



FALMOUTH  
GENEALOGICAL  
SOCIETY

# FGS Newsletter

JANUARY–MARCH 2026

VOLUME 38, ISSUE 1

## Monthly Talk Recap

### Engaging Youth with Genealogy

Kathleen Brunelle, English teacher and Historian presented *Engaging Youth with Genealogy* on Saturday, October 11, 2025. With her evident enthusiasm for the topic, it is no wonder that students clamor to take her popular elective course at Old Rochester Regional High School in Mattapoisett. During this course, Kathleen guides students in the basics of conducting family research. As the capstone to their work, students create digital or print books on their findings to share with their families.

Kathleen stressed that young people are very excited about genealogy and that they want to learn about their families. She said the most important thing is to set them up for success through organization and planning. She encourages family involvement and advises that family interviews are a great starting point. From there, she works with students to build research skills using online sites and tools, including [AncestryClassroom.com](https://www.ancestryclassroom.com), [FamilySearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org), and [Newspapers.com](https://www.newspapers.com).



**Kathleen Brunelle**  
English Teacher and Historian

Through this, they look for vital records, census documents, and immigration records. She captures their interest initially by having students search for their chosen ancestor in yearbooks — “they love finding their great-grandparents as teens.” Throughout the process, she stresses the importance of verifying information and providing historical context. While learning how to conduct independent research, Kathleen also incorporates fun activities that showcase the fun of genealogy — a day of shared family recipes and food. In their Family History Books (done using [Shutterfly.com](https://www.shutterfly.com)), students incorporate photos, documents, artifacts — as well as historical context — to tell their ancestor’s story. When complete, the school hosts a celebration where the students share their work with family and friends.

## FGS’ NEW ADDRESS

PO Box 144  
Falmouth MA 02541–0144

## Calendar of Events

Meetings are held on Saturdays at the Falmouth Public Library in the Hermann Foundation Room and virtually on Zoom unless noted otherwise. See [falgen.org](https://falgen.org) for updated information.

Meeting start time is 10:00 am;  
10:00–10:30 Refreshments and Socializing; 10:30–Noon: Program.

Please note changes in meeting dates due to room availability at the library.

### Saturday, January 17 (3rd Saturday)

10:00 am

**I Knew I was Adopted — How I Filled in the Story with Research**  
Mary O’Keeffe

### Saturday, February 14 (2nd Saturday)

10:00 am

**Falmouth’s Whaling Heritage**  
Joe Mattingly

### Saturday, March 21 (3rd Saturday)

10:00 am

**Planning a Trip to Your Ancestral Home — A Case Study to a German Town**  
Jeff Schiebe

## Mending Broken Branches: How Genealogy Can Reconnect Families

By Tim Martin, FGS President



In almost every family tree, there are broken branches — estrangements, divorces, adoptions, or disagreements that hardened into long silences. Many of us have stories of siblings who no longer speak, cousins who drifted away, or entire

branches that “disappeared” after a move or a conflict. For some families, the fractures go back generations.

Genealogy should not erase the past but should offer powerful context and story. As we dig into records, photographs, letters, and newspapers, we begin to see fuller portraits of those who came before us. A “difficult” ancestor may turn out to have carried a heavy burden — war, poverty, loss, illness, or discrimination. When those stories are brought to light, they can soften judgments and open the door to empathy.

As I write this article, there is a holiday period ahead. Sharing these discoveries with living relatives can be surprisingly healing. A simple question, “*Did you know why Grand-*

*pa left?*” can reframe long-standing resentments. Unknown cousins found through research or DNA may bring fresh connections where relationships once felt thin. Even a shared project, such as labeling old photographs or building a tree together, can create a safe, neutral space for conversation.

Genealogy gives us a means for saying, “*We are part of something larger than this argument or this silence.*” We do not research only to collect names, but to understand the human stories that shaped us. Sometimes, offering those stories back to our living relatives is the first step toward mending broken branches and growing a more connected family tree.

### Monthly Talk Recap

## Two Talks with Jill Morelli

By David Martin

At the annual joint meeting of the Falmouth and the Cape Cod Genealogical Societies on November 15, 2025, professional genealogist Jill Morelli made presentations on two different topics.

### ***Data Collection: Mastering Techniques in Genealogical Research***

Jill’s first presentation concerned Data Collection; she made the distinction between a genealogist operating at Level 1 — assuming that all genealogical data are on-line, a genealogist operating at Level 2 — working with direct evidence exclusively, and a genealogist operating at Level 3 — using on-line data, direct evidence, as well as indirect evidence. Level 3, of course, is the



**Jill Morelli, Professional Genealogist**

mark of a skilled genealogist; she then recommended that one must begin by having a “strong” question: one which details what, when, where; the time frame and the place,

and a statement of specifically what the researcher wants to know. It is important not to have more than one question so that the process can be well-focused.

One little-used resource for Mid-Western research is [CommunityHistoryArchives.com](https://www.communityhistoryarchives.com) — rich with data from numerous small-town newspapers, which often give detailed coverage of personal events that never will appear in larger urban newspapers. Purdue University has a collection of free historic newspapers, arranged by state.

Jill emphasized that sources must be evaluated for both their independence and reliability. Reliability relates to the probability that the

## Monthly Talk Recap

# Naturalization and Citizenship Records in the United States

Christine Cohen presented an outstanding comprehensive talk, *Naturalization and Citizenship Records in the United States*, on Saturday, December 13.

There is no way a short summary can capture the breadth and detail of her talk. We encourage researchers to watch (and rewatch) this lecture to identify helpful resources that relate to their specific ancestor's immigration story and timeline. Christine's recorded talk and handout, used in combination, may help you track an elusive family member. Access these materials at [falgen.org](http://falgen.org) in the Members Only section.

Christine defined Naturalization as the three-step process by which an alien becomes an American citizen. The Declaration of Intention (DOI) or First Papers were normally filed two years after arrival and were valid for seven years. The Petition of Citizenship or Second Papers were typically filed one to two years after the DOI, and the Certificate of Naturalization was often provided at the same court as Second Papers. That said, she highlighted that it is estimated that between 1890–1930, *25 percent of immigrants never naturalized.*

Christine emphasized the need to explore many records sets to locate naturalization documents. She said clues can be found in federal and state census files, homestead records, state-specific periodicals that contained "oaths of allegiance", court documents, military records (an expedited process existed for aliens who served in the Civil War [Union] the Navy and Marines in 1894, and WWI), WWI Draft Registrations, and newspapers. She said this is particularly important before 1906 when the naturalization process was handled independently by each state and



**Christine Cohen, Program Director  
Whittier (CA) Area Genealogical  
Society**

could take place in "any court of record."

In 1906, the Federalized Naturalization Process was established, creating standardized practices, procedures and forms, and a repository for centralized immigration records. These records provide much more information and after 1929 include a photograph of the applicant.

Christine concluded by providing many helpful examples of using the card catalogs at major research sites to locate naturalization and citizenship data sets.

*Note: We are aware that there has been sporadic difficulty in accessing the Members Only section of the FGS website. We are working to rectify the problem. We appreciate your patience and regret any inconvenience.*

## FGS Talks on YouTube: Members Only Benefit

Miss a monthly talk? Want to rewatch a presentation? Need a speaker's handout? FGS Members can access most recorded monthly presentations and speaker handouts in the "Members Only" section of the FGS website at [falgen.org](http://falgen.org). If you need the password, contact Tim Martin at [fgspresident@gmail.com](mailto:fgspresident@gmail.com).

## FGS Website: First Stop Resource

The FGS Website ([falgen.org](http://falgen.org)) is an outstanding resource for its members and the community. You can find a myriad of helpful links to genealogical research resources as well as documents to download.

## Keep Learning: On-Line Programs

On-line lectures and courses, many free, are available on a multitude of genealogical topics. Check out the following for classes to expand your family history research.

**The Massachusetts Genealogical Council**  
[massgencouncil.org](http://massgencouncil.org)

**American Ancestors**  
[americanancestors.org](http://americanancestors.org)

**Cape Cod Genealogical Society**  
[wcapecodgenealogy.org](http://wcapecodgenealogy.org)

**National Genealogical Society**  
<https://conferencekeeper.org/calendar/>



[falgen.org](http://falgen.org)

## Discovering Roots and Building Connections at the 31st AFROY Grand Gathering

By Dan Roy and Verne Roy

On September 20th, 2025, we embarked on a trip north to Saint-Vallier, Quebec. Our destination was the 31st grand gathering of the American French family association known as AFROY, a much-anticipated event for those eager to explore their French-Canadian heritage. For both of us, it was more than just a journey, it was an opportunity to connect with the past and meet newfound family.

AFROY — an acronym for Association des Familles Roy — is one of many American French family associations dedicated to uniting descendants of common ancestors from New France. These organizations host regular gatherings, maintain historical records, and help members trace their family lines back generations. In an ongoing effort, AFROY genealogists have thus far officially recognized twenty-five unrelated Roy founding families who sailed from France and settled in New France beginning in the mid-1600s. All of these have known descendants to this day through agnatic lineage: genealogy that focuses solely on a person's male ancestry, that which transmits the surname to their children. The Association is renowned for hosting annual grand reunions or "grand gatherings" that they dedicate to descendants of one or more of these founding families.

For the 31st grand gathering in Saint-Vallier, AFROY celebrated with the descendants of Nicholas Leroy and Jeanne Lelievre, who in 1661 settled on the Côte-de-Beaupré, on land located within the present-day territory of the city of Boischatel. It is eight miles northeast of Quebec City and near the beautiful Montmorency



**Dan and Verne Roy with their newly found second Canadian cousins Pauline, Louise and Pierre Jacques.**

Falls. By 1676 the Leroy family had crossed the Saint Lawrence River and settled nearby in the Seigneurie of La Durantaye, part of which is today known as Saint-Vallier. Members that attended the grand gathering came from throughout Canada, France and nine states from Maine to Oregon. Of the recognized twenty-five founding families, Nicolas and Jeanne descendants have the largest number of AFROY members.

The event opened with a guided historical tour of this picturesque village and the Domaine de la Pointe de Saint-Vallier, an 18th century manor reflecting the heritage of the seigneurial era. Historical presentations introduced us to the lands of the Leroy family, and the history of Bellechasse in the time of the feudal Seigneuries. We enjoyed a buffet dinner, shared stories, and research assistance from certified genealogists. Several artisans displayed local crafts and products of the people of Saint-Vallier and the Bellechasse region.

This trip held a particular significance for Dan since his seventh great-grandparents were Nicolas

Leroy and Jeanne Lelievre. Standing in Saint-Vallier, Dan walked the land where eight generations of his ancestors lived and worked on their subsistence farms. He also met for the first time three second cousins and several more distant cousins. These new connections brought his family tree to life, transforming names on a chart into real, living relatives.

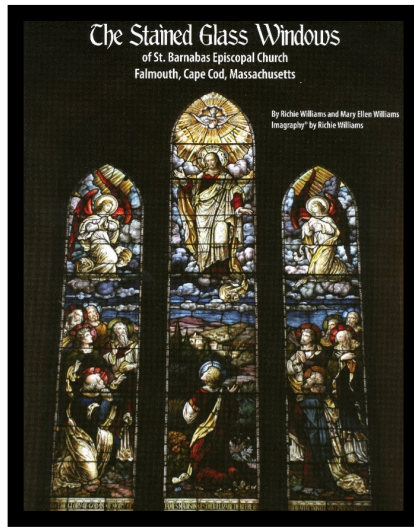
One challenge we faced was every presenter spoke in their native French language — a

language neither of us understood. But thanks to the AI-powered real-time translation technology (released by Apple the day before the event), we did not miss a moment. With an iPhone and AirPods, we listened to live translations with about one second delay, allowing us to participate fully and engage with fellow attendees. This experience highlighted how technology can bridge language gaps and open doors to new experiences.

Our trip to Saint-Vallier was a journey into history, family, and friendship. Our story is a reminder that family roots are worth exploring, and there are always new connections waiting for us to discover. Whether you are fluent in French or just starting out, the world of French-Canadian family associations is open to all.

## FGS News and Noteworthy

Send your brief update to Caroline Anderson at [caroline@gregandcaroline.net](mailto:caroline@gregandcaroline.net)



Published in 2009; Reprinted in 2022

FGS members **Richie and Mary Ellen Williams** have published *The Stained Glass Windows of St. Barnabas Episcopal Church, Falmouth, Cape Cod, Massachusetts* and *Rocks of Ages: The Building Stones of St. Barnabas Church, Falmouth, Cape Cod, Massachusetts*. The latter booklet was published in cooperation with the Falmouth Historical Society. Both authors are retirees from the U.S. Geological Survey's Woods Hole Coastal and Marine Science Center, and lived in West Falmouth from 1991 to 2017.

*The Stained Glass Windows* booklet is a history of the stained glass windows and the religious stories in Christianity represented in each of the high-altar, eight nave, and the narthex windows. *The Rocks of Ages* booklet is a history of the three building stones used by the architect, Henry Vaughan, who constructed a stone church in Falmouth in 1890.

*The Rocks of Ages* and *Stained Glass Windows* are available from the Museum Shop at the Falmouth Historical Society at a price of \$20 each.



David Burt, Longtime FGS Board Member

David Burt stepped down from the FGS Board in the spring of 2025 after many, many years of impactful and dedicated service to the Society. While David had long been an active genealogist, he became active in FGS when his sister, the late Janet Burt Chalmers, asked him to assume her role as editor of the newsletter. He brought his skills with desktop publishing and served in this role from 2013–2015. One of David's favorite projects was working with members of a St. Anthony's based Boy Scout troop to complete their genealogy merit badge. Working with the Scoutmaster, they held sessions in the library reviewing available research resources. Scouts also interviewed family members and completed a family tree. David plans to stay involved, enjoying the talks, artifact presentations, and particularly the camaraderie of the group. He encourages everyone to explore their family history, saying "it gives us a sense of belonging, it tells us who we are and where we came from." He added that it also gives us the opportunity to tell our stories.

## Welcome Members

We are eager to learn more about your family history research. Please join us for our monthly programs or visit us at the Tuesday Help Desk. If you have questions about your membership, contact Caroline McKee Anderson at [fgsmembership@gmail.com](mailto:fgsmembership@gmail.com) or 206-300-7020 .

Allorra Beardsley  
Dannielle Beardsley  
Tom Brewer  
Katheryn Chasse  
Marilyn McMillan  
Tom Moore  
Lorraine Lynch Nagy  
Kate Nagy  
David Powell  
Carla Zavorskas

## Membership Counts

Your weekly e-newsletter is delivered to your in-box every Monday. Rotating topics: genealogy tips, talks at other places, FGS newsletter, and FGS monthly talks (where you'll find speaker handouts). Click **Open** every Monday to stay informed.

## Volunteer Today

FGS needs you and your talents! To explore volunteer opportunities, contact Dottie Priestley at [rpriest1567@comcast.net](mailto:rpriest1567@comcast.net).

## Join the FGS Facebook Group

Engage with others who share your interest in genealogy and family history. Click with Control key on Facebook Logo to go to FGS page.



## Up Next:

### We're Asking You.

It's time for another submission of photos of your ancestors. Send us your favorite baby photo. Please include the name of the ancestor and his/her birth and death dates. Also include his/her relationship to you. And, if your photo inspires a story, include a short summary (50 words) that can be used as a caption.

Please send photos and information to Caroline Anderson at [caroline@gregandcaroline.net](mailto:caroline@gregandcaroline.net)



**Sarah Jane Farrell, 1865–1939**  
**Dottie Priestley's Maternal Grandmother (note the adult hand holding her up.)**

## We Asked. You Responded.

We asked you to tell us about your most remarkable/intriguing/fascinating/inspiring/mysterious ancestor. Thank you to Carolyn Powers and Diana Stadtmiller for sharing their stories about their ancestors.

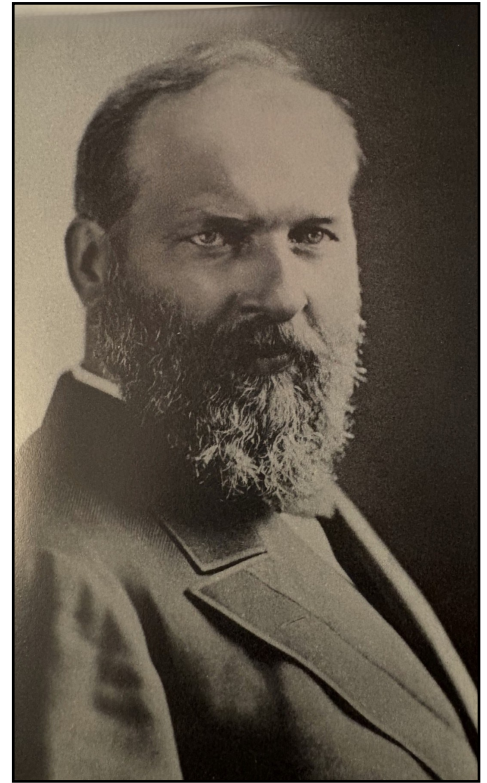
### James Abram Garfield

*By Carolyn Powers*

James Abram Garfield (1831–1881), my great-great-grandfather, is a remarkable ancestor in my family tree. Born in a log cabin built by his father in the Western Reserve wilderness, later known as Moreland Hills, Ohio, he lost his father at the age of two. Out of necessity, he learned to work the farm from his mother, older brother, and two sisters. Education mattered to the Garfield family, and James pursued learning in a variety of ways: as a young student, a driver and bowman on the Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal, a scholar at Western Reserve Eclectic Institute and Williams College, and as a faculty member and Principal of Western Reserve Eclectic Institute (1857–1862), renamed Hiram College in 1867. During his tenure he instituted science courses and supported the abolition of slavery, ideals he promoted throughout his life.

Garfield was intelligent, hardworking, and ambitious. He was often a change agent. At the urging of the Hiram faculty, Garfield was pressed into political service in 1860 as an Ohio state senator. His eloquence and knowledge of subject were compelling, both in the classroom and in the Senate. After the firing upon Fort Sumter, a call from President Lincoln for an army inspired Garfield to move “that Ohio contribute twenty thousand men and three million dollars, as the quota of the state.”

The Ohio Governor sent Garfield to Missouri to obtain arms and to



**James Abram Garfield (1831–1881), 20th President of the United States of America**

Cleveland to organize two regiments of Ohio infantry. Officers and members of the Ohio regiment requested that Garfield take command, and he eventually consented. His bravery and military skill resulted in promotions to brigadier general after the Sandy Valley campaign and to major-general after the victory at Chickamauga.

In 1863 Garfield made a difficult decision in response to his Republican colleagues who, without his knowledge, nominated him to represent the 19th Ohio congressional district. To accept meant he would have to resign his command and take a cut in salary, hard choices for this Union leader with a growing family. In the end, it was President Lincoln's wish to have a congress-

man with military experience and skill that led Garfield to accept the nomination. He was elected and served as Congressional representative for the next 17 years, maintaining his relationship with Hiram College as a member of the Board of Trustees and purchasing a 150-acre farm for his family in Mentor, Ohio (now the James A. Garfield National Historic Site).

At the 1880 National Republican Convention, factions were numerous. When Garfield rose to nominate John Sherman for the presidency, his speech encouraged unity over division. He was dismayed to hear his name emerge after the first ballot ... and the 36th ballot affirmed him as the Republican candidate. He accepted the honor, not for himself but for the greater good of the country and won the election to become the 20th President of the United States.

Unfortunately, the United States was not to benefit from the remarkable "man from Ohio" as he was assassinated just four months into his presidency.

## Thomas Henry "Tom" Clack

By *Diana Stadtmiller*



**Tom and Gerty Clack, Devil's Leap, North Vancouver, Canada circa 1935.**

My paternal grandfather, Thomas Henry "Tom" Clack (1904–1959) is the person who was the main impetus for my start in genealogy. He died shortly before my birth, so I never got to meet him. He came from England to Canada alone in 1919 at age 15 and worked his way across to Vancouver where he met my paternal grandmother Gertrude Mary "Gerty" Empey (1905–1955). They married in 1929 and soon after moved to the US, eventually becoming citizens. Tom had five inventions that he patented, one of which was quite successful. My dad would say he made and lost a couple of small fortunes. In 1939, having not seen his parents for 20 years, Tom, along with Gerty and my dad, Thomas Dean "Dean" Clack (7 years old at the time) travelled to England to visit his family. He purchased a movie camera before the trip. While visiting, Tom ordered and paid for electric lighting to be installed in his parents' home. As a child, I knew my grandparents only through these movies, photos, a few paintings, and household artifacts — and my dad's stories (which eventually became his memoirs). Gerty died a few years before Tom, so I also did not get to meet her. When I was in college, my maternal grandmother revealed to me that both Gerty and Tom died from suicide. It was not something my dad was ready to talk about. I already wanted to learn more about my Clack family and their lives in England, but this last fact really created a mystery that my young self hoped to understand. Still, it would be 20 years later in 1997 before I was able to really begin researching my Clack family. My parents had moved to Chatham and were both working on their memoirs. My dad had a copy of what was then Broderbund's Family Tree Maker and I purchased the same. My genealogy research began with this



**1939 trip to Ramsgate, England. Tom Clack's parents, Thomas Henry "Harry" Clack and Minnie Sarah Anne Latch with their grandson Dean Clack.**

software, what little was available online, and microfilms that could be ordered from the Church of the Latter-day Saints. Little did I know that another 20 years later, an Ancestry DNA test would reveal that Tom was not actually my biological grandfather.



**1939 trip to Ramsgate, England. Tom Clack's sister, Kate Gertrude Clack and daughter Jean Patricia Harris with Gerty and Dean Clack.**

## The Viewing Room

Send book (or movie) recommendations to Caroline McKee Anderson at [caroline@gregandcaroline.net](mailto:caroline@gregandcaroline.net)

For this issue, we share what we're watching.

***Death by Lightning*** is a four-part Netflix miniseries about the assassination of President James A. Garfield by Charles Guiteau. It highlights the political intrigue that led to Garfield's unexpected nomination as the Republican Presidential candidate, Guiteau's delusional pursuit of power, the assassination and its tragic aftermath which ultimately led to Garfield's death.

*James Abram Garfield* is FGS member Carolyn Powers' great-great-grandfather. See her story on page 6.

***The American Revolution*** is a six-part PBS series created by Ken Burns. It chronicles the American Revolution from many different perspectives to paint a comprehensive picture of the war and the birth of the United States. Rather than a heroic uprising, it is portrayed as a civil war among diverse groups including American Patriots, British Loyalists, Native Americans, enslaved and free African Americans, and foreign allies.

## Book Review

# History Matters David McCullough

By Ralph Wadleigh



I expect that many of you are familiar with David McCullough (1933–2022). After all, he lived nearby on Martha's Vineyard, and you may have had the opportunity to meet him at a book signing or other event. His nine major books include many familiar titles, including *Truman*, *The Path Between the Seas*, *Mornings on Horseback*, *The Pioneers*, and *1776*.

In *History Matters*, we have a modest posthumous sample of McCullough's speeches, interviews and previously unpublished musings, lovingly edited by his daughter, Dorrie McCullough Lawson and Michael Hill, his long-time research assistant.

History certainly mattered to David McCullough, who noted "we are raising a generation of young Americans who, by and large, are historically illiterate". He felt "if we deny our children the enjoyment of that adventure in the larger time among the greater part of the human experience, we're cheating them out of a full life."

Certainly, history should matter to all genealogists who, to better understand their families and their challenges, must use history to place their ancestors in the times in which they lived.

McCullough's systematic approach to writing can help us with this. In each project, he sought "to immerse myself in the world of the book." How did he do this? By extensive research, travel and voracious reading. For his book, *John Adams*, he read numerous eighteenth-century novels and of course read the letters between John and his wife Abigail. For *Truman*, he traveled to France to visit the battlefields where Truman fought and walked the halls of the U.S. Capitol. For *The Path Between the Seas*, he travelled to Panama, studied the diseases that afflicted the people involved in the project, and delved deeply into the lives of the project's engineers.

McCullough was an old school practitioner. He wrote four pages a day on a Royal typewriter in a little building behind his home. While skilled in working in the realm of television, I suspect he watched little of it, preferring his books. In fact, one of the bonuses of this book is a wonderful reading list for those of us looking for that next read.

McCullough sought to "bring historical characters to life. Your subjects were real human beings." That's what we genealogists should strive to achieve. I think you will enjoy this memorial to McCullough's work. *History Matters* is available through the CLAMS system.

## NERGC 2025 TOP 10 *with due respect to David Letterman*

The New England Regional Genealogical Consortium (NERGC) Conference held this fall in Manchester, NH was an outstanding success. FGS is a founding member of NERGC and several members attended.

### Here are their Top 10 Takeaways

#### 10 CONFERENCE LOCATION AND FOOD

It was delightful to be in New Hampshire in the Fall. A change of scenery provided the right backdrop to focus on four days of genealogy. Luncheons and dinners with fellow genealogists were highlights.

#### 9 THE SYLLABUS

The NERGC syllabus was a wealth of information that included speaker biographies, extensive bibliographies, and websites from each speaker's talk plus the session handouts.

#### 8 THE ANCESTOR CONSULTATIONS

These 20-minute discussions with professional genealogists could help reinvigorate the research journey. Held by appointment, these were valuable sessions that were available exclusively to NERGC attendees.

#### 7 RESEARCH TRACKS

The Women and Children First track had four compelling segments including *School Days — In and Out of the Classrooms*. Military Research at NARA included an *Introduction to the National Archives records*.

#### 6 AI AND DNA

AI was covered in *The Robot Genealogist: Separating Fact from Fiction*. DNA topics included: *Visual Phasing: Using Siblings to Identify Grandparent DNA* and *Solving Maternal Surname Mysteries with DNA*.

#### 5 FEATURED SPEAKER

In *Think You Know the Census? There's More*, Annette Burke Lyttle, CG explained the reasons behind the census and the enumerator's job; population schedules; Federal and State censuses; and more.

#### 4 BUS TOURS

Pre-conference tours in Manchester and Concord stopped at a genealogical society, two museums, the State Library, the State Archives and the two cities' libraries.

#### 3 BIRTH CERTIFICATE VS. DNA

In *Misattributed: When Your Birth Certificate & DNA Don't Jive*, FGS-sponsored speaker, Peter J. Boni, shared the moving story about discovering he was not related to his known father. Read *Uprooted: Family Trauma, Unknown Origins, and the Secretive History of Artificial Insemination*.

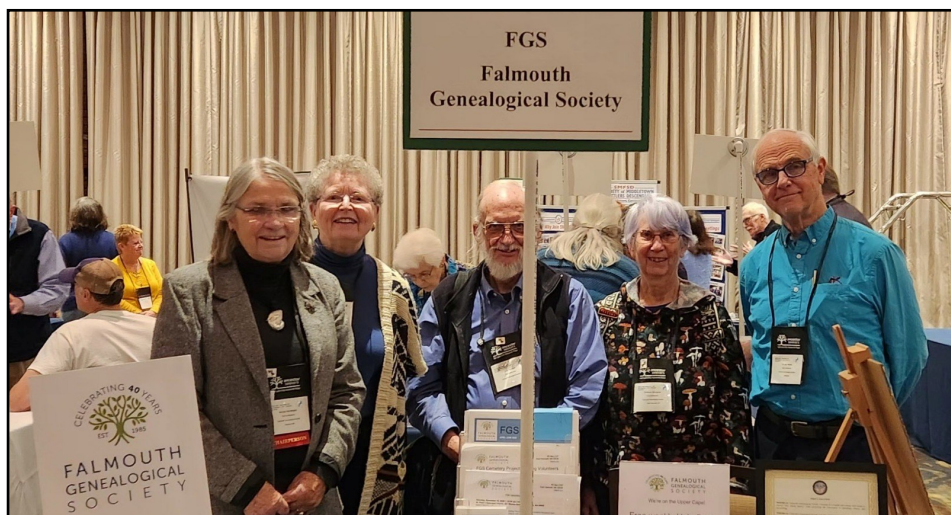
#### 2 FGS VOLUNTEERS

FGS volunteers received kudos for their work at NERGC where they staffed the registration table, filled tote bags, staffed the query tables, and transcribed the queries for publication on the NERGC website.

#### 1 2027 NERGC

The 2027 NERGC, *Genealogy in the Age of AI: Innovation Meets Responsibility*, will be held from April 14 through 17, 2027 in Portland, Maine. Join us!

FGS Volunteers at NERGC, left to right, Wenda Windbigler, Mary Anne Conboy, Clyde Tyndale, Deb Winograd and Tim Martin.



## Get Equipped: Genealogy Tips

### The Importance of Collateral Research— Unopened doors that lead to rich stories and critical evidence

By Tim Martin

Many come to our library Help Desk with the goal of tracing one or more of their direct lines back in time. But most of us are still missing out by not broadening the scope of our work enough — by doing collateral research, the study of relatives who are not direct ancestors, such as siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Siblings of our direct-line ancestors, their spouses and children often leave clearer records than our own forebears. I discovered a second wife of a German immigrant whose descendants held a diary detailing his travels throughout the early American west before settling in Newburg, New York. Marriage witnesses, godparents, guardians, and executors frequently turn out to be cousins or in-laws hiding in plain sight. A childless aunt's probate file may list every niece and nephew by

name and residence. Many of your unidentified DNA matches may be half-cousins through an additional spouse that you have missed. Most of us are also certain to have DNA matches from an unexpected parent, someone taking a DNA test to find their origins. You might be the one who is their first biological connection.

Neighbors who appear page after page in census records and families who migrate together can point us toward the correct origin or maiden name. Church congregations, fraternal organizations, and military units preserve membership lists, minutes, and pension affidavits that quietly spell out relationships.

Land and location offer another powerful path. Who bought or sold a parcel or owned the adjoining parcel? Who else is buried in that nearly forgotten cemetery?

Admit it! Most of us need to broaden the scope of our research, revealing the more meaningful context of the lives and community of our ancestors.

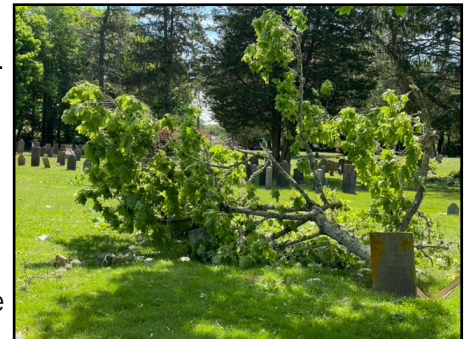
## Falmouth Cemetery Project Update

By Linda Heald

We've been busy with a different assignment. A major undertaking was led by Ralph Wadleigh and Kathy Mortenson, a very talented volunteer. Kathy devoted hours to researching the deeds of the Falmouth cemeteries. This meant, in some cases, going way back to the original gift of the land, title searches, additional adjacent land gifts, and going through many Town Reports where citizens asked the Town Select Board to assume care of the cemetery. We have submitted the research to the Town Manager. It is important history that we want to verify through their office.

Two cemeteries, Old Burial Ground (OBG) and Oak Grove Cemetery submitted applications for 2027 Community Preservation Fund (CPF) funding consideration. Phase 1 of OBG will begin in the spring. A local conservation firm, Village Green Restoration of East

Falmouth submitted the winning bid. If approved at the Town Meeting in April, Phase II, vital preservation work in the Old Burial Ground will begin in July. I walked the beautiful cemetery lane with Jeremiah Pearson, our Tree Warden, before the leafy majestic trees with their stunning canopies had to be cut down. I witnessed the severe rot that made them impossible to save. On June 1st, I took this picture which demonstrates the danger both to visitors and the fragile old headstones.



## FGS in the Community



The free weekly Genealogy Help Desk at the Falmouth Public Library has been a mainstay of FGS activity for decades. FGS volunteers field all kinds of genealogy questions. Drop by the Help Desk any Tuesday afternoon between 2:00–4:00 pm to connect with your family research and fellow family researchers.

**At the Tuesday Help Desk (left to right): Mary Anne Conboy, Miriam Davison, Caroline Anderson, Carla Zavorskas, Dannielle Beardsley, and Wenda Windbigler**

## Two Talks with Jill Morelli

sources are credible. Independence refers to the process by which a genealogist uses multiple types of data which present information from different sources, as opposed to being different forms of data which eventually track back to one source. Another recommendation is when using a multi-page document, such as a census record, remember to turn the page — a continuation of that family may be on the next page or there may be other names immediately following which were relatives or friends of the person being investigated. It is also useful to become familiar with handwriting, spelling, and meanings — each of these can vary from document to document or even within a single document written by one person.

She distinguished between a Proof Statement, which rests on independent sources, quality sources, and are recorded close in time to the event itself; a Proof Summary, which uses multiple kinds of evidence and uses the context of the event as well; and a Proof Argument which includes indirect evidence and resolves any conflicts in the data.

The veracity of a piece of data must avoid presentism — the idea that the event could not have happened then or there; romanticism — which imputes feelings and judgments which may not be merited; and bias — in which the researcher interprets data from only her or his own viewpoint.

### *Broad Context: How to Find It and Use It!*

Jill's second presentation dealt with Context — how to find it and use it. The genealogist needs to avoid falling down “rabbit holes” of fascinating diversions, which take the focus away from the main task. One would start not by focusing on the individual yet, but instead focusing on the time and place, and then seeking the name — a scientific approach. One should also do a literature search when beginning; the search would include what is available on-line, and would consider historic changes in boundaries, migration routes, family-naming conventions, women's occupations, and religious backgrounds. Wikipedia is useful for learning what others have already written about the topic, but only if the sources are provided. A suggestion for those using Artificial Intelligence is to express the question and at the same time request that sources be provided.

Context is a lens through which the researcher views the data. The broader context of an event or person is topic-centered, and it overlaps but is also different from the social history which is more person-centered. Useful context includes the specific point in time but also is longitudinal in terms of the broad sweep of events.



Jill with a Favorite Slide Entitled,  
“Loving the Rabbit Hole”

## Get Help with Your Family Research

### Monthly Talks

Each month FGS hosts a talk on some aspect of genealogy or history. Expert speakers — drawn locally and nationally — dive into a wide range of topics from research strategies to interpreting DNA results. Meetings also provide an opportunity for members and guests to meet others interested in family research. Programs are held one Saturday each month from 10:00 am–noon at the Falmouth Public Library. Most talks are also available via Zoom. View the calendar at [falgen.org](http://falgen.org).

### Tuesday Help Desk

Just getting started in family history research? Have you hit a brick wall? Want to learn how to research at [Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com) or [FamilySearch](http://FamilySearch)? Visit the FGS Help Desk.

FGS volunteers assist both members and community individuals with their genealogical questions. Sessions are held every Tuesday afternoon from 2:00–4:00 pm at the Falmouth Public Library on Main Street. No appointment is needed for this complimentary drop-in session.

### Team Up!

Is your genealogical question complex? Might your topic be of interest to others? Are you researching a specific country of origin or time in history? Schedule a Team Up! consult.

Based on your question, we'll identify one or more members with expertise in this area of research. Team Up! sessions are free for FGS members and are available in person or via Zoom. To schedule a Team Up! consult, contact Tim Martin at [fgspresident@gmail.com](mailto:fgspresident@gmail.com).



**FALMOUTH  
GENEALOGICAL  
SOCIETY**

## **Falmouth Genealogical Society, Inc.**

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PO Box 144  
Falmouth MA 02541-0144  
[falgen.org](http://falgen.org)

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Linda Heald  
Dottie Priestley

### **FGS Newsletter**

**Caroline Anderson, Co-Editor**  
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The Falmouth Genealogical Society, Inc. Newsletter is published four times per year and is dedicated to news, events, and ideas that will help members enhance their genealogical research.

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## **Meet Your Board**

### **Dottie Priestley, Newsletter Co-Editor**



Dottie Priestley brings people together — family, neighbors, fellow volunteers — and ancestors. When asked, she said she loves organizing get-togethers, getting to know new people, and keeping people connected. She brings these talents — along with outstanding writing and design skills to the FGS Board. She currently serves as co-editor of the FGS newsletter and liaison to the Falmouth Chamber of Commerce. Previously she served as Board Secretary.

Dottie was introduced to genealogy by her mother who was very proud of her Irish heritage as well as her own Civil War veteran grandfather. Dottie's mother took her on a tour of her hometown Melrose to view the foundation of a home built by this ancestor who was a mason.

While many get involved in genealogy to track ancestors back through the generations, Dottie most enjoys finding and visiting living relatives. In fact, she once gave a presentation to FGS on how she had found and travelled to meet relatives from the East to West Coast and most recently, to Ireland.

She also enjoys that there is always more to discover. Just recently, she learned that her great-grandfather, Nelson Densmore, participated in protecting British North America (now Canada) from the Fenian raids in 1866. The raids by Irish Americans, which failed, were aimed at pressuring the British government to grant Ireland independence.

After school in Boston, Dottie worked for a major insurance company before moving to Frankfurt, Germany where she married Bob Priestley (they just celebrated their 58th Anniversary) who was serving with the U.S. Army. She describes this time as an extended honeymoon with her handsome prince, visiting castles, and absorbing history. She worked in the Army Engineer Command for the U.S. Government during their stay.

Upon returning to the U.S., she dedicated 17 years to raising her children before returning to work at the Southern Saratoga Chamber. Dottie and Bob have two children, Sandy (d. 2023) and Rob and four grandchildren. She moved to the Cape in 2005.

Dottie said that she enjoys the camaraderie of serving on the FGS Board. She added that it's both impressive and motivating to see the talents and knowledge that members bring to help the society grow and succeed.



**Dottie at Athenry Castle, County Galway, in April near where her 2nd great-grandparents lived.**