San Antonio Genealogical and Historical Society

NEWSLETTER | MAY 2025





PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Peter Baron

I'm committed to history and to preservation. We, as a Society, have an obligation to preserve the story of those who came before us.

Thank you to the **Sifuestes** family and member **Armandina (Dina)** for a fascinating presentation at April's Membership meeting. Her ancestor's life story, surviving strife of battle and the trials of early life to endure. Her goal, as mine, is to share our history.



The Board has been burdened by how best we can fill our philanthropic role in the community. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage that we fund an annual Grant to Texas A&M San Antonio for the preservation of History. These monies could be used to support research or publication of a topic of San Antonio significance or to fund a teaching assistant to assist with the furtherance of the History Department at TAMU-SA.

I believe this would be an excellent community outreach project that would bring attention to our Society and our Mission, while supporting our role as a 501(c)3 organization.

We are now officially within the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution. April 19th commemorated the shots at Lexington and Concord, the original "Patriots Day."

I hope each of you are working to increase our visibility by reaching out to historical, civic, patriotic, educational, and community organizations to promote our 250th Anniversary and our great Nation.

God Bless America!

Inside This Issue:

Adventures of a New Member	03
Pecan Valley Family Search Center	05
Renewals Due	06
New Members	06
May Membership Meeting Speaker	06
Brief History of England's Laws Regarding Owning & Holding of Land, pt. 4	07
New Board Member	09
Fall Seminar Speaker	10
From the Education Committee	11
Class Schedule Update	11
Bones & Notes	12
From the Library	12
New Books	13
Member Collage	14
Our Librarians	15
Contact Us	15

Adventures of a New Member

THE SEEKER | By Markel Steverson



Back in 2021 (I think), I inquired about joining DAR San Antonio de Bexar Chapter. Of course, you need lots of documentation to prove your lineage. I knew my patriot, **Claude Thomas Pierre Metoyer**, was proven because I saw in a Facebook group that distant relatives had joined and formed a whole chapter (Cane River) in Natchitoches, Louisiana where my maternal grandfather is from. I just needed to prove my connection to him where my tree veered off from those distant relatives. I was introduced to the SAGHS library because DAR held an event there to help prospective members do research. I can't remember her name but one of the volunteer librarians (who is still one) (**Nancy Brennen**) who was assigned to me came back to our table with several books about my family from the SAGHS library. **Elizabeth Shown Mills** has published books about the area and my family such as The Forgotten People: Cane River's Creoles of Color.



I intended to just use the computer to look up information on Ancestry.com since I take issue with companies charging so much to get my own ancestor's info. **Peggy Peterson**, the Duty Librarian, was super friendly. She told me about the programs available at the library like Ancestry and others. We chit chatted about family history stories. She suggested that I try familysearch.org. I'd created a login a while back but never really used it. So Peggy showed me how to search the site effectively and how to use the Source Box.

I told her about my maternal grandmother having a sister who died very young that I did not know how to find. It irks me when I've seen people left off family trees because they are somehow not as connected to the rest of the family. They existed and they are important. At least give them a placeholder box on the tree like 'sister #2 - unknown'. From what I could remember: she was 2-3 years younger than my grandmother who was born in 1919, and died at 2 or 3 years old, her name was Mae and she died of something that people wouldn't normally die of today but I couldn't remember exactly what that was. I'd been looking at census records because that's mostly what I knew about besides the books. But because she would have been born after 1920 but died before 1930, I wasn't sure how to find her. She was born after Louisiana started requiring birth certificates because my grandmother had one.

I went on looking up several other things that I thought were more attainable but Peggy decided to find Mae using the computer at her desk. From her desk, she

asked me her parents' names and where she was born and I responded back while sitting at the computer in the front as soon as you go left into the library. Then suddenly she says **May Leonce Landry**? and called out her parent's name. *Peggy had found her death record*. I couldn't believe she found her so quick. Leonce is a family name from Donaldsonville, Louisiana and they loved naming people after someone in the family. So I was sure that was her. I thought it was spelled Mae for some reason I can't remember or maybe whoever filled out the form spelled it the way they thought was correct. My grandmother named my mother, her first girl, Mary and nicknamed her Mae. I've since come to find out that Mae was a common nickname for Mary. *I was so excited for this discovery!* Later I told my mom about it and she was so pleased. I sent off for her death certificate from vital records.

When I was getting ready to leave, Peggy told me I should join the beginner class that was coming up. That I would learn so much in that class about how to research and resources I'd probably never heard of. I looked at the prices for members and non-members. Peggy said I might as well join SAGHS because the price difference for just the one class wasn't very much more than just joining and then future classes would be at the member rate too. It seemed like a good deal to me. I do remember that it was only check or some other way to pay that I didn't have on me. So I came back the next week (or so) and signed up with, I believe the same person who brought out all the books from the DAR research event. I also signed up for 1 or 2 other classes.

I've been making discovery after discovery since then and thoroughly enjoyed the class. The class had so much information, there are still things I learned that I haven't used yet.

THE FINDER | By Peggy Peterson



Mysteries are solved at SAGHS! On any given day, researchers wander into SAGHS looking for answers and who do they meet? The Mighty Duty Librarians! These librarians have likely walked in the shoes of the new and inexperienced researchers looking for Great Aunt Sallie or where their great-great grandparents met and married. Recently, while on duty, I met a soon to be new SAGHS member and, as often happens, we started talking about her genealogy journey. Her family story was intriguing and soon enough, I jumped in to help with her search. Working on opposite sides of the States Room wall, asking questions back and forth, we hunted. Suddenly, EUREKA! The elusive auntie was found, and we became forever genealogy buddies!

This is the reason I volunteer as a Duty Librarian. I enjoy connecting and sharing genealogy stories with new friends and members, but I also treasure the quiet afternoons doing my own searches when no one needs my help and I can develop my research skills. Regardless of how the day unfolds, I always feel good about my time in the big white building on Melissa Street and the part it plays in uncovering the pieces of my family puzzle.





Saturday, 29 March 2025, **Jackie Meldrom**, **Susan Stieler**, and **Bev Rakowitz** went to the Pecan Valley Family Search Center to share SAGHS Library with visitors at the Family History Fair. We presented publication from the Society, passed out cards so people could find their way to SAGHS. It was a step towards introducing SAGHS to others.



From the Membership Chair

By AnneMarie Esparza

KEEP OUR ROOTS STRONG – RENEWAL DUES

Even though your membership is paid through June 30th, you can pay your dues in MAY. Two easy ways:

1. Visit the library
2. Visit the website txsaghs.org to make you renewal in **MAY**

You won't want to miss the new season of articles or the activities!

Dues support our ever-expanding library, classes, subscription websites, annual seminar, special interest groups (like WikiTree), membership meetings with great speakers, and our publications: the SAGHS newsletter and *Our Heritage*, our journal for your family stories. It's exciting to visit other genealogical libraries and see copies of *Our Heritage* on their shelves!

Please pay your renewal in May. Thanks to the members who have paid their renewals in the last few weeks!



NEW MEMBERS

Juli & Michael Favor

John W. Greene

Cindy Neff

Lora Shinn

Glen Stevens

Frances Von Rosenberg

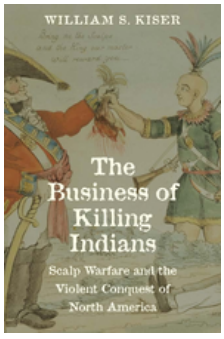
MAY 17 MEMBERSHIP MEETING SPEAKER: WILLIAM S. KISER, Ph.D.



Dr. Kiser is the current history professor, Chairman of the Department of History, Philosophy, and Geography, Texas A&M University-San Antonio. He has authored many published works, and *The Business of Killing Indians* is one, his latest!

"My talk will be about my new book that was just published a couple weeks ago with Yale University Press. The talk will be entitled 'The Business of Killing Indians: Scalp Warfare and the Violent Conquest of North America.'

I will focus the talk on the US-Mexico borderlands and the Apache tribe in the nineteenth century."



He will be bringing copies for sale in case anybody is interested.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ENGLAND'S LAWS REGARDING OWNING & HOLDING OF LAND

Part 4



By Jeffery R. Hankins, PhD

William the Conqueror died in 1087 CE, after twenty years of ruling England and Normandy. In that period, almost all of England's lands had been taken from Anglo-Saxon families and placed in the hands of Norman nobles and knights. This dispossession was resisted in the beginning but was "legitimized" in 1086 with the compiling of the infamous Domesday Book. By the time the Conqueror died, his Norman followers had received clear title to lands they had muscularly been taking over two decades.

William was succeeded by his son, William Rufus, who believed firmly in a king's total control of the land. Rufus did not allow heirs to walk onto their father's estates before paying a fee, and the king would disapprove marriages between families which might create an oppositional power block. William Rufus also kept church positions vacant and demanded payment from those who wanted to fill the jobs.[1] With all of this, it is not too surprising that William Rufus was killed during a hunting party (1100 CE), probably by someone known to the king.

The throne was claimed by the Conqueror's youngest son, Henry, who promised his subjects he would not rule as his brother had. Henry I restored bishops and archbishops to their jobs, permitted consensual marriages, and allowed sons to proceed onto their father's lands. To deepen his power across England, Henry I began sending royal justices to hear cases in county and noble courts; this brought many civil cases, including land disputes, into the crown's orbit.[2] Henry I also issued hundreds of royal writs to confirm land grants, exempt individuals from taxes, or command the stop of certain behaviors. By the time he died (1135 CE), Henry I had established the important precedent that the king's justice was more effective, more available, and more expedient than the local courts.

Henry was grooming his young son William to be the next king but when William died in a shipwreck, Henry I informed England's nobles that his daughter Matilda would be their next ruler. The nobles swore allegiance to Matilda but changed their direction after the king died, selecting another Norman (Stephen of Blois) as their king. Thus began a civil war between Matilda and England's nobles which lasted over fifteen years and caused great disruption across the country. In 1148 CE, Matilda retreated to France to be with her husband (Geoffrey of Anjou) and young son (Henry). The nobles grew tired of their provisional king and in 1153, accepted a treaty allowing Matilda's son to inherit the crown of England.[3]

The thirty-five-year reign of Henry II brought significant changes to the legal process of land holding and land inheritance. Henry was faced

with a jumble of court cases from people who had lost lands during the civil war and the king wanted his royal justices to direct the solution. Two legal processes helped to speed up the resolution of cases and prevent unwarranted claims against rightful landholders. The first was called Novel Disseisin, started in the 1160s; the second was Mort d' Ancestor, in regular use by 1176.

Novel Disseisin was to prevent unlawful ejection of a subject from his/her land based on claims made by another. A local jury was empaneled and asked two simple questions: had the plaintiff been unjustly ejected from the land in question; and did the person alleged to perform the unlawful ejection actually do so? The jurors had only to answer these two questions and did not have to decide the difficult issue of who might have the better right to the land.[4] *Novel Disseisin* had the effect of restoring to the land those who had justly been there, and it placed a greater burden of proof on those who might try to unseat a vulnerable tenant.

Mort d' Ancestor was similar and promised a speedy resolution to disputes over who was the closest heir to



someone who had died holding an estate. Again, the sheriff empaneled a local jury which swore an oath before the king's justices regarding which claimant was closer in kinship to the deceased landholder. The jury's pronouncement was all that was needed to allow a claimant onto the land or to remove a false claimant.[5] *Mort d' Ancestor* helped speed the resolution of land disputes among relatives, cases that could often linger for years. Henry II certainly deserves his reputation for adapting English customary law to the more immediate needs of his subjects.

Unfortunately, such innovation was not brought forward by Henry's heirs: Richard Lionheart and John I. Richard acceded to the English throne on his father's death (1189 CE) but spent much of his ten-year reign in Europe on the Third Crusade. During his absence, his younger brother John tried unsuccessfully to gain control of government, which hurt John's reputation when he did become king in 1199. John I spent money and time fighting wars in France but even Normandy eventually fell into the hands of the French king. King John then demanded taxes from his subjects and pushed England into a dispute with Pope Innocent III over the selection of the next Archbishop of Canterbury. [6]

By early 1215, England's nobles had had enough and forced King John to agree to a written guarantee of good governance, known as the

Magna Carta ("Great Charter"). *Magna Carta* contained 63 paragraphs that limited the powers of English kings and guaranteed certain "rights of Englishmen". These included a jury of one's peers, the right to retain one's land for reasonable service, and freedom from arbitrary fees.[7] *Magna Carta* is often seen as the beginning of English liberty but in fact, England's nobles were guaranteeing *their own* rights and privileges. It would take another 400 years before the "rights of Englishmen" would make their way down to common men and women.[8] But after 1215 CE, English kings were less likely to take land from their subjects without due process or reasons of national emergency. 1215 CE, English kings were less likely to take land from their subjects without due process or reasons of national emergency.

1 *C. Warren Hollister, Robert C. Stacey, Robin Chapman Stacey, The Making of England to 1399, 8th Ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2001), pp. 155, 158.*

2 *Ibid., p. 165.*

3 *W. L. Warren, Henry II (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973) pp. 38-49.*

4 *Warren, Henry II, pp. 338-341.*

5 *Ibid., pp. 343-347.*

6 *Hollister, Stacey, and Stacey, The Making of England to 1399, 8th Ed., pp. 198-208.*

7 *Ibid., pp. 209-211.*

8 *David Wootton, Ed., Divine Right and Democracy: An Anthology of Political Writing in Stuart England (London: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 169.*

DUSTIN WHITTENBURG, NEW BOARD MEMBER!



We are welcoming new board member attorney Dustin S. Whittenburg. He is a solo practitioner specializing in tax, estate, and probate law. He attained a BBA (accounting/finance) and MS (accounting) at Texas Tech University in 2000, a law degree from SMU in 2003, and a LLM (Taxation) from NYU School of Law in 2006, and is currently officing in San Antonio.

"My family genealogy is a passion for me. I first found the library when I was researching my family history in Texas. I was specifically researching my **Archer** family connection to the Republic of Texas and the Civil War Units from Texas. I am a member of multiple lineage organizations including: (1) The Society of the Cincinnati – Virginia; (2) The Aztec Club of 1847; (3) The Jamestown Society; (4) Sons of the Revolution; (5) Sons of the American Revolution; (6) The General Society of Colonial Wars; (7) General Society of the War of 1812; (8) The Baronial Order of the Magna Charta; (9) The Military Order of the Crusades; (10) Descendants of the Knights Templar; (11) National Society of the Magna Charta Dames and Barons; (12) Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War); (13) Sons of the Republic of Texas; and (14) National Order of the Blue & Gray. I am a member of several other lineage organizations. I have not been able to find a qualifying line to the Mayflower Society, but I am still searching."

SAGHS FALL SEMINAR SET!





By Dr. David Katerndahl

Two years in the making! The 2025 Fall Seminar is scheduled for Saturday, **October 18th** at the Dwyer Center. Our featured speaker is **Teri E. Flack**, M.A., M.B.A., professional genealogist, researcher, and educator. In addition to being a 6th generation Texan, she has a Masters' Degree in Public History and worked as Chief Investigator for the Texas Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division for over 10 years. She later handled governmental relations and public information for the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, eventually becoming Deputy Commissioner of Higher Education. She is a fellow of the Texas State Genealogical Society, chairing the society's Records Preservation and Access Committee, and served on the faculty of the Texas Institute for Genealogical Research (TIGR) since its inception.

Her morning presentations will begin with *Seeing the Patterns: Organize, Visualize, & Evaluate the Evidence*. "We gather lots of information, data, and evidence as we research our ancestors. The difficulty lies in analyzing the information, correlating and comparing it to data gathered from multiple sources, evaluating the evidence, and ultimately concluding what it all means. Organizing data using timelines, chronologies, charts, tables, and other assemblages can help us visualize the evidence to make it easier to analyze and evaluate. We can discover gaps and missing information, see how pieces of the puzzle fit together (or don't), and uncover new paths for research." Her second presentation will address *Using Maps to Explore our Ancestors' Lives*. "Maps illuminate ancestors' lives by providing clues to the land they owned, the likely routes they traveled, their neighbors and the neighborhoods in which they lived, and the obstacles they faced. Learn how using maps can take your research in a new direction."

Our afternoon will begin with our own **Larry Luckett** presenting a Guide to Joining a Lineage Society. "Census records, military service and pension records, deeds, and wills—all are resources to provide support to your application to join a lineage or heritage society. Lineage societies include First Families/immigrants, early colonists, military service or war veterans, religious groups, occupational groups, and Old-World royalty. The generations between you and your ancestor require resources and substantiation to support your application. This program is designed to help you begin, move forward, or finalize your application to a lineage society." Building upon this, the afternoon will conclude with a Lineage Group Forum, in which representatives of local lineage groups will be available to answer questions and assist you in completing applications for membership.

Please mark your calendars and plan on joining us this October!



From the Education Committee

By Lois Bready, MD

Our April, our Membership Orientation/Library Tour was a great success. New and seasoned members enjoyed a personal experience with presenters Treasurer **Barb Holmes**, Webmaster and Past President **Rob Lewis**, Vice President **Dr. David Katerndahl**, Librarian **Karen Boyers**. Those taking advantage of this wonderful tour and education session were **Darrell Berry**, **Bonny Condiff**, new members **Juli and Michael Favor**, **Jane Lowenhaupt**, eBlast Editor **Peggy Weyel**, **Sally Hurst**, **Richard Petitt**, **Alan Parrish**, **Ronnie Retzloff**, Our Heritage Editor **Dr. Jeffery Hankins**, **Lisa Richardson**, new member **Markel Steverson** and ever fabulous photographer **Judy McKee**.

We're in session for 2025! Check out the calendar to find almost every topic under the Genealogy sun… txsaghs.org or watch for **Peggy Weyel**'s eBlast! It's going to be an interesting year!







Photo Credit: Judy McKee



MAY CLASS SCHEDULE UPDATE

The May 18 Sunday class topic has changed! Now covering Researching WWII Service Members. Visit our website for details.



BONES & NOTES: EXHUMING AN ERROR ON FIND A GRAVE

By Don Sharon

How can someone be born several months after the "supposed" mother had died? In a city 200 miles away? That dilemma occurred when someone (a "jackrabbit genealogist," I call such a person) apparently saw a similar name in one of my Find a Grave postings and hopped to a conclusion by adding a "daughter."

This began when another researcher contacted me about this "daughter" to confirm my posting. Surprised, I sent an email to the "contributor" to ask her source. I waited a month. I received no reply. So, I contacted Find a Grave, explained the situation, and asked what could be done to remove this "daughter." They told me that if the "contributor" did not respond to their query within a certain time, her posting would be removed. It was.

My posting was for Christina Stehle, born 9 February 1865 in Mramorak, Austria-Hungary (now Serbia). Christina, a sister of one of my ancestors, died 12 July 1897, in a house fire in Yorktown, DeWitt County, Texas. I relied on immigration records, Christina's headstone in a family cemetery in Goliad County, and family stories. Newspaper accounts could not be found, nor could birth and death records. Texas did not require such records until 1903.[1]

The posting by this "contributor" indicated this "daughter" was born about six months after Christina died and in Galveston, some 200 miles away. Of course, the math did not work.

We've all come across odd postings—on Find a Grave, Family Search, and other sites. The lesson here is if you post something that other people can access and change, review your posting often. You want to keep errors from being copied and populated faster than breeding rabbits, and to keep someone else from falling down a rabbit hole.

1 De Witt County, TX Genealogy, Wikipedia, www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/De_Witt_County,_Texas_Genealogy. Accessed 25 Mar. 2025.

From the Library



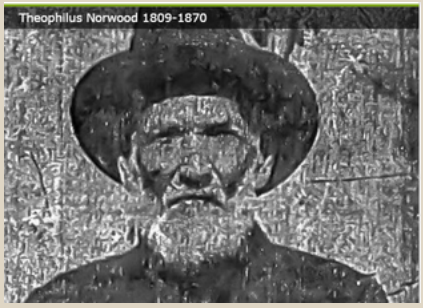
By Bev Rakowitz

THE PICTURE WALL

Would you like to see your treasured old family portraits, those old photos labeled, framed and hung here in our library? We have what we call a Family Picture Wall.

Many years ago, I believe that this was **Jim Earl**'s bright idea to have a way to share priceless family photos with those who visit the library.

There are volunteers who will cheerfully help you get your old family photos/portraits hung for all library visitors to enjoy. Please contact me. **Charles Brussells** and I will help you get this project accomplished. Yes…there is a fee of $50 to cover costs. Come and share your ancestor portraits, old posed family photos with your SAGHS family.



NEW BOOKS

For a full list of new books, view the catalog online or ask the duty librarian in person.

CALL #	TITLE	AUTHOR	DONOR	
MD kent8	Inhabitants of Kent County Maryland, 1637-1787	Peden, Henry C., Jr.	Martin Soward	MD
MD quan7	Queen Anne's County, Maryland Orphans' Court and Registrar of Wills: Wills, Liber B, 1707-1763	Keddie, Leslie and Neil	Martin Soward	
NY char4 Book 1	History of Chautauqua County, New York, from its First Settlement to the present time, Book I and Book 2	Young, Andrew W.	Martin Soward	NY
NY scho4	History of Schoharie County and Border Wars	Simms, Jeptha R.	Martin Soward	
OK pont8	Marriages of Pontotoc County, Indian Territory, 17 April 1895 to 17 May 1903	Pontotoc County Historical and Genealogical Society	Martin Soward	OK
RF 00004 (14)	History for Genealogists, Using Chronological Time Lines to Find and Understand Your Ancestors	Jacobson, Judy		RF
SC 00007 (9)	Laurens and Newberry Counties South Carolina: Saluda and Little River Settlements 1749-1775	Motes, Jesse Hogan, III and Margaret Peckham Motes	Martin Soward	SC
SC pick2	Pickens District, S.C. 1940 Census	Sheriff, Anne	Wendy de la Cruz	
TN 00000 (20)	Aids for Early Tennessee Research	Watson, Larry S.	Wendy de la Cruz	TN
TN 00008 (21)	Guide to County Records and Genealogical Resources in Tennessee	Fulcher, Richard Carlton	Martin Soward	
TX 00004 Rare Book	History of the San Jacinto Campaign	Day, W. C.	Martin Soward	TX
TX bexa6	Property Research and Definitive Guides to the City Directories and Sanborn Maps of San Antonio, Texas	Carroll, Michael Patrick	Michael Patrick Carroll	
VA nels8	History of Southern Rockfish Families and Old Houses, A	Seaman, Catherine H.C.	Joseph M. Ware	VA
VA surr6	Surry County [Virginia] Tithables, 1668-1703	MacDonald, Edgar and Richard Slatten	Ann Oppinheimer	

















Photo Credit: Judy McKee

OUR LIBRARIANS

During library hours, a volunteer Duty Librarian is available to assist patrons. Check the schedule below to find a librarian based on their research strengths and availability. Patrons may also contact the library at 210-342-5242 to arrange assistance during a scheduled librarian's shift.

DUTY LIBRARIAN	RESEARCH STRENGTHS
Martin Soward *1st Monday*	Texas Research
Smitty Smith *1st & 3rd Wed. 2-7*	Beginning research
Kitty Massey *1st & 3rd Saturday*	Settlement of MD to KY; Settlement of VA to KY, PA
Karen Boyers *2nd Sunday*	Ancestry, lineage groups, FamilySearch, research
Julia George *2nd Monday*	Beginning & intermediate research, WV, VA, OH, PA, SC, KY
Beverly Rakowitz *2nd Wed. 10-2*	FindaGrave, Billiongraves, Persi, online catalog
Scott Atkinson *2nd Wed. 2-7*	Genealogy programs, Family Tree Maker, WikiTree.com
Elizabeth Prike *2nd Saturday*	French translation
Nancy Brennan *3rd Sunday*	Huguenots, DAR, lineage societies, New England
Nancy McNamara *3rd Monday*	Five-generation chart, beginning research
Susan Stieler *3rd Wed. 10-2*	Beginning research
Merri Murphy *4th Sunday*	Beginning and intermediate research
Daniel Snell *4th Monday*	Map/land record sources & research methods, TX landowning ancestors
Peggy Weyel *4th & 5th Wednesday*	Ancestry, Migration from Great Britian, NC, MS, TX; PA to SC's Piedmont to TX; Civil War (16 MS & 2nd TX Mounted Rifles)
Barbara Johns *4th Saturday Floater*	Beginning & intermediate research, Quaker migration, online catalog, FindaGrave

SAGHS is a proud member of:

NATIONAL GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Texas State Genealogical Society

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Library Hours:
Sunday: 1 pm – 5 pm
Monday: 10am–4pm
Wednesday: 10am–7pm
Saturday: 10 am – 4 pm

Library Closures:
New Year's Day, Easter, Mother's Day, Memorial Day, Founders Day, Father's Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, October (Seminar), Thanksgiving Eve & Day, Christmas Eve & Day, New Year's Eve