

History is The Key: Discovering Family Lineages and Uncovering Your Story

A Conference in Celebration of America's 250th Anniversary

Doubletree-Edgewater Hotel in Missoula, MT

April 25, 2026



Sponsored by **Bitter Root Chapter, NSDAR**
with assistance from **Destination Missoula**

History is The Key: Discovering Family Lineages and Uncovering Your Story

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INVITATION:

The Bitter Root Chapter, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, warmly invites you to join us in celebrating America's 250th Anniversary at our genealogy conference, "History is the Key: Discovering Family Lineages and Uncovering Your Story." The event will be held at the Doubletree-Edgewater Hotel in Missoula, Montana, on April 25, 2026.

Understanding our history is fundamental to understanding ourselves, our families, our communities, and our nation. This conference is designed to equip participants with practical skills for uncovering and connecting personal and collective histories.

Highlights include a keynote presentation, "America's Birth Certificate: The Declaration of Independence," delivered by acclaimed author and historian, Richard Bell, Professor of Early American History at the University of Maryland. Additional sessions will cover topics including engaging children in family history, applying artificial intelligence to research and writing, advanced techniques for using FamilySearch, interpreting land and legal documents, and fostering intergenerational connections.

We hope you'll take this opportunity to enjoy Missoula's hospitality. Relax at the Doubletree-Edgewater Hotel or one of our nearby partner hotels. While you're here, stroll along the scenic Riverfront Walking Trail to downtown, savor local cuisine at restaurants like Le Porte Rouge, 1889 Steak House, Finn, and explore unique eateries such as Rice Fine Thai Cuisine, Biga Pizza, or Five on Black. Don't miss the Carousel in Caras Park, the new Butterfly House at the Missoula Fairgrounds, local breweries and distilleries, or a visit to Traveler's Rest State Park—the only archaeologically verified site of Lewis and Clark's journey to the Pacific. You can also discover more about Missoula's rich history with a tour from Unseen Missoula.

Don't miss this unique opportunity to connect with fellow history and genealogy enthusiasts, learn from leading experts, and discover the stories that shape us all. Spaces are limited and interest is high—secure your place today!

Register now by completing and returning the registration form with payment to Bitter Root Chapter, NSDAR, PO Box 115, Lolo, MT 59847. If you have questions or need more details, please contact Nancy Schmitz at (808) 987-2114 or nschmitz2002@yahoo.com.

We look forward to welcoming you to this special event and sharing an unforgettable day of discovery and connection!

Nancy Schmitz, Ed.D.
Regent, Bitter Root Chapter

Meet our Presenters:

KEYNOTE SPEAKER. Richard Bell.



Richard Bell is Professor of History at the University of Maryland and author of the book *Stolen: Five Free Boys Kidnapped into Slavery and their Astonishing Odyssey Home* which was a finalist for the George Washington Prize and the Harriet Tubman Prize. He has held major research fellowships at Yale, Cambridge, and the Library of Congress and is the recipient of the National Endowment of the Humanities Public Scholar award and the Andrew Carnegie Fellowship.

He will present the Keynote Address: **America's Birth Certificate: *The Declaration of Independence***, Saturday, April 25, 2026 at 2PM

The *Declaration of Independence* is a peculiar thing. It's a literary masterpiece that was written jointly by a committee of fifty people. It's short and punchy—just 1310 words long—but still somehow daunting and difficult to get to grips with (there's a reason most of us have never read it in full and can only quote the first third of its second sentence). And what is it exactly? Dr. Bell will tackle the fascinating origins, misunderstood purpose, and extraordinary global legacy of the *Declaration of Independence*.

Richard Bell invites us to rediscover the Revolution as a world war that unleashed chaos, opportunity, and transformation across six continents in his new book: ***The American Revolution and The Fate of the World***, published by Penguin in November 2025. **For book ordering, please include the following secure credit card link for the \$35 signed book for in-person collection from the author, at the event: <https://square.link/u/ZBaOtoFH>.**

Other Presenters

Vicki Aznoe, panel moderator, has a lifelong focus on the three R's – Reading, Writing, and Research. She holds a Masters in Linguistics with multiple Secondary Education endorsements, and her career has included teaching, curriculum development, and serving as lead editor for a major publisher. She was the Organizing Registrar for the Daughters of the War of 1812, completing applications for every charter member. Among other offices, she currently serves as President of the Montana Society of 1812 and as chairperson of the Montana State Society DAR Application Team.

Diane Denny has been involved in Family History for many years including years as Assistant Director at the Kalispell Family History Center and as a consultant. She began the Digitizing Opportunity in Northwest Montana to digitize books, records, and personal histories. Probably best known for offering a Family History curriculum in over seventeen schools, she has taught for community groups, and service organizations. She is currently working with the Mesa, AZ FamilySearch Center.

Ken Egan, Jr., panelist served as executive director of Humanities Montana until his retirement after teaching American literature for thirty years at colleges and universities in the United States and abroad. His books include *Hope and Dread in Montana Literature* and *Montana 1864: Indians, Emigrants, and Gold in the Territorial Year*. His presentation is based on his biography of his Irish American great grandfather, forthcoming from the University of Wisconsin Press in September 2026.

Bill Lawrence is a semi-retired lawyer who specialized in probate and trust administration in northwest Colorado for 46 years. Bill began his genealogy research after the TV series “Roots.” Since his retirement, genealogy and writing family history has been a full-time project for him.

Nancy Schmitz, panelist, is a retired professor at Columbia University’s Teachers College, University of Montana and University of Guam. Currently authoring a book, “Lighting a Fuse to Revolution,” she is recognized for her engaging presentations on education and history, with a special emphasis on cultural impact.

Amanda Wickel grew up in the West. She and generations of her family have lived in Utah, Idaho and Montana. She has actively been piecing together the stories and people of those generations for 30 years. A FamilySearch volunteer consultant for ten years, Amanda is currently the coordinator of the Missoula Family Search Center.

Session Descriptions

Session 1: *The Stories that Bind Us.* (A session for parents, parents and children, teachers, and anyone). Come and join the fun and engaging activities, learn how storytelling and recording them can help children and families build a unifying narrative for generations to come. (Diane Denny)

Session 2: *FamilySearch Centers: Unlocking Hidden Resources.* Discover records and research “helps” available for free in FamilySearch Centers. (Amanda Wickel)

Session 3: *Building and Supporting Lineages: Connecting Generations and Telling Their Story.* From single documents to the written story, finding the right connections to fill in the details. (Panel)

Session 4: *Interpreting Land and Legal Documents.* Probate files disclose family relationships, the person’s occupation, the extent and value of their assets, and the distribution of the person’s assets. Along with probates, the transfer of real property and other legal documents provide context to our ancestors’ story. (Bill Lawrence)

Session 5: *Using Full Text Search is Your Key to Success.* Using Full Text Search will help you find that elusive information. Every word is searchable; using Fact View will give you cleaner results. Come discover how you can find that ancestor who is eluding you. (Diane Denny)

HISTORY IS THE KEY: DISCOVERING FAMILY LINEAGES AND UNCOVERING YOUR STORY
SATURDAY, APRIL 25

8 am – 2 pm	Registration East Hallway
9:00- 10:00am	Session 1: The Stories that Bind Us (A session for parents, parents and children, teachers, and anyone) Clark Room
10:00-10:15am	Break
10:15- 11:15am	Session 2: FamilySearch Centers: Unlocking Hidden Resources Canyon Room
11:15-11:30	Break
11:30am-12:30pm	Session 3: Land and Legal Documents. Canyon Room
12:30-1pm	Lunch Break
1:00 – 2:00 pm	Session 4: Building and supporting lineages: Connecting Generations and Telling Their Story. Canyon Room
2:00-2:15pm	Break
2:15 -3:30 pm	Keynote “America’s Birth Certificate, The Declaration of Independence” -- Dr. Richard Bell TBD
3:30-3:45pm	Break
3:30-4:15pm	Richard Bell Book signing, “The American Revolution and the Fate of the World”
4:00-5:00pm	Session 5 – Using Full-Text Searches is Your Key to Success Canyon Room
5:00 -5:15pm	Break
5:15 – 6:15pm	Question and Answer session with the genies Canyon Room

A grab and go lunch will be available on Saturday from 12 pm to 1:30 pm. Choose either a Chicken Caesar Salad or a Turkey Club. Cost for either is \$26 including drink and gratuity.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Please make check payable to **Bitter Root Chapter, NSDAR** and return with the Registration Form to:

Bitter Root Chapter, NSDAR

PO Box 115

Lolo, MT 59847

If you would like further conference details, please contact: Nancy Schmitz, (808) 987-2114 or nschmitz2002@yahoo.com.

ROOM RESERVATIONS

Three hotels have courtesy blocks of rooms at convention rates. Please note different cutoff dates for room reservations at each hotel.

CONVENTION HEADQUARTERS

For reservations and any questions, please call the **Doubletree-Edgewater Hilton**. Mention the DAR State Convention to receive the conference rate. **Book by March 1, 2026.**

One King bed or two Queen beds are available at the Conference rate of \$239 + applicable tax and fees. Call 406-728-3100.

CLOSE BY

Comfort Inn – University

1021 E. Broadway, Missoula, MT 59802

Conference rate for one King bed (\$129) or two Queen beds (\$134) + applicable tax and fees. Breakfast is included. Call 406-549-7600. State Group: DAR2026. **(Book before March 25, 2026).**

Direct booking link: <https://www.choicehotels.com/reservations/groups/SC17S9>

Days Inn by Wyndham Downtown Missoula – University

Conference rate for one King bed or two Queen beds is \$129 + applicable tax and fees. Breakfast is Included. Call 406-549-5134. Group: Genealogy **(Book before March 23, 2026)**



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HISTORY IS THE KEY: DISCOVERING FAMILY LINEAGES AND UNCOVERING YOUR STORY

SATURDAY, APRIL 25

REGISTRATION FORM Hosted by Bitter Root Chapter, NSDAR

NAME: _____ EMAIL: _____

ADDRESS: _____ PHONE: _____

Organization: _____ DATE: _____

REGISTRATION

Full day - If registered by March 25, 2026. **\$110** \$ _____

Late registration after March 25 **\$120**

Morning sessions only until 12:30pm **\$60** \$ _____

Afternoon sessions only starting at 1:00 pm including Keynote **\$70** \$ _____

Grab and Go lunch **\$26** \$ _____

Chicken Caesar Salad, Caesar Dressing, bottled water

Turkey Club with fries, bottled water

Individual Sessions only (Please choose sessions you will be attending below)

Session 1: The Stories that Bind Us (A session for parents, parents and children, teachers, and anyone) \$20 \$ _____

Session 2: FamilySearch Centers: Unlocking Hidden Resources \$20 \$ _____

Session 3: Interpreting Land and Legal Documents \$20 \$ _____

Keynote presentation. America's Birth Certificate **\$30** \$ _____

Session 4: Building and Supporting Lineages: Connecting Generations \$20 \$ _____

Session 5: Using Full-Text Searches is Your Key to Success. \$20 \$ _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ _____