



MASSACHUSETTS
GENEALOGICAL
COUNCIL

The NEWSLETTER

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MASSACHUSETTS GENEALOGICAL COUNCIL

SPRING 2011

President's Report *Barbara J. Mathews, CG* Spring Issue 2011

SEE YOU AT OUR ANNUAL SEMINAR ON 23 JULY 2011

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We are returning to Bentley University's Conference Center, with free parking and breakfast and lunch included. Once again we are offering the option of online registration using a credit card. Michael Brophy, Program Director, is booking vendors for our Exhibit Hall. His committee member, Christine Sharbrough, CG, is putting together the syllabus for our annual meeting.

The Annual Meeting will include an election of officers and directors. MGC officers have term limits and I've reached mine. I've enjoyed working in the interests of the Massachusetts Genealogical Council over the last four years. I've enjoyed the sense of teamwork I feel when the MGC board works together. It's been an exciting ride.

You, the members of MGC, have stepped up to the plate for us every time we needed your support. Please continue to subscribe to our email broadcast list for emergency notices. The next team of officers will continue to monitor legislative activities for you. They will need your support.



NARA BRANCH IN WALTHAM REOPENS AFTER RENOVATIONS

Monday, 23 May 2011, marked the reopening of the research room at the National Archives/Northeast location in Waltham. Renovations were aimed at increasing the space for manuscript access, supporting patrons using online resources, and increasing classroom accommodations. Diane LeBlanc, the Regional Administrator, gave me a personal guided tour on Monday morning and I was completely delighted with the space available for genealogists and other researchers.

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President's Column continued

A collage mural of the United States adds color to the online resource room. Over thirty-two computers are available for researchers to take advantage of NARA's free access to the following important online resources: Ancestry, Footnote, Heritage Quest, and Proquest (see our Summer/Fall 2010 newsletter for an article about these resources). The



The mural is a collage of digital images of the types of records held by NARA.

microfilm reader and reader/printers (which stood us in such good stead during the winter in the temporary building) are here, too, to support those who use microfilm. A nearby microfilm cabinet contains the most-used microfilms for quick and easy patron access.

A separate and roomy research room is available to handle up to eighteen people using archival, manuscript, or one-of-a-kind documents stored onsite. Each patron in this reading room will have a full table to work on. Essentially, the area in which to access such important records as original naturalizations has tripled in size.



George sits at the reference desk, ready to help all patrons.



Out with the old and in with the new. NARA's temporary patron home this winter is on the right. The main building is again open, with its renovated research facilities.

NARA certainly listened to our concerns about keeping access to records open to genealogists and other members of the public during the renovation phase. The result is a beautiful space that will perfectly support our research needs.

DEATH OF ALAN COTE, SUPERVISOR OF RECORDS

Alan Nelson Cote was the Supervisor of Public Records and the First Deputy Secretary of State in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. He passed away in hospice on May 2nd after a battle with cancer. Always fair and thoughtful, he supported MGC legislative efforts. In return, MGC supported a bill giving him more administrative authority in efforts to ensure that the laws were enforced on the town level.

According to an obituary published in *The Boston Globe*:

"He was very consistent in pushing for a more open government," said his friend and colleague Jay Herod of Cambridge. "If anything, he was frustrated that he couldn't do more."¹

Alan Cote was only forty-eight years old but he has left a lasting legacy.

¹Stuart Bishop, "Alan Cote: Had Key Role for Secretary of State," *The Boston Globe*, issue of 7 May 2011; www.boston.com, viewed 20 May 2011.

NERGC 2011 HUGE SUCCESS

Our panel discussion at NERGC in Springfield covered many topics important to us here at MGC. We were fortunate to have three articulate and capable people: Rich McCoy, who leads the vital records division for Vermont; Melinde Byrne, our VP who is also the President of the American Society of Genealogists; and Sharon Sergeant, long-time MGC board member, who is also known as the "hoax-buster." They discussed both national and local issues regarding open records. The audience asked thoughtful questions and we all came to a better understanding of access issues.

Our booth at NERGC also saw the roll-out of an official MGC logo. For years we have used a public domain graphic from the US Centers for Disease Control. Through the efforts of Polly Kimmitt and Merlyn Liberty, we have a new look. I suggest you look carefully at the shield. The arm at the top is wielding a key rather than a sword. What a great symbol for MGC: the key to keep the records open.

DIGITIZATION ONLINE AT REGISTRY

Mike Brophy updates the current status of the Registry's digitization project:

As of mid-May, digitized birth records for the years 1953-1986 are available on computers inside the Registry for the first time. There is no remote access at this time.

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MGC Seminar will include tracks on Technology, Workshops, Records, and Repositories and feature a luncheon speech on "Fur, Fortune and Empire" by Eric Jay Dolin

Program Report: MGC 2011 Annual Seminar *by Christine Sharbrough, CG*

Massachusetts Genealogical Council
2011 Annual Seminar
"Chronicling the Bay State"

23 July 2011

LaCava Conference Center

Bentley University

175 Forest Street, Waltham, MA 02452

\$65 for members, \$75 for non-members or walk-ins

For our 2011 Annual Seminar, we are returning to Bentley University's LaCava Conference Center for a full day of lectures. Our exhibit hall will include vendors as well as information tables from member societies. You will be able to use your choice of registration systems: either online or with a form and check. You can download our program brochure from www.massgencouncil.org. It includes a registration form on the back.

Last issue we covered half of the sessions and here are the other half in the this issue.

TRACK: RECORDS

David Allen Lambert, "Researching Your Civil War Soldier"



David Allen Lambert, the Online Genealogist at the New England Historic Genealogical Society in Boston, will discuss the resources available from local, state, and federal sources to research a Union soldier. Participants will discover a variety of documents that can illuminate an ancestor's story from enlistment to the end of service. Those who bring

photographs and family documents relating to a Civil War soldier will receive help with identification.

David Dearborn, "Researching Families from Massachusetts"



Thomas Howard, "Hidden in the Vaults: Gems Found in Town Halls and other Public Places"



Learn what resources are available in town halls and elsewhere that you might not readily think about for your research.

Mary Ellen Grogan and MGC Board Members, "Massachusetts Legislative Update"

TRACK: REPOSITORIES

Meldon Wolfgang, "Don't Miss the One-of-a-Kind Gems You Can Find at an Archives"

With only 10% of records digitized or microfilmed, we will miss the stories of our ancestors unless we venture into the world of paper records. Massachusetts has some of the greatest repositories of paper in America. It's a different research style, some might even say an old-fashioned style. Learn the skills it takes to find these unique resources that will break through your brickwalls and provide great stories for your family history.



Elizabeth Bouvier, "Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Archives"

The Judicial Archives is a separate and distinct institution holding permanent court records housed within the Massachusetts Archives. At present, the Judicial Archives contains the pre-1860 records of the predecessor courts of the Superior Court (Court of General Sessions of the Peace and Inferior Court of Common Pleas) for nine counties. Other records in the Judicial Archives include Supreme Judicial Court and Superior Court of Judicature; predominantly pre-1900 probate records of Essex, Middlesex, Suffolk, Plymouth, and Worcester counties; a limited number of County Court records; records of some Justices of the Peace, naturalization

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MGC Seminar continued

records and records of a small number of special courts. Probate, naturalization and divorce records are especially useful for those doing genealogical research.

James David Moran, "Holdings of the American Antiquarian Society"



American Antiquarian Society is a genealogy gem hidden in Worcester. This session will provide an overview of the collections of the AAS, which houses the largest and most accessible collection of books, pamphlets, broadsides, newspapers, periodicals, sheet music, and graphic arts material printed through 1876 in what is

now the United States, as well as manuscripts and a substantial collection of secondary works, bibliographies, city directories, local and regional histories,

and other reference works related to all aspects of American history and culture before the twentieth century.

Zachary Enright, "Treasures at the City of Boston Archives"

In this lecture we will discuss the variety of genealogical resources available at the City of Boston Archives, which includes tax records, voter registers, student records, and prison records, as well as several smaller collections and supporting materials. We will examine examples of these records and discuss their use and access. The City of Boston



Archives is the permanent repository for records created by the City of Boston and holds over 15,000 cubic feet of records dating from 1634 to 2005. The Archives makes Boston's municipal archival records accessible to the public.

Seminar Schedule • 23 July 2011

LaCava Conference Center • Bentley University • 175 Forest Street • Waltham, MA 02452

9-9:30	Registration, Continental Breakfast, and Check-in			
9:30-10	Welcome and MGC Annual Meeting			
	Repositories Track	Technology Track	Records Track	Workshops
10-11	<i>Archival Research: Finding Unique Treasures for Family History</i> , Meldon Wolfgang	<i>What's Happening at FamilySearch: Wiki, Indexing, and Playing in the Sandbox</i> , Carol Smith	<i>The 150th Anniversary of the Civil War: New Resources for Genealogists</i> , David Lambert	<i>Beginning Genealogy: Climb Your Family Tree, Part One</i> , Lori Lyn Price
11:15-12:15	<i>Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Archives</i> , Elizabeth Bouvier	<i>Amazing Stories from the Revolutionary War Pension Files</i> , Beau Sharbrough	<i>Researching Families from Massachusetts</i> , David Dearborn	<i>Beginning Genealogy: Climb Your Family Tree, Part Two</i> , Lori Lyn Price
12:15-1:45	Luncheon <i>Fur, Fortune and Empire</i>, Eric Jay Dolin			
1:45-2:45	<i>Holdings of the American Antiquarian Society</i> , James David Moran	<i>Amazing Stories from Newspapers Online</i> , Beau Sharbrough	<i>Hidden in the Vaults, Gems Found in Town Records</i> , Thomas Howard	<i>What is a Blog Anyway?</i> Marian Pierre-Louis
3-4	<i>Treasures at the City of Boston Archives</i> , Zachary Enright	<i>Genealogical Searches on Google</i> , Dick Eastman	<i>Legislative Update</i> , Mary Ellen Grogan and MGC Board Members	<i>Using Zotero, the Free Citation and Note Manager for Firefox</i> , Connie Reik

Register Online: www.regonline.com/mgc2011

www.massgencouncil.org

Mike Brophy debunks the myths that open records lead to fraud and pleas for continued vigilance to keep records open

Brophy's



Corner

Michael Brophy
program@massgencouncil.org

While attending the National Genealogical Society's (NGS) annual meeting in Charleston, South Carolina, recently, I attended several lectures on new and unique record sources. I spoke with some colleagues about preservation and access issues and came away concerned about the future of the preservation of our historic records and access to our current documents.

There is no proof that open records significantly contribute to identity theft or terrorism in any way. Social Security numbers are rarely stolen or reused when obtained from government documents. They are usually stolen by online thieves breaking into banking and business databases when conducting Internet scams. Yet the myths and the fear persist in the post-9/11 world.

In early May, the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development's database, which helps unemployed people find jobs, fell victim to a cyber-criminal. Personal information about these individuals could potentially be used to harm them, and the Commonwealth will be sending out letters to all those affected. This act had nothing to do with open public records. In one fell swoop, a criminal on the Internet could have stolen thousands of identities without looking at one public record in a record repository.

Open Public Observations

County, town, and state records were not used by the terrorists on 9/11, yet legislators around the country have passed over a thousand laws changing access to public records. As a genealogy lecturer, I am always asked why I put my late grandfather's Social Security number up on screen when showing an example of the Social Security Death Index. I explain that financial institutions, lenders, and government agencies use this public information to **prevent** individuals from reusing his number to collect benefits. Clark Rockefeller, the imposter kidnapper, used the Social Security number of the killer "Son of Sam" while employed at a New York financial firm. He was fired shortly after the discovery. It was a very short career!

As I pointed out in a recent article, the number of people doing genealogy, and interest in family history study, is growing rapidly. Seventy-eight percent of the US population are interested in or are actively researching their family history. I suspect that the number who are actively researching will grow when more of the baby-boom generation retires in the coming years. Family Search gets over ten million hits on their site every day and has over three hundred thousand volunteers indexing records from their vault. The need for open records in every state is more important now than ever.

Closed records can perpetuate fraud and identity theft, as in the Misha Defonseca case. Ms. Defonseca hid behind the guise of a Jewish woman who survived World War II while being protected by wolves. Her book and resulting fame made her millions on the lecture circuit. Closed records in Europe made it nearly impossible to vet her story, until Massachusetts genealogist Sharon Sergeant uncovered the fraud. If records had been open, the fraud may not have

gone on for as long as it did. She turned out to be a Catholic girl who spent the war safely in Belgium.

Records are routinely destroyed in most locales. I shudder at the thought that there may not be adequate oversight of this process by the community of historians and genealogists. Does our government not appreciate our heritage and common history? Next year, we will begin to celebrate the two-hundredth anniversary of the War of 1812. Have we totally forgotten the burning of Washington in 1814 and the archival loss that resulted? How about July 12, 1973, in St. Louis, the largest fire in that city's history and largest archival loss in our nation's history? Does it really cost that much to store these documents so that they may be digitized some day? Where are our national priorities?

It seems to me that we are at a reckoning point when it comes to preserving our nation's history and the opportunities to discover our ancestry. We must get past the fear and irrational arguments concerning access to our records and get on with the business of exploring our culture for the benefit of all.

President's Column continued

This service improvement should help researchers work more efficiently in the often crowded and under-served research room. Instead of waiting for a "call for slips" after obtaining a volume and page number from a birth index book, researchers will be able to access the actual records directly on the research room computers.

Stanley Nyberg, Registrar of Vital Records, said that future plans for the project are to expand access. In our tour of the Vital Records Registry in 2009, he said that the goal is to have the records viewable at town halls throughout the state.

NEWSLETTER

Bios of Seminar Speakers part II

We featured the bios of half the speakers at the MGC seminar in the last issue; here are the rest of them.

Zachary Enright, "Treasures at the City of Boston Archives"

Zachary Enright has been an Archivist with the City of Boston Archives for five years, since receiving his M.L.I.S. from Simmons College. In his capacity as a reference archivist he has assisted residents of Boston and non-residents alike in their historical, genealogical, and legal research.

Mary Ellen Grogan, "Massachusetts Legislative Update"

Mary Ellen Grogan was appointed Civil Records Director, filling a spot opened by the retirement of Bernard Couming. Mary Ellen is a past Program Director and Newsletter Editor for MGC. As editor, she wrote "Access to Records in Massachusetts" (<http://bit.ly/hhMBIrl>) which examines Massachusetts laws pertaining to records access. She currently handles contract negotiations with outside transportation providers for the MBTA.

Thomas Howard, "Hidden in the Vaults: Gems Found in Town Halls and other Public Places"

Thomas F. Howard is a retired high school teacher and part-time professional genealogist. He has taught genealogy classes and lectured at regional and national conferences and to local genealogical and historical societies. He is past president of the Connecticut Professional Genealogists Council, of NERGC, of the East Granby Historical Society, and of the East Granby Land Trust, and a past member of the board of governors of the Connecticut Society of Genealogists. He co-chaired NERGC Hartford in 2007 and was the 2009 recipient of NERGC's Donna Holt Siemiatkoski Volunteer of the Year Award.

David Allen Lambert, "Researching Your Civil War Soldier"

David Allen Lambert is currently the NEHGS Online Genealogist, and formerly served as the Microtext Department manager and reference librarian for NEHGS. David has been

on the NEHGS staff since 1993, and a member previously. His interest in genealogy started at the age of seven, and increased over the past four decades. He is currently a consulting editor for *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register*.

James David Moran, "Holdings of the American Antiquarian Society"

James David Moran is Director of Outreach at the American Antiquarian Society where he oversees the Society's promotional activities and programming aimed at the general public and K-12 educators. Jim has over twenty years experience creating cultural and educational programming, including designing and presenting teacher training programs.

Marian Pierre-Louis, "What is a Blog Anyway?"

Marian Pierre-Louis is a House Historian and Genealogical Lecturer who specializes in southern New England research. She frequently speaks on New England topics, including house history research, social media, African American research, and a broad range of genealogical topics. Her *Roots & Rambles* blog was nominated to the 2011 *Family Tree Magazine* Top 40 Genealogy blogs contest.

Lori Lyn Price, "Beginning Genealogy: Climb Your Family Tree"

Lori Lyn Price focuses on connecting with ancestors via social history, bringing ancestors' traditions and culture to life. She has worked on her personal genealogy for ten years and is working on a graduate degree in history. She loves sharing her knowledge and passion of genealogy and history with others.

Connie Reik, "Using Zotero: the Free Citation and Note Manager for Citation Logs"

Connie Reik, M.S.L., M.A., is Government Publications Coordinator and Research Librarian for History at Tisch Library at Tufts University. She is a recent graduate of the National Institute on Genealogical Research at NARA, past Vice President of the Massachusetts Society of Genealogists, wrote a column in NEHGS *New England Ancestors* (2006-2007), and has spoken nationally, regionally, and locally at various genealogy and library conferences.

Beau Sharbrough, "Amazing Stories from Newspapers Online" and "Amazing Stories from Revolutionary War Pension Files"

Houston native Beau Sharbrough received a Philosophy BA from Texas A&M in 1977. He is the founder of the FGS web site, the GENTECH website, and the Lexicon Working Group, a former president of GENTECH, and has worked as a Product Manager for Tree Products at Ancestry.com and as Vice President of Content at Footnote.com. Beau writes regularly on technical topics in family history and maintains the RootsWorks.com website. He is the author of *Gene's Anniversary Scrapbook*.

Carol E. Smith, "FamilySearch: A Library Without Walls"

Carol E. Smith, AG® works at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City as the Patron Services Manager for the Main floor, where she is responsible for all patron classes, and with the United States and Canada reference desk teams. She has a BA degree in Family History from Brigham Young University and is accredited in New England Research. She is a past president, vice-president, and board member of the Utah Genealogical Association (UGA); has worked with the Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy, with the UGA host committee for the 2010 NGS Conference. with RootsTech 2011, and co-chairs the Conference on Family History and Genealogy 2011 at Brigham Young University. She serves on the Renewal committee for the International Commission for the Accreditation of Professional Genealogists, and has researched professionally.

Meldon Wolfgang, "How to Research at an Archives"

Author, teacher, lecturer and practicing genealogist since 1961, Mel Wolfgang has been educating and encouraging genealogical audiences of all levels for more than two decades with lively and thought-provoking presentations.

MGC vendors 2011:

Jonathan Sheppard Books	TIARA
Family Plots	MGC
Paul Bunnell	MSoG

Silent auction items:

Subscriptions to: GenealogyBank.com,
Family Chronicle, *Family Tree*, *Internet Genealogy* magazines
Donations from New England Historic Genealogy Society

Plus much more!



**Massachusetts Genealogical Council
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23 July 2011 • Bentley University, 175 Forest Street, Waltham, MA
REGISTRATION FORM**

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

E-mail _____ Phone _____

Registration Fees (includes continental breakfast and lunch)

_____ MGC Member (\$65)

_____ Non-Member (\$75)

_____ MGC Membership (\$10)
(1-year membership to MGC, save \$10 on conference registration)

Note that walk-in registration on the day of the event will be \$85 per person.

Payment Method

_____ Check (payable to MGC)

_____ Credit Card

_____ Visa _____ MasterCard

Card Number _____

Expiration Date _____ Security Code _____

Two easy ways to register:

- Mail check and completed form to:
Annual Seminar, MGC, PO Box 5393, Cochituate, MA 01778-5393.

OR

- Register online at <https://www.regonline.com/mgc2011>

Register online with a credit card



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Membership Form

Membership privileges include:

- Subscription to MGC's eNewsletter
 - Discounted rates for MGC's Annual Seminar
 - Participation in MGC's board meetings
 - Access to the Members Only section of the MGC website
- Organizational Membership also includes:
- URL link to the organization's website from MGC's website
 - One table in our vendor hall at the Annual Seminar

Membership Status (Membership Year runs January 1 - December 31):

- New
- Renewal

Membership Category:

- \$10 - Individual
- \$15 - Family (must reside in same household, two family members eligible for Annual Seminar discount)
- \$20 - Organization

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Save a Tree
(and save MGC postage)

By default, the newsletter will be emailed. If you require a paper copy, please initial here: _____.

Make checks payable to: **Massachusetts Genealogical Council**
 Mail to: **MGC, P.O. Box 5393, Cochrane, MA 01778-5393**

MGC has a number of committees that work on various projects. If you are interested in getting involved, please indicate your interest(s) and we will contact you!

_____ Legislative (vital record access issues) _____ Publications (newsletter, website)

_____ Education & Events (annual seminar) _____ Membership & Publicity

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