



# *Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society, Inc.*

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## Upcoming Meetings

### January 2023 Meeting



Popular genealogist and author Sunny Jane Morton will help us kick off the new year! At our January 4th meeting, Sunny will present **"Introduction to U.S. Church Records: Why We Care Where Grandma Went to Church."**

As Sunny has noted, U.S. church records of many denominations can reveal ancestors' vital events, maiden names, family relationships, overseas birthplaces, and other information such as our ancestors' religious practices and residences. Sunny will help us learn what these records may look like, how to identify an ancestral church, locate extant records, and tell us where we might locate them.

Sunny's acclaimed book on this topic, "How to Find Your Family History in U.S. Church Records" (co-authored with Harold Henderson), has become a bestseller. Sunny is a popular speaker at genealogy conferences and seminars around the U.S. and world.

She's especially known for expertise in tracing U.S. ancestors, her unique comparisons of the industry's largest websites, and inspiring presentations on how to reconstruct and tell meaningful stories from the past.

She's a contributing editor at Family Tree Magazine, content manager for [YourDNAGuide.com](http://YourDNAGuide.com), the National Genealogical Society award-winning past editor of the Ohio Genealogy News, a past contributing editor for the Genealogy Gems podcast, and the author of hundreds of articles and blog posts. Along with her latest book, she has also authored "Story of My Life: A Workbook for Preserving Your Legacy."

Be sure to join us on **Wednesday, January 4th at 6 p.m.**

*(The recording and handout for this presentation will be archived in the Members Only section of our website for 30 days.)*

## February 2023 Meeting



Where did your ancestors live? How did they live? What was their dwelling like? As genealogists we can generally find the addresses of our ancestors on census records, marriage licenses, death certificates, and other sources. But the next question should be: Where exactly is this address? What was the dwelling like? How far did ancestors live from their place of work, other relatives, or their place of worship? Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps are one resource to locate where your ancestors lived and bring detail to their story.

At our February 1st meeting, Susan J. O'Connor will be presenting "**Pinpointing Ancestors Using Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps.**" Susan's presentation will include examples from her ancestors who lived in Chicopee, MA, making her presentation especially important for our members.

A native of Chicopee, Susan O'Connor has been involved in genealogy since before she was born! When her parents announced their engagement, a distant relative declared "Maurice Bowler's daughter has no business keeping company with Katie Manning's son!" Testimony from an Irish missionary priest in Georgia enabled her parents to marry

but it was only on their 60th wedding anniversary when Susan presented them with a detailed pedigree chart that they learned they were actually 3rd cousins.

Susan has researched her family in Ireland, Australia, and the United States and those of her husband from French Canada for over 20 years. She holds a Certificate in Genealogy Research from Boston University and is a graduate of the ProGen professional genealogy study group.

Prior to her "retirement" in 2014, Susan was for 13 years the Executive Director of the Timothy Smith Network (TSN), a regional consortium of community technology centers in the greater Roxbury section of Boston working toward the community's economic advancement through technology proficiency. She was the Transition Manager of Boston Neighborhood Network (BNN), Boston's Public Access TV Station from 2017 to 2019. She also has over 25 years' experience in technology and program development, IT support and training in the banking industry. As an undergraduate, she majored in mathematics, physics and secondary education at Mount Mary College in Milwaukee, WI. Susan received a Master of Science in Training & Development in 1994 from Lesley University. Currently Susan is the Treasurer of NEAPG and the President of the Massachusetts Genealogical Council.

Join us on **Wednesday, Feb. 1st at 6 p.m.** for a virtual presentation on Zoom.

(This presentation and handout will be archived in the Members Only section of our website.)

***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](mailto:westmassgen@gmail.com). We're available and willing to help our members to access everything that WMGS has to offer!***

***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.***

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## Message from the President

by **Jeanne Leblond**



I'm looking forward to 2023 with anticipation and optimism that it will be a great year. We've been through so much in the past few years, and I'm looking forward to enjoying the new normality. We might still be wearing masks in some situations, but we'll be out and about with friends and family again.

Though I don't make any New Year's resolutions because I know that I won't keep them, I'm looking forward to working on some long-standing genealogy projects, including a major project to scan family pictures and documents. I hope that you have some exciting plans for the new year as well.

I'm also excited about what's coming up for WMGS in 2023.

Starting in January, WMGS will be offering a virtual beginners' course with Peggy Clemens Lauritzen that's sure to be terrific. Whether you're new to genealogy, someone who's been working on your ancestry for years, or even if you've taken a beginner's class in the past, we encourage you to attend Peggy's sessions with us. As I remember from my student days, each instructor has a different way of teaching and presents a different perspective on a subject. I'm confident that you'll enjoy Peggy's classes and will pick up a few tips, perhaps even new skills, that will help your research.

This coming year, we hope to begin holding regular hybrid meetings from April through October, which will allow us to be together with some members in person and others who join us from the comfort of their homes.

New Year's is also a time of reflection on the past year. Looking back at 2022, it was a great year for WMGS, as we celebrated our 50th anniversary, had our first hybrid meeting, hosted many wonderful speakers, and held fantastic training sessions where our members shared family stories and research.

We were also blessed again by the generosity of our members who contributed to our second Giving Tuesday campaign, which will allow us to continue providing a broad variety of speakers and presentations for our members. The Program Committee is

working on an exciting lineup of presentations for 2023, so stay tuned for news about them.

From all of us on the Board of WMGS, we wish you and your loved ones a happy, healthy, and successful New Year with many genealogical discoveries and accomplishments!

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## Articles

### Genealogy 101: A Four-Session Course in Beginning Genealogy – Monthly Trainings



We're excited to share the news with you! Peggy Clemens Lauritzen, one of our favorite presenters, will be teaching "**Genealogy 101: A Four-Session Course in Beginning Genealogy**" for WMGS members at our monthly training sessions from January through April 2023. These sessions will be held virtually on the **4th Thursday** of the month at **7 p.m.** via Zoom.

For some time, we've been searching for a beginners' course in genealogy that we could offer to potential, new, and current members. Not only will these classes be an introduction to genealogy for beginners, the classes will be a great refresher for anyone who has been working on their genealogy for some time, who wants to learn skills in another research area, or just wants to see what they might have missed.

If you have friends or family who have been thinking about doing their family genealogy, please let them know about this wonderful opportunity. For the low cost of an annual membership, they'll be able to take this course (either live on Zoom or at their leisure), attend our monthly meetings, and have access to all of the archived webinars, handouts, and other content in the Members Only section of our website as well.

**Session Dates and Times**

January 26, 2023 - 7 p.m.  
February 23, 2023 - 7 p.m.  
March 23, 2023 - 7 p.m.  
April 27, 2023 - 7 p.m.

**Note: Sessions and class handouts will be recorded and archived in the Members Only section of our website.**

We've copied the course description from Peggy's website below:

## **Genealogy 101: A Four-Session Course in Beginning Genealogy**

Genealogy is an adventure in researching your family's history. These sessions will aid the beginner in starting the process and enjoying the journey.

Summary: Each of the four classes will build on the previous instruction. They will include the following:

### **Session 1: Identify What You Already Know**

This will include home sources, oral interviews of older relatives, obituaries, appropriate charts, and forms. Basic forms, i.e., pedigree chart, family group records, etc. will be provided to find out what is already known.

### **Session 2: Filling in the Blanks**

Pedigree analysis will aid us in deciding where we need to go next. Following many recommendations from Tom Jones's *Mastering Genealogical Proof*, we will focus on asking a genealogical question and setting a goal. Citing sources and learning to keep a research log will be emphasized. Time will also be spent on the value of maps.

### **Session 3: Learning How to Obtain and Read a Record**

After learning of the many ways to search for and obtain a record, we will analyze the information it may contain. Specific class time will include evaluation of a death record, an obituary, and perhaps even birth/christening records.

## Session 4: Organizing What You Have Gathered

Organizing and preserving our data is essential. An overview of computer programs specifically for genealogy will be demonstrated. Different filing systems, sharing information with online databases, and leaving a legacy for future generations will be included.

### About Peggy



Peggy Clemens Lauritzen, AG, FOGS, is a frequent lecturer at many local societies in Ohio, as well as at family history seminars. She has presented at Brigham Young University and ICAPGen and has taught continuing education classes at several community colleges, as well as at Ohio State University. An accredited genealogist, she is a featured columnist in Reminisce magazine, has written several Legacy QuickGuides, and has filmed as an instructor for Ancestry Academy. In 2018, she was honored to be awarded Fellow of the Ohio Genealogical Society and received the Laura G. Prescott Award for Exemplary Service

to Professional Genealogy. Peggy is a former researcher at Ancestry ProGenealogists and both she and her husband serve as Family History Center Directors in north central Ohio.

Mark your calendars for the **first** session on **Thursday, January 26th at 7 p.m.**

## Giving Tuesday Thanks!



This past November, WMGS participated in Giving Tuesday, a worldwide effort to celebrate generosity, share kindness, and support organizations and causes which need resources to fulfill their missions.

The generosity of the financial contributions made by our members again this year has been heartwarming to us. Our members donated more than \$1000.00 in tax-deductible funds to WMGS.

These funds will help support our programs and activities and allow us to continue our efforts to bring the best speakers and trainers in the genealogical field to our WMGS members.

As you know, WMGS is a 501(c)3 organization that is run entirely by volunteers and is funded solely by membership fees and donations. The money raised through this campaign will help us to continue our mission to assist our members and others to research and document their ancestors and family history.

The WMGS Board of Directors would again like to express our appreciation to those who generously donated to our Giving Tuesday campaign.

## Free Offerings

Note: We publish this list of free online webinars and events each month to let our members know about educational opportunities. For more information on them, check out the organization's website.

### [Boston Public Library](#)

- **A Recipe for Success: Finding Women Through Community Cookbooks**  
(January 25 at 6:30 p.m.)

### [Chicopee Public Library](#)

The Chicopee Public Library offers in-person genealogy open labs every Tuesday and Thursday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Volunteers are available to answer questions and help you use the library's genealogy resources, which include American Ancestors, Ancestry, Fold3, Heritage Quest, books, and more. The library is a FamilySearch Affiliate Library.

Location: Computer Lab. Contact Chuck Abel by phone (413-594-1800 x3) or email ([cabel@cwmars.org](mailto:cabel@cwmars.org)).

### [FamilySearch](#)

As Family Search prepares for RootsTech 2023, live classes and webinars will not be offered through March 2023.



Recordings of over 2,100 archived classes can be viewed on their FamilySearch website at: [https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Classes\\_in\\_the\\_Learning\\_Center](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Classes_in_the_Learning_Center).

\*Be sure to sign up for the free RootsTech virtual conference to be held from March 2-4, 2023 at: <https://www.familysearch.org/rootstech/event>.

### [Legacy Family Tree Webinars](#)

Note: At press time, Legacy Family Tree Webinars had not released their 2023 calendar. Please check their website for upcoming webinars at: <https://familytreewebinars.com/>.

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

Register at: <https://www.americanancestors.org/education/online-classes#ots>.

- **The Ruin of All Witches: Life and Death in the New World** - Author event with Springfield, MA family in 1651 as the focus (January 18, 2023 at 2 p.m.)
- **Basics of Jewish American Genealogy** (January 19 at 3 p.m.)
- **Deciphering Old Handwriting** (January 26 at 3 p.m.)
- **Jewish Soldiers in the Civil War** (January 31 at 1 p.m.)

### **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 50** videos of our monthly presentations and training sessions, **12** individual training videos from the DNA Boot Camp from Hack Genealogy, and **over 65** handouts available.

Have you joined  
the WMGS  
Members Only  
Facebook Group?



## Calendar

DATE/TIME	EVENT/PLACE
Jan. 4, 2023 6 p.m.	<b>WMGS Meeting Online!</b> Sunny Jane Morton presents "Introduction to U.S. Church Records: Why We Care Where Grandma Went to Church."
Jan. 9, 2023 6:30 p.m.	<b>WMGS Board meeting via Zoom.</b>
Jan. 26, 2023 7 p.m.	<b>WMGS Training Session.</b> Peggy Clemens Lauritzen presents "Genealogy 101—Session One."
Feb. 1, 2023 6 p.m.	<b>WMGS Meeting Online!</b> Susan J. O'Connor presents "Pinpointing Ancestors Using Sanborn Maps."
Feb. 13, 2023 6:30 p.m.	<b>WMGS Board meeting via Zoom.</b>
Feb. 23, 2023 7 p.m.	<b>WMGS Training Session.</b> Peggy Clemens Lauritzen presents "Genealogy 101—Session Two."
Mar. 23, 2023 7 p.m.	<b>WMGS Training Session.</b> Peggy Clemens Lauritzen presents "Genealogy 101—Session Three."
April 27, 2023 7 p.m.	<b>WMGS Training Session.</b> Peggy Clemens Lauritzen presents "Genealogy 101—Session Four."



## Brick Wall Queries

### **How to Submit or Respond to a Query:**

**Submitting:** Queries and responses should be sent via email to [westmassgen@gmail.com](mailto: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 answers to questions, 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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## About Us



The Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society was founded in Springfield, Massachusetts in 1972 and officially incorporated on February 6, 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 and 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 email from people looking for information on area families. Our members are happy to volunteer to research these requests.

President	Jeanne Leblond
Vice President	Dave Lapierre
Treasurer	Position is open.
Assistant Treasurer	Jeanne Lockhart
Secretary	Dorothy Cichonski
Membership Coordinator	Jeanne Lockhart
Webmaster & Technology Coordinator	Dave Lapierre
Newsletter Editor	Joanne Mason
Facebook Editors	Carol Lynne Bagley & Joanne Mason
Surname & Queries Editor	Jeanne Leblond
Fundraising Coordinator	Bob Whitney
Founder	Diane Ascioti
Directors	Gwen Laprade, Cara Seitchek & Joanne Mason

### Meeting Details

We generally meet year-round for our monthly meeting on the first Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. 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 third Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. 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.



Since March 2020, we have met virtually using the web conferencing platform Zoom.

Zoom registration information is sent by email to all members in advance of each meeting and training session. If you need help using Zoom, please contact us at [westmassgen@gmail.com](mailto:westmassgen@gmail.com). We'll be glad to assist you.

When a speaker allows us to record a presentation, we archive it 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, Inc. is a long-standing group of members, both local and from across the United States. We welcome you to join our society!

### **Reasons to join the Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society, Inc.:**

- Meet people with similar interests in family history and genealogy.
- Attend monthly meetings featuring local, regional, and national presenters. All meetings are held on Zoom, while meetings from April to October are hybrid (attend via Zoom or in-person).
- Attend our Special Interest Group meetings and trainings.
- Access our archive of previously recorded presentations and handouts, DNA Boot camp series, helpful resources including Western Massachusetts and Massachusetts genealogical resources (with links), member discounts, newsletters, and more.
- Receive assistance from our members on your family research.
- Join our WMGS Members Only Facebook group.
- Serve as a volunteer, coach, or as a member of the Board of Directors.

One of the 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., including: Peggy Clemens Lauritzen, Tom MacEntee, Michael John Neill, Lisa Alzo, Stephen Morse, Julie Miller, J. Mark Lowe, Michael Brophy, Nancy Loe, John Putnam, Ed Strickland, and more!

Our Members Only section also includes handouts from these and many more meetings, along with historical copies of the *American Elm*, the original WMGS newsletter publication, which contains genealogical material and family trees from our early members. The *American Elm* newsletters are fully searchable.

Once we receive your membership application, you will receive 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, 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.**

## 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 the 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](mailto: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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## Email Update

Please let us know if you have changed your email 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](mailto:westmassgen@gmail.com).



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**The editor reserves the right to edit all contributions.**