

T W I G T A L K



Newsletter

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FEBRUARY 18 MEETING PROGRAM "THE MAKING of HACKLEY PARK" Guest Speaker: Ronald Pesch



Ronald is a state historian and lifetime Muskegon resident. He enjoys many activities, including being the historian for the Muskegon High School Athletics Association; co-producer and researcher for the film documentary 'Buster Keaton Home'; and working as a freelance speaker, author and historian. He has spent over 30 years researching, writing, and teaching Michigan history.

"Many villages of a few thousand inhabitants have costly shafts, erected in the village square to the memory of their dead soldiers. Muskegon should have, in some central location, a beautiful and enduring monument which will stand forever as a memorial of our dead, and an encouragement to the living." – Muskegon Chronicle, 1886. Hackley Park is Muskegon's "Town Square" which suggests many memories for Muskegon area residents. For many, art fairs, Christmas displays, ethnic festivals and parties, and Memorial Day remembrances immediately come to mind. For us, the park has always been there. It's difficult to imagine that before it became our city's home to Civil War monuments, the block was filled with stately homes.

MARCH 18 MEETING PROGRAM "THE REVIEW OF PROBATE COURT RECORDS" Guest Speaker: Judge Kathy Hoogstra



Judge Kathy Hoogstra currently presides over Muskegon County Family Division court cases. She served as the probate court administrator for Muskegon County from 2007 until her appointment to the 14th Circuit Court in 2013. She has also served as a judicial law clerk for the 14th Circuit Court, as a public defender and as a family court referee for Muskegon County. She received her undergraduate degree from Calvin College and her J.D. degree from the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago-Kent College of Law.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!
April 15—Organize Your Paper Genealogy Files
May 20—Organize Your Digital Genealogy Files



President's Message

By Karen (Page) Frazier

Hello again! My husband and I are usually looking for a warmer place to be this time of year. Although the sunless days are frustrating, the no-snow is great. Our lawn is actually green! Making me wish for spring...

Your MCGS Board met on January 13. In a board meeting the agenda includes a report from the Secretary and Treasurer, and updates from all committee chairs. Most recently, some major items discussed include the revision of our Policies and Procedures (basically our "job descriptions"), scheduling of speakers and presentations, research requests, and any projects. For our members that are not local, we are working on better digital technology, including Zoom sessions, and a long term goal of an enhanced Website.

All members may submit a topic or question to the Board, for review and consideration. For example, what topic would you like to see presented at your general membership meetings? Do you want genealogy classes before or after the meeting? Do you have Ideas for your newsletter, "Twig Talk"? Feel free to communicate with any board member or email us at 1972mcgs@gmail.com.

We hope the value of your membership will be enhanced by our efforts and results.

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

All membership meetings are held in the Lower Level of Hackley Public Library, 316 W. Webster Ave, Muskegon, MI. And will start at 10:30 AM. For your safety please use the front door only! The steps are free of snow, ice, and also have a handicap ramp. Use the stairs or elevator to the Lower Level, Room #2.

Quotation from The Genealogy Guide

"We all grow up with the weight of history on us. Our ancestors dwell in the attics of our brains as they do in the spiraling chains of knowledge hidden in every cell of our bodies". — *Shirley Abbott*

TIP – Family Tree #7

To avoid the pitfall of merging two or more same-named people into one, assume that at least two people of the same name lived in a given town. Land and tax records are important documents for sorting out people of the same name: No two people owned the same property, nor would they be taxed on the same possessions.

The Western Michigan Genealogical Society is accepting entries for the WMGS 2023 Writing Contest until March 31, 2023. Topic: My Favorite Ancestor. 1,500 to 3,000 words (excluding endnotes/source list). See page 3.

NEW LOCAL HISTORY & GENEALOGY BOOKS AT HACKLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY:

- Guardians of Michigan Architectural Sculpture of the Pleasant Peninsulas, by Jeff Morrison
- Revolutionary War Veterans Buried in Columbia County, New York v.1, compiled by Esther Griswold French.
- Early History of Berlin, Vermont 1763-1820, by Mary Greene Nye
- A Genealogical Register of the First Settlers of New England, By John Farmer.

2023 WMGS Writing Contest ~ My Favorite Ancestor ~

Some genealogists have tiny trees; others have thousands of relatives. No matter the size of your tree, at least one of those ancestors is likely to be your favorite. Maybe it's a relative who was an adventurous soul! It could be the very first immigrant in your family. Maybe it was a good cook, a business person, a pioneer, a war hero, an artist or a musician. It could be someone you knew or from centuries past. For the 2023 Writing Contest, climb your family trees and pick an ancestor, grandparent or earlier, who you like well enough to call your favorite ancestor.

How to enter the 2023 Writing Contest

Eligibility: All family historians and genealogists, except the Michigana Editor and judges, are invited to submit their favorite story for the contest. There is no entry fee and membership in WMGS is not required.

Length: Stories should be between 1,500 and 3,000 words in length. In order to encourage quality in research, please cite your sources by using endnotes. Attach copies of documentation, family group sheets, and pedigree charts when appropriate. Endnotes, documentation, photograph captions, and chart information will not be included in the word count.

Formats: Please submit stories as a Microsoft Word attachment. ****IMPORTANT:** Please send digitized photographs, charts, maps or graphics as separate files as 300 dpi tif or jpeg files.**

Identification: Include the story title, your name, mailing address, phone number and email address in the header of the first page and in the body of the email. This information will only be used to identify and notify the winners.

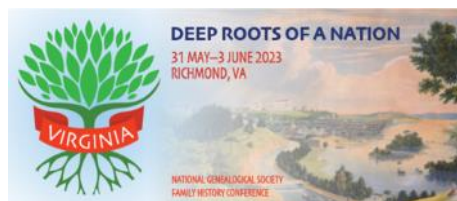
Entries will be accepted between January 1 through March 31, 2023. Email your submission to michigana@wmgs.org with "WMGS Writing Contest 2023" written in the Subject Line Notification: Contest winners will be announced before the end of 2023, on the WMGS Facebook Page, in Michigana and at a WMGS member-

ship meeting. Each entrant will also receive an email with the results of the WMGS Writing Contest at the time of the announcement. Winners do not have to be present to win. Prize winning articles will be published in future issues of Michigana.

By submitting articles, authors are giving WMGS one-time print and digital rights and are aware that submission will be edited by Michigana staff prior to printing; copyright is retained by the author. Entries may not have been previously published. All prizes may not be awarded. Prizes: 1st prize: \$100 and 1 annual WMGS membership (total value - \$120); 2nd prize: \$75 and 1 annual WMGS membership (total value - \$95); 3rd prize: \$50; 4th prize: \$25.

Looking for help, feedback, encouragement? The WMGS Writers Group is great for positive camaraderie along the writing journey. Check the WMGS website at www.wmgs.org for the latest info on whether the group is meeting online or in person.

Save the Dates
May 31 – June 3, 2023
NGS 2023 Family History Conference,
Richmond, VA



The National Genealogical Society 2023 Family History Conference gives geneolo-

gists and family historians of all levels the insights necessary to take their research and writing to new heights and make exciting new discoveries.

Join us at the Greater Richmond Convention Center or Online at Home! Registration is open at: <https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/>

AND

The Barbara J Brown Family History Seminar
State of Michigan Archives
Lansing, Michigan
June 23 & 24, 2023



We would like to welcome a new member, Steven Salter, from Whitehall, Michigan.

He runs a nonprofit organization called the "Killer Blues Headstone Project" to provide headstones for blues musicians lying in unmarked graves. If you would like to read more about the organization, go to [Killer Blues Headstone Project](#)

PETER LANSIFF

It Just Kept Getting Better and Better
By Frances Harrington



As a young man in Brauschan, Germany, the home of his birth, Peter Lansiff got a job driving a stage coach. He was 16 years old when he started. He saved what money he could and in 1847, by himself, at the age of 25, he made the 64-day journey on a sailing vessel that landed at New York. You see, back in Germany, Peter had met and fell in love with Fredericka "Rika" Bronholz and wanted a better life for the two of them and their baby daughter, Mary, than what he thought they would have in Germany.

After his arrival, he worked for four months in Boston, then went on to Chicago for two months, and finally, arrived in Muskegon on November 6, 1847. He had very little money at the time, so he helped load the vessel

"Muskegon" (the ship that would bring him here), to cover the cost of his passage from Chicago to Muskegon. When he got here, it was nothing but a wilderness. There were no streets, just swamps and timber. Back then, it was a village, and part of Ottawa County. There were only a few lumber mills when Peter got here. He first worked for E. Merrill in the woods at Sand Creek, and then at Ruddiman's lumber mill, unloading lumber rafts. In the early 1850s he sent for his wife, daughter, mother and sister. Upon their arrival, he met them in Chicago, where he and Rika were married by the Justice of the Peace. That same year, he bought property on Pine Street, and operated a boarding house where many of Muskegon's prominent pioneers, mill hands, and even mill owners, had stayed at one time or other. It would later become a saloon. At the same time, he started a logging business that he continued to do for many years, and was quite successful in that endeavor. He hauled logs for many of the lumberman. He also cut and sold slabs of wood to the Goodrich Steam Ship Lines. These slabs were loaded on boats, and shipped to Chicago in the summers. Throughout the winter he supplied slabs to the entire village of Muskegon. That is where he got the nick-name the "Slab King". He had three teams of horses. He used them to haul the wood to the boats, or to local residents and builders, to be used for schools, homes, or businesses.

Not long after starting his boarding house on Pine Street, there was a fire that burned it down. He rebuilt it soon after. In 1874, while living on Spring Street, his residence burned down during Muskegon's first big fire. By 1891, the Lansiff family had moved to the corner of Pine and Hartford. This didn't prove to be such a good move either, because that was the year of the "great Pine Street fire". The loss of their property was estimated at \$9,000 (around \$286,000 in 2022). He was only insured for two-thirds of it. The family then moved to Clay Avenue where they stayed until his death.

Fire wasn't the only tragedy that struck the Lansiff family. In 1854, Rika gave birth to their second child, a baby boy. They named him Charles. Charles attended Muskegon schools and went on to college in Grand Rapids. He returned to Muskegon and worked at the Mus-

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

kegon Bank. He started feeling ill on a Friday night in 1873, and by Monday, he was dead. He was 19 years old. In 1856, Rika gave birth to a daughter named Helena who lived less than one year. Their 4th child, Peter, was born in 1858 and died in 1862. Their last child, Fredericka, only lived 15 months. Mary, their firstborn, was the only child to live a full life. She married Zeph Jeffers, had two children, and died at the age of 72 in 1918.

Peter was the first man to be elected as Street Commissioner. He also served as City Treasurer in 1873 and paid his clerk out of his own pocket. He served two years as Alderman under Mayor O.P. Pillsbury and later, served as Alderman again, under Mayor Francis Jiroch. Under Mayor Jiroch, he served on many committees including those on the streets, water, and the poor. He liked to take visitors through Muskegon on carriage rides to show them the city...maybe, it reminded him of his stagecoach days. He also served as Chairman of the City Hall Building Committee that was organized when they decided to build the first City Hall. His name was engraved on the corner stone of that building. When he was first an Alderman, they used to get \$50 a year for their service but in 1881, Peter introduced a resolution to raise the pay to \$100 a year, and it passed.

In 1892, Peter and Rika took a return visit to Germany for 2 months to visit family and friends. He hadn't been back there in 45 years.

Peter was very active in the organization known as the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. He was a member of the Davis Encampment, No. 47 and served as its Treasurer for twenty years. He joined the Germania Lodge and was its Treasurer for several years also. He was part of the Muskegon Pioneer and Historical Society whose President was Henry H. Holt. In 1896, he was recognized as one of the oldest living Muskegon Pioneers.



Peter was 85 when he died in 1905. He had lived in Muskegon for 58 years, and had been married to Rika for 55 of those. She died a little over a year later in 1906. Peter and Rika are buried

in Evergreen Cemetery along with 4 of their 5 children. Their daughter, Mary, is buried in Oakwood Cemetery.

When asked why he continued to stay in Muskegon all those years, he replied, "because it just kept getting better and better".

Sources: Ancestry.com, findagrave.com, The Muskegon Chronicle (Genealogybank.com), History of Muskegon with Illustrations & Biographical Sketches (H.R. Page & Co.), Advantages & Surroundings of Muskegon 1892 (Muskegon Board of Trade).



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Acheologists in Norway have discovered the world's oldest dated runestone, featuring runic inscriptions from up to 2,000 years ago.

Researchers at the University of Oslo's Museum of Cultural History found the stone while investigating a burial ground in the municipality of Hole in eastern Norway in fall 2021, according to the museum. The stone has been named "Svingerudsteinen," or "the Svingerud Stone," after the site where it was found. Burnt bones and charcoal from the cremation pit where it was discovered revealed that the writing was carved into the reddish-brown sandstone boulder, measuring about a foot in height and width, between 1 and 250 AD.

Runes are the oldest known form of writing in Scandinavia, and the alphabet was widely used from the beginning of the Common Era (CE) and throughout the Viking Age until the late Middle Ages, according to the university.

Scandinavia has several thousand runestones from the Viking Age -- between 793 and 1066 AD -- but there is less evidence of runes from earlier times. Of the runestones found in Norway, only about 30 are believed to date from earlier than around 550 AD.

Svingerudsteinen is the only stone found by archeologists that dates to before 300 AD. It contains the first three letters of the runic alphabet -- "f," "u" and "th" -- on one of its sides, according to the museum.

You can read more in an article by published in the CNN.News web site at: <https://www.cnn.com/style/article/worlds-oldest-runestone-norway-intl-scli-scn/index.html>.

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To be considered, applicants must reside within the United States.

**PARTICIPANTS SUBJECT TO ADDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS
AND OTHER TERMS & CONDITIONS.**



IMPORTANT MESSAGE

**MCGS MEETINGS
NEW PLACE**

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



Saturdays at 10:30am
NO JULY MEETING!

2023 Meetings

- Feb. 18
- Mar. 18
- Apr. 15
- May 20
- Jun. 17



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

**Contact MCGS for your
Individual appointment with
one of our members.**

At 231-722-8016
or email us at

1972mcgs@gmail.com

LOCAL HISTORY & GENEALOGY

DEPARTMENT

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

More on their website

<https://www.hackleylibrary.org/local-history-genealogy/research-sources-at-the-torrent-house/>



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- Twig Talk at TwigTalk1972@gmail.com

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 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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