



Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society

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Upcoming Meetings

August 2016 Meeting

On August 3rd we will be meeting for our most anticipated event of the year; our annual field trip to the [Lyman and Merrie Wood Museum of Springfield History](#). Join us from 6-8 PM at 21 Edwards St, Springfield for a full night of research. Because the museum will be closed to everyone but us, you **must** arrive promptly between 5:30 and 6pm. At 6 PM the doors will be locked and there will be no one to let anyone else in the door. Nobody will hear knocking since we will all be downstairs with the tour. We get the place to ourselves, undivided attention from the archivist, and a private tour of normally off limit areas. But remember, you have to be a paid member to attend and you must arrive before 6 PM!

September 2016 Meeting

Census Reports Lead To...

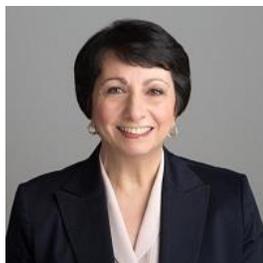
On September 7, our guest speaker will be Seema Kenney of Seema-ABLE. Seema has been working in the genealogy field professionally since 2010, having completed the Boston University Genealogy Research Program. She is currently the Secretary for NERGC (holding the genealogy conference in Springfield in 2017) and is the president of the Worcester Chapter of the Mass Society of Genealogists.



She will be presenting on the many crossroads one's research might take **after** finding a family in the census. This presentation will make connections between data from the different census years and data to look for in twenty-seven other resources. The census gives you location which leads to City Directories. Ages and genders lead to possible military records. Every fact on the census hints at another resource direction.

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July Meeting Recap



On July 6, our guest speaker, Margaret Rose Fortier, presented *Andiamo! Finding Your Italian Family*, in person. She covered Italian history, Italian immigration, Italians in the US, and how to find your Italian family. We discovered why our great-uncle had five cousins named Vincenzo and what they changed their name to in the United States.

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Message from the President – Dave Robison

As a longtime researcher, I occasionally think about how easy it has been for me, generally speaking, to research most of my family. My maternal lines go as far back as the Mayflower with many other lines arriving during the Great Migration. My paternal lines were a bit of a challenge at first because 20 years ago, I had not “embraced” the concept that spelling duzn’t cownt in genealogical research. So as far as I was concerned in those days, “Robison” should have been “Robison.” Made sense to me, anyway.

Aunt Sarah straightened me out on this issue and really opened my eyes. I found her accidentally in 2000. I believe I’ve talked about that many times in the past but I’ll be happy to retell the story. It’s a good one! She had been researching for decades without the benefit of the internet. Hers was all letter writing and visiting libraries, town halls and archives. What she left was a mountain of research, reasonably well documented and sourced that allowed me to track “Rob*son” to the mid 1700’s. Not bad! Guess what? I descend from Robertson, Robinson, Robson and even a Robrson. At least that’s what’s on my 4th great grandfather’s grave marker!

My mother and her siblings knew enough to frame the beginnings of that side of the family. It was like pulling teeth, however, as they all felt that “What you don’t know won’t hurt you!” I heard the names and I listened to the stories. Most of it concerned my maternal grandfather, the newcomer, who arrived from Ontario just before The Great War or what we now refer to it as World War I. He courted my grandmother for several years beginning around 1914 but they didn’t marry until 1923! I guess Grandpa had a problem with the “C” word! In his defense, his service in the Canadian Expeditionary Forces sort of got in the way. So the stories gave me some background on my Scottish heritage, kilts, bagpipes, tartans, etc. I’m one of those oddballs who actually enjoys the pipes having been introduced to them at several Canadian Legion picnics and parties. By the time you read this, Karen and I will have spent Saturday, 16 July 2016 at the Glasgow Lands Scottish Festival at Look Park in Northampton. As a tribute to my Scottish heritage, I’m particularly happy about the fact that we won the tickets in a raffle....saved us \$32!

In spite of the lack of any really deep information, researching Massachusetts family histories in particular is a walk in the proverbial park. If you have any experience with 16th or 17th century research in, say, New York, you’ll have no problem understanding why New York is referred to as the “Black Hole of Genealogy Research!” So by comparison, you’ve got to be grateful if your ancestors were from Massachusetts. Beginning with my maternal grandmother, Hazel Adel Bassett Dickson, and working backward, the records almost literally fell into my hands. She was born in Enfield, Massachusetts as well as her father. Many of the Bassett’s were born, lived, died and were buried there. There apparently was a rush to preserve the records before the towns were destroyed. That leaves us with wonderful records of all sorts.

Let's get back to those of us with generations of New England ancestors. If that describes you, then you should at least have Robert Charles Anderson's "The Great Migration Directory" on your shelf. It covers 1620 to 1640 and includes the heads of households, spouses and children, dates of migration and principal residences. Anderson pulls together town records, passenger lists (yes, passenger lists!), land grants, letters and diaries. A great value at only \$64.95 or \$51.96 for NEHGS members. Find it here: http://bit.ly/Anderson_Migration_Directory.

The bookstore at NEHGS certainly has quite a number of other New England research aids such as Michael Leclerc's "Genealogist's Handbook for New England Research" as well as study aids: <http://shop.americanancestors.org/>. You should also look at "Western Massachusetts Families in 1790" volumes I and II by Helen Schatvet Ullman, CG, FASG. Not because we're cousins, she's a very good genealogist and highly respected.

My latest source of excitement is a volume that has solved a dozen or more brick walls for me and added many direct and collateral ancestors. I reviewed "Early New England Families 1640 – 1700 Volume I" by Alicia Crane Williams for the Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS) which should appear in their next publication. Covering 50 heads of families, spouses and children, Williams draws on her extensive research talents to provide insights into the lives of these families. Occupations, religious affiliations, European origins, land and probate records and a commentary. All the data she compiled is supported by thorough source citation as only it should be! But with all those sources and the right amount of motivation, you may be able to go to those sources for deeper research and understanding. Williams was very thorough. Here's the NEHGS link where you can add this one to your library: http://bit.ly/Early_Families_1640-1700. This one is clearly a bargain at \$32.95 or \$29.66 for NEHGS Members. And we have Volume II to look forward to.

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Articles

What a Difference a Century Makes

Reprinted from The American Elm Volume 29, Issue 4 – Winter 2000

(discussing life in the year 1900)

- The average life expectancy in the US was forty-seven.
- Only 14 percent of the homes in the US had a bathtub.
- Only 8 percent of the homes had a telephone. A three-minute call from Denver to New York City cost eleven dollars.
- There were only 8,000 cars in the US and only 144 miles of paved roads.
- The maximum speed limit in most cities was 10 mph.
- Alabama, Mississippi, Iowa, and Tennessee were each more heavily populated than California. With a mere 1.4 million residents, California was only the 21st most populous state in the Union.
- The tallest structure in the world was the Eiffel Tower.

- The average wage in the US was 22 cents an hour. The average US worker made between \$200 and \$400 per year.
- A competent accountant could expect to earn \$2,000 per year, a dentist \$2,500 per year, a veterinarian between \$1,500 and \$4,000 per year, and a mechanical engineer about \$5,000 per year.
- More than 95 percent of all births in the US took place at home.
- Ninety percent of all US physicians had no college education. Instead, they attended medical schools, many of which were condemned in the press and by the government as “substandard.”
- Sugar cost four cents a pound. Eggs were fourteen cents a dozen. Coffee cost fifteen cents a pound.
- Most women only washed their hair once a month and used borax or egg yolks for shampoo.
- Canada passed a law prohibiting poor people from entering the country for any reason, either as travelers or immigrants.
- The five leading causes of death in the US were: 1. Pneumonia and influenza; 2. Tuberculosis; 3. Diarrhea; 4. Heart disease; 5. Stroke.
- The American flag had 45 stars. Arizona, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Hawaii and Alaska hadn’t been admitted to the Union yet.
- Drive-by shootings in which teenage boys galloped down the street on horses and started randomly shooting at houses, carriages, or anything else that caught their fancy – were an ongoing problem in Denver and other cities in the West.
- The population of Las Vegas, Nevada was 30. The remote desert community was inhabited by only a handful of ranchers and their families.
- Plutonium, insulin, and antibiotics hadn’t been discovered yet. Scotch tape, crossword puzzles, canned beer, and iced tea hadn’t been invented.
- There were no Mother’s Day or Father’s Day. One in ten US adults couldn’t read or write. Only 6 percent of all Americans had graduated from high school.
- Some medical authorities warned that professional seamstresses were apt to become sexually aroused by the steady rhythm, hour after hour, of the sewing machine’s foot pedals. They recommended slipping bromide – which was thought to diminish sexual desire – into the women’s drinking water.
- Marijuana, heroin, and morphine were all available over the counter at corner drugstores. According to one pharmacist, “Heroin clears the complexion, gives buoyancy to the mind, regulates the stomach and the bowels, and is, in fact, a perfect guardian of health.”
- Coca-Cola contained cocaine instead of caffeine.

- Punch-card data processing had recently been developed, and early predecessors of the modern computer were used for the first time by the government to help compile the 1900 census.
- Eighteen percent of the households in the US had at least one full-time servant or domestic.
- There were about 230 reported murders in the US annually.

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GPS #4 – Resolution of Conflicting Information

By Dave Robison

1. Reasonably Exhaustive Search
2. Complete and Accurate Citations
3. Skilled Analysis and Correlation of Data
- 4. Resolution of Conflicting Information**
5. Soundly Reasoned, Coherently Written Conclusion

Let's review last month's discussion of why there are standards for genealogical proof in the first place. Family history research is certainly more popular today than it has ever been. Complicating matters, believe it or not, is the internet. The ease the internet affords us makes genealogical research as simple as a user name and password. There are paid sites, free sites, genealogically oriented Facebook pages and innumerable other social media where a researcher can generally find just about whatever they're looking for. That, ladies and gentleman, makes research deceptively easy. There's the name, there's the spouse and there are the kids. A little typing, a bit of copy and paste or maybe a little download and "VOILA" the family tree is finished and uploaded to the internet for everyone to see. And copy and copy and copy over and over again! Maybe that's where you found your data; from someone else who followed the easy path. In a few weeks or maybe a few months, literally thousands of casual researchers have propagated inaccurate information. And all of that propagating will never, I repeat never, be undone. I'm not taking a shot at casual researchers. Rather, I am raising the caution flag for every researcher, casual or not. As to the internet, I'm still planning on having bumper stickers made up: *"If it's on the internet, it's true --- Abraham Lincoln."*

Thus and once again, we return to the Genealogical Proof Standard. It takes us down the proper roads prescribing proven research methodology all for the good of solid genealogical research.

Let's take another look at the data we discussed last month. Here is last month's discussion:

As we all know, the federal population census is decennial. Therefore (and usually) the individuals in any household should age approximately 10 years from one census to the next. Does that always happen? Don't we wish! So here we already have a need to call up the 3rd standard, skilled analysis. Is it the right household? Are the right individual enumerated? Are the ages reasonably close? In most cases, common sense will answer those questions. If not, we'll call on our correlation of data skills. Graph the family. Create columns for the years of the census records you're studying. Then down the side of your graph, list the data you've found:

- Location

- *Household number (depending on the year)*
- *Family name*
- *Head of household*
- *Members of the household*
- *Ages of each household member*
- *Citizenship*
- *If not native born, then country of origin and language spoken*
- *Year of immigration*
- *Citizenship status: AL, PA or NA*
- *Occupation*
- *Industry*

Do you need all that data? Yes, GPS #1. Do you have to remember/record where you found the data? Yes, GPS #2 complete and accurate citations. Why do you need all of this information to conform to GPS #3, skilled analysis? Here are a few simple examples:

In the 1900 census for Barre, Vermont. The head of household is Antonio Bianco, age 32 and his spouse is Maria, age 27. There are 6 children listed as either sons or daughters. The ages run from the oldest at 9 years and the youngest at 3 months. Antonio is from Italy, immigrated in 1888 and is naturalized indicated by "NA" in the appropriate column. He is a stone cutter in the construction industry.

After searching for Antonio in the 1910 census, you've found Anthony Bianco age 44 whose wife is Maria, age 39 and they are living with their 4 children in Northfield, Vermont. The children are ages 19 to 15. Anthony stated that he was an immigrant from Italy but his citizenship status indicates that he has only declared his intentions to naturalized, "PA." And Anthony has mysteriously changed his occupation to butcher. A few questions here, but you say to yourself, "Age discrepancies...Hmmm, I'll look into that later."

Now you've moved on the 1920 census. Back in Barre, Vermont, there's Antonio again. He's now 52 years old and Maria is 47. It seems a career as a butcher didn't work out so he's stonecutting again. He's also naturalized...again. And the children? His oldest son is still in the household at age 29, also a stonecutter. But Antonio isn't employed by anyone, as his occupation code is "O" meaning he's now in his own business apparently with his son working by his side.

In this case, you're going to have to use more than just the census records I fabricated here. How do you get the ages to line up? How do you justify the name changes? The occupation changes? I would begin with City Directories which should all be available for this time period. Next, military records. Every male between the ages of 18 and 35 was required to sign up for the draft beginning in 1917. So Antonio would have been excluded but any of his sons would have been required to participate. Marriage records, death records (2 children were missing between the 1900 and 1910 census records), probate records, property records should all contain information to help push the names and numbers into a sensible order. Some flexibility is required as you can see that in the census records alone, many discrepancies occur.

In my opinion, a time line is the absolute best tool to use to organize the conflicts in the data collected from multiple sources and allow you to make reasonable judgments as to the accuracy of each fact.

Comments? Suggestions? Email me at dave@oldbones.info.

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Calendar

DATE/TIME	EVENT/PLACE
Wednesday, 3 August 2016 6 – 8 PM	Field trip to the Lyman and Merrie Wood Museum (Springfield Archives) at the Springfield Museums, Springfield, MA
Thursday, 18 August 2016 6 - 8 PM	Genealogy Research Clinic at the Agawam Senior Center
Thursday, 25 August 2016 6 - 8 PM	Genealogy Research Clinic at the Agawam Senior Center
Wednesday, 7 September 2016 6 – 8 PM	WMGS Meeting - Seema-Jayne Keeney - President of the Worcester Chapter of the MSOG and a NERGC Tri-Chair . Presenting in person at the Agawam Senior Center on the topic <i>Census Reports Lead To...</i>
Thursday, 21 September 2016 6 - 8 PM	Genealogy Research Clinic at the Agawam Senior Center
Thursday, 28 September 2016 6 - 8 PM	Genealogy Research Clinic at the Agawam Senior Center
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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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. Dave was also chosen to make 2 presentations at the NERGC 2017

conference in Springfield: “*The Rich Research Resources of Western Massachusetts*” and “*Gathering the Family Stories: Non-Confrontational Strategies.*” There are 79 speakers who were chosen to make a total of 137 presentations.

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Member Focus

Ellen Janik

By Jeanne Leblond

Ellen Janik’s interest in genealogy is all about discovery, pride, sharing, and honoring her family’s ancestors in different ways. What started out in 1996 as a quest to find out more about her maternal grandfather, has turned into a passion for her family’s history. Ellen’s maternal grandfather, James Kelly O’Neil, died in 1929 at the age of 31, when Ellen’s mother was only 7 years old. Her mother knew little of his background, other than that he was adopted from Brightside Orphanage. After his older siblings found him and were reunited, he returned to using his birth name. Ellen was able to obtain records from the orphanage which provided information about his family, but her brick wall challenge is trying to find where his grandparents were born in Ireland.



Ellen’s research interest spans not only her grandparents’ Irish, English-Early American, and French-Canadian origins, but also her husband’s Polish, English, and Welsh ancestors. She got hooked on genealogy when she began to find that many of their ancestors served in the military. Their family has been represented in wars ranging from early Indian wars to her son-in-law serving in Iraq. During WWII, an uncle was a prisoner-of-war in Germany and during the Civil War, her great-great-grandfather was held in Andersonville Prison in Georgia. Her family has traveled to some of the Civil War battle sites where their ancestors have fought.

Family treasures include a letter written by her great-great-grandfather to his wife on his march to Gettysburg. She also has a copy of his regimental roster poster (Vermont Volunteers, Company I, 16th Regiment), which she obtained after someone who had an ancestor in the same regiment responded to her post on the vermontcivilwar.org website. That genealogist had the original poster and was willing to make a copy for her. A stroke of luck enabled her to find her great-great-grandfather’s Civil War dog tag on Ebay, though she admits that it was an expensive purchase.

August 2016

Serendipity has played an interesting part in her family and research. When Ellen and her husband were expecting their first daughter, her husband's grandmother asked if they had a name picked out. When they announced that it would be Carrie Marie, his grandmother asked if they knew that was her mother's name. Ellen discovered that her daughter shares a birthdate with her great-great-grandfather and has lived on the same street in Westfield where he lived in 1910. Another serendipitous event was finding her great-grandparents marriage certificate 124 years to the day of their marriage in Hinsdale, MA.

Ellen and her husband are high school sweethearts who have raised three children and now have four grandsons. They proudly display a collection of old family photos on an upright piano given to them by her husband's grandmother. A family tree is painted on a wall in their family room with the names of their direct ancestors, along with a quote that says "to live in the hearts we leave behind is not to die." She happily shares any photos or information on her family tree.

Her future plans include creating a Heritage Garden with the many plants given to her by family members. Each summer, Ellen plants some of her grandmother's favorite flowers in her memory. She hopes to write a family history, tying historical events with her ancestors' lives, to show her children and grandchildren where they came from, the hardships their ancestors endured, and their strength and bravery.

It's all about family.

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New WMGS Members

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

Tom and Anna Adams

We hope that they will avail themselves of all that WMGS has to offer them and that they find success in their hunt for family ancestors.

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***** CALLING ALL MAC USERS! *****

If you have any experience at all with using RootsMagic on a MAC, we have a member who would like some advice. Please contact Dave Robison at dave@oldbones.info for details.

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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 Ascoti – 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. Membership rates are:

- \$25 for an individual membership
- \$40 for a couple of the same household
- \$250 for Lifetime membership
- \$30 for Institutions

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
P.O. Box 418
West Springfield, MA 01090

Membership Renewal Time!

As we all should be aware, the annual memberships to the Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society run from September through August of the following year. Now is the time to renew your memberships for the 2016-2017 season. The most efficient way to take care of this is through our website. Here's the link to the "Join" page: <https://westmagenealogy.com/join/>. Now you don't have to join again, just renew. To do that, simply scroll down the page and click on the PayPal link. **YOU DO NOT NEED A PAYPAL ACCOUNT** to use this secure, convenient and simple method.

Let's take at a brief review of some of the benefits of membership:

- Membership in one of the oldest genealogical societies in New England
- Availability to attend, free of charge, regularly scheduled research clinics (non-members pay \$10 per session)
- Access to Ancestry Library edition at the clinics

- Regular year-round meetings with experts both live and in virtual presentation.
- Access to previously recorded meeting in the Members Only section of the website (NOTE: some have time limitations due to speaker's requests)
- Many fellow members willing to assist or advise you in your research efforts
- Volunteer opportunities
- Opportunity to meet and mingle with likeminded people

Dues are the life-blood of any society, especially smaller societies such as ours. You are the members and the dues you pay helps us to continue to bring interesting programs to you. Here are a few changes for this season: The standard dues of \$25 for a single membership remains unchanged. But we are happy to announce a new couples' membership for \$40, which represents a 20% discount for any 2 members of the same household. In addition, we are re-introducing lifetime memberships at only \$500 but are currently offering it at the greatly reduced rate of \$250 until 31 December 2016.

Newsletter Deadlines

Please submit all information to be entered into the next newsletter by 15 August 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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