

THE JOURNAL OF THE TEXAS STATE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY INC.

Stirpes



Final Footsteps: Our Ancestors' Journey



VIRTUAL

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Texas State Genealogical Society

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"Discovering Family Roots"

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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.)

From the

Editors' Pen



The death of an ancestor often leaves behind a paper trail—obituaries, death certificates, funeral cards, tombstone inscriptions, and more. Each record helps genealogists document that final footprint. Yet these essential sources can be elusive or difficult to interpret. This issue of *Stirpes* explores the many ways death is recorded and remembered, offering insight, tools, and strategies to help you uncover that last vital clue to the next generation.

In “Material Culture of Death,” Gena Philibert-Ortega explores how objects associated with death can add depth and nuance to family history, helping you craft richer and more historically grounded narratives. Susan E. Ball offers practical guidance in two articles. “Finding the Final Resting Place in Online Databases and Print Resources” spotlights accessible, often overlooked sources for locating burial records. “Finding Death Record Resources using AI” demonstrates how artificial intelligence can support your research.

Church records often serve as valuable substitutes when civil death records are missing. In “Laid to Rest: Church Death and Burial Records,” Nancy Gilbride Casey shares tips for locating and using these resources. For death documentation of military ancestors, LCDR Dale R. Spaulding, USN (Ret.) provides an essential guide in “Unlocking the Past: A Genealogist’s Guide for Researching Military Death Records.”

Obituaries are a goldmine for genealogists. In “Newspaper Obituaries: Death Dates and Stories of Our Ancestors,” Emily Coffman Richardson shares strategies for navigating common challenges and extracting rich detail from obituary research. “Mysteries Solved! Case Studies in Cracking Death and Burial Puzzles,” by Nancy Gilbride Casey demonstrates how unusual resources—from census records to Facebook—can help identify that elusive death date.

Wouldn’t it be nice to have GPS coordinates to every grave in your family tree? “Adding GPS Coordinates to Find a Grave Memorials” by Jim Thornhill gives step-by-step instructions for digitally marking graves you visit so others can easily find them. While at the gravesite, you may find the stone is hard to read. Jim Thornhill illustrates a technique for overcoming that problem in “Damage-free Tombstone Rubbing.” Samantha Barnes outlines a low-impact method for cleaning a headstone with important caveats in “Caring for Cemetery Headstones: A Gentle Approach.”

Two case studies showcase the power of persistent research. Shirley Langdon Wilcox, CG, FNGS, FVGS, combines land, court, historical, and vital records to prove that “The First Burial in Dallas, Texas, was Lucy (Gibbs) Young.” Bernard Meisner brings diligence and ingenuity to his pursuit of three long-forgotten children in “A Teacher’s Token:

Clues to Cousins Buried and Nearly Forgotten.”

William D. “Bill” Buckner’s review of *Beneath Sacred Ground: The Mission San Antonio de Valero Burial Records Transcribed, Translated and Annotated* by Art Martinez de Vara introduces readers to an essential new resource for researchers with ancestors in early San Antonio.

Don’t miss the “Partner Society Roundup.” It features genealogical society news from TxSGS’s Partner Societies. You might spot an interesting event in your area.

Plus, this issue includes details about upcoming education opportunities:

- **Genealogy Essentials**, July 14 – August 25
- **TIGR Bonus**, “Beyond the Battlefield: Advanced Military Research Analysis and Methodology” led by Michael Strauss, August 11-15
- **2025 TxSGS Family History Conference**, *Deep in the Heart: Discovering Family Roots*, November 7-8.

These programs offer the perfect opportunity to sharpen your skills and deepen your genealogical knowledge.

Looking ahead, our September issue will focus on skill-building, featuring practical how-to articles on a variety of topics. If you’d like to contribute, the submission deadline is August 1. ★

—*Stirpes* Editors

New Members & More

New Members since
March 2025

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Monica Stockton
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Jann Treadwell
Christine Wetzel
Brenda Williams
R. York

Texas State Genealogical Society

Have you claimed your Texas heritage yet?

http://www.txsgs.org/programs/heritage-certificates/

Volunteer Spotlight:

Larry Pettit Steps Up for TxSGS

TxSGS thrives because of dedicated volunteers who contribute their time, energy, and expertise. One such standout is *Larry Pettit*, who was elected in 2024 to serve as director of membership for the 2025–2026 term. From day one, Larry demonstrated the initiative and adaptability that make volunteers indispensable to TxSGS's success.



Under the guidance of outgoing membership director Tony Hanson, Larry quickly familiarized himself with the society's membership management system, a critical step in ensuring a seamless transition. "Larry jumped into the fire fast," said Sandra Crowley, TxSGS director of development. "He came up to speed in January and by February was already working on plans for TIGR."

The Texas Institute for Genealogical Research (TIGR) is one of TxSGS's most significant educational initiatives, and Larry played an important role in its 2025 planning and execution. His work began months in advance, coordinating Zoom logistics, creating training documentation, and preparing Zoom hosts to ensure a polished virtual experience.

During TIGR, Larry's behind-the-scenes support was indispensable. Each night, he prepped and distributed recordings to participants, answered

technical questions, and ensured attendees had access to the necessary course materials.

Thanks to Larry and the TIGR team, TIGR 2025 ran smoothly and efficiently. When events go well, attendees notice. According to one attendee, "I have to tell you that I have experience at IGHR, GRIP, SLIG, etc., both as an attendee and as a presenter, and I feel that you and the TIGR staff did an outstanding job. Each part of the conference was well thought out!"

Larry's contributions also include monitoring the TxSGS website and collaborating with Sandra Crowley, director of development, to keep the society's technology infrastructure running smoothly.

From technical support to membership engagement, Larry Pettit exemplifies the spirit of volunteerism. TxSGS is fortunate to have his skills and commitment, and we look forward to his continued leadership in the years ahead.

Become a Volunteer.

Email volunteers@txsgs.org to learn more.



Laid to Rest: Church Death and Burial Records

by Nancy Gilbride Casey

Church records can be some of the best vital record substitutes available to researchers. In a time well before civil registration, early births, marriages, and deaths were recorded in church registers, meeting minutes, cemetery records, and elsewhere. And that recordkeeping continues today.

Many faiths record deaths, funerals, burials, and even obituaries in some fashion or another. It is well worth any researcher's time to seek out these sources.

I personally have the most experience with Roman Catholic church records as both of my parents were born into Catholic families. I also have researched in Baptist and Congregational sources since my husband's lines hail from those traditions. And while I will give examples from Catholic, Baptist, and Congregational traditions here, readers can rest assured that similar sources are available in most other faiths as well. See the sidebar for suggestions on where to find records for other faiths.

Catholic Church Sacramental Records

The Roman Catholic church keeps sacramental records for parishioners, including baptisms, marriages, and confirmations. While they do not record a death per se, they likely will have a burial record documenting the

Rite of Christian Burial. These may also include notation of the Catholic sacrament of anointing of the sick, known in the past as *extreme unction*.

The Catholic burial record shown in image 1 is for my Croatian second great-grandmother Bara Celinščak Baltorinić, who died in 1918 and was buried in Srednjak, Croatia.¹ This record included not only her death and burial information, but also information on her husband, his occupation, her birthplace, cause of death, and more.

Written in Croatian (translated with Google Translate), it notes from left to right the information listed in table 1.

Tip: Bara's record includes a hint regarding her husband, Petar—the cross before his name indicates that he has already passed away. Even if I could not immediately translate the record, this symbol would clue me in to the fact that Petar predeceased Bara.

In another example, the entries for image 2 found in a burial register from St. Cecilia Catholic Church in Sheldon, Wyoming County, New York, are for the twin sons of my third great-grandparents Joseph Bäcker and Barbara Schiltz. “Infans Bäcker,” who was named Jacob, died on 28 August 1863 and was buried on 29 August. His twin “Joannes”—indicated by the

Table 1: Translated burial record of image 1.

Burial number	77
The year/date/month of death	1918, 26 November
Her name (including her maiden name)	Bara Baltorinić r. Celinščak, widow of farmer
The name of her spouse	†Petar Baltorinić, husband, farmer
Her birthplace/residence	Celine/Srednjak 1
Her religion	Roman Catholic
Age	72 years
Cause of death	Age (old age)
Whether she received the “holy sacraments of the dying”	Received

Str. 276

P o k o j n i k a							
Proj. tekuci	Godina, mjesec i dan, kad je umro	ime, prezime, stariš njegov	ime, prezime, stariš njegovih roditelja ili žene	m j e s t o gdje je rođen gdje je stajovao		vjeta mu	doba mu
77	1918 26 studenoga	Bara Baltorinić r. Celinščak udom. staj	† Petar Baltorinić supr. staj	Celine	Srednjak 1	Rim kat	72 god

Od čega je bolovao ili umro	Je li primio svete sakramente umirućih?	Gdje i kad je pokopan?	Ime, prezime, i služba onoga, koji ga je pokopao
Starost	Primio	Župno groblje dne 28. i. mj	Robertušević

Image 1: Croatian burial record for Bara Celinščak Baltorinić, who died in 1918 and was buried in Srednjak, Croatia.

The Material Culture of Death

by Gena Philibert-Ortega

An ancestor's death. When we think of tracing an ancestral death, we think of a death certificate or maybe even a funeral home record. These records provide us with a date of death and a burial place. We then can hope for a burial location complete with an extant grave marker.

Often, we only think about genealogical facts such as name, date of death, and location when we research. But what else can we learn? In my decades of presenting to societies, institutes, and conferences, I have stressed the importance of incorporating social history with genealogical research. Social history is simply the study of the everyday lives of everyday people. It focuses on your ancestors and how they experienced life rather than history looked at through the lens of the famous and "important."

How do we add social history to our genealogy? One way is to examine material culture and how it can enhance our knowledge of our ancestors and their experiences. Material culture helps us add historical context, answer questions, and learn more about our ancestors. While we are accustomed as family historians to analyzing documents to prove facts, material culture is one way that we can ask questions and learn more about those items.

Thinking differently about an ancestor's death can help us learn more than just their name, date, and location. Seeking out the material culture that follows death can help us add details to our ancestor's life.

Material Culture: What Is It?

First, let's define material culture because it's not a term we use in genealogy. A very basic definition is that it's

the "stuff" that humans make. A more detailed definition found on the website ThoughtCo provides extra clarity.

"Material culture is a term used in archaeology and other anthropology-related fields to refer to all the corporeal, tangible objects that are created, used, kept, and left behind by past and present cultures. Material culture refers to objects that are used, lived in, displayed, and experienced; and the [term] includes all the things people make, including tools, pottery, houses, furniture, buttons, roads, and even the cities themselves."¹

Material culture refers to physical items which may have been created or purchased by your ancestor. When considering death, material culture items might document the death. These items may refer, for example, to the objects found on a grave site or what was worn and used during periods of mourning.

Material culture as it relates to death differs with race, gender, economic status, place of death, circumstances (for example, war or enslavement), laws, ethnic and religious background, country of origin, era, family beliefs, and traditions in a specific place. We need to ask what traditions existed around death and mourning for the location, time period, circumstance, and religion as we research.

In death, numerous types of material items are created and left behind that document and memorialize the deceased. Examples include:

- Gravestones
- Coffins
- Coffin Plates
- Urns
- Memorial Statues
- Cemeteries
- Mourning Jewelry
- Mourning Buttons
- Hair Wreaths
- Funeral Fashion
- Mourning Samplers
- Funeral Cards
- Funeral Programs
- Funeral/Memorial Books
- Postmortem Photographs
- Funeral Photographs

This list is not comprehensive and is not representative of the material culture created around every death. What is created and left behind will differ depending on the location, era, socio-economic status, and beliefs surrounding death.

In addition, ideas about death evolve, which also impact the material culture of death. What might have been common for a death in 19th century New England may not be common for a death at the same time in Louisiana. In addition, social mores change. For example, during Victorian times, mourning clothing was essential, and a whole industry ensured that black clothing and accessories could be purchased, especially for women. However, around the time of the First World War, when death was a common occurrence because of the war and the influenza pandemic, it started to go out of style.

Finding Death Record Resources using AI

by Susan E. Ball

Artificial intelligence tools are proving to be remarkably useful for genealogists. ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and Transkribus are examples of AI tools to transcribe, translate, summarize, create narratives, and provide research assistance.

Another AI tool, Perplexity (<https://www.perplexity.ai/>), is especially helpful when searching for resources on the internet. Rather than just returning a list of websites to wade through one by one, Perplexity analyzes and organizes the results. These responses are more comprehensive than, for example, the AI-generated overviews provided by Google search.

About Perplexity

Asked “How can Perplexity help with genealogy research?”, the app replied “Perplexity delivers concise, up-to-date answers to genealogy questions by searching the live web and always providing links to its sources. This transparency allows you to verify information and dive deeper into original records, articles, or historical resources.” This answer included a six-point outline with practical examples. Try this prompt yourself to discover the many ways you can use Perplexity in genealogy research.

Perplexity’s transparency and links make it an exceptionally valuable tool for most any web-based research, including locating online death record collections and resources. As Perplexity has access to websites for libraries, archives, repositories, plus genealogical and historical societies, a search using Perplexity can provide an extensive review of what’s available online formatted for easy comprehension.

A free account on Perplexity provides unlimited quick searches and three to five “pro searches” per day. Free accounts have access to Perplexity’s standard model only; pro accounts and the “pro searches” on the free account use multiple advanced models (e.g., GPT-4o, Claude 3, Sonar, Llama, Grok, Gemini). The free plan is designed for light or casual users, while the pro plan targets professionals, researchers, and power users who need advanced features and higher usage limits. A typical genealogist will benefit most from the free account.

Using Perplexity

The Perplexity query interface (image 1) shows the prompt box. Just type your question in the box (image 2). Once you start typing, an arrow appears in the lower right corner in the prompt box (indicated with an arrow in figure 2). Click on the arrow to launch your query. Depending on the prompt, Perplexity will return the query response with bullet lists, tables, and analysis, including links to the sources it uses.

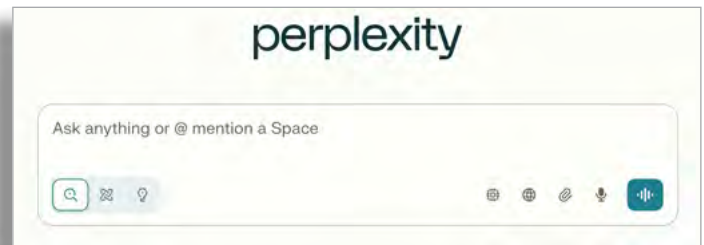


Image 1: Perplexity query interface.

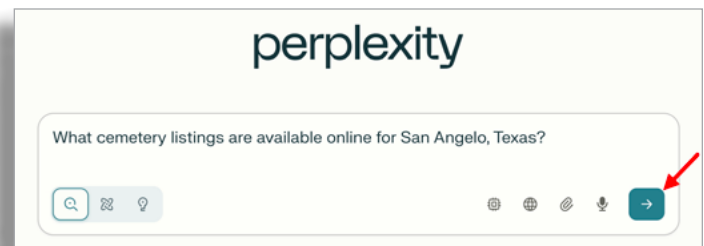


Image 2: Perplexity interface showing icon for launching query.

Be sure to click each source link to make sure Perplexity is drawing conclusions from sound information. If the links include questionable sites, try repeating the prompt with a request to exclude those sites. For example, I’ve occasionally found Perplexity using Reddit, a social media platform, as a source for its responses. That’s not the authoritative source I was hoping for!

At the bottom of each query, Perplexity adds five prompts to extend your research. Click the prompts to find answers to those suggested questions. Also, consider the questions’ format and use Perplexity’s approaches to refine your prompts. I’ve found these suggestions helpful; they often include research directions I hadn’t considered.

Mysteries Solved! Case Studies in Cracking Death and Burial Puzzles

by Nancy Gilbride Casey

Have you struggled to find a death date or place for an ancestor? Have you wondered where they might be buried? Have you looked in the usual places, such as in a death index, on Find a Grave, or in cemetery info, only to find frustration?

I have been in your shoes. But I have also been fortunate to stumble upon clues to this vital information in places I never expected to find them.

In this article, I'll share some mini case studies on how I solved my death and burial dilemmas using some unusual resources.

Case Study 1: Where did Peter Schiltz really die?

Resources used: 1870 U.S. census, 1870 Mortality Schedule, Catholic burial record, census enumerator instructions

My third great-grandfather, Peter Schiltz, was living on 1 June 1870 in Sheldon, Wyoming County, New York, for the 1870 U.S. census.¹ Or was he?

Peter also had a Catholic burial record that noted: "Day 4 of June was buried in the cemetery of St Caecilia body of Petrus Schieltz died on the 1st of this [month] in St. Catharina's, Canada, age 75."² Peter likely died while visiting his daughter, Barbara Schiltz Becker, who had recently moved to St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada.

So, why was Peter noted as living *and* dying on the same day, and in two different places? Which was right?

A dive into the 1870 census enumerator instructions helped solve this mystery.

"Names of individuals ... In column 3 will be entered the name of every person in each family, of whatever age, *including the names of such as were temporarily absent on the 1st day of June, 1870. The name of any member of the family who may have died between the 1st day of June, 1870, and the day of the assistant marshal's visit is to be entered, and the person fully described, as if living ...*" [emphasis mine]³

These instructions were critical, as Peter's death fell on that important June 1st date. The census taker recorded the Schiltz family's information on 23 June 1870. While it appeared that Peter was alive, well, and residing in Sheldon on the census day, he had died before that. The enumerator, following directions, recorded him as being alive.

In 1870 a special Mortality Schedule was conducted to record the "Name of every person who died during the year ending June 1, 1870, whose place of abode at the time of death was in this family." Peter's name was entered on this schedule and later struck out (image 1).⁴

Enumerators were warned:

"...the period covered by the inquiry is from the 1st day of June, 1869, to the 31st of May, 1870, inclusive ..." and "Deaths which have occurred between the 1st of June and the day of the enumerator's visit will not be reported; but the person will be reported as living on the 1st of June."⁵

When the census taker discovered that Peter died on June 1st, he crossed out Peter's entry from the Mortality Schedule to correct his figures.

Case Study 2: Where was Maria Jane Darragh Cassidy buried?

Resources used: Facebook, cemetery staff, cemetery records

While I have a death record for Maria Jane Darragh Cassidy (1857-1903), a second great-grandmother, it did not mention her burial place.⁶ I knew she was Catholic, but I could not find a church burial record.

Knowing that most of the Cassidy and associated family members were buried at Victoria Lawn Cemetery in St. Catharines, Ontario, I assumed she would be, too. Turning to Facebook, I asked members of the Ontario Genealogical Society page where the records for Victoria

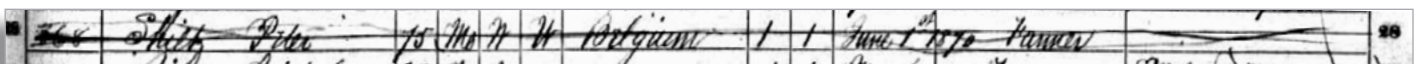


Image 1: Peter Schiltz's entry in the 1870 Mortality Schedule was struck out when the enumerator discovered he died on 1 June 1870.

Damage-free Tombstone Rubbing

by Jim Thornhill

Tombstones in older cemeteries are often unreadable because of their age. To make the inscription readable, I have used several methods over the years. I have also been told that all those methods were harmful to the tombstone. Then I discovered a new method, aluminum foil rubbing, that is easy, inexpensive, and does no harm to the stone.

The equipment needed is aluminum foil, a medium bristled brush like something you would use to wash dishes, and tape, as shown in image 1. For aluminum foil, the cheap stuff is best. You want it to be thin so you don't have to apply much pressure to create the rubbing. Find the extra wide size if possible since it will result in fewer wraps around the stone and thus fewer seams. For tape, something like masking tape is preferable because it is easy to work with.

Once at the cemetery, clear any debris away from the tombstone. If fire ants have taken up residence next to the stone, *carefully* clear away the mound and leave for a while to let them disperse. Before starting the aluminum foil rubbing, take a photo of the gravestone to show its condition and any characters readable without the rubbing. To illustrate the aluminum foil rubbing process, I'll use the stone shown in image 2.

To create a damage-free aluminum foil rubbing, follow these steps.

Step 1: Pull off a piece of foil long enough to wrap all the way around the tombstone and overlap a little.

Step 2: Starting at the bottom, wrap the foil around the stone. Try to get the foil as tight as possible; gently pull out any large wrinkles without tearing the foil.

Step 3: Tape the foil to itself on the back of the stone. Be sure to avoid putting any tape on the stone.

Step 4: After you secure the first wrap, add a second wrap above it, overlapping the first wrap about an inch. Try to place the overlap section so that it isn't on top of a row of words or dates. The double thickness of foil will make it more difficult to make an impression of the stone's text or characters.



Image 1: Equipment for damage-free tombstone rubbing.

Step 5: Repeat steps 1 through 4 until you reach the top of the stone, as seen in image 3. Make sure you go all the way to the top. Often tombstones will have emblems at the very top and inscriptions on the very bottom that you want to identify.

Step 6: Start brushing the foil *gently* with the medium bristle brush, as shown in figure 4. As you brush over the foil, the gentle pressure dents the foil slightly over the engraving on the stone, leaving a readable image. Try to



Image 2: The inscription is nearly impossible to read on this lichen-encrusted, time-worn stone.



Image 3: The back of the stone shows the aluminum foil wraps taped together. Note that the aluminum foil overlaps at the back so that no tape touches the stone.

Finding the Final Resting Place

in Online Databases and Print Resources

by Susan E. Ball

Locating burial records is an important aspect of genealogical research. Not only does that one piece of information provide closure to a person's life, but it also helps differentiate between individuals with similar or identical names. The location of a burial, perhaps within a family plot, can tie a person to a specific family.

Finding a monument can illuminate the person's stature within the community and hint at the family's financial status. Gena Philibert-Ortega's article, "Material Culture of Death," (page 14) discusses the many insights that can be gained from a person's burial site.

Many burial sites, though, are difficult, if not impossible, to find. For example, the person may be buried in an unmarked grave, their resting place may be in a tiny, forgotten cemetery, or their tombstone may have been destroyed. By expanding your search to encompass online databases and cemetery listings in published sources, some of those elusive burials may come to light.

First Step: Burial Sources

Before launching into an exhaustive search, be sure to look for a death certificate and an obituary. Many death certificates include the cemetery in which the deceased is buried. Obituaries may be found in the deceased person's local newspaper. If that newspaper doesn't exist or isn't easily available, try searching newspapers in cities where the deceased person's relatives lived. The funeral home handling the burial may have sent obituary information to those newspapers as a courtesy to the family. (See "Newspaper Obituaries: Death Dates and Stories of our Ancestors," page 38.)

Major Online Burial Databases

Beyond death certificates and obituaries, search online burial databases such as Find a Grave, BillionGraves, and Interment.net. Find a Grave is the largest database, with over 180 million memorials. As you research Find a Grave, keep in mind that memorials are created by volunteers. Many of the volunteers expand a memorial

with photos of the gravesite and stone, links to burials of family members, abstracted obituaries, death certificates, and more.

Be cautious of anything on the Find a Grave memorial that isn't verified with a source as information posted on the site may be wrong. I have come across some memorials that have no photo and are added to a cemetery because the contributor thought the person should be buried there.

BillionGraves claims 50 million memorials, all with headstone photos and GPS coordinates. Also supported by volunteers, the emphasis at BillionGraves is on verifiable burial information. As with Find a Grave, be aware that mistakes can be made.

Interment.com claims it contains 25+ million cemetery records, transcripts, and burial registers, from tens of thousands of cemeteries across the world, all contributed by genealogists, cemeteries, government agencies, and private organizations. The search interface is awkward, but the site should be checked just in case that person you're searching for is only on that site.

Funeral Homes and Memorial Websites

Many funeral homes maintain dedicated websites where they publish obituaries and death notices for the families they serve. These sites typically allow visitors to search for recent obituaries, leave condolences, share memories, and find information about upcoming services. Here are a few of the more prominent sites:

- **Legacy.com:** syndicates obituaries from thousands of funeral homes and newspapers, creating a vast searchable directory. This site also has a large directory of funeral home listings.



Newspaper Obituaries: Death Dates and Stories of our Ancestors

by Emily Coffman Richardson, EdD

More than just a notice of death, obituaries can reveal clues about relationships, migration patterns, and community ties. However, locating the right obituary—and interpreting it accurately—requires persistence, flexibility, and a few smart search strategies.

The following practical tips help guide you in overcoming common obstacles and maximizing what you can learn from obituary research. Using the sidebar resources may help you find that obituary or article that provides critical information on an ancestor.

Tips for Newspaper Obituary Research

Don't give up if you don't find what you are looking for on the first try. Each newspaper repository offers a unique selection of publications, and you may discover variations of the same obituary in different newspapers. This often occurred when an individual moved from one place to another. The deceased person's "hometown"

newspaper may publish a different obituary than the newspaper in the city where he passed—one focused on the person's connection to that locale.

Keep in mind that how you search significantly affects your results. In the mid to late 1800s, women were frequently listed in obituaries as Mrs. (husband's first name) (husband's last name). For instance, you may find Mrs. A. H. Mills instead of Barbara Richardson Savage. Consider all name variations when searching, especially if the husband was known by initials (e.g., A. H. Mills instead of Arthur Haven Mills).

Be flexible with spelling. For example, surnames like Hoge and Hogue may refer to the same family—



or completely different ones. Read the obituary carefully and compare its details to what you already know. Remember, obituaries weren't always written by a close family member; reporters or funeral home staff might have guessed at the spelling of the last name.

Also consider the print quality of the original newspaper. Poor or degraded type can interfere with optical character recognition (OCR), causing names and keywords to be misread or skipped entirely. Imagine how a letter might appear if partially smudged, broken, or blurred—and adjust your search terms to include possible

Locating Newspapers for Obituary Research

Online newspaper resources:

Newspapers.com (<https://www.newspapers.com/>) – \$\$

GenealogyBank (<https://www.genealogybank.com/>) – \$\$

NewspaperArchive (<https://newspaperarchive.com/>) – \$\$\$. Many libraries subscribe to this database, so check with your local library to see if they have it.

Chronicling America (<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>) – Free

The Portal to Texas History, Texas Digital Newspaper Program (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/explore/collections/TDNP/>) – Free

Texas Tech University Southwest Collections/Special Collections Library has over 240 Panhandle and West Texas newspapers online at <https://newspapers.swco.ttu.edu/handle/20.500.12255/1> – Free

The Ancestor Hunt (<https://theancestorhunt.com/newspaper-research-links.html>) has a listing of most every digitized newspaper with links to the newspaper. The site is free, but you have to wade through a number of ads.

Microfilm and print copies of newspapers:

The Library of Congress maintains the directory of U.S. Newspapers in American Libraries, a searchable index of newspapers published in the United States since 1690. This directory can help identify what titles exist for a specific place and time and how to access them. (<https://www.loc.gov/collections/directory-of-us-newspapers-in-american-libraries/>)

Deep in the Heart: Discovering Your Ancestors

2025 TxSGS Family History Conference



Join us this fall for the 2025 TxSGS Family History Conference, themed *Deep in the Heart: Discovering Your Ancestors*. This virtual event, held **Friday and Saturday, November 7–8**, will feature *TxSGS Live!*, with ten nationally recognized speakers presenting live sessions followed by interactive Q&A.

But that's not all!

All *TxSGS Live!* sessions—including the Q&As—will be recorded and available on demand. In addition, the conference includes **29 pre-recorded lectures** from many of your favorite speakers and internationally acclaimed presenters. These sessions will be available online through **midnight, February 11, 2026**, giving you the flexibility to learn at your own pace. (*Read more about speakers and topics on our website.*)

Whether you're just starting out or looking to take your research to the next level, the

2025 Family History Conference offers tools, techniques, and inspiration for every genealogist. Alongside our 39 featured sessions, attendees can enjoy **bonus content** from sponsors, exhibitors, and select genealogy vendors.

Plan Your Learning Journey with Conference Tracks

This year's conference includes sessions organized into learning tracks to help you customize your experience. Revisit your favorite presentations as often as you'd like during the replay period.



Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Other Technology

Discover how artificial intelligence is revolutionizing genealogy—from smart record-matching and automated transcriptions to predictive tools that reveal hidden connections. Dive into the latest tech innovations, including interactive maps, dynamic databases, collaborative platforms, and digital preservation strategies designed to help you research faster, deeper, and smarter.



DNA

Step into the world of genetic genealogy and discover how DNA can take your research further. Learn to choose the right test, interpret your results, and turn matches into meaningful family connections. Whether you're just getting started or fine-tuning your analysis skills, this track will help you make the most of your genetic clues.



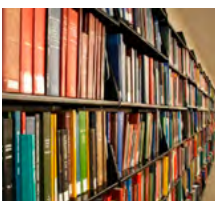
Ethnic Research

Trace your ancestors' cultural heritage and migration paths. This track focuses on strategies and sources for researching African American, Hispanic, and Irish ethnic groups, while offering tips for honoring and preserving cultural traditions through genealogy.



Methodology

Build stronger research skills with sessions focused on effective genealogical methods. Topics include resolving research challenges, documenting findings, writing reports, and tracing elusive ancestors—such as women and those in urban settings.



Records & Resources

Unlock the genealogical value of lesser-known historical records. Explore land deeds, tax lists, religious records, voting rolls, and more. Learn how to find and interpret these documents, and how to navigate archives with confidence.



Skill Building

Sharpen essential genealogy skills—from organizing research and writing reports to creating timelines and analyzing sources. This track is great for beginners and those looking to refresh their approach.



Storytelling

Turn your research into meaningful narratives. Learn how to write compelling family stories, add historical context, and share your heritage through blogs, books, or multimedia projects.



Wartime: Genealogy Research

Explore military and wartime records to uncover your ancestors' service and its impact. This track includes research strategies for conflicts from the Revolutionary War to the 20th century.

See page 45 for the full list of **2025 TxSGS Conference Speakers and Topics**.

Visit www.txsgs.org over the coming months for updates on speaker bios, FAQs, registration details, and more.



2025 TxSGS LIVE



Friday and Saturday, November 7-8, 2025



Craig R. Scott, CG®, FUGA
***Every Ancestor Records:
Places I Look***

J. Mark Lowe, FUGA
***Break It Down, Build It Up:
Solving Research Puzzles
With Plans***



Julia A. Anderson, MA, AG®, AGL
***In Their Own Words: Women
and the War of 1812***

Deborah A. Abbott, PhD
Manuscript & Oral Collections



Diana Elder, AG®
***Small Bites, Big Impact: Crafting
Focused Narratives to Illuminate
Ancestral Lives***

Katy Rowe-Schurwanz
***Multiple Relationships: How
mtDNA Can Prove Connections
When Autosomal DNA Struggles***



Diane L. Richard, MEng, MBA
***Speaking a Thousand Words:
Using Photograph Collections in
Your Genealogy Research***

Ari Wilkins
***Tracing the Enslaved and Formerly
Enslaved in Newspapers***



Kelvin L. Meyers
Probate: More Than a Will

Andrew Redfern
***Artificial Intelligence:
Friend or Foe?***



Visit our website to learn more.

www.TxSGS.org

The First Burial in Dallas, Texas, was Lucy (Gibbs) Young

by Shirley Langdon Wilcox, CG, FNGS, FVGS

Records are sparse for frontier settlements. Accounts of early days in Dallas, Texas, indicate that the first burial there was likely the wife of Isaac Young.¹ Isaac was scarcely mentioned in early records and recollections. His wife was never named. She is simply referred to as Isaac's wife who died in childbirth and became the first burial in Dallas.

She died probably in the late summer of 1842 and was buried five hundred yards north of John Neely Bryan's cabin.²

John B. Martin, who came in 1842 to Fannin County, Texas, said Isaac Young came in July 1842 with his family and camped. A cabin was built for Young by John Neely Bryan, John Pulliam, Long [*sic*], and John B. Martin. Mrs. Young died shortly thereafter in childbirth. She was buried a few hundred yards north of where Dallas' public square is now.³

There is no official record naming the first settlers in Dallas. An early resident, John Henry Brown, attempted to reconstruct a list of those pioneers. However, his arrival was thirty years after the initial wave of migration. He depended on others for much of his settler information.⁴ His list was published in 1892 in the *Memorial and Biographical History of Dallas County, Texas*.⁵ Isaac Young was not listed, even though a 27 August 1942 deed records his early residence.⁶

Isaac is documented in two Texas records, the 1842 deed and an 1843 tax record.⁷ Then he drops out of the records. Who was he, why did he go to Texas, and where did he go after he left Texas? What was the name of the woman who bore his child, then died?

Isaac Young

An Isaac Young of Kentucky fits with known Texas information. This Isaac was born in Virginia and moved to Oldham County, Kentucky.⁸ Isaac's first two wives died young.⁹ After marrying his third wife, Lucy Gibbs, in 1841, Isaac, Lucy, and two sons from his first marriage, about ages four and six, immigrated to Texas in 1842.¹⁰ He returned to Kentucky with his sons in 1844 and died years later in California. The dates for this short Texas residence were found in a biographical sketch about Isaac's son Leander Young.¹¹ It states that "L. A. Young" was "born in Kentucky, July 23, 1835. In 1842 the family moved to

Texas, where they resided until 1844, when they returned to Kentucky. In 1850 the subject of this sketch, his brother, Pembroke S., and their father [Isaac Young], crossed the plains to California...."¹²

Isaac Young's Lake County, California, tombstone states he was born on 13 December 1799 in Virginia and died 23 May 1872.¹³ His first marriage was at Oldham County, Kentucky, on 29 May 1829, to Elizabeth Logan, whose father, William Logan, gave consent.¹⁴ Isaac's name at that time was Isaac Whitson. His name was legally changed by an Act of the Kentucky Legislature on 12 February 1838. Isaac Whitson and Elizabeth Whitson, his

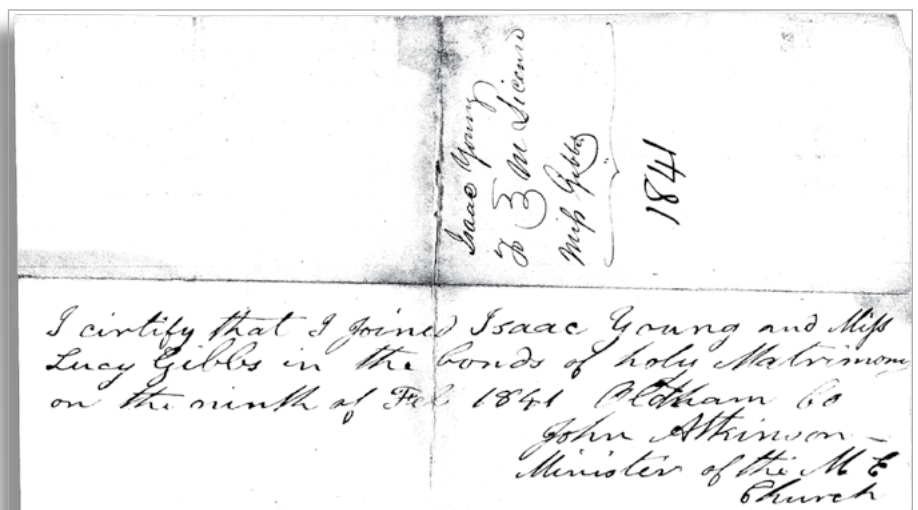


Image 1: Marriage record for Lucy Gibbs and Isaac Young, 9 February 1841, Oldham County, Kentucky.

Caring for Cemetery Headstones:

A Gentle Approach

by Samantha Barnes

Headstones often hold critical information hidden beneath decades of lichen and grime that make inscriptions almost impossible to read. Dates become obscured, names fade, and important family connections remain hidden.

This is why many genealogists clean headstones. It's not about aesthetics—it's about uncovering information that connects family stories across generations. Sometimes that gentle cleaning reveals birth dates, death dates, relationships ("Beloved Wife of..."), or even poetic epitaphs that tell us something about who our ancestors were and how they were remembered. These details can confirm research, break through brick walls, or add rich details to family narratives that no document could provide.

Why Clean (And Why Not)

First, forget about making that 150-year-old marble shine like new—that's not the goal! You're simply removing harmful substances like pollution, bird droppings, and biological growth that can damage the stone over time. Remember, every time you clean a headstone, you're removing tiny bits of the surface, so it's not something to do just for fun.

Before You Roll Up Your Sleeves

Always get permission before you begin! You can't just walk into a cemetery with your cleaning supplies. Check with the cemetery owners

or managers before touching any stones.

Weather matters, too. Don't clean when it's cold out (below 40°F) because water can freeze in the stone's pores and cause cracks. And if a stone feels hot to the touch on a sunny day, let it cool down before applying water.

Is the Stone Up for It?

Here's a quick way to check if a stone is too fragile: give it a gentle tap with your knuckle. If you hear a hollow sound, that's trouble - the stone might be delaminating (layers separating). And if you notice cracks or severe erosion, especially on older stones, it's best not to clean them.

The Right Tools for the Job

Keep it simple:

- Soft brushes (natural or nylon bristles - never metal or hard plastic!)
- Clean water in buckets or spray bottles
- Plastic scrapers or wooden tools for stubborn growths
- Maybe a gentle cleaning solution but only if water alone doesn't cut it. Continue reading for suggestions.



Image 1: Before cleaning.

Cleaning 101

1. **Soak that stone** completely with water first. This is super important because it prevents the stone from soaking up any cleaning solutions.
2. **Gently remove loose growths.** Once it's wet, moss and lichens often loosen up on their own.
3. **Scrub with care** using soft circular motions. Work from the bottom up (yes, opposite of what you might think!) to prevent streaking.
4. If plain water isn't doing the trick, **consider a gentle cleaner like Orvus or D/2 Biological Solution**—but only after testing in an inconspicuous spot.
5. **Rinse, rinse, and rinse some more!** Any cleaner left behind can cause problems later.

What to Absolutely Avoid

Please don't use:

- Bleach (seriously, just don't—it seems like a quick fix but causes so much damage)
- Pressure washers (they can blast away inscriptions)
- Wire brushes or metal tools (they'll scratch the surface)
- Random household cleaners (they weren't made for historic stone).

Special Situations

Got ivy growing on a stone? Don't yank it off! Cut it at the base and let it

die before gently removing it.

Dealing with stubborn biological stains? Products like D/2 keep working for weeks after application, so don't worry if the stain doesn't disappear immediately.

The Big Picture

Think of yourself as a caretaker of history. These stones tell stories about people who came before us, and with gentle, thoughtful cleaning, you're helping preserve those stories for future generations. Just remember that golden rule: when in doubt, do no harm! ★



Image 2: After cleaning.

About Samantha Barnes: Samantha lives in Argyle, Texas, with her high school sweetheart and husband. They have two children and five grandchildren. Samantha is a passionate genealogy volunteer and lifelong learner, she has earned the Boston University Certificate of Genealogical Research, and has participated in several institutes including GRIP, SLIG, and Gen-Fed.

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**HOPKINS
COUNTY**
Genealogical Society

WHERE HISTORY
AND HERITAGE MEET.



Where the Trail Ends, the Stories Begin

2025 Genealogy Lock-In

Saturday, July 26, 10am to 7pm, Sulphur Springs, TX.

Exclusive after-hours research with access to databases, microfilm, books, computers, and expert help.

\$15 donation - lite supper, door prizes, and 10¢ copies
Space is limited - visit **hcgstx.org** for details!

Unlocking the Past: A Genealogist's Guide for Researching Military Death Records

by LCDR Dale R. Spaulding, USN (Ret.)

So, you've recently discovered an ancestor that served in the military. What a find! Now you're eager to uncover the details surrounding your veteran relative's death. As you prepare to begin your research, consider two criteria: the questions you want answered and what sources are available that will help you discover the answers.

Research Questions

Before beginning your records search, think about what you want to learn. Here are ten questions you can use to guide your research.

1. What branch of service did they serve in?
2. What unit were they assigned to?
3. What rank did they hold?
4. Did they receive a pension?
5. What conflict did they serve in?
6. Where and when did they die?
7. What were the circumstances of their death?
8. Where were they buried?
9. Are there any family stories regarding their death?
10. Who do you know that may have documents related to their death?

Where Military Death Information Can Be Found

Understanding when, where, and how a military ancestor died is one of the most significant discoveries a genealogist can make. While military service records may confirm a veteran's enlistment or discharge, tracing the circumstances of a soldier's death often requires exploring a range of record sets across multiple archives and institutions. This guide outlines key sources for uncovering death-related details in military records from the Revolutionary War through modern conflicts, including compiled service records, pension applications, burial cards, and databases maintained by the National Archives, Department of Defense, and private platforms such as Ancestry and Fold3.

Service Records:

Veterans of the American Revolution and Civil War have a Compiled Military Service Record (CMSR) housed at the National Archives that provides basic information about the soldier's military career. The CMSR consists of an envelope (jacket) containing one or more cards (records). The cards may include the date of enlistment and discharge, pay amount, death information, and other data such as wounds received during battle or hospitalization for injury or illness. Some CMSRs also contain an internal jacket for so-called "personal papers" such as letters written home. Learn more about the CMSR at <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/civil-war/resources#cmsr>.

Pension Records

Pension records can provide information about the fate of wounded or disabled American Revolution or Civil War veterans, including descriptions of their injuries and the pension awarded. Most Union Army soldiers, their widows, or minor children later applied for a pension. The pension file may also contain medical information such as

NAME OF SOLDIER: <i>Spaulding, Henry A.</i>					
SERVICE: <i>Late rank, Co. A, 1 Regt. Minn. I. A.</i>					
TERM OF SERVICE: <i>Enlisted Aug 25, 1861 Discharged Aug 24, 1864</i>					
DATE OF FILING:	CLASS:	APPLICATION NO.	LAW:	CERTIFICATE NO.	
<i>1890 Sept 19</i>	<i>Invalid,</i>	<i>957522</i>	<i>J</i>	<i>954395</i>	
<i>1905 May 15</i>	<i>Widow,</i>	<i>828226</i>	<i>J</i>		
	<i>Minor,</i>				
ADDITIONAL SERVICES:					
REMARKS: <i>See Ser. Cert. 1066104 William Henry Spaulding, Private, 46th & 9th Mass. Inf. Died March 15, 1905, as Lewis Mass.</i>					

Image 1: Private Henry A. Spaulding's Civil War Pension Record (1890).

A Teacher's Token: Clues to Cousins

Buried and Nearly Forgotten

by Bernard Meisner, PhD

“How sweetly does our little Ella, Mary, Emma rest. They was so young fair and beautiful. To earth’s calm bosom pressed with almost a mother’s care.” Three versions of these lines were written in a small chap book that my sister, cousins, and I found while going through a trunk that had been owned by our grandfather, Daniel Joseph O’Hara (1880-1957).

The National Museum of American History describes chap books as: “small paper covered booklets sold by peddlers known as chapmen.”¹

My grandmother, Mary Ursula (née Kelly) O’Hara (1888-1935), was married to Daniel. She must have received the book from her mother, Sarah Jane “Sallie” (née Byrne) Kelly (1862-1936)—my great-grandmother—which is how it was placed in my

grandfather’s trunk. Based on other writing in the book, the original owner had been Sallie’s older sister, Anna Byrne (1852-1940). One version of the lines includes the notation “Written by Sallie Byrne and spoken by Annie Byrne.”

Research revealed the little 3 x 4¼ inch, 48-page book, *A Teacher’s Token*, was the fourth in a series of six books edited by Asa Buller and published by

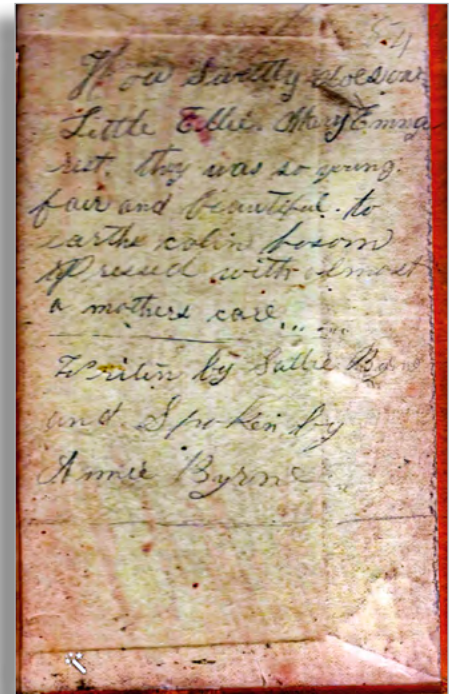


Image 2: Inscription found in the book that inspired the author’s quest for information.

Brown, Taggard, and Chase in Boston between 1857 and 1865. It contained “poems and stories intended to teach morals lessons to children.”²

Electronic copies of other books in the series are available on the Internet Archive.² Titles of some of the stories and poems in *A Teacher’s Token* include “How a Child May Be Useful,” “The Good Sunday Scholars,” “A Bible Rather Than a Penknife,” and “Power of Snowflakes.”

At first I thought the “How sweetly...” lines were part of a favorite poem of Annie and Sallie, but they were not in the book, nor could I find any such poem through an internet search. To refresh my memory regarding my great-grandmother’s family, I reviewed the records I had about them.

The 1850 census shows my second great-grandparents William H. Byrne and Sarah (née McDonald)

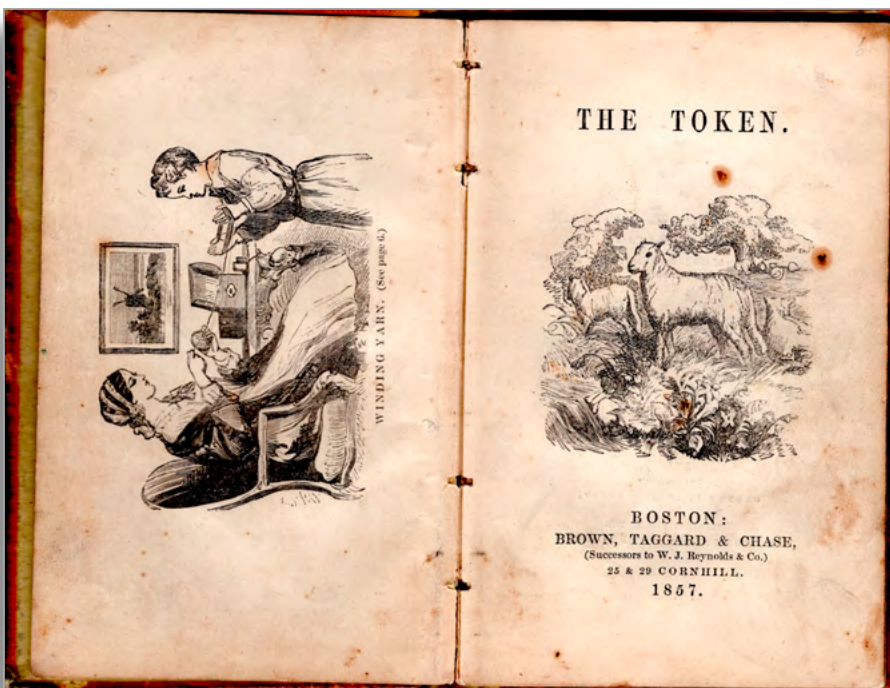


Image 1: Frontispiece and title page of a small book, entitled *A Teacher’s Token*, found in a trunk belonging to the author’s grandfather.

BOOK REVIEW of the First Place Winner, Category II Books by a Professional / References at the 2024 TxSGS Awards Ceremony

by William D. "Bill" Buckner, TxSGS Awards Chair

Beneath Sacred Ground: The Mission San Antonio de Valero Burial Records Transcribed, Translated and Annotated by Art Martinez de Vara

(Tap Pilam Press, 2024): 795 pages, illustrations, photos. Available from Amazon.com and ArtMartinezDeVara.com.

Beneath Sacred Ground grew out of Art Martinez de Vara's work with the Tāp Pilam Coahuiltecan Nation (TPCN)* to prove the Mission San Antonio de Valero Cemetery existed on Alamo grounds and have the cemetery recognized as a Texas Historic Cemetery. Their efforts culminated in approval and recognition of the Chapel and most of the Alamo Plaza as a Texas Historic Cemetery by the Texas Historical Commission on May 19, 2019.

Art's efforts with the TPCN furthered his interest in the Indigenous inhabitants of Mission San Antonio de Valero. According to Art in his introduction, "this book is an attempt to place Indigenous people at the forefront of one of the most contested and central narratives of Texas history, the Alamo." In 2023, the TPCN established Tāp Pilam Press to further Indigenous research in Texas. This is the press's first publication.

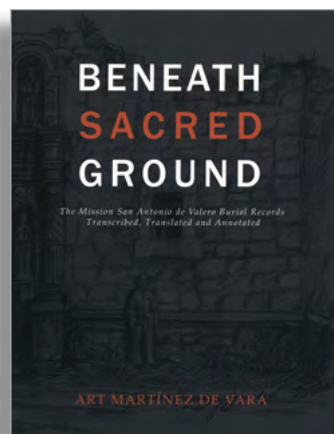
Filled with meticulous detail, this monumental work completely transcribes the original Spanish burial records of Mission San Antonio de Valero and its prior incarnations from 1703 to 1783, with additional external records to 1835. Translations are in both modern Spanish and English, with fact-filled annotations compiled by the author. As one judge of the 2024 TxSGS Book Awards competition stated, this book is "a tremendous gift to the families of these ancestors!"

Through his annotations, Art

Martinez de Vara has brought the people who lived during the Mission period of the Alamo to life. The annotations provide Indigenous names, ethnonyms (a name or term used to identify a specific ethnic group), family structures, *compadrazgo* relationships (a child's parents and their godparents), social status, and political offices, for example. Annotation sources include sacrament, mission, military, and other records. For Art, the research was personal: he discovered his eighth great-grandfather's death record, and his fifth great-grandparents were mentioned in an annotation.

The bulk of the book lists interments in the four original burial books of Mission Valero, recorded in the order found. Five appendices address records recovered from other sources. *Beneath Sacred Ground* documents a grand total of 1,193 burials.

The records are arranged by burial book and by year with references to the original burial book number and a unique book record number that refers to the Inventory of Burials (pgs. 748-755). This inventory is the only index to the names on the burial records. In his introduction, the author states that "due to the size of the book a comprehensive print index was not practical." This is



discouraging because the well-researched annotations include names that aren't in the Inventory of Burials. Hopefully, an every-name index will be published as a supplement.

Along with a well-researched mission history and detailed information about the

burial records, the book includes a glossary of terms, bibliography, and end notes. One prominent feature was the Table of Figures. There are 137 figures throughout the book, including images of the original burial records—so readers can see what they actually look like—and AI-generated portraits of the people buried there. The goal was to put faces to the names and make it easier to connect with them as real people, not just entries in a record. Well done!

Burial records are a key resource to help us document the lives of our ancestors. For the modern-day Coahuiltecan people, burial and other mission records have a unique importance as the largest historical repository of documentation of their ancestors. Art Martinez de Vara recognized the value of making these burial records accessible in their truest form and provided a platform of documentation that will bring focus to the Indigenous inhabitants of Mission San Antonio de Valero and their modern-day connections for years to come. ★

*The Tāp Pilam Coahuiltecan Nation is a confederation of Indigenous families who descend from the Mission Indians of South Texas and Northeastern Mexico including families from San Antonio-area missions.

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 see whether the event will be held in person, virtually, or both. 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 B

Nancy Gilbride Casey,
District Representative

The [*North Texas Genealogical Association*](#) (NTGS) meets on the first Thursday of each month; there is no meeting in July. Meetings are held at 7:00 p.m. at St Mark's Methodist Church in Wichita Falls with the option to join via Zoom for those unable to attend in person. Visitors are always welcome. At the May meeting, an online video presentation about preparing for genealogical trips was viewed, after which members discussed some of the trips they had made and what they had learned about how to prepare for trips. A field trip was taken at the end of May. Members visited a local cemetery to take photos and answer Find a Grave requests.

The June topic focused on researching female ancestors. Attendees learned about dower rights, probate, and other ways to find those elusive females who changed names (sometimes several times). In July, when no regular meeting is scheduled, board members will meet to plan programs and events for the coming year with input from members.

A presentation on adoption will be given by an NTGS member in August. As an adoptee, the presenter has researched adoption; their experiences will inform others who are trying to navigate the adoption maze.

The archives tab on the NTGS website has a wealth of information for anyone researching in Wichita and surrounding counties.

District C

Emily C. Richardson
District Representative

The [*Collin County Genealogical Society*](#) (CCGS) offers programming both in person and virtually. Monthly programs are free and open to all; see upcoming programs on the CCGS website event calendar. On May 14, CCGS society member Sue Gover-Lee presented "Know Your Location, Case Study: Northeastern Canada/USA." The information emphasized the importance of knowing the area you are researching and provided resources for researching locations. On June 11, Bill Buckner, supervisor of the Waco-McLennan Genealogy Center, gave an informative program on "Mining Genealogical Evidence

from State Legislative Records." CCGS installed the 2025-2026 board comprising both returning and new board members at the meeting.

CCGS's new special interest group (SIG), "All Things Technology," launched its first meeting at 11:00 a.m. Saturday, July 12, at the Genealogy Center program room in the W. O. Haggard Library, 2501 Coit Road, Plano, Texas. The kickoff program will explore how AI can bring your family history to life. From smart tools to photo magic, discover the future of genealogy—perfect for beginners and pros alike. Everyone is welcome to attend. All Things Technology SIG will meet again on Saturday, September 13, with a topic to be announced.

The Digital Project committee has been busy identifying Collin County materials to be digitized. Plano city directories are available at The Portal to Texas History (Portal), CCGS's digitization partner, at https://texashistory.unt.edu/explore/partners/CCGS/browse/?fq=dc_type%3Atext+book. McKinney city directories are in the process of being digitized at the Portal.

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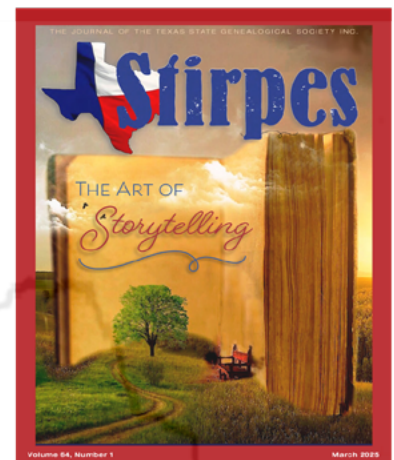
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