



# National Archives at Kansas City Newsletter

## Upcoming Virtual Programs at the National Archives

The National Archives is continuing to offer a full slate of public programs in June. An extensive list can be found [here](#). Below are several highlights on a variety of topics. All programs are scheduled according to Eastern Daylight Time.

### On Juneteenth

On **Wednesday, June 2 at 7:00 p.m. EDT**, the National Archives will host **Annette Gordon-Reed** for a discussion titled *On Juneteenth*. Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Gordon-Reed tells the sweeping story of Juneteenth’s integral importance to American history and provides a historian’s view of the country’s long road to Juneteenth. She recounts both its

origins in Texas and the enormous hardships that African Americans have endured in the years from Reconstruction through Jim Crow and beyond.

Joining Annette Gordon-Reed in conversation will be **Roy Young**, CEO of James Madison’s Montpelier, and the **Rev. Dr. Halliard Brown, Jr.**, a board member of the Orange

County, Virginia, African American Historical Society. This program is presented in partnership with James Madison’s Montpelier. This **free program** is available via live stream on the National Archives [YouTube Channel](#).



### Can Congress Reform Itself Again?

On **Wednesday, June 9 at 1:00 p.m. EDT**, the National Archives will host a panel discussion titled *Can Congress Reform Itself Again?* Over the years, Congress has embraced reforming the institution, but that process often was voter-driven. Congress has also periodically looked inward and asked if its processes are in lockstep with the current times. Might the current hyper-partisanship be an equally impactful event that will change the way Congress operates? A bipartisan panel of former and current Members of Congress will discuss these issues. Moderated by Librarian of Congress, **Dr. Carla Hayden**, panelists include current members of Congress **Derek Kilmer** (D-WA) and **Will Timmons** (R-SC); and former members **James Blanchard** (D-MI) and **Bob Walker** (R-PA). This program is presented in partnership with the U.S. Association of Former Members of Congress. This **free program** is available via live stream on the National Archives [YouTube Channel](#).

### The Republic of Detours: How the New Deal Paid Broke Writers to Rediscover America

On **Tuesday, June 15 at 6:30 p.m. EDT**, the National Archives will host **Scott Borchert** who will discuss the story of the Federal Writers Project (FWP). The FWP was a division of the Works Progress Administration founded to employ jobless writers. It was a predictably eclectic organization, directed by an equally eccentric man, Henry Alsberg. Under Alsberg’s direction, the FWP took up the lofty goal of rediscovering America and soon found itself embroiled in the day’s most heated arguments regarding literary representation, politics, and racial inclusion. Joining Borchert in conversation will be **Susan Rubenstein DeMasi**, author of *Henry Alsberg: The Driving Force of New Deal Writers*. This **free program** is available via live stream on the National Archives [YouTube Channel](#).

## June 2021

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### Upcoming Events

Unless noted, all events are held at the National Archives 400 W. Pershing Road Kansas City, MO 64108

NOTE: All in-person public events at National Archives facilities nationwide are cancelled until further notice. This includes in-person public programs, tours, school group visits, public meetings, external conferences, and facility rentals.

# National Archives Offers Virtual Genealogy Series

In lieu of the autumn 2020 Virtual Genealogy Fair that could not be held due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are pleased to offer a new Genealogy Series. Instead of a single-day event, the program sessions will be broadcast individually throughout June. You are invited to watch and participate in real time with the presenters and family historians from around the world on [YouTube](#).

The sessions will offer family history research tools on federal records for all skill levels. The May sessions are available for viewing [here](#). The June sessions are focused on specific topics and may be better suited for the experienced researcher. All are welcome! Session descriptions, videos, handouts, and participation instructions are below.

- Open with no reservations required
- Watch the broadcasts via [YouTube](#)
- Participate and ask questions via chat during the scheduled broadcasts
- After the scheduled broadcasts, video recordings and presentation materials will be available online

Below are the June dates, times, and program topics.

## **Tuesday, June 1 at 1:00 p.m. EDT - *From Here to There: Researching Office of Indian Affairs Employees***

Researching ancestors who worked for federal agencies is a popular topic at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), and this presentation will tie together the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Official Personnel Files (OPF) held in St. Louis with the agency field records located in various NARA field sites. The session will open with what can be found in the OPFs and how to request them. **Cara Lebonick** will then conduct a deep dive into several OPFs of Native women employed by the BIA before handing it off to **Cody White**, who will then explore what further information can be found in the regional records of the BIA. Together, Cara and Cody will show how the holdings across the National Archives can provide a more complete genealogical story.

## **Tuesday, June 8 at 1:00 p.m. EDT - *Civil War Union Noncombatant Personnel: Teamsters, Laundresses, Nurses, Sutlers and More***

The National Archives contains many records about noncombatant civilians connected with the Union Army during the American Civil War. However, the records are underutilized because there is no comprehensive index - no "one" place to look - and requires time-consuming research into obscure records. Digitization is slowly changing that, however! **Claire Kluskens** will provide suggestions for research with emphasis on online materials that can help you get started.

## **Tuesday, June 16 at 1:00 p.m. EDT - *Merchant Marine Records at the National Archives at St. Louis***

**Theresa Fitzgerald** will introduce you to the core collection of Merchant Marine Licensing Files, which were recently accessioned and are now open to the public for the first time at the National Archives at St. Louis. She will also go over the auxiliary collections of Merchant Marine records that are complex and closely connected.



Above: Women and children in camp, 31st Pennsylvania Infantry at Queen's farm, vicinity of Fort Slocum, near Washington, D.C. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.

# Hidden Treasures from the Stacks

## Paper Bag Wars

Margaret Knight was born in 1838, one of three children. By the time she was twelve, her father had died, leaving her widowed mother in need of help. As such, Margaret took a job at a weaving mill where her inventive skills first came to light. During her employment, she witnessed several accidents in the mill involving other children who were severely injured by the moving parts of the weaving loom coming airborne and striking them. These tragic events inspired Margaret to invent a device to keep the parts of the loom from becoming airborne, but she was unaware of the potential financial benefit to her of the invention.

In 1867, Knight moved to Springfield, Massachusetts, and began working at the Columbia Paper Bag Company. The process of folding and pasting the bags was labor-intensive. Knight's inventive mind took over and soon she had an idea for a machine invention that could fold and paste the bags in one process. She began working on the idea, constructing paper and wood models of the machine.

In the late 1860s, the U.S. Patent Office required a working patent model to be submitted with the application. The paper and wooden models Margaret had initially created would not be suitable for a patent model. She employed several different machinists as early as July 1868 to help build the patent model and eventually was successful in creating a working model. Her application was received at the patent office on February 28, 1870. On April 4, 1870, she was notified that her application was rejected, alleging that some claims were already patented by a number of different inventors. Several of the claims in question were awarded to Charles Annan on June 1, 1869.

Annan had filed for his patent on April 3, 1869, and Knight knew him from the machine shop where her patent model was perfected. The application date coming well after she had conceived of the idea as well as similarities to her patent led her to believe that Annan had gained knowledge of her idea while *employed in the shop* and used it in his application.

Until 2013, the United States was a "first to invent country," which means that a patent is awarded to the inventor who *conceived of an invention first, not the first to file for the patent*. This process resulted in the patent office needing to resolve the issue of first to invent in an administrative trial, where the parties would have the chance to present evidence supporting their claim of priority. These became known as "patent interference cases." Normally the interference is noticed by the patent examiners and a request for an interference case is made by the patent examiner.

On April 7, 1870, Knight sent a request for an interference case against Annan. The first hearings were held on June 3, 1870. A decision in Knight's favor was delivered on June 25. Annan filed an appeal on July 20 and the Examiner in Chief's decision came on September 3, 1870.

Knight provided multiple depositions from witnesses familiar with her work on the invention as well as numerous exhibit items including her earliest drawing from February 1867, wooden parts used in early prototypes, photographs of the patent model, and examples of flat bottom bags made on the machine during the development of her idea. Annan provided no proof of priority for his invention but only questioned the abilities of Knight and made arguments that while she may have had an idea earlier than he did, it was not perfected until after his idea.

The *Knight v. Annan* interference case file has numerous examples where the abilities of Margaret Knight were called into question. In the argument submitted by Annan, she is accused of shopping around for a machinist who had already produced a similar patent model as a means to utilize previously gained knowledge to expedite a working model for herself. The decision made by the Examiner in Chief says in part, "But great allowances are to be made to inexperience in business, as well as to the embarrassments to which her sex subjected Miss Knight. She was incapable of judging what degree of industry her work required, or how far she might insist upon its being attended to, neither could she enforce her claims with the persistence that one of the other sex might use." Despite the questions of her abilities as a woman she was given priority and patent 109,224 was issued to her on November 15, 1870, awarding all of the disputed claims to Knight.

Throughout her lifetime, Knight had over twenty patents issued to her for a wide range of ideas. In 2006, she was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame.

(Continued on next page.)

Office of CHARLES F. STANSBURY,  
Solicitor of American and Foreign Patents,  
MAY BUILDING, ROOM 1, COR. SEVENTH AND F STS  
P. O. Box 575.

Washington, D. C., Apr 7 1870

Sir:

In the matter of my application  
for a patent for a Paper-bag Machine,  
I desire that interference may be  
declared with the patent of  
Charles J. Annan dated June  
1<sup>st</sup> 1869- that I may have the  
opportunity to test the question  
of priority.

Very respectfully  
Your Obt. Servt.  
Chas F. Stansbury  
atty for  
Margaret E. Knight.

Hon: S. S. Fisher,  
Compt of Patents.

versation with Mr. Binney in Lincoln and Graham's shop, in the rear of 76 Sudbury Street; and before Mr. Annan ever came in and talked with Mr. Abbott. The Annan-Binney patent was granted June 1, 1869, and these conversations took place as late at least as August.

Out of all the machine shops in Boston, Miss Knight selects the one most adjacent to that in which a square-bottom bag machine had been built or was building, close behind it, in fact; she calls on Binney, the owner of the patent, and of this machine just built, negotiates some kind of a trade with him, for which he makes papers, which she never signs. She calls to see him twice at his store, invites him to visit her machine, gives him a card to insure admission to the shop where the machine was building, at all times; and now at this hearing, introduces the testimony of these facts, as if to argue that Binney and Annan had stolen something from her. Annan's patent and machine was made and sold to Binney, long before either ever saw Miss Knight; long before June, 1869, and this is of record in the Patent Office.

And so it seems to us, that if anything is shown by this evidence, it is, that the applicant, Margaret E. Knight, sent her machine to the nearest shop she could find to the one where a successful machine was building or had been built, we do not say, in the hope that good luck and fortune would ooze through the walls; but in the hope that some familiarity with their neighbor's work would make the mechanics she then entrusted it to, more skilful in arranging and coördinating a mechanism, which, up to that time, she and Knox and Burnham had been unable to grapple with.

The requests we make then of the Patent Office are, to confine Miss Knight's claims to what confessedly she has invented, not to give her a patent for features inoperative in and by themselves; to put us and our mech-

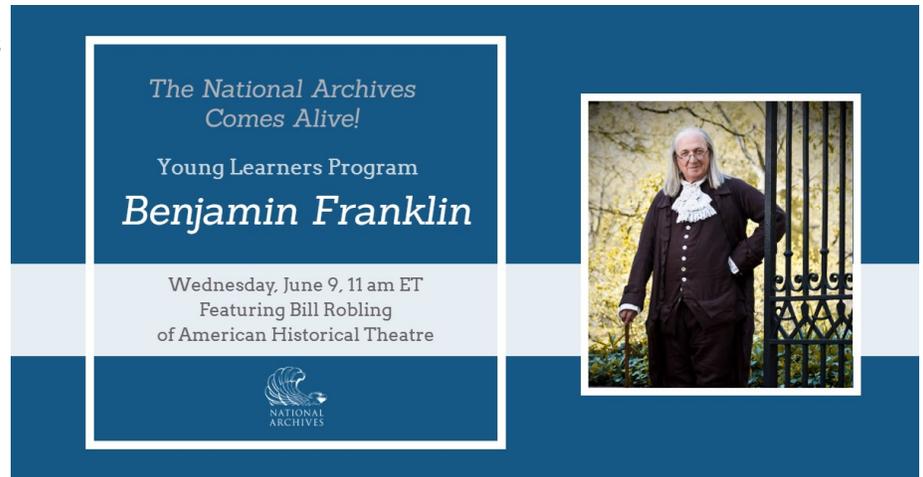
## June Virtual Programs for Educators and Students

**Upcoming Summer Workshops:** This summer, the National Archives and our Presidential Libraries will host several professional development opportunities for educators. Educators can participate in document-based workshops on finding and teaching with primary sources, and on specific historical topics. A list of various professional development workshops are available [online](#).

### **Young Learners Program - Meet Benjamin Franklin on Wednesday, June 9 at 11:00 a.m. EDT**

Benjamin Franklin was one of the most influential Americans of any generation. He was a scientist, inventor, entrepreneur, politician, and brilliant diplomat. Franklin was the only "Founding Father" who took part in the creation of all the founding documents of America. Benjamin Franklin will explain his role in shaping the United States. Benjamin Franklin is portrayed by **Bill Robling** of American Historical Theatre.

This **free program** is available via live stream on the National Archives [YouTube Channel](#).



The National Archives  
Comes Alive!

Young Learners Program  
**Benjamin Franklin**

Wednesday, June 9, 11 am ET  
Featuring Bill Robling  
of American Historical Theatre



## National Archives Facility Information Regarding COVID-19

(updated as of May 28, 2021)

The National Archives is committed to the health and safety of our visitors and staff. We are continuing to monitor the situation regarding COVID-19. National Archives staff will continue to serve the public remotely by responding to emailed requests for records and [History Hub](#) inquiries. Finally, all in-person public programs and events are suspended until further notice. We will continue to update the public as agency guidance becomes available. Follow the National Archives at Kansas City on [Facebook](#) or on Twitter [@KCArchives](#).



**GENERAL INFORMATION:** The National Archives is open Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Closed on weekends and Federal holidays. Hours are subject to change due to special programs and weather.

The National Archives is located at 400 West Pershing Road, Kansas City, Missouri, 64108, and is home to historical records dating from the 1820s to the 1990s created or received by Federal agencies in Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

For more information, call 816-268-8000, email [kansascity.educate@nara.gov](mailto:kansascity.educate@nara.gov) or visit [www.archives.gov/kansas-city](http://www.archives.gov/kansas-city). Tweet us [@KCArchives](#). Follow us on Instagram at [kansascity.archives](#). Find us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/nationalarchiveskansascity](http://www.facebook.com/nationalarchiveskansascity).