

NGS 2022 Family History Conference

Our American Mosaic

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The California Genealogical Society has supported family research since 1898. A collage of ancestors of the society's members, who hail from around the world, illustrates the theme of the 2022 NGS Family History Conference, Our American Mosaic. Collage created by Lois Elling.

Genealogy enthusiasts will have many golden opportunities to fine-tune research skills and dig up information about ancestors during the NGS 2022 Family History Conference, in Sacramento, California, 25-28 May. Conference registration and hotel reservations will open later this year.

The theme of the 2022 conference is Our American Mosaic, celebrating the rich diversity of the United States as well as the country's most populous state, California. Appropriately, the official logo of the conference represents the compass points from which our ancestors came and how they have all contributed to the American story.

The local host society for the conference is the California Genealogical Society, which has a history of supporting genealogical research since 1898. On the conference agenda are genealogy lectures, seminars, workshops, events, tours, and socializing opportunities with fellow attendees.

California's history

It is said that the origins of the mystique of California might be traced back to the 1510 fictional account of a Queen Califia who reigned over an island of Amazon women along the west coast of what is now the United States. *Las Sergas de Esplandián*, a popular romance novel that titillated readers of the era, was written by Spanish author Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo. California's name comes from Spanish explorers of the Mexican peninsula of Baja (lower) California, who mistakenly thought it was the infamous island.

Prior to the "discovery" of California by Europeans, many indigenous people had populated the state for generations. In 1579, Sir Francis Drake landed north of today's San Francisco Bay, claiming California for England.¹

Websites cited in this article were viewed on 1 February 2021.

1. Jim Wood, "Did Drake Really Do It?" *Marin Magazine* (<https://marinmagazine.com/community/history/did-drake-really-do-it/>).

Kathleen O'Donnell Beitiks is a fourth-generation Californian. Her paternal Irish ancestors immigrated to California in the 1850s and ran a boarding house in Grass Valley for gold miners. It's safe to say her ancestors did not strike it rich—otherwise Kathleen would be living in a mansion today. Currently the volunteer coordinator for the California Genealogical Society, Kathleen is also the publicity chair for the Local Host Committee of the NGS 2022 Family History Conference.



Capitol Building. Sacramento was established as the capital of California in 1850. Courtesy of Visit Sacramento.



Stepping back into the era of the California Gold Rush, Old Sacramento is home to shops, restaurants, and the Sacramento History Museum. Courtesy of Carlos Eliason/Visit Sacramento.

However, Spain made its presence known in this new world by establishing trading routes along the California coast and colonizing the southwest. By 1821, Mexico gained its independence from Spain and claimed California for its own.²

Spain's continued influence on the early history of the state can be seen not only by the establishment of California's twenty-one missions from 1769 to 1833 (San Diego to Sonoma), but also by the Spanish names of many cities.³ Reflecting Spain and Mexico's religious culture, Sacramento is the Spanish word for "sacrament."

By the mid-1800s, territorial disputes led to the two-year Mexican-American War. The war ended in 1848 and resulted in much of the Southwest, including California, becoming part of the United States.

Gold Rush

It took almost a year before the country and the world heard from President James K. Polk about the discovery of gold in California. Ironically, Mexico had ceded California to the United States less than ten days after gold was discovered in the state.⁴

The 24 January 1848 discovery at Sutter's Mill seems to have perpetuated the California mystique, with gold seekers from almost every continent rushing to stake their claim on the state's riches. Sutter's Mill is about an hour east of the capital city of Sacramento.

By 1855, it is estimated that at least three hundred thousand gold seekers and other immigrants had arrived in California, including thousands from China, Europe and South America.⁵

Although some prospectors were successful as miners, a large number of gold seekers ended up making a comfortable living by providing supplies to the miners. One of the most well-known was Levi Strauss, a German-born San Francisco businessman

2. "Early History of the California Coast," *National Park Service* (<https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/ca/intro.htm>).

3. "The Mission Story," *California Mission Foundation* (<https://californiamissionsfoundation.org/the-california-missions>).

4. "The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo," *National Archives* (<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/guadalupe-hidalgo>). "The California Gold Rush," *PBS American Experience* (<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/goldrush-california>).

5. "California Gold Rush," *Encyclopedia Britannica* (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/California-Gold-Rush>).



The Tower Bridge, which spans the Sacramento River in the downtown area, was included on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. Courtesy of Visit Sacramento.

who partnered with a Latvian immigrant, Jacob Davis, to manufacture sturdy blue jeans.⁶

Many of the prospectors did not stay in California, but chose to return to their homes and families after a few years. Records of their short time “out west” might not appear in standard genealogical records, but can be found in newspaper accounts and other sources.

Sacramento and the NGS Conference

Sacramento, the state’s capital and host of the 2022 conference, was incorporated in 1850 and is the sixth largest city in California. It is the political center of the state, and the region is home to the University of California, Davis, and other reputable educational institutions.

It is also a city that is proud of its culture. The Crocker Art Museum, California State Railroad Museum, California State Capitol Museum, and Old Sacramento State Historical Park are just some of the cultural institutions supported by the city and its residents.

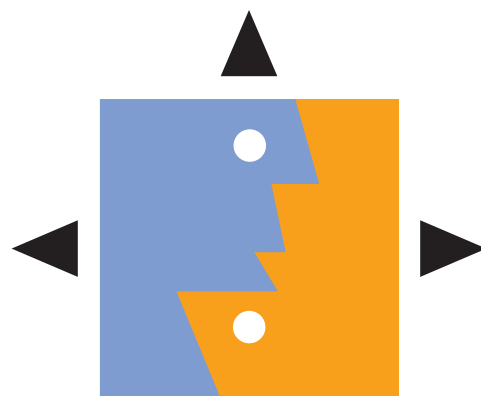
During the 2022 conference, attendees will have a chance to explore the Sacramento area, do some research, and learn more about how its history

contributed to the growth and development of the country.

Conference attendees might consider adding on a few extra days to their trip and take this opportunity to visit the city of San Francisco, a ninety-minute drive from Sacramento. San Francisco is a beautiful city to explore and is filled with many genealogical research opportunities. The next issue will feature information about research facilities in Sacramento and San Francisco.

Mark your calendars now for the NGS 2022

Family History Conference—and your opportunity to discover how your ancestors are part of Our American Mosaic. 🌳



**OUR
AMERICAN
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**25-28 MAY 2022
SACRAMENTO, CA**

NATIONAL GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
FAMILY HISTORY CONFERENCE

6. Unzipped Staff, “The Story of Levi Strauss,” Levi Strauss & Co. (<https://www.levistrauss.com/2013/03/14/the-story-of-levi-strauss>). Tracey Panek, “Jacob Davis: 6 Things You (Probably) Didn’t Know About the Inventor of the Blue Jean,” Levi Strauss & Co. (<https://www.levistrauss.com/2015/10/08/jacob-davis-6-things-you-probably-didnt-know-about-the-inventor-of-the-blue-jean>).