

## WHAT IS COMING UP.....

by Josh Taylor

Mark Your Calendars. The Massachusetts Genealogical Council is proud to present the 2009 Annual Seminar, to be held July 18, 2009 at Bentley College in Waltham. This year's seminar offers something for every genealogist including lectures and panels on general methodology, Irish genealogy, DNA research, professional genealogy, Internet and technology, and a host of other topics. Watch the MGC Website (<http://www.massgenealogicalcouncil.com>) for the complete program and registration details.

This year's main speaker will be Paula Stuart-Warren, CG, an award-winning genealogist. Since the early 1980s Paula has worked full time in the area of genealogical and historical research, lecturing, consulting, and writing. She is a graduate of the weeklong U.S. National Institute of Genealogical Research held at the National Archives and in 1988 earned her national certification from the Board for Certification of Genealogists. A current member of the Federation of Genealogical Societies' Board of Directors, Paula has also served as a national officer of the Association of Professional Genealogists and is an active volunteer in numerous genealogical, historical, and professional organizations. She has been a frequent lecture at both National Genealogical Society (NGS) and Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS) national conference since the early 1990s. A former columnist for Ancestry.com, Paula has written articles for the Minnesota Genealogist, Digital Genealogist, FGS Forum, Family Tree Magazine, NewEnglandAncestors.org, NGS NewsMagazine, and Ancestry Magazine. She also co-authored the best-selling Your Guide to the Family History Library: How to Access the World's Largest Genealogy Resource. Paula has been recognized as a fellow of the Minnesota Genealogical Society, as is a recipient of the George E. Williams Award from the Federation of Genealogical Societies for her service to FGS and its member societies and the Grahame T Smallwood, Jr. Award of Merit from the Association of Professional Genealogists.

This year's seminar will also feature a silent auction, exhibitors, and a special "Beginner's Workshop," designed to help genealogists "jump-start" their research. More information, including the complete seminar schedule and registration information will be available in the next issue of the newsletter. If you would like to volunteer to help at the conference, or would like to receive additional conference additional by e-mail, please e-mail [massgenseminar@gmail.com](mailto:massgenseminar@gmail.com).

***We look forward to seeing you there!***

***D. Joshua Taylor***

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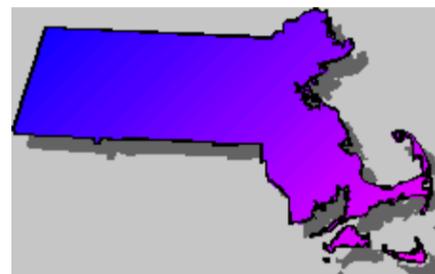
***MGC SILENT AUCTION.....***

MGC will again feature a Silent Auction at this year's July conference. Polly Kimmitt and Melinde Lutz Sanborn will be in charge of arrangements. Begin thinking of what you'd like to place up for bid. Last year there was terrific variety – everything from blocks of research time from skilled genealogists, to historic maps, CDs of lectures, memberships in organizations, and books, books, books. Conference attendees may place things into consideration. Anyone may bid. As last year, an email address will be given out online for remote bidders. Photos of objects/services to be auctioned will be sent electronically. Look for all the details in our next Newsletter and start dusting off your duplicates now!

***FROM THE EDITOR.....***

***by Arthur J. Roberts***

Wow...I had trouble just fitting all the news into this Newsletter. The legislature is in a new session, the MGC Annual Seminar is coming and the government is trying to limit research hours. What else can be going on? It is important that all of you read the inserts in this issue. The New England Regional Genealogical Conference is coming up in April with some wonderful speakers. As for the MGC seminar in July we just received news that Vincent Cannato, the author of the soon to be published AMERICAN PASSAGE, the story of Ellis Island will not only be speaking at the MGC Seminar but will also be signing his new book which will be released in June. Well, this is all the space I've been allowed. Enjoy this edition.



## Massachusetts Genealogical Council Newsletter

**ISSUE: March, 2009 Visit us: [www.massgencouncil.org](http://www.massgencouncil.org)**

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**A Publication of the Massachusetts Genealogical Council Established in 1980**

***FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT....***

***~ President's Letter ~  
Barbara J. Mathews, CG***

My thanks to all of you who responded to our email posting about the new restriction in research hours at the Vital Statistics office of the Commonwealth at Columbia Point. While we all recognize that cutbacks in service are going to happen in these difficult economic times, taking away two-thirds of our access is way too much of a hit in one area. All can see that the cutbacks have been unfairly apportioned. Feedback from representatives and senators in the Massachusetts legislature has been very positive.

Excitement is building for the bi-annual New England Regional Genealogical Conference in Manchester, New Hampshire, 22-26 April 2009. In size and complexity, but NOT in price, this conference rivals the big national conferences. NERGC is put on by a regional consortium of genealogy societies. MGC is just one of the participating societies. For a great description of the conference, see Dick Eastman's online genealogical newsletter and blog. Check out: [http://blog.eogn.com/eastmans\\_online\\_genealogy/2009/02/new-england-regional-genealogical-conference.html#more](http://blog.eogn.com/eastmans_online_genealogy/2009/02/new-england-regional-genealogical-conference.html#more). Or, if you want to do a whole lot less typing, then use this tiny URL that I just registered for access to that very long address: <http://tinyurl.com/dmao7g>.

Our sponsored NERGC speaker for 2009 will be Sharon Sergeant, who will discuss the Mischa Defonseca fraud case that she uncovered a year ago. Sharon gave a brief synopsis of this case as our luncheon speaker at our own annual meeting last year. There was just a fantastic interview with our Sharon in the magazine of Boston University. The article title is "Hoax Buster" and you can see it online at <http://www.bu.edu/today/node/8337>.

At NERGC, Sharon speaks on Friday afternoon, April 24th, in the 4:45-5:45 time slot. If you attend, be sure to come hear Sharon and to visit the MGC booth in the exhibit hall. Also, please consider doing an hour of volunteer work while at NERGC; ask that it be counted towards the MGC quota. Both the NERGC registration information and the volunteer contact information are posted elsewhere in this newsletter.

We are now less than six months away from our own Annual Meeting and Seminar. On July 18th, 2009, we will revisit Bentley College to enjoy a full day of sessions. Joshua Taylor has put together a program with something for everyone. Our featured speaker Paula Stuart-Warren, CG, is known nationally for her expertise in research issues. Come to hear Paula. We could all use a tune-up in our research strategies!

Yours, Barbara

## BROPHY'S CORNER

### Open the 1926 Irish Census!

By Michael Brophy

In Massachusetts, one in four of us claims Irish ancestry-about double the national average according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Along with Delaware and New Hampshire, the Irish are the leading ancestry group in the state. With St Patrick's Day coming in a few weeks, we are a lucky triplet indeed.

In the United States, we know the difficulties of tracing ancestors during a slightly earlier time period with the loss of the 1890 census, save a few names down south and the Civil War Veteran's Schedules. The 19th century Irish censuses are all but gone due to the June 30, 1922 bombing of the Four Courts building and bureaucratic blunders between the Irish and English governments. The census returns lost forever with only a few fragments left are the 1821, 1831, 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, and the 1891 censuses of the island. A plan to conduct a 1921 census was scraped due the Civil War raging at the time.

The only publically available censuses of Ireland are the 1901 and 1911 returns. Due to the horrendous losses of irreplaceable genealogical material mentioned above, public access was granted in 1961 when the records were transferred to the Public Records Office (PRO). In the United States we have a reasonable 72 year release restriction for census returns that guarantees every adult a degree of privacy. The latest available US census is the 1930 census, which is available online at many public libraries around the Commonwealth.

The fact the Irish government made a decision almost fifty years ago to release the 1911 census to alleviate the loss of the 19th century returns after only fifty years sets an important precedent for the release of the 1926 returns now. If we do nothing, the census will remain closed under the current 100 year rule, until 2026. Will you be alive then to look at it?

For the Massachusetts Irish-American, the returns could be an invaluable resource. Many of the people enumerated are the parents and grandparents of living people. For beginning genealogists, this is an important starting point to tracing back one's ancestry. For we folks who have been doing genealogy for many years, we know that our work is never done and that our conclusions about our ancestry are rarely, ironclad certain.

The Council of Irish Genealogical Organizations (CIGO) launched an effort recently to petition the Irish government to open the 1926 Irish Census. CIGO's 1926 census site is: [http://www.cigo.ie/campaigns\\_1926.html](http://www.cigo.ie/campaigns_1926.html) and endorse their petition you can sign on at: <http://www.petitionspot.com/petitions/1926C>.

## News From The Hill

By Bernie Couming



Regarding the current legislative session (2009-2010) at the Massachusetts General Court, the Mass. Genealogical Council (MGC) has re-submitted the exact same bill as last session, which did not get passed into law then.

Newly elected Senator Thomas P. Kennedy is the Primary sponsor of our bill. Tom (who served several years as Representative from Brockton) has long been a supporter of the preservation of access rights to public vital records. Representatives Peter Koutoujian of Waltham and William C. Galvin of Canton continue in their support and signed on as co-sponsors again this year. Also, adding his name as a co-sponsor is State Senator Steven C. Panagiotakos of the first Middlesex District and Chairman of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means.

Other supporters are still being solicited to sign on as well. That should include your own Representatives and Senators if you are able to persuade them to add their name via Sen. Thomas P. Kennedy's office.

At present (February 20, 2009) the clerk's office has entered our bill in their Docket List as Docket # 888. That office will assign an actual bill number at the same time as it is referred to a committee and scheduled for a Public Hearing. Typically that occurs in the spring. Last session it was assigned to the Joint Committee on Public Health, Chaired (in Part) by Rep. Peter Koutoujian.

In the Executive our one ally in preserving the open access continues to be the Office of the Director of Public Records, Alan Cote who serves under the Secretary of the Commonwealth, William Galvin. Their office continues to monitor legislative activity in concert with us.

Our efforts to gain passage of our bill over the efforts of those who would close access for the past 50 to 100 years depends on the collaborative involvement of our entire community, and your communication with your own representatives and senators is the first link in that collaboration. When our bill (and probably the numerous other bills filed on this subject) are scheduled for the public hearing, we hope that a large number of you will be able to attend to support our position. The movement of legislation is determined largely by the perception of voter support.

## A SIGN OF THE TIMES.....

To Massachusetts Genealogical Community:

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has announced a drastic cut in the research hours available to genealogists and the public at large. The notice reads:

**DUE TO BUDGET RESTRICTIONS AND STAFFING REDUCTIONS, THE REGISTRY OF VITAL RECORDS AND STATISTICS WILL BE REDUCING RESEARCH ROOM HOURS EFFECTIVE**

**FEBRUARY 23, 2009. NEW RESEARCH HOURS WILL BE:**

**MONDAY: 2:00pm - 4:30pm TUESDAY: 9:00am - 12:00n**

**WEDNESDAY: NO RESEARCH HOURS**

**THURSDAY: 2:00pm - 4:30pm FRIDAY: 9:00am - 12:00pm**

we apologize for any inconvenienceThe cutback in hours represents a 16½ hour loss of research time from a previous weekly service level of 27 ½ hours. The reading room is not large enough to fit the current number of users in the new hours, so numerous researchers will be turned away.

### Change in Research Hours

Day	New Hours	Old Hours
Monday	2 ½	5 ½
Tuesday	3	5 ½
Wednesday	0	5 ½
Thursday	2 ½	5 ½
Friday	3	5 ½
Total per week	11	27 ½

The Registry plays an essential role by providing access to birth, marriage, death and divorce records in Massachusetts from 1916 to the present. The records are essential for the legal community when searching for legal heirs at law for personal estates as well as law enforcement officials when researching individual backgrounds. Massachusetts' passionate genealogy community uses the registry to research family history. Visitors from outside the Commonwealth bring countless tourism dollars into Massachusetts every year by doing research at the facility. The medical information contained in the records is critical to building a family history for medical providers of all kinds. By reducing hours at the facility, the Commonwealth is reducing its own revenue stream by losing the nine dollar per hour research fee from researchers.

EMAIL YOUR REPRESENTATIVES....

(Subject line email): Objection to drastic cut back in hours at the Registry of Vital Records

Dear [Senator/Representative/Governor Patrick]:

Please act immediately to maintain the current hours at the Registry of Vital Records. The Department of Public Health's announcement that Registry research room hours will be reduced from the current 27½ hours to a paltry 11 hours per week effective February 23 is unacceptable. The Commonwealth's citizens need your immediate attention to stop this action.

The Registry plays an essential role by providing access to birth, marriage, death and divorce records in Massachusetts from 1916 to the present. These records are essential for the legal community and law enforcement officials. Massachusetts' passionate genealogy community uses the Registry to research family history. The medical information these records contain is critical to building a family health care history. The Registry is a tourism destination for countless visitors from outside our borders, bringing in thousands of dollars to our state government's coffers every year. The reduction in hours at the Registry will reduce the Commonwealth's own revenue stream by losing the nine dollar per hour research fee paid by every researcher. It also strangles a revenue stream for the dozens of genealogists who depend on research hours to sustain their small businesses, reducing the taxes they can pay.

Thank you for attention to this important issue. I look forward to your positive action on this matter.

Sincerely

(Your name)

(Telephone Number)