

UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA

Researching the Revolution: Records and Resources at the Georgia Archives

Research into Georgia's Revolutionary War era often begins with something small: a name written in a family Bible, a story passed down through generations, or a reference to an ancestor who may have served in the militia or received land after the war. That first clue can open the door to a much larger story, but researchers will rarely find the answer waiting patiently in a single record. More often, the search winds through military, land, court, legislative, and county records, with each one providing another piece of the story.

Revolutionary War bounty land records are a good starting point. Certificates of service, petitions, oaths, warrants of survey, and land grants may contain details that send the research in a new direction. A land record might lead to a deed showing when property changed hands, a probate court file might name someone's relatives, or a tax digest might confirm when someone lived in a particular county.

But military and land records tell only one part of the story. Revolutionary-era Georgia included Patriots and Loyalists, refugees and government officials, Native nations, enslaved people, and communities disrupted by war and political change. Petitions, proclamations, maps, correspondence, and government records can help researchers understand what was happening around the people they are studying.

Researching this period can be frustrating. Records may be incomplete, scattered among several record groups, or difficult to connect. County boundaries shifted, names were spelled in different ways, and courts did not always operate consistently. Sometimes the clue that moves the research forward is not a direct reference to the person being studied, but the name of a neighbor, officer, witness, or nearby place.

These are exactly the kinds of challenges genealogist Larry W. Thomas will address during the Georgia Archives' July Lunch & Learn, *Georgia @ 250: Uncovering the Lives of Patriots, Refugees, and Frontier Families*. He will discuss how the Revolutionary War affected Georgia families and how researchers can find surviving evidence even when records are incomplete or scattered. The program will be held Friday, July 10, from noon to 1:00 p.m. at the Georgia Archives. It is free and open to the public, and no registration is required.

If you're interested in researching the Revolutionary era in Georgia, you don't have to wait until the Lunch & Learn to begin. The Georgia Archives' America 250 webpage highlights records and historical context from the period. Additional materials can be found through the Virtual Vault, research guides, and finding aids, all available on GeorgiaArchives.org. Recorded programs examining Georgia's Revolutionary era are available through our Revolutionary War playlist on YouTube. Use the links below to learn more.

Historical research rarely follows a straight path. One record leads to another, and sometimes the most useful discovery is not the one you expected to make. Whether you begin with a family story, a name in a family Bible, or a question about Revolutionary Georgia, the Georgia Archives' records, online resources, exhibits, and public programs can help you follow where the evidence leads.

[JULY
LUNCH & LEARN](#)[EXPLORE
AMERICA 250](#)[WATCH THE
PLAYLIST](#)

REVOLUTION
IN **1776**

Exhibit on View:
MAY 15 - JULY 18, 2026

**GEORGIA'S RECORDED COPY OF THE
DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE
ON VIEW SELECT DATES:**

~~MAY 15~~ | ~~JUNE 12~~ | **JUNE 30** | **JULY 10**

**Only Two Dates Remain to See
Georgia's Recorded Copy of the Declaration**

There are just two opportunities left to see Georgia's recorded copy of the Declaration of Independence this summer: Tuesday, June 30, and Friday, July 10.

The document is featured in Revolution in 1776: Georgia's Signers and Copy of the Declaration of Independence, now on view at the Georgia Archives. The exhibit explores the lives of Button Gwinnett, Lyman Hall, and George Walton and examines the copy of the Declaration entered into an official state volume in 1777.

The full exhibit remains open through July 18 and can be viewed Tuesday through Saturday, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Admission is free. Groups interested in arranging a visit may contact Robin Klemm at Robin.Klemm@usg.edu.

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GENEALOGY TIDBITS BY KENNETH H. THOMAS, JR.

Calendar:

July 27-31, The IGHR Virtual Institute

The IGHR Virtual Institute, sponsored by the Georgia Genealogical Society, will be held virtually the week of July 27-31, 2026. The Institute offers some very important genealogy courses on a variety of subjects. If you miss registering this year, put it on your calendar for the future. IGHR also offers six once-a-week courses throughout the year. Visit IGHR.GAGenSociety.org for further details.



Beginner's Focus:

Newcomers to genealogy and many seasoned researchers need to be reminded that in the late 1600s and early 1700s, our colonial era, many kinship terms found in wills, estates, and deeds may not mean what they would mean today. In early Virginia records, I have found "cousin" used when the writer meant a niece or nephew. Calling a man one's "son-in-law" usually meant a stepson; likewise, calling someone one's "mother-in-law" usually meant a stepmother. When researching in early Virginia, one also needs to remember that until the American Revolution severed ties with England, primogeniture was in force in many of the colonies. That meant that the firstborn son got the real estate (land) and that was a fact, so the son did not have to be mentioned in a will or in any deed record. IF the oldest son had already died but had a son, that grandson would inherit in the same manner, and so forth.

Society/Library Focus:

The Central Library, located at 127 Main St. in downtown Gainesville, Georgia, houses the Sybil Wood McRay Genealogy & Local History Collection, named for its founder, a local historian and author. It has a very good collection of published genealogical works from most of the original 13 states/colonies and much more. Plus, it has a lot of material on Hall County and Gainesville's history, so check it out. The website is HallCountyLibrary.org.

DNA:

Blaine Bettinger, a nationally recognized DNA expert, created the DNA Relationship Chart and Shared cM Project. This important tool helps researchers use shared centimorgan totals to determine how DNA matches might be related to them. The latest version of that chart is 4.0 (2020), and he recently announced he is working on an updated version. You can find a lot of DNA tips from him on the website TheGeneticGenealogist.com as well as information on several books he has contributed to.

African American Genealogy Focus:

Juneteenth, celebrated on June 19 and recognized as a federal holiday since 2021, offers an opportunity to explore African American history and genealogy throughout the year. The Auburn
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GENEALOGY TIDBITS (CONTINUED)

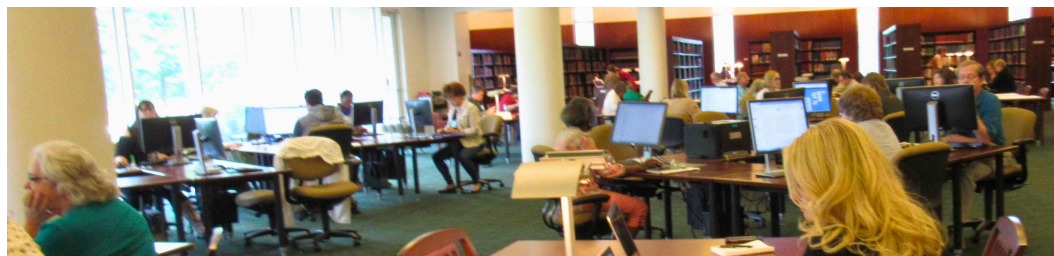
Avenue Research Library, a branch of the Fulton County Library System, is devoted to African American culture, history, and research. Here is one link to what they have: Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History (aafa.galileo.usg.edu).

Website News:

Scottish family history research was the focus of the Spring 2026 issue of *American Ancestors*, the magazine published by American Ancestors, formerly the New England Historic Genealogical Society. In addition to the resources offered to members through its own website, which look pretty good, the issue references the National Library of Scotland (nls.uk/digital-resources); the National Records of Scotland (nrscotland.gov.uk); the Register of Tartans (tartanregister.gov.uk); Scotland's People (scotlandspeople.gov.uk); and Scottish Handwriting (scottishhandwriting.com).

Georgia Archives Research Tidbits:

The Georgia Archives is the place to go for original material about Georgia, state government records from colonial times to the present, and microfilm of Georgia's county records, some of which are not online. It also has a vast collection of published genealogical books from the surrounding states, more from some than others. A case in point is the collection of early Virginia historical and genealogical journals indexed in the *Swem Index (The Virginia Historical Index)*, published in the 1930s. Researchers can use the index to locate specific materials and then check the periodical area for back issues of the *William and Mary Quarterly*, *Tyler's Quarterly*, the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, and others. The Archives also holds issues of the *Virginia Genealogical Society Quarterly* published after the period covered by the *Swem Index*. So, if you have a Virginia genealogy topic, don't forget to check out what the Georgia Archives has.



Questions? Contact Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr.:
P.O. Box 901, Decatur, GA 30031, or email him through his website, kenthomasongenealogy.com.

COMING UP AT THE GEORGIA ARCHIVES

JUNE

June 27, 10 am - 4 pm
Genealogy @ the
Georgia Archives

Preserving Your
Family History

In partnership with Georgia
Genealogical Society

June 30, 9 am - 4 pm
Exhibit

View Georgia's
Recorded Copy
of the Declaration of
Independence

JULY

July 10, 12 pm - 1 pm
Lunch & Learn

Georgia @ 250

by Larry W. Thomas
Genealogist

July 10, 9 am - 4 pm
Exhibit

View Georgia's
Recorded Copy
of the Declaration of
Independence

AUGUST

August 14, 12 pm - 1 pm
Lunch & Learn

The Proof is in the Dough
by Kathryn Beasley
Author of *The Proof*
Is in the Dough