



Connections

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McHenry County Illinois Genealogical Society Newsletter



Volume XL, Number 9

mcigs@mcigs.org

September 2021

September Meeting

September 9, 2021

Jan Polep, 1st V. P. - Program Chair



*“Back to School:
Making the Most of
School Records”*
presented by Tina
Beaird.

Tina Beaird will share the many ways you can access cool details about your ancestors by using school records like yearbooks, school schedules, teacher’s registers, school newspapers, alumni directories and much more.

Tina is the owner of Tamarack Genealogy and is the Genealogy/Local History Librarian at the Plainfield Public Library. She lectures nationally on military research, genealogical methodology, Scottish records, and archival preservation. She is a governing board member of the Illinois State Genealogical Society, the Northern Illinois Historical League, and the Illinois State

Historical Records Advisory Board. Tina volunteers her time with several local historical and genealogical societies scanning and indexing historic records. Occasionally, she finds time to research her own family tree, which she has been pursuing for over 25 years.

In Memoriam

One of our founding members, Alice Wagner, died on 4 August 2021 in Seymour, Wisconsin, at the age of 82.

Alice was instrumental in getting MCIIGS off the ground and served as President of the society for four years. One of her passions was to preserve the records of McHenry County and she worked on several projects to that end, the most recent one being the indexing of the Saunders Funeral Home records. She was also instrumental in organizing our Early Settlers Program and was chair of that until she moved to Wisconsin when her health began to deteriorate.

We extend our sympathies to Alice’s family and friends.

A Few Words From the President...

I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Laurie Stage, and I accepted the position of President with MCIGS in July 2021, after having been on the board for several years. Most recently I was the 2nd Vice President in charge of Membership. I'm so excited to lead this group. I'd like to share updates on some of the most recent events going on with the MCIGS Board.

During our August meeting (8/26/21) Bill Wheeler was appointed to the role of 2nd Vice President and Mike Reall was appointed as the Webmaster. This leaves one Director position open. A Director is asked to attend board meetings, listen, provide input and vote on issues. We meet the 3rd Thursday of the month. Please feel free to contact me if you're looking for more information. We'd really love to have this position filled as soon as possible.

Due to several schedule conflicts, we agreed to move our August board meeting to 8/26/21. I'd like to share a few of the things we worked on at the meeting. The board will be reviewing the website and making changes to a few components. Mike Reall wants to incorporate his love of personal history by offering to assist our members with creating and sharing their personal histories. We also put our heads together to generate ideas and topics for MCIGS General Monthly meetings. We are looking at finding a location on our website so that our monthly board meeting minutes can be

made available to you. I'll keep you updated on our progress!

Stay tuned to learn about what your MCIGS Board is up to. Please feel free to share your thoughts and suggestions with me. I can be reached at president@mcigs.org

I want to wish you all a happy and safe Labor Day Celebration!

~ Laurie

August Meeting Review

Nancy Gaynor

Our August speaker came to us via a partnership with the Illinois Humanities Road Scholars Speakers Bureau, supported in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Illinois General Assembly. Katherine Hamilton-Smith presented her program "The Happy Invention: The History of Picture Postcards" which was based on her work as curator of the Curt Teich Postcard Archives at the Lake County Forest Preserve District.

Decorated envelopes and sheets of paper were first introduced in the 1860's, with the early images usually limited to well-known public buildings like the U S Capitol.

Correspondence cards offered space for an address and postage, with the other side blank for advertising or notes.

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In 1893, at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, traditional picture postcards were introduced showing the marvels to be found there.

The Paris Exposition in 1899 and the completion of the Eiffel Tower, postcards were introduced. They were sold at the top of the Tower, postmarked, and mailed from there.

In 1907 the postcards restricted the writing to the picture side and people did make full use of the space, sometime writing horizontally, then writing over that vertically. It was called “cross writing” and was common during the Victorian era.

Many companies offered these postcards over time. One man, Curt Otto Teich, owner of a printing company in Chicago offered all kinds of “jobber printing” to his customers. Opening in 1898, his company, Curt Teich & Company, became the world’s largest producer of picture postcards, being best known for his “Greeting from...” cards. By 1920 the company employed over 900 art and design school graduates.

The 1930’s saw the emergence of the “tourism” postcards. Cards sent from places visited were popular mementos to send to family and friends. Over 10,000 municipalities from the United States, Canada, Central and South America were depicted by Teich postcards. The “Greetings from...”

postcards were popular from the 1930s-1950. These large letter cards showcased a variety of images from specific locations. The “real photo postcard” showed life as it was with no retouching or artistic finishes

that had been popular in the early 20th century.

Postcards not only depicted places visited, but they also became a popular way to showcase everyday life, showing fashion trends and art among other topics.

Postcards became a popular collectible along the way. Collector’s parties and clubs sprouted up around the world. Many of us probably have a few in our own collections. My father collected postcards of the small tourist town he represented as the head of the local Chamber of Commerce.

The Teich Company closed in 1978 and donated their unique archives to the Lake County Discovery Museum. The company

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Early Settler

Contributed by Claudia Conroy

Joyce Oelkers Peterson has recently earned an Early Settler Certificate for proving she is a direct descendant of Richard Bradford Simpkins, who settled in McHenry County about 1835. Joyce used mostly newspaper articles and obituaries to show the continued relationships between herself and Richard Simpkins.

Richard Bradford Simpkins born 1810 in PA and died in Marengo 1884.

Richard’s daughter, Phoebe “Elizabeth” Simpkins Mead Fenton, born 1838 in Coral Township, died 1916 in Marengo.

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Elizabeth's daughter was Eva Lynn Mead Torman, born 1872 Seneca Township and died in 1954 in Hartland Township.

Eva's son Adelbert "Del" Edwin Torman was born in Seneca Township in 1892 and died in Minnesota in 1976.

Del's daughter was Delores Donna Torman Oelkers who was born in Minnesota in 1921 and died there in 2015.

Delores's daughter, Joyce, is the applicant.

We congratulate Joyce on her research and receiving the certificate.

If you are interested in an Early Settler Certificate, check out our [website](#) for details.

Upcoming Events

Please note that the following listed events may be in-person, via Zoom or a hybrid. Be sure to contact society. All times are CDT.

September 7, 2021 – 10:00 AM -Elgin Genealogical Society, "How I Use My DNA in My Genealogy Search"- Caron Primas Brennan info@elginroots.com

September 14, 2021 – 7:00 pm– Lake County Illinois Genealogical Society, "Discovering Your UK/Irish Roots On-line: Websites and Resources for English, Welsh, Irish and Scottish Ancestry" – Debra Dudek LCIGS1170@gmail.com.

September 18- 10:00 AM– British Interest Group of Wisconsin and Illinois, "Maps and Trails of the 17th to 19th Centuries" – Tina Baird – bigwill.org

Personal History is Family History

By
Mike Reall, Webmaster

Family history can be really fun. But if you're like me, it can also be very intimidating and frustrating. First of all, there's the name "Genealogy." I'm finally to the point where I don't have to look it up just to spell it (I always wonder if there's an "o" or an "a" right before the "l").

The fun part is learning about my heritage. Knowing where my ancestors came from is interesting as I think about what they could have been going through during major historic events of the time.

But my favorite part is reading an ancestor's history. I love thinking about their thoughts and feelings during key successes or what emotions they were experiencing as they went through extremely difficult times.

For example, my ancestor David Ross was part of the westward pioneer movement in the middle of the 19th century. He filled the role of travel agent for hundreds of people making the trek. David and another man, Eli Kelsey, chartered a cheap, dilapidated steamer in April 1852, the [Saluda](#), to carry 90 of their passengers (mostly from Great Britain) on the Missouri River to Council Bluffs, IA.

After several failed attempts at rounding a tight bend in the river near Lexington, MO, Captain Belt, a stubborn part-owner of the steamer, ignorantly insisted on one final attempt. He started building up steam for his

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final push when the boilers went dry. As cold water was pumped into the red-hot boilers, they exploded. Of the total 175 passengers on the steamer, only 40-50 survived.

David was thrown into the middle of the river and eventually pulled to shore. After two months of recovery, he continued his journey westward with his wife and two daughters.

As I read this experience, I can only imagine the intense emotions David felt when he first realized what happened. Lying there on the river shore, I'm sure he immediately felt concern for his own family. Then, soon after, concern for the families he was helping. As time passed, I imagine there was guilt for chartering the boat and a million "what if" scenarios that went through his mind. How did he overcome this?

There are many other stories in my family history. I love reading all of them.

However, it also makes me wonder about all my ancestors I know nothing about. The frustrating part of family history is hitting roadblocks. Some people didn't keep journals, or the journals got lost or destroyed. Some were very private so there are only second-hand accounts of their experiences, if any. Little to no information makes it nearly impossible to learn about the individual as well as find links to other related ancestors. And it's where I frequently get lost.

But there's something I can do to help. I can leave a rich history for my descendants.

Developing a complete personal history is a critical component of family history work.

When we're young and invincible, it can be tough to think about recording our history. As we grow older and feel more vulnerable, thoughts of our legacy start to become more real. The sooner we start [recording our personal history](#), the more complete it can become - and the more our [family down the line can connect with our life](#).

A few things are guaranteed in life: taxes, death, and running into dead-ends when working on family history. Working on my personal history allows me to continue being involved, [provides a fun reprieve](#) from the trauma of the dead-end and provides valuable information for future generations to enjoy.

August Meeting Review

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had kept a copy of every postcard they produced which was an historical recap of the company, beneficial to anyone doing historic research, including genealogists.

After the museum obtained the collection, they hired Ms. Hamilton-Smith as curator and archivist for the collection and postcards have been added, most recently with the acquisition of Leonard Lauder's personal collection.

By 2016 the Discovery Museum donated the entire collection to the Newberry Library in Chicago and in a few months after acquisition, the collection was available to researchers.

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Ms. Hamilton-Smith had an interesting array of postcards produced by the Teich Company, highlighting our hometowns, fashion, and art, giving a view of life in the past.

Early McHenry County Lawyers

Continued from August Newsletter

From History of McHenry County Illinois, Vol. I, 1922 (Munsell Publishing Company, Chicago)

John A Parrish – was born in New York in 1825. He attended the New York Normal School in Albany, New York and then became a schoolteacher. His health failing in 1859, he came to Illinois and attained distinction in scholastic circles at Aurora and Woodstock, while studying law. He was admitted to the bar and was engaged in a general legal practice in McHenry until his death in 1882. He was very successful as a pension agent and as an attorney in insurance cases. He amassed considerable property.

William Jackson – was born in 1808 in Connecticut. He accompanied his family to Ashtabula, Ohio in 1832. His father came to McHenry County about 1843. William engaged in lumbering but then started reading law in 1828. He located in Algonquin about 1838 and was admitted to the bar in 1859. Eventually he moved to Nunda where he had a general law practice and served as justice of the peace for 16 years. Twice he was elected associate judge and later was appointed judge. He was a

Democrat and a 50-year member of the Christian Church.

Benjamin N Smith- was born in McHenry County in 1838, the son of Nathaniel Smith, a county pioneer. He received his education in both Illinois and Wisconsin. In 1864, he enlisted in Company E, Ninety-fifth Illinois Volunteer Infantry, during the Civil War. In April 1866 he graduated from the law department of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He returned to McHenry County and immediately opened a law office in Woodstock. In 1869, he was elected county judge and held that office for more than a dozen years and was for four years master-in-chancery. He was a Mason, a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Grand Army of the Republic, and the Ancient Order of United Workmen.

John M Southworth- was born in Vermont in 1839 and came to McHenry in 1858. In April 1861, he enlisted in the Seventh Illinois Volunteer Infantry. Later he re-enlisted in another infantry regiment, serving for a period of over five years and obtaining the rank of Major. He was elected sheriff in McHenry County in 1866 and clerk of the circuit court, in 1868. In 1873 he began practicing law in Woodstock, then in the 1880s in Chicago. He was appointed commissioner of the Illinois Penitentiary.

James A Slavin – was born in McHenry County and lived his whole life in the county. He was ranked among the best lawyers of his day and generation. He died 6 February 1875 at the age of 38 years. Although interested in state and national affairs, he kept out of politics, and oftentimes refused nomination for office, preferring to devote all of his time and energy to the law.

**McHenry County Illinois Genealogical
Society
Board of Directors
2021**

OFFICERS:

President: Laurie Stage –
president@mcigs.org

1st V. P. Programs - Jan Polep –
jan.polep@mcigs.org

2nd V. P Membership – Bill Wheeler –
bill.wheeler@mcigs.org

Secretary – Claudia Conroy -
claudia.conroy@mcigs.org

Treasurer – Tami Allred –
tami.allred@mcigs.org

BOARD DIRECTORS:

Ann L Wells –Newsletter Editor
ann.wells@mcigs.org or
annwells@yahoo.com

Dave Stumpf –dave.stumpf@mcigs.org

Nancy Gaynor – Librarian
nancy.gaynor@mcigs.org

Mike Reall – Webmaster
mike.reall@mcigs.org

Director - Vacant

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Sue Durbin – Volunteer Chair
sld@suedurbin.com

MCIGS Board Recap**August Meeting**

Members present: Laurie Stage, Jan Polep, Bill Wheeler, Claudia Conroy, Nancy Gaynor, Dave Stumpf, Mike Reall and Ann Wells. Absent: Tami Allred

Bill Wheeler was appointed as 2nd V P- Membership and Mike Reall was appointed as Webmaster; both approved by the board.

Jan Polep, Program Chair has asked for suggestions for future meetings. The board has been asked to submit ideas of topics and speakers. Members' suggestions are also welcome.

Financial Report as of 31 July 2021:

Balances:	
Savings	0
Checking	6375.56
Edward Jones	127,850.20

Early McHenry County Physicians

From History of McHenry County Illinois, Vol. I, 1922 (Munsell Publishing Company, Chicago)

Dr Christy G Wheeler- believed to be the first doctor in McHenry County. He settled in the county about 1837. He was born in Dunbarton, New Hampshire in 1811. Supposedly his family was the first white family to settle in McHenry County. While he may or may not have been an educated physician, he owned a general merchandise store and had a post office. He was also Recorder of Deeds, an office he held until his death 28 March 1842.

Dr V B Anderson – was born in Girard, Pennsylvania in 1847 and moved to Woodstock with his family in 1854. He read medicine under Dr J Northup and then entered Rush Medical College in Chicago. He was a physician in Ford County, Illinois, Buchanan County, Iowa and then McHenry before returning to Woodstock.

Dr S Fillmore Bennett – was born in Erie County, New York in 1836 and came to Illinois as a toddler. He was a teacher in Wauconda in 1854 then entered the University of Michigan in 1856 and returned to McHenry County, locating in Richmond where he again taught school. He was in the Union Army during the Civil War and upon returning to McHenry County, entered Rush Medical College in Chicago, and graduated in 1874. He again returned to Richmond and began practicing medicine. For many years, he was a United States pension examiner and surgeon. Dr Bennett was also interested in music and composed “The Sweet Bye and Bye” and J P Webster wrote the music. The

song was translated into many foreign languages.

Dr Horace W Johnson – was the first physician in Harvard and came to the county in about 1856. Dr Johnson was born in New York City, 16 December 1810. He graduated from Rutgers College in New Jersey and first began practicing medicine in New York City. In 1836 he went to Kenosha, Wisconsin, then in 1856 to McHenry County. He practiced medicine in Harvard until his death 24 February 1871. His son, C M Johnson also became a physician.

Dr Royal Sykes – was from Vermont and located in Hebron in 1848. He was a successful physician in Hebron until 1876 when he went to Chicago.

Dr J H Giddings – was a doctor in Hebron from 1858 until the Civil War when he enlisted. His health failed during the war years, and he returned to Hebron but only remained a short time.

Dr E O Gratton – settled in Hebron in fall of 1865, coming from New York. He remained in Hebron for a number of years.

To be continued

