WHAT IS COMING UP..............
by Josh Taylor
Mark Your Calendars. The Massachusetts Genealogical Council is proud to present the 2009 Annual Seminar, to be held July 18, 2009 at Bentley College in Waltham. This year’s seminar offers something for every genealogist including lectures and panels on general methodology, Irish genealogy, DNA research, professional genealogy, Internet and technology, and a host of other topics. Watch the MGC Website (http://www.massgenealogicalcouncil.com) for the complete program and registration details.

This year’s main speaker will be Paula Stuart-Warren, CG, an award-winning genealogist. Since the early 1980s Paula has worked full time in the area of genealogical and historical research, lecturing, consulting, and writing. She is a graduate of the weeklong U.S. National Institute of Genealogical Research held at the National Archives and in 1988 earned her national certification from the Board for Certification of Genealogists. A current member of the Federation of Genealogical Societies’ Board of Directors, Paula has also served as a national officer of the Association of Professional Genealogists and is an active volunteer in numerous genealogical, historical, and professional organizations. She has been a frequent lecturer at both National Genealogical Society (NGS) and Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS) national conference since the early 1990s. A former columnist for Ancestry.com, Paula has written articles for the Minnesota Genealogist, Digital Genealogist, FGS Forum, Family Tree Magazine, NewEnglandAncestors.org, NGS NewsMagazine, and Ancestry Magazine. She also co-authored the best-selling Your Guide to the Family History Library: How to Access the World’s Largest Genealogy Resource. Paula has been recognized as a fellow of the Minnesota Genealogical Society, as is a receipt of the George E. Williams Award from the Federation of Genealogical Societies for her service to FGS and its member societies and the Grahame T Smallwood, Jr. Award of Merit from the Association of Professional Genealogists.

This year’s seminar will also feature a silent auction, exhibits, and a special “Beginner’s Workshop,” designed to help genealogists “jump-start” their research. More information, including the complete schedule and registration information will be available in the next issue of the newsletter. If you would like to volunteer to help at the conference, or would like to receive additional conference additional by e-mail, please e-mail massgencouncil@gmail.com.

We look forward to seeing you there!  
D. Joshua Taylor 
NEHGS Research Services Coordinator 
101 Newbury Street 
Boston, MA 02116 
617-226-1233 
MGC SILENT AUCTION.............

MGC will again feature a Silent Auction at this year’s July conference. Polly Kimmitt and Melinde Lutz Sanborn will be in charge of arrangements. Begin thinking of what you’d like to place up for bid. Last year there was terrific variety – everything from blocks of research time from skilled genealogists, to historic maps, CDs of lectures, memberships in organizations, and books, books, books. Conference attendees may place things into consideration. Anyone may bid. As last year, an email address will be given out online for remote bidders. Photos of objects/services to be auctioned will be sent electronically. Look for all the details in our next Newsletter and start dusting off your duplicates now!

FROM THE EDITOR............
by Arthur J. Roberts
Wow…I had trouble just fitting all the news into this Newsletter. The legislature is in a new session, the MGC Annual Seminar is coming and the government is trying to limit research hours. What else can be going on? It is important that all of you read the inserts in this issue. The New England Regional Genealogical Conference is coming up in April with some wonderful speakers. As for the MGC seminar in July we just received news that Vincent Cannato, the author of the soon to be published AMERICAN PASSAGE, the story of Ellis Island will not only be speaking at the MGC Seminar but will also be signing his new book which will be released in June. Well, this is all the space I’ve been allowed. Enjoy this edition.
Regarding the current legislative session (2009-2010) at the Massachusetts General Court, the Mass. Genealogical Council (MGC) has re-submitted the exact same bill as last session, which did not get passed into law then. Newly elected Senator Thomas P. Kennedy is the Primary sponsor of our bill. Tom (who served several years as Representative from Brockton) has long been a supporter of the protection of access rights to public vital records. Representatives Peter Koutoujian of Waltham and William C. Galvin of Canton continue in their support and signed on as co-sponsors again this year. Also, adding his name as a co-sponsor is State Senator Steven C. Panagiotakos of the first Middlesex District and Chairman of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means. Other supporters are still being solicited to sign on as well. That should include your own Representatives and Senators if you are able to persuade them to add their name via Sen. Thomas P. Kennedy’s office. At present (February 20, 2009) the clerk’s office has entered our bill in theirocket list as Docket # 888. That office will assign an actual bill number at the same time as it is referred to a committee and scheduled for a Public Hearing. Typically that occurs in the spring. Last session it was assigned to the Joint Committee on Public Health, Chaired (in Part) by Rep. Peter Koutoujian. In the Executive our one ally in preserving the open access to Massachusetts’ past is Alan Cote who serves under the Secretary of the Commonwealth, William Galvin. Their office continues to monitor legislative activity in concert with us. Our efforts to gain passage of our bill over the efforts of those who would close access for the past 50 to 100 years depends on the collaborative involvement of our entire community, and your communication with your own representatives and senators is the first link in that collaboration. When our bill (and probably the numerous other bills filed on this subject) are scheduled for a public hearing, we hope that a large number of you will be able to attend to support our position. The movement of legislation is determined largely by the perception of voter support.

The Registry plays an essential role by providing access to birth, marriage, death and divorce records in Massachusetts from 1916 to the present. The records are essential for the legal community when searching for legal heirs at law for personal estates as well as law enforcement officials when researching individual backgrounds. Massachusetts’ passionate genealogy community uses the registry to research family history. Visitors from outside the Commonwealth bring countless tourism dollars into Massachusetts every year by doing research at the facility. The medical information contained in the records is critical to building a family history for medical providers of all kinds. By reducing hours at the facility, the Commonwealth is reducing its own revenue stream by losing the nine dollar per hour research fee from researchers.

Dear [Senator/Representative/Governor Patrick]:

Please act immediately to maintain the current hours at the Registry of Vital Records. The Department of Public Health’s announcement that Registry research room hours will be reduced from the current 27½ hours to a paltry 11 hours per week effective February 23 is unacceptable. The Commonwealth’s citizens need your immediate attention to stop this action.

The Registry plays an essential role by providing access to birth, marriage, death and divorce records in Massachusetts from 1916 to the present. These records are essential for the legal community and law enforcement officials. Massachusetts’ passionate genealogy community uses the Registry to research family history. The medical information these records contain is critical to building a family health care history. The Registry is a tourism destination for countless visitors from outside our borders, bringing in thousands of dollars to our state government’s coffers every year. The reduction in hours at the Registry will reduce the Commonwealth’s own revenue stream by losing the nine dollar per hour research fee paid by every researcher. It also strangulates a revenue stream for the dozens of genealogists who depend on research hours to sustain their small businesses, reducing the taxes they can pay.

Thank you for attention to this important issue. I look forward to your positive action on this matter.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

[Telephone Number]