



WMGS

Newsletter

FALL 2021



Upcoming Membership Meetings

We meet at **1:30 p.m. in the Ryerson Auditorium of the Grand Rapids Public Library** on the first Saturday of the month, September through June. Should the first Saturday fall on a holiday weekend, another day will be scheduled. Unless a special program, each meeting has a one-hour lecture on a genealogy related subject by a knowledgeable speaker. Books and charts are sold at our meetings and a "Hospitality Hour" follows.

All meetings are free and open to the public (NO IN-PERSON MEETINGS YET)

Saturday, September 11, 1:30 p.m. (ZOOM)

[https://zoom.us/j/97300550464?](https://zoom.us/j/97300550464?pwd=aG0xNytMTENXUVVxL0N3ZG9mSkJjd09#success)

[pwd=aG0xNytMTENXUVVxL0N3ZG9mSkJjd09#success](https://zoom.us/j/97300550464?pwd=aG0xNytMTENXUVVxL0N3ZG9mSkJjd09#success)

(Or access via WMGS website, click on the link for the meeting)

Presenter: Claudia Breland

Topic: Beyond Ancestry.com: Searching for your ancestors online

Ancestry.com is one of the largest genealogy databases on the internet today, and they have the advertising dollars to make themselves known. However, there are many, many other online resources (most of them free) that can supplement the information you have on your family and fill in the missing puzzle pieces. We'll talk about census records, vital records, online newspapers, state archives and libraries, cemetery records, military records, and more.

Claudia Breland began researching her family in 1974, after she received family papers from her paternal grandfather. She became a professional genealogist in 2009 and has had clients from around the world, and has lectured in Western Washington, Canada and at the National Genealogical Society conference. She's written two books on genealogical research and has transcribed and published two volumes of her grandfather's journals; she has also published a family history for one of her clients. She is an avid user of DNA, and has worked on several unknown parent & grandparent cases. Claudia recently broke a 45-year brick wall, using DNA genetic networks, finding a black sheep 2nd great grandfather who deserted during the Civil War, and discovering a motive for murder in the death of her 2nd great-grandmother in 1883.



Saturday, October 2, 1:30 p.m.

**Virtual presentation
via Zoom Webinar**

Zoom link: Access via WMGS website,
click on the link for the meeting

Presenter: Lori Piercefield Fox

Topic: Who Owned It? Land Abstracts

Land Abstracts especially in the Great Lakes region can answer some of those troubling questions or create a few new ones. Land Abstracts were the original proof of ownership. A complete list of each owner and mortgage and attachment proved that you owned that parcel of land. But what else can it tell you?

Lori Piercefield Fox is an ex-high school teacher, accountant, wife, mother, grandmother and GENEALOGIST. She is obsessed with genealogy and family history. Lori is the 5th generation to live in the same township in Ionia County, Michigan. She is currently the president of Ionia County Genealogical Society.



Saturday, November 6, 1:30 p.m.

Virtual presentation via Zoom Webinar

Zoom link: Access via WMGS website,
click on the link for the meeting

Presenter: Deb Moore

**Topic: Transform your genealogical research
into a family History Book**

When you pass on, who will go through your briefcases and scraps of paper, computer files, paper files, and heirloom photographs in search of the family research you've spent decades compiling? Maybe no one. This presentation focuses on taking your genealogical research, photos and ancestor stories, and compiling all the information into one book that can be shared with family members. Only then can you be assured that your efforts will be passed to future generations. Join Deb to learn how.

A lifelong Grand Rapidian, Deb Moore started her business, The Stories of Your Life, in 2003 to help individuals, families and businesses preserve and record their histories. As a personal historian, Deb has helped dozens of local residents and organizations in this regard. In addition, Deb has made presentations on memoir-writing at local libraries, retirement homes, senior centers and is a regular instructor on memoir writing at Aquinas College's OLLI program.



If you know the words
"Birth" "Marriage" &
"Death" in several
different languages...

You just might be a
genealogist



Remember to "like" and follow
WMGS on Facebook
Find us at:

<https://www.facebook.com/wmgs.org/>
or search for "Western Michigan
Genealogical Society" at Facebook and you will
be directed to our FB closed group



**Sophie de Marsac Campau
Chapter, NSDAR-
Grand Rapids, Michigan**

CHAPTER ORGANIZED ON MAY 18, 1896

The National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR or DAR), founded in 1890 and headquartered in Washington, D.C., is a non-profit, non-political volunteer women's service organization dedicated to promoting patriotism, preserving American history, and securing America's future through better education for children.

As one of the most inclusive genealogical societies in the country, DAR boasts 185,000 members in 3,000 chapters across the United States and internationally. Membership in DAR provides many opportunities to cherish our American heritage, to preserve family and local histories, to promote the celebration of our national holidays, to support our national defense, and to form friendships with others who share our love of God, Home, and Country.

The Sophie de Marsac Campau Chapter is one of the oldest chapters of NSDAR and was the second chapter organized in Michigan. Its members have a rich 125-year history of promoting DAR objectives.

For more information:

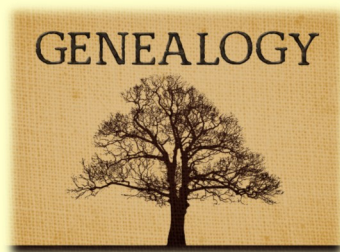
<https://www.dar.org/national-society/about-dar/national-headquarters>

<http://www.grandrapidsdar.org/>

Do you know of something that our members need to know and/or would be interested in knowing? Send your information to:

talkingtree@wmgs.org

The editors of the WMGS newsletter and the WMGS quarterly, the publicity chairperson, the website and database managers, the WMGS president — and more — will receive the information. So you don't have to wonder who to contact, just send it to: **talkingtree@wmgs.org**



2021 WMGS Writing Contest has concluded and the winners have been selected. Here are the results!

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

- ♦ First place: Bob Bush, "The Meanest Man in America"
- ♦ Second place: Barb Bettes, "The Skeleton in Our Family's Closet"
- ♦ Third place: Amy Russell, "An Outlaw for an In-law"
- ♦ Fourth place: Mary Milne Jamba, "They Can't All Be Heroes"

Honorable Mentions:

Linda Guth, Kay Crabtree and Mary M. Lane

**Michigan Genealogical Council Fall Virtual Family History Seminar
with Bernice Alexander Bennett
Saturday, September 18, 2021**

9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Award-winning author, genealogist, talk show host and storyteller, **Bernice Alexander Bennett** will be our speaker. Bennett is the recipient of the first Ida B. Wells Service Award from the Sons and Daughters of the U.S. Middle Passages for her dedication to broadcast the stories about enslaved and indentured ancestors of African descent. Her book, "*Tracing Their Steps*" is the winner of the 2021 New Generation Indie Book Award and the Phillis Wheatley Award. Bennett is a nationally recognized speaker, having presented at conferences such as the National Genealogical Society, Midwest African American Genealogy Institute, RootsTech, Afro-American Historical and Genealogy Society, the International Black Genealogy Summit, and more.



Tim Gleisner is currently the Head of Collections for the Library of Michigan, a position he has held for almost four years. Previous to this he was the Head of Special Collections and Local History and Reference at the Grand Rapids Public Library for twelve years. Before that he was the Genealogy and Local History Librarian at the Herrick District Library for four years. He is the winner of the Filby Award for Genealogical Librarianship in 2018. He holds a BA in History, MLIS with emphasis in Archival Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Kris Rzepczynski is a Senior Archivist and Head of Reference at the Archives of Michigan, where he specializes in family history and Michigan research. Kris has worked in the genealogical community for more than 20 years. He is a former Vice President of Membership for the Federation of Genealogical Societies and a Past President of the Mid-Michigan Genealogical Society.

9:00 – 9:15 am: Welcome and remarks (Rozlyn Kelly, MGC President, Mark Harvey, Archives of Michigan State Archivist, Tim Gleisner, Library of Michigan Special Collections Manager)

9:15 – 10:15 am: Bernice Alexander Bennett - *USCT Civil War Widows Pension Records Tell the Story*

10:30 – 11:30 am: Bernice Alexander Bennett - *Black Homesteaders at the Crossroad of Freedom*

11:45 am – 12:45 pm: Tim Gleisner, Library of Michigan Special Collections Manager - *What can you find with your Library of Michigan Card?*

12:45 – 1:15 pm: Lunch Break

1:15 – 2:15 pm: Bernice Alexander Bennett - *Writing and Telling Your Story*

2:30 – 3:30 pm: Bernice Alexander Bennett - *Follow the Witnesses*

3:45 – 4:45 pm: Kris Rzepczynski, Senior Archivist, Archives of Michigan - *Researching Your Family's History at the Archives of Michigan*.

4:45 – 5:00 pm: Closing Remarks (Rozlyn Kelly)

To sign up: <https://mimgc.org/eventListings.php?nm=19>

How the 1918 Flu Pandemic Affected Your Ancestor

(written by: David A. Fryxell, *Family Tree Magazine*)

The Flu's Death Toll: The great flu pandemic of 1918 killed up to 675,000 Americans, 0.65 percent of the nation's population. Most died in a terrifying span of 16 weeks. Worldwide, death estimates range from 21 million to 100 million.

How the Pandemic Affected Your Ancestors: The deadly virus may have first appeared in Haskell County, Kan., from which newly mustered soldiers spread it to Camp Funston, Kan., in February 1918. The gathering of men from across the country into close quarters galvanized the flu: In the spring of 1918, 24 of the 36 largest army camps suffered outbreak and 30 of the 50 largest US cities—notably, those close to Army bases—also saw outbreaks.

But nobody thought much of it at the time. Then the flu returned with a vengeance in September, striking first in Philadelphia, where it quickly overwhelmed the city's ability to deal with the dead. Soon, steam shovels were digging mass graves. (Keep this grisly bit of history in mind if you can't find the burial site of an ancestor who died in late 1918.) Some cities became ghost towns save for municipal workers in masks. In most areas, gathering places from schools to saloons were shuttered and public meeting banned.

If Your Ancestor Died of the Flu: The 1918 flu struck many in the prime of life—half the US dead were between the ages of 16 and 40. So many young people died, according to because of what's today recognized as a pathological process called Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome. A pulmonary expert describes it as “a burn inside the lungs.” Your ancestor's death certificate likely ascribed the cause to pneumonia, if not to influenza. The cycle of infection in each locale typically ran from six to eight weeks; then the incidence of flu dropped off sharply. As survivors gained immunity and the killer virus mutated, the pandemic burned itself out. In Philadelphia, where 4,597 people died from the disease in one October week, influenza had all but vanished by Armistice Day less than a month later. Most death indexes don't list a cause of death; so you'll need to get a copy of your ancestor's death certificate—typically from the county courthouse or the state archives. See when states began requiring death certificates on our Vital Records Chart. Besides gleaning valuable genealogical data, you may get a glimpse of the killer that stalked the world in the fall of 1918.

Other Major US Epidemics: Epidemics raged throughout US history. Early on, an infectious disease outbreak might be confined to a city or two, with ports particularly susceptible due to passengers on arriving ships. Many areas saw the same disease return year after year. But as Americans moved westward and became more mobile, epidemics were more widespread. Indian tribes, lacking the immunity some Europeans had, died in great numbers. These are major US epidemics and their geographic areas of concentration.

(Source: <https://www.familytreemagazine.com/history/world-war-i-and-the-flu-pandemic/>)



Source: *Library of Congress*

Timeline of Major US Epidemics

- 1721 smallpox (New England)
- 1770s smallpox (Pacific Northwest)
- 1772 measles (North America)
- 1793 to 1798 yellow fever (recurs in Philadelphia)
- 1832 cholera (New York City, New Orleans and other major cities)
- 1837 smallpox (Great Plains)
- 1841 yellow fever (Southern states)
- 1849 cholera (New York City)
- 1849 cholera (New Orleans, St. Louis and along the Mississippi River)
- 1850 influenza (nationwide)
- 1851 cholera (Great Plains)
- 1852 yellow fever (nationwide, especially New Orleans)
- 1853 yellow fever (New Orleans)
- 1855 yellow fever (nationwide)
- 1862 smallpox (Pacific Northwest)
- 1865 to 1873 typhoid, yellow fever, scarlet fever recur (nationwide)
- 1867 yellow fever (New Orleans)
- 1878 yellow fever (lower Mississippi River valley)
- 1916 polio (nationwide)
- 1918 Spanish influenza (nationwide)
- 1949 polio (nationwide)
- 1952 polio (nationwide)



Temporary hospital in Terre Haute, IN, during the Spanish flu outbreak; courtesy of the *Indianapolis Star*



Got Ancestors?! 2021

**Annual Fall Conference Western Michigan
Genealogical Society**

**A Virtual Event
16 October 2021**



Dana Palmer, CG ® , CGL (SM) has been a genealogy instructor at Sinclair Community College since 2010. She has spoken at national, state, and local genealogy events including RootTech, NGS, FGS, and frequently at OGS. She specializes in lineage society applications, publishing family books, and Mid-western research – specifically Ohio, but she also has experience in Germany, Denmark, and the U.K. She also reviews military repatriation cases for Eagle Investigative Services and is part of the Silver Book team for the Society of Mayflower Descendants. She has received numerous awards for her books and volunteer efforts. She belongs to several lineage societies including ISDUP, NSDAR, USD 1812, and Colonial Dames. She loves problem solving and tracking down those elusive ancestors.

Sessions:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 9:15 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. | Free Online Genealogy Resources: Discover how to find and use information found on free genealogy websites such as Family Search, RootsWeb, US Gen Web, Chronicling America, Archive.org and others. |
| 10:45 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. | Effective Search Strategies on Family Search: Learn tricks to find your elusive ancestors in the historical records and catalog on Family Search. |
| 12:45 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. | Tricks of the Trade- Effectively Using Genealogy Websites: Knowing how to use the tools on the most popular websites can help you find your family. Come learn the tricks of the trade. |
| 2:15 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. | Chronicling America: A Newspaper for Everyone: Using online search engines can be tricky! Learns some techniques to find elusive ancestors in the newspapers on Chronicling America. |

Conference fee is \$25 and you can register at <http://gotancestors.com/>



Western Michigan Genealogical Society's

Bus Trip to Ft. Wayne's Allen County Public Library



Monday – Tuesday --- October 25 – 26, 2021

\$138=Single, \$102=Double, \$91=Triple, \$85=Quad

Transportation by **Great Lakes Motor Coach** No smoking on coach or in motel

PICKUP AREAS

Day #1	7:00 AM	Leave Plainfield Meijer (between Woodworth/4Mile NE) near "K" marker
Oct 25 th	7:30 AM	Leave Meijer (I-96 and 28 th St) near the "K" marker)
Monday	8:15 AM	Leave Lake Odessa and I-96 (Exit64) (just ¼ mile south to Outreach Christian Church lot)
	8:45 AM	Possible pickups near Charlotte and/or off I-69 at Marshall Park/Ride
	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 FairBridge (260) 489-8888 (name change)
		Last spring many of us enjoyed pizza at the motel! – Fun time!
		5707 Challenger Parkway, Fort Wayne, IN, 46818 (Name change - was Econo Lodge)
Day #2	7:00 AM	Wakeup Call – Continental breakfast (and maybe cold pizza)
Oct 26 th	8:30-8:40 AM	Load luggage. Transportation to library.
Tuesday	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 Meijer I-96 drop off area
	10:30 PM	Arrive at Plainfield Meijer

Trip includes: roundtrip motor coach transportation, lodging at FairBridge (same place as last time),

5707 Challenger Parkway, and library transfer. Light Breakfast included.

- ^ Allen County Library no longer has a café. Many eateries are close to the library.
- ^ The motel does not have an elevator. Please indicate floor requirement.
- ^ 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 36 bus riders to make this trip a reality. ^ An email by September would be most helpful.
- ^ A \$15 deposit guarantees your place on the bus until the bus is full.

Balance to be paid by Oct 16th. Please make checks payable to **WMGS**.

Cancellations will receive a refund with replacement only

^ Please contact Sue Irvine with any questions. 616-889-0042 or sjirv@yahoo.com

\$138=Single \$102=Double (each) \$91=Triple (each) 85=Quad (each)
Ft. Wayne Trip Mon – Tues Oct 25-26, 2021 All rooms non-smoking
Is 1 st floor a requirement? Yes___ No___ (help is provided for carrying luggage but no elevator)
NAME: _____ Phone# (____) _____ Cell # (____) _____
ADDRESS: _____ City, State, Zip _____ Roommates: _____
Pickup Point: <u>Circle one:</u> Plainfield Meijer - Meijer 28th/I96 - Lake Odessa - Charlotte - Marshall
Confirmation and other trip information will be sent by email : _____

WMGS WRITERS GROUP

The WMGS Writers Group finally met in-person in August where we discussed several topics in addition to writing. Since its inception in 2004, Sister Michael Ellen Carling, one of the Writers Group's founders, has arranged for us to meet at the Dominican Center. Many things have changed over the last year-and-a-half and one of them was that the Main Building of the Dominican Center was sold to an organization which will renovate it into apartments. Sister Michael Ellen and the other Dominican Sisters have been gracious and helpful in opening their home to the Writers Group for almost 17 years. We have enjoyed their company, graciousness, and thank them for their years of support.

At our August meeting it was decided that our new meeting location will be:

Central Christian Church
2525 Leonard St. NE
Grand Rapids 49505

The church is located on the north side of Leonard just west of the I-96 exit to Leonard. It is set back from the road with a long driveway. When you enter the main doors you'll be directed to the meeting room. Ron Osgood is our host and if you have any questions you can call his cell phone 616-334-7712.

We are continuing to write stories about this Pandemic or other illnesses and medical problems that have effected our families or relatives.

As this is written, the Covid Delta mutation is spreading rapidly. To attend a Writers Group meeting you must be fully vaccinated and willing to wear a mask if necessary. Check the WMGS.org webpage to make sure that it is still safe for small groups to meet. Our next scheduled meeting will be:

The Third Tuesday of September on the 21st at 1:30 p.m.

Membership Application

NEW _____ RENEWAL _____

\$20 in the US

\$25 outside the USA

Membership begins January 1 and ends December 31

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

Option of receiving the WMGS newsletter by regular mail _____ or via email: _____

Would you like to donate to WMGS? Yes No If yes, Amount: _____

Make checks payable to WMGS, Send checks and completed form to:

WMGS Membership, Western Michigan Genealogical Society
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, c/o GRPL, Western Michigan Genealogical Society, 111 Library St. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503-3268.

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