Bay Area Genealogical Society Newsletter

BAGS General Meeting

March 27, 2026, 7:00pm *via Zoom*

From Clutter to Clean: Organize, Digitize and Store Photos
with Allyson Maughan

Inside this issue

Special Points of Interest

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Your family gave you the historical picture collection. The quantity or disorganization keeps you from using these priceless documents. You know your family history is in them, but you stop short because of the clutter. Most photo collections aren't organized. Allyson will guide us to follow basic steps, showing you how to break down the organizing process and get results. In this session we will learn to collect, organize, digitize, and store your pictures. Move from clutter to clean. Examples will be provided.

Allyson Maughan is an accredited genealogist, professional speaker, writer, and consultant. She specializes in photographic record sets, genealogical methodology, and family history writing. She speaks for groups ranging from international to local. Her writing has been featured in *Crossroads Magazine* where she shares her ancestors' lives in the West. A member of the Utah Genealogical Association board, she helps with the magazine and **ProTalk** webinar content. Find her work and resources on her website **remembering relatives.webly.com**. Before her genealogy career, she taught high school foreign languages and history. When not doing genealogy, she enjoys spending time with her husband and daughters.

Bay Area Genealogical Society

MEET YOUR BAGS PRESIDENT

My name is Teresa Rundell, and I am currently serving my second term as President of the Bay Area Genealogical Society of Texas. Many of you already know me, but you may not be familiar with the full scope of the president's role. A detailed list of responsibilities is available under the **Members Only** tab on our website. Rather than repeat that information here, I would like to share my personal experience in this role in the hope of encouraging others to consider serving in a leadership position in the future.

One of the more visible aspects of my role is presenting at our monthly meetings, though this represents only a small portion of the work involved. At the beginning of each month, I distribute an email outlining upcoming events, which many members rely on as their primary source of information about society activities.

Much of my time is devoted to preparing for the Board and General meetings held at the end of each month. This includes gathering input from board members and committee chairs, such as recommendations from the Education Committee regarding meeting formats. I compile this information to develop the Board meeting agenda, facilitate discussion, and prepare the agenda and PowerPoint presentation for the General meeting.

These responsibilities are very much a team effort. I am grateful for the support of fellow Board members, particularly in areas where their technical expertise complements my own. I would like to specifically acknowledge George Porterfield for assisting with slide formatting and proofreading, and Kim Zrubrek, who literally sits by my side, providing tech support during our general meetings on Zoom.

I rely on the dedication and professionalism of all Board members, and they consistently exceed expectations. You will have the opportunity to learn more about each of them in future newsletters.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As we welcome another month, I am excited to share the latest updates and news from our society!

One of the updates involves the newsletter itself. We want to make the newsletter more interactive and engaging, and you will notice some changes that we hope you will enjoy. Since this is your newsletter, we encourage you to share your feedback with us.

Among the planned changes, you will have the opportunity to get to know our BAGS Board members better. Over the coming months, we will feature brief introductions so you can learn a little more about each of us. We also want to learn more about you, our members. To foster this connection, each newsletter will include a survey or question for your response. The results will be published in the following issue, and we hope you will participate in this new feature.

We are also preparing to celebrate the 25th anniversary of BAGS. A committee is actively seeking a wonderful venue for our event, and we welcome your suggestions. If you have ideas or recommendations, please contact **Rebecca Briggs** at vicepresident@txbayareagen.org as soon as possible.

BAGS OPPORTUNITIES

Board Meetings

All BAGS Board Meetings are virtual <u>via Zoom</u>. Members are welcome to attend! If you would like to attend a meeting, request a link from info@txbayareagen.org

2026 Meetings

March 23rd
April 20th
May 25th
June 22nd

Board meetings are on Mondays at 6:30pm. Board meeting minutes are available on the Members Page.

Follow BAGS on **Facebook!**

[Facebook Group (members)](#)
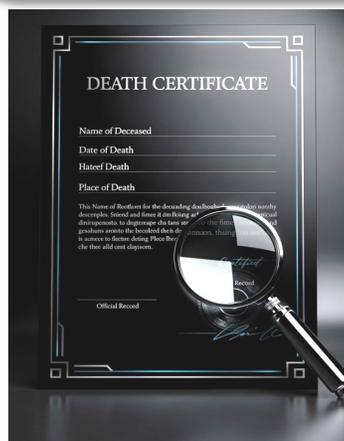
[Facebook Page (*public page*)](#)

[txbayareagen.org/](#)

BUS TRIP WITH FRIENDS
TO THE CLAYTON LIBRARY!
Saturday, April 18th, 9:15am
THERE IS ROOM ON THE BUS FOR YOU!

Mark your calendar for this BAGS reserved day at the Clayton Library. Interested in riding on the bus? To reserve your seat on the bus contact Terri Meyers at **publicity@txbayareagen.org**, before 4/13. Meet/park at the Freeman Library, 16616 Diana Ln, Houston, at 9:15am to catch a ride on the bus! Bring your laptop, flash drives, plus a light jacket (because Clayton gets cold), and your own lunch to enjoy! <u>The bus will leave for Clayton at 9:30am</u>!

From Dust to Data: How ILCD and ICD Codes Can Guide Genealogical Journeys

Thomas MacEntee

Now available for Members Only at the Genealogy Learning Collection page on the BAGS website!

The language of death records can feel like a foreign dialect to today's genealogist. Words such as "dropsy," "consumption," or "brain fever" may appear on a death certificate or cemetery register, leaving us unsure what they truly mean—or how to use them in our research.

That's where the **International List of Causes of Death (ILCD)** and the later **International Classification of Diseases (ICD)** become powerful tools for family historians.

Developed to standardize how causes of death were recorded across time and place, these coding systems can help genealogists translate confusing historical terminology into modern understanding. More importantly, they allow us to move beyond vague descriptions and uncover deeper context about the health, hardships, and lived experiences of our ancestors.

In this session, you'll discover how ILCD and ICD codes can serve as a bridge—from dusty old documents to meaningful data that strengthens your genealogical conclusions.

RESEARCH ASSISTANCE GROUPS

RESEARCH ASSISTANCE — MONDAYS

Session #1 10:00am to 12:00pm
with Reneé Ball & George Porterfield

Session #2 Mondays, 7:00pm to 8:00pm
with Kim Zrubek & friends

Need assistance with your family tree or a genealogical brick wall? BAGS members can participate in **Research Assistance** via *Zoom*. Participants can share their screens to demonstrate research finds. Details for connecting to a *Zoom* link are available on the **Research Assistance page.**

RESEARCH ASSISTANCE — In-person

Saturday, March 14th, 1:30-4:30pm, Freeman Library *(16616 Diana Ln, Houston, TX)*

Bring your laptop/tablet and research for hands-on interaction and help!

Genealogy Writing Special Interest Group (SIG)

The BAGS Writing Special Interest Group meets **virtually, via *Zoom*,** from **1:30 – 3:30pm** on the **1st** and **3rd** Thursdays of each month, —with an in-person option, on the 3rd Thursday. Registration details are on the BAGS website or contact Becky Jones at **vicepresident2@txbayareagen.org** for more information and location

NO writing SIG 5 Mar 2026!

Family Tree Maker Assistance

If you would like help using /installing Family Tree Maker or need to ask questions about how the software works and interacts with other genealogical sources, you can now make appointments directly with our FTM guru, **Reneé Ball**. Help with technical concerns, such as software upgrading and exporting files, is also available. Connection details are available on the **Research Assistance page**.

EDUCATION Spotlight WORKSHOP
How to Craft an AI Prompt
March 26 6:30—8:00pm

This spotlight **Workshop** will be introduced by a brief presentation, followed by hands-on "how to." A handout will also be provided.

March 26th is an members requested, in-depth dive into writing AI prompts via *Zoom* at **6:30-8:00pm**. The *Zoom* registration is under the **Members Helping Members** section of the **BAGS website**. More presentation details are available on **pages 5-6** of this newsletter.

Need Extra Help?

Complete the **BAGS Help Desk Form** and email it to **Kathleen Williams, Education Chair.** She'll respond to discuss your research needs!

How to Craft an AI Prompt

~ Written with the assistance of Perplexity AI

Artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming more common in everyday life, and you might wonder how genealogists can use these tools. You may have seen tools like ChatGPT, Perplexity, Gemini, or Claude mentioned online and wondered if they could help with your genealogy. The short answer is yes—but only if you use them carefully and understand what they *can't* do.

Why You Can't Ask AI to "Research Your Family"

It is tempting to type something like, "Find everything you can about my great-grandmother Nellie Tuttle from NYC," and expect AI to go off and search records for you. That is n*ot* how these tools work. They do not log in to Ancestry, FamilySearch, MyHeritage, or any other database, nor do they check original documents or images. Instead, they generate answers by predicting what words "fit together" based on patterns in the information they were trained on. When they don't really know, they often *guess*—but they still sound very sure of themselves. For genealogy, that might mean:

- Invented birth or death dates
- Wrong relationships between people
- Made-up sources, books, or record sets

You should never treat AI responses as proof. Use them as ideas to explore, not as facts to copy into your tree.

Last year, I asked AI to help me find a marriage announcement for my grandparents. They were married in 1933 in New York City. I gave it all the details, and it gave me so many places to look! Most of them were made-up sources and none led to a marriage announcement. You must craft your prompt carefully, so you don't waste your own time.

What AI *Is* Good For

Even though AI can't "do your research," it can still be a very helpful assistant. Think of it more like a brainstorming partner than a record-searching engine. It can:

- Suggest record types you might have overlooked
- Help you draft or rewrite short stories about your ancestors
- Turn rough notes into a clearer summary or outline
- Explain background history for a time or place
- Transcribe records

Used this way, AI can save time and make writing and planning easier while you remain in charge of the actual research. Steve Little created a 5-part prompt, demonstrated below:

Tips for Writing Prompts

Give a ROLE: You need an expert. What job do they have?

Give AI a GOAL: Tell it exactly what you want.

Give AI the TEXT: Provide AI with the background information or article you want transcribed.

Give AI the TASK: Break down the task you want it to perform into subtasks.

Give AI the FLASK: Tell AI how its answer should look.

> **Example:**
>
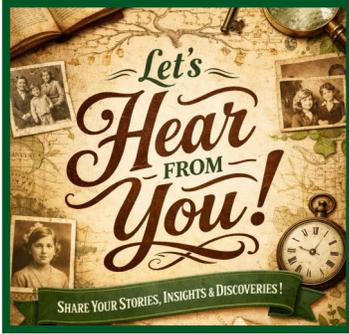> ROLE: *You are an expert genealogist.*
> GOAL: *Transcribe the handwritten document exactly.*
> TEXT: *Upload the document.*
> TASK: *Preserve original spelling, punctuation, and line breaks. Use [brackets] for unclear words and ? for illegible words.*
> FLASK: *Number the lines.*

Let's Hear From You—
Monthly Members Question! *(new feature)*

In order to make this newsletter be a little more hands-on and members interactive, the BAGS board would love to hear your response.

Based on the February General Members Meeting presentation, **please use this link** to Google forms to answer the brief questions!

In the **April** addition of the newsletter, we'll let you know the other members answers to the questions and have another fun question or two for you to answer!

How to Craft an AI Prompt

continued from p5

Staying Safe and Accurate

Because AI can hallucinate—make up realistic-sounding but false information—you always need to doublecheck.

- Verify every fact in real records or trusted databases.
- Do not paste full details about living people; protect their privacy.
- Treat AI results like you would treat an online family tree created by someone else: useful clues, but never proof on their own.

If you keep these limits in mind, AI can be a helpful tool in your genealogy toolbox without leading you astray.

An example PROMPT I used: You are an expert genealogist. Transcribe this handwritten document exactly as written, preserving original spelling, punctuation, and line breaks. Use [brackets] for unclear words and ? for illegible words. This is a deed from Dale County, Alabama in 1869. 300 acres were sold by Susan B Lawrence to Benedict Craft.

March 26 from 6:30pm-8pm

In response to the overwhelming interest in our recent Artificial Intelligence Members Appreciation Seminar, your Education Committee will conduct focused **AI workshops in 2026**. Join us for some practical tips on how to use AI in your genealogy research. This will be a hands-on workshop–it will be more about doing than learning the basics. It is highly recommended that you have a free account with at least one or two of the main AI chatbots: **Gemini, ChatGPT, Claude, CoPilot, or Perplexity.**

Register here for the March 26th AI workshop https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/zGkbNnwqQMCx9hYqUhB6Lw#/registration

If you're interested in reading more about AI:

https://aigenealogyinsights.com/2025/12/18/the-art-of-breaking-things-apart-a-framework-for-ai-assisted-genealogical-research/

https://aigenealogyinsights.com/prompts/

If videos are the way you learn:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUw100TkacQ

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQe77lDyops

And don't' forget to check out upcoming videos from RootsTech about AI:

https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/schedule?f.tags=00000199-4dd5-dc15-abb9-edd534470000&day=2026-03-05&type=online

~ **Kathleen Williams,** educational chair

MARCH RESEARCH | LIBRARY UPDATES

Friendswood FamilySearch Center
In-Person Research Session
TUESDAYS: Mar 17, Apr 21, May 19
10:00am to 12:00pm

Now meeting the 3rd Tuesday of each month! This session is open to all BAGS members for research. The Friendswood FamilySearch Center is located at *505 Deseret Dr,* in Friendswood, TX. The center is also open to the public for research during the listed visitor hours:

Tues, Thurs, & Fri	10:00am — 2:00pm
Tuesday evenings	7:00pm — 9:00pm

The center has FREE access to the FamilySearch Center Portal page, with premium family history software.

League City FamilySearch Center

The League City FamilySearch Center is located at *4655 South Shore Blvd,* in League City and is open to the public for research:

Tuesdays and Wednesdays	7:00pm — 9:00pm
Saturdays	10:00am — 12:00pm

OTHER FAMILYSEARCH CENTERS

Alvin FSC, *2700 Lehi Ln, Alvin, TX, 77511*	Wednesdays 10am — 12pm
Baytown FSC, *1010 Birdsong Dr, Baytown, TX, 77521*	Wednesdays 10am — 12pm
Kingwood FSC, *4021 Deerbrook, Kingwood, TX, 77339*	Wednesdays 7pm — 9pm
Pasadena FSC, *4202 Yellowstone Dr, Pasadena, TX, 77504*	Wednesdays 7pm — 9pm
Sugarland FSC, *602 Eldridge Rd, Sugarland TX, 77478*	Wednesdays 10am — 5pm

These centers have FREE access to the FamilySearch Center Portal page, with premium family history software.

BUS TRIP WITH FRIENDS TO THE CLAYTON LIBRARY!
Saturday, April 18th, 9:15am
THERE IS ROOM ON THE BUS FOR YOU!

To reserve your seat on the bus contact Terri Meyers at **publicity@txbayareagen.org**, before 4/13.

HPL Clayton Library for Genealogical Research FamilySearch Center

The **FamilySearch Center at the Clayton Library Campus** is open for research! Staff members are available to help you get started and to assist in locating books, microfilms, periodicals, and databases to further your research.

"Write Out Loud" with the Family History Research Center, **MAR 18th, 10:30am—12:00pm,** Our ancestors were as human as we are, which means they lived, laughed, loved, made mistakes, had triumphs, and tragedies. Join us at Clayton Library once a month for our new Special Interest Group "Write Out Loud," where we meet to work together to write out the stories that make our genealogies more than just a compilation of names, dates, and places. Each month will have a new "theme" to write about, so even though we'd like to build a "core" group of writers missing a meeting will not derail your progress. Use of a laptop or computer is helpful, but not necessary for group participation. **More info**!

Orientation to the Family History Research Center at the Clayton Library — MAR 28th, 10:00-11:30am, Curious about your family history? We offer a genealogy workshop where you can learn how to uncover your ancestors' stories. Begin with a short video introduction, followed by a guided tour of our extensive genealogy collection. Afterward, stay for one-on-one assistance from our expert staff as you dive into your own research and start piecing together your family tree.

Why you should attend — 1. Learn the basics: Get an introduction to genealogy research and available resources. 2. Expert guidance: Receive personalized help from experienced staff. Uncover your family history: Start exploring your ancestry with the tools and support you need. **More information here!**

Clayton Library Friends Partner Societies | The Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society | Texas Bay Area Genealogical Society | The Baytown Historical Preservation Association | Galveston County Genealogical Society | The German-Texan Heritage Society | The Greater Houston Jewish Genealogical Society | Hispanic Genealogical Society of Houston | The Houston Genealogical Forum | Houston History Alliance | The Humble Area Genealogical Society | League City Historical Society| The Matagorda County Genealogical Society | Texas Research Ramblers Genealogical Society | West Houston Area Genealogical Society

Family History Research Center @ the Clayton Library, 5300 Caroline Street, Houston, Texas 77004

BAGS BUSINESS | INFORMATION

A Warm Welcome
to our newest BAGS members!
James and Tandra McLeroy *and* **Susan Schroeder**

MARCH Meet 'n Munch
March 29th, 4:00pm
Red River BBQ & Grill
1911 E Main St,
League City, TX 77573

President's Message from page 2.

Rebecca is leading the committee, joined by several volunteers, but we need additional support. Whether you have creative ideas for decorating, connections to caterers, or other helpful resources, your involvement could make a significant difference. Please let Rebecca or me know if you are interested in volunteering and being part of this special occasion.

I hope you like the additions to the newsletter and hope to see you at an upcoming event!

Teresa Rundell
president@txbayareagen.org

Statement of Activity as of February 1, 20226

Checking Account	**$4,755.23**
Savings Account	**$2,177.07**
CDs	**$10,184.46**
PayPal	**$246.48**
Undeposited Funds	**$278.00**
Total Monetary Assets	**$17,641.24**

Additional points of BAGS contact:

Don't know the Members Page password? registrar@txbayareagen.org — *George Porterfield*

Have an article or idea to share? newsletter@txbayareagen.org — *Cindy Austin*

Submit information for the Journal: journal@txbayareagen.org — *Rebecca "Becky" Jones*

Ideas for BAGS advertising: publicity@txbayareagen.org — *Terri Myers*

Not receiving emails? emailcoord@txbayareagen.org — *Todd Roberts*

Research questions or provide research assistance: education@txbayareagen.org — *Kathleen Williams*

2026 BAGS OFFICERS

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Calendar of Events 2026

MARCH

2	10:00a	Research Assistance #1
	7:00p	Research Assistance #2
5	1:30p	~~Writing SIG~~ **canceled** for *RootsTech*
9	10:00a	Research Assistance #1
	7:00p	Research Assistance #2
14	1:30p	**In-person** Research Assistance *Freeman Library, Houston, TX*
16	10:00a	Research Assistance #1
	7:00p	Research Assistance #2
17	10:00a	Research Session @ **Friendswood FamilySearch Center**
19	1:30p	Writing SIG *(Zoom and in-person)*
23	10:00a	Research Assistance #1
	6:30p	BAGS Board Meeting *(Zoom)*
26	6:30p	Education Spotlight Workshop *(Zoom)*
27	7:00p	BAGS Members Meeting *(Zoom)* *From Clutter to Clean – Organize Digitize And Store Photos – Allyson Maughan*
29	4:00p	Meet 'n Munch – *Red River BBQ*
30	10:00a	Research Assistance #1
	7:00p	Research Assistance #2

APRIL

2	1:30p	Writing SIG *(Zoom)*
6	10:00a	Research Assistance #1
	7:00p	Research Assistance #2
13	10:00a	Research Assistance #1
	7:00p	Research Assistance #2
18	9:30a	Bus Trip to Clayton Library
16	1:30p	Writing SIG *(Zoom and in-person)*
19	10:00a	Research Session @ **Friendswood FamilySearch Center**
20	10:00a	Research Assistance #1
	6:30p	BAGS Board Meeting *(Zoom)*
21	10:00a	Research Session @ **Friendswood FamilySearch Center**
25	12:00p	BAGS Members Meeting & Potluck
27	10:00a	Research Assistance #1
	7:00p	Research Assistance #2

MAY

4	10:00a	Research Assistance #1
	7:00p	Research Assistance #2
7	1:30p	Writing SIG *(Zoom)*
11	10:00a	Research Assistance #1
	7:00p	Research Assistance #2
18	10:00a	Research Assistance #1
	7:00p	Research Assistance #2
19	10:00a	Research Session @ **Friendswood FamilySearch Center**
21	1:30p	Writing SIG *(Zoom and in-person)*
25	10:00a	Research Assistance #1
	6:30p	BAGS Board Meeting *(Zoom)*
29	7:00p	BAGS Members Meeting – *The Farmer in the Dell… and Many US Records* – Paula Stuart Warren
31	4:00p	Meet 'n Munch – *Red River BBQ*

JUNE

1	10:00a	Research Assistance #1
	7:00p	Research Assistance #2
4	1:30p	Writing SIG *(Zoom)*
8	10:00a	Research Assistance #1
	7:00p	Research Assistance #2
15	10:00a	Research Assistance #1
	7:00p	Research Assistance #2
16	10:00a	Research Session @ **Friendswood FamilySearch Center**
18	1:30p	Writing SIG *(Zoom and in-person)*
22	10:00a	Research Assistance #1
	6:30p	BAGS Board Meeting *(Zoom)*
26	7:00p	BAGS Members Meeting *(Zoom)* – *TBA*
28	4:00p	Meet 'n Munch – *TBA*
29	10:00a	Research Assistance #1
	7:00p	Research Assistance #2

ROOTSTECH

WE'LL SEE YOU IN **2026**

MARCH 5–7