

Big Sky Roundup

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
MONTANA STATE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Desirée Funston

On March 14, an executive order titled "Continuing the Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy" called for the dismantling of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). By the end of the month, all 70 IMLS employees were placed on leave.

Among IMLS's crucial functions is supporting and funding museums and libraries in every state in the nation, including Montana. The Grants to States program funds library development work, including our beloved Montana History Portal. To date, grants have been canceled in three states: Washington, California, and Connecticut. According to Montana State Librarian Jennie Stapp, "Montana has NOT received a termination notice at this time, but the future of our Grants to States funding is at significant risk."

On April 6, staff at Humanities Montana received notice from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) that their general operating grant was terminated effective April 2. Humanities Montana is now unable to continue its grantmaking activities, which provided for public programs, humanities speakers, and research fellowships across the state. In fact, Humanities Montana was forced to cancel numerous events that had already been approved, scheduled, and funded.

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OFFICERS:

President:

Desirée Funston
(2023 - 2026)

1st Vice President:

Stacey Corcino
(2024-2026)

2nd Vice President:

Julie Walker
(2023 - 2025)

Secretary:

Dianne Klinski
(2023 - 2025)

Treasurer:

Terry Atwood
(2013 - 2026)

Registrar:

Margaret Kemner
(2024 - 2025)

Newsletter Editor:

Jennifer Van Syckle



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (CONTINUED)

Robust libraries, museums, and archives are integral to successful genealogy research. We depend on thriving cultural repositories to provide the rich context necessary for understanding our ancestors' lives.

Responsible government spending is important, but it should not come at the cost of our collective memory. Reach out to your representatives and demand that they fight for our libraries, museums, and archives. Our history depends on it.

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MSGS BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Respectfully submitted by **Dianne Klinski**

Virtual Zoom Montana, 11 April 2025 The meeting was called to order at 9:35 am.

Board members in attendance included Desiree Funston, Margaret Kemner, Jennifer Van Syckle, Julie Walker, Stacey Corsino, Karen Huck, Terry Atwood, Dianne Klinski. Guests: Jan Thompson and Cheryl Lucas of the Great Falls Genealogical Society.

The following reports were accepted by the Board:

Secretary's Minutes from the last meeting were approved

- Treasurer's Report
- 1st Vice President's Report
- 2nd Vice President's Report
- Registrar's Report

Additional reports were given for the

- Library
- First Families & Early Settlers
- Social Media/Newsletter

Old Business

- 2025 Conference [Education] - Desiree Funston and Stacey Corsino have been working on updating the website regarding Conference information.
- FF / ES files [Resources] - Desiree continues to scan files for the Montana History Portal. Library funding has been cut and while there has been no impact on the State Library as yet, the Montana History Portal is in danger of being discontinued.
- Online classes [Education] - "Tracing Trades" lecture will be held online May 10th at 2:00pm, presented by the Genealogy Center at the Allen County (Indiana) Public Library.

New Business

- Meeting dates and times - discussion regarding changing the day and time to better fit Board members' schedules. The Summer meeting date and time was the only decision made. Further discussion on regular meetings will be addressed later.
- Banner - The new banner has been printed and is ready for use.
- The Summer meeting is June 26th at 1pm via Zoom.
- The deadline for submissions to the Roundup Newsletter is April 15th.

Julie moved to adjourn the meeting; Karen seconded. Meeting adjourned at 10:50am.



Local Society Updates

Yellowstone Genealogy Forum

Jan. 28, 2025

At our Jan. 28, 2025, meeting, Yellowstone Genealogy Forum members heard Billings resident Phillip Parker speak on his book about his great-uncle Harry Moore's service on the USS Constitution's 1931-34 tour of the United States. The tour was undertaken to thank citizens for donations made to renovate the ship and lift spirits during the Great Depression.

Phillip's research went beyond wartime service records and genealogy documents to include personal visits to the National Archives, the U.S. Naval Academy Library, The USS Constitution Museum, as well as newspaper accounts of Old Ironsides' voyage down the East Coast, through the Panama Canal and up the West Coast.

YGF members shared their own stories about service in the U.S. Navy and those of family members.

Feb. 26, 2025

At our Feb. 26, 2025, meeting, YGF member Dena Clowes Burt presented a fascinating program "Society of Friends History: The Quakers' Role in the Making of Our Country".

Since she was a child, Dena knew she was descended from a long line of Quakers, who first came to America colonies from England in the 1650s. Many Quaker beliefs such as equality, liberty and justice were enshrined in founding American documents. Quakers later became abolitionists and feminists.



Dena Burt

If you are a genealogist, consider yourself lucky if you have Quaker ancestors, according to Dena. Quakers kept detailed records of birth, deaths, marriages, many of which have been faithfully preserved. Dena showed one of a multi-volume set of documents, "Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy". Each volume covers a different state or region.

Yellowstone Genealogy Forum (Continued)

March 25, 2025

YGF members watched a Roots Tech video “Coming and Going: Tracing Your Irish Surnames” by David Ryan. Some interesting points of his lecture include the fact that Irish surnames come from a variety of sources including Vikings (MacAuliffe originally was Son of Olaf) and Anglo-Normans (Fitzgerald, Barry and Burke). Ryan’s presentation is available on YouTube. More on Ryan can be found at: ryangenealogicalresearch.com.

The YGF continues to staff our genealogy library at the Billings Community and Senior Center five afternoons a week.

Mary Parker, correspondent



Lewis and Clark Genealogical Society

The Lewis and Clark County Genealogical Society had a very fun and informative program in January. Stephanie O’Connell, CG® of Seattle, Washington presented “Unearthing Hidden Gems: The Importance of Researching Collateral Ancestors.” Stephanie shared the wild story of her great grandmother who absconded from New York to Washington State with an uncle’s inheritance and kept her origins a family secret. Stephanie’s research on her collateral great granduncle and his military pension file revealed the truth of the situation. It was a great program.

In February we had our annual election with most board members staying the same but the addition of Gary Wulff who replaced an ad-hoc board member who’s term was up. For our program we watched a video titled “Getting Out of the Rut of Your Genealogy Research” by James Tanner. He had some great tips about how to advance research.

National genealogical speaker Thomas MacEntee presented to us via Zoom for our March program. The topic was “Genealogy Do-Over,” where we learned how to go back to our beginner research and add quality with source citations, a research log, extracting and analyzing information.

We are looking forward to our Spring and summer programs and the change of season!

Julie Walker
President



Butte Silverbow Genealogical Society

February was such a cold month that the genealogists in Butte decided to stay at home and keep warm. But March brought the Butte-Silver Bow Genealogy Society back to its regular monthly meeting at the Butte Archives. The group dedicates alternate meetings to working on member questions and research problems. Everyone learns something from these collaborations, and goes home inspired with some new idea for tackling personal research issues.

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Butte Silverbow Genealogical Society (Continued)

At the April 10 meeting the Society, in concert with the Butte-Silver Bow Archives, presented public offering on using and contributing to Find-A-Grave. Presenters Julie Bushmaker and Pat Armstrong provided great information for both novice and experienced users of the site. The program was planned to complement the Archives' current exhibit on funeral and burial practices in Butte, which is a fascinating collection for anyone interested on Butte cemeteries and burials.

Member JoAnn Piazzola has researched all the death certificates from the time the Potters Field cemetery was in use in Butte, and compiled a list of those buried there. The Silver Bow chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution has taken on the task of creating Find-A-Grave memorials for these people, so soon, although they lie in unmarked graves, these souls will be publicly remembered somewhere. This is an exciting project. Kudos to all involved.

Our May meeting will be another planned brick wall and problem solving session. We always welcome visitors—the second Thursday of each month at 4:15 at the Butte-Silver Bow Archives.

Linda Lee



Attention member societies



Please keep your membership list updated by emailing the MSGS Registrar at msgsgsregistrar@gmail.com

Award Nominations Open

It's that time of year again to think about who in your genealogy society or community has gone over and above in service or volunteerism. Those who give time, talent, and dedicated service to help with your group's mission or operations.

The Montana State Genealogical Society has established two awards to recognize extraordinary efforts in support of genealogists. The [Anna Mae Hanson Award](#) is presented to an individual who is a member of MSGS, which includes all members of local Montana Societies who are a member of the State Society. The [Al Huntsman Award](#) is presented to a business or organization who has greatly contributed to the genealogical community.

Nominations for the Anna Mae Hanson Award must be a genealogist who is a member of a local society that is a member of the Montana State Genealogical Society. This award is to be presented to someone who is an outstanding person, works beyond what is expected of them and is very dedicated to the field of genealogy. Their contributions focus on the local level, state level, or both.

Nominations for the Al Huntsman Award may be a business, institution, or individual who is not a genealogist but that has made invaluable contributions to the genealogical community.

To make a nomination, send a written document by email or U.S. mail with a few paragraphs about the person or organization you are nominating and why they deserve the award. Tell the committee how the nominee has gone over and above and how they have contributed to the genealogy community.

The deadline for nominations for both awards is 30 July 2025. Awards will be presented during the 2025 Annual Conference.

Send nominations to:
 MSGS Awards Committee
admin@montanamsgs.org
 or P.O. Box 5313
 Helena, MT 59604



Free Class!

Tracing Trades: Unearthing Your Ancestors' Occupations

Saturday, 5/10/2025, 2:00p Mountain

The staff of the Allen County (Indiana) Public Library's Genealogy Center will show you how to discover what your ancestors did for a living.

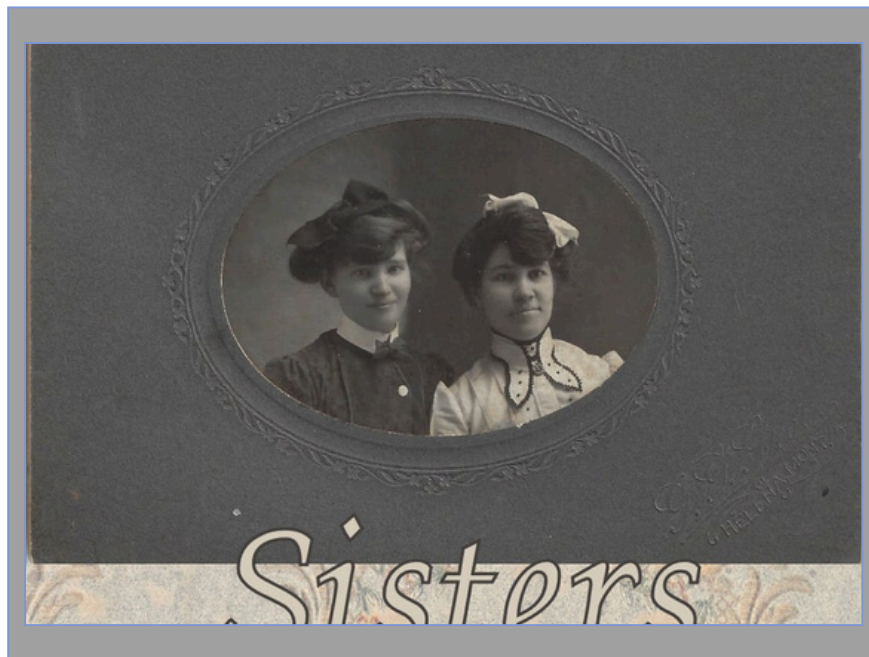


There is no cost to attend this virtual presentation, but pre-registration is required.

Mystery Photo

Kristy Makela put together this post of a mystery photo the Lewis and Clark Genealogical Society.

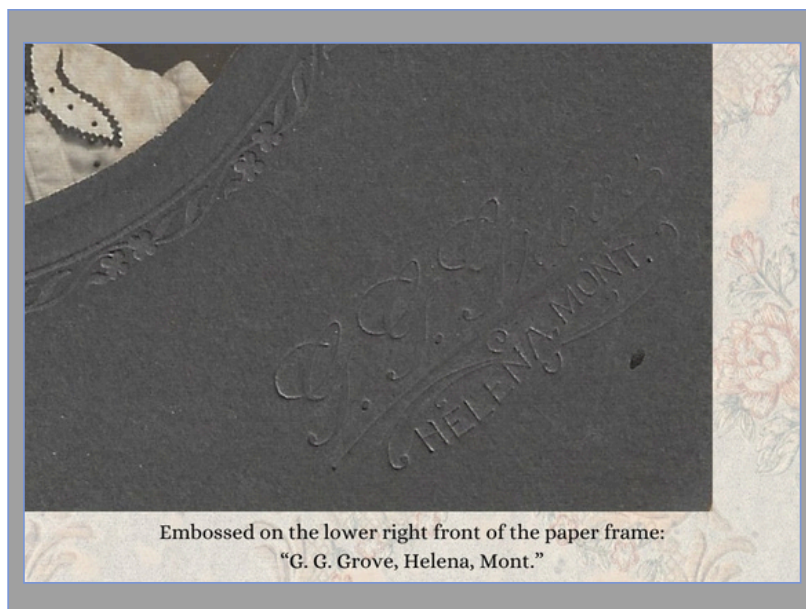
Can you help identify this unknown photo?



"1898 Sisters"

1878 Sisters

The photo studio was G.G. Grove in Helena, MT. According to city directories, the photographer was Gilbert G. Grove, and his studio was located in the Power Building in 1904. A newspaper search returns ads only in 1904, so perhaps his business was short-lived. The sisters appear to be late teens, so we can estimate they were probably born around 1885-1889.



2025 Annual Conference

The 33rd Montana State Genealogical Society Conference will be held:
September 18th-20th, 2025
Heritage Inn, Great Falls

Please keep an eye on our [website](#) and social media for updates!

Speakers

Michael L. Strauss, AG®, is a professional genealogist and military historian with over 30 years of experience in the field. He holds a BA in History and is a United States Coast Guard veteran. His expertise is recognized in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Virginia courts, where he has testified as an expert witness. Michael has lectured at universities, conferences, and institutes and contributed to publications, including peer-reviewed articles, public history articles, and book reviews that highlight his expertise in military records and historiography.



Gena Philibert-Ortega is an author, researcher, and instructor specializing in the use of social history and material culture to tell the story of historical women's lives. She holds two Master's degrees: one in Interdisciplinary Studies (Psychology and Women's Studies) and the other in Religion. As an author, Gena has published two books, *Cemeteries of the Eastern Sierra* (Arcadia Publishing) and *From the Family Kitchen* (F+W Media), and hundreds of articles in print magazines and online publications. Her writings can also be found on her two blogs, *Gena's Genealogy* and *Food.Family.Ephemera*, as well as the *GenealogyBank* blog. A highly sought-after instructor,

Gena has taught material culture and social history at the GRIP Genealogical Institute and the Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy and is a frequent presenter at seminars and conferences throughout the United States and Canada. Her professional associations include the American Quilt Study Group, the Association of Gravestone Studies, and the National Genealogical Society. Gena has conducted research for PBS, HGTV, and the Travel Channel and has collaborated on research for the Gemological Institute of America. Gena's current research projects focus on American cemeteries, cookbooks, signature quilts, and 20th-century women's lives. (Continued on page 10)

Speakers (Continued)

Tim McGonigal is an anchor and reporter at KRTV-TV in Great Falls. During his nearly 18 years at the station, he has served multiple roles, including news director. He also has an award-winning podcast entitled "McGonigal's Chronicles: Making Montana Connections." He is a native of Helena, MT, and a graduate of Eastern Montana College (MSU-Billings). His nearly 40-year broadcasting career has included stops in New Mexico, Missouri, and Minnesota. He lives in Great Falls with his wife of 36 years, Nancy. They have two children, Molly and Evan and one grandchild, Jackson.

Tim will present McGonigal's Chronicles: My Life in Broadcast Journalism during the Friday evening banquet.



MSGs is asking member societies - and anyone else who may be interested - to please donate a basket or item to be raffled at the conference.

The funds earned will help offset costs of the conference and go towards future conference expenses.

If you are interested, please reach out!

Final thoughts....

The conference schedule is available; watch for registration to open soon!

We hope to see you in Great Falls in September!

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram!

