

# MUSKEGON COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Founded 1972

Vol. 22 No. 10

October 2022

## T W I G T A L K

### Newsletter



Celebrating 50 years in 2022

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### President's Message

By Dawn Westcomb Kelley

Our first membership meeting for this year was a big hit. It was especially gratifying because we had not met in more than two and half years. I was glad to see many energized members and guests. These morning meetings are the best time of the day for me. This arrangement gives you time to stop by Torrent House after the meetings to do some research.

We heard an update from Bill Hansen about the GIS cemetery maps. We also heard from Barb Martin with the Pioneer Program, and Kathy DeCormier about History Book Volume 2, "Footprints in History". Jude Ruch spoke about her patriot ancestors and I found out that Jim Clark's half-brother last name is Palametier and we are related through my Covey and Wilson families from Lake County, Michigan. Surprise! Surprise!

Remember to bring something for "Show and Tell" at the October general meeting on the 22nd. Bring whatever you want to share – a research story, a special item you discovered, or your published family tree book. We are so excited to see all of you, so pass the word to your genealogy family and friends. We will have more information on the upcoming year 2023.

Jennifer Lamkin, is the Chairperson for the Nominating Committee. Elections are coming up in November at the Annual meeting,. We have openings for all volunteer positions, President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Jennifer will be calling on you soon.

We still need your input! What would you like your Society to provide? What topics are you interested in for meeting programs? What skills would you like to learn, or improve? Please contact any Board member at [1972mcgs@gmail.com](mailto:1972mcgs@gmail.com) with your ideas.

### **OCTOBER is FAMILY HISTORY MONTH**

Here are a few things to do for family history month ...

1. Dedicate a full day to in-person genealogy research, for all the internet's charms it doesn't have everything you need to find your family tree



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2. Discover the best genealogy websites for beginners
3. Have children interview a relative.
4. Organize your family photos.
5. Complete a genealogy task on your lunch hour.

Ctrl/click this link for more information. [How to Celebrate Family History Month in October \(familytreemagazine.com\)](https://familytreemagazine.com)

### **New Books at the Local History and Genealogy Dept.**

**The Adoptee's Guide to DNA Testing: How to Use Genetic Genealogy to Discover Your Long Lost Family**, by Tamar Weinberg

**Organize Your Genealogy: Strategies and Solutions for Every Researcher**, by Drew Smith

**Historic Schools of Muskegon County**, by Dana Johnson (Gift from MCGS)

### **CITY OF THE DEAD / MUSKEGON EVERGREEN**

Tour of Evergreen Cemetery date Friday is October 8 from 5pm to 8pm and Saturday, October 9, from 2pm to 4pm. It will be \$5 at the gate. Check out their Facebook at [City of the Dead - Muskegon | Facebook](#)

### **Quotation of the Month**

"If you don't recount your family, it will be lost. Honor your own stories and tell them too. The tales may not seem very important, but they are what binds families and makes each of us who we are."  
By Madeleine L'Engle

### **TIP – Family Tree**

Charting what you know about a problem ancestor through the years, by making a chronology, can help solve your research puzzle. Start with the earliest date you have for a person and then list everything you know about him or her and the immediate family. Include your speculations, but make these clear by highlighting them or adding a question mark.

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**Southern California Genealogical Society Webinar Series** is there for you no matter where you live. Join our webcasts with knowledgeable genealogists to help grow what you know. We offer a low-cost broadcast that is open to the public Price: \$5.50.

Register at [www.scgsgenealogy.com](http://www.scgsgenealogy.com)

- **You MUST Register to participate.**
- 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.

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Next Up:

Saturday, October 11:00 PM - Eastern

400,000 German POWs in the U.S.: How Did They Affect Your Community and Family

by Mary Risseeuw



How did Germans POWs end up in farm fields, factories and at someone's dinner table? There were over 500 camps established throughout the U.S. This had a huge affect on the communities where these camps were located. The stories of the interactions between prisoners and civilians and their impact were not talked about for decades and are still being uncovered.

Mary K. Risseeuw is a genealogist, historian, writer and lecturer with an emphasis on 19th and 20th Century Dutch emigration and Wisconsin history. She has been a researcher for over 30 years. She serves on the Board of the Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies. She organized the 2008 Dutch in Wisconsin Conference which was the first conference about Dutch immigration to Wisconsin.

Wednesday, October 19 9:00 PM - Eastern

Civil Law Notarial Records

by Forrest Hansen, JD



Civil law notarial records are among the most valuable genealogical resources available for researchers in civil law jurisdictions. This lecture offers insights into notarial records and will address: (1) origins of civil law jurisdictions; (2) civil law notaries; (3) notary records; and (4) techniques for locating notarial records.

Forrest Hansen, JD, is a genealogist with expertise in civil law, French genealogy, and the U.S. Constitution. He teaches at the Université of Paris and American University, is fluent in French, and regularly lectures on French genealogy and genealogical legal topics.



Welcome to our new members who joined in August/September! Our Society currently has 64 members from Michigan, Texas, Washington, Maryland, California, Massachusetts, and Virginia.

New Member: Patti Mulder, from Muskegon

Prior members who have returned: Kathy Agard, from Muskegon – researching surnames: Agard, Newquist, Hewitt, Rockel, Ross, Weber, Bohland, and Stone.

Jennifer Lamkin, from Muskegon.

Thanks to all members, new and old, for your continued support of 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 Committee Chair

## UPCOMING GENEALOGY EVENTS

Events are from Michigan Genealogical Societies, or about Michigan records.  
Unless noted ALL ARE FREE and most require pre-registration.

### October 1:

Fred Hart Williams Genealogical Society of Detroit: African American Genealogy Case Studies - *Combining Traditional Genealogy With DNA*. Virtual at 10:30am. Researching the enslaved is beyond possible, but it's not one size fits all. In this session, learn about a myriad of research strategies and documents outside of the slave schedules that confirm slaveholders and name their formerly enslaved.

Western Michigan Genealogical Society: 1:30pm at Grand Rapids Public Library. *Exploring the Features of FamilySearch.org*. Presenter: Katherine R. Willson - FamilySearch.org is the largest free genealogical website in the world. This presentation demonstrates how to effectively search for your ancestor in digitized records, books, and online family trees, as well as how use the catalog, the Learning Center, and wikis to better understand what's available in your ancestral area.

### October 6:

Library of Michigan in Lansing: *MyHeritage Library Edition*. Virtual at 6:30pm. MyHeritage Library Edition is a family history database available through the Michigan eLibrary with access to a wide range of historical documents, images, and public records. Discover the fundamentals for navigating MyHeritage and learn key strategies for finding specific records within its collections.

### October 8:

French/Canadian Heritage Society of Michigan: *Bring out your Dead, Plagues, Epidemics and Pandemics*. Virtual at 11:00am. The program discusses epidemics from the 1200's to present and where to find unusual data records about the epidemics and records of people that succumbed to them.

### October 9:

Jewish Genealogical Society of Michigan: *Beth Olem Cemetery* Open October 9, 2022. Beth Olem Cemetery is scheduled to be open on Sunday, October 9th, from 10AM to 1PM. **This year the opening is after Yom Kippur.** Beth Olem is the oldest Jewish cemetery in Michigan, with graves dating from the 1880s through World War I. It is located on the grounds of the GM Poletown plant in Hamtramck, Michigan, between Smith and Clay Streets. Visitors are allowed only two times per year, around Rosh Hashanah and Passover.

### October 12 thru 15:

National Afro-American Historical & Genealogical Society: Annual Conference over 4 days. Virtual. The AAHGS Annual Conference is the largest international African American conference that promotes African-ancestored family history, genealogy, and cultural diversity by bringing together subject matter experts who promote scholarly research, provide resources for historical and genealogical studies, create a network of persons with similar interests, and assist members in documenting their histories. Typical attendees are historians, genealogists, researchers, scholars, educators, preservationists, media, and beginners.

### October 14:

MCGS Board of Directors Meeting: 10:30am at Hackley Public Library – Torrent House

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**October 15:**

Western Michigan Genealogical Society: Annual Seminar “Got Ancestor’s?!” All day on-site at Park Congregational Church. Speaker: **David E. Rencher, AG<sup>®</sup>, CG<sup>®</sup>, FUGA, FIGRS** – Chief Genealogist with FamilySearch and former Director of the amazing Family History Library in Salt Lake City. COST FOR REGISTRATION, MUST PRE-REGISTER.

Polish Genealogical Society of Detroit: 44th Annual Seminar Includes four live presentations with Q&A, a syllabus, and door prizes. Virtual at 9:00am to 4:00pm: “*Love, Loss, and Exile: The Moments that Define Us*” presented by Anna Kucewicz, Sheffield, England. “**Searching for Your Elusive Prussian Ancestors: A Case Study**” presented by Stephen Wendt, Ohio, USA. “*Genealogy in Ukraine: Discover Online Resources*” presented by Michelle Chubenko, New Jersey, USA. “*Eastern European Ancestry in Bukowina and Galicia*” presented by Michelle Chubenko, New Jersey, USA

**October 22:**

MCGS General Membership Meeting: 10:30am at Hackley Public Library. Family History Month. No registration required.

Hackley Public Library: 10:30 am at HPL. *Intro to Emailing*. Learn the basics of emailing during an introductory computer class with De’Ondra Pentecost.

**November 3:**

Library of Michigan: session at 3:00pm and 4:00pm. Michigan Historians. Historians play a crucial role in both documenting and presenting the events of our past. Come learn about the many historians in Michigan and their works in chronicling the history of the Great Lakes State. Location: Library of Michigan

**November 5:**

West Michigan Genealogy Society: 1:30pm at Grand Rapids Public Library. See website for topic. No registration required.

**November 11:**

MCGS Board of Directors Meeting: 10:30am at Hackley Public Library – Torrent House

**November 12:**

Michigan Genealogical Society: *44<sup>th</sup> Annual Seminar* – Virtual. COST is \$25. Topics include Planning Research; Fundamentals of Transcribing & Abstracting; Meeting Standards for Narrative Genealogies, Lineages, and Pedigrees; An NGSQ Case Study: DNA Corroborates Oral Tradition.

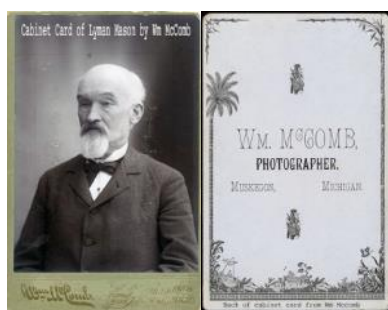
French/Canadian Heritage Society of Michigan: 11:00 a.m. EST Virtual– Speaker: Guillaume Teasdale, Ph.D. “*Mobility and Sedentary Life in the Cross-Border Community of the Detroit River Region, 1791-1812*”

**November 14:**

Michigan Germanic Genealogy Society: 7:30pm to 8:30pm. – Virtual. Did you know that Michigan was the first state to employ Immigration agents? Once Michigan became a state it was growing as a state, but it wasn’t growing with foreigners. Join MIGGS to explore the conditions which enticed Germans to migrate to Michigan; learn how the recruitment process worked, the laws that encouraged immigration, and resources available for genealogists.

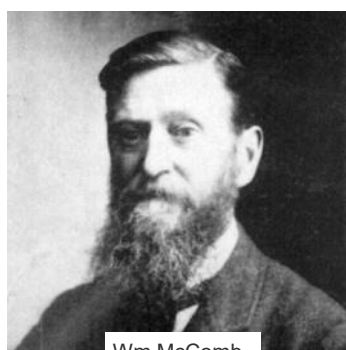
William McComb  
Pioneer Photographer of Muskegon  
By Frances Harrington

When you go to the Local History & Genealogy Department of Hackley Public Library (Torrent House) you need to check out the approximately 4' by 6' composite picture of the "Old Settlers & Representative Men of Muskegon, Mich. 1885." There are 380 men in that composite. There is a list next to the photo, that gives the names of each person (that they were able to identify). Each one of those men had their picture taken, at some point since 1878, by William McComb. William then, painstakingly, cut out each photo and arranged them into the composite. So, to arrange 380 cutouts into a 4' by 6' composite and have each man recognizable and of similar size, was a pretty amazing work of art. Remember, this was 1886 – no Photoshop or digital copies to manipulate back then, it was all done by hand. An article in The Philadelphia Photographer magazine from 1886 called it "His Crowning Work". He had the photo copyrighted and displaced in a local store window. He also sold smaller mounted copies of this group that was 18" by 22" in size. The original ended up in a collection owned by former Mayor, R. Andrew Fleming. After his death, his heirs donated the composite to Hackley Library in 1919.



front & back of typical cabinet card

William McComb was one of Muskegon's pioneer photographers. He grew up on Prince Edward Island in Canada. He became interested in photography while a teenager. In 1859, he started volunteering as an assistant to a visiting photographer. He was able to learn all about photography and chose this as his career. He later operated a gallery in Ottawa, then moved to Montreal and worked for Notman's gallery. He then moved back to Ottawa and worked for a photographer named Tobley. After coming to the United States to buy his own photographic gallery, he met J.D. Westervelt in Chicago, a photographer from Muskegon, and the two of them formed a short partnership that only lasted one year. In 1879, William opened his own studio in Muskegon, above the Jiroch Cigar Store. He became one of Muskegon's most popular photographers having reportedly photographed more people in Muskegon than any other photographer.



Wm McComb

William was born on August 28, 1844 to James and Ann (Thompson) McComb, both of Irish descent. He married Ellen Walker, daughter of John and Margaret (Smith) Walker, in 1864, in Canada. Both Ellen's parents were of Scottish descent. William and Ellen had no children of their own but adopted a daughter named Evelyn who was born in 1895. William had a sister named Margaret, and two brothers, James and George. His brother, George, married Agnes Walker, sister of William's wife, Ellen. George was in charge of the printing department of William's gallery.

William was also interested in weather forecasting. In 1893, along with his photography business, he joined the US Weather Bureau. His job was referred to as a "Displayman". He would telegraph the Bureau in Chicago of the current condition here. In return, they could inform him of the approaching conditions he could expect. He would raise flags to notify mariners of what the weather forecast was. In 1900, Muskegon received a 75-foot tower and weather vane, with a 4-foot-long arrow and electric signal lights, that was to be operated by the Displayman instead of the old flag system. It was located just west of the Train Station. When he resigned in 1905, he received a letter from Professor H. J. Cox of the Bureau stating, "Your work has always been satisfactory and in fact, I had looked upon it as a model for other Displaymen to follow".

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A. GUSTIN\* E. W. MERRILL\* Wm. MCKILLIP\* LUTHER WHITNEY\* G. J. TILLOTSON\* HIRAM PARKER\* S. H. STEVENS\*  
Geo. B. WOODBURY\* J. D. DAVIS\* CHARLES T. HILLS\*  
**GROUP OF MUSKEGON'S GRAND OLD MEN.**  
\*Now Deceased.  
MUSKEGON DAILY CHRONICLE, GREENSBORO, 1900.

On June 27, 1900, William gathered ten citizens together for a group photo. The men ranged in age from 69 to 88 and had come to Muskegon between the years 1840 to 1868 - the last of Muskegon's living pioneers. The photo is referred to as the "Group of Muskegon's Grand Ole Men". They were: George B. Woodbury (1840), E. W. Merrill (1844), Charles T. Hills (1852), Joseph D. Davis (1852), S. H. Stevens (1856), Luther Whitney (1864), George J. Tillotson (1865), Hiram Parker (1866), William McKillip (1867), and A. Gustin (1868).

In 1895, a fire destroyed almost all his photographic supplies and furnishings, and also 40,000 of his negatives

were cracked or ruined. The negatives were a photographers most valued possessions and William had the biggest collection in town. The largest portion of his income came from re-orders off those negatives. He did have insurance but it didn't cover the income he would have generated from those negatives. Fortunately, in another room, he had another large collection of negatives of Muskegon pioneers dating back to 1879, that were not destroyed. The next year, he once again opened a gallery but this time, in the Lyman block. His new gallery was said to be the most attractive and complete in all the state, with the most modern appliances available.



In 1905, William decided to sell his gallery in Muskegon and open a new one in Cadillac, Michigan. In 1909, in an adjoining dentist's office, a fire broke out. William's new gallery was almost completely ruined by smoke and water damage.

**Friends of HACKLEY Public Library 2022 Used Book Sale**

Pre-sale and Networking for Friends Members:  
Thursday, October 13  
5 - 7 PM  
(Not a member? Join at the door!)

Public Sale:  
Friday, October 14  
Saturday, October 15  
10 - 5 PM

Sunday "Bag" Sale:  
Sunday, October 16  
12 - 3 PM  
(Fill a bag for \$3 - we will provide bags!).

All proceeds help to fund projects that benefit Hackley Public Library!

Hackley Public Library  
316 W. Webster Ave.  
Muskegon, MI 49440  
LOWER LEVEL  
**fohpl.org**

William was very active in the Masonic Organization. He became an apprentice in the Catarqui Lodge 92 of the Free & Accepted Masons at Kingston, Ontario on March 10, 1869, taking the Fellowcraft degree on April 21<sup>st</sup>, and made master Mason on June 2<sup>nd</sup>. He became a member of the Muskegon Lodge 140 in 1880 and was the recorder of Muskegon Commandery No. 22, Knights Templar for 22 years. He also received many titles and degrees over the years with various Mason organizations.

By 1912, William and Ellen are living at the Masonic Pathways, a Masonic operated home for the purpose of providing a home for the aged Masons, Masons' widows, and orphans in Alma, Michigan. William died there in 1921. Ellen died in 1933. They are buried at Oakwood Cemetery.

You can see some of William McCombs work by going to the Lakeshore Museum's website at: <http://5091.sydneyplus.com/final/Portal/Default.aspx?lang=en-US> and typing McComb in the search box

Sources: Hackley Public Library Local History & Genealogy Dept., Ancestry.com, findagrave.com, Genealogybank.com (Muskegon Chronicle), Philadelphia Photographer 1886 V 23 Pt 1, Cabinetcardgallery.com, Lakeshore Museum Center, HLP Quarterly Bulletin vol 13-25, 1919.

**IMPORTANT MESSAGE**

**MCGS MEETINGS**

**NEW PLACE**

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



**Saturdays at 10:30am**

**October 22  
November 19**



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

Call for your Individual appointment today at:

231 722-8016  
or email us at

[1972mcgs@gmail.com](mailto: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](http://hackleylibrary.org/local-history-genealogy/research-sources-at-the-torrent-house)



**2022 OFFICERS & COMMITTEES**

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Tom Shepherd  
Research.....Karen Fraizer  
Fran Harrington

**UPDATE for HISTORY BOOK VOLUME 2**

History Book Volume 2 name is "Footprints in History"

**Last date for submissions: February 15, 2023**

**Do not wait to put your family history in Volume 2**

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

**TWIG TALK**

*A monthly publication of:*  
**Muskegon County Genealogical Society** c/o Hackley Public Library—  
Torrent House Local History & Genealogy Department 315 W. Webster Avenue  
Muskegon, MI 49440-1208

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