

May 2014

*A monthly publication
on behalf of the*



Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society

P.O. Box 418 • West Springfield, MA 01090

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News

Greetings,

May is a busy month for the WMGS. We will elect our officers at the meeting on May 7th. It is also a time to finish planning for next year. If you have any suggestions for speakers next year, please let us know.

Be sure to check out these articles in our newsletter this month:

- Upcoming Events (pages 2-3)
- Election of Officers in May (Page 4)
- *Double Dates – They're Not What You Think* by Dave Robison (page 4)
- Sneak Peak: Details on our 2014-15 Season (page 6)
- Discount on ancestry.com (Page 8)

We're looking forward to seeing everyone at our next meeting on Wednesday, May 7, 2014 at the Agawam Senior Center.

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WMGS Calendar of Events

Wednesday, May 7, 2014:

The Western Massachusetts Genealogy Society will meet from 6:00 to 8:00 PM at the Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main Street, Agawam, Massachusetts.

We will hold our annual Election of officers followed by speaker Kerry Hotaling: "What They Endured-What They Wrought" (rescheduled from our February meeting)

Thursday, May 15, 2014:

The Western Massachusetts Genealogy Society will host a Genealogy Research Clinic. Individuals are encouraged to bring their research and questions. Clinics are offered on the third and fourth Thursday of the month from 6:00 to 8:00 PM at the Agawam Senior Center, located at 954 Main Street in Agawam, Massachusetts. Clinics are free for members. There is a \$10 fee per class for non-members.

Thursday, May 22, 2014:

The Western Massachusetts Genealogy Society will host a Genealogy Research Clinic. Individuals are encouraged to bring their research and questions. Clinics are offered on the third and fourth Thursday of the month from 6:00 to 8:00 PM at the Agawam Senior Center, located at 954 Main Street in Agawam, Massachusetts. Clinics are free for members. There is a \$10 fee per class for non-members.

Wednesday, June 4, 2014:

The Western Massachusetts Genealogy Society will meet from 6:00 to 8:00 PM at the Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main Street, Agawam, Massachusetts.

We will hold our last monthly meeting and dinner for the 2013-14 season. Pizza or pot luck? We will discuss meal preferences at our May 7th meeting.

Genealogy Research Clinics

Join Fran Malone, President of WMGS, and Dave Robison, Treasurer 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. Time saving research strategies using Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org, Google and SteveMorse.org among other sites.

Sessions will be held on the third and fourth Thursdays of the month in the computer room of the Agawam Senior Center. There are only a few remaining sessions left, so mark your calendar for the following dates:

May 15 and 22 June 19

Genealogy with Dave Robison

Open Lab and Genealogy Research Clinics

Thursdays from 9:00 – 4:00 at the Chicopee Public Library

“Pulling the People form the Paperwork”

Tuesdays in May at the Hitchcock Free Academy in Brimfield, MA

For full details about these events, as well as Dave’s summer events, please visit:
<http://www.oldbones.co/upcoming-events.html>

PGSMA 25th Anniversary Conference

Saturday, June 21, 2014, 10 am - 4 pm.

Location: Polish Center of Discovery & Learning
33 South Street
Chicopee, MA 01013
413-592-0001
More Details: <http://www.pgsma.org>

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

Election of Officers

At our upcoming meeting on May 7, 2014 we will elect the 2014-2015 officers of The Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society (WMGS).

We are pleased to say that all current board members are planning to run for re-election. 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 at our Meeting on May 7th, or via e-mail at WestMassGen@gmail.com

Double Dates – They’re Not What You Think!

by **Dave Robison, Old Bones Genealogy of New England**

So you've found that elusive colonial era document and you see that your ancestor was born 22 January 1688/89. Your first impulse might be to ignore it, or maybe just assume that someone in the 17th century wasn't really sure of the exact year.

Actually, 1688/89 is absolutely correct! But it's a little complicated to explain. (There's a small but clever chart toward the end that will help explain). Way back in the early Roman Empire, those BCE years, civilization had a difficult time keeping a calendar year lasting, well, a calendar year. In the very early days, September, which has a root word meaning "7", was the 7th month. Thus, October, the 8th month; November the 9th month; December, the 10th month.

You see, the problem was that 10 months of 30 days or so each didn't "last" a full year based on the very natural occurrence of the vernal equinox. So the powers that be would do the simplest thing they could: Add however many days you needed to keep this running smoothly. However, things didn't really run smoothly.

So, the length of the year is finally long enough to last a year, right? Wrong! So again, the empire took the easy way out: If you need to add a few days here, a few days there...no problem. As long as the pesky calendar would last a full year!

After all, they had to perform certain rituals at certain times of the year to appease the gods. You had to keep the gods happy for a whole spectrum of reasons: no flooding, bountiful crops, fertility, natural disasters like volcanoes (Where did the good people of Pompeii do wrong?) and various other human calamities.

The irregularity affected so many aspects of life in the empire that somebody had to do something. Along comes the Roman emperor Julius Caesar. First we have a good reason to add at least 2 months to the calendar: July for Julius and August for Augustus. We can discuss exactly how these came about but it's not relevant to this discussion. While Julius was responsible for many great achievements, he's also credited for the Julian Calendar. 12 months, 365 days with a leap year every four years.

Fixed? No! After a few centuries, they began to realize that a year was now a year plus! How did they know? Back to the natural arrival of the vernal equinox. It was off by about 10 days in 1582. By the 16th century, the addition of approximately 3 days every 400 years was once again causing havoc with the calendar. So along comes Pope Gregory and his advisers. They actually shortened the year and made a huge one-time adjustment. Suffice to say that what we now know as the Gregorian Calendar works, sort of. But that's yet another story. We have to get back to our double dates or no one will finish reading this post!

Most European countries adopted the Gregorian Calendar with the notable exception of the British Empire. Remember that "thing" between Henry VIII and Rome? The English were not ready to jump on a plan that was generated by the Roman Catholic Church. So the British Empire including all of her colonies were staunch "Julians". Also, a big factor in double dates had to do with a simple problem: When did the new year start? With all the Gregorian adapters, January 1st was the conventional start of the new year. But those cheeky English continued to celebrate the new year on March 25th, or "Lady's Day".

So we're finally at the end of the story and I'm ready to put the last pieces in the puzzle. If the British considered March 25th the new year, but everybody else considered January 1st the new year, then it makes sense that some people thought that 22 January 1688 was really 1689 because January 1st was the start of the new year; 1688 became 1689. But the British considered January 22nd to be 1688 because the new year, 1689, didn't start until March 25th. To part of the world, January 22nd was 1688 and to everyone else January 22nd was 1689. Thus, you'll see January 22nd written "22 January 1688/89" or "January 22, 1688/89".

Because the British new year was March 25th, double dates are only used from approximately 1582 until 1752 and only on the days between January 1st (The new style new year) to March 24th (The 25th was old style new year).

Why 1752? That's the year the British finally adopted the Gregorian calendar for the entire empire including the American colonies. Maybe this will help:

	December	January 1st	February	March 24th	March 25th
Julian	1688	1688	1688	1688	1689
Gregorian	1688	1689	1689	1689	1689

“Julian”: 1688 lasts all the way up to March 24th. March 25th is the first day of 1689.

“Gregorian”: 1688 ends at the end of December. January 1st marks the start of 1689.

This is where “Double Dates” can occur. But only from 1 January up to 24 March of any year up to 1752 in the British Empire, including the Colonies.

A couple of “small” details: 1) The change in calendar necessitated that 12 days would vanish! The day after September 2, 1752 was September 14, 1752; 2) Russia didn't “Go Gregorian” until 1918. The Russian Empire kept itself pretty much isolated for a very long time! They also had a little problem with Rome. Then they had this revolution problem! 3) Greece (finally) converted in the 1920's a little after their revolution problems...

Dave Robison of Old Bones Genealogy of New England

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Sneak Peak: Details on 2014-15 Season

by Dave Robison, Old Bones Genealogy of New England

Over the next several months, the members of Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society will certainly be getting their money's worth given the caliber of the speakers that have been lined up! Keep in mind that we have not

forsaken our popular local speakers, but WMGS has entered into a new and refreshing level of professionals brought to you for your education, edification, entertainment and genealogical advancement. And all at an incredibly reasonable cost!

There are 3 who I'd like to tell you about. They have all graciously accepted our invitation to meet with us in the virtual world of SKYPE or GOOGLE HANGOUTS ON AIR! After a successful "Maureen Taylor" presentation, we've been emboldened to reach out to other nationally renowned genealogists to share their expertise here in Agawam.

What follows is the plan as it is today. Please keep in mind that plans can change in a moment's notice. Having said that, I would hope that any changes would merely be a change in the date of the presentation.

For our October 1st meeting, we have scheduled Dick Eastman. He's been involved in genealogy for over 35 years. He has also been in the computer industry for 40 years! He approached CompuServ in the mid 1980's and proposed a "genealogy forum," the first of its kind. He became a motivator for genealogists nationally and internationally on the benefits of technology. In 1996, he launched "Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter" which you can subscribe to at www.eogn.com. There's free basic subscription and a much more detailed premium edition for an annual fee. The circulation of his newsletter has grown to over 75,000 worldwide! He is also responsible for www.eogen.com an online genealogical encyclopedia and www.RootsBook.com an online genealogy bookstore. Dick Eastman is a highly respected, internationally known professional genealogist who is often the keynote speaker at genealogical events around the US.

Our November meeting will bring us Pat Richley-Erickson a/k/a Dear Myrt. She has been on-line since 1985 and is responsible for a great many genealogy resources. Her award winning blog "DearMYRTLE Genealogy Blog" can be read at <http://blog.dearmyrtle.com/> From her website, she lists accomplishments too numerous to mention here. But a brief overview would include her as an author ("Dear Myrtle's Daily Genealogy Column," "The Everything Online Genealogy Book," "Dear Myrtle's Joy of Genealogy") along with numerous magazine articles published in "Heritage Quest Magazine" and "Everton's Genealogy Helper" among others. She is an experienced radio show host, public speaker and trainer. She's been the keynote speaker at numerous genealogy conferences such as RootsTech, the "Grand Daddy" of them all! Among dozens of other

accomplishments, including the originator of <http://blog.geneawebinars.com/> she hosts a weekly “Google Hangout” called “Mondays with Myrt” which is a live broadcast that takes place on, well, Mondays!

You’ll absolutely want to be with us on February 4, 2015. That’s “The Legal Genealogist” night! And who is the Legal Genealogist. First, I recommend that you visit her website at www.legalgenealogist.com. It has a link to her blog which I also recommend you sign up to receive. Judy G Russell is as much an entertainer as she is a brilliant genealogist. I’ve heard her speak at many meetings where she combines an extensive legal background, a detailed understanding of genealogy and DNA while bringing a very sophisticated sense of humor that keeps everyone’s attention regardless of the subject matter.

From her website: “I’ve worked as a newspaper reporter, trade association writer, legal investigator, defense attorney, federal prosecutor, law editor and, for more than 20 years, I’ve been an adjunct member of the faculty at Rutgers Law School...I’ve spent the last decade learning my trade as a genealogist, and hold credentials as a Certified GenealogistSM and Certified Genealogical LecturerSM from the Board for Certification of Genealogists® where I currently serve as a member of the Board of Trustees. I’m a member of the [National Genealogical Society](#), the [Association of Professional Genealogists](#), and, among others, the state genealogical societies of [New Jersey](#), [North Carolina](#), [Virginia](#), [Texas](#) and [Illinois](#).”

Well, that’s a lot to look forward to. I’m particularly excited about how lucky we are to have the opportunity to “meet” these very talented people. I hope you can share in my enthusiasm.

And tell your friends...encourage them to come with you and more importantly to become a member of our ever growing Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society!

[Ancestry.com Discount](#)

Special thanks to Daphne Thompson who noticed a discount in her recent issue of the AARP travel magazine. For AARP members (50 years +) there is a 30% discount on an Ancestry.com membership. Call Ancestry.com at 1-800-262-3787 or visit www.ancestry.com/aarp for details. This is about a \$30.00 savings for those who qualify.

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 computer workshops 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, while institutions may purchase a membership for \$25. Applications for Membership can be found on our website.

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 June 2014. Please forward your information by May 20, 2014 to Susan Leverson at: WestMassGen@gmail.com

Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society 2013-2014 Executive Board Members

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