

THE JOURNAL OF THE TEXAS STATE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY INC.

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TECHNOLOGY

for Genealogy



VIRTUAL

Roots and Branches: Climbing Your Family Tree

10-11 November 2023

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Why Name our Journal Stirpes?

Pronounced "STÛR'PEZ," it perfectly describes the core understanding of our passion in researching ancestry and family history: The phrase "... to my heirs, per stirpes" means that the legal heirs share their inheritance based on their relationship to the deceased. (See full story in *Stirpes*, 2016, Volume 55, Number 3-4)

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From the

Editors' Pen



We're living in the golden age of genealogy. More records are being digitized every day, technology is rapidly making even handwritten documents in foreign languages accessible, and new tools are being developed to assist us with our genealogy research and analysis. All these developments are making ancestral records more and more accessible to family historians of all ages, with less travel and expense.

September's focus is on technology for genealogy – those software programs, apps, websites, and devices that aid research and analysis. Articles in this issue discuss just a few of the myriad tech tools available, ranging from basic to more advanced.

A quick review of online searching methods is useful for introducing and refreshing search skills, as shown by Susan E. Ball in "Basic Search Techniques." Melody Hooper Woods demonstrates how to stretch your DNA dollar in "How to Download and Upload Raw DNA Data Files." "HeritageHub: A New Resource for Finding Obits and More," by Emily Coffman Richardson, introduces us to a relatively new resource from NewsBank that can be exceptionally helpful for genealogists.

Nancy Gilbride Casey discusses the many ways Facebook can be used in genealogy research in "16,000+ Friends: Using Facebook for Genealogy." For genealogists,

Facebook is much, much more than chatting with cousins. Tony Hanson's "Using Your Smartphone When a Scanner is Not Available" reminds us that we carry a good scanner in our purses and pockets and shows us how to utilize it. In "Embracing Technology: Preferred Tech Tools and a Wish List for the Future," Susan E. Ball reports on replies to *Stirpes'* tech tools survey. TxSGS family historians are clearly on the cutting edge of genealogy tech – read the responses to learn recommendations for useful digital solutions and more.

"Create Your Own Genealogy Website Using TNG: The Next Generation of Genealogy Sitebuilding" by Melody Hooper Woods shows how TNG can be used to provide access to your family tree and genealogy research without the strings attached by big online genealogy companies. Susan E. Ball delves into artificial intelligence (AI) in the form of chatbots such as ChatGPT in "ChatGPT: The Genealogist's Virtual Assistant." AI is rapidly changing the technology landscape, and Susan provides a few examples of how a genealogist might incorporate it in their research to save time and effort.

Bill Buckner's book review takes a look at Drew Smith's newest release, *Generation by Generation: a Modern Approach to the Basics of Genealogy*. With the meager information gleaned

from a Certificate of Citizenship, Russell A. Rahn follows an immigrant as he moves across the U.S. in "From Coast to Coast."

The Partner Society Roundup features fall genealogy events hosted by TxSGS's Partner Societies. Be sure to investigate those societies in your area and events of interest to you. Do you have early Texas ancestors? Check out the latest Heritage Certificate recipients – someone may have proved your ancestor's early Texas connection.

Join us virtually November 10-11 at the 2023 TxSGS Family History Conference, "Roots and Branches: Climbing Your Family Tree." Read about speakers and topics in this issue, watch our website for updates, and plan now to attend!

TxSGS conducted TIGR in June to rave reviews. Read the wrap up and see "Volunteer Spotlight" for those critical supporters who made TIGR a resounding success.

Our next issue focuses on "Curating Your Family Archive." Do you have a tried-and-true technique for preserving, protecting, and sharing your family history research and treasures? We would love to hear your tips and techniques for controlling the chaos! Send them to stirpes@txsgs.org. ★

–*Stirpes* Editors

Volunteer Spotlight

The TIGR Tech Team

TxSGS applauds the TIGR 2023 Tech Team, whose efforts as Zoom Hosts and more made TIGR enjoyable for attendees in all seven courses.

Tony Hanson set up each of the TIGR zoom rooms required to run seven courses in parallel plus a large gathering space for combined classes, evening sessions, and lunch gatherings. In addition, he created documentation for each Zoom Host that delineated what actions were to be taken and what time they should occur.

Sandra J. Crowley worked with each Zoom Host one-on-one to ensure they could run the zoom sessions for their course and manage most any technical issue thrown their way.

Zoom Hosts **Lori Thornton, Susan E. Ball, Suzan Younger, Mitch Clendening, Emily Coffman Richardson, Angie Shumway, and Nancy Gilbride Casey** kept their courses running smoothly throughout the day. They were called upon to troubleshoot students' tech issues, manage polls and breakout rooms for the coordinators and instructors, and monitor the attendees' microphones to keep distracting noise to a minimum.

TIGR Café, the lunch gathering spot for all attendees, was managed by **Betsy Mills** and **Paula Perkins**. This Zoom Host duo kept the lunch crowd engaged with interesting questions and probing discussions.

Todd DeDecker stepped in on Monday to assist with combined classes during the day. **Barbara Coakley** subbed as needed as Zoom host and more.

Even though the number of TIGR courses almost doubled from 2021 to 2023, the week ran very smoothly thanks to the efforts of Tony, Sandra, and the Tech Team. As one person succinctly summarized the overall feeling, "The organization, tech support, and instruction [were] top notch!"

Thank you all from TxSGS and TIGR 2023!



Tony Hanson



Sandra J. Crowley



Lori Thornton



Susan E. Ball



Suzan Younger



Mitch Clendening



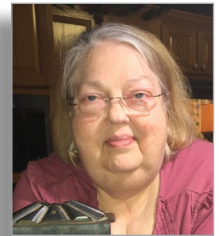
Emily Coffman Richardson



Angie Shumway



Nancy Gilbride Casey



Betsy Mills



Paula Perkins



Todd DeDecker



Barbara Coakley

Using Your Smartphone When a Scanner is Not Available

by Tony Hanson

By far, the best way to capture high-quality digital images is with a flatbed scanner. In addition to having optimal lighting, the document will be stable, flat, and perpendicular to the scanning head. Plus, you will have full control over the scanning resolution and be able to save the image in a wide range of file formats.

Scanners, though, have one major drawback – they are not very portable. Genealogists frequently encounter documents that have information of great importance to their research in locations where no scanner is available. Fortunately, most of us have in our pockets or purses a substitute for a scanner – a smartphone. The cameras in most of today’s smartphones take relatively good digital images, suitable for capturing a document image when no better options are available.

Before getting caught in the wilds of genealogical research without a scanner, it’s helpful to understand how to use the camera in your smartphone to create those high-quality digital images of documents and photographs you want to add to your family history. In addition, you’ll need to know how to compensate for environments typically encountered by genealogists. With a little advance preparation and a few tips on how to capture the best possible smartphone scan, you’ll be able to scan on the fly.

Background Information

Before we get into the nuts and bolts of photographing documents, let’s discuss some of the basics of digital photography and the terms

you’ll see applied to the images you capture.

What is a digital image? It is a binary (consisting of 1s and 0s) representation of a two-dimensional object. It consists of many **Picture Elements**, which are interchangeably referred to as “**pixels**” or simply “**dots**.”

- Each pixel represents the color at a single point on the image being digitized.
- Pixels are arranged in rows and columns.

Digitizing devices such as the camera in your smartphone capture a document as specific points and save information about each of those pixel points. In general, the more pixel points an image has, the better the image will be. Imagine a photograph from which you’ve captured 100 little dots. If you printed just those 100 dots, you wouldn’t recognize the photo. But, if you captured 90,000 dots for each square inch of that photograph, those dots would reproduce the photo to a high degree of accuracy.

The cameras in smartphones have a fixed arrangement of pixels. The number and arrangement of pixels varies by model. For example, the camera in an iPhone 12 Pro creates



images in a 3,024 by 4,032-pixel format. This is referred to as a 12-megapixel camera because each image is made up of 12,192,768 pixels (3,024 x 4,032).

Digital File Formats

Once a digital image has been created, it needs to be saved so it can be accessed later. There are many different image file formats in existence, but we will focus on those you are likely to encounter and use. See the sidebar on page 11 for file format details.

Image Resolution

Resolution is defined as the number of pixels per unit area. On a scanner, you specify the resolution before you scan the document. Determining the true resolution (pixels per inch) of a digital image created with a camera is a little more difficult. The answer will depend on three factors:

- the size of the document being photographed
- the number of pixels available in the camera
- the number of pixels that digitize the document (instead of the background)

How to Download and Upload Raw DNA Data Files

by Melody Hooper Woods



DNA has become a critical tool for genealogical research. Solving difficult genealogy challenges using DNA means taking advantage of every opportunity to find the match or matches that will help solve the brick wall problem. However, DNA tests can be expensive, especially if you purchase tests for family members.

What if you want to submit a DNA test for the same person to several different companies? Do you have to buy a test from each company for every person you want to test?

Here's the good news – you can download DNA test results from one company and upload them to another company for little or no extra cost. That one little DNA testing hack can save a lot of money! Read on to learn why you would want to have your DNA at more than one DNA company and how to download your DNA data from one company and upload it to another.

There are five major autosomal DNA testing companies: AncestryDNA®, 23andMe, FamilyTreeDNA, MyHeritage, and Living DNA. Each DNA testing company maintains a database of their testers' DNA data and genetic cousin match lists. They do not share their testers' data or match lists with each other. For example, if you test your DNA with 23andMe, you will only see a list of matches who have tested with 23andMe.

Each testing company also offers different genetic analysis tools such as chromosome browsers, MyHeritage's

Theory of Family Relativity™, and AncestryDNA's ThruLines®. Uploading your data to different companies gives you access to more matches and more tools to trace your elusive ancestors.

Raw DNA data files contain the

genetic information that the testing companies use to estimate your ethnicity, predict your traits, and match you with your genetic relatives.¹ They are downloadable from the testing companies' websites in text, CSV, or zip formats.

```
#AncestryDNA raw data download
#This file was generated by AncestryDNA at: 05/30/2021 03:45:52 UTC
#Data was collected using AncestryDNA array version: V2.0
#Data is formatted using AncestryDNA converter version: V1.0
#Below is a text version of your DNA file from Ancestry.com DNA, LLC. THIS
#INFORMATION IS FOR YOUR PERSONAL USE AND IS INTENDED FOR GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH
#ONLY. IT IS NOT INTENDED FOR MEDICAL, DIAGNOSTIC, OR HEALTH PURPOSES. THE EXPORTED DATA IS
#SUBJECT TO THE ANCESTRY TERMS AND CONDITIONS, BUT PLEASE BE AWARE THAT THE
#DOWNLOADED DATA WILL NO LONGER BE PROTECTED BY OUR SECURITY MEASURES.
#WHEN YOU DOWNLOAD YOUR RAW DNA DATA, YOU ASSUME ALL RISK OF STORING,
#SECURING AND PROTECTING YOUR DATA. FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE ANCESTRYDNA FAQS.
#
#Genetic data is provided below as five TAB delimited columns. Each line
#corresponds to a SNP. Column one provides the SNP identifier (rsID where
#possible). Columns two and three contain the chromosome and basepair position
#of the SNP using human reference build 37.1 coordinates. Columns four and five
#contain the two alleles observed at this SNP (genotype). The genotype is reported
#on the forward (+) strand with respect to the human reference.
rsid      chromosome    position      allele1 allele2
rs3131972 1             752721      A       G
rs114525117 1           759036      G       G
rs4040617 1            779322      A       G
rs141175086 1           780397      C       C
rs115093905 1           787173      G       G
rs11240777 1           798959      G       G
rs6681049 1            800007      C       C
rs4422948 1            835499      A       A
rs57494724 1            837192      A       A
rs4475691 1            846808      C       C
rs6657440 1            850780      T       C
rs4970461 1            852964      T       G
rs7537756 1            854250      A       A
rs13302982 1            861808      G       G
rs2880024 1            866893      T       C
rs74047407 1            866938      G       G
rs1110052 1            873558      T       T
rs7523549 1            879317      T       C
rs2272756 1            882033      G       G
rs3748597 1            888659      C       C
```

Figure 1: AncestryDNA raw data file text example used with permission of the author.

BOOK REVIEW by William D. "Bill" Buckner**Generation by Generation: A Modern Approach to the Basics of Genealogy**

by Drew Smith (Genealogical Publishing Company, 2023): 178 pages, illustrated, indexed. Available in print and as an e-book from www.genealogical.com and other book sellers.

My first thought when reviewing Drew Smith's new genealogy beginner's guide, *Generation by Generation: a Modern Approach to the Basics of Genealogy*, was, "Is there need or room for yet another guide for beginners?" In this case, the answer is "Yes!"

Smith describes the traditional beginner's guide as one that discusses home-based sources, then jumps into every type of genealogical record a beginner might come across – even when the record is not relevant to their research at the time.

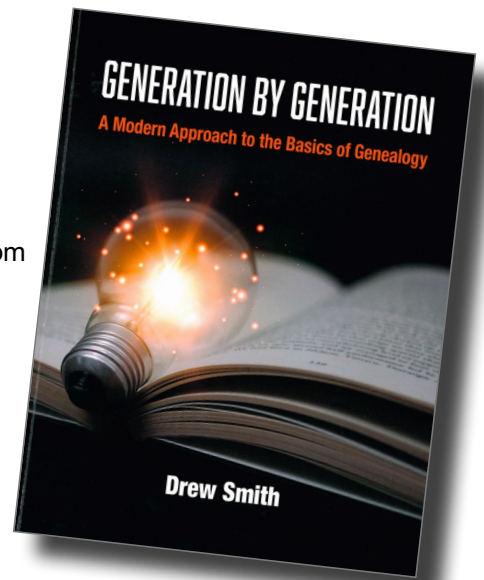
Smith's non-traditional concept is to organize the book in the same way that genealogical research should be done: starting with oneself, then one's living family and relatives, and moving backwards in time "generation by generation." Smith takes this idea a step further by introducing records useful for each major period. Beginners discover new record types as needed for each generation. The idea and execution are spot on.

The book is divided into two parts. Part I, "For All Generations - Preparing to Research," discusses relationships between family members, naming practices, the Genealogical Proof Standard (GPS), genealogy software, the basics of DNA testing, and more. He discusses resources to help the beginner locate and evaluate previous research before accepting it into their own

research. I was happy to see this issue addressed. He discusses the big four online genealogical databases (FamilySearch, Ancestry, MyHeritage, and Findmypast) and includes how to find record sets and search a collection.

Part II, "Generation by Generation: Doing the Research," includes five chapters focused on different time periods moving backwards chronologically: after 1950, 1880 to 1950, 1850 to 1880, 1776 to 1850, and British America before 1776. In each, he introduces readers to the important strategies and record sets for each period. For example, in "1950 to present" Smith discusses how to conduct a home search, newspapers, vital records, cemetery records, yearbooks, city directories, and telephone books. In subsequent chapters he covers other record types helpful to the period such as census, military, immigration, naturalization, slave records, church records, etc. While Smith focuses on United States records, he also devotes one chapter to research outside of the U.S. and briefly covers records in other languages.

Smith tells the reader what to expect. He shares how he researches, such as how he organizes files and websites. He gives advice, provides screen shots, and offers suggestions – all in conversational, easy-to-understand language. He uses analogies and examples from



his own family research to help the beginner observe how the ideas, concepts, and information presented translate into concrete results. Here, beginning genealogists will find a solid foundation of skills to correctly start their research.

As the co-host of the *Genealogy Guys Podcast*, a genealogy librarian at the University of South Florida Libraries, co-founder/administrator of The Genealogy Squad Facebook Group, a regular *APG Quarterly* columnist, educator, and lecturer, Smith's depth of knowledge and experience in researching and teaching shows on every page of the book.

Generation by Generation: a Modern Approach to the Basics of Genealogy will help beginning genealogists get started and be successful in research, organization, and record evaluation. Its fresh approach to presenting record sets associated with various periods is helpful, as are Smith's candid advice, suggestions, and personal examples. It's a fine guide which will serve the genealogy community well for years to come. ★

Basic Search Techniques

by Susan E. Ball

Does it seem like your searches on online databases such as Ancestry, FamilySearch, MyHeritage, or others are missing the mark? The search engines at genealogy websites are constantly upgrading, so it helps to occasionally review fundamental search methods to improve your search results and maximize your genealogy research time. Throughout this article, I'll be using FamilySearch in my examples. Similar techniques can be applied to other genealogy websites.

Database Background

The records at online genealogy sites are stored in databases. Typically, each record collection is contained within its own database. On FamilySearch and Ancestry, for example, each U.S. census is an individual database. You can search each individual database separately, search a group of databases by region, or search the whole site at once. Your search approach will depend on factors such as how common your ancestor's name is and how much you know about your ancestor.

Think of each database as a book and the genealogy site as a library. If you asked the library for a listing of every page in every book in which your ancestor's name appeared, you would have a very long list to wade through. Alternatively, you could focus your search on just those books with those areas and dates that apply to your ancestor. You would receive fewer results that would more likely apply to your ancestor.

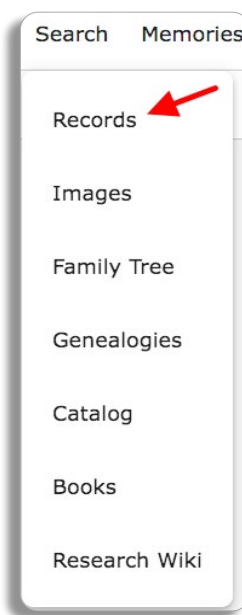


Figure 1: Click on "Records" to search FamilySearch's genealogy records.

In this library example, both approaches have their benefits. The targeted search doesn't overwhelm you with results. The wider library or site-wide search might catch that one record that you can't find in a focused search. Read on to discover how to make both approaches work for you.

Site-Wide Searching

Almost all genealogy websites, free or fee-based, have some form of a site-wide search on their main page. The site-wide search is like the whole-library search in the example above. For best results, most advanced genealogists recommend searching individual databases instead of using the site-wide search. However, the large genealogy sites add new databases so rapidly that an occasional site-wide search is useful just to see if your ancestor's name pops up in a new collection you didn't know about.

Access the site-wide search interface by clicking on "Search" in FamilySearch's menu bar. In the drop-down menu, select "Records," indicated by the red arrow in figure 1, to view FamilySearch's main records search page. The main records search page is labeled "Search for Historical Records." On this page, FamilySearch provides three search options: a site-wide search, a search by place, and a search by collection. Underneath the title, "Search for Historical Records," on FamilySearch's main search page, you'll see "Tips for Effective Searching." I recommend that you bookmark or download this document – it's an excellent discussion of search

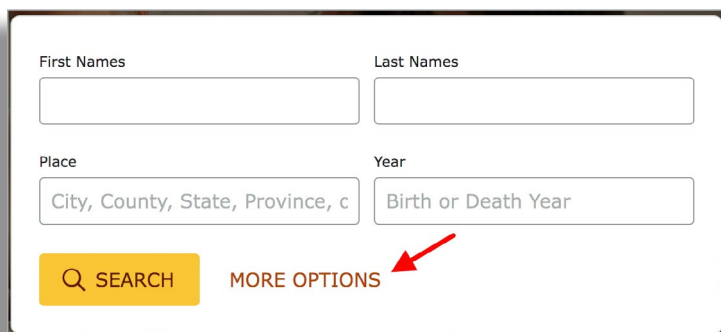


Figure 2: FamilySearch's site-wide search on the home page.

Create Your Own Genealogy Website Using TNG: The Next Generation of Genealogy Sitebuilding

by Melody Hooper Woods

Have you ever wanted to build a family history website for yourself or for a genealogical organization? TNG: The Next Generation of Genealogy Sitebuilding allows you to easily create a genealogy website whatever your skill level might be with technology.

Who uses TNG?

- Genealogists
- Surname projects
- Locality projects
- Historical societies
- Family associations
- Anyone wanting to display a historical or genealogical project.



TNG is web-based software that is installed on your website, not your computer, and runs in a web browser (Edge, Chrome, Safari, or Firefox). To use TNG, you need the TNG software, a hosting provider, and your family tree data.¹ Your hosting provider must support PHP (a server-side scripting language, version 7.0 or higher required) and MySQL (a database, version 5.7 or higher recommended). TNG uses PHP and a database to create your pages on demand instead of creating static HTML pages.²

If your eyes glazed over at the acronyms HTML, PHP, and MySQL, never fear. TNG software developer Darrin Lythgoe has partnered with a website hosting provider, Simply Hosting, so that even the most technologically challenged among us can manage and display a genealogy

website. Simply Hosting gives TNG users who buy a new TNG license 50 percent off their first order of hosting services and will install TNG at no extra charge. You do not need a working knowledge of PHP, MySQL, or website design because TNG has a robust support network for its users.

Since I have no knowledge of website design, I took advantage of Simply Hosting's offer for new TNG users. I was impressed with how easy TNG and Simply Hosting made the entire process of getting my website, *Our Ancestral Stories* (geneastories.com), up and running. I purchased the TNG software and the

TNG template 21, home page for the family site *Our Ancestral Stories* at geneastories.com.

HeritageHub: A New Resource for Finding Obits and More

by Emily Coffman Richardson

Obituaries are an important component in genealogy research. They can provide proof of relationship, context for the deceased person’s life, clues to records, family legends, and more. To locate an obituary, though, we’re often searching several sites to find that one newspaper that carried the obit. Wouldn’t it be nice to have one free resource that was focused on locating obituaries and death records?

NewsBank created HeritageHub to fill this need. HeritageHub offers a collection of obituaries and death notices specifically for genealogical research. Manually indexed obituaries enhance search accuracy for deeper family connections.

Regardless of your location in the U.S., contact your local library to see if they can offer access to this collection. With support from your library, finding a critical obituary could be as easy as entering your library ID to gain access to this resource, either at home or at the library.

Searching With a Known Name and Date of Death

The search interface of HeritageHub’s home page, shown in figure 1, has options for basic information regarding the person you are researching: last name, first name, middle name, year, and keyword. The only required term is last name; adding other terms will narrow the results.

Searching is performed by HeritageHub on newspapers that are active in the NewsBank system. As the majority of their newspapers were published in the past 100 years,

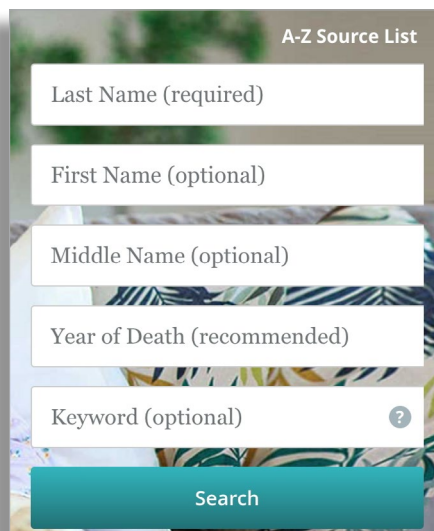


Figure 1: HeritageHub search interface.

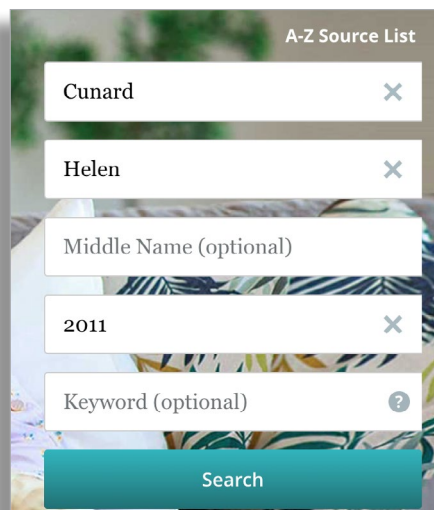


Figure 2: Search for Helen Cunard who died in 2011.

searching for deaths and obituaries after the 1920s produces excellent results. However, HeritageHub even has some obituaries dating back to the 1850s.

The first example is a search for Helen (Morrow) Cunard, shown in figure 2, who died in 2011 in Iowa. Whenever you search newspapers, always begin with a broad search on the name along with the year of death. If you are searching for a woman, consider what her name was when she died. Use a proper name first, but don’t hesitate to search again using a nickname in the search terms. Also, remember that a woman might be known by her husband’s name as, for example, “Mrs. Charles Cunard.”

In this case, two results are found (see figure 3). One is an obituary and the second is the Social Security Death Index record, both providing information on the correct individual. The obituary listing provides the date the obituary was published and the newspaper in which it was found, vital information found in the obituary, as well as people mentioned in the obituary and their relationships. Without opening the obit, I can see at a glance that Helen’s father was Jesse and her mother was

16,000+ Friends: Using Facebook for Genealogy

by Nancy Gilbride Casey

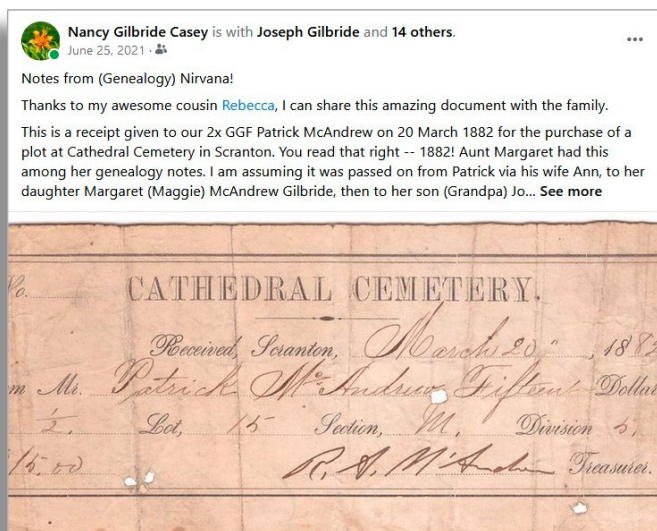
What if I told you there were over 16,000 friends just waiting to help you with your genealogy research? And they would do it for FREE! Sound too good to be true? I wouldn't pull your leg – it's true.

Where are all these friends? On [Facebook!](#)

You're not using Facebook for genealogy yet? You are missing out on one of the most easily accessible, free resources available to further your research. On Facebook, you might find assistance to document your family, learn information to provide context for their lives, share your stories with family and friends, find DNA cousins, and more. Plus, you can give back to the community by sharing your expertise, resources, and discoveries. Sounds like a win-win to me!

Many use Facebook to stay in touch with their friends or family, and I do that, too. I see their vacation photos, the funny memes they post, their birthday and anniversary wishes, and their memories from past years. But these days, my Facebook activity feed is more likely to be filled with genealogy-related posts. How? I have "liked" or "followed" several of the more than 16,000+ genealogy-related Facebook pages.

Facebook's genealogy resources fall into two categories: pages and groups. **Pages** are created by genealogy organizations such as [Denton County Genealogical Society](#), [Clayton Library Friends](#), or the [Texas Czech](#)



Facebook was the best place to immediately share a wonderful artifact with my family.

As I was reviewing my Facebook posts for this article, I reread my June 2021 cemetery receipt post. Suddenly, its March 1882 date rang a bell. Quickly reviewing the information I had on Patrick's daughter Barbara, I discovered that Patrick must have purchased this 1/2 plot for her. Barbara died 19 March 1882; Patrick purchased the plot on 20 March 1882. Score another one for Facebook! It pays to review your old notes – or Facebook posts!

my experiences will spark some ideas for how you can use Facebook to your own genealogical advantage.

[Genealogical Society.](#)

On these pages societies, libraries, archives, and such share their events, activities, resources, and more with those who "like" their page.

Facebook **groups** are a collection of like-minded individuals focused on a particular topic or geographic region. Some groups are public – anyone can join, view, or post. Some are private – those wishing to join the group usually answer a few questions, agree to basic civility and posting rules, and are approved by group administrators.

Once you follow a page or join a group, their posts will begin to show up in your Facebook activity feed. You can also go directly to their page to view just their content. Instructions on how to create a Facebook account and like or follow pages are included later in this article.

There are myriad options for using Facebook as a genealogy resource. Here are ways that I've used Facebook pages and groups to further my own research. Maybe

Roots & Branches: Climbing Your Family Tree 2023 TxSGS Family History Conference



Join us for the 2023 TxSGS Family History Conference to explore resources and techniques for identifying the roots and branches that can help you scale your family tree.

TxSGS will host *TxSGS Live!* online on Friday and Saturday, November 10-11, featuring ten speakers with live Q&A.

That's not all! These lectures will be recorded, including the live question and answer sessions. Thirty-six additional pre-recorded lectures will offer some of your favorite speakers and well-known presenters from across Texas and the U.S. You will be able to access these lectures online for 90 days, from November 13, 2023, through February 10, 2024. (Learn more about our speakers and topics in the article on page 43.)

Are you ready to take your genealogy research to the next level? The 2023 TxSGS Family History Conference, *Roots & Branches: Climbing Your Family Tree*, seeks to help

you and hundreds of other attendees discover tools and resources to answer your genealogy questions. In addition to 46 live and recorded speakers, TxSGS will also offer select bonus sessions from some of our sponsors and exhibitors.

This year's Family History Conference promises opportunities for learning in a variety of areas, or tracks. Use the tracks to plan your conference experience. Go back and review 2023 Family History Conference webinars as often as you like during the replay period (November 13, 2023, through February 10, 2024).



DNA: Sessions will offer a variety of ways to analyze your DNA test results. Explore Y-DNA, mtDNA, and DNA clustering, plus discover how to identify that mystery DNA Match. Whether you're just getting your first test results or are using the latest tools to analyze results you've had for a while, there will be a session for you.



Ethnic: Texas is a diverse state, and each ethnic group presents unique research challenges. Learn how to discover more information about your African American, Hispanic, Irish, and German ancestry. Find an ancestor's slaveholder or delve into Freedmen's Savings Bank records; dive into Colonial localities, censuses under Spanish rule, and borderland genealogy; or mine the nuggets in German Genealogy's free mega website. There is something for everyone.



Methodology: Discover new records and ways to analyze the records you've already found. Examine ways to use the information unearthed in records to identify and solve problems. Explore methods for researching female or urban ancestors, separating men of the same name, and diving into 19th century travelogues. Investigate techniques for organizing, digging deeper, and writing as you research. Methodology offers advice on all this and more.



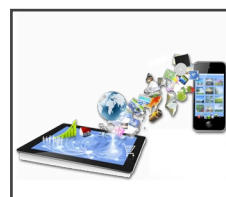
Military: Military records can be rich in personal details not available in other sources. From the Civil War through WWII, learn how to pursue ancestral service and veterans' records. Beyond the soldier, military records capture genealogically rich information on widows, heirs, and more. Discover the wealth of data available in collections such as pension files, bounty land applications, voter registrations, old soldier home lists, and more.



Records & Resources: Discover how records and repositories can hold the answers to your family history. Whether it's land deeds that mark your family's territorial journey, federal tax records hinting at their economic standing, religious documents revealing faith and community, or voting records offering a glimpse into their political leanings – these multifaceted sources are goldmines of genealogical information. A deep dive into records and repositories will provide you with the keys you need to *Climb Your Family Tree*.



Storytelling: Genealogists are, in a sense, sleuths. No detail is too small for investigation as we track down our elusive ancestors. We often get caught up in the search for records and data. In the midst of this consuming hunt, it's easy to lose sight of the story. Capture your ancestors' story by discovering the context of their lives. Learn how to apply social history in your writing, write interesting family stories, and self-publish the results.



Technology: Learn how to enhance your family history for future generations by taking advantage of technology. Discover how to use Steve Morse's 300-plus One-Step Tools' on immigration research, NY Ship Lists, Census Tools, and more. Learn how to use the free Google Earth web platform to follow the footsteps of your ancestors and tell their stories. Explore social media to open a new world of connections and genealogy research. Technology is constantly pushing the boundaries of family history research. Put technology to work for you!

See the TxSGS website at www.txsgs.org for more information, including topic descriptions, speaker bios, and more.

Registration for the 2023 TxSGS Family History Conference is open.

Connect with TxSGS and other genealogists
at the
2023 TxSGS Family History Conference!
Visit **Communities** in the Expo Hall
Learn more at www.txsgs.org



Join us in the Expo Hall to learn more about the following TxSGS programs and events:



Texas State Genealogical Society

Partners in Preservation with Individual and Family Genealogists and Historians

www.txsgs.org

TxSGS
Member Benefits

TxSGS focuses on the needs of members with a suite of benefits:

- TxSGS Blog** – timely blog posts on our website concerning the genealogical community (especially Texas).
- TxSGS eNews** – an electronic newsletter with valuable genealogical information & news, a round-up of all the TxSGS blog posts for the period, reminders of upcoming Partner Society events, and more. TxSGS eNews is free and available to any subscriber.
- TxSGS Website** – connect with local and regional genealogy sources on our website while we continue to expand our Texas genealogy resource list.
- TxSGS Facebook Page** – post your Texas research questions for help from knowledgeable Texas genealogists.
- Local and Regional Events Calendar** – TxSGS promotes special genealogical events produced by Partner Societies on the TxSGS online calendar and social media. Find educational and entertaining events near you at TxSGS.org.
- Digital subscription to Stirpes** – Published quarterly, the digital issue of *Stirpes* is available to all TxSGS members. *Stirpes* focuses on historical and genealogical articles of interest to any genealogist. A printed subscription is available to members for an additional \$15 per year.
- Member discount** on the registration fee for our annual TxSGS Family History Conference, the Texas Institute of Genealogical Research, and other events that may be offered from time to time.



TxSGS LIVE 2023

Friday and Saturday, November 10-11, 2023

**Boost Your Genealogy with Haplogroup
Insights from FTDNA's Time Tree**
Jim Brewster

**Problem-Solving Strategies for
US/Mexico Borderland Genealogy**
Henrietta Martinez Christmas

**Spies Among Us: Tracing WWI Era
Ancestors through FBI and American
Protective League Records**
Debra Dudek

**Using Google Earth Web to Tell Your
Family History Migration Stories**
Colleen Robledo Greene, MLIS

**Are you a Genealogy Spelunker or
Caver? Exploring the Deep Recesses
of the Family Tree**
Jean Wilcox Hibben, CG®



**Patching the Holes, and
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18th & 19th Century Federal
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Diane L. Richard

**In Their Own Words:
Genealogy in the Slave Narratives**
Renate Yarborough Sanders

**Finding Females: Still Haven't
Found that Maiden Name?**
Craig R. Scott, CG®



Visit our website to learn more. Registration is open!

www.TxSGS.org

ChatGPT: The Genealogist's Virtual Assistant

by Susan E. Ball

Haven't you dreamed of having an assistant, intern, or minion to help with the drudge work of genealogy? You could give your assistant a chore and work on the fun tasks of finding ancestors while your assistant is writing emails, summarizing documents, or extracting genealogical information from text.

Working with artificial intelligence (AI) systems, or chatbots, is much like working with an assistant. Chatbots such as ChatGPT, Claude, Bard, Bing, Perplexity, and Chatsonic are what's known as "large language models." They can perform language-based tasks, many of which are tedious or time consuming. But just like when you're working with an assistant, you need to clearly communicate your objectives and understand the AI system's limitations to get the best results.

At present, one of the better AI systems is ChatGPT,* short for "Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer." To explore the use of AI tools in genealogy, we'll use the basic, free version of ChatGPT in our discussion and examples.

What is ChatGPT?

ChatGPT is a computer program that has been trained on an enormous set of data containing vast amounts of text from books, articles, websites, and other sources. According to ChatGPT, "This extensive training allows it to understand the context of a given text and generate responses that are relevant and grammatically correct."

How does ChatGPT work? At its core, it is a conversational AI system that responds to prompts you provide. You can interact with ChatGPT by typing in questions, prompts, or messages, and it will generate responses in real time. The program predicts the most appropriate response based on the input it receives. This back-and-forth dialogue between ChatGPT and you is called a conversation.

What Can Basic ChatGPT Do?

Before going any further, it's important to note some of ChatGPT's more glaring limitations as applied to genealogy. While you can access ChatGPT on the internet, ChatGPT does not search the internet for answers because it isn't connected to the internet. The only information that the basic, free version of ChatGPT has available is the vast amount of text it was trained on and the information you provide in the prompt. It can't search genealogy databases for information about your family. Moreover, the body of text that ChatGPT uses as it crafts responses is not being updated. It



doesn't know anything that occurred after September 2021. ChatGPT's strength is language, not facts. It's not able to analyze data or synthesize facts into conclusions.

What ChatGPT can do is craft written responses to prompts, extract information from text in a user-specified format, summarize documents, translate from one language to another, and many other language-based tasks. For example, you can provide the text of an obituary or family history article and request ChatGPT to extract the names of the persons mentioned and their relationships. You can input the text of a document such as a deed or a will and ask ChatGPT to summarize the key points and list persons named in the document. You can provide text in a foreign language and ask for a translation. ChatGPT can also create biographies and profiles of individuals based on information you provide. Genealogists continue to discover new ways to use ChatGPT despite its constraints.

From Coast to Coast

by Russell A. Rahn

It is interesting to speculate on what folks were thinking when they decided to leave their native land and immigrate to the United States. Why did they leave their homeland? What was their destination? How would they make a living in their new home?

Clearly, one of the more important decisions was where these folks would settle down and live. Many times, this decision was influenced by other people. The immigrants may have planned to join family members who were already in the United States or perhaps their destination was an established church settlement to which they had ties. Advertisements in European newspapers or brochures touting the benefits of migration might also have enticed the immigrants to pack up and move.

Another approach to deciding where to live could be totally opposite, with the immigrant perhaps thinking, "I will go to America and see what happens when I get there." It seems such was the case with a late 19th century immigrant from England named Harry Hobson. Harry was born 2 February 1869 in Leicestershire, England.¹ In 1887, he immigrated to America.² From the evidence discovered, Harry appears to have been a man who thought for himself and made decisions he believed to be in his own best interests.

Harry chose the *SS Arizona* as his transportation to America.³ This British passenger liner was designed for speed, able to cross the Atlantic in less than eight days. Publicity for the ship touted its luxurious interiors.⁴ These features would

certainly imply a higher fare than that of a slower, less opulent ship. Apparently, 18-year-old Harry was a man of means.

Harry disembarked in New York City. His whereabouts are unknown for the first few years of his life in the U.S. By 1890, he was farming in Ewington Township, Jackson County, Minnesota, according to a newspaper notice in the *Western Advance*, Worthington, Nobles County, Minnesota, indicating he was selected as secretary of the Farmer's Alliance.⁵ According to a passport application Harry completed in 1903, he moved to Worthington in 1891.

By 1892, Harry had embarked on a lifetime career as a real estate agent and broker.⁶ On 5 March 1892, Harry married Minnie Virginia Dodge, a teacher in the local schools.^{7 8} Their marriage license is shown in figure 1.

A man of many talents, Harry was a composer at the World's Fair in 1893.⁹ Active in his adopted hometown of Worthington, he served in the volunteer fire department, as a deputy sheriff, as a justice of the peace, and in various positions in the Knights of Pythias.^{10 11 12}

Harry became an American citizen on 14 April 1897, ten years



Figure 1: Marriage license for Harry S. Hobson and Minnie V. Dodge dated 5 March 1892.

Embracing Technology: Preferred Tech Tools and a Wish List for the Future

by Susan E. Ball

*S*tirpes recently polled readers about tech and genealogy and discovered that Texas genealogists use technology in every aspect of their genealogy research. Almost all respondents said they use computer apps or software, smartphones, and scanners, while others use cameras, tablets, social media, and GPS. Tech intensive genealogists also use Excel spreadsheets, writing software such as Scrivener, and a personal hotspot for safe browsing when away from home.

Favorite Tech

Survey respondents were generous in their advice and found it hard to name just one tech favorite they'd recommend to a friend. Ramona Roller shared a laundry list of "must have" genealogy tech: "Laptop, Ancestry, hotspot, Find A Grave app with GPS, newspapers, Ancestry app for the photo scanner, Google Earth Pro to map out my ancestor's land, Facebook to monitor free webinars and the latest finds in genealogy, tablet for when I know that I'm going to have down time at kids' events (instead of knitting or playing on games on my cell), and a hotspot from my cell phone when I want to use my tablet or laptop outside of Wi-Fi."

"I am a big fan of the ability to sync my Family Tree Maker tree with my tree on Ancestry.com," reported Janet Minke. "FastStone Image Viewer is a very user-friendly photo editing tool that can be used to clean up and clear up old or damaged photos or hard-to-read digital documents," Karen Walker divulged. "The basic program is free to download." Karen included

another favorite: "Wikimedia often has public domain maps and photos that can be edited with specific information for your family. Follow the guidelines for use."

"I love the snipping tool on Microsoft to quickly grab an image or text," noted Debbie Pearson. "I can drop it into a document or save it as a JPG file."

See the sidebar for a list of more favorite tech tools from our survey participants.

Newly Discovered Tech

Asking about newly discovered tech struck a nerve with the survey participants. Responses showed that TxSGS genealogists are constantly seeking out new ways to improve their research and analyze the results.

Many genealogists are using cutting-edge software and hardware to enhance their research and productivity. Efficiency and organization were tops on Kyla Bayang's mind: "Notion organizes and saves all my research notes, links, webinar handouts, everything. It's my second brain



so I can 'remember' everything and quickly search those 'little stickies.' That helps me move toward reducing my papers and piles."

Dianne Holley followed the theme of efficiency and organization with her suggestion: "Zotero is user friendly, is a great research management tool, and, in certain circumstances, can generate citations. It allows me to create a 'reading stack,' make notes from what I read, save those notes, and mark the item in the stack as having been read and/or annotated."

Technology for digitizing a genealogy collection is on Karen Rasmussen's list: "1) Laptop; 2) smartphone; 3) scanners, including a flatbed that can also scan negatives and slides, and a book scanner; and 4) subscriptions to genealogy websites."

Another respondent shared the benefits of using the OneTab extension on their computer browser: "When I have many tabs open for research and need to leave the computer, I can save all the open tabs and open them back

22nd Annual Genealogy Lock In



October 20, 2023



Partner Society Roundup

Read these reports from around Texas to identify events and societies in your area.

TxSGS recommends that persons interested in society events check the society's website and Facebook page to make sure the event is still scheduled and whether it will be held in-person, virtually, or in the hybrid (in-person and virtual) format. Names of societies with webpages or Facebook pages are hyperlinked to those pages; otherwise, just search for the society on the TxSGS society webpage at txsgs.org/partner-societies/.

To find your society's district, check the Partner Society map on the TxSGS website at txsgs.org/about/district-map/. Click on your region to see your district

representative's name and contact information plus a list of genealogical resources in that district.

Is your Partner Society missing? Perhaps our contact information is out of date or your society's membership has lapsed. Please contact your district representative and memberinfo@txsgs.org to update your society's contact data and confirm your society's membership status.

Partner Societies are encouraged to investigate the many benefits and resources available from TxSGS at the Partner Society Resource page (txsgs.org/partner-society-resources/). Benefits include webinars to use for society programs, publicity support for society events, media downloads, preservation and access support, awards, and much more.

District A (Open)

Tony Hanson, Acting District Representative

Walter Wilhoit spoke on "The Faces of Margraten" at the May meeting of the [South Plains Genealogical Society](#) (SPGS). His presentation generated great interest, leading SPGS to participate in this project. At the September meeting, SPGS featured Anna Hoab from the National WASP WWII Museum in Sweetwater, Texas, speaking about the museum and researching the Women Airforce Service Pilots. SPGS meets the second Saturday of the month at 10:00 a.m. in the Community Room of the Mahon Library in Lubbock, Texas. The public is welcome to attend.

District B (Open)

Tony Hanson, Acting District Representative

The [North Texas Genealogical Association](#) (NTGA) promotes and preserves genealogical and historical data of Wichita Falls

and the surrounding area including Archer, Baylor, Clay, Hardeman, Jack, Montague, Wichita, Wilbarger, and Young Counties in Texas. The society meets at 7:00 p.m. on the first Thursday evening each month except July at St. Mark's United Methodist Church, 4319 McNiel Avenue, Wichita Falls. Meetings are hybrid via Zoom for those who wish to attend virtually.

In addition to the NTGA monthly newsletter emailed to membership, the society publishes a quarterly, *Trail Tracers*. Issues are posted in the archives page on the NTGS website where they can be viewed by anyone.

District C

Emily Richardson, District Representative

September's program for the [Denton County Genealogical Society](#) (DCGS) featured librarian Laura Douglas of Denton's Special Collections (Emily Fowler Central Library). She surveyed one of the best and most overlooked resources

for genealogical research in "The Public Library: A Treasure Trove for Genealogical Research." Members utilized the program syllabus and explored Special Collections after learning how and where the treasures may be discovered both locally and at research locales.

October's program by Emily Richardson, "Writing Your Family History: Learning to Assess and Compile Your Research," will provide direction to DCGS in recording ancestral studies' facts and conclusions for legacy preservation. Following November's lecture by John Versluis, Dean of the Texas Heritage Museum at Hill College, Hillsboro, Texas, DCGS members anticipate an end-of-the-month society field trip/private tour to this museum in Hillsboro.

[Genealogy Friends of Plano Libraries](#) (GFPL) holds hybrid meetings with the option of attending in person at WO Haggard Library or via Zoom on the third Saturday of each month except September and December. September's meeting was

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TELL US YOUR STORY

Make this the year you tell your family's story! Whether you're sharing information about ancestors you've recently discovered or tips other genealogists can use to help them in their research, TxSGS wants to know more!



Themes for 2023:

Q4 - Curating Your Personal Archive (Oct 15, 2023 deadline)

Themes for 2024:

Q1 - Expanding Genealogical Horizons (Learning) (Jan 15, 2024 deadline)

Q2 - Finding Females (Apr 15, 2024 deadline)

Q3 - Military (Jul 15, 2024 deadline)

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