



MASSACHUSETTS GENEALOGICAL COUNCIL

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WHAT IS MGC?

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NEWSLETTER



President's Column

by Mary Ellen Grogan

MGC was formed in 1978 by members of the Massachusetts Society of Genealogists who were deeply concerned about efforts to close access to public records. It began with an initial effort to reclassify vital records (designed to be records of interest to all citizens) as public health documents. With that new definition, authorities began collecting detailed information that had not previously been asked. Vital records currently include information that should not be part of the public record.

With that change, public health officials nationwide have advocated that a "Model Vital Records bill" be adopted that would seal birth records for 125 years, marriage records for 100 years, and death records for 75 years.

In Massachusetts, we have worked very hard to prevent this closure. Yet in every legislative term, there are renewed efforts to

close access to records. This requires that volunteers from MGC closely monitor all proposed legislation; oppose bills and regulations that

would affect our research; and submit legislation that would improve our access. In the 2015/2016 legislative session, we will propose three bills that:

1. Provide for non-certified copies of vital records, which by current law are not permitted;
2. Ensure that all records in the custody of the Secretary of State which are more than ninety years old be open to inspection;
3. Remove the restriction on vital records relating to individuals born out-of-wedlock.

Due to our new incorporation status we have rewritten our by-laws. This includes a change in nomenclature describing individuals who advocate the effort to retain and expand access to public records in Massachusetts as Supporters rather than Members. (cont. on p. 4)

Every

inhabitant of the Countrie shall have free libertie to search and veeve any Rooles Records. or Regesters of any Court or office except the Councill. And to have a transcript or exemplification thereof written examined and signed by the hand of the officer of the office paying the appointed fees therefore.

1641 Massachusetts
Body of Liberties



How Many Deaths Before the SSDI Gets Updated Again?

by Barbara Mathews

On 26 December 2013, President Barack Obama signed into law the 2013 Ryan-Murray Budget Compromise Bill. Paul Ryan and Patty Murray chaired the joint Senate-House committee that came to the budget agreement. Congress is mandated to pass budgets that balance, which means that every new cost in the budget must be offset by a tax, fee, or savings. Section 203 of the budget bill describes a savings that is an offset to other costs. We discussed the ramifications of Section 203 last December.

The National Technical Information Systems (NTIS) is the government division that sells the underlying database that the big genealogy websites put up as the Social Security Death Index (SSDI). As a result of the 2013 budget bill, NTIS had to enact two different levels of SSDI access. One level was for genealogists who could no longer access death information until the end of the third calendar year after a person's death. The other level was for financial institutions, who could access what NTIS called the Limited Access Death Master File during the period when it was in fact closed to everyone else. Some forensic genealogists qualified through the certification program and one of them has shared her experiences.

The law required NTIS to charge only as much as it cost to implement the new system. The actual budget offset came from the projected savings that would be realized by the Internal Revenue System if they prevented just 1.8% of the fraudulent payments they were making.

We can estimate an answer to the question "How many deaths before the SSDI gets updated again?" The U.S. Centers for Disease Control found that 2,515,458 people died in the U.S. in 2010. That means about 209,000 died each month. The last time it was legal to update the SSDI in a timely fashion was 28 March 2014, and the next time will be 1 January 2018 (for deaths in 2014 only). That is a time span of 45 months. The estimate then is that 9.4 million more deaths will occur in the U.S. before a single one of them is placed in the SSDI that we genealogists access.

Photograph credit: A lone U.S. Army bugler plays Taps at the conclusion of the First Annual Remembrance Ceremony in Dedication to Fallen Military Medical Personnel at Arlington National Cemetery, March 11, 2009. (DoD photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Chad J. McNeeley/Released.)

13th New England Regional Genealogical Conference

Navigating the Past: Sailing into the Future

Visit MGC's booth
in the exhibit hall!



**RHODE ISLAND
CONVENTION CENTER
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND
15 - 18 APRIL 2015**

- 60+ lectures
- Librarians' and Teachers' Day
- Society Fair
- Technology Day
- Ancestors Roadshow
- Research in Providence
- Exhibit Hall
- Special Interest Groups
- Query Column

Don't miss
the MGC panel
session on
Records Access!

Featuring MGC's
Saturday Luncheon
with Judy Russell



Keynote Speaker: Lisa Louise Cook – Genealogy Gems

Keynote Speaker: Judy G. Russell – The Legal Genealogist

Early Bird Deadline: Feb. 28th 2015

Visit www.nergc.org for more information

MGC-Sponsored Luncheon at NERGC

Roadblocks, Red Lights and Detours: Records Access for Genealogists with Judy Russell

This was supposed to be the Age of the Information Superhighway. Instead, even as so many records are coming online, doors are being slammed shut on so many more – often records that aren't and won't be online, now and perhaps ever. As a community and as individuals, learn what we can do to protect records access.

President's Column

(cont. from p. 1)

We see this as an expression of the importance of active participation in the efforts by all of our supporters. In 2015, we will be calling on all of you to contact your legislators to support our efforts.

In the meantime, the Board of Directors has met to discuss our activities in 2015 and 2016. The New England Regional Genealogical Conference (NERGC) will be held in Providence in April 2015. This is the key genealogical event held in New England and more detail on the conference is given elsewhere in this newsletter. MGC is a founding member of NERGC, and we recommend that all of our members attend. We will sponsor a panel discussion on records access; a luncheon with a speech by Judy Russell on *Roadblocks, Red Lights and Detours: Records Access for Genealogists*; a booth in the exhibit hall; and a hospitality room in the Biltmore Hotel. Full information on the conference is at www.nergc.org. Please join us! We have also accepted the responsibility for running the exhibit hall. We would love each

of our supporters to give us an hour or two of time to help out.

With this effort, we have decided not to have a formal conference in 2015. Instead, we will work more closely with supporting organizations and provide them with presentations on the status of records access. We will hold our conference in April of 2016; information will be available at our booth in the exhibit hall at NERGC. We are also considering some exciting projects that you will hear about in 2015.

In this issue of our newsletter, you will find information on how to show your support for our efforts. I strongly urge you to renew your status as a “supporter” of MGC and demonstrate the importance of records access to you. Our next board meeting will be on January 11th at the Waltham Public Library. Everyone is welcome to attend and to participate in our discussions. We all have to work together to ensure that access to records for genealogists and historians continues.

NERGC HIGHLIGHTS

As a participating society in the New England Regional Genealogical Consortium (NERGC), MGC is playing a key role in NERGC's 2015 Conference.

MGC President Mary Ellen Grogan and Vice President Sharon Sargeant are the exhibit hall Co-Chairs for 2015, and you will see them and other MGC officers around the exhibit hall, ensuring that things run smoothly. MGC will also have a booth in the exhibit hall. Please stop by and say hello!

An essential part of MGC's mission is educating genealogists and the public about access to and preservation of public records. To this end MGC is sponsoring the Saturday luncheon featuring the very popular Judy Russell. (see box at upper left). Judy makes ANY topic entertaining, including and especially records access. We hope you will join us for an informative and fun time.

Immediately after the luncheon MGC will present a panel on Access to Records. As genealogists, we should advocate for our use of records. Learn how you can help keep those records available. Three leaders in the field will be panelists to discuss the hot issues about records access in 2015. How can we navigate into a future world of better records access?

We look forward to seeing you!

Spotlight on Supporting Organizations

The Irish Ancestral Research Association (TIARA)

TIARA has supported the Massachusetts Genealogical Council for years, sponsoring speakers, making donations, and manning tables in the exhibit hall at our seminars. Here is a TIARA Update.

If you picked up a TIARA trip flyer at the Celtic Connections Conference, we wanted to let you know that the **deadline for registering for either a week of research in Dublin or a week in Belfast has been extended to December 1st**. If a genealogical research trip to Ireland is in your plans TIARA is the way to go. One research trip is planned to Dublin, Ireland, April 25 - May 2 and another to Belfast, Northern Ireland, May 2 - 9. You can attend one or both.

Knowledgeable people in the U.S. and Ireland-based professionals personally work with each TIARA trip participant to guide them in their quest to find their Irish ancestors. According to an article published in [The Wall Street Journal](#), TIARA offers some of the most reasonably-priced research trips. It is wise to book at least six months in advance to allow time to research a family's heritage.

Genealogy Research Trip to Dublin ***(\$1721 double or \$2296 single) Airfare not included.***

In Dublin, participants can research at the National Library of Ireland National Archives, General Register Office, Valuation Office, and Registry of Deeds. Dublin-based professional genealogist Eileen O'Duill will assist participants at various locations in Dublin.

The trip includes: a review of your research prior to leaving for Ireland to help you determine your research strategies; assistance in Dublin by knowledgeable researchers; seven nights accommodation at Buswells Hotel (across the street from the National Library and a few blocks from the National Archives); transfer from Dublin airport to your hotel; a welcoming dinner; full-Irish breakfasts daily; and a trip to Dun Laoghaire.

Genealogy Research Trip to Belfast ***(\$1692 double or \$2005 single) Airfare not included.***

In Belfast, participants can research at the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), the Linen Hall Library, and the General Register Office of Northern Ireland. A Belfast-based research expert will be available to assist participants in Belfast.

Prior to civil registration, church registers of baptisms marriages, and burials are the best sources of information on family history. PRONI has microfilms and many original copies of registers for nearly all Presbyterian churches in Ulster and other denominations as well. PRONI has Valuation Records beginning in 1864, Tithe Applotment books c 1830, wills and testamentary papers, school records and a vast collection of administrative records relating to the management of landed estates in Ulster, from the early 17th century onwards. (Note that some of the estate records found in PRONI relate to estates that reside solely in the Republic of Ireland!)

The trip includes: a review of your research prior to leaving for Ireland to help you determine your research strategies; assistance in Belfast by knowledgeable researchers; seven nights accommodation at Park Inn by Radisson; transfer from Dublin airport to your hotel; a welcoming dinner; full-Irish breakfasts daily; and a tour of the city of Londonderry. Airfare not included.

If you are not sure you are ready to research in Ireland or have questions about the trips contact Janis Duffy j.duffy@tiara.ie or Marie Ahearn m.ahern@tiara.ie trips to discuss your research.

Trips are open to TIARA members. Guests of members may also attend at the same discounted rate. To become a member of TIARA visit: <http://tiara.ie/application.htm> for a membership application form.

For a trip brochure or registration material visit our [Future Trips](#) page.



PLEASE SIGN RPAC'S GENEALOGISTS' DECLARATION OF RIGHTS



Earlier this year Records Preservation & Access Committee (RPAC) announced the Genealogists' Declaration of Rights: a statement advocating open access to federal, state, and local public records. The Declaration affirms America's long history of open public records, which has been threatened the last few years over concerns about identity theft and privacy. RPAC has worked with state and federal legislators as well as local public officials for more than twenty years in support of legislation and regulations that achieve a balance between access and privacy. The Declaration of Rights has been approved by the board of directors of the three sponsoring organizations: The National Genealogical Society (NGS), the Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS), and the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS).

To read the full press release click here: [Press Release RPAC Declaration of Rights Ver4 \(3\)](#).

Now is the time to speak up! Genealogists and anyone interested in open access to public records, please sign this petition! Thousands of professional genealogists do research everyday on behalf of clients, government agencies, and attorneys. Of particular note are the many forensic genealogists who assist the Department of Defense in locating next of kin for the repatriation of remains from previous wars; assist county coroners in the identification of unclaimed persons; work with attorneys in locating missing and unknown heirs involving estates, trusts, real estate quiet title actions, oil and gas and mineral rights, and other similar legal transactions; trace and track heritable medical conditions where finding distant cousins can facilitate early treatment and possibly prevent a premature death; research stolen art and artifacts for repatriation; and identify American Indians, Native Alaskans, and Native Hawaiians to determine eligibility for tribal benefits.

Over the past few months, the Declaration has traveled to the 34th IAJGS Conference on Jewish Genealogy in Salt Lake City, Utah, 27 July–1 August 2014 and the Federation of Genealogical Societies Conference in San Antonio, Texas, 27–30 August 2014. There is still time for your voice to be heard.

Visit our booth in the exhibit hall at NERGC to sign the declaration.

OR

Visit <http://bit.ly/gen-declaration>.



**MASSACHUSETTS
GENEALOGICAL
COUNCIL**

RENEW AFTER JANUARY 1ST!

SUPPORTER FORM

Safeguarding access to public records since 1980 and providing related educational opportunities.

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Thank you for your interest in MGC

<p>Individual Supporter benefits include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct updates on legislative action • Participation in MGC's board meetings • MGC's Newsletter <i>online</i> • Discount on MGC Seminar 	<p>Supporting Organization benefits also include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicity on MGC's website, newsletter and blog • A visit to your organization to discuss threats to record access • One free vendor table at MGC seminar
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*** PLEASE NOTE ***

- The new incorporated status of MGC requires "supporters" rather than "memberships"
- **THE FAMILY CATEGORY HAS BEEN ELIMINATED EFFECTIVE 2015**
 - Supporter year runs the calendar year, January 1 to December 31
 - MGC dues are NOT tax deductible
- **Email addresses are required and must match online profile**
- MGC communicates almost exclusively via email and our website

APPLICATION FOR: **NEW SUPPORTER** **RENEWAL SUPPORTER**

PLEASE COMPLETE ALL FIELDS

<input type="checkbox"/> INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTER	<input type="checkbox"/> \$10 per calendar yr.
Name:	
Email address: (must be consistent with your online profile)	
Address:	
City/State/Zip	
Phone:	<input type="checkbox"/> home <input type="checkbox"/> cell <input type="checkbox"/> work

<input type="checkbox"/> SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20 per calendar yr.
Name of Organization	
Address	
City/State/Zip	Phone:
Website:	Email:
President's name:	Email:
Named Delegate to MGC:	Email:

Pay by Mail:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make check payable to: Massachusetts Genealogical Council • Print form and mail to: Susan Tellier, Treasurer 206 Beacon Park, Webster, MA 01570
Pay Online:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Log onto www.massgencouncil.org with user name and password • Follow onscreen instructions or email info@massgencouncil.org for help • Electronic payments are made via PayPal, but you can use a credit card and do not need a PayPal account

MGC is an all-volunteer organization. Can you help in these areas?

- Monitoring Legislation** **Education & Events** **Publicity** **Newsletter**



Many bills are introduced because legislators are worried about identity theft. We in the genealogy community do not accept that vital records are the causes of identity theft. The main causes of identity theft are hacking into major databases; theft of wallet or mail; credit card, in-store or on-telephone transactions being hijacked; and computer spyware. We need ongoing education for legislators and regulators.

MGC Membership News

As we move forward into 2015, there are some important changes to bring to your attention. Our new incorporated status requires a change in nomenclature so from now on “Members” will be identified as “Supporters.” This change does *not* affect the benefits of your involvement with the Massachusetts Genealogical Council.

The MGC Board has decided to eliminate the former Family Membership category. Effective in 2015, there will be two categories of Supporter for MGC: Individual Supporter and Supporting Organization.

These changes will appear in the new form and on the MGC website.

Whether you are a first-time supporter or renewing we appreciate your helping us spread the word about public records access.

To date, MGC has 160 Supporters, 12 of which are Supporting Organizations. Your support is crucial to the success of MGC, so please visit our website at www.massgencouncil.org to renew your support for MGC for another year!

Your involvement in MGC is based on a calendar year. Because of changes to the website we are encouraging you to **wait until January 1st to renew.**

If you have any questions or comments, please drop us a line at membership@massgencouncil.org.



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