



MASSACHUSETTS GENEALOGICAL COUNCIL

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WHAT IS MGC?

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NEWSLETTER



President's Column

Greetings Ye Genealogists, Historians, Researchers, Attorneys, Journalists, Librarians, Town Clerks, Archivists, Activists, Legislators and anyone else interested in keeping historical public records open and accessible to all!

While not a lot is happening in legislatures at this time of year, there is still plenty we can do to prepare for when our voices will need to be heard. Check the updates on pages 2 and 4 to learn more.

We have been busy with conferences. Our own Annual Meeting and Seminar at Brandeis University in July was a smashing success! An ambitious undertaking for sure, but participants seemed happy with the wide variety of talks. And plans are already underway for next year's seminar. **Save the date!! July 20, 2013** we are pleased to feature Judy G. Russell, the Legal Genealogist, as our main speaker. Judy is a real crowd-pleaser and we

know you will love her! You can read more about her on page 6.

MGC had our first booth presence at the Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS)

Conference in Birmingham, Alabama in August (see below), and we are now gearing up for our second appearance at the New England Regional Genealogical Consortium (NERGC) Conference in Manchester, New Hampshire in April. See page 3 for more

information. As a participating society, MGC is expected to donate volunteer hours to the cause, so if you know you'll be there, please offer your hours to benefit MGC's contribution if you can.

As always we are looking for people to help out, so drop me an email if you want to help out, have questions or are just interested!

See You Next Year!!

Polly FitzGerald Kimmitt, CG
president@massgencouncil.org



STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

In the ongoing effort to assure open access to public records, MGC has an ally in the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies. With Jan Meisels Allen as the chairperson of their Public Records Access Monitoring Committee, they keep an eye on records access all over the United States (and beyond!) and provide us with timely updates on the status of bills and hearings. MGC also looks to the Records Preservation and Access Committee (RPAC) to be a leader in the area of open record advocacy. We engage with the Occupy Genealogy page on Facebook, watching for trends and issues of which we may not be aware, and asking for help when we need it. We believe that the issue of open access to civil records extends far beyond the genealogical realm into media, legal, medical, educational and historical research, and we hope to engage other like-minded researchers to join in monitoring the status of our records access.



Identity Theft, Tax Fraud, the IRS and the SSA

MGC received this notice from the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies written by Kenneth H. Ryesky. We have Mr. Ryesky's permission to post his communication.

On 29 November 2012, the House Committee on Oversight & Government Reform held a hearing entitled "Identity Theft and Tax Fraud: Growing Problems for the Internal Revenue Service, Part 4." The webpage to the hearing is at: <http://1.usa.gov/10umOHw>. This has links to the testimony of the witnesses.

Beth Tucker, IRS Deputy Commissioner for Operations Support, stated that the IRS is "collaborating with the Social Security Administration and other parts of the Administration on a potential legislative change to the practice of routine release of the Death Master File." You can read her testimony at: <http://1.usa.gov/U6H6LJ>.

The bad news is that the written statement of National Taxpayer Advocate Nina Olson includes a three-page treatise on the Death Master File (aka SSDI) and why its access should be limited. The good news is that in reference to the financial and emotional tolls imposed upon grieving parents by

perpetrators of the dead baby scam, Nina states that "Legislation could relieve survivors of [the] burden by simply delaying release of the information for several years." Not genealogical paradise, but a bit less draconian than prior stances Nina has taken. Ms. Olsen's testimony can be read at: <http://1.usa.gov/UO4esz>.

This Committee is not as openly solicitous of public comments on its hearing.

You can read Mr. Ryesky's full statement to the committee at <http://bit.ly/U49btL>. It is a well crafted, well thought out appeal to look behind rhetoric and emotion into the facts of tax fraud.

"Certain Internal Revenue Service (IRS) practices, policies and procedures ... have condoned if not facilitated identity theft in the commission of tax fraud. This includes, but has not been limited to, a recklessness which effectively declined to allow the taxpayer-victim of identity theft to demonstrate that he or she was in fact a victim, while foolishly depending upon the criminal perpetrator of the identity theft to come forward and indicate that he or she has perpetuated the fraud upon the taxpayer-victim and upon the American public."

Woven in History: The Fabric of New England

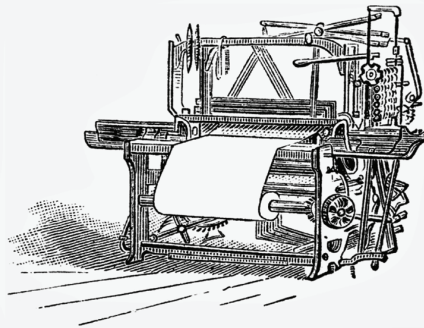
12th New England Regional Genealogical Conference

April 17- 21, 2013
Manchester, New Hampshire

**Visit the MGC Booth
in the Exhibit hall!**

**Attend
the MGC panel session
on
Records Access!**

-WOVEN IN HISTORY- THE FABRIC OF NEW ENGLAND



*Unravel the mysteries they wove.
What part did your ancestors play?
Where did they come from?
Where did they go?*

Featuring over 50 genealogical experts and 100 informative lectures, workshops, poster sessions, the Ancestor Road Show, Librarians & Teachers Day, Technology Day and popular Special Interest Groups.



Colleen
Fitzpatrick, PhD



Stephen
Morse, PhD

Early Bird Deadline: Feb. 28th

Register at www.nergc.org

Pennsylvania is working with Ancestry to digitize their vital records. They started with the earliest records (1906) and are proceeding by year. While the records are being processed, they will not be available at the State Archives. Ancestry is expected to make the records available online as they are processed and data extracted. All the records are expected to be completed being digitized within 18 months (around February 2014).

Legislative Update

The latest IAJGS legislative update was published on 16 October 2012. To read it, please visit: <http://bit.ly/Vsytl1>. It is very thorough and goes into much more detail than we can cover here in the newsletter.

There are now six bills before Congress addressing access to the SSDI/DMF. Congress was adjourned until the lame duck session began on November 15. As of this legislative alert the Administration had not provided their proposed language to either the House or Senate—and both committees were waiting to receive it before hearings are held on specific bills on actual bill language.

Library and Archives Canada (LAC) is currently experiencing draconian budget cuts—and already over 400 staff have been laid off, and services are being reduced. These cuts negatively affect the ability of the LAC to provide a high level of service to researchers and will affect the public's ability to access records housed at LAC. Small and medium-sized archives throughout the country have been

dependent upon funding administered through LAC. The Interlibrary loan program where archives throughout the country may borrow materials from the National Archives in Ottawa is scheduled to cease in February 2013.

In Maine a new rule-making coordinator started in September—hopefully that will expedite the long-awaited proposed rules for genealogists to acquire the researcher card. New York City proposed a merger of the Department of Records Information Services (DORIS) into the Department of Citywide Administrative Services—eliminating the autonomy of DORIS. If passed, this legislation would significantly downgrade the authority of DORIS within City government and potentially put at risk its ability to preserve, protect, and make accessible the intellectual legacy of one of the world's greatest cities.

Once the legislative sessions are over for the calendar year of 2012 (and it is not a "carryover" state into the 2013 legislative year), all non-enacted and "dead" legislation will be removed from the report.

UPDATE ON GEORGIA

This fall we witnessed firsthand what can happen when members of the genealogical community band together to fight for the right of the public to access civil records. When the Georgia State Archives was under threat of closure, the Georgians Against Closing State Archives group led an effort to collect 15,000 signatures in protest. The operating hours were going to be cut down to "by appointment only" and all but a few staff members were let go. It was a catastrophe, not a solution. Happily, however, the petition and resulting kerfuffle resulted in convincing Georgia's Governor Nathan Deal to reduce the amount slashed in his budget in order to avert the threat, at least until June 30th, 2013.

Currently, Governor Deal is planning to turn over jurisdiction of the archives to the University System of Georgia, which can only be an improvement over the very unstable position in which it now finds itself, subject as it is to political whim. In fact the Georgia state libraries are already under the supervision of the University System, and it just makes more sense to keep our precious historical documents in an institution that understands their importance!

For the moment, this is what is says on the Archives website: "The Georgia Archives is currently open to the public Fridays and Saturdays, 8:30 to 5:00. No appointment needed."



Spotlight on Shirley Barnes

Shirley Barnes has given decades of outstanding service to the genealogical community in her dogged determination to keep public records open and accessible. As MGC director of civil records from 1982 to 2007, Shirley visited the Massachusetts State House weekly, developed relationships with legislators and staff, and was a positive influence on the outcome of bills. Thanks to Shirley's vigilance, in 1983 the Massachusetts Civil Records Access Bill was passed, keeping Massachusetts vital records open and accessible, and transferring them on a five-year basis from the Bureau of Vital Records to the Massachusetts Archives.

Shirley worked for years almost single-handedly to prevent the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in Waltham from being

moved to Pittsfield. Instead, the region benefitted from an additional NARA branch for quite a few years.

Shirley has supported and even helped establish some of our best-loved genealogical societies, including the Irish Ancestral Research Association (TIARA), of which she was one of the eleven founding members, and for whom she wrote bylaws. She is the Genealogical Roundtable's delegate to MGC and was an early member of the Massachusetts Society of Genealogists (MSOG).

Shirley continues to attend MGC board meetings and to mentor the civil records co-directors who are following in her footsteps. Her participation and wisdom have been and remain critical.

As a skilled genealogist, Shirley focuses on her own family roots in Connecticut and New York. She was awarded the Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS) Award of Merit in 1984. She is a 1986 alumna of the National Institute of Genealogical Research in Washington, D.C.

Wife to Robert, mother of two and grandmother of one, Shirley has devoted countless hours to the genealogical community. She has brought us safely from a time of poor research conditions with little awareness of threats to public access to the enviable position of a truly open access state.

For her embodiment of the best objectives of our organization and in honor of her lifelong dedication to the genealogical community, we thank Shirley Barnes!





THE LEGAL GENEALOGIST

JUDY RUSSELL

A Certified GenealogistSM with a law degree, Judy G. Russell, is a lecturer, educator and writer who enjoys helping others understand a wide variety of genealogical issues, including the interplay between genealogy and the law. Judy's very popular blog, *The Legal Genealogist*, covers issues of interest to all genealogists, from the brand new to the highly experienced.

SAVE THE DATE!!

Massachusetts Genealogical Council's Annual Meeting and Seminar

Saturday, 20 July 2013

Next year the New England region will have two major multi-track conferences. The New England Regional and Genealogical Conference (NERGC), held every two years, will take place in Manchester, New Hampshire from April 17th–21st. Then another multi-track, multi-day extravaganza of genealogical fun and learning, the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies conference, is coming up August 4th–9th in Boston. This international conference will cover all kinds of topics and should prove of interest to all genealogists.

That leaves MGC with a different niche to fill next year, so we have decided to have our one-day seminar be a simple, one-track affair. And we have chosen a fantastic speaker to present that one track!

Judy Russell is brilliant. She has a lively wit and compassion for the woes genealogist at all levels suffer. Her specialty is in legal issues, an area of weakness for a great many of us. She says she wants "to help folks understand the often arcane and even impenetrable legal concepts and terminology that are so very important to those of us studying family history. Without understanding the context in which events took place and records were created, we miss

so much of both the significance and the flavor of what happened." Judy's talks will appeal to beginners and experienced genealogists alike.

We will start the day with our annual meeting and follow that with an update on legislative issues. Judy will give one talk in the morning. We will enjoy a luncheon speaker, then two more lectures from Judy. And we'll do our best to have lots of interesting vendors dangle goodies before our eyes.

Visit our website at www.massgencouncil.org for more information on the seminar. You can also visit Judy's blog at www.legalgenealogist.com to read her witty and insightful articles on topics ranging from DNA to her own personal research trials and tribulations.

And don't forget to renew your membership with MGC in order to benefit from the reduction in cost of the annual meeting. If at all possible we strive to make the discount greater than the modest dues amount, so you will end up saving money if you become a member. You can renew or join either with the paper or online at www.massgencouncil.org.

But whatever you do, don't forget-

HOLD THAT DATE! July 20th 2013!



IT'S TIME TO RENEW!

MGC MEMBERSHIP FORM

**Thank you for your interest in the
MASSACHUSETTS GENEALOGICAL COUNCIL**

MASSACHUSETTS GENEALOGICAL COUNCIL

www.massgencouncil.org
info@massgencouncil.org
P. O. Box 5393
Cohituate, MA 01778-5393

For over 30 years, MGC has safeguarded researchers' access to public records in Massachusetts and has provided educational programs for the genealogical community. With your help our mission will continue!

Your MGC membership gives you the opportunity to make a **real difference** by making your voice heard when efforts are made to restrict access to public records in Massachusetts.

All Memberships include:

- Direct updates on legislative action
- Participation in MGC's board meetings
- MGC's Newsletter
- Discount on MGC seminar

Organization Memberships also include:

- 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's annual seminar

Membership Type☐ \$10.00 - **Individual**☐ \$15.00 - **Family**☐ \$20.00 - **Organization**

Membership year is from January 1 to December 31. MGC dues are not tax deductible.

Individual & Family Membership (Families, please include two names & emails)

Name/s

Email/s*

Address

City/State/Zip

Phone

Organizational Membership

Name of Organization

Address

City/State/Zip

Phone

Website

Email*

President

Email*

MGC Delegate

Email*

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Log into our website at www.massgencouncil.org with your user name and password. If you forget them, follow the instructions on screen or send an email to info@massgencouncil.org for help. Electronic payments are made via Paypal, but all you need is your credit card. You do not need to have a Paypal account.

***IMPORTANT!** Please include an email address. MGC communicates almost entirely through email and our website. You can also follow us on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), & [Twitter](#). **If you require a paper copy of the MGC Newsletter, please initial here:** ____.

Please make check payable to:
Print form and mail to:

**Massachusetts Genealogical Council
Ruy Cardoso, Treasurer
P. O. Box 600565, Newtonville, MA 02460-0005**

MGC is an all-volunteer organization. Can you help MGC 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 causes of identity theft are due to hacking into major databases, theft of wallet or mail, credit card, in-store or on-telephone transactions and computer spyware. We need ongoing education for legislators and regulators.

Every inhabitant of the Countrie shall have free libertie to search and veewe any Rooles, Records, or Regesters of any Court or office except the Councell, 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 therfore. (Massachusetts Body of Liberties, 1641).

What is the Massachusetts Genealogical Council?

MGC was founded in 1980 and is the umbrella organization representing Massachusetts genealogists, historical societies and all those concerned about records preservation and free and unfettered access to civil records.

All historical researchers owe it to themselves to advocate for open public records. MGC serves as the records access watchdog and provides a counterpoint to the Massachusetts legislature regarding access issues. Thanks in large part to efforts by MGC, genealogists are still able to access all Massachusetts vital records.

MGC holds a yearly seminar with genealogical lectures and workshops, networking and book sales. This is our way of connecting the genealogical community. We hope you will become more aware and active in the cause of keeping public records open and accessible.

Please consider joining MGC, whether as an individual, genealogical society, library, historical society or family association. Anyone interested in preserving open access to public records is welcome!



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