



# Twig Talk

Newsletter of the Muskegon County Genealogical Society



Since 1972

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TWIG TALK

A publication of:

Muskegon County Genealogical Society

c/o Hackley Public Library

Torrent House

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## “HOLIDAY GATHERING” VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION & ANNUAL MEETING & ELECTIONS

**Thursday, November 13,  
REMEMBER it is 6:00 p.m.**

**VFW Post 3195, 5209 Grand Haven Rd**

Join us for our yearly tradition of getting together for an evening of fun-filled night of genealogical actives and some wonderful food! The society will provide a main dish, tableware and water. Please everyone bring a dish to pass and your own beverage. Also, if you have any holiday traditions handed down from your family, please share with us! Old holiday photos are always appreciated for sharing as well.

What did you find in your GENEALOGY RESEARCH this year?

The photo above is a German card with elves in it. Do you know the translation?

**Did you know: Christmas Traditions in France** Christmas celebrations France begin on December 5, which is St. Nicholas Eve, but Christmas Eve is the most special time in the French celebration of Christmas. Church bells ring and voices sing French carols, called noels. On Christmas Day, families go to church and then enjoy an abundant feast of wonderful dishes, ending with the traditional buche de Noel, a rich buttercream-filled cake shaped and frosted to look like a Yule log. **Find out more traditions at our Holiday Gathering!**



### How About Some Christmas Trivia!

Before settling on the name of Tiny Tim for his character in "A Christmas Carol," three other alliterative names were considered by Charles Dickens. What were those names?



## MEMBERSHIP

**Steven E. Benton**, Champaign, IL  
**SURNAMES:** Benton, Edick, Kuis,  
Salisbury, Slinger



## COUNTY CLERK RESEARCH

Clerk's Office!  
Muskegon County Building at  
990 Terrace St. Use the front  
entrance on Terrace St. There is  
Senior & Handicap parking in the old parking lot  
facing Apple Ave.  
MCGS volunteers are there every Wednesday  
from 1:00-4:00 p.m. to help you.



## HOSPITALITY HAPPENINGS



Our October meeting's program  
about the Ottawa County Poor  
Farm was given by Marjorie  
Viveen.

The developmental history plus the fascinating  
stories of the inmates made a captivating  
presentation. The following members & guests  
were dressed in the spirit of the season: Barb  
Martin, Paula Rice, Phyllis Slater, Nancy  
Spoon, Noel Carlson, Donna David & Val  
Wilks. Lucky Karen Farmer won the door prize  
of an organizer file. Planner Jennifer Lamkin  
took home the sorting tubs. Ticket winner,  
John Robillard, received the book, "Unpuzzling  
Your Past."

Fortunate Marie Payne added "Decades of  
Deals." to her library from the free draw. As  
always, John and Phyllis Slater are thanked for  
the water so needed at snack time. Barb  
Martin is appreciated for her festive rice  
cakes. The society provided veggies  
and cookies.

The NOVEMBER GATHERING will be an  
opportunity for bringing your favorite dish to  
pass. The society will provide an entree and  
activities. Let's be there to celebrate a  
successful 2014 year for MCGS.

## NEW FOUND COUSINS

Member Marcia Wiersma found a new cousin  
from Ancestry.com, Mary Jo Westenberg. This  
just goes to show you that you can never be  
sure who is out there doing the same things  
you are to research their family history. It  
might be worth looking on ALL of the websites,  
and even do some Google searching to see  
who is looking for the same people you are.  
In fact, just yesterday (Oct. 15) I (Kay Bosch)  
received a message on my Facebook from a  
long lost cousin to my mother. So you just  
never know who is out there and related to  
you! Take a look and give the internet a  
chance!!!!

## BINDING BOOKS AT HPL



We now have 34  
volumes of so  
much research  
and hard work  
from contributor  
Matt Burns; 1980  
through 2013 of  
vitals from the  
Muskegon  
Chronicle which  
we know Matt dedicated so much of his time.  
We had them professionally bound by Peter  
Helder Binding of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Our  
society paid all costs at a total of \$1057. They  
are beautifully done and a huge contribution to  
Hackley Library's Local History and Genealogy  
Department. This is a very good example of  
your dues money at work. We are furthering the  
cause. We can't forget to send a huge Thank  
You to Matt Burns. Without all of his hard work  
and dedication, we would never have had the  
opportunity to add this to the library collection.

Answers to trivia page 1: They were Little Larry,  
Puny Pete, and Small Sam.

"Done! Everyone in the family tree  
has been found & everything is  
perfectly organized  
including the  
photos," said no  
genealogist...  
EVER.



som<sup>ee</sup>cards  
user card

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## **WHO IN THE WORLD IS JOHN HENRY KNICKERBOCKER? PART 2**

***By Connie Fales***

In our September Twig Talk, you saw photos of the tombstone of John Henry Knickerbocker as it was raised from the grave. In our October Twig Talk, I told you about the stone and the cemetery.

### QUESTION 3: WHO WAS THIS MAN?

With his name and dates in hand, I headed to the Torrent House to search the historical / genealogical collection of Muskegon's Hackley Library.

- Card catalog check - led to a book, History of Muskegon County, published in 1882 by H. R. Page & Co. It stated that Henry, as he was known, was born in 1815 in Watertown, N. Y. (Washington Co.) He settled in Muskegon in 1840. From 1845-47, he was a business partner of Martin Ryerson. They built and ran a sawmill in Muskegon. Mrs. Knickerbocker and 3 other women started the first Sunday School here in 1852 before there were any churches.

#### Census Check - nothing for 1830 or 1840

Henry Knickerbocker lumberman  
Charlotte Knickerbocker  
Harriet Fish adult  
Arthur Fish child

#### Bingo for 1850!

John Sutton engineer  
Frank Cole laborer

- Newspaper Check - no Muskegon Newspapers in 1856
- Church Records Check - no churches in Muskegon in 1856
- Vital Records - Not kept in 1856
- City Directories - None before 1873
- Muskegon Co. Register of Deeds office on Apple Ave. Henry bought two pieces of land in 1851. Both pieces were in the Muskegon Village area. Here I also found out that Harriet Fish was married to Lyman Fish. There were records of the couple buying and selling land.

- Ottawa Co. Register of Deeds office, on Fillmore St., south of Grand Haven.

Since the Muskegon area was still a part of Ottawa County at that time, I needed to check with that office. Here I found that Henry and Charlotte Knickerbocker sold 80 acres for \$1.00 to Chauncey Davis. Mr. Davis lived in Muskegon. He was Muskegon's first Mayor, first State Representative and first Superintendent of Schools. Could this sale have anything to do with the first school in Muskegon? I didn't check that far. Mr. Davis was also born in Watertown, N.Y.

- Grand Haven to check Loutit Library's Genealogy Room Collection. The card catalog indicated an obituary for Henry in the Grand River Times. This paper is free to search at ChroniclingAmerica.gov under the Library of Congress in Washington. (see *next page*.) Henry's wife died 6 months before him and they left a son born in 1852-53.

Found a Probate Notice on 26 Nov. 1856 in the Grand River Times. Harriet Fish was Henry's sister. Henry died intestate (without a will). I thought this strange since he had a young son to protect.

- Ottawa County Probate Office on Fillmore St. - with the probate notice in hand which gave file number. There were 2 files on old microfilm. One for the estate and one for guardianship of Henry's son, Frank. I looked at the estate file first. Lots of clues here!

A form listing Henry's 3 survivors: his mother and son in Belleville, N. Y. and his sister Harriet Fish.

There were several "pine land" properties. One was co-owned with Rice Jones. Henry and Rice were married to sisters, I later discovered. This was a quit claim request. More on him later.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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A letter from Seth Evans in Somerset, MA. He was Henry's father-in-law. It gave the dates of Charlotte and Frank's arrival at his home; the date of Charlotte's death and the date Frank left to go live with his paternal grandmother in N.Y. Seth was asking for compensation for "boarding and care" of his grandson from the time of his daughter's death until Frank left to live in N.Y. There will be more on this family later.

A record that said that the tombstone was paid for out of Henry's estate.

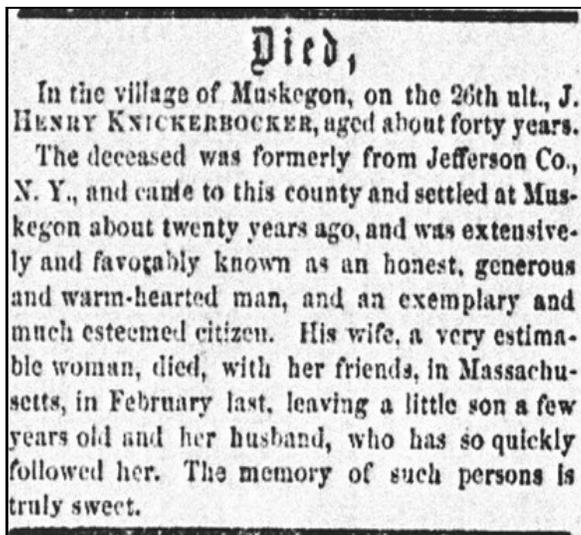
Remember the guardianship file - more on that later when I write about young Frank.

- "Pine land" search - Why weren't those in the Register of Deeds Office? It turns out that both Henry and Lyman Fish are listed as receiving Bounty Land in Michigan. Who served in the military which entitled them to this land? I know that the census for 1830 & 1840 shows Lyman living at Fort Ann in N.Y. Was Henry in the military? He was born in 1815 in Watertown, on Lake Ontario.

Watertown was the site of a major shipyard and the headquarters of the American forces in the War of 1812. There were some heavy-duty battles fought there. Was Henry's father involved with that? Henry's sister Harriet was born in Rochester, New York in 1818. That was also a port city during the war. Somewhere between 1818 and 1856, Henry's father died. If I had more time, I would search for the Bounty Land papers, and for a pension record for Henry's father and for perhaps a widow's pension. That would lead me to his parent's names. There are no Knickerbockers in the census in the area of Belleville, N.Y., where Henry's mother and son were living. Did she remarry? It would be nice to connect him to the big Knickerbocker clan in New York: think the New York Knicks and the huge Knickerbocker financial empire ..... Lots of money. Maybe I'll find this on Fold3. It's a free web site in Fort Wayne. That's where I'll be next week with the Muskegon County Genealogical Society.

So..... Who was John Henry Knickerbocker?

- A son, brother, husband and father
- Owner of "pine lands" upriver from Muskegon. He probably logged pine to sell to local sawmills.
- He wasn't a leader. He didn't hold local office, run committees, own a local store or leave anything in writing behind.
- His wife held Sunday School classes. Was he religious?
- The bounty lands indicate a military connection
- He had business dealings with his wife's family and his sister's husband.
- A large weeping willow tree on his tombstone indicates great sadness at his death.
- He was a man who dealt with the legality of land records but he left no will. Why not?
- The last year of his life was spent without his wife or son. Could he have died of a . . . . broken heart? I guess we'll never know the answer to that.



What happened to his wife, Charlotte and his sister? A bit about Charlotte's sister and brother and their spouses who later came to live in Muskegon. Her brother is buried here.

But **SERIOUSLY** . . . . . I'll tell you about the guardianship file and what happened to Henry's son, Frank.

Next time: Check out our January Twig Talk! the conclusion

← <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>

Source: Library of Congress

Image provided by Central Michigan University, Clark Historical Library

Grand River Times (Grand Haven, Mich.)

1851-18??, September 03, 1856

Page 2 Column 5

## ARTICLE OF INTEREST

At MCGS's October 2014 we learned about Ottawa County's Poor Farm and how kind they were to the residents. Below is an item about Muskegon Poor Fund submitted by one of our members.

**Petition to Muskegon Poor Fund** Submitted by Jane Appleton Schapka

"Petition from F. Barnhardt was read as follows: Allow me herewith to hand you a statement of my condition. Eighteen years since I lost my arm in Hackley's mill. I had seven children to support at that time. Six years later my oldest son was killed in Miller's machine shop. One year later our daughter was accidentally shot. Four years later on my then oldest son was killed at Hackley's dock. My wife has been sick for a year or more with crisyelas and is unable to work. We have never received any help from the poor fund and have never asked any, except a reduction of taxes. In 18[?]9 my taxes were \$16.85; in 1890 I am taxed between \$28 and \$29. Now, gentlemen, I do not feel like coming before you as a beggar, but the tax this year seems oppressive, and it seems to me that it could with justice to all parties be reduced. Hoping that you will see it in the same light, I remain your humble servant. Moved by Al. Hoeksema that the petition be referred to the committee on finance to report. Carried." Citation: "Council Proceedings, 6 January 1891, F. Barnhardt," *Muskegon Daily Chronicle, Muskegon, Michigan, 21 January 1891, page 8, col. 1.*

### Here is the latest FREE information online.

Sorry about the smaller print here. There is a lot to share!

Chronicling America Library of Congress <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>

**Canada** – FamilySearch.org has put online a new image collection of Nova Scotia birth records. The first tranche of some 29,000 images dates from 1864 to 1877. These are the registration of births, not birth certificates. A typical birth register lists the following information: name of the child; gender; date and place of birth; father's name; occupation; dwelling place (residence); mother's maiden name; when and where the parents were married, and the name of an informant to the birth. Below is an image of a typical page from the birth register. This collection is organized by county and then by year. Access is free.

- <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/2243378>

**Belgium** – FamilySearch.org has put online an additional 188,000 images of civil registration files from Liège. These are birth, marriage, marriage proclamations and death records that span the years from 1621 to 1910. Liège is the easternmost province of Belgium. It borders Germany and Luxembourg. In total, there are some 3.5 million images in the collection. Most of the collection can be searched by first and last name. Access is free. - <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/2138505>

**Ireland** – The Church of Ireland has put online the 1914 editions of the Church of Ireland Gazette. Previously, the 1913 editions were also put online. This weekly publication published details on funerals, obituaries, school activities and community activities in addition to church activities. This is a nice publication to look through if you had family members active in the church during 1913 or 1914. The Gazette can be searched by keyword. Access is free - <http://ireland.anglican.org/about/128>

**US** – AmericanAncestors.org has put online a free collection of Middlesex County Massachusetts probate records. The records are being made available through a partnership with the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Archives. Middlesex County is one of the four original counties in Massachusetts. It originally encompassed the current Middlesex County plus Worcester County and Hampshire County. This collection of probate records covers some 45,000 cases between 1648 and 1871. It includes such things as wills, guardianships, and administrations. Access is free. - <http://www.americanancestors.org/Search.aspx?Da=0536>

**Canada** was unprepared at the start of World War I. It had only 3,100 men under arms. As volunteers were quickly recruited and organized in Canada, members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force were sent to Europe to help reinforce these newly formed units. Therefore, when looking for ancestors in this collection, be aware that they most likely left Canada under one unit and then were reassigned to a different unit as soon as they arrived in Britain. This collection can be searched by keyword (such as name) and date range. Access is free - <http://www.canadiana.ca/en/cef-register>

**Europe** – The International Center of Photography in New York and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. have created an online database containing some 9,000 images of Jewish life in Central and Eastern Europe prior to World War II. The images are from photographer Roman Vishniac, who documented in pictures the rise of Nazi power and its impact on Jewish life. Most of these images (see example below) have never been published before. The collection can be searched by date, location and keyword. Access is free - <http://vishniac.icp.org/>

Links and information courtesy of Genealogy In Time Online.

# The Lost 33

By William P. Hansen

Research, for whatever purpose, can take you in directions that you may have imaged when you started. What is important is, that's where ever the path leads, embrace it and hang on, because it can be the most exciting ride of your life.

For me, it started with a goal of having the dam at Browns pond, designated as an historical site. After several months of research and filing my results, Blue Lake Township decided at the time, that



that was not the direction they wanted to go. Not what I expected, so I changed direction after finding out that in 2015 it would be the township's 150th anniversary. A big part of my new research turned out to be the early family histories of those who settled in the township. Think of the work involved of doing your family histories, now consider doing the work on about 80 families at the same time!



To do a family history, its also best to have a beginning and an end, a birth and a death record, but what do you do when one is missing? At this point in my research, I have over 75 soles that died while living in the township, but I was unable to locate their final resting place in any of the area cemeteries.

Overhearing a conversation about someone using ground penetrating radar for a search for a canon, I contacted the company and was offered to my surprise, the free service from their company in searching for unmarked graves in the 143 year old Ware Cemetery in Blue Lake Township.



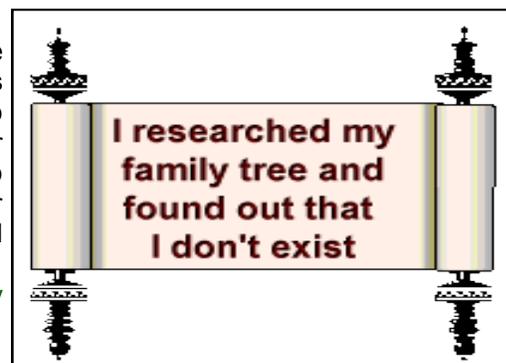
On October 11, 2014, I had the honor of working with Mike McGarry and his crew from Work Smart, Inc., to locate some of these missing residents. With only six old marked grave sites and one modern stone in the cemetery, our hopes were high. After four hours of nonstop surveying, I am pleased to say that they have located an additional 33 grave sites. Although we will likely never know who is in each of the graves, we can at least, turn this sparsely populated location into the cemetery it was meant to be by marking the final resting places of the lost 33.

*Did you know:*

**Christmas Traditions in Holland** Dutch children in Holland, or the Netherlands, eagerly await the arrival of Sinterklaas on St. Nicholas Day on December 6. Sinterklaas is a kindly bishop. He wears red robes and a tall, pointed mitre on his head. Sinterklaas travels by ship from Spain to Amsterdam's harbor every winter. He brings his white horse and a huge sack full of gifts for the children. Families celebrate St. Nicholas Eve at home with lots of good food, hot chocolate, and a letterbanket, a "letter cake" made in the shape of the first letter of the family's last name.

**Christmas Traditions in Italy** The Christmas season in Italy begins on the first Sunday of Advent, which is four Sundays before Christmas. Christmas fairs feature fireworks and bonfires along with holiday music. Families go to the Christmas markets to shop for gifts and new figures for the manger scene. Some families set up a Christmas tree and decorate it. Families set up their presepio, or manger scene, on the first day of the novena. They gather before the presepio each morning or evening of novena to light candles and pray.

Find out about many more traditions from all over the world at our [Holiday Gathering!](#)



# Massive Online US Obituaries Project Will Help Find Your Ancestors

Volunteers are needed to help make over a billion names from US death records searchable online.

**Salt Lake City, Utah —October 1, 2014**—In celebration of Family History Month, FamilySearch International ([FamilySearch.org](http://FamilySearch.org)) and GenealogyBank ([GenealogyBank.com](http://GenealogyBank.com)) today announced an agreement to make over a billion records from historical obituaries searchable online. It will be the largest—and perhaps most significant—online US historic records access initiative yet. It will take tens of thousands of online volunteers to make GenealogyBank's vast U.S. obituary collection more discoverable online. Find out more at [FamilySearch.org/Campaign/Obituaries](http://FamilySearch.org/Campaign/Obituaries).

The tremendous undertaking will make a billion records from over 100 million US newspaper obituaries readily searchable online. The newspapers are from all 50 states and cover the period 1730 to present. The completed online index will be fairly comprehensive, including 85% of U.S. deaths from the last decade alone. The death collection will easily become one of the most popular online genealogy databases ever, detailing names, dates, relationships, locations of the deceased, and multi-generational family members. Family history information from obituaries are being indexed by volunteers and made searchable online. Obituaries can solve family puzzles, tell stories, dispel myths, and provide tremendous help with family history research. A single obituary can include the names and relationships of dozens of family members. For example, Alice E. Cummings' obituary (See above) sheds light on where she lived during her lifespan, her personal history, and it provides information connecting five generations of ancestors and descendants in her family tree—14 people in all.

Dennis Brimhall, CEO of FamilySearch, explained that obituaries are extremely valuable because they tell the stories of our ancestors' lives long after they are deceased. He invites online volunteers to help unlock the "treasure trove" of precious family information locked away in newspaper obituaries.

"Billions of records exist in US obituaries alone," Brimhall said. "The average obituary contains the names of about ten family members of the deceased—parents, spouse, children, and other relatives. Some include much more. Making them easily searchable online creates an enormously important source for compiling our family histories. The number of people who will benefit from this joint initiative is incalculable."

GenealogyBank has over 6,500 historical U.S. newspapers and growing, spanning over 280 years. The death notices in these publications go beyond names and dates. They can provide insightful first-hand accounts about an ancestor that simply are not available from censuses or vital records alone.

"Obituaries, unlike any other resource, have the ability to add incredible dimensions to an individual's family history research. They contain a wealth of information including facts and details that help capture the legacy of those who have passed on," said Dan V. Jones, GenealogyBank Vice President. "The unique life stories written, dates documented, and generations of family members mentioned are often only found within an obituary, which makes them such an invaluable resource. Obituaries have the unique power to both tell a story and enable individuals to learn more about their family relationships. GenealogyBank is proud and excited to partner with FamilySearch in bringing these obituaries to researchers all over the world."

## Volunteers Are Key

The success of the massive US obituary campaign will depend on online volunteers. The obituaries are fairly simple to read, since they are digital images of the typeset, printed originals, but require human judgment to sort through the rich, historic data and family relationships recorded about each person. Information about online volunteering is available at [FamilySearch.org/indexing](http://FamilySearch.org/indexing). A training video, indexing guide, detailed instructions, telephone and online support are available to help new volunteer indexers if needed.

FamilySearch.org volunteers have already indexed over one billion historic records online since 2006, including all of the available U.S. Censuses, 1790 to 1940. In 2012 volunteers rallied in a record-breaking effort to index the entire 1940 U.S. Census in just four months. Today, the US censuses, 1790 to 1940, are the most popular online databases for family history research. Indexed obituary collections can be searched online at [FamilySearch.org](http://FamilySearch.org) and [GenealogyBank.com](http://GenealogyBank.com).

**Making US Death Records Searchable Online**

**Original Obituary**

**Indexed by Volunteers**

**Searchable Family Information**

**Deceased**  
Mrs Alice E Cummings (Additional details often include: title, death location, gender, age, birth date, death date, etc.)

**Spouse**  
W H H Cummings (Husband)

**Children**  
Mrs Pearl Dahlhammer (Daughter), Mrs Kittie Hirsch (Daughter), Mrs Len Boyle (Daughter), Mrs Ruby Wilson (Daughter), George S Cummings (Son)

**Parents**  
Mr Joseph Tucker (Father), Mrs Joseph Tucker (Mother)

**Siblings**  
Mrs N A King (Sister), Mrs John Tucker (Sister), Mrs Mary Parker (Sister), Mrs Netta Sherlock (Sister), William Tucker (Brother), Mrs Lillian Hadley (Sister)

LINEAGEBANK  
FamilySearch  
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# Important Upcoming Dates 2014/2015

## Regular Meetings

7:00 p.m.  
VFW Post 3195  
5209 Grand Haven Road

**November 13, 2014**  
No meeting in December

**2015**  
January 8  
February 12  
March 12  
April 9  
May 14  
June 11

No meeting in July or Dec.

August 13  
September 10  
October 8  
November 12

## Board Meetings

5:30 p.m. at the VFW

**November 13, 2014**  
No meeting in December

**2015**  
January 8  
February 12  
March 12  
April 9  
May 14  
June 11

No meeting in July & Dec.

August 13  
September 10  
October 8  
November 12

## Genealogy Family History Workshops

Torrent House Local History & Genealogy Dept., 315 W. Webster  
Morning and afternoon sessions!

10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. or  
2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Please preregister online at  
[1972mcqs@gmail.com](mailto:1972mcqs@gmail.com)  
or call 231-722-7276 ext. 240

**Next workshop:**  
**November 8, 2014**

No workshop in December

### **2015**

January 10  
February 14

March 14

April 11

May 9

August 8

September 12

October 10

November 14

**No workshops in:**

June, July, & December

## HOLIDAY GATHERING REMEMBER TO BE THERE AT 6 P.M.

We will conduct our Holiday Gathering with a dish to pass, Annual Meeting and Elections, and have some very special volunteer recognitions.



### REMEMBER TO BRING:

- A dish to pass with your serving utensil. If you wish, share your recipe can
- Your own beverages.
- Bring your camera if you want any photos.

**BRING A FRIEND TO JOIN US!**

**2015 MEMBERSHIP DUES**  
**\$25.00 per person per year**  
**Jan 1 thru Dec 31**

**SEE OUR NEXT TWIG TALK**  
**NEWSLETTER IN JANUARY**

Did you know: **Christmas Traditions in Germany**

German families prepare for Christmas throughout cold December. Four Sundays before Christmas, they make an Advent wreath of fir or pine branches that has four colored candles. They light a candle on the wreath each Sunday, sing Christmas songs, and eat Christmas cookies. In the weeks leading up to Christmas, homes are filled with the delightful smells of baking loaves of sweet bread, cakes filled with candied fruits, and spicy cookies called lebkuchen. *Come find out more traditions at our Holiday Gathering!*

Congratulations to Jane Appleton Schapka who completed the class "Determining Kinship Reliably with the Genealogical Proof Standard" at the Genealogical Research Institute of Pittsburgh (GRIP), held at Orchard Lake, Michigan, August 3-8, 2014. The course was taught by Thomas W. Jones, Ph.D., CG, CGL, FUGA, FNGS, and is based on his book, *Mastering Genealogical Proof*.

It is good to look to the past  
to gain appreciation for the present  
and perspective for the future...

