

FAMILY FOOTSTEPS



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Greetings

This past Fall brought us several interesting presentations and a wonderful holiday party. With the area recently in the grips of ice, it is fun to look forward to the warmth of Spring. As such, we have a number of exciting presentations lined up over the next four months. First, in February, is a field trip to one of the filming locations of National Geographic's "Naming the Dead" TV series. In March, we will learn about the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT) from local members. In April, we will learn about genealogy organizational methodologies. And finally in May, we will learn what it is like to attend a genealogy conference in person or virtually. You can read all about these planned meetings inside.

As usual, if you have comments, suggestions, or material for publication, please let us know at suggestions@ccgstexas.org.

Previous Meetings

14 October Meeting



Due to a scheduling issue, the October meeting was held in the Sophienburg Museum in front of Sophie's Shop. The meeting was broadcast over Zoom with 10 attendees online.

Ruth Foreman from the DNA Doe Project (<https://dnadoeproject.org/>) and TV show "[Naming the Dead](#)" (filmed in New Braunfels) joined us briefly to welcome the CCGS to her home for our February 2026 meeting. See below for more information.



Richard Miller presented "Genealogy research software Goldie May". This was a live demo of genealogy research software Goldie May (<https://www.goldiemay.com/>), which can help you stay organized, analyze what you find, and navigate more quickly to the right resources at the right time. Goldie May works with the websites you already use. It does NOT replace your genealogy programs. However, it might replace your spreadsheet, your notebook, the papers on your desk, and the sticky notes on your monitor—all the places where you track your research and sort out what you're finding. Keep the family tree you already have and see if Goldie May can add to it.



Image: V. Callier



Image: V. Callier

11 November Meeting



Kevin Klaus from the Texas General Land Office (<https://www.glo.texas.gov/>) presented "Preemption and Homestead Grants in Texas". Preemption grants were used by the Republic, and later the State of Texas in various ways from 1845 to 1856, and again from 1866 to 1898. Preemption grants allowed settlers to claim land on the vacant public domain of Texas and provided a process by which they could title the land once established criteria were met. Many times, these types of grants are an overlooked treasure trove full of great genealogical information! In many instances, they will tell you when a person settled upon the land, names of the original grantees and possibly their wives or what structures were on the land. You may find unique stories or history in these files such as murders, Indian troubles, or even an old marriage certificate. Kevin covered many aspects of these early grants, and provided interesting examples and stories of the types of unique information that can be found.

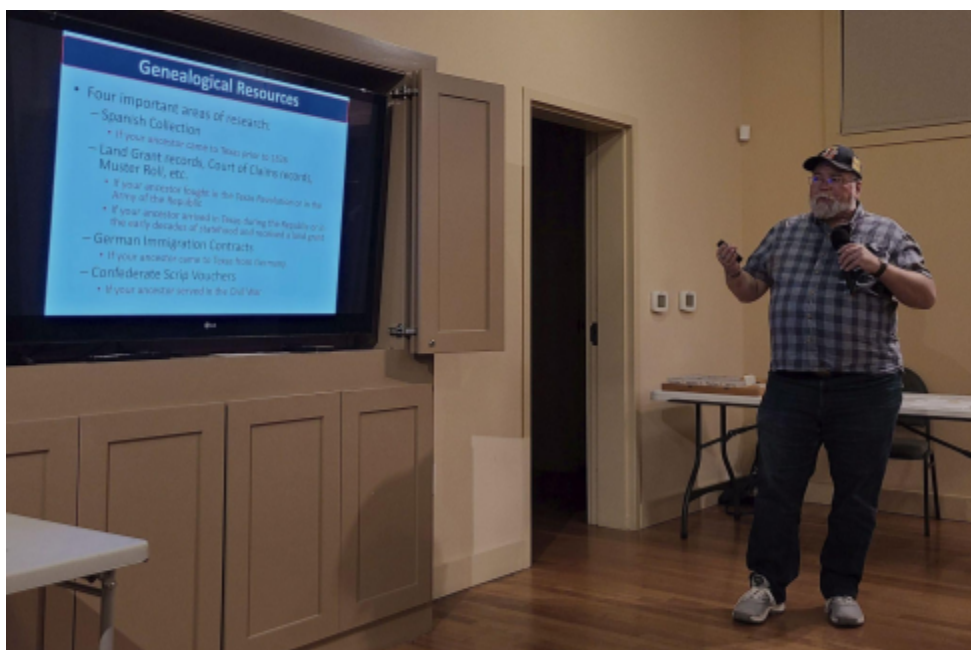


Image: W.Voigt



Image: V. Callier



Image: V. Callier

09 December Meeting



The Comal County Genealogy Society wrapped up the year with the annual party and new officer installation. Officers for 2026 are: President and Footsteps Editor - **Wendel Voigt**, Treasurer and Membership - **Simone Hierholzer**, Secretary - **Chris Parma**, Publicity - **Tommy Daum**, Genealogy - **Tina LaFreniere**, Publications and Past-President - **Lynn Thompson**, and the Vice President position is vacant. The primary event for the evening was the Christmas party with pot luck dishes provided by members. Dishes ranged from tamales, finger sandwiches, charcuterie to various desserts, and wines from the Noltes. As usual, there were a variety of items on the food table. As most people were finishing food, Wendel Voigt asked if any members would share a piece of family history or something that they've discovered doing their genealogy.



Food and Drinks Image: V. Callier



Melissa and Chris Parma shared a photo of their grandfathers finalizing the catalog for the 1949 Medina County Fat Stock Show, along with a copy of that catalog. Image: W. Voigt



John Coers told stories of his time in Germany and his family research there. Image: W. Voigt



Wilfred Schlather shared his system of flexible family 3-ring notebooks that allows him to print new sections without having to print everything. Image: W. Voigt



Front Table (L to R): **Simone Hierholzer**, **Tina LaFreniere**, **Lynn Thompson**, **Vince Callier**. Back Table (L to R): **Chris Parma**, **Lynne' Voigt**, **Melissa Parma**. Image: W. Voigt



Front Table (L to R): **John Coers**, **Marlena Schlather**, **Wilfred Schlather**, **Cindy Coers**. Back Table (L to R): **Jackie Nolte**, **Ceretta Daum**, **Tommy Daum**, **Charlene Nolte**. Image: W. Voigt

Upcoming Meetings

10 February Meeting



Ruth Foreman from the DNA Doe Project (<https://dnadoeproject.org/>) and TV show "[Naming the Dead](#)" has invited CCGS to her home to see a private screening of an episode of the National Geographic documentary series "Naming the Dead". This documentary series showcases the groundbreaking work of the DNA Doe Project, which is an organization dedicated to identifying unknown deceased individuals through investigative genetic genealogy. Adding a special local connection, part of this documentary series was filmed at Ruth Foreman's own home, making this presentation especially meaningful and unique.

Space is limited since this meeting is being held at Ruth's home. Please RSVP at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScbulJ-dEDZXSfz5V01_N_dYAx-CTyeNconhuitKLeFlCG0Hw/viewform so we can make the appropriate preparations. The meeting will start at 7:00pm, so give yourself time to get there. The location is off of 2722, about halfway to Canyon Lake from New Braunfels. The exact address will be emailed to those RSVPing by February 8th. Ruth will put out signs to make it easier to find her house.

10 March Meeting



Members of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT) will come and discuss various aspects of the organization. Speakers include:

Sally Startz Blacksmith was born and raised in New Braunfels. She is a 6th generation New Braunfels/Comal County resident. Her great-great-great grandfather, Johann Startz, was one of the original founders of New Braunfels arriving on March 21, 1845 with his family. Sally is married to her high school sweetheart, Jim Blacksmith, who was also raised in New Braunfels. Jim's maternal ancestors were likewise multi-generation residents of the area. Jim and Sally have two married daughters, who are both members of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT), and are proud grandparents to four grandchildren. Sally attended Southwest Texas State University and graduated with her master's degree in Speech Pathology. She worked in the public school system, primarily Austin ISD, until she retired in 2014. Sally has been a member of the DRT for over 20 years. She is currently President of the Lindheimer Chapter of the DRT. She has also served on the Comal County Historical Commission for the past 8 years.

Carolyn Reed is a 6th generation Texan, has lived in New Braunfels for 50 years and has been a member of the DRT for almost 30 years. She has been a past president of the Lindheimer Chapter and currently serves as Second Vice President. Carolyn has been active with the state DRT in Austin for many years. In addition, Carolyn and her husband, Rick, serve on the Comal County Historical Commission.

The third speaker is **Dana Watson**. Dana lives in New Braunfels and currently serves as both the Lindheimer Chapter of the DRT's registrar and as the Children of the Republic of Texas (CRT) Registrar. Dana's husband, Butch, is a member of the Sons of the Republic of Texas (SRT). Her daughter is a DRT member, her son in law is an SRT member, and her two grandsons are members of the CRT. Dana helps women do research and helps them with the paperwork to become DRT members.



14 April Meeting

Kaye Feuerbacher Wykoff will present on “How to Organize Your Files”.

With over 40 years of experience in family history research, Kaye brings a wealth of genealogical knowledge and leadership. In addition to being a long-time member of DAR, she previously served as the organizing President for the New Kentucky Chapter of DRT and was an active member of the Chaparral Genealogy Society in Tomball Texas before moving to Comal County. After relocating to Spring Branch following Hurricane Harvey in 2017, Kaye became a member of the Genealogical Society of Kendall County (GSKC) in Boerne, where she currently serves as Vice President and a dedicated volunteer at the Family History Place. She also authors the “Technology Smash Corner” section of the GSKC’s monthly “Keys to the Present” publication.

Like many researchers who began their journey in the early 1980s, Kaye once found herself overwhelmed by baskets of photos and endless folders. Recognizing that a disorganized archive is a lost archive, she immersed herself in organizational seminars to develop a streamlined system. Today, Kaye uses a method that bridges the gap between physical records and modern digital systems—offering a roadmap for researchers looking to transform their clutter into a legacy.

12 May Meeting



Tina LaFreniere, CCGS Director of Genealogy and founder and CEO of Related Faces Technologies (<https://www.relatedfaces.com/>), will present "Benefits of Attending a Genealogical Conference." She is a regular attendee and exhibitor at the RootsTech the National Genealogical Society conference as well as other genealogy conferences across the country.

Tina is the founder and CEO of Related Faces Technologies. She is a graduate of The University of Houston where she earned a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in Finance. Tina began her genealogical journey almost 20 years ago and along the way she inherited thousands of photos from her family, hundreds with no identification. These photos were the inspiration for Related Faces back in 2018. Tina is also a member of The Texas Genealogical Society, The National Genealogical Society as well as numerous local genealogical societies. Tina also holds two U.S. patents for use of facial recognition on photos for genealogical purposes.

News

New Braunfels: The First Founders Reprint

The definitive two volume set of *New Braunfels: The First Founders* by Everett Fey is out of print. There are no remaining original copies to be sold, and the publisher is no longer in business. The family of Everett Fey, the Sophienburg Archives, and the Comal County Genealogy Society (together the copyright owners) are collaboratively working to bring this classic into print again. CCGS members who have participated include Lynn Thompson, Tina LaFreniere, and Wendel Voigt. The following work has been done or planned to be done:

- An existing copy was sacrificed for scanning by having its binding removed.
- Both volumes have been scanned into PDF format (over 1000 pages!)
- Pictures used in the book were located in the Sophienburg and are to be scanned.
- The scanned pictures will be inserted into the PDF files. This will provide the best print picture quality.
- A new publisher/printer is being sought which can use the PDF files to produce the books.

Once a printer is selected, a definitive schedule and book price can then be set. It is hoped that the printer can then provide copies of the book "on demand" instead of needing to do a large (expensive) print run.

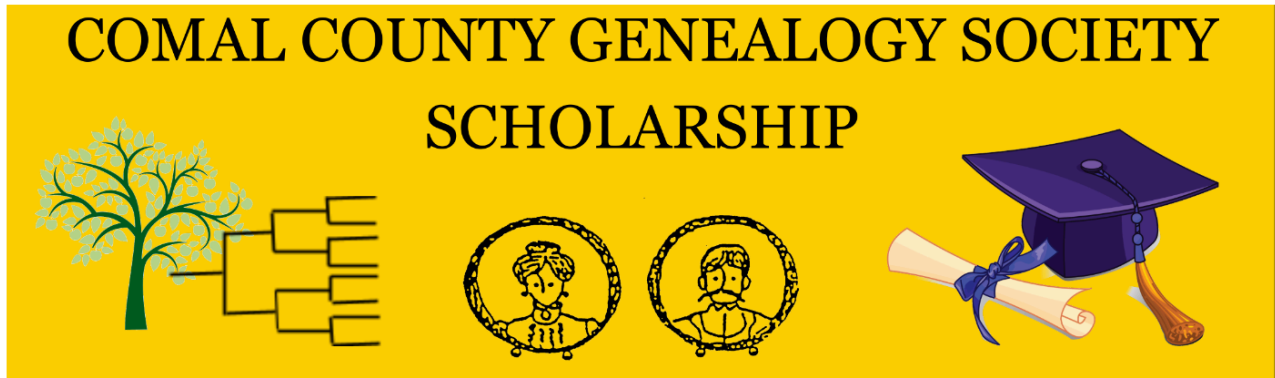
CCGS New Address

Due to a mixup at the post office, we have a new address:

Comal County Genealogy Society
P. O. Box 310190, New Braunfels, TX 78131-0190

CCGS 2026 High School Scholarship

The Board of Directors has again approved providing a \$1000 scholarship to a local Comal County high school senior. This will be the second scholarship given by CCGS. The 2026 Scholarship committee consists of Wendel Voigt, Simone Hierholzer, Vince Callier, Chris Parma, and Lynne' Voigt. If you know of a high school senior in Comal County, please share the following flyer with them or give them the link <https://www.ccgstexas.org/scholarship/>. A copy of the Scholarship flyer is on the next page. It can also be found on the website.



SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

One applicant will be awarded \$1,000.00

ELIGIBILITY

Open to 12th graders who attend school in Comal County (or a school in Comal ISD or New Braunfels ISD, even if it is in an adjacent county) and who will be attending a Higher Education institution after high school graduation.

OBJECTIVE

The intent of this scholarship is to give ALL applicants a sense of what it is like to participate in genealogy and to learn about their family history. The CCGS hopes that the applicant's submission will be viewed by family members as a special living document that can grow and be expanded upon in the future.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Go to <http://ccgstexas.com/scholarship> to obtain the CCGS Scholarship Application Instructions and the CCGS Scholarship Application file.
2. Complete the following sections in the Application (See CCGS Scholarship Application Instructions for details)
 - Applicant Information
 - Ancestor Chart
 - Treasured Object
3. Email the completed Application to: scholarship@ccgstexas.org

DEADLINE TO SUBMIT APPLICATION IS MARCH 09, 2026

ANCESTOR CHART

Start your family tree. Applicant must submit a family lineage to four generations using an Ancestor Chart (also known as a Pedigree Chart). An Ancestor chart is used to keep track of family members' names, their birth dates, their marriage dates, and death dates. The Ancestor chart also keeps track of the locations where these events took place and from where the information was obtained.

TREASURED OBJECT

Please provide a picture of a treasured family photo, heirloom, or document that you would like to share with the Comal County Genealogy Society. You should provide a description of the object and an explanation of why it is a treasure to you.

See the CCGS Scholarship Application Instructions for details to help you get started.

For additional information or any questions regarding the scholarship requirements, please email: scholarship@ccgstexas.org.

CCGS Digitization Project

The CCGS Board of Directors are in the process of digitizing all prior CCGS publications. To date, 33 publications have been scanned to PDF, converted to make the text searchable, and watermarked to make sure every page shows the document name and the CCGS copyright. The versions without the watermarks can be used for reprints if needed. The work is about 90% done, with only the Census books left to do. All prior Family Footsteps have already been digitized.

The Board of Directors are discussing ways we can make these available as part of the CCGS membership.

Membership

Benefits of Membership

Your membership in the Comal County Genealogy Society provides:

- Meetings featuring guest presenters on a variety of genealogy-related topics.
- The September Picnic in Landa Park, which includes catered food.
- Access to the *Family Footsteps* published in February, June, and October.
- FREE access to the Sophienburg Archives with the CCGS' collection of local family histories and important research materials.
- Access to the CCGS computer at the Sophienburg Archives with Ancestry.com & Fold3.com subscriptions.
- Provides financial support for CCGS ongoing obligations as well as to our High School Scholarship program.

Members at the Prinz and Baron level will be recognized in the *Family Footsteps*.

Members at the Prinz level will have a research item donated to CCGS in their honor (with their name inscribed) and placed in the Research Room at the Sophienburg Archives.

New Members

Vanessa Miller
Robin Skeen

Premium Members

Stephen Beisser - Baron

2026 Calendar

Meetings are held at 7:00 P.M. on the second Tuesday of February, March, April, May, September, October, November and December. Unless indicated otherwise, all General Meetings are held at the **Emmie Seele Faust Building** at the **Sophienburg Archives**, 401 W. Coll St., New Braunfels, Texas 78130.

New Members and Visitors are always welcome.



January	Board of Directors meeting only
February 10	General Meeting - Ruth Foreman - "Naming the Dead" field trip
March 10	General Meeting - Sally Blacksmith - Daughters of the Republic of Texas
April 14	General Meeting - Kaye Wykoff - Organizing your Genealogy
May 12	General Meeting - Tina LaFreniere - Benefits of Attending a Genealogical Conference
June	Field Trip - TBD
July	Field Trip - TBD
August	Board of Directors meeting only
September 8	CCGS Picnic - 6:00pm to 9:00pm at Pavilion #16 in Landa Park
October 13	General Meeting - Joe Grist - Founding of Wurstfest
November 10	General Meeting - TBD
December 8	New Officer Installation and Holiday Party

Organization

Purpose

The purpose of the Comal County Genealogy Society is to create, foster and maintain interest in history and genealogy and to work with other organizations to preserve historical & genealogical publications and records.

Board of Directors

Officers

Office	Officer
President	Wendel Voigt
Vice President	<i>vacant</i>
Treasurer	Simone Hierholzer
Secretary	Chris Parma
Past President	Lynn Thompson



Image: V. Callier

2026 Officers and Directors (left to right):
Wendel Voigt, President & Director of Footsteps; **Christopher Parma**, Secretary; **Lynn Thompson**, Director of Publications & Past-President; **Mary Simone Hierholzer**, Treasurer & Director of Membership; **Tina LaFreniere**, Director of Genealogy; **Tommy Daum**, Director of Publicity.

Directors

Director of...	Director
Footsteps	Wendel Voigt
Genealogy	Tina LaFreniere
Membership	Simone Hierholzer
Public Relations	Tommy Daum
Publications	Lynn Thompson

All Officers and Directors are members of the Board of Directors.

Committee Chairpersons

Welcome / Greeting	Simone Hierholzer
Cemetery	Connie Krause
Archives/History	<i>vacant</i>
Library	Lynn Thompson
IT / Website	Wendel Voigt

Find Us on the Internet

Website

<https://ccgsTexas.org>



Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/CCGSTexas>



Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/ccgstexas/>



Footsteps Contributors

DIRECTOR OF FOOTSTEPS

Wendel Voigt

EDITOR

Wendel Voigt

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Vince Callier, Simone Hierholzer, Tina LaFreniere, Lynn Thompson, Chris Parma, Lynne' Voigt

ATTENTION!

If you have an interesting poem, story, translation from a newspaper, or article about your ancestors, or your research has turned up something that you think is interesting, please consider sending it to us to publish in the "Family Footsteps." Persons submitting published materials will be listed as a contributing editor. The Editor reserves the right to edit submissions as necessary. Please make sure all submissions are either ready in rich text format or camera-ready.

Please send your submission to footsteps@ccgstexas.org

Online Membership



After September 1st, you can renew your membership for 2026 by either filling out the Membership Application found at the end of this publication or you can go to <https://ccgstexas.org/membership> to renew online.

Membership Application

Comal County Genealogy Society

P. O. Box 310190, New Braunfels, TX 78131-0190

Name: _____
Family Members: _____
Street: _____ Phone: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip+4 _____
Maiden Name: _____ Email: _____

MEMBERSHIPS (January - December)

Individual: \$20.00 () New () Renewal

Family: \$25.00 () New () Renewal

Baron: \$50.00 () New () Renewal

Prinz:* \$100.00 () New () Renewal

*A Research item will be donated to CCGS in your honor (with your name inscribed) and placed in the Research Room at the Sophienburg Archives.

DONATIONS

CCGS Scholarship \$ _____

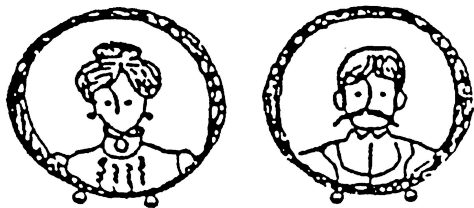
TOTAL Included \$ _____

Membership includes a subscription to "Family Footsteps" newsletter, free queries, use of the Research Room at the Sophienburg Archives, and interesting programs at our meetings. Meetings are held on the second Tuesday in the months of FEB, MAR, APR, MAY, SEP, OCT, NOV, and DEC. JUN and JUL are reserved for field trips to a local site and to sites in nearby counties. The SEP meeting is often a group picnic. (Board meetings are held in JAN and AUG.)

Meetings are held at the Sophienburg Archives, 401 West Coll St, New Braunfels, TX.

Please mail this application to the address given above and your check made payable to *Comal County Genealogy Society*.

I/We are researching the following surnames:



Comal County Genealogy Society
P. O. Box 310190
New Braunfels, TX 78131-0190

**Postage needed
for mailing**