



Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society, Inc.

Inside This Issue:

[Upcoming Meetings](#)

[President's Message](#)

[May SIG: Western Massachusetts Ancestors](#)

[Annual Meeting May 6](#)

[Genealogy Tidbit: Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions About WMGS](#)

Upcoming Meetings

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.

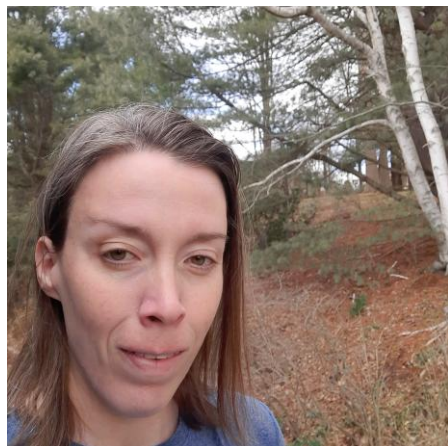
David's articles have appeared in the New England Historical and Genealogical Register and American Ancestors magazine. He has written 11 books, including "A Guide to Massachusetts Cemeteries." He also serves as the tribal genealogist for the Massachusett Tribe at Punkapoag in Massachusetts.

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.

June 2026 Meeting



With the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution approaching, interest in Revolutionary era genealogy is surging. So we're pleased to welcome Bryna O'Sullivan to our June meeting.

Bryna will present a timely topic on American Revolution ancestors: **"From Local Militia to the Continental Line."**

Did your ancestor serve on the local level, the state level, or the federal level in the American Revolution? How can you tell? Understanding the three distinct types of military service — local militia, state troops, and the Continental Army — is essential for accurate research and lineage documentation. These categories determine what records exist, how reliable they are, where they're held, and how much personal detail they contain.

This program will explain the different types of Revolutionary War army service and how the differences in service might have impacted where your ancestor was

recorded. It will cover militia and Continental Line structures, the federal pension system, and more.

Bryna O'Sullivan is a professional genealogist and French-to-English genealogical translator based in Connecticut. As proprietor of Charter Oak Genealogy, she specializes in lineage society applications.

Mark your calendars and plan to join us on **Wednesday, June 3 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 for 30 days.

Message From the President

by Jeanne Leblond



May is certainly one of the prettiest months in New England. As flowers and shrubs burst into bloom, the month brings two holidays that can inspire meaningful genealogy research.

I remember when many mothers proudly wore corsages on Mother's Day — often orchids, which felt very exotic at the time. What better way to honor our grandmothers, mothers, and female ancestors than by writing down a memory of that tradition? A short article about the joy of receiving and wearing a Mother's Day corsage would be a lovely way to preserve a tradition that meant so much to the women in our families.

I'd like to thank Phil Johnson once again for sharing his expertise and practical tips on applying to a lineage society. His presentation was thorough and will be very helpful to our members. I've long assumed that I had no early New England ancestry and therefore wouldn't qualify for a lineage society, but I recently learned that many French Canadians served in the American Revolution. Now I'm wondering whether any of them might be in my own lineage. If so, I may have American Revolutionary ancestors to remember this Memorial Day — along with those in my family who

served in the Civil War, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. Perhaps this will be a topic for a future Special Interest Group session.

We have a full agenda at WMGS this month. Noted genealogist David Allen Lambert will speak at our May 6 meeting. His presentation will help us determine whether an ancestor supported the British position or the American cause during the Revolution and will shed light on the political complexities our ancestors faced.

Our annual meeting and elections will follow, and we hope all members will stay and participate.

We're also excited to launch our Special Interest Group (SIG) sessions focused on Western Massachusetts ancestors. Many members suggested this topic in our recent survey. In this newsletter, you'll find a description of the format for our first session. We hope some of you will contribute by sharing research on an ancestor who lived in or had ties to Western Massachusetts, by contributing information on resources, or by submitting a brick wall problem for the group to consider.

Special Interest Groups thrive on participation, and we're eager to build SIGs that help members connect, collaborate, and share their collective knowledge and experience. Several additional SIG topics were suggested in the survey, and we look forward to offering those in the months ahead.

As we celebrate the holidays and traditions of May, I hope they'll inspire your research. Perhaps you'll revisit the memory of a mother or grandmother or take a moment on Memorial Day to remember the ancestors who served — whether in early New England regiments, the American Revolution, or the many conflicts that followed. And perhaps you'll even uncover a Western Massachusetts connection you hadn't noticed before.



May Special Interest Group: Western Massachusetts Ancestors



Our first Western Massachusetts Ancestors Special Interest Group (SIG) session will take place on **Thursday, May 21** on Zoom.

These SIG sessions are designed to give members a chance to explore a focused topic, connect with one another, learn new skills, discover useful resources, and share their research. Each session will follow a flexible, member-driven format that may include:

Member Presentations

Members are invited to give short presentations (5–15 minutes) on a Western Massachusetts ancestor, family line, or research topic. We encourage you to highlight the resources you used — databases, archives, websites, books, maps, or tools.

Resources, Tools, and Techniques

We'll feature helpful research tools, newly updated databases, useful websites, and practical tips to support your genealogical work.

Brick Wall Challenges and Breakthroughs

Have a research puzzle you can't solve? Share a brief summary of the ancestor or problem, along with any clues or documents you've gathered, and we'll add your brick wall to the agenda. Fellow members may be able to offer insights or suggestions to move your research forward.

Q & A and Open Discussion

We'll reserve time for questions, troubleshooting, and open conversation about methods, records, and discoveries.

We hope members will help shape each session's agenda — our SIGs will be member-driven. Whether you're a beginner or someone with years of experience, your contributions will help us all understand our Western Massachusetts roots a little better.

If you'd like to offer a short presentation, submit a brick wall challenge, share a recent breakthrough, or highlight a resource or technique, please email us at westmassgen@gmail.com.

Not sure what format to use? We can provide a suggested outline, and we're happy to assist with creating PowerPoint slides if needed.

We hope you'll join us on **Thursday, May 21 at 7 p.m. ET** on Zoom. *Members will receive a link to register for the session in advance.*



Share a Book Review!

Have you read a genealogy related book that fellow members might enjoy?

Perhaps a great summer read or a useful new reference?

Send us a short review or description, and we'll feature it in an upcoming newsletter.

Email us at westmassgen@gmail.com.

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)

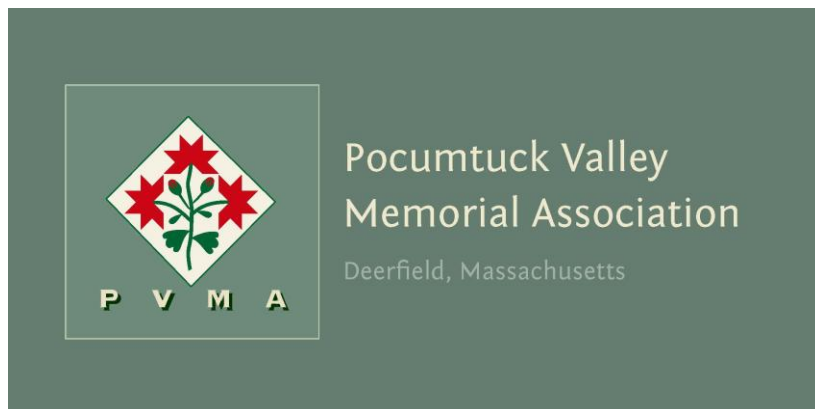
Our Secretary and Treasurer positions are also vacant and waiting to be filled.

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 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.

Genealogy Tidbit: Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association



The Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association (PVMA) in Deerfield — home to the earliest museum in Western Massachusetts — has refreshed its website, **American Centuries: View the Past**. The new site makes PVMA's extensive digital collections easier to explore and adds several new features.

The site now offers access to digitized exhibits, photographs, manuscripts, oral histories, videos, and more. It provides a rich resource for anyone researching families from the Connecticut River Valley.

The online collection features more than 2,000 items from the Memorial Hall Museum, including artifacts, documents, maps, photographs, and books. These materials span centuries, from the region's earliest Native American inhabitants through the 20th century.

A particularly intriguing section explores content by themes, such as family life, newcomers, and the land. This section brings together objects and documents that illuminate daily experiences and historical context at the turn of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries.

The site also includes digitized images that accompany essays on major historical topics affecting the people of the Connecticut River Valley. These curated sections can provide valuable background for understanding our ancestors and the communities they lived in.

Researchers can search the collections by person, location, or topic, making it a practical tool for uncovering new details or confirming family connections.

Explore the collections at <https://americancenturies.org/>



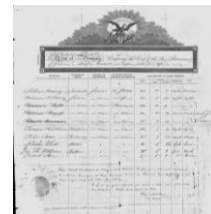
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An Evening with Stephen Hartwell

Maritime Records Lead to Genealogical Treasure

Wednesday, April 29, 2026, at 7:00 PM ET via Zoom



Join genealogist Stephen Hartwell on a voyage of discovery as he uncovers the fascinating stories of his two Hartwell seafaring ancestors in early 19th century Essex County, one who became a sea captain and one who committed mutiny! Maritime records are key to this quest, along with newspaper articles and written correspondence. You will learn how to unearth and mine these records, both online and in local repositories, and then apply these techniques to find out more about your own ancestors.

Stephen Hartwell is a professional genealogist who works with clients to discover the stories of their ancestors, as well as create family history websites to showcase them. He specializes in New England and New York research and especially enjoys helping those just starting out on their genealogical journey. Stephen is a graduate of the Boston University Genealogical Research Certificate Program, an officer of the Essex Society of Genealogists and Hartwells of America, and a member of the Association of Professional Genealogists. More information can be found on his website at <https://shartwell.com>.

This presentation is free, but registration is required!
For more information, go to www.massgencouncil.org/m-o-r-e

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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