

April 2015

*A monthly publication
on behalf of the*



Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society

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News

Greetings,

Spring has sprung! The days are getting longer. It is time to start getting outside to exercise, even if it means taking a short break from your genealogy research. Start slow with a walk around the block and gradually increase the length of your walks.

Sunday, April 5th is Easter. It is a time for a new beginning. Resolve to attend a genealogy learning event. This is an opportunity to meet new people that have a similar interest in genealogy research. In addition, be sure to check out the following items in our newsletter this month:

- Upcoming genealogy events (Pages 2-5)
- WMGS April 2015 Meeting Details (Page 2)
- New WMGS Secretary Appointed (Page 3)
- Election of Officers (Page 3)
- WMGS Round Table Recap – Part 1 (Page 5)
- Polish Genealogy Resources (Page 7)

We're looking forward to seeing everyone at our next meeting on Wednesday, April 1st at the Agawam Senior Center.

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WMGS Calendar of Events

April 1, 2015 – The Western Massachusetts Genealogy Society will hold their next meeting from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main Street, Agawam, Massachusetts.

Lauren Forastiere of Forastiere Family Funeral and Cremation will present, “The Funeral Home Industry as a Family History Resource.”

Save the Dates

Mark your calendars. Below you will find the 2015 events for the WMGS:

May 6, 2015 – Election of officers; Connie Reik, Archivist at Tufts University will present “Finding Your Civil War Ancestors.”

June 3, 2015 – Last monthly meeting and dinner.

For a printable version of our 2014-15 calendar and events, click here:

<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~mawmgs/updates.html>

Genealogy with Dave Robison

Upcoming events by Dave Robison of Old Bones Genealogy of New England. More information is available at http://oldbones.co/?page_id=3679

April 15 – 19, 2015, Dave will be presenting “*Search Strategies You Haven’t Tried --- Search Sites You Never Thought Of*” at the biennial conference of the New England Regional Genealogical Consortium (NERGC) in Providence, RI. Dozens of speakers from around the United States will be presenting a broad variety of programs.

Do you know of an upcoming genealogy event? If so, let us know, and we’ll include it in the WMGS monthly newsletter.

Genealogy Research Clinics

Join Fran Malone, President of WMGS, and Dave Robison, Vice President of WMGS and owner of www.oldbones.co for “Genealogy Research Clinics.”

Spend some time with genealogy researchers with years of experience using the internet to help get the answers you’re looking for. Learn time saving research strategies using Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org, Google and SteveMorse.org among other sites.

Sessions are held on the third and fourth Thursdays of the month in the computer room of the Agawam Senior Center. Clinics are free for WMGS members. There is a \$10 fee per session for non-members.

Mark your calendars, there are only a few remaining dates in 2015:

April 16 April 23 May 21 May 28 June 18

New WMGS Secretary Appointed

We are sad to report that Janet Curley could no longer serve as our Secretary. To fill her position, WMGS President Fran Malone has appointed Ann McDougal. Welcome aboard Ann! We are happy to have you as a board member. We thank Janet for all of her service, and hope to see her at our future meetings.

Election of Officers

At our upcoming meeting on May 6, 2015 we will elect the 2015-2016 officers of The Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society (WMGS). We are pleased to say that we have one WMGS member running for each board position.

However, any member of WMGS is welcome to run for the positions of President, Vice President, Secretary or Treasurer. If you are interested in working as an officer, please contact Fran Malone via e-mail at WestMassGen@gmail.com



The most important genealogical conference in the Northeast is the biennial “New England Regional Genealogical Conference.” Virtually all genealogical subjects will be covered in a 3 day event with a wide variety of speakers, workshops, “Ancestor’s Road Show”, banquets, luncheons and other events. For a detailed description of what has been planned, and to register, click here:

<http://www.nergc.org/> and then click the

link **Download the Program Brochure**. The local hotels are offering special rates to conference attendees.

APRIL 15 – 19, 2015

The Rhode Island Convention Center - Providence, RI

Find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NERGC

Keynote Speaker: Lisa Louise Cook – Genealogy Gems
Keynote Speaker: Judy G. Russell – The Legal Genealogist

- 60+ lectures
- Technology Day
- Librarians’ and Teachers’ Day
- Ancestors Roadshow
- Society Fair
- Exhibit Hall
- Special Interest Groups
- Query Column
- Research in Providence

Also speaking at NERGC 2015 will be one of our own, **Dave Robison of Old Bones Genealogy of New England and Vice President of WMGS**. He will present “Search Strategies You Never Thought Of---Search Sites You never Heard Of!” which is scheduled for Saturday afternoon, April 18th from 1:45 – 2:45 pm, track #S-321



Cousin Russ and DearMYRTLE are coming to NERGC with some awesome giveaways: A Microsoft LX-300 Headset Mic, a Logitech C920 HD Video Web Cam and a Samsung Galaxy tablet. Be sure to look for them!

WMGS Round Table Recap – Part 1

by Susan Rokosz Levenson

For the March 2015 monthly meeting, the Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society hosted a Round Table discussion. It was a night filled with questions and answers, tips on overcoming brick walls, and research strategies. Leading the Round Table were WMGS members Bruce Cortis, Fran Malone and Dave Robison.

In our newsletter this month, we are sharing specific questions and answers from the meeting.

Special thanks to Ann McDougal for taking precise notes at the meeting, and for sharing those notes with us electronically. Dave Robison and I reviewed the notes and added additional details.

So if you missed the meeting, or didn't take notes, we hope this summary helps you. For WMGS members who attended, check out the newest details, along with website links you can use from your computer. Enjoy!

How do we go about finding ancestors who came over from Ireland about 1800?

Dave recommended starting with www.google.com then going to the free site www.stevemorse.org for Ellis Island and other ports of entry info. Start by going to Steve's "About this website" link for information that will help get the most from this site.

Note: Steve Morse will be at the Polish Genealogy Society of Massachusetts Fall meeting at Elms College in Chicopee, Massachusetts. More details will be available on their website: psgma

How do you search for ancestors who were American Indians?

www.Ancestry.com www.Familysearch.com and www.en.wikipedia.org are all helpful. Land grants. On ancestry.com, click Search → census, on the right hand side under "Featured Data Collections", click on "US, Indian Census Rolls".

What is a "Dit name" in French Canadian records?

A “dit” name is a connection between one surname and another as a means to add another surname. The second name is referred to as “the dit name.” Thus the “dit” name reflects something other than the family surname. It was used to describe the “estate” they owned or lived on, a respected ancestor, a revered saint, or even a war hero although that is relatively uncommon.

A dit name may be derived from the mother’s maiden name. It was often used to distinguish families with the same surname from each other.

Other suggestions for French Canadian research:

Baptism names are listed first in baptismal records. Death records are under the maiden name in Canada.

If you are having trouble locating a family member with a French surname, translate the surname into English and search again. Google translate works with names as well as with documents in many languages.

PRDH, www.genealogie.umontreal.ca, is a French Canadian site with records from 1621 to 1849. As a guest user, you can access the index of the records. A subscription is necessary to view the records. Instead of purchasing annual subscription, you may for individual "hits" that never expire.

Note: The PRDH website usually opens in French by default. However there’s a button up top to convert the site to English. You just have to click “English.”

Fran pointed out that the PRDH site is helpful, but difficult to use. He uses the Drouin collection at www.cangenealogy.com/quebec.html

What are double dates?

A system of double dating used in the British Empire from 1582-1752 for dates falling between January 1 and March 24. The Gregorian calendar, which went into effect in 1582, but was not officially adopted by the British and the American colonies until 1752, recognized January 1 as the first day of the year, while the old Julian calendar recognized March 25 as the first day. Thus, dates between those two days prior to the calendar change in 1752 were often written with both year numbers (i.e. 5 January 1712/13).

To save confusion when reading them, the second year is the “modern” style of the year while the first year is the “old” style. If the Gregorian calendar had been

adopted in 1582, 5 January 1712/13 would simply be 5 January 1713 as the new year would have begun on 1/1 and the old year would have ended on 12/31/1712.

Looking for street not listed in a census?

To find a street that is not listed in a U.S. Census, check the city directories. Go to ancestry, card catalog, city directories, state, county, city. When using city directories, you may need to know what city a town was associated with. For example, some of the earlier city directories for the City of Chicopee were located at the end of the Springfield Massachusetts city directory.

Another way to find the street is to check a page or two before the page you've found. The street name might be written there. This would only apply to census records from 1880 and later.

We hope you enjoyed this summary of our March 2015 meeting. In our May newsletter, we will share additional search tips, research strategies and websites.

Polish Genealogy Resources

By Susan Rokosz Levenson

At the March meeting of the Polish Genealogical Society of Massachusetts, Julie Roberts Szczepankiewicz gave a detailed presentation about the steps to follow when trying to locate vital records in Poland. She covered:

1. How to find the village name of your ancestors, using U.S. Documents
2. Which resources to use to identify the parish for the village
3. Where to look on-line for Polish vital records.

Step 1: Find the Village

Some of the most common documents to find the village name are U.S. Passenger records, and Naturalization Papers, in particular the Petition of Intent. It was interesting to learn from Julie that while civil records, such as marriage certificates found in local city offices might contain the village name, researchers may have more success by locating the U.S. church records. Parishes tend to keep more detailed records, so researchers should try to find the church marriage and death records.

From my own experience, I was fortunate to find the village name of Wierzbanowa listed on my great-grandfather's passenger ship record when he traveled to the United States in 1904.

Step 2: Find the Parish

The next step in the process is to find the name of the parish for the village. This step involves using the appropriate gazetteer to locate the name of the village. Once the village is located, the gazetteer will provide other details such as the population size, and parish name. For my own research, I used the Skorowidz of Galicia, 1918 by Jan Bigos. There, I learned that my ancestor's village of Wierzbanowa was part of the Wisniowa parish. I also googled the village to find that Wierzbanowa is located in Myslenice County, which is south-east of Krakow.

Step 3: Find Polish Vital Records

Once the parish name has been located, it is time to look for Polish vital records. This can be done by writing a letter to the parish. There are also many resources and websites available, including Geneteka, Metryki.GenBaza, and BaSIA. As part of Julie's presentation, she distributed a six page handout with websites, links and descriptions. If you missed the meeting, you can get a copy of the handout by joining the Polish Genealogy group on Facebook.

Polish Genealogy group on Facebook: The final resource Julie mentioned was the Polish Genealogy group located on Facebook. The group currently has almost 6,000 members. Once you join the group, you have access to Julie's handout, along with lots of other files with information. Since this handout is on-line, you can simply click on the links to get to the websites.

More importantly, members of the Polish Genealogy group can post their research questions to the group. I've only been a member for a week, but I have enjoyed reading the various questions. There is also a very quick response from other members, and in most cases, several people chime in with their replies.

To join the Polish Genealogy group on Facebook, follow this link:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/50089808265/>

Or, once you log into Facebook, search for "Polish Genealogy." Look for a closed group with just under 6,000 members. You'll need to ask to join the group, but they are quick to accept new members. Happy researching!

About Us

Meetings:

We meet on the first Wednesday of each month, September through June from 6:00 to 8:00 PM at the Agawam Senior Center, located at 954 Main Street in Agawam, Massachusetts.

Our genealogy research clinics are offered on the third and fourth Thursday of the month from 6:00 to 8:00 PM at the Agawam Senior Center.

Membership information

Annual membership runs from September 1 to August 31 each year. Individuals may purchase a membership for \$20. Applications for Membership can be found on our website at www.WestMassGen.com

Newsletter Deadline

Did you enjoy reading our newsletter? Do you have suggestions for articles, or have an article you would like us to publish? Our next issue of the newsletter will be May 2015. Please forward your information by April 20, 2015 to: WestMassGen@gmail.com

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