



PIONEER RECORD

Newsletter for the Midland Genealogical Society

Volume 32 No. 1

www.rootsweb.com/~mimngs/

September 2011

In This Issue

Buffalo's Barges, Bins, Businesses, and Boxcars	1
The Presidents Letter	2
Editorial Comments	2
Membership	3
New Books	3
Books For Sale	3
Mt. Pleasant Cemetery Records	5
And the walls came tumblin...	6
Family History Month	7
Coming Events	7
Larceny at the Midland Post Office.	8
Query	13
Genealogy News	14
Looking Back in Midland County	15
MGS Officers & Society Information	16

Midland Genealogical Society Programs for 2011 - 2012

Meetings are scheduled on the third Wednesday of the month unless otherwise noted..

Programs for the meetings are as follows.

September 21, 2011 7:00 pm Library Lounge

"The Price of Conviction" by Bob Snyder.

Oct 8, 2011 – 9 am "Family History Writing" ,Grace A Dow Library, A workshop sponsored by the Grace A. Dow Library

Oct 19, 2011—7 pm Library Lounge.

Gary Skory will update us on exhibits and status of of the Doan History Center in Midland.

Buffalo's Barges, Bins, Businesses, and Boxcars

By Gloria Kundinger

Many United States seaports served as gateways for immigrants searching for a better life in America. Even though it was miles inland from the Atlantic Ocean and not reachable by river, Buffalo, New York became a major gateway for those immigrating westward. With its location on the eastern side of Lake Erie at the end of the Erie Canal and across the Niagara River from Canada, Buffalo also became an important grain port and railroad hub whose spokes radiated outward to many different areas of the U.S. and Canada.

Originally owned by the French, the region around Buffalo, New York became part of the British Empire in 1759. It was relinquished to the United States after the Revolutionary War. The Holland Land Company acquired the area in 1791 from the State of Massachusetts even though Iroquois and Seneca Indian tribes claimed ownership. They were persuaded to give up their holdings for some cash and several hundred thousand acres of Niagara frontier land to use for reservations.

As an outpost on Lake Erie near the mouth of Buffalo Creek, "New Amsterdam" was later renamed Buffalo. The early settlers who lived miles from nowhere relied on trading with the sometimes hostile Indians of the area to make a living.

In 1804, Joseph Ellicott designed a city plan similar to that of Washington D.C. It had main streets and public squares

named for Holland Land Company managers. What began as a small lakeside town blossomed into a large city after the dedication of the Erie Canal in 1825.

Shortly thereafter, Buffalo became known as "The Gateway to the West" when thousands of immigrants traveled through it on the Erie Canal heading to Midwestern states. The city grew from 2,500 before the canal to one of 8,600 five years later. During the next forty years, Buffalo's population would double every decade.

Before the Erie Canal, transporting grain from the Midwest to the east coast was difficult. It had to be hauled by wagon over the Appalachian Mountains or shipped by barges down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to New Orleans. There it was unloaded into sailing ships that took it to the east coast or to Europe. Some of it spoiled on the way.

After the opening of the Erie Canal, grain was shipped to Buffalo on lake ships then unloaded by hand into canal boats because the canal was too narrow and shallow to handle lake ships. Over 146,000 bushels of grain arrived in Buffalo in 1830. That amount increased tenfold by the 1840s.

(Continued on page 4)

The President's Letter

After a busy summer, it is good to be getting back into doing some serious genealogy. Four of us, not the same four each time, have recently spent two days in Lansing on two different occasions doing research at the Library of Michigan and the State Archives. The Library staff has been cut drastically. Only one reference librarian was on duty at a time – but the assistance we usually received was very good. It is sad to be in the library and see how it has been impacted. But the good news is that the material is there and diligence will usually help you find what you seek.

Many of the microfilm readers were out of order on the four days I spent there. There is only one card vending machine and it's over in the area around the corner from where the circulation desk used to be. There is no circulating library any more, but that wasn't usually the area where most genealogists did their searching. There are still four copy machines; one uses only cash but the other three use only cards. I didn't do much microfilm searching but did use the microfilm printer one day for one particular record I found.

Bev Keicher used the newspaper room

quite a bit and said that many of the shelves are empty there. It is my understanding that the library is not currently subscribing to many periodicals so over time you will not be finding all of the types of materials we have perhaps come to expect over the years.

The State Archives had two people at work on the desk when we were there. They were very helpful. If you have had occasion in the past to use the "brown books" of Michigan's regimental history of the Civil War units and the men who served in them, you will be shocked to see that the books are literally falling apart. This came about when the Archives decided to put them into digital form on the "Seeking Michigan" website. In order to copy the books, the spines were broken so the pages are now loose. But the data is captured for all time on the web page and is easily searchable.

No doubt future budgetary decisions regarding the Library of Michigan will be based in part on the way the Department of Education and the Legislature perceive that the facility is being used so it is important that all of us use the Library regularly. Four people in a car make a good unit for a day trip and the Lansing area has many hotels for longer stays. Hours at the Library are 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Archives hours are 1:00 to 5:00.

Parking charges now are \$1.00 per hour in the Library lot. If you have a handicapped parking permit be sure to take it along because the handicap spaces on the front drive are free. The lunch room is still operating – and sometimes full of school children who visit the Archives. So plan a trip, take a carload of fellow researchers, and make your presence known. Ask a librarian for help so they know you're there!

Happy hunting,
Wilma

GENE TOONS by Wendell Washer



I'm sorry, sir. We only allow pencil and paper in the library.

From The Editor ● ● ●

After a long summer and two surgeries, I am finally getting back to working on my family tree again. I hope that most of you are finding successes in your research.

The society is always looking to increase its membership and put on programs that you want to see. If you have any ideas, please send them to the PO box listed on the newsletter.

I am still looking for more articles from you for the newsletter. I am trying to increase the pages. If you have something to offer, please send it to the PO box

or preferably, send it to me via my email address wgbennett@chartermi.net. Please keep in mind that this should be original material unless permission is granted to use it. I cannot accept articles with no author.

There are some new technology items coming out that may be of interest to you. I will try to do some reviews on these after they become available. I am trying to get some query's going in this newsletter. If you have something that you think another member may be able to answer, please send it to me.

Walt Bennett
Editor

MEMBERSHIP DUES 2010-2011

Statements for the 2010-2011 dues were be sent out in early August 2011 and will be due by the first meeting in September 2011.

Midland Genealogical Society, P.O. Box 2421, Midland, MI 48641-2421. Dues for an individual are \$14.00; for a family they are \$17.50.

Membership

Renewal membership forms are in the mail, and we are looking forward to a great year. In implementing some suggested ideas, queries from members will appear in The Pioneer Record as space permits, with priority given to new members.

This month we introduce Tom Nadsady of Utah who is searching for info on ALBERT BASSETT, 1853-1892, buried in Pinconning. He is the brother of Frank Bassett 1859 Wisc. – 1936 Calif. who was in the 1894 Midland County census with his wife, Alice Scruby Bassett. If you have any information, you can contact him via e-mail: tnad-say@gmail.com.

Queries by resident members should be dropped off in the genealogy room with either Betty Bellous' or Marion Berry's name noted.

Betty Bellous & Marion Berry

New Books

Researching Your Colonial New England Ancestors", by Patricia Hatcher.

19th Century Germans to America: AmcOjsolidation of Six Pamphlets Identifying Emigrants from Baden-Wuerttemberg Hamburg/Bremen, Nordrhein—Westfalen, Rheinland-Pfalz, Schleswig-Holstein. By Clifford N. Smith

Note: the main title of this soft cover book is misleading. Sometimes only a very specific smaller area is included, sometimes emmi-grants are bound for other countries than America. Several phamphlets have sur-names listed alphabetically; others the names are just listed.

The Ultimate Search Book. 2011 edition, by Carangelo.

"Revolutionary War Pensions: Awarded by State Governments 1775-1874., The general plus Federal Governments Prior to 1814,

Private Acts of congress to 1905. by Lloyd Bockstruk

Erin's Sons: Irish Arrivals in Atlantic Canada to 1863, Vol IV. By Terrence Punch.

A Digest of the Early Commecticut Probate Records, 3 vol. Reprinted 1995. Hartford District 1635-1750. by Charles Manwaring.

The complete Beginners Guide to Genealogy, The internet, and to your Genealogy Programs, revised 2011 by Karen Clifford.

Social Networking for Genealogists by Drew Smith.

New York Essays by Marion Henry. This book gives lots of resources for the genealogist in NY State outside of NY City.

History of Hillsdale Co., MI by Crisfield Johnson. Published 1879.

Jo Brines



BOOKS FOR SALE

The following books, published by the Midland Genealogical Society, are available for sale at any meeting, at the Midland Genealogy Room, Grace A. Dow Public Library or by mail. Price of each book is \$20.00 plus \$3.00 for postage and handling.

Midland County Obituary Index (#1) – 1872-1927. The book consists of 16,000 abstractions covering 55 years from the Midland Times (1872 -1875), The Midland Sun (1892 -1924) and the Midland Republican (1881-1927). The soft bound 238 page book is 8 ½ by 11 inches.

Midland County Obituary Index (#2) – 1928-1950. The book consists of about 8,000 abstractions covering 22 years from the Midland Republican (1928 - 1937) and the Midland Daily News (1937 - 1950). The soft bound 238 page book is 8 ½ by 11 inches. Note: Both Obituary Books (#1 & #2) are available as a package of \$35.00.

Midland County Obituary Index (#3)-1951-1982 This book consists of 30,900 entries including about 4000 maiden names covering 22 years extracted from Midland Daily News. The 387 page, 8½ by 11, soft bound book consists of two volumes A through L and M through Z. The set costs \$40 plus \$5 postage and handling.

Midland Pioneers, edited by Ora Flaningham. This book is a compilation of the most interesting genealogical, historical and humorous reprints from newspapers published in the Pioneer Record. The book is 6 by 9 inches, soft bound, 259 pages. (Out of print, but orders being compiled at Genealogy desk.)

Midland County, Michigan Marriage Records 1855-1910 including Groom & Bride Indexes. The book is 8.5 by 11, soft bound, 320 pages. \$30.

A collection of "Some Midland Michigan County Records" have been compiled and extensively indexed by Ora L. Flaningam. It is available in PDF format on a compact disc from the Midland Genealogical Society. The collection is mainly out of print books from our society, Harold Moll, and Ora Flaningam. Included are: "Midland County Cemetery Records" 1981, "Midland County Michigan Census 1850-1894 (1983)", "Midland County Michigan Obituary Index 1872-1927 (1994)", "Midland Pioneers", vol 1 (1999) & vol 2, "Midland County Michigan Probate Index 1850-1900", "Early Saginaw Valley History", "Bethany Indian Mission 1843-1855", "Bethany Indian Mission 1851-1868", "In the Wilderness With the Red Indians", "Account Book of Charles H. Rodd", "Indian Build a Birch Bark Canoe", and Index to First Families of Midland County". The cost of this CD is \$25 shipping included in US.

To ORDER A BOOK write: Midland Genealogical Society BOOK: P.O. Box 2421, Midland, MI 48641-2421.

(Continued from page 1)

In the 1830s it took over five hundred men to unload and reload the grain. Mostly Irish immigrants made up the workforce for this hard and dangerous job. The grain dust thickened the air they breathed and dust explosions were an occupational hazard. The job was a slow process, and ships would be backed up for several days waiting to be unloaded.

A retail merchant named Joseph Dart invented the first grain elevator in 1842. Built on Buffalo Creek at the end of Commercial Street, it consisted of a wooden building containing huge grain storage bins. Buckets attached to a steam-driven belt unloaded the grain from the ships' holds, transported it up to the inside of the building, and deposited it in the bins.

The elevator could hold up to 55,000 bushels of grain. After three years, it held twice that capacity. Ships could unload and depart in a day because the elevator could unload 1,000 bushels an hour. Buffalo became the biggest grain port in the world after construction of ten more elevators. They later gave rise to cereal mills, flour mills and a lucrative animal feed industry.

As more immigrants came through Buffalo on their way west, many permanently settled in the city. The Irish canal laborers and immigrants from the Irish potato famine who arrived twenty years later made up a large number of those who stayed. Other settlers were of Italian, Polish, and Jewish descent as well as African Americans. (Buffalo was the last stop in the under ground railroad into Canada.) Today different areas of the city still reflect the cultural herit-

age of those early settlers.

One of the largest groups of early settlers was the Germans from the Alsace area of France and southern Germany. They were tired of living in a land ruled by tyrants who had laid it in ruins from various wars. In 1839, the old Lutherans came because of religious persecution, and later those from the Mecklenburg area joined them.

These industrious Germans worked hard and soon a variety of different small factories and businesses arose in the 1840s. J. F. Schanzlin, Jacob Roos, Joseph Friedman, and others established breweries in Buffalo which later competed with those in Milwaukee before the turn of the century. In 1896, they brewed 252,340 barrels of beverage.

Michael Mesmer, who came to Buffalo in 1829, started a feed, flour, and grocery business. Later he became a partner of Weller, Brown, and Mesmer—a group of successful furniture makers and dealers. Other enterprising Germans formed flour mills, tanneries, and meat packing businesses. Some became bankers and politicians.

In 1880 the population of Buffalo was 150,000. Half of those were of German descent. They built German churches and started schools. They also formed societies and organizations that looked after the well being of their fellow Germans.

Under such prosperous circumstances, Buffalo was an ideal place for German immigrants to settle for a short time. Females found employment as cooks and domestics for well-to-do Buffalo families. Men were able to find a job in one of the growing factories, businesses, or grain elevators in town. The money they earned would either help other relatives pay for passage to the U.S. or buy a parcel of land in one of the Midwestern states.

In 1836, the first steam driven railroad was built connecting the city of Buffalo to Niagara Falls twenty miles away. With Lake Erie and the canal frozen over during the winter months, the need for railroads to supplement canal shipping was the excuse given by entrepreneurs and state leaders for more rail construction. By 1852, four different railroad lines were doing business in Buffalo. Another rail line went from Buffalo to Brantford, Ontario before it was expanded to Goderich and renamed the Buffalo Lake Huron Railroad. In the 1880s several other rail companies added lines to Buffalo and built stations there too. The Toronto Hamilton and Buffalo line was operating in Canada by 1897. Buffalo's half million residents had such wonderful rail service in the 1920s that half the U.S. population and two-thirds of Canada's could reach the city by rail overnight.

At that time, approximately two railroads shared a train station in Buffalo. There were five stations in operation and eleven different railways servicing passengers. There were also fourteen city stations that handled only freight trains. They made Buffalo one of the world's major railroad centers with the daily comings and goings of 476 freight trains and 319 passenger trains. As a U.S. rail center, Buffalo was second only to Chicago.

Before the 1820s, the marshy area where the canal joined Lake Erie was known as "the Flats." Later it was called "the Canal District" or "the District" and became prime commercial real estate. Many regular as well as illicit businesses sprang up in the District whose customers were mostly canal workers, known as canawlers, and sailors.

Along with stables for the mules and horses used to pull the canal boats, there were stores who sold supplies to the boats and crews. The grain elevators and ship yards were also located there as well as housing for the laborers of the District. This hodge-podge of buildings quickly covered the Flats.

Many beer halls and brothels could be found in the District whose sole purpose was to part sailors and canawlers from their wages. The saloons had rooms for the “working girls,” and whiskey flowed freely. Fights were common among these groups of men whether they were at the bars or not. They fought each other with fists and sometimes knives.

In the 1830s, the immigrants who stepped off the canal boats and onto the docks came to the District lugging with them everything they owned. “Runners” who stalked the docks were there to persuade immigrants to travel on their company’s lake steamers and directed them to the ships as soon as they landed. Most departed shortly after arriving, but some immigrants had to stay the night and wait until the next day to board a lake ship.

They had their pick of the many hotels in the city. The hotels also employed runners to hook immigrants into staying at their establishments. Each large hotel had agents on their premises who worked for the steamship companies which made it easy for immigrant guests to purchase tickets.

Besides European immigrants, there were people from farming areas in New York and the eastern states migrating to the Midwest in search of land. These migrants crowded the docks of the District with farm animals and implements as well as personal and household items while waiting to board lake steamers. Both the immigrants

and the migrants were preyed upon by patent medicine hawkers, swindlers, and other charlatans. Even after warnings from the ships’ employees and others, many were victimized by these sharks.

Today with immigration quotas and other means of transportation, Buffalo is no longer an immigrant gateway. The end of Buffalo’s grain prominence came with the opening of the Welland Canal and the St. Lawrence Seaway. Large lake ships and ocean vessels bypassed Buffalo completely. Most of the grain elevators were shut down, the animal feed industry died, and people lost jobs. The Erie Canal and the railroads surrendered to progress and faded away into history.

Many people living in Midland County today can trace their early Midland ancestors back to the migrant farmers of New York and other eastern states. Others have immigrant ancestors who came from Europe and settled here. The one thing most of them have in common is that their ancestors trod the docks and rail platforms of Buffalo, New York.

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Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, Cemetery Records are available Online



Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, city officials have made searching records for loved ones at Riverside Cemetery a genealogist’s dream. It has taken several years to accomplish, but all Riverside Cemetery records are available online.

There are more than 9,000 burials at Riverside Cemetery. It took seven years, and several volunteers to get the job done but all burial records are available online. The Mt. Pleasant Genealogy Society helped with the project.

<http://www.mt-pleasant.org/depts/cemetery/records.htm>

And The Walls Came Tumblin'... *by Bob Snyder*

“So the people shouted, and trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpets, they raised a shout, and the wall fell down flat...”

– Joshua 6:20

Sometimes Biblical stories provide nice metaphors for life in the present. Genealogists talk a lot about their “brick walls” in research. We all have those blocks that we’re sure we’ll never overcome. But a recent experience in my research suggests that we shouldn’t despair of break through moments.

One of my earliest discoveries was a death record for my g.g. grandmother, Emily (Lake) Rarick. She was born in Potter Co., PA, 12 May 1848, and died in Edmore, Montcalm Co., MI 16 Oct 1906. She m. 5 Nov 1862 at Bath, Steuben Co., NY, to Abel Rarick. Emily’s death record stated that her parents were Isaac J. Lake and Sally Coby. I’ve looked for years, and I’ve found a fair amount of information on Isaac J. who m. late in life, to Mary W. Youngs; but could find nothing on Sally. There is a Coby family, but it is very small, and concentrated in and around Baltimore, MD.

About two years ago, a fellow researcher sent me a transcription of a will for a Jacob Jacoby, late of Steuben Co., who died in October of 1860. The will contained a list of children, under guardianship: James Lake, Adeline Lake and Emaline Lally, and Margaret Lake. There was no indication

of how these children might be related to Jacob, nor what their interest might be in his estate. On a trip to Steuben Co. last summer, I even read the details of Jacob’s probate record, which gave no clues as to the relationship.

I knew from other research, that the marriage of my g.grand-mother, Adda May (Rarick) Burt was witnessed by her uncle, James Lake. This led to considerable speculation on the possibility that the information on Sally Coby’s death certificate might be in error. Maybe the surname could be Jacoby.

I pursued that idea for some time, but could find nothing definitive. James F. Lake was well documented in PennYan, Yates Co. as a brick mason. But his sisters were quite elusive. Then, in late March 2011, I received information which changed everything.

“Way back in 2002, I had posted this family on line, in the hope that someone might be able to help with this brick wall. I received the e-mail every researcher hopes to receive: “My name is Barbara, I live in Albuquerque, NM, but I was born in MI. My grandmother was Mary Jane Rarick, daughter of Abel and Emily; and I have Isaac J. Lake’s family Bible. Can we exchange information?”

Can we?!!! Here’s the information that Barbara transcribed from Isaac’s Bible:

“Sally Lake died 2 Sep 1848

Isaac Lake Jr., died 12 Sep 1845

Lucetta Lake, Isaac’s second wife, died 1 Jan 1866 at Penn Yan, Yates Co.

Isaac J. Lake died 19 Oct 1895, at Dresden, Yates Co., NY

Mary W. Lake died Jan 1904 at Dresden

Isaac J. Lake b. 8 Feb 1814

Sally Jacobus, b. 14 Mar 1821

Sarah Jane Lake b. 18 Feb 1839

James F. Lake, b. 20 Apr 1841

Emaline and Adaline Lake b. 12 May 1843

Isaac Lake Jr. b. 29 May 1845

Maryetta Lake b. 5 Aug 1846

Isaac J. Lake and Sally Jacobus married 4 May 1838, in Bradford, Steuben Co.

Isaac J. Lake and Mrs. Lucetta Lay m at Ovid, 4 Feb 1852

Isaac J. Lake and Mary W. Youngs m. at Dresden 10 Nov 1866”

JACKPOT!! The list of children matched exactly with everything I’d found on the Lakes, including the names in Jacob Jacoby’s will. This whole event only reinforced for me the truth that somewhere out there, waiting to be found, is the clue that will make a researcher’s Jericho wall come tumblin’ down. Thank you, Barbara, for sharing this information with me. Armed with it, I’m back two more generations on Sally (Jacoby) Lake’s family.



Emily (Lake) Rarick

Coming Events

Sept 23-25, 2011 "State History Conference", Traverse City, Michigan, presented by the Historical Society of Michigan. www.hsmichigan.org/

Sept. 24, 2011 "Family History Festival at the Detroit Public Library", 10am to 5pm. Free. <http://patrickshaul.com/FamHistFest.pdf>

Sept. 25, 2011 "Hookers, Crooks, and Kooks, Aunt Merle didn't Run a Boarding House"/ Education Center Auditorium at the St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, Ypsilanti, Michigan. <http://washtenawgenealogy.org/>

Oct 1, 2011 "OGS 2011 Fall Seminar", Columbus, Ohio, With guest speaker, Dick Eastman, author of the popular Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter. Presented by the Ohio Genealogical Society. www.ogs.org.

Oct. 15, 2011 "Annual Polish Research Seminar", American Polish Cultural Center, Troy, Michigan. Presented by the Polish Genealogical Society of Michigan.. http://pgsm.org/index_046.htm

Oct. 29, 2011 "Family History Month Workshop at the Archives of Michigan". Lansing. <http://mimgc.org/MGCworkshop>

Nov 4-5, 2011 "Got Ancestors?!" Grand Rapids, Michigan. Presented by the Western Michigan Genealogical Society. Registration is required. <http://gotancestors.com/>

Nov 5, 2011 "Save the Date!!", Livonia. Presented by the Western Wayne County Genealogical Society", <http://rootsweb.ancestry.com/~miwwcgs/>

Nov 5, 2011 "Finding that elusive ancestor", Livonia Civic Center Library., Presented by the Western Wayne County Genealogical Society. http://mimgc.org/pdf/201111wwcgs_seminar.pdf

Sept 28-30, 2012 "State History Conference", Monroe, Michigan, presented by the Historical Society of Michigan. <http://www.hsmichigan.org/>

October is Family History Month – Programs at the Library

Contact the Grace A. Dow Memorial Library (837-3449) for more information.

www.midland-mi.org/gracedowlibrary

EVERY PHOTO TELLS A STORY

"Every Photo Tells a Story"

Rebecca Stimson, personal historian, writer and editor

Saturday, October 8, 10 – 1

Library

Lounge

Whether or not you like to write, this workshop could inspire you to capture the stories – or people portraits – in words. Bring a photograph to see how you can change the Who What Where When Why questions to the story told by the photograph. You're going to practice with the photos you bring and see just how easy – and fun! – telling the story can be. You'll write the story told by the photographs.

BRING A PHOTO OF SOMEONE OR SOMETHING SIGNIFICANT TO WRITE ABOUT.

Registration begins Tuesday, September 6, 2011.

www.clarkwoodconnect.com

Computer Classes – sign-up begins Monday, Sept. 26.

USING ANCESTRY LIBRARY EDITION
Monday, October 10, 7:00pm

Learn tips & tricks of using Ancestry Library Edition for genealogical research.

USING HERITAGE QUEST ONLINE
Monday, October 24 at 7:00pm

Learn tips & tricks of using Heritage Quest Online for genealogical research.

Family Search Tech Tips

Genealogy has been a popular hobby for over a century, but the pursuit of one's ancestors is now a decidedly technology-intensive endeavor. To help family historians take advantage of the latest technology, FamilySearch has launched a new section on its FamilySearch.org website called FamilySearch TechTips.

The goal of TechTips is to continue building a bridge between the developing worlds of technology and genealogy, according to FamilySearch product marketing manager Jim Ericson.

"For someone who is already excited about family history, FamilySearch TechTips can introduce them to technologies that will help them climb their family tree," Ericson said. "Those who may not be familiar with genealogy, but are technology enthusiasts, can learn how products can be applied to family history."

Ericson said visitors to FamilySearch TechTips can read about a variety of subjects, such as how to store photographs for the long term, what mobile applications are available for family historians, how to share files and how to scan images. The site also contains step-by-step guides to help users accomplish a technology-related task, like how to join an online research community and why.

FamilySearch TechTips is a community effort that is a cross between a blog and an online technology magazine. Anyone can contribute articles and share their personal experiences. The TechTips articles don't endorse specific products, although they may mention what is available in the marketplace. There will also be content on new technology or trends that impact the world of genealogy.

"People can learn where genealogy technology is headed and how technology may evolve in the future to make life easier for family historians," Ericson said.

The new TechTips section of FamilySearch is available at <https://www.familysearch.org/techtips/>.

LARCENY AT THE MIDLAND POST OFFICE

submitted by Thomas L. Bowen

Research Resources on the website of the Grace A. Dow Public Library in Midland, Michigan include historical Midland newspapers presented by ProQuest. In searching for George F. Hemingway within the database, I found the reports of a larceny from the Midland post office during the night of December 17, 1883. The Midland Republican gave a comprehensive report of the trial in its issue of Thursday, February 14, 1884, on pages 1 and 5. My transcription of the this report along with three earlier articles in the Republican following the crime are included below. They are illustrative of the workings of the legal system in Midland in those early days.

The first article reports on the crime:

Dec. 20, 1883, p. 7 – “**BOLD BAD BURGLARS – They Blow the Safe at the Post Office and Secure some Valuables—Keely Gagged.**

On Thursday morning... A company of safeblowers had been there [at the post office] and made a complete wreck of the safe, a small one... From the statement of Martin Keely, the night watchman... Mr. Keely heard some noise in the vicinity and went around to the rear of the building... when he came upon the gang, four in number, the safe being close by the door. He was pounced upon, revolvers put to his head, and he [was] hustled away into the adjoining store of Bradley and Beardsley, where he was bound and gagged and left in the cold, while the burglars proceeded with their job. The job was thoroughly done. The face plate was entirely separated from the body of the door, and the upper hinge broken off. The lock was removed.... Mr. Keeley was so securely bound that he could not even give an alarm, but he succeeded by about 5 o'clock in getting the gag from his mouth, when his

outcries aroused Fred Hayes, who slept in a room over the store, but had not been disturbed by the burglars.... The gang is believed to have taken supper at the Exchange hotel. They had a team. They were traced to Bay City, where it was found the team had been returned to a livery stable. It is hoped that the rascals will be captured.”

January 17, 1884, p. 5 – “Perhaps he's One of 'em.

Frank Westbrook, of Saginaw City was captured last week in Tuscola county, in company with a man who was accused of horse-stealing. Capt. Simmons of Bay City, who made the arrest, it seems believed that Westbrook was one of the safe crackers who recently visited the Midland post-office, and the young man was turned over to Midland officers. He has been in jail here since. Yesterday he had an examination before Justice Murphy and the circumstantial evidence against him is very strong. Mr. Keely, the night-watchman who was so roughly handled by the gang, was very firm in the opinion that Westbrook was one of them. Westbrook acted as his own counsel, cross-questioning witnesses for himself, but he made no statement. He was held for trial, and bail fixed at \$1,000, in default of which he went to jail. It is intended to bring his case on this term of court. His father and numerous others from Saginaw were in Murphy's court room during the investigation.”

January 24, 1884, p. 5 – “The Burglary Prisoner.

Saturday afternoon, Jan. 19, Frank Westbrook, charged with the post-office burglary, was brought into court and arraigned before his Honor, Judge Hart. The prisoner stood up and listened coolly while Prosecuting Attorney Gordon read the grave charge against him. To the Judge's question, he responded 'not guilty.' Then the question of trial at this term came up, and the prisoner didn't know whether he could be ready or not. He had done

nothing. He had no attorney, no one to do anything for him. He stated under oath that he had no property, nothing except what he had on,--a very good suit of clothes, over coat included. He was unable to employ an attorney and invited the court to detail one for his defense. The prisoner had heard VanKleek spoken of as a good lawyer, but VanKleek had his hands full already. Att'y Geo. F. Hemingway was finally selected and proceeded at once to have an interview with the prisoner. They came forth from their consultation with a list of some six or eight witnesses whose attendance would be necessary, and with a doubt as to ability to be ready this term. The prisoner's poverty made it necessary for the county to secure his witnesses, and it was finally arranged that the trial should be had this term, an adjournment of the term being arranged. The trial was put down for Monday, Feb. 4. Whereupon, Sheriff Ryan harnessed himself and the prisoner together, and returned with him to the place of seclusion.

Westbrook is cool and self-possessed, quite young in appearance, not particularly handsome, yet not more depraved in appearance than many others.”

February 14, 1884 - “**GUILTY**
Is the verdict in the case of Frank Westbrook.

The Charge of the Judge to the Jury, the Remarks of the Prisoner, and the remarks of the Judge in passing sentence given in full.

Seven Years at Hard Labor.

The Trial of Frank Westbrook, of Bay City, for burglary of the Midland post office has been one of the most important before the Midland circuit for a long time, and the court room was filled with listeners throughout the trial, several ladies being constant attendants.

Thirty two witnesses were examined for prosecution and defense.

The prosecution was ably conducted by Prosecuting Attorney Gordon, who

(Continued on page 9)

has won golden opinions by the energy and industry with which he has, without assistance, performed the duties of his office.

Atty. Geo. F. Hemingway, who was assigned by the court to conduct the defense, did so with skill and ability, making as good a defense as the circumstances and the evident guilt of the prisoner would permit. The main points in defense were to show that the prisoner was in Bay City the night of December 17th, and could not have been in Midland; also to discredit the identification of the prisoner as one of the men seen in Midland and leave the impression that there was another man that looked like him. Addie Parker, of Bay City, swore to having seen the defendant at the Valiev House dance at 11 o'clock, and other witnesses swore to seeing him during the night. The cross-examination of such witnesses generally resulted in showing themselves to be persons whose assertions most would hesitate to give full credence. The general remark was that they were a bad lot. The defendant took the stand and testified that he was in Bay City the whole of that night, and got pretty drunk. He denied saying to Ferguson, (a Bay City prisoner brought here to testify in his behalf,) "keep your mouth shut on me," while both were in the Midland jail. Constable Wm. Mixer testified to hearing such a caution, and the promise of Ferguson to do so.

The evidence was all in Thursday after noon and Prosecutor Gordon addressed the jury, setting forth the theory of the prosecution in a clear, concise manner, strongly connecting the circumstances shown, the two horse team and carriage taken from LaFrance's stable, the party of four that took supper at LaRue's, the prisoner being one of them, the arrival of a similar team at the Exchange Hotel, the identification of the prisoner by Hinkley, Ellis and others, as the men seen at the Findlater House, and by Keeley as

one of those who took him in at the post office, the tracks of two men found in the morning from the post office to the back street and disappearing alongside the carriage tracks, the carriage tracks going out on the Bay City road, and distinctly traced as far as Williamstown, the finding of the team at LaFrance's returned early in the morning, the horses showing evidence of being driven, one of them in particular, warm; the same four, Westbrook included, coming about six o'clock to La Rue's again, drinking there and then going to another place and getting breakfast, Westbrook having \$30 to \$40 in silver, another in the party paying 75c. all in copper, Westbrook leaving Bay City that night the 18th, and the other three disappearing, Westbrook spending lots of money in Tuscola county where he was for some time, -all these and more were shown to point with painful force to the prisoner as guilty of the crime as charged.

Friday morning Mr. Hemingway commenced his plea for the defendant. He occupied the forenoon from about 9:30, doing himself credit by his clear statement of what was required in the way of proof beyond reasonable doubt and in explaining the circumstances as favorably as possible, to harmonize with his theory of innocence. He admitted possibly too much,--admitted "for the sake of the argument," that such a team, etc., did leave Bay City, that McDonald, Bennet and "Shorty" the other three of the party of four who took supper together, did go in the rig to Midland and did commit the burglary. But he said that if all that were true, it was not shown that Westbrook went with the three. It had been shown that one of the two men who hired the team looked something like Westbrook, but was not Westbrook. Westbrook's testimony as to his whereabouts, said he had not been shaken by cross-examination, and it was corroborated by other witnesses. He commented with some pungency on the zeal of

the prosecution and of the Bay City officers in their efforts to accomplish the conviction of the prisoner.

After dinner, Mr. Gordon closed for the prosecution, in a convincing review of the case. The judge delivered his

CHARGE TO THE
JURY.

Gentlemen of the Jury:

The defendant in this case is charged with having committed the crime of breaking open the post office in this village, county and state, and enter the same with intent to commit the crime of larceny there. That the said postoffice is not occupied with or adjoined to any dwelling house, and that while he was in the postoffice he actually committed the crime of larceny by stealing \$248.82 of money belonging to the money order fund in connection with the money order department of the post office, and about \$25 of other money belonging to Mr. Bradley, who was at that time the postmaster and in charge of the postoffice.

The people claim that on the 17th of last December four men, one of which was this defendant, broke open the postoffice by taking or breaking out a glass in the back door and by that way opening the back door through which they entered and broke open the safe of the office and stole the money. The evidence on which the people rely for a conviction it is not necessary for me to refer, except perhaps to say that the positive evidence is derived from Mr. Keeley, which has been supported as the people claim by the testimony of other witnesses, and the facts and circumstances that will inevitably establish the guilt of the defendant.

The defendant denies that he was in Midland on that night, and claims that he was in Bay City that night, where he remained the whole night.

Our statute provides that any person who shall break and enter in the night time any office, shop and store within the body of any county, with

intent to commit the crime of larceny, shall be punished by imprisonment. In order to convict the defendant, you must find the following facts to be true, each beyond a reasonable doubt.

First, you must find the post office was broken open in the night time, and by night time is simply meant after daylight is gone at night and before it comes daylight in the morning: but moonlight and starlight should not be taken into consideration in determining the degree of light that is claimed to have existed at the time. The people claim that the crime was committed at about one o'clock in the morning, but the hour is not material except to show that it was done before daylight in the morning and after daylight had gone at night.

Next, you must find the post office was broken into. And should you find that the door was closed on that night in the ordinary way, and that it was opened and entered through the door, it amounted to a sufficient breaking. A man is not even bound to have the doors of his store and shop locked or fastened in any other than the ordinary latch: so that should you find his door was opened in a manner the people claim by the testimony in this (words illegible).

Next, you must find that this post-office is not adjoining to or occupied with a dwelling house. The only witness who testified on this subject is that of Mr. Bradley, and if you believe his testimony, it is not adjoining to or occupied with a dwelling house.

Next, you must find that this post-office was broken open and entered by this man with the intent to commit the crime of larceny. The people claim that three men did actually commit the crime of larceny by stealing this money. And larceny is the wrongful and (?) taking and carrying away by any person of the personal goods of another from any

place with felonious intent to commit it to the use of the offender and make it his own property. Should you find that this safe was broken open and the money actually taken in the manner the people deem it was, it amounted to a larceny of the money, and should be considered in determining the intent with which the office was broken open.

Now, the next question for you to determine, which perhaps is the most in dispute in this case is, was the defendant in this case one of the men who committed this crime, if in fact a crime was committed.

This fact you must find from the testimony in the case, if you find it to be true, in determining this fact you should consider all the testimony in the case and the facts and circumstances in the case that bear on this question, and from the testimony and facts and circumstances determine whether or not the defendant is one of the men who committed the crime.

Should you find that the crime was committed, and this defendant was one of the men who committed the offense, and you have no reasonable doubt of it, you should convict the defendant.

But if the defendant was in Bay City during all this night, as claimed by the defendant, of course he could not have been one of the men who broke open the postoffice and should be acquitted.

The law presumes every man innocent until proven guilty by testimony introduced in court. And the burden of proof is on the people to establish the guilt of the defendant to your satisfaction beyond a reasonable doubt. But that doubt should be a reasonable doubt; one that addresses itself to your judgments as reasonable men. But it is not necessary that the testimony should be so strong as to establish the guilt of the defendant beyond all possible doubt. Neither should that doubt be captious [apt to focus on trivial faults or defects] or imaginary doubt. But the testimony should be strong enough to direct your judgments

and satisfy your reasons. The testimony should be strong enough to convince you of the guilt of the defendant to a reasonable and moral certainty.

You are the judges of the weight that should be given to the testimony of each witness, and in determining this weight you should consider the appearance of the witness on the stand; the manner in giving his testimony, his opportunity of knowing the facts and remembering them correctly, and how far he is corroborated by the testimony of the other witnesses and the facts and circumstances in the case. And the law permits the defendant, if he chooses, to go on the stand and be a witness in his own behalf. This the defendant has elected to do, and this testimony you should consider the same as you do the testimony of the other witnesses in the case, that is you should give to his testimony just such weight, under all the circumstances, as in your judgments it is entitled to. You should apply the same tests you do to the testimony of the other witnesses, and should you believe he tells the truth, you would have a right to take his testimony as being true even as against all the other witnesses in the case. The number of witnesses that swear to a given fact is not the only way of determining what the facts are. You should make up your mind in accordance with that testimony that convinces your minds of the truth.

Now, gentlemen, take this case and carefully consider all the testimony and the facts and circumstances surrounding the case, and should the testimony convince your minds that the defendant is guilty, and you have no reasonable doubt of it, your verdict should be guilty.

But should the testimony that has been introduced in court fail to convince you that the defendant is guilty, beyond a reasonable doubt, you should give the defendant the benefit of that doubt and your verdict should be not guilty.

The jury retired at a little before four o'clock. Counsel on both sides seemed satisfied with the charge of the court as

(Continued from page 10)

entirely just and fair. Then followed the peculiar suspense of waiting for the verdict, but it was not long, the jury voting "guilty" without a dissenting voice on the second ballot. The prisoner heard the verdict with perfect self-control, not moving a muscle when it was announced. Court took a recess until seven o'clock, when the prisoner was again brought before His Honor to receive sentence. There was a full attendance of interested listeners. The court addressed the prisoner:

Mr. Westbrook, you must stand up. (Prisoner stands.)

Have you anything to say why the sentence of the court should not be passed on you?

THE PRISONER:--Your Honor, I have a great deal to say, if I may be allowed to make a few remarks, in regard to my trial and conviction here. If you have no objections I have a few remarks I should like to make in regard to it.

THE COURT:--Certainly, sir, you may make them.

PRISONER:--When I was first arrested and brought here for trial – brought to Bay City, rather. I don't know what the law is, anything about law, it is something I am ignorant of, but it don't seem to me the way I was fetched before the witnesses brought against me here in this case, and recognized by them, it don't look to me like I had a fair show to establish my innocence in this case. When I was fetched to Bay City, they didn't come and pick me out of a crowd, or out of a half a dozen, or two or three men, and say I was the man. I was simply brought out before the witnesses, and they asked to identify me as the man, not to pick me out among a crowd or nothing of the kind. Some of them spoke of my voice. I never spoke one word, only the captain of police asked me if I knew that man, and I shook my head and I said no. That is the only time they ever heard me speak. When I was fetched here to

Midland, I was simply brought out before them as the man arrested for this crime. They were not asked a question whether they recognized me there, or whether they did not; and they go on the stand and they swear they recognize me, without giving me a show—without picking me out of other men. I don't know whether it is law, but it don't seem to me it is justice. Another circumstance is in regard to the fuses. When I was arrested and fetched here, he searched me when I was in jail, and he found some things claimed to be fuses, on me. He had them in his possession for examination, and he didn't produce them on the examination. He didn't fetch them up so I could show where I got them. I was surprised--I was surprised to think he had any such thing, and didn't think it until he fetched them here on the witness stand. I had no chance—I had no money—I had no chance to show where I got those. That there is something that I don't know as everybody has heard of and used them. They are nothing more or less than hat pads. I should think that they ought to have been produced on the examination, so as to give me a chance to show where I got those, and what I would use them for. Instead of that he kept them in his pocket. It may be law, but I don't hardly think it is justice to do anything of that kind; it don't seem to me I had a fair trial in that respect at all.

A witness I subpoenaed here from Bay City—they have tried to swear to the truth as near as they could, and I tried to swear to the truth as near as I could remember, and did so; but the chief of police and captain of police came here from Bay City—they circulated reports about my hard character, they introduced people here, they tried to run my witnesses out of town, and did arrest one for vagrancy, and run two out that I had all subpoenaed, and I couldn't get them. They run Sam Bennett out, and this man Kearns couldn't be found no place. Two of the witnesses they had against me here was arrested for this.

They were asked about it on the stand and wouldn't own up. I wouldn't put them on the stand and ask them that again, because I knew if they went back to Bay City, the officers would arrest them, put up something against them and send them over the road. I don't think I have had a fair trial, and I think there has been too much influence by them officers from Bay City.

I am not guilty of this crime. The prosecuting attorney tried to make the jury believe about this man Williams, that I didn't recognize him because I know him. Williams is an entire stranger to me—the clerk. I never seen the man before in my life, therefore I couldn't recognize him, and I ask you to make the sentence as light as you can.

I never was tried for anything before in my life, except I was tried once in Saginaw for receiving stolen property; it was silk wipes, worth a dollar and a quarter, and I was acquitted. It was made a present to me a few days before, and I didn't know it was stolen, and I was acquitted. That was the only time I was ever tried in my life. All the time I was in Bay City I worked, until a few days before this crime occurred—this crime here. All the money I ever had I earned there where I worked in Bay City, and what I got from my home. I never had no money that I stole. All the money I had was mine, and I don't think that I deserve to be convicted of this crime, although I have been convicted. I ask you to make the sentence as light as you can.

I haven't anything else to say, and I am very much obliged to Mr. Hemingway for defending me the way he has. He has done all that laid in his power to acquit me, believing that I was innocent, and he still believes that I am innocent, and I am—I am not guilty of the crime for which I have been convicted. I am very much obliged to him indeed. I don't know anything against the officers here in this county, not even Mr. Ryan, alt-

(Continued on page 12)

though he has not showed me a fair chance in some respects. I have nothing against the prosecuting attorney, because he has done nothing but his duty. I have no malice against nobody, and hope you will give me just as light a sentence as you can. I am convicted although I am not guilty—the jury has found me guilty. I don't know as I have anything more to say.

THE COURT:--How old are you, Mr. Westbrook?

PRISONER:--Twenty-four years old the 21st day of last August.

THE COURT:--You were raised in Saginaw, were you?

PRISONER:--No sir, I was raised in Canada until I was about 15 years old, then came to Saginaw, and have lived in Saginaw and Bay City ever since, more or less.

THE COURT:--Well, I don't know, Mr. Westbrook, as I can say anything to you that would be any benefit to you. It is true, you are a young man—an exceedingly young man to be brought before the bar of a court and convicted of such a serious and grave offense as the one of which you have been convicted. It is one of the worst offenses that is known to the law. Of course I do not know of my own knowledge what sort of treatment you have had out of court, but so far as the progress of the trial is concerned, I have certainly tried to the best of my ability to give you a fair trial.

PRISONER:--I can't say anything but what I have had a fair trial in the court house, so far as I see.

THE COURT:--And I think it has been a fair trial. The testimony that has been produced against you, Mr. Westbrook, has been very strong. It has been exceedingly strong. Of course, the testimony that has been produced in your behalf, if the jury had believed it, was strong too; but evidently the jury, after an examination of the case, and I saw nothing that led

me to think but that they were making a very careful and patient examination of it—I say that the testimony that was produced here by your witnesses did not seem to make very much of an impression upon the minds of the jury. They came to the conclusion very promptly that the testimony for some reason was not true – either that your witnesses were mistaken as to the date they saw you, or else that it was a fabrication. Of course, I do not know just how they came to that conclusion, but they evidently must have come to the conclusion that the testimony that was introduced in your behalf did not apply to that day or else that it was not true. And the testimony that was introduced on the part of the people was such as in my judgment fully warranted the jury in coming to the conclusion that they did.

If you are not guilty, Mr. Westbrook, the circumstances that surround you in this matter are very remarkable,--very remarkable indeed. Your associations have not been of the best. If you had had different associates, and kept better company during the past two years, you would have found it very much better for you. Even your own account of your wanderings around on that night, while if true, would fully exonerate you from the commission of this crime, yet they were wanderings around that did not indicate really a proper motive, a motive that a good citizen would naturally have. Although, of course, if I was fully satisfied you were not guilty I would not sentence you, because you was wandering around the town doing those things which you had better not have done, yet I wish to impress upon your mind the fact that it is always better to be among good people, to be among respectable people, and at night to be where good people are nights, than it is to be wandering around from saloon to saloon, from one dance house to another, and from one bar room to another.

Now then, this offense is not only very grave in itself, but it was attended on that night with circumstances that indicated the perpetrators to have a very depraved disposition. It is possible that a man who is not really a very bad man, that ordinarily intends to be a good citizen perhaps, will commit a crime of some kind when he is suddenly tempted, or in some heat of passion before he has time for reflection, but where persons deliberately plan a burglary—lay a plan to break open somebody's house or store or building for the purpose of committing larceny in it, or any other crime, it indicates that degree of deliberation which ought not to influence the court very much in inflicting a light sentence.

If you are guilty, you have deliberately done these acts. If you are guilty, you deliberately threatened the life of Mr. Keely, and that was done under those circumstances which would lead me to think, at least, that had he not obeyed you in every word, his life would have paid the forfeit. I think you fully realize that, and everybody who knows the facts and circumstances fully realizes that. So that the crime itself, even under the best of circumstances is a very grave and a very heinous offense, but under the peculiar circumstances that surround this case, and the condition that that man was left in, the manner in which he was treated, all indicate a disposition on the part of the perpetrators to accomplish their ends, let it cost what it would—if it was necessary to take that man's life, they were prepared to do it.

Now, taking these things into consideration, taking into consideration what I deem to be true, that you have had a fair, patient and impartial trial; the officers it is true might have been somewhat zealous, and I think they ought to be in ferreting out crime, I should be the last man to blame an officer for being zealous in any attempt to ferret out crime and bring the perpetrators of crime to justice. It is possible that they might be zealous, and I think they ought to be. But the jury at least that

(Continued from page 12)

came here to assist the court in your trial, came here as persons who had no previous knowledge of this offense or the circumstances that surrounded it. They were twelve men, straightforward, honorable men, and have given you, I think, a very patient hearing. You have had the process of the court to aid you in getting all your witnesses, and I think, however zealous the officers may have been to ferret out the crime and bring the perpetrators to justice, that they have been just as zealous in obtaining witnesses for the defense.

Now then, for this offense—as I have indicated to you, and as you cannot but see—with the circumstances surrounding it, taking into consideration its gravity, the sentences cannot be anything very light. If it was, it would be but a mockery of justice. In such offenses as this, where not only a person's property is endangered, but wherein human life is endangered, the conviction must be attended with some degree of severity, unless there are some mitigating circumstances, of which there are none in this case.

Now, the sentence of this court is, Mr. Westbrook, that you be confined to the state prison at Jackson, at hard labor, for the period of seven years from and including this date. This is less than half what the statute allows.

The prisoner was returned to jail, and on Saturday morning Sheriff Ryan started with him for Jackson, which place he reached in good order the same day.”

The Jan. 29, 1885 issue of the Midland Republican, p. 8, shows that on January 17, records of the Board of Supervisors for Midland county had paid \$50 for bounty money for Westbrook and \$10 to Geo. F. Hemingway for defending Westbrook. There was no indication of who received the bounty.

In the May 19, 1892 issue of same, p. 3, it is reported that “Frank Westbrook, of Saginaw, who is charged with attempting to ravish [probably inflicting a severe beating] his nine-year-old child and who inflicted serious injuries on the child's person, is in jail; having been caught at Mt. Morris.”

In the 1910 census, Frank Westbrook, age 52, married 3 times, current marriage 13 years, lives in Bay City with wife Elizabeth and two step-children, occupation, laborer at odd jobs.

The trial was conducted in the Midland courthouse by Judge Henry Hart, with William Gordon, Prosecuting Attorney and George F. Hemingway the defense counsel. Judge Hart had been the Prosecuting Attorney from 1866 to 1870, then a state representative, and then in 1875 when the 21st judicial district was formed to comprise Midland, Gratiot, Isabella, Gladwin, Clare and Roscommon counties, he was elected judge, holding that office for eighteen years. William D. Gordon was elected Prosecuting Attorney in 1882, serving four years. He also served as Probate Judge from 1888 to 1892, when he was elected to the office of state representative. George F. Hemingway was one of the first practicing attorneys in the village. He served as prosecuting attorney and state representative. He was a partner with Henry Hart in Hemingway and Hart from 1867 to 1871 and with William Gordon from about 1878 until November 1883. At the time of the trial, Hemingway lived across Jerome street from the Midland county jail, which was next to the court house. Soon after the trial, in July 1884, he sold his home and left his local practice for about three years due to the ill health of his wife, living with several of his children. Sheriff M. W. Ryan was elected to three two year terms as sheriff, in 1882, 1886 and 1888.

It is interesting to note the instructions to the jury concerning reasonable doubt; that reasonable doubt did not mean beyond all possible doubt, or doubt of a captious or imaginary nature. Would these be similar to instructions given to jurors some 127 years later, as in a recent highly publicized case in which reasonable doubt was in play? There was little or no physical evidence such as fingerprints to consider in those days, but the jurors came to a prompt guilty decision in this case.

Also of interest are the “zealous” activities of the police officers. Would this activity be condoned in today's society as they were by Judge Hart?

Member Query

A member asked this question:

“The early records of the Midland County Circuit Court are in the custody of the Midland County Historical Society and have been processed by flattening the papers and placing them in folders for each case. An index of these court cases is also available. I have found that many other cases were apparently tried in a so-called justice court, possibly a Midland township justice of the peace, sometimes appealed to the circuit court. Justice courts were abolished in 1968, the duties to be taken over by District Courts. Does anyone have information on any justice court in Midland county in the 1800s and whether any court records exist?”

If anyone has the answer to this question, please send email to wgbennett@chartermi.net or send snail mail to the PO box address on the newsletter. The answer will be published in a later issue.

1871 Canadian Census online

-Library and Archives Canada has placed the 1871 census online. 1871 marked the first regularly scheduled collection of national statistics. The information covers the four provinces that were part of the Dominion of Canada in 1871: New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Quebec.

The online database provides digitized images of original census returns featuring the name, age, country or province of birth, nationality, religion, and occupation of Canada's residents at the time. The database is searchable by nominal information such as Name, Given Name (s) and Age, and/or geographical information such as Province, District Name, District Number, and Sub-district Number.

The 1871 Canadian Census is available free of charge at: www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/

Hundreds of Historic Papers Lost from U.K. National Archives

Sir_Winston_Churchill According to an article by Matthew Holehouse, published in the Daily Telegraph, 1,600 folders of documents reported missing since 2005 include letters from Sir Winston Churchill to General Franco, the Spanish dictator; minutes of Harold Wilson's meetings with the Queen; and documents from the courts of Henry VIII, Elizabeth I and Charles I. Dozens of regimental diaries, medal records and squadron and battleship logbooks have also seemingly disappeared.

Some of the files, many of which contain the sole copies of historical documents, have not been seen since the early 1990s and fewer than a half have been recovered, according to a register of missing items released under freedom of information laws.

Historians have accused the National Archives, which is overseen by the Ministry of Justice, of "administrative laxness".

Searching Your Irish Roots Online

With over 70 million people around the world claiming Irish ancestry, there's a chance that you have some Irish roots. Why not take look? Your Irish roots are only a click away.

Kate Hickey and Jordana Kozupsky have published a list of online genealogy sites that will help you connect with your Irish roots. You can find this useful list on IrishCentral.com at <http://goo.gl/X4QEN>

Findmypast Makes Updates

Leading UK family history website www.findmypast.co.uk has today launched a quicker way to find the deaths of your ancestors, completing a two-year project to make the birth, marriage and death records of England and Wales easier to use. Over 1,000 people have worked on this project, rescanning 170 years of records and transcribing the quarter of a billion names they contain.

1940 Census to be Free

The 1940 U.S. Census record will be released by the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration on April 2, 2012. Best of all, the more than 3.8 million original document images containing 130 million-plus records will be available to everyone free of charge.

To be sure, not everything will be available on April 2. Not only are the records unavailable to genealogists prior to April 2, those records are also unavailable to indexers and unavailable to companies that host the records online. Everyone gains access on April 2. The companies involved in making the records available online will require several months to digitize and index the records and then to make them available online.

Ancestry.com has already pledged to make the 1940 census records available free of charge through the end of 2013.

Another 67,000 Scottish Records Added to Deceased Online

Burial and cremation records for the cities of Aberdeen and Edinburgh are the latest additions to www.deceasedonline.com.

Over 22,000 burial records dating back to 1824 are from three Aberdeen City cemeteries; Nigg, Trinity and St.Nicholas Kirkyard. The records are in the form of scans of burial registers, dues registers and burial indexes. Register scans for a further 45,000 cremations from Warriston Crematorium in Edinburgh are also now available, covering the period 1991 to 2009. This brings the total number of records on Deceased Online for Warriston Crematorium to nearly 225,000, covering the period 1937 to 2009.

5 New Titles Recently Added to Fold3

Fold3, formerly known as Footnote.com, has added five new collections to the online service. These include War of 1812 Pension Files(available to everyone free of charge) Mexican War Service Records Confederate Casualty Reports World War I Officer Experience Reports WWII "Old Man's Draft" Registration Cards.

Recording Longitudes and Latitudes

Genealogists have always been taught to record our sources of information. We not only record the name of the book or other source of genealogy information, but we also record the location of the building (repository) where we found it. Typically we record the buildings name, street address, city and state.

With today's technology, shouldn't we also be recording the geographic coordinates?

Looking Back in Midland County

(Taken from *Portrait and Biographical Album of Midland County, Michigan* 1884 p. 320-21)

John Roberson

John Roberson, farmer on section 32, Jasper Township, was born in Washington Co., N. Y., July 8, 1849. His father, Martin Roberson, a native of New York, lived in that State all his life, engaged in farming, and died Jan. 12, 1872, aged 55. His mother, Sarah J. (Cook) Roberson, was born in Ireland, came to this country when 12 years old, and now resides, in good health, at the age of 57, with her son.

The subject of this biography was reared on a farm, received an academic education, and on arriving at his majority began teaching. For five winters he had charge of schools in Saratoga and Washington Counties, working on the farm during the summers. In March, 1878, he left his native county and came to Rose Township, Oakland Co., Mich., and one year later he removed to Springfield Township, same county. In December, 1879, he came to this county and purchased 80 acres of heavily timbered land in Jasper Township, where his mother, two brothers, a sister and himself established their home. He has improved 40 acres, and built the necessary farm buildings, and is making creditable progress in developing a fine farm. He has taught two winters in this country. He is in political sentiment a Republican, and has held the offices of Justice of the Peace and School Inspector. His mother is a member of the Baptist Church. He has two sisters and two brothers. Mary E. was born May 31, 1852; Martha J., Sept. 5, 1857 (now married and residing in Ionia County); Martin, Feb. 24, 1859; William C., Nov. 2, 1865.

Taken From *The Midland Sun* February 17, 1899 p. 8

LaPorte

Born to Mr. and Mrs. Fred Cramton a son.

The ladies' aid society meets with Mrs. George Beckley Friday.

The infant child of Mr. Kregor is dangerously ill with pneumonia.

Two new cases of scarlet fever are reported in the neighborhood.

Will Elliot, who has been working in Antrim county, has returned home.

Lewis Williams of Billings, Montana, is here visiting friends and relatives.

Miss Orpha Williams, who is teaching school at Porter, is home spending a few days vacation.

Mrs. Roy Stewart of Grand Rapids is visiting her mother, Mrs. Ellen Johnson, who is dangerously ill.

D. A. Mills was called to Grand Blanc Saturday to attend the funeral of his aunt, Mrs. Sarah Farrer.

J. J. Winslow and family and H. L. Griffin of this place, and Hugh Kelly of Hope, spent Sunday at D. O'Donnell's near Freeland.

Edwin Winslow returned from Vanderbilt Tuesday. He says the weather in that part of the state is very cold, the thermometer registering 54 below zero.

A number of friends of George Pierce gave him a pleasant surprise Friday evening. The evening passed merrily with music and games, refreshments were served and at a late hour the guests departed, regretting that the time had passed so quickly.

Mrs. E. J. Cook died Sunday morning, aged 64 years. She was born in Ireland, moved to Canada when quite young, and has lived in this town 11 years. Besides

a husband she leaves 7 children: Mrs. O. J. Franklin of Merrill, Mrs. M. P. Rathburn of Detroit, Mrs. C. B. Cook of Northville, Mrs. R. McColly of Northville, Mrs. Wm. Hepinstall of Poseyville, and W. A. and John Cook of this place. The funeral was held in the M. E. church Tuesday and the remains were interred in the Laporte cemetery.

East Ingersoll

Mrs. Hugh McMillan is out again.

Mrs. Anna O'Donnell is in Hope with Mrs. Kelly, who is very sick.

T. Fisher, who was on the sick list last week is so as to be out again.

Miss Kate Moffet of Saginaw, who has been visiting at D. O'Donnell's this winter, is visiting S. T. Sanford's.

Taken From *The Midland Sun* January 8, 1897 p. 8

Pleasant Valley

Miss Alice DeCoo of St. Louis has been visiting Miss Mamie Oswald.

Everything is flooded in this vicinity. Some of the oldest settlers say they never saw the water so high.

James Brown of Big Rapids has been visiting his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Chas. Brown, during the last week.

School began in district No. 5 Monday with the same teacher as last term—Miss Ethel McWethey of St. Louis.

Miss Maggie Raymond of Charlotte has been spending the Christmas holidays with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Raymond.

Pioneer Record

Midland Genealogical Society
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Pioneer Record is published quarterly (Sep., Nov., Feb., & Apr.) by the Midland Genealogical Society. Queries are free to members and should be sent to: PIONEER RECORD, Midland Genealogical Society, P.O.Box 2421, Midland, MI 48641-2421. We welcome genealogical material which would be of interest to the general membership. Articles to be included in PR should be submitted to the above address by the 15th of August, October, January and March.

Information about Midland Genealogical Society

The MGS meets on the 3rd Wednesday of Sept., Oct., Nov., Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr. & May at 7:00 PM in the lounge of the Grace A. Dow Memorial Library, 1710 W. St. Andrews Dr., Midland, MI 48640. Visitors are always welcome. Watch the Midland Daily News or local Midland MCTV channel 5 for upcoming speakers, dates and times.

Membership dues are \$14.00 for single and \$17.50 for a couple and can be paid after July 1, but must be paid by Nov. 25, to continue receiving the Pioneer Record. Dues may be paid at any MGS meeting or may be sent to the Membership Chair, Midland Genealogical Society, P. O. Box 2421, Midland, MI 48641-2421.