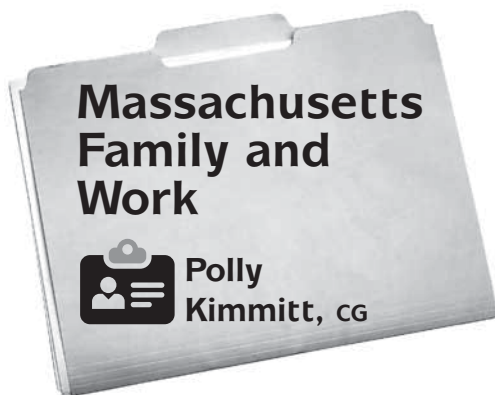


Professional Profiles



If you happen to ask Polly Kimmitt if she still likes doing genealogy, she will radiate the enthusiasm of a beginner, but you will soon realize she is a distinguished professional whose work in and around Massachusetts still ignites her eagerness to discover.

“Genealogical research is a field in which my strengths serve me very well and my shortcomings do less harm than they otherwise might. It just suits my particular character very well. Like all genealogists, I am detail-oriented, enjoy history, like to solve puzzles, am insatiably curious, and derive satisfaction from organizing and writing up my thoughts.

“What keeps me going is that every day I learn lots of new things about history, language, human nature, computers, and the world in general; things I never would have otherwise sought out. Every day I receive countless short-term rewards, and at the end of a project I am left with a feeling of having resolved a problem or discovered something that matters not just today but will matter far into the future as well.

“Being surrounded by adults in my early years, I always felt I knew less than everyone else. Events that occurred before I was born, neighbors who had died or moved on, all remained mysterious to me. This always led me to investigate and try and make connections on my own, a skill that serves me particularly well as a genealogist.”

A Close Connection with My Grandmother

Polly grew up nearly as an only child. “In my early childhood, my parents lived

with my grandmother. I was the youngest of four children, and my siblings were considerably older. When I was about three, my parents moved the family to our own home, but by then, my two eldest siblings were already in college. I missed my grandmother terribly, and I always loved our frequent visits with her.

“My grandmother loved books, and best of all, was a genealogist! I didn’t realize this at the time, (she died when I was only seven), but I remember her house being filled with antiques, photos, and books.

“She passed her passion on to my mother, who, in turn, passed it on to me. Oh sure, I spent lots of years rolling my eyes staying completely disengaged, but deep down I enjoyed knowing that someone had mapped out the comings and goings of my ancestors. The passion, however, lay dormant for many years, partially because I had glanced at the very complete family tree and seen only brick walls remaining!”

Pulling out the “Picture Drawer”

“My mother was just a delight. Always interested in others, compassionate, thoughtful, witty, and funny as anything. She taught me to love books by reading to me every night when I was small. She taught me how to knit when I was six, and gave me a love of blue and white transferware china. It was my mother’s fan charts and notebooks full of genealogical information (including the occasional source citation!!) that really got me intimately involved in genealogy.

“In my mother’s desk, I had always loved to pull out the ‘picture drawer’ and look at the photos of my aunts and uncles, and my siblings, when they were young. My grandmother had a bunch of brothers and my grandfather had siblings; I loved trying to work out which great-aunt or uncle belonged to which grandparent.”

Polly remembers her mother’s recollections of warm and happy times centered around Polly’s grandmother’s home; the memories so impressed Polly

that she memorialized the family house into her business logo.

Memorial Day was a hallmark anniversary in Polly’s family. “Grandma carried to the cemetery huge white Victorian wicker baskets that she filled with gladiolas while I played with the water spout and picked wildflowers. I could hear her and my mother talk about the people upon whose graves we left the baskets. This love of ancestors and reverence for history was impressed early in me. How could you not love cemeteries with memories like that?”

Family—A Safe Place to Keep Your Heart

“My father’s side, on the other hand, was quite another matter. His parents both died before I was born, and he rarely had contact with his brothers and sisters. He was happy to embrace my mother’s family, and purposely distanced himself from his Irish ancestry.

“Being a first-generation American, he had painful memories of when the Irish and Italian gangs still fought on the streets of Boston. He did not want to be associated with that caricature of the drunken Irishman, dressed like a leprechaun, pipe in the corner of his mouth.

“Nonetheless, as he got older, he became curious, and he and my mother visited his parents’ hometowns in Castlemaine and Milltown, County Kerry, Ireland. Family has always been a positive concept, a safe place to keep my heart.”

The Search for Famine-Era Immigrants

Polly acquired more difficult client work as her own proficiency increased. “I have been taking clients for about twelve years, gradually increasing the complexity of the jobs, so that I moved from lookups and record pulls to lineage society applications and compiled genealogies incorporating complex proof arguments.

“With a maiden name like FitzGerald, I attract a lot of clients in search of their

ancestral Irish homeland, and I feel a certain kinship with these folks because of the collective suffering of our ancestors.

“Early Irish research is tough, though, because many of those famine-era immigrants were illiterate and remained disenfranchised, staying under the radar and thus out of records. They are hard to find: from meager information in the occasional manifest to sorting out identities of families who moved frequently. And, once you find them, you are very lucky if you can pinpoint a townland back in Ireland from which they emigrated. They used the same names over and over, and it can be very frustrating, sometimes impossible to help the client find what he wants.

“My favorite client contacted me saying he had a painting of a ship, labeled only with the captain’s first and middle initials, his surname, the name of the ship, and ‘Sicily, 1825.’ He knew he had an ancestor with the same surname, but knew virtually nothing about her, and had never heard of the captain.

“I loved that project. The poor sea captain was unlucky in love and whilst his ship was being immortalized in oils, his wife was back home beckoning would-be lovers lurking in the neighbor’s barn by waving a white sheet to signify her availability. And adding to the interest of this story, the house the captain built was in a town that was razed in the 1930s to create the Quabbin Reservoir. Before they flooded the town, many people dismantled and moved their homes, and the captain’s was taken apart plank by plank and rebuilt in Amherst, Massachusetts.”

Rewards and Challenges

Polly has assignments that strike to the heart of loss and remembrance. “These days I am doing a lot of work under contract with the U.S. Army, helping to find the families of servicemen lost in previous conflicts. We identify the primary next of kin and also map out the family tree to find appropriate potential mitochondrial and Y-DNA donors to aid in identification of remains, should any be found. I find this work extremely rewarding.”

Polly recognizes the frustrations of genealogy. “There are challenges in working on twentieth and twenty-first century cases: the variety of sources is a bit more limited, privacy regulations limit access, and particularly irksome is that black hole of information in the mid-twentieth century. Yet, we do have the wonderful bonus of actually being able to talk with family members. That can speed up the work tremendously, but you also have to learn how to read between the lines, discern family troubles, and decide whether to believe what you’re being told.”

Polly claims colonial Massachusetts history as a favorite focus of research. “I grew up about twenty miles from Plymouth, Massachusetts. We used to play in the woods, traveling old Indian paths and looking for artifacts. We built ‘houses’ out of whatever we could find, and as winter approached I would empathize more and more with those early inhabitants of the area.

“I loved to imagine the Native Americans and Pilgrims living in peace

and harmony, roasting popcorn together, smoking herring, teaching each other new ideas. Obviously, I grew up and learned otherwise, but I’m still fascinated by the interaction of the two groups. There were people on both sides who were respectful of the other, and others who betrayed their own people and each other. But of course, one side dominated and nearly decimated the other. I always wonder how life might have been had that not been the case.”

Adventures Abroad and Other Tidbits

Polly left proper Massachusetts for a time and landed in risqué Europe. “I lived in Italy for four years. After majoring in French I headed back to Europe to work in France, but on the way became enamored of Italy and the Italian people, one in particular. I stayed, learned the language and worked in a bizarre variety of jobs, including being *au pair* [domestic assistant] to a prince, his ex-wife, and his extremely spoiled brat of a son.

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“The prince had a live-in girlfriend with two more babes who had their own au pair, and we all lived in the same big palazzo on the finest street in Rome, seconds from Piazza di Spagna. Those crazy people had us prepare lunch for them every day, so the very young English and American au pairs would cook for an Italian family. We all dined together on the rooftop terrace: the prince, ex-wife, girlfriend, three children, and au pairs. All very decadent and it didn't last more than four months or so.”

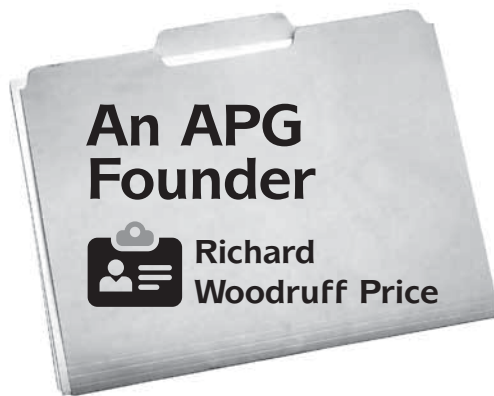
Polly tips her hat to two preeminent genealogists who have influenced her work. “Elizabeth Shown Mills just blows me away with her ability to absorb and integrate details. Her imagination leads her to deep crevices of information that many would never find. She is absolutely brilliant at analysis, writes like a dream, and can cut through mountains of information to isolate the heart of a problem, then systematically works through to a solution.

“I also adore Helen Leary and really admire her for her ability to make anything seem approachable. She is an incredible teacher.”

Polly describes her own family. “My husband, Myles Henry Gordon Kimmitt, and I married in 1988. We have three strong, happy, healthy, intelligent, and gorgeous sons, two in college and one just starting high school. I have worked my professional life around them, always giving priority to my job as a mother before my job as a genealogist. I have been extremely lucky to be able to have my cake and eat it, too, in that respect. I have experienced all the joys and frustrations of raising our boys, while slowly developing my skills as a genealogist. I timed it so that I became board certified the same year our eldest graduated from high school.”

Polly sits back now and then and makes use of her leisure time. “I love to knit. My favorite projects are small, portable things like socks, hats, and mittens. But, once I made a fancy, black lace dress for a 6'4" drag queen.”

Submitted by Roberta “Bobbi” King



Richard Woodruff Price was born and raised in Phoenix, Arizona. His father was a genealogy hobbyist and got Rick to fill out his first pedigree chart at the age of six. At age twelve he started collecting genealogies. His grandfather took him to the Mesa, Arizona, genealogical library and helped him find records there. One thing he found fascinating was that both of his parents descended from the Reverend John Lathrop, the early New England cleric.

Genealogy continued as a hobby for Rick throughout high school. When he was sixteen, his parents took him to Boston, where he spent two weeks at the New England Historic and Genealogical Society. Then, as a freshman at Brigham Young University (BYU), he took a genealogy class. His professor told him not to major in genealogy because he could not make a living at it, so he took genealogy classes that interested him and got a B.S. in Psychology. In his early twenties, Rick went to England and Wales and spent two weeks sleeping in hostels, visiting record offices and the Society of Genealogies, and scouring cemeteries and registers at ancestral parishes.

In 1976 he visited a genealogy company, the Institute of Family Research (IFR), who he heard was working on one of his ancestral lines. He wanted to get a copy of their work. Phil McMullin, the president, offered him a job. Rick needed a summer job, so he started working there. Dean McLeod became his trainer and mentor. He was hooked! He worked at IFR for six years.

Rick became accredited in English research by the Genealogical Society of Utah (later ICAPGen) in 1978, and about this time he served as president of the Utah Genealogical Association,

Professional Chapter. In 1979, he and a group of twelve friends started meeting for two to four hours weekly to establish a professional genealogical organization. At the end of the year, they named it the Association of Professional Genealogists (APG). Rick became vice president and later president of APG. It has now become an international organization with over 2,400 members.

In 1981, Rick started his own company, Price & Associates, Inc. In 1984 he earned an M.A. in Family and Community History at BYU. His master's thesis was *Child-Naming Patterns in Three English Villages, 1558–1740: Whickham, Durham; Bottesford, Leicester; and Hartland, Devon*. He has taken periodic research trips to England, Scotland, Wales, and Germany. By doing this he has learned to complement the records available at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City with the use of original manuscripts in local churches and archives in Europe.

Today, Rick continues directing research and working with clients at Price & Associates, Inc. in Salt Lake City. He has served for many years as a family history consultant and is a life member of APG.

Rick married Nancy Knudsen of Mission Viejo, California, in 1975 and together they raised five children and have four grandchildren. He enjoys cycling, gardening, hiking, and watching his grandchildren play soccer. He loves to travel with his wife. Besides research trips to England, he has lectured at APG, Federation of Genealogical Societies, National Genealogical Society, BYU, and ICAPGen conferences and has lectured on several cruise ships about family history.

Rick's experiences in England in his own words:

“How can one express the feelings, the chills that descend on you at your first visit to an ancestral home? When I first visited Ludlow, Shropshire, where my Price ancestors originated, a still, sacred reverence fell upon me. I walked the same roads, churches, markets, and shops where my forefathers had sojourned. This was holy ground to me.

“On one occasion a family hired me to trace their Cannon ancestors on a visit to Somerset. Upon visiting the record office, I found a book entitled *John Canon’s Memoirs 1684–1742*. I ordered the book. John Canon was an Anglican minister. The book was an 800-page handwritten volume filled with pictures, scriptures, and a history of his life. The first twenty pages were his genealogy, where he wrote about his great-grandparents and their descendants. My client’s ancestry had hit a dead end because the parish registers did not go earlier than 1754. Somerset’s probate records were destroyed. Luckily, John Cannon was a cousin to this ancestor. He drew family trees and wrote histories of these relatives. Besides the fascinating story of the family, we were able to extend the pedigree back 200 years, to 1527.

“Work on these trips can be very exhilarating, yet exhausting. On one occasion I had been working at Cambridge University archives and was very tired after a long week’s labors. As I left the archive, I looked around and saw the beauty of the campus with its rivers, landscape, and wildlife. I had recently seen *Chariots of Fire*, which took place partially at Cambridge University. I had the music on my tape recorder, and rather than rush off to my next spot, I just wandered through the beautiful acres and felt the reverence of what felt like a holy place.

“Adventures to me on these trips to England were not without variety. Once while in Lincoln I was jogging on cobblestones and fell and broke my leg. I got to a hospital where they put a cast on and told me I could not bend my leg for two months. I had six weeks left in England, driving my stick shift car on the left side of the road. I didn’t know what to do but knew I could not sit around for six weeks, so I figured out how to use my leg and continued driving through the country.

“On another occasion I was staying at a large bed and breakfast, where bathrooms are shared. At 5:00 A.M. one day I went in the bathroom with a towel wrapped around me to get ready for the day. After my shower I returned to my room and found the key I had was to the outside door, not to my

bedroom. So I walked down five flights of stairs with nothing but a towel on. The owner was not yet up, so I sat in the lounge waiting for him to awake. A foreigner came in who did not speak English. I tried to explain my dilemma. He just laughed and laughed. Finally after what seemed like hours, the owner woke up. I explained my predicament and we walked up the five flights of stairs, passing other tenants on the way, and he let me in my room.”

Submitted by Tristan Tolman, AG



Purple velvet covering a thick Victorian photograph album. A windswept island off the coast of Maine. A maternal grandmother’s stories of fisher folk and lobstermen. A circa 1900 photograph of a Danish family’s cow in the streets of downtown Portland, Maine. Endless and unusual family superstitions handed

down. These are what Rob Stanhope thinks about when considering how his interest in genealogy began.

Born and raised in Maine, Rob, who now lives in the Boston area with his partner, listened to all the stories his grandmother had to tell. Wondering aloud to his high-school librarian about where to look for more family information, he was directed to the Maine Historical Society. It was there that he found a book about genealogy, thus putting a name to what has become a lifelong passion and way of life. At age eighteen, he was vice president of his town’s historical society helping to oversee volunteer teams researching the history of old, local houses with the intent of documenting the buildings for a future historic district.

Rob credits much of his interest in the past to a particularly inspirational history teacher who encouraged his curiosity of genealogy, research, and study of earlier times. At his high-school graduation, Rob was recognized with a special genealogy award that he is certain the teacher invented to acknowledge his budding interest in the field. But, it worked! The award gave him all the inspiration he needed to fashion a career as a social-cultural historian.

A recent trip to Nova Scotia, an



Fig. 1. Rob Stanhope at the National Archives, Washington, D.C., 2010, looking at the Civil War pension file of one of his great-great-great-grandfathers from Maine.



Fig. 2. Rob Stanhope at Cranberry Horn Cemetery near Cundy's Harbor, Harpswell, Maine, July 2011, photographing the headstone of Thankful Small, his fifth great-grandmother.

area from which several of his ancestors emigrated, left Rob with the idea that he would like to do more genealogical projects with his father, a local Maine historian. Rob's dream project will involve working heavily in archives and with manuscripts, perhaps at the Maine Historical Society—all of Rob's many and varied interests inevitably root themselves back in his home state—and a focus area of special interest is the birth and growth of the Danish community in southern Maine.

"I want to get my hands dirty with leathery books," Rob says while commenting on his preferred way of working. He likes to get away from the Internet, electronic access, and mainstream researching and follow mysteries on parchment. This is a rather odd statement for such a technologically sophisticated man. Rob is a Mac professional and, while serving as a teaching assistant in Boston University's Certificate in Genealogical Research program, helps to introduce many students to the wonders of new technology and how it plays out in the genealogical world. Rob clues students in on how to use, and not use, their iPads for genealogical research,

the joys of Dropbox, and the magical powers of *DEVONThink Pro* software, a research database application he is now using to manage all his genealogical documents, images, web pages, and digital audio files.

Perhaps much of his appeal as a genealogist and as a person is that Rob can be both high-tech pro and old-world man. His full-time work as a graphic designer and project administrator at Harvard University puts him in touch with the latest advancements in digital design and database applications, many of which he uses in his daily work. Rob speaks "advanced technology" as smoothly and comfortably as most of us talk about the weather. His fascination with—and his intuitive grasp of—most new technology somehow blends with the part of him that spends hours in old cemeteries, sits in archives bent over fragile manuscripts, and ponders ancient handwriting, something that he is quite proficient in interpreting. In many ways, Rob is what many genealogists aspire to be: fluent in both the Old World and the new.

Of all the latest technology, Rob feels that social networking may be one of the most broadly useful and accessible inventions. He regularly uses Twitter <www.twitter.com> to encourage others to research their ancestors or learn about the history of Maine. While doing so recently, he met a woman from Indianapolis who offered to do supplementary research for him in the area. The woman, a total but very kind stranger, got back to Rob soon afterward with the crucial information that he had been searching for about one of his Maine ancestors who had wandered off after the Civil War and was never heard of again. In one afternoon Rob received documentation of the man's fate: killed on a railroad bridge, hit by a train. Rob views this as a powerful example of how social networking can connect individuals, encourage volunteerism, solve mysteries, and help to complete family stories.

Along the way of life, Rob has earned two bachelor's degrees, one in history

and one in German studies, the latter with an emphasis on cultural and literary studies. His Master of Arts in German concentrated heavily on medieval languages and literature. He has a very strong background in Latin, which helps him when reading old manuscripts. His work in graphic design and information graphics allows him to work more creatively with old photographs. He has identified many unknown posers by tenacious work in the records, tracking down families who lived in towns identified only by the name of a single photography studio. Rob also applies his graphic design skills to photographs of gravestones in order to better bring out the faded and disappearing names and dates engraved upon them.

What is next for Rob in his role of social-cultural historian? He is working toward certification through the Board for Certification of Genealogists, which will not change his interests or focus areas any, but which is providing him with an in-depth adventure at the moment. "I'm too busy to take new cases right now," he says, "but hope to be able to do that again at some point." In the meantime, he remains a very lively and informative source for New England research, with a particular emphasis on Maine. And in his spare time? If he has any, Rob uses it to enjoy the poetry of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. He was once a tour guide at Longfellow's boyhood home in Maine, and likes to introduce others to Longfellow's works. Rob also collects vintage cocktail books and likes to tweet about the history of cocktail recipes with special emphasis on where each one was invented and what was going on in that particular city or part of the world at the time, a rather unique way to explore our more immediate past.

We look forward to seeing a future project by Rob in Maine's Danish immigrant community. We hope he decides to teach a course in "The Technology of Genealogy" as well.

Follow Rob on Twitter <@maineroots>.

Submitted by Kyle Ingrid Johnson