

MASSACHUSETTS GENEALOGICAL COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

What is the Massachusetts Genealogical Council?

The Massachusetts Genealogical Council was formed in 1978 by members of the Massachusetts Society of Genealogists. It is composed of Massachusetts genealogical and historical organizations and individuals, who are interested in the preservation of records relating to Massachusetts history, and ensuring that these records remain available and open to use by genealogists and historians. Members of the Massachusetts Genealogical Council monitor legislation and regulatory actions by government officials that might affect access to records. This includes local, state and federal government actions.

2014 Supporting Organizations

Cape Cod Genealogical Society
Central Massachusetts Genealogical Society
Falmouth Genealogical Society
The Genealogical Roundtable
Massachusetts Society of Genealogists, Inc.
Massachusetts Society of Mayflower Descendants
The Irish Ancestral Research Association, Inc.

FROM THE PRESIDENT – Mary Ellen Grogan

The Massachusetts Genealogical Council was formed in 1978 by members of the Massachusetts Society of Genealogists. It was set-up to be a watchdog organization to monitor legislation and regulations that would affect records access and preservation, and to work with the record custodians to ensure that documents would be available to genealogists and historians. In the years since then, our concerns about preservation and access have continued to grow. Due to the efforts of our members we are able to use many more records in Massachusetts than researchers do in other states. However, problems can arise at any time and we must remain vigilant.

In Franklin County, North Carolina, a new county clerk discovered that a basement room of the court house was full of records dating to the mid-nineteenth century. Shelves were collapsing, documents were in boxes that were damaged by age, and a water leak in the past had caused mold to develop. Local historians and genealogists became involved in the effort to inventory the records, preserve them, and make them available for use. The State Archives was asked to provide an opinion on the best way to handle the records. The Department of Public Health was asked to evaluate the space due to concerns about mold. There seems to be a difference of opinion on what happened next, but the result was that all the records in the building were burned. No notice was given to the historical community.

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The Seminar is on July 26! Early Registration closes on July 15. The link to registration is on the Home Page of the MGC website. More information is on page 4 and 5 of the newsletter.

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In Virginia, an apparently innocuous law was passed regarding the privacy of permits to carry hand guns. Judy Russell has described this incident as an example “of the law of unintended consequences”. Since the gun permits were filed with other court records, more than 220 rolls of microfilmed court records dating back to the 18th century had to be pulled from public access. Efforts are being made to amend the law to allow the non-gun-permit-records to be viewed.

In Massachusetts, the law detailing the definition of a public record was amended. A newspaper had requested the health records of a state employee when doing an investigation of workers’ compensation cases. The court determined that state employee medical records were not public records and therefore not open for viewing. The law was amended, but without sufficient clarity with regard to the records to be closed and the relevant time period. This resulted in a legal opinion that any state records that included a reference to a medical condition should be closed. The State Archives then closed access to records that had previously been open to researchers: state hospitals, veterans, schools, prisons, overseers of the poor, and the Salem Witchcraft Trials to name only a few. This was never the intent of the court or the legislature, but this is the result. The Massachusetts Genealogical Council has submitted a bill intended to address this situation

What can we do? We will continue to monitor legislation, and support bills that will open records to us. We have also formed a group to identify local, state and private record holdings that are important, but are difficult to access. We are working with several organizations that are interested to scanning important records and making them available online. We must work actively together to preserve our records and protect our access. The Massachusetts Genealogical Council is the only state-level organization that has such a responsibility and our reputation among other genealogists is high. Be proud of your work.

FEDERAL AND STATE CIVIL RECORDS – Teresa Scott and Barbara Jean Mathews CG Bills Before the 188th General Court of Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Genealogical Council supports H2876, S1473, and S1474. We concur with H3945 which impacts not just access but organizational implementation.

Bill Number	Submitter	Name of Bill	What the Bill Would Do	Current Committee
H2876	Angelo Scaccia for William Galvin	An Act relative to records open to public inspection	All records in the custody of the state secretary which are ninety years or older shall be open to public inspection.	House Ways and Means Committee
H3945	Consolidated from several earlier bills	An Act to improve access to public records	State agencies that design or acquire a recordkeeping system or database must segregate public and private information and do so in a way that will not restrict	House Ways and Means Committee

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			access to the public.	
S1473	Kenneth Donnelly by request of the Massachusetts Genealogical Council	An Act relative to records open to public inspection	All records in the custody of the state secretary which are ninety years or older shall be open to public inspection; and the birth and marriage records of people born out-of-wedlock will no longer be treated differently.	Senate Ways and Means Committee
S1474	Kenneth Donnelly by request of the Massachusetts Genealogical Council	An Act providing non-certified copies of records	The custodians of birth, marriage, and death records will provide non-certified copies of records on plain paper rather than safety paper. These copies will be marked "for research purposes only, not to be used as evidence." The cost will be 20% of the cost of a certified copy.	Senate Ways and Means Committee

Changes to Access to the Social Security Death Index (SSDI)

The 2013 Federal Budget Compromise Bill removed the Social Security Death Index (also known as the Death Master File) from the Freedom of Information Act. It then instituted a delay in revealing death information until the end of the third calendar year following a person's death. This has affected your access to death information on all online databases.

The Records Preservation and Access Committee Liaison Activities

The national genealogical community works together through the *Records Preservation and Access Committee* (RPAC), which today includes The National Genealogical Society (NGS), the Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS) and the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) as sponsoring members. The Association of Professional Genealogists (APG), the Board for Certification of Genealogists (BCG), the International Commission for the Accreditation of Professional Genealogists (ICAPGen), the American Society of Genealogists (ASG), ProQuest and Ancestry.com serve as participating members.

RPAC meets monthly, and more often if needed, to advise the genealogical and historical communities, as well as other interested parties, on ensuring proper access to vital records, on means to effect legislation, and on supporting strong records preservation policies and practices. The RPAC Liaison from Massachusetts is Barbara Mathews. She attends monthly conference calls of the committee. If you have records issues, please contact her at fedrecords@massgencouncil.org.

Mary Tedesco, Director of Communications for the Massachusetts Genealogical Council, attended the RPAC meeting at the National Genealogy Society conference on May 8th. There RPAC announced support of the *Genealogists Declaration of Rights* developed by Rob Rafford from Connecticut. Further information on this petition, and instructions on how to add your support, is on the MGC Home page.

Polly FitzGerald Kimmitt, MGC Past President, will attend the RPAC meeting at the Federation of Genealogical Societies conference in San Antonio in August.

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When: Saturday, July 26, 2014

**Where: the Mansfield Holiday Inn, 31
Hampshire St, Mansfield, MA 02048.
Full information is on the link on the
Home page of the MGC website.**

The hotel is easily accessible by car and by public transportation. The MBTA Commuter Rail (Providence/Stoughton Line) stops at the Mansfield Station. The Holiday Inn will provide a bus to pick you up in the morning, and return you at the end of the Seminar. Please let us know on the registration form if you will be using this option so that we can arrange the shuttle.

Time Table (a guide, it may be altered slightly)

7:30-9:30am: Registration Desk is open in the hotel (follow the signs) and continental breakfast will be served. Vendors will set-up and be open until the afternoon.

8:15 to 9:00am: We will have our annual meeting, and present reports on records preservation and access issues.

9:00 to 10:00am: First Session,

10:30 to 11:30am: Second Session

12:00 to 1:30pm: Lunch and Presentation

2:00 to 3:00pm: Third Session

3:15 to 4:15pm: Fourth Session

Breakfast: Assorted Breakfast Pastries with Coffee & Tea (served 7:30 to 9:30)

Lunch: Since we will be having a plated luncheon (waiter service) you need to make a choice of entrée on your registration form. The ticket will be in the registration packet. Choice of Chicken Francaise (boneless chicken cutlet in a lemon caper sauce) OR Four Cheese Lasagna with Marinara Sauce (vegetarian option). Both served with fruit cup, rolls, vegetable, Double Chocolate Fudge Cake, coffee and tea. If you have any food restrictions, please notify us. The hotel staff will make every effort to accommodate you.

Overnight Accommodations: If you would like to spend the night, the Holiday Inn is holding some rooms for our guests on Friday and Saturday nights. The room rate will be \$139 plus tax. Please call the hotel (508) 339-2200 by July 4th, and tell them you are with the MGC Group. We will organize a get together for anyone staying overnight. Let the Program Director know you are staying at the hotel: program@massgencouncil.org.

The Holiday Inn website: www.ihg.com/holidayinn/hotels/us/en/mansfield/bosmf/hoteldetail

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PROGRAM

There will be three tracks with four lectures. You may attend any lecture. Full information on the speakers and topics is on the Home page of the MGC website (massgencouncil.org).

- 9:00 to 10:00** **Alice Kane - Genealogy Fundamentals**
Walter Hickey - Immigrant Origins in Naturalization Records
Maureen Taylor - Solving the Case: Photos, Genealogy and History
- 10:30 to 11:30** **Mary Ellen Grogan - Genealogy Research Online**
Mary Tedesco - Adventures in Italian Genealogy
Julie Michutka – Scrivener
- 12:00 to 1:30** **Luncheon with Table Topics and a special presentation**
- 2:00 to 3:00** **Walter Hickey - The Census is only Step One**
Michael J. Leclerc - Advanced Research for Quebec Ancestors
Drew Bartley - The new, free guide to Boston - what is there and how to use it
- 3:15 to 4:15** **Shellee Morehead, Ph.D, CG - Sex, DNA and Family History**
Judy Lucey - Discovering Your Irish Ancestry in Print and Online Sources
Barbara J. Mathews, CG - Don't Let the GPS Own You: Take Charge of Your Proof Discussions!

PRICE

\$65 for members, \$75 for non-members (you may join for \$10) until July 15th; \$85 for registration between July 15th and July 23rd when registration closes. Registration includes: breakfast and lunch.

REGISTRATION

Registration may be done online or by mail. The links to the forms are on the Home page of the MGC website. If you are a member, you need to sign in first with your member login and password. If you have any difficulty, please notify us and we will let you know what your login and password is. If you register online, you will pay with a credit card using Paypal. You do not need a Paypal account to use this service. Simply log in as a “Guest” user. It is easy.

Please join us. You will have an enjoyable and instructive day, and meet fellow genealogists. This is important. Most of us labor alone with no one to share our research experiences.

Complete information is on the MGC home page at <http://massgencouncil.org>.

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Items of Interest for Genealogists!

Massachusetts Vital Records are online through 1920 at FamilySearch.org

The FamilySearch website has a particularly nice feature that allows you to search by parents' names, making it possible to recreate families. Ancestry, in coordination with the New England Historic Genealogical Society, has also entered the Indexes to the Vital Records online. Ancestry has a very nice feature which allows you to search for possible spouses (people whose names occur on the same volume and page). Although Ancestry does not have the State copy of the VRs, they have many town records which were originally copied by Jay Holbrook. You should always check both the state and town copy whenever possible.

Pennsylvania putting older vital records online at Ancestry

From the Genealogical Research Institute of Pittsburgh (GRIP) Blog (<http://www.gripitt.org/?p=1424>)

When Pennsylvania opened its state vital records to the public (births over 105 years old and deaths over 50 years old) in 2012, Ancestry.com contracted to digitize them. That process was completed and now the digitized certificates (not records but original certificates) are being made accessible in batches through Ancestry.com. As promised, Ancestry.com has posted the next installment of Pennsylvania death certificates for 1924-1944, making the entire collection now available from the beginning of state death certificates in 1906 through 1944. The next installment, scheduled for the November, should bring access to all the legally permitted public death certificates up to 1963. Birth certificates from 1906 to 1908, although publicly available now, will not be placed in the Ancestry.com database until next spring.

Free Family Record Forms from the Library of Congress Web Site

From Dick Eastman's Newsletter, June 16, 2014

"Long before the invention of home computers that could generate forms, many families recorded their important family events within their Bibles. Whether printed as part of the Bible or printed on separate paper forms that could be stored alongside the family Bible, these forms often were ornate with beautiful artwork. The Library of Congress has collected many of these forms and made them available online. Some are simple "fill in the blank" forms while others have space to manually paste in pictures. All of the forms are available free of charge.

You can download any of these old Family Records and Family Register forms and even print them on your own printer, then use them as you wish. Many of them are "oversized." If so, they cannot be printed on a normal computer printer that only handles 8½ by 11 inch paper. However, you can always save them to a flash drive and then have them printed on an oversized printer or plotter at FedEx Office (formerly called Kinko) or other service that has such hardware available. You can even send the print image to online to <http://www.fedex.com/us/office/> and either pick up the finished printout in person or have it shipped to you. You will have to pay a few dollars for the printing and shipping, of course.

You can find many Family Records and Family Register forms by starting at:

<http://www.loc.gov/search/?q=Family+Records+and+Registers>. Some of these forms are huge! Downloading them may take a minute or two on a slow to medium speed Internet connection. However, I will suggest the results are worth the wait."

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REPOSITORIES OF INTEREST TO GENEALOGISTS

THE MASSACHUSETTS STATE LIBRARY

The Massachusetts State Library has an excellent collection of historical materials for genealogists. The main reading room is located on the third floor of the State House, with their Special Collections department in the sub-basement. The Library is open to the public, and genealogists are welcome. Their materials do not circulate; they must be used in the Library. The State Library is primarily a legal research center, but they have specialized in records of the cities and towns of Massachusetts. Town histories, town reports, maps, city directories, and voting lists are among their collections. The Library is making a concerted effort to digitize records, and provide complete lists of their holdings on their website, <http://www.mass.gov/anf/research-and-tech/oversight-agencies/lib/>.

Click *Research State and Local History*, then *Genealogical Resources*. Check out their lists of holdings for the towns of your ancestors. Most of these resources are in paper copies.

For example, this is the online entry for *City Directories and Voting lists for Chelsea*:

City Directories and Voting Lists

This large collection dates from the first Boston directory of 1789 and covers most Massachusetts communities. The last Boston directory was published in 1981. Around this time directories for other Massachusetts cities and towns cease to be published, supplanted by the telephone book as a listing for a town's residents, businesses, organizations, and services. Directories contain a list of persons, organized by last name, residing in a town or city. However, some directories (including "Blue Books") do have house guides, which contain listings by address and not individual. City Directories and Voting Lists are found in the State Library's Special Collections.

CHELSEA CITY DIRECTORIES (in the State Library collection): 1847-1848, 1850, 1852, 1856, 1858, 1860, 1861, 1864, 1866, 1868, 1870, 1872, 1874, 1876, 1878, 1880, 1882, 1884, 1886-1890, 1892, 1893, 1895-1896, 1897, 1899, 1901, 1902-1903, 1904, 1906, 1908, 1910, 1912, 1914, 1916, 1918, 1921-1922, 1925, 1928, 1932, 1934-1935, 1937, 1940, 1946

BUSINESS DIRECTORIES: 1848

VOTING LISTS: 1917, 1924, 1931-1936, 1938-1940, 1942-1947, 1950, 1952, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1958, 1959, 1972, 1978, 1980, 1988

I know most genealogists are familiar with City Directories, but you may never have used Voting Lists (also known as Ward Lists). This information is commonly found in town records beginning around 1885. Later lists were printed and distributed more widely. Voting lists are organized by address, and list everyone who is eligible to vote, regardless of whether they have registered to vote. It lists similar information to a City Directory: name, age, occupation, address, political party and sometimes previous address. These records supplement the City Directories, and make it easier to search by residence.

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UPCOMING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES (WEEKLONG COURSES)

**British Institute, International Society for British Genealogy and Family History (<http://isbgfh.org>)
October 20-24, 2014 in Salt Lake City, at the Salt Plaza Hotel**

“The Institute strives to further your education about the records and the locations that are important to your genealogical research. Classes are intentionally small in order for the participants to experience individual instruction. All classes are held in a Salt Lake City hotel near the Family History Library in the morning with research at the Family History Library in the afternoons. Instructors are available all afternoon.”

The following courses will be offered in 2014:

From Simple to Complex: Applying Genealogy’s Standard of Acceptability to British Research – Tom Jones
Researching Your Irish Ancestors – David Rencher
Scottish Research: The Fundamentals and Beyond – Paul Milner
Welsh Family History Made Simple – Darris Williams

**Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy aka SLIG, Utah Genealogical Association (<http://infouga.org>)
January 12-16, 2015 in Salt Lake City at the Hilton Hotel**

“The Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy (SLIG) is a week-long intensive educational experience that takes students deep into their topic of choice. Instead of a breadth of topics like a conference, this institute offers a depth of knowledge. Students attending SLIG have the opportunity to advance their education with renowned genealogy experts during a week-long experience, network through special events, and tap into the wealth of resources at the nearby Family History Library.

Sponsored by the Utah Genealogical Association, SLIG is now in its 20th year. Having outgrown their previous venue, the 2015 program will be held at the Hilton Salt Lake City. This new venue offers plenty of elbow room for learning, networking, and celebrating at the closing awards banquet. Offering SLIG four-star quality at a three-star price, all students desiring to do so will be able to stay at the conference hotel in order to immerse themselves completely in the SLIG experience.”

There were twelve courses offered when registration opened. As of June 25, 2014, the following courses still had vacancies:

Finding Immigrant Origins, coordinated by David Ouimette (FamilySearch)
Diving Deeper into New England, coordinated by Josh Taylor (Findmypast)
Research in Original Source Repositories, coordinated by John Coletta
Advanced German Research, coordinated by Warren Bittner
Post War Military Records, coordinated by Craig Scott
Resources and Strategies for United States Research, coordinator by Paula Stuart Warren

Mary Ellen Grogan, President of the Massachusetts Genealogical Council, has attended both the British Institute and SLIG courses in the past and will do so in 2014/2015. If you have any questions, please ask her at the MGC seminar on July 26th. Hope to see you all there!