



## MADISON COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

PO BOX 26  
WINTERSET IA 50273-0026  
Fourth Quarter Newsletter 2024

**MEETING:** Our meetings are held the first Tuesday of each month (no January and February meetings) in the Winterset Public Library meeting room, starting at 6:30 pm.

**DUES:** Payable January 1 of each year. \$10 per person or \$15 per family. Life membership is \$115.

**RESEARCH:** \$10 per hour plus cost of copies and postage. Send inquires to the above mailing address or to our email address below.

### OFFICERS FOR 2025

PRESIDENT	Marcia Trevillyan
VICE PRESIDENT	Skip Greenwood
SECRETARY	Colleen Haglan-Lynch
TREASURER	Colleen Peterson
OBIT ENTRY	Pat Hochstetler Kathi Kuhl
DIRECTORS (year term ends)	Linda Smith (2025) Pat Hochstetler (2026) Donna Crow (2027)
IAGenWeb COORD:	Linda Smith
NEWSLETTER:	Linda Smith
EMAIL:	madisoncountyiagenealogy@gmail.com
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MADISON COUNTY GENEALOGY INFO:	<a href="http://www.iagenweb.org/madison">www.iagenweb.org/madison</a>

## Message from Our President

Greetings Family Seekers,

This is the last message from my term in office. Come March 1<sup>st</sup>, a new president will be taking over. I have enjoyed my time but it is time for somebody else.

Great things have been done this year, such as:

- The walking of the Winterset Cemetery by Pat Hochstetler and others
- Colleen Peterson has researched and received several veteran gravestones and set them with Ryan Marquardt.
- Viney Cemetery has been restored by Donna Crow.
- More programs before our monthly business meetings.
- Within the Winterset Library, cemetery books have been reorganized and updated by a group of MCGS members.
- Township trustees are taking a second look at their cemeteries to fix them up with a new fund created by the Greater Madison County Community Foundation.

I leave the society in good hands.

Thank you,

Skip Greenwood

President, Madison County Genealogical Society

**When Genealogists  
are put in charge  
wrapping the presents.**



This issue is composed of information and resources on a variety of topics from various sources – like a mix of Christmas gifts. Enjoy!

**Happy Holidays!**  
**Happy New Year!**

# Madison County Cemetery Work Began in 1974

*In preparation of the 200<sup>th</sup> year of the United States in 1976, an emphasis on local history activated a Madison County group to begin investigating our cemeteries. Their work is described in this 1974 article and their interest led to the creation of the Madison County Genealogical Society in 1978.*

## The Winterset Madisonian

ESTABLISHED 1856

WINTERSSET, IOWA, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 1974

119th YEAR

NO. 16

### Uses Witching Method to Help in Cemetery Survey

By Gary Haymond



#### TOURING THE TOMBSTONES

Lewis Morris, 60, of rural Earlham uses two pieces of heavy wire to detect and survey gravesites in the Bennett Cemetery in Madison Township. Morris uses the wires in the same manner as if he were witching for a well, only the wires respond to bones instead of water. He says he can detect unmarked graves, as well as make certain that a marked gravesite is occupied. Morris conducts such inspections as part of his work in surveying the cemeteries of Madison County.

Witching for water by using a wand which bends to indicate its presence is a well-known art.

But for Louis Morris, a 60-year-old farmer from Madison Township, witching has another possibility. He uses it to help him in his hobby of genealogical study and an important part of genealogical work, surveying cemeteries. "I use two wires bent in the shape of an L," Morris explains. "When they go across a grave, they flop around. I can determine the size of the body by using this."

Morris said he first saw a friend using this method to locate field drainage tile, so he decided to try it and has found that it works for him. Later, he accidentally discovered that it worked just as well in locating bones, so he went to a cemetery to test it and "it proved out." "It's been three or four years since I've known I've had this ability," Morris says. "I really haven't used it much, and I don't guarantee anything, because metal will throw it off."

Generally, Morris explained, he uses the witching method if he locates a likely gravesite which has no marker. "I went to the

Bennett Cemetery in Madison Township, which I had heard was full," Morris related. "But there were a lot of places where there were no headstones. So I went up and down the rows and found that there are a lot of graves there with headstones missing."

Basically, Morris says he tries to locate all the gravesites in any particular cemetery, then he attempts to identify the person buried in each grave.

### Survey Project

Much of Morris' work recently is being done as part of a project of surveying all the cemeteries in Madison County. The survey is being undertaken by members of the Iowa Genealogical Society who live in Madison County, under the sponsorship of the Iowa American Bi-Centennial Heritage committee and is expected to take two years to complete.

The basic idea of the survey, Morris said, is to locate all the graves in Madison County and obtain the occupant's name, date of birth and death, and the names of the parents, if possible. This information be collected and alphabetized, noting the location of each grave. In addition to a master file of all persons buried in the county, cross-files will be kept listing the burials in each particular cemetery.

Morris said a similar survey was contacted here by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) from about 1935 to 1938, but that information is now outdated and was never complete. One cemetery, Morris said, was not recorded at all by the WPA.

## 60 Cemeteries

With some 60 known cemeteries in Madison County, Morris and his fellow surveyors have a great deal of work to do in order to complete the survey by the target date of 1976. Morris noted that each quarter of the county has from 14 to 16 cemeteries, and that surveyors have so far been assigned to all corners except the southeast.

Six cemeteries around the county have already been surveyed, Morris noted, with another six currently being checked. In addition, Morris said, the survey group is looking for isolated graves, so that they may be recorded too.

“We are asking for anyone who has knowledge of isolated burial sites to contact either myself, John Bishop of Winterset or Mrs. Margaret (Peg) Wheeler,” Morris said. “We may never have a record of everybody, but we’re trying to get them all.”

Morris added that the task is complicated due to the fact that some cemeteries have had the stones removed and are being farmed over. There are at least six abandoned cemeteries in the county, he said. Once the project is completed, Morris said, the records would probably be centralized and located in the Madison County Clerk of Court’s office and in the state historical files. [Note: In 2024, the records are in the Winterset Public Library.]

## Clerk’s Duty

Madison County Clerk of Court Margaret (Peg) Wheeler and her staff are aiding the project by working on the records of burials in the Winterset Cemetery during their spare time. Mrs. Wheeler said that under the Code of Iowa, it is her duty as clerk of court to maintain records of cemeteries in the county, so she began working on the Winterset cemetery records about two months ago.

Mrs. Wheeler noted that the cemetery here was originally called the Rock City Cemetery. She produced a clipping from a Winterset News of 1914 with an article on the local cemetery’s history. According to that article, the first person to be buried in the Winterset Cemetery was one John Moon, who died in the fall of 1850 from overeating of green corn and watermelons. The article explained that Mr. Moon had partaken of “one and one-half dozen ears of corn, two watermelons, drank one gallon buttermilk. Died in the night. Dr. Tidrick was the doctor.”

Other people currently working on the cemetery records, besides Morris and Mrs. Wheeler, are Ted Cummins, Mrs. E.I. [Alma] Wildin, Mrs. Richard R. [Carolyn] Farr, Mrs. Ronnie Horn and Mrs. Stanley [Mildred] Busch, all of Winterset; Mrs. Lyle [Dolores] Summy and Gayle Junkin of Earlham; and Mrs. Gene [Donna] Golightly of Dexter.

Morris summed up the cemetery survey effort by noting that present records must be utilized while still available. “We want to create just as good a record as we can, because eventually our county government may not be able to keep them up,” Morris commented.

# Society News

*As President Skip Greenwood mentioned, much has been accomplished in 2024. Here are a few more details on several of our 2024 projects*

## Cemetery Books Reorganized in Winterset Library

Continuing the theme of the 1974 *Madisonian* article above, a group of MCGS members met at the Winterset Public Library several times to integrate the original 1974 cemetery walks and other early walks into the same 3-ring binders as the more recent walks. Older walks may show stones that have since completely deteriorated or are now difficult to read. More recent walks will help visitors locate current graves. The majority of cemeteries have two documents - one alphabetical by name and the other listing gravestones row-by-row. Old binders were replaced and clearly labeled. Thank you to Pat Hochstetler, Colleen Haglan-Lynch, Colleen Peterson, Sandi Harper, and Marcia Trevillyan.

## More Veteran Gravestones Set

Since 2021, 28 pre-WWI veteran gravestones have been received from the Veterans Administration (VA), under the direction of MCGS members Kent Transier and Colleen Peterson, then placed with the help of MCGS member Ryan Marquardt and other volunteers. Installations in 2024 included these cemeteries: Penn Center (1), Wight (1), Moon (2), King (1), Peru (1), and Winterset (1). The Madison County Historical Complex Director, Jared McDonald stores the heavy gravestones and has started to receiving VA gravestones that will be installed in 2025.



## Viney Cemetery Restoration



A few years ago, Colleen Peterson researched pre-WWI veterans in Viney Cemetery, hoping to secure free Veterans Administration gravestones. But there was a problem – Viney was in such bad shape with broken stones and overgrown with weeds that the pictures required in the application would never pass VA standards. But through the dogged work of MCGS member Donna Ford Crow with assistance from South Township trustees and a nearby property owner, the area has been cleared, stones have been reset, and a new fence has been installed using the new Cemetery Fund. Donna provided a program in our November meeting, showing the improvements. Colleen was able to send the applications with photos of the restored cemetery and the two veteran gravestones are being shipped this winter for installation in 2025.



## Madison County Cemetery Fund Awards Grants

Ryan Marquardt, Director of the Madison County Development Group (MCDG), established the Cemetery Fund through the Greater Madison County Community Foundation to assist township trustees, cemetery associations, and municipalities with grants for fencing, clearing, and gravestone repairs. Projects may be funded up to 50% (fencing/clearing) and up to 75% (gravestone needs) of cost. In 2024, grants were awarded to Worthington, Viney, Moon, and Fairview. As a result, 51 total gravestones were repaired/reset. If you would be interesting in contributing to this fund, send a check to MCDG, 1217 N. 6<sup>th</sup> Ave - #3, Winterset, 50273 with **Cemetery Fund** in the memo line.

## Veterans List by Cemetery

As you can probably tell, veterans are near-and-dear to the hearts of MCGS members. Besides the veteran gravestone project listed above, veteran graves have been noted for years in the cemetery documentation kept in the Winterset Public Library. A multi-year project has been started by Colleen Peterson, with assistance of Pat Hochstetler, to visit each of Madison County's 63 cemeteries and create a list of every veteran in every cemetery. If no marker exists, one will be placed to represent their time of service and to hold a small U.S. flag. Colleen investigates the service record of each veteran and that information will be entered into IAGenWeb.org/madison's [MILITARY PAGES](#).

## IAGenWeb.org/madison Passes Fall Peer Review

The Madison County webpage, part of the IAGenWeb project, is reviewed twice each year by Iowa peers. In the 2024 fall review, we received these comments. *"Madison County is a wonderful site, so full of information for researchers that it will take them forever to go through everything!"* *"Congratulations to all who are working on this website; you have and are doing a wonderful job adding all of the information covering so much of Madison County daily life!"* Thanks to all of the MCGS volunteers who contribute to the site to make it so full of resources.

## Winterset Cemetery UGRR Walking Tour Created

The Winterset Cemetery is listed on the National Park Service's Network to Freedom as a location that represents Underground Railroad activity in Madison County. Twenty participants are buried there, including a freedom seeker, Charles Moore. The Madison County Historic Preservation Commission created a two-sided single-page walking tour to each of the graves with a bit about each person. It is included along with this newsletter in your email or mailed envelope.

## See You March 4, 2025

To avoid the possibility of canceling January and February meetings due to nasty weather, our next meeting will be on March 4, 2025. In our December 2024 meeting, we discussed programs for 2025 and came up with several of interest: a case study of an indentured servant ancestor, how unclaimed cremains are being handled in Des Moines, the story of a relative who was a Chicago gangster's wife and her murder, St. Charles's Armstrongs and Morgans, and an overview of the IAGenWeb.org/madison website. What suggestions do you have?

## And... It is Time to **RENEW** Your Membership

Visit the last page of this newsletter to renew your annual membership to the Madison County Genealogical Society. We use your membership dues to assist with copying, postage, page sleeves, binders, D2 gravestone cleaner, etc. to maintain Madison County gravestones along with cemetery and genealogical records.

## Updates on Your DNA Results by R. Glenn York

*Glenn, MCGS member of Longmont, Colorado, is a student of DNA plus the companies that supply the tests and interpret the data. Changes are afoot and Glenn fills us in of what we need to know. A version of this article was previously published in the "Longmont Heritage" newsletter of the Longmont Genealogical Society.*

Do you look at your DNA test results regularly? The DNA testing companies make changes often and new matches are added daily. Several changes have happened recently. If you haven't looked at your test results lately it may be time to review them.

New customers are added to their database every day. If you haven't looked for a few weeks or months you may find a close family member has recently tested. Maybe someone on a line you are working on just tested.



## 23andMe

There has been a lot of discussion about the future of 23andMe lately. They are the only publicly traded direct to consumer DNA testing company with a focus on genealogy and their stock price has been under \$1.00 for many months. Stocks under \$1.00 are often delisted so they cannot be easily traded. The founder has attempted to take the company private, but that offer was rejected.

We don't know what the future of the company is so it may be a good idea to look at your results and print or screen-shot any important information you want to have in the future.

Last year after their data breach was disclosed, they stopped showing how your shared matches are related to other shared matches. They have recently turned this feature back on so now when you look at shared matches you can see if one of the matches you share is close to them like a parent, sibling, or first cousin. This may help you determine how you are related to an unknown match.

## MyHeritage

Earlier this summer MyHeritage updated their Theories of Family Relativity. This information is updated once or twice a year and each time they identify how more of your matches may be related to you. You may have several more matches with new Theories of Family Relativity.

Keep in mind that Theories of Family Relativity are just clues and you will find some that are incorrect. Every theory must be verified before they are accepted as facts and added to your tree.

# FamilyTreeDNA

Last year FamilyTreeDNA acknowledged that they are not good at building trees, and they started working with MyHeritage on a joint project to move the trees on their site to MyHeritage. MyHeritage has good tools to enable you to manage your trees and makes it easier to add or update people in the tree. As of early September, all trees on FamilyTreeDNA are read only and they cannot be updated or modified. When you access your account, you will be given the option to move your tree to MyHeritage. Once your tree is transitioned to MyHeritage you will have access to update or add to your tree with no additional cost. MyHeritage will only maintain your tree data. They will not have access to your DNA information unless you test with them or upload DNA test results to them.

FamilyTreeDNA also updated their Ethnicity estimates so you may find changes to their predictions of what regions your ancestors may have come from.

## Ancestry.com

Ancestry has made several changes recently. Their DNA screens have been completely updated. All the information is still there, but it may be in a different place. They have also renamed some parts of your report. Ethnicity estimates are now Ancestral Regions and Communities are now Ancestral Journeys.

Ancestry usually updates their Ancestral Journeys (formerly Ethnicity Estimates) every fall. Now rolled on the updates and added several new regions and Journeys. While these will not directly help with your genealogy research, they can provide some clues about countries or areas where your ancestors may have lived that can suggest new research directions. Journeys can identify DNA matches that may have migrated with your ancestors.



Earlier this summer Ancestry added a tool as part of their “Pro Tools” that is available for \$10.00/month. You can try pro tools for one month then cancel if it is not useful for you. This now shows how your shared matches are related to the matches you share. This is like the reports available from 23andMe and MyHeritage. This often can help determine how an unknown match is related to some of your known matches, and this may enable you to determine how they are related to you.

If you have not looked at your DNA test results for a while, it may be good to review them again and see if you have some new information that can help advance your research.



## MCGS Membership Renewal Information

The Madison County Genealogical Society “year” runs from January 1 through December 31. Please cut (or copy) and mail in this form with your dues. We do not take electronic payments.

- Annual Dues are \$10.00 per year, per person or \$15.00 for a family membership.
- Perhaps it is time to consider a Lifetime Membership at \$115.00.



Amount Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Membership Rates: (check one)

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

\_\_\_\_\_ \$10.00, single – 1 year

City: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$15.00, family – 1 year

State: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$115.00 Lifetime Membership

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Is this a

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Renewal or  
\_\_\_\_\_ New membership?

Please make your check payable to **Madison County Genealogical Society** or just **MCGS**.  
Mail to **MCGS, c/o Colleen Peterson, 320 NW 7th St. Earlham IA 50072**