

# T W I G T A L K

## Newsletter



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### President's Message

By Dawn Westcomb Kelley -

All meetings for 2021 are cancelled. We are hoping 2022 will be a better year for all of us. So please stay safe and healthy. I will keep you posted.

Family Reunions are so important even when they are very small ones. My brother and I had not seen our older sister for over 3 years. She came to visit us for 7 days from Tennessee in September. My sister and I also have birthdays in September. Our brother had a cookout at his place with a few family members. Oh, we had so much fun and great time, with all of us being together.

October been officially listed as Family History Month within the US. It is a time to remember our roots and celebrate our unique histories and identities. It also happens to be the month that we celebrate several specific heritage days (German-American month, Italian Heritage month, Polish American Heritage month, etc.)

#### October is Family History Month



**A task each day!**

**Research is open at the Muskegon County Clerk**

Wednesdays 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Phone 231-724-7140

Muskegon County Genealogical Society

Volunteer – Karen Frazier

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*The following story by Melanie Meade was presented during a "Roll On Muskegon" ride on August 30, 2021. You can find out more about "Roll On Muskegon" by visiting their Facebook page at Facebook.com... And if you ride a bicycle, please join the group at the Muskegon Farmers Market on any Monday into October, as long as the weather holds, around 6:15 pm. Wheels turn at 6:30 pm.*  
Ed

## **BOOGIE WOOGIE BUGLE BOY**

By Melanie Meade

Let me introduce you to Clarence Zylman. Mr. Zylman was born in Muskegon in 1906. He went to Muskegon High School but left school in his junior year to find work. This was not unusual for this time in history. He was a talented trumpeter and was able to sustain a career as a musician. He eventually moved to Chicago in the early 1920s. There he found success playing with many bands. But in the 30s he had to return home because of The Great Depression. In 1940, he went back on the road with one of the biggest bands of the day...The Tommy Tucker Band. In 1942, at the age of 35, Clarence was drafted into the Army. Because he had a special talent, he was drafted as a bugler. The story says that two of his jobs were to play Reveille in the morning to wake up the troops and Taps at night. This was boring to him so he decided to jazz up Reveille. The troops loved being woken up in such a fun way. The Army, in a Stars and Stripes article that came out in 1943, declared him to be the real life inspiration for the smash hit song "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy" that was sung by The Andrew Sisters. Read to the lyrics and see if you think they fit...

"He was a famous trumpet man from out Chicago way.  
He had a boogie sound that no one else could play.  
He was the top man at his craft.  
But then his number came up and he was gone with the draft  
He's in the army now, a blowin' reveille  
He's the boogie woogie bugle boy of Company B

They made him blow a bugle for his Uncle Sam  
It really brought him down because he couldn't jam  
The captain seemed to understand  
Because the next day the cap' went out and drafted a band  
And now the company jumps when he plays reveille  
He's the boogie woogie bugle boy of Company B"

The lyrics really fit his description, don't they? Mr. Zylman ended up spending his time during WWII going around the world and entertaining the troops with his boogie woogie style.

After the war, he came back to the United States and tried to get employment as a musician. He ended up in NYC where competition was fierce. He had a tryout with the famous Jimmy Dorsey Band but it seems as if he chose to not take that opportunity and instead return to good ole Muskegon. Here he married and worked at Continental Motors. For fun, he played in local bands. When he would play around town...he would always end his sets by playing The Boogie-Woogie Bugle Boy of Company B. It was a favorite and everyone knew it was about him.

Clarence Zylman died in 1988 at the age of 81. He is buried in Evergreen Cemetery. In 1918 a statue was erected to commemorate this famous Muskegonite. I'm sure most of you have seen it. It's a great homage to a Muskegon Legend. But there is more to this story...

This is the inscription at the statue. Read it carefully to what it says...AND DOESN'T SAY...

*Born in Muskegon and trained on the streets of Chicago, he toured the country as a professional trumpeter helping to lead a musical revolution, featuring a new boogie-woogie sound. Clarence Zylman served his country as a bugler, playing reveille in his own boogie-woogie style. He became a military legend as the bugler who got the troops up with a jitterbug in their step. He was an ordinary man who led a remarkable life, and thanks to an extraordinary song, will forever be known as Muskegon's own Boogie-Woogie Bugle Boy.*



Did you catch what they did? They fell short of claiming he is the actual inspiration for the song. There is a reason for this. You see, although the song FITS Mr. Zylman to a tee, he had not actually enlisted in the Army until 1942. The song was written by Hughie Prince and Don Raye and recorded by The Andrew Sisters in 1941, a full year before Clarence Zylman had even reported for duty. Hence, it is impossible that he was the true subject of the song. It is just a lovely example of LIFE imitating ART. And BECAUSE it fit him so well, the Army took the opportunity to CLAIM he was the “real McCoy” and used it to their advantage. No real harm was done.

The men who wrote the song were in Chicago at the same time as Zylman. Since they were all prominent in the music field, they probably had met each other. But Zylman wasn't in the Army yet so could NOT have inspired the song. Another man, named Harry L Gish also claimed that he was the inspiration. He actually KNEW the writers of the song so it seems as if Mr. Gish is the more likely muse. Countless others also claimed that the song was about them. History may never be sure who the real BWBB was...if there even WAS a real person

behind the song. But since Clarence Zylman got the stamp of approval from the Army, he has historically been given credit.

## MUSKEGON'S FIRST LADY BARBER AND HER HUSBAND

By Frances Harrington

Ann C. Wisheart was born in Illinois in August of 1862 to Mary J Bell and George Wisheart. According to the 1880 Census, she had 5 sisters and 2 brothers and they were living in Adams, Illinois. She married DeWitt C. Clark, a widower with 2 children, on August 25, 1894.

The 1900 Census shows the couple living in Oskaloosa, Mahaska, Iowa. She has been working as a barber and DeWitt is the proprietor of a bath house.

On November 10, 1904, the Muskegon Chronicle had an article titled “Lady Barber Shop Opened in Muskegon”. It read: “Muskegon has at last come up to the times with a lady barber. Mrs. D. C. Clark,

formerly of Oskaloosa, Iowa, last evening opened a shop at 225 W Western Avenue, opposite Union Station. The shop has two chairs and another woman barber, Miss Bell McNelley, is expected here in about two weeks to assist Mrs. Clark in her work. Mrs. Clark, the present female exponent of the tonsorial art (fancy words that describe someone who gives shaves and haircuts) in Muskegon, says she has been shaving all kinds of faces for the last 5 years and expects to make a success in this city."

I wanted to do an article on Ann C Clark (Mrs. D. C. Clark) Muskegon's first lady barber; unfortunately, the above excerpt from the Chronicle is about all I could find on her. Her husband, on the other hand, was another story.

DeWitt C. Clark was born on February 9, 1861, in Blissfield, Michigan. For a while he worked as a farm laborer there. At some point, he married Edith Culp and they had two children in South Dakota, a boy named Felton (birthdate unknown) and a girl named Jessie (born 1885 according to her marriage license). When DeWitt and Ann move to Muskegon, both Felton and Jessie are with them.

The barber shop occupied space in part of the building at 225 W. Western, and part was occupied by Felton, who had started a photography business, and DeWitt, according to the 1906 city directory, was a "feather renovator" making pillows and feather beds, along with various other small businesses renting out other spaces. The upstairs was used for the family residence. DeWitt also raised white leghorn cockerels (chickens) and sold chicken eggs.

There was an article in the Chronicle dated June 31, 1906, "*Cute Peddler Is Captured*" about a hunt that went on for several weeks by the License Collector of Muskegon for someone who had been peddling perfume without a license. It said they arrested "*Felton W. Clark, barber, photographer, peddler, and jack-of-all-trades, whose wife runs a barber shop at 255 W. Western Avenue. Clark had so cleverly concealed his wares that the police and the License Collector had never been able to locate him*". It turns out that when the police went to investigate a robbery of a suit case at the Milwaukee House, they came across Clark "*vending his perfume, which he carried in bottles attached to a belt concealed under his clothing*". The reason the police hadn't caught up with him sooner is that they had been looking for someone who had their wares openly displayed. Clark was arraigned before Judge Oosterbaan and pleaded guilty. He was offered the chance to take out a license, but he said he had no money for that. The penalty for the offense was a \$10 fine or 20 days in jail. Clark refused to take out the license, which would have cost him \$3 a week or \$1 a day. Clark told the Judge that he would let the city pay his board at the jail for the next 20 days. After spending one night in jail, he changed his mind and paid the \$10 fine. But that's not all of the story....

It turns out that it wasn't Felton W. Clark, who was the "*barber, photographer, peddler, and jack-of-all-trades*" who had committed the crime; it was his father, DeWitt C. Clark. Felton was in Crystal Falls, Michigan, with the American Amusement Company doing magic and slight-of-hand stunts when he saw the article in the paper saying that he had been arrested. He quickly wrote a letter back to Muskegon stating his innocence and the fact that he wasn't even near Muskegon at the time. When he wrote the letter, he was unaware that it was his father who had actually committed the crime.



The original complaint sworn out by License Collector Allport had been issued with the name "Felton W. Clark" as the defendant. Even though the Judge read the complaint to DeWitt in full and had taken special care to read it slowly and distinctly, including the name Felton W. Clark 3 times, DeWitt never said a word. Later, when DeWitt was asked why he didn't correct the mistake, he said *"he did not notice the mistake in the name until after sentence had been passed on him, that no one had asked him his name, and that he was in no mood to put the officers right in the matter"*. So, apparently, he would rather have the crime on his son's record, rather than his own. Not exactly the father-of-the-year.

After this incident, I wasn't able to find out anything more about Felton other than that he was listed in the Muskegon City Directory in 1908 for the last time. DeWitt took over the photography business at that time. (Some of DeWitt's photos can be viewed on the Lakeshore Museum's website.) Ann had the building moved from 225 W. Western Avenue to 273 W. Western Avenue in 1908. She continued her barber shop while her step-daughter, Jessie, made "switches" (hair pieces) from combings from the barber shop which she would dye to match a person's shade. The barber shop must have done well because Ann would spend each winter in Florida (renting out her barber chair while she was away).

It looks like DeWitt continued to have problems. In 1917 he was held at the county jail awaiting action as to his sanity. He was found wandering about Union Station without his clothes on. He said he feared that someone was endeavoring to poison him and that he was trying to make his escape. Application was to be made to send him to the state hospital. Whether he went or not or if he did, for how long he stayed is information I wasn't able to gather.

After the 1922 City Directory, Ann is no longer listed as a barber. DeWitt continues to be listed as a photographer up to 1930.

Ann C. Clark, Muskegon's first lady barber, died on May 21, 1931 and is buried in Oakwood Cemetery. DeWitt died on September 7, 1936 and is buried in Restlawn Cemetery. Jessie married a carpenter named Maurice Lindsey in 1914. She died in Indiana in 1942. Felton W. Clark's whereabouts remain unknown.

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## Webinar Information Provided by Gail Taggart

Southern California Genealogical Society Webinar Series - Join our webcasts with knowledgeable genealogists to help grow what you know. The LIVE broadcast is FREE and open to the public. Register at [www.scqsgenealogy.com](http://www.scqsgenealogy.com)

- You MUST Register to participate.
- Scroll down and click on the Webinar Title you want to attend.
- Register with our partner website, GoToWebinar.com.
- Enter your name and email address and answer a few questions. You will receive confirmation of your registration by email.
- You will also receive reminders before the webinar. The reminder email will have information on accessing the handout material.

On the day of the session, click the link that you received in your invitation to GoToWebinar.com to join the online session.

Wednesday, October 20 9:00 PM - Eastern

[Find the Stories of Your French and Indian War Ancestor](#)

by Annette Burke Lyttle, MA

The French and Indian War, lasting from 1754 to 1763, involved French colonists and their Native allies against British colonists and the Iroquois Confederacy in Colonial North America. Thousands of Americans-French, British, and Native fought in hundreds of battles and skirmishes. Learn how to find the records and stories of your ancestor's military service during this time.

Annette Burke Lyttle is a professional genealogist specializing in online and repository research, and genealogical education and writing. She loves helping people find and tell their family stories.

**IMPORTANT MESSAGE**

**MCGS MEETINGS**

2nd Thursday at 6:30 p.m.  
**VFW Post 3195**  
**5209 Grand Haven Rd.**  
**Norton Shores, MI**



**ALL MEETINGS  
CANCELLED  
FOR 2021**

**Genealogy Family  
History Workshops**

Torrent House Local  
History & Genealogy  
Department  
315 W. Webster Ave.

**No news yet!**

**All workshops are  
cancelled until  
further notice.**



**LOCAL HISTORY & GENEALOGY DEPT.**

Changes to the Local History & Genealogy Department. PLEASE call ahead of time at 231-722-8016 Tuesday thru Friday from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. Check Hackley Public Library website for new updates on opening and closing at <https://hackleylibrary.org/> **Click** the Local History & Genealogy button on top of the page and check out the Research Resources .



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**HISTORY BOOK VOL. 2**

We care what happens to our members, their families, and everyone around us. Our History Book, Volume 2 will be extend until further notice. It is very important to start working on your stories now.

**Do not wait to put your family history in Vol. 2**

If you have any questions or need help, contact us at our [1972mcgs@gmail.com](mailto:1972mcgs@gmail.com) or send your information to Kathy DeCormier at [middlaker@frontier.com](mailto:middlaker@frontier.com) — In the subject area put “History Book Volume 2”.

**TWIG TALK**

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