

MECOSTA COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 1068 Big Rapids, MI 49307

November 2015

OFFICE HOURS

*Upcoming Saturday sessions,
November 7-Our 7th Annual
Veterans Tribute 10am to
2pm.*

*December 12-Home for the
Holidays- 10am to 2pm.*

January 9th -10am to 2pm.

***Physical address is
424 N. Fourth Ave.,
Big Rapids, next to
Recycle, Inc.***

*We are also open by
appt. call Maureen at
231-250-5555.*

**Volunteers needed in
the office to file, index
and clean. If we get
enough volunteers, we
can add some work
hours. Call and let us
know if you can help.**

OFFICERS

President/Secretary-

Maureen Nelson

Vice-President/Treasurer-

Barb Place

Trustees:

Janet Stout

Gordon Telfer

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

President's notes	1
Research & Vets Tribute	2, 3
POW Camps in MI	4
Pioneer Certificates	5
Donations & Dues	6

Dear Members,

Do you realize the collection that your society has? We are over 500 binders of historical information on Mecosta County families, businesses, churches, funeral homes, townships, military, cemeteries and more. We have almost 21,000 obits in our files. We love what we do and are looking to preserve more history, before it is lost.

With a handful of volunteers, we help people from all over the country who write or email us with questions, obit requests, genealogy help and more.

We had a busy summer with people coming to Big Rapids from as far away as Washington State, Kentucky, Ohio, Virginia and Wisconsin to do research. Several drove 2 or more hours in Michigan, to check our collection and to get help. Most times we have done pre-research for them to decide if they need to drive here and let them know other options, like the courthouse or other surrounding groups that might have more information for them.

I was asked to speak at the West Michigan Genealogical Society in Grand Rapids at the public library in September. I spoke once before about doing Irish genealogy in Canada and Michigan. They wanted a different topic, so I decided to travel around the area to check out the other groups and to report back on what each one offered. This was a real eye opener for me, as I quickly found out that we are pretty much the only "stand-alone" society for genealogy in a wide area. Every other group I visited was either housed in a library or a museum.

The last five years we have moved our dues collection from July/August to coincide with the Mecosta County Community Foundation Match Day. This year is the 6th annual Match Day on November 9th. They allow us to turn in checks written in September, October, on that day. They match a portion of the amount from a pool, but we have to share it with other non-profit groups. We don't gain a lot from this, but every little bit helps. The day is mainly a time when we can talk with the public that go through and show them about our organization. It is held at the Holiday Inn in Big Rapids from 11-6pm.

So, if you like what we are doing, please send your dues, normally \$15/year or any donation to the following address. I will deposit the check around November 11 or 12. You can help our society pay rent and provide supplies to keep us helping others with their family history requests and to keep us preserving the history of Mecosta County and its families.

Check should be made out to MECOSTA CO. GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OR MCGS, P.O. BOX 1068, BIG RAPIDS, MI, 49307.

If you have any questions, please call Maureen at 231-250-5555 or email me at doyle@tucker-usa.com

THANKS FOR SUPPORTING MCGS!!! Maureen Nelson, President

How can MCGS help you?

Brickwall Section:

You can email or mail a short paragraph on things that you are having trouble with. Help us gather info for researcher's inquiries that we have had lately. We receive calls, letters and emails from all over the country. These are some of the latest requests. We have helped some, but if anyone has info on the following requests, please email Maureen at doyle@tucker-usa.com or Barb Place at mbplace@hotmail.com.

What a great feeling we get when we are able to help people out that are searching for bits and pieces of their family history in Mecosta County. We have over 500 binders of information and almost every time, we are able to find at least something for them. This year so far, we have helped people looking for information with the following searches:

Van Gilder-we have had at least 4 people inquire about the Van Gilder history from Michigan and the surrounding states. We mailed a Pioneer Certificate to Norman Keaton from Illinois and another person just sent their application in for the Van Gilder branch in their family tree.

Mary Scranton and her husband came from Ohio to research her Scranton families and Jasper "Jep" Bisbee family of Paris. We had quite a few bits of info for her in our office and suggested other areas for her to check. (did you know that Jep Bisbee was a fiddle player who lived in Paris. Thomas Edison and Henry Ford used to stop there to hear him play and Edison had him come to Detroit to record him). Barb Place, our VP was able to find a relative's death certificate that Mary had not been able to find. It was on the website, www.seekingmichigan.com, but it was misspelled and was listed as Seranton, not Scranton...good job Barb!

Mapes and Slade families of Big Rapids. These families are buried in Ladner Cemetery south of Big Rapids and one person from Florida called about his Slade family. He mentioned that there was a note that also mentioned Mapes. I had already been looking up info for Mary Ellen Vandermark, who came from Ohio with her husband. I asked if she knew about the Slade family and she did have info that I was able to send to the person in Florida. There are no stones on the Slade graves, so he told me that he would probably never find info on his family. I told him that there is always a way to find info. A little networking and even the people calling us for info may have the clue we need to answer another person's question.

J.J. Barrett from Ontario, Canada emailed about obits in the Kienitz and O'Brien families. I mentioned I knew some of the Kienitz family members. I gave his phone number to them and Betty Kienitz Noe Southworth called him late last spring and he learned a great deal from her. I spoke to Betty afterwards and she said she really enjoyed talking about the past and was glad that she was able to help him. Betty passed away in September and I let the gentleman know. Isn't it nice that they found out about each other and maybe passed on some family history that might have been lost if they did not speak to each other.

Ralph Yost of Florida emailed about his Krupp family in Big Rapids. One of our members, Cynthia Spurgat Johnson wrote and donated two books to us a couple of years ago, about the Wilhelm Krupp families and Wolf-Stanislawski families that came from West Prussia to Big Rapids. These families lived in the area of Big Rapids called Krupptown. The detail in these books is amazing. Cynthia and her husband traveled back and forth from Wisconsin to Big Rapids and she listed all the homes in the Krupptown area (Bjornsen & other streets up the hill from Swede Hill), who lived in them and there is a lot of detail. They are hard cover volumes and we are grateful to Cynthia for donating a copy to our society. I have used them many times to check the names when someone is researching that area. Ralph Yost from Florida was able to contact her and get more information.

Bill Shust called from Chicago suburbs and was going to attend a memorial service for his aunt in Paris. He wanted to know where a certain farm was and also another one in Osceola County near Marion. I looked on the plat book and was able to find the places, contact the present owners and they gave him a tour of the place. I knew someone who would be going to the Memorial service and alerted them to watch for him and they all ended up having lunch together and chatting. He had left Chicago area at 4am, visited the two farms, two or three cemeteries, met up with the ladies and made it back home late that night. He sure put in a full day with a little prep from MCGS.

An Auburn Hills man emailed about finding out where two of his high school buddies were buried. He knew one had died in Vietnam and the other in California, after he came back from Vietnam. I found their gravesites and another local classmate was able to go with him to visit the graves. I dug a little further and found the parents of the two deceased classmates and the man contacted the brother of one of the men. They reminisced and the brother told the man that his brother had spoke about him many times. The man was so grateful to learn this and to be able to pay his respects to his high school friends. With the extra information (he had not requested), he was able to find out that his buddy also spoke of him to his family...isn't that a nice thought, to know he was remembered.

As Veterans Day approaches, remember to take time to honor your family and friends that served in the military. You can join us this Saturday, November 7th for our 7th annual Veterans Tribute. We take it a step further by not only having our military collection available to the public, but honor our local Veterans by setting up a unique display of items, mostly brought in by Veterans. There is a different display every year. The Vets and the public go from table to table, learning about each others' military days. We feed them lunch too!

If you are near, it is worth coming to see the event and you can drop off your dues or Match Day money. Hope to see some of you there. The event is from 10am to 2pm so stop by for a few minutes or as long as you like to honor our Veterans. If you have items from a family member or your own military days, we would love to have you bring it in for show and tell. Call Maureen at 231-250-5555 with questions or just come to our office that day.

HONOR OUR VETERANS..PRESERVE THEIR HISTORY..HONOR OUR VETERANS!

How you can help....tell others about our collection

Tell your friends about our new link on CommonCorners.com....use

www.commoncorners.com/mcgs to find some of our indexes

Volunteer to do indexing this winter

Send in your family history for our files

Become a helper to do some lookups for us. (Do you have ancestry.com?)

Anyone interested in interviewing people

Anyone interested in making posters or doing advertising.

Send in articles or suggest things you would like to see in the newsletters

Many of these things can be done even though you live in another state or across the state.

This is a list of Prisoner of War Camps in Michigan. The list is taken from a binder that we have in our office. It says the list is based on weekly reports located on NARA microfilm #66-538 (population lists June 1942-June 1946).

The POW camps during WWII included:

Allegan, Allegan County (branch camp under Custer, MI)
Au Train, Alger County (branch camp under Sheridan, sometimes Grant, IL)
Barryton, Mecosta County (branch camp under Custer, MI)
Benton Harbor, Berrien County (branch camp under Custer, MI)
Caro, Tuscola County (branch camp under Custer, MI)
Coloma, Berrien County (branch camp under Custer, MI)
Croswell, Sanilac County (branch camp under Custer, MI)
Custer, (Fort George A.), Augusta, Kalamazoo County (base camp), state land since 1971, National Guard
Dundee, Monroe County, (branch camp under Custer, MI)
Evelyn (Camp), near Wetmore, Alger County (branch camp under Sheridan, sometimes Grant, IL) originally CCC
Freeland, Saginaw County (branch camp under Custer, MI)
Fremont, Newaygo County (branch camp under Custer, MI)
Grant, Newaygo County (branch camp under Custer, MI)
Grosse Ile Township, Wayne County (branch camp under Custer, MI)
Hart, Oceana County (branch camp under Custer, MI)
Jones (Percy) General Hospital, Battle Creek, Calhoun County, MI
Mattawan, Van Buren County (branch camp under Custer, MI)
Mass, Ontonagon County (branch camp under Sheridan, IL)
Milan (USFR) Monroe and Washtenaw Counties, MI
Odessa Lakes, Tuscola County (branch camp under Custer, MI)
Pori, Houghton County (branch camp under Sheridan, IL)
Raco, Chippewa County (branch camp under Sheridan, IL)
Romulus Army Air Field, Wayne County (branch camp under Custer, MI)
Shelby, Oceana County (branch camp under Custer, MI)
Sidnaw (Camp), Houghton County (branch camp under Sheridan, sometimes Grant, IL)
Sparta, Kent County (branch camp under Custer, MI)
Waterloo (Camp), Jackson County (branch camp under Custer, MI)
Wayne (Fort), Detroit, Wayne County, MI
Wetmore, Alger County (branch camp under Sheridan, IL)

Cemeteries:

Fort Custer Post Cemetery, Ft. Custer, MI, now Fort Custer National Cemetery

OTHER MILITARY BINDERS-We have binders on Civil War Union Vets, Pensioners in the late 1800s, Civil War Veteran's Graves, Spanish American War 1898, Michigan POW Camps, World War I, Selective Service Army Lottery 1917, A few different books that list the WWII Honor Roll names that were on the Fairman Building, information on Company E, five big binders of articles from WWII to present day people from Mecosta County area from the local newspapers, American Legion, Desert Storm, National Guard Armory and Vietnam.

Member Gordon Telfer donated two booklets that he put together, one on "The Flying Dutchman" and the other "The Great War WWI 1917-1918", a collection of letters from a WWI soldier.

John Emmons donated the diary of C.E. Emmons II from the Civil War July 1863.

We also have articles by Jim Boyd and Milt Rackham from the Pioneer newspaper with stories of their military years.

We welcome any military history of Mecosta County and surrounding areas. We can copy originals and return to you.

PIONEER FAMILY CERTIFICATES were issued to the following people:

Mary Jo Vincent received one in August 2012 for her Parker family who resided in Green Township in the 1870s. She traveled from California to accept her certificate.

Gary Walter-reissued a certificate at the Cummings Family Reunion in June 2012 in Barryton. Gary was not present, but it was accepted on behalf of the family by Deb Bauman on the steps of her farm.

Minkel families-(two different lines)-one for William and Leila Minkel family, and then another line for Mary Batchelder, Marie Gatehouse, and Alice Humphrey.

Cramer family-certificate given to Richard Cramer of Stanwood. Richard received his certificate at his 80th birthday party.

Stickler family-seven members of the Stickler family received a certificate. That was the most certificates given out for one family line. We met at the Wild Rose for lunch and the presentation.

Judge Ron Nichols received a last minute certificate a couple of years ago to take to his daughter for a Christmas gift! Now there is an idea!!

These certificates are not hard to apply for, bring in your application and we can guide you. A nice certificate is issued and researchers get the recognition for their family and how they came to shape the history of Mecosta County. Get your application going this fall or winter and call Maureen with questions.

DOES ANYONE HAVE COPIES OF OBITS THAT WE MIGHT NOT HAVE, FUNERAL CARDS, OLD PHOTOS, OLD NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS, WE WILL COPY IF YOU WANT THE ORIGINALS BACK. SCRAPBOOKS ARE ESPECIALLY WANTED FOR AREA HISTORY. TELL YOUR FRIENDS WE ARE COLLECTING ITEMS. IT MAKES US BIGGER AND BETTER. STOP BY YOURSELF AND SEE HOW MUCH WE HAVE ADDED TO OUR COLLECTION.

DO YOU HAVE A LISTS OR PHOTOS OF OLD BUSINESSES IN MECOSTA COUNTY FOR REMUS, ALTONA, MORLEY, STANWOOD, BARRYTON, MECOSTA OR PARIS? SEND THEM IN TO US TO INCLUDE IN OUR BUSINESS BOOKS.

YOU CAN EMAIL THEM TO US OR MAIL TO MCGS, P.O. BOX 1068, BIG RAPIDS, MI 49307.

CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE www.commoncorners.com/mcgs The Pioneer certificate application and an index for our over 20,873 obits is on the site. We get emails and letters from all over the USA from people that are looking for Mecosta Co. obits.

Donations from the last two years:

Thomas Bennett of Stanwood, former member of MCGS and former editor of the newsletter, passed away in 2012. His daughter has donated some items from his collection to us. Included were a couple of 1900 plat map books, old newspapers and many land records for the townships in Mecosta Co. We will have a special section that will have the Thomas Bennett collection. Tom was a great historian and loved to save. I am sure we will find some great things and we assure the family that we will keep his collection in good order.

The daughter of the late Walter Welsh of Round Lake in Mecosta also donated items from Walter's collection. We are going through those items to see if there are things that can go to their local library or the group in charge of the Little River school. Walter used to participate in our Veterans Tribute by bringing an enlarged version of the Honor Roll that was painted on the side of the Fairman building. He was instrumental in helping with a booklet that listed all the names on the wall and where they were located. We thank his daughter, Leslie Lewis for trusting us with some of his collection.

For other donations, we thank the following:

Ed Burch for donating some items from his years as Mayor of Big Rapids and a history book of Michigan State College 1855-1955, on the front it says Centennial Wolverine...hmmm. I just looked up the history of that and from 1910-1975, the yearbook was called the Wolverine. It explains that there was not the athletic rivalries that there are now. Later they decided that the U of M Wolverines had a stronger claim to the Wolverine name and Michigan State College, later Michigan State University changed their yearbook to the Red Cedar Log in 1976. The book weighs almost 8 lbs. (I weighed it).

Jim Markey of Big Rapids donated a box of old photos, possibly from the 1920s. They were found in a rental house that he had on Mechanic St. They appear to be singers and big bands that played in that era. Some are autographed. We are going to research where they may have played. One thought is Idlewild, but there is a picture of a town along a river and that may give us a clue. Anyone interested in seeing them and helping us solve the mystery, call Maureen or stop by the office.

Evelyn Dunn brought in a shoe-box sized plastic box filled to the brim with obits for us to copy!

We received a photo from David Doss of Allen Park. He picked up the photo at a flea market in Royal Oak, dated Spring 1900. It shows three men up to their knees in water, digging a drainage ditch perhaps. The photographer is J.B. King & Son, Emerald, Michigan. Emerald is another of those towns of yesteryear. It was located in Chippewa township, near Pogy Lake. We have a binder on Emerald and welcome donations if anyone has more info on this village. The book has a section that talks about some of the families speaking Gaelic, as they had arrived recently from Scotland.

Ever heard of Bingen? That is a settlement that was located about 3 miles west of the current Remus village. The late local historian Jim Wood had a book that mentioned many little settlements in Mecosta County that no longer exist. If anyone has info on these lost areas, please email us. We would love to collect any info we can so that these areas are not forgotten.

DATES TO REMEMBER

NEXT SPECIAL SATURDAY SESSION WILL BE NOV. 7TH FROM 10AM TO 2PM OR OPEN BY APPT. 231-250-5555.

Looking ahead... We want to make genealogy interesting and educational, so... Saturday, December 12th, we will invite families to bring their out-of-town guests or kids to show them all of our historical articles. I will also make some evenings available to open the office for this purpose, especially near Christmas time. If you know of someone who has wanted to stop by, get me their name and I will send out a special invite.

See what Mecosta Co. memories we have and bring them home for the holidays. All ages welcome.



P.O. Box 1068
Big Rapids, MI 49307
(Physical address is
424 N. Fourth Ave)

Send in your dues or donation to MCGS , P.O. BOX 1068, BIG RAPIDS, MI 49307

NAME AND ADDRESS _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

PHONE # _____ NAMES RESEARCHING _____

\$15 dues _____

Other donation _____

_____ I have collections of family history research to donate

_____ I have collections of obits, funeral cards, old newspapers to donate

_____ Misc. donation for coffee, cookies, refreshments for Veterans Tribute, or Saturday special sessions.

Thanks for your donations and dues money. Send us a note if you would like to see us do other special events, classes. We welcome the input and suggestions.