

The dash of life

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[Cheryl A. Cuddahy](#) May 17, 2021 at 6:02 a.m.



Kathleen Kaldis stands in her library, among over 1,000 genealogy books. PHOTO COURTESY OF KATHLEEN KALDIS

LEOMINSTER — Kathleen Kaldis, fondly known as The Ancestor Finder, is a professional genealogist and genealogical speaker and her enthusiasm shines through when she shares her passion for genealogy with her clients and audiences.

Kaldis' interest in genealogy started at a young age when she heard stories about how her great-great-grandfather, who was born on Cape Breton Island, came to Boston to build Fenway Park as the vice-president of Logue Building Co.

"Go Sox!," she said with a smile.

"Genealogy, the study of family history, connects you to the everyday lives of the people who made you — you," Kaldis added. "You learn the good, the bad, and the ugly — the real lives of our ancestors in their words."

Kaldis believes that genealogy is the "dash of life."

"The lives of our ancestors are usually measured by their birth and/or death date on a tombstone," she said. "However, it's the lives of our ancestors and the people who make up the communities around us that really tell the story of our ancestors."

Kaldis holds a certificate in genealogical research from Boston University, is a nationally recognized speaker, and has lectured for many conferences and genealogical societies throughout the continental United States.

She has worked as a genealogist at the Massachusetts Society of Mayflower Descendants and The New England Historic and Genealogical Society.

"Currently, my work revolves around finding missing and unknown heirs in probate, mining/oil rights, and real estate cases," Kaldis said. "I am also very active within the genealogical community and serve as the president of the Central Massachusetts Genealogical Society."

The Central Massachusetts Genealogical Society is a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation founded to promote an interest in genealogy and family history and serves as a community resource for genealogy.

CMGS offers a wide variety of quality educational programming featuring genealogical speakers from across the country and partners with the Leominster Library.

Monthly meetings are held on the third Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. on Zoom and are open to all.

Through the society, Kladis is thrilled to be able to present programs to members and the community.

Her next presentation, titled "Opa! It's All Greek to Me!," inspired by her husband who is a first-generation Greek, will be held at 7 p.m. today via Zoom. This presentation is in partnership with the Leominster Public Library.

"Opa! It is a marvelous time to be Greek," Kaldis says with a smile.

"Conducting Greek genealogy can be challenging even for those who can speak and read Greek. Many first- and second-generation Greek immigrants do not even know their grandparents' names or even their parents' exact village."

Kladis says attendees will learn the first steps to conducting Greek research and what resources are available here in America, unlocking records in Greece.

"This lecture will be helpful for both individuals who migrated to the United States post World War II and those who have ancestors who left Greece before World War II," she said.

Kaldis will also lead "From Pilgrims to Pioneers: Researching Your Colonial New England Ancestors" at 7 p.m. May 25 via Zoom.

"The Great Migration of New England started with the Pilgrims, who sailed on the Mayflower, and ended in 1640," she said. "During that period, almost

20,000 individuals came to the New England Colonies from Europe but mostly from the British Isles."

Over the next 150-plus years, many of their descendants migrated westward to the great western frontier to become Pilgrims in their own right.

"I am excited to present this lecture, which will discuss some of the common migration patterns out of New England and record collections helpful when tracking your ancestors back to New England," Kaldis said.

"Got Books?," which was inspired by the COVID-19 pandemic closures, will be offered at 7 p.m. June 14, via Zoom, in partnership with the Leominster Public Library.

"Attendees will learn the tools, tricks, and organizational styles useful when organizing personal genealogical libraries of all sizes," she said. "With so many repositories and libraries closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, private genealogical libraries, no matter the size, have become an overlooked resource to help researchers conduct research projects."

Personal libraries can connect with other personal libraries to create a Virtual Genealogical Community Research Library using [LibraryThing.com](https://www.librarything.com/), a free online cataloging tool.

Have you ever wondered what your ancestor's contribution was to their community? Have you ever discovered your grandparents' love letters to find they were school chums who grew to be husband and wife?

"Touching the same piece of paper your ancestor signed 200 years ago is a fantastic feeling," she said. "The thrill of finding everyday records for your ancestors deepens the humanity of your ancestors," Kaldis said. "They had lived and learning about their lives enriches yours in unexpected ways."

Kaldis says her enthusiasm for genealogy is something she wants to share with her community, and she has a simple goal in sight.

“I would like to bring awareness to the Central Massachusetts Genealogical Society and to encourage people to join us,” she said. “New members are always welcome and the more people we can reach — from hobbyists to professionals — the better.”

To learn more about CMGS, visit [CMGSO.org](https://cmgso.org) or join the [Central Massachusetts Genealogical Society Facebook](#) group. Annual membership dues are \$15 for individuals; \$20 for couples.