



Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society, Inc.

Contents

Upcoming Meetings	p 1-2	Calendar	p 9
President's Message	p 2-3	About Us	p 10-11
Member Only Benefits	p 3	Membership	p 11-12
Articles	p 4-6	Newsletter Info	p 12
Brick Wall Queries	p 6	Contact Us	p 12-13
Free Online Offerings	p 7-9	Email Update	p 13

Upcoming Meetings

January 2021 Meeting



We're starting the New Year with another presentation by our perennial favorite, nationally and internationally known Thomas MacEntee! Tom, Founder and CEO of High-Definition Genealogy, LLC, is the author of over 10 genealogy books and editor of over 100 publications. After spending more than 25 years in the information technology field, Tom branched off into genealogy education and marketing. Known as one of the most generous genealogists in the field, he shares many of his articles and videos for free through his AbundantGenealogy.com website and Facebook groups. He also runs the popular GenealogyBargains.com and DNABargains.com websites to keep us updated on the latest in genealogy offerings and bargains in the marketplace.

Tom will be presenting **“Don't Chop Off That Branch! A Genealogy Arborist's Handbook.”** Many of us will relate to this dilemma. You're at a crossroads when it comes to years of genealogy research: should you delete an entire branch of your family tree due to faulty research? Or is there a better way to correct family history research errors and salvage information that took years to find? Tom will address the problem of bad research, help you decide if your research is bad or just sloppy, help you map out a correction plan, and help you salvage that branch.

Join us for our virtual monthly meeting on **Wednesday, January 6, 2021 at 6 PM.**

February 2021 Meeting



We're excited that Michael John Neill will be joining us again at our February meeting. Michael's presentation to us last May on **Researching the Entire Family** was so well-received that we've asked him to return. Michael will be presenting another live webinar titled **"What It Does Not Say."** Many times, a record only scratches the surface of what was going on when that record was created. This lecture looks at why a record was created and how state statute, common practice, economic situations, family issues, and other factors may be the "real story" behind any document. Michael will also discuss how to determine (when possible) what those "unwritten" issues were.

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.

Mark your calendars and join us at our monthly meeting on **Wednesday, February 3rd at 6 PM.**

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

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.

Do you have questions about using Zoom or need assistance to join our meetings and trainings? Just send us an email at westmassgen@gmail.com. We're available and willing to help our members to access everything that WMGS has to offer!

[Return to Contents page](#)

Message from the President

by Jeanne Leblond

As we turn the page onto a New Year, we welcome what we hope is the beginning of the end of our pandemic. The rollout of several vaccines is offering hope that there's light at the end of the tunnel for all of us.

Usually as a new year begins, I reflect on my memories of the previous year and make a few resolutions to improve my health or what I want to accomplish in the next year. Not this year! I don't want to reflect on my

memories of the past year. Nor do I want to make my usual resolutions, except for two. I resolve to write more about my experiences with the pandemic, so that my future descendants will understand what life was like in 2020, and I resolve to have greater appreciation of the simple, daily activities that we missed in 2020, but only when public health officials tell us that it's safe to do so!



We've all given up much during our quarantine, missing family and friends, but we can't return to normal life just yet. We are not out of the woods, by any stretch. We have to be patient as we wait for our turn to be vaccinated. Even then, we will need to maintain precautions for some

time, until experts declare that life can return to normal.

The past year has been challenging, but we've been grateful that so many of our members have joined us along the way. We've enjoyed having you at our virtual meetings and trainings, as we learn new skills to help our genealogical research. We look forward to having you join us to celebrate a new year and to experience all of the joys and frustrations of doing family genealogy.

Stay well. Stay home. Stay safe. Everyone at WMGS wishes you and those you hold dear a joyous New Year with many blessings and new family discoveries.

[Return to Contents page](#)

Member Only Benefits

Special Interest Groups (SIGs) & Trainings



Join us for pre-recorded presentations from Lisa Louise Cooke's Genealogy Gems series!

January 21 – 7 pm – Organize Your Research With Evernote

January 28 – 7 pm – Google Search Methodology

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.

[Return to Contents page](#)

Articles

Revised Bylaws Approved

At a brief business meeting following our December 2nd presentation, the final step in the process to complete our Bylaws revision was met. Our proposed revised Bylaws were presented to members and were unanimously approved by the 34 members in attendance. An anonymous Zoom poll was used to conduct the vote. Our newly approved Constitution & Bylaws are now available in the Members Only section of our website under Official Documents. Members will also find our Policies & Procedures document and our Code of Ethics in that section.

RootsTech Connect 2021

For the first time ever, RootsTech, the annual family history conference sponsored by FamilySearch, will take place completely online. Usually, RootsTech is a 4-day event held annually in Salt Lake City, Utah. However, because of the pandemic, the entire event will be held virtually from February 25th-27th, 2021. Incredibly, it will be completely **free** this year!

RootsTech Connect 2021 will offer a combination of both livestream and on-demand content to participants from around the world. For the three days of the online event, attendees will have the opportunity to interact with speakers, exhibitors, and fellow attendees through live-chat and question & answer opportunities. Because of the differences in time zones, sessions will also be available to view on-demand after the conference concludes. Even better, sessions will be available for viewing for at least a whole year!

Roots Tech Connect 2021 will feature keynote speakers, dozens of classes, and over 300 breakout sessions, along with a virtual expo hall marketplace that you can visit from home. This is the largest family history conference in the world and you don't have to even travel to participate in it.

To attend the live event and to access the on-demand sessions, you must pre-register. Again, the conference will be completely free and you can attend sessions from the comfort and safety of your home.

<https://www.rootstech.org/rootstech-connect-2021-registration?lang=eng>

**RootsTech
Connect
is free in
2021!**



How Did Your Ancestors Meet?

What brought the couples in your family tree together? Did they meet at a USO dance? Were they neighbors? Perhaps they were on the same ship travelling to America?

Every family has a good "how they met" story, and we'd love to hear some of yours! For our February newsletter, we'd like to celebrate Valentine's Day with a collection of anecdotes from our WMGS members.

Just a few sentences will do, but if you'd like to tell us more, you're welcome to do so. Photos, if you have them, are also welcome! (Your story can be shared anonymously if you prefer.)

Not sure what to write? Here's an example from Joanne Mason:



My grandparents, Alfred Mason and Gladys Beane, met in the summer of 1921 at a resort on Moosehead Lake in Maine. She was 18 and working as a chambermaid for the season. He was 30 and a driver, chauffeuring resort guests back and forth from Boston. (I can only imagine how long that trip took in the 1920s!) They spent their days off hiking in the woods and canoeing on the lake. Six years later, they married and moved to the Springfield area, spending almost 30 years here before heading back to Maine for their retirement.

Please email your stories to us to westmassgen@gmail.com by January 15, 2021! We look forward to sharing them in our February 2021 newsletter!

[Return to Contents page](#)

You and Albert Einstein May Have This in Common

by Lisa Louise Cooke

Is a cluttered desk a familiar sight to you? Maybe you and Albert Einstein have something in common. Or maybe you're more like tenacious photographer Ralph Morse, who captured the now-famous image of Einstein's desk the day he died.



Wikimedia Commons image. [Click to view.](#)

**Do You Have This in Common
with Albert Einstein?**

 www.GenealogyGems.com

willingness of one photographer to think outside the box and ask for what he wanted. Certainly this is a trait worthy of a family historian emulating.

Many a genealogist has written to me over the years, heaping discontent on their own heads because of their lack of organization. They are sure that those piles of papers, sticky notes and backs of napkins mean failure on their part. I always assure them that it is the sign of a prolific researcher. I also do my best to share strategies that can help ease the clutter.

But as you can see from an iconic and rare photo of Albert Einstein's desk published in this Time article online [*Editor's note: Unfortunately, this article is no longer available.*], you are in great company indeed. This image was snapped just hours after his passing 61 years ago today.

The story of this photo is as important as the message it conveys. It's a story of tenacity: the

Like many other journalists and reporters, Ralph Morse jumped in his car and headed to Princeton when he heard the news of Einstein's death. The difference between him and the others, however, was that he came prepared with a case of Scotch he picked up along the drive.

I appreciate this part of the story because it reminds me of a piece of advice that I always give in my class on how to find living relatives: "Never show up empty handed." If we're going to stretch our hand out in hopes of receiving advice, copies of documents or access to genealogical information, there ought to be something in that hand for the person assisting us. For example, I keep a stack of hard-cover photo books I had made up on my various family lines, ready and waiting to be given to any newly found cousins I hope to interview. (Hmm, should I bring Scotch instead? But I digress....)

Morse approached the building superintendent at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton (where Einstein's had his office) with a bottle of Scotch and a request to look inside. He received immediate, and exclusive, access. The result was an entire series of iconic and totally unique photos.

Guilt over a lack of organization has ground many a productive genealogy research afternoon to a screeching halt. And although good organization is certainly worth striving for, it's not worthy of derailing your passion for family history.

Although a picture speaks a thousand words, I think I'll give the last word to Einstein himself:

"If a cluttered desk is a sign of a cluttered mind, of what, then, is an empty desk a sign?"

© Lisa Louise Cooke, from Lisa Louise Cooke's Genealogy Gems at www.GenealogyGems.com, home of the free Genealogy Gems Podcast. April 18, 2016

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. 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 2018-Q1, 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.

[Return to Contents page](#)

Free Online Offerings

*Note: Our list of offerings has grown so much that we'll only publish new items each month. If you missed something, our complete list of previous offerings is available in the Members Only section of our website.

January Virtual Tours & Offerings

Stay cozy and safe at home this January while spending a bit more time exploring some local resources.

Historic Northampton – Northampton, MA

We're not sure if Historic Northampton has recently updated their website or if we didn't notice these items before, but we're duly impressed by the virtual activities and resources that are available on their website.

In the History at Home section, you can have fun doing an interactive activity to find out how you would fare in a 1600s witchcraft trial in Northampton. Or move to the 1700s and take a tour of the prayer requests made to minister Jonathan Edwards to find out what Northampton residents were thinking. Test your 1700s spelling know-how while you're there or learn some interesting details of clothing items.

Browse their online resources, such as maps, early editions of the Hampshire Gazette, original plans for the Bridge Street cemetery where the earliest residents were buried, inscriptions on grave stones at the cemetery, or tour the Parsons house and examine inventories of other historic houses. You'll also find early photos and descriptions of buildings at Northampton State Hospital from 1865 through the 1960s, along with photo collections by other notable early photographers.

<https://www.historicnorthampton.org/>

Porter-Phelps-Huntington Museum – Hadley, MA

Head to the online site of the Porter-Phelps-Huntington Museum in Hadley, MA for a fascinating tour of this 18th century homestead. The collections on this website are a bit more academic, but you'll find many articles of interest, including information on the Connecticut River Byway that helped to shape our region.

<https://www.pphmuseum.org/>

Other New Offerings

[Chicopee Public Library](#)

- Online Genealogy Meet-up (Tuesdays from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm)

This group meets every Tuesday on Zoom. Feel free to ask questions, give advice, or just listen. Email the library at cpl@chicopeepubliclibrary.org to get the Zoom link sent to you.



[FamilySearch.org](#)

- **Using the FamilySearch Catalog** (January 4 at 12:00 pm) [Register here!](#)
- **Introduction to United States Military Records** (January 21 at 12:00 pm) [Register here!](#)



[Legacy Family Tree Webinars](#)

Legacy Family Tree 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. Four free webinars are planned for January. Topics include:

- **Where Else to Look? When Matches Don't Reply** (January 5 at 8 pm)
- **Genealogy Unplugged: When Offline Records Are the Best** (January 6 at 2 pm)

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



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

- **The Federal Census: Moving Beyond the Population Schedule** (January 28 at 3 pm)

More information: <https://www.americanancestors.org/education/online-classes#fc>



[RootsTech Connect](#)

- **Annual Conference** (Feb. 25-27) with free access for an entire year. [Register here!](#)



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 and Hillary Schau for their help compiling these listings!

[Return to Contents page](#)

Calendar

DATE/TIME	EVENT/PLACE
January 6, 2021 6 PM	WMGS meeting online! Thomas MacEntee presents “Don’t Chop Off That Branch! A Genealogy Arborist’s Handbook.”
January 11, 2021 6:30 PM	WMGS Board Meeting via Zoom
January 21, 2021 7 PM	Zoom training: “Organize Your Research With Evernote” presented by Lisa Louise Cooke (recorded webinar).
January 28, 2021 7 PM	Zoom training: “Google Search Methodology” presented by Lisa Louise Cooke (recorded webinar).
February 3, 2021 6 PM	WMGS meeting online! Michael John Neill presents “What It Does Not Say.”
February 8, 2021 6:30 PM	WMGS Board Meeting via Zoom
February 18, 2021 7 PM	Stay tuned for our new events. More information is coming in the next newsletter.

[Return to Contents page](#)

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!

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	Joanne Mason – Newsletter Editor
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 and are available, along with handouts, in the Members Only section of our website.

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

[Return to Contents page](#)

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 complete and submit an application by mail with your check, or as an attached link in a separate email to us when using PayPal as your payment, so that we have all the necessary information for our membership list.

[Return to Contents page](#)

Newsletter Deadlines

Please submit all information to be entered into the next newsletter by January 15, 2021.

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.

[Return to Contents page](#)

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.

[Return to Contents page](#)

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.



Copyright © 2020 by the Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society, Inc. All rights are reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any way without written permission of WMGS. For permission to reproduce any article in this newsletter, contact the editor at westmassgen@gmail.com.

The editor reserves the right to edit all contributions.