



Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society, Inc.

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Upcoming Meetings

June 2021 Meeting



On June 2nd, Tom MacEntee will be joining us again to present “**Backing Up Your Genealogy Data.**”

Have you ever experienced a data loss when it comes to your genealogy research? Not yet? Well, if not, have you prepared for what might happen if your hard drive fails? What if your laptop is lost or stolen? Learn the basics of backing up all your genealogy data including identifying data, common backup methods, and how to use free online programs to help you make sure your data will always be available!

Mark your calendars for this very important presentation and be sure to join us virtually on **Wednesday, June 2nd at 6 p.m.**

July 2021 Meeting



We're pleased that John Putnam will join us again to present “Peopling Colonial New England: 1620-1787,” the third lecture in his New England series.

From several small coastal settlements in the early 17th century, the early settlers and their descendants, as well as new immigrants, migrated to other parts of the New England frontier over the next 150 years. Many reasons led to these migrations, which infilled the settlement of most areas of New England by the time that the new Republic was established in 1787. As this presentation will demonstrate, there were many ebbs and flows in this process over this time period. Why should this matter to genealogists? If you

had ancestors in this region, this presentation will help you understand why your ancestors were part of this dynamic process, where and how to look for your ancestors in this area, and how the population pressures in colonial New England continually pushed the borders outward. If your ancestors lived elsewhere, this New England settlement model became a template for the future development of the rest of the country and fueled the settlement of many areas of the remaining U.S.

A native of Western Mass, John grew up on a farm in Southwick, graduated from UMass Amherst, and earned a master's degree in political science from the University of Colorado. He now resides in Colorado. He's the past president of the Pikes Peak Genealogical Society, a fascinating speaker, and a 12th-generation American! Join us on **Wednesday, July 7th at 6 p.m.** for a virtual presentation via Zoom!

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 p.m.

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!

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Message from the President

by Jeanne Leblond

We're heading into June with cautious optimism for an end to this pandemic.

Though we're not out of the woods yet, there are more and more signs that life can begin a return to what's being called the "new normal." However, you might be tip-toeing slowly back into society, as I am.

In this issue, you'll find a recap of our annual meeting on May 5th and information on WMGS' plans for the coming year.



Because there are signs that some archives and libraries are beginning to allow visitors again, we're going to pause our list of virtual resources in our newsletter. We'll continue with our list of online webinars at libraries and other venues, as they are great educational resources year-round.

Our annual meeting on May 5th was an opportunity for reflection on the past 15 months for our society. We're thankful and proud that WMGS has not only weathered the storm, but has actually thrived. While some societies had to shut down, we've continued to grow and, in many ways, improved.

Since we had been offering webinars for several years, we were able to quickly adapt to Zoom events. We're thrilled that Zoom allowed us to be joined virtually by our more distant members. However, we've missed some of our members who aren't comfortable with Zoom.

Of course, there are many people who contributed to these efforts. A huge thank you goes out to our "Chief Techie," Dave Lapierre, who has managed to sort out the technical details of doing things virtually.

We also appreciate the efforts of Hillary Schau and Terry Pearsons, who have stepped down from the board. We thank them for all of the work that they've done for us over the years. Thank you to Deb Woodford, our treasurer, who was reelected to the board. We're very happy to extend a welcome to our two new board members, Joanne Mason and Cara Seitchek. Thank you also for reelecting me. All of us on the board pledge to do our best to keep WMGS running smoothly. We also want to thank all of our members who have supported us in our efforts.

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Member Only Benefits

Special Interest Groups (SIGs) & Trainings

June 17th – 7 p.m. – Was My Ancestor in the Civil War?

We're very happy that Brian Rhinehart will be back with us for another session on researching ancestors who served our country. If you missed his presentation, "Navigating Records from The War of 1812," the recording will be available in the Members Only section of our website until June 20th.



On June 17th at 7 p.m., Brian will present "Was My Ancestor in the Civil War?"

Over 10% of the U.S. population fought in the Civil War in the 1860s. Was your ancestor one of them? Learn some tips on how to determine if your ancestor was in the Civil War, using (mostly) free resources.

This presentation is part one of a three-part series. The third presentation, titled "I Have a Civil War Ancestor... Now What?" will be offered in the fall.



Brian Rhinehart is a graduate of Boston University's Certificate of Genealogy Research and the Genealogical Institute on Federal Records (GenFed) in Washington, D.C. He's attended the Genealogical Research Institute of Pittsburgh and has completed the ProGen (Professional Genealogy) Study Group.

A direct descendant of six Civil War soldiers, Brian specializes in Civil War and War of 1812 records at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. and has retrieved military files for hundreds of clients there.

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 p.m.

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Articles

Annual Meeting Recap 2021

Our annual meeting was held virtually on May 5th following our presentation by Thomas MacEntee.



Following the Treasurer's Summary and Report on Membership presented by Deb Woodford, Treasurer, our annual elections were held. The Nominating Committee included Dave Lapierre, Chairperson; Dorothy Cichonski, Secretary; and Jeanne Lockhart, Assistant Treasurer. After describing the role of the Nominating Committee and its process for selecting candidates, Dave presented the slate of nominees for election to terms that will expire at the May 2023 annual meeting.

The proposed slate included:

- Jeanne Leblond, President
- Deborah Woodford, Treasurer
- Joanne Mason, Director
- Cara Seitchek, Director

No nominations were offered from the floor. Voting was conducted by anonymous electronic Zoom polling. The slate was unanimously approved by those members in attendance.

Both Dave Lapierre and Jeanne Leblond, President, congratulated those members reelected or elected to the board for the first time. Both also thanked Hillary Schau and Terry Pearsons, directors who chose not to run for reelection, for their service to the board. We will miss them on the board, but we're confident that they'll stay involved in WMGS.

A brief report on the status of WMGS over the past year was presented by Jeanne Leblond. She noted that WMGS needed to quickly transition to operating virtually, but has had a successful year despite the challenges.

Announcements included:

- Our annual audit, which we were unable to complete last year because of the quarantine, will be completed later this spring. For safety reasons, it may be necessary to conduct the audit in an outdoor facility, as most libraries and meeting venues are still not open. An auditing committee will be appointed at the June board meeting.
- Our Founders Award has been postponed until we can return to live meetings.

- No information is available on when the Agawam Senior Center will reopen and whether we will be able to reserve rooms. We anticipate that when the senior center reopens to their members, it will take some time before community members are welcomed into the facility.
- The board is working on a policy for operating in a hybrid format with events held both live and virtually when we return to normal activity. There are many issues to be resolved including, but not limited to, speakers' contracts needing to be modified, equipment needs, Wi-Fi capabilities at the senior center, and having enough volunteers trained in the needed technology.
- A new Members Only Facebook page will be coming sometime in the next few months. It will be an additional member benefit and will be a place where members can communicate with each other, share information, ask for assistance from other members, post queries, and share discoveries. It will also provide WMGS and our members a place to post information on coming events that we learn about between meetings.
- WMGS will be celebrating its 50th anniversary next year. A committee will be set up to discuss options for celebrating the event, which will hopefully include completing a history of our society.
- The meeting ended with a raffle for those in attendance. WMGS was fortunate to earn a raffle prize from the Southern California Genealogical Society for their jamboree to be held virtually on June 11th & 12th, as we completed the requirements to advertise their event. This was a marketing effort conducted to advertise their conference to genealogy society members across the country. A virtual "wheel of fortune" with names of attendees was used. Joanie Bonner was selected as the lucky winner! She'll be able to attend live lectures on those days and access 20 recorded webinars of her choice through October 10th, 2021.



Daniel Gates Merritt – Letters from the Civil War

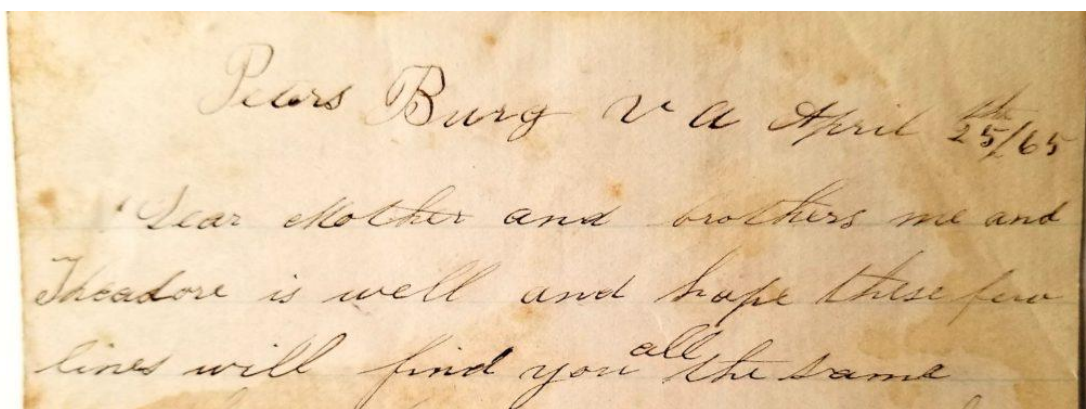
by Joanne Mason

(Note: A version of this article was first published on July 22, 2018 on the blog Dot Blossoms. It is reprinted here with permission.)

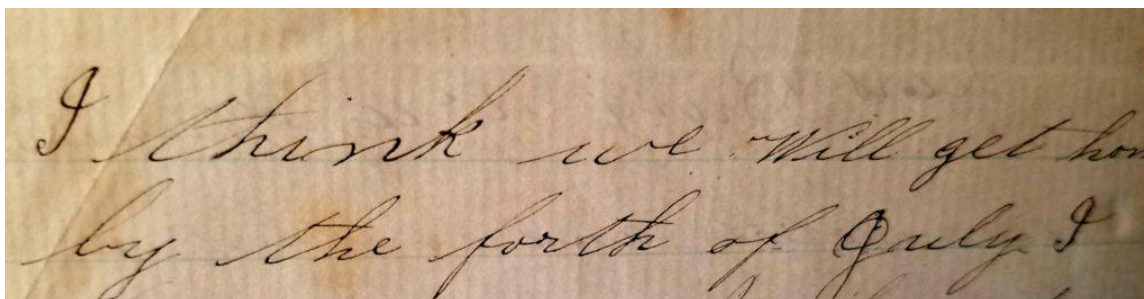
I knew I had a few Civil War soldiers in my family tree, and today I was able to put a name with — well, not a face — but some handwriting and some stories.

Daniel Gates Merritt was my 4th great-uncle. Born in Patterson, New York in 1841, he entered the military in September 1864. On April 25, 1865, he was in Petersburg, Virginia, writing home to his parents, William and Esther Jane (Mabie) Merritt.

Here are some snippets. Please note that I have retained Daniel's spelling and grammar:



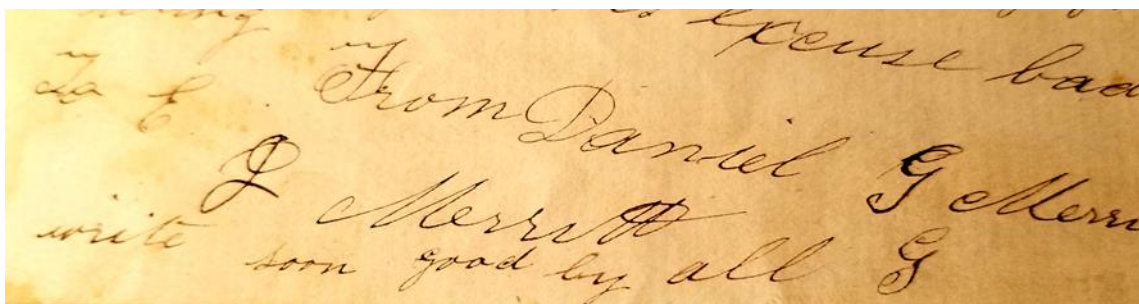
Dear mother and brothers me and Theodore is well and hope these few lines will find you all the same. [Daniel had an older brother named Theodore, but I don't know if his brother is the same Theodore mentioned.]



I think we will get home by the forth of July. I hope we may.

He also wrote:

There is plenty of tobacco hear where we are. It is a tobacco factory. There is over 2 ton of leaf hear now. The boys has had all the plug tobacco they wanted.



I'm not sure whether Daniel made it home by the Fourth of July, but he was mustered out of military service on July 13th, so he was probably close. Sadly, he passed away in 1869, a few weeks before his 28th birthday.

As I read this letter, I realized that it was written just ten days after President Lincoln was assassinated. On the day it was written, Lincoln's funeral train was traveling through Daniel's home region in New York, heading up the east side of the Hudson River. It passed through Tarrytown, the place of Daniel's enlistment, to Albany, before it swung due west on its way to Springfield, Illinois.

Also on that day, John Wilkes Booth was hiding out at a farm about 75 miles away. He was killed on April 26th.

And Daniel's newborn niece, Carrie Jane Cowl, was just two days old. She grew up to become my great-great grandmother.

Resources:

The Lincoln Highway National Museum & Archives (link no longer available)

[Mr. Lincoln and New York](#)

[Indiana Historical Bureau](#)

The Lincoln Inaugural Train of 1861 and The Lincoln Funeral Train of 1865 (link no longer available)

[Surratt Museum](#) (provides map and timeline of John Wilkes Booth's escape and capture)

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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.

Library Offerings

Boston Public Library

- **African American Genealogy: Get On Track to Rediscover Your Story** (June 3 at 6 p.m.)

Chicopee Public Library

- **Online Genealogy Meet-Up** (Tuesdays from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.)

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.

[Storrs Library - Longmeadow](#)

- **This Business of Fighting: A Human Face on World War II** (June 1 at 6 p.m.)

Other New Offerings

[FamilySearch.org](#)

Classes and webinars are free, but registration is required. To find classes go to Research Wiki, enter Webinars in the search box, click Family History Library, then Classes & Online Webinars, select Month, then Class.

- **The Research Process, Research Help, and Searching Records on FamilySearch** (June 3 at 12 p.m.)
- **Forgotten Wives, Mothers, and Old Maids: Tracing Women in U.S. Research** (June 3 at 12 p.m.)
- **Using the FamilySearch Catalog** (June 7 at 12 p.m.)
- **Tips and Tricks for Finding Elusive Records in FamilySearch** (June 8 at 12 p.m.)
- **The Knowles Collection, What Is It and How Do I Use It?** (June 17 at 12 p.m.)

More information is available at

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



[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. Topics for June include the following:

- **Solving Family Mysteries With mtDNA Projects** (June 2 at 2 p.m.)
- **African Americans in the U.S. Revolutionary War** (June 4 at 2 p.m.)
- **They Had Names: Identifying Children Represented by Tick Marks in Pre-1850 Censuses** (June 15 at 8 p.m.)
- **New England's 'Seventh State': Life Along the Coast** (June 16 at 2 p.m.)
- **Online Sources for Scottish Genealogy Research** (June 18 at 2 p.m.)
- **Angel Island's Immigrants from 80 Countries: Stories from the West Coast Counterpart to Ellis Island** (June 3 at 2 p.m.)

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



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

- **Researching the Deep South** (June 10 at 3 p.m.)
- **Gabrielle Glaser with American Baby: A Mother, A Child, and the Shadow History of Adoption** – author talk with Gabrielle Glaser (June 15 at 6 p.m.)
- **The Country Houses of Shropshire** (June 18 at 1 p.m.)

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



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.

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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. 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.

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MASSACHUSETTS
GENEALOGICAL
COUNCIL

demand
M:O:R:E.

MGC: Open Records & Education

An Evening with

John D. “Jack” Warner, Ph.D.

Archivist of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts



Wednesday, June 30, 2021 at 7:00 P.M. EDT via Zoom

John D. “Jack” Warner, Ph.D., Archivist of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, will discuss how to access the records and artifacts held at the Massachusetts State Archives; how records become part of the Massachusetts Archives Digital Repository; how his work with the State Historical Records Advisory Board affects future resources; and how you can get involved at the Archives.

If we analyze Dr. Warner’s current responsibilities, you can see his impact on records preservation and access, both of keen interest to genealogists:

- Dr. Warner’s involvement with the Massachusetts Archives Digital
- In his role as State Historical Records Coordinator, he leads the Massachusetts State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAD) in strategic planning, grants programs and records preservation.
- Repository makes this presentation valuable to genealogists across the country.
- He leads the Records Management Unit of the Secretary of State's Office, which oversees records management for all state agencies as well as city and town clerks. The working documents of today are the resources of tomorrow.

This presentation is free, but registration is required!

For more information, go to <https://www.massgencouncil.org/m-o-r-e>

Calendar

DATE/TIME	EVENT/PLACE
June 2, 2021 6 p.m.	WMGS Meeting Online! Thomas MacEntee presents "Backing Up Your Genealogy Data."
June 14, 2021 6:30 p.m.	WMGS Board Meeting via Zoom.
June 17, 2021 7 p.m.	WMGS Training via Zoom. Brian Rhinehart presents "Was My Ancestor in the Civil War?"
June 30, 2021 7 p.m.	MGC M.O.R.E presentation: "An Evening with John D. (Jack) Warner, Ph.D. Archivist, Commonwealth of Massachusetts." See ad on page 10. Register: https://www.massgencouncil.org/m-o-r-e .
July 7, 2021 6 p.m.	WMGS Meeting Online! John Putnam presents "Peopling Colonial New England."

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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 p.m. 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, Cara Seitchek, and Joanne Mason – Directors	

Meeting Details

We generally meet year-round for our monthly meeting on the first Wednesday of each month, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. 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 p.m. to 8 p.m., 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!

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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 the 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.

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Newsletter Deadlines

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

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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.

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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.