

# MSGS STATE CONFERENCE



## Location & Accommodations

The Conference will be held at the Heritage Inn, 1700 Fox Farm Road in Great Falls, MT.

Sleeping Room Rate is \$114 plus tax for double queen and king rooms, \$139 plus tax for suites.

Check-in time is 3:00pm, checkout is 11:00am. No breakfast.

Phone 406-761-1900, ask for Montana State Genealogical Society Block. Hotel Reservation Deadline is August 27, 2025.

## Book Sale

The MSGS Fund Raiser! Check your bookcases for annuals, histories, family histories, genealogy books, tapes & videos to donate to our sale. Drop them off Thursday to be sold, \$5 for hardcovers, \$3 for paperbacks with progressive discounts throughout the conference. Please – only genealogy or family history related materials. Do not bring quarterlies or outdated material. The Book Sale in the Montana/Alberta Room will not be open on Thursday for browsing.

## September 2025

Montana State Genealogical Society  
and the Great Falls Genealogy Society  
host the  
33rd ANNUAL MONTANA  
STATE  
GENEALOGICAL  
CONFERENCE  
September 18, 19, 20, 2025  
Heritage Inn  
Great Falls, Montana

## Extras

### Genealogy Tables

Various MONTANA GENEALOGICAL SOCIETIES & genealogy related organizations will be represented.

### Basket Raffle

Baskets from Societies and MSGS will be available to win! This is a MSGS Fundraiser to help offset expenses for the next year.



## Speakers

**Katherine R. Willson** will present for us via Zoom.

Katherine R. Willson of Dexter, Michigan, is a seventh-generation Michigander who began researching her family history as an 8-year-old Junior Girl Scout. Today, she is a nationally recognized genealogy educator and full-time researcher, specializing in solving complex questions about pre-statehood settlers in Michigan and the broader Great Lakes region. She is a dynamic and engaging presenter at regional, national, and international events, including faculty roles with the Genealogical Research Institute of Pittsburgh and the Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy. Katherine is the founder and past president of the Virtual Genealogical Association, past president of the Michigan Genealogical Council, and a former board member of both the Association of Professional Genealogists and the Genealogical Speakers Guild. She has held numerous leadership roles within Michigan's genealogical community. She is the author of *The Genealogist's Guide to Grand Rapids, Michigan* (2018) and Family Tree Magazine's "Research Guide to Michigan" (2022). Her website, [SocialMediaGenealogy.com](https://SocialMediaGenealogy.com), features free resources, including curated catalogs of over 17,000 genealogy and history Facebook links, 190+ genealogy YouTube channels, 76 family history podcasts, and more.

**Michael Strauss MA, AG®, AGL™** has a BA in History from Shepherd University with a concentration on the Civil War and the 19th century, and a MA in History from the University of Massachusetts, Boston with a concentration on military history in the Spanish-American War. He is a professional genealogist and military historian with over 30 years of experience in the field 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.

**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 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. The title of his Banquet presentation: "McGonigal's Chronicles: My Life in Broadcast Journalism."

## Schedule

### THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2025

- 3:00 **Book Sale Drop Off** – Montana/Alberta Room
- 3:00 – 5:30 **Registration Desk Open** – Main Convention Area
- 3:30 – 4:30 **MSGS Board Meeting** – ABC
- 5:00 – 6:00 **Workshop 1** – First Families & Early Settlers Certificate Program  
Lewis/Clark Room
- 5:00 – 6:00 **Workshop 2** – Great Falls History Museum – Missouri Room
- 7:00 – 8:00 **“Let Them Eat Cake” Social** – Main Convention Area. Need ticket to attend.

### FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2025

- 7:30 – 9:00 **Registration Desk Open** – Main Convention Area
- 9:00 – 9:15 **Opening Remarks** – ABC Room
- 9:15 – 10:15 **Records of Westward Traveling Pioneers & Service Providers** – Kathrine Willson. Records generated during Americans’ westward treks between 1787-1890, locations of those records and search strategies (includes discussions on cowboys, traveling preachers, midwives, Harvey Girls, and other service-providing occupations during the western migration).
- 10:30 – 11:30 **Following the Tracks: Your Ancestors on the Railroad** – Michael Strauss. Railroads for nearly two centuries have been the preferred mode of transportation for many of our ancestors. Their rich history includes details on when lines started, ceased, merged, or filed bankruptcy. Records including employee, manuscripts, directories, pensions, social security, and other organizations including the Pullman Porters and Harvey Girls are examined.
- 11:45 – 1:00 **Lunch & Society Reports** – Convention Area- Menu: Deli Sandwich Buffet – Roast beef, turkey, and ham sandwiches with cheddar, American, and Swiss cheeses, whole wheat and white bread, rolls, lettuce, tomato, pickles, red onion, mayo & mustard served with potato salad, tossed salad with dressing and croutons. Includes homemade potato kettle chips. Coffee or Iced Tea.

## Schedule

### FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2025

- 1:15 – 2:15 **Seeking Dead People: Cemetery Research Online & In Person** – Kathrine Willson. Tips and techniques for accessing burial records, cemetery stone photos, obituaries, death certificates, and more.
- 2:30 – 3:30 **Historical Maps: The World at Your Fingertips** – Michael Strauss. For many centuries, maps have been the preferred choice of travelers the world over. They not only serve as reliable guides to desired destinations, they also assist the user in getting his or her bearings straight. But beyond direction and bearing, maps enrich the genealogist's journey through the roadways and byways of personal history. From fire insurance maps that provide minute detail of our ancestors' homes, to election maps that detail boundaries of registered voters in large cities, you're sure to find a research path not yet considered.
- 3:45 – 4:45 **Top 10 Dos & Don'ts for Preserving Family Memorabilia** – Kathrine Willson. Best materials, methods, and places for storing precious family photos, heirlooms, textiles, and more.
- 5:00 – 6:00 **MSGS Annual Meeting**, Lewis/Clark Room, Everyone welcome
- 6:30 P.M. **Banquet** – Convention Area – Presentation of Awards, Program: Tim McGonigal, "McGonigal's Chronicles: My Life in Broadcast Journalism." Pork Tenderloin Medallions Wrapped in Bacon: Sliced pork tenderloin wrapped in bacon with mushroom herb sauce, garlic mashed potato, and seasonal fresh vegetable. (A vegetarian, gluten-free option will be available.) Chocolate layer cake. Coffee or Iced Tea.

## Schedule

### SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2025

- 8:00 – 9:00 **Registration Desk Open** – Main Convention Area
- 9:00 – 10:00 **Introduction to Military History Research** – Michael Strauss. Beginning genealogy research on your ancestors who served in the military is not without rewards; research can be both challenging and daunting for persons not familiar with the records, repositories, and the methodology employed to find details of military service. This lecture focuses on a large number of records, strategies, and techniques on how to research military ancestors from the colonial era through Vietnam that can be used to discover facts about your ancestor's life.
- 10:15 – 11:15 **A House Divided: Research in the Civil War** – Michael Strauss. Sectional differences and ideology tore apart the United States between 1861 and 1865. This lecture separated in two parts is an in-depth examination of the various military records used to search for soldiers, sailors, and marines on both sides during this conflict. Compiled Service Records, Pensions, Draft Registrations, and related genealogical material is covered in this presentation. Civilian records covering the war period are also examined in both segments of this lecture.
- 11:45 – 1:00 **Lunch & Society Reports** – Convention Area – Menu: Baked potatoes, bacon bits, butter, shredded cheddar cheese, sliced green onion, sour cream, steamed broccoli, cheese sauce, and homemade chili served with tossed salad with dressings and croutons and seasonal fresh fruit salad. Coffee or Iced Tea.
- 1:00 – 1:15 **Raffle Drawings**
- 1:15 – 2:15 **Navigating the Historical & Genealogical Treasures Within Repositories: Libraries, Archives, & More** – Kathrine Willson. Unlock practical techniques to uncover valuable repositories in ancestral regions, master the use of repository finding aids and subject headings, and effortlessly navigate select websites and digital collections to take your genealogical research to the next level.
- 3:00 **Book Sale Closes**

# Registration Form

33rd Annual Montana State Genealogical Society Conference  
Heritage Inn, Great Falls, MT September 18, 19, 20, 2025  
<https://montanamsgs.org/conference/>

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

MAIDEN NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

Is this your 1st MSGS Conference? Yes No

I plan on attending the Thursday evening "Let Them Eat Cake" Social  
No additional charge but **MUST** sign up in advance for a ticket

Yes (How many tickets?) \_\_\_\_\_  
No

		How many?	Total
Full 2-day Conference Registration with Banquet & Two Luncheons	\$198.00	_____	\$ _____
Full 2-day Conference Registration (NO MEALS)	\$130.00	_____	\$ _____
1 Day FRIDAY ONLY Conference Registration (NO MEALS)	\$ 81.00	_____	\$ _____
1 Day SATURDAY ONLY Conference Registration (NO MEALS)	\$ 49.00	_____	\$ _____
<b>Additional Fee for Non-members</b>	\$ 15.00	_____	\$ _____

MEALS: To guarantee meals, registration must be received by Monday, September 1, 2025. One of each of the three meals is included with the \$198.00 level. If you want to select only one or two of the meals for yourself, select the \$130 level above and then add the individual meals below. If you want to purchase additional meals for spouses, etc., please add these meals below:

		How many?	Total
Friday Lunch	\$ 18.00	_____	\$ _____
Friday Banquet (Pork)	\$ 32.00	_____	\$ _____
Friday Banquet (Vegetarian, Gluten-free Option)	\$ 39.00	_____	\$ _____
Saturday Lunch	\$ 18.00	_____	\$ _____

		How many?	Total
Conference Pins:			
Starter Bar, <b>New Design!</b>	\$ 5.00	_____	\$ _____
Great Falls 2025 Shingle	\$ 6.00	_____	\$ _____
Prior Year Shingle(s) - indicate years	\$ 4.00	_____	\$ _____

Pre-registration must be received by August 15, 2025, to qualify for the "Early Bird" drawing for a refund of the Conference Fee (\$130.00 Maximum).

Cancellation Policy: Full refund of all meal, functions and registration fee (less a \$15.00 cancellation fee) will be issued if request is received by Monday, September 1, 2025. For cancellation notifications received after September 1, 2025, or for non-attendance, no refund will be given.

Questions? Email [admin@montanamsgs.org](mailto:admin@montanamsgs.org)

**Grand Total \$** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail this form and a check to:**  
**MSGS Registrar**  
**4532 Drafthorse Drive**  
**Bozeman, MT 59718**

# Door prizes!

Our generous sponsors Ancestry, My Heritage, and Find My Past have donated a variety of door prizes to be given out each day of the conference to those who register!

