

# DCGS News

## NOVEMBER MEETING FOCUS: TEXAS HERITAGE MUSEUM HOLDINGS

DENTON COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

SPOTLIGHT!

THE HOLDINGS IN THE TEXAS HERITAGE MUSEUM!

Presented by  
John Versluis

THURSDAY,  
NOVEMBER 9, 2023  
6:30 P.M.



Visitors Welcome

EMILY FOWLER  
CENTRAL LIBRARY  
502 OAKLAND ST.  
DENTON, TX

Join DCGS for “*Spotlight the Holdings in the Texas Heritage Museum,*” to be presented virtually by **John Versluis** at the next Denton County Genealogical Society meeting, Thursday, 9 November 2023. Social time begins at 6:30 p.m., with the program at 7 p.m., in the Emily Fowler Central Library meeting room.

Guest speaker Versluis—executive director and chief curator of the Texas Heritage Museum at Hillsboro College—will provide an overview of the museum’s three divisions: Galleries and Collections, Hill College Press, and the Historical Research Center (HRC).

Versluis will feature Lieutenant

Andrew Birdsall Briscoe, 8th Texas Cavalry, Terry’s Texas Rangers, Co. K., and Private William Newby, 40th Illinois Infantry, Co. D to illustrate what one might find while researching Civil War Confederate and Union ancestors in the Historical Research Center, regarded as a top-five U.S. Civil War collection.

The center offers an extensive collection of maps, photographs, microfilm, soldiers’ letters, diaries, unpublished manuscripts from all wars, and original art works depicting the Civil War, among other items.

Under Versluis’s leadership, the Texas Heritage Museum was accredited in June 2023 by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM)—the highest national recognition afforded to museums. Versluis recently received the North Texas Community College Consortium’s Jesse Jones Leadership Award for his stewardship of the museum and the accreditation process.

*See page 7 for more details on the November 30th field trip to the Texas Heritage Museum.*



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**Photo:** Jones Photographic Studios of America, Studio No. 1, Fireworks at the Denton County Courthouse Celebrating the End of World War I, 1918-; digital image, *The Portal to Texas History* (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph12494/m1/1/>; 2 May 2023); citing Denton Public Library.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



When researching genealogical information, do not forget historical societies. Often small, they are nevertheless a valuable research resource. After all, what is genealogy if not a history of people?

The Denton County Historical Commission (DCHC), an arm of the Denton County government, is charged with preserving Denton's historical heritage. DCHC committees include collections, archaeology, historical markers, and cemeteries. Projects include a Chisholm Trail Report, Historical Markers, and Denton County History. DCHC maintains all the county's cemetery and burial records, which may be of interest to those researching Denton County ancestors. Museum archives and DCHC records are available on the first floor of the Courthouse-on-the-Square.

There are many historical societies throughout the United States. The special collections librarian at the

Windsor (Connecticut) Historical Society was especially helpful to Linda during our recent excursion to New England. Linda contacted WHS before our trip and was pleasantly surprised at the amount of material ready for review upon her arrival. She found and copied several items of significant interest. Books and maps were also available, and map reproductions were available for purchase. Linda bought an early Windsor map to more easily find an ancestor's home location from the 1600s.

If you plan to visit a historical society, be aware that many of them may not be open for the entire week, so call ahead for operating hours. And be sure to leave a donation as historical societies are not often well-funded.

A good genealogist will find fascinating and plentiful records in a variety of organizations throughout the United States. Why not let us know which ones have been especially helpful to you?

—Robert L. Lane, President  
[presidentdcgs@gmail.com](mailto:presidentdcgs@gmail.com)

### 2023-24 DCGS OFFICERS

<b>President</b> .....	Robert L. Lane, <a href="mailto:presidentdcgs@gmail.com">presidentdcgs@gmail.com</a>
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<b>TxSGS District C Representative</b> .....	Emily Coffman Richardson, <a href="mailto:districtC@TXSGS.org">districtC@TXSGS.org</a>



Find us on Facebook:

[https://www.facebook.com/  
DentonCountyGenealogicalSociety](https://www.facebook.com/DentonCountyGenealogicalSociety)

Society Website:

[www.genealogydentontexas.org](http://www.genealogydentontexas.org)

# OCTOBER 2023 MEETING MINUTES

Denton County Genealogical Society,  
Inc.

## October 12, 2023 Minutes

President Bob Lane called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. Linda Lane, assistant membership chair, welcomed visitors Tara Anderson (who joined—welcome), Henry Koehler, and Linda Moor. Total attendance was 31: three visitors, 24 members were present at the Emily Fowler Library, and four members were present on Zoom.

Minutes of the September 14, 2023, meeting were approved with no corrections as printed in the newsletter. There were no questions about the Treasurer's Report, and it was filed for audit.

### Reports by Board Members

**Social/Hospitality**—Eileen O'Neill thanked Kathi Coatney, and Sandra and Charles Robertson for bringing snacks.

**Librarian**—Laura Douglas highlighted these programs: Lunch Break Genealogy on October 18; Annual Genealogy Lock-In on October 20; and Connections: A Genealogy Discussion Group on October 27. Learn more about these programs on the library's website. She previewed a program on writing your family history to be led by Emily Coffman Richardson to be held in summer 2024.

There was no **New Business**.

### Announcements

- The next meeting will be November 9, 2023.
- Congratulations to Laura Douglas for a fun and useful scavenger hunt at the last meeting.
- Donna Spears's newsletter article provided great information on accessing

the War of 1812 pension records.

- The president will compile a list of duties/responsibilities of officers for reference and history files as well as a document to provide to new officers.

### Program

Nancy Gilbride Casey, newsletter editor, announced that the Ancestor Question of the Month for November is: "Why were you given your first name?" Email her any tips or tricks of genealogical research for inclusion in a newsletter.

In the absence of Beth Leggieri, vice president, Nancy Gilbride Casey introduced Emily Coffman Richardson, who presented "Writing Your Family History."

President Bob Lane closed the meeting with his last word from an unknown source. There were no other announcements, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

—Respectfully Submitted by Sandra Robertson,  
Secretary



## TREASURER'S REPORT

<b>Balance Sept. 26, 2023</b>		<b>\$3,065.54</b>
<b>Deposits</b>		
October 17, 2023 cash	40.00	
October 17, 2023 checks	90.00	
<b>Total Deposits</b>		<b>\$130.00</b>
<b>Disbursements</b>		
<b>Total Disbursements</b>	100.00	<b>\$100.00</b>
<b>Balance October 23, 2023</b>		<b>\$3,095.54</b>
—Respectfully Submitted, Marian Carroll, Treasurer		

# WE HAVE BEEN WARNED!

by Minna Marinko

In her October DCGS presentation, “Writing Your Family History,” Emily Coffman Richardson forewarned us that our years of genealogical research will become “dust in the wind” if we do not get busy writing. She advised that writing the story is as essential as researching and collecting. If we want our work to live on, we must “tell the story of the dash,” referring to the symbol between birth and death dates.

To tell the story, Emily urged us to get beyond the “hunters ‘n’ gatherers” stage. She predicted that if our descendants find only piles of unorganized, unscanned, or unfocused research, our countless hours at the computer, our trips to cemeteries, and our courthouse searches will have been for naught. It’s the stories about our ancestors that are most powerful; it’s those stories that will endure.

Emily’s good news? Each of us *can* write those stories. Writing can take any form we choose: a blog, a book, a journal article, a family newsletter, a play, a poem, a storybook, letters to our children and grandchildren, etc.

Her step-by-step solution? We must “**RAC.**”

- ◆ **RESEARCH** with a focus and a plan (i.e., ignore the bright, shiny objects).
- ◆ **ASSESS** what we find more thoroughly.
- ◆ **COMPILE** what we find into a story.

How?

1. Decide who/what to write about. Examples: Use a photograph of a family event for inspiration. Work backward through our trees (write a story about our own life, then our parents’ lives, then grandparents, etc.). Pick an ancestor that especially calls to us. Use a prompt system (like Amy Johnson Crow’s “52 Ancestors in 52 Weeks”), or



whatever strikes our fancy.

2. Assess our research. Create a timeline—it’s a great tool for examining what we have. Include everything on our subject. If necessary, do a little more focused research to fill the exposed gaps. Pull photographs.
3. Compile our thoughts. Create a storyboard. Good writing comes from emotions/feelings, best/worst times, values/beliefs, social context, events, etc.
4. Create a time and space to write and give yourself a deadline.
5. Write first, edit later.
6. Review (by peers, by reading aloud, etc.).
7. Submit and/or share the story.
8. Begin the process again!

I have heard similar advice enough times to know that I should be carrying my research and collecting all the way through to writing. I have even tried writing several times, and my reviewers even liked what I wrote. However, because writing was so difficult for me, each time I reverted to the more-comfortable hunter-gatherer role. Researching and collecting is so much more fun, eh?

Emily’s warning was not new to me, but her solutions were. Her “RAC” will remind me that there are three parts to genealogy—not just two—and that I am not finished until I complete all three. Emily’s step-by-step process will keep me on track as I prepare. More importantly, it may even eliminate my dreaded fear of a blank page staring back at me when it’s time to write.

# POLISH RESOURCE BOOKS DONATED IN HONOR OF ERIK KASZYNSKI

by Nancy Gilbride Casey

Denton County Genealogical Society donated funds last spring to the Emily Fowler Central Library for a book purchase to honor past DCGS president and member Erik Kaszynski. Erik passed away in May. The books, which focus on aspects of Polish genealogy, are available now in the Special Collections area.

Wondering why your Polish ancestors may have emigrated to the United States? ***Polish Immigration to America: When, Why, How and Where***, by Stephen Szabados (2016), explores possible answers to that question, and much more.

Chapters in ***Polish Immigration*** cover:

- ◆ *Emigration from Poland* - When did they leave and what were the reasons?
- ◆ *Emigration from Poland - Leaving their Villages* - What experiences did immigrants have as they bid farewell to their homeland?
- ◆ *Emigration from Poland - Departure Ports and Arrival in America*. The Ports offer brief histories of most ports used by Polish immigrants on both sides of the ocean—from Bremen and Antwerp to New York and even Galveston, among others.
- ◆ *The Voyage* - What did the passage from the Old Country to America look like for immigrants?
- ◆ *Arrival in America: The Process* - What did Polish immigrants find as they set foot in America?
- ◆ *Beginning a New Life* - How did the immigrants become acclimated to their new country?

If your ancestors settled in Illinois, authors John Radzilowski and Ann Hetzel Gunkel's ***Poles in Illinois*** (2020) offers “the first comprehensive history to trace the abundance and diversity of this ethnic group throughout the state from the 1800s

## POLISH IMMIGRATION TO AMERICA



WHEN, WHY, HOW AND WHERE

STEPHEN SZABADOS

to present.”

Illinois boasts one of the most visible concentrations of Poles in the United States, the largest Polish community outside the country centered in Chicago, and many smaller Polish settlements around the state. ***Poles in Illinois*** emphasizes the lived experiences of ordinary Polish Americans, with chapter topics ranging from “Settling in America” and “Faith and Religious Life” to “Polish Community Life in Illinois” and “Poles in Industrial Illinois.”

Join us for ***Lunch Break Genealogy***, 12:30 p.m., Emily Fowler meeting room. Bring your lunch, watch a genealogy webinar, and discuss!

- 11/15 - “Delving Into Divorce: Finding Family Details in the Civil Court Docket” – Susan Ball
- ◆ 12/20 - “Take a Deep Dive in the U.S. Census” – Jim Thornhill

## ANCESTOR Q OF THE MONTH: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR FIRST NAME?

*The November Ancestor Question of the Month was “Why were you given your first name? Is it a family name?” Enjoy these answers from fellow DCGS members.*

**Walta Evans** writes: “My grandmother created my name. My Mom wanted to name me Walterine after the newscaster Walter Winchell’s daughter, but my grandmother said, “That is too big a name for such a little girl. Take the Walt from her father’s name and add the Latin feminine ending *a* and make it WALTA.’ My dad was Walter and had an uncle named Walter. Dad also had a son named Eugene Walter. I was his first girl. My middle name is Edwina using the same idea from my Mom’s stepfather’s name.”

“My parents didn't want to name us for someone in the family but wanted us to feel we were individuals without the weight of ‘you were named for...’ writes **Eileen O’Neill**. “They simply liked the name Eileen Kathryn.”

**Charles Robertson** writes, “Including myself, a son, and a first cousin, there are eight persons in my family line with the name Charles. Five of these are ancestors—both direct and collateral lines. Specifically, I was named for my father, Charles Stewart Robertson, Sr. (1899-1966). He was named for his uncle Charles Stewart (1892-1943), who was my paternal grandmother's brother. Charles Stewart was named for his father Charles Houston Stewart (1845-1898), my paternal great-grandfather. My family on both maternal and paternal sides passed family names down through the generations.”



“My first name, Nancy, was chosen by my mother, as a diminutive of her name, Ann. She was named after her Slovak grandmother, Anna Tatar Simonik, and her aunt, Anna Simonik,” writes **Nancy Gilbride Casey**. “My husband and I carried on the tradition by naming our daughter in honor of my mother, but spelled it *Anne*. I wanted to honor so many beautiful women of my maternal line. This image shows the line of women with this name, including, top row: Anna Simonik, her daughter Anna, and my mother Ann Kozlina Gilbride, and lower row, me and daughter Anne.”

New DCGS member **Tara Anderson** writes, “I was given my first name because my mother heard it on a television show and thought it was a pretty, unique name.”

“My parents liked the name Sandra—that’s what my mother said when I asked where my name came from,” writes **Sandra Robertson**. “I was born in 1944, and the name Sandra was very popular beginning in the 1930s and reaching its peak in the 1950s and 1960s. There were always other girls named Sandra in my elementary, junior high, and high school classes. In fact, my across-the-street neighbor was named Sandra. She was Sandy, and I was Sandra. My favorite film Sandra is the Pink Lady, Sandy Dombrowski, from the 1971 musical *Grease*.”

## January Ancestor Question of the Month

*What are your 2024 genealogy goals?*

Click the link to complete the form (easiest) <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe6pMmZu4ulivksIP62242oVMbrHdQcj5b-v2ivIrMhoTWJKw/viewform>

or email [newsletterdcs@gmail.com](mailto:newsletterdcs@gmail.com) to respond.



### DCGS Field Trip to the **Texas Heritage Museum**

112 Lamar Dr, Hillsboro, TX 76645

Thursday, 30 November • Meet @ the Museum, 1 p.m.

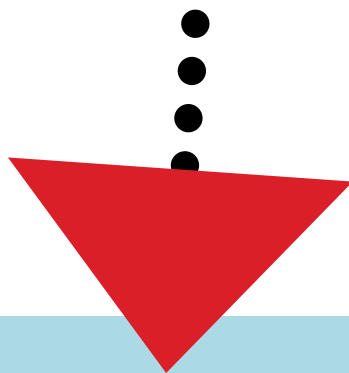
DCGS Members only

Participants provide own transportation.

For more info, contact Beth Leggieri,  
[vicepresidentdcs@gmail.com](mailto:vicepresidentdcs@gmail.com)



*DCGS and community members enjoy Judy Russell's presentation at the annual day-long Genealogy Lock-In on October 20th. The event was held both in-person and virtually. (Photo: B. Leggieri)*



## MEMBERCONNECT: SOCIAL MEDIA SUCCESS

**Beth Leggieri** shares a recent success story:

I frequently conduct research via social media: Facebook groups, such as historical and genealogical societies in my research locales, are my travel destinations.

Recently, I was researching to develop narratives for ancestors who left no descendants—including an unmarried female, Alta Smith. I was making routine sweeps through assorted Facebook sites that I follow. And there she was, in a 1931 photograph attached to a November 2022 county historical society Facebook post! (See image, page 9)

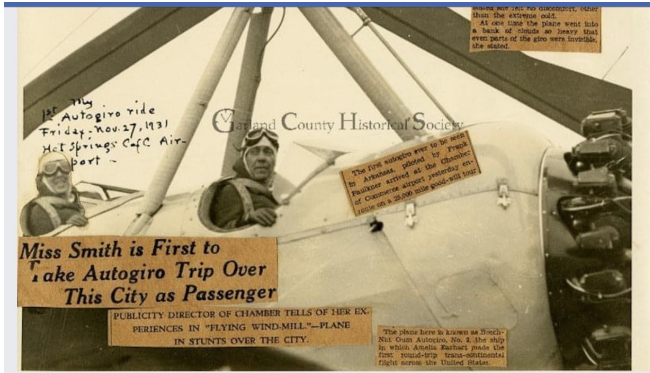
A phone call later to the city library, and I learned that Miss Smith's hometown had closed its genealogical collection, that the city genealogical society had split the collection with the state library, and that the county historical society was working with the genealogical society to preserve the collection. I contacted all three entities via email with specific research requests stemming from the 2022 Facebook post.

Ten days after that Facebook sighting, I now possess five photographs, several published articles, and a telegraph copy. A PowerPoint lecture about MY Miss Alta Smith is in the mail to me. An only daughter who left no descendants, she was the tail end of her line; Miss Smith had long fallen out of my family story. But, she has not been entirely lost. Her community continues to honor her commitment and contribution to their town, making it possible to restore her to the larger family story.

What I learned from this success:

- ◆ **Travel** via your keyboard! The least expensive research trip is the one I booked at my computer.
- ◆ **Make** the phone call, write the email—if you don't ask, you don't get.
- ◆ **Share** what you know with the hosting social media site. It helps grow their story as they helped you grow yours.
- ◆ **Join** the helpful society or send a donation. Genuine interest in an organization's mission encourages the staff and helps their interaction stats.
- ◆ **Support** Emily Fowler Special Collections and utilize our incredible research librarians' expertise. Although I knew that some locales are losing their genealogical collections, this was my first brush with that reality.





 **Garland County Historical Society · Follow**  
Nov 2, 2022

This photo, from 1931, shows Alta Smith, publicity director for the Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce, taking a trip in the Autogiro; flying over Hot Springs as a passenger. This was the first Autogiro seen in Arkansas and is known as Beech-Nut Gum Autogiro #2, the ship in which Amelia Earhart made the first, round trip, trans-continental flight across the United States.

In 1924 Alta Smith brought her boundless enthusiasm and tireless work ethic back to Hot Springs after working for the national YWCA. She became the publicity director of the Chamber of Commerce and remained in that position from 1924 to 1963. She brought Hot Springs to the notice of the world and was the creator of the iconic Hot Spring's slogans "We Bathe the World" and "Where the World Bathes and Plays" along with the image of the world in a bathtub.

She authored award-winning booklets about Hot Springs that were distributed all over the country. Smith produced thousands of stories, photographs, and programs about Hot Springs and helped countless writers produce stories of their own. A great networker, she cultivated contacts everywhere—her friends included editors and writers from all over the country.

As one editor said, "All through the lean years of the Depression and the war years of the 40's, she single-handedly kept up the drum-fire of publicity releases and pictures to the nation's magazines and newspapers to keep Hot Springs on the travel pages of the country's newspapers." Her efforts in the fifties and sixties continued to attract reporters, writers, and conventions here.

E. Robbins, GCHS, ED

Garland County Historical Society archives  
Join, volunteer, donate, like, follow, share, preserve, support!

*This Facebook post began a cascade of discoveries for DCGS member Beth Leggieri. Read about it in this month's MemberConnect, page 8.*



## Welcome

to our newest DCGS members

**Tara Anderson, Ethan Coatney, and  
Pamela Spooner**

## COMING EVENTS

New classes to be offered at the Denton Family History Center, taught by Stacie Briggs. All classes 10-11:30 a.m., Denton Family Stake Center, 3000 Old North Road.

1/27/24—**Other Ways to Search: Going Beyond the Provided Hints**

2/24/24—**Organizing Your Family History Work**



## NEW! BOOK CLUB

Stacie Briggs, director of the Denton Family History Center, is starting a **Genealogy Mystery Readers Book Club**, to meet once monthly beginning in January 2024. Date and time to be determined.

The first selection is Nathan Dylan Goodwin's *The Asylum* and *Hiding in the Past*.

Visit the group's Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/805606441364371/>

or email Stacie for more info at [staciebriggs@ymail.com](mailto:staciebriggs@ymail.com).

## ***ABOUT THE SOCIETY***

Founded in 1979, the ***Denton County Genealogical Society*** (DCGS) has been serving area genealogy researchers for nearly 45 years, offering classes and events, collaboration, and support, in partnership with the Denton Public Library—a Family Search Affiliate Library.

DCGS is a proud member of the National Genealogical Society and the Texas State Genealogical Society.

The society meets on the second Thursday of the month (September-November, January-May), at the Emily Fowler Central Library, 502 Oakland Street, Denton. Social time begins at 6:30 p.m., program at 7 p.m. Programs may be in-person, virtual, or hybrid (both in-person & via Zoom). Visitors are welcome.

Membership dues are \$20 (individual) and \$30 (couples). To become a member, contact the membership chair at [membershipdcgs@gmail.com](mailto:membershipdcgs@gmail.com).



***Denton County Genealogical Society • 502 Oakland St., Denton, TX 76201***

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