

June 2011

*A monthly publication
on behalf of the*



Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society

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

Web Site: <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~mawmgs/index.html>

E-Mail: WestMassGen@gmail.com

News

Greetings,

Memorial Day is here, marking the unofficial start of summer. It is a time to remember those who have served our country. In our new "Places to Visit" column, be sure to check out the details for the Massachusetts National Guard Museum & Archives. It is a great resource dating back to the 1700s.

We are finalizing our calendar for the 2011-2012 year. If you have any suggestions for speakers, please submit them to us at westmassgen@gmail.com

For the summer, our society will take a much needed vacation. Our meetings and newsletter will return in September. We will continue to monitor our e-mail, so feel free to write in with any research questions or suggestions for the 2011-2012 year. Have a wonderful and safe summer.

We're looking forward to seeing everyone at our last meeting and "Pot Luck Dinner" on Wednesday, June 1, 2011 at the Agawam Senior Center. Have a safe summer and we'll see you September.

Calendar of Events

June 1, 2011:

The Western Massachusetts Genealogy Society will hold their next meeting on Wednesday, June 1, 2011. The meeting will be from 6:00 to 8:00 PM at the Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main Street, Agawam, Massachusetts.

Last meeting of the month and “Pot Luck Dinner.” Have a good summer and see you in September.

Thursday, June 16, 2011

The Western Massachusetts Genealogy Society will host a genealogy computer class. Classes 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. Classes are free for members. There is a \$10 fee for non-members.

Thursday, June 23, 2011

The Western Massachusetts Genealogy Society will host a genealogy computer class. Classes 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. Classes are free for members. There is a \$10 fee for non-members.

September 7, 2011:

The Western Massachusetts Genealogy Society will hold their first meeting on Wednesday, September 7, 2011. The meeting will be from 6:00 to 8:00 PM at the Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main Street, Agawam, Massachusetts.

Please check our website in August for details on our speaker.

October 14-15, 2011:

The Polish Genealogical Society of Connecticut and the Northeast, Inc. will host a Polish Genealogy Conference at Central Connecticut State University, New Britain, CT. For more details, please visit their web site:

<http://www.pgsctne.org/2011%20Conference/Conference%20Announcement.html>

Election of Officers

Congratulations to the following individuals who were elected to serve as officers of the Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society (WMGS):

President: Fran Malone
Vice-President: Beckie Cross
Co-Secretary: Jane Okscin
Co-Secretary: Marilyn Powers
Treasurer: Susan Levenson

The officers' term will run from June 1, 2011 through May 31, 2012.

Genealogy Hint By Fran Malone

BACKING UP YOUR COMPUTER FILES

The habit of backing up your computer files is probably right up there with getting enough exercise. You know you should do it but there are so many other things you would rather be doing.

We all have years of research/family pictures stored in numerous files and we have all experienced the loss of our computers with those files. The last time it happened to me I was lucky and they were able to retrieve my information from the hard drive. I know save my information on the four USB thumb drives that I have and I try to update those about twice a week.

There are several other ways to back-up your information. You can email files/information to yourself and then store them in folders on your email account. When you get back on line your email will still be there with your information. You can also backup your files on a second computer/laptop or purchase an online back-up service to do it for you.

Plan to back-up your computer soon and then choose a regular time to update it. It's not as much fun as researching, but the time you spend saving your files now will be worth the peace of mind later.

YOUR ANCESTORS OBITUARY

Your ancestors' obituary can be very informative when it comes to establishing a family. The obituary will give you his/her full name, date of death, cause of death, age, and place of death. It will also give you the funeral home, date of burial, and cemetery where he/she is buried.

If your ancestor is the immigrant then it will tell you where he was born, when he came to the country and where he lived. The family information available will be the name of the parents, spouse, years married, the children and if married their spouses, grandchildren, and siblings. Some of the siblings might still reside in the old country which now gives you the opportunity to follow up on them.

So visit your local library and check out the old newspapers on microfilm. If you're not from the local area then check out the internet for where your ancestor lived and contact the local library there. Check for "ask the reference librarian" and send a request for an obituary lookup (make sure you have a date though). With the modern age of computers some libraries will now scan the obituary and send it back to you by email at no cost. This is how I've obtained several of the obituaries that I've collected.

As always we look forward to your hints and your input so please email us at: WestMassGen@gmail.com We would like to hear from you and your information will be added to our newsletter.

Genealogy Websites

By Fran Malone

The Ireland National Archives

<http://nationalarchives.ie>

The National Archives holds a wide variety of records, many of which are relevant to Irish genealogy and local history. Click on the heading genealogy and read the information. The archives do not assist in one's research but there are a lot of genealogy websites to look including "askaboutireland.ie". The askaboutireland.ie will bring you into the website for the libraries in Ireland and from there you can ask the librarians about their collections. The one thing I did find that was helpful to me was the 1901 and 1911 National Census reports. If you have Irish heritage and you know that family was still in Ireland between 1901 and 1911, then these two resources are the place to look.

The PRDH

The Research Program in Historical Demography

<http://www.genealogy.umontreal.ca/en/>

This website pertains to the births, marriages, and burials in Quebec prior to 1800. It is a paid subscription site but can be navigated without subscribing. Once I was able to "trial by error" my way through the site, it became a very useful resource in finding important birth, marriage, and deaths on my wife's French line. When using rootsweb you might find a parish born in with a year of 1762. If you take that information and plug it into the parish drop down block with a calendar search date, it will help you find the date of the event. The site will also help you with finding your French Immigrant under the heading of "Pioneers." Click on this heading and look for the "dark blue highlight" that says type a family name.

Follow these directions on how to use the site for your limited information. Click on "Public Access to our database." If you know the last names of the ancestors you are looking for then you can go to the TAB that says couples, which is all the way to the right. Enter just the last name of the groom and the last name of the bride and you will get their full names including any "dit" names they may have. You will also see a TAB that says parish and this will bring you to a page where you can enter the parish if you know it and a yearly calendar to search by. The calendar format goes yyyy/mo/day yyyy/mo/day. For example if you have the parish to be Sorel and the year 1762 then select Sorel and enter the date as 1762/01/01 1762/12/31 as well as the event from the type drop down box. If it's a birth then this will give you all the births in Sorel for that year and when you find your ancestor or member of your ancestor's family then start narrowing the date down. I've use six month searches at a time so for example it would be 1762/01/01 to 1762/06/30. If the person you looking for is still there then narrow it down more till you find the month and then narrow it down to the day until both dates read 1762/05/15 1762/05/15. Obviously this site is a little more complex to use and does take some trial and error to figure out other features but the two that I explained can help you go a long way in getting the correct names and dates.

Please email us at: WestMassGen@gmail.com We want to hear from you with websites that may have helped you or websites that can be used as resources.

Places to Visit

By Susan Leverson

Now that summer is here, we have focused on several places in the state of Massachusetts for you to visit.

1. National Archives at Pittsfield

Silvio O. Conte National Records Center

10 Conte Drive

Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01201-8230

Telephone: 413-236-3600

<http://www.archives.gov/northeast/pittsfield/index.html>

The National Archives is a terrific resource for researching your family tree. You can access census records, look at naturalization records, and search passenger lists. Unfortunately, due to cuts in the federal budget, the public part of the NARA in Pittsfield will be closing on September 30. Over the summer, approximately 71,000 microfilm rolls will be transferred to the Berkshire Athenaeum (Pittsfield's Public Library) so that the public can continue to access this information. For more details, visit their web site: <http://www.pittsfieldlibrary.org/index.html>

2. Massachusetts Archives

220 Morrissey Blvd

Boston, MA 02125

Telephone: 617-727-2816

<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/arc/arcidx.htm>

The Massachusetts Archives houses records created by the Massachusetts government. The holdings date back to 1628 and include vital records, passenger lists, military records, federal census schedules and Massachusetts state census schedules for 1855 and 1865. There are also judicial records including divorces, probate, naturalizations, and name changes. In addition, there are three searchable on-line databases, which you can use from the comfort of your own home.

[Massachusetts Archives Collection Database \(1629-1799\)](#)

[Index to Passenger Manifests \(1848-1891\)](#)

[Index to Vital Records \(1841-1910\)](#)

3. New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS)

99-101 Newbury Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02116-3007
888-296-3447
<http://www.americanancestors.org>

Founded in 1845, NEHGS is a true leader in the field of family history research. Their Boston location contains a stellar collection of books, microfilm, family papers, manuscripts and photographs.

Admission to the Research Library is free for NEHGS members. Non-members are welcome and may purchase a day pass for \$15.

4. Massachusetts National Guard Museum & Archives

44 Salisbury Street
Worcester, MA 01609
(508) 797-0334
<http://states.ng.mil/sites/MA/resources/museum/default.aspx>

Special thanks to Nancy Zebert for suggesting that we include the Massachusetts National Guard Museum & Archives in our column. The museum was built in 1995, and holds items and documents of the Massachusetts National Guard. According to their website, the most significant records are documents relating to the men and units of the Massachusetts Volunteer Regiments which fought in the Civil War. In addition, museum holdings include military records of Massachusetts Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Militiamen, and National Guardsmen from 1775 - 1940. Some of the records are on microfilm; others are actual documents. This is an incredible resource for Massachusetts military research.

If you are interested in doing research at the archives, please call at least one day in advance of your visit. Special note: there is limited parking in a small lot next to the building; otherwise you may park on the street.

Best wishes in your travels this summer. If you have a place that you would like us to write about in our "Places to Visit" column, please contact Susan Levenson at WestMassGen@gmail.com

New Members

David Robison

Debra Fairfield

Congratulations to Debra Fairfield who attended the NERG Conference in April. She is the winner of our drawing for a free membership from September 1, 2011 through August 31, 2012.

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 classes 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 September 2011. Please forward your information by August 20, 2011 to Susan Leverson and Fran Malone at: WestMassGen@gmail.com

Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society 2011-2012 Executive Board Members

President: Fran Malone
Vice-President: Beckie Cross
Co-Secretary: Jane Okscin
Co-Secretary: Marilyn Powers
Treasurer: Susan Leverson