President's Column
by Barbara Mathews, CG, FASG

It was an honor to be asked by the Nominating Committee to return to the position of MGC president for a two-year term. Under my predecessor, Mary Ellen Grogan, MGC finished its procedure to incorporate and to obtain 501(c)(3) status. My plan is to continue this work, ensuring that MGC’s operations meet the requirements for Massachusetts public charities. To this end, we have registered the change of officers, we produced a board orientation manual, and we’ve developed a Written Information Security Policy. More policies and paperwork lie ahead.

MGC’s website has been updated and switched from an underlying Joomla platform to a WordPress platform. I’ve appointed Richard Reid as webmaster. Richard is also a Delegate for the Friends of Irish Research. His volunteer work for us is much appreciated. I am looking forward to blogging again on all the issues important to genealogists.

In addition to the website work, Richard collaborated with Polly Kimmitt, a past president, to produce a new logo for MGC. We decided to keep the lovely lines and overall design of the logo, but to modify it to celebrate the Sunshine Laws. This is a term applied to laws that ensure that government records and meetings are open.

Continued on page 2…
MGC PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE (CONT.)

We are all excited about our upcoming Seminar. It will again be two days. On the first day, we’ll have several tracks of presenters. One track, devoted to DNA, will feature Jennifer Zinck, a nationally recognized specialist. It’s great to be able to feature DNA for a full day. Our Sunday program features Thomas Jones, Ph.D., the author of two wonderful books published by the National Society of Genealogists, *Mastering Genealogical Proof* and *Mastering Genealogical Documentation*. His topics will help us to improve our research and writing skills.

Of course, no newsletter can be complete without a look at legislative, regulatory, and government issues that might affect genealogists. We are keeping our eyes on several bills before the Massachusetts General Court. On the federal level, adequate planning to make the 2020 census accurate is meeting budget issues while major repositories such as NARA and the Library of Congress also face budget impacts. Finally, a non-governmental issue across the nation involves all of us adapting to the availability of microfilms rented from the LDS Family History Centers. We want to keep abreast of this issue as well.

MGC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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. This section of our website provides more information about our organization as a whole, and about our 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, communicators—just tell us your skills and we’ll 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*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>President: Barbara Mathews, CG FASG</th>
<th>Civil Records Director: Kathleen Kaldis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vice President: Stella Pierce, Ed.D.</td>
<td>Civil Records Director: Teresa Scott, J.D.</td>
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<td>Secretary: Linda MacIver, MSLIS, M. Ed.</td>
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<td>Treasurer: Susan Tellier</td>
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<td>Program Director: Susan O’Connor</td>
<td>Archives Director: David Darby</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communications Director: Sharon Christensen</td>
<td>Ways &amp; Means Director: Charlene Sokal, MSLS</td>
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Massachusetts Genealogical Council
2018 Seminar

**Dates**
- April 7 and 8, 2018
- Attend one or both days

**Location**
- Courtyard by Marriott Hotel, Marlborough, MA. Western corner of Routes 20 and 495
- Lodging will be available at the Courtyard by Marriott. Ask for the discounted MGC rate.
- Arrangements will be made to pick up attendees at the MBTA Westborough Commuter Rail Station

**Included**
- Lectures
- Printed and Electronic Syllabus
- Continental Breakfast
- Lunch
- Raffle prizes
- Free Parking
- Luncheon Topics

**Price**
- $85 for Saturday
- $85 for Sunday

**SATURDAY, APRIL 7**

**Session 1**
- **Jennifer Zinck.** DNA & Your Family Tree
- **Karen Mauer Jones.** Records Created by New York’s Towns, Counties, and Cities: Uncommonly Rich Resources
  - **Archives / Libraries:** Kimberly Toney, American Antiquarian Society

**Session 2**
- **Jennifer Zinck.** After the Test: Exploring Ancestry DNA Results
- **David Lambert, NEHGS.** Researching Revolutionary War Veterans
  - **Archives / Libraries:** Clifford A. McCarthy, Springfield History Library & Archives

**Session 3**
- **Jennifer Zinck.** DNA Ethics
- **Karen Mauer Jones.** New York Land Records: Patroonships, Manors, Patents, Rent Wars and Land Companies
  - **Archives / Libraries:** John Hannigan, Massachusetts Archives and Commonwealth Library

**Session 4**
- **Jennifer Zinck.** DNA Case Study
- **David Lambert (NEHGS).** Researching Civil War Veterans
  - **Archives / Libraries:** Jean Maguire, Digital Commonwealth Collections

**Workshop (MGC members only)**
- **Dr. Thomas W. Jones, FASG, FNGS, FUGA.** Developing Research Questions and Hypotheses: Planning an Exhaustive Search

**SUNDAY, APRIL 8**

**Dr. Thomas W. Jones, FASG, FNGS, FUGA.**
- What is the Standard of Proof in Genealogy?
- Maximizing Your Use of Evidence
- Systematically Using Autosomal DNA Test Results to Help Break Through Genealogical Brick Walls
- When Sources Don’t Agree: Then What?

For more information visit [www.massgencouncil.org](http://www.massgencouncil.org), or contact us at program@massgencouncil.org.

Connect with us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter.

*We hope you will join us for two very instructive days!*
**LIST OF MASSACHUSETTS STATE MENTAL INSTITUTIONS FILMED BY FAMILYSEARCH.ORG**

Records of many Massachusetts State Hospitals, State Schools and other institutions have been recently filmed and in some cases digitized by FamilySearch. These materials were previously housed in the Massachusetts Archives and thanks to the work of the volunteers from FamilySearch, are now made accessible at their website.

An excellent example is the State Primary School at Monson, MA, records, which have been digitized (note the camera icon in the upper right hand corner of the record). These records are case histories (1864 – 1895), boarding out registers (1883 – 1892), and placement registers (1874 – 1890).

So if these records are of interest to you, search the FamilySearch catalog under the location of the institution. Not all institutional records have been filmed but more will be.

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**Assembled by Charlene Key Sokal, M.S.L.S.**

N.B. The Records of the Grafton and Worcester State Hospitals Are Located at the Countway Library of the Harvard University Medical School in Boston, MA. They are inaccessible to the public. 11/15/2017

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<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
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<td>Massachusetts, film 2080271, items 3 – 5.</td>
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RELAAUNCED MGC WEBSITE

Announcing the new and improved MGC Website!


• Seminar Registration and Information
• Membership: Join or Renew
• General Information
• Donations
• Blogs - Record Access Issues

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN FOR SEMINAR 2018 (APRIL 7 & 8)

Online registration is now open for the MGC Seminar 2018 which is being held on Saturday, April 7th and Sunday, April 8th. For details on the seminar check our page that leads you to all you need to know about the seminar, including registering online and paying with PayPal. Register early as there is a limit of 130 for Sunday, April 8th.

NEW WEBSITE GOES LIVE

It has been a long road, but we have simplified our website and it is now active. We have corrected the broken links and simplified its look. Very soon we will have all the updates about the 2018 Seminar.

WELCOME TO MGC

The Massachusetts Genealogical Council works hard on behalf of genealogists. MGC

- monitors legislative and administrative activities of governmental agencies which affect genealogists;
- sponsors and presents legislation and programs designed to expand the resources and accessibility of services;
- develops and promotes the growth, education and exchange of ideas among persons and organizations interested in the pursuit of genealogy; and
- provides educational activities to advance genealogy.

As just one example, during the 2010 legislative session, MGC successfully opposed a bill...
Joint Committee on Public Health  
Massachusetts General Court  
Hearing November 28, 2017

In support of H1220, An Act relating to access to public records.

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.

This bill amends Section 7 of Chapter 66, “Custody of Old and Other Records,” by making all records held by the Secretary of State that are older than 75 years subject to public inspection. The current M.G.L. text makes no assertion of closure periods or timeframes.

Section 1 of this bill would ensure that studies of history, health, and social policy can proceed. Right now, records from the Salem Witch Trails and the state’s almshouses are closed to public inspection. Why? This is due to a misunderstanding of federal regulations and of privacy issues. Massachusetts stood at the forefront of compassionate care of the poor, destitute, and mentally ill. By making records more than 75 years old open to health, historic, and genealogical research, we promote well-being.

Current misunderstanding of federal HIPAA regulations has led the Massachusetts State Archives to close records of the Salem Witch Trails under the mistaken assumption that the reports of the inspection of defendants bodies for “witch’s marks” constitutes private health information covered by HIPAA. This action is not mandated by HIPAA, which is now regarded as covering no more than 50 years after the death of the subject. The Salem trials were 325 years ago. The action also limits both historical and genealogical investigation.

The current burgeoning study of the varied genetic basis for illness also means that the state would serve the public good best by making state hospital and almshouse records open after 75 years. Massachusetts was at the forefront of developing humane standards of care for the destitute.

For example, Annie Sullivan, the woman who went on to tutor Helen Keller, as a child lived at the Tewksbury State Almshouse. What role did the state play in making her ready to take on precedent-setting communication with Keller? By needlessly keeping these records private, we prevent the scholarly development of an understanding of the state’s place in this compassionate work.

Continued on Page 7…
Section 2 of this bill amends Section 2A of Chapter 46 by removing the stigmatization now surrounding those born out-of-wedlock through their entire adult life and to their posterity. Right now, the significant portion of children born without their parents having married creates a second-class set of vital records. Neither their birth records nor their marriage records will be seen by anyone other than themselves or their parents. There is no need in this day and age to create duplicate administrative systems for a single record type in this way. We create stigma rather than eliminate it.

Currently, about one-third of the births in Boston and about one-fifth of the births statewide are of children born out-of-wedlock. Current law requires that town clerks and state vital records staff people handle those births AND the marriages of those out-of-wedlock differently from all other births and marriages. This results in a two-track system and a level of monitoring that adds unnecessary overhead to administration of the civil registration system.

It also adds significant burden to these children. A young friend’s mother died when she was 2½ years old. She was raised by a boyfriend of her mother. She now has school records using her foster father’s surname. This is not the surname on her birth certificate. This young woman lacks the documentation required to obtain her own birth certificate.

For genealogists, the current law makes it impossible to research some family members. While all other records are open and accessible, the births and marriages of those born out-of-wedlock remain locked in the dark. Access to these records can contribute to a better health history, as supported by the U.S. Surgeon General.

In the 21st century, illegitimacy has lost its stigma within society as a whole. The populace understands that a poor decision or happenstance surrounding someone’s parents does not make the baby a bad person. We should stop placing administrative roadblocks in front of these people throughout their adulthood.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. I ask you to report this bill favorably out of committee.

Yours, Barbara J. Mathews

president@massgencouncil.org
Local Repository of Note:
The Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield, MA
By Dave Robison of Old Bones Genealogy of New England

TREASURES IN THE BERKSHIRES – THE BERKSHIRE ATHENAEUM

Dave Robison of Old Bones Genealogy of New England

The building housing current Berkshire County Registry of Deeds and Probate Court was the original location of what has always been known as the Berkshire Athenaeum. Founded by local influential families in the mid-19th century it was once not only a library but a museum. Not long after its opening, the building proved too cramped for the enormous collections of books and artifacts that came to reside there. The Crane family (think of the paper on which our currency is printed) funded the construction of what we know today as the Berkshire Museum in 1903. The phenomenal early growth is attributed to Harlan Ballard, the first Director. Since its inception, the Athenaeum has been a haven of literacy, research, children’s activities, and a number of other public services.

The transition from private to public funding began in the early 20th century. In 1979, a young woman came to work at the Athenaeum as a “benefitted part time evening assistant” and since 2000 has served as the Local History & Melville Collections Supervisor. Kathy Reilly has been the guide for many initiatives at the Athenaeum. It is safe to say that Kathy is largely responsible for the depth and breadth of the collections available, not the least of which involves the acquisition of the records of National Archives and Records Administration formerly housed at the Silvio Conte Center which was defunded by the Federal Government several years ago.

Genealogical researchers here in Western Mass are well served by the Athenaeum. The most important asset, of course, is a knowledgeable staff who are ready, willing, and able to assist anyone’s research needs. Most is available on a self-serve basis. The shelves are chock full of collections: vital records of many cities and towns in Massachusetts, family genealogies, the catalogs of several Massachusetts genealogical societies, transcribed cemetery records, immigration records, the Drouin and Hale collections, naturalization records and much more. Other collections are searchable in digital indices. Search a large collection of vertical files containing such interesting collections as the 18th century sermons of Rev. Thomas Allen 1743-1810, written in a code yet to be deciphered!

The acquisition of the records of the NARA could be considered a “coup de généalogie”! All but parts of the Civil War and Spanish American War are available. These records are accessed only by staff. Much like retrieving records in Washington DC, you make a request and a few minutes later, it will be on the table for.

Those of you familiar with NARA records will recognize the files shown here. They are the same files once housed at the Silvio Conte Federal Building in Pittsfield. The finding aid was written by Jean Nudd, an employee of NARA who now works out of the Waltham facility.

Pittsfield was the home of the famed author, Herman Melville. He lived on an estate he called “Arrowhead” which had been occupied by the Melville family until the early 20th century. It is now owned and operated by the Berkshire Historical Society. The Athenaeum houses one of the world’s largest collections of Melville memorabilia is housed here. Many of his books, pieces of his scrimshaw collection, whaling artifacts and even a passport that contains the signature of his friend, Nathaniel Hawthorne.

The Berkshire Athenaeum, a worthy destination!
Spotlight on Local Community Organizations
Chelmsford Genealogy Club
By Judith Sylvia, Coordinator of the CGC

The Chelmsford Genealogy Club started in 1999 with a group of people that took a genealogy class from Chelmsford Recreation. For two years they met in a restaurant and had pizza and wine and talked about genealogy led by Carolyn Murray. The group then grew and we moved our meetings to the new meeting room in the renovated Chelmsford Library. We then became a program of the Chelmsford Library and are supported by the library and the Friends of the Library and Judy Sylvia took over running the group as Coordinator.

The Chelmsford Genealogy Club now has about 40 active members who attend different programs at different times. Judy sends out emails to the 369 member email list with information on meetings, products, genealogy news etc.

A few months ago we established four interest groups that have been well attended: Irish, English, DAR/Mayflower, and Newfoundland/Nova Scotia.

The club had a successful Beginning Genealogy class on March 5th, with 12 students attending. They taught what records are available, and how to obtain them. In addition, they were also informed about how to search online.

Our motto of the Chelmsford Genealogy Club is Teach, Learn and Share.

For more information contact:
Chelmsford Genealogy Club Coordinator,
Judith Sylvia
978-256-4461 jjysylvia582@aol.com
MESSAGE FROM THE ACTING MGC NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Dear MGC Community: We want your articles. Please consider submitting material for publication in future MGC Newsletters. The newsletter will feature: professional development content, organizational events, genealogy tips, repository information, legislation updates, records accessibility, etc. Please send all article submissions to the MGC Newsletter Editor, Kathleen Kaldis at Newsletter@MassGenCouncil.org.

MEMBERSHIP
By Brigid O'Donnell

Join or Renew your Massachusetts Genealogical Council membership for 2018!
“access • education • preservation”

Your participation is essential in order to continue to serve genealogists, both individuals, libraries and organizations. The MGC mission is to provide ongoing monitoring of state and federal legislation pertinent to protecting records access and preservation, to provide educational opportunities and to promote other interests of the genealogical community.

MGC operates on a calendar year, January through December. Join or renew your membership for a minimum amount of $20. Consider volunteering as well – we’d love to chat with you about the opportunity to participate. MGC also accepts donations from individuals or organizations as well as in-kind or monetary support for events, such as the upcoming MGC 2018 Seminar April 7 and 8.

Membership benefits include access to our informative and newly designed website, our blog and The MGC Newsletter, in addition to the educational and records access advantages and other special opportunities. For example, the special event presented Saturday, April 7 by Dr. Thomas W. Jones at the upcoming 2018 Seminar which will be open to current individual MGC Members Only!

Visit the MGC website www.massgencouncil.org and choose the “Click here for Membership” link in the right hand gray column and then choose the gold “MGC Revised Membership Form 2018” to get the membership registration form which can be downloaded, completed and emailed to membership@massgencouncil.org or printed and mailed to:

Massachusetts Genealogical Council
Susan Tellier, Treasurer
206 Beacon Park
Webster, MA 01570

Stay tuned to the website for the option to register and pay electronically.

Questions? Contact Brigid O'Donnell, Membership Director membership@massgencouncil.org
New England is the last bastion of open records states. With your support MGC can continue to effectively serve the genealogical and historical communities. MGC welcomes both individual and organizational members. Both have access to our newsletters and are welcome at our board meetings. In addition, we ask organizational members to designate a delegate to participate actively in our meetings and to bring information about records back to their societies.

We make every effort to keep those with an interest in public records informed of the current state of legislative and regulatory activity that affects researchers. This is important because of the consistent and repeated efforts to close access to records.

MGC has been recognized as tax-exempt under Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3). Memberships are fully tax-deductible. All of our staff (officers, directors, and committee members) are volunteers. No one receives a salary. We do however have expenses to meet in order to support a webpage, and to engage in educational conferences.

We encourage our supporters to make a donation to MGC to help pay for our operating expenses which include website maintenance and operations, participation in genealogy events and conferences, testifying at public hearings, and printing and distributing information on subjects relating to access to records. We need you to join us! Non-voting membership supports our efforts on your behalf.
PLEASE COMPLETE ALL PERTINENT FIELDS

☐ MEMBER – INDIVIDUAL OR ORGANIZATION January 1-December 31
☐ $20  ☐ Other $________

Name of INDIVIDUAL:

Email address:

Address:

City/State/Zip

Phone:    home    cell    work

Name of ORGANIZATION:

Address

City/State/Zip

Phone:

Website:

President’s Name:

MGC Delegate:

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 and over  ☐ $________
Bronze $100 and over  ☐ $________

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

Monitoring Legislation  ☐ Education & Events  ☐ Publicity  ☐ Newsletter  ☐ Fundraising

revised 3/5/2017
2019 SLIG and 2019 SILG Academy for Professionals
PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT

@SLIG2019 on Facebook and Twitter

New for 2019

SLIG Academy
For Professionals

Registration Opens:
July 2, 2018
### Upcoming Genealogy Seminars & Conferences

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<tr>
<th>Seminar/Conference</th>
<th>City, State</th>
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<tr>
<td>RootsTech</td>
<td>Salt Lake City, Utah</td>
<td>February 28th - March 3rd 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Massachusetts Genealogical Council Seminar</td>
<td>Marlborough, Massachusetts</td>
<td>April 7th - April 8th 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Genealogical Society Family History Conference</td>
<td>Grand Rapids, Michigan</td>
<td>May 2nd - May 5th 2018</td>
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<td>Ontario Genealogical Society Conference</td>
<td>West Guelph Ontario</td>
<td>June 1st - June 3rd 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>TIARA/IGSI Celtic Connections Conference</td>
<td>Newton, Massachusetts</td>
<td>August 10th - August 11th 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federation of Genealogical Societies Conference</td>
<td>Fort Wayne, Indiana</td>
<td>August 22nd - August 25th 2018</td>
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