



Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society, Inc.

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Upcoming Meetings

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.

April 2026 Meeting



At our April 1 monthly meeting, genealogist Sara Cochran will present the sequel to her January presentation "Who Needed It Anyway? Getting Around the Missing 1890 Census." In that presentation, Sara discussed strategies and provided us with resources to bridge the ten-year gap caused by the loss of that census.

The 1890 census was uniquely detailed, including information on household relationships, occupations, literacy, and housing conditions. It also included special schedules for Union Civil War veterans and widows.

In 1921, nearly the entire 1890 census was destroyed by fire and subsequent water damage at the U.S. Department of Commerce building in Washington, DC. Only fragments covering about 6,000 individuals survived out of over 62 million people enumerated.

Sara's April presentation is called **"Why We Still Don't Miss 1890. Much."** She will explore even more strategies and resources to help us find our families between 1880 and 1890, and she will complete the case study she began at her January presentation.

Note: If you missed Sara's first presentation, the recording and handout will be available in the Members Only section of our website until April 1.

Sara is a full-time professional genealogist with thirty years of research experience. She holds a genealogical research certificate from Boston University and a bachelor's degree in library science. She is an alum of the ProGen Study Group and a member of the DAR and other lineage societies, the Association of Professional Genealogists, and the Genealogical Speakers Guild.

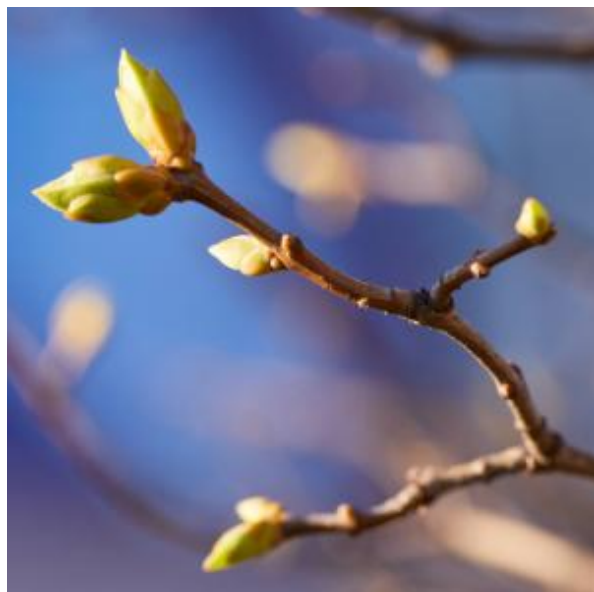
If you'd like more information about Sara or want to sign up for her weekly newsletter, you can find her online at: <https://theskeletonwhisperer.com>

We hope you'll join us on **Wednesday, April 1 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 60 days.

Message From the President

by Jeanne Leblond



This winter will go down in the books as a difficult one in Western Massachusetts, with prolonged cold and hefty snowfalls. As the days stretch a little longer, warmer weather can't come soon enough.

Though I'm anxious to get back outside and do some cemetery research, I'm still trying to finish up a few winter projects, including scanning photos and following up on resources suggested by our recent presentations. You may be doing the same.

Last month, Nancy Burke Lyttle's presentation on our ancestors' migration from rural farms to cities suggested several research avenues to explore as I work on a family story. Her presentation also connects beautifully with our Genealogy Tidbit this month — the Museum of Industrial Heritage, which highlights the industries connected to the Connecticut River. If you missed Nancy's presentation, it will remain available on our website for a few more days.

Keep an eye out for our upcoming member survey in the next few weeks. We're exploring new ways to help our community stay connected, and your feedback will guide our next steps.

Julie Miller's presentation at our March monthly meeting, using a case history of a little lost boy, is sure to be fascinating and may offer strategies to help solve mysteries in your own research. Don't miss it.

Many members have been enjoying the GenSocSoup webinar series during these chilly weeks. At our March training session, we'll explore the series, view and discuss one of the webinars, and share how these sessions can add to your research toolbox. Anytime, right from home — no need to worry about the weather.

March is going to be a great month. To all our members with Irish ancestry, we wish you a Happy St. Patrick's Day.

March Training: Introducing GenSocSoup!



At our March training session, we'll offer our postponed training session **"Introducing GenSocSoup."** 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, March 26 at 7:00 p.m. ET** on Zoom.

Note: This session is being held one week later than usual.

Upcoming Member Survey



Do you miss connecting with other members who are researching the same surnames, ethnicities, or locations? Would you like guidance on next steps in your research, or are you interested in learning more about specific genealogy topics? Perhaps you'd even be willing to share the expertise you've gained over the years.

WMGS is exploring three new initiatives designed to help members connect, collaborate, and support one another. In the coming weeks, we'll be sending members a survey to gauge interest and to learn who might like to participate in one or more of these programs.

The proposed initiatives include:

- A Genealogy Helpers-style program for one-on-one assistance
- A Surname/Location/Topic directory to help members find others with shared research interests
- Special Interest Group sessions focused on specific topics

We hope you'll take a few moments to complete the survey when it arrives. Your feedback will help us shape these new initiatives. Thank you in advance!

Genealogy Tidbit:

Museum of Our Industrial Heritage



The Connecticut River and its tributaries — most notably the Deerfield and Millers rivers — formed the backbone of Franklin County's early industrial growth. Throughout the 19th century, these waterways powered hundreds of mills, from modest workshops to sprawling factory complexes. Waterwheels, and later turbines, drove machinery that ground grain, sawed lumber, spun textiles, and enabled the rise of precision metalworking.

During the Industrial Revolution, the Connecticut River Valley emerged as one of the world's most advanced manufacturing centers. Franklin County's rivers supported a remarkable range of industries, including brickmaking, textiles, paper, lumber, shoes, and bookbinding. They also nurtured the development of nationally recognized machine-tool companies, gun manufacturers, cutlery makers, and other metalworking enterprises.

Many of our ancestors found employment in these mills and factories or in the secondary businesses that grew from them and spread throughout Western Massachusetts. Understanding the industrial landscape of the region can offer valuable insight into their daily lives, skills, and migration patterns.

One of the best resources for exploring this history is the **Museum of Our Industrial Heritage** in Greenfield, Massachusetts. Although its focus is Franklin County, the museum's collections extend across the entire Connecticut River corridor and include materials related to industries that branched outward, such as Smith & Wesson in Springfield and the Pope Manufacturing Company (Columbia bicycles) in Westfield.

The museum's website provides a wealth of online tools for genealogists researching occupational history. Visitors will find articles, photographs, archival films, social-history materials, and links to related museums and digital collections. The museum also welcomes questions through its Ask Our Historian service.

To explore these resources, visit the Museum of Our Industrial Heritage at <https://industrialhistory.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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