

T W I G T A L K

Newsletter



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President's Message

By Dawn Westcomb Kelley -

Hurray! Hurray! Hurray!

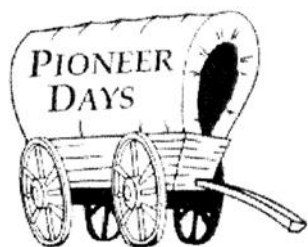


We are returning following two and half years of forced abstinence to have in-person Membership meetings. Mark your calendar for Saturday, September 17th at 10:30 am (doors open at 10:00 am). We will be meeting at the Hackley Public Library in the basement meeting room.

We look forward to meeting with everyone and renewing our commitments to learn more about genealogy and share ways we have used resources and technology.

We have experienced many challenges in the last few years, and with these challenges has come new solutions. We especially want to thank those who have continued to keep doing research, indexing records, making maps, assisting at the county clerk's office, updating our Society and taking photos. We are thankful for everyone's past involvement and accomplishments. Read more from our new membership chair, Karen Frazier who has a new membership section for Twig Talk on page 3 of this issue.

Karen and I have been updating all the forms that we use for the Society. Which has been a long process. The genealogy blue packet that we used for our genealogy workshops has been updated and will be used for two purposes now. We are just about done.



Pioneer Certificate Program – Chair, Barb Martin

If you wish to work on your Muskegon County Pioneer Certificate the application and instructions can be sent to you by postal mail or email (as a pdf file). The Pioneer Certificate is provided for families who can show residency in Muskegon County between 1859 and 1894. Barb will meet with you at

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the Torrent House – Local History & Genealogy Department to help you along. You can let us know of your interest by an email to: 1972mcgs@gmail.com

I hope to see you all soon! Have a safe summer and stay healthy!

Genealogy Quote

“I wish I had realized that family history is a perishable commodity. It disappears with time, as memories fade, and as loved ones pass on. I wish I had known that the most important aspect of family history is preserving a record of the present for the future.” — Guy Black

TIP - From Ancestry

Cross-reference city directories with the census. Be sure to check directories for the year before, the year of and the year after the census to see if your ancestors moved during this time. Keep in mind, that information you find in any directory compiled in the year before the census may show information not in the census.. SAMPLE: 1909—before the 1910 census came calling.



Independence Day or commonly known as the Fourth of July in the US, is a day when Americans all around the world commemorate the formation of the United States of America. It commemorates the day in 1776 when 13 colonies adopted a Declaration of Independence drafted by Thomas Jefferson, preceding the United States' secession from the British Empire.

HPL Local History & Genealogy Department Notes

Torrent House Hours:

The Torrent House will be **open** Saturday, July 2nd. We will be closed Sunday the 3rd, and Monday the 4th, then reopen Tuesday the 5th at 10:00 am.

Latest New Book on the Shelf:

Generously donated by the National Society Colonial Dames XVII Century—Captain Thomas Taber Chapter, Michigan, in memory and honor of charter member Marilyn Joan Dietz 1933-2022:

The Settlers of the Beekman Patent: Dutchess County, New York – Taber to Tupper, by Frank J. Doherty, Orlando Florida. 2019c (A historical and genealogical study of all the 18th century settlers in the patent).

Digital Access:

If you need a 1939 vital statistic record from the Muskegon Chronicle, just email, call, or stop in to ask the information specialist to look up the name of your ancestor. We have access to the digital form of Matt Burns' newest *Index of Vital Statistics from the Muskegon Chronicle* book for 1939 on our staff computers. In time, we will let you know when we have the hard bound book on our shelf for patron use.

Email: localhistory@hackleylibrary.org

Phone: 231.722.8016

Address: 315 W. Webster Avenue, Muskegon, MI 49440

Submitted by Diana J. Franckowiak, Information Specialist

Hackley Public Library—Torrent House—Local History & Genealogy Department.

June 17, 2022



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA-NC](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

Below are the new members so far for 2022:

Joined in February:

Martha Doyle, from Silver Springs, Maryland
Michelle Lewis, from Muskegon, MI –
Surnames: Jarvis (Gervais), Esh, McLaurin, Hichue, Green, and Fisher
Dennis Lloyd, from Flushing, Michigan

Joined in April:

Paul Hulka, from Muskegon, Michigan – Surnames: Hulka and Sauders
Sara Rose, from Muskegon, Michigan – Surnames: Dondono and Morris

Joined in May:

Susan Ball, from Fort Worth, Texas – Surname: Cowan

Joined in June:

V. Janet Southerland, from Twin Lake, MI

Thank you all for joining our Society! We encourage all members to submit their surnames that touched Muskegon County. Please reach out to MCGS with any questions you may have.

Karen Frazier, Membership Chair

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS BEGIN!

*Held every month except
July and December.*



- NEW Location: Hackley Public Library, Lower Level (Handicapped Accessible with ramp & elevator). Use the front door only.
- NEW Day: 3rd Saturday of month, (subject to change due to HPL events)
- NEW Time: 10:30am to 12:30pm. Doors open at 10:00am

Dates Confirmed:

Saturday, September 17, 2022 – Restart, Reset, Go!

Saturday, October 22, 2022 – Family History Month (3rd Saturday date moved due to HPL event)

Saturday, November 19, 2022 - Annual Meeting, Election of officers

Members, guests, and public are welcome. All meetings are FREE. Come and mingle with your Society friends and family!

Brown Family History Seminar

The most important tree? Your family tree!

Whether you're wondering how to get started researching your family history or you're already deep into genealogy, you can gain new skills and understanding at the **Barbara J. Brown Family History Seminar, July 8-9.**

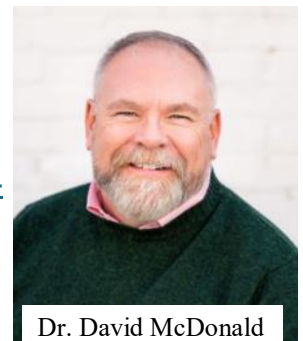


Attend online or in person at the Archives of Michigan, part of the DNR's Michigan History Center in Lansing. Designed to promote family history awareness and teach genealogy research skills, the annual event is hosted by the Archives in partnership with the Michigan Genealogical Council and with the generous support of the Abrams Foundation. The two-day seminar is \$45.

This year, the Barbara J. Brown Family History Seminar welcomes Dr. David McDonald, CG, as the featured speaker. A professional genealogist with more than 45 years of research experience, McDonald has shared his expertise at state and regional conferences across the United States and in the United Kingdom. He will offer three sessions during the seminar, including strategies for locating records from closed or extinct congregations and communities of faith.

As always, the event brings together a slate of state and local experts who share their knowledge in sessions that look at a variety of genealogy topics and resources, ranging from the 1950 U.S. Census to coroners' records – plus, there is a behind-the-scenes tour of the Archives of Michigan. The deadline to register is July 6. [Check out the complete schedule and registration information and book your spot today](#) (ctrl—click to follow the link).

Questions? Contact [Kris Rzepczynski](#), senior archivist/head of reference, at 517-335-2595.



Dr. David McDonald



Members of the Muskegon County Genealogical Society are available on Wednesday afternoons from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. In the County Clerk's Office To assist in Genealogy Record Searches. No appointment is Necessary. **JUST SIGN IN** and **SHOW YOUR PICTURE ID.**



THE PIRATE'S DAUGHTER By Frances Harrington

She was reported to have been born on the Mediterranean Sea, or was it the Atlantic Ocean, in 1825 or was it 1832? The product of a whirlwind romance and marriage between a young European aristocrat and a pirate of the open seas, or was he a Spanish officer *during* the time of the pirates? Anyway, whatever he was, they say the man's surname was Cladyne.



Lou's picture is from the Grand Rapids Press (1902) courtesy of the Grand Rapids Library.

It was reported, that when the girl got old enough, her parents changed her name, and sent her to be educated in a French convent. After the death of her father in the 1830s, because they were very rich, her mother took the family fortune of \$175,000 (equivalent to about \$5.5 million today) and her children, and left for America where she had friends. They say she bought a large plantation near St. Louis, Missouri, and owned a few slaves, or was it 101 slaves? Anyway, sometime later, but before the Civil War, her mother joined the abolitionist movement. It was also reported, that because of her new beliefs, her mother gave each of her slaves two sets of clothes, \$5 (about \$170.00 today), and gave them their freedom. Two of the slaves, who were old family servants, were given enough money to last a year and passage back to Liberia.

It was also reported, that the young girl got an excellent education in a convent school in America. Besides English, she learned to speak four languages fluently, or was it six languages she learned to speak? She was said to be beautiful, stylish, and the "belle of the ball" in the wealthy social circles of St. Louis. As time went on, she became bored with her life there and left to see other parts of the country. She finally made it to Washington D. C. where she became a government interpreter, or was it a cook in the White House, or was it a stenographer in the Treasury Department? After the Civil War broke out, she reportedly became a nurse on the front lines, or was it a spy for the Union Army? Either way they say, later in life, she received a quarterly pension from the government.

After the war, according to some reports, she was a ballerina, or was it a singer, at the famous Crosby's Opera House in Chicago? And, did she really take part in the musical "Black Crook" (which is said to be the first musical in the U. S.) and then travel to South America with this entertainment troupe?

Some reports say, that at some point, she married John J. Whitcomb or was his name William "Billy" Whitcomb? They were married in Kalamazoo, or was it somewhere down south? After he deserted Lou and their young daughter, she moved around a lot, and started getting into trouble. She ended up moving by herself to Grand Rapids, Michigan, leaving her daughter with friends. It was reported, that she always sent money for the daughter's upkeep until she was grown. Another report said she and her husband moved to Muskegon and lived here for some years, but people in Muskegon who knew her, say she came here alone to make a "fresh start".

So, have all these different "reports" confused you yet? While researching this woman, it sure confused me. Every report about her earlier life was a little different from the one before. In one article, they reported, that she didn't like talking about her past, so, where did these reporters get all this information about her life - a pirate's daughter, a child of aristocracy, Spanish, German, a ballerina, a singer, a cook, an interpreter, fluent in many languages, a stenographer, a nurse, a spy, etc. etc. She also, reportedly, gained and lost several fortunes in her lifetime. If that was true, it was obviously before she came to Muskegon. In all the accounts of her early days, I could not find *one time*

when she was actually being interviewed in person.

I tried to find any record of this woman before she came to Muskegon, but I couldn't find anything! Granted, my resources are limited, but you would have thought I'd find something, somewhere. So, who was this pirate's daughter? (I think most of the reporters went with the "pirate's daughter" story because it sounded more exciting than the "officer's daughter".)

What I did find out, (mostly from notices in the Chronicle and not the romanticized stories) was that she was a very sad and troubled woman. Yes, she was well-known throughout Muskegon, for many years, but not for the reasons you think she was. You see, this woman had a terrible addiction – to alcohol. Her name, or should I say the names she used were, Agnes Whitcomb, AKA Lou Whitcomb, AKA "Spanish Lou". Her nick-name, Spanish Lou, was what most people called her, or knew her by. That was the name that was used in almost every article or mention of her I found, and there were plenty! How did she get the name "Spanish Lou"? Apparently, when sober, she acted like a very refined woman, and obviously, very well educated. But, when she drank, which was quite often, if she felt you disrespected her in anyway, she not only cussed you out in English, but in Spanish too, showing her feisty Spanish side, hence, "Spanish Lou". One reporter put it this way, "If jeered at or addressed slightly, she would turn loose vials of wrath, and had a vocabulary of epithets and profanity which would have made a Missouri mule driver green with envy".

One article in the Chronicle, written just after her death, says that she came to Muskegon in 1880, from Kalamazoo, Michigan, when she was about 50 years old. She was employed by Mrs. Mary Scoular, proprietor of the Muskegon House, (later, known as the Foalk Hotel) at 25 E. Clay Avenue, as a cook. There was evidence that she came to Muskegon with the intention of starting a new life, quitting the bad habits that had already taken their toll on her. She managed to stay sober for about three months after she got here, but then she started drinking again, and she was fired from her job. I think, Muskegon in the 1880s, with its abundance of saloons, was a bad place for anyone with a drinking problem, who was trying to stay sober. After that, she reportedly worked as a cook for a number of the other boarding houses in town but she never stayed gainfully employed for long because of her drinking. There were many boarding houses/hotels, or resorts/brothels in Muskegon for all those mill workers to stay and/or be entertained. Unfortunately, there were also plenty of saloons where they could spend all that hard earned money. The places Lou would have worked were definitely not your "high class" establishments. One article put it this way, she was "always sinking lower in her associations because of her intemperate habits", and, "her refuge was the disorderly resorts of the city", in other words, houses of prostitution.

I found many mentions of her going to jail in Muskegon, or to the House of Corrections in Detroit, for being: drunk, a "common tippler", disorderly, intoxicated, drunk & disorderly, committing petty larceny, and prostitution. Sometimes, she would walk to the jail after a drunken incident because she knew she would be arrested anyway. There were other times where she simply walked up to an officer and ask to be taken to jail. This might have been for her own protection, because I also saw reports of her being physically assaulted or maybe, she just needed a warm bed. Whatever the reason, sometimes, they would let her stay over-night, releasing her in the morning, often without making a formal report. Other times, they would find her passed out on the street or too intoxicated to walk and arrest her on the spot.

Apparently, she could be quite the character. There were reports that said, after receiving her sentences, she was always polite and thanked the Judges. Once, after getting out of jail, she even sent flowers to the judge who sentenced her. Apparently, she wasn't as polite to all the officers, because one time, she went to jail for 90 days for verbally assaulting the Assistant Police Chief. Another time, she was in jail in Muskegon and transported to Grand Rapids to be a witness in a separate trial. Somehow, during the lunch break, (without the officer guarding her noticing) she

managed to get drunk. She ended up spending that night in jail in Grand Rapids instead of being transported back to Muskegon. On one occasion, the judge told her, he wouldn't send her to jail *if* she left town. She made it as far as Grand Rapids, but decided to come back, and eventually, was arrested again. It would almost be comical, if it weren't so tragic, that this otherwise, kind and intelligent woman's life, was ruined because of her addiction.

To Be Continued

- More about Spanish Lou next month with concluding information that appeared in the Muskegon Chronicle and other press -

Sources: News articles from Genealogybank.com, Ancestry.com, Muskegon Cemetery Dept., Lou's picture is from the Grand Rapids Press (1902) courtesy of the Grand Rapids Library.

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Next Up:

Wednesday, July 20

6:00 PM - Pacific, 7:00 PM - Mountain, 8:00 PM - Central, 9:00 PM - Eastern

Deeds Not Words: Records of the Merchant Marines

by Michael Strauss, AG®



The Merchant Marines have played a pivotal role in maritime history. Without their efforts and sacrifice the wars of the twentieth century could have turned out very different. A series of acts passed by Congress in 1916, 1920, and 1936 would officially organize the Merchant Marines into a well-trained and disciplined organization set about to answer the call to action during World War II.

Michael L. Strauss, AG®, is a nationally recognized genealogical speaker. He has a BA in History and is a United States Coast Guard veteran. He is also a qualified expert witness in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Additionally, he is a faculty member at SLIG, GRIP, and IGHR where he coordinates the military courses.

IMPORTANT MESSAGE

MCGS MEETINGS

NEW PLACE

Hackley Public Library
316 W. Webster Ave.
Muskegon, MI 49440



Saturdays at 10:30am

September 17

October 22

November 19



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

Call for your individual appointment!

231 722-8016

or email us at

1972mcgs@gmail.com

LOCAL HISTORY & GENEALOGY DEPARTMENT

Call 231-722-8016
Sunday and Monday — Closed
Tuesday through Saturday
10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

More on their website
hackleylibrary.org/local-history-genealogy/research-sources-at-the-torrent-house



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

TWIG TALK

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c/o Hackley Public Library
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