



Access — Education — Preservation

NEWSLETTER OF THE MASSACHUSETTS GENEALOGICAL COUNCIL

SUMMER 2019

President's Column

By Barbara Mathews, CG, FASG

We had so much fun at NERGC 2019 in early April in Manchester, New Hampshire. I hope you got a chance to connect with us. Our table in the exhibit hall had a constant stream of visitors. We handed out many health pedigree fill-in charts and recruited new members. Inside, we have coverage with lots of photos.

NERGC Sponsored Speech

MGC sponsored NERGC 2019's Thursday opening luncheon. Our speaker, Jennifer Zinck, covered "DNA Testing: What Did I Sign Up For?" She provided four ways to sort out fact from myth when evaluating the terms of service and implications of testing on DNA websites.

Shirley Barnes Award

During lunch, we presented our first annual Shirley Barnes Records Access Award. Shirley was MGC's Civil Records Director for 25 years and an ardent supporter of records access. Many of us remember the changes to the laws she instigated, and her dedication to the Council throughout her life. We presented this award to **Brooke Schrier Ganz, founder of Reclaim the Records**. We were able to play Brooke's acceptance speech at our Thursday NERGC luncheon. As I stood at the podium, I saw many heads bent over their food. As Brooke was making her points about records access, heads started lifting up. At the end, all were rivetted to her message.

If you missed our luncheon and Brooke's inspiring message about records access, we have good news for you.



Barbara Mathews catches up with Dick Eastman at the MGC booth in the NERGC 2019 exhibit hall. You can subscribe to view Mr Eastman's Online Genealogy News by going to his website, EOGN.com, or subscribe [here](#). Photo by Yvonne Hickey

We've uploaded the video to our channel on YouTube. You can view it by following this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZLC3Ov9zCc&t=5s>

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

President's Column	1
President's Cont.	2
Shirley Barnes Award	3
Your Board	4
NERGC 2019	5
Institutional Records: Penikese Hospital	6
Federal Records Access	7
MA Records Access	8
MA Records Cont.	9
Membership News	10
Membership Form	11
Sunshine Laws	12

Save the Date!

MGC's 2020
Seminar

"Origins and
Destinations"

Saturday and
Sunday,

April 4-5, 2020

in

Lowell, MA

President's Column, continued

MGC 2020 Seminar

Planning for our 2020 MGC Seminar is underway. We've identified our dates and a venue – Come join us in Lowell, Massachusetts on Saturday and Sunday, April 4th and 5th, 2020.

Our theme is Origins and Destinations. The City of Lowell is the perfect place to celebrate this. It was a nexus of incoming immigrants from Europe and Latin America as well as people leaving historic family farms to find work in the burgeoning mills. From this experience, many moved into economic security or moved with the Westward Migration. Lowell was and is still a crossroads. There will be plenty here for everyone no matter what focus your research has.

Technology Fund

I am pleased to announce that MGC received a generous donation to support an upgraded website. We created a Technology Committee to define what we need and when. Expect more news from us on this topic in the future. To donate to the Technology Fund, please go to <http://www.massgencouncil.org/2017/please-donate/> where you can use PayPal or find directions to send a check. Make a note on your check or send an email to Treasurer@massgencouncil.org to ensure that your donation is earmarked for technology.



MGC Board in 2007, following Shirley's retirement from the Civil Records Director position, in the Trustees Room of the Waltham Public Library.

Back row: Michael Brophy, Kathryn Smith Black, Sheila Fitzpatrick, Melinde Luta Byrne, Sharon Var-num Sergeant, Anne Dzindolet, Wilbur Wheaton, and Bernie Couming. Photo by Don Byrne.

Front row: Barbara Jean Mathews, and Shirley M. Barnes.

Legislation

Many deeply interesting issues are being raised during the 191st legislative session (this year and next). Adoptees born during a closed-record gap in our current law may gain access to their original certificates of birth. The Massachusetts Sunshine Laws may see better coverage for the legislature itself. People born out-of-wedlock may finally lose the stigma of being the only people in Massachusetts to have their own birth and marriage records closed. That stigmatization might finally end in this session. Another bill would open records in the Secretary of State's care after 75 years. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Archives are under the Secretary of State's operation.

Elections

Our biennial spring election took place the board meeting late in April. We have a great team of people going forward. Please see the list of officers and directors on page 3. We welcomed back many officers and directors. Linda MacIver moved from Secretary to Civil Records Director/Federal, Kathy Kaldis moved to the VP slot, and we welcomed David J. MacRae, Jr., as Secretary. I will miss the calm voice and ability to take on difficult tasks that Stella Pierce, Ph.D., our retiring VP, brought to our team. Thankfully, she remains a part of our program committee, so we still have the pleasure of working with her. Thank you, Stella, for your service; you will be missed.

2019 Membership Year

It's time to renew your membership to MGC. The membership year runs from January 1st to December 31st. The cost is \$20 per year for both individuals and institutions. We've set up the website to accept payments with credit cards. Just click on the PayPal link and you will be able to pay either with your own credit card or through your own PayPal account. Find the membership links for individuals or societies at: <http://www.massgencouncil.org/2017/join-our-community/>

For those of you who prefer to fill out a paper form, we've put one on page 12 in this newsletter.

Thank you for your on-going support of MGC. We are all excited to be working on your behalf.

The Shirley Barnes Records Access Award

“Massachusetts Genealogical Council Presents the First Annual Shirley M. Barnes Records Access Award to Brooke Schreier Ganz, Founder and President of Reclaim the Records”

(MANCHESTER, NH: April 4, 2019) At the opening luncheon of the New England Regional Genealogical Conference, the Massachusetts Genealogical Council (MGC) awarded its first annual Shirley M. Barnes Records Access Award to Brooke Schreier Ganz, Founder, and President of Reclaim the Records. The award is an engraved book clock, a replica of the award presented to Shirley Barnes July 14, 2007, upon her retirement as Civil Records Director of MGC.



WHO IS BROOKE SCHREIER GANZ? Brooke is a friendly, outspoken mother of two residing in California. A computer programmer, she developed an open source records management software and is a lifetime volunteer with the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine. Researching 95% of her ancestors who resided in New York City proved difficult from California. Brooke promptly understood that public records should be accessible to all, especially to those whose taxes paid for them. Drawing from the success of her personal record access and publishing project, she founded the non-profit Reclaim the Records which utilizes the Freedom of Information Laws and Acts to reclaim public records, making them accessible for free to all genealogists.

Image: Brooke Schrier Ganz, 2017.

WHO WAS SHIRLEY M. BARNES? A little slip of a woman, frequently donning an inviting smile and a big “Save Massachusetts Records” button, Shirley M. Barnes was committed to advocating for record preservation and access. Weekly she rode the commuter rail from Concord to Boston to walk the statehouse, visiting with legislators. Her work brought about the 1983 Massachusetts vital records law which mandated the transfer of vital records to the state archives in five-year intervals. After 25 years of dedicated service as MGC's Civil Records Director, Shirley tirelessly stayed on the board, mentoring her successors until recently when attending meetings became a physical challenge.

Shirley passed away on August 24, 2018, at the age of 95, only eight months after her husband. She is survived by two children and a genealogy community that she had served for decades. (Her obituary may be accessed [here](#).) Shirley's efforts served to establish a model for other New England states to follow in protecting access to public records for research.



Image: Shirley M. (Armstrong) Barnes in the statehouse, circa 1983

THE SHIRLEY M. BARNES RECORDS ACCESS AWARD: The Massachusetts Genealogical Council, at the board meeting on February 17, 2019, established an annual award to be given in memory of Shirley M. (Armstrong) Barnes at a luncheon held in odd years at the New England Regional Genealogical Conference and in even years at the MGC Annual Seminar. The award will recognize people who emulate Shirley's volunteer spirit and whose dedication to records access has made a significant impact for genealogists. See <http://www.massgencouncil.org> for more information.

MASSACHUSETTS GENEALOGICAL COUNCIL: The Massachusetts Genealogical Council is an umbrella organization of Massachusetts genealogical and historical societies and libraries. We provide educational seminars and conferences to the members of those organizations. We also monitor legislative and administrative activity that might impact genealogists and historians.

Contact Info:

Francine Crowley Griffis, Communications Director
Massachusetts Genealogical Council
978-201-6406 communications@massgencouncil.org

Your Board Members

The people on the board of the Massachusetts Genealogical Council are volunteers who work hard on your behalf, monitoring legislative activities and producing quality genealogy seminars. Please reach out to a member of the MGC Board or visit our website to explore available rewarding volunteer opportunities.

We always need people to help with publicizing our activities, learning more about bills in the Massachusetts and US legislatures, and working on our annual seminar. Don't underestimate your skills. If you can walk and lift a box, write an article or tweet about us, you're in! We need computer savvy people, writers, legislative advocates, coordinators, organizers, and communicators. Just tell us your skills and we will fit you in.

Send us an email if you are interested. We'd love to have you join a committee and learn about our work.

Contact MGC President, Barbara Mathews, CG, FASG

Email: President@MassGenCouncil.org

President : Barbara Mathews, CG, FASG

Vice President: Kathleen Kaldis

Secretary: David J. McRae, Jr.

Treasurer: Susan Tellier

Program Director: Susan O'Connor

Communications Director: Francine Crowley Griffis

Civil Records Director/Federal: Linda MacIver, Med. MSLIS

Civil Records Director/Massachusetts: C. Yvonne Hickey

Membership Director: Brigid O'Donnell

Webmaster: Richard Reid

Newsletter Director: Angela Schofield

Archives Director: David Darby

Way & Means Director: Charlene Sokal, MSLS

AAHGS Delegate: Stella Pierce, Ph.D., Carolyn Saunders

AMG Delegate: Richard Reid

CMGS Delegate : Kathleen Kaldis

ESOG Delegate : Barbara Beake

Friends of Irish Research Delegate: Richard Reid

MSOG Delegate : Ray Gendreau

NEHGS Delegate: Anne Meringolo

TIARA Delegate: Sheila FitzPatrick

WMGS Delegate: Dave Robison

NERGC 2019, Manchester, New Hampshire



MGC's Civil Records Directors, Linda MacIver (Federal) and C. Yvonne Hickey (Massachusetts) get together at our booth at NERGC 2019. These ladies will be vigilant on our behalf over the coming two years. Photo by Barbara J. Mathews.

With over 1,000 genealogists in attendance, the two dozen genealogy societies putting on NERGC 2019 saw a successful and exciting conference.

SHIRLEY BARNES AWARD

We presented the first ever Shirley Barnes Records Access Award to Brooke Ganz of Reclaim the Records.

MGC-SPONSORED LECTURE

We sponsored Jennifer Zinck's presentation about four important things to know about the legal issues of genetic testing.

RAFFLES

MGC gave out two raffle prizes. The Volunteer Raffle donation was a two-year membership. From our booth, we raffled a single ticket to both days of our own MGC 2020 Seminar.



The view from the podium, in this case, at the Thursday MGC-sponsored luncheon, as Barbara presented the Brooke Ganz acceptance video. A critical projector cable had been missing and Francine Griffis had run to her room and run to the lunch room carrying an older laptop that used a different type of connector. Barbara Mathews carries lots of thumb drives in her pocketbook, so Jennifer quickly transferred her speech to the old laptop. No attendees knew we had been so worried only moments before. Photo by Barbara Mathews



Jennifer Zinck at the podium during Thursday's lunch, discussing "Finding Fayette's Father." Photo by Barbara Mathews.

PENIKESE HOSPITAL

By Barbara J. Mathews, CG, FASG, and Charlene Key Sokal, MLIS

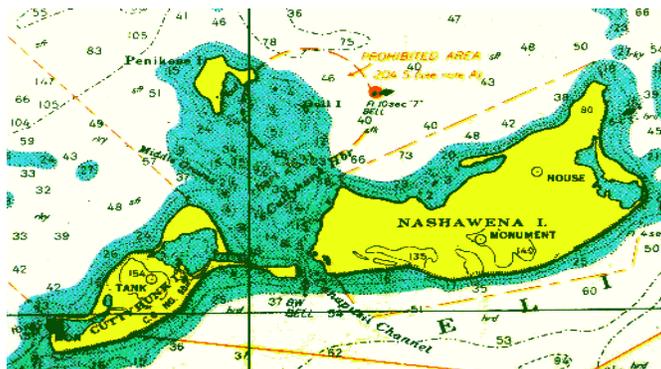


Figure 12 Pekinese Island is just to the north of Cuttyhunk, a sister Elizabeth Island.

Penikese Hospital

The leper (now called Hansen's disease) hospital operated from 1905 to 1920, and always operated under the same name. It was for a period of time, affiliated with Harvard Medical School. When it closed, its patients were transferred to the federal leper hospital in Carville, Louisiana.

"There are remains of residences, a laundry facility, and a cemetery with 14 residents buried there."¹ The graveyard's tombstones are all photographed on Find A Grave [here](#). The last burial was for a woman who died 20 December 1920.



Figure 13 Pekinese Hospital, circa 1915. Photograph used by Mass Moments on 17 November 2005, [The First Leprosy Patients Arrive on Penikese Island](#).

Resources: "[The First Leprosy Patients Arrive on Penikese Island](#)." *Mass Moments*, blog, posted 17 November 2005.

Hartnet, Ken . "[The Tragedy of Pekinese Island](#)," *The Boston Globe*, posted 26 November 2005, the 100th anniversary of the transfer of patients to the island.

Honeij, James A. "Leprosy and Its Relation to Massachusetts." *New England Journal of Medicine* 173 (1915): 48-53. By subscription only [here](#).

Sabin, Thomas D. "The Penikese Hospital — A Massachusetts Hospital for the Treatment of Hansen's Disease." *New England Journal of Medicine* 304 (1981): 1610-2. By subscription only [here](#).

Buckley, I. Thomas, and Meg B. Stringer. *Penikese, Island of Hope : One of the Elizabeths, a Massachusetts Historical Site*. Elizabeth Islands, Gosnold, Mass.: Stoney Brook Pub., 1997. The WorldCat link is [here](#).

¹ "Pekinese Island History and Fun Facts," <http://www.penikese.org/penikese-island-history-and-fun-facts/>

FEDERAL RECORDS ACCESS REPORT

By Barbara J. Mathews, CG, FASG



2020 CENSUS ACCURACY

Genealogists rely on the US Census for accurate information about households. Right now, a law suit has worked its way to the US Supreme Court about a question whether each person in the household is an American citizen or not.

In the meantime, many cities have formed 2020 Complete Count Committees. An overview of these committees can be found at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/2020-census/complete-count.html>. Directions on how to form a committee for your town can be found at <https://www.census.gov/partners/complete-count.html>.

NEW YORK STATE BILL WILL OPEN ORIGINAL CERTIFICATES OF BIRTH FOR ADOPTEES

Passed by overwhelming majorities in both the Senate and the Assembly, S3419/A5494 has been sent to the governor for signing. The law will become effective 15 January 2020. New York is the 10th state to pass a law making original certificates of birth available to adoptees. Massachusetts has a similar bill that still has a chance to pass this year. See the Massachusetts Records Report for more

information.

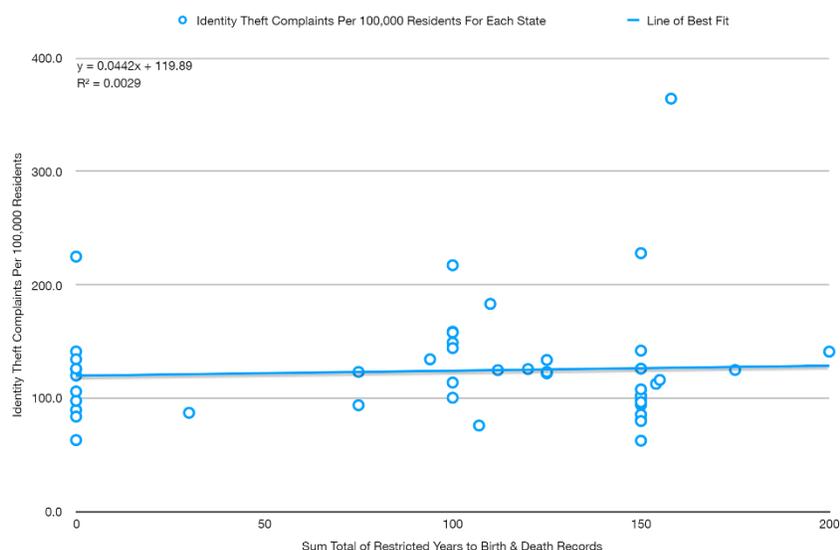
VR BILL IN MAINE

Helen Shaw of Maine worked with her representative to submit LR 1695, a bill to turn back the last law expanding vital records closure period. We learned just recently that the bill had great support but that one member of a legislative committee dead-ended it following a discussion with someone who misunderstood the underlying causes of modern consumer identity theft. This was a big loss to genealogists.

It invigorates MGC to continue to teach that records closure periods have no relationship to ID theft. Where do we get these statistics? Why, from the FBI of course! We've reproduced the graph below and you can see that it has a flat line, meaning that the information on the horizontal access (years of records closure) results in little effect on the vertical access (Consumer ID theft from the FBI).

Go to <https://github.com/ReclaimTheRecords/vital-records-data/blob/master/Vital%20Records%20Graph.pdf> to see the larger version.

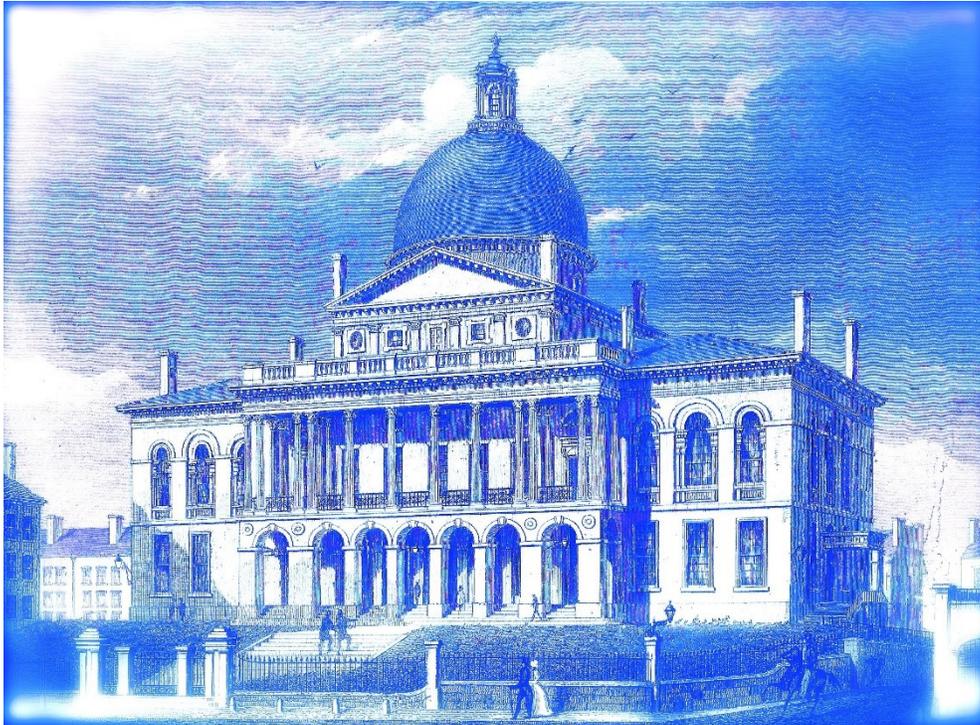
Correlation of Restricted Years of Birth & Death Records with Rate of Identity Theft in Each State



MASSACHUSETTS RECORDS ACCESS REPORT

BILLS OF INTEREST IDENTIFIED

By C. Yvonne Hickey



TO: The Board of MGC

DT: 06/22/2019

RE: Civil Records Director

State Report - June 2019

- Participated in Massachusetts Town Clerk Association (MTCA) Summer Conference on June 12th in Plymouth, MA with MGC VP. Amended 1-minute MGC Promotional Video used at NERGC and had it on display in our booth – interacted with clerks and other vendors present in the exhibit area. VP compiled feedback we collected from those who visited the booth on day 1 and were subsequently queried on what would benefit them as clerks as it pertained to interacting with genealogists in search of records. Availability of a handout / cheat sheet on where town records are housed according to
- In May visited the State Representative's Office. Requested Meeting with Representative Betty Poirier of North Attleboro, Second Assistant Minority Leader – target June 24th. Mrs. Poirier is currently sponsoring 60 Bills in the House including two that MGC is following. Any large group tour/gathering must be coordinated through one's state representative, per docent engaged at the state house and must be held on a weekday.
- Will investigate variations of the "Nostalgic Button" worn by Shirley M. Barnes, in whose name, MGC established the "Annual Records Access Award." I would suggest we secure enough buttons for the Spring 2020 program in addition to whatever membership drive(s) we settle upon, as the buttons are in keeping with our theme/concept of "origins" and carry a great story to share when engaging parties - Would also suggest the website be on the button – either around the rim or on the

MASSACHUSETTS RECORDS ACCESS REPORT, CONTINUED

backside: www.massgencouncil.org

- City of Boston Registrar Follow Up. Registrar indicated she would participate in an educational session with MGC. Details to be determined. Outreach planned late July.
- Participated in Program Committee Meeting at MGC President's residence.
- Technology Committee – a member, but unable to flex to change in schedule in June. Look forward to participating in future discussions.
- Ongoing: Continue to monitor progress of legislation via downloaded APP, encourage others to do so, and have frequented the statehouse to establish presence.

New Bills We Are Tracking:

- Expansion of Massachusetts DNA Database. S1457 & H2071.
- Self-Identify Gender on Massachusetts Identification and All Governmental Forms. S.2213.
 - Similar legislation was apparently in the previous session but did not progress.
 - Vote to engross by the Senate, currently in the House for concurrence.
 - Please see the article in the Boston Herald (thank you Linda Mac):
<https://www.bostonherald.com/2019/04/25/senate-passes-gender-x-bill-expandscope/>



- Noteworthy: NH HB669 recently went through both the House and Senate for Identification.
- The following states allow a gender-neutral option without documentation on identification:

Oregon (since 2017)

Washington, D.C. (since 2017)

Minnesota

Maryland

California

- Infrastructure Note: Legislators in the Commonwealth noted that the state agencies that would be affected by the bill are already prepared. The Registry of Motor Vehicles, for instance, has built into its systems the ability to add gender designations to driver's licenses.

Of Interest:

- SD2444 – 24 Page Report of the Special Commission to preserve Polish heritage in the Pioneer Valley (pursuant to Chapter 6 of the Acts of 2016) now available as of June 2019. Preservation and Genealogy mentioned.
- H3292 – Proposes establishing a commission to flush out Electronic Notarization in the Commonwealth.
- In Texas, to protect seniors, changes to vital records access - C.S.H.B.703 is proposing to increase the number of years a birth record is inaccessible to 90 citing "Concerns have been raised over the vulnerability of seniors. when their birth records become public information after 75 years. Because a birth record can be used to establish a false identity and gain access to state and federal benefits, among other fraudulent activities,"

MEMBERSHIP

Brigid O'Donnell

MGC Membership Director

membership@massgencouncil.org

What an exciting time to be a member of the Massachusetts Genealogical Council! MGC had quite a presence at NERGC 2019 in Manchester, NH, and it was a great opportunity to see MGC in action, and realize all the potential benefits of membership!

We had a very active Society booth, with lots of people stopping by to say hi or to learn more about what MGC is. We welcomed a number of new members to our ranks and presented two lucky raffle winners with prizes that will bring them back to MGC events. Some of our Board and general members presented at the Seminar. Delegates to MGC were present at their own society tables. The most exciting event for MGC was hosting one of the lunch events, using the opportunity to give the first ever Sheila Barnes award to the founder of Reclaim the Records!

Membership in MGC allows you to experience all this and more! We are actively planning our two-day 2020 MGC Seminar to be held in April 2020 in Lowell, MA – see elsewhere in this Newsletter for details. If you are already a member, consider offering your skills – the camaraderie is a value-added benefit of membership! If you are not a member, **please join us** – we currently have 70 individual members and 16 organizations and libraries in our ranks. Our membership comes from New England and beyond – their support is invaluable. We keep you apprised of ongoing legislative issues which affect access to records key to genealogical research. Visit our website at membership@massgencouncil.org to access past newsletters, blog posts and to read about coming events. You can use our convenient online registration options. Or use the paper mail-in registration found in this issue of the MGC Newsletter. MGC dues are a very affordable \$20 per year.

Every organization tries to meet the needs of its constituents in a way that honors its mission – we do that through records access and preservation and educational programs – but we need enthusiastic and dedicated members to identify and keep those offerings dynamic. Any organization depends on the talents and commitment of its membership to succeed – MGC needs you! Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions at membership@massgencouncil.org.



A Special Note to our PayPal Subscribers:

If you set up PayPal to automatically send us your membership fee every year, make sure that you told PayPal to increase that fee to \$20.

We increased our fees from \$10 to \$20 two years ago. PayPal won't change it until you tell it to. Thanks!



Massachusetts Genealogical Council
 • safeguarding access to public records since 1980 •
 P.O. Box 5393
 Cochituate, MA 01778-5393
 www.massgencouncil.org info@massgencouncil.org

MASSACHUSETTS GENEALOGICAL COUNCIL
access • education • preservation

A recognized 501(c)(3) all-volunteer umbrella organization representing Massachusetts genealogists, historical societies, libraries and researchers.

PRINT FORM and SUPPORT MGC by Mail:

• **Make check payable to:**
 Massachusetts Genealogical Council
 Susan Tellier, Treasurer
 206 Beacon Park, Webster, MA 01570

or go to massgencouncil.org for electronic registration and payment

• All Donations are tax-deductible and contributors will receive written acknowledgement of all gifts.

PLEASE COMPLETE ALL PERTINENT FIELDS

MEMBER – INDIVIDUAL OR ORGANIZATION **January 1-December 31**
 \$20 (MGC minimum since 2017) Other \$ _____

Name of INDIVIDUAL:

Email address: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone: home cell work

Name of ORGANIZATION:

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____ Phone: _____

Website: _____ Organization Email: _____

President's Name: _____ President's Email: _____

MGC Delegate: _____ Delegate's Email: _____

Contact president@massgencouncil.org for more information re: Organizations/Libraries

LIBRARY - SUBSCRIPTION ONLY Newsletter via online link or paper \$20.00

Library Name: _____ Email: _____

Contact Person: _____

DONOR • unrelated to membership dues •
 INDIVIDUAL \$ _____
 ORGANIZATION \$ _____

EVENT SPONSORS • Individual or Organization •
 • monetary and/or in-kind gift supporting specific MGC event • tangible benefits vary by category

Gold \$500 and over \$ _____ **Silver** \$250 - \$499 \$ _____ **Bronze** \$100 -\$249 \$ _____

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

Monitoring Legislation Education & Events Publicity Newsletter Fundraising

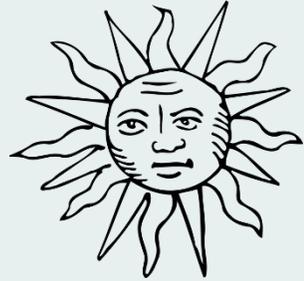
WHY DO WE HAVE A SUN SHINING ON DEED BOOKS AS OUR LOGO?

Several of the records genealogists use are open to us through Sunshine Laws. These include property records, probate records, tax records, poll records, military service records, public cemetery records, and town meeting records. Many a genealogist has broken a brick wall using these types of records.

Sunshine laws are laws that require government agencies and bodies to allow the public to attend their meetings and have access to their records. Sunshine laws are enacted at the state level and vary by state.^[1]

One type of record we use — the vital record — is not a public record. Vital records are among types of records prevented from disclosure by other laws which also vary from state to state. In most states, records not specifically deemed through law to be private are open records.

We not only watch for legislation that might change vital records access. We look for legislation or regulations that might impact genealogists in other ways, such as making records copies more expensive, or limiting the times during which research is permitted, or extending embargo periods.



[1] “Sunshine Laws Law and Legal Definition,” *USLegal.com* (<https://definitions.uslegal.com/s/sunshine-laws/> | viewed 12 June 2019).

Massachusetts Genealogical
Council
PO Box 5393
Cochituate, MA 01778

www.massgencouncil.org

newsletter@massgencouncil.org

PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE



MASSACHUSETTS
GENEALOGICAL
COUNCIL