



Big Sky Roundup

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
MONTANA STATE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Desirée Funston

Our 33rd annual conference is in the books, and what a great time it was. Thank you once again to our host, the Great Falls Genealogy Society, and to everyone who made the conference such a success. It was wonderful to see you all, and I look forward to getting together again next year. Our 34th annual conference will be held at the newly constructed Montana Heritage Center in Helena, 10-12 September, 2026.

Our 2nd Vice President, Julie Walker (Lewis and Clark County), decided to step down at the end of her term, but something tells me we haven't seen the last of her. Thank you for your service, Julie W.!

Julie Bushmaker (Butte-Silver Bow) was elected to fill the vacant position, which has been renamed Vice President for Development. Welcome aboard, Julie B.! Our Registrar, Margaret Kemner (Gallatin County) was re-elected for another term, as was Secretary Dianne Klinski (Lewis and Clark County). Thanks to all for your willingness to serve.

Your MSGS Board continues to make progress with the strategic plan we implemented one year ago. We have made strides in streamlining our operations and will continue to prioritize cost-effectiveness. At the same time, we anticipate expanding our resources and enhancing member benefits. These improvements will require a review of our membership fee structure; more information will be available in the coming months.

As always, I thank you for your membership and wish you success in your research.

OFFICERS:

President:

Desirée Funston
(2023 - 2026)

Vice President for Programs

Stacey Corcino
(2024-2026)

Vice President for Development

Julie Bushmaker
(2025 - 2027)

Secretary:

Dianne Klinski
(2023 - 2027)

Treasurer:

Terry Atwood
(2013 - 2026)

Registrar:

Margaret Kemner
(2024 - 2027)

Newsletter Editor:

Jennifer Van Syckle



MSGS BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Respectfully submitted by **Dianne Klinski**

18 September 2025, 3:30p.m., Heritage Inn of Great Falls

Board members in attendance: Desiree Funston, Dianne Klinski, Julie Walker, Terry Atwood, Stacey Corcino, Fern Kauffman, Jennifer Van Syckle, Karen Huck and Margaret Kemner.

The following reports were accepted by the Board:

Minutes from the 26 June 2025 Meeting – emailed to Board members, Stacey moved to accept, Jennifer seconded. Minutes approved as written.

Treasurer's Report, 1st Vice President's Report, 2nd Vice President's Report, Registrar's Report. Additional reports were given and approved: Library, First Families/Early Settlers and Social Media/Newsletter.

Old Business:

Discussion on to how to proceed/organize future Conferences. MSGS Bylaws were discussed on Saturday, October 19th. These can be [found on the website](#).

The First Families/Early Settlers files can be now be [found on the Montana History Portal](#). [See eligibility requirements, instructions and/or submit](#) an application, Application forms and lineage charts are all available online for free, however they must be downloaded, filled out by hand and mailed to the address provided on the Eligibility page.

A Community Asset Survey was included in Conference folders as a way for members to make themselves known for various committees, projects and leadership positions.

Ideas for the 2026 Conference in Helena were discussed.

Community Webs – Archive-It, available thru the Missoula Library is a digital archive collecting born-digital obituaries from funeral homes across the State.

MSGS BOARD MEETING MINUTES (CONT)

Officer Nominations:

2nd Vice President (VP for Development) Julie Bushmaster

VP for Communications no nominations

Secretary – Dianne Klinski

Registrar – Margaret Kemner

The next Board Meeting is Wednesday, January 7th at 10:00 am via Zoom.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Stacey, Terry seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 4:33pm.



Montana State Genealogical Society
Annual Meeting: 19 September 2025, 5:00 pm

The meeting was called to order at 5:06pm.

The following reports were accepted as read:

Secretary's Minutes from the last Annual Meeting were approved.

Treasurer's Report, 1st Vice President's Report, 2nd Vice President's Report, Registrar's Report. Additional reports were given and approved: Library, First Families and Early Settlers, Social Media/Newsletter.

There was no old business.

New Business:

The positions of 1st Vice President for Programs, MSGS Vice President for Development and MSGS Vice President for Communications were presented for addition to the Bylaws and added by vote.

First Family/Early Settlers files are now on the Montana History Portal, and Desiree is working on a digital archive of born-digital obituaries from all funeral home website in the State.

A database of volunteer assets is being assembled, an asset survey was included in Conference packets.

Discussion on planning the 2026 and 2027 Conferences.

Elections:

2nd Vice President (VP for Development) – Julie Bushmaster

VP for Communications – No nominations; position remains open at this time.

Secretary – Dianne Klinski

Registrar – Margaret Kemner

Sheryl moved that the meeting be adjourned, Jan seconded. The Annual meeting was adjourned at 6:02pm.

MSGs BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Respectfully submitted by **Dianne Klinski**

8 October 2025, 10am via Zoom

The meeting was called to order at 10:02 am.

Board members in attendance: Desiree Funston, Stacey Corcino, Julie Walker, Terry Atwood, Karen Huck, Margaret Kemner, Julie Bushmaker and Dianne Klinski.

The following reports were accepted by the Board:

Secretary's minutes from the last meeting were approved.

Treasurer's Report, Vice President for Programs Report, Vice President for Development's Report, Registrar's Report.

Additional reports were given and approved,

Library, First Families and Earl Settlers, Social Media/Newsletter.

Old Business

2025 Conference recap. Discussion regarding a possible increase in dues which was tabled until the January meeting.

New Business

Welcome Julie Bushmaker, our new Vice President for Development!

Updates given on the 2026 Conference and the open position for NGS Liaison.

Contact Desiree for information on this position if interested.

The next Board meeting will be Wednesday, January 7 th , 2026 at 10:00am and will be a Strategic Plan Review session.

Julie made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Terry seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 11:19am.



The Society's Bylaws and Standing Rules were updated at the 2025 Conference. To view the updated documents, please visit our website.





Local Society Updates

Yellowstone Genealogy Forum

During the 22 July 2025 Yellowstone Genealogy Forum meeting, members shared memories of family vacations. Visits to family topped the list of happy remembrances. Getting to know extended families of grandparents and great-greats, aunts, uncles and cousins filled members' summers. These visits may have planted the seeds of future interest in genealogy. One member and her husband followed their ancestors' migration through many states, including a visit to the Mayo Clinic after learning a relative was a childhood friend of the Mayo brothers.

At our 26 August 2025 meeting, we had an in-depth Zoom presentation, "Ever-Growing Tree: Descendancy Research and DNA Matches", by Kate Penney Howard of Fort Wayne, Indiana.

In traditional ascendancy genealogy, we start with a person, usually us, and then work back in time. In descendancy research (also known as reverse genealogy or forward genealogy), we start with a person, a great-great uncle, for example, and work forward in time, gathering facts about him and all of his descendants.

Although there are differences between the two types of research, they share some of the same sources all genealogists are familiar with. In addition to answering genealogy questions, descendancy genealogy can help with medical and legal issues.



Yellowstone Genealogy Forum member Shelley Green talking about a family vacation.

Yellowstone Genealogy Forum (Continued)

At our 23 September 2025 meeting, we watched two YouTube videos about FamilySearch created by the Fresno North Stake FamilySearch Center.

In other news, YGF members continue to staff its Genealogy Library at the Billings Community and Senior Center every weekday, 1 to 3 p.m. We answer genealogy questions from the public and guide them through family research on the center's computer. Members also provide informational programs on a variety of topics. We recently passed our first-year anniversary at the center!

Our president P.J. Smith and other members have given genealogy programs at Billings senior living facilities and in outlying areas. P.J. recently sent letters out to all Billings senior living facilities to offer our genealogy programs. Some facilities also plan to bring groups of their residents to the Billings Community and Senior Center to learn more.

P.J. Smith and our webmaster Kathy Robins are working on a new YGF website that should be running by next summer.

-Mary Parker



Butte Silverbow Genealogical Society

Now that the frost and snow is on the pumpkin, it is time to fire up the coffee pot and laptop and get back to work hunting. Orange vests are not required!

Butte hosted the annual An Ri Ra Irish heritage festival 8-10 August 2025. This brought many people to Butte not just to celebrate, but to research their Irish roots. A number of our members volunteered at the Butte-Silver Bow Archives to provide guidance in their searches.

At our September meeting, our group collaborated on two research projects. We looked for information on the great grandfather of a local resident who left his wife and children behind in Butte to return to his native Montenegro to fight in the early days of World War I, where he was sadly killed in action. We also explored the mystery of the drowning death of a young man who was the fiancé of a former Butte resident's mother. Working on these searches together helps us all to sharpen our skills and gives us ideas for our own searches.

At our October meeting, our group celebrated our local recipients of the Al Huntsman and Anna Mae Hanson awards by enjoying cake while receiving a recap of the state meeting from Julie Bushmaker. Everyone who attended found it to be an exceptionally good experience and came away with lots of good information. Thanks to everyone who worked so hard to provide this great gathering. We are already excited about Helena in 2026.

-Linda Lee Holmes

Lewis and Clark Genealogical Society

In July our society enjoyed a great private tour of the new location of the Lewis and Clark County Historical Society Museum. The new location is at the Steamboat Block, 118 Helena Avenue.

In August we had our summer potluck picnic at the Fairgrounds. After we ate member Helen Diehl suggested a fun activity. She said "I think all of us have had those moments when we discovered something when we weren't really looking for it. Or the middle of the night ideas that prompted us to go to the computer. I decided to jot down some of my serendipity or intuition surprises." Many members shared their fun serendipitous surprises.

At our September meeting, Missoulian Ednor Therriault, aka Bob Wire, drove over and shared stories from his travels around Montana while writing Montana Curiosities and other books. He said that Montana is so large, folks in one region may not know stories from other regions. He told stories, shared photos, and played and sang two original songs about his Montana adventures.

Thirteen members of our society attended the state conference in Great Falls and had a great time! Here is a photo of our group from the conference.

-Julie Walker



Society members attending the state conference in Great Falls.



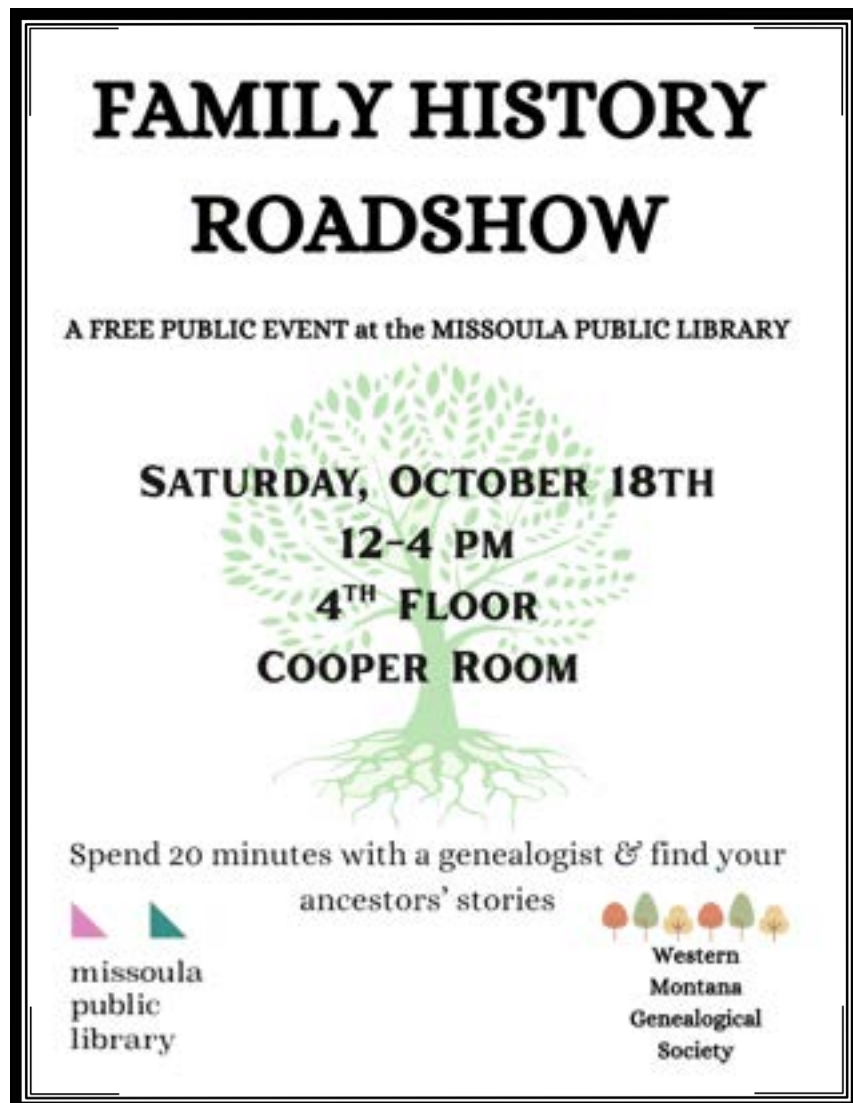
Visit to the Lewis and Clark County Historical Museum

Great Falls Genealogy Society

Great Falls Genealogy Society was busy this last few months preparing for the State Conference. We hope everyone enjoyed their time in Great Falls. I know we enjoyed helping host the Conference.

Family Search continues to digitize Schnider Funeral Home records and hope to be doing Croxford Funeral Home. GFGS is part of a group that includes the GF Public Library and The History Museum called "Meeting of the Minds". At our last meeting GFGS brought up that O'Connor/Schnider are starting to shred old funeral records after they had scanned parts of the records for their own bookkeeping. GFGS took point of contact and approached them about keeping the records in permanent storage at The History Museum after they have been scanned by either Family Search or us. I am happy to report they said yes! We look forward to continuing our scanning and indexing of the records.

-Stacey Corcino



Award Winners

Congratulations to the 2025 winners. Thank you to everyone who submitted a nomination!

Anna Mae Hanson Award

Given to acknowledgement for dedicated service in the genealogical community.



Jennifer Keith from the Western Montana Genealogy Society



Linda Lee Holmes, of the Butte Silver Bow Genealogy Society. Award was accepted by Julie Bushmaker, of the BSBGS.

Al Huntsman

Given to acknowledgement for dedicated service to the genealogical community by a non-genealogist.



Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives



**Plan to join us for next year's
conference!**

**10-12 September 2026
Montana Heritage Center
Helena**



Calling all family historians! Missoula Public Library is holding its third annual **Family History Writing Contest**. Memorialize your family history and compete for cash prizes: \$100 for first place, \$50 for second place, and \$25 for third place. Submissions will be accepted 1 October 2025 through 1 March 2026.

For further details please visit
<https://www.missoulapubliclibrary.org/family-history-writing-contest/>



Montana First Families and Early Settlers applications and descendants charts are available online at the [Montana History Portal](#).

Consider using these records to aid your own research!