



Western Massachusetts Genealogical Society, Inc.

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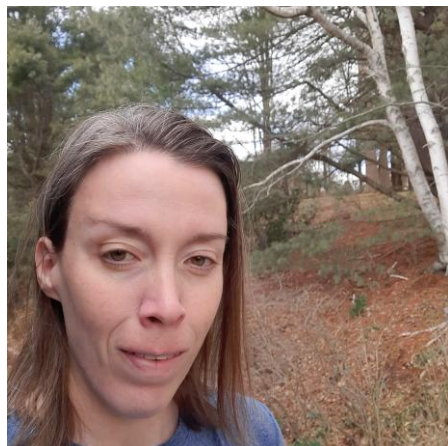
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Upcoming Meetings

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.

July 2026 Meeting



What happened after the ink dried on the Declaration of Independence? For many of our ancestors, the Spirit of '76 was immediately tested by the grueling reality of the New York campaign and a desperate winter retreat across the Jerseys.

At our July monthly meeting, John Putnam will present **"Sacred Honor, Frozen Feet: Finding Your Ancestors in the 'Times That Try Men's Souls.'"**

This presentation explores the pivotal 14-month window from the spring of 1776 to the summer of 1777. John will trace the political courage required to sign a document of "high treason" and the physical endurance of the Continental soldiers who saved the Revolution at Trenton and Princeton.

Designed specifically for genealogists, this talk goes beyond the history books to focus on the records. John will discuss how to locate your Revolutionary ancestors in NARA record groups, interpret pension narratives of the Ten Crucial Days, and find the hidden stories of those who risked their lives during the nation's darkest hour.

A Colorado resident, John is a native of Western Massachusetts with deep colonial roots. He grew up on a farm in Southwick, graduated from UMass Amherst, and earned a master's degree in political science from the University of Colorado. He's the past president of the Pikes Peak Genealogical Society, a current WMGS board member, and a fascinating speaker.

We hope you'll join us on **Wednesday, July 8 at 6 p.m. ET** on Zoom. Members will receive an email to register for the Zoom link. Please note the date, as we will be meeting one week later than usual because of the July 4 holiday.

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

Message From the President

by Jeanne Leblond

If you weren't able to attend our annual meeting in May, you can catch up on all the important updates in the summary included in this newsletter. Our annual election was held, and we're pleased to share that Dave Lapierre (Vice President), Jeanne Lockhart (Assistant Treasurer), and Gwen Laprade (Director) will continue to serve our society for another two-year term.



June is shaping up to be another busy month at WMGS. As we look ahead to our nation's 250th anniversary, we're continuing our focus on researching Revolutionary War ancestors. At this month's meeting, Bryna O'Sullivan will present how different types of Revolutionary War military service can influence the records available for your ancestor — an important topic for anyone exploring this era.

School will soon be out, but in the genealogical world, learning doesn't stop for summer recess. To keep your skills sharp, Dave Lapierre will be offering another Tech Talk session, this time highlighting an unexpected resource for genealogy education: YouTube.

With warmer weather on the horizon, many of us will be inspired to dive into summer research projects, such as cemetery sleuthing or cleanup, visiting archives or historical sites, or even walking in the footsteps of our ancestors.

We wish all of you a bright, productive, and sun-filled month of June.

June Training: Tech Talk With Dave Using YouTube for Genealogy



At our next Tech Talk with Dave session, we'll look at the world's largest video site and how you can use it to enrich your genealogy journey. Dave Lapierre will show how YouTube is far more than entertainment — it is a vast, free library for genealogists and family historians.

Discover genealogy channels offering free, clear tutorials; locate vintage films; find solutions for tough research roadblocks; view archival footage; and learn to organize your favorite videos and control playback speed. Dave will guide us step-by-step through navigating the website easily, adjusting settings for comfortable viewing, and safely saving videos to watch later.

We hope you'll join us on **Thursday, June 18 at 7 p.m. ET** on Zoom.

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

WMGS is pleased
to welcome
a returning member!

Tina Peters



WMGS Annual Meeting Recap

Our annual meeting was held virtually on May 6, following an engaging presentation by David Allen Lambert, Chief Genealogist at American Ancestors.

Financial Review and Membership Numbers



A financial summary prepared by Assistant Treasurer Jeanne Lockhart was shared with members. As in recent years, our annual income remains below our annual expenses. However, thanks to generous member donations on Giving Tuesday and throughout the year, we were able to meet all financial obligations.

Membership remains stable, with 96 dues-paying members and 16 lifetime members. An audit of our financial records for the past two years was conducted by Vice President Dave Lapierre and Director John Putnam, with no discrepancies found.

Annual Election



The Nominating Committee — Cara Seitchek, Director, and Jeanne Leblond, President — presented the following slate of nominees for two-year terms expiring at the May 2028 annual meeting:

- Vice President: Dave Lapierre
- Assistant Treasurer: Jeanne Lockhart
- Director: Gwen Laprade

With no nominations from the floor, voting was conducted via anonymous electronic polling, and the slate was unanimously elected by those in attendance. President Jeanne Leblond expressed appreciation to Dave Lapierre, Jeanne Lockhart, and Gwen Laprade for their continued service on the Board.

Jeanne also noted that the positions of Secretary and Treasurer remain vacant and encouraged members to consider stepping into these important roles.

Accomplishments Over the Past Year



Our society:

- Offered 12 webinars and 9 training/SIG sessions, plus our annual virtual holiday party — 22 virtual programs in total.
- Launched a new Marketing Team focused on expanding our reach and welcoming new members.
- Leveraged our free nonprofit Canva Pro software account to create engaging Facebook posts and a new society brochure. Each member will receive a brochure with their renewal, with a request to share it with others who may be interested in joining.

Member Connection Survey Results

Thirty-eight members participated in our recent Member Connection Survey, and the message was clear: Members want more opportunities to collaborate, share expertise, and explore shared research interests. Highlights include the following:

Gen Helpers Group

- 56% are willing to help other members.
- 58% have brick walls or would appreciate research assistance.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

- 85% expressed interest in participating.
- Most-requested topics included colonial New England, Western Massachusetts ancestors, French-Canadian, military, various ethnic groups, African American, DNA, and one-name studies.
- A similar percentage reported having expertise in these same areas — an encouraging sign for launching a Gen Helpers Group.

Member Directory

- 82% responded positively to creating a surname/place/topic directory, either in the Members Only section of our website or as a redacted version for non-members who may join.

Next Steps

- Our first SIG — Western Massachusetts Ancestors — debuts in May.
- Planning is underway for a surname/place/topic directory, with signups expected this fall.
- A Gen Helpers group is also in development for launch this fall.

Looking Ahead: Challenges & Opportunities



To keep WMGS thriving, we must continue to increase our membership, strengthen volunteer participation, and ensure our programming remains robust and relevant. Donations and volunteer contributions have been essential — and deeply appreciated — but sustaining our society requires ongoing engagement from all members.

Even small actions make a meaningful difference: renewing your membership, gifting a membership, liking and sharing our Facebook posts, or submitting items for the newsletter all help WMGS flourish.

In the coming year, WMGS will focus on:

- Expanding membership
- Encouraging new volunteers
- Staying current with trends in genealogy societies and the broader genealogical community
- Continuing to offer high-quality educational programs

WMGS is proud of everything we've accomplished together, and we're excited for the year ahead. With your participation, we'll continue to grow, innovate, and support one another in our shared passion for genealogy.

Genealogy Tidbit: Making the Most of a Free Ancestry.com Membership



If you don't currently subscribe to [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com), it's still worthwhile to create a free registered guest account or keep yours active if you've let a paid membership lapse.

While free accounts don't provide access to all of Ancestry's record databases, many public libraries offer complimentary access to **Ancestry Library Edition**, which includes most U.S. collections. Library access does

have limitations, such as not allowing users to create or edit family trees, but it remains a valuable research tool.

Because guest accounts are free, there's no need to cancel them; you won't be billed. Simply stop using the account whenever you choose. If you decide to sign up for a free trial subscription, be sure to cancel within the two-week trial period to avoid charges. To create a guest account, visit the Support section on Ancestry's home page for instructions.

Free Resources You May Be Overlooking

Ancestry.com offers a surprising number of free tools and educational materials, including:

- Dozens of research guides
- Charts and forms such as family group sheets, U.S./Canadian/UK census forms, and ancestral charts
- **Ancestry Academy**, which contains hundreds of free video tutorials on research methods, DNA tools, and more (including 13 videos focused on Massachusetts research)

In addition, Ancestry provides access to several free databases, including indexes for census, vital, and military records, as well as collections from the U.S. and many international locations.

Free Massachusetts Collections Not Available on FamilySearch



While [FamilySearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org) remains unmatched for free access to digitized records, Ancestry hosts some Massachusetts collections that FamilySearch does not, such as the following:

Massachusetts, Mason Membership Cards, 1733–1990 (Free Index)

Massachusetts, Grand Army of the Republic Membership Records, 1866–1942 (Free Index) — includes membership details, posts, and sometimes service notes for Union Civil War veterans.

Massachusetts, Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War (Free Index)

Massachusetts, Town Clerk Vital and Town Records (Selected Towns) Free Indexes

Additional free resources may be available if you have taken an AncestryDNA test.

Trees and Access Considerations

You can create a family tree (or continue to access a tree you built during a previous subscription) using a free account. However, without a paid membership, you cannot view the images or documents you previously attached to your tree. For this reason, it's essential to maintain your primary or "master" tree in a stand-alone genealogy program where you control your own data.

Tips for Paid Subscriptions

Some researchers rotate their subscriptions to paid sites throughout the year. If you decide to purchase an Ancestry membership, watch for sales. Ancestry frequently offers 50% discounts around major holidays. Many genealogy blogs and newsletters share alerts about these promotions, so consider subscribing or following them on social media.

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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