



Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society

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Upcoming Meetings

WMGS Meeting 1 June 2016

June is our annual "Pot Luck Dinner" and "Open Mic" Session. And this year we're adding another layer to the evening. We are having our first ever "**Artifact Show**"! Bring your favorite casserole or main dish, a side dish, or some sort of dessert, but **also** your favorite family heirloom to show off. Socialize with fellow genealogists searching for their family tree. After dinner, members will have an opportunity to speak and share during our Open Mic session. Members are welcome to share genealogy information including ideas, tips, suggestions, research experience, genealogy projects, **and** treasured heirlooms. If you have a new website to share, a place to visit, or a research success story, please be sure to share it during our Open Mic session that's how we all learn. Members are encouraged to bring a friend.

WMGS Meeting 6 July 2016



Please join us for our monthly meeting at which our guest speaker, Margaret Rose Fortier, will present *Andiamo! Finding Your Italian Family*, in person. She will cover Italian history, Italian immigration, Italians in the US, and how to find your Italian family. Learn why your great-uncle had five cousins named Vincenzo and what they changed their name to in the United States.

Margaret Rose Fortier, named for her grandmothers and inspired by her mother's phenomenal memory, is a professional genealogical researcher, writer, and speaker. She focuses on Italian - American and French - Canadian ancestry in New England. She serves as vice-president of the Massachusetts Society of Genealogists, Inc. and lives in Medford, Massachusetts. She is a member of the Italian Genealogical Society of America, the New

England Historic Genealogical Society and the New England Chapter of the Association of Professional Genealogists.

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3 August 2016 WMGS Meeting

Remember to mark your calendars early, our next field trip is coming up fast! Our annual trip to the Lyman and Merrie Wood Museum of Springfield History is just around the corner. Join us on August 3rd from 6-8 PM for our highly anticipated exclusive visit for a night of research. We get the place to ourselves, but remember, you have to be a paid member to attend! More details will be in the next newsletter.

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May Meeting Recap

In May, the regular monthly meeting of WMGS consisted of a panel discussion with not one, and not two but three panelists who responded to audience questions. Dave Robison was joined by Fran Malone and Bruce Cortis for this event. Other audience members helped with suggestions and anecdotes. Questions asked included

- What to do when a small town doesn't respond to your email request?
- Should people include references to living people in their Find a Grave memorials?
- How do I get a wrong name on a death certificate corrected?
- Can we get information from people who came from Brightside?

Together we were able to share ideas and knowledge and experiences. This is one of the many benefits of belonging to such a welcoming group.

Election Results

At our May meeting we held our annual elections. The body first voted on and approved a change to the Constitution and By-Laws to expand our number of board members from four to a total of seven. The body then voted the following people into these positions:

Dave Robison - President
Fran Malone - Vice President
Ann McDougal - Secretary
Katy Krause - Treasurer
Janie Tarver - Director
Jeanne Leblond - Director
Nancy Netherwood - Director

The officers' term will run from June 1, 2016 through May 31, 2017.

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Letter to the WMGS Membership

From Dave Robison, President WMGS

“Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their country.”

I remember that phrase as a typing exercise, probably something my sister talked about when she was in high school many years ago. (Don't tell her I said that, but it really **was** many years ago!) We'd have to update it a bit to make it slightly more politically correct! I'm bringing it up as it reminds me of the good things happening at Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society.

“Now is the time that ‘everyone’ has come to the aid of our genealogical society!” There's plenty of good news to go around. The WMGS board has been re-organized just a bit. (Thank you for your votes of confidence.) We've brought in some additional ad-hoc board members to help with the planning, organizing and execution of our activities. That spirit of chipping in with your time and talents is what will help us grow and become a more vibrant and recognized member of the broad genealogical community.

A few years ago when I joined the society and began attending meetings, I felt that WMGS would be an ideal means for me to meet others with the same interests and build my genealogical “connections.” Turns out I was right as I've met many new friends and I've learned a lot. We have had great meetings with interesting guest speakers. However, in looking back it seemed to me that our membership was shrinking a bit, mostly due to attrition and certainly not due to a lack of interest or enthusiasm.

Almost by accident, I began recruiting speakers from many other sources: other genealogical societies, classes I taught, classes I attended, conferences; whenever I met someone interesting, I'd gauge their interest in coming to Agawam. So again, almost by accident, I became more and more involved. After a year or so as Treasurer then as Vice President and now as President, I'm proud to say that everyone at WMGS has proven to be very willing to contribute.

Our membership has grown and we should soon crest the 100 mark. That growth is due to many factors such as the growing interest in genealogy and family history itself, our continued efforts to bring interesting programs to the membership, the success of our research clinics and the very active and exciting plans for our future.

So what does that future hold? Our plans are to

- continue, in spite of all the technical defugalties, to pursue a means to bring our meetings to a broader membership audience;
- broaden the type and style of our regular meetings;
- offer incentives to join and maintain membership in WMGS;
- enhance our regional reputation by our participation in the presentation of the 2017 NERGC conference in Springfield next April.
- We're getting ready to announce an appreciation award (details soon),
- Organize a mini-conference,
- Implement monthly program evaluations to make sure that what we're presenting is educational and interesting to the membership, and
- improve the way we employ technology at our meetings.
- Finally, we're going to bring back the “Lifetime Membership” choice, as well as a \$40 couple's membership for a spouse or significant other living in the same household to join WMGS.

Back to NERGC for a moment. I'm very impressed with the number of WMGS'ers who have spoken up to offer their time as conference volunteers. I realize details have been slow to announce, but I can tell you that planning preparations are spooling up!

We'll be finishing up this season with lots to be proud of. We'll be starting next season with lots to look forward to!

My thanks to all of you for continued interest and participation.

Dave Robison

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Articles

GPS #2 – Complete and Accurate Citations

By Dave Robison

In March, I discussed the first Genealogical Proof Standard (GPS) element, “Reasonably Exhaustive Search.” All of the terms in that tenet are subjective, of course, but they imply that when it's a matter of serious research, one bit of evidence is never enough. Cursory research leads to erroneous conclusions. Pros need these details but every family researcher should take a close look at the GPS if only for guidance and suggestions on how to build a credible record. To review that article, you'll find it on pages 5 and 6 here:

[http://bit.ly/WMGS Newsletter March 2016.](http://bit.ly/WMGS_Newsletter_March_2016)

Professional researchers are passionate (even a little whacky sometimes) about source citations. Elizabeth Shown Mills has written a 993-page tome with guidance on source citations. She's just published the third edition and is probably working on the fourth! But source citations are the building blocks of credibility. For the monthly program at the Falmouth Genealogical Society last Saturday, I presented “The Dangers of On-Line Family Trees.” We discussed the existence of thousands upon thousands of on-line family trees whose only source is someone else's on-line family tree whose source, in turn was someone else's family tree! Obviously, the authors of those trees failed in the first principle of GPS, namely, reasonably exhaustive search.

Rather than passing judgment on those contributors, I'd advise just passing up on looking at those trees. We can talk about research strategies another time. But for now, let's talk about why source citations are so important. Let me ask you to think about this question: Would you like to have a conversation with your grandparents? Your great grandparents? Nearly all of us would treasure that opportunity; that's why we do what we do.

Let's go down the line a hundred years or so. Do you believe that your descendants would like to have a conversation with you? Whereas a conversation with your ancestors may not be possible, you have an opportunity that borders on a duty of talking to those who haven't been born yet. They won't have to wish they could talk with you; they merely have to look at your research in whatever form you've left it. I truly believe that it is my responsibility to leave a true a map of not only how I got here but how my ancestors got me here.

It would be tragic if I simply grabbed every bit of information, regardless of its source, and claimed it as my heritage, accuracy not a consideration.

Thus, the GPS comes in very handy. I'm certainly not recommending the everyone drop everything, run out and buy Mills' book, study each and every permutation and apply them to every sliver of data in your files. But what I am recommending is that you think. Think about someone, anyone reading over your records and says simply, "Yeah, right! That can't possibly be true because my grandfather said...." With all due respect to Grandpa, his stories may fall slightly over the edge of the truth. Not intentionally, of course. But polishing up the family story was both entertaining for his "audience" and surely made him feel better about his background. Frankly, I don't blame him one bit. If you've attended any of my introductory classes, you've heard me state that one of the reasons we do the research is to clarify or at least demystify the family myth. By providing a path to the data that you've uncovered allows anyone to retrace your steps to the truth. Or the best truth that's available to you and your heritage. Show the path by using these three concepts:

- 1) Sources – These are the "containers" of the information that you've used to come to your conclusions. Let people know where you found it. The title of the book, the website, the newspaper. Tell everyone the title or the URL as specifically as you can. The closest you can get to an original source, the more trustworthy it *should* be.
- 2) Information - First-hand? Second-hand? Third-hand? Again, the closer to first-hand information you can get the better. I was there when I was born, but I can't provide first-hand information as to the date, time and location. I just don't remember! My mother or the delivery doctor could provide first-hand information. With second-hand information and beyond, the less trustworthy it is by its very nature. The value is not necessarily suspect or intentionally incorrect; it's just not "from the horse's mouth."
- 3) Evidence – Simply put, what we call "direct evidence" is differentiated from "indirect evidence" simply by this standard: If it answers the genealogical question in and of itself, it's direct. Anything is indirect. For example: "When was she born?" is a single genealogical question that can be answered with a certified birth certificate. The source might be the City Clerk's office; the information would be primary if it was a document signed by the physician; the evidence would be direct as it answers that single question without any other research

Now you should have confidence that anyone will be able to find whatever it is that you found which should bring them to the same conclusions as you reached.

Like the TV commercials say, "But wait! There's more!" I have to say that there's more. Read about the 3rd GPS element, "Analysis and Correlation of all sources, information and evidence." This is imperative as you will find conflicts...I promise!

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Calendar

DATE/TIME	EVENT/PLACE
Wednesday, 1 June 2016 6 - 8 PM	WMGS Meeting – Our annual Potluck Dinner & open-mic session , at the Agawam Senior Center
Thursday, 16 June 2016 6 - 8 PM	Genealogy Research Clinic at the Agawam Senior Center
Thursday, 23 June 2016 6 - 8 PM	Genealogy Research Clinic at the Agawam Senior Center
Wednesday, 6 July 2016 6 - 8 PM	WMGS Meeting – Margaret Rose Fortier ~ <i>Andiamo! Finding Your Italian Family</i> , Live and in person at the Agawam Senior Center
Wednesday, 3 August 2016 6 – 8 PM	Field trip to the Lyman and Merrie Wood Museum (Springfield Archives) at the Springfield Museums, Springfield, MA
26 - 29 April 2017	NERGC 2017: Using the Tools of Today & Tomorrow to Understand the Past , at the Mass Mutual Center, Springfield, MA

Genealogy Research Clinics are free to WMGS members. There is a \$10 fee per session for non-members. Annual WMGS membership is just \$25.

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Local Resources

In addition to the familiar and popular Genealogy Research Clinic at the Agawam Senior Center, we also have, just down the road, the Genealogy resources of the Chicopee Library on Front Street, Chicopee, MA. This library is a Family Search Affiliate Library which allows people to order microfilm from the Salt Lake City LDS library and have it sent to the library at 449 Front Street in Chicopee for your review, download to a thumb drive and/or printing. In addition, this library has a dedicated genealogy room with 10-12 computers equipped with links to the subscription sites of AncestryLibrary, Fold3, and HeritageQuest. The library recently installed RootsMagic and Personal Historian genealogy software programs on each of the computers for use in creating your digital trees and writing your story. The genealogy room hours are Tuesday, 10-2 and 6-8 PM and Thursday, 10-3 and 6-8 PM. During these hours, volunteers are available to help with search strategies, brick walls and sharing your success and frustration (Dave Robison, our president, volunteers some of his time there so you might run into him during your visit). This is an amazing resource. If you are in the area, stop by and check it out. They often have free classes on genealogy so it is another good place to watch for opportunities to develop your research skills.

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Member Events

Dave Robison has scheduled a number of classes, workshops and presentations so far this year and there are more to come! They include single presentations, four and five session programs and at least two (2) intermediate to advanced courses in genealogy research. Please click here for the current **“Scheduled Events”** that he will be presenting throughout Massachusetts from Springfield and Northampton to as far away as Falmouth at Cape Cod.

Hillary Schau will be presenting a two-part hands-on class on the topic of Beginning RootsMagic at the Holyoke Library on June 6 and 13 from 4:30-6 PM. It is free, but registration is required. Contact the Holyoke Library History Room to sign up or get more information. 413-420-8107.

Dave Robison will be giving a talk entitled “Genealogy: Starting or Improving Your Family Research” on Tuesday, 14 June 2016 at the Chicopee Senior Center at RiverMills, 5 West Main St., Chicopee, MA, from 5:30-7 PM. A Q&A session will follow.

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Member Focus

Ann McDougal

By Ann McDougal

What a pleasure it is to be a part of a group of people that knows that although my married name is Ann McDougal, that does not mean that I am of Scottish descent. And now I have a confession for you:

It is all my mother’s fault! She received a genealogy of her father’s family compiled by her second cousin twice removed which she passed along to me. I spent hours looking through the book and trying to explain to my children the fascination of seeing how all of the family members were connected. At one family reunion I endeavored to detail the relationship between my cousin and my son. All they wanted to know was, “Are we cousins?” Talk about killing the moment!

Now the blame passes to my daughter, Katy. She gifted me with a subscription to Ancestry.com as a wedding anniversary present. Now there are two of us consumed with researching the families, though I have the theoretically smaller task of looking for my own ancestors. Katy helps me, continues research on her father’s line started by her grandmother, works on both sides of her husband’s family and helps out every friend who asks about genealogy.

Because my maternal grandfather’s family has been extensively documented, I moved along to my maternal grandmother’s family expecting to find Irish roots, the apostrophe in O’Blenis made it obvious. But the apostrophe did not appear in their name until after 1850 and then only on occasion. Even more puzzling was the prefix Van which was frequently found prior to 1800, though of course the spelling was inconsistent. Sometimes the family was listed as Van Oblinus, sometimes Oblanis or even Blenis. Imagine my surprise when I discovered that this family came not from Ireland but from Flanders! Their home was that area of

Europe where Belgium and the Netherlands touch. Now the Van prefix makes a good deal more sense. Though I know who originally immigrated from the Netherlands and who my third great grandfather was, his father remains only a hint without a birth record. When I need a break from that search, there is always Dad's side to work on.

Don't feel sorry for me, though, I do have an Irish ancestor. My maiden name is Donohue and yes, they actually are Irish! But that's another story for another day.

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New WMGS Members

The Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society (WMGS) welcomes our newest members:

David Lapierre and Olivia Patch

We hope that they will avail themselves of all that WMGS has to offer her and that they find their family ancestors.

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About Us



The Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society was founded in Springfield, Hampden County, Massachusetts in 1972, and officially incorporated on 6 February 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

Dave Robison – President

Fran Malone – Vice President

Katy Krause – Treasurer

Ann McDougal – Secretary

Hillary Schau – NERGC Delegate

Susan Levenson – Webmaster

Jeanne Leblond – Surname Project Coordinator

Ellen Janik – Facebook Administrator

Carolea Hayden – Refreshment Coordinator

Diane Ascioti – Founder

Janie Tarver, Jeanne Leblond and Nancy Netherwood - Directors

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

Meeting Details

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 Thursdays 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 look forward to you joining us at our next meeting!

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Membership

Like most things in life, membership is not free - but for our reasonable annual membership fee, 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 (3rd & 4th Thursday of month - \$10 / session non-members)
5. Share our library of resources including books and CDs
6. Opportunity to serve as a volunteer, coach or be a member of the Board of Directors

Membership Dues

Annual membership runs from 1 September to 31 August each year. You may purchase a membership for \$25 for an individual membership or \$40 for a couple joining together. Lifetime membership is now available for \$250. Institutions may also purchase a membership for \$30.

Join by mail, email, or in person at our monthly meeting: Click [here](#) for the WMGS Application for Membership; the image is to your right to view, save, and print. Payments may be made online on our [Join Page](#), by mail at the address listed below, or brought in person to one of our meetings.

Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society
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West Springfield, MA 01090

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Newsletter Deadlines

Please submit all information to be entered into the next newsletter by 15 June 2016.

We are looking for articles written by our members. Have you been to a repository or a federal or state archive? 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, share your knowledge.

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E-Mail Update

Please let us know if you have changed your e-mail address. We want to make sure that you continue to receive all of our updates, meeting reminders and electronic newsletters. Just send your name and new email address to us at WestMassGen@gmail.com.

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*Western
Massachusetts
Genealogical
Society
Celebrating
44 years
in 2016*