



Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society

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News

Our Speakers

This month we have Al and Betsy McKee from the Association for Gravestone Studies. They will be giving a presentation on causes of death recorded on gravestones.

Al and Betsy live in Longmeadow right across from the Longmeadow Cemetery. They not only have a workplace right across the street from them, but they are well known for their gardens. They are also known for what is under their gardens. According to a MassLive.com article from 20 July 2011 by Staasi Heropoulos, "[Great Gardens Past Meets Present in Gardens of Al and Betsy McKee's Historic Home](#)", the McKees have created a garden that fits in well with their 200-year-old house, and they have become quite the amateur archeologists. As they dig for their garden, they have unearthed quite a few antiques and historical pieces and shards. Betsy weaves textiles on her antique looms from her second floor studio. We look forward to hearing from both of them.

From around the Genealogy Global Community

Google Books won its big fight with The Authors Guild. The Appellate Court upheld an earlier decision that Google Books' digitization of books for online use is "fair use" under copyright law. What does this mean for us genealogists? Check out what Judy G Russell says in her blog, [The Legal Genealogist - Google Prevails](#).

Ancestry UK office visits a local cemetery in honor of the Global Community for Find a Grave, 16-18 October 2015. They followed up on photo requests for that cemetery. Great idea for us.

We will keep up with Hillary Schau when she plans to teach more classes. Her classes on *Organizing Your Genealogy* were very well received at the Chicopee Public Library. Check out her story in the [Member Focus](#) article.



NERGC 2017: Using the Tools of Today & Tomorrow to Understand the Past

April 26-29, 2017 -MassMutual Convention Center, Springfield, Massachusetts

We need volunteers to assist us in the planning and execution of this magnificent event coming to a city near us. Please contact [Dave Robison](#) if you would like to help – for more information about the conference click on

this link - [NERGC](#).

Calendar

Monday, November 2, 2015 from 6-8 p.m.

and

Monday, December 7, 2015 from 6-8 p.m.

at the Agawam Senior Center

Join WMGS members Susan Levenson and Katy Krause as they lead a hands-on genealogy session in the computer lab. They will expand on the WMGS monthly meeting by reviewing applicable websites and offering genealogy tips and strategies. Attendees will also have time to use the computer for their own research, including use of the Ancestry Library Edition, and Susan and Katy will be available to provide assistance. Sessions are free for WMGS members. There is a \$10 fee per session for non-members. Annual WMGS membership is just \$25.

4 November

Our monthly meeting with speakers Al and Betsy McKee ([Our Speakers](#))

2 December

Our monthly meeting with a Potluck Dinner and Show and Tell

Last meeting before the holidays! Come to our “Pot Luck” dinner and enjoy holiday music while you dine. After dinner, we will host an “Open Mic” session for members to share their genealogy tips, ideas, or projects.

26-29 April 2017

NERGC 2017: Using the Tools of Today & Tomorrow to Understand the Past

Member Events

Dave Robison's Upcoming Events:

Tuesday, 3 November 2015 7:00 PM
EFFECTIVE INTERNET SEARCH STRATEGIES
Learn clever, timesaving internet search techniques

Call to reserve a spot (508) 647-6520
Sponsored by: Morse Institute Library
14 E Central Street
Natick, MA
Public is welcome

Tuesday, 17 November 2015 7:00 PM
REVIEW THE BASICS: GET OUT OF THAT RUT!
(GoToWebinar format)

Massachusetts Society of Genealogists
Sponsored by: Worcester Chapter
Contact Dave Robison for details at [Old Bones Genealogy of New England](#)

Thursday, 19 and 26 November 2015 6:00 to 8:00 PM
WMGS Genealogy Research Clinic
Free to WMGS Members/ \$10 to non-members

Agawam Senior Center
954 Main Street
Agawam, MA

Tuesdays including 9 and 23 February then 1 and 8 March
Sessions are 2 hours each
**PULLING THE PERSON OUT OF THE PAPERWORK:
MORE THAN JUST NAMES AND DATES**

Museum School at the Springfield Museums
21 Edwards St
Springfield MA
For rates and registration contact Sarah Gogal (413) 263-6800 ext 377

Saturday, 9 April 2016 1:30 PM
DISSECTING THE DOCS
Sponsored by
Massachusetts Society of Genealogists - Middlesex Chapter

Acton Memorial Library
486 Main Street
Acton, MA
Public is welcome

Tuesday, 5 April 2016
MINING THE RICH RESOURCES OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS
Sponsored by
Central Massachusetts Genealogical Society

The American Legion Hall Post #129
22 Elm Street
Gardner MA
Public is welcome

Articles

A Conversation with Russ Worthington

by Ann Royal

Russ Worthington spoke to us about US City Directories in our October meeting, and he was kind enough to grant an interview with this reporter. The topic of conversation was online learning and why that is such an important part of our genealogical life. Russ feels that education is important because things are changing all the time. New ideas, new records, and new technologies are coming to the forefront all the time. It is an awesome task to try to take on all of that by yourself. He and Pat (Myrt) came up with the concept of DearMyrtle's Genealogy Community in the Google + communities. This allowed them a certain freedom that other formats had not allowed.

Then came Google Hangouts and Hangouts on Air, and a new way of teaching was born. What most online formats lacked that traditional classrooms still had an advantage with was interaction between the presenter and the students. Hangouts and Hangouts on Air changed that dynamic forever. Now you could teach material with a panel of experts, who could be changed out during the class, and interact not just with ten people but potentially thousands. Hangouts on Air record in YouTube and post to your YouTube channel. Paid members can view our meetings and other videos at the **WMGS YouTube Channel**. You can make them public or private. Then Google changed things for the better, you could now post those Hangouts in your community, have people watch them there and comment directly in the community. So now, thousands of people can watch real-time and participate while Russ and Myrt are online and recording, or they can participate after by watching the videos and posting comments within the community. Myrt handles the questions directly from the panel, and Russ reads the comments from the community. People can ask questions in real-time and be answered by Myrt, the panel or the community in either real-time or later.

Russ knows that people learn in many ways, some visually, some by audio and some kinesthetically (by doing). This method of teaching incorporates all of that. In the Study Groups, there is often material to read (visual) and homework to do (doing), then you come together and discuss (by audio). This hits all the ways people learn, and makes it easier for them to "Swallow the Elephant". Please join [DearMyrtle's Genealogy Community](#) by requesting to join and Google +. You must have a Google+ account, and then search Communities for DearMyrtle. Once she approves your joining, you will have access to everything. If you have any problems feel free to contact [Ann Royal](#) or [Dave Robison](#), they will be happy to help you. Join Dave Robison, Bruce Cortis and myself on Mondays with Myrt, Mondays at Noon EDT.

These educational moments are free, and they are there to teach you, inspire you, and help you “Climb Your Family Tree”.

If you need help getting on Google, please let Ann Royal or Katy Krause know and we will get someone to help you or come to one of our clinics.

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Surname Project Update

The Surnames that have been submitted so far are in the process of being published online, and of course, we can update it throughout the year. If you have not yet done so, please consider adding your research surnames to the list.

You may either return the completed form via email or print it and bring the completed form to one of our meetings. By submitting this information, you are giving WMGS permission to publish it. Here is the link to the information and the form, both available on the website - [Surname Project Information and Form](#).

The completed list will be available on our website, on our Goggle+ community, and on our Facebook page. We will not publish any information until we have received your permission. Please note that you may request removal of your information from the surname list by contacting our society at any time.

If you have any questions or comments, please let me know. When emailing, please write “surname list” in the title. Once the Surname List is posted on our website, members may request the addition or deletion of surnames at any time by contacting WMGS.

Please note that only paid members of WMGS can submit names for the Surname List. If you have not paid your 2015-2016 dues, we will not add your submitted information until you have. However, anyone may use the Surname List to connect with those listed once published.

Thanks, [Jeanne Leblond](#)

Surname Project Coordinator

westmassgen@gmail.com

Methodology

GPS – Genealogical Proof Standard

by Ann Royal

You will notice that I start these articles off by what is it, why should I care, and WIIIFM (What Is In It For Me?). This is because there is some sense out there that this is only for the realm of professional genealogists, not us regular, average-joe genealogists. “I just want to do my family history.” “I don’t need to publish.” These are many of the comments heard whenever the GPS or Genealogical Proof Standard is mentioned.

Warning! This article is intended for the genealogist who says, “GP What?” We talk about how groceries are like the GPS. This article will not get you certified with the BCG (Board for Certification of Genealogists). This is about what it is, why you should care, and what is in it for you.

So what is the GPS – Genealogical Proof Standard? Put simply, the GPS is a structured way of determining that the conclusions you make about your family history are the best and most accurate ones you can make. So why should I care? If you have ever run into a brick wall, had numerous people in the same town with the same name and birth dates, or any other number of genealogical issues, this is why you should care. People went about looking for a repeatable and simple (not easy) method to help solve these problems. Ever tried to follow a published genealogy’s sources and given up? The GPS helps to rectify all of those issues.

There are five questions to answer for the GPS. I have deliberately paraphrased these.

1. Have I done a reasonable, thorough research of the problem?
2. Have I accurately cited and examined the sources?
3. Have I analyzed and correlated the data from these sources?
4. Have I resolved any discrepancies?
5. Have I written a conclusion?

What is reasonable and thorough research? There are several sources for answers – ESM – Elizabeth Shown Mills’ *Evidence Explained*, Thomas Jones’ workbook – *Mastering Genealogical Proof*, and DearMyrtle’s Study Groups by the same name. There are several others as well. The basic answer is that when you have looked at enough sources from different informants to be satisfied that you have answered the question adequately, you are done. The

biggest thing to remember is that there is no magic number, e.g. three. If you feel, you have researched enough unless you are publishing to NEHGR (New England Historic and Genealogical Register) or some other location, then YOU ARE DONE.

The second question can best be looked at as if you were in a grocery store. Most of us look at the boxes, containers, cans, fruits and vegetables we buy for rips, tears, dents, bruising, rotting, etc. We do this so we feel better about the quality of the product inside. It is the same thing with citing and analyzing our sources. We cite our sources so we can find that new product again if we like it. We check the can out to make sure it does not leak, has not expired or otherwise show that what is inside has gone bad. In genealogy terms, we want to be able to find that document again in case we have another question. We examine the quality of the source to know if something might be smeared, torn, faded, soiled, or disintegrated on the inside. Stop sweating whether that should have been a colon, a comma or a semicolon! Think Prego! "It's in there." If you have the basic information, you are good.

The third question is when we get to eat the fruit, cereal, tacos, whatever it is we bought in question two. What is the data – date and place of birth, parents, father's occupation, et cetera? We want to put all the like pieces together. If they all came from the same probable informant then we might want to go look for another source if there is one available. If they all look good, then move on to question four.

The fourth question is the resolving of discrepancies. Four censuses say that John Doe was born in New York, one census says Canada, and the death certificate says he was born in Montreal. (Thanks Hillary Schau for the example) You need to explain why there are differences. If John Doe was Catholic and French Canadian in origin, the explanation may be that he was physically born in New York, baptized by a circuit priest and recorded by the priest as if John had been born and baptized in Montreal, Canada. You just need to be able to explain why there are discrepancies.

The fifth question asks you to write a conclusion. This is just to keep you and anyone else from running around in circles. If you have already proved something, do you really want to go down that aisle again?

All right, the professional genealogists, who went ahead and read this article, are beating their heads on the table, rolling their eyes, rolling on the floor laughing or are otherwise waiting to strangle me, but I warned them. This was a simplified meat and potatoes explanation. If I got some of you to realize that this is not the uppity, smarty-pants way of doing genealogy; I stopped you from thinking only professional genealogists do this stuff; then I have accomplished something.

If all else failed, hopefully, you have an easier time at the grocery store.

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Technology

Elizabeth Shown Mills' *Evidence Explained* is now available on Kindle. She has closed her store on her website and her active books and Quick Sheets are now available on Amazon.com. Amazon.com has a great free app called Kindle for the PC. This free program allows you to read Kindle books on your PC. There is no need for another device. You can see more about this on *DearMyrtle's Genealogy Community* on Google +, in her 7 October 2015 installment of "Wacky Wednesday".

Hillary Schau will introduce Evernote for Genealogy in December.

Member Focus: Hillary Schau

Hillary Schau has been an engineer, a teacher, and a Microsoft certified programmer and analyst. She started her genealogy in 1986. She grew up in Springfield and lived in many places with her military husband. She has lived in Pennsylvania, Maine, Saint Louis, Missouri, and even Iceland for two years. She also lived in Mississippi, where her LDS neighbors introduced her into the wonderful world of genealogy. She started with paper and pen, but quickly evolved to more technological tools.

Since returning to the Springfield area, she started volunteering at the Chicopee Library in the Genealogical Room. She has recently converted to RootsMagic for genealogical software, but still uses Ancestry for IPAD. She recently taught her first class – *Organizing Your Genealogy at the Chicopee Library*, and is currently developing new classes to teach. Hillary really enjoys that class, and may specialize in helping people organize their genealogy.

She is currently taking clients, and aspires to create a local Roots Magic Users' Group. Hillary recently finished the Boston University 15-class Certificate Program in Genealogical Research. She plans to go on to get her CG (Certified Genealogist) credentials when she has more experience and feels ready.

Membership

Like most things in life, membership is not free - but for our reasonable annual membership fees, you get a lot for your money.

Reasons to Join our Society

1. Meet people with similar interests of family history and genealogy
2. Attend monthly meetings featuring local and national presenters
3. Receive assistance from our members on your family research
4. Attend our free genealogy research clinics held twice per month (\$10/session non-members)
5. Share our library of resources including books and CDs
6. Opportunity to serve as a volunteer, coach or member of Board of Directors

Membership

Annual membership runs from September 1 to August 31 each year. Individuals may purchase a membership for \$25, while institutions may purchase a membership for \$30.

Join On-line: To join on-line, simply click on the PayPal button and follow the on-screen directions. You do not need a PayPal account to use this PayPal feature.

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

Join by mail or in person at our monthly meeting: Click on the Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society Application for Membership image to your right to view, save, and print your application. Payments along with the form should be sent to us at the address listed below.

Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society
P.O. Box 418
West Springfield, MA 01090

Meetings

We meet year-round on the first Wednesday of each month 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. The cost of the computer class is \$10 for non-members; free for members of the Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society.

We hope you will join us at our next meeting.

About Us



The Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society was founded in Springfield, Hampden County, Massachusetts in 1972, and officially incorporated on February 6, 1973. We are devoted to the research and documentation of our family ancestry and history. We also assist others in the pursuit of discovering their ancestry.

We meet year-round on the first Wednesday of each month from 6:00 to 8:00 PM at the Agawam Senior Center, located at 954 Main Street in Agawam, Massachusetts. We welcome non-members and beginning genealogists. Please join us!

We currently have about 100 active members, approximately 80% living in the Western Massachusetts area. The other 20% are residents of other states but with ancestry from Massachusetts or New England.

We receive numerous inquiries each month via U.S. & e-mail from people looking for information on area families. Our members are happy to volunteer to research these requests.

Fran Malone – President

Ann Royal – Newsletter Editor

Dave Robison – Vice President

Susan Levenson – Webmaster

Katy Krause – Treasurer

Jeanne Leblond – Surname Project Coordinator

Ann McDougal – Secretary

Carolea Hayden – Refreshment Coordinator

Hillary Schau – NERGC Delegate

Diane Ascoti – Founder

Susan Levenson, Katy Krause & Dee Pederson – Website Redesign Team

Newsletter Deadlines

Please submit all information to be entered into the next newsletter by 15 November 2015.

We are looking for articles written by our members. Have you been to a repository that would be cool? Have you been to where your ancestors lived? Have you tried a new gadget or software? You do not have to write the article yourself. If you would like to do an interview about a subject, that would be helpful as well. What are you interested in? Tell us.