

# Walworth County Genealogical Society Newsletter



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July - August 2014

## Guest Speakers/Programs for 2014

Tuesday, August 5th, 6:30 pm: Ice Cream Social - bring your favorite toppings and your favorite dessert recipe to share

Tuesday, September 2nd, 5:30 pm: Annual Dinner at Foley's Irish Woods  
Register online or use the form on page 41

Saturday, September 27th, 9:00 am to 3:00 pm - History Fair - hosted by Burlington Genealogical Society at Burlington High School

This marks the first time Burlington, Walworth, and Kenosha County Genealogical Societies will be combining for the History Fair

Tuesday, October 7th, 6:30 pm: Using GIS mapping resources presented by Deb Ketchum

*Please consider a donation for either the local food pantry or Lakeland Animal Shelter*

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## From the President's Desk

Mike Hay - WCGS President

It's family reunion time! Martha, Jon, and I will be traveling south on Saturday, August 2<sup>nd</sup> to attend the 76<sup>th</sup> Annual Grider Reunion in Hoopston, Illinois. It's encouraging that this family has gotten together for that many years. The family historian brings photo albums of past reunions and it's fun to see what our ancestors look like and how things and people have changed over the years.

We have just concluded our annual cemetery walk at St. Peter's Catholic Cemetery in East Troy and I would like to take this opportunity to again thank all of the participants and East Troy Area Historical Society for all of their gracious assistance in setting up and conducting this year's walk. The weather was perfect with a light breeze and all those leaving were happy and smiling and stopped at our table to add to their donations. Our cemetery walk was attended by some members of Williams Bay Historical Society who are planning a cemetery walk of their own in October and wanted to pick up some pointers from us.

For those of you who did not attend, we have created a slide show which can be viewed on our website at [www.walworthcgs.com](http://www.walworthcgs.com). While you are on our website, you can sign up or print out the form for the 26<sup>th</sup> annual dinner by clicking on the appropriate link.

We have been contacted by Burlington Genealogical Society and they are requesting that we attend their August meeting to help fill bags to hand out at the Family History Fair in September. They have also requested that we bring any items that we might like to put into the "silent auction" or as a door prize. Kenosha Genealogy Society will also be a part of the Family History Fair this year making it a tri-county coalition. We are hoping for a big turnout and next year we will host the event. We are searching for a suitable site for our next presentation, so if you have any suggestions, please let us know. The Kenosha group will be hosting the History Fair two years from now.

WCGS will be holding elections this year for President, Treasurer, and two board members. The future of our organization will be in the hands of those selected, so your participation is vital to keep our society continuing. If you have any suggested candidates for the open positions, you can email them to [wcgcontact@gmail.com](mailto:wcgcontact@gmail.com) or jot them down and give them to a board member or officer.

The Delavan Enterprise published a tabloid in 1995 covering the Spring Grove, St. Andrews cemeteries which we sold. We no longer have any copies of these and the Enterprise has no plans to reprint and have given us authorization to print and distribute our own book. We are currently working on this and should have it ready for sale soon.



Deb Ketchum, Librarian



# Ketchum's Korner

As most of you may know I am currently in Anchorage Alaska on family leave. I want to thank Mike and Martha Hay for taking over the Cemetery program. I see on the website it was a great success. I also want to thank them for covering my Tuesday at the library. I plan to return to Wisconsin the week of August 11<sup>th</sup>, so things should get back to normal afterwards. Since I don't have a "library" page per se this issue I would like to share my experience with an event I attended here in Anchorage last week.

During the summer months there's a couple that is carrying on a tradition that was done by a fellow for years until he died. He would pretty much do a "cemetery program" somewhat like WCGS does every year. Yes you read correctly "summer months" not just one day in the summer, but June - July - August there's a program. The one for July was called Stories at Anchorage Memorial Park featuring costumed actors (from the local theatre groups) at selected gravesites. Just like our program there were 11 sites, free of charge and ran from 6pm-8pm (daylight until 11pm) with speakers repeating as the crowds came and went throughout the evening. A little background information, Anchorage is a city of about 300,000 people. It has 2 cemeteries. One is Anchorage Memorial Park which is 3 blocks long and 3 blocks wide and the home of 12,000 burials. It was originally established as the Cemetery Reserve by President Woodrow Wilson in Executive Order 2242 of August 31, 1915. Then with Executive Order 2836 of April 10, 1918, President Wilson directed that burial land be made available, without charge, to the public. Today it still has no burial cost, but now has a \$150.00 administration fee. The columbarium memorial wall established in 2003 has 3,861 niches and will hold 9,000 urns. There are different levels of costs for the wall.

One of the featured sites was for Frank Finnigan, 1860-1932. He was born in Maine and had lived on the east coast all his life. One day during the Panic of 1910, he left his family and came to Alaska with the gold fever get rich dream along with thousands of others. He arrived in Nome, trying his hand at mining. He was in his 40's and the intention was to send money back home to the family. Word began to spread about the railroad being built in 1915 down by Anchorage. The 1920 census lists him as a timber cutter. He had built his own home and worked many years for the railroad and then ran a tie and wood camp on the south side of Anchorage. History can only hope he was sending money back to the family. He never did return to the east coast. In the fall of 1931 he was receiving medical treatment. Then in December he became ill enough to be placed in the Railroad hospital. He died on April 11, 1932 from complications of cancer of the liver.

Now having nobody in Anchorage to make burial decisions, the Anchorage Funeral Parlor wrote a letter to the family back east notifying them of the death and wanting instructions as to burial. The family responded they would like the body sent back and would send money soon to cover the costs. Several letters exchanged over a period of time with the family and the Anchorage Funeral Parlor but the family was struggling and never could send money. After a while the correspondence between the two stopped. In 1944 the Anchorage Funeral Parlor was sold, Frank's body was discovered still sitting in a vault waiting to be buried. One of the terms of sale by the purchasers was disposition of the body. The Haines Funeral Parlor stepped in and had Frank buried as too much time had elapsed since his death for the Territory to pay for burial. So on July 27, 1944, after 12 years of living in the vault, Frank's body was finally laid to rest in the Anchorage Memorial Park.



# The History & Herstory of Walworth County

By Chris Brookes

## Diaries, Journals, and Charles M. Baker

When Judy Rockwell held up a family diary as a memory jogger for Life Writing, an audible sigh filled the room. Everyone seems to appreciate the good fortune of someone who has access to such a valuable artifact. Diaries have provided historians and others an insight into the past. Some famous diarists include:

Samuel Pepys (1660-1670) England – one of the most important diaries in history

Mary Chesnut (1861-1865) South Carolina – a vivid eyewitness account of the Civil War

Queen Victoria (1832 – 1901) England – recently put online

Anne Frank (1942-1944) Amsterdam – one of the world's most widely read books

Many US presidents: Theodore Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Ronald Reagan

Some of these diaries were never intended for publication, but all of them provide personal accounts of life and events that shaped history.

The practice of keeping diaries reached its peak during the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romantic and Victorian eras in Britain due to increased literacy, increased reading, and increased availability of literature especially for women.

Closer to home is the published journal of Charles Minton Baker, Walworth County's first District Attorney. *Charles Minton Baker's Journal from Vermont to Wisconsin* details his overland journey to the Great Lakes in a covered wagon with his wife Martha Larrabee Baker, three children, and \$160 in his pocket. From there they took a steamboat to Chicago (which he found to be a "low muddy town of cheap wooden houses"), and then overland again to Janesville, Wisconsin. Finding most of the land already claimed, he proceeded to explore Walworth County, settling in Geneva in late December, 1838.

"The house was a log one...its cracks filled or 'pointed up' only half way, - with one door broken down, no glass in its windows and no chamber floor. The roof of oak boards, rough edged and warped, admitted plenty of light and air, and gave free access to snow and rain. No friend or neighbor was present to greet him, and no fire blazed to warm or cheer him. Here the family remained through the winter, with but few articles of household necessity except such as kind neighbors lent to them, their own goods not arriving until the following June." (*Annals of Lake Geneva* by James Simmons, page 70-71).

The life of Charles Baker and his collection of letters and papers inspired his grandson Edward Larrabee Baker to publish *Charles Minton Baker and the Pioneer Trail* in 1928 – a true example of Life Writing!

After the death of Martha Larrabee Baker in 1843, Charles Baker married a second time. Eliza Holt Baker kept a series of diaries, unpublished but available at the Area Research Center in Whitewater. Karen Weston shared a couple entries with me from the 1862-1864 book.

"10<sup>th</sup> – Mrs. Farr fitting a basque for me – here to dinner. We all went to Mr. Bs to tea. Came home in the dark. Mrs. Dr. Palmer with us."

What can we learn from this? Women's fashions – a basque is a long corset fastening in the front. Mrs. Farr is a seamstress. Dinner served around mid-day. Tea served in the late afternoon. Common forms of address: Mrs. Farr, Mr. B, Mrs. Dr.

"17<sup>th</sup> – Full of work, as it is Saturday. Delia came in, on her way to see Mrs. Walter who took a large quantity of laudanum yesterday – much excitement is created

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# The History & Herstory of Walworth County

By Chris Brookes

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& many people going to see her. I went also, & saw the poor sufferer struggling with death. – The dead body of Mr. Farr arrived today. He was shot by Quantrell’s men in Missouri. Mrs. Farr is in Vermont.”

Karen asked if this was “my” Mrs. Farr. Yes, and this confirmed something I wanted to know – that Mr. Farr’s body was shipped home for burial. What I didn’t know was that Mrs. Farr was in Vermont! A first-hand look at the diaries is now on my research list.

Charles Baker’s home occupied the site of the Bella Vista Suites in Lake Geneva. The Baker House restaurant next door was the summer home of his son Robert

H. Baker and daughter-in-law Emily. Other Larrabee relations lived in a home where Harbor Shores stands today. These Larrabees and their relations, the A.C. Calkins family, were the main characters in the play *Journey to Geneva 1872* presented at the Geneva Lake Museum last month, which, incidentally, was based on the diary of 14-year-old Rosa Calkins!

Diaries are unique accounts which may offer insights into life later on in history. Consider keeping a journal, diary, or writing life stories for future generations. You just might be making history.

## Walworth County Genealogical Society Annual Dinner

Foley’s Irish Woods  
W3905 Hwy 50, Lake Geneva  
Tuesday, September 2nd

5:30 pm Cash Bar  
6:00 pm Dinner

### Menu

Your choice of:

**Corned beef and cabbage:** Authentic Irish Corned Beef and Cabbage dinner with soup or salad choice.

**Shepherd’s Pie:** Spicy beef with carrots and onions, topped with garlicky mashed potatoes served in a hot black kettle.

Soft drinks are included with the price along with free refills.

## Walworth County Genealogical Society Annual Dinner Registration Form

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

### Number of Reservations

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

Members (\$20.00 each) \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Non-members (\$25.00 each) \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

### Choice

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Corned Beef & Cabbage: # \_\_\_\_\_

Shepherd’s Pie: # \_\_\_\_\_



## AROUND THE COUNTY TIDBITS

by Shirley Sisk

**Lyons** – Mrs. Phoebe Healey is entertaining her sister, Mrs. Robinson, from Genesee Co., N. Y., and also a niece from the same place.-----Mr. Chas. Stubbs has purchased Mrs. Hubbard's house and his family is now nicely settled in the same.-----Mr. Henry Erdley has been quite sick. Dr. L. N. Hicks, of Burlington, is the attending physician.-----The oyster supper last Tuesday evening was a pleasant feature of the week's programme. Mrs. G. V. Weeks and Mr. and Mrs. O. Gillett furnished some excellent music which was much enjoyed by all. The society cleared \$ 13.35. (From the Delavan Republican, Wed., Nov. 13, 1889)

**North Walworth** - Mr. S. U. Phelps left Monday, for Grand Rapids, Michigan. We are sorry to lose S. U. as he is one of our best young men, but console ourselves with the thought that he will return with the birds in the spring.-----Miss Josie Bunnell, of Chicago, is home for a few days visiting her parents.-----Mr. E. W. Bunnell and Miss Jennie Ferow, were united in marriage Wednesday evening, Nov. 6, the Rev. Dr. Collie performing the ceremony. The scene of the ceremony was the residence of the bride's father, C. E. Ferow, where about seventy-five invited relatives and friends had assembled to witness the formula of this happy event. (Delavan Republican, Nov. 13, 1889)

**Darien** – Turtle Prairie again heard from. We are glad to learn that Albert Hageman, the trusty laborer who for a number of years has lightened Mr. E. Flaherty's labors, was on Nov. 5th married to Miss Marie Olson. We wish them a long, prosperous and pleasant voyage on the stream of life, and feel assured they will make friends where ever they may go. They have the best wishes of a host of friends.-----Mr. Jamsie Gunning and wife returned to Chicago Thursday.-----Mr. L. Bradburn, of Hampshire, Ill., is

visiting his sister, Mrs. Marks.-----Mr. Wm. Dodge, of Springfield, is visiting his sister, Mrs. H. Wright.-----Mr. C. Rockwell sold his vilage residence on Saturday to I. L. Saxton for \$1000. Mr. Rockwell now expects to move his family to Missouri, where his son John resides. (Delavan Republican, Nov. 13, 1889)

**Fontana** – Milt Freer has secured a position at the fishery, which is owned by L. Z. Leiter. He will move into the house recently vacated by Geo. Putnam.-----J. B. Davis went to see his wife at the sanitarium, at Racine, Sunday.-----Mrs. Chas. Babcock and children spent last Saturday with his sister, Mrs. Mae Crumb, of Walworth.-----Mrs. Lillie Vanderslice and husband came out to the Read cottage Saturday night for a few days' stay with the home folks.-----A. A. Rowe believes in hitting two birds with one stone. While drawing hay from the farm down the hill to the barn he is also engaged in acrobatic feats. We venture to say if the haying lasts much longer he will become a professional in that line. (Delavan Republican, Thurs., July 21, 1898)

**Millard** – Miss Ida Roe, of Whitewater, is spending a few weeks with her brother Jason.-----Wrin Day spent a couple of days the past week with his sister, Mrs. James Matheson.-----Burton Hanson spent part of last week with his cousin Anda Oleson, of Richmond.-----Miss Carrie Cook, of Heart Prairie, and sister, Mrs. Olds, of Whitewater, called on Mrs. M. D. Baker, Thursday.-----Lewis Larson has a lame horse. (The Enterprise, Delavan, Wis. Thurs., Aug. 23, 1900)

**Walworth** – Mr. and Mrs. Frank Stupefell buried their seven year old boy who died Monday evening of scarlet fever.-----

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# AROUND THE COUNTY TIDBITS

by Shirley Sisk

(continued from page 42)

Some of our farmers who are carrying their milk to Bigfoot carry rocks in their buggy for protection.-----Geo. McCaa got ditched on Tuesday with a load of milk and come near being run over by the

cars.-----If you have a few dollars to lay by for a rainy day, come to Walworth and see where they have commenced to erect a bank building to make your deposit. (The Enterprise, Delavan, Aug. 23,

## PROGRAM RECAP

For our June meeting, we travelled to the Area Research Center at the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater. We didn't take any pictures. Mike Hay was able to find the school registrations from 1917, 1918, and 1919 when his father was a young boy and his family lived in Genoa City, where we live now.

Our July meeting was "Lifewriting" presented by Judy Rockwell. Not a lot of members attended, but those that did enjoyed the program. Judy gave us time to write something, then had everyone who wanted to share what they had written, read to the group.





## St. Peter's Catholic Cemetery - WCGS Cemetery Walk

Our web site, [www.walworthcgs.com](http://www.walworthcgs.com), has a short slide show of the event. Here are a few more pictures. The weather was perfect. We could not have asked for a better day.



Al Gruling as Augustus Wilmer



Larry Mitten (from East Troy Historical Society) related the story of Father John J. Weinhoff.



Chris Brookes portrayed Allie Schwartz, a woman who taught in East Troy for 56 years. Several of Miss Schwartz's students and children of her students came to watch Chris' portrayal.



Dan Richardson related the story of Chester Byrnes.

A very large thank you to the East Troy Area Historical Society and the East Troy Chamber of Commerce for their cooperation and assistance in this event. Also, a large thank you to all the presenters, helpers, and visitors.



Burlington Genealogical Society

The Burlington Genealogical Society will present a program of Internet tools for genealogists: RSS readers to facilitate web news accumulation, Google tools, and more presented by Bonnie Bolster on Wednesday, August 20. The meeting starts at 7:00 pm in room 100 at Gateway Technical College, 496 McCanna Parkway, Burlington.

At 6:30 pm, before the meeting, the society is asking for volunteers to help fill the bags which will be presented to visitors at the Family History Fair on September 27. Any assistance will be much appreciated.

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Daughter's of Union Veterans of the Civil War, 1861-1865  
Detached Tent #23

The Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Tent #23 of Delavan will conduct its second CEMETERY WALK at Spring Grove on Saturday, August 16th from 1:00-3:30 pm to continue raising funding for the Civil War Monument located there.

Re-enactors will portray philanthropists and a Civil War doctor and stories of Civil War Soldiers. Donations are suggested so that the Daughters may continue with their mission of preserving the history of their ancestors who fought in the Civil War.

The Daughters “encourage the preservation of monuments and historic sites “ and “teach about American history”.

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BIGWILL

British Interest Group of Wisconsin and Illinois will have their next meeting on September 20; “Looking for Love in all the Wrong Places” and “New Tools for Finding Old Stuff”. It will be an All-day Seminar with lunch being served by the Church Women’s Group. (Cost if any will be announced later.)

This article comes from the July 2014 issue of the Ezine of the Federation of Family History Societies. The editor of *BIGWILL News* thought you might be interested in participating in the testing phase or just enjoying the website after it officially launches next month.

**The Illustrated First World War Archive Website**

When it first appeared in 1842, *The Illustrated London News*, revolutionised journalism. The world's first fully illustrated weekly newspaper allowed readers to not only read about British and world events but to actually see them. From war and disasters to politics and the arts, its artists provided a vivid view of the people, places and events that, until then, most of its readers could only imagine. Today, *ILN* – now a customer engagement agency – is the custodian of the iconic *Illustrated London News* archive. This extensive collection brings together "The Great Eight" illustrated magazines from the era, including *The Sphere*, *The Tatler* and *The Bystander*.

Earlier this year, *ILN* successfully applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant to build a public access website, designed to allow users to search our entire digital First World War archives. Now, with our website due to launch on 4 August 2014, we are looking for website testers (<http://www.illustratedfirstworldwar.com/testers/>) to provide feedback pre- and post-launch, to ensure that the website we build lives up to the high standards set by *The Illustrated London News* 172 years ago. So whether your interest is the trench cartoons of Bruce Bairnsfather, researching a raid on your hometown, or finding a relative in a roll of honour, these fascinating archives have something for everyone – and you can help us make sure our content is available to all. For more information on how to help with this wonderful new project please go to <http://www.illustratedfirstworldwar.com/>

I'm desperately looking for more members to fill out the “Are You Related to Me?” form. If you need a



## The Millis Family: Walworth County Pioneers

*By Patricia Spicer Blackmer*

As I traveled the country, I had always wondered why I was so fascinated and felt so at home in the New York state Finger Lakes region. That is where my second great grandfather, Peter B. Millis and his wife Eliza Jane Vance Millis emigrated from to settle in Walworth County, Wisconsin prior to 1848. The Finger Lakes region is a beautiful area with pristine lakes and numerous vineyards. The Millis family had settled in the region between Lakes Seneca and Keuka when they moved west from eastern New York state. With the hopes of finding fertile farm land, a new challenge and the spirit of adventure they set forth to settle in the Whitewater area.

Peter B. Millis was one of nine children born to Teal and Olive Millis in Dutchess County, New York in 1820. Along with his brothers Jeremiah and Philip, their families left New York and settled in Walworth County in the spring of 1845.

Peter and his new bride, Eliza Jane Vance settled on a homestead in Clover Valley where they purchased 180 acres of land in Section 27 in 1846. He became a prosperous farmer and well regarded citizen of the area. He and Eliza had seven children of which my great grandfather, Myron Francis Millis was born in 1851. Peter would eventually meet a tragic end when returning from Whitewater, his team of horses which were pulling his wagon spooked and overturned the wagon which landed on him as he was thrown from it. The crushing injuries were so grave that they were not treatable at that time in history and caused his death within three days in July of 1885. He is buried in Hillside Cemetery in Whitewater.

His son Myron Millis, my great grandfather married into another Walworth County pioneer family, the Mahons when he asked Mary Ann Mahon for her hand in marriage. They would eventually have three children, a daughter who died at the age of five and two sons, William Francis born in 1876 and my grandfather John Patrick who was born in 1890.

Myron and Mary Ann purchased 160 acres in Section 18 (Whitewater/LaGrange) which included Mary Ann's father's first 80 acres that he gave them as a wedding present. Myron and Mary Ann remained on this farm their entire married lives. It was there that they celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary in 1923. Myron eventually died of dropsy at the family farm where he resided with his son John, my grandfather and his family. Myron and Mary Ann are buried in St. Patrick's Calvary Cemetery in Whitewater.

My grandfather, John Patrick inherited the family homestead where he was raised and continued to farm the property until the late 1950's when he sold it to the Hamilton development company who developed Lake LaGrange. The family homestead was eventually purchased by the Wisconsin DNR and is part of the southern Kettle Moraine unit.

During my grandfather's tenure as a Walworth pioneer and "keeper" of the family homestead, my mother, Vera Elizabeth was born to John Patrick and Synneva Johnson Millis. The oldest of three sisters, Vera would follow in her mother's footsteps, attend Whitewater Normal School and become a teacher as did her two siblings, Maribel and Frances.

Tragically, my mother Vera Millis Spicer would die following the birth of my sister. Leaving a devastated husband and an infant, I became privileged to live with my grandparents who would care for me for a number of years on the family farm which was purchased in 1846. I too, followed family tradition and was the third generation to attend what is now the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.

While the family homestead is no longer in the family, the land has been preserved for all to enjoy. If ever you care to take a venture, head out to the Ice Age hiking trail on Highway 12 outside of Whitewater, walk the property that my family owned and that I was raised on and I believe you will agree that my ancestors made the right choice when they moved from New York to Walworth County, Wisconsin.



## WALWORTH COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OFFICERS

PRESIDENT	Michael Hay	455 Fellows Road	Genoa City, WI	wcgspres@gmail.com
VICE-PRESIDENT	Pat Blackmer	2148 Horseshoe Lane	Delavan, WI	wcgsvpres@gmail.com
SECRETARY	Barbara Hale		Elkhorn, WI	jawadusti@yahoo.com
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OTHERS:	Newsletter Editor: Martha Hay <a href="mailto:wcgnewsletter@gmail.com">wcgnewsletter@gmail.com</a>			
	Past-President: Deb Ketchum			
	Historian: Pat Blackmer			
	Librarian: Deb Ketchum			

Regular meetings of the WCGS are the first Tuesday of each month at the  
**Delavan Community Centre, 826 E. Geneva St., Delavan, WI.**

Library Hours: Matheson Memorial Library, 101 N. Wisconsin St., Elkhorn, WI- Every Tues. 10-3pm  
other times by appt - call 262-215-0118

The membership year runs from Jan. 1<sup>st</sup> thru Dec. 31<sup>st</sup>. The newsletter is published bi-monthly.

\*\*\*\*Dues are \$15 (\$50 Lifetime) for an individual, \$18.00 (\$100 Lifetime) for a family, \$25 contributing, \$7.50 student.  
\$5.00 additional per year to receive the newsletter through the mail.

MEMBERS: Want email meeting minutes or not?? Contact Barb - [jawadusti@yahoo.com](mailto:jawadusti@yahoo.com)

**Visit the Walworth County website and uncover your roots! <http://www.walworthcgs.com>**

**E-Mail us at [societynews@walworthcgs.com](mailto:societynews@walworthcgs.com)**

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