



Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society, Inc.

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Upcoming Meetings

February 2026 Meeting



We're delighted that nationally-known genealogist, Annette Burke-Lyttle will join us again to present **"Ancestors on the Move: Migration from Farms to Cities, 1870-1920."**

Between the Civil War and World War I, Americans faced dramatic changes that shaped where and how they lived. Push and pull factors, financial panics, the reality of daily life in rural areas, and the rise of manufacturing were some of the factors that led to decisions to move from farms to cities.

Annette will guide us through the records that capture those movements — from census schedules and land deeds to city directories, newspapers, military files, and other sources. We'll learn what factors influenced our ancestors' choices and discover practical strategies to locate the documents that bring their journeys to life.

Annette Burke Lyttle owns Heritage Detective, LLC and provides professional genealogical services in research, education, and writing. She speaks on a variety of genealogical topics at the international, national, state, and local levels and loves helping people uncover and share their family stories.

She is past president of the Association of Professional Genealogists and editor of The Florida Genealogist.

We hope you'll join us on **Wednesday, February 4 at 6 p.m. ET** on Zoom. Members will receive an email to register for the Zoom link.

This presentation will be archived in the Members Only section of our website for 30 days.

March 2026 Meeting



A good genealogist needs the instincts of a detective — our research often unfolds like a compelling mystery. But how much can we trust the records and sources we find? When the facts don't line up, what might be hiding beneath the surface? Can documents or titles simply be wrong?

At our March 4 monthly meeting, Julie Miller presents **"Eddie Wenck: The Case of a Little Lost Boy."** Eddie Wenck was a forgotten child. His story was a mystery for many years until research exposed an error made

over 20 years ago and uncovered the hidden past of a well-known landmark. This lecture is about the importance of using original records and historical context and about following our instincts when things don't seem right.

Julie Miller, CG, CGL, FNGS, is a full-time researcher, lecturer, and writer. Her articles have appeared in the National Genealogical Society Quarterly (NGSQ) and NGS Magazine. Julie is a member of the National Genealogical Society (NGS) conference committee and a fellow of the NGS. She was a volunteer at the National Archives and Records Administration in Denver for 21 years.

We hope you'll join us on **Wednesday, March 4 at 6 p.m. ET** on Zoom. Members will receive an email to register for the Zoom link.

This presentation and handout will be archived in the Members Only section of our website for 30 days.

Message From the President

by Jeanne Leblond



I'll be honest. I rarely watch any of the popular television shows. I wouldn't know their titles and likely wouldn't recognize any of the actors. I'd much rather use my time to work on another genealogy research project. With so many opportunities to improve our research skills, it's more enjoyable than ever.

We've had many excellent speakers and presentations that have inspired me to explore new resources, and I hope they've done the same for you. At our January presentation, Sara Cochran introduced alternatives to the lost 1890 U.S. census records, and I've explored several of them with promising results.

The time period from 1880 – 1890 is when many immigrant ancestors came to the U.S., and not having the 1890 census has long been a challenge. Sara offered us many alternatives to use, and she'll

return in April to offer even more resources and a case study demonstrating how to use them.

Genealogist Annette Burke-Lytle is joining us again at our February meeting to offer a presentation on our ancestors who moved from farms to cities after the Civil War through the 1920s. This is another critical time period for researching many of our ancestors.

I'm also excited about our new subscription to Thomas MacEntee's GenSocSoup webinar series. Being able to watch one of Tom's webinars whenever I have a free hour is a real benefit. At this month's training session, we'll view one of them, "Navigating the Seven Cs of Genealogy" and share how we might use these techniques in our own research.

At our January Board meeting, we had a further discussion about forming a genealogy helpers group or some other type of mutual research program. We'll be creating a

survey to gauge member interest, and we'll likely form a committee to explore the possibilities further. As I write this message, we haven't yet had the opportunity to discuss this idea with members at our January training session but we're looking forward to hearing your thoughts.

2026 is off to a good start as the opportunities for learning and conducting more effective genealogy research continue to grow!

WMGS is pleased to
welcome 3 new members!

John B. Lisle
Elizabeth Matthews
Judith Stanton



February Training: Introducing GenSocSoup!

Tom MacEntee's GenSocSoup



At our February training session, we'll tour Thomas MacEntee's brand-new GenSocSoup webinar channel, now available in the Members Only area of our website. We'll show you how it works and answer any questions about using the new platform.

GenSocSoup is an exclusive, subscription-based learning platform — similar in style to YouTube — that provides 24/7 access to 15 on-demand recorded webinars and accompanying handouts created by Thomas MacEntee. Tom will be creating four brand-new webinars over the next year as well. This subscription is offered only to societies

with a secure members-only website, making it a valuable addition to our member benefits.

Tom's webinar collection spans a wide range of topics, from basic genealogy skills to new tools that can help us improve our research. Topics include research tips, technology, organization strategies, and more.

During our session, we'll watch and discuss one of the featured webinars, "Navigating the Seven Cs of Genealogy," and talk about how using themes and resolutions can help guide our research throughout 2026 and beyond.

We hope you'll join us on **Thursday, February 19 at 7:00 p.m. ET** on Zoom.

Genealogy Tidbit: Revolution Happened Here



As our nation approaches the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, the Pioneer Valley History Network (PVHN) has partnered with Mass Humanities to highlight the stories that unfolded right here in our region.

Revolution Happened Here is a growing online exhibit developed by PVHN in collaboration with museums and historical organizations across western Massachusetts. The site invites visitors to explore images of historical documents and artifacts from multiple local collections, read interpretive stories

that bring these materials to life, and browse a continually expanding directory of museum and historical society collections — complete with an interactive map of locations where these items and many others can be found throughout the Pioneer Valley.

The project emphasizes the grassroots nature of revolutionary activity in western Massachusetts, showcasing the local debates, actions, and everyday experiences that shaped the region's role in the struggle for independence.

The project is intentionally designed to grow over time. As more museums and historical groups contribute materials, the site will continue to expand — offering an

ever-richer picture of how the inhabitants of western Massachusetts participated in and were affected by the Revolution.

PVHN welcomes contributions of local treasures, stories, and archival materials, helping make this a truly community-built resource. Explore the project at <https://revolutionhappenedhere.org>.

WMGS Frequently Asked Questions

Where can I find a calendar of upcoming WMGS events?

We list all of our events on our website's [Events page](#).

How do I participate in a virtual meeting or event?

Members will receive an email notice in advance of the monthly meeting, training session, or special interest group (SIG) meeting. To attend a virtual event, you will be required to preregister 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. Syllabuses and handouts will be sent out in advance of most events. They will be included with the preregistration information.

I'd like to attend meetings online, but I'm not too savvy with Zoom. Do you have any trainings?

Yes. WMGS Vice President Dave Lapierre gave a [Zoom training session](#) in 2023, which is available on YouTube and in the Members Only section of our website. If you still need help, don't hesitate to contact us. We'll be glad to assist.

How can I join the WMGS Members Only Facebook Group?

Our Members Only Facebook group provides an opportunity for members to help each other with their genealogical and historical research.

To join our WMGS Members Only Facebook group, you need to have a free Facebook account. Once you log into your account, enter **WMGS Members Only** in the Search box to find it. Click on our name (it has our familiar tree logo included), then on the **Request to Join** button. A group administrator will verify your membership, and you'll be admitted as a member.

I've hit a brick wall in my research. Can WMGS help?

Information on submitting and responding to queries is available on [our website](#), along with a list of archived queries. Members can also ask for help in our Members Only Facebook group.

My friend wants to join WMGS. How can they do that?

We're always happy to welcome new members! Details on membership benefits and dues can be found on our website's [Join/Renew page](#).

I'd like to write an article for the newsletter. How do I do that?

Send your article idea to westmassgen@gmail.com for editorial review. Please note that our newsletter deadline is the 15th of the month. For example, articles to be published in the July edition must be received by WMGS by June 15.

How can I contact WMGS?

Send an email to us at westmassgen@gmail.com or contact us by mail at WMGS, P.O. Box 418, West Springfield, MA 01090-0418.

How can I make a donation to WMGS?

Donations help our nonprofit society continue its mission and are greatly appreciated. Donations can be made by mail or online at our [Donation page](#).

Who is on the Board of Directors?

The WMGS Board of Directors includes:

President: Jeanne Leblond

Vice President: Dave Lapierre

Treasurer: Position is open.

Assistant Treasurer: Jeanne Lockhart

Secretary: Position is open.

Directors: Gwen Laprade, Cara Seitchek, and John Putnam

We would also like to recognize:

Membership Coordinator: Jeanne Lockhart

Webmaster & Technology Coordinator: Dave Lapierre

Newsletter Editor: Joanne Mason

Fundraising Coordinator: Cara Seitchek



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