Massachusetts Society of Genealogists, Inc.
Monthly Newsletter

PastTimes

Volume 17 Issue 8 April 2026

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Writing Special Interest Group

Interested in joining? Login to the Members Only section of the Website. Go to Event Registration

Genealogy Discussion Group

Tuesday March 31
7 pm Zoom
Click below to register
MSOG Events

2026 Writing Contest

submission deadline is August 2, 2026

See details on page 8

MSOG News

Do you have ancestors from Maine?

New England Regional Genealogical Conference (NERGC)

April 14-17, 2027 in Portland, Maine

NERGC 2027 is not that far away – just about 15 months! MSOG Board has decided to, once again, have a booth in the NERGC Exhibit Hall. In addition to needing help to staff the booth in Portland, we're looking for **data to use in our booth theme** – Massachusetts: the birthplace of Maine.

We'd like to highlight the connection between Maine and Massachusetts. To do this, we would like to gather data on ancestors who lived there before 1820 as well as members who lived, vacationed, or otherwise spent time in Maine.

Please send the surname, town, and date range of your MA/ME ancestors as well as other data about ME connections to Seema Kenney at middlesex@msoginc.org no later than December 1, 2026. In 2027 we'll work on a display for the booth and start looking for members to staff the booth on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday during the exhibit hall hours. Thank you!

New volunteer role
Query manager/dispatcher

We're looking for a volunteer to help create & staff a new role in MSOG: a public-facing manager of incoming queries. The new MSOG website will include a "submit query" button. This will provide a visible mechanism for someone (from the public or a member) to post a question, likely about family history & genealogy, to the entire MSOG membership.

The person filling this new role will oversee the interface between the public & MSOG membership. They will be responsible for keeping track of inquiries, of who has "picked up" a question & any progress towards its answer; they may dispatch queries to members they know might be appropriate specialists and may be asked to keep certain statistics. They may also need to contact the requestor if no member has chosen to work on the query. The details of the role and the mechanism underlying query submission & dispatching are still being defined; the volunteer would participate in this feature's design & testing.

Interested members should contact Greg Paris (worcester@msoginc.org).

President's Message

Welcome to Spring! Even our rainy, windy weather is a respite from our recent winter snow.

The MSOG Board held a special "Brainstorming" meeting on February 22nd to generate a number of ideas on how to improve our society. We followed up on these thoughts during our March 8th board meeting. Some of the discussion revolved how MSOG compared to four other regional genealogical societies and whether MSOG could adopt some of the things that these organizations did well.

Highlights of the key points of comparison were:

- *250th Anniversary References: Other societies were highlighting America's 250th Birthday with programs on this theme and with website references to sites like MA250.*
- *Links to other Genealogy site: Websites for other genealogy groups offered helpful links to state and national genealogy websites.*
- *Increasing Member Engagement / Query Process: Other societies have a formalized query process where members can ask for assistance from their society's members but a membership or a donation is needed to get this assistance. MSOG and its chapters periodically receive such requests via email and the MSOG Face Book page.*
- *Programs Offered: MSOG offers more monthly programs than other societies but does not require membership (except for the monthly webinar) to register for them.*

As a result of our discussions, we have already made a few changes. The MSOG website now has a section called the 250th Anniversary page. We are also including helpful genealogy links on our website to aid members and non-members. MSOG is looking to increase member engagement by forming a Genealogy Discussion Group enabling members to have an open discussion forum on various topics. The first session will be March 31st on the topic of DNA. The MSOG Board is also considering the creation of the position of Query Master to manage the requests for assistance that MSOG receives.

In April, our Chapters offer programs on the following subjects: "Genealogy and the Power of Connection in Early America" (Apr 4th - Worcester); "Immigration and Naturalization Records" (Apr 11 - Middlesex); "Using Pension Records" (Apr 18 - Bristol) and "Dead Men Do Tell Tales: Recreating Life in a Community Using Death Certificates" (Apr 21 – Merrimack Valley). Our April 7th book club will discuss the book "Defiant Brides." The monthly webinar on April 9th will be on "Researching Dighton's Revolutionary War Soldiers". See this Past Times for more details.

Be sure to reach out to myself, (president@msoginc.org), or any other officers with your own ideas on how we can make MSOG a better organization and thanks for being a member of the Massachusetts Society of Genealogists!

Terry

April 2026 MSOG Meetings-at-a-Glance

To pre-register for these events: https://msoginc.org/eventListings.php?nm=107

MSOG Book Club

Tuesday, April 7
7:00 p.m.
Virtual Only

Defiant Brides
by
Nancy Rubin Stuart

MSOG Members-only event

MSOG Webinar

Thursday, April 9
7:00 p.m.
Virtual Only

Patricia Gailes & Robin LaCroix
Presents

Researching Dighton's Revolutionary War Soldiers

MSOG Members-only event

Worcester

Saturday, April 4
9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Attend in person or virtually via Zoom

Karin Wulf
Presents

Genealogy and the Power of Connection in Early America

9:30 am Socializing
9:45 am Business Meeting
10:00 am Presentation

This meeting is open to the public.

Middlesex

Saturday, April 11
10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Virtual Only

Rhonda R. McClure
Presents

Immigration and Naturalization Records

10:30 am Announcements & Socializing
11:00 am Presentation

This meeting is open to the public.

Bristol

Saturday, April 18
12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Attend in person or virtually via Zoom

Catherine "Casey" Zahn
Presents

Using Pension Records

11:00 am Business Meeting
11:30 am Member Sharing
12:00 am Presentation

Somerset Public Library
1464 County St. Somerset, MA
This meeting is open to the public.

Merrimack Valley

Saturday, April 25
10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Attend in person or virtually via Zoom

Karen A. Fortin
Presents

Dead Men Do Tell Tales: Recreating Life in a Community Using Death Certificates

Georgetown Peabody Library
2 Maple St
Georgetown, MA

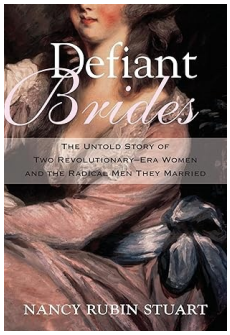
This meeting is open to the public.

Writing - Special Interest Group

MSOG Members Only
Tuesday, April 21 7:00 p.m.

MSOG Members-Only

For More Information: https://msoginc.org



Members-Only Book Club

Tuesday, April 7
7:00 p.m.
Virtual Only

Defiant Brides
By Nancy Rubin Stuart

Go to msoginc.org Events to see more details about this book and upcoming books.

You must be logged in as a Member to register for the Book Club
https://www.msoginc.org/members.php

Go to "Event Registration" to register for the book club.

Members-Only Webinar



Thursday, April 9
7:00 p.m. *Virtual Only*

Patricia Gailes & Robin LaCroix
presents

Researching Dighton's Revolutionary War Soldiers

Born from a shared love of genealogy, cemeteries, and local history, this work explores the lives of Dighton's patriots—many of whom appear in the Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War.

Who were these men, and what ties did they have to Dighton? Pat and Robin will guide you through their research journey, offering a glimpse into their methods and highlighting several compelling examples of what they uncovered along the way.

Patricia Gailes has been an active member of the MSOG Bristol Chapter for many years. Her involvement has supported her ongoing genealogy research and given her opportunities to share her findings with family and friends. From 2013 to 2019, she served as the Chapter's Vice President. As a resident of Dighton, Massachusetts, Pat is deeply committed to preserving the town's history. She currently serves as Vice President of the Dighton Historical Society, where she oversees all genealogy records and inquiries. In addition, she is the Chairperson of the Dighton Historical Commission and leads Dighton's 250th Anniversary of America Committee. Across all her roles, Pat brings together her passion for genealogy and her dedication to documenting Dighton's historical events.

Robin LaCroix has been an active member of the MSOG Bristol Chapter for many years, as well. She served as the Chapter's Vice President from 2019 to 2023, Secretary from 2023 to 2025, and Special Projects Coordinator from 2025 to present. She has been a lifelong enthusiast of genealogy and specializes in DNA research to find missing persons, and documenting Veterans' service. Her two current projects are documenting Dighton Cemeteries and collecting World War II Veterans' biographies from Bristol Chapter members. Also a resident of Dighton, she has joined Pat Gailes on Dighton's 250th Anniversary of America Committee, and together they are gathering Dighton's Revolutionary War Veterans' biographies and raising money for a Revolutionary War Memorial for Dighton.

You must be logged in as a Member to register for the Webinar.
https://www.msoginc.org/members.php

Go to "Event Registration" to register for the Webinar.

MSOG Chapter Meeting

For More Information: https://msoginc.org



Worcester Chapter Meeting

Saturday, April 4

9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Attend in Person or Virtually via Zoom

Karin Wulf
presents

Genealogy and the Power of Connection in Early America

- Shows how genealogy is a matter of interest for government, religious, and other institutions
- Draws from a broad range of sources including informal writing, official records, and performances
- Discusses the importance of genealogy to African American families

Worcester Public Library
3 Salem Street
Worcester, MA

9:30 AM EDT	Socializing
9:45 AM EDT	Business meeting
10:00 AM EDT	Presentation

This program is FREE and OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Those who wish to attend virtually, should pre-register at msoginc.org—Events.
https://msoginc.org/eventListings.php?nm=107

U.S. 250th Anniversary

MSOG is excited to join in celebrating the 250th anniversary of the United States and it's rich family history!

Please visit our U.S. 250th Anniversary page under Home.

Click here

For the U.S. 250th anniversary (Semiquincentennial) in 2026, major genealogy initiatives are underway, including partnerships between America250 and organizations like FamilySearch and Ancestry to help Americans discover their, roots. Key efforts focus on "Together, We Build America's Story," with local, 250th-themed, guided research experiences occurring nationwide throughout 2026.

MSOG Chapter Meeting

For More Information: https://msoginc.org



Middlesex Meeting

Saturday, April 11

10:30 am to 12:30 pm
Virtual Only

Rhonda R. McClure

presents

Immigration and Naturalization Records

Passenger arrival records, border crossings, passport applications, and records of special inquiry are just some of the types of immigration and naturalization records available at the National Archives. We will provide an overview of these important resources, how to access them, and how to make the most of them in your family history research.

Rhonda R. McClure, Senior Genealogist, is a nationally recognized professional genealogist and lecturer. Before joining American Ancestors in 2006, she ran her own genealogical business for 18 years. She has been a contributing editor for Heritage Quest Magazine and Biography, as well as a contributor to The History Channel Magazine and American History Magazine. In addition to numerous articles, she is the author of twelve books including the award-winning The Complete Idiot's Guide to Online Genealogy, Finding Your Famous and Infamous Ancestors, and Digitizing Your Family History. She is the editor of the currently available 6th edition of the Genealogist's Handbook for New England Research. Her areas of expertise include immigration and naturalization, late 19th and early 20th century urban research, State Department Federal records, New England, Mid-West, Southern, German, Italian, Scottish, Irish, French Canadian, and New Brunswick research.

10:30 AM EST Announcements & Socializing
11:00 AM EST Presentation Begins

This program is FREE and OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Those who wish to attend virtually, should pre-register at msoginc.org—Events.
https://msoginc.org/eventListings.php?nm=107

MSOG Chapter Meeting

For More Information: https://msoginc.org



Bristol Meeting

Saturday, April 18

12:00 pm to 1:00 pm
Attend in Person or Virtually via Zoom

Catherine "Casey" Zahn

presents

Using Pension Records

Pension records are a fun way to learn more about our families and their military service. Discovering your ancestor's service can help you discover their life events and new connections in their FAN club. This program will focus on pension records available to researchers online and strategies for finding records after 1900.

Catherine "Casey" Zahn is a retired teacher. Born in CT, she began the Central Jersey Genealogical Club and was a past trustee for the Genealogical Society of New Jersey. She wrote two books on teaching children genealogy and served as the program chair for the Federation of Genealogical Societies Conference in Philadelphia. She often speaks throughout the region for genealogical societies and libraries. Casey currently serves as a governor for the Connecticut Society of Genealogists and works daily on her New England roots.

SOMERSET PUBLIC LIBRARY
1464 County Street
Somerset, MA

Business Meeting 11:00-11:30 am
Member Sharing 11:30-11:55 am
Presentation Begins at Noon.

This program is FREE and OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Those who wish to attend virtually, should pre-register at msoginc.org—Events.
https://msoginc.org/eventListings.php?nm=107

MSOG Chapter Meeting

For More Information: https://msoginc.org



Merrimack Valley Meeting

Saturday, Apri; 25

10:00 am to 12:00 pm
Attend in Person or Virtually via Zoom

Karin A. Fortin

presents

Dead Men Do Tell Tales: Recreating Life in a Community Using Death Certificates

Death certificates can tell us a lot about how our ancestors lived and died. When looked at as a group they can also tell us about life and death in their communities. This presentation focuses on an analysis of death certificates from Attleboro, Massachusetts over a five-year period, and shows how they can provide us with a window into the lives of the people who lived there.

Karen A. Fortin has degrees in history and library and information sciences and a passion for research. She worked in a public library for 30 years before switching to providing genealogical and historical presentations in 2016. She is a member of various genealogical societies and loves to help people explore their family history so that they can better understand their ancestors and the world in which they lived.

Georgetown Peabody Library
2 Maple St
Georgetown, MA

This program is FREE and OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Those who wish to attend virtually, should pre-register at msoginc.org—Events.
https://msoginc.org/eventListings.php?nm=107

2026 *MASSOG* Writing Contest

The Massachusetts Society of Genealogists, Inc., will hold its next biennial writing contest in 2026. We hope that many of you will participate. The rules will be the same as for the 2024 writing contest. There will be three prizes: $100 for first, $75 for second, and $25 for third place.

What should you write about? You could describe the solution to a brick-wall mystery or provide a brief family history related to Massachusetts. You might also relate a historical story pertaining to Massachusetts. If you have another idea and are wondering whether it would be appropriate, feel free to contact us at massog@msoginc.org.

Your entry must be submitted as an electronic file and should not exceed 12 pages, including footnotes. Please submit your entry by the submission deadline, August 2, 2026, to writingcontest@msoginc.org.

Complete contest rules are available at the MSOG website, under Publications.

Best of luck to all writers!

Upcoming Events



Register for Family History Hill Day on 15 April

The Records Preservation and Access Coalition (RPAC) is organizing Family History Hill Day in Washington, DC, on 15 April 2026. This event gives family historians a chance to speak directly with lawmakers about the importance of records access and preservation, and to share how much our community relies on records for research.

The first training for Family History Hill Day takes place on 25 February to prepare attendees for effective conversations on Capitol Hill. Anyone who would like to participate in this event with RPAC is encouraged to sign up as soon as possible.

Visit the RPAC blog to find out more about Family History Hill Day 2026 and register. **Learn More and Register**



Gaylord Archival
Free Webinar:
Thursday April 16, 2026 at 2 PM ET
Advanced Photo Preservation 101:
Formats, Storage & Salvage
Presented by Rebecca Elder
Cultural Heritage Preservation Consultant
To Register: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/7117727331315/WN_MvzH_KGTT7CHVAvlwzqn4w

Senator Eldridge announces 45th Annual Senior Conference
Thursday, April 23rd 8 AM to 2 PM
Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School
215 Fitchburg St, Marlborough, MA

https://www.senatoreldridge.com/press-releases/seniorconference2026

MSOG will have a table, stop by and say Hi!

MASSACHUSETTS GENEALOGICAL COUNCIL

An Evening with Stephen Hartwell
Maritime Records Lead to Genealogical Treasure

Wednesday, April 29, 2026, at 7:00 PM ET via Zoom

This presentation is free, but registration is required!
For more information, go to www.massgencouncil.org/m-o-r-e

National Genealogical Society Conference May 27-30, 2026
in Fort Wayne, Indiana For more information, https://conference.ngsgenealogy.org/

East Coast Genetic Genealogy Conference

August 21-23, 2026
Embassy Suites at Boston Logan Airport
& virtually
For more information, go to https://ecggc.org/



To stay updated on the latest Genealogy events check out
ConferenceKeeper.org

Massachusetts Society of Genealogists, Inc.
P.O. Box 215, Ashland, MA 01721-0215

Statement of Purpose

MSOG's mission is to promote and encourage Massachusetts genealogical research at all levels - beginner, amateur, and professional. MSOG is a Massachusetts nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. The corporation was formed for the following reasons:

To bring together all persons interested in genealogy - beginner, amateur, and professional;
To set standards of conduct, to ensure public access to records, to provide education in genealogical research;
To act in whatever manner needed to promote genealogy and family history; and
To bring together families both past and present. (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 6 June 1975)

Membership Information

Membership is from September 1 to August 31, with the membership renewal period beginning each July 1.
INDIVIDUAL dues are **$30** per year. FAMILY dues are **$40** per year
The membership application is on our website: https://msoginc.org/onlineJoin.php

State Officers and Board Members 2025-2027

President	Terence Dugan
Vice President	Diane Laferriere
Treasurer	Paul Brueggemann
Corresponding Secretary	Vacant
Recording Secretary	Anne Borg
Membership Director (interim)	Diane Laferriere
Co-Historian/Archivists	Dick & Kathy Knowles

For more information go to https://msoginc.org/about.php

MASSOG Editors	John Manning & Erik Swanson
Past Times Editor	Vacant
Webmaster	Deb Cardoni
Bristol President	Bonnie Mendes
Merrimack Valley President	Wendy Sheppard
Middlesex President	Seema Kenney
Worcester President	Greg Paris

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