



Elizabeth Swanay O'Neal, CG® ***Lectures for 2026***

Unless otherwise stated, all lectures are one hour long, including a Q&A session at the end, and can be presented in person or via online webinar. Each program includes a slide presentation and an accompanying handout.

For more information, please contact Elizabeth via email at elizabeth@thefamilyheart.com.

NEW for 2026

Context in the Count: Interpreting the U.S. Census with a Historical Perspective

The U.S. federal census wasn't designed with genealogists in mind; it was created to meet the changing needs of a growing nation. This session takes you beyond the names and numbers, exploring the historical context behind each census from 1790 to 1950. We'll examine how shifting questions, enumeration methods, and national priorities have shaped the records we rely on today. By understanding the *why* behind the census, you'll gain tools to interpret your ancestors' entries with greater accuracy and uncover richer stories hidden in the data.

Genetic Genealogy

What to Know Before You Take a DNA Test: A Beginner's Guide

Genetic genealogy is a hot topic, with more and more people purchasing DNA kits to learn about their ancestry each day. But how do you know where to begin? And will your privacy be protected? Avoid wasting your time and money: learn how DNA is inherited, which type of DNA test to take to answer your genealogical questions, what you can expect to get back as a result, and how your privacy is handled at the various DNA testing companies.

Lineage Societies

How to Successfully Apply a Lineage Society

You've finally decided that this is the year you will apply to the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Mayflower Society, or other lineage society of choice. But... *how* do you begin? Find out what steps you can take to prepare a successful application before you start filling it out.

Learn from Lineage Societies... Without Being a Member!

Lineage societies have been collecting and preserving family histories for more than 125 years. Did you know that some of these resources can be found online for free? And you don't even have to be a member to take advantage of them! Thousands of applications and supporting documents have been submitted to lineage societies over the years, and your brick-wall ancestor could be hiding in the file of one of their members. From the databases of the DAR to simple lists of pioneers and soldiers: this lecture will show you which gems are available online and where to find them.

Methodology

10 Places to Search for An Ancestor's Death Date... Without a Death Certificate

Not every ancestor left a death certificate, even after death registrations were required by the states. But don't give up hope! You may be able to find an ancestor's death date using these 10 great resources.

Find Your Family with Fire Insurance Maps (20 minutes)

Fire insurance maps – such as those made by the Sanborn Company – are a fantastic tool for researching the cities and towns where our ancestors lived! Find out what fire insurance maps are, how to use them for family history research, and where to find them online.

Strategies for Brick Wall Busting

Have you been doing the same thing over and over again, expecting different results? Then it's time for you to think "outside the box!" This class will feature a variety of tips and strategies for thinking creatively about your genealogy research.

Military

Great-Grandpa Wore Gray: Researching Your Confederate Ancestor

Confederate ancestors may be more difficult – and controversial – to research than their Union counterparts, but that doesn't mean you should overlook the records they left behind. Bringing your Confederate ancestor's military service to light will give you a better understanding of why they served and what life was like for them during that time. In this talk, you'll learn how to research your Confederate ancestor online.... and why you should.

Resources for Researching Your War of 1812 Ancestor Online

The War of 1812 may be a "forgotten war" for some, but many valuable genealogical resources were created as a result of this conflict. Could your ancestor have been involved in America's second Revolutionary War? Find out which resources are available to bring your War of 1812 ancestor's service to life.

Organization

Finally Get Organized: Conquer the Clutter Using Your Natural Learning Style

Have you tried organizing your family history documents, photos, and digital files, but you just can't find a system that you can stick to? Start organizing according to your natural learning style! This talk will help you identify your specific learning style and will share brain- and research-based organizing strategies for each style. *Learn how you learn* so you can finally get organized with the right system for YOU!

Technology & Internet

10 Unexpected Places to Find Ancestor Photos Online

It is wonderful to uncover the facts of an ancestor's life, but putting a face to a name is the most amazing discovery of all. Expand your search for your ancestor's faces with these ten "unexpected" online resources!

An Introduction to Using WordPress to Build a Blog or Website

WordPress is a free, open-source software system used by millions of people around the world to create beautiful blogs and websites. But WordPress also has a reputation for having a bit of a learning curve, especially for new users who are just getting started with the platform. Whether you are an absolute beginner or someone who needs a refresher, this webinar will help reduce the "overwhelm" by showing you how quick and easy it is to get started building your website with WordPress!

Got Old Negatives? Scan Them With Your Phone and These 5 (Mostly) Free Apps!

Are your old film negatives wasting away in a box in the closet? Let's bring them to life so you can enjoy them! These days, it's quick, easy, and inexpensive to scan film negatives with your smartphone. Find out how with these five apps and a few household items!

How to Use eBay, Etsy, and Other Shopping Sites for Family History

Your family treasures could be waiting to be found on popular online sales and auction sites like eBay, Etsy, Craigslist, and others. While many people use sites like these to find collectibles at a reasonable price, they can also be used to enhance your family history research. In this session, you will learn how to locate family heirlooms using effective search strategies, how to work with sellers, and how to make a purchase or participate in an auction. Additionally, you will learn how to use these sites as a family history research tool... without spending a dime!

Research at the Library... Without Leaving Home!

Looking for books about your family history? You may be able to find them without leaving the comfort of home! Millions of books have already been digitized and are free to use and download to your personal library. Learn where to find the best digital book collections, how to search them strategically, and how to save your finds for later reference.