

The West Florida Genealogical Society

Newsletter

October 2026

<https://www.youtube.com/@WestFloridaGeologicalSociety>

Meetings are free and open to the public and include a presentation on genealogical research or relevant history. **Refreshments will be provided.**

December: State of the Society



SAVE THE DATE

WFGS Spring Conference

March 13, 2027

2027 Conference Publicity

We need your help! If you have any contact information for other societies or groups you belong to that may be interested in our conference, we're collecting that information (there will be a sheet at the back table at the October meeting). Once the Conference Flyer is complete, we will be sending it to those contacts that you provided.



Give a welcome to:

Shawn Stroman

Daniel Freeman

We encourage you to explore our resources, participate in events, and connect with other members. Don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or need assistance.

Once again, welcome aboard!

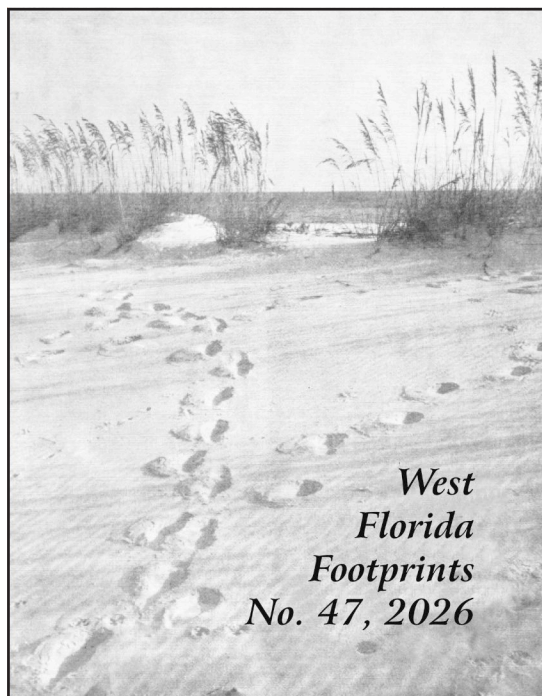
Webinars

Nancy Loy puts together a monthly list of upcoming webinars of interest to genealogists and historians. This is a fantastic service that used to be part of our newsletter, but we decided it needed to be more accessible to the people who might use it. The link is on the home page of the WFGS website. So, [click here](#) to see this wonderful resource!

Digital Horizons

Digital Horizons is an online resource for thousands of images, documents, video, and oral histories depicting life on the Northern Plains of North Dakota and Minnesota, from the late 1800s to today.

<https://digitalhorizonsonline.org/digital>



Articles Needed for the 2026 *West Florida Footprints*

Articles are needed for the 2026 issue of the *West Florida Footprints*.

The issue will center on the 250th Anniversary of the United States Declaration of Independence on July 4, 2026. If you have ancestors from the Revolutionary War we encourage you to write an article about them. It doesn't have to be long. Include photos or images of documents, if available. Please contact the editor if you are interested in submitting an article for the publication.

If you need guidelines for writing the articles, please contact Denise Mowery, at wfgsfootprints@gmail.com

Guidelines for *Footprints* Articles

- Articles can be submitted anytime. The deadline for article submissions is September 30 for the current year's issue.
- Article file types include Microsoft Word (doc or docx), Rich Text Format (rtf), and text files (txt), among others. If you are unsure, contact the Editor.
- Articles in past issues of *Footprints* have been one to two pages in length, sometimes longer (1,200 – 3,000 words).
 - Before submitting articles, please verify the spelling of names, place names, etc.
 - Submit photos with the articles, if available. See below for image (s) submission information:
 - Provide the original photo(s) (preferred method). Photos will be returned after the *Footprints* issue is sent to the printing company (this will ensure that there are no problems with the images).
 - Scan the photo(s) at 300 dpi (v per inch), which is the minimum setting for printing. Save the image file as a "jpg," "tif," "png," "bmp," etc. file type.
- You can embed the image file within the article to establish the position of the photos. However, send the images as separate files.
 - If you would like a photo caption, please provide the necessary information for the caption.
- Articles and photos can be turned in at the monthly meeting or emailed to the editor at: wfgsfootprints@gmail.com
Denise Mowery
Editor, *West Florida Footprints*

Museums

Virginia Shelby

Most people don't think of researching at a museum. However, the Pensacola Historic Village and the museums there have a wealth of information. One of the items you might want to visit is the Sweet Teat Murder Mysteries. Mike Simmons presents a great program on local murders. It will keep you spellbound in these short stories of local history.

Historic Pensacola is starting up their Ghost Tours. You can find out a lot of information on local stories. We often think of ghost stories as just entertainment. However, many of these so-called ghost stories have a lot of information on how these people died.

As genealogists, we need to look at all resources for our historical information.

West Florida Genealogical Society Board Members Needed

Contact
Kelley Harris
or
Jennifer Rollins



Election of Officers and Board of Directors for 2027-2028

"We need YOU to step forward and volunteer to serve as a member of the WFGS Board."

The following positions are needed: Secretary and one Board of Director (term is two years).

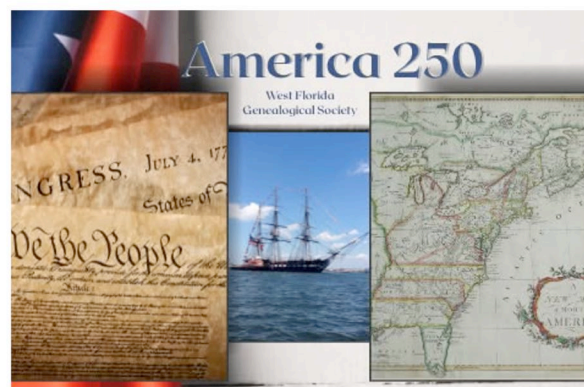
Please consider giving the Society your time and energy in this way. Members over the years have stepped up and volunteered to make this happen. Now it's YOUR turn! Will you accept the challenge? Will you volunteer to serve? Do you know a member who should?

Contact Jennifer Rollins at rollins.jl@me.com

THE

West Florida Genealogical Society

Preserving the Past, Enriching the
Future



WFGS New Website

The WFGS website transition to the new platform is complete. The URL is the same (www.wfgs.org).

As a WFGS Member, your login name to the website will remain the same.

Your password did not transition because it is encrypted.

At your FIRST LOGIN, you will need to go through the “forgot password” process.

Click on the “I forgot my password” link on the Member login page. This link takes you to the “Reset Password” form. Enter your email address in your profile and reset instructions will be sent to you. The email will come from ENS CRM.

Your password must be at least eight characters long and include at least one capital letter and one number.

Website Feedback

The new WFGS website has been active for a few weeks, and the Board would like feedback from the members. There are a few problems that we are aware of. If you encounter any problems while using the website, please let a Board member know.

Meeting Recordings

Please remember that presenters copyright all program content. Recording, photographing slides, copying content, or reposting our program recordings anywhere online or on other platforms is strictly prohibited without the presenter’s explicit permission. Lack of permissions violates copyright and undermines the generosity of the speakers who share their research with our community.

Please respect our presenters and their intellectual property by not recording, photographing, or redistributing program recordings in any form.

Thank you for helping us protect our speakers’ work.

10 Must Haves for Genealogy and Family History Success

Thomas MacEntee

Whether you're just "dabbling" in genealogy and researching your roots, or you've become a "hard core lifer" obsessed with "the hunt," there are basic skills that family historians of all levels have in common. We'll review those skills that can help you find success researching online or in-person.

Is there a RIGHT WAY to do GENEALOGY?

I've never liked living in a "black and white" world where there are only two ways of doing something. Telling another genealogist that they aren't doing it "right" can quickly turn a misunderstanding into a battle royale. However, I do think there are some BASICS of genealogy and family history research that should be learned and employed so that we aren't just "playing around." Sites like Ancestry have "gamified" genealogy so it is fun to build family trees, click on hints, add info, etc. But are you really building a legacy and leaving a solid body of work for your future generations?

The 10 Must Haves

My list of "must haves" for genealogy is one I think most genealogists can agree with.

A Sense of Purpose

Seriously consider why you want to search for your ancestors and know more about your family history. Take into account how many years you've been doing this, how much time you spend each week researching, and how much money you spend each year going to conferences, society meetings, ordering copies of records, subscribing to websites. It is so easy to just bounce from thing to thing and never really have anything to show for your investment of time and money. Having one big goal such as "I'm going to write a book about the MacEntee family history" is admirable but it might be too big and overwhelming. Start with small goals: "I'm going to write a two-page biographical sketch on Elmer MacEntee, my great-grandfather." Then more small goals and pretty soon you'll find you can string them together into that one big goal!

Communication Skills

Why Can't We All Just Get Along? You think it would be simple especially since the genealogy com-

munity is generally known as a dedicated and intelligent group of researchers all focused on a similar goal: finding our ancestors. Yet researchers are people and as such little things like the ego and even misinformation or lack of knowledge can be like sand in the gears of the genealogy machine.

It all comes down to COMMUNICATION.

Whether dealing with family members, cousins with whom I've never met before, or archivists and librarians, I always try to remember the 5 Cs: Clear, Concise, Complete, Congenial, and Compensation.

Writing Skills

I was fortunate enough to become a good writer in high school and a better writer in college. In genealogy don't feel pressured to write a long "proof" argument like those you see in society journals. Employ the KISS concept: Keep It Simple, Stupid. I contend that you can compose a written proof of an ancestor's birth date or birth location in 50 words or less and still follow guidelines set out by professional genealogy societies and associations.

In addition, learn to master whatever writing application you are using whether it is Microsoft Word, Google Docs, etc. Once you acquire those skills, you'll have an easier time documenting your research efforts as well as getting those family stories in a fixed and written format.

Genealogy Research Toolbox

Have you ever sat down either in front of your home computer or at a library prepared to start some genealogy research and then *bam* you can't find that wonderful website or resource you used last week or last month? Wouldn't it be great if you could build your own little toolbox of research resources that you could use anywhere? Building a research toolbox with your own favorite links, books, articles and more is what you need. A personalized research toolbox not only can help you locate information about your own ancestors, but it is a great way to share resources with your fellow genealogists.

Containers: Think of a physical toolbox, perhaps made of metal or plastic. Which design would work best for you? Large or small? With a handle? Lots of

small drawers inside for items? For a “research” toolbox, especially one with lots of links to websites, consider a container where you can organize your browser “bookmarks.” A big consideration is portability.

Content: Think of what you would want to have at your fingertips during genealogical research. Are you constantly going out to Google to search for something like a list of old occupation names or abbreviations for given names? If you already had these website links in your research toolbox, imagine the amount of time you could save? And that time could be used to search for ancestors instead of tools!

Organization Skills

If you’re a beginning genealogist you want to research “the right way” and if you’re an intermediate one, you probably have learned from your early mistakes. While some would argue as to what is “correct” we would probably all agree on these points as to what a research log could and should do:

Create an action plan. Many genealogists have some sort of research plan whether it is written down or in their heads. A research log can help you fine tune that research plan and convert it into an action plan. For many of us, that is the challenge . . . getting from “What I want to look for” to “Oh, look what I’ve found!”

Keep you organized. Do you spend hours just bouncing around on Ancestry.com or another website? What about in-person at a repository . . . do you use your time wisely or just go from resource to resource? A research log can help you not only organize your research finds but also identify areas where you need to do more research.

Allow instant recall. Even if you are successful at finding the records and information you need in genealogy, what good is it if you can’t locate that information easily and quickly? Especially if you store your finds on a computer, it helps to have a “map” to where all that stuff is! Use links and entries in a research log to find items fast.

Reduce “do-overs.” There’s nothing worse than spending time researching only to find out that you already had that particular record. A research log lets you know where you’ve been and where you should be spending your time.

Help analyze data. If you’ve located several different records related to an ancestor’s marriage, how can you really analyze all the information and conclude if you can’t see the details all at once? A research log lets you sort by fields or column headings and search for specific keywords so you can easily analyze results.

Evidence Evaluation Skills

Have you ever looked closely at a vital record such as a birth or death certificate? I mean REALLY close . . . every line, front and back, every stray mark? That is what we should do as genealogists but many of us get caught up in the excitement of the find, that our eyes only gravitate towards what we feel matters at that time. The following fields can be used when working with *The Board for Certification of Genealogists’ Skill-building: Guidelines for Evaluating Genealogical Resources*.

Source Type: A source is Original if it is the first written statement, photograph, or recording of an event. Subsequent copies are Derivative and may be reproduced by hand, machine, camera or scanner; they may be reproduced on paper, in microform, as photographs or digital images, or in any other medium that records the image whether transcribed by hand or technology.

Clarity: Use Clear if the information can easily be read. Use Marginal if information is not clear, is partially obscured and researcher must “guess” at words or letters.

Information Type: Use Primary if a piece of information is recorded by a knowledgeable eyewitness or participant in that event, or by an official whose duties require him or her to make an accurate record of the event when it occurs. Use Secondary if information is supplied by someone who was not at the event and may include errors caused by memory loss or influenced by other parties who may have a bias or be under emotional stress.

Evidence Type: Direct evidence is any fact that is explicitly stated. Indirect evidence is inferred from one or more pieces of evidence within the record.

Source Citation Skills

When I first learned about source citations, I didn’t believe they were necessary. I thought they were a waste of time. Over time, I realized the importance:

Establish Proof. Cited material gives credibility to a fact or relationship while proving a connection.

Determine Reliability of Evidence. Some sources are more reliable and make a stronger proof. Compare points of evidence based on their source.

Track Records and Resources. Easily go back and locate records and their repository. This is effective when the original record or a copy is lost.

Expand Research. When encountering a difficult area of research, look for sources that were successful in making a proof and check them again.

Discover Conflicts. Locate contradictions in existing research or when new evidence is found.

Understand the Research Process. When using another researcher's work, sources can give a glimpse at how that research was developed.

Placeholders. Pick up a research project where you left off by looking at source citations.

Tech Skills

Even for a "techie" like me, it isn't easy to keep up with the latest genealogy technology. A great way to stay up to date is to visit the RootsTech website and sign up for their e-newsletter. And also attend the FREE virtual portion of RootsTech each year!

One bit of advice on updating technology: never go for the latest and greatest. Never be a ".0" person. What do I mean by that? Well, when a new version of a genealogy software comes out – like Version 8.0 – don't run to update your copy even if it is free. I've found that most .0 versions of software and apps have bugs and glitches. Wait for the Version 8.1 which usually is available a few weeks after the .0 version. You'll have a better upgrade experience and why should you be a bug fixer for that company?

A Sense of Fun

It can be difficult to quantify fun when it comes to genealogy. I'm sure anything we genealogists find enjoyable like indexing records on FamilySearch or transcribing an old letter from an ancestor will appear just plain weird and nerdy to friends and family.

For me, each time I am doing my genealogy I ask myself, "Thomas, is this fun?" And if it isn't I move on to perhaps a different ancestor or a different task. I don't mean to say that you should avoid the menial tasks but look for balance between what MUST be done and what CAN be done ... and go for the fun stuff!

A Sense of Legacy

I strongly believe that the 45 years I've spent doing genealogy should have something to show for that time and effort. If my family is not interested and I don't have a family member who wants to inherit my work. At the very least when my "expiration date" arrives, I will have already donated my research to one or more genealogy libraries and societies or have left instructions with my family on how to dispose of my research and everything that goes with it.

What if I did it WRONG?

Finally, how can you do it WRONG if there is no RIGHT WAY in genealogy? And even if after reviewing the 10 must haves above, you notice something you've done wrong, it is easy to fix. Like evidence evaluation ... just review the section above, look at the Resource List below, set a reasonable goal for yourself like "spend an hour learning the best way to evaluate a historical document," and just do it! That small time and effort investment will really pay off as you continue your genealogy journey.

Resources

Genealogy Bargains

Genealogy Cheat Sheets

<https://genealogybargains.com/genealogy-cheat-sheets/>

Sense of Purpose

10 Ways to Jumpstart Your Genealogy

<https://genealogybargains.com/syllabus-jumpstart>

Evidence Evaluation

Evidence Explained Website

<https://www.evidenceexplained.com/>

The Genealogical Proof Standard

<https://bcgcertification.org/ethics-standards/>

Source Citations

Evidence Explained Website

<https://www.evidenceexplained.com/>

Writing Skills

BCG Resources on Key Skills

<https://bcgcertification.org/learning/skills/>

Genealogy Research Toolbox

Cyndi's List

<https://www.cyndislist.com>

FamilySearch Digital Library

<https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/>

Genealogy Research Toolbox

<http://genealogytoolbox.weebly.com>

Google Bookmarks

<https://www.google.com/bookmarks/>

Google Books

<https://books.google.com>

Wolfram-Alpha

<https://www.wolframalpha.com>

Organization Skills

Genealogy Research Log – Microsoft Excel

<https://genealogybargains.com/genreslog>

Trello

<https://trello.com>

Tech Skills

RootsTech

<https://www.rootstech.org>

Sense of Fun

10 Ways to Jumpstart Your Genealogy

<https://genealogybargains.com/syllabus-jumpstart>

Thomas MacEntee, of Genealogy Bargains

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New York Heritage Digital Collections

Millions of families have passed through New York, some briefly, some for decades. Search for your person or place or browse through the New York Heritage Digital Collections to find aerial and ground-level photos, state military records, even the guest book for a tearoom.

<https://nyheritage.org/>

Southern Campaigns Revolutionary War Pension Statements & Rosters

<https://www.revwarapps.org>

Military Court Martial File Deposit

The Court Martial records from the National Archives are now officially available to order on their site for the first time!

<https://civilwarrecords.com/products/military-court-martial-file-deposit?>

Newspapers.com

Have a paper you'd like to see?

Are we missing the paper you're looking for? Fill out this request form and our team will look into it.

<https://www.newspapers.com/contact/>

Fresh history has arrived! We're thrilled to add 189 new newspaper titles to our archives, spanning everything from small-town news to international papers. Whether you're unearthing a long-lost family connection, investigating local history, or reliving major world events through primary sources, these newly added pages offer countless fresh paths for discovery.

<https://blog.newspapers.com/189-new-papers-on-newspapers-com/?>

WFGS Name Tags

Name tags can be ordered at the check-in desk at the general meeting. The price of the name tags is \$5.00. Payment must be made at the time of ordering the name tag (exact amount only).



**Your
Name**

West Florida
Genealogical Society

Palafox Market

Jennifer Rollins

The WFGS participated in the Palafox Saturday market on the South end on August 29 and September 12. Between the two events, we gave out over 54 Genealogy starter kits and society flyers, provided by the West Florida Library Genealogy Department. We engaged with community members discussing our monthly meetings, genealogy assistance, Thursday help hours, annual conference, and quarterly luncheons. We heard some wonderful family stories and traced lineages, while inviting the community to interact with our world map of traced ancestor roots, which had 209 pins.

We are looking for volunteers to sign up for our next market in October, either the 17th or the 24th, depending on volunteer interest. Set up is at 8 am, market starts at 9 am and goes until 2 pm. If there are multiple volunteers signed up, we can do a morning shift and an afternoon shift. If interested, please see the signup sheet at the October meeting and speak to a board member.



Palafox Market
August 29





Palafox Market
September 12

FSGS Poolside Chat Webinar

Google My Maps: Visualizing Your Ancestors' Lives

Linda Debe

October 15, 2026

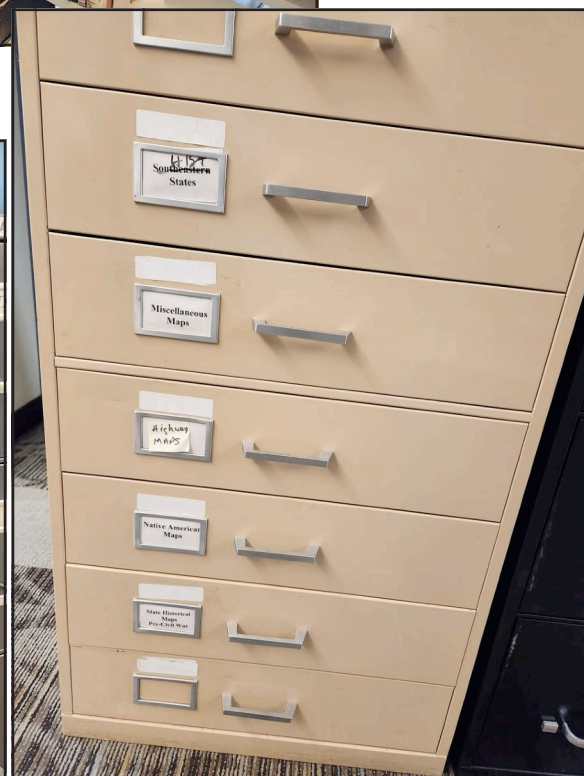
Webinar Abstract: Discover the power of Google My Maps, an essential tool within the Google app suite, for visualizing your ancestors' lives. From mapping migration patterns and cemetery locations to planning research trips and validating historical documents, Google My Maps offers a dynamic way to bring your genealogical research to life. In this presentation, you will learn the basic features of Google My Maps and how to use it to create rich, visual stories of your ancestors' journeys and experiences. Start transforming your genealogical data into interactive maps and uncover new insights into your family history.

Presenter: Linda Debe is a lecturer, writer, and lifelong student with 40 years of genealogy experience, affectionately known as the Sleepless Genealogist. Her passions include maps, deeds, and technology. Microsoft Office certified in Access and Excel, Linda loves creating spreadsheets to analyze research—her motto: work smarter, not harder. She holds an AAS in Electronics Technology from the U.S. Air Force, is an alum of Pro Gen 54, and expects to graduate from the International Institute for Genealogical Studies in 2026. Linda serves as Program Chair for the North Hills Genealogists in Pittsburgh and leads Technology SIGs with North Hills and the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania. She has spoken at RootsTech, PaGE, the UGA Summit, IGHR, and the Atlanta State Archives' Inaugural Native American Symposium, among many others.

Registration: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_uJelGpVJTeewEuFvQflTQw

Genealogy Thursdays

Tables are set aside for research. You may just need room to spread out books and notes. No laptop? There are public computers available. Bring a flash drive and save what you find. Use the library resources. It's not all online. Check out the books, maps and surnames files. Come join us each week. Remember, the librarians are there every day.



General Meetings

General meetings are held on the first Saturday of the month (except July) at 10:30 a.m. at the downtown Pensacola Library, meeting room B, on the first floor (239 North Spring Street), Pensacola, Florida.

Each month features a different speaker and topic. Our meetings are open to the public and free of charge.

Executive Board of Directors Meetings

Regular and special meetings of the Board are open to all members of the WFGS. Members who are not on the Board may not participate in any deliberation or discussion unless expressly authorized by a vote of a majority of the Board or have been placed on the meeting agenda.

Board of Directors meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month at 4:00 p.m., via Zoom.

Monthly Meeting

The meeting room is reserved from 10:30 am until 1:00 pm for our monthly meetings. Members and visitors are welcome to stay to socialize and have discussions. Board members will be available during this time to answer any questions.

WFGS Membership Dues

Annual dues are \$20.00 for an individual membership or \$25.00 for a family membership.

Annual dues shall be payable on or before January 1. Dues should be paid before March 1 for members to retain access to the members' side of the website.

Dues may be paid at the monthly meetings, by mail, or on the website (<https://wfgs.org>).

Please make checks payable to the West Florida Genealogical Society.

Send checks to:

WFGS Treasurer

P.O. Box 10217

Pensacola, Florida 32524-0217

Update Your Email

Please log in to the WFGS Members' portal on the website (<https://wfgs.org/login>) and verify your email address. The email on the membership list is the one used to contact you (i.e., newsletter, conference updates, general information, etc.). **If you haven't been receiving emails from the Society check your spam folder.**

Contact me, if you have problems. Denise Mowery, Editor, wfgsfootprints@gmail.com