



Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society, Inc.

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WMGS Plans for the COVID-19 Pandemic

In case you didn't receive this email on March 12th, we are repeating the information it contained here in its entirety. It contains information on how you will be able to participate in our monthly meetings and view our webinars safely from your home.



As all of you, we have been paying close attention to the news about the COVID-19 pandemic. Health experts are now recommending that anyone who is over 60 years of age or who has an underlying health condition should avoid group gatherings. Social distancing is recommended as one way to reduce the risk of contracting the virus.

At our Board meeting on Monday night, we decided to be proactive and to cancel all of our live meetings, including monthly meetings, special interest groups (SIGs), and training sessions, until we receive guidance that it's safe to resume our events.

We are diligently working to offer alternatives, so that members can still participate in WMGS events, but remotely from home. We have contacted our scheduled speakers for upcoming months and are in the process of making arrangements to host live webinars instead. The process we'll follow is one that we have had in place, in the event that the Agawam Senior Center was closed for a weather event. Members will receive an email with a link to join the webinar at the scheduled time, from the comfort of their own home. We can't promise that all of the webinars will be available later on our website, so you will want to join in at the scheduled time.

April 2020

We have already confirmed that our April 1st presenter, Sara Campbell, will be presenting her scheduled topic, “**Massachusetts Map History**,” via a live webinar.

Rather than hosting SIGs and training sessions on the 3rd and 4th Thursdays of the month at the Agawam Senior Center, we will now send members a link to a Zoom (online) meeting, where we will moderate the meeting and show one of the pre-recorded webinars from Lisa Louise Cooke. We cannot provide our members the links to the webinars, but we can show the webinars in an online meeting. We will follow this format until we resume live meetings. These are the same webinars that we planned to show at the Agawam Senior Center.

On Thursday, March 19, we will have a Zoom (online) training session where the topic will be “**Institutional Records Research Methods**.” On Thursday, March 26, we will have another Zoom training session where the topic will be “**Google Earth**.” More details and how to join these meetings will be coming out shortly.

Unfortunately, technology won’t allow us to solve all issues. We will need to postpone the business portion of our meetings, our May elections, and our Founders’ Award presentation until we resume meetings at the Agawam Senior Center. However, our Board meetings will be held via Zoom.

We will still send you our monthly newsletter and do other work behind the scenes. Be sure to follow our posts on Facebook about news in the genealogy community.

We’ll do our best to keep you informed about what’s happening at WMGS. If you have any questions, please send us an email at westmassgen@gmail.com.

Stay Well, Stay Safe, and Stay Home,

Sincerely,
WMGS Board of Directors

Upcoming Meetings

April 2020 Meeting



At our April 1st monthly meeting, we’ll be welcoming back Sara Campbell. Sara is a popular lecturer and educator in Western Mass where she has been active in the genealogical community for over 25 years.

Sara is the author of a recently released book, *Six Generations in Otsego*, the story of the Colman family, spanning 150 years from the early years of the Republic in the late 1700s to the mid-twentieth century. She maintains a blog about history and genealogy at <http://rememberingancestors.blogspot.com>.

An expert on maps and their historical significance for genealogists, Sara has a background as a civil engineer, which gives her a unique perspective on her research. Sara will be presenting “**Historic Massachusetts Maps**” to our society via a live webinar at our Wednesday, April 1st meeting. Mark your calendars for an interesting presentation! (*NOTE: See further instructions below.*)

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May 2020 Meeting

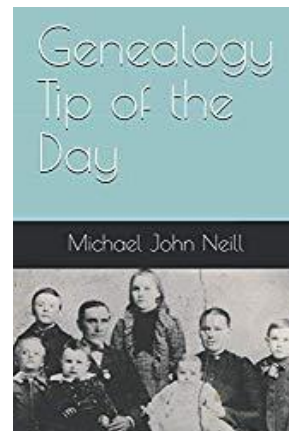


Our May 6th monthly meeting will feature a live webinar with genealogist and author Michael John Neill. His topic will be **“Researching the Entire Family.”** Focusing only on a direct line can cause significant information to be overlooked and larger patterns to go unnoticed. Michael discusses, via examples, the importance of researching the siblings and at least first cousins of a direct ancestor.

Michael has been an active genealogical researcher since the early 1980s and has researched his or his children’s families in most states east of the Mississippi River and several European countries. He has lectured nationally, gives day-long seminars, and regularly leads research trips to the Family History Library in Salt Lake City and the Allen County Public Library in Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

Michael has a master’s degree in mathematics and has been on the math faculty of Carl Sandburg College in Illinois since the early 1990s. His research interests include methodology, land records, the immigrant experience, chain migration, and researching female ancestors.

In addition to hosting several blogs and Facebook sites, including Rootdig and Genealogy Tip of the Day, Michael has recently published a collection of his most popular daily tips titled *Genealogy Tip of the Day*. It’s a must read for all genealogists – guaranteed that you’ll learn something new.



NOTE: Until our regular meetings resume, our events will be held virtually.

How to Participate: Members will receive an email notice in advance of the monthly virtual meeting. You will be required to pre-register via a link in the email. After that, you will receive another email with the link to join the meeting via Zoom at the broadcast time. Monthly meetings will be broadcast at 6 PM.

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Message from the President

by Jeanne Leblond

It’s hard to imagine that we’re now in the midst of a worldwide pandemic, and what is now described as a war effort to keep our citizens safe and our economy from a severe recession. The main focus needs to be on the health and safety of everyone, of course.



We also know that while our country and the entire world work to overcome this crisis, it’s important to maintain some sense of normalcy and social connection. It means maintaining a healthy lifestyle, having good nutrition, getting fresh air and exercise, all while maintaining a 6-foot social distance when out, and staying home as much as possible. It’s certainly challenging, but doable.

When everyone is experiencing stress in their lives, it’s crucial to offer some distraction, entertainment, and social connection. We have worked very hard to come up with alternatives to live meetings so that we can

continue to offer programming to our members. We're fortunate that technology is offering us options to do that.

We are grateful to Sara Campbell for being willing to offer her presentation on April 1st as a live webinar. Prior to the meeting, we will be sending a link via email to our members with an invitation to join the webinar at the scheduled time.

Our May speaker, Michael John Neill, will be joining us via webinar as well. Instead of Skills Night in June, we'll be joined again via webinar by Tom MacEntee, a nationally known genealogist.

We have received permission from Lisa Louise Cooke, owner of Genealogy Gems, to offer webinar training sessions to members through a modification of our subscription. Instead of trainings at the Agawam Senior Center, we will be allowed to broadcast them via Zoom to our members. Some of you have already enjoyed our training sessions on institutional records and Google Earth.

Instead of our usual local events listings in our newsletter, we've created a list of free webinars and online offerings. More are likely to be added all of the time, as the entire genealogy community is stepping up. We've been posting them as they're announced on our Facebook page.

On a lighter note, do you know what the most popular hobby is in the US? Gardening. Genealogy is the 2nd. I enjoy both, as I'm sure many of you do, too. Now that spring is here, I'm headed outdoors for some fresh air, vitamin D, exercise, and relief from the news. I hope that you can enjoy some of the benefits of springtime as well.

Stay safe and stay well.

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Member Only Benefits

Special Interest Groups (SIGs) & Trainings



April 16 – 7 pm – “The Big Picture in Little Details”

Oftentimes the road to assembling the big picture in your genealogy is paved with lots of little details. In this video webinar class, we'll explore examples of how to inspect the big picture genealogical problems we face and identify the little clues that we can use to move our research forward. (Length: 43 minutes)



April 23 – 7 pm – “Beginning Evernote”

Evernote is a free tech tool that enables you to instantly capture and retrieve everything that is important to your research. Cloud storage of your notes allows you to access them from any computing device, no matter where you are. And OCR (optical character recognition) adds another level of searchability. (Length: 50 minutes)

NOTE: Until our regular meetings resume, we will offer pre-recorded trainings from Lisa Louise Cooke, a nationally known genealogy expert. These sessions will be held virtually via webinar and broadcast to your home. After the video, there will be an opportunity to ask questions or post comments. Our host and other members will be able to respond to them. We'll be live, but not in the same room!

How to Participate: Members will receive an email notice in advance of the training sessions. You will be required to pre-register via a link in the email. After that, you will receive another email with the link to join the Zoom webinar at the broadcast time.

Note the time change for training sessions only. Training sessions will be held at 7 PM.

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Articles

Genealogy at Home

By Jeanne Leblond

While we're staying at home, we've put together a few ideas to stay busy.

1. **Check out the free podcasts, articles, and videos at Lisa Louise Cooke's Genealogy Gems website.** There are over 240 episodes of Lisa's podcast and several thousand articles on a variety of topics available.

Visit www.lisalouisecooke.com or search for Genealogy Gems

2. **Create that Facebook account you haven't had time to do.**
 - Review the Facebook handout from our 9/19/19 training session in the Members Only section of [our website](#).
 - Join genealogy groups related to your research interests.
 - Create a private family page to share stories, pictures, and your research.
 - Check out the Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society, Inc. [Facebook page](#), where you'll find posts on genealogy resources and webinars.
3. **Do some of the tasks that you've been putting off.**
 - Organize your files.
 - Create templates for the sources that you use most often to make it easier to add them to your findings.
 - Sort, label, and scan family pictures.

4. **Be a Good Ancestor.**

There's a handout available for this topic in the Members' Only section of [our website](#), but you might want to start with this task:

Write a short paragraph or two on what it's been like to survive the 2020 worldwide pandemic.

- Did you stock up on supplies in advance? Did you have difficulty finding specific items?
- Did you focus on the news, or did you try to avoid it?
- Were you able to stay home? If not, what precautions did you take when going out?
- What did you do to keep busy and relax?
- How did you stay in touch with your family?

Don't worry about your writing skills. No one will judge what you wrote. Your descendants will be very glad that you took time to write your thoughts.

MGC's April Seminar Now Virtual



MASSACHUSETTS
GENEALOGICAL
COUNCIL

The Massachusetts Genealogical Council's "Origins and Destinations" seminar will now be held virtually. It will not be held in Lowell, Massachusetts as originally planned.

The seminar will still take place April 4 –5, 2020. More information, including program and registration details, is available at [this link](#).

April 1 is Census Day!

By Joanne Mason



By now, you have probably received your forms for the 2020 United States Census. While it may be difficult to imagine our descendants looking at these records for the first time in 2092, it's important for us to answer the census questions completely and thoroughly. Who knows? We might be helping our descendants break through some brick walls!

For more census fun, did you know you can browse the census records for some famous (and infamous) Americans? The U.S. Census Bureau has compiled a list of hundreds of records for presidents, military officers, actors, authors, musicians, adventurers, scientists, athletes, artists, and more. Check it out [here!](#)

Find Your Family History in the 1950s

By Lisa Louise Cooke

When we try to research our family history from recent decades, we often find privacy barriers: U.S. census records for 1950 and beyond are closed, as are many vital records. Here are some ideas for finding family history in the 1950s and beyond:

1. Interview relatives. The good news is that in many families, there are relatives around who remember the 1950s. If there's not, then look to the memories of the next living generation.

Interviewing a relative is one of the most fun and meaningful ways to learn your family history. You can ask specific and personal questions, deepen your relationships with those you interview and gain a better understanding of the lives that led to you. Older people often love to have someone take a sincere interest in them. The free [Family History Made Easy podcast episode 2](#) has a great segment on interviewing your relatives.



2. Read the newspaper. Use newspapers to find obituaries and discover more about daily life, current events, popular opinions of the time, prices for everyday items and more. It's getting easier than ever to find and search digitized newspapers online, but more recent papers may still be under copyright protection.

Use online resources like to discover what newspapers served your family's neighborhood, or even whether an ethnic, labor or religious press would have mentioned them. In the US, I always start with the [US Newspaper Directory at Chronicling America](#) to search for ALL newspapers published in a particular place and time, as well as the names of libraries or archives that have copies of these papers. Historical societies and local public libraries are also wonderful places to look for newspapers. My book, [How to Find Your Family History in Newspapers](#), teaches readers what to look for in papers and how to locate them online and offline.

3. Search city directories. By the 1950s, most towns and cities published directories of residents, mostly with telephone numbers. I use annual directory listings to track families from year to year. These might give you your first clue that someone moved, married, separated, divorced or died! I can often find their exact street address (great for mapping!), who lived at the house and sometimes additional information like where they worked, what their job was or who they worked for.

Ancestry.com has over [a billion U.S. city directory entries online](#), up to 1989. But most other online city directory collections aren't so recent. Look for city directories first in hometown public libraries. Check with larger regional or state libraries and major genealogical libraries.

4. Search for historical video footage. YouTube isn't just for viral cat videos. Look there for old newsreels, people's home movies and other vintage footage. It's not unusual to find films showing the old family neighborhood, a school or community function, or other footage that might be relevant to your relatives.

Use the YouTube search box like you would the regular Google search box. Enter terms like "history," "old," "footage," or "film" along with the names, places or events you hope to find. For example, the name of a parade your relative marched in, a team he played on, a company she worked for, a street he lived on and the like. It's hit and miss, for sure, but sometimes you can find something very special.

My Contributing Editor Sunny Morton tried this tip. Almost immediately, with a search on the name of her husband's ancestral hometown and the word "history," she found a 1937 newsreel with her husband's great-grandfather driving his fire truck with his celebrity dog! She recognized him from old photos and had read about his dog in the newspapers. ([Click here](#) to read her stunned post.) Learn more about searching for old videos in my all-new second edition of *The Genealogist's Google Toolbox*, which has a totally updated chapter on YouTube. (Note: Lisa Louise Cooke has a just released *The Genealogist's Toolbox 3rd Edition*. Information on the new edition can be found on her website. www.GenealogyGems.com)

[Click here](#) to read more about the 1950s U.S. census: when it will be out and how you can work around its privacy restrictions.

From Lisa Louise Cooke's Genealogy Gems at www.GenealogyGems.com, home of the free Genealogy Gems Podcast. Originally published: April 23, 2015.

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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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Free Online Events

Since local libraries and other venues are closed for the time being, we have compiled a list of free webinars that can be easily accessed online.

[Legacy Family Tree Webinars](#)

Offers free webinars, but you must register for them. If you can't watch the webinar at the scheduled time, they are available for free for one week. If you become a member, they are free long-term.

Nine free webinars are planned of April. Topics include:

- **Betty Jean's Story - Forensic Genealogy & Adoption** (April 1)
- **Decoding Social Security: Providing Benefits to Our Ancestors** (April 8)
- **Was Great-Grandmother Really Native American?** (April 15)

See the entire list at <https://familytreewebinars.com>

[New York Genealogical & Biographical Society](#)

The New York Genealogical & Biographical Society is offering free webinars through April 5th.

- **PERSI (The Periodical Source Index) Across the Generations** (April 1 at 12 pm)
- **Finding and Accessing New York State Birth Certificates: 1880s through the early-1900s** (April 2 at 3 pm)
- **Genealogy Resources of the Daughters of the American Revolution** (April 3 at 12 pm)
- **How to Find New York State Death Certificates (rebroadcast)** (April 5 at 2 pm)

For more details and registration information, please [click here](#).

Also, check out the free subject guides, blog articles, and webinars in the [Free Resources](#) section of the website.

[Family Search](#)

It's a little harder to find webinars on this site, so follow these steps:

- On the home page, click on the **Search** tab.
- Go to the **Research Wiki** section.
- In the **Getting Started** section on the left side of the page, click on **Family History Library**.
- Scroll down to the **Family History Library Information** section.
- Click on **Classes and Online Webinars** and **Current Month Schedule**.

Or, use the link below:

https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Family_History_Library_Classes_and_Webinars

[New England Historic Genealogical Society \(NEHGS\)](#)

NEHGS has a large number of free webinars and training material available on their website, but as of this writing, they are not offering any additional webinars. The site is still working checking out.

<https://www.americanancestors.org/education/learning-resources/watch>

WMGS Monthly Presentations and Trainings

Join our upcoming presentations and trainings from home. Our schedule of webinars and trainings is available in our newsletter and on [our website](#). Members will receive an email with a link to join the presentation at the scheduled time. Be sure to join in at that time, as some presentations can't be placed on our website per the contract with our presenter.

In addition, catch up on archived presentations in the Members Only section of our website. There are over 25 videos available of our monthly presentations and 12 individual training videos from the DNA Boot Camp from Hack Genealogy.

Special thanks to Jeanne Leblond for her help compiling these listings!

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Calendar

DATE/TIME	EVENT/PLACE
Wednesday, 1 Apr 2020 6 – 8 PM	WMGS Meeting Online! – Sara Campbell presents “ Historic Massachusetts Maps. ”
Monday, 13 Apr 2020 6 – 8 PM	WMGS Board Meeting via Zoom.
Thursday, 16 Apr 2020 7 PM	Online webinar by Lisa Louise Cooke: “ The Big Picture in Little Details ”
Thursday, 23 Apr 2020 7 PM	Online webinar by Lisa Louise Cooke: “ Beginning Evernote ”
Wednesday, May 6, 2020 6 – 8 PM	WMGS Meeting Online! Michael John Neill presents “ Researching the Entire Family. ”
Monday, May 11, 2020 6 – 8 PM	WMGS Board Meeting via Zoom.
Thursday, May 21, 2020 7 PM	Stay tuned for our new events. More information is coming in the next newsletter.
Thursday, May 28, 2020 7 PM	Stay tuned for our new events. More information is coming in the next newsletter.

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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!

(Note: Until further notice, WMGS will hold meetings online. Please watch your email for instructions, and feel free to contact us at westmassgen@gmail.com with any questions.)

Most of our membership is from the Western Massachusetts area, but a number of our members live all over our country and have ancestors from Massachusetts or New England.

We receive numerous inquiries each month via U.S. mail and e-mail from people looking for information on area families. Our members are happy to volunteer to research these requests

Jeanne Leblond – President	Dave Lapierre – Webmaster & Technology Coordinator
Dave Lapierre – Vice President	Hillary Schau & Joanne Mason – Newsletter Co-Editors
Deborah Woodford – Treasurer	Carol Lynne Bagley & Joanne Mason – Facebook Editors
Jeanne Lockhart – Assistant Treasurer	Jeanne Leblond – Surname & Queries Editor
Dorothy Cichonski – Secretary	Bob Whitney – Fundraising Coordinator
Deborah Woodford – Membership	Diane Ascioti – Founder
Carol Lynne Bagley, Hillary Schau, and Terry Pearsons – Directors	

Meeting Details

We generally meet year-round for our monthly meeting on the first Wednesday of each month, from 6 pm to 8 pm at the Agawam Senior Center, located at 954 Main Street in Agawam, Massachusetts. On rare occasions, a holiday or other significant event may disrupt that schedule causing a meeting to be held on the second Wednesday. You will be informed of date changes well in advance.

Our Special Interest Group meetings and training sessions are typically held on the 3rd & 4th Thursdays of the month from 6 pm to 8 pm, also at the Agawam Senior Center. However, some of these sessions are held on different days of the week, depending on the availability of each session's host. Check our monthly calendar for each month's schedule.

(Note: Until further notice, WMGS will hold meetings online. Please watch your email for instructions, and feel free to contact us at westmassgen@gmail.com with any questions.)

Occasionally, inclement weather causes the Agawam Senior Center to close. If our presenter is coming to us via a webinar and gives us permission to do so, we will broadcast the presentation live to our members via the internet, using a web-based platform, such as ZOOM. Members will be emailed the link before the meeting.

Also, when a speaker allows us to record a presentation or a webinar, we archive the presentation in the Members Only section of our website. Many of our monthly presentations have been recorded, along with handouts, and are available in the Members Only section of our website.

We look forward to you joining us at our next meeting or event!

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Membership

The Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society is a growing group of members, both local and from around the United States. We welcome you to join our society!

Reasons to Join Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society:

1. Meet people with similar interests in family history and genealogy.
2. Attend monthly meetings featuring local, regional, and national presenters.
3. Attend our Special Interest Groups meetings, trainings, and classes.
4. Receive access to our archive of previously recorded presentations and handouts, DNA Boot Camp videos, Western Massachusetts and Massachusetts genealogical resources (with links), and handouts in the Members Only section of our website.
5. Receive assistance from our members on your family research.
6. Access our library of resources including books and CDs.
7. Serve as a volunteer, coach, or as a member of the Board of Directors.
8. Join us on exclusive WMGS field trips.

One of our key "member benefits" is access to the **Members Only** section of our website, which contains archived recordings of our previous speakers from around the U.S.: Judy G. Russell, Maureen Taylor, Colleen Fitzpatrick, Elissa Scalise Powell, Dr. Shelley Murphy, Nora Galvin, 'Dear MYRTLE' a/k/a Pat Richley-Erickson, Russ Worthington, Melissa Barker, Jennifer Alford, and many more! Our Members Only section also includes handouts from many of those meetings and historical copies of the *American Elm*, the original WMGS newsletter publication, which contains genealogical material and family trees from our early members. Once we receive your membership application, we will send you a welcome letter with the confidential password to access the Members Only section of our website.

Membership Dues:

Annual membership runs from September 1st to August 31st 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, P.O. 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 April 2020.

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.

How to Contact Us:

Have a question, comment, or suggestion for someone at WMGS?

Need information about your membership status or how to access our Members Only material?

Want to send in a query or provide an answer to one?

Have a comment or suggestion for us?

There are two options available for contacting us via email:

Our **Contact Us** page on our website has an easily completed form to use. First enter your name, email address, topic, and the name of person to whom the email is being sent. Then, write your message and click on Submit.

Or, you can send an email directly to us at: westmassgen@gmail.com.

Of course, you can also correspond with us by sending mail to:

WMGS, Inc.
P.O. Box 418
West Springfield, MA 01090-0418

Note: Please do not write directly to any board member's personal or business email. For legal reasons, our board members cannot conduct WMGS business using emails, other than through WMGS. Thank you for your consideration.

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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The editor reserves the right to edit all contributions.