



# What's in a Name? Tremblay, Tremblé, Trombley

By Elizabeth Bourne-Nido, founder and board member of Rendez-vous Détroit, member of French Canadian Heritage Society of Michigan and third great-granddaughter of Benoît Tremblay. [rendezvousdetroit@gmail.com](mailto:rendezvousdetroit@gmail.com).

When I was growing up in Lansing, MI, I remember my mother telling me we were French and someone in our family was an interpreter between the French and the Indians. I imagined this mix of cultures was a part of me and my ancestor was surely a dashing French voyageur.

My favorite summer trip was a visit to Mackinaw City where we always had dinner at Teysen's. I gulped down my food as fast as I could so I could escape from the table and get upstairs to maximize my time in the Indian museum. Even as a child, I was drawn to our family's past.

Later as an adult I moved to the Detroit area for an advertising career, landing a job at Florists' Transworld Delivery (FTD) as their Manager of Member Communications. I worked with a man there with the last name of Trombley. I told him, I too, was of French-Canadian ancestry. I asked him a lot of questions about his family, curious to know if there was any link to ours.

You see, our family had lost contact with the French-Canadian side of our family. My French-Canadian maternal grandfather had died when I was a toddler and for reasons I would find out much later, his family was disconnected. It wasn't until my mother passed away in 2015 that I started to do some digging.

It was quite a surprise to find that Bay City, MI, played such a major role in the outcome of my family's experience. In researching my grandfather's family, I found he had two ancestors in Cadillac's 1701 founding convoy of Detroit! I also learned that my grandfather was a direct descendant of the Tremblay family who had arrived in Detroit in the late 1700s and were co-founders of Grosse Pointe, MI.

It was my third great-grandfather, Benoît, who left Detroit in 1831, along with brother Joseph and nephews, Mador and Leon. The family group became the early trailblazers of what was to become Bay City, MI. Benoît and his wife, Teresa Pomainville Tremblay had many children, one of their daughters, Abigail, born in Oakland Township in 1828.

Abigail married a French/Ojibwe from Mackinac Island, Peter Gruet (Kawkawcheese), in the late 1840s and they moved to the Mt. Pleasant area. It seems that's where the disconnect in our family relations occurred. My mother probably thought the family secret of Ojibwe blood running through our veins would go with her to the grave. Or that her father and all his siblings had been sent to the Mt. Pleasant Indian Boarding School. I will never know if she knew that or not. She always said her father had attended a country school and had an eighth-grade education. She at least had the last part right.

It appears that when my grandfather was finally released from the boarding school, he closed the chapter about his family history and heritage. It all would have been lost if not for his very snooply granddaughter.

Learning of my Tremblay lineage, I was led to visit the Trombley Centre in Bay City. Trombley, anglicized from the French Tremblay. Anglicized after Michigan was overrun with Yankees, Germans, Scots and Irish from the east after the Erie Canal opened Michigan up for westward migration. The docents at the Trombley Centre were very kind and helpful and put me in touch with Sue Vandenbrooks, who is on their board of directors.

After speaking with Sue, I thought of several things that I hope will be of interest to Tremblay/Trombley descendants and members of the Bay County Genealogy Society.

Almost ten years ago, several friends and I who are also members of the French Canadian Heritage Society of Michigan, founded Rendez-vous Détroit, a 501c3 French Canadian/Métis cultural group. Our initial goal was to raise money for our ancestral church, Ste. Anne de Detroit, but also to create events to celebrate our heritage.

I felt very strongly about this. I had grown up attending other people's ethnic festivals. I later learned there were many reasons why the French history and heritage in Michigan have been very neglected. Since 2017, Rendez-vous Détroit has worked tirelessly to increase the public's awareness and appreciation of the contribution made by the French in the early settlement of Michigan.

This summer, Rendez-vous Détroit will be hosting a wonderful celebration in Detroit to commemorate Detroit's 325<sup>th</sup> birthday! Bonne Fête Détroit 325 will be held July 24 – 26, 2026. I am including all our information which can also be found on our website, [rendezvousdetroit.org](http://rendezvousdetroit.org).

At past Rendez-vous, we have had mini reunions of family groups. About five years ago at Ste. Anne de Detroit, we had a Tremblay reunion and had about 50 people meet. It was fun connecting with Tremblay descendants from all over the state!

I would like to invite everyone to attend our Bonne Fête Détroit 325 festivities and propose we have a Tremblay reunion sometime during the weekend. I would also like to propose that we put our heads together and consider some fundraisers to support our ancestral landmark. Yes, the Trombley Centre is OUR ANCESTRAL LANDMARK!

Why is this important? The French were the first Europeans in Michigan. French and Indigenous languages were the main languages in Michigan until the 1840s. The Trombley Centre is the oldest surviving wooden structure in Bay County. This is all part of our French history and heritage in Michigan.

My great-great grandfather, Peter Gruet (Kawkawcheese) must have been quite a catch for Benoît Tremblay to allow his 18-year-old daughter to marry him. In the *Michigan Pioneer* periodicals, it is reported that working as a guide and interpreter, Gruet led a scientific expedition into mid-Michigan. While traveling back to Detroit by canoe on Lake Huron, a terrible storm came up. If not for his excellent prowess and skill with a canoe, the expedition would have been lost.

I am very proud to be the great-great granddaughter of such a brave man. He's not the dashing French voyageur I had imagined. He's better! He was a brave hero, white men trusted him with their lives, and he spoke all the Indian languages plus English and French. No wonder he could steal the heart of a French girl from Bay City! They eventually had eleven children, so you'd think I'd have some cousins out there somewhere.

There are more Tremblays than any other French-Canadian family in North America. We have made our mark in so many ways. Whether you identify as a Tremblay, a Trombley or Tremblé, we are all descendants of Pierre and Ozanne Tremblay of Il d'Orleans, Quebec. So, what's in a name? No matter how you spell it, the surname Tremblay is your familial tie to your family's history and the legacy we will leave behind.

If you are a Tremblay, your Michigan roots began in Detroit. Please consider joining us for Bonne Fête Détroit 325. Come and meet your distant cousins and let's discuss how we, as descendants, can help our Ancestral Landmark, The Trombley Centre. À bientôt!

## **Website-FaceBook-Plus**

**By Charles Kocher**

### **Facebook (Bay County Genealogical Society-Michigan)**

In the last three months, five people have become members of the Society's Facebook group, bringing the total to 409.

In February, there was a query from a new member to the group, Troy King, who lives in Maine. He was seeking documentation that would connect an ancestor that was given a French name at birth and anglicized it when he migrated to the United States from Quebec, Canada.

By presenting what he was seeking and the information he already knew in bullet points, he made it easier to find the needed information. Many people ask for help by writing in paragraph form, which can make it difficult to determine exactly what they are looking for.

Aid was provided by group members.

### **Website (baymigenoc.com)**

Following are statistics covering the period since the December, 2025, issue of the Clarion.

There were one hundred and eighty-eight (188) "Site Sessions", defined as visits to the website. One hundred and eighty (180) visitors came from twenty-three (23) States. Eight (8) other visitors came from Poland, Netherlands, Austria, United Kingdom, Germany, and Cech Republic.

The top five visited pages were Home, Marriage Indexes, Meetings, Genealogy Room, and Queries.



RENDEZ-VOUS DÉTROIIT PRESENTS

**BONNE FÊTE 325 DÉTROIIT**

HAPPY 325<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY DETROIT!

**July 24 – 26, 2026**

Fort Pontchartrain Hotel, Detroit, MI 48226

Calling all descendants of Detroit's early French settlers! Francophones, Francophiles, lovers of Detroit history and those who simply enjoy a great dose of joie de vivre, you're invited! Rendez-vous Détroit is throwing a party! It's a weekend of festivities to celebrate Detroit's 325<sup>th</sup> birthday. We will be saluting the efforts of Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac and his brave convoy of French and Indigenous trailblazers who, together, put Détroit on the map. Our party encompasses a variety of components, all recognizing and celebrating the French history and heritage of Detroit while appreciating how our legacy will continue to influence the future.

**Please join us and be a part of this very historic event.**





## FRIDAY, JULY 24, 2026

Hotel Room Check-in begins at 3:00 p.m.,  
Fort Pontchartrain Hotel, 2 Washington Blvd., Detroit, MI 48226

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

### FRIDAY, JULY 24, 2026

- 4:00 p.m.** Founders' Recognition Ceremony, Founding Convoy Plaque, Hart Plaza, Detroit, Michigan. Chorale music provided by The French Boys' Choir, La Maîtrise des Hauts de France, Lambersart, France.
- 5:15 p.m.** Cocktail Meet and Greet, Ballroom B, Fort Pontchartrain Hotel
- 6:30 p.m.** Dinner, Pure Michigan Buffet: Michigan Cherry Salad, Broccoli Slaw with Bacon and Cheddar Cheese, Maple Pork Tenderloin, Lake Perch, White Cheddar and Chive Cheesy Potatoes, Roasted Seasonal Vegetables, Sander's Chocolate Bumpy Cake, Ballroom B.
- 8:00 p.m.** Dr. Catherine Cangany, "Early beginnings of Détroit."
- 9:00 p.m.** Live Entertainment, Traditional French-Canadian Music

### SATURDAY, JULY 25, 2026

- 8:00 a.m.** Continental Breakfast, Assorted Fresh Fruit, Flavored Yogurts, Assorted Muffins, Bagels and Breakfast Pastries, Ballroom B.
- 9:30 a.m.** "Jean Baptiste Vernier (1762 – 1834) Adventurer, Landholder, Businessman, Entrepreneur and Progenitor" by Jim Verney.
- 10:45 a.m.** "Saving the Last Standing Landmark of French Détroit, The Basilica of Ste. Anne de Détroit," by Craig Horvath, The Catholic Initiative.
- 11:30 a.m.** Lunch, Soup and Salad Bar, French Canadian Pea Soup and Soup du Jour, Chicken Salad and Tuna Salad on Croissants, Pasta Salad, Garden Salad, Fresh Fruit and Tarte Aux Pommés, Ballroom B.
- 1:15 p.m.** Leave hotel for afternoon activities:  
*Détroit French History Cruise:* The Detroit River was the main highway of 18<sup>th</sup> Century Détroit. The bilingual (French/English) tour highlights the French historical sites along the river. Our ship, The Diamond Belle, has capacity for 200 passengers. Reservations will be made on a first-come, first-served basis.  
*The Detroit Historical Museum:* If you haven't been to Detroit before, the Detroit Historical Museum is well worth the visit. Known in the 1950s as the Paris of the Midwest, Detroit has worn many titles: The Motor City, Car Capital of the World; Motown: The "D." Begin with the excellent exhibits about the early Indigenous and French roots of the city and discover why Détroit continues to make history.
- 2:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.** Détroit French History Tour on the Detroit River or Detroit Historical Museum Tour, 5401 Woodward Ave., Detroit, MI 48202
- 6:30 p.m.** Dinner Dance, Caesar Salad, Coq Au Vin, Roasted Redskin Potatoes, Green Beans, Rolls, and Petit Fours, Ballroom B, Music provided by La Compagnie Dance Troupe.

### SUNDAY, JULY 26, 2026

- Check-out:** 11:00 a.m.
- Noon Mass:** Basilica of Ste. Anne de Détroit Campus, 1000 Ste. Anne Street, Detroit, MI 48226  
Chorale music by The French Boys' Choir, Les Petits Chanteurs de France  
(*The interior of our ancestral church, the Basilica of Ste. Anne de Détroit, is closed for restoration.*)
- 1:15 p.m.** On-site history tour of the exterior of the Basilica of Ste. Anne de Détroit, last standing landmark of Old French Détroit and listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

**À bientôt!**

Questions? Email [rendezvousdetroit@gmail.com](mailto:rendezvousdetroit@gmail.com).



## REGISTRATION

**FRIDAY – SATURDAY, JULY 24 – 25, 2026**  
Register online at [rendezvousdetroit.org](http://rendezvousdetroit.org)

**Early-Bird Registration Ends: May 21, 2026**  
**Standard Registration Ends: July 2, 2026**

### Mail-in Registration

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_ CITY \_\_\_\_\_

DAYTIME PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

DIETARY RESTRICTIONS \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to Rendez-vous Détroit and mail to: Rendez-vous Détroit, P.O. Box 4158, Centerline, MI 48015.

**Full Weekend Registration** includes Friday afternoon Founders’ Ceremony, Cocktail Party, all meals, four drink tickets, lectures, activities and entertainment.

**Saturday-Only Registration** includes all meals, two drink tickets, lectures, activities and entertainment.

**Cut-off for standard registration is Thursday, July 2, 2026.** Cancellations and refunds will not be processed after July 2, 2026.

### FULL BONNE FÊTE 325 WEEKEND

(includes Friday Founders’ Ceremony, Cocktail Party, Friday and Saturday meals, four drink tickets, all lectures, activities and entertainment)

- Early-Bird Registration** until May 21, 2026 .....\$276.00
- Standard Registration**, May 22 – July 2, 2026 .....\$326.00

### SATURDAY-ONLY

(includes all meals, two drink tickets, all lectures, activities and entertainment)

- Early-Bird Registration** until May 21, 2026 .....\$195.00
- Standard Registration**, May 22 – July 2, 2026 .....\$245.00

### FRIDAY-ONLY DINNER

(does not include Cocktail Party)

- 6:30 p.m., Ballroom B** .....\$87.00 per person

### SATURDAY-ONLY DINNER DANCE

- 6:30 p.m., Ballroom B** .....\$87.00 per person

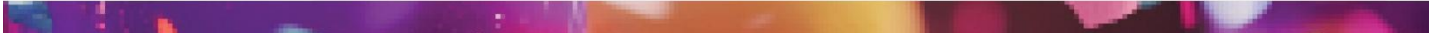
Please fill out one registration form for each person attending. Please include any dietary restrictions and food allergies.

**Please select one of the options below for your Saturday afternoon activity:**

- Detroit French History Cruise on the Detroit River (Ship capacity 200, first come, first served sign-up)
- Detroit Historical Museum (excellent exhibits on early French history in Detroit)

On Saturday afternoon, July 25, we will be walking two blocks from the hotel, either to the boat dock on the Detroit River to board the ship or to Woodward Avenue to board the Q Line which will transport passengers to the Detroit Historical Museum. If walking is not an option for you, it is a short drive to both activity locations. If you have paid for event parking at the Fort Pontchartrain Hotel, you will be allowed to leave and return at no additional cost. The Detroit Historical Museum has their own parking lot next to the museum. There are parking ramps and street parking near the boat dock.

**This registration form does not include the hotel reservation which must be made directly with the Fort Pontchartrain Hotel. Please ask for the Rendez-vous Détroit group rate when making your reservation.**



# **Towns/Townships in Bay County**

## **KAWKAWLIN, MICHIGAN**

The name Kawkawlin came from an Ojibwa word which meant “Place of Pike (fish)”. The area was originally settled by Sauk Indians, ca 1736 and the area attracted fur traders and lumberjacks. The lumber industry began about 1844 with the first mill at the mouth of the Kawkawlin River. Agriculture replaced lumbering after much of the land was cleared. The township formed in 1868 and grew with the arrival of the railroad in 1871.

Seidler’s Corner (corner of Seidler Road and Garfield Road) was settled by Henry Seidler in the 1880’s. There soon was a bustling town. It boasted a hotel, saloon, livery stable, blacksmith shop and a cheese factory. Today there is no significant commercial or notable businesses at that exact location anymore.

In Kawkawlin H H Thomas owned and operated the Ajax Dynamite Factory. He processed nitroglycerine and was in business from about 1880-1890. His factory was rocked with two explosions over the years shaking buildings as far away as Standish and eventually was not rebuilt.

An early sawmill was O A Ballou & Co, and other businesses in the area were a drug store, a hotel and a general store.

Kawkawlin is in the northeastern part of Bay County but is in Monitor Township and not in Kawkawlin Township. Always check both townships when researching in the area.

These are among the earliest families in the area: Juillet, Goulet, Beauchamp, Laframboise, Rivard, Trudell, Charbonneau, Desmarais, Boucher and Trombley. These families often worked in lumber camps, river driving and early trading networks along the Kawkawlin River area.

Many Irish and German families also settled in the Kawkawlin and Bay City area. Names like Sheridan, Murphy, Ryan and Schmidt, Weiss, Koch, and Bauer. Other settlers from New York and New England came into the area with names like Fraser, Hotchkiss, Bangor and Salzburg.

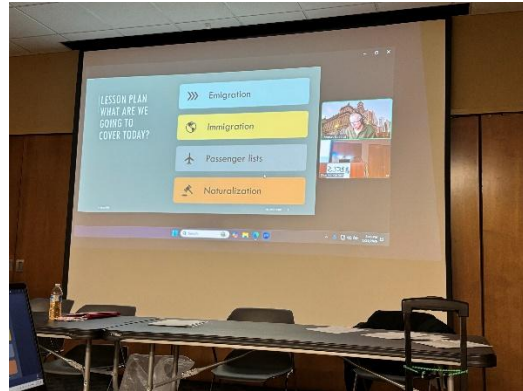
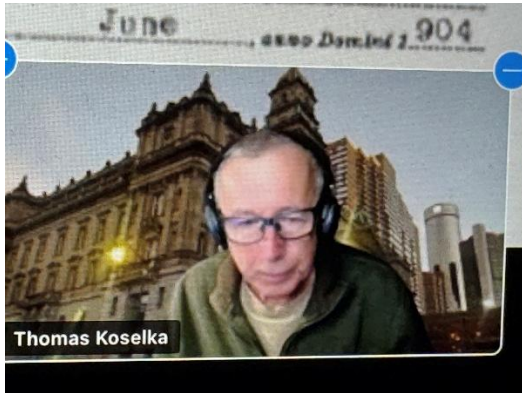
The area is a true melting-pot of nationalities.

*Article by Barb Conner*

# Past Meetings

## January 14<sup>th</sup> – Tom Koselka – Exit, Enter, Commit: Emigration, Immigration, Naturalization

At the end of Tom's presentation, every one understood the differences between Emigration, Immigration, and Naturalization. He highly recommends looking at the blogs on Family Search when you need some help.

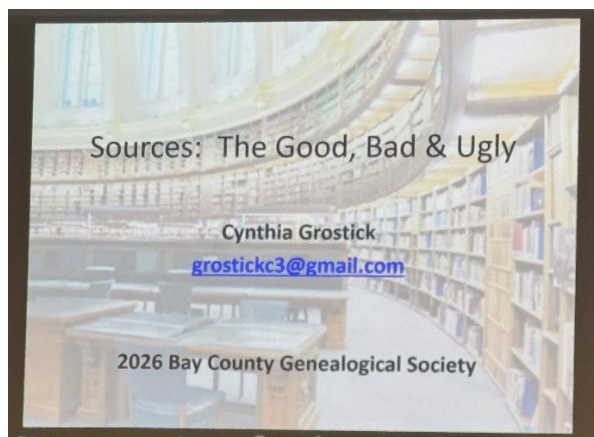


## February 11<sup>th</sup> – Judy Nimer – French Migrations Out of Quebec

Judy gave a wonderful lecture on the paths heading out of Quebec and down to the states. She referenced places to trace your ancestors to plus the history behind the migrations.

## March 11<sup>th</sup> – Cynthia Grostick – The Good, The Bad, The Ugly

Cynthia mostly talked about Primary & Secondary sources. Primary are mainly documents made at the time – ie birth/marriage/death records. Secondary sources are obits/tombstones/other family trees. She welcomes anyone with a question to email her.



## **Future Meeting Dates:**

**April 8<sup>th</sup> – Bryan Whitledge – Aladdin’s Bay City Roots (Kit Homes)**

**May 13<sup>th</sup> – Jim Verney – Searching for Verney Family**

**June 10<sup>th</sup> – Potluck & Auction – Red, White & Blue for the 250<sup>th</sup>!**

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## **New On Our Website**

One of our members, Charles Reagan, has donated a wealth of his family tree memorabilia to our club so that people researching his tree can access the material. I have taken part of it and scanned it in to my laptop. Charlie has added it to our website under members only (for now) so our members can view it. The hard copies have been added to our library so if you wish to look at those, please contact me. I still have a bunch more to scan and I am working on a cross-reference for names so you can see at a glance if the name you are researching is in the collection.

So far names in the tree include: Hoyt, Reagan, Gowan. Cities range from Saginaw to Lansing. Again, an index will be coming, sometime this summer.

**Thank you, Charles, for trusting us with your family tree.**

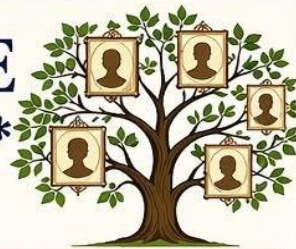
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**This is the reason I’ve been so behind in getting the newsletter out. It’s softball season and we have to attend a lot of practices and games throughout the week. Well, this sacrifice was paid in full when last week my daughter, Sandy, hit the ball out of the park and into the baseball field during a game against CPS!**

**Heather Leser**



# A GETTING-STARTED GUIDE for NEW GENEALOGISTS\*



## FIVE FIRST STEPS:



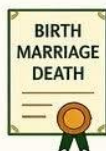
1. Learn how to distinguish reliable sources from unreliable ones. (Free tutorial: <https://www.evidenceexplained.com/content/quicklesson-17-evidence-analysis-process-map>) This is the most-important basic point of all. It's easy to be misled by misinformation.



2. Begin with yourself and your parents. Collect all family documents you can find. Organize and thoroughly identify these mementoes as you collect them. Begin entering your information in family-tree software. (*LegacyFamilyTree is free for your PC or laptop. RootsMagic has a free version. Ancestry offers an online platform.*)



3. INTERVIEW (in person or in writing) any and all family members older than you. Record what they tell you. Then seek documentation for what you're told. But keep in mind that family tradition is NOT Gospel. People misremember.



4. Seek BIRTH, MARRIAGE, and DEATH RECORDS for each parent, grandparents, etc. But be aware that most states did not create them until after 1900. Before the start of vital records, you'll need to use many other types of records to find this information or build a case.



5. Exhaust the free CENSUSES at FamilySearch. Every census for every ancestor across their entire lives. Missing just one can mean missing the very information you need to solve a problem. The U.S. has taken censuses every ten years since 1790. They are available through 1950. Many states, from the mid-1800s, have taken censuses at five-year points between the federal censuses.



## FIVE CAUTIONS:



1. DO identify (cite) your source every time you record a "fact." Adequate identification means we answer 6 W-questions: WHO (author), WHAT (title, website, etc.), WHEN (published or created), WHERE (published or created), WHEREIN (the exact spot in the source) and WHY should I believe this? As you continue research you will find contradictory information; determining which is more credible is possible only if you have adequately identified the source of each piece of information.



2. DO be critical and logical. Question everything you see and find.



3. DO NOT accept anything anyone else says, anywhere, if their assertion is not supported by a reliable source. If it IS supported by a source, get that source and verify that the information has been reported correctly.



4. Do NOT copy anyone else's tree. If a tree asserts a name, relationship, date, or place that you think might help you, ask yourself: What source do they cite? If there is no source—or if it's a poor one—find a credible source or else do NOT add that information into your tree. It could mislead you for years.



5. DO, when using Ancestry (\$\$), FamilySearch (free), and similar sites, focus on their billions of DOCUMENTS (original records), not the user-contributed trees that, at all sites, are riddled with errors.



### FREE INSTRUCTION:



<http://ancestryacademy.com/>  
(5 minute videos)



FamilySearch's written tutorial for beginners: ([https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/New\\_to\\_Genealogy\\_-\\_Beginners\\_First\\_Step](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/New_to_Genealogy_-_Beginners_First_Step)). You'll need to sign up for a free account first.



FamilyLocket.com  
"Research Like a Pro" podcast.



### INEXPENSIVE INSTRUCTION (HIGHLY RECOMMENDED):



FamilyTreeWebinars.com  
\$49 a year for access to some 3,000 webinars and 10,000 pages of syllabi by today's best genealogists. Every topic imaginable.



<https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/genealogy-courses>  
The National Genealogical Society, a set of three structured courses for beginners that will keep you from going astray.



### FREE RECORDS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD:



#### FamilySearch.org.

Here you will find billions of original legal records from courthouses, town halls, state and federal archives—censuses, court cases, deeds, immigration records, land grants, marriage records, military records, probates, tax rolls—and far more.

\* Elizabeth Shown Mills, CG, CGL, FASG, *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace*; *Your Stripped Bare Guide to Citing & Using History Sources*; and *Professional Genealogy: Preparation, Practice & Standards*.

\*\*Source FaceBook: Elizabeth Shown Mills

## Meeting Schedule

Meetings are held in the Community Room  
at Wirt Library

Time: 5:30-7:30 pm

September 10 <sup>th</sup>	March 11 <sup>th</sup>
October 8 <sup>th</sup>	April 8 <sup>th</sup>
November 5 <sup>th</sup> **	May 13 <sup>th</sup>
December 3 <sup>rd</sup> **	June 10 <sup>th</sup>
January 14 <sup>th</sup>	July No Meeting
February 11 <sup>th</sup>	August No Meeting

\*\*1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday Meeting

If Bay City Schools are canceled due to bad  
weather, our meetings are also cancelled.

## Library Hours

### Auburn & Pinconning

Sun-Mon	Closed
Tues-Thur	10am -8pm
Fri-Sat	9am - 5pm

### Sage

Mon-Tue	9am – 5pm
Wed-Thur	12pm – 8 pm
Fri	9am – 5pm
Sat-Sun	Closed

### Wirt

Mon-Thur	10am – 8pm
Fri-Sat	9am – 5pm
*Sun	1pm – 5pm
	*(Sep-May only)

## Contact Information

Please send all questions to one of the  
following:

**Facebook:** Bay County Genealogical Society MI

**Website:** baymigenesoc.com

**Email:** bcgs13@yahoo.com

**Snail Mail:** BCGS

P.O.Box 1366

Bay City, MI, 48706

## 2024-2025 BCGS Officers

President	Ruth Wilke
Vice President	Barb Conner
Secretary	Judy Berner
Treasurer	Mary McManman
Librarian	Heather Leser
Publishing	Heather Leser
Clarion Editor	Heather Leser

## Membership Dues

All membership renewals are due by the  
end of December. Yearly dues are \$20.00  
for a single person or \$25.00 per  
family/one household.

## The Wirt Genealogy Room

Our BCGS volunteers are available on  
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and  
Saturday from 1pm-4pm.

There is access to Ancestry.com,  
Heritage Quest, Fold3, and  
Familysearch.org