

June 2013

*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,

Memorial Day is here, marking the unofficial start of summer. It is also a great time to continue your genealogy research. Check out the following articles in our newsletter this month:

- Upcoming Events (pages 2-3)
- Results from our Election of Officers (page 4)
- Fran Malone's Genealogy Hint: Unexpected Search/Inquiry Returns (page 5)
- Website: NARA (page 6)
- Summer Reading Suggestions (Page 7)
- Massachusetts Land, Probate/Family, Housing Court Records (Page 8)

We are finalizing our calendar for the 2013-2014 year. If you have any suggestions for speakers, please submit them to us at westmassgen@gmail.com

We're looking forward to seeing everyone at our last meeting and "Pizza Dinner" on Wednesday, June 5, 2013 at the Agawam Senior Center.

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. Have a safe summer and we'll see you September.

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WMGS Calendar of Events

The Western Massachusetts Genealogy Society will hold their last meeting of the season on **Wednesday, June 5, 2013** from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the at the Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main Street, Agawam, Massachusetts. Please join us for dinner and an "open mic" session.

Dinner items will include: Pizza from Nicky's, tossed salad, beverages and dessert. The cost is \$4 per person. Cash only, please.

After dinner, we will host an "Open Mic" session. Members will have an opportunity to share genealogy information and tips. If you have a new website to share, a place to visit, a genealogy tip, or a research success story, please be sure to share it during our Open Mic session.

The meeting is free and open to the public. Members are encouraged to bring a friend.

Thursday, June 20, 2013

The Western Massachusetts Genealogy Society will host a genealogy computer workshop. Stumped with a research question? Bring your question to our hands-on computer workshop, by Bruce Cortis. During the workshop, you will have an opportunity to ask your question, and use the computer to look for a solution.

Individuals are encouraged to bring their research and questions. Workshops 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.

Wednesday, September 4, 2013

The Western Massachusetts Genealogy Society will hold their first meeting of the 2013-14 season on Wednesday, September 4, 2013. 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.

Upcoming Events Hosted by WMGS Member, Dave Robison

June –July 2013 and July-August 2013

“Introduction to Genealogy and Family Research” billed as “More than just the Basics”, 5 sessions over a 5 week period of classroom study at the Yellow House Center for Community Learning. One session in June/July and the other at the end of July into August. Fees are discounted to members of the Yellow House Community.

July-August 2013 “Strategies for Basic to Intermediate Family Research” 4 sessions with classes forming for the July/August time frame at the Hitchcock Free Academy. Call (413) 233-4866 for details.

Visit Dave Robison’s website: www.oldbones.co
and blog: www.oldbonessearch.wordpress.com

Polish Genealogical Society of Massachusetts

Thursday, June 20, 2013, 6:30 PM

"DNA for Genealogy"

<http://www.pgsma.org/>

Jay Sage will discuss the evolving field of genetic testing as a tool for doing genealogical research. DNA mapping can potentially establish or disprove a biological connection between individuals, and can estimate for the number of generations back to a common ancestor.

Polish Center of Discovery & Learning, 33 South Street, Chicopee, MA 01013
Phone: 413-592-0001 Website: www.polishcenter.net

Polish Genealogical Society of Connecticut and the Northeast

Friday, October 11, 2013 and Saturday, October 12, 2013

“2013 Polish Genealogy Conference”

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

<http://www.pgscetne.org/EventsConferences.aspx>

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

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
Treasurer: Dave Robison

The officers' term will run from June 1, 2013 through May 31, 2014.

Genealogy Hint: Unexpected Search/Inquiry Returns by Fran Malone

Last month's genealogy hint was "Never Give Up" and showed how it can become rewarding by researching information already searched. New information becomes available all the time as well as new "eyes" and new "thoughts." I stress the thought of "Never Give Up" as last month's find will attest and this month's hint "expect the unexpected" when you make an inquiry into a search.

To bring you to the present, I have to go back to 2007. My wife's Great-Great Grandfather was a Civil War Veteran that was wounded three times. In March of 2007, I made an inquiry into the Purple Heart for his three wounds and the inquiry went through several people along the way. The end result came in October 2007 when my wife received the Purple Heart and two Oak Leaf clusters for the three Purple Hearts. On the back of the medal it was engraved with his name. Happy that we received the medal, but still disappointed because no certificates came with it and I left it at that.

In April of this year I came across the Civil War Campaign Medal that the soldiers were entitled to as well as the Congressional Medal of Honor that was also issued to Civil War soldiers based on the gallantry. I set forth through the Vermont Veteran's Affairs, Congressman Neal's Office, and the National Archives to see if these medals could be obtained. I was able to get the Civil War Campaign Medal credited to my wife's 2nd Great Grandfather but the Congressional Medal of Honor is still unknown. I have to see if I can get the military records on him from the National Archives to see if he was ever nominated for his gallantry in the face of the enemy because he was involved in a bayonet charge that kept the road open for the other Union troops to pass by. If I can find that he was nominated then the Congressional Medal will be awarded.

This brings me to the unexpected news from this inquiry. Through it all I got a phone call from the U.S. Army Awards and Decorations Branch in Virginia. The phone call pertained to the Purple Hearts awarded in 2007. The Purple Hearts were sent in 2007 without out the Military Orders and the Certificates for the awards. The Military Orders and Certificates for the three Purple Hearts were printed up and sent to Congressman Neal's Office. Congressman Neal's Office presented them to us this past week.

So keep searching the records even if you have checked them ten times over and keep making those inquiries for information. You'll never know what "unexpected" treasure will turn up when making those inquiries.

Genealogy Website: National Archives Administration and Records by Fran Malone

Yes Folks, it's a repeat sort of. The website for the National Archives is <http://www.archives.gov> and by clicking on the highlighted area, it will take you to the home page of the National Archives. As mentioned in prior highlights of this site, it's a wealth of information for searching records in regional areas of the country.

I hope the links highlighted for this month help to bring a few researchers to an area they've never been.

- When the National Archives home page appears, take your side bar down about half the page until you see the heading that says resources.
- You will see the A-Z Index, click this link and it will bring you to <http://www.archives.gov/global-pages/subject-index.html> or just click on the link if you can.
- There are numerous subjects to choose from but if you are interested in looking at archival records click on [Access to Archival Databases](#) (AAD) or choose this <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/>
- There are several categories to choose from. If you are looking for a casualty in the Vietnam War then click on the Vietnam War <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/series-list.jsp?cat=WR28> and search the records available by clicking on them and then putting a name in.

You can follow this search procedure on all the Archival Databases. I've had success on a few of the WW2 records but like anything, nothing is guaranteed.

Summer Reading Suggestions

by Susan Leverson

Now that summer is almost here, we'll take a break from publishing our WMGS monthly newsletter. However, that doesn't mean you need to take a vacation from your genealogy research. When you're stuck inside on a hot day, be sure to check out these websites:

www.oldbones.co

WMGS Member Dave Robison offers a website called www.oldbones.co. He also publishes a blog at: www.oldbonesearch.wordpress.com

Dave's blog is very interesting, especially if you're a fan of railroads. Dave Robison's grandfather, Clem Dickson, kept a diary while he was working on the construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railroad 100 years ago.

According to Dave, "He worked with the team that was responsible for construction westward from Winnipeg, Manitoba toward the team that began in Prince Rupert, British Columbia and worked eastward toward Winnipeg a total distance of about 1,500 miles."

Dave transcribes the diary pages and publishes them on his blog. To start reading about Clem Dickson's adventures, start here:

<http://oldbonesearch.wordpress.com/2013/01/06/lest-we-forget/>

www.genealogyaddiction.com

WMGS member Janet Curley has started a blog about her experience with genealogy research.

According to Janet, "This blog is my effort to share the ups and downs, joys and woes, trials and tribulations of my addiction to genealogy with equally addicted family historians. It includes my thoughts as I explore the various paths of my search as well as tips of how I got through obstacles. I love this endless mystery and look forward to sharing it with the genealogy community."

Janet grew up in Holyoke, and has Irish roots. Her blog articles are entertaining, enlightening, and extremely addictive. Once you start reading, you'll want to read more. Start here: <http://genealogyaddiction.com/2013/02/>

Massachusetts Probate/Family, Land and Housing Court Records

by Susan Leverson

Most people think jury duty is a hassle, unless of course you're a genealogist who has jury duty in Springfield, MA. I was recently one of those lucky individuals. Honestly, I was counting the days until my jury duty. Do you know why? It's because the jury room and the probate records are both located on the 4th floor of the Hampden County Hall of Justice, located at 50 State Street in Springfield, MA.

Luckily, I did not get called to serve on a jury. While most people ran toward the exit, I went straight to the records. There are computers to use for more recent files, and there are index cards to reference the older case files.

Did you know you can access the some information on-line?

Just click on the link: www.masscourts.org

What's Available?

Public records from Land Court, Probate and Family Court, and Housing Court from all Massachusetts Counties

What can you expect to find?

At the very least, you can obtain a case number, which is needed to view a file when you arrive at the courthouse. If you take a look at the docket tab on-line, you can view a list of items located in the file. In the case of an estate in the probate and family records, you may see items such as: a will, certificate of death, name of the newspaper the notice was published, and an inventory of the estate. By reading through the file, you may come across names or dates to add to your family tree.

So the next time you have jury duty, don't fret. If you're lucky enough to have it in Springfield, turn it into a genealogy research trip. (Did I mention the parking was validated?) You can also save yourself some time by gathering the case numbers from your computer at home. 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 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 September 2013. Please forward your information by September 20, 2013 to Susan Levenson and Fran Malone at: WestMassGen@gmail.com

Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society 2013-2014 Executive Board Members

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Vice-President: Beckie Cross
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