



WMGS Newsletter

Spring 2015



Roger Moffat Receives Distinguished Service Award at FGS Seminar

Each year the Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS) honors a member of a local society with a Distinguished Service Award. This February, The Western Michigan Genealogical Society's own Roger Moffat received this award in Salt Lake City, Utah where the FGS and Rootstech Seminars took place.

WMGS has been blessed in having computer guru Roger Moffat as it's Datamaster. The Society has benefited from his technical expertise for over 15 years. Now, the national genealogical community has also recognized his genius.

Joshua Taylor, current FGS President and star of the "Genealogy Road Show," presented a, "Distinguished Service Award to Roger Moffat in recognition of exemplary and outstanding service to an FGS Member Society, the Western Michigan Genealogical Society."

Roger was honored for his many years of dedication and hard work on behalf of WMGS and the entire genealogical community. He developed and maintains the many databases available on the Society's website, www.wmgs.org, and keeps the membership list up-to-date. WMGS members who volunteer to index resources know that Roger will help them in any way that he can. Society Board members appreciate his vast knowledge of the Internet and all things related to technology. He has also chaired the Society's annual seminar, *Got Ancestors?!*, for the last six years.

Roger is also Projects Chairman for the Michigan Genealogical Council, the Genealogist for the Clan Moffat Society, and Secretary for the Family History Information Standards Organisation (FHISO). This organization works to create a digital environment where all genealogical software is more compatible, and a better GEDCOM is available to all genealogists. Roger is, "Looking forward to a standards-driven environment where things 'just work'."



D. Josh Taylor presents Roger Moffat with the Federation of Genealogical Societies' Distinguished Service Award in recognition of exemplary and outstanding service to the Western Michigan Genealogical Society. *Photograph courtesy of Linda McCauley and the Federation of Genealogical Societies.*



wmgs.org Honored for FOURTH Year in a Row!

Family Tree Magazine announced that, “Your organization’s [WMGS] website has been named to *Family Tree Magazine’s* list of Best State Websites for Genealogy for 2014.” The award was published in the December 2014 issue and online at <http://familytreemagazine.com/article/2014-best-state-genealogy-websites>. This is the fourth consecutive year that www.wmgs.org has been recognized as one of the very best state websites for genealogical research.

The magazine notes that, “This list honors the best websites that specialize in genealogy research for one of the 50 US states. The 75 stellar sites on the list represent the go-to bookmarks for tracing American ancestors, state by state. Thank you for your work on behalf of genealogists across the USA.”

Indexes on wmgs.org have almost a quarter of million (2,489,954) records freely available to everyone. All entries have been created by dedicated volunteers who spent many, many hours deciphering handwriting or faded typed letters. *The West Michigan Newspaper Database* alone now includes over 1,000,000 records! WMGS members began indexing the obituaries in the *Grand Rapids Press* and the *Grand Rapids Herald* over forty years ago. Obituaries from 1910 through the end of 2014 are now all online. Also found in this database are Engagement, Wedding and Anniversary announcements from 1966 to the present. The *Rockford Register*, the *Holland Sentinel* and the *Northfield Advance* also have indexed records that will be found here.

The website includes vital record indexes for Kent County Marriages and Deaths. Individuals who purchased gravestones from the Black Monument Company are indexed in another database. These records cover a

larger geographical area in western and southern Michigan.

Other records indexed include: those for Kent County School Records; WWI Veterans Census; the Latzek Funeral Home; *The Farm Bureau News*; various State and Federal Censuses for west Michigan counties; and, indexes for Chapman’s *History of Kent County, Michigan* and Goss’ *History of Grand Rapids and It’s Industries*.

WMGS members have the option of putting a GEDCOM of their ancestry on wmgs.org. Many have taken advantage of this opportunity and then subsequently connected with previously unmet distant cousins or found clues to brick wall ancestors.

In 1997, our current Webmaster, Don Bryant, created the Society’s first website. Two years later, Datamaster Roger Moffat put the first database online. The number of available records has continued to increase every year. Every WMGS volunteer should be very proud of the quality and quantity of genealogical information that has been made available, for free, to the entire genealogical community.

The website also provides a wealth of information for the Society’s members. Meeting dates and times, speaker and topic descriptions, class and seminar announcements, volunteer opportunities, etc., keep members well informed.

THANK YOU, TO ALL THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE WORKED SO HARD TO MAKE WMGS.ORG ONE OF THE BEST 75 WEBSITES IN AMERICA!!!

Tri-River Historical Museum Network’s “Spring into the Past” May 2nd and 3rd, 2015

During the first weekend in May each year, the members of the Tri-River Historical Museum Network celebrate local history. Each hosts an open house on the same day, and all are FREE!

Come see special displays and the history of local areas. For more information and a list of participating museums go to: commoncorners.com

Family History Center Seminar

March 14, 2015

2780 Leonard St NE, Grand Rapids, MI

Many genealogists have enjoyed the resources available at the LDS Family History Center in Grand Rapids. Last year, the Center sponsored its first day long seminar. It was so successful that a second will be held this year on March 14 from 10 o’clock am to 4 o’clock pm. Classes will cover vital records, search techniques, preservation, cemetery research and many other subjects. There are topics for beginners, intermediate or advanced genealogists. For more information call the Family History Center at the Church of the Latter Day Saints at (616) 949-3210.



WMGS Bus Trip

to Ft. Wayne's Allen County Public Library

--- Staying at Red Roof Inn (new name)---

Wednesday -- Thursday-- April 22-23, 2015

\$120=Single, \$92=Double, \$82=Triple, \$78=Quad

Transportation by Great Lakes Motor Coach No smoking on coach.

NEW PICKUP AREAS

Day #1
April 22nd
Wednesday

7:00 AM Leave Alpine NW area (back behind Star Theater) (North of I-96)
7:30 AM Leave Meijers (next to I96 and 28th St near the "K" marker)
8:15 AM Leave Lake Odessa and I-96 (Exit64) (just ¼ mile south to Outreach Christian Church lot)
8:45 AM Possible pickup off I69 near Charlotte (on I69 -exit 48)
9:30 ish Refreshment Stop (donuts & juice at highway rest stop)
10:30 AM Arrive Allen County Public Library (260) 421-1200
9:00 PM Bus transfer to Red Roof Inn (260) 483-0091

Day #2
April 23rd
Thursday

7:00 AM Wakeup Call – Walk across parking lot to restaurant for breakfast
8:30-8:40 AM Load luggage. Transportation to library
6:00 PM Depart from Allen County Public Library
6:45 PM Stop for quick meal near Auburn, Indiana
9:30 PM Arrive at Lake Odessa exit (church parking lot)
10:00 PM Arrive at Meijers I-96 drop off area
10:30 PM Arrive at Alpine area behind Star theater



Trip includes: roundtrip motor coach transportation, lodging at Red Roof Inn (new name. It was Guest House Int.), 3003 Coliseum Blvd. West, and library transfer. Light Breakfast included – or If you prefer, Liberty Diner (¢) is across parking lot. The Allen County Library has a nice café and many other eateries are close to the library.

*The motel does not have an elevator. Please indicate floor requirement.

*Cancellations will receive a refund with replacement only.

* WMGS member? Membership PERK. You will receive a coupon worth \$5 towards next year's membership or towards any purchase at the WMGS sales table.

** We need 38 bus riders to make this trip a reality. An email by first of March would be most helpful A \$15 deposit guarantees your place on the bus. Please send your deposit or at least an email by March 20th.

* Balance must be paid by April 15th. Make checks payable to WMGS.

***Please contact Sue Irvine with questions. 616-889-0042 or sjirv@yahoo.com
Send registration to Sue Irvine, 4215 Northgate NE, Grand Rapids, MI, 49525

\$120=Single, \$92=Double, \$82=Triple, \$78=Quad

REGISTRATION Ft. Wayne Trip Wed – Thurs April 22-23, 2015

Room type: Smoking ___ Non-smoking ___ Is 1st floor a requirement? Yes ___ No ___

NAME: _____ Phone: (____) _____

ADDRESS: _____ City, _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Pickup Point: Circle one: Star Theater Meijers Lake Odessa Charlotte

Roommates: _____

Confirmation and other trip information will be confirmed by email.: _____

WMGS Program Schedule

These programs are held in the Main Branch of the Grand Rapids Public Library in the Ryerson Auditorium, beginning at 1:30 pm with WMGS business, followed by the speaker. Free admission — everyone is welcome! Parking is free at the Library on Saturdays. Remember to have your parking ticket validated in the Library's main lobby. Refreshments are served after the presentation. Books and supplies may be purchased from the Sales Table before and after the program.

March Membership Meeting **March 7, 2015**

The Lines that Define: the Boundaries of our State, Counties, Townships, Villages and Cities.

The various geo-political units such as states, counties, townships, villages and cities all have boundaries which influence our history and quality of life. This presentation will examine some of the origins and impacts of the many lines on maps that create a cultural and historical legacy in Michigan.

Morris O. Thomas is a Visiting Professor of Geography at Michigan State University. He has taught many classes including the Geography of United States and Canada and the Geography of Michigan. He has given many presentations for various organizations. Mr. Thomas has received numerous awards including the Distinguished Teaching Achievement Award from National Council for Geographic Education in 2008.

April Membership Meeting **April 4, 2015**

Dutch Women Immigrants to the U.S. 1880-1900

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century well over 84,000 Dutch immigrants arrived in the United States. Most headed for Western Michigan. By 1900, one-third of the Dutch-born in the United States of America lived in Grand Rapids, where they totaled 40% of the population. In 1890, nearly 300,000 residents of Dutch ancestry lived in the five-county region—Allegan, Kalamazoo, Kent, Muskegon, and Ottawa—making it the largest Dutch settlement area in the United States. Within this Dutch population were thousands of married women and single women—unmarried or widowed.

Who were these women? What was their social status in the Netherlands before immigrating? What were their occupations? Their legal rights? What motivated them to immigrate? This program takes a closer look at the distaff side of Dutch immigration. If you have a Dutch grandmother or great-grandmother in your family tree you will be interested in learning more about these women.

Janet Sjaarda Sheeres is an independent scholar and freelance author. Her books include *Son of Secession*, *Douwe J. VanderWerp*, *The Not-so Promised Land: the Dutch in Amelia County, VA 1868-1880*, and *Minutes of*

the Christian Reformed Church Assemblies 1857-1880. The last book was one she edited and annotated.

She has served as president of both the Zeeland, Michigan, Historical Society, and of the Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies. She was also chair of the Christian Reformed Church Historical Committee. Ms. Sheeres is the associate editor of *Origins*, the historical magazine of Calvin College's Heritage Hall Archives. Besides publishing dozens of articles in national and international historical and genealogical journals, she has taught courses on Dutch Genealogy for CALL (Calvin Academy for Life-long Learning) and given many presentations on the subject. She is currently writing about the wives of the first ten Christian Reformed Ministers — immigrant women all.

May Membership Meeting **May 2, 2015**

Finding Grandma's European Ancestors

Finding European ancestors may seem to be a challenging task but this presentation covers a method that can simplify this daunting search.

The program includes:

- Tips for locating ancestors homelands
- Finding sources for European records
- Suggestions for translating most records

The author has been successful in researching ancestors in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Germany. The program also gives suggestions to help those researching countries.

Steve Szabados has given numerous presentations to groups in Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. He has written ten genealogy books and is also a contributing editor for the *Polish American Journal*. As a genealogy volunteer at the Arlington Heights Library, he helps individuals with their research and he wants to share his passion for Family History.

**Membership Meetings and
Parking are both FREE!**

WMGS Mini-Classes

Mini-Classes are held on the first Saturday of the month before most Membership Meetings. They provide an in-depth view of a specific topic. These are the Mini-Classes that are scheduled for the next three months.

What is a GEDCOM Anyway?

Saturday, March 7th Time: Noon – 1:00 PM

This class reviews the nature of GEDCOM files, their purpose, structure, and how you can utilize the power of data transfer to expand your family history research.

Class will be held in the Adult Computer Lab, Lower Level, at the Grand Rapids Public Library. Instructor: Linda Guth.

Prepping for the Allen County Library

Saturday, April 4th Time: Noon – 1:00 PM

Thinking about going to the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, IN on April 22nd & 23rd? They have one of the largest research collections available, incorporating records from around the world. Our presenter will show you how to prepare for research at their library. Class will be held in the Adult Computer Lab, Lower Level, at the Grand Rapids Public Library. Instructor: Sue Irvine.

Using Find-A-Grave

Saturday, May 2nd Time: Noon – 1:00 PM

Find-A-Grave has become one of a genealogist's "go to" websites. You will learn how to search the site and what information you may find for each entry. Class will be held in the Adult Computer Lab, Lower Level, at the Grand Rapids Public Library. Instructor: Kathy Cook.

Grand Rapids Public Library Presents:

A Polish Doctor in the Nazi Camps

March 12 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm

Medical anthropologist Barbara Rylko-Bauer will discuss her book *A Polish Doctor in the Nazi Camps*. The book details her mother's experience after she was arrested in 1944 for suspicion of resistance activities. For 15 months she endured three Nazi concentration camps and a 42-day death march, spending part of the time working as a prisoner-doctor to Jewish slave laborers. Jadzia's struggle continued after the war as she attempted to rebuild her life, first as a refugee doctor in Germany and later as an immigrant to the United States. A book signing will follow the presentation.

Next "Lock-in" April 24th at the Grand Rapids Public Library

Come to the Local History and Special Collections department for a free after-hours program just for genealogists!

- Learn how to use the microfilm reader/scanner/printer, and how to save images.
- Take advantage of free copying and printing during the event.
- Discover hidden genealogical research gems in the stacks, the Archives and the files.
- Search databases – we have a limited number of computers available or bring your own laptop and use the Library's WiFi network.
- Bring your genealogy questions or Ancestry and Heritage Quest problems – volunteers will be on hand to assist.
- Network with other genealogists – you never know what you might find!

****Registration is Required****

Check www.grpl.org/events for more information and when registration will begin.

WMGS Writers Group

Meeting the third Tuesday of the month:

17 Mar—21 Apr May 18 1:30- 4:45pm

at the Dominican Center, 2025 Fulton St NE

The Writers Group is designed to help and support the desire to write about our families with a kind eye and lots of humor. Everyone is welcome and all workshops are free.

Each meeting has a suggested topic, but writers are free to bring any work in progress to the meeting.

March 17: Are you an optimist or a pessimist? What makes you this way?

April 21: What are the most important books that you have read? How did they change your life?

May 19: What ancestral homeland would you like to visit: time and place?

The workshops are held at the Dominican Center on the corner of East Fulton and Lakeside Drive. Please call Sister Michael Ellen Carling at 616-514-3231 (home) or 616-514-3340 (office) if you are attending for the first time. You may park in the Dominican Center parking lot on Lakeside Drive. Use the lower entrance on the east side of the large portico. Go down the steps or down the cement ramp to enter the building. The receptionist will direct you to the room.

2015 WMGS Writing Contest

Who was your most “famous” or “infamous” ancestor?

Have you stumbled across one or two ancestors who just really intrigue you - because of who they were in the community, or because of something they did, or because they just happened to be in the right place at the right time of a well-known historical event? We would love to hear your story. Write it up and enter the 2015 writing contest!

WMGS has worked for 60 years to educate researchers in evaluating and citing sources. Your story may inspire someone else to use new research techniques or discover a unique resource. The 2015 Writing Contest will recognize unpublished excellent genealogical writing by awarding substantial prizes. Prize winning entries and those receiving an “Honorable Mention” will be published in *Michigana*. Like all submissions to *Michigana*, entries will be thoroughly edited before publication.

Additional information about submitting any article to *Michigana* can be found in the latest issue of *Michigana*, or at wmgs.org.

Rules:

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.

Deadline: Entries will be accepted between January 1 and March 30, 2015.

Length: Stories should be between 1,500 and 3,000 words in length. Please cite your sources by using endnotes, and attach copies of documentation when appropriate. Family group sheets and pedigree charts should be included if pertinent. Neither documentation nor charts will be included in the word count.

Formats:

Entries by email are strongly preferred, but print submissions will also be accepted. When emailed, a PDF is preferred; iPages and Word documents will also be accepted. Photographs or graphics should be sent separately as 300 dpi tiff or jpeg files. **Email your submission to ruthgen@gmail.com with “*Michigana* Contest 2015” written in the Subject Line.**

If submissions are mailed, please double-space on one side of standard letter-size 8.5” x 11” paper. Put your name and a page number on each sheet. Include copies of all photographs and supporting information.

Mail to: WMGS, Grand Rapids Public Library, 111 Library St. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503-3268.

Identification: Be sure to include the story title, your name, your mailing address, phone number, and approximate word count. This information will be only used to identify and notify the winners.

Notification: The Judge’s decisions will be announced at the May 2015 WMGS Membership Meeting and in the next available issue of *Michigana*. 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. However copyright is retained by the author. Entries may not have been previously published. Judges’ comments will be provided upon request. All prizes may not be awarded.

The 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

NEED HELP?

The WMGS Writers Group meets the third Tuesday of the month and we’d love to help you make your story the best that it can be. For information about location, time, and directions go to www.wmgs.org.

For further information or any questions about the Writing Contest, please contact the *Michigana* Editor at ruthgen@gmail.com.

Lansing Family History Seminar

A great opportunity to learn and to share, the April Family History Seminar has become a local institution within the Mid-Michigan genealogical community. This year's Seminar is another high water mark with 52 Classes and Activities - ONE OF OUR LARGEST EVER! This year's Seminar is sure to be enjoyable and rewarding - Don't Miss It!

Please review our website and discover the new classes and some old friends. We are anxious to see you whether you are a long time participant or a new friend. Come join us and learn and share your experiences.

The Lansing Michigan Family History Center in East Lansing, Michigan is one of the major genealogical resources in Michigan and has served the broader community for many years. We encourage you to come and visit and get to know the significant collections and friendly assistance that is waiting for you.

For more information, the class schedule, or to register go to: <http://lansingfhc.org/>

Extreme Weather Affects Family History

Learn All About the 1965 Tornado

Kenowa Hills Hills High School
7:00 pm on April 11th.

Family history is often changed by a pivotal weather event. If you lived in Michigan in 1965 your life was likely effected by the tornado that swept into the lower peninsula. Kent and Ottawa counties saw a great deal of death and destruction. If you're interested in learning more about this historical event come to Kenowa Hills Hills High School on April 11th.

In April of 1965, the Palm Sunday Tornado swept through Kent County's Alpine and Plainfield Townships. The Alpine Township Historical Commission is hosting a program on Saturday, April 11 at 7 p.m. at the Kenowa Hills High School auditorium. There is no admission fee and all are welcome.

A representative from the National Weather Service will present information about the 1965 tornado. The Commission has also produced a book and a video of witnesses and workers who remember that fateful day describing their experiences. There will also be photographic displays and the book will be available for purchase.

MORE CLASSES???

Be sure to check www.wmgs.org and www.grpl.org for more information on upcoming 2015 genealogy education classes.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NEW _____ RENEWAL _____

\$20 in the US \$25 Outside the USA

Make checks payable to: Western Michigan Genealogical Society or WMGS

DATE: _____ PHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP+4: _____

What is your level of genealogy experience? (circle one): Beginner Intermediate Advanced

Would you like someone to contact you about volunteer opportunities with WMGS? Yes No

Do you use computer software to manage your genealogy? No Yes Please list the software you use _____

Send checks and completed form to:
WMGS Membership, Western Michigan Genealogical Society
111 Library St NE, Grand Rapids MI 49503-3268



WMGS
c/o Grand Rapids Public Library
111 Library St NE
Grand Rapids MI 49503-3268

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

About WMGS

The Western Michigan Genealogical Society is dedicated to gaining knowledge, preserving records and teaching others about genealogy and family history.

Membership: An annual membership to WMGS is \$20 and begins on January 1st of each year. Membership benefits include: 10% discount on all items at the Sales Table, four issues of *Michigana* per year, free queries in *Michigana*, free online brick wall help and leadership opportunities. Your membership in the Western Michigan Genealogical Society will also include use of the private files of the Society and publication of your genealogy online at trees.wmgs.org

Change of Address: (Temporary or Permanent) If you will be permanently moving to a new address or going on an extended vacation, please notify WMGS before your address change occurs. Be sure to include the date your address will change or the dates when you will leave and plan to return. Email your address change information to the Society at membership@wmgs.org or write to: WMGS – Membership, Western Michigan Genealogical Society, 111 Library St NE, Grand Rapids MI 49503-3268.

2015-2016 WMGS Officers

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