



Volume 42 Number 3  
May-Jun 2026  
President: Robin Engel  
Newsletter: Dottie Chandler  
PO BOX 192 BURLINGTON, WA 98233  
Web site: skagitvalleygenealogy.org

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### Where are we?

That's a loaded question. It could refer to how SVGS is doing (well I think) or what stage we are at on a project (Obituaries, making progress!). But more than likely it refers to our physical location. It's the question every parent is asked by their child on a road trip. You can easily answer it. Today I am in Mount Vernon, Skagit County, Washington State, United States of America, North America, Western Hemisphere, Earth. But what about in the past? Can you be sure of the answer 100 years ago? 150 years ago? Would the answer be the same?

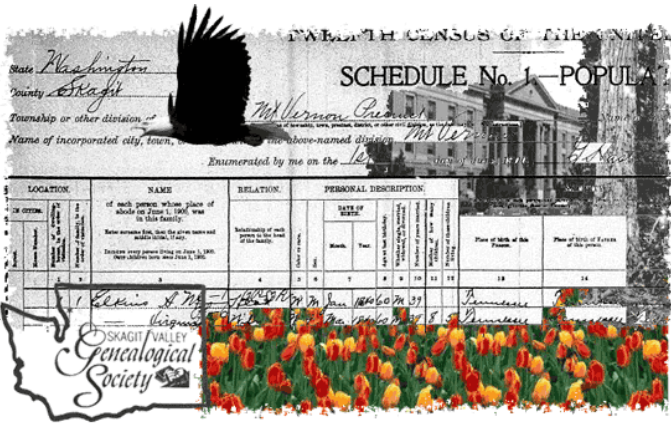
Did you know it was possible to live in the same dwelling your entire life, yet be born, married and die in three different locations. Such is the puzzle of changing borders/jurisdictions at the local, state or country level. In May we are thrilled to have Dave Obee back to present "**Changing Places, Changing Borders: Overcoming Geographic Challenges**". *We are proud to call Dave one of our own, a member of SVGS, Dave is a noted Canadian Journalist, Genealogist and Author. Dave will help us all sort out just how to locate your ancestor when they lived their lives on the shifting sands of changing borders.*

In June we celebrate one of those border changes when we celebrate America's 250th birthday with a special presentation "**Researching Women in the American Revolution**" with *Melanie McComb. Melanie is a Senior Genealogist with American Ancestors known to many of us as the New England Historic Genealogical Society. Melanie will discuss the role of women in the fight for American Independence and how to research women from that period.*

When we celebrate America 250, most of the focus is rightly on the Colonists who took up arms for their freedom. However, many of us do not have lineage in this country back to the founding of the United States. Our families came later. It's important to recognize that America is a patch work quilt of people, many of whom left their home countries long after 1776 but still contributed meaningfully to, and sometimes fought and died for, this grand experiment. So, as the bands play Souza marches and the fireworks explode overhead, let's remember all our immigrant ancestors, the ones who left with nothing but the clothes on their backs and a dream. They changed borders too, and looked around and wondered: Where are we? The answer: Home.

Robin Engel





### SVGS Board of Directors 2026

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**Communications:** Richard Gunther  
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### Special Committees

**Nominating:** **OPEN**

**Check out our redesigned web page at  
skagitvalleygenealogy.org**

### Comb Binding ...

- For members, The society owns a comb binding machine. If you call Dan Royal @ 360-826-6141 he will make arrangements to bind your pages into a book for you. Cost is: \$1.00 per book to cover supplies.

### Burlington Public Library

820 E Washington Ave  
 Burlington, WA 98233  
 Phone (360) 755-0760  
 Email:  
 library@ci.burlington.wa.us





# Researching Women in the American Revolution

*Celebrating  
America 250*

## Saturday June 13, 2026



Guest Speaker:  
**Melanie McComb**  
Senior Genealogist  
*American Ancestors*

**1:00PM-3:00PM**

**BURLINGTON LIBRARY**

**Conference Room**

**Hybrid Meeting**

**Attend in Person or via Zoom**

Email [info@skagitvalleygenealogy.org](mailto:info@skagitvalleygenealogy.org) for  
a Zoom link

**EVERYONE WELCOME**

*Free, Fun Giveaways*



Skagit Valley Genealogical Society  
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820 E. Washington Avenue  
Burlington WA 98233  
[burlingtonwa.gov/library](http://burlingtonwa.gov/library)  
360.755-0760

# CHANGING PLACES, CHANGING BORDERS

## Overcoming Geographic Challenges

### Saturday May 9, 2026

### 1:00-3:00PM



**Guest Speaker:**  
**DAVE OBEE**  
*Noted Canadian  
Author and  
Genealogist*

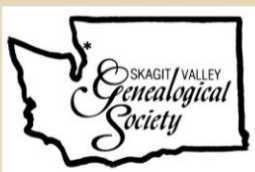
## Burlington Library Conference Room

Hybrid Meeting  
Attend in person or via Zoom

Email [info@skagitvalleygenealogy.org](mailto:info@skagitvalleygenealogy.org)  
for a Zoom link

## **EVERYONE WELCOME**

## Free, Fun Giveaways!



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## Burlington Public Library

820 E Washington Avenue  
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360.755.0760

## SVGS LIBRARY REPORT FOR SPRING 2026

Four new genealogy books have been added to SVGS' book collection at the Burlington Public Library. These books are both new to the collection as well as newly published in 2024 and 2025.

Did you know that SVGS has a policy that a book is purchased in memory of an SVGS member who has passed away? Sadly, Nancy Ruhlman, a long-time member passed away recently. Nancy was a both a genealogist and woman of faith. The book that was chosen for in her memory is: **“How to Find Your Family History in U.S. Church Records: A Genealogist’s Guide,”** by Sunny Jane Morton and Harald A. Henderson, CG.

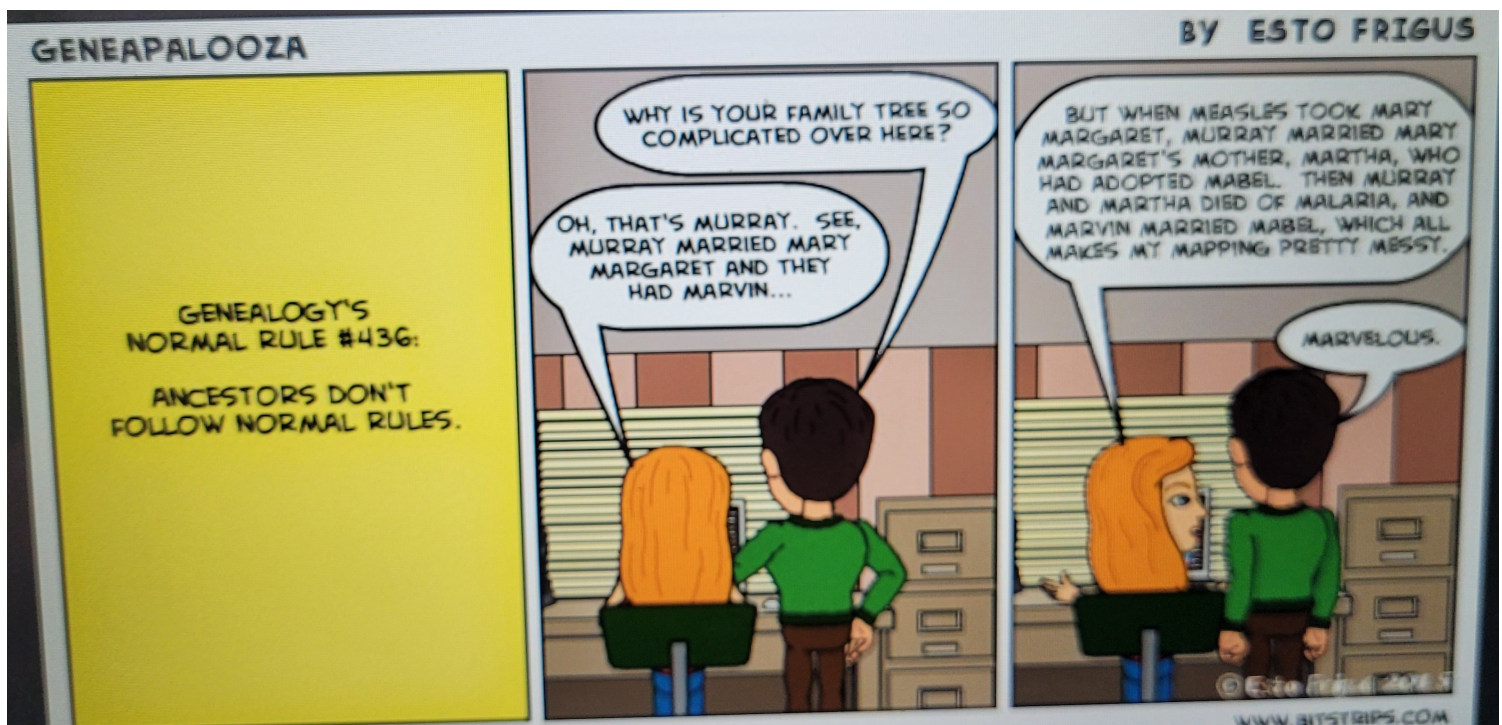
Another SVGS library policy is to purchase a President’s Book. This is contributed to the book collection in honor of the outgoing president. Barbara Johnson chose for the book to honor her service as president to be: **“Tracing Your Scottish Ancestry Through Church & State Records: A Guide for Family Historians,”** by author Chris Paton.

Another new book for the collection that was recently purchased is: **“Tracing Your Marginalized Ancestors: A Guide for Family Historians,”** by Janet Few. This book was published in 2024. The book topics such how to find illegitimate, mentally ill, criminal, gypsy and a variety of “fallen through the cracks of society” ancestors. A fascinating study.

The fourth book is a donation by the author himself. Robert Burns who recently published his book, **“Rebels in the Wild: The Equality Colony and the Taming of American Capitalism.”**. Mr. Burns was our in-person guest speaker for our March monthly meeting.

We invite you to stop by the SVGS genealogy book collection at the Burlington Public Library, 820 E. Washington Ave. and browse through our titles. You just might find a subject of interest or even a clue to break through a tough research brick wall. The collection is open during the public library’s regular hours. For hours visit: [burlingtonwa.gov/library](http://burlingtonwa.gov/library).

*Submitted by Margie Wilson, library chair*



## THE FORMATION OF SKAGIT COUNTY

November 28, 1883, was the culmination of decades of geographic "fission" and growing political friction within the Washington Territory. Originally, the entire region was part of a massive Island County, established in 1853. Just one year later, in March 1854, the territorial legislature carved away the northern portion to create Whatcom County, which then included the modern-day boundaries of Skagit and San Juan counties.

For nearly 30 years, the "Skagit country" remained under the jurisdiction of Whatcom County. During this period, the region began to transform from a wilderness into a productive frontier. Early pioneers like Michael Sullivan and Samuel Calhoun arrived in the 1860s, proving that the marshy "flats" near present-day La Conner could be reclaimed through diking for agriculture. As the population grew—bolstered by the 1878 Ruby Creek gold rush and the clearing of massive logjams on the Skagit River by 1879—settlers in the south began to feel neglected by the political center in Bellingham Bay.

The push for independence became a battle of geographic boundaries and legislative maneuvering. In September 1883, the Northwest Enterprise in Anacortes reported a petition to divide Whatcom County along the Chuckanut Mountains. The proposal faced fierce opposition from "Whatcom boosters" who feared losing valuable tax revenue and fertile land. A first attempt to pass a division bill failed in the Territorial Council in October 1883.

However, advocates like James Power and Orin Kincaid—who both lived in the southern districts—utilized a strategic window. While many opponents had left the capital for the Thanksgiving holiday, a second bill was introduced and "rushed through". It passed the House on November 24 and the Council on November 28, with Governor William A. Newell signing it into law the same day.

The new county was named after the Upper and Lower Skagit tribes, the indigenous people of the river valley. La Conner served as the temporary county seat, but after a countywide vote in November 1884, the seat was permanently moved to Mount Vernon, which offered more central access for the growing inland agricultural and logging communities.

Today Skagit County is flourishing with a "booming" economy that ranks as one of the fastest-growing in the state. The area is also a global leader in agriculture, producing 75% of the U.S. commercial tulip supply and roughly half of the world's beet and spinach seeds within its fertile valley. Beyond its industrial success, the county offers an exceptional quality of life with a landscape that stretches from the snow-capped peaks of the Cascade Mountains to the vibrant marine life of the Puget Sound.

Submitted by Eric Pena

## Upper Skagit Indian Tribe

From their website – “The Upper Skagit Indian Tribe is a federally recognized Indian tribe composed of eleven predecessor bands, including the Nuwha’ha, Nookachamps, Bsigwigwils, Bsxwexwehwa’1, Chobahabish, Sabelxu, Saylayotsid, Shayayotsid, Kwabatsabsh, Sakhumehu, and Skaywih. An original signatory of the Treaty of Point Elliott, the Upper Skagit people are descended from a tribe with eleven separate villages on the Upper Skagit and Sauk Rivers in Washington State. Our ancestors eventually consolidated, but a separate reservation was not originally established, and some tribal members had to reside on other reservations, primarily Swinomish. It was not until September 10, 1981, that the Upper Skagit Reservation was established.”

The tribe was initially called "The Skagit Tribe of Indians", but changed their name in 1958.<sup>1</sup>

The name "Skagit" is an anglicization of the Lushootseed word *sqajət*, which refers to the Skagit people of Whidbey Island, whose territory encompassed the land around Penn Cove.<sup>[4]</sup> "Upper Skagit" in particular refers to the peoples whose villages were located along the Skagit River and its tributaries, contrasting with the "Lower Skagit" of Whidbey island. Early settlers applied the name *sqajət* to both the Skagit proper, as well as those living along the Skagit River, creating the distinction between the "Upper" and "Lower" Skagits. In historic times, the peoples of the Skagit river would have used the term *bəstuləkʷ*, '(people who) have a river', to refer to themselves as a unit.

The Lushootseed word *sqajət* is composed of the nominalizing prefix *s-*, and the root *√qajət*, 'to hide'.

### List of village groups preceding the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe

<u>Lushootseed name</u>	<u>English/anglicized name(s)</u>	<u>Translation</u>	<u>Traditional territory</u>
dxʷʔaha	<u>Nuwaha</u>		Along the Samish River ( <i>sqʷəʔqʷalič</i> ); along the coast from Padilla Bay to Lake Samish
<i>duqʷəčabš</i>	<u>Nookachamps,</u>	<i>People of Nookachamps Creek (duqʷač)</i>	Mount Vernon to
	<u>Nookwachahmish</u>	<i>Creek (duqʷač)</i>	below Sedro-Woolley
			along Nookschamps
			Creek to Lake
			McMurray ( <i>qəbuʔlaʔ</i> )
<i>bəsikʷigʷilc</i>	Mesekwegwils, Bsigwigwils, Meesequaguilch	<i>(People of) the big rocks</i>	Along the Skagit River from Sterling to Minkler
<i>čubəʔabš</i>	Chobaabish, Chobahabish Bsxwexwehwa' Baslohaloh	<i>People who climb the banks of the river</i>	<u>Lyman and the surrounding areas</u> Hamilton and the surrounding areas

<a href="#">sbaliʔxʷ</a>	Smawhu, Sabelxu, Sabaliuhk <sup>l</sup>	Mixture of people	<a href="#">Birdsview</a> to Faber's Ferry ( <i>qʷəqʷqʷəqʷ</i> ); along the Baker River ( <i>dxʷqəlb</i> ) to Baker Lake
<a href="#">sʔilayucid</a>	Saylayotsid	Alongside the path	<a href="#">Rockport and the surrounding area</a>
	Shayayotsid, Beskiotsid	People upriver from the confluence	West of Rockport, at the bend of the river ( <i>sqixʷucid</i> ); <i>Rocky Creek</i> , west of <a href="#">Marblemount</a> .
	Miskaiwhu, Skaywih	People way upriver	From Marblemount to <a href="#">Bacon Creek</a> ; the <a href="#">Cascade River</a> drainage
	Kwabatsabsh	People upriver from the bend	From <a href="#">Damnation Creek</a> to <a href="#">Newhalem</a>
<a href="#">saʔqʷəbixʷ</a>	<a href="#">Sauk</a>	People who dig roots	<a href="#">Sauk</a> and <a href="#">Suiattle</a> rivers

### [Samish Indian Nation](#)

From their website: “The Samish Indian Nation is the successor to the large and powerful Samish Tribe, a signatory to the Treaty of Point Elliott in 1855. The Tribe’s traditional territory stretches over a wide region of the Salish Sea in Northwest Washington, from the tops of the Cascades Mountains to the far western shores of the San Juan Islands. The beauty, abundance and variety of the region since time immemorial provides a rich backdrop for our history and cultural traditions that remain strong today.”

### [Swinomish Indian Tribal Community](#)

From their website – “The Swinomish Reservation is located on Fidalgo Island in Western Washington State. It is the home of the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, a federally recognized tribe. The Swinomish Tribe is descended from and is a successor to tribes, including Swinomish, Kikiallus, Samish and Lower Skagit, that inhabited the Skagit Valley and Puget Sound islands for thousands of years before non-Indian settlement.”

### [Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe](#)

From their website – “The Sauk-Suiattle Indian people have lived under the gaze of Whitehorse Mountain for many generations: as Fishermen, Gatherers and Hunters in the region of Sauk Prairie and near the present-day towns Darrington, Marblemount and Rockport, WA. In the early days, we were known as the Sah-ku-me-hu. Sah-ku-méhu homelands were the entire drainage area of the Sauk, Suiattle and Cascade Rivers. We had an important village at Sauk Prairie, near the confluence of the Sauk and Suiattle Rivers. The village consisted of eight traditional cedar longhouses which were destroyed in 1880s by early non-Indian settlers who had laid claim to these lands under the U.S. Homestead Act and Dawes Act.”

## 2026 Membership Renewal Statement

Dear SVGS Member,

Don't miss out on the helpful benefits of being an active SVGS member in 2025. Members receive monthly meeting Zoom links, speaker's notes/handouts, a weekly genealogy news digest sent to your email inbox on upcoming genealogy presentations, skill-building research tips and resources, webinars, workshops, genealogy seminars, and other helpful genealogy news. Plus, members receive the SVGS quarterly, digital newsletter. Your dues make SVGS' monthly educational programs by genealogy experts possible. Your membership dues will keep you in the loop as to upcoming presentations and help make them happen!

If you have been helped in your family history research by SVGS' programs and/or volunteers, then renewing your dues is the perfect way to "pay it forward" so that SVGS may continue to help other researchers learn valuable skills and break through research challenges. If you have already renewed your dues – Thank you! If not, please use the mail in form below – or pay online:

[www.skagitvalleygenealogy.org/membership](http://www.skagitvalleygenealogy.org/membership) today!

Detach below the dotted line and return the bottom portion with your check.

----- Mail your completed form with your check before your dues expire on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday in March 2026 to:

**Skagit Valley Genealogical Society**  
P.O. Box 192, Burlington, WA 98233-0192

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ RENEWAL \_\_\_ NEW MEMBER \_\_\_ \$20 INDIVIDUAL \_\_\_ \$25 FAMILY (at Same Address)

Your contact information is not shared or published. It is solely used for official SVGS communications.

**YOU CAN ALSO RENEW ONLINE WITH PAYPAL OR CREDIT CARD IN THE MEMBERSHIP TAB on SVGS' WEBSITE:**

**[www.skagitvalleygenealogy.org/membership](http://www.skagitvalleygenealogy.org/membership)**

Please tell us a bit about your family research interests:

I am researching in: (list the US states or countries): \_\_\_\_\_

Genealogy topics I'd like to learn about are: \_\_\_\_\_

I consider myself to be at the research skill level of a: \_\_\_ Beginner \_\_\_ Intermediate \_\_\_ Advanced \_\_\_ Not Sure

Your feedback for SVGS: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to get more involved with SkVGS. Please: \_\_\_ Call me \_\_\_ Email me \_\_\_ Sorry, not at this time.

Thank you so much for your continued support of your genealogy society.

**SKAGIT VALLEY  
Genealogical Society  
P.O. Box 192 Burlington, WA 98233-0192**

Address Correction Requested