

# WOOD COUNTY



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## CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

### *Hello Fellow Genealogists!*

Hello again to all the faithful genealogists out there. It is bitterly cold out, which is a good time to check your files and organize or reorganize your research. It is also a good time to find new information through the various family tree websites out there and incorporate that information into your various families.

Personally, I have started reorganizing and redoing much of my collection. This is due to finding a lot of new and interesting material on several family members.

On another note—there are a number of upcoming conferences and seminars over the next couple of months. There is a Family History Conference at the Family History Center in Wausau on May 18. Gene-A-Rama is scheduled for April 5 and 6 at the Plaza Hotel & Suites in

Wausau. If you want to venture further south, the National Genealogical Society's Family History Conference will be in Las Vegas, Nevada, on May 8-11. Please check further in this newsletter for more information on all of the above conferences & seminars.

Finally, as many of you are noting, more states are restricting or closing their records due to political and privacy issues. This trend is further encroaching on our interest in locating our ancestors and other family members. We have to search as much as possible now before we lose our chances in the future.

*Happy Hunting!*

*Eugene Meier*

## FAMILYSEARCH.ORG UPDATE

There are another 10.5 million reasons to check out the records on FamilySearch.org and keep checking them. A recent update by FamilySearch said they had added 10.5 million records in the last two weeks! The largest portion of this update includes 8,613,673 images added to the New York probate records from 1679 to 1971, increasing this collection's images by 63 percent! Due to the fact that so many of our ancestors landed in New York

and maybe stayed awhile before heading "out west" leads me to believe that one of us should find something valuable in these records!

Search this record collection and more than 3.5 billion other records for free at FamilySearch.org.

Why are you still sitting here reading this newsletter? Finish this later—get searching!  
*The Editor*

### HEART WELCOME!

We welcome three new members to our Society.

We'd like to extend a Heart welcome to Rose M. Boggs of Milwaukee, WI; her e-mail is rmb618@hotmail.com. She was asking when and where our meetings are held, so we hope to see her at a meeting.

We'd also like to extend a large Heart welcome to Mike and Kim Tomczyk of Sun Prairie, WI.

If you see any of these at a meeting, please give them a "Heart" welcome!

### YOUR HELP IS NEEDED!

Please contact our Program Chair, Tina Krummel, with your ideas for programs for the remainder of this year. I don't like to see "program to be announced" on our Calendar of Events.

The nominating committee will be seeking new blood for the Society offices. Please consider volunteering to run for one of them. None of the officer duties are exceptionally difficult! Please volunteer!

### MEMBER BIOGRAPHY— OF AND BY BEV POLANSKY

*Roots of member Beverly Schuyler Pergrossi Polansky:*

I was born in Sturgeon Bay, Door County, Wisconsin. My father was Philip (Scotty) Schuyler and my mother was Olive Warwick. My paternal grandparents were Dr. Chauncey Schuyler (famous horse doctor) and Charlotte Clark. With the help of my cousins from Canada and all over the USA, we put the Schuyler Family History together. Another cousin, Judy Clark Phillips, developed the Clark family side.

My maternal grandparents were Wesley Warwick and Mary Emma Blasier, children of James Warwick and Louisa Decanter. James Warwick was the son of George Warwick and Jane Peacock. Their other son, my great uncle George Warwick, served in the Civil War and is buried in the GAR plot in Manitowoc.

My great-grandmother, Louisa, later married William

Darling and became the wife of a Civil War Veteran, prior local lighthouse keeper, and later on a politician.

A cousin, Marianne Rose, and I put together the Warwick, Blasier, and Decanter family trees.

I married a Navy man named Charles Pergrossi and we had two sons. I did a Pergrossi family history. I found more than I expected on Ancestry.

I later married a local of Wisconsin Rapids, David Polansky, and had a son. David was the son of Carl Polansky, Sr., and Ella Schroeder.

Since retiring from Sentry Insurance in 2009, I began painting. In my painting class I met Joy Siekert who is currently living in the old Polansky homestead. She put me in touch with her niece and this cousin sent me home with a box of pictures and albums. I was able to put the Polansky family tree together and made several albums for my

### RESEARCH REPORT

Diantha reported she had only one inquiry and one thank-you over the last few months:

- ◆ Maureen McCarty contacted the South Wood County Historical Corporation regarding Reed Gordon Moor, the first mayor of Centralia. SWCHC referred her to our Society. Diantha researched him for Ms. McCarty.
- ◆ Di mentioned she got a thank you from Betty Reichel for all the information she found on our web site. Di will forward it to Encourage so they can see that their donation toward our web site is being put to good use.

*Diantha Neinfeldt, Research Committee Chair*

## **DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY TRACED IN BRIDGE HISTORY WISCONSIN RAPIDS DAILY TRIBUNE, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1922**

### **TRANSITION FROM PRIMITIVE FERRY OF LITTLE OVER FIFTY YEARS AGO TO PRESENT STRUCTURE SYMBOLIZES PROGRESS.**

From a primitive current-propelled ferry boat to the broad concrete and steel structure which is to be dedicated tomorrow is the transition of little more than 50 years which typifies the development of Wisconsin Rapids from a tiny back woods village to the flourishing city of today. From the earliest days, the present city of Wisconsin Rapids has consisted of two settlements, one on each side of the river, and with their growth and union has come a steady improvement of the facilities for crossing from one to the other, culminating in the Grand Avenue bridge which with its broad roadway and street car service banishes the barrier between the two sections.

As transportation facilities are an accurate index to the prosperity and progressiveness of a community, so does the history of successive methods of crossing the river trace the growth of Wisconsin Rapids.

### **LITTLE TRAVEL AT FIRST**

In the first years of the settlement at the foot of the "Grand Rapids of the Wisconsin," during the thirties, forties, and early fifties of the last century, there was little need of ferry or bridge or any public means of crossing the river. Travel was slight in those days, and the few pioneers who had settled here in the midst of the pine forests were content in the main to stay on the side where they had located. Every man had his own flatboat, dugout, or Indian bark canoe, and thus the need for communication between the two sides was adequately cared for without any regular provision for traffic between the two.

### **FERRY CAME IN FIFTIES**

Although owners of boats had conducted a casual ferry business during the years previous, the first ferry to be established as a commercial proposition until 1857 or '58 when Ensebe LaVigne, under a charter from the state, commenced a regular service. LaVigne's boat, a big flat-bottomed affair, was op-

erated on a block and tackle attachment to a heavy overhead cable. Motive power was obtained from the current of the river by turning the broad side of the boat at an angle so that the force of the water rushing down stream pushed the boat across. Built of heavy timbers and planks, it was about thirty feet long by sixteen long, with a depth of about four feet. A railing about four feet high was built along the sides but the ends were left open to permit teams to be driven on to the deck. It landed near the present location of the Herschleb Bakery on the east side of the river, and just above where the MacKinnon block now stands on the west side.

### **NEEVES BUILT FIRST BRIDGE**

This primitive method of transportation served for about ten years until George Neeves, one of the enterprising business men of the early days, was granted a charter by the Wisconsin legislature to "construct a toll bridge over the Wisconsin River at some point near the foot of Grand Rapids, to open and operate the same for public use and travel, and to collect toll therefore. A charge of 5 cents for foot passengers and 25 cents for teams and vehicles was authorized, which Neeves put into effect when he opened his bridge, but which were later greatly reduced as traffic increased. The opening of the bridge put an end to the ferry business, but many of the thrifty citizens of those days who owned their own boats used them to cross back and forth, rather than pay the charges assessed upon those who crossed on the bridge.

As the twin cities of Centralia and Grand Rapids, which then included a very large proportion of Wood County, continued to grow and prosper, it seemed advisable for the county to take over the bridge under the provisions of the charter provided for such purchase and make it free to the public. (Cont'd on Page 1132)

(Cont'd from Page 1131)

The growth of the communities, with the attendant rapid increase in the volume of traffic, however, had made the bridge a decidedly profitable thing for Neeves, and he fought the

## MEETING SUMMARIES

Dec 2012—Members shared some old photographs of their families' Christmas celebrations of years past. January's program will be Brick Wall Demolition by Diantha and Bev. Paypal is now up and running on our web site; several test deposits and withdrawals were done successfully by Paypal. Members have used it already also. Volumes I and IV of the old marriage records are now on our web site. Discussion centered around putting the history of the cemeteries on the main cemetery research page in place of the current plat map. Since directions are already listed, this was thought to be a good idea. Volunteers are working at indexing the early birth records at the courthouse to be put on line also. The South Wood County Historical Corporation is looking for Civil War ancestor stories.

Jan 2013—Diantha Neinfeldt and Bev Peaslee gave demonstrations on how best to use FamilySearch and Google as options for finding ancestors. Arlene reported that we are getting some exchange newsletters via e-mail to the web site. Discussion focused around what to do with them. It would be

too expensive to print them out as some are quite lengthy. It was decided that those who are interested in these (they are the Lafayette and Rock County newsletters) should ask Diantha to forward the newsletters to them. Newsletters from out of the area are kept in the file cabinets in the Local History Corner for three years. Ideas for books in memory of Dave Billmeyer and Don Krohn are needed. Any books that we donate to the library are considered their property and we do not have first choice if they decide to put them out for resale. Bev Peaslee has reserved the All-Purpose Room in the library for six meetings of the newspaper indexers. Training will be available as well as time for proofreading and data entry. See an article about this later in the newsletter for more information. Dates for possible brat fries were tossed around. It was tentatively thought that earlier in May would be better rather than too close to Memorial Day.

*(Cont'd on Page 1133)*

*(Cont'd from Page 1132)*

Feb 2013—Billy Parker came dressed as Col.

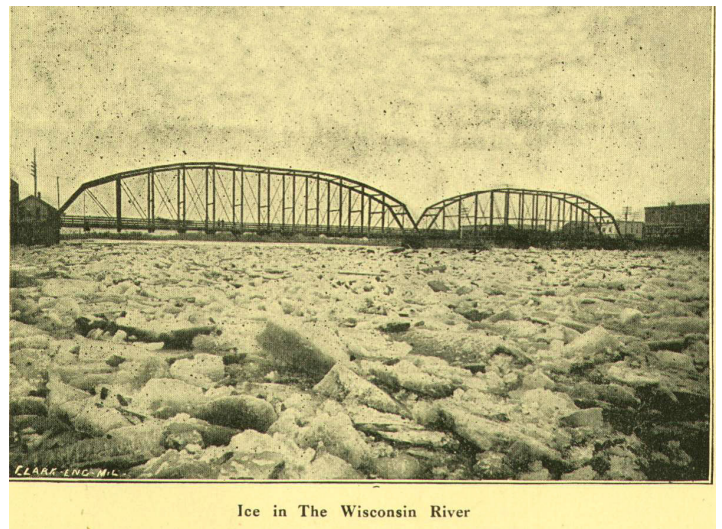
## DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY, CONT'D.

purchase plan energetically, first in the county board and later in the courts.

### CARRIED OUT BY ICE

The transfer was finally made, however, and the bridge, built over and strengthened, was opened to the public. This bridge, known as the Howe Truss Bridge, served satisfactorily for many years until 1888 when a section of it was carried out by the great ice jam of April of that year, ruining it practically beyond repair.

*THIS ARTICLE WILL BE CONTINUED...  
IN THE JUNE 2013 WOOD COUNTY ROOTS.*



Ice in The Wisconsin River

Above is a postcard of an ice jam in the Wisconsin River. I'm not sure it is the one of April of 1888 but I'm sure it resembled this. Citizens used to hold contests to guess when the ice would go out of the river each year.

*The Editor*

## MEMBER BIO—OF AND BY BEV POLANSKY, CONT'D.

sons and some of the Polansky lines. I am still trying to find a copy of Gottfried Polansky's (aka Polensky) death certificate. He died 16 Apr 1888 and is buried in St. John's Lutheran Church cemetery in the Town of Sigel, Wisconsin. At that time, it was not required that a death certificate be filed. It is not at the courthouse. I will next check church records.

Gottfried Polansky's wife's name was Wilhelmena. It was quite exciting to find her maiden name, Schimmelpfenig, on her death certificate. They were both born in West Prussia.

Researching never ends and remains exciting when I make a new connection.

I am the current treasurer and I am chairman of the committee for the upcoming 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of HOWGS.

If you belong to HOWGS, then you know we are a very busy group of people and there is still a lot to do.

*Beverly Polansky*

## FIRST ROAD TO RUDOLPH

The first road to Rudolph came out of Wisconsin Rapids along Third Avenue, near the log piles, following the river past Redings and Staeges, turned north past the Welsh place, past Hamm's, through Lessig's farm, through the stone quarry, across Schmick's place, through the Brahmsteadt place, and came out on the cross road near the Brahmsteadt and Buschbom line, crossed the Joe Walloch forty, and went into Sigel on the Walloch and Nash line. The road followed the high ridges.

The second road branched off near the stone quarry, crossed the McCarthy farm, and went north as far as the Clark & Scott mill. They had no bridge across the creek. The creek was forded. No bridge was built because the creek was used for floating logs each spring. The last log drive down Mosquito Creek was taken down by Jim Rouhan in 1888.

*This is an excerpt from a speech by Mrs. W. H. Warner subsequently printed in the Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune on March 22, 1927.*

## MEETING SUMMARIES, CONT'D.

James Alban of the 18th Wisconsin. He described the various parts of his uniform and his membership in the Sons of Union Veterans. A number of donations were received in memory of a recently deceased charter member Grace Tomscyck. A book in memory of Grace will also be donated to the library. Suggestions are needed. Indexing session is to be held tomorrow. Diantha is done with the marriages through 1908. She will check to see if the marriages through 1920 can be added to the web site directly from their current format. The first meeting of the 40th Anniversary Committee was held in January. Bev Polansky is the chair. The committee members are Eugene Meier, Doreen Dimick, Joyce Keehn, and Myra Sweet. A tentative date of Tuesday, May 13, 2014, was suggested for the celebratory event. Please give ideas and sug-

gestions to the committee members regarding location, menu, program, etc. Myra Sweet will be the nominating committee for next year's officers. Please be ready to volunteer when she calls you. The tentative dates for the brat fries are May 15 at Pioneer Bank and May 17 at Walmart. Diantha brought up changing our meeting time to some time during the day so more of the older members would come. As some members are still working, this would not work out for them. Doreen proposed having evening meetings in the spring and fall when it is lighter out and have some daytime meetings in the winter when it is dark out. This will be discussed further.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**12 Mar 2013**      **Heart O' Wisconsin Genealogical Society meeting at 6:30 p.m. at the McMillan Memorial Library in Wisconsin Rapids.** Program to be announced.

**5-6 Apr 2013**      **Gene-A-Rama, Putting It All Together: Methodology and Resources, at the Plaza Hotel & Suites, Wausau, WI. Sponsored by Wisconsin State Genealogical Society and the Marshfield Area Genealogy Group.** Full details are out on [www.wsgs.org](http://www.wsgs.org). Download a registration form and come and join us! Some of the topics are: Organizing Your Genealogical Materials: Methods to Keep It Current, the Area Research Center Network, Genealogy in BadgerLink, Your Anytime Library, Tracing Private Ryan: WWII Research, NUCMC & Its Cousins: Keys to "Lost" Ancestral Records, and many, many more.

**9 Apr 2013**      **Heart O' Wisconsin Genealogical Society meeting at 6:30 p.m. at the McMillan Memorial Library in Wisconsin Rapids.** Program to be announced.

**14 May 2013**      **Heart O' Wisconsin Genealogical Society meeting at 6:30 p.m. at the McMillan Memorial Library in Wisconsin Rapids.** Program to be announced.

**8-11 May 2013**      **National Genealogical Society's 2013 Family History Conference, Building New Bridges, at the LVH-Las Vegas Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada.** There are way too many topics being covered at this conference to cover here. Check out their website, [www.ngsgenealogy.org](http://www.ngsgenealogy.org), for the online program and brochure. It looks like a very good conference. If you've never been to one of these, I would encourage you to attend as it is quite a learning experience.

**18 May 2013**      **Family History Conference at the Wausau Family History Center, 5405 Rib Mountain Drive, Wausau, WI.** The keynote speaker is Lori Bessler speaking via webinar on "Preparing to Visit the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison." Next you will have a choice of three topics—Getting Started in Family History, Computer Security, or Danish Research.

After lunch three more topics in the first session include Marathon County Historical Society, Reading Russian, or Find A Grave. The final trio of sessions will be FamilySearch.org, Land Records, and the 1940 Census. This seminar is still free, but please register so they will have enough hand-outs. E-mail your registration information (Name, County, and State only) to [family.history.wi@gmail.com](mailto:family.history.wi@gmail.com).

**11 Jun 2013**      **Heart O' Wisconsin Genealogical Society meeting and cemetery walk at 6:00 p.m. at Green Hill Cemetery in the Town of Saratoga.** Fred Murray will lead us on a tour of the Green Hill Cemetery (on County Road Z) in the Town of Saratoga. More details to follow.

## *IN MEMORIAM* *GRACE TOMSEYK*

Our genealogical society has lost another charter member with the passing of Grace on January 2, 2013. We are all very saddened to hear of her death.

The Heart O' Wisconsin Genealogical Society was formed in September of 1974 by a group of 20 like-minded individuals. Grace was one of those 20. Although Grace never held an elected office, she was a very active member behind the scenes, always encouraging and helping fellow members.

Grace was involved with the following Society projects: (1) Recording all Wood County cemeteries, from one grave to 8,000 graves from 1974-1986. (2) Co-Chair of a 1978 committee indexing the Wood County Reporter. (3) Co-Chair of a 1980 committee to index all old newspapers located at McMillan Memorial Library. (4) Indexing Wood County plat books in 1984.

(5) Survey of governmental records from 1989-1993.

Grace was very quiet and soft spoken but she was always there to help new members get acclimated to the Society and to genealogy in general. As you can see by her involvement in the projects listed above, she was a very active member of our Society.

We will all miss Grace very much.



## **AMATEUR BEATS GOVERNMENT!**

One computer expert working alone has built a collection of digitized newspapers that rivals one created by a federal bureaucracy. Tom Tryniski's site presently has more than 22 million old New York State historical newspaper pages. He is now adding newspapers from other states. By contrast, the Library of Congress' site, Chronicling America, has only 5 million pages and only half as many views accessed by visitors to the site!

He is adding new content at a rate of about a quarter million pages per month!

You can access Tom's site at <http://fultonhistory.com>. Check this site out (this is one of Diantha's favorites)! Again, New York State here we come!

**MEMBERSHIP FORM**  
**DETACH AND MAIL WITH A CHECK FOR \$15 PAYABLE TO:**  
**HEART O' WISCONSIN GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY**  
**P.O. Box 516**  
**WISCONSIN RAPIDS WI 54495-0516**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**New members only:** You may have **one** free surname search if you reside outside of Wood County, WI (a \$10 value).

Surname you would like researched: \_\_\_\_\_

The membership list is published once per year in the December newsletter. We ask that you give permission for us to publish your address, telephone number, and e-mail address by responding to the following questions. **(Please clearly circle your answer; if no response is given, we will automatically publish):** I wish to have the following published in the December newsletter: my address? **Yes No**; my phone number? **Yes No**; my e-mail address? **Yes No**

Members may submit one free query per year, which will be published in the Society's newsletter in order to contact others researching the same ancestors. It should be 50 words or less, not counting the name and address of the submitter.

Members and non-members may submit additional queries at the rate of 10 cents per word.

Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want a membership card mailed to you. Thanks.

Heart O' Wisconsin Genealogical Society

**HEART O' WISCONSIN GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY**

- Chairman Eugene Meier
- Vice Chairman Tina Krummel
- Secretary Doreen Dimick
- Treasurer Bev Polansky
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- 2 years Annie Greeno
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- Library Files Arlene Keehn
- New Members Doris King
- Newsletter Bev Peaslee
- Pedigree Charts (Vacant)
- Research Di Neinfeldt
- Sunshine Char Diesburg
- Website Di Neinfeldt

Wood County Roots Editor:

**PURPOSE OF SOCIETY:** To assist members and others in genealogical research and to preserve local records.

**DUES:** \$15 per household—one newsletter per address. Please list names of all persons joining. Due at or before 31 July. Membership year runs from 01 August through 31 July.

**MEETINGS:** Held monthly—September through June—on the second Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the McMillan Memorial Library, 490 East Grand Avenue, Wisconsin Rapids, WI (right across the street from the Hotel Mead & Convention Center).

**Wood County Roots Editor:**

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**Visit us on the web at [www.howgs.org!!!](http://www.howgs.org!!!)**