

MUSKEGON COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Founded 1972

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T W I G T A L K

Newsletter



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[Celebrating 50 years in 2022](#)

President's Message

By Dawn Westcomb Kelley -

HAPPY 50th ANNIVERSARY MUSKEGON COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY 2022!



It looks like we will not be meeting anytime soon for our monthly meetings in 2022. We will keep you informed when we get a chance to meet again in person. So do not give up on our society, we will make it through this Covid mess.

What makes a genealogical society to survive is our members like you who join. Even though we are going through rough times the past 21 months. Remember, volunteers also are the sunshine that nourish us to bloom for the future.

The Saturday Family History Workshops will be changing to one on one in person Tuesday through Saturday by appointment only in 2022 contact us at 1972mcgs@gmail.com to make your appointment.

THANK YOU! Members who have paid their membership and added a nice donation!

TIP - From Family Tree Magazine

You may be too close to a research brick wall to view it objectively. [Trade problems with a friend](#), and try to find her missing information while she tries to find yours. This brings a fresh look to a frustrating situation and its fun to help someone else.



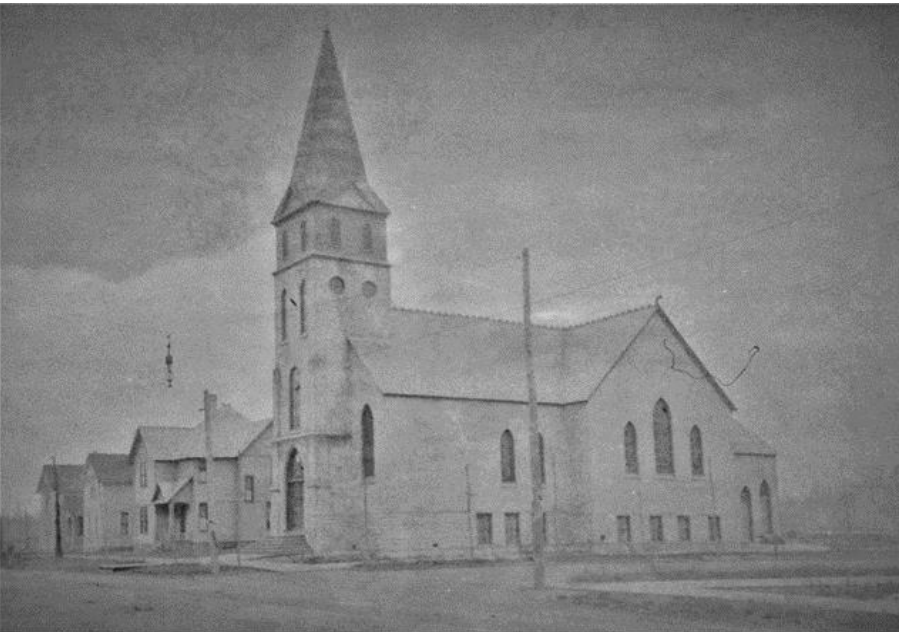
St. John's Evangelical Church of Muskegon

From the book "St. John's Evangelical Church of Muskegon available at the Torrent House

During the summer of 1882, a meeting was held in the home of Mrs. Funche on Peck Street for the purpose of organizing a church for the growing population of German-Americans wishing to work in the sawmills. The women had been holding meetings in their homes every two weeks. When a minister was located for services, they met in the Arbeiter Hall on Terrace Street.

Rev. John Lambrecht had been assisting with the religious rituals. Now they called upon him to assist with the organization of the church. He raised substantial funds through subscriptions. Mrs. Herman Lange, along with other women helped, by holding fairs and suppers to raise money.

They purchased a lot on the corner of Pine Street and Diana Avenue. On September 1882 the cornerstone was laid. They continued worshipping in the Danish Church on the corner of Peck Street and New Street, while their church and parsonage had to be constructed. Dedication services held on the second Sunday in January 1883. The First German Evangelical Church of Muskegon came into existence. Services held, in German and in English.



On May 16, 1891, during Muskegon's second Pine Street Fire, the church burned to the ground. The members began immediately began to rebuild their church. They again held services in the Danish Church until their new building was completed. One dedication took place in September 1891, with a formal dedication of the new church building-taking place on February 28, 1892. Over the years, the church went through many changes. In June of 1934, the Evangelical Synod of North America merged with the Reformed Church in the United States. The local church changed their name to St. John's Evangelical and Reformed Church. The practice of having services in

German had dwindled from once a month in 1920 to being completely dropped in 1946.

Later alliance with the Congregational Church resulted in the name changing to St. John's United Church of Christ. In 1970, the membership voted to merge with McGraft Congregational Church became part of the archives of McGraft Congregational Church who gave permission in 2003 to have the Muskegon County Genealogical Society to make a copy of church indexes and records.

You can find the index and records at the Torrent House, Local History and Genealogy Department.



Ice Cream and Oysters

By Frances Harrington

The other day, Dawn Kelley and I decided to try out this new little place downtown called “Occidental Eats”. They share a building that houses Mike’s saloon on the east and they are on the west. The building next door is the Heritage Museum. They serve ice cream, old fashioned malts, soup, hot dogs, etc. They call it “Occidental Eats” because they serve a hot fudge Sunday using the old hot fudge recipe from the Occidental Hotel. While we were there, enjoying our old fashion malts, we got to talking with the owners, Corrine and Eric Cockream. We started talking about the uniqueness of the building. They said they had been told by different people that it had been used as a number of different businesses. I told them I would see what I could find about it.

That night, I got on my laptop and started searching city directories on Ancestry.com. What I found is from 1889 to 1926, the address was listed as 237 W. Western Avenue and after 1926, it was re-numbered to 557 W. Western Ave. Keep in mind, that it is a single-story building that is divided into two separate business spaces with separate entrances. I don’t know if both sides had ever been combined to be used as a single business or not. Since the spaces are so small, I don’t see how some of these businesses operated there unless it was, at one time, one entire space. What I found was that in 1889, it had been used as the business offices for McCracken, Hume, & Company (lumber and shingles) and at the same time, for Hovey & McCracken (lumber manufacturers). From 1907 to 1911, it was Gilroy’s (confectionery, bakery, lunch room, etc.). From then until 1956, it has been a men’s clothing store (Isaac Arenstein); a retail confectionery & fruit sales store (Frederick Spadator); a jewelry store (Julius C Nerreter); a tailor shop (Conrad Bayer); and a barber shop (Carl K Krueger). Carl Krueger seems to have been there for the longest amount of time, with his barber shop, for 16 years. I didn’t look any further than the directories I could get on-line so after 1956, I’m sure many other businesses have been in that building. I do know that recently, it was the 557 Café & Deli.



Photo 1

I then began to wonder if I could find an old picture of any of the businesses listed above, so I started checking the internet. The only picture I was able to find was from the Lakeshore Museum Center’s online photo collection data base. That picture was of “Gilroy’s Lunch Room & Bakery” (see photo 1). I also found another picture of a 2nd Gilroy’s Lunch Room. At first, I thought the photos



Photo 2

were of the same place, but upon closer investigation, I could see they were not. I found the larger building was at 353 W. Western Avenue. So, two “Gilroy’s” lunch rooms? Were they owned by the same person? At the same time? Or by brothers? I need to do some more investigating. In the meantime, I gave the information and picture to the Cockreams. They

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were very appreciative and even gave me a free lunch!

Now about Gilroy's....

James and Mary (Gallagher) Gilroy lived in New York City in 1857, where they gave birth to their firstborn son, Bernard Francis Gilroy. James dies in 1880 and Bernard moves to Muskegon, Michigan in 1881. I don't know what brought him to Muskegon, but perhaps, like many others, he had heard of the prosperity of this city due to the lumber industry and decided this was the place to be. His mother, Mary, follows him here in 1882 and his brother, Hugh, in 1883. The first Muskegon City Directory I can find him in is the 1883. At that time he has a small restaurant located at the south side of Western Avenue between Pine and Terrace and resides at the same address. By 1885, his restaurant is located at 23 Western Avenue, along with his residence in the back. The Chronicle states that the popular restaurant owner has remodeled, added a skylight, added on to the building, and is now able to accommodate 14 tables. (This address is probably the same location as before only now the directory is listing it by the street number.) One of the ads in the Chronicle says: "*Go To Gilroy's RESTAURANT The finest and best equipped in the city for a Splendid Dish of Oysters, a Good Meal, a First-class Lunch, or a Package of Candy. FRUIT IN THEIR SEASON! Warm Meals furnished at all hours, and the most courteous treatment always awarded to customers*". Another ad states that he also sells the choicest fruits, confections (sweets), cigars and tobacco. In 1886, he will serve a complete Thanksgiving holiday meal for 25 cents! Can you imagine an entire Thanksgiving meal for 25 cents? Today, you can't even get a glass of water for that!

By 1887, Bernard sells the old place and opens a new Gilroy's Restaurant at 139 W. Western Avenue, that he calls an "oyster house" because oysters are his specialty and he will have "oysters of all kinds" available all year round. It is located on 3rd Street and W. Western Avenue, opposite the Occidental Hotel. Besides the oysters and is regular restaurant favorites, he will have a fine selection of candy, fudge, toys, and "Harrison's Ice Cream" (a popular brand in Muskegon at the time).

By July, 1888, he is advertising as the "Headquarters for Gilroy's Oysters" and also, the "Headquarters for Harrison's Celebrated Ice Cream" along with his normal restaurant and confectionery items. This is the year he buys his house at 183 Clay Avenue where he and his family will live until 1920. This is the property across from the Lakeshore Museum Center, where the parking lot is.

In 1890, he purchases the building where the old Pine Street Hardware was located. He doesn't move to that location but later rents it out. In the fall of that year, he sells his restaurant and oyster business to J. F. Hirshman.

1891 is a busy year for Bernard. In April, he marries Elinor "Nellie" T. McCarthy at St. Mary's Church in Muskegon. Nellie is a life-long resident of Muskegon and the daughter of Bridgett (Glavin) and Thomas McCarthy. They will end up having 5 children together. In May, Bernard opens the first refreshment stand at the Lake Michigan Park Pavilion. In June, the infamous Pine Street fire happens. The building on Pine Street he is renting out to J. A. Moore, is completely destroyed. (Poor Mr. Moore spent his life's savings moving to Muskegon, purchasing inventory, establishing a new business, and setting up a home in the upstairs, only to have all he owned go up in smoke. Even the last \$500 he kept in the safe was destroyed. Luckily, he, his wife, and 6 children survived. Mr. Moore was so devastated by his loss that he became ill and died 3 months later.) In November, Bernard leases a store at 111 W. Western Avenue and transforms it into what he calls "a 1st class establishment" for selling confectionery, fruit, and you guessed it...ice cream, and oysters.

In 1894, he is no longer the "headquarters" for Harrison Ice Cream. In fact, Harrison's put a notice in the Chronicle listing those businesses who do sell their ice cream and specifically

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mentions that Gilroy's no longer handles their product. In July, Bernard adds a room for manufacturing his own brand of ice cream at his restaurant. He advertises it as being "equal to any other brand in the city or no charge". An ice cream soda can be had for 5 cents, a quart of ice cream is 35 cents, and a gallon is 1 dollar. By this time, he has also bought a rig and will deliver his goods to any part of the city.

1896 has Gilroy's moving his confectionery, restaurant, and lunchroom to 33 W. Western Avenue. He starts a lunch wagon to sell oysters, celery, and crackers and continues to deliver his ice cream to any part of the city. He advertises that he will deliver to dealers, private citizens, parties, church socials, and other gatherings.

Headquarters!

Candies,
Fruits,
Nuts,
Oysters,
Lowney's
Bon Bons

Gilroy's

Prices lowest. Quality best.

Finest stock of Confectionery, Home Made Candies, Nuts and Fruits in the city.

GILROY'S
New Store.
39 W. Western Ave.,
PHONE 279.

In 1898 Bernard brings a well-known candy maker from out east to Muskegon and starts to manufacture his own candy and moves to 39 W. Western Avenue. He advertises: Gilroy's Fine Candies, Lowney's Chocolate & Bon Bons, Oysters direct from Baltimore, and his fancy ice cream called "Gilroy's Velvet Ice Cream".

In 1903, Bernard sold his restaurant and candy store to go into the wholesale candy and ice cream business at 145 W. Western Avenue and continued to sell oysters.

Remember at the beginning of the story, I mentioned the "Occidental Eats" at 557 W. Western (which up to 1926 was known as 237 W. Western Avenue) that Dawn and I went to? Well, in 1907, Bernard moved into this building and once again started a lunch room and sold fresh fruit, candy, baked goods, ice cream, and oysters (see photo 1). He stayed in this location until 1911 when he again moved down the street to 353 W. Western Avenue to have more room for his businesses (see photo 2). He sold this restaurant in 1913 to enlarge his ice cream manufacturing business and started the **Gilroy Ice Cream and Oyster Company** on his property at 183 Clay Avenue (across from the current Lakeshore Museum Center).

In 1920, Bernard retires as the oldest ice cream manufacturer in Muskegon (26 years). He builds a new home on the property west of his old residence at 201 Clay Avenue (renumbered 467) and continues to sell oysters but he sells his ice cream manufacturing business to the Piper Company of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Bernard Gilroy was a successful restaurateur, entrepreneur, and manufacturer in Muskegon for 38 years. He died at his home, after a short illness, in 1927. Bernard's mother, Mary, was born in Ireland in 1831, and died in Muskegon, in 1907. Elinor "Nellie", his wife, died in Muskegon, in 1958. Their children were all born in Muskegon: Bernard J. born in 1892, became the manager of Piper Ice Cream Company in Grand Haven, and died in Muskegon, in 1940; Thomas J. born in 1893, had some run-ins with the law, spent some time in prison in New Mexico, then became a salesman, and died in Muskegon, in 1945; Helen F. born in 1895, became the office manager for Piper

GILROY'S

Wholesale Ice Cream and Oysters.
Brick and Fancy Cream a Specialty.

GILROY

Ice Cream and Oyster Co.
183 W. Clay Ave. Phone 2911

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Ice Cream Company, married Lawrence Kearney, and died in Muskegon, in 1989; Marie K. born 1896, became a teacher, married John H. Kearney, and died in Orange County, California, in 1985; Louis E. born 1898, became an associate pastor for the Catholic church, and died in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1936. All are buried at St. Mary's Cemetery in Muskegon, at the family plot, except for Marie who is buried at the Holy Sepulcher in Orange County, California.

Sources: Ancestry.com; Genealogybank.com; Lakeshore Museum Center; Findagrave.com; Hackley Library, Local History & Genealogy Center)

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- 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.

NEXT UP:

Saturday, January 8 1:00 PM - Eastern

[French Canadian Settlements in the Midwestern U.S.](#)

by Annette Burke Lyttle, MA



French Canadians have inhabited the Midwestern United States since the late 17th century, and major immigration waves from French Canada came to the Midwest in the 19th century. Many of these immigrants sought to maintain their language and customs by settling together in communities. Learn about the history of these communities and how to find the stories of ancestors who lived there.

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.

Wednesday, January 19 9:00 PM - Eastern

[When DNA Ethnicity Predictions are Useful and Accurate](#)

by Kitty Cooper



The ancestry composition predictions at each major DNA testing company vary, often by a lot, and none are completely accurate yet. This presentation discusses which company is best for which expected ethnicity and which ethnicities are easier to predict. Comparison of some unusual mixtures across all the companies will be shown

Kitty Munson Cooper is a well-known blogger on genetics and genealogy. Her blog, which gets several thousand hits a day, includes numerous basic pictorial tutorials about using your DNA results and DNA tools to help with your DNA matches.

**INTERESTED
IN YOUR
FAMILY
HISTORY?**

Muskegon County Clerk's Office is open to the public for family history information contained on Muskegon County Marriage and Death Certificates:

- **Monday through Thursday: 8:30am to 4:00pm**
- **Friday: 8:30am thru 3:00pm**

Need assistance?

Muskegon County Genealogical Society is on site to help/answer questions every Wednesday from 1:00pm to 4:00pm.

MUSKEGON COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

** Our membership begins January 1 through December 31**

- New Membership Renewal Membership
- \$25.00 Single in the USA \$30.00 Single USD\$ outside the USA
- \$50.00 Double in the USA
- We are a non-profit organization 501 (c) (3)
If you wish to make a donation, please fill in the amount \$ _____

*PHONE (____) _____

*E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

*NAME _____

*ADDRESS _____

*CITY _____ *STATE _____ *ZIP _____

Please make check or money orders payable to MCGS

**MAIL TO:
MCGS**

Attn: MEMBERSHIP
C/O HPL - Torrent House
315 W. Webster Ave.
Muskegon, MI 49440-1208

MCGS USE ONLY

Date Received _____
Check # _____ Amount Paid _____
Paid Cash _____
Money Order _____
PayPal _____

Rev. Oct 2021

IMPORTANT MESSAGE

MCGS MEETINGS

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



2022 Meetings
?

Genealogy Family History Workshops

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

Workshops will be one on one. **Please** call for your appointment for the day you would like to meet.
231 722-8016



LOCAL HISTORY & GENEALOGY DEPARTMENT

Call 231-722-8016

Hours will change
January 4, 2022
Sunday and Monday — Closed
Tuesday through Saturday
10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



2021 OFFICERS & COMMITTEES

President: Dawn Westcomb Kelley
Past President: Jane Appleton Schapka
Vice President: Ingrid Porritt
Secretary: Tom Shepherd
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Pioneer Program.. Barb Martin
Programs & Publicity . Ingrid Porritt
Tom Shepherd
Gail Taggart



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 or send your information to Kathy DeCormier at middlaker@frontier.com — In the subject area put "History Book Volume 2".

TWIG TALK

A monthly publication of:
Muskegon County Genealogical Society
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genealogymuskegon.org

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