

## REVEALING THE TRUTH

By Lindsey Russell

Whether we recognize it or not, we all have blind spots when it comes to our family history. As genealogists, it is sometimes easy to overlook the obvious. I experienced such an issue not long ago.

The resolution will stay with me for some time. I thought I knew more about my great-grandmother, Leona Clara Forward Buttrick (my mother's paternal grandmother), than I actually did.

Growing up just outside of my mother's hometown of Standish, MI, my mother made sure that she took my sister and I to visit her grandmother, whom we nicknamed Great, weekly. We would often visit after school as she lived only a few blocks from Standish Elementary. Those visits stay with me. They inspired my interests in genealogy and history. Over time, Great told me stories of teaching in a one-room schoolhouse and how she met my great-grandfather, Hatley Buttrick. I also learned that her memories of growing up in Standish were not happy ones due to the loss of her mother in 1917.

For whatever reason, I assumed that Leona received training as a teacher in western Michigan where she was originally from and later settled. Her teaching stories involved a one-room schoolhouse in western Michigan. She later married my great-grandfather Hatley and lived in Marshall, MI for most of her adult life, only returning to Standish in 1980 to be closer to her children and grandchildren. I could not have been more wrong. I failed to consider that she may have continued her education in Standish after graduating from Standish High School in 1921.

When I first voiced my interest in researching

my great-grandmother's education, fellow HSGS member Eugene Suszko Daniels suggested I look in the then newly printed book *Arenac County Normal, 1904-1957*, written and compiled by the Arenac County Historical Society (2013). At first I doubted I would find anything. While I knew that Normal Schools provided teacher education in the earlier

part of the 20th century, I largely associated the Arenac County Normal School with the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, not the early 1920s.

Not only did I find information on Leona Forward's further education at the county normal school, I also found information on her senior year of high school.

I also rediscovered a piece of family history I had forgotten. It turns out that she attended school, including county normal, with her step-sister Barbara Wilson. Ultimately, I purchased my own copy of the book. Not only does it contain

pertinent family history, it also contains a treasure trove of local information, including ties to several people I know. Coincidentally, I came across this information as I decided to go back to school to earn my teaching certificate. I am proud to continue the teaching tradition in my family, and I am glad that I was able to fill in the details of my great-grandmother's educational history. Never pass up the opportunity to search all local resources, even if you think that they may not apply. You never know what you may find.



Leona Clara 'Great'  
Forward Buttrick