I want to thank everyone for their active interest in the goals of the Massachusetts Genealogical Council and their financial support. We have several important issues to tell you about.

• The Massachusetts Genealogical Council has received recognition as a 501(c)3 organization from the Internal Revenue Service. This means that any donations that you give to us to support our operations are fully tax-deductible and you will receive an acknowledgement for tax purposes. As a result, we are changing from a system of annual dues to one of requests for annual donations. Supporters will no longer receive a discount to attend the Seminar, so any gifts that you give the Council will be tax-deductible. More information will be found in this newsletter.

• We have incorporated and rewritten our bylaws to bring our operation into the recommended organizational structure for such societies. The incorporation documents and bylaws are now on our website for you to view. The legal wording of the incorporation laws requires us to have supporters not members. [Members of a corporation, apparently, receive a dividend.] You are all now supporters, but it is a change of wording only. Election of officers is done at a board meeting, rather than a general meeting but all supporters are welcome to attend and

(cont. on p. 4)
Launched on October 9th by scientists from the New York Genome Center and Columbus University, DNA.Land was described by Dr. Yaniv Erlich as “a platform to massively crowd source genetic, genealogy, and health information from millions of people.” He went on to say that “Our goal is to help our participants know more about their genome and help science.” Erlich presented the project October 10th at the annual meeting of the American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG) in Baltimore, Maryland.

CeCe Moore, who will lead a DNA workshop at MGC’s two-day 2016 seminar next April, wrote about the project in her blog Your Genetic Genealogist: “I was asked to advise on this project several months ago and have been excitedly anticipating its launch.” She provides a detailed explanation of the process for those of us who want to dig deeper.

The DNALand project expects to take advantage of the growing number of people, especially genealogists, who have been tested by consumer genetics companies and will agree to contribute their test results. We are invited to upload our multiple test results from 23andMe, Family Tree DNA, or Ancestry for analysis with the tools provided on the site. Note that this option is already available through GEDMatch, another free service for DNA analysis.

The difference is that participants are told that they will get a “more complete version of their genome data.” That is, DNALand offers to create an imputed genome, inferring a complete DNA sequence from available data. Erlich is a computational geneticist and there are statistical geneticists on the team. Basically this means they have mathematical magic to “fill in the gaps” between markers. Another difference is that later in the project user surveys will collect ancestry and health data to make other new scientific discoveries. As an incentive to upload data, users will receive a “badge” (see image, above) that quantifies their level of contribution to science. The score corresponds to the amount and percentile of data contributed.

It’s early days for this project so it remains to be seen how DNALand will fare in attracting genealogists to participate. As always privacy concerns are a consideration. Judy Russell, The Legal Genealogist, analyzed the privacy statement to help us with the decision.

There’s a pretty lively discussion to follow taking place on DNALand’s Facebook page. For further, and deeper, reading there are articles in The Atlantic and Nature.
Massachusetts Genealogical Council  
2016 MGC Seminar  
www.massgencouncil.org

April 2016

Date of Seminar
- Saturday, April 16, 2016
- Sunday, April 17, 2016
- You may attend one or both days

Location
- Courtyard by Marriott Hotel, Marlborough, Massachusetts. Routes 495/20
- Arrangements will be made to pick up attendees at the Westborough Commuter Rail Station
- Hotel rooms are available at the Courtyard under the MGC rate for $134 per night plus tax

Included
- Printed Syllabus
- Continental Breakfast
- Lunch
- Raffle prizes
- Free Parking
- Luncheon Topic Tables (reserved on arrival at the seminar)

Price
- $75 for Saturday
- $85 for Sunday

Speakers

Saturday
- **Marian Pierre-Louis** (Looking After the Poor: Finding Your Ancestors in New England Poverty Records)
- **Margaret Sullivan** (A Needle in a Haystack: A Case Study in Identifying 19th Century Ancestors)
- **Helen Schatvet Ullmann** (Workshop: Using FamilySearch Effectively)
- **Speaker TBD** (Military Records)
- **Polly FitzGerald Kimmitt** (Until They Are Home: Genealogists in Service of Country)
- **Barbara Mathews** (The Family History Narrative: Hooking your Readers, Gaining their Trust)
- **Pam Eagleson** (Obituaries in Genealogical Research and Their Role in American Culture)
- **Diane Florence Gravel** (Internet Genealogy: Separating the Trash from the Treasure)
- **Rhonda R. McClure** (Using your Computer for Genealogical Analysis)
- **Mary Ellen Grogan** (Workshop: Irish Genealogy)

Sunday
- **CeCe Moore, Your Genetic Genealogist** (The Power of DNA: Genetic Genealogy Basics; Who Am I: Exploring Ethnicity Estimates; Digging Deeper with Autosomal DNA; DNA Stories from “Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.”)

How to register or contact us for more information

Full information will be available on our website by October 15, 2015. Go to our home page at massgencouncil.org. Use the online registration form and register by credit card or print the registration form and mail it to us with a check or credit card number.

Contact us for more information at program@massgencouncil.org.

We hope you will join us for two very instructive seminars!
President’s Message

(cont. from p. 1)

participate. In fact, we want you to participate. Anyone who is interested in working on one of our committees, please contact me at president@massgencouncil.org.

• The MGC Board changed our educational seminar schedule from every year to every other year (2016, 2018, etc.) in order to prevent any conflict with the New England Regional Genealogical Consortium conference. The next NERGC will be in Springfield, Massachusetts in 2017. The MGC conference will be in Marlborough, Massachusetts on April 16 and 17 of 2016. By going to every other year, we can expand our offerings.

• We have reactivated our membership in the Massachusetts Town Clerks’ Association. We attended their Fall meeting in Springfield and spoke to many clerks to find out how we can foster better relations with them. They are the records custodians, and we need them. We came away with many ideas and will be pursuing them enthusiastically.

• More genealogists and historians are working together to ensure records are available for them. A new organization has joined our ranks, Reclaim the Records. They are focusing on New York City now and are filing Freedom of Information requests to get public data released. An interesting approach that MGC will be watching.

We need to work together to ensure that the documents we need are available to us, and the records that have been closed are reopened for inspection and transcription. This doesn’t just happen; it requires effort. We want all of our supporters to become more active and join one of our projects, or come up with something new! We welcome all ideas.
US National Archives Announces Digitization Priorities that will Support Genealogists

NARA’s approach to prioritizing records digitization involved crowdsourcing. As genealogists know, they are among the most loyal patrons of NARA. We turned up in droves to address digitization priorities.

NARA announced on 2 October 2015, “Overwhelmingly, people asked us to digitize records of genealogical interest, including immigration and ethnic heritage records; military and veterans records, especially those from World War I and II; and, of course, records that had preservation concerns.” Thank you to all the genealogists who took the time to let NARA know what records they put at highest priority.

You can see the entire list of records scheduled for scanning here. After scanning, records will be posted online. Won’t it be wonderful to access these records from home?

Reclaim the Records: A New Effort to Ensure We Have Access to Open Records

Brooke Schreier Ganz, a genealogist from California with ancestry in New York City, wanted more than just the two-page marriage certificate available from the New York City Department of Records and Information Services for the years 1908 to 1929. Brooke wanted something more authoritative. She wanted the original three-page application made by the parties to be married. Legally it should have been an open record, just as the two-page license and return are. In practice, the New York City department had limited their use to on-site visits to the department’s office.

Brooke started a group named Reclaim the Records. She filed a petition to obtain copies of the records through the Freedom of Information Law in New York State. Eventually, she had to file a lawsuit that caused the department to move finally to provide her with copies, at her cost.

Jan Meisels Allen was the first to cover Brooke’s quest in the Avotanyu blog. These records are full of great information. Emily Garber shows an example and discusses its value on her blog Going the Extra Yad.

Judy Russell on the Legal Genealogist picked a great title for her post about Brooke’s success, “We Don’t Always Lose.”

Brooke plans to continue her effort to make open records available to genealogists. Read more about this project and upcoming projects.

Massachusetts Legislation

From Teresa Scott, Director of Massachusetts Records

MGC continues to insure open access to records by advocating both for and against legislation in the Massachusetts state house. We petitioned for two bills to be introduced: S1069, to end the stigmatization of out-of-wedlock births which currently requires associated records to be closed; and S1629, to require that all records ninety years or older be open to public inspection. We are also actively monitoring more than twenty other bills in the House and Senate as they affect access to public records. When a bill is up for consideration, we mobilize our members to submit testimony to the appropriate committee and/or contact their elected representatives.

One of the bills that we are monitoring, H3665, has been greatly anticipated by numerous media and groups concerned with public record access. Despite Massachusetts’ much vaunted status as an open records state, our laws provide no real penalties for officials who fail to respond to requests for access. This bill would bring Massachusetts in line with 47 other states and federal law by providing attorneys’ fees, increasing fines on public officials for not responding to requests in a timely manner, requiring the designation of a point person at every governmental agency to promote access, lowering the cost of obtaining records, and providing records in a digital format when available. This bill has the support of the House Speaker and the Senate President and is expected to pass sometime soon. We will certainly let you know when that happens!
The New England Chapter of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, Inc. (AAHGS-NE) was formed in 1997 to promote the study of Afro-American history and to encourage genealogical research of African-American heritage. A 501(c) (3) Massachusetts corporation since 1998, the chapter is affiliated with the national organization, headquartered in Washington, DC, and is one of 35 chapters in the United States.

Many of the programs and activities facilitate much needed interaction between African-Americans and historical and genealogical resources within, but not limited to, New England. Monthly meetings are held on the third Saturday of each month, September through June at the Bedford Free Public Library and feature speakers, many of whom are members, who give presentations on genealogical research techniques and methods, African American History, and compiled family research. AAHGS-NE issues a quarterly newsletter highlighting recent genealogical findings, seminars, lectures and relevant book publications. (See the attached copy of our current program schedule).

This year the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society is working collaboratively with Family Search, the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, and the California African American Museum on the Freedmen’s Bureau Project which involves indexing approximately 4 million records. This is an important project because it will result in these records becoming digitized and searchable. The 1865—1872 handwritten documents to be indexed include records of: labor contracts, indentures and apprentices; schools; hospitals; court proceedings; land and property; persons and articles hired; pension and bounty claims; and applications for rations issued. The ultimate goal is to have all of the records indexed by September 2016 when the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture is slated to open and where these copies will be housed in a Family History Center in Washington, DC and made accessible online to the public free of charge.

AAHGS-NE invites members of all Massachusetts genealogical societies to participate in this indexing project. For more information and an overview of the program, go to http://www.discoverfreedom.org.

For more information about AAHGS-NE or to join the AAHGS-NE indexing group, please contact:

Stella M. Pierce, EdD, President
AAHGS-New England Chapter, Inc.
5 Old Planters Road
smmpierce@comcast.net
978-969-1761
AAHGS-NE CHAPTER, INC. - PROGRAM SCHEDULE
2015-2016

Please join us on 3rd Saturdays, September through June
Learn about Afro-American History & Genealogical Research

Bedford Free Public Library, 7 Mudge Way, Bedford, MA*

Featured Presentations* @ 11 a.m. followed by Light Refreshments & Business Meeting

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Featured Speaker(s)</th>
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<td>September 17th (Thursday) National Archives-Waltham</td>
<td>Jeffery Bolster, PhD</td>
<td>Book Discussion: “Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail”</td>
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<td>October 10th</td>
<td>Dolores Goode, PhD</td>
<td>The Legacy of Mrs. Corrine Woodson Alleyne, RN</td>
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<td>November 21st</td>
<td>National Convention Attendees</td>
<td>Highlights of the AAHGS 2015 National Convention</td>
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<td>December 19th</td>
<td>Sharon Varnum Sergeant</td>
<td>Collaborating with the Massachusetts Genealogical Council (MGC) and the New England Regional Genealogical Consortium (NERGC)</td>
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<td>January 16th</td>
<td>Jean &amp; Irving Smith</td>
<td>Parsons Family History</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 20th</td>
<td>Robert Bellinger, PhD</td>
<td>Highlights of African American History</td>
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<td>March 19th</td>
<td>Lee Blake</td>
<td>New Bedford and the Underground Railroad</td>
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<td>April 16th</td>
<td>Myrna Heath</td>
<td>How to Self-Publish Your Family History</td>
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<td>May 21st</td>
<td>M. Brenda Smith &amp; Gen-Tech Team</td>
<td>Gen-Tech Workshop</td>
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<td>June 18th</td>
<td>Stella M. Pierce, EdD</td>
<td>Evaluating Genealogical Sources: Two Case Studies</td>
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*Please note that the location and programs are subject to change. For more information, contact Robert Pierce at 978-969-1761; robert.piercejr@comcast.net; or go to www.aahgs-ne.org
Mass. Town Clerks Association
Conference
September 30- October 1
Mary Ellen Grogan, Sharon Christenson, Dave Robison and Sharon Sergeant manned a table to increase our interactions with town clerks. Mary Ellen described our efforts to educate genealogists about records request etiquette and our desire to work with town clerks.

Genealogy Roadshows, Boston & Providence
October 3-4: MGC and supporting societies participated in the filming which featured two former MGC board members, Mary Tedesco and Joshua Taylor. Mary Ellen Grogan, Sharon Christenson, Kathy Kaldis, Dave Robison, Barbara Mathews, Sharon Sergeant and Kathy Broomer took turns at the MGC table. Polly Kimmitt and Kate Lowrie manned the FGS booth. Mary Choppa, Susan Steele and Greg Atkinson were at the TIARA booth. MSOG had many volunteers including Pat Stano Carpenter and Margaret Fortier. Pictures and videos are available online. MGC will also be at the November 22, Genealogy Roadshow in Houston when I visit my son there.

MSOG Annual Meeting
November 7: Stop by our table where Kathy Broomer, Sharon Christenson and Barbara Mathews will be participating.

Boston Public Library Programs
Commonwealth Room, Boston Public Library

‘The Value of Open Public Records’
Monday, November 9, 6:00–7:30pm: Sharon Sergeant will moderate an open records panel discussion. We expect a cross section of stakeholders to attend.

A multi-disciplinary panel of experts will discuss how open public records benefit our society and citizens in practical applications today, ensuring that all laws and regulations are followed to protect civil rights, inheritance and property rights, historical and medical research advancement, records preservation and access as well as the repatriation of remains for fallen soldiers. Open public records provides citizens, legislators, journalists, attorneys, scholars, archivists and individual citizens with information needed to honor and maintain our democracy. Panelists:

Robert Ambrogi, an attorney specializing in the intersection of law, media and technology. Internationally known for his editing, writing and blogging, he is the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Newspaper Publishers Association and frequently testifies on open records and open meetings issues.

Melinde Lutz Byrne, author, editor, genealogist, Boston University CPE Program Director, Cohen Center Fellow, a trained forensic facial reconstruction artist, a Fellow of the American Society of Genealogists (FASG) and Certified Genealogist (CG) by the Board for Certification of Genealogists. She writes and testifies on local and national open records value.


“Keeping Records Open in Massachusetts: A Workshop for Genealogists.”
Saturday, December 5, 10:00–12:00pm: Mathews will chair a meeting for MGC delegates and the public about open records legislation monitoring. Many of the records that genealogists use are generated and stored by the government, from vital records to deeds and court records. This workshop will discuss the legislative process, focusing on when and where genealogists can get involved to let their legislators know what is important to them. This presentation will be a practical, hands-on workshop. We will show you how to search for bills affecting different topics, and how to track them through legislative committees and floor votes.
SUPPORT MGC

P.O. Box 5393
Cochituate, MA 01778-5393

www.massgencouncil.org info@massgencouncil.org

Safeguarding access to public records since 1980 and providing related educational opportunities.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

MGC:
- is a recognized 501(c)(3) organization
- is an all volunteer umbrella organization representing Massachusetts genealogists, historical societies, libraries and researchers concerned about records preservation and civil records access.
- sponsors annual educational opportunities to all genealogists in the form of programs or seminars

MGC NEEDS YOUR HELP to cover operating costs including:
- website maintenance and operation
- printing and distribution of materials related to records preservation and access
- participation at genealogical events to educate and promote records access
- testifying at public hearings

PLEASE COMPLETE ALL PERTINENT FIELDS

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Donation: ☐ $10  ☐ $25  ☐ Other $________

MGC is an all-volunteer organization. Can you help in these areas?
☐ Monitoring Legislation  ☐ Education & Events  ☐ Publicity  ☐ Newsletter  ☐ Fundraising

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

☐ ORGANIZATION (featured on website, newsletter & blog, eligible for records access presentation & vendor table when available, sends delegates to participate at MGC Board meetings.) Donation: ☐ $________

☐ LIBRARY SUBSCRIPTION ONLY (will receive paper copy of newsletter, may nominate a library delegate to attend MGC Board meetings.) Donation: ☐ $20

Name of Organization/Library

Address

City/State/Zip

Website:  Email:

Presidential name:  Email:

MGC Delegate:  Email:

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

DONATE by Mail:  ☐ Make check payable to: Massachusetts Genealogical Council

☐ Print form and mail to: Susan Tellier, Treasurer

206 Beacon Park, Webster, MA 01570

DONATE Online:  Due to planned website updates, online payment will not be available until Spring 2016
WHAT IS RPAC?

RPAC is a joint committee of genealogical societies. It has three layers of participation:

- The Sponsoring Organizations are the voting members, the National Genealogical Society, the Federation of Genealogical Societies, and the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies. Jan Alpert from NGS serves as the chair, Fred Moss represents FGS, and Jan Miesels Allen IAJGS. Action is taken only when all three voting members agree.

- The Participating Societies send representatives to the monthly teleconference meetings. These societies are ASG, APB, BCG and ICAPGen. Representatives from Ancestry and ProQuest also attend meetings. FamilySearch is not officially a participating group but the Head Genealogist of the church was a past chair of RPAC and attends meetings as one of the FGS delegates. FamilySearch also provides the teleconference venue.

- The State Liaisons (34 are currently active) are individuals nominated by statewide genealogy umbrella organizations to serve as links between the state and RPAC. A liaison notifies RPAC if records preservation or access concerns arise then participates in monthly teleconference calls as the situation resolves.

RPAC’s mission is to:

- Advocate for open access to records.
- Support strong preservation policies and practices.
- Advise the genealogical community about federal, state, and local regulations and legislation.
- Coordinate the genealogical community’s response.

You can subscribe to the RPAC blog at www.fgs.org/rpac by clicking on the orange FeedBurner button. As local issues arise, you can contact your state liaison directly. If you have not yet done so, please consider signing the Genealogists’ Declaration of Rights at http://bit.ly/gen-declaration.

Current RPAC Activity

RPAC continues to gather signatures for the Genealogists Declaration of Rights, a petition demonstrating support for RPAC’s efforts to loosen recent restrictions on the SSDI. Printed copies of the declaration and petition are brought to conferences with the aim of gathering 10,000 signatures by the end of 2015. It can be signed online at http://bit.ly/gen-declaration. As of the end of August there were 8,579 signatures.

Arizona: Without much warning the Capitol Library announced it was moving and the genealogy holdings dismantled and distributed. FamilySearch has stepped in to digitize 5,000 books, and other records are being moved to the Arizona State Archives. Duplicates are being donated to the Irish Cultural Center and West Valley Genealogical Society.

U.S. Commerce Department: The final rule on certification for access to the Death Master File is past due. RPAC has suggested changes in the proposed rule to make access easier particularly for forensic genealogists.

Kansas: On September 3, the Kansas Supreme Court adopted its proposed Rules 106 and 108 greatly restricting access to marriage records and redacting information such as the mother’s maiden name. The new rules take effect October 1, 2015.

Virginia: More than 16 million Virginia vital records have been digitized and indexed by Ancestry and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH). They were made public on 2 June 2015. Virginia VRs 1853-1896 are held by the Library of Virginia, which plans to have them scanned and indexed.

Massachusetts has one of the worst records in responding to FOIA requests. MGC is following FOIA hearings. The Secretary of State has threatened to initiate a plebiscite in the 2016 elections if the legislature doesn’t take care of it. Turnout was very high at the last hearing, and included press and other groups.

Maine: State officials are attempting to restrict some vital records information as confidential but have yet to identify exactly what information is to be included. New regulations for access to vital records will require a researcher card, membership in a research society, and payment of a $50 annual fee. The Maine Genealogical Society is monitoring developments.

A letter was recently sent to the National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information (NAPHSIS) stating RPAC’s position on the Model Act and Revised Model Act.

AARP: RPAC sent a letter addressing some misconceptions re SSDI in an article they had published.

We’re keeping an eye on the Government Oversight Committee and Congressman Chaffetz of Utah who are considering a bill to stop funding for National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHRPC).

Talking Points One-Pager: The BCG blog presents helpful hints on how to talk to your legislators about SSDI restrictions here: http://bit.ly/one-pg.

Fred Moss presented both at the Center for Identity’s ID360 Conference and at U. Kansas Law School a case study based on Section 203 of Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 which suggests that closing the DMF is counterproductive in fighting identity theft.
With the new Massachusetts Genealogical Council status as a tax-exempt 501(c)3 organization, the MGC board has made changes that will affect all of our Supporters as of 31 December 2015. After that date MGC will change from the current dues-paying model to an organization without required membership fees. You will no longer need a login designation to access the website. The information on the website is open to everyone.

We are, however, still requesting your annual financial support. All gifts from supporters will be 100% tax-deductible. In order to continue the vital work of preserving and expanding access to public records in Massachusetts, monitoring and proposing legislation to that effect and providing educational opportunities to genealogists, MGC needs your help. All of our participants are volunteers who give their time and expertise to make sure records are available to our use. No one receives a stipend. However, there are many costs involved in maintaining our website, monitoring legislative activities in the Massachusetts and nationally, and providing education on the status of records availability that does cost money. This is why we are asking you to continue your annual support.

Currently our roster boasts funding from over 100 individual Supporters and thirteen Supporting Organizations. So whether you have a history of backing MGC as an individual or as an organization, or are newly interested in the vital activities of our volunteers, you need only to visit the MGC website (www.massgencouncil.org) to access blogs, updates, announcements and newsletters. Please realize that in order to continue this important work, MGC will need all of our individual and organizational supporters now more than ever! Your tax-deductible donation will allow MGC to continue the work that benefits the genealogical community in so many ways.

We recognize that a donation may be difficult for some; from you, we request your time. Right now, the website is being updated and we request that your supporter donation be sent by mail. A form is on page 9 of this newsletter, and on our website. In the future, you will be able to donate via our website through PayPal. Any offers of help should go to the Membership Director (membership@massgencouncil.org).

We know that most of our supporters have been with us for many years. That is a validation of the importance of our organization and we want it to continue. We are going to be investigating opportunities to provide more tangible thanks to our supporters. We sincerely hope that we can count on your continued support.

Contact membership@massgencouncil.org for any questions.

EDUCATION

MGC SEMINAR

You may have noticed that we have shifted the schedule of our seminars. Because of our heavy involvement with the New England Regional Genealogical Conference, held every two years, we’ve decided to hold our own seminar in the years when NERGC is not being held. That way New England will have a fine conference every year.

Check out page 3 for details on this year’s exciting MGC seminar!
Some Affiliate Societies at the Filming of Genealogy Roadshow

NUMBERS

MGC currently has a total of 108 supporters, of which 13 are organizations. We hope to see that number increase in 2016.

WE WISH TO THANK
Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society of New England
Boston Public Library
Cape Cod Genealogical Society
Central MA Genealogical Society
DAR Library
Essex Society of Genealogists
Falmouth Genealogical Society
Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston
MA Society of Genealogists
NE Chapter of APG
NEHGS
Scituate Town Library

Massachusetts Genealogical Council
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