

# DCGS News

## ARE YOU BIASED IN YOUR GENEALOGY RESEARCH?



Barbara Coakley

Unrecognized bias can lead genealogists astray—resulting in inaccurate conclusions and incomplete family stories.

To help us recognize and combat bias, **Barbara Coakley** will present **“Avoiding Bias: Consider All the Possibilities,”** at the Denton County Genealogical Society’s monthly meeting, Thursday, February 12th. Attendees will gather at the Emily Fowler Central Library meeting room, 502 Oakland Street in Denton. Social time begins at 6:30 p.m., with a brief

business meeting at 7 p.m., followed by the presentation. Visitors are welcome.

We’ll explore how cognitive bias creeps into genealogical research and the behaviors that can skew results. You’ll learn how to combat bias using proven tools such as the Genealogical Proof Standard (GPS), a consistent research process, and comprehensive source checklists. Real-world case studies will illustrate how to spot and correct for bias and ensure conclusions are built on a foundation of sound evidence. Whether you’re a beginner or a seasoned researcher, this session will equip you with practical methods to improve the accuracy and credibility of your genealogical work.

Barbara's interest in family history began over 30 years ago when her aunt sent an envelope of family papers. Through the years, she had traveled throughout the U.S. and Europe visiting ancestors’ homelands and doing research.

Barbara taught continuing education classes in genealogy for 22 years before she retired and now lectures on a wide variety of genealogy topics. Her current focus is on writing her ancestors' stories for genealogical society publications and her family.

Barbara is president of Genealogy Friends of Plano Libraries and volunteers for three other state and local genealogy societies. She is a member of the DAR and multiple local, state, and national genealogical and historical societies.



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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



*Eileen O'Neill*

Valentine's Day decorations are up; love is in the air or at least in the candy aisle. We like to think our ancestors shared happy married lives leading to the crowning achievement of our trees, namely us! They may have, but if you're like me, there are blanks in the tree where full names of foremothers should be, leading to missing branches.

Finding those maiden names is a challenge. DCGS has had presentations on female ancestors, but reminders are useful. It's easier for the more recent past but what about farther back? One can start with marriage records, church and civil, and death records and gravestones for husbands. Look for children's names; check their birth, baptismal, marriage, and death records to see if dear old mom's name is listed. Check all the children's records; some may be more specific than others. Middle names of children may provide clues; maiden names are sometimes used for given or middle names. Clues may be found in wills. Land records may help, as well as DNA research. If your family moved, look for neighbors who moved with them. They may be related.

Not every culture has the custom of a woman changing her surname when marrying. In France, a woman's birth name remains her legal name, though she may use her



Image by rawpixel.com

husband's name in daily usage. In Spanish-speaking countries, a child has two last names, her father's and her mother's. How fortunate for researchers!

—*Eileen O'Neill, President*  
*presidentdcgs@gmail.com*

## Visit DCGS online



**Facebook**

<https://www.facebook.com/DentonCountyGenealogicalSociety>

**Website**

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

### 2025-26 DCGS OFFICERS

#### President

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**DCGS News** is published eight times annually, September–November and January–May.

Submissions always welcome at [newsletterdcgs@gmail.com](mailto:newsletterdcgs@gmail.com).

#### Newsletter Staff

Laura Douglas, Kathy Lawrence

**DCGS News** has been honored as the 1st place winner in the 2023, 2024, and 2025 Texas State Genealogical Society Writing Awards, Partner Society Publications category.

# JANUARY 2026 MEETING MINUTES

*Denton County Genealogical Society, Inc, Jan. 8, 2026 Minutes.*

**Call to Order**—President O’Neill, 7:00 p.m.

**Pledge of Allegiance**—President O’Neill

**Attendance**—27 members and 3 guests in attendance at the Emily Fowler, 7 members and 1 guest on Zoom, plus our presenter for 38 total in attendance.

## Reports

**Vice-President**—Stacie Briggs announced a field trip on Jan. 17, 2026, to Texas Veterans Hall of Fame Museum, Denton.

**Membership**—Marian Carroll introduced new member Dawn Terrizzi, and guests Alan Ruben and Robert Cruitt (on Zoom).

**Secretary**—Bob Lane reported that minutes for the November 13, 2025 meeting were published in the newsletter. Corrections were given that five members attended by Zoom and 20 members were present at Emily Fowler Library on November 13, 2025. If there are no other corrections, the minutes are approved as published.

**Treasurer**—Linda Lane reported that the financial report was published in the newsletter and will be filed for audit. The balance in the bank was \$3,486.59 on November 13, 2025.

**Social/Hospitality**—Eileen thanked Joan Anderson for bringing and preparing treats and for all who helped with set up.

**Librarian**—Laura Douglas discussed the scheduled events/presentations in Emily Fowler Library. Connections Genealogy Discussion group will meet January 23.

**Newsletter**—Congrats to editor Nancy Gilbride Casey for the 3-peat, winning 1<sup>st</sup> place in the Texas State Genealogical Society Writing Awards in the Partner Society Publications category-newsletter. DCGS will receive \$100 from TxSGS.

President O’Neill discussed the need for a volunteer to handle the newsletter publication. Please contact her or Nancy if you have questions or wish to volunteer.

## New Business

- Beth Leggieri discussed Roots Writer meetings and its importance to DCGS.
- Bob Lane moved for approval to purchase a book in

honor of Patti Gillespie for her contributions to DCGS at various meeting programs over the past few years. The book will be donated to the library’s Special Collections. Amount proposed \$50. Motion approved unanimously.

- Reminder to all, there is scholarship funding available for any genealogy course you may wish to attend.

## Announcements

- Next DCGS meeting is Thursday, Feb. 12, 2026 here at the Emily Fowler Library, beginning with social time at 6:30 p.m., then a short business meeting at 7:00 p.m., followed by the program.
- Over the next couple of months, President O’Neill will be setting up a Nominating Committee. Please consider volunteering.
- The Texas Czech Genealogical Society sent us a notice of an event. The flyer is at the back of the room.
- Stacie Briggs reported on Family History Library events, including Family History Discovery Day on Jan. 31, 2026. Volunteers are needed to help man a table for DCGS.

**Program**—Stacie introduced the program for this evening. The presenter is Tony Hanson. He discussed various software programs available for genealogical research, including advantages and limitations of each.

**President’s Last Word**—Paraphrased from Twisted Twigs on Gnarled Branches Facebook post: “I have a foolproof genealogy backup plan: I’m giving a copy of my research to Keith Richards to hand to my great-great-grandchildren.” This works just as well with Mick Jagger’s name.

Please help put up the tables and chairs.

President O’Neill adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

—Respectfully Submitted by Robert Lane, Secretary



Seven Roots Writers attended the January meeting and shared their 2026 goals followed by supportive feedback and wide-ranging discussion. Nancy Gilbride Casey offered suggestions for writing about yourself, based on a Legacy Family Tree Genealogist blog post, [“How and Why to Document Personal Stories for Future Generations: Be a Good Ancestor!”](#)

Roots Writers’ February gathering will include:

- ◆ Discussion of Tony Hanson’s DCGS January program on selecting genealogy software. Sandra Robertson will demonstrate how she utilizes Family Tree Maker 2024 in her research program, and how she supports her writing goals with it.
- ◆ A personal writing challenge for the March meeting.

Roots Writers are setting their intentions to write with some having established specific days and times on their weekly calendars. RW reminds DCGS members that even J.R.R. Tolkien struggled to adhere to his established writing schedule amid daily intrusions!

Roots Writers meets 11 a.m.—12 p.m. on the 3rd Wednesday of the month in the Emily Fowler 1st floor meeting room. **Spring dates are: Feb. 18, March 18, April 15, and May 20.**

## HANSON PRESENTED GENEALOGY SERVICES PROS, CONS, AND CONSIDERATIONS

*By Kathy Lawrence*

January’s program, “Choosing Genealogy Services & Software,” by Tony Hanson, presented attendees with a wealth of details! The three categories Hanson covered were family tree software and services, online genealogical services, and DNA testing/services.

There are numerous considerations when selecting which service(s) to use. Among them are: the cost, including any additional charges for extra services (ex. Ancestry’s ProTools); limitations on family tree size (ex. the free tree on MyHeritage has a limit of 250 members); the user interface; how well the service integrates with your devices (mobile phones, tablets, PCs, and Macs); how accurate the records sourcing is; whether the service provides hints; the number of users and profiles; the ability to run reports and the types of reports; and whether GEDCOM data can be uploaded/downloaded.

DNA testing varies between companies, with some limited to autosomal while others also test mitochondrial and Y-DNA. Although several are genealogy-focused and may include family tree-related services, others concentrate on health and genetic predictive data. Advanced DNA services such as [DNA Painter](#) provide more tools for analysis that can be utilized to determine the relationship between matches, for example.

Tony’s presentation was well received and provided valuable information!

### *DCGS Member Field Trip*



*Due to a conflict with the April date, a new date will be announced soon.*

# SCHOLARSHIP TOOK ME TO NORTH CAROLINA— VIRTUALLY!



By Kathy Lawrence

After having spent decades researching my family in other states, I recently shifted my focus to North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland. I was thrilled to receive the **Diana Pearson**

**White Continuing Genealogical Education Scholarship** in October to attend the North Carolina Genealogical Society 2025 Conference virtually. Thank you again to the committee for the scholarship!

The conference offered so many fabulous lectures to choose from, many specific to North Carolina. Court records have been an important part of my research everywhere, and since court systems varied between states and time periods, the “Finding and Understanding North Carolina Court Records” lecture was essential for me. Other lectures I watched included “North Carolina Research Strategies: A Blueprint for

Discovery” (fabulous overview of the geography and history of the state), “From Colony to Cradle: NC State of Geographic Contrasts,” “Founding Footsteps: Family Migrations That Shaped North Carolina,” “Viewing a Whole Community in Early North Carolina,” and “Quaker Genealogy.” I also found the “Tracing the Enslaved in Newspapers” as well as the “Tracing Enslaved Families, Using Court and Estate Records” lectures very interesting. A bonus lecture, “Someone to Watch Over Me: Guardianship Records,” was added to the recordings.

The lecture handouts are already proving extremely helpful!

For those of you who had ancestors in North Carolina, I am sharing a link that will provide you with a list of the county records available at the North Carolina State Archives: [Guide to Research Materials in the North Carolina State Archives: County Records](#).

The conference benefitted me in so many ways. Please consider applying for the scholarship this year!



<b>TREASURER’S REPORT</b>		
<b>Report for Month of December 2025</b>		
<b>Balance—Dec. 1, 2025</b>		<b>\$3,486.59</b>
No Deposits	\$0.00	
<b>Total Deposits</b>		<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>Disbursements</b>		
No Disbursements	\$0.00	
<b>Total Disbursements</b>		<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>Balance Nov. 30, 2025</b>		<b>\$3,486.59</b>

—Respectfully submitted,  
Linda Lane, Treasurer

**to our newest DCGS members!**

- ◆ **Dawn Terrizzi** is DPL’s newest Special Collections librarian. Dawn is researching the surnames Vitko (Witko), Szpet (Speck), Pantano, Distefano, and Caspar.
- ◆ **Robert Cruitt** will be Zooming meetings from Abilene. He’s researching the surnames Grimes, Collinsworth, Cruitt, Whitlock, White, Ensminger, and Yopp.

## ANCESTOR QUESTION(S) OF THE MONTH

We have two questions for February:

- ◆ First, in honor of Black History Month, we asked, “Has your family history intersected with Black history, and if so, how?”
- ◆ Or, “Write about an ancestor with a 1776 connection for America250. The ancestor need not be a Patriot.”

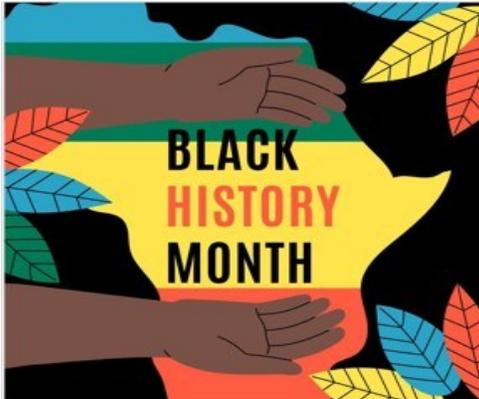


Image: Raupixel.com

“It was a shock to discover my husband’s ancestors enslaved two people, even though he has deep Southern roots and I expected it,” **Nancy Gilbride Casey** writes. “It was still gut-wrenching.”

“The two slaves—Jane, who was about 24, and her daughter, Celia—were sold as part of David Kite’s estate in 1859 for \$975. The estate administrator asked to sell the them because, ‘...said slave property cannot be equitably fairly and beneficially divided between said Heirs & distributees without a sale thereof...’

Knowing that Black lineages are notoriously difficult to trace, I used a process described by the Beyond Kin Project, to add Jane and Celia’s information to my Ancestry family tree under Kite’s branch. Hopefully their descendants might possibly find them someday and have a part of their story. For more info on the Beyond Kin project, click here: <https://beyondkin.org/a-method-to-document-enslaved-populations/> or Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1448445325226364>.”

**Mary Tate** writes, “When I finished my teacher certification in my home town in 1967, the only opening was in the segregated Black high school which contained grades 7-12. There were fewer than 500 students and only four teachers on the faculty were not Black.

This was the last year of segregation, and we entered the school year knowing the faculty and student body would be absorbed into the ‘white’ schools the following year—and hoping for a change in policy!

The year itself was a challenge. In the spring, Martin Luther King was assassinated; the school was closed for a time. Barbara Jordan, state legislator for Texas, gave the graduation address; all faculty were required to attend. Impressive!

The next year, the students were disbursed into three junior highs or two high schools in town. I went with about one third of my 7th and 8th graders into a junior high across town. I cannot recount the education I got from this one year!”

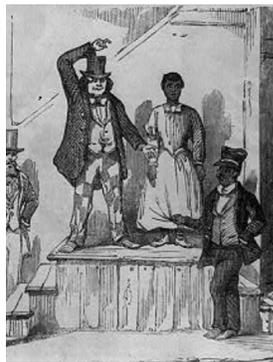


Image: Library of Congress

“My sisters and I knew my maternal grandmother’s family had been in the U.S. for a very long time, originally coming into Virginia before the Revolution and then following a typical migration pattern down through the Carolinas into Georgia and then into Florida,”

writes **Eileen O’Neill-Windsor**. “Land to farm was always a big draw. On a research trip to Georgia and Florida several years ago, we were afraid we wouldn’t like some of what we found,

and we were correct. Very typically, a number of our relatives were slave owners. We found wills that passed enslaved individuals to their own children or directed their enslaved ‘property’ to be sold and the proceeds divided by their heirs. We knew it was a good possibility, but to see it written down was a blow. Our ancestors were linked to a dreadful aspect of Black history; Black history is American history.”

**Beth Leggieri** writes, “Visiting the birthplace of Dr. Carter Woodson (1875-1950), the father of Black History, in 2024, added powerful contextual layers and cultural history to my research.

Woodson was born to recently emancipated parents on the James River southern shore in New Canton, Virginia. This important commercial inland port was also my ancestors’ home beginning in 1793. Woodson’s ancestor was a bateau oarsman on the James River at the same time my ancestor owned businesses dependent on river transportation, suggesting that our ancestors interacted at some level.

Woodson’s birthplace includes a slate monument sourced from the nearby mine once owned by my ancestor, whose enslaved labor force mined its riches for export. Today my ancestor is known only to a few descendants while Carter Woodson’s contributions are central to honoring and understanding American history.”



Image: Beth Leggieri

# AMERICA

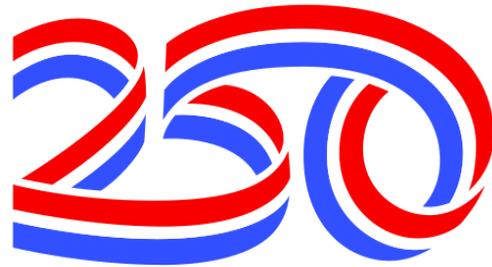


Image: Wikimedia Commons

**Donna Spears** shares, “My Patriot ancestor Philip Lorentz Houtz of Pennsylvania was the father of Christian, who migrated to southwestern Virginia. Christian’s daughter, Catherine, married John Myers (both born in Berks Co., Pennsylvania) and moved to Virginia where they raised their family.



Image: Raupixel.com

When 60 years old, John, a rich farmer, sold out to move to Indiana. On 29 Aug. 1833, John and Catherine Myers sold three tracts of land near Roanoke, Virg. for \$6,000. He built a box under the wagon seat and therein nailed tight the \$6,000 cash to buy land in Indiana. To say that Catherine, granddaughter of a Revolutionary War Patriot proven in DAR records, was probably very nervous the entire trip to Indiana is an understatement.

John and Catherine were my third great-grandparents and are buried in Ladoga, Montgomery County, Indiana. John died in 1841 and Catherine in 1850.”

**Sandra Robertson** writes, “Jacob Book (27 Dec. 1761—20 Sept. 1852) was my fourth great-grandfather. He was born in Germany and was part of the large German migration into America caused by the death and chaos created by the

Thirty Years' War, as well as a lack of economic opportunities. Some Germans also came at this time to avoid religious persecution.

Like many of these Germans he probably arrived in the port of Philadelphia which became the main port for German entry. He eventually moved into the western section of Pennsylvania. His farm was part of several county boundary changes; but when he died, the farm was in Lawrence County.

Jacob is buried in the Hermon-Union Cemetery in Princeton, Lawrence County, Pennsylvania. The cemetery was associated with the Hermon Presbyterian Church. In addition to Jacob and his wife Mary Moyne, many other early settlers are buried in this cemetery.”

**Stacie Briggs writes,** “One of my 1776 connections is Johann Christoffel Schacke, AKA John Christopher Shockey. He had three sons and at least one grandson fight in the Revolutionary war for America. He landed in Philadelphia on 10 September 1737 and took the Oath of Allegiance that day. The ship was the *Snow Molly* and John Howell was the master of the ship. Johann was born about 1715-1720 in the Palatinate area of Germany. His trip from Germany to America was long and hard. He first had to travel to Amsterdam, Holland, probably walking, where he boarded the ship with 95 other Germans. They traveled across the North Sea and landed on their only stop in Dover, England. Then they traveled on to Philadelphia which probably took several months. The conditions were not good and the sea was rough.”

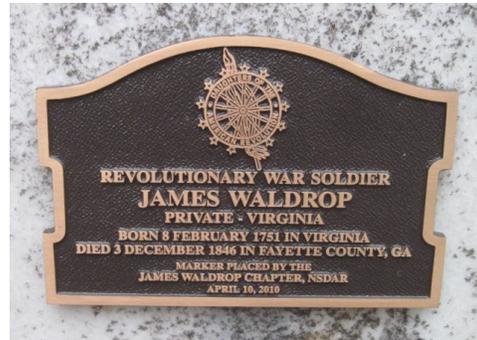


Image: SGT Ed Elstan, used with permission.

“James Waldrop, **Kathy Lawrence’s** 4th great-grandfather, enlisted as a private in the 6th Virginia Regiment of the Continental Army at the age of 25, on 12 March 1776. The enlistment period was two years, with monthly pay of 6 and 2/3 dollars. James was born on 8 February 1751 in Lunenburg County, Virginia (later Halifax 1752, then Pittsylvania 1767).

The engagements involving the 6th Virginia Regiment included Trenton, Princeton, Brandywine, Germantown, and Valley Forge. The July 1777 muster roll, dated 5 August, records James as being in the hospital. Some of the rolls are heartbreaking to read, with dozens of men listed as dead. The National Park Service History site includes a publication which does a wonderful job explaining a number of engagements Private Waldrop experienced, through the use of maps, illustrations, photographs, and quotations. <https://npshistory.com/publications/vafo/they-passed-this-way-2002.pdf>

James Waldrop was discharged on 2 March 1778 at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. He eventually settled in Fayette County, Georgia, participating in the Georgia Land Lottery. James was granted a pension of \$8 per month beginning 23 February 1828. He died on 3 December 1846.”

***Stay tuned for more America250-themed questions in future issues!***

# LIBRARY PROGRAMMING, NEW BOOKS & MORE

## PROGRAMS THIS MONTH

### **Denton County's African American Schools**

Saturday, Feb. 21, 10 a.m.—Join local historian Robin Cole-Jett for a program exploring the history of Denton County's African American schools and communities, specifically highlighting the Lewisville and Hickory schools.

### **Connections: A Genealogy Discussion Group**

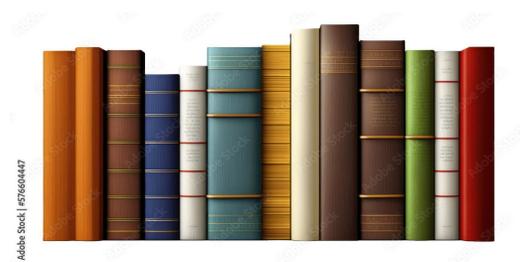


Friday, Feb. 27, 11 a.m.—Join us for a group that explores genealogical research through discussion of articles published in the TxSGS journal *Stirpes*. As a registrant, you will

receive the focus article and a list of questions to guide our conversation. This group is for anyone interested in learning more about genealogical research and the historical context of their family history. The focus article for February is “Researching the Slave Ancestry of my African American Cousins,” by Duane Helweg, published June 2018, pages 33-41. Registration opens 2/13; click this link to register: <https://denton.bibliocommons.com/events/693ca2eb1e64afd01e4ec8c5>

### **New Books**

- ◇ *That Splendid Little War: A Comprehensive Guide to Spanish-American War Research: Including the Boxer Rebellion and the Philippine Insurrection* by Michael L. Strauss
- ◇ *Mayflower Day by Day* by W. Becket Soule
- ◇ *Fire in the Piney Woods: Texas Lookout Towers, the Forest Service, and the Civilian Conservation Corps* by Edward Cavallerano

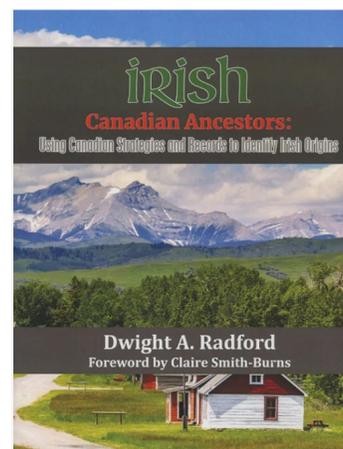


- ◇ *The 56th Evac Hospital: Letters of a WWII Army Doctor* by Lawrence D. Collins
- ◇ *Voices of Camptown: Untold Stories from a Freedom Colony Cemetery* by Charles Swenson

### **On the Library Blog**

“The new year is looking bright for local family historians with Irish Canadian roots! Full of resources to identify your ancestor’s origins, Dwight A. Radford’s new book ***Irish Canadian Ancestors: Using Canadian Strategies and Records to Identify Irish Origins*** (2025) has just hit the Denton Public Library’s Special Collections shelves. It may be the boon to researchers who have previously thrown up their hands in frustration at seeking these Irish roots.”

Continue reading the post by clicking [here](#).



## ***ABOUT THE SOCIETY***

Founded in 1979, the ***Denton County Genealogical Society*** (DCGS) has been serving area genealogy researchers for 46 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 \$25 (individual) and \$35 (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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