



Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society, Inc.

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Upcoming Meetings

December 2018 Meeting

Cliff McCarthy, archivist at the Museum of Springfield History (MOSH), archivist at the Stone House Museum of Belchertown, local historian, published author, avid genealogist, and president of the Pioneer Valley History Network, a non-profit consortium of historical institutions, will be our December 5th speaker.

Cliff will be presenting on the history of our four Western Massachusetts counties (Hampden, Hampshire, Berkshire, and Franklin) and the treasure-trove of genealogical resources for anyone doing research or with ancestors in them.



PIONEER VALLEY
HISTORY NETWORK

*Celebrating Local History
in Western Massachusetts*

January 2019 Meeting

Our January 2, 2019 presenter will be Katherine R. Willson of Ann Arbor, Michigan. Katherine is an engaging & dynamic lecturer at local, regional and national conferences. She's the founder and president of the Virtual Genealogical Society, member of the Board of Directors for the Association of Professional Genealogists, President of the Michigan Genealogical Council, Secretary for the Genealogical Speakers Guild, Social Media Manager for GRIP /Genealogical Research Institute of Pittsburgh, and member of the National Genealogical Society. In addition, she is the author of [The Genealogist's Guide to Grand Rapids, Michigan](#) (published in 2018 by [The In-Depth Genealogist](#)).



She's also recently updated her list of over 13,200 Facebook genealogy links and has created a list of 100+ instructional genealogical channels on YouTube. (both available on her website [here](#))

Katherine's presentation to us at the Agawam Senior Center is titled: *Seeking Dead People: Getting the Most from Cemetery Research Online & In Person*. Katherine will discuss cemetery, funeral home, and online research and provide tips and techniques to help locate photos, family trees, obituaries, and death certificates, and more.

November 2018 Recap

David Ouimette, CG, CGL from FamilySearch.org was our November 7th speaker. His presentation was entitled, "*Discovering Your Ancestors Using Family Search*."



FamilySearch has the most comprehensive collection of family history records in the world, with billions of images and billions of indexes of the best records for ancestral discovery across much of the globe. Come and learn how FamilySearch prioritizes, digitizes, publishes, and indexes records that tell the stories of your ancestors. With that background, we will then demonstrate effective search strategies across the FamilySearch website, covering historical records, family trees, published genealogies, the research wiki, and the FamilySearch catalog.



David manages Content Strategy at *FamilySearch.org*, prioritizing the acquisition and online publication of records worldwide for family history research. He holds BS and MS degrees in Mathematics. In addition to being a certified genealogical lecturer, he has authored the book, "Finding your Irish Ancestors: A Beginners' Guide" and many articles in genealogy magazines and journals. Many of you will remember his wonderful presentation last January titled "From Wojtowa to Chicopee: The Story of Polish Immigrant Millworkers" at the Chicopee Library which WMGS co-sponsored with the Polish Genealogical Society of Western Massachusetts. His excellent presentation is archived in our Members Only section.

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December Meeting and Holiday Gathering

Just a reminder that our December meeting will be a combination Holiday Gathering and presentation by Cliff McCarthy, local archivist at the Museum of Springfield History.

We'll have an opportunity to enjoy holiday desserts, along with each other's company for some social time, and then benefit from a presentation from Cliff on Western Mass. Genealogical resources to help in your research. How good is that!!

We'd like to ask those members, who are able to do so, to bring a dessert or treat to share – perhaps a favorite holiday dessert, a family ethnic recipe, holiday cookies, a recipe that you've been wanting to try, or whatever inspires you.

If you didn't inherit those family baking genes or are short on time, that's okay. (Actually, if everyone brought a dessert, we'd have way too many items to eat.) Come - with or without a dessert. But, please join us on Wednesday, December 5th at 6pm!

Message from the President

Dave Robison

This should come as no surprise to anyone but I'm openly admitting that I don't know what I don't know. And neither do you. Not to be condescending, but it makes sense. If everyone knew everything, it would be a very boring world, indeed!

Thus, we have books, tapes, CDs, the internet, classes, lectures, series, conferences, meetings, libraries, archives, historical and genealogical societies and on and on. We have professionals who can assist, experienced non-professionals, webinars, lectures, classes, Facebook groups, Twitter, and Instagram to name a few other sources of "education." We never stop learning nor should we.

Where is this all taking us? Hopefully, we are all learning not just about our families and our ancestors but about ourselves. The most startling wall that we seem to be successful in breaking down is what might previously have been considered impossibly difficult. The phenomenal popularity of "getting my DNA," tens of thousands, scratch that, millions of people are enhancing the knowledge of their ethnic backgrounds and building their family data bases, we are finding relatives in mostly happy circumstances.

And here, I might say, is the rub. Some people simply don't want to be found. The reasons are sometimes complicated and often quite simple. We might have the luxury of close, happy, loving families. But trust me when I say, there are far more people than you can imagine who have had less than happy childhoods or who have suffered tragedy. Some might be suspicious of their own family backgrounds; grandparents raising grandchildren as their own, individuals of questionable fatherhood (far more common than anyone might expect), children who had been orphaned or who have an ancestor either close or distant who may have been orphaned. There are just too many scenarios to mention here.

My point is that although most people are thrilled with the discoveries they are making, many run from these discoveries and would rather not know or open the door to stories they are not prepared to hear. I don't believe there's anything wrong with either situation. Anyone I have dealt with who is seeking answers are generally happy when a brick wall comes down. On the other hand, I've dealt with many who would simply rather not "go there." I never question them or put even the slightest pressure on them even if I believe the answers to some of their mysteries might be easily solved.

One of my clients, who I happened to have known for many years, was eager to have a DNA test. They already knew that they had been adopted. Now near 60 years old, there was a feeling that DNA might finally be the tool that would resolve some of suspicions of who the extended family might be and where they might be found. As it turns out, that is a huge understatement. With the results of the DNA test, 6 half-siblings scattered across the country turned up. There were 5 of the 6 who were delighted when they were able to connect. The 6th chose to avoid bringing anyone new and unknown into their lives, at least at this point. There were also a few bizarre results: This client had worked with a biological nephew for the past 15 years! This newly acquired knowledge has brought them both closer together for all the right reasons.

Although events like this are heartening, the outcomes are not always as positive. There are untold numbers of illegitimate births, adoptions both legal and unrecorded, abandoned children and other mostly sad situations. What we sometimes call "NPEs" or "Non-Paternal Events" have been happening since time immemorial. So where does that leave our extended ancestral lines? I will venture to say that we all have family histories that would include these biological events. They can't be avoided. It may not be your grandmother or your 15th great grandfather, but they are out there.

So, what do we make of this? I will tell you that I'm approached frequently by people who enthusiastically say that they want to "get their DNA done." My first question to them is "Why?" On rare occasions, that might end the conversation about genealogy and family history and return it to something far less esoteric. But mostly people just want to know who they are. It is said that a vast majority of DNA testing is motivated by ethnicity; where did I come from, who were my ancestors, am I Jewish or Native American or Irish or African-American? DNA can answer these questions to some extent. The results are often strongly influenced by which company you test with. It largely depends on that company's data base or reference group. In an extreme example, if no one from the British Isles had ever had their DNA tested, then no one, anywhere in the world could be found to have British Isles ancestry based *solely on DNA*. Remember, I said "*solely on DNA*." Science wouldn't know what DNA from the population of the British Isles looked like! This is the strongest argument to say that you must still do the legwork, the research, finding the paperwork, the vital records, pensions, probate, military records, even newspaper articles, school records, city or town directories.

Getting back to not knowing what you don't know, education is the answer; continuous improvement to learn the most efficient ways to get the genealogical questions answered. And, in spite of Abraham Lincoln's quote, "If it's on the internet, it's true!" we all really need to dig into the records and, if you choose, use DNA to support the findings. When odd results come in, our research skills may be the only way to get to the bottom of some of the mysteries, mysteries that may never be resolved. But don't get discouraged. Take a break for a few days, weeks or even months. When you get back to it, I can almost guarantee there will be an "aha" moment where suddenly all the pieces fall into place.

In my experience, most of the discoveries are happy discoveries. Finding a sibling, a grandparent or a 3rd cousin twice removed at this time of year especially will likely enhance the spirit of the holidays for you and your family and bring memories like "Remember that Christmas when we finally met..."

Keep in mind, however, that science isn't going to find most of your ancestors. That's your job!

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Articles

A Genealogist's Christmas Anonymous – American Elm

Twas the night before Christmas

When all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even my spouse.

The dining room table with clutter was spread with pedigree charts and with letters which said:

"Too bad about the data for which you wrote - Sank in a storm on an ill-fated boat."

Stacks of old copies of wills and the such, were proof that my work had become much too much.

Our children were nestled all snug in their beds, while visions of sugarplums danced in their heads.
And I at my table was ready to drop, from work on my album with photos to crop.

Christmas was here, and of such was my lot, that presents and goodies and toys I'd forgot.
Had I not been so busy with grandparents' wills, I'd not have forgotten to shop for such thrills.

While others had bought gifts that would bring Christmas cheer, I'd spent my time researching those birthdates and years.

While I was thus musing about my sad plight, A strange noise on the lawn gave me such a great fright.

Away to the window I flew in a flash, tore open the drapes and I yanked up the sash!
When what to my wondering eyes should appear, But an overstuffed sleigh and eight small reindeer.

Up to the housetop the reindeer they flew, with a sleigh full of toys, and 'ole Santa Claus, too.
And then in a twinkle, I heard on the roof the prancing and pawing of thirty-two hoofs.

The TV antenna was no match for their horns, and the roof was covered with hoof-prints adorned.
As I drew in my head, and bumped it on the sash, Down the cold chimney fell Santa . . . KER-RASH!

"Dear" Santa had come down the roof in a wreck and tracked soot on the carpet. (*I could wring his short neck!*).

Spotting my face, good old Santa could see I had no Christmas spirit you'd have to agree.

He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work and filled all the stockings. (I felt like a jerk).
Here was Santa, who'd brought us such gladness and joy; When I'd been too busy for even one toy.

He spied my research on the table all spread "A genealogist!" he cried! (*My face was all red!*)
"Tonight, I've met many like you," Santa grinned, As he pulled from his sack a large book he had penned.

I gazed with amazement . . . the cover it read "**Genealogy Lines for Which You have Plead**"
"I know what it's like to be a genealogy bug," He said as he gave me a great Santa hug.

While the elves make the sleighful of toys I now carry, I do some research in the North Pole Library".

"A special treat I am thus able to bring, to genealogy folks who can't find a thing.

Now off you go to your bed for a rest, I'll clean up the house from this genealogy mess."

I climbed up the stairs full of gladness and glee, I looked back to Santa who'd brought much to me.

While settling in bed, I heard Santa's clear whistle To his team, which then rose like the down of a thistle.
And I heard him exclaim as he flew out of sight,

"Family History is Fun! Merry Christmas! Goodnight!"

Handwritten Does Not Mean Original

By Michael John Neill

Just because something is handwritten does not always mean that it is the original. Many older courthouse records are handwritten transcriptions of the original documents-commonly referred to as the record copy. This is especially true with deeds before other reproductive techniques were developed.

Some wills were copied by transcriptionists into record books as well.

It is not bad that something is a handwritten copy but bear in mind that you could be looking at a handwritten reproduction of the original document.

And some handwritten documents are the original document.

(c) Michael John Neill, "Genealogy Tip of the Day," <http://genealogytipoftheday.blogspot.com>, 03 Nov 2018

Openings on the Board

WMGS is looking for a someone willing to serve as Assistant Treasurer of WMGS, as Katy Krause has informed us that she needs to step back from the Board because of other responsibilities. The position is for the remainder of a two-year term, with the term expiring in May, 2020.

The Assistant Treasurer's responsibilities include assisting the Treasurer and handling accounts payable duties for WMGS. Katy is willing to offer extensive training to her replacement.

We wish Katy well and appreciate her many years of service to WMGS. Thankfully, she's not going too far and will continue to assist with our website and other tasks.

If you are interested in the position or would like more information on the duties, please send a note to us at [westmassgen@gmail](mailto:westmassgen@gmail.com) or speak to any of the Board members at our monthly meeting.

Volunteer Opportunities

As WMGS grows, so do the tasks needed to run our society. That's hardly a complaint, because it means that there are numerous opportunities for our members to be involved in our society and to contribute to its growth!

Our Board has recently created a list of committees to address the various tasks that are needed to run our society. A Board member has been assigned to chair each committee and to coordinate the committee's work. And, we've defined the tasks that need to be done, hoping to make the workload a bit less for everyone on a committee.

Do you have a few extra hours that you could help out each month? If so, please let us know. We'll let you know what opportunities are available.

Some of the volunteer options include:

- coming a bit early to our meetings to help set up our welcome table with forms, badges, handouts, etc.
- helping to welcome our members.
- sitting with new members and visitors to welcome them and answer questions
- distributing and collecting speakers' evaluations
- copying handouts and forms

We're also in need of members who can help with publicity, such as sending press releases to local media and posting news and pictures on Facebook and other social media. If you have experience in marketing or community outreach to offer, we'd love to talk to you.

And, we're always looking for members to submit short articles for our newsletter.

If you can help out in any of these areas, please let us know. We'd love for you to join our volunteer team.

Brick Wall Queries

How to Submit or Respond to a Query:

Submitting: Queries and responses should be sent via email to westmassgen@gmail.com or submitted through the Contact Us section on our website. Members may also bring their prepared queries or responses to our monthly meeting or to one of our research clinics. Non-members should submit their payment (\$5.00 per query) via the Donate tab on the website. Members are entitled to post three (3) queries per month.

Responding: Please send your response directly to WMGS. To aid in matching answer to question, please Identify the question you are answering by using the month of the Newsletter and the question number. (example Oct 2018Q1, Oct 2018-Q2) Answers submitted should include the source(s) of information found or specific information on a website or database. WMGS will forward the response to the person who asked the question, post it in the next newsletter, and archive it on our website.

Note: Because of space limitations, WMGS reserves the right to limit the number of queries that are listed per newsletter. When necessary, queries will be posted in the next available issue. WMGS and its members are not responsible to conduct research, to provide answers for the query, or for the accuracy of the information posted or received. Always verify any information received by checking its source.

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News and Upcoming Conferences

Family—a Link to the Past &



a Bridge to the Future

April 3–6, 2019
Radisson Hotel
Manchester, New Hampshire

Join us for the New England Regional Genealogical Consortium's 15th conference! NERGC 2019 will feature special tracks on Wednesday and regular conference presentations Thursday through Saturday. When you're not attending sessions, check out the Exhibit Hall, Ancestors Road Show, Society Fair, and other fun and educational events.

Manchester is a vibrant city with world-class entertainment and fine dining, all within walking distance of the conference hotel. Explore museums or visit a spa in the mill district along the riverfront, or take in live music and nightlife at Irish, Mexican, Asian, and American establishments.

For more information, go to nergc.org. If you have not yet made your hotel arrangements do it soon, rooms are filling fast. Call (603) 625-1000 and mention the NERGC conference for the discounted rate. That rate is NOT available if you register on line; by telephone only, directly with the front desk at the hotel. We look forward to seeing you there.

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](#) to search the calendar for scheduled events "**Calendar**" that he will be presenting throughout Massachusetts.

Calendar

DATE/TIME	EVENT/PLACE
Wednesday, 5 Dec 2018 6 - 8 PM	WMGS Meeting – Cliff McCarthy will present on " <i>The History of our four Western Massachusetts Counties</i> "
Thursday, 20 Dec 2018 6 - 8 PM	Genealogy Research Clinic at the Agawam Senior Center.
Thursday, 27 Dec 2018 6 - 8 PM	Genealogy Research Clinic at the Agawam Senior Center.
Wednesday, 2 Jan 2019 6 – 8 PM	WMGS Meeting – Katherine R. Willson will present " <i>Seeking Dead People: Getting the Most from Cemetery Research Online & In Person</i> "
Monday, 14 Jan 2019 6 – 8 PM	WMGS Board Meeting - Open to Members
Thursday, 17 Jan 2019 6 - 8 PM	Genealogy Research Clinic at the Agawam Senior Center
Thursday, 24 Jan 2019 6 - 8 PM	Genealogy Research Clinic at the Agawam Senior Center

Genealogy Research Clinics are free to WMGS members. There is a \$10 fee per session for non-members. Annual WMGS membership is just \$30.

New WMGS Members

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

**Joanne Saltman
Janice Davis**

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

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 165 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
Jeanne Leblond – Vice President
Deborah Woodford – Treasurer
Katy Krause – Assistant Treasurer
Estelle Stasz – Secretary
Hillary Schau – Newsletter Editor

Dave Lapierre – Webmaster
Jeanne Leblond – Surname Project Coordinator
Ellen Janik – Facebook Administrator
Carolea Hayden – Refreshment Coordinator
Diane Ascoti – Founder

Edie Bowen-Wilcox, Hillary Schau, and Dave Lapierre – Directors

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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Inclement Weather Policy

In case of bad weather, please check the following areas for a cancellation of our monthly meeting or genealogy research clinics:

1. If the Agawam Senior Center is closed, then our meeting is canceled. This information can be found on most **local TV stations** such as WWLP (Channel 22) and WGGB (Channel 40). It will be posted at the bottom of the screen, along with the other school and activity cancellations.
2. **WestMassGen.com** – We will post cancellation information on our website.
3. **Email** – We will send an email out to our mailing list, if time permits.
4. **Facebook** – We will post a note to let you know if our meeting will be canceled.

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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 Western Massachusetts Genealogical 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. Access to recordings of many past WMGS meetings and to the recent DNA boot camp and handouts in the members only section of the website.
7. Opportunity to serve as a volunteer, coach or be a member of the Board of Directors

One of our key ‘member benefits’ is access to the members-only page containing archived recordings of speakers from around the US: Judy G Russell, Maureen Taylor, Connie Fitzpatrick, Elissa Scalise Powell, Dr. Shelley Murphy, Nora Galvin, ‘DearMYRTLE’ a/k/a Pat Richley-Erickson, Russ Worthington, Melissa Barker, Jennifer Alford and our own Panel of Pros. The page also includes the handouts from most of those meetings and historical copies of ‘American Elm,’ the original WMGS newsletter publication.

Membership Dues

Annual membership runs from 1 September to 31 August each year. Membership rates are:

- \$30 for an individual membership
- \$45 for a couple of the same household
- \$15 for students
- \$500 for Lifetime membership

If you are new to our organization, click [here](#) for the WMGS Application for Membership; the image is near the bottom. Click to open the pdf to view, save, and print.

There are three ways to join or renew your membership:

- Pay by cash or check at the monthly meeting
- Print and mail an application, found on the Join/Renew page of our website (if a new member) along with your check, or, if renewing, just the check to
WMGS, PO Box 418, West Springfield, MA 01090-0418
- Use the secure PayPal button on our website (you **do not** need to have a PayPal account, just use your debit card or credit card). Here's the link to our Join/Renew page: [JOIN](#)

Note: All first-time members must submit an application by mail or in person at a meeting, even if using PayPal, so that we have all the necessary information for our membership list.

Newsletter Deadlines

Please submit all information to be entered into the next newsletter by 15 December 2018.

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.

E-Mail Update

Please let us know if you have changed your e-mail address, mailing address and/or phone number. 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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