

Davis Genealogy Book Club  
Recommended reading - January/February 2025

February 6 @ 12:30 pm

DGC Book Club - **The Orange Lilies**. By Nathan Dylann Goodwin. 2014 Fiction

This is the 10th selected book for the DGC Book Club.

### Suggested books

Copeland, Libby. *The Lost Family: How DNA testing is upending who we are*. **Nonfiction**. 2020

A look at the rise of home genetic testing and the seismic shock it has had on individual lives. You swab your cheek or spit not a vial, then send it away to a lab. You get a report that might tell you where your ancestors came from or if you carry certain genetic risks. Or the report could reveal a long-buried secret and upend your entire sense of identity. Copeland explores the culture of genealogy buffs, the science of DNA, the business of companies like Ancestry and 23 and Me, all while tracing the story of one woman, her unusual results, and a relentless methodical drive for answers that becomes a thoroughly modern genetic detective story.

Recommended by Suzanne Peterson

Fronczak, Paul Joseph and Alex Tresniowski. *The Foundling: The True Story of a Kidnapping, a Family Secret, and My Search for the Real Me*. **Nonfiction**. 2018

This is the inspiring and “page-turning” (*Booklist*) true story of a man who discovered that he had been kidnapped as a baby—and how his quest to find out who he really is upturned the genealogy industry, his own family, and set in motion the second longest cold case in US history.

Recommended by Sue Torguson

Goodwin, Nathan Dylan. *The Forensic Genealogist Series. The Orange Lilies, The American Ground, The Spyglass File, The Missing Man, The Suffragette's Secret, The Wicked Trade, The Asylum, The Sterling Affair, The Foundlings, The Deserter's Tale*. **Fiction**

Recommended by Michael Bowling and Nancy Asmundson

Griffeth, Bill *Stranger No More: A sequel to The Stranger in my Genes*. **Nonfiction**. 2022

Recommended by Mary Dobosz

Hill, Richard. *Finding Family: My search for roots and the secrets in my DNA*. **Nonfiction**. 2012 *Finding Family: My Search for Roots and the Secrets in My DNA* is the suspenseful account of an adoptee trying to reclaim the biological family denied him by sealed birth records. This fascinating quest, including the author's landmark use of DNA testing, takes readers on an exhilarating roller-coaster ride and concludes with a twist that rivals anything Hollywood has to offer.

Recommended by Mary Dobosz

Humes, Edward. *The Forever Witness: How DNA and Genealogy Solved a Cold Case Double Murder*. **Nonfiction**. 2022

“Thought-provoking true-crime thriller...the book raises urgent questions of balancing public and private good that we’ll likely be dealing with as long as the title implies.”—*Wall Street Journal*A relentless detective and a civilian genealogist solve a haunting cold case—and launch a crime-fighting revolution that tests the fragile line between justice and privacy.

Recommended by Lisa Henderson

Jerkis, Morgan. *Wandering in Strange Lands, A Daughter of the Great Migration Reclaims her Roots*. **Nonfiction**. 2022  
Between 1916 and 1970, six million black Americans left their rural homes in the South for jobs in cities in the North, West, and Midwest in a movement known as The Great Migration. But while this event transformed the complexion of America and provided black people with new economic opportunities, it also disconnected them from their roots, their land, and their sense of identity, argues Morgan Jerkins. In this fascinating and deeply personal exploration, she recreates her ancestors' journeys across America, following the migratory routes they took from Georgia to Louisiana, Oklahoma and California.

Recommended by Suzanne Peterson

Jones, M.K. *Maze Investigation Series* (6 titles) *The Curiosity Club of St. Foy* series. (2 titles so far). **Fiction** M. K. Jones is a family history researcher, genealogist and author of the “Maze Investigations” series and “The Curiosity Club of St. Foy”

Recommended by Michael Bowling

Mason, Daniel. *North Woods: A Novel* **Fiction**. 2023. It begins with a pair of young lovers in colonial New England escaping wrathful judgment in their Puritan village. They flee to a house in the wilds of western Massachusetts. The rest of this impossible-to-summarize novel introduces us to inhabitants of that house over the ensuing three-plus centuries. *North Woods* is a hodgepodge narrative, brazenly disjointed in time, perspective and form. Letters, poems and song lyrics, diary entries, medical case notes, real-estate listings, vintage botanical illustrations, pages of an almanac, modern-day nature photographs, a true-crime detective story, and an address to a historical society.

Recommended by Suzanne Peterson

Parthasarathy, Raghuveer. *So Simple a Beginning: How Four Physical Principles Shape Our Living World*. **Nonfiction**. 2022

A biophysicist reveals the hidden unity behind nature’s breathtaking complexity - The form and function of a sprinting cheetah are quite unlike those of a rooted tree. A human being is very different from a bacterium or a zebra. The living world is a realm of dazzling variety, yet a shared set of physical principles shapes the forms and behaviors of every creature in it. *So Simple a Beginning* shows how the emerging new science of biophysics is transforming our understanding of life on Earth and enabling potentially lifesaving but controversial technologies such as gene editing, artificial organ growth, and ecosystem engineering.

Recommended by Cyndi Young

Raymond, Barbara Bisantz. *The Baby Thief: The Untold Story of Georgia Tann, the Baby Seller Who Corrupted Adoption*. **Nonfiction**. 2007

For almost three decades, renowned baby-seller Georgia Tann ran a children's home in Memphis, Tennessee selling her charges to wealthy clients nationwide, Joan Crawford among them. Part social history, part detective story, part expose, *The Baby Thief* is a riveting investigative narrative that explores themes that continue to reverberate today.

Recommended by Sue Torguson

Ross, Andrea. *Unnatural Selection: A Memoir of Adoption and Wilderness*. **Nonfiction**. 2021 (Andrea Ross is a local Davis author)

Adopted at birth, Andrea Ross grew up inhabiting two ecosystems: one was her tangible, adoptive family, the other her birth family, whose mysterious landscape was hidden from her. In this coming-of-age memoir, Ross narrates how in her early twenties, while working as a ranger in Grand Canyon National Park, she embarked on a journey to discover where she came from and, ultimately, who she was. After many missteps and dead ends, Ross uncovered her heartbreaking and inspiring origin story and began navigating the complicated turns of reuniting with her birth parents and their new families. Through backcountry travel in the American West, she also came to understand her place in the world, realizing that her true identity lay not in a choice between adopted or biological parents, but in an expansion of the concept of family.

Shorto, Russell *The Island at the Center of the World: The Epic Story of Dutch Manhattan and the Forgotten Colony That Shaped America* **Nonfiction**. 2005.

Russell Shorto presents astonishing information on the founding of our nation and reveals in detail the crucial role of the Dutch in making America what it is today. In the late 1960s, an archivist in the New York State Library made an astounding discovery: 12,000 pages of centuries-old correspondence, court cases, legal contracts, and reports from a forgotten society: the Dutch colony centered on Manhattan, which predated the thirteen "original" American colonies. This is a different perspective of our nation's beginnings.

Recommended by Suzanne Peterson

Shorto, Russell. *Smalltime: a story of my family and the mob*. **Nonfiction**. 2021

*Smalltime* is an American immigrant story that travels back to Risorgimento Sicily, home of Antonino Sciotto, the author's great-grandfather, who leaves his wife and children in grinding poverty for a new life—and wife—in a Pennsylvania mining town. *Smalltime* draws an intimate portrait of a mobster and his wife, sudden riches, and the toll a lawless life takes on one family.

Recommended by Suzanne Peterson

From Nancy Asmundson -suggestions

The best genealogical mystery novels (shepherd.com). Mystery Book Series with Genealogy Theme [cozy-mystery.com](http://cozy-mystery.com)

**Maureen Taylor, photo detective, recommended ten nonfiction books.**

I am including them as possible DGBC reads- but also as books that might interest Davis Genealogy Club members.

Maureen Taylor is a frequent keynote speaker on photo identification, photograph preservation, and family history at historical and genealogical societies, museums, conferences, libraries, and other organizations across the U.S., London and Canada.

*Telling Her Story: A Guide to Researching and Writing about Women of the Past.* by Sharon DeBartolo Carmack. 2024  
The women of our past led fascinating lives. Not only were they mothers and teachers who shaped their families' identities, they were also moral reformers and pioneers in their own right. But, compared with the men in our past, researching women is distinctively challenging.

*Threads of Life: A History of the World Through the Eye of a Needle* by Clare Hunter. 2021  
A globe-spanning history of sewing, embroidery, and the people who have used a needle and thread to make their voices heard. From the political propaganda of the Bayeux Tapestry, World War I soldiers coping with PTSD, and the maps sewn by schoolgirls in the New World, to the AIDS quilt, Hmong story clothes, and pink pussyhats, women and men have used the language of sewing to make their voices heard, even in the most desperate of circumstances.

*Real Clothes, Real Lives: 200 Years of What Women Wore.* 2023 by Kiki Smith (Author), Vanessa Friedman (Introduction), Diane von Furstenberg (Foreword)  
An unprecedented look at women's everyday clothes—from Sylvia Plath's Girl Scout uniform to psychedelic microminis, modern suits, and fast-food workers' uniforms—this fascinating volume shows how American women from every background have lived, worked, and dressed for 200 years.

*Painted People: 5,000 Years of Tattooed History from Sailors and Socialites to Mummies and Kings* by Matt Lodder. 2024  
The earliest tattoos yet identified belonged to Ötzi, the 'iceman', whose mummy allows us a brief glimpse into the prehistory of the practice. We know that over the more than five thousand years since he was tattooed, countless cultures have performed this ancient practice, and people in every corner of the world have been tattooed. For the most part, these fascinating histories remain stubbornly untold, and the secrets of Siberian princesses, Chinese generals and Victorian socialites have been hidden on the skin, under layers of clothing and under layers of history. Now with access to a wealth of new and unreported material, this book will roll up its sleeves and reveal the artwork hidden beneath them.

*The Unclaimed: Abandonment and Hope in the City of Angels.* by Pamela Prickett, Stefan Timmermans. 2024  
For centuries, people who died destitute or alone were buried in potters' fields—a Dickensian end that even the most hard-pressed families tried to avoid. Today, more and more relatives are abandoning their dead, leaving it to local governments to dispose of the bodies. Up to 150,000 Americans now go unclaimed each year. Who are they? Why are they being forgotten? And what is the meaning of life if your death doesn't matter to others?

*Sporting Fashion: Outdoor Girls 1800 to 1960.* by Kevin L. Jones, Christina M. Johnson, Serena Williams (Foreword) 2021

Discover how the designers of women's sporting attire navigated the worlds of fashion, function, and propriety, from the beginning of the 19th century to 1960.

*Cartomania: Photography and Celebrity in the Nineteenth Century.* by Paul Frecker 2024

Cartomania was a photographic phenomenon that seized the public imagination at the beginning of the 1860s. Small portraits, dubbed *cartes de visite*, were avidly exchanged with friends and family, quickly earning a reputation as 'the paper currency of social intercourse'. Compiled into albums and prominently displayed in the home to peruse, assess and discuss, this first explosion of commercial portraiture proved a wildly popular craze, particularly once celebrities embraced the new format.

*Plantation Goods: A Material History of American Slavery.* by Seth Rockman 2024

The industrializing North and the agricultural South—that's how we have been taught to think about the United States in the early nineteenth century. But in doing so, we overlook the economic ties that held the nation together before the Civil War. We miss slavery's long reach into small New England communities, just as we fail to see the role of Northern manufacturing in shaping the terrain of human bondage in the South. Using *plantation goods*—the shirts, hats, hoes, shovels, shoes, axes, and whips made in the North for use in the South—historian Seth Rockman locates the biggest stories in American history in the everyday objects that stitched together the lives and livelihoods of Americans—white and Black, male and female, enslaved and free—across an expanding nation.

*Pockets: An Intimate History of How We Keep Things Close.* by Hannah Carlson 2023

“Who knew the humble pocket could hold so much history? In this enthralling and always surprising account, Hannah Carlson turns the pocket inside out and out tumble pocket watches, coins, pistols, and a riveting centuries-long social and political history.” —Jill Lepore, author of *These Truths: A History of the United States*

*The Power of Knitting: Stitching Together Our Lives in a Fractured World.* by Loretta Napoleoni 2020

This book is a voyage through our history following the yarn of social, economic and political changes - from ancient Egypt and Peru to modern Mongolia, from the spinning bees of the American Revolution to the knitting spies of World War II, and from the hippies' rejection of consumerism to yarnbombing protests against climate change. For the author it is also a personal journey of discovery, drawing on the wisdom her grandmother passed along as they knit together.

### **Books read by the Davis Genealogy Book Club**

Hiding the Past, The Lost Ancestor by Nathan Dylan Goodwin-Fiction

The Pirate's Wife: The Remarkable True Story of Sarah Kidd by Daphne Palmer- Nonfiction

Inheritance: A memoir of genealogy, paternity, and love by Dani Shapiro-Nonfiction

Genealogy: a novel by Mae Wood-Fiction

The Lost Family: How DNA Testing is Upending Who We Are by Libby Copeland-Nonfiction

The Rosie Project: a novel by Samson, Graeme. Fiction

Secret Harvests: A Hidden Story of Separation and the Resilience of a Family Farm-Nonfiction

Three Times Removed by M.K. Jones Fiction

The Stranger in my Genes: A Memoir by Bill Griffeth -Nonfiction