

NEWSLETTER

Fall 2006

www.massgencouncil.org

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK...

A great big thank-you goes to all of you who responded to the legislative alert sent out by MGC regarding the very restrictive O'Brien bills filed in the Massachusetts legislature.

The bills, in the final analysis, were not considered before the end of the legislative session. However, a special session of the legislature may be called in order to deal with a bond bill requested by Governor Romney.

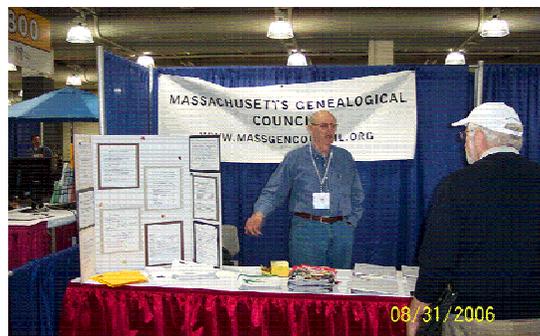
If the legislature meets, then other issues might be included in the discussion. The three O'Brien bills, which MGC and the genealogical community reject outright, might be reconsidered.

Should this be the case, we may need to call on all of you again. For those of you who are not current Massachusetts residents, it may help to point out to legislators that your genealogical visits to this state contribute to our economy: hotel stays, restaurant visits, etc. The economic impact of closing access to research records ought to speak loudly to legislators of the only state that is losing population. After all, if you cannot get at the records, why make the trip here.

Let's hope that our worries are for naught.

Best wishes,

Daphnah Sage



MASSACHUSETTS GENEALOGICAL COUNCIL AT FGS

Our Secretary, Peter Viles, pictured above did the first shift at the opening of the hall. Our booth was in a great location between the Association of Professional Genealogists booth and the Board of Certification. We were able to spread the word about MGC and our mission and vision to protect records access in Massachusetts to several hundred people. Our panel discussion, held on Saturday, was well attended. Details about the panel discussion can be found on page four.

Thank you to everyone who stopped by to say hello, including our new members who joined during the conference! We hope to see you all at our conference on July 14th. Check our website for more details.

MGC BOARD MEMBERS 2005-2007

OFFICERS

Daphnah Sage, President
Mary Ellen Grogan, Vice President
Benjamin Woznick, Treasurer
Peter Viles, Secretary

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Christine Sweet-Hart, CG, Newsletter Editor
Sharon Sergeant, Programs
Michael Brophy, Publicity
Sheila FitzPatrick, Ways & Means
Christine Sweet-Hart, CG, Webmaster

BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE

The MGC Board meets on Saturdays, from 1p.m. to 4p.m., four times a year at the National Archives in Waltham, unless otherwise noted. Meetings are open to all interested genealogists. Massachusetts genealogical organizations are urged to send a representative to these meetings. Contact: info@massgencouncil.org.

HISTORY AND MISSION STATEMENT

The Massachusetts Genealogical Council was founded in 1980, and has dedicated itself to serving the interests of the state's genealogical community.

The Council's stated purposes are: to act as advocates in monitoring legislative and administrative activities of governmental agencies which affect genealogists; to sponsor and present legislation and programs designed to expand the resources and accessibility of services; to develop and promote the growth, education and exchange of ideas among persons and organizations interested in the pursuit of genealogy; and to provide other activities to advance genealogy.

CONTACTING MGC

Newsletter Contributions: If you would like to have the projects or your activities of your society included in the MGC newsletter, please send them to: Newsletter Editor, Massachusetts Genealogical Council, P. O. Box 5393, Cochrane, MA 01778, or via email at info@massgencouncil.org.

Newsletter Options: If you would like to receive the newsletter via email, please contact the newsletter editor at info@massgencouncil.org.

Coming in the Next Issue: Vital record access updates, news, reviews.

Address/Email Change? Keep the MGC newsletter coming – inform us of any changes by contacting us at info@massgencouncil.org.

TV THAT WON'T ROT YOUR BRAIN

The Internet television channel Roots Television (<http://www.rootstelevision.com>) debuted last week, with our own contributing editor Sharon DeBartolo Carmack interviewing Henry Z. Jones, author of *Psychic Roots: Serendipity and Intuition in Genealogy*. (Come on, we know you've heard your ancestors talking to you -- listen to Jones relate similarly eerie research coincidences by clicking the Roots Living tab, then Roots Books). Other shows focus on Megan Smolenyak Smolenyak's search for the "real" Annie Moore (read our coverage in the Sept. 14 E-mail Update) and genealogist/comedian Heir Jordan's shtick about the five stages of genealogy (Bargaining: "OK, I'm related to you ... but only on my mother's side"). You'll also find how-to footage including lectures and instructional CDs, storytellers' recollections and a chance to say what you'd like to see (and would be willing to pay for) on Roots Television. We give it two thumbs up, but the addiction potential is high, so get hooked at your own risk.

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WORLD VITAL RECORDS OPENS FOR BUSINESS

After offering free records since its debut earlier this year, online genealogy newcomer World Vital Records (<http://worldvitalrecords.com>) launched its subscription service last week. The site, a project of Utah-based Internet business incubator Provo Labs, aims to become the number-two player in the genealogy industry--behind MyFamily.com, the company started by Provo Labs founder Paul Allen (he departed MyFamily.com in 2002). Paid content includes genealogy classes and podcasts, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' membership records (1830 to 1848), Scottish death records and UK marriage witnesses. The site offers newspapers through a partnership agreement with Small Town Papers (<http://www.smalltownpapers.com>). World Vital Records' Pennsylvania Gazette, The Liberator, African-American publications and Godey's Lady's Book also are available at Accessible Archives (<http://www.accessible.com>).

Some of World Vital Records' paid content is free elsewhere online, such as the 1880 US Census (at FamilySearch, <http://www.familysearch.com>), Kentucky Death records (<http://ukcc.uky.edu/~vitalrec>), Irish prisoners (<http://www.pcug.org.au/~ppmay/convicts.htm>) and UK marriage witnesses (<http://www.genuki.org.uk/mwi/>).

Content that will remain free includes the Social Security Death Index (SSDI), Bureau of Land Management (<http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov>) records, a few state death indexes and a host of miscellaneous Colorado records. Much of this also is on other Web sites. With all this overlap, World Vital Records needs more information on what'll be special about its site--spokesperson Whitney Ransom says that's coming. One boon: Many World Vital Records listings are geocoded. A relative's SSDI record, for example, shows a Microsoft Virtual Earth map of his county of residence at death, with tombstones marking nearby cemetery locations (although my great-aunt's cemetery wasn't shown in her record). You can click See Neighbors for people in the SSDI who shared your relative's ZIP code of last residence.

If you purchase a \$49.95 World Vital Records annual subscription before Oct. 31, you'll get another year free.

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FORM A PAC AND DON'T LOOK BACK

-- Melinde Lutz Sanborn, FASG

About forty minutes into the MGC panel discussion at FGS-Boston, the audience received its chance to comment. Thirty people heard four experienced genealogist-panelists from across the nation discuss issues of records access. Of the six thoughtful comments at the audience microphone, two firmly advocated a Political Action Committee (PAC) with adequate funding to help elect pro-access legislators and to oppose those who would restrict access; four discussed issues related to reaching legislators.

The Archivist of the United States, Dr. Allen Weinstein, kicked-off the whole discussion in the FGS Plenary Session on Thursday. He spoke about transparency in government and the actions he had taken to prevent "theft by socks" and theft by reclassification on the National Archives' shelves to several standing ovations. An energized base of genealogists subsequently sent a petition consisting of 10,000+ names to the Archives voicing support of his efforts.

Back in the trenches, our four panelists spoke to their experiences with various government policy changes. Marie Varrelman Melchiori, CG, CGL, from Virginia gave up close information about the NARA flood and budget cuts. Alvie L. Davidson, CG, PI, from Florida traced the extreme changes in his state's access laws in the last five years and stressed the loopholes that still exist in a state with a constitution dictating open records. Diane V. Gagel, Past President of the Ohio Genealogical Society, spoke of recent battles against records closures. Our own Sharon Sergeant gave an historical timeline from the Vital Records Model Act in the 1970s, which attempted to standardize record closings, to current NAPHSIS policies. We await the proposed Section 7211 regulations to be presented in December 2007, "conveniently after the elections."

In the spirited discussion afterwards, our President, Daphnah Sage, spoke to how legislators think, and explored the attention-getting issues of economic loss from tourism dollars turned away by restrictions.

MGC is proud to be part of the continuing national discussion on records access. A proactive stance on records access will be the subject of our upcoming MGC panel at the 2007 New England Regional Genealogical Conference (NERGC) at Hartford, Connecticut, April 17-22, 2007.

For more information on NERGC, please see their website at www.nergc.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS

NERGC CONFERENCE COMING TO HARTFORD

April 26-29, 2007

Start planning your conference experience today. Half the fun of the conference is choosing the programs that you will attend. Our featured speakers will be Cyndi Howells, Patricia Law Hatcher, and Henry Z. "Hank" Jones. Read the biographies of the conference speakers to gain insight into their experience. Ready your questions for the experts-those who will be presenting programs or those who will be available at the Ancestor Roadshow. Early preparation will make this a truly enjoyable experience.

The 2007 New England Regional Genealogical Conference registration brochure is now available in PDF format on the NERGC website at www.nergc.org. Be sure to bookmark the site. You can also sign up for the ezine to have regular updates sent directly to your email box.

Information adapted from the NERGC ezine.

OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS

October 26-29 **Salt Lake City, Utah**, AAHGS 2006 Conference: 'The Legacy of Our Roots: A Heritage for the Future' (www.aahgs.org)

IN OTHER NEWS



The MGC met on September 9, 2006, at the Acton Public Library. Pictured at right: first row: Sharon Sergeant, Programs; Wheaton Wilbar, Delegate; Christine Sweet-Hart, CG, Editor/Webmaster; Back row: Melinde Lutz Sanborn, FASG, Delegate; Mary Ellen Grogan, Vice President; Shirley Barnes, Civil Records; Bernie Couming, Civil Records (standing behind Shirley); Daphnah Sage, President; Suzanne Richardson, Delegate; Ben Woznick, Treasurer; Peter Viles, Secretary.

Would you like your newsletter faster and in color? Sign-up to receive your newsletter via email at info@massgencouncil.org.

Due to rising printing costs, we are no longer able to print the newsletter in color. By signing up to receive the newsletter via email, you can continue to receive the colorized version in a PDF format.

Send an email to info@massgencouncil.org with *NEWSLETTER* in the subject line. Please be sure to include your name in your request so that we can verify your membership information prior to sending.

Thank you!

ATTENTION MEMBERS:

Both FGS and the MGC are interested in knowing the current membership numbers for our member societies.

This information is important in helping us quote accurate figures when dealing with records access issues and the legislature.

Societies, and society officers are asked to submit your numbers and society name to us at info@massgencouncil.org. Society members are urged to contact your society officers and request that they submit this information.

MGC MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- *Allen County Public Library, Indiana
- *Afro-American Historical & Genealogical Society
- *Central Massachusetts Genealogical Society
- *Descendants of *Whaling Masters
- *Essex Society of Genealogists
- *Friends of the Silvio O. Conte Archives
- *Genealogical Roundtable
- *Greater Boston Chapter of the Association of Professional Genealogists
- *The Irish Ancestral Research Association
- *The Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston
- *The Massachusetts Society of Genealogists
- *The Massachusetts Society of Mayflower Descendants
- *The National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution
- * New England Historic Genealogical Society
- *The Waltham Historical Society

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Council is open to any person or organization interested in its activities upon payment of dues. The membership year runs from 1 January to 31 December.

Dues: \$10 for individual
\$15 for family (same mailing address)
\$20 for organizations.