



# West Houston Area Genealogy Society



"Helping to find your roots!"

September 2021

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"A good snapshot keeps a moment from running away."

— E. Welty

## Presenting In Person & Virtually!

Speaking at our hybrid presentation for September 21 is Betsy Mills. Her topic is **"Solving Photo Mysteries."** All of us have one or more photos on which we would like to identify the people, determine where it was taken, or discover the history behind it. Learn some great steps to help you answer your ques-

tions.

Save the Date!

**September 18, 2021  
Saturday!!**

The meeting opens at **10:00 am** and **the program will begin at 10:30 am**. We will be meeting in person at the **Steve Rad-dack Center on Clay Road** or you can attend virtu-ally.



Register at **www.whags.org** to attend virtually.

## "Solving Family Photo Mysteries" by Jenny Sharrer ©

Do you have an old photo or two you would like to know about? If so, I encourage you to pull them out and partake of an opportunity to do some investigating. Hopefully, you will have a break-

through with identification. The Society's first monthly program for the 2021-2022 program year is on how to resolve old photo mysteries. Some of us inherited boxes full of unidentified old photos

and others have just one or two. Regardless of the number, it is important to uncover a missing piece of our family's history!

*Cont. on pg 4*

## The President's Corner....



I am excited to start another programming year with Betsy Mills presenting *Solving Photo Mysteries*. This will be WHAGS' first hybrid program. A hybrid meeting has virtual participants and in person attendees. The Leadership Team (LT) decided this was the best way forward, given the uncertainties with Covid, and to provide our members and guests with the opportunity to participate where they feel comfortable.

Neal Scott helped lead the efforts moving WHAGS into the hybrid meeting environment. Challenges are depending on the physical meeting location and audio/visual infrastructure and equipment available at the physical site. The LT is supporting the hybrid meeting processing with their equipment and a computer donated by Joe and Brenda Carrington. We have made good progress over the summer and are still on a steep learning curve. The LT is working hard to provide the best solution for all participants. Please be patient as we continue to learn what works best and what we need to improve. Our goal is to provide the best programming to everyone, virtually, in person, and hybrid.

Your LT has worked hard to provide great programming, improve WHAGS, and meet the desires of our members. Members of the LT participated in leadership forum virtual meetings with other Texas genealogy societies through the Texas State Genealogical Society (TxSGS). Ideas, issues, and solutions are explored at these sessions in areas such as programming, social media, marketing, member engagement, etc. Thanks to the TxSGS

for stepping up and showing us, we are not alone!

Similarly, the National Genealogical Society (NGS), after the merger with the Federation of Genealogical Societies, has increased its support of genealogy societies, archives, libraries, and museums. During the NGS Family History Conference in May 2021, the NGS held a day-long *Focus on Societies* symposium to share best practices; building leadership; attracting and retaining members; etc., attended by members of the LT. Additionally, NGS has established a Delegate Council as a new advisory group of its member organizations, to advise the NGS Board of Directors on how it can best serve the member organizations. The WHAGS delegate is yours truly. The Delegate Council meets quarterly, three virtual meetings and one inperson meeting at the annual Family History Conference.

In June, the Board adopted the slogan of "Helping to find your roots." This represents what WHAGS is about. We are here to help each other with genealogy whether you are new to genealogy or have been researching for years. Last year, we added a DNA special interest group (SIG) and monthly members-helping-members sessions. We are also working on a list of what are people's areas of specialization and what are areas where people need help. This is a result of the survey done last spring. If you are new or did not complete the survey and would like to share knowledge or find out who in WHAGS can help you, please reach out to Jenny Sharrer or Pacquitta Laverents so we can capture the information.

## The President's Corner .... Cont'd

Finally, remember the phrase, "It takes a village." It takes all of us to make WHAGS. We are all valuable members of WHAGS, and we need all of us to make WHAGS a vibrant genealogy society where we all help each other, just like our slogan states. Many things can be done at home, e.g., organizing digital files, putting together a flyer for program advertising, editing articles for the newsletter, contributing content for the website, volunteering to present at the December Holiday Party, and many other opportunities. This is a great way to get to know other WHAGS' members!

I hope to "see" everyone soon!

Gail




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### "Resources to Broaden Your Knowledge" by Linda Hudson ©

There are thousands of resources at your disposal, to access and to learn from which will assist you in your family history research. Sharing these resources with you is an endeavor of our newsletter. As records become more digitized and available across the globe, your success becomes more likely.

Our membership researches many different locations, ethnic groups, record types, and more. If a particular entry is not about your family search specifically, I still encour-

age you to read the information. It may be a resource like Wiki that has information on numerous records from multiple ethnicities and you may find that link to records in your area of research. The U.S. has numerous genealogy societies that have databases to "homeland" records or specific areas in the U.S. For example, "Palantines to America German Genealogy Society." They can offer guidance for your research that may have not occurred to you.

## “Solving Family Photo Mysteries” Cont’d from page 1,

I will be using Maureen A. Taylor’s book, *Family Photo Detective*, to write this article. Before I begin to share information about her and her book, I want to tell you about a YouTube video that I encourage you to watch in advance of seeing our speaker, Betsy Mills, on Saturday, September 18.

The video opened my eyes to just how much sleuthing one can do to identify details about a photo’s content, when it might have been taken, and perhaps what the occasion was. To get the most out of Betsy’s upcoming presentation, I suggest you watch Jordan Liles’ video first. Search YouTube for Jordan Liles and the video title, “Ep.1 Solving Old N.Y. Photo Mysteries”. If your experience of watching this 16 minute video is like mine, you will come away with a greatly enhanced interest in solving photo mysteries. It is an example of awesome detective work. Enjoy!

So now let’s dive into learning about Maureen A. Taylor and her book. Maureen, known as “The Photo Detective,” is an internationally renowned expert in historic photo identification, preservation, and genealogical research. This book was written in 2000 and has been reprinted a number of times. It is a 174 page paperback jam packed with case studies about mystery photos and tons of very helpful information. I could say A to Z information. The chapters are: Bringing the Past to Life; Talking with Relatives; Cased Images: Daguerreotypes, Ambrotypes, and Tintypes; Paper Prints and Negatives; Color and Digital Photographs; Identifying the Photographer; Images from Birth to Death; Looking for Clues; Identifying Costume; Read-

ing the Clues in Photographs; Photograph Albums; Adding up the Clues; and Extensive Appendices.

As budding genealogists, you and I are accustomed to asking questions to learn more about our ancestors. To succeed in uncovering information about old photos, we will need to up our game at asking questions, paying attention to minute details, being persistent and keeping track of what we learn along the way ... just like with re-searching documents.

Photos show us what was important to our ancestors. The images, along with all of the documents created during their lifetimes, provide a more complete ‘picture’ of our ancestors. When visual and written materials are combined in a family history, a wonderful story emerges. Family photo collections become a valuable possession because the photos contain a record of the past.

Photography became an option around 1840. If you are fortunate enough to have photos from that era, you have 180+ years of family history! With pictures, you have a visual record of your family’s history. It’s the history of the births, loves, and deaths of your ancestors .

Maureen’s book provides information to assist you in discovering the visual heritage of your family by evaluating and understanding the various aspects of the photos you possess. Each chapter in the book contains charts and illustrations to assist in uncovering the clues in the photos. The book is rich in case studies that provide examples of how other people solved their photo mysteries. Maureen said seeing old unidentified photos at auctions inspired her to write the book! Let’s not let our old photos be auctioned off.

## Cont'd

The rest of this article is a summary of the tips and guidelines that caught my attention:

### General guidelines:

- ◆ Handle photographs carefully
- ◆ Use a worksheet to record data about each photo
- ◆ Develop a research strategy
- ◆ Cite your sources
- ◆ Be persistent

### Tools of the trade:

- ◆ Magnifying glass or photographer's loupe
- ◆ Cotton or nonlatex and powder-free medical examination gloves
- ◆ Measuring tape
- ◆ Pens and pencils for marking images
- ◆ Protective sleeves, photo albums and storage containers
- ◆ Scanner
- ◆ Worksheets for describing the prints you are researching

### Ways to date a photo:

- ◆ Costume
- ◆ Type of photo...shiny metal daguerreotype, glass ambrotype, iron picture called tintypes, or paper
- ◆ Detail in the photo ... props, background, and facial characteristics

### When interviewing relatives ask:

- ◆ Do you recognize this photograph?
- ◆ Are any of the people in the photograph familiar?
- ◆ Who are they and how do you know them/how are you related to them?
- ◆ Was this picture taken for a particular occasion?
- ◆ Does this photograph remind you of any family events or stories?

- ◆ Who owned the photograph before you?
- ◆ Do you have a collection of family photographs?

### Physical characteristics to examine:

- ◆ Shape of face oval, heart, round, or square shaped
- ◆ Eyes (shape, position, color, size)
- ◆ Nose and nostrils (shape, size)
- ◆ Ears (shape, position on head, length)
- ◆ Hair pattern (baldness, widow's peaks)
- ◆ Eyebrows (size, shape)
- ◆ Moles
- ◆ Teeth

### Where to go, what to look at, or next steps when looking at a mystery photo?

- ◆ Ask family and relatives
- ◆ Assess the photographic format. For instance, is it an 1840s daguerreotype or a circa late 1800's cabinet card (photo mounted on cardstock)?
- ◆ Are there props that may be related to a profession or a family tradition?
- ◆ Are there fashion clues that can help date the photo or reveal ancestral interests and their fashion sense?
- ◆ Is there a name or mark of a photographer? Lucky you, if there is one!
- ◆ What clues does the family's history provide? If the facts don't add up, start over to see what you missed or re-examine your family tree for other possible matchups.

## Cont'd

There are many lists of resources in the book. Examples include Resources for Costume Dating, What to do if You Can't Identify a Photo, Resources for Identifying Jewelry, and Magazines and Catalogs for Dating Costumes and Interiors.

This short article does not do the book or the topic of identifying old photos justice. If, after viewing Jordan Liles' video and participating in Betsy's presentation, you desire additional information, I encourage you to order Maureen's book.

I ordered a used copy, that is like new, from Thrift Books at a huge cost savings. In addition, Maureen has products on her website ([maureentaylor.com](http://maureentaylor.com)) that include a 9-lesson video course titled *Saving Family History for Future Generations* for the price of \$129, sometimes on sale for \$99. Wishes for continued success with sleuthing your photo mysteries!



Photo Courtesy of Linda Hudson

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## "More Resources for you!" cont'd from page 3

Researching our ancestors and finding when they arrived in America can be a challenge. When did they come? What port did they arrive in? Did they travel alone or with family? How old were they? How was their name spelled? All of these questions become hurdles to finding the right record.

Many of our ancestors came before ports of entry had detailed protocols for entry. The Steerage Act of 1820 required record keeping. The time period when they came and their ethnicity played a role in which port they arrived. Consider this — in 1848 my two times great grandfather arrived in New York and traveled via water and land to Wisconsin. His sisters and mother who came in 1852 first went to England — then their ship wrecked off the Canadian coast. Their destination had

been Philadelphia with a plan to go overland to Wisconsin. They took a ship to New York City and then moved on. Another great grandfather came from Germany and sailed from Hamburg to Cuba and then to New Orleans in 1871. My point is when and where they came depends on the circumstances in their homeland, what ports they had access to in Europe and in the U.S., and importantly where "travel agents" told them to go. Cheap land, great soil, established ethnic community, and other factors determined travel routes and locations. These two sites can provide information to help you get started:

[www.theshiplist.com](http://www.theshiplist.com)

[www.genesearch.com](http://www.genesearch.com)

## "Why Join a Genealogy Society (Gen Soc)?"

by Linda Hudson ©

Joining a genealogy society is important for numerous reasons. Among them are to up our game, grow our skills, and learn more about how to access documents. To better understand how membership can help with this, let's look at what genealogy societies and historical societies do.



There are layers of societies. In the U.S., there is the National Genealogical Society. Its main objectives include: providing conferences and other events that help the novice to the expert grow their research skills. It also has an impressive collection of family Bibles and member submitted trees. NGS also publishes a quarterly magazine. It features genealogical case studies, instruction on how to use various programs, access various data bases as well as instructs on answering research questions through using historical events and related records. The New England Historic and Genealogical Society is a major archival society with a focus on families that came in the 17th or 18th century. Its monthly publication, "American Ancestors," relates information about the history of the United States with research tips for collections across the U.S. Both organizations produce additional scholarly quarterlies that contain articles that demonstrate genealogical proof and the standards of genealogy research. Check both websites for cost and what they provide to members. While both societies are among the most expensive, you get a LOT for your money.

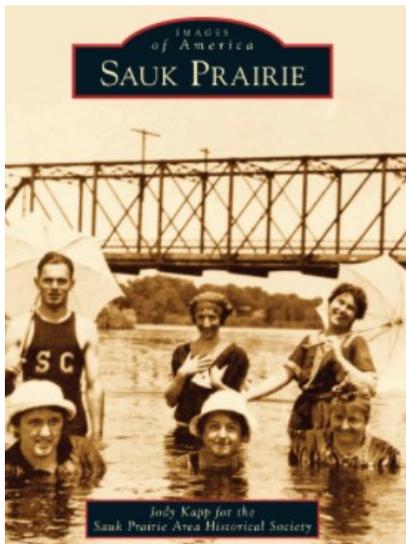
Most states have a state genealogical society. In Texas, it is called the Texas State Genealogical Society (TxSGS).

Like the national programs, Texas holds a state conference which has presentations for beginners to experts. It publishes a quarterly journal containing research articles, research guides and other items to help grow your skills and knowledge about what records and resources are available in the state archives and at the local level. Fees for state societies vary, but most are approximately half that of the national societies.

Local societies are more varied in what they provide to their members and communities. They provide educational programs for members. Special Interest Groups (SIGS) have become a cornerstone for many societies. These groups deal with a specific area, and typically meet once a month and can go on indefinitely. Topics include DNA, Writing Your Family History, Using Roots Magic or other ancestral programs, ethnic based research (ex. Italian, Jewish), and Conquering Brick Walls. Many local societies function much like a local historical society. They house cemetery lists, court records, local history, and newspapers. They often have family submitted documents and family trees that have not been digitized or submitted to a major collection. These organizations are golden and have helped me get through a few brick walls. One also provided look ups in local records. A member was able to verify that my two times great grandparents got married in the county. This most gracious

## Cont'd

person even attempted to find the actual record at the courthouse. On a trip I made to Wisconsin, I found that the record was horribly misfiled and it was indeed there.



You can join societies in ancestral homelands. Many have Facebook pages. For example, I am a member of Cumbria Family History Society which has many resources. Clearly, I don't attend presentations, but I do have people I can reach out to when I have questions. They also post upcoming local conferences and have a yearly travel opportunity to see the region of my people. I am also a member of the Cumberland Travelling Families on FB. They have a GEDmatch group and link families together. They also post stories and information of interest to its members. Just like our national, state and local societies, more developed countries across the globe have these as well. These are well worth joining, particularly if you are planning a trip. I've done this with research trips in the U.S., and I believe it made my trips far more successful. One day I will travel to the UK and to Central Eu-

and intend to use the organizations and groups there to help with my planning.

Also increasing are the ethnicity based societies. According to Lisa Alzo, these societies link people with a common interest, location, and surnames. For example, Texas has a Czech society. There is also a Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International. These groups can not only introduce you to new "cousins," but can help you knock down a few brick walls. The foreign based societies may provide free lookups or be able to answer your questions about local history. Some also provide language instruction programs, have festivals, and organize tours.



Bewcastle, Cumbria, St Cuthbert's ...

[britainexpress.com](http://britainexpress.com)

One day I will get here — the land of my people. Here lies Routledge ancestors of years prior to 1683.

Societies do so much. They help us build skills, provide opportunities to network, and guide us to new discoveries. Members help make their society stronger when they give back. Members can abstract and index local records, train beginners in research and software skills, serve on committees and other leadership positions to help grow our societies and strengthen them.

## Cont'd

Another important reason to join a society is to advocate for the preservation of records. I was once in a central Texas courthouse, and I wanted to look at the Poll Tax book from the 19th century. I was told they threw those old books away. Sadly, the senior clerk didn't even know what a "poll tax" was. Many societies take items like this, or family submitted histories and Bible records and archive them for the community.

Not everything is on the computer or has been digitized. Much has changed in the way we research in the last 30 years. But it remains true that without the documents and the proof of relationships, working online is just searching. Researching is when you have the actual documents of land, probate, court, tax, vital, military, and other resources. Many of these can only be found in courthouses, local repositories, archives or in manuscripts collections.

That's why it is important to know how to research at these locations. The online sources are great, but I've yet to meet someone who met the standards of proof for all their researched people without going to an archive of some sort.

Join societies where you can make helpful and lasting connections. Bear in mind, the cost annually can add up.

Last, give back. You are a valued member of this society. We need each of you to get engaged supporting the activities of our society. The more who contribute, the easier the work load for all, and the more programs and opportunities we can offer to our membership to grow larger and to support our common passion. Societies are changing due to Covid, the internet, and our fast-paced lifestyles. We can adjust. We can meet the new reality, and we can do it well. But, we need you. We have what we have because others came before and did the work. Now, it's our turn.

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## "The Chaparral Genealogical Society Library in Magnolia, TX" by Joe Carrington ©

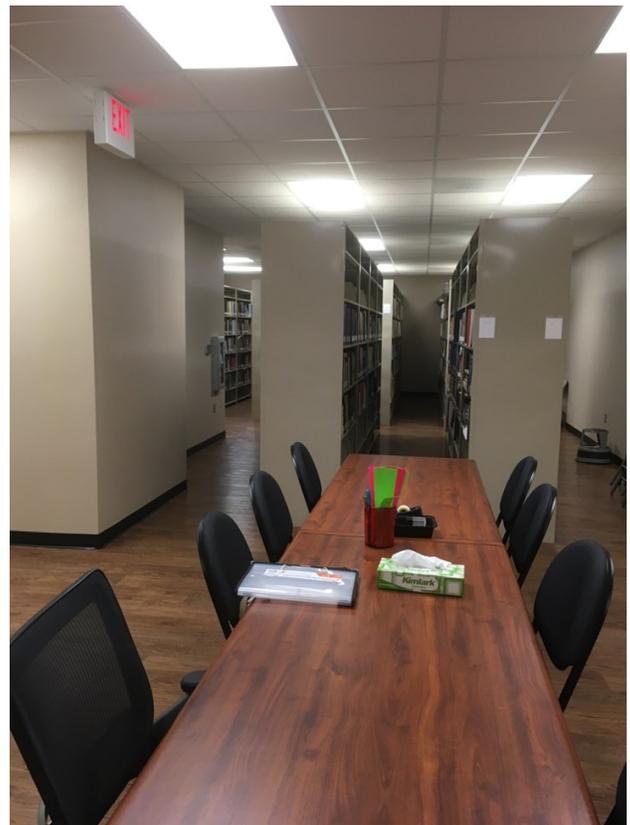
If you have ancestors that may have lived in or passed through the Magnolia area — this is a great resource for you!!

The Chaparral Genealogical Society began in 1972 and by 1982 had a plot of land and a small camp house. The members now had a place to meet and to store their books. Books and manuscripts were donated by the members and as the membership grew their library took on a life of its own.

By 2014, the small camp house needed repairs and there was no room for the books. Montgomery County offered us a place for the library that we could not refuse, and the library was moved to 31350 Friendship Drive, Magnolia. After years of not being able to purchase books, due to lack of space, Chaparral was able to add over 500 volumes to the collection in 2019. More have been added through donations, both monetary and otherwise. During a conversation with our librarian, I was told that some of the duplicate books might be donated to help other genealogy groups.

The attached photos are of the Chaparral Genealogical Society's research library. It is open to anyone for genealogy research on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 10 am to 2 pm.

We may not have a volunteer available so please call (281-259-7500) before you come. If there is no answer, you can give Joe a call at 832-698-1788, and I'll try to meet you there. Internet access is available. Copies or prints are \$0.15 per page. Food and drink are confined to the break area.



The library looks empty without you here diving deep into your genealogy research. Come Join Us!!



## "A Place in Time!"

Our newsletter is going to have a new column. The hope is that each of you will contribute to the newsletter by sharing your successes, perhaps some accidental ones, and your family history.

You may want to discuss the military service of a family member and what you learned. You could share what it was like back in the day. For example, the family and the process of butchering a hog. (Been there.) I learned a lot about hog butchering. I was too young to do it, but it was a family affair with many jobs. You can write about a special family memento, event, story, etc. You may have a story that has passed through time with no real evidence, but it's a great story. ALL of you are story tellers. Step up and share

a story of your people.



This is the wedding photo of my maternal grandparents married in 1921. As the daughter of her oldest daughter, I have the cameo that she is wearing. Many granddaughters wore it when they married. More to come.....

## Editor's Corner:

Hi WHAGS members,

This year marks the second year of our society's newsletter. I would be most grateful if you would share your comments with me about the content of the newsletter. Suggest ideas for the newsletter. Offer to write for the newsletter. If you become aware of an event or a site that you think other members would appreciate hearing about, send me an email. I would gladly include your suggestions.

If you attend a virtual conference or in-person conference, feel free to share those great tips you wrote down for me to pass on. Recently, I attended conferences sponsored by the the International German Genealogy Partnership and the

International Society for British Genealogy and Family History and grew my resources. I'm looking forward to the upcoming TxSGS.org conference. I'm always learning. Trying to anyway. The misfortune of Covid in our midst has brought a growth in online programming that is well worth participating in.

I hope to see each of you in person, or virtually, at our September program.

Wishing you all health and well-being.

All my best, Linda



# West Houston Area Genealogy Society (WHAGS)

*Helping to find your roots*

For the latest event updates throughout the year, visit our website at [whags.org](http://whags.org)

Everyone researching for ancestors...*Novice to Expert...*is invited to participate

## Calendar of Events - 2021-2022 August-May

### August

17 10-12 am WHAGS Leadership Team Meeting

### September

9 10-12 am **DNA Special Interest Group (SIG)**

14 10-12 am WHAGS Leadership Team Meeting

18 10-12:30 am **Betsy Mills: *Solving Photo Mysteries***

25 1-3 pm **Members Helping Members**

### October

1-2 TxSGS Family History Conference Virtual...Early-Bird registration open through August 31 [TxSGS.org](http://TxSGS.org)

12 10-12 am WHAGS Leadership Team Meeting

14 10-12 am **DNA Special Interest Group (SIG)**

16 10-12:30 **Patti Smith: *The Beatitudes of a Genealogist***

23 1-3 pm **Members Helping Members**

### November

11 10-12 am **DNA Special Interest Group (SIG)**

16 10-12 am WHAGS Leadership Team Meeting

20 10-12:30 **Irene Walters: *Keys to Research Success: Breaking Down Brick Walls***

27 1-3 pm **Members Helping Members**

### December

18 10:00-12:30 **Holiday Party & Members' Show & Tell: MC = Tom Woltz**

### January

11 10-12 am WHAGS Leadership Team Meeting

13 10-12 am **DNA Special Interest Group (SIG)**

15 10-12:30 ***Finding Genealogy Resources & Tools in National Archives*** (Video followed by Irene Walters facilitating Q&A)

22 1-3 pm **Members Helping Members**

### February

10 10-12 am **DNA Special Interest Group (SIG)**

15 10-12 am WHAGS Leadership Team Meeting

19 10-12:30 **Linda Worsham: *Best Practices for Writing Family Stories***

26 1-3 pm **Members Helping Members**

### March

9-12 RootsTech 2022

10 10-12 am **DNA Special Interest Group (SIG)**

13 *Daylight Savings - Spring Forward!*

15 10-12 am WHAGS Leadership Team Meeting

19 10-12:30 **Mitch Clendening: *Tools for Using Google® to Research Ancestors***

26 1-3 pm **Members Helping Members**

### April

12 10-12 am WHAGS Leadership Team Meeting

14 10-12 pm **DNA Special Interest Group (SIG)**

16 10-12:30 **Jenny Sharrer: *Generating Books Using Family Books Creator***

23 1-3 pm **Members Helping Members**

### May

12 10-12 am **DNA Special Interest Group (SIG)**

17 10-12 am WHAGS Leadership Team Meeting

21 10-12:30 **(Presenter to be determined)**

2022-2023 Board Elections

25-28 National Genealogical Society 2022 Family History Conf. [ngsgenealogy.org](http://ngsgenealogy.org)

28 1-3 pm **Members Helping Members**

**June, July & August - We are off for the summer**

## Good to Know! Beginner Tips!

Many of us have ancestors from **Central Europe**. Here are some important facts and resources to have handy to facilitate your research. 1. Throughout history the borders changed. From the 16th century to the 20th century there were a minimum of 14 border/country changes depending on the area of Europe. Tag the following online: **MEYERS.GAZ.org.**, **kartenmeister.com** — these maps/gazeteers will help you find the right location 2. Names of locations were often quite similar but not the same. Language matters. North Rhine-Westphalia is called "Nordrhein-Westfalen" in German. Try using **geogen.stoepel.net**. Put in your family surname and maps will show the areas where that name is predominant. It may help to narrow your search location. 3. Check out the info on FamilySearch Wiki, and societies in the U.S including, Palatines to America and Germanic Genealogy Society. They offer programs and publications to help you research.

### BOARD:

Gail Colby, President

Tom Woltz SR, Vice President

Tom Matchett, Treasurer

Pacquitta Lavarents, Secretary

Linda Hudson, Director

Neal Scott, Director

Jenny Sharrer, Director

Email:

Membership@houstonwestfamgen.org

Website & Virtually:

www.whags.org

**West  
Houston  
Area  
Genealogy  
Society**

**Meeting  
Virtually  
& In-  
Person**

## MORE TO KNOW

The **Texas Czech Genealogical Society** is hosting its 20th Birthday Celebration at the Caldwell Civic Center on September 25, 2021. Non-Members who register after September 7 will pay \$55.00. You will receive morning refreshments, a full catered lunch, several presentations and access to materials available through the Library/Book Room located there. Librarians will also be available to help with your inquiries. This is also your opportunity to meet some of the most knowledgeable researchers in Czech records and culture. Go to <https://txczgs.org/> for more information.

The **Texas State Genealogical Society** at <https://www.txsgs.org/> has posted its conference topics and speakers for this year's October event. Programming includes on-demand options. Also, help your society by doing the following: **use the TIPS code whags.fan for WHAGS to receive a \$10 donation from TxSGS!!**