

May 2015

*A monthly publication
on behalf of the*



Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society

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News

Greetings,

The month of May has arrived, and it feels like summer here in New England. May is a busy time of year, with Mother's Day and Memorial Day celebrated this month. If you're not sure where to focus next on your family research, you may find some inspiration from one of these important days. Maybe you can look further into your maternal ancestors. Another option is to research family members who have served in the armed forces.

There is also a lot going on at the Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society (WMGS). Be sure to check out the following items in our newsletter this month:

- WMGS May 2015 Meeting Details and Summer WMGS Meetings (Page 2)
- Upcoming genealogy events (Pages 2-5)
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We're looking forward to seeing everyone at our next meeting on Wednesday, May 6th at the Agawam Senior Center.

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WMGS Calendar of Events

May 6, 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.

We will have elections of our officers for 2015-16. In addition, Connie Reik, Government Publications Coordinator and Research and Instruction Librarian at Tufts University, will present “Beyond Pension Files! Discover Your Civil War Ancestor in Federal Publications and Documents.”

June 3, 2015 – Last monthly meeting of the 2014-15 season and pot luck dinner. We are looking forward to kicking of the 2015-16 season at our newly scheduled July meeting with a “Surprise Guest.”

NEW! WMGS Expanding to Offer Meetings Year-Round

We are pleased to announce that WMGS will now offer summer meetings. Mark your calendars. The following two meeting dates have been added: **Wednesday July 1 and August 5**. Speaker details will be announced soon.

IN THE WORKS:

WMGS is planning a field trip or two over the summer. Let us know if you have any preferences.

We are currently planning our 2015-16 year. If you have any suggestions for future meetings, please contact one of our officers.

Genealogy Research Clinics

Join Fran Malone, President of WMGS, and Dave Robison, Vice President of WMGS and owner of www.oldbones.info 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.

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

May 21 May 28 June 18

Polish Genealogical Society of Massachusetts

Summer Meeting: Thursday, June 18, 2015 at 6:30 p.m.

at the Chicopee Public Library

“Leaving Dobrzechów: Immigration from a Galician Village”

Patricia Yocum will discuss who these immigrants were and what they might tell us about Polish immigration from Galicia. For more details see www.pgsma.org

Association for Gravestone Researchers

Annual Conference

Westfield State University

June 23 – 28, 2015

Westfield, Massachusetts

This conference features lectures, demonstrations, exhibits, conservation and documentation workshops, classroom sessions, slide presentations, and guided cemetery tours. For more details see

<https://www.gravestonestudies.org/conference/register>

New York State Family History Conference

Syracuse, New York

September 17-19, 2015

Similar to the recent NERGC held in Providence, Rhode Island, this event is a regional conference, “A Federation of Genealogical Societies.” Read all the details here: <http://www.nysfhc.org/index.html> where you can see the extensive list of outstanding speakers, the rates for partial registrations, hotel rates, exhibitors and

sponsors. Early bird deadline: May 31, 2015.

Dave Robison is planning to attend the NY conference. If you're interested in traveling with him, please e-mail him at dave@oldbones.info.

Polish Genealogical Society of Connecticut and the Northeast

Annual Conference at Central Connecticut State University

1615 Stanley Street, New Britain, Connecticut

October 2-3, 2015 (Friday PM & Saturday All Day):

Speakers will cover many subjects that will help you understand the many ways to conduct your Polish genealogical research. Some of the subjects covered in lectures include:

- Galician Maps in Poland: A Great Source for Family Research
- Introduction to Polish Research, Part I and Part II
- Digital News: Utilizing Online Newspapers in Your Genealogy Research
- Notary Records in Poland (with Emphasis on the Notary Records of the 19th Century)

For more information, visit the Society's Conference website:

<http://www.pgscne.org/ConferencesEvents.aspx>

Spend a Day with Steve Morse

Saturday, October 10, 2015

Elms College

Chicopee, Massachusetts

The PGSMA in collaboration with the Polish Center of Discovery & Learning and the Chicopee Cultural Council is pleased announce that renowned genealogist and computer professional is coming to Chicopee to present a full day of talks. For more details see www.pgsma.org

Genealogy with Dave Robison

Are you interested in an intermediate genealogy course to be held at the Agawam Senior Center? Dave Robison is looking to set up a course to run 4 sessions, one per week from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. If you're interested, please e-mail Dave Robison for details at dave@oldbones.info.

Upcoming events by Dave Robison of Old Bones Genealogy of New England can be found at bit.ly/Workshops_Classes.

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

Calling All Facebook Users!

Do you use Facebook? If so, WMGS needs your help. We are currently looking for someone to maintain our Facebook page. Duties involve: posting WMGS events and newsletters; liking similar interest groups; and sharing articles that may be useful to our members. If this is something you can do, please see one of our officers, or e-mail us at WestMassGen@gmail.com

Remembering the Civil War

By Katy Krause

At our May meeting Connie Reik will be presenting "Beyond Pension Files! Discover Your Civil War Ancestor in Federal Publications and Documents". Personally, this is one of my favorite time periods. The Civil War is one of those "big" moments in our history. Its course defined who we became as a nation today. Unfortunately though I've met historians and history collectors that purposely avoid anything from the 1861-1865 time period because they believe it was a dark taint in our countries history. I'm certainly not saying it was one of our shining moments, it was a civil war. But to try to pretend it didn't exist is not only harmful

to our future, but an insult to all our ancestors who fought.

Fortunately there are many people out there who do work to remember the war. Whether you had ancestors who served for the Union or Confederate (or like me, both), or which side of the Mason Dixon line you currently live on, there are many groups out there that remember those who served in the Civil War. They preserve battlegrounds, find graves, add headstones and help veterans.

Most genealogists have a fondness for cemeteries, but many have never been to a battleground from the war. This is hallowed ground just as much as any cemetery. Over 620,000 men lost their lives due to the war, many right there on those battlefields. In fact the Journey Through Hallowed Ground <http://www.hallowedground.org/> is a National Heritage Area that is going a step further than just preservation. It is a 180 mile stretch from Gettysburg to Monticello and they're planting trees along it, one tree for each of the 620,000. Eventually each tree will be tagged with a soldier's information. If you'd like to see one <http://www.hallowedground.org/livinglegacymap/> search for Holland (John). That's my 4th great grandfather that I had a tree planted for.

Even though the end of the Civil War was 150 years ago, the war is closer to us then it might seem. To show just how short 150 years is, my own grandfather just recently told me that he remembers meeting his grandmother, Mary Ann, when he was 6. Mary Ann was born before the Civil War, her husband a veteran of the war. And if that still doesn't bring it close enough; hard as it is to believe, but there are still a handful of people alive today who are the actual children of civil war veterans. Think about that, their fathers might have served with your great great great grandfather! You can read about them here:

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/special-features/2014/11/141111-veterans-day-150-anniversary-civil-war-memories/>

So everyone enjoy hunting for your Civil War ancestors and maybe plan on taking a drive through the Journey Through Hallowed Ground (and of course stop at a battlefield or two!).

WMGS Round Table Recap –Part 2

by Susan Rokosz Levenson

For the March 2015 monthly meeting, WMGS 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 additional search tips, research strategies and websites. *Special thanks to Ann McDougal for taking precise notes at the meeting, and for sharing those notes with us electronically.*

Search tips

According to Bruce Cortis, www.Google.com is underused. Next, he suggests trying www.Ancestry.com and www.FamilySearch.org. When searching for an immigrant, use the immigrant and travel search tab, or the card catalog specifically on immigration.

Did you know that you can enter wildcards in your searches? Check each site to see which wildcards they use. Here are a few examples:

Wildcard	Explanation	Example
*	For multiple letter or no letter	"John * Smith" (in quotes) it tells the search engine to find names together, with or without middle initial.
?	For one letter	
Near	Finds 2 words near each other, indicating their distance	near2 for two spaces away
-	Minus sign to exclude a term	
..	Two periods for an inclusive time period	1850..1870

Dave pointed out that card catalogs can narrow your search to state, county or city. You can also select any country of interest. The Ancestry Library enhancement allows you to email results to yourself or save it to a flash drive or print it out. Library edition does not have family trees on it. He also recommends that when searching historical records on ancestry, unclick "family trees" to exclude them from a search, though it can be worth looking at trees that are sourced with vital records, census, etc.

Websites and Additional Resources

www.bit.ly/Genealogy-Handouts

Check out this website. It contains the Dropbox handouts from Dave Robison's classes. Information includes: Locations of Western Massachusetts Catholic parish records, dit names, websites, blogs and Facebook pages. (The lists of over 4,000 U.S. and 2,500 Canadian Facebook pages from Katherine R. Willson)

Bruce mentioned that NEHGS www.americanancestors.org has the most reliable records. Their copies are from the state archives. You may find that small town record-keeping is inconsistent. One additional note: Family trees are at the "bottom of the pecking order" when using www.FamilySearch.org. NEHGS (americanancestors.org) doesn't use uploaded family tree data as do most other genealogy research sites.

Books can frequently be obtained by interlibrary loans. www.worldcat.org allows you to locate a book, then it can be ordered from your local library. This usually requires a visit in person to their reference desk, unless the book is within your local library system. For Western Massachusetts, this is called the C/W MARS. It includes libraries in Western and Central Massachusetts. For a map and more details, see <http://bark.cwmars.org/eg/opac/home?loc=150>.

Additional tips and valuable resources

Ancestry Tips:

- Click on Save in upper right corner.
- There is also an option to "save to thumb drive" if a thumb drive is installed.
- A name or other info in brackets indicates edits

When you transcribe names to a blank census form, each transcription removes the level of confidence by one as it gives one more opportunity for error.

Newspaper subscriptions services have contracted only with specific papers. Find the one that serves your areas of interest. When clipping a section, include the source so that it can be sited and found again. To make saving pages of information easier use a snipping tool, and set a shortcut key.

Questions on Family Search books will be addressed during our computer clinics on Thursday nights.

New: The Worcester Public Library has Boston port arrivals on microfilm, which may not be accessible at Ancestry or Family Search.

NERGC 2017 in Springfield, Massachusetts **By Dave Robison**

My first comment is to address a concern of the participants in 2011. Realizing that many were not satisfied with the arrangements in Springfield, the 2017 NERGC conference committee (of which I am one of the tri-chairs) took that into consideration and has contracted with the MassMutual Center. That one fact alone should make attending quite a bit more convenient for everyone.

Mark your calendars for April 26-29, 2017. Every year, these events become more and more popular. The Providence conference was attended by nearly 1,000 genealogists from amateur to professional. I know I've talked about the 2015 event many times in many blogposts, Facebook posts, the WMGS Google Community and in this newsletter, but in case you were not aware, here's how everything rolled out:

Wednesday's Library and Teacher's Day was filled to capacity. Thursday through Saturday nearly 90 presentations were spread out in morning and afternoon sessions.

Also, there were specialized workshops most evenings, luncheons and "banquet" dinners sponsored by various organizations and an Exhibition Hall filled with a wide variety of genealogy vendors, web site representatives, book sellers, software

vendors and our own special friend, Dear Myrtle a/k/a Pat Richley-Erickson. Pat came with door prizes and her “Ambush Cam.” With a few minor technical difficulties that were quickly resolved, she interviewed a number of participants and, although they weren’t broadcast live, all are on YouTube where you can see her “in action!” Here’s a link to her interview with Tim Firkowski: bit.ly/Tim_Firkowski. From there, you can click on any other of the interviews that took place in Providence.

So here’s my pitch: I believe that when NERGC comes back to Springfield that we would be sorely remiss if WMGS was not only a participant or a “vendor,” but we need to be one of the sponsors. I’ll fill you in more at the meeting as to the benefits, not the least of which is sharing in the revenue. The 2013 conference yielded over \$3,000 to each of the sponsors and 2015 should prove equally beneficial. It’s not too far away for us to start planning immediately.

More to come!

Dave Robison
Old Bones Genealogy of New England

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About Us

Meetings:

We meet on the first Wednesday of each month, July to 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 June 2015. Please forward your information by May 20, 2015 to:

WestMassGen@gmail.com

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