



# Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society, Inc.

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## Upcoming Meetings

### April 2026 Meeting



We're pleased to welcome Sara Cochran back to WMGS on April 1, when she will present **"Why We Still Don't Miss 1890. Much."** This talk is a sequel to her January presentation about the 1890 census.

Finding ancestors that lived in the U.S. between 1880 and 1890 can be a challenge. In 1921, nearly the entire 1890 census was destroyed by fire and subsequent water damage. Only fragments covering about 6,000 individuals survived out of over 62 million people enumerated.

In January, Sara provided resources to bridge the ten-year gap caused by the loss of that census. In April, she'll share even more research strategies and complete a case study she started in January.

**Note:** Sara's January presentation was called "**Who Needed It Anyway? Getting Around the Missing 1890 Census.**" If you missed it, you can find the recording and handout 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 Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), the Association of Professional Genealogists, and the Genealogical Speakers Guild.

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.*

## May 2026 Meeting



At our May 6 monthly meeting, noted genealogist David Allen Lambert will present "**Friend or Foe: Researching Colonial Ancestors During the American Revolution**" to our society.

Nearly 250 years ago, America declared its independence from the British Empire, changing the course of history. While many took up the cause and supported revolution, others remained loyal to the British government — turning friends into foes and pitting neighbor against neighbor. David will discuss how to research your colonial ancestors and determine if — and how — they may have served the cause of the American Revolution.

David Allen Lambert, Chief Genealogist at American Ancestors, is an internationally recognized speaker on genealogy and history. His areas of expertise include New England and Atlantic Canadian records; American and international military records; and DNA research. He also specializes in Native American and African American genealogical research in New England.

David's articles have appeared in the New England Historical and Genealogical Register and American Ancestors magazine. He has written 11 books, including

"A Guide to Massachusetts Cemeteries." He also serves as the tribal genealogist for the Massachusett Tribe at Punkapoag in Massachusetts.

Mark your calendars and plan to join us on **Wednesday, May 6 at 6 p.m. ET** on Zoom. Members will receive an email to register for the Zoom link.

*This presentation will be recorded and archived in the Members Only section of our website.*

**Note: The WMGS annual meeting will follow this presentation.**



MASSACHUSETTS  
GENEALOGICAL  
COUNCIL



An Evening with

**Margaret R. Fortier**

*Bay State Bonanza: 400 Years of Vital Records*

Monday, March 30, 2026, at 7:00 PM ET via Zoom

Bonanza means an abundance of something good. For those of us researching Massachusetts vital records, it means an abundance of records. That's great for us as researchers but dealing with so many records can also be challenging. The Commonwealth boasts records back to 1620, and many are available online.

But not everything is online; some records may be at state agencies and/or with town clerks. Learn how to determine where to locate them as well as the ins and outs of the evolving formats for birth, marriage, and death certificates over time.

Named after her grandmothers and inspired by her mother's phenomenal memory, Margaret Rose Fortier is a Board-certified genealogical researcher, writer, and lecturer. She was co-editor of the *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* and retired in December 2025. She specializes in immigrant ancestors to New England. A graduate of Boston College and Bentley University, she holds a Certificate in Genealogical Research from Boston University. She was an instructor in the Spring 2025 course, "Tracing Your French-Canadian Ancestors" at SLIG and will again present in this course in Spring 2027.

**This presentation is free, but registration is required!**

For more information, go to [www.massgencouncil.org/m-o-r-e](http://www.massgencouncil.org/m-o-r-e)

## Message From the President

by **Jeanne Leblond**



Spring has finally arrived! I'm looking forward to sunshine, spring flowers, and the chance to open the windows again. After winter weather, I'm always anxious to start working in my garden. But before I get my hands in the dirt, I'm hoping to wrap up a few lingering winter projects.

My goals include finishing the scanning of a box of old photos, completing a family biography for my Slovak branch, and cleaning out the computer files that are taking up far too much space. Once those tasks are behind me, I won't feel quite so guilty spending long hours on gardening and genealogy.

We have some wonderful presentations coming up at WMGS. On April 1, Sara Cochran will present the sequel to her January program on the 1890 census. I'm sure her follow-up will open new avenues for members searching for ancestors in that lost record.

We're also pleased that member Philip Johnson will be offering a program on lineage societies on April 23. Many genealogists dream of joining a lineage or hereditary organization, and Phil's presentation is sure to help you take meaningful steps toward meeting the requirements for membership.

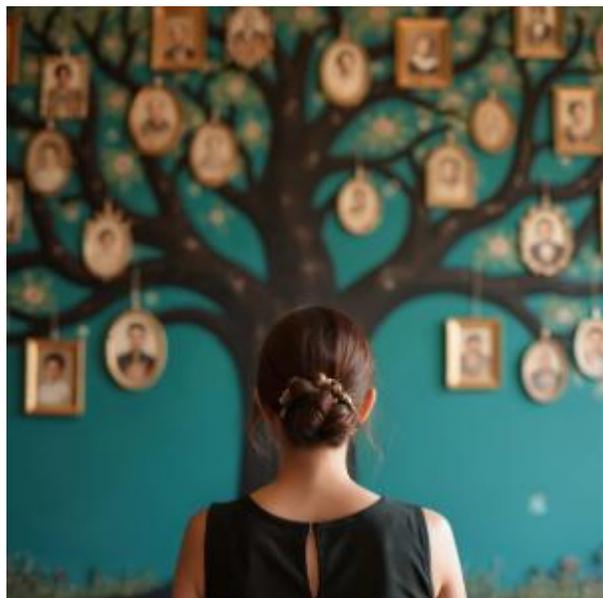
Thank you to all who completed our recent survey on member connection options WMGS is considering. We'll share the results with you at our annual meeting in May.

Looking ahead, we hope to see many of you at History Fest at Westfield State University on April 11. There are always several genealogy-related offerings and a wide variety of presentations to choose from. If you've never attended, we hope you'll consider joining us this year.

And for our members in Massachusetts and Maine — or anyone with roots there — Patriots' Day is just around the corner. It's a perfect excuse to revisit your Revolutionary War ancestors. This month's Genealogy Tidbit highlights a resource that can support that research.

Wherever your genealogy projects take you this month, we're glad to be part of the journey.

## April Training: Lineage Societies



Thinking about joining a lineage society? You won't want to miss our April training session!

Lineage societies help us connect with our heritage. Through societies, we can honor ancestors by preserving family histories and traditions. Societies can also offer access to valuable genealogical resources and a strong sense of community.

At this session, WMGS member Philip Johnson will tell us more about lineage societies, why they matter, and what they offer to genealogists and history enthusiasts.

He'll also outline the different types of societies and walk us through the typical membership requirements and application processes.

Phil has been researching his own genealogy for about 30 years, taking over his mother's research. He is currently the registrar/genealogist for the Pomeroy chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR). Previously, he was the assistant state registrar for Massachusetts.

Philip has researched, written, and self-published two books on a railroad from Western Massachusetts. He lectures on this railroad and other railroad subjects.

In his family, Philip has identified seven travelers on the Mayflower and 19 Patriots who fought in the American Revolution. His paternal grandparents emigrated from Sweden about 110 years ago. He has researched these lines back into the 1700s. He also serves on several other boards and the Erving Historical Commission.

We hope you'll join us on **Thursday, April 23 at 7:00 p.m. ET** on Zoom. Members will receive an email to register for the Zoom link.

## WMGS Annual Meeting is May 6



Our annual meeting will be held on May 6, following David Allen Lambert's presentation.

At the meeting, our Assistant Treasurer will give a brief financial report. We'll announce the results of our annual audit, provide membership numbers, and discuss the results of our recent member survey.

We will then conduct our annual elections. The Nominating Committee will present the slate of candidates for election as officers and directors of our society. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor. Voting will be conducted electronically by an anonymous poll.

The following positions are up for election to two-year terms:

- Vice President
- Assistant Treasurer
- Director (one position)

Our Secretary and Treasurer positions are also vacant and waiting to be filled.

A Nominating Committee, consisting of Cara Seitchek and Jeanne Leblond, has been appointed. If any member is interested in running for election to a position and/or wishes to know the requirements for each position, please send an email to [westmassgen.com](mailto:westmassgen.com) with Nominating Committee in the subject line. Please include a brief description of your qualifications and experience for the position you are seeking.

Following the election, we will review the status of our society and our plans for the upcoming year.

We encourage you to attend our annual meeting.



## **“Our Homespun History Conference”**

**Saturday, April 11, 2026 at Westfield State University**

Join us for a gathering of local history enthusiasts, high school age and up, including local historians, public history professionals, genealogists, preservationists, academics, and others, in one place for one day of sharing.

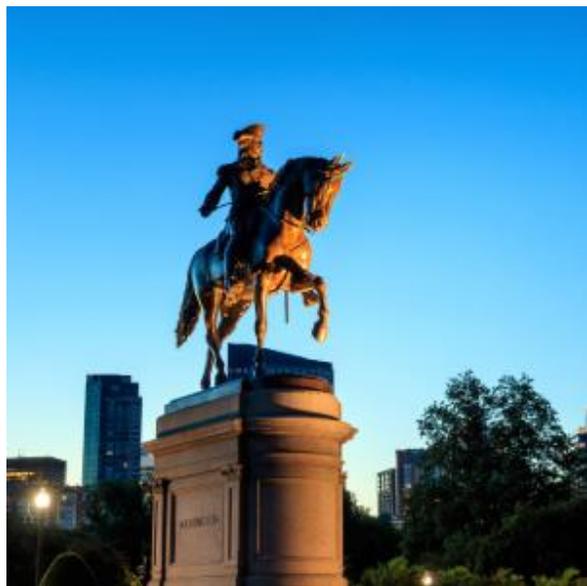
For more information, please visit [pioneervalleyhistorynetwork.org](http://pioneervalleyhistorynetwork.org).

WMGS is pleased  
to welcome  
a new member!

Sharla  
McAuliffe



## Genealogy Tidbit: The American Revolution Institute of the Society of the Cincinnati



As we commemorate 250 years since the birth of our nation, the American Revolution Institute offers an invaluable opportunity to understand the lives and experiences of those who shaped our early history. It's a resource well worth exploring.

In 1783, officers of the Continental Army founded the Society of the Cincinnati to preserve the rights and friendships forged during the American Revolution, promote national unity, and assist members in need. In 2012, the society created the American Revolution Institute to broaden its educational mission.

The Institute works to honor those who secured American independence and to deepen public understanding of the revolution's enduring legacy. For genealogists, its digital offerings provide exceptional opportunities to learn about their ancestors and to add historical context to family research.

Here are some highlights:

- A research library and archives
- Exhibitions, public programs, and an extensive collection of recorded lectures and videos
- Access to online databases
- Digitized collections of books, manuscripts, newspapers, maps, broadsides, armaments and equipment, textiles, art, artifacts, and more
- Educational resources that can help genealogists better understand the world in which their ancestors lived
- A wide range of initiatives designed to foster appreciation for the American Revolution and its impact

One of the best features for researchers is that no membership or travel is required. Even without visiting the society's headquarters in Washington, D.C., anyone can explore their rich digital collections and virtual programming.

The institute's website is [americanrevolutioninstitute.org](http://americanrevolutioninstitute.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](mailto: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](mailto: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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**The editor reserves the right to edit all contributions.**