



# WMGS Newsletter WINTER 2023/2024



## 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***

**Saturday, December 2, 1:30 p.m.**

**Presenter: Debby Stassek**

**Topic: Google Services and Helps  
for Genealogy**

Genealogy researchers often are hyper-focused on the big genealogy sites and may miss important resources on the rest of the Internet. Google can help. This presentation will include Google search engine "secrets," Google Books, Scholar, News Archive, Earth, Images, Translate, YouTube, and general computer tips. A live demonstration of Bard (Google's ChatGPT) will be featured.

Debby is an end-user technology consultant for the Paw Paw District Library. She has degrees from Central Michigan University and the University of Michigan; over 30 years of experience locating information online; and a passionate interest in genealogy. Her family tree has many West Michigan roots and includes 26,000 people. Her extended tree includes 39 presidents, 27 Mayflower passengers, Wyatt Earp, Elvis Presley, and Janis Joplin.



**Saturday, January 6, 1:30 p.m.**

**Presenter: Sue Irvine**

**Topic: WMGS Databases**

Have you ever checked out all of WMGS databases? There is a lot of local (Western Michigan) information right here at WMGS. We'll look into each of these. We'll also take a look at CommonCorners.com. You can't imagine what's here right under your nose.

Sue Irvine is on the board of the Western Michigan Genealogical Society and she wears many hats. She has coordinated the bus trips in the past to Fort Wayne, Indiana. She takes care of manuscripts and has printed the WMGS newsletter and magazine. Sue is a regular fixture at our meetings and can always be counted on to pitch in with WMGS.

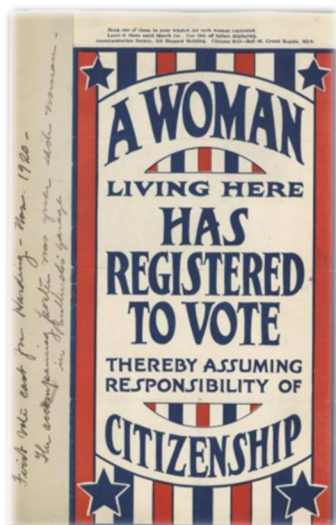


**Saturday, February 3, 1:30 p.m.**

**Presenter: Ruth Stevens**

**Topic: Who, what, when and where?  
The Search for the Story Behind  
an Iconic Suffrage Poster**

Grand Rapids Public Museum holds a precious and iconic image of the women's suffrage movement, a poster given to newly-registered female voters in Grand Rapids in 1919. The poster, decorated in patriotic colors of red, white, and blue, proclaims, "A woman here has registered to vote thereby assuming responsibility of citizenship." Join Ruth Stevens, a retired Grand Valley professor of Legal Studies, as she delves into the



backstory behind the poster. Who created and distributed the poster? Why 1919? Who wrote the note on it? Where was "Pantlind's Garage"? Learn about the genealogical, archival, and other sleuthing tools used to solve this local mystery and the answers revealed by them.

Ruth Stevens has a J.D. from the University of Michigan and a MLIS from Wayne State and is an active participant in the local history community, serving as a board member of GGRWHC, a trustee of the Grand Rapids Historical Commission, and as a presenter on diverse topics related to women's history.



**Education Classes:** Starting in December, the 2 hour class will always be the 2nd Monday of each month.

December 2, mini class: Noon – 1:00 p.m. at the GRPL VanderVeen Room, 4<sup>th</sup> floor

**Pioneer Certificates**

The Michigan Pre-Statehood and First Families certificates are offered by Michigan Genealogical Council as a way to honor ancestors who settled Michigan. Learn more about them and see if your family qualifies.

**Instructor: Sue Irvine**

2 hour class: Monday, December 11, 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. at the GRPL VanderVeen Room, 4<sup>th</sup> floor

**Top 10 Genealogy Mistakes and How to Avoid Them**

None of us are safe from errors in our genealogy research. Many software programs and online family tree services have built-in tools to help you error-proof your genealogy. BUT, you can take your family tree's health into your own hands by knowing what issues to look for. Here are 10 common genealogy errors—and what you can do to prevent them.

**Instructor: Linda Wells (Guth)**

January 6, mini class: Noon – 1:00 p.m. at the GRPL VanderVeen Room, 4<sup>th</sup> floor

**Family and History Intersections**

We will cover how history affects your family story and how important it is to share your family experiences with history institutions. can contribute your family stories to historical institution and why.

**Instructor: Sue Rabick**

2 hour class: Monday, January 8, 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. at the GRPL VanderVeen Room, 4<sup>th</sup> floor

**Dating Old Family Photos by  
Clothing and Hairstyles**

What do you do when you have a box of old family photos and none are dated or labeled? With some reference points and knowledge of your family history, it is possible to figure out a date range and even the identity of who is in the picture. In this presentation you will learn some of basic concepts of dating clothing and hairstyles from the 1860's to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.



**Instructor: Jessica Riley**

# Enter the 2024 WMGS Writing Contest

## “A Turning Point in Your Family’s History”

Genealogists often discover there’s one incident, event or choice that changes the family’s historical trajectory. This “Turning Point” might have been a major political or military event (national, state or local), a critical meeting or a crossroad where several choices are evaluated. Perhaps disease, a birth or death, or a weather event caused a change in the family’s status or required a move to a new geographical area. Please tell us about a “Turning Point” in your family’s history in **1,500 to 3,000 words**.

**Format:** Entries must be sent as a PDF, Microsoft Word or Apple Pages Document.

**Sources:** WMGS strongly encourages writers to always source all facts and documents. Endnotes must be complete enough that readers could locate them easily in books, on websites, in a repository, or contact the owner of a photograph or physical item.

- **Photographs and Graphics:** Photographs and graphics are acceptable proofs and sources. The equivalent of a 300 dpi jpeg image is required. Please send EACH photograph, graphic or document in a SEPARATE email. Depending on the length of the article or the pertinence of the images to the story, some photos or graphics may not be included in final publication.

**Length: 1,500 to 3,000 Words.** Endnotes, documentation, photograph descriptions and chart information will NOT be included in the final word count.

**Eligibility:** All genealogists, except the *Michigana* editors and judges, are invited to submit stories to the contest. There is no entry fee and membership in WMGS is not required. Articles may not have been previously published in a newsletter, magazine or online.

**Identification:** On a separate cover page please include the title, your name, mailing address, email, phone number and approximate word count. This information will only be used to identify and notify winners. Also include a brief paragraph about yourself and your genealogical interests that is typically found in the “About the Author” comment at the end of published articles in *Michigana*. The Judges will not see this information until after judging is completed.

**Deadline:** Entries will be accepted between January 1 and March 31, 2024. Email your submission to [michigana@wmgs.org](mailto:michigana@wmgs.org) with “WMGS Writing Contest 2024” in the subject line. You may only submit ONE entry to this contest

**Notification:** Contest winners will be announced at the May 2024 WMGS membership meeting. Each entrant will also receive an email with the results of the WMGS Writing Contest at the time of the announcement. Winners do not have to be present to win. Prize winning articles will be published in future issues of *Michigana*. By submitting articles, authors give WMGS one-time print and digital rights. Copyright is retained by the author. All submissions will be edited by *Michigana* staff prior to printing.

**Prizes:** 1st prize: \$100 and one annual WMGS membership (total value - \$120); 2nd prize: \$75 and one annual WMGS membership (total value - \$95); 3rd prize, \$50; 4th prize, \$25. All prizes may not be awarded.

For further information or questions about the Writing Contest, please contact the *Michigana* editor at [michigana@wmgs.org](mailto:michigana@wmgs.org). Also, be sure to check [WMGS.org](http://WMGS.org) for writing suggestions, tips and ideas on how to improve all of your family history articles and stories.



## Volunteer Opportunities

West Michigan Genealogical Society has many different opportunities to volunteer. Several of our projects need to be done at the downtown branch of the Grand Rapids Public Library, these are; School Census Card Indexing, Robinson Portrait Card Collection indexing, Obituary lookups, and Genealogy Help.

Manuscripts can be done from the comfort of your own home. We will send you a PDF copy of a manuscript and you will index the names and information from the copy into an excel file and then email it back.

We are also looking for a person to work with the refreshment hostess in setting up snacks for the meetings. We are always looking for people to provide snacks too.

Volunteer opportunities are listed below with a brief description:

- ♦ **Manuscripts; Manuscripts** are “unpublished papers” that have been given to WMGS. We scan the original document then a copy of the document is used to extract names from it and put in a spreadsheet. Manuscripts can be emailed to you with instructions so you can do at your own home When you complete the index you email the index spreadsheet back to the project manager.
- ♦ **School Census Cards;** School Census Cards are cards filled out by the local schools of their students. These cards are in boxes with multiple names on the card. The names are indexed, along with the parent's name and other pertinent information. The cards are part of the GRPL collection and can't leave the fourth floor of the downtown library. This project has to be done at the library, on the fourth floor.
- ♦ **Robinson Portrait Cards Collection;** The cards are the “paper trail” of the orders for all the portraits taken by Robinson studio over many years. We index each card in the box so that at some point people will be able to search the index and get a copy of the actual portrait. This project has to be done at the library, on the fourth floor.
- ♦ **Obituary Lookup:** A group of volunteers meet at the downtown library and look up obituaries that have been requested of WMGS. This is done on the fourth floor of the library.
- ♦ **Genealogy Help:** WMGS and GRPL help individuals start their family trees and to help them solve brick walls that are causing a problem. This group meets on Thursday's at GRPL fourth floor.
- ♦ **Refreshments;** Volunteers provide refreshments (cookies and snacks) at the general meeting once or twice a year.

Wanting to volunteer? Contact any WMGS officer or John Pierce, Volunteer Coordinator at [jwpierce53@gmail.com](mailto:jwpierce53@gmail.com)

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 Facebook private group

facebook

## December Sales Table Discount

The WMGS Sales Table will offer a 35% discount off your entire purchase if you are a member of WMGS or a 25% discount off your entire purchase if you are NOT a member of WMGS. This holiday discount will only be available at the December 2, 2023 membership meeting.



## Membership Renewal



It's that time of year again, time to renew your yearly membership with WMGS. Membership has it's benefits from discounts to our quarterly magazine to leadership opportunities and more. Please find the renewal form on page 7.

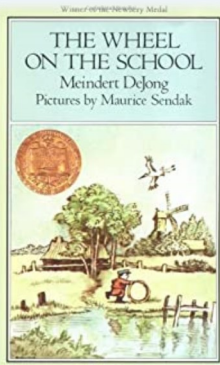
# History Detectives

History Detectives Grand Rapids announces the return of its popular day-long local history programming event and aims to bring together those interested in the evolution and history of local topics and persons.

This 15<sup>th</sup> annual offering of all local history programming will deliver a diverse array of topics by local researchers and academics including the following (in order of presentation) on **Saturday, January 20, 2024:**

***Before Jerry & Betty, There was Another Prominent Ford Couple in Grand Rapids*** by M. Christine Byron and Sophia Ward Brewer

***The Experiences of Women in Homes for Unmarried Mothers, 1945 – 1985*** by Nora Salas and Hannah McBride



***The Republican Home Front vs. Frank McKay*** by Jon VanderPloeg

***The Legacy of Captain Charles E. Belknap: 100 Years after The Yesterdays of Grand Rapids*** by Colleen Alles

***Return to Peppermint Street: The Life and Works of Grand Rapids Author Meindert DeJong*** by Adam Oster



***Coldbrook Creek: Rediscovering a Hidden Urban Stream*** by Peter & Mary Lewandoski

All presentations are held in the Ryerson Auditorium of the main branch of the Grand Rapids Public Library, 111 Library Street, NE. Each presentation runs approximately 45 minutes with the first presentation beginning at 9:30 a.m.. A lunch break will begin at 12:15 p.m. and those wishing to reserve a boxed lunch from Schnitz Deli can make a selection and payment at the History Detectives Grand Rapids website (see below). The programming day will conclude at 4:00 p.m. and attendees can enjoy free parking for any or all of the programs they wish to attend.

Learn more about History Detectives Grand Rapids at our website: <https://historydetectivesgr.org> and see past presentations at our YouTube channel: [History Detectives GR - YouTube](#).

**About History Detectives Grand Rapids:** Developed by local history enthusiasts and former librarians at the Grand Rapids Public Library's Center for Local History in 2008, History Detectives Grand Rapids features a day-long event showcasing research-based presentations on local history topics specific to the greater West Michigan region. Speakers regularly include independent researchers and academic historians delivering local history topics. The local history organizations that support History Detectives Grand Rapids combine their general knowledge and passions for area history to execute what has become one of Grand Rapids' premier history-related events.

Sponsoring local history organizations include: Grand Rapids African American Museum & Archives; Grand Rapids City Archives & Research Center; Grand Rapids Historical Commission; Grand Rapids Historical Society; Grand Rapids Public Library; Grand Rapids Public Museum; Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council; Kutsche Office of Local History at Grand Valley State University; Library of Michigan; and Western Michigan Genealogical Society.

## Roots Tech, February 29—March 2, 2024

RootsTech is the largest genealogy event in the world, sponsored and hosted by FamilySearch. RootsTech brings people from all over the globe together for one common mission: gathering and celebrating family. Classes at RootsTech are offered for all skill levels, beginner to expert, so you can learn more about discovering your ancestors and linking them to your family tree.

The Expo Hall, or the heartbeat of the conference, is home to many sponsors and exhibitors that offer new innovations and technology that will help connect with your past and record your memories for future generations. A fan favorite experience at RootsTech is the keynote speakers on the main stage! Various talent from industries around the world speak on their own family experiences and share inspiring messages of hope and resiliency.

If the 3-day conference isn't enough, check out [rootstech.org](https://www.rootstech.org) all year long for past content, as well as new content to learn and be inspired anytime you want!

Registration is open!



Feb. 29–Mar. 2, 2024  
Visit [rootstech.org](https://www.rootstech.org)

 **rootstech**  
by FamilySearch

To register: <https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/>

### DNA Interest Group

The DNA Interest Group (known as "DIG") meets on the third Thursday of the month at the Main Branch of the Grand Rapids Public Library in the Vander Veen room on the 4th floor. We meet at 6:30 p.m. with the first half an hour being a presentation, video, speaker, etc. From 7:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m. we help each other with DNA questions and projects. Check our Facebook group for updates.

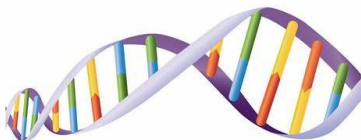
#### Next meetings:

**Thursday, December 14 (one week earlier)**

**Thursday, January 18**

**Thursday, February 15**

We discuss and learn more about a variety of genetic genealogy topics such as the Leeds Method, GEDmatch, Y-DNA, and more.



### Stories Behind the Stars

#### "BE A HERO TO THE WWII FALLEN IN MICHIGAN"

During World War II a banner with a gold star was presented to the families of the fallen. *Stories Behind the Stars* initiative was created to organize one central digital location to collect the stories of the 421,000+ Americans who were killed during World War II. These stories will be digitally linked to all war memorials and cemeteries by a smartphone app so visitors can read the stories of the fallen. This national effort, researched, written, and financially supported by all those who want to see the fallen remembered, will ensure that future generations will be able to learn about each of the Americans who paid the price for the freedoms we take for granted every day.



*Stories Behind the Stars* is looking for more volunteers to assist with gathering data and/or writing stories about Michigan's men and women who gave their lives during WWII. If anyone is interested in helping, they can contact the state coordinator, Karen Murphy at [murphykj@storiesbehindthestars.org](mailto:murphykj@storiesbehindthestars.org)

<https://www.storiesbehindthestars.org/>

## WMGS WRITERS GROUP

We meet on the third Tuesday of the month, in person and on Zoom. In person, the location is Trinity United Methodist Church, 1100 Lake Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, 49506, one block west of Fuller. Park in the first lot on Lake Drive and come in the door on that side of the church.

We meet in the Fireside Room, immediately left as you come in the door. Contact Jill Pearson Reider at JillReider1@gmail.com or 307-699-0812 if you have any questions.

For the Zoom link, and more information, check the WMGS website: [https://www.wmgs.org/writers\\_group.htm](https://www.wmgs.org/writers_group.htm)

Next meeting topics:

**Tuesday, December, Annual Potluck**

**Tuesday, January, New start in life — migrations — moving—jobs**

**Tuesday, February, Deaths & disasters**

And as always, people are welcome to write on suggested topics or bring in a project they are working on for suggestions.

Hope to see you there!

## 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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111 Library St. NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503-3268

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## 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](http://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](mailto:membership@wmgs.org) or write to: WMGS—Membership, c/o GRPL, Western Michigan Genealogical Society, 111 Library St. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503-3268.

## WMGS Contact Information

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