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# CCGS NEWS

*A Publication of the Cape Cod Genealogical Society*

**Volume 11 Issue 5**  
**November 2024**

**Please Join us at our Monthly Meeting**  
**Saturday, November 16 at 10:30 AM, Eastern Time**  
**St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Osterville**

Our meeting will be brought to you via **Zoom and in-person**.  
Members have already received an email with the registration link.

Non-members are asked to email us at [info@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:info@capecodgenealogy.org)  
to receive the registration link.

*Please Welcome Our In-person Speaker*  
*Michael J. Leclerc*



There will be **TWO** one-hour presentations, with a lunch break in-between, one at 10:30 AM and the next at 12:30 PM.

*Probate Research Beyond the Basics*

Using a case study, learn more about the information in records from the administration of estates that you can find in, and infer from.

*Reading and Understanding Old Documents*

AI has a long way to go before it can be reliable in transcribing documents. Learn how to read handwriting of earlier eras so you can read and understand the original records of your ancestors.

**Michael J. Leclerc** is a well-known professional genealogist who teaches family historians around the world. He worked in various capacities at *New England Historic Genealogical Society* for seventeen years and spent four years at *Mocavo* and *FindMyPast* before founding *Genealogy Professor* to provide high-quality learning experiences for genealogists. He has been a member of the teaching team in Boston University's genealogy courses for more than a decade.

## Message from the CCGS President Judy Fenner



Dear Members and Friends,

We are all looking forward to the joint meeting with the Falmouth Genealogical Society. It is always fun to meet together and network.

This past Saturday, I attended a NERGC planning session on Zoom. The next conference will take place at the DoubleTree Hilton Hotel in Manchester, New Hampshire, from October 29<sup>th</sup> to November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025. Information can be found on the NERGC website at <https://nergc.org> and on Facebook at NERGC-New England Regional Genealogical Conference. You can find the call for presentations at both sites. David Martin and I are delegates if you have any questions.

The Barnstable Probate Project continues, and we are always looking for volunteers. Currently we are limited to Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings per Anastasia's request.

Our room at the Dennis Public Library on Hall St. is available for research and assistance. Please reserve a time by contacting our librarian, Walter Murphy at [librarian@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:librarian@capecodgenealogy.org). We also have a scanner available for your use. (Bring a thumb drive so you can take your scans home with you.)

The upcoming holiday season is a great time to interview family members and add stories to your family tree.

Looking forward to seeing many of you on the 16<sup>th</sup> at St. Peter's Church on Wianno Avenue in Osterville.

Judy  
[president@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:president@capecodgenealogy.org)



## Cape Cod Genealogical Society Board of Directors 2024-2025

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Bob Oppenheim	Long Range Planning

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[info@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:info@capecodgenealogy.org)



**The CCGS Genealogy Library  
and Research Center  
is located at the  
Dennis Public Library  
5 Hall Street Dennis Port, MA**

**Research Center Hours:  
1 to 4 PM on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays and all Thursdays  
(Please note that, on occasion, the CCGS Research Center  
may not be open due to unforeseen events.)**

**We are a FamilySearch Affiliate Library!  
We have access to many records not available through public means.  
Our holdings include a wealth of resources  
relating to genealogical research.**

**Two computers are available for your research  
with access to:**

*Ancestry.com*  
*FamilySearch.org*  
*AmericanAncestors.org*  
*Newspapers.com (NEW !!!!)*

**Please contact  
[librarian@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:librarian@capecodgenealogy.org)  
to reserve a space or for more information.  
Walk-ins are welcome if space is available.**

**Can you spare three hours on one  
Tuesday or Thursday afternoon a month?  
We are *always* looking for new volunteers!  
Please use the above link to ask for more details.**

**Please Welcome  
New Members**

**Deirdre & Michael Leyden  
Stephen Brown**

### **Probate Project**

**Remember, we have a volunteer Probate Project going on. A group has been meeting at the Barnstable County Courthouse and scanning in old probate records (for FamilySearch). They are having a lot of fun, as they work on their tasks, chatting and laughing. It's only for a few hours here and there. Think about joining us! Contact President Judy Fenner for more information:**

**[president@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:president@capecodgenealogy.org)**

**Job Requirements:  
the ability to fold and unfold paper.**



**Why waste your money looking up  
your family tree?  
Just go into politics and your  
opponents will do it for you.**

**Mark Twain**

## **Education Updates**

**Interested in learning more about genealogy basics?  
Our own David Martin, CCGS Board Member and Education Chair, will  
present a series of classes:**

### **Bourne Public Library**

**19 Sandwich Road**

**Buzzards Bay, MA**

**508-759-0644**

**Six Thursdays, 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM**

**January 16, 23, 30**

**and**

**February 6, 13, 20**

**Please call the library  
to register and reserve a spot.**

**Any questions?**

**Contact David Martin at**

**[davidmartindr@aol.com](mailto:davidmartindr@aol.com)**

## Program Summary, August 20, 2024

Written by *David Martin*



### Bathsheba Spooner: A Revolutionary Murder Conspiracy By Andrew Noone

The Society welcomed author Andrew Noone with his presentation of a woman known as Bathsheba **Spooner** and the conspiracy to murder her husband, which occurred during the early years of the Revolutionary War in Massachusetts.

Bathsheba **Ruggles** was born in 1746 in Sandwich and was descended from Mayflower passengers Elizabeth **Tilley** and John **Howland**. The colonial surname **Chipman** is in her pedigree, and one of her cousins was Robert Treat **Paine**. John **Adams** was her second cousin.

Her father, Timothy **Ruggles**, was a Tory and was despised for it and exiled from Massachusetts. He moved to Staten Island, New York, and eventually to Canada. Her grandparents' surname was **Newcomb**, and the tavern that they built in Sandwich can still be seen.

A Revolutionary sidelight of interest is an event that occurred in the Worcester area, where the family lived prior to their moving there after they left Cape Cod. In January of 1775 (i.e., prior to the Battle of Lexington and Concord), two men dressed as farmers spent time investigating the Worcester area as a place to be attacked by British General Gage, who was stationed in Boston, as a way to put down the growing rebellion. However, the General decided instead, to focus nearer to Boston (Concord) since Worcester was a further distance for a march. After Lexington and Concord, a horseman rode to Worcester to tell the news of the Battle.

Bathsheba had what we could term an “arranged marriage” with Joshua **Spooner**. **Spooner** was a soldier

during the Revolution on the Patriot side and was involved in the Battle of Saratoga. Bathsheba, like her father, was a Tory. Bathsheba had an affair with a young Patriot soldier. She grew to dislike her husband and plotted with him and two British run-away soldiers to kill **Spooner**. Attacking him with fists, they then forced him down a well. It is not clear if **Spooner** was already dead when he was put in the well. The next day, people were curious about why **Spooner** was missing, and they found footprints in the snow, leading to the well.

**Spooner**'s body was brought up, and the search began for the guilty parties. The three conspirators had gone to Worcester and apparently drank hard. They eventually confessed to the murder, and a trial was set for them and for Bathsheba as well (for “inciting, abetting and procuring the manner and form of murder”), which began in 1778.

The prosecutor was **Paine**, and the defense attorney was Levi **Lincoln**, who later became Governor of Massachusetts and then Attorney General under President Jefferson. All four were found guilty and sentenced to be hanged.

Bathsheba was 32 years old and had children from previous relationships. She claimed to be pregnant. She asked to be examined, and the first examiners reported that she was not pregnant. A subsequent examination confirmed that she was indeed pregnant, but this was dismissed as not true. She asked to be spared on account of the pregnancy, but to no avail. She then asked to have her execution postponed until the baby was born—again,

to no avail. She was hanged along with her three conspirators—the first woman in American history to be executed after the Declaration of Independence. The execution occurred in Worcester’s Washington Square on 2 July 1778 in front of 5,000 witnesses.

Bathsheba had requested an autopsy which confirmed that she had indeed been pregnant with a five-month-old male fetus. Bathsheba’s now-orphaned children were adopted. No one is certain of the exact spot where she is

buried in Green Hill Park, Worcester, although a stone has been erected. The three male conspirators were buried at the site of the scaffold, which later became the site of a 19<sup>th</sup> century railroad station in Worcester.

**Note:** In both the Spring and Fall 2024 issues of the Society’s *Journal* are articles by author Greg Williams, providing further historical context and details for this account.

## Program Summary, September 17, 2024

Written by *David Martin*



### Using Mug Books in Genealogy By Melanie McComb

Society members enjoyed the presentation by professional genealogist Melanie McComb on the subject matter of mug books. So-called mug books are county histories containing biographical sketches of citizens of the county. These were popular in the 1880s and began to be circulated by subscription. President Grant authorized these publications in 1876, on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Revolution.

The volumes showed the value placed on self-made successes and focused largely, although not exclusively, on men. Flowery language was used to describe the accomplishments and qualifications of prominent men of the specific counties. Some of the biographies focused on immigrants who had become successful pioneers.

Most of the subjects were white males—professional entrepreneurs, farmers, teachers, people of religion, lawyers, etc. They were mostly Republicans and their European ancestries were often included. The biographies included information such as: date and place of birth, marriage information, parentage, ancestry,

politics, profession, military service, and membership in fraternal organizations.

These biographies can serve genealogists as another starting point to follow up and locate specific documentation for items such as military service, vital records, and societal connections. For example, a genealogist who learned that an ancestor in a mug book was a member of some lodge, could then follow up by requesting the membership information from that lodge to provide documentation and further information on that ancestor which could be contained in the lodge’s records.

The publication was a for-profit, subscription-based service, and occurred most prominently in the Midwest, although other regions did have some of these publications, including some New England counties. Illinois had the largest proportion of subscribers, followed by Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Iowa. Less than half of the local population in any region was included in these books.



It was recommended that genealogists use mug books in combination with county histories. Using *ArchiveGrid* enables the genealogist to find these works at different places in the world. Making contact with local libraries and historical societies can provide information on which mug books may have covered that region in the period.

The user of mug books should, of course, evaluate their usefulness and coverage. An entry should include when the record was made, who wrote the record, who provided the information which the writer used, and what conclusions could be drawn after reading the biography. The user needs to be aware that in a biography not all the details may be accurate; some

entries are ambiguous, some falsehoods may be contained, and there may be some exaggerations about how upstanding the individual was.

*The Great Migration Directory*, published by the New England Historical Genealogical Society, may be a kind of index for finding the forebears of some mug book individuals. From the Directory, one can then proceed to *The Great Migration Begins* series, which covers colonial arrivals between 1620 and 1640. William Filby's volume, *Bibliography of American County Histories*, will reveal which mug books were published. Other sources would include *HathiTrust.org*, *Books.Google.com*, *Archive.org*, *OpenLibrary.org*, and *FamilySearch.org*.

## Program Summary, October 15, 2024

Written by *David Martin*



### An Artifact Breaks Down a Genealogical Brick Wall

How my search for a great-grandfather's artwork led to surprising and rewarding genealogical discoveries

By **Susan Feinberg**

For its October 2024 monthly program, the Society enjoyed a historical presentation from CCGS member Susan Feinberg about her challenging but successful search for the identity and details about her great-grandfather in Lithuania.

Starting with minimal information, Susan conducted a systematic search which involved international investigation. At the start, she had only a family memoir written by an uncle which she was given after his death and information about the Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, which she found by googling her great-grandfather's name. A later step involved the use of a Facebook group related to the museum, and then research in the United States. This research included the *JewishGen.org*

database, the records indexed and translated by *LitvakSIG.org* and the name list in the data base of Yad Vashem, the Israeli museum of the Holocaust.

Most members of her paternal family had died at a younger age and therefore there had been little information recorded by previous generations other than the memoir written by her uncle, who was the grandson of the subject of the research (her great-grandfather, Aaron Lazar Chait). The memoir contained information about the immigration from Lithuania by the children of Aaron to the United States by 1914; thus, some other descendants, by now in the United States, were able to indicate the identity of additional relatives.

Hebrew spellings of family members meant that names were translated into multiple variations using Latin characters, making database searches more complicated. Born in Lithuania, Aaron was a painter and a sculptor. He created a variety of three-dimensional pieces of art, featuring sculpted figures of people, which are currently at the Lithuania museum. One of the creations was an “ark”—a wooden structure for storing the scrolls of the Torah in a synagogue. Another was a sculpture of King Solomon’s Throne which depicted the famous decision about which mother should get the child. That item is on permanent display at the Vilna Gaon Museum in Lithuania but is currently being restored.

A question arose about whether this artist was indeed Susan’s great-grandfather, since the birthplace information did not match her grandfather and the artist. But further genealogical research did confirm that her grandfather did come from the town mentioned by the museum, which resolved this discrepancy. An email sent to the Museum resulted in further information as well as excitement by the Museum at finding a descendant of the artist. Susan gave the Museum permission to include Aaron’s photograph (in her possession) in the Museum’s exhibit.

A sad discovery was that virtually all of the Jewish people in the town had perished in the Holocaust; the community’s earlier cemetery stones were probably largely used for paving after the murders and the destruction of the town.

An 1816 Russian Empire Census record corroborated that the Chait family had lived in the same town for

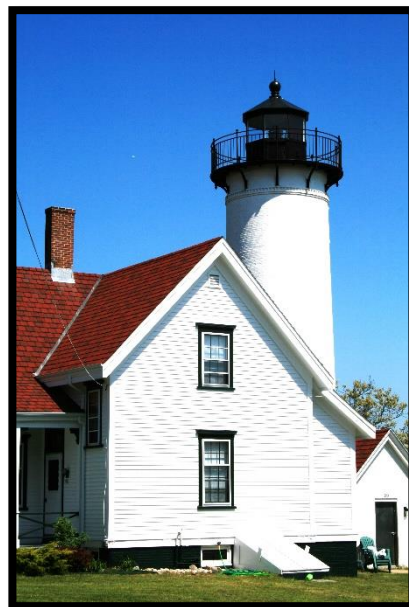
more than a century. Susan also found a 1912 census of “missing soldiers” that listed the artist and his family including her grandfather—one of the four sons who had immigrated to the United States. He had been drafted into the Czar’s army in 1912 (Lithuania was part of Russia at the time), which would have been a 45-year commitment. He then immigrated first to Ireland and then to the United States. Subsequently, she found a Lithuanian death record of 1828 for the artist, which matched information in her uncle’s memoir.

Recent developments included a 2017 visit by a cousin to Lithuania, confirming the exhibit and the cousin’s taking of photographs of the exhibit which were included in Susan’s Power Point presentation and a 2019 visit by the artist’s grandson and namesake, Aaron Chait. As a result of publicity about that visit, Susan was able to add an entire new branch to her Chait family tree, including the artist’s two younger sons from his second marriage and the children and grandchildren of his youngest son, all of whom live in Haifa, Israel.

Apparently, her great-grandfather was intent on destroying his art late in his life because Judaism forbids making an image of a human being, since all humans are created in the image of G-d. But the artist’s youngest son managed to convince the artist not to destroy the works.

Susan summarized some “take-aways” from this project. First, make certain the information about the birthplace of the ancestor is correct; second, check all possible variations of the surname; third, account for possible changes in spelling in both place names and surnames; and fourth, investigate non-traditional sources for information—in this case, a museum.

Lighthouse Photos  
by  
CCGS Member  
Louise  
Kirkpatrick



## Special Interest Groups

**SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGs)** are informal member gatherings for the purpose of sharing information, research techniques, data, and references, regarding specific topics or geographical areas. While membership in the SIGs is restricted to members of the Society, guests just wanting to see what the Society is all about or who are interested in a particular topic are always welcome. Use the email links below to request a link if you want to attend a Zoom meeting. Any meeting held at the Brewster Ladies' Library is open to the public.

*The following is general information. Please email the SIG leader for further details and/or to be added to their list to receive the email announcements for meetings and handouts.*

You may also visit our website at [www.capecodgenealogy.org](http://www.capecodgenealogy.org).



### Cape Cod Families

[capecodfamiliesSIG@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:capecodfamiliesSIG@capecodgenealogy.org)

Leader **Bebe Brock** advises that all are working independently. Bebe is currently holding meetings on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 1:00 PM at Sturgis Library, Barnstable.

### Computer Users

[computerusersSIG@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:computerusersSIG@capecodgenealogy.org)

Leader **Bob Oppenheim** holds a meeting on the second Tuesday of the month at 10:00 AM (except in July and August). Although the Group has started hybrid meetings (Zoom and in-person), there have been some instances that meetings are only Zoom, depending on unforeseen circumstances. Out of consideration for the members that have joined the group from off-Cape locations, our meetings will continue to be hybrid meetings or only on Zoom. Hybrid meetings are held in the meeting room at the Dennis Public Library, 5 Hall Street, Dennis Port, except when otherwise announced. We have used facilities at the Brewster Ladies' Library when the room at the Dennis Library is unavailable. If it involves a computer and it can benefit your genealogy, it's a topic that we are likely to discuss. The SIG has a rich collection of meeting handouts, website listings and other resources available to its members.

In addition, items of interest are routinely posted on the Computer SIG's Facebook Group site. Find it at the Cape Cod Genealogical Society Computer SIG <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CCGS.ComputerSig>. Members of the Society are invited to join.

## DNA

[dnaSIG@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:dnaSIG@capecodgenealogy.org)

Leader **Walter Murphy** holds a Zoom meeting every other month on the first Tuesday at 1:30 PM. Prior to the Zoom meeting, he sends out both an agenda and a Zoom invitation to register. This is an active group that typically attracts participants of all levels of interest and expertise to each meeting. All sessions begin with a question-and-answer roundtable discussion, divided into two sections: DNA 101 questions/problems followed by time for “old hands.” The discussion period is followed by topics of interest.

## German

[germanSIG@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:germanSIG@capecodgenealogy.org)

**Bob Oppenheim** hosts a monthly hybrid meeting (Zoom and in-person) on the first Tuesday of the month at 10:00 AM (except in July, August and September). The meeting is held at the Brewster Ladies’ Library in the upstairs auditorium when it is available, otherwise in the downstairs meeting room. Members discuss their genealogy with an emphasis on methodologies for gathering information about the life and times of their German ancestors, along with a smattering of tales about what they have learned.

In addition, items of interest are routinely posted on the German SIG’s Facebook Group site. Find it at the Cape Cod Genealogical Society German SIG <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CCGS.GermanSIG>. Members of the Society are invited to join.

## Irish Research

[irishresearchSIG@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:irishresearchSIG@capecodgenealogy.org)

Leader **Pat Flaherty** holds a Zoom or in-person meeting every three months. Irish SIG members are advised via email on specific dates and times. Anyone with an interest in Irish genealogy is most welcome. We have members with lots of experience who can help those with little experience. It is a good combination. Our sessions usually include a presentation from a member on available records (either in the United States or in Ireland). We also share strategies for finding those elusive Irish ancestors wherever they may be lurking. There is always time for good discussions during which questions are answered and experiences are shared. Please contact Pat if you wish to be added to her email list.

## Writers

[writersSIG@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:writersSIG@capecodgenealogy.org)

Leaders **Sherill Baldwin** and **Lee MacDonald** hold a Zoom meeting on the third Friday of the month at 10:00 AM. Anyone interested in sharing their writing with the group regarding personal genealogy or about family members (including pets), anything historical, current event topics, articles of personal satisfaction and more is most welcome. We explore many styles of writing and narrative, even poetry, as well as discuss the possibilities of publication. Everyone is welcome to participate and share their work, writing tips, and techniques. If you do not have anything to share, join us anyway. You may become inspired! For more information, contact Sherill Baldwin.

The Society has recently added two new SIG groups.



## Family Tree Maker (FTM) Users Group

[computerusersSIG@capecodgenealogy.org](mailto:computerusersSIG@capecodgenealogy.org)

**Bob Oppenheim** hosts a meeting of users of this popular genealogical software application on the fourth Tuesday of each month, from 10:00 AM to 12 Noon. At this time, it is a Zoom-only meeting. Members of the Group have the option of joining a session or not, depending on whether they have questions to ask or techniques to share. The Group also shares a growing library of FTM solutions to common problems, links to helpful videos, and videos of its past meetings.

## Roots Magic Users Group

[davidmartindr@aol.com](mailto:davidmartindr@aol.com)

**David Martin** hosts the meeting toward the end of the month. This is a Zoom-only meeting. Discussion includes sharing challenges, solving problems, and discussing new developments produced by the Roots Magic company.

## The Story Tellers: We are the Chosen Ones

In each family there is one who seems called to find the ancestors, to put flesh on their bones and make them live again, to tell the family story and to feel that somehow, they know and approve. To me, doing genealogy is not a cold gathering of facts but, instead, breathing life into all who have gone before. We are the story tellers of the tribe. All tribes have one. We have been called as it were by our genes.



Those who have gone before crying out to us: Tell our story! So, we do. In finding them, we somehow find ourselves. How many graves have I stood before and cried? I have lost count. How many times have I told the ancestors you have a wonderful family? You would be proud of us! How many times have I walked up to a grave and felt somehow there was love there for me? I cannot say.

It goes to pride in what our ancestors were able to accomplish. How they contributed to what we are today. It goes to respecting their hardships and losses, they're never giving in or giving up, their resoluteness to go on and build a life for their family. So, as a scribe called, I tell the story of my family. It is up to that one called in the next generation to answer the call and take their place in the long line of family storytellers.

Attributed to **Della Joann McGinnis Johnson**