



# TWIG TALK

## Newsletter

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### TWIG TALK

A monthly publication of:  
**Muskegon County Genealogical Society**  
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### President's Report

By Dawn Westcomb Kelley -

Daughter Stacy flew in from Tennessee to surprise us on our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and that was the very special surprise package that she mentioned was coming, but we thought a regular package was coming by UPS.

That was the best anniversary gift we could have expected. Making more memories that will last a lifetime and we had so much fun.

Guess what is coming soon...a NEW WEBSITE! The board has agreed to hire Scott Eikenberry, owner of Reliv-it Media Productions, LLC., of Muskegon.

*Continued in next column -*

### Membership Meeting

Thursday, May 10, 2018

**Starts at 6:30 p.m.**



**VFW Post 3196, 5209 Grand Haven Rd**

### “Pioneer Certificate Celebration”

Our society has two members, Diana Wojton and Larry Rosencrans who are cousins; they are descendant from the same pioneer George Rosencrans. Each will receive a Pioneer Certificate that night with a nice celebration.

### “May Cemetery History Month”

Bill Hansen will give a brief update on the *Shady Rest* plaques.

*Continued from previous column*

The new website will be usable on all platforms be it computer, tablet, or phone.

I know we have been looking to see this happen for long time. Its almost here.

### COUNTY CLERK RESEARCH

Muskegon County Building  
990 Terrace St.

MCGS volunteers are there every  
Wednesday from 1:00-4:00 p. m.

Direct phone # 231-724-7140



### GENEALOGY TIP

**Search and browse yearbooks online;** <http://www.e-yearbook.com/> the website started in 2005 and has thousands of books from all over the United States (requires membership fee to actually view the books).

MCGS is asking for donations of Muskegon County yearbooks for the Local History & Genealogy Department.

## HOSPITALITY HAPPENINGS



The speakers for the April meeting, Thomas VanBruggen and Bill Hansen, presented a program titled "Little Known Facts on Cemetery Mapping." They also provided information to us about new Muskegon County GIS web page features.

The door prize winner, Judy Tierney, will find her gas card handy for research travel. She received genealogical aids as well. The free book draw won Diana Wojton, "The Constant Princess" about Katherine of Aragon, the 1st wife of King Henry VIII. Jeff Admunsen will read about true tales covering over 100 years in "Shipwrecks of the Graet Lakes." for his free book draw. Lucky again ticket book winner, Diana Wojton, should gain helpful information with, "Discovering Your Immigrant and Ethnic Ancestors."

Members and guests were once again fortunate to enjoy snacks from volunteers. Phyllis and John Slater have consistently brought water for the meetings for which we're very appreciative. Barb Martin provided a variety of fruits and vegetables with dip. She must know about the healthy diet style of eating foods of the rainbow! Marie Payne added to this by bringing orange tangelos. Our sweet tooth was ready to sample Tom Shepherd's offering of cookies. Chocolate chip, fudge-striped shortbread and fig bars were a tasty selection. Marie Payne also brought her yummy home baked banana and apple-cinnamon muffins. We are perhaps the most spoiled society in Michigan!

A meeting highlight is the Show And Tell sharing by members. Phyllis Slater began with her display of photos, a 1913 graduation program, a WWI card along with many other items with missing identifications. She and John bought a box at an auction with Muskegon area contents. They are now seeking ID's for these lost memorabilia of the past. One photo went to surprised Connie Fales. Has she ever heard of the Fales cattle herd!?

Paula Rice updated a story about British Andy (anonymous.) Previously, Paula submitted to Ancestry, her stepmother's family tree which included Paula's step-uncle. Meanwhile, Andy learned about his biological father by reading the adoption papers after his adoptive parents had passed. He went online and found his father's name on Paula's tree. Paula's step-uncle was Andy's fa-

ther!! His father passed before he could meet him, but there was family in the US. Andy traveled from Great Britain to Kentucky for a reunion with Paula and family. Paula also shared a four generation family chart produced online through Ancestry.

Her mother-in-law, Ruth Marie Jankowski, from Manchester, Iowa married James Joseph Rice of Racine, Wisconsin. Long ago the two met while teaching school. A framed family tree with photos will be presented to Ruth on her 100th birthday in May! Paula would like to assist anyone wishing to produce their own chart through Ancestry.

Tom Shepherd's father, Alfred Shepherd, was born as Frederick Benninga in 1906 and adopted by the Shepherds in 1907 in New Mexico. Tom's father never pursued identification of his biological parents and died in 1981. In the 1990's, Tom decided to investigate his father's lineage. He had a copy of the adoption decree because his father had to prove his citizenship in order to work in the defense plants during WWII. This gave Tom his father's birth name, date and place of birth plus the birth mother's name, Anna Benninga. Using conventional genealogical tools, Tom was able to locate only one woman named Anna Benninga who was living in the US and of child bearing age in 1906. However, Tom couldn't locate a record to confirm her as the right woman.

Relatives he contacted weren't able to help because to their knowledge, Anna had never married or had children. In addition, an adoption intermediary said many women used aliases in their records! Tom decided to try DNA testing that finally gave him the proof he was seeking. He found matches with 2 sisters who would be grand nieces of Anna and subsequently with their father, aunt and uncle. They invited Tom to meet them in Kansas where he spent 2 days learning the family history and seeing family sites. He visited the graves of his grandmother, Anna Benninga, her parents, John and Dena Benninga plus Dena's parents, Luppo and Lumke Heikes.

Bill Hansen has been earnestly working to provide commemoration markers for children buried in unmarked graves at *Shady Rest* cemetery during 1960—1962. He decided to help the project along by flying out to Portland, Oregon to assist his brother in the production of them. These are not your "run of the mill" type. The anodized black plaques are made of heavy duty aircraft aluminum with a special wax to protect the engravings. While there, he took some photos of business signs used in the enterprises of his grandfather and father. We especially enjoyed the Muskegon Heights dairy cow sign!!

*(Continued on page 3)*

We look forward to hearing your stories and viewing keepsakes in May! Your contributions help others with their genealogy hobby.

## MICHIGAN ARCHIVES

Kris Rzepczynski and Jill Arnold of the Archives of Michigan reported:

- The Archives continues to update county guides listing archival materials for the county currently housed in the archives. 60+ have been completed.
- As reported last time, the Archives has started to receive an influx of county probate files because of new retention of records guide. Midland's files have arrived.
- The 1942 Death Certificate images are being posted. <http://seekingmichigan.org/>
- A complete redesign of the Seeking Michigan website is in the works.
- The Naturalization indexing project is on-going (phase two is 99% complete) and is an extremely large project, so we need your support. To help with project, visit [seekingmichigan.org/naturalization](http://seekingmichigan.org/naturalization).
- Abrams 2018 will be held July 20-21, 2018. The presenter will be announced soon. A "Barbara Brown Family History Day" will coincide with the Abrams Seminar as a platform to bring more interest and awareness to the field of genealogy, and will feature oral history booths. More information will be available in the coming months.

## FAMILY HISTORY CONFERENCE INFORMATION — May 2 – 5

Main Website: <https://conference.ngsgenealogy.org>

### Parking

The public parking rate at DeVos Place is currently \$12.00 per day. Uncovered parking lots are available for \$10.00 or less a day a few blocks away from DeVos Place. For parking details and rates see <http://grcity.us/enterprise-services/Parking-Services/Pages/Downtown-Parking-Rates.aspx>.

### Volunteers

We have heard that the organizers have put out a call for 125 more volunteers. The signup page is here; <https://onference.ngsgenealogy.org/>

## MUSKEGON HISTORICAL TRIVA

By Trivia Trudy, from the Torrent House -

Trudy here... digging around at the Torrent House. Last month I shared a funny from 19 & 24. I think I'll flip it and investigate 19 & 42. I'll pull the box labeled May 1942 from the microfilm cabinet. After threading the film on the reader, the first thing I see is pages of **EXPLOSIVE** headlines about the war. There were sooooo many articles, but one in particular caught my eye. "Teachers Open 4 Day Sugar Rationing Job". As a retired teacher, I had to read on. School days for students were shortened. 244 school staff members were to work in 3 hour shifts to register the expected 70,000 consumers in Muskegon County.

I read through the pages, and came to an article about Constantine (Gus) Pattakos. I felt that his story probably represented the stories of so many others who stood in those lines those 4 days. Unfortunately, he collapsed while waiting at Moon School and died on the way to Hackley Hospital. Because of this, the newspaper related details of his life. However, I wanted to know the "whole" story. Wouldn't you if this were your relative?

I started with the Polk Directory Collection in the front room. From there, I discovered the addresses of Gus, his brother Nicholas and several other family members. Gus and his brother worked as patternmakers at West Michigan Steel. A few years later, Gus changed occupations. He worked as a cook at the Occidental Hotel and ran the Coffee Shop there. My grandmother worked there and probably knew him! By 1942, at age 67 he was retired.

The Chronicle articles said that he was born on the Greek Island of Cos. A google search on the library computer showed me a very beautiful long island just off the coast of Turkey. And what an ancient history! I found that Hippocrates (yes... the originator of the Hippocratic oath) established a medical school on this island. The island was long enough to accommodate airplane (bomber) runways. Originally, part of Greece, the island was overtaken by the Italians in 1942 and then the Germans, before the allies landed.

In May of 1942 the Turkish army was fighting the Italians along their Albanian border. The Greek harbors were blockaded. The Greek people were starving. From the Chronicle article, I knew that Gus had his only son and two sisters still living in Greece as well as their families. What was happen-

ing to those family members? Did they survive the war?

Gus was more than birth and death dates on a chart. He was caught up in the history of the world at that time, like so many others who stood in those ration lines. Gus belonged to the first Greek Orthodox Church here in Muskegon. After consulting the card catalog in the Computer Room, I discovered an article and picture of this church. Gus was laid to rest in Oakwood cemetery.



At our meetings in May and June I will make available all the articles and pictures that I used for his search. I will also leave them with the clerk at the Torrent House for your perusal. They will include articles about.....

Constantine (Gus ) Pattakos; reasons for sugar rationing; ration registration information with photo; The Island of Cos with a map; conditions in Greece in 1941 – 42; Hippocrates and ancient Greek medicine and the articles about the original Muskegon Greek Orthodox Church with photo.

Was Gus part of your family? If so, this is my gift to you. Trivia Trudy—TriviaTrudy@gmail.com

**NEW MEMBERS—January**

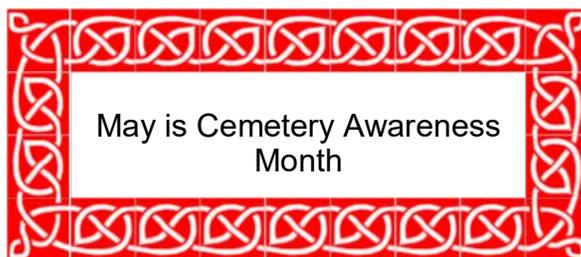
Kari Gordon, Muskegon, MI (Surnames: Daminga, Hughes, Make-Makie-Maiden, Seppamaki, Morin, Vanbrocklin)  
Dan & Judi Ruch, Coopersville, MI  
Rae Simerick, Muskegon, MI

**NEW MEMBERS - April**

Farr Hinton – N. Muskegon, MI  
Larry Rosencrans – Muskegon, MI  
Donald Siplon – Muskegon, MI  
Robert Siplon – Casper, Wyoming  
Shirley Zavitz – Muskegon, MI

**NEW BOOKS** – Hackley Public Library - Torrent House, Local History & Genealogy Department

- Index of Vital Statistics From The Muskegon Chronicle 2017, compiled by Matthew Burns
- Index of Vital Statistics From The Muskegon Chronicle 1972
- Muskegon High School Alumni Directory 2013
- Queen Marinette Spirit of Survival on the Great Lakes Frontier, by Beverly Hayward Johnson
- Camp Roosevelt: Man Maker, by Frank C. Jacoby
- Even More Palatine Families: 18th Century Immigrants to American Colonies and their German, Swiss and Austrian Origins v. 1, 2 & 3, by Henry Z. Jones Jr. and Lewis Bunker Rohrbach
- The Palatine Families of Ireland, by Henry Z. Jones Jr., from MCGS
- Frank J. Harkness in Loving Memory, by Jim Harkness
- Legendary Locals of St. Joseph and Benton Harbor Michigan, by Elaine Cotsirilos Thomopoulos
- Pinery Boys: Songs and Songcatching in the Lumberjack Era
- Index of Vital Statistics from The Muskegon Chronicle 1971, compiled by Matthew Burns
- The Norseman 1950 (North Muskegon Yearbook)
- Images of America: Traverse City State Hospital, by Chris Miller



*Editor's note: the following two articles were authored by Bill Hansen for the MCGS brochures to be provided at the NGS Family History Conference May 2 –5.*

## **CEMETERY AWARENESS MONTH – *Shady Rest Cemetery***

Through the sponsorship of the Muskegon County Genealogy Society (MCGS), the Muskegon County Board of Commissioners has designated May 2018 “Cemetery Awareness Month”. This will enable MCGS to continue to assist the County in a project begun last year to maintain and improve *Shady Rest* cemetery. *Shady Rest* is one of the largest free standing Potter’s Field cemeteries in the state. It is the only cemetery owned by the County of Muskegon. The last burial there was in 1970. This cemetery has seen years of minimal maintenance, until last year when its condition was brought to the attention of County officials.

During 2017 with help from Muskegon County, MCGS, and other volunteers the following work was accomplished:

- Planting flowers
- Protecting a grave near the drive from vehicle traffic
- Resetting 255 sunken headstones
- Spreading 25 yards of topsoil
- Creating a plot map of the cemetery
- Restoring the front gates to working condition
- Painting the entrance sign

In 2017 MCGS was able to provide a professional ground penetrating radar survey of the cemetery. This survey located over 80 unmarked graves, 72 of which are children’s graves.

The goal for 2018, is to raise an addition 250 headstones with the donation of additional topsoil. Also in the plan for 2018, is obtaining a military headstone for the only veteran known to be interred there. He was a veteran of the Civil War. MCGS will be placing 7 group markers with the names of the 72 children whose burial locations were confirmed.

## **THE GIS TRANSITION**

A Muskegon County Genealogy Society (MCGS) goal is to create higher quality printed maps of all the cemeteries in Muskegon County. The project took an unexpected turn when a suggestion was made to find out if the Muskegon County Geographic Information

Systems (GIS) Department could help. This is the department that creates all of the County maps. The GIS staff was interested but further approvals were needed. After getting the necessary support a plan was developed where MCGS could supply available data and the County would host the maps and data on its GIS website.

The current process of making maps of the cemeteries from photographs or drawings is not very precise. More complete burial data is needed. It is valuable to have headstone photos, monument company, funeral home, and military records. This is being integrated through the GIS process and is resulting in an improved mapping system. The final result will include redrawing all the cemetery maps with precision down to the plot and plot split level.

Few cemetery owners in the county would be able to afford to have digital interactive maps done of their cemeteries. The cost can run in to the tens of thousands of dollars for each one. The Muskegon County Genealogical Society is providing these maps at no cost to them.

Some benefits of using GIS cemetery maps include the ability to be updated by cemetery owners and being Global Positioning System (GPS) linked with local aerial photo layering. The new cemetery maps will have the ability to indicate plot status, veteran locations with military branch and conflict noted. Also included, when known, will be the name of the attending funeral home, burial date, death place, and gender.

All of the approximately 45 cemeteries in the county use different numbering systems for their burial locations. This information is being standardized in the new GIS system so burial plots can be located using the cemetery’s record system or GPS information.

### **Don't Tell Me!**

Two seagulls were sitting on a perch. One said to the other, “do you smell fish?”

The other day I held the door open for a clown. It was a nice jester.

