

# DCGS NEWS

D E N T O N C O U N T Y G E N E A L O G I C A L S O C I E T Y

## FEBRUARY ZOOM MEETING

**Program: “Genealogy in Criminal Investigation”**

**Speaker: Chris Womack**



1896- Denton County Courthouse-

The Denton County Genealogical Society meets on the second Thursday during the months on September-November and January-May. 6:30 P.M.  
 Denton Public Library, Emily Fowler Central Library, 502 Oakland St., Denton, TX 76201  
[www.genealogydentontexas.org](http://www.genealogydentontexas.org)

Join us for the monthly Denton County Genealogy Society meeting Thursday, February 11, 2021. We will connect via Zoom at 6:30 p.m. for a social time to chat with friends and see everyone’s smiling faces.

After a short business meeting, Chris Womack, Crime Analyst with the Denton Police Department, will present the program “Genealogy in Criminal

Investigation”. This presentation is designed to give a high-level overview of how genealogy tools and skills can be used in support of criminal investigation and subject identification involved in cold case investigation. Additional topics will include an overview of cases solved with DNA and the emerging field of forensic genealogy.

Visitors are welcome. If you are not a member of the DCGS and would like to attend please register here: <https://denton.bibliocommons.com/events/5ff39e8125c2fc430bf20f25> by Wednesday, January 13, 7 p.m. to receive an invitation email for the Zoom event.

## DISCOVER YOUR STORY AT RootsTech CONNECT

25–27 FEBRUARY, 2021

For the first time ever, the world’s largest family celebration event will be entirely virtual and completely free. Get ready to celebrate shared connections with people from around the world. Connect with friends, your family, your past, and your heritage and homelands—all from the comfort of your home and in your browser.

To celebrate worldwide cultures and family heritage, RootsTech Connect is also offering activities from around the world, such as cooking demonstrations, yoga, dance, and music. Attendees can submit videos sharing aspects of their lives, such as their hometowns, family traditions, cultural celebrations, or dances. It will be a unique way to honor homelands, people, and ancestors from all over.

Participating in RootsTech is easier than ever with RootsTech Connect. All you need to do to participate is register with your name, email address, and location. That’s it!

Once you have registered, you can attend all the classes, speakers, and activities offered during the conference on February 25–27, 2021. Join in from the comfort of your own home at [RootsTech.org](https://RootsTech.org). And once the conference is over, you’ll have full access to all the recordings for the following year!



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## PRESIDENT'S ARTICLE

Hello, Everyone,

From your feedback it is clear that we were all fascinated by our January program on Archaeology at the Tom Cook Blacksmith Shop (c. 1870s-1890s) and the Sartin Hotel in Bolivar, Denton County, Texas. We hope to have Maria Franklin and Doug Boyd speak to us in a few months with an update on the project and more amazing photographs of their discoveries.

Watch your email for the February 11 meeting Zoom Join Link. We will start our meeting at 6:30 p.m. for social time followed at 7 p.m. by a brief business meeting and program. Our speaker will be Chris Womack of the Denton Police Department, and her topic is Genealogy in Criminal Investigation. I expect many of you are as curious as I am about how DNA and forensic genealogy come together to help solve cold cases.

Laura Douglas is completing a grant application for the digitization of the Denton Record-Chronicle newspaper from 1955-1969 for publication on the Portal to Texas History. On behalf of DCGS, I provided a letter of support for that effort.

I want to take a moment to brag on Denton County. I know several of you registered like I did to get the Covid-19 vaccination at a Denton County Public Health drive-thru vaccination hub. The team was professional, quick, caring, and thorough as we stayed in our car and rolled through the line in less than an hour. The drive-thru vaccination hub handled 3,500 doses in their first week. They are now up to over 30,000 doses administered in a week. If you are interested in being vaccinated, click the following link for more info and to register on Denton County's Vaccine Interest Portal. <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/7c802a848ce04a0999f9831f2ddaaf2e>

Stay well and stay safe. I look forward to seeing you on Zoom and in person before too long.

Joe Spears  
Email: [argyleiris@verizon.net](mailto:argyleiris@verizon.net)



## TREASURER'S REPORT

**Balance Jan. 1, 2021** **\$2,802.23**

**Deposits:**

01/04 2020-2021 Dues \$20.00

Total Deposits: \$20.00

**Disbursements:**

None

Total disbursements: \$ 0.00

**Balance January 31, 2010** **\$2,822.23**

Library Donations

April 1995 – May 2006 \$2,876.52

June 2006 – June 2012 \$3,310.00

July 2012 – January 2021 \$2,925.53

Respectfully Submitted,  
Linda Touraine, Treasurer



## JANUARY 2021 MINUTES

President Joe Spears called the Zoom meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. He introduced himself and welcomed everyone. He introduced new member Candy Risher and visitor Pam Stephens.

The motion to approve the November 2020 minutes as published in the Newsletter was made by Eileen O'Neill and seconded by Bob Lane. The treasurer's report was filed for audit.

### Old Business

There was no old business.

### New Business

Beth Leggieri plans to resign from her office as Secretary due to health issues. We may need to elect a replacement at next month's meeting.

### Announcements

Our next meeting will be February 11, 2021 by Zoom and address DNA and criminal forensic genealogy and be presented by Chris Womack of the Denton Police Department.

### Program

President Joe Spears introduced Maria Franklin, (UT-Austin) and Doug Boyd (Cox-McClain Environmental Consulting, Inc.) who presented the program: Archaeology at the Tom Cook Blacksmith Shop in Bolivar, Texas.

Audrey Mabe moved to adjourn at 8:20 p.m. and was seconded by Steve Booher.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sandra Robertson, Acting Secretary



## LESSONS LEARNED: 31 DAYS OF WRITING FAMILY HISTORY

by Nancy Gilbride Casey

The COVID pandemic has had many casualties in our everyday lives. For me, family history writing took a big hit in 2020. Ideas dried up and motivation was lacking. GenPen—the writing group of the DCGS—ceased to meet, after a very first successful year. Everything seemed upended.

A random Facebook post caught my eye in late December 2020. The author had challenged herself to post a single family history record on social media each day in January 2021, and offered to readers her list of types of records: birth, death, wedding record, etc.

The idea had great appeal. After a year of overwhelming events, here was a suggestion to "go small." I committed myself to try out her challenge. What I learned may encourage others trying to get going on writing their family history.

The first big lesson was, "I have **control** over my writing." Originally, I had decided to follow the challenger's list of topics. But some of the topics didn't interest me, or I didn't have a ready example to hand (such as a "family recipe"—hard to believe, right?).

So, I gave myself **permission** to write about *something else*: a record, photo or artifact I had wanted to write about in the past, but just hadn't—maybe one I'd forgotten about, or which was too small a topic to merit a long post on my blog [Leaves on the Tree](#). This was freeing: There is no right or wrong to family history writing. Write about what fascinates, and chances are that interest and excitement will come across to your readers. I also learned, "I can **pivot**," when needed. On the topic of "[Interesting Letter](#)," I intended to write about my husband's "Comanche Princess named Morning Dew" legend which I found out about in a letter from his uncle. But, the post had gotten too long and it was just not ready to publish that day. Rather than not do anything that day...I decided to pivot. I went to my living room, looked at some family photos, and the three-generation photo of my husband, my son and my father-in-law in OU attire jumped out at me. The story of the long-standing family love of football and OU which the photo embodied just rolled out onto the page.

The challenge of coming up with 31 distinct records had me asking, "**What constitutes a record?**" One day I wrote about [my father-in-law's teddy bear](#), an artifact we own; it was a "record" of this childhood. Another, I wrote about various ways one can look at [DNA test results](#)—the ultimate "record" of an individual. I also included [anecdotes about my children](#) when they were younger. Even more recent family history is still "history," and these stories are as deserving of being recorded for posterity as any others.

Even the best ideas can go awry, but one can still **create a silk purse out of a sow's ear**, as evidenced in my post on the [topic of "ancestral town"](#). It so happens my Slovak ancestors lived very near a castle, and I imagined that they might have been awed and inspired by the site. Turns out that the castle is just a bit too far away from their town and blocked by a hill to be seen on an everyday basis (according to FB friends who have been there). A quick rewrite included a "fess up" about my mistaken notion.

Purposefully **staying small** by limiting inspiration to a single document/record/photo definitely made the end product **manageable**. I confess wanting to add maps, additional documents, and the like. This sometimes made it hard to get the writing done by the day's deadline. But it also showed that the daily habit of thinking about writing had **unleashed some momentum** in what I could write about and how.

The 31-day challenge was certainly eye-opening. There were days I definitely was not "feeling it" in terms of writing, and on those days I may have picked a very easy topic. Other days were the culmination of several days of thought and planning which resulted in a blog post later in the week. The challenge was a microcosm of the writing process as a whole, where some days the stories flow and others they need to be coaxed along. In the end, however, each day was a win in the quest of telling my family stories.



## SLEUTH ALONG INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS FOR YOUR ANCESTORS

The thought of your ancestors of 100 or 200 years ago traveling along a modern-day interstate highway may seem amusing as interstate highways didn't exist until the 1950s. Yet, it is quite possible that your ancestors traveled along the same routes as today's interstates, plus or minus a very few miles.

Westward migration in the United States usually took place in the path of least resistance: on riverboats where practical or on pathways along rivers when boat travel was not available. In cases where there was no river to follow, overland travel generally went along the path of least resistance, too: through valleys, through mountain passes, and perhaps straight across the flatlands and prairies.

When studying migration patterns throughout history in the United States, we can see hundreds of examples. In New England, the first inland areas to be settled were along the Merrimack River, the Connecticut River, the Penobscot River, and the others.

When researching the origins of those who settled the mountainous areas of northern Vermont and New Hampshire, we find that most of them were from Connecticut and western Massachusetts. They traveled up the Connecticut River, not overland across the north-south mountain ranges that receding glaciers carved many thousands of years earlier. Today, Interstate 91 follows roughly the same route.

In Massachusetts, the east-west migration generally followed the valleys through the central part of the state, often following the Boston Post Road (present-day U.S. Route 20). That path is more or less parallel to the present-day Massachusetts Turnpike, or Interstate 90.

As we travel down the eastern seaboard, the migration pattern was repeated: the Hudson River, the Susquehanna River, the Potomac River, the Savannah River, and many others became "highways" of travel for our ancestors. As we move further west, we find the "super highways" of years past: the Mississippi River, the Ohio, and the Missouri.

Of course, rivers didn't always exist in convenient places. Many times the early settlers blazed overland routes through valleys where travel would be easier for wagons drawn by horses or oxen. Two major examples would be the Cumberland Gap in Tennessee and the Wilderness Road in Virginia. These routes did follow rivers, where possible, but they also went overland through valleys, following paths that could be used by horses and oxen pulling wagons. Of course, there were dozens of other highways.

If you follow the migration paths of your ancestors prior to 1850, you will see that they usually traveled along the same routes as did earlier travelers, routes that allowed for easier transport. These routes were generally on rivers, beside rivers, or through valleys.

For a few years in the first half of the 19th century, canals looked like they would become the primary method of transportation. Indeed, that did happen in a few areas, such as the Erie Canal. The traffic on the canals moved at two or three miles an hour as the barges and boats were typically powered by work animals

that walked along adjacent footpaths. However, canals were doomed almost from the start as a new, mechanized beast soon appeared that could move more goods, move them faster, and do so at less construction expense.

By the mid 19th century, railroads started appearing in significant numbers. Railroad locomotives could perform the work of many horses or oxen, and the travel experience for passengers in railroad cars was much better than riding on a buckboard or a Conestoga wagon. These "iron horses" were very powerful but had one major shortcoming: they weren't very good at climbing hills.

The railroads were always built along the flattest land possible, often on or beside the routes that had already been established for overland travel. The railroads thrived best along riverbanks, which rarely had hills, or through valleys, including the Cumberland Gap and the Wilderness Road. More than a few railroads were built on the footpaths beside canals, replacing the "beasts of burdens" that had powered the canal boats of the previous generation. Of course, these new-fangled railroads transported immigrants, freight, and livestock alike.

Let's fast forward another century. In the 1950s, the federal government began its interstate highways project. The primary justification was to build a transportation system the Defense Department could use to move convoys in time of war. However, commercial and personal uses soon eclipsed defense purposes. Today we all travel along interstate highways without regard to the travel hardships of our ancestors.

The interstate highways often follow the same paths as the earlier railroads and the still earlier ox-carts and covered wagons. While modern construction techniques have allowed a few exceptions, such as building highways in the mountains, the majority of today's interstate highways are built along traditional trade routes and migration paths. In other words, today's highways often follow rivers, old canals, and deep valleys.

Are you mystified as to the origins of some family in your family tree? You know where they lived on a certain date but wonder where they came from? Get out a modern-day highway map, and find the town where those ancestors lived. Next, see where the major highways of that town go. Chances are that your ancestors traveled along one of those routes. They almost never traveled over a mountain range or through a swampy area.

There's a good chance that your ancestors followed the same approximate route as today's super highways. Start by looking at the records of the state "up the highway" from their hometown. Sleuthing along today's interstates may actually pay off.





## DENTON PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES

You can now make an appointment to use the research computers, the Legacy Lab conversion equipment at the or the books in the Special Collections at the Emily Fowler Central Library. Call (940) 349-8749 to schedule an appointment.

Did you know you can use your Denton Public Library card to take advantage of the multitude of digital resources listed in the Online Library tab on the homepage of our site at [library.cityofdenton.com](http://library.cityofdenton.com)? AncestryLibrary Edition, Fold3, Heritage Quest Online and Newspaper Archives are a few of the resources you can access from home for your Genealogy research.

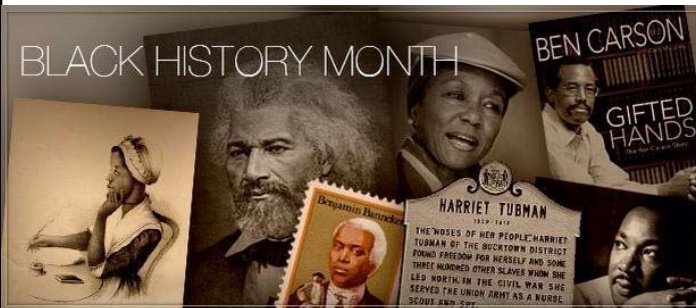
There are thousands of ebooks and audiobooks available through CloudLibrary. To use CloudLibrary, download the app and login with your library card number. Check out audiobooks, movies and more through Hoopla. Similar to CloudLibrary, Hoopla is another digital platform that allows you to borrow movies, music, audiobooks, ebooks, comics and TV shows to enjoy on your computer, tablet, or phone – and even your TV! For more detailed instructions on how to use CloudLibrary or Hoopla on a phone,

tablet, computer or Kindle Fire the library has online tutorials, also listed in the Online Library tab of the library homepage.

Whether you're looking for ways to work out your brain or you need resources to keep kids engaged, we have a number of learning tools you can use. With Lynda, you can access on-demand training through video tutorials to build technology, creative, and business skills. Or you can use Pronunciator to learn how to speak, read, and write any of their 80 languages covered through lessons, feature films, music, and more.

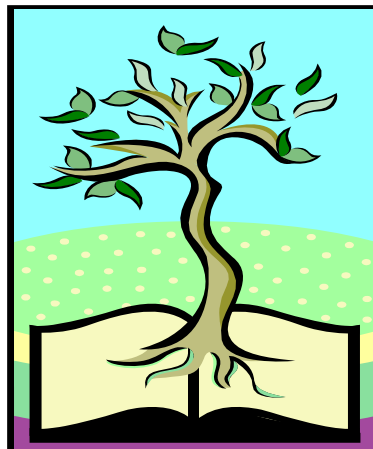
Don't have a Denton Public Library card? Get immediate access to our online services by signing up for an eCard. Apply online at the library homepage under the Services tab. (Note: if you already have a Library card, you do not need an eCard.)

For our full list of resources, visit [library.cityofdenton.com](http://library.cityofdenton.com).



### 2020-2022 OFFICERS

**President—Joe Spears**  
**Vice-President—Stacie Briggs**  
**Secretary—Beth Leggieri**  
**Treasurer—Linda Touraine**  
**Librarian—Laura Douglas**  
**Webmaster—Chris Strauss**  
**Membership—Donna Spears**  
**Newsletter Editor—Kathy Strauss**



**NEXT MEETING OF THE  
 DENTON COUNTY  
 GENEALOGICAL  
 SOCIETY WILL BE ON  
 MARCH 11, 2021  
 Online Webinar**

DENTON COUNTY  
GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

502 Oakland Street  
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