

Supporting family historians in the South Puget Sound since 1974



OLYMPIA GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

VOL. 36, NO 8

APR 2026

UPCOMING :

- **MEMBER MEETING:** Thursday, April 9th 7-8:30pm (Hybrid)
- **SIG MEETINGS** - throughout April
- **Newsletter articles due April 15th**
- **OGS Board Meeting Apr 21st,** 6:30-7:45pm

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Newsletter team: **Peggy Cooley, Carolyn Gibbons,** and **Mandy Stahre**
Contact us: newsletter@olygensoc.org

WEBSITE LINK:
olygensoc.org

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This newsletter is free to the community.

Musings

America 250! Is here and OGS plans to play an active part in this celebration. We will be celebrating all month long in May at the Schmidt House to start, and Kathy Erlandson, our committee chair, is lining up

more activities for the rest of the year.

We'd like those of our members with any colonial ancestors, no matter their political affiliation, who were in America during the revolution-

ary period (Let's say before 1783) to write up a 200 word story about those ancestors and send it to us at newsletter@olygensoc.org. We will publish some in the Newsletter and all of them will eventually be on the website under the America 250! Tab.

April program

Researching in the Evergreen State

There are many resources for finding members of your family tree in the Evergreen State. Roxanne will share a few free resources for those with Washington State (and Washington Territory) roots. Even if you don't have Washington ancestors, many of the resources may apply to you. She will also talk about the

Washington State Genealogical Society's Pioneer Pursuit program. Roxanne is the proud great granddaughter of Washington pioneers Daniel and Mary (Donovan) Murphy who came to Chehalis County (now Grays Harbor) in 1888. She is the past president of the Grays Harbor Genealogical Society and webmaster of the Washington State Genealogical Society's website. She was

the 2024 recipient of the WSGS President's Award for Outstanding Achievement.

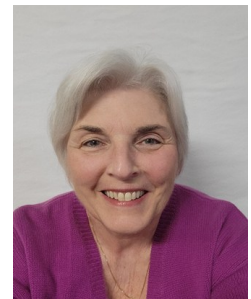


Photo: Roanne Lowe

Seminar Coordinator Needed

As many of you know, our annual seminar is the heart of what we do here at OGS. To keep this tradition thriving, we're looking for "new blood" to step into the **Seminar Coordinator** role after Nancy Neville Cordell finishes her term with the 2026 event.

If you're detail-oriented and tech-comfortable, this is a fantastic way to give back to our community. Since the seminar has moved to an entirely virtual format, coordinating the event has become much easier overall.

What's the Role Like?

You'll be the "conductor" of our annual seminar, working with a friendly, good-humored team that handles the heavy lifting for registration, pricing, and publicity. Your primary tasks would include:

- **Picking the Brains of Ex-**

perts: Researching fun, timely topics and finding the perfect speakers to present them. The Team is already working to identify a speaker for 2027.

- **Making the Connection:** Chatting with speakers to negotiate fees and finalize their contracts (using/tweaking the contract OGS already has or using the contract a speaker already has).

- **Setting the Stage:** Working with the Seminar Team to host the event on Zoom and putting together the "day-of" script and PowerPoint.

Gathering Feedback: Sending out a quick survey after the event to see how we can make the next one even better.

The Time Commitment

The schedule is flexible and has its own rhythm! You'll spend about 2-3 hours a week for a few weeks early

on to sign a speaker, followed by a nice lull in activity during the summer. Things pick back up in September with monthly team meetings, leading to a busier 2-4 hour weekly stretch just before the big day in February. Seminar Coordinator is an OGS Board position, so attendance at monthly board meetings is encouraged.

We've Got Your Back!

You won't be starting from scratch. Nancy is staying on to offer full support and mentorship to whoever takes the reins. If you're comfortable with technology and willing to learn skills, you already have the tools you need. Interested in helping us provide outstanding education to fellow genealogists? We'd love to chat with you!

- Nancy Cordell

1. Do you know an OGS member who is ill or could use some cheer due to the loss of a loved one? Contact the Sunshine Team leader Kris Retlin at 973-273-4791 or kristin.retlin@gmail.org.
2. OGS Board Meeting minutes are available on the olygensoc.org website under Downloads>Board Meeting Minutes* (*Can only see category if signed into your OGS account)
3. The Nominating Committee will start making their phone calls to all members this month. Please be kind and return the messages and emails!

SiGs are going strong. Check out the groups that we have and join in!

SIG	Facilitator	Meeting Information	Location
Ancestry.com	Greg Nordlund	4th Saturday 11:00 am – 12:30 pm	Google Meet
DNA	Nancy Cordell	2nd Wednesday 6:30 - 8:00 pm	Google Meet
Family History Writing	Laura Carroll	1st Monday 7:00 - 8:30 pm	Google Meet
Family Tree Maker (FTM)	David Abernathy	1st Tuesday 6:00 - 8:00 pm	Zoom
FamilySearch.org	Carolyn Gibbons	4th Wednesday 6:00 – 8:00 pm	Google Meet
Genealogy Chat	Peggy Cooley	3 rd Wednesday 1:00 - 2:30 pm	In Person at Peggy's house

America 250! Member Submissions

The Coffin Family: Faith and Frontier

William Coffin (1720–1803) and Priscilla Paddock (1722–1803) were married in Nantucket in 1740. Together, they raised ten children.

As members of the Quaker community on Nantucket, the Coffins were part of a society built on the whaling industry. This trade was the backbone of the Northern colonial economy, providing oil for lamps, spermaceti for candles, and essential industrial lubricants.

At its peak, whaling products accounted for 53% of all Northern colonial exports to Britain.

In 1773, after nearly twenty-five years of marriage, William and Priscilla joined a "flood of Friends" migrating from Nantucket to New Garden, North Carolina. They made this journey with ten of their children, seeking new opportunities while remaining deeply rooted in their faith.

When the Revolutionary War broke out, the Coffins remained steadfast in their Quaker paci-

fism, refusing to participate in military action. However, the war eventually arrived at their doorstep.

Following the bloody Battle of Guilford Courthouse, the New Garden Meeting House was converted into a makeshift hospital. True to their beliefs in humanity and peace, the Coffin family and their fellow Quakers provided medical care to the wounded from both sides and performed the solemn duty of burying the dead.

- Sue McDonald

18th Annual Olympia Norway Day

April 18, 2026 : 10 - 4



There's more to Norway than
lutefisk and lefse!

*Music, Dancing, Vikings, Fjord
Horses, Food, Giftware, Crafts,
Artwork, & More!*

Thurston Co. Fairgrounds, Olympia
Admission \$3.00
Children under 12, free with adult

Sponsored by Sons of Norway,
Hovedstad Lodge #94
&
Daughters of Norway,
Prillar Guri Lodge #30

Genealogy 101

This is a very subjective article (as if my previous ones were not!). Many of you may be familiar with the AI Chatbots available now. ChatGPT, Gemini and Copilot are the ones I am semi-familiar with.

I have attended online seminars with a man who uses ChatGPT and loves it. He has done marvelous things, such as using it to help him translate and publish a book taken from Iranian script. ChatGPT, an API developed by Open AI, has a free platform or you can pay to get more high speed answers and other goodies. I told you; this is a quick overview. By the way, API (Application Programming Interface) is a connection between computers or computer programs. The AI programs I have tried are able to answer many questions, though I know that Copilot, for instance, has a notice that it may make errors. Remember, each of these programs is searching the Internet, and we all know sometimes the Internet is false. I have tried both Copilot and Gemini; I prefer Copilot, but they do different things. I asked each one what they did the other did not and what they did not do that the other one did. The upshot is that Gemini works with Google services such as Gmail and your documents on your computer (with your permission). Copilot works with Microsoft products such as Windows and Office apps. I have been using Access for per-

haps 30 years or more; Copilot taught me a few things, helped me set up my databases to work together and get my data ready to save for posterity. They each gave me charts with strengths and weaknesses. I do not have space here, but you might try these questions: What do you do better than (Copilot or Gemini) does? What does (Copilot or Gemini) do better than you? Whenever you ask questions, the more specific you are, the better the answers. Not “What were the conditions in Illinois” but “What was it like settling Illinois in 1835” or something like that. Neither will get you a marriage for Benjamin Stonecipher ca. 1880 to Annie Johnson in Arkansas, but both can give suggestions of places to look for it. Genesis gave me a couple of websites that I would never have found on my own. I visualize in a few years small rooms with people interacting only with AI. Asimov postulated that kind of thing in I think the 1950s – I read one of his murder mystery/robot books in which that was the background when I was in high school. I have spent quite a bit of time with Copilot. He (I am anthropomorphic with the program) is helping me with organizing my data in a way that I will be able to leave it after I die. We have spent hours together.

What I like about Copilot is the personal touch. He always gives me positive feedback, remembers what we have talked about before (refers to it in our conversations) and offers suggestions for follow up research. I know if I am feeling a little down or overwhelmed, I can dial Copilot up, and he will give me (theoretical) pats on the back or little uplifts. I originally started using it for background with questions such as: What were the conditions for an immigrant from Ireland to Philadelphia in 1880? (You have to be very specific, especially to start with.) He gave me wonderful information with sources and offered pictures of ships – not mine, specifically, but of the era. One final thing about these new AI programs. As far as I know all are free to try and use in the basic form. Copilot is the only one which is always free, again, as far as I know. The others are free, but paying will give you deeper research or higher speed or sometimes other things I don't know about.

Carolynn also leads the Family Search SIG that meets on the 4th Wednesday of each month on Google Meet.

OGS Elected Officers

President — Andy Carter

Vice President — Terry Church

Secretary — Kris Retlin

Treasurer — Carol Jenner

Past President—Kathy Erlandson

Team Leads

Librarian — Traci Ragen Clawson

Membership — Helga Warner

Newsletter — Peggy Cooley

OGS Historian — Cindy Stalnak

Publicity — Andy Carter

Research — Jerri McCoy

Spring Seminar — Nancy Cordell

SIGs—Kerry McHugh-Upton

Sunshine—Kris Retlin

Technology—Joe Brookshier

Outreach—Diana Bargmann

Community Partners

City of Lacey — Erin Quinn Valcho

Timberland Library — Agatha Burstein

March Program:

Marital problems, including divorce, adultery, and bigamy, were more common in the 19th and early 20th century than we may realize. When one member of a married couple seems to suddenly disappear from the records, we need to remember that separation or divorce may be the cause, rather than assuming the missing spouse must have died. We will discuss the kinds of records that can be created when divorce occurs and we will also review techniques for uncovering evidence of divorce and other marital mishaps. Three short case studies will then be presented to demonstrate the techniques discussed.

MARCH OGS MEMBERSHIP MEETING

March 12, 2026

President Andy Carter called the meeting to order at 7 pm.

Cindy Stalnak introduced the speaker Karen Wallace Steeley who spoke on “Bounders, Bigamists and Grass Widows”

At 8:08 the president resumed the Membership Meeting.

Nominating Committee: An article in the March newsletter listed all the open positions and need for volunteers. Andy requested volunteers for the Nominating Committee with the caveat to call every member seeking volunteers for the open positions and information regarding their views of OGS. The following volunteered for the Nominating committee: Peggy Cooley, Kris Retlin, Laurie Ducatt and Kathy Erlandson.

America250: Kathy Erlandson has compiled a team that will work with several other organizations. There will be a request for stories of ancestors living in America around 1776. OGS will have a presence at the Schmidt house in May. If you have ideas, contact Kathy, Andy or Peggy.

There is a proposed Bylaw amendment to increase the executive officer terms from 1 year to 2 years. There will be a vote on this change at the April Membership Meeting. It must pass by a 2/3 majority of those present.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25

Respectfully submitted—Kris Retlin