

May 12, 2018



TRAVERSE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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The Traverse Area Historical Society Newsletter is published quarterly. The four issues are published February, May, August and November.

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From President Siciliano's Desk

Greetings and Happy Spring to our members. This issue of the Newsletter will provide a recap of our 2017-2018 program activities as well as our future plans for the summer of 2018.

Continuing Successful Programming

We have had a successful year of offering a diversity of programming to our community. Our monthly programs during the school year have been attended by between twenty and seventy community members. This fall we had two programs. In September, I spoke on "Abraham Lincoln's Presidency through the Eyes of the Political Cartoonists of His Day." President Lincoln faced a great deal of criticism during most of his

presidency. It has been largely with a modern perspective that we have come to appreciate the sixteenth president and his legacy.

In November, retired maritime deck officer and mariner John Brian spoke on the Twentieth/Twentieth-First Century history of Great Lakes shipping. Mr. Brian described the various vessels on the Great Lakes, the life of deck and engineer mariners, and the joys and challenges of sailing on the Great Lakes.

Our spring program schedule started this January with Russ Soyring, Traverse City Planning Director, speaking on "How Traverse City Planning Developed and Its Effects on our Community, 1940 to the Current Day." He described city planning dating to the 1880s through the present time. He closed by sharing some future plans for the city and new developments such as the five-mile Boardman Lake Trail.

For our February program, board member, Jennifer Loup presented on the history of the Clinch Park Zoo and Clinch Park. Ms. Loup was an employee and zookeeper at Clinch Park from 2000 through the closing of the zoo in 2007.



She focused her presentation on the use of the space from the first Traverse City Aquarium in 1932, founded by Conrad Foster, up through the two locations of the Clinch Park Zoo - before and after the building of the Grandview Parkway.



The Clinch Park Zoo closed in 2007 with the relocation of many of the animals across the country. Ms. Loup included photos of some of the animals who were re-homed, as well as displayed her postcard collection detailing the history of Clinch Park from the 1930s-2000s.



Ms. Loup would like to remind members she is always looking for new photos and materials pertaining to the history of Clinch Park and the zoo for future projects. Family photos often include relevant information even in the background! Feel free to contact her at loup.jen@gmail.com with any information.

In our March program, Sharon Jennings, retired TCAPS Teacher and current TAHS Board Member, spoke on the "History of Schools in the Traverse City Area."



Ms. Jennings discussed the origins of public education in the Traverse Area from the 1830s.

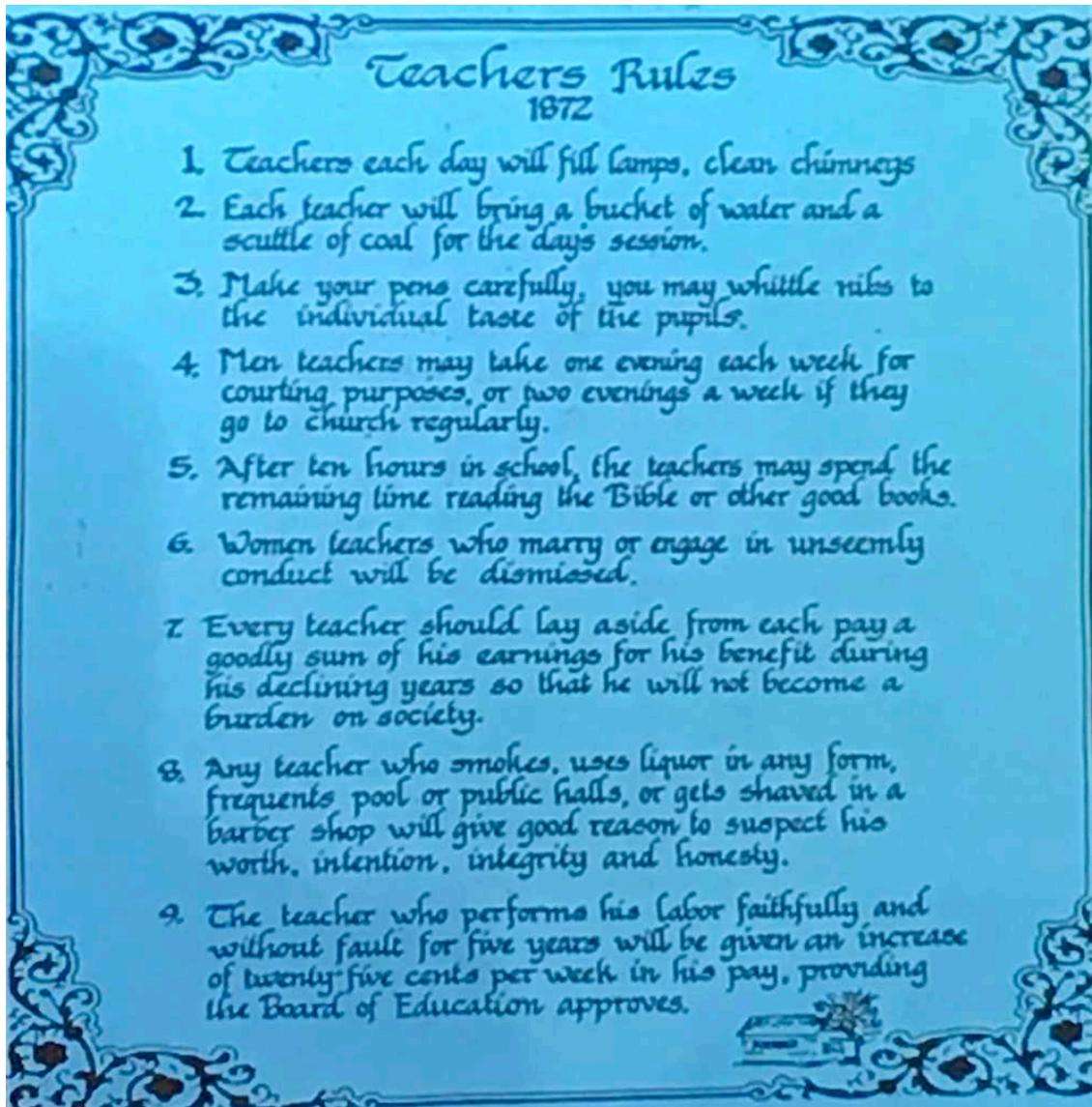
One of our earliest teachers was fifteen year old Helen Goodale who taught in a small log cabin that once stood near where Little Fleet is today. We are fortunate to have a photo of this early teacher.

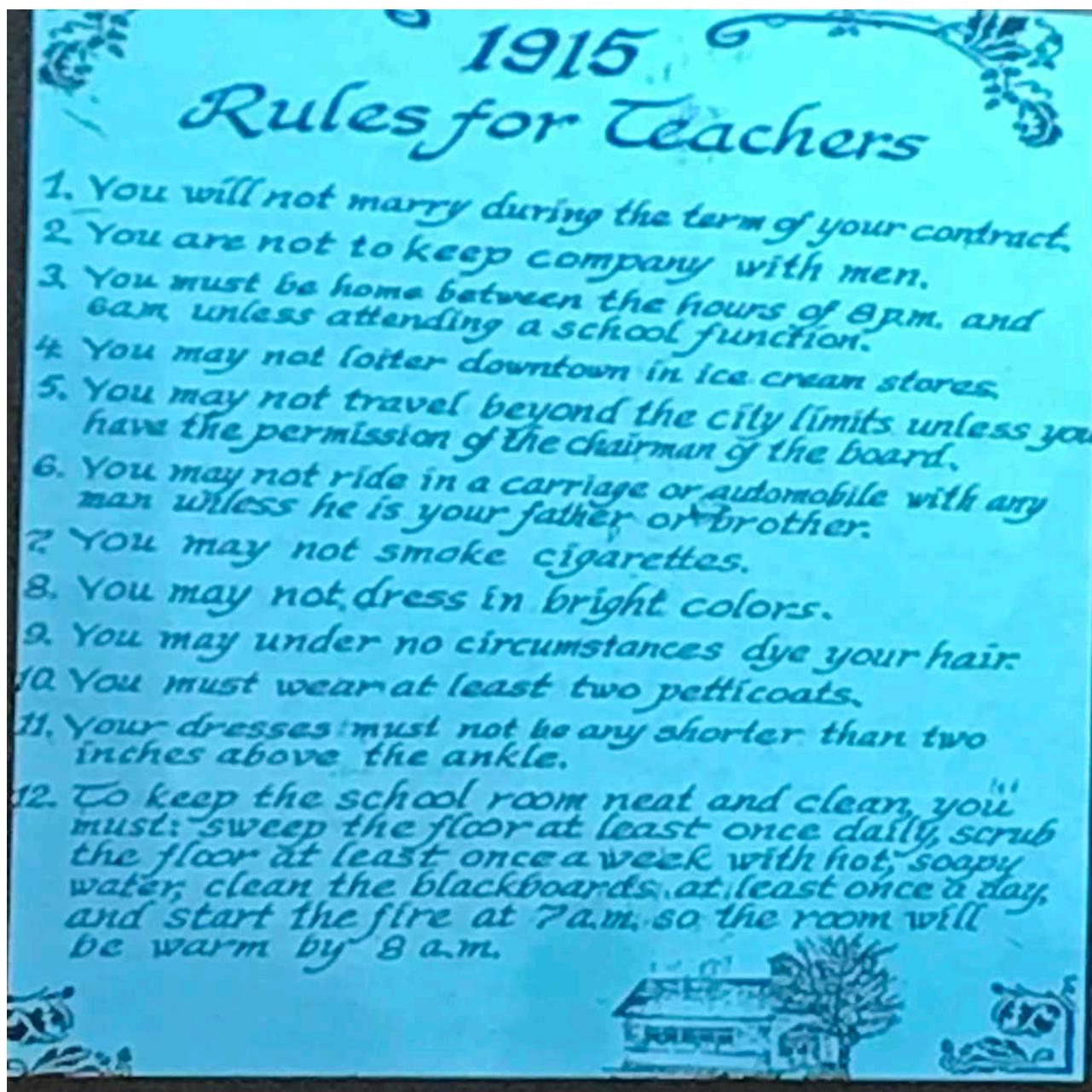


As the Traverse Area grew in population, so did the size and number of its public schools. In 1903 there were four brick schools and three wooden one-rooms for a student population of 2000. The first two-story Central Grade School was built in 1877. Sadly, a tragic fire destroyed the yellow brick building in 1934. The 1920s red brick addition survived, and a new red brick addition was opened in 1937. Fortunately, schools have continued to grow with the children of the area.



Public schools and public-school teachers have come a long way from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Ms. Jennings pointed this out by showing the following lists of rules and responsibilities for teachers from 1872 and 1915:





Unfortunately, our April program had to be postponed due to severe winter weather. The presentation by Julie Schopieray, Local History Author and TAHS Board Member, on "Jens C. Petersen: From Bricklayer to Architect: The Life and Works of a Visionary Michigan Architect," based on Ms. Schopieray's newly-published book (2017), will be offered in our 2018-2019 Monthly History Program Series.

Our final program for the 2017-2018 Monthly History Program Series will be held on May 20. It will be entitled *Selected Historic Shorts*. The program will include three local historians giving short presentations on their favorite historic site.

As we close our monthly programs we will turn to our summer tour season. For the details on our tour schedule, please refer to Program and Events Committee Chair Loup's report.

In addition to our tours and monthly programs, we continue to publish or republish our library of local history works. This past year, we published our newest local history book, Bob Wilhelm's *Traverse City: Then and Now*.

Finally, thanks to the Petertyl Fund, the society is now sponsoring fifteen scholarships for East and West Middle School History students who advanced to the state finals of the Michigan History Day program; the funds will cover their registration fees to participate in the state finals. In the event that any of these students are successful in advancing to the national finals, the society will also cover those registration fees as well.

Strong Partnership with TADL

An important part of our success has been our continuing strong partnership with the Traverse Area District Library. The Library's acceptance of the TAHS Archives last year provides a good home for this important collection. Our members continue to support the archives with hours of volunteer service and your society has committed to monthly financial support of the archives. Much thanks to TADL Special Collections Librarian, and Society Webmaster, Amy Barritt for her leadership of the archives and her support of our work. See her report from the archives later in the newsletter.

Rebuilding our financial sustainability

Based on the hard work of your Board, particularly our Treasurer Larry Hains, we have balanced our budget in 2017 and established a sound budget for 2018. See Treasurer Hains' report below for more details.

From Board Treasurer Hains' Desk

We continue to work successfully to meet our financial obligations. We worked within our approved 2017 budget and had a positive fund balance going into 2018. In addition, we have begun to restore the Julius Petertyl fund for historical education and now have a balance of over \$5,300 in that fund. We have significantly reduced past expenses and through our membership dues, tours, publications, and generous donations we are in a stronger position than in several years.

In addition, the society received an estate gift of \$5,000 from long-time member and past board member, Mary Lautner. We are very grateful to Mary and her family for their great generosity.

We have also committed to monthly payments of \$100 to the Traverse Area District Library to support the care of the historical archives which are now located there. Board Secretary Peg Siciliano and President Stephen Siciliano established a matching grant for our members where they matched contributions to the Petertyl Fund up to \$100 per month for this past calendar year. Every month in 2017, members matched the grant. Given the success of the matching grant program, the Sicilianos have agreed to continue the program for one more year. I want to thank our members for their generosity.

From Membership Committee Chair Jennings' desk

The TAHS membership is currently at 166, and this month we are very happy to welcome new member, Brian Strickland. Brian plays a part in TC history as he lives on Pine St. in the old wooden Elmwood School that was moved there from Elmwood Ave. many years ago. You might know Brian as a craftsman from the Candle Factory, and the school is not only his home but his gallery as well. Brian let us feature his unique home in our last presentation of the history of Traverse City schools!

Another bit of news is that we are revising our membership renewal plan. From now on you will be sent a notice approximately two weeks before the month your dues are due. If we have not heard from you by the

end of that month you will be listed as a non-current member until your dues arrive. In December all the non-current members will be sent a second notice and hopefully will be back with us after that.

Thank you to all of you, our faithful and loyal members, who continue to support us in keeping the remarkable history of TC alive and well.

From Program and Events Committee Chair Loup's desk

A big thank you to all TAHS members who have attended our program series this past year. After one more program in May, TAHS will then begin to look toward our next history program series. We welcome your input and would love to hear from you if you have topic suggestions or ideas regarding presenters. Feel free to send along suggestions to Jen at loup.jen@gmail.com.

Our full summer program including our May program and our full tour schedule is provided later in this newsletter.

News from the Archives by Amy Barritt

Winter was packed with a number of image and research requests, so we were obliged to slow down on processing collections. However, we expect the recent generous monthly commitment from the Traverse Area Historical Society will reinvigorate our efforts!

The volunteers in local history remain the driving force for preserving and presenting the archival collections. Cathy Griffin continues her duties with *110 Years Ago*, easily the *Traverse City Record-Eagle's* most popular column (if I do say so myself!). You may have heard her column on the radio, too! Local radio host Smitty on Rock 105 reads "Old-Timey News" during the Afternoon Drive Shift. He tells us it's a pretty popular segment, so check it out some time!

Janet and Joe Novak have undertaken the arduous task of sorting the newspaper clippings files. Part of their work was marrying the collection held at TADL and the collection created by TAHS together. They also pared down files that would benefit other area historical societies, and we have delivered those to their new homes. They also took care of duplicates, preservation hazards, and a lot of reorganizing to make the collection more easily accessed. Whew!

Marlas Hanson finished the Johnson Family Papers. This collection is a significant piece of history for anyone interested in lumbering in the area between 1880 and 1920, as the "Johnson Boys" were all involved in the trade. The collection largely contains business correspondence between the Johnsons living in Traverse City and their offices at a paper mill company in Manistee, Michigan. There is also some personal correspondence between family members and at least one documented courtship. Hanson has taken the Johnsons from rotting boxes to finished collection, and I believe she has really enjoyed every step.

Bensie Benghauser has taken on the small collection of what we believe is part of the *Traverse City Record-Eagle* morgue files. After inquiring with the *TCRE*, we believe the bulk of the morgue was destroyed in a series of fires, floods, and neglect over time, so we are not entirely sure where this collection was being stored, and we have no documentation for it. But, we are lucky to have it and are treating it with care! Most of the photographs are from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s and represent a number of subjects and photographers.

Some of the more significant uses of the archives the past few months include:

- A visit from Dr. Victoria Brehm, editor of *The Great Lakes Women's Reader*. She is working on the second volume of that work, and came to look at the Courtney Family Records and other published works by M.E.C. Bates and Mary K. Buck.
- Students of East Middle School who were working on a project about the Franke Farm, which was located behind where Kohl's is now on US-31. The farm operated its own hydroelectric dam, which was eye-opening for the students to learn, as was finding out that that was a fairly common practice at the time.
- Ongoing research visits from Dr. Richard Fidler, who is nearly finished with his latest book on recreational activities in the pre-electronics days. This will be a fun volume for reminiscing with friends!

With deep appreciation,

Amy Barritt, MSI, CA
Special Collections Librarian
Traverse Area District Library



Portrait of Mary K. Buck



Examples from the Record-Eagle morgue collection

The Preservation Corner by Peg Siciliano

Welcome to "The Preservation Corner!" The Corner will provide updates on various preservation issues of interest to the TAHS and its supporters. In the future, after member input and Board consideration, the TAHS could take public stands and action concerning pertinent issues. Such actions are certainly a part of this group's history. For example, in the 1970s the organization was integral in the actions that saved the Grand Traverse County Courthouse from demolition.

Today's installment presents updates on three current issues: The use of the Sixth Street Carnegie Building; the status of the City of Traverse City's Con Foster Museum three-dimensional artifact collection; and plans for Traverse City Area Public Schools' Central Grade School complex. If readers have other preservation concerns they would like to see addressed, please e-mail your ideas to contact@traversehistory.org.

Carnegie Building and Museum Collection: Assistant City Manager Penny Hill provided this update: *Thank you for reaching out about the Carnegie Building and the Con Foster Collection. The City currently leases space in the Carnegie Building to two tenants; Crooked Tree Arts Center and the Grand Traverse Area Rock and Mineral Club. The building is also utilized as a polling place for elections, and is the site of the annual Festival of Trains event. The City has contracted with Grand Traverse Construction for the installation of a new elevator. That project should be complete in mid-May.*

With respect to the Con Foster Collection, the City is in an ongoing process of compliance with the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). City staff has been working with Bernstein and Associates to consult with the various tribes. To date, no artifacts have been repatriated, although two items have been requested for repatriation. All artifacts remain stored in a secure location and in a controlled environment.

Central Elementary School: There will be a TCAPS bond renewal request this coming August, but it does not include funds for any changes at Central Grade. A successful millage would, however, include the reconstruction of nearby Glen Loomis Elementary, pegged at a cost of approximately \$16 million. In August, 2017, school board members placed Central Grade changes lower on their priority list than Glen Loomis. Board members agreed the Central building eventually needs to be renovated or demolished and built elsewhere. TCAPS Superintendent Paul Soma said that this project would not likely begin for another seven or eight years, making a potential price tag impossible to determine. Costs that far out are hard to pin down, and School Board Treasurer Scott Hardy said he would feel uncomfortable asking for funds in the bond election that he could not explain.

An August, 2017 Ticker article further explained: “. . . Superintendent Paul Soma said addressing the aging facility wasn't as urgent as Glenn Loomis, but that 'within the next seven to ten years, we know we have to take action on the building. We know it can't last forever.' Board members have discussed options including renovating all three floors of Central Grade to modernize the facility, or abandoning the building and building a new school elsewhere, such as on Fourteenth Street. Preliminary rough estimates for those options range anywhere from \$16 million to \$33 million. TCAPS has yet to go through a formal public planning process to determine which direction it will take with the school. . . . Board members ultimately agreed to go through the public process of determining the future of Central Grade before putting the question of funding to voters. The decision leaves open the possibility the school could return as its own separate bonding request several years down the road.”

Central Elementary School is the oldest local school building still in use as a school. As the building complex has great historical significance to the area, the TAHS will endeavor to stay up-to-date on any

decisions regarding its future. With those details still unclear, multiple school board members worried including Central Grade in the bond proposal would cause the public to focus exclusively on plans for that school – raising controversial questions about its future that could not be answered before next year’s election. “We don’t have the time to answer that before the next bond election, and I don’t want to put Glenn Loomis at risk,” said board member Scott Hardy. Board Chair Erik Falconer added that voters rejected previous TCAPS bond proposals because they viewed the district as “overreaching,” saying the “risk of failure is catastrophic” if board members took on too much and voters rejected a proposal next year.

Board member Jan Geht, however, advocated for the path of pursuing a longer-term bond of 15 or 20 years that could cover Central Grade – as well as any other capital projects that might arise – saying voters needed to trust TCAPS had a long-term plan and would use the funds appropriately for needs as they came up. “It’s about giving the school system the flexibility to not constantly have to beg for finances,” Geht said.

But other board members, leery after past voter rejection, reiterated their desire to have a clear plan for projects the bond proposal might cover. “I am not comfortable going into any election asking the public to spend their tax dollars on something that I can’t articulate what it’s going for,” said Hardy. Soma said including Central Grade in the 2018 millage request was a “risk-reward” proposition, one he didn’t support.

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Traverse Area Historical Society Summer 2018 Program and Tours

May 20th – Final Spring Monthly Program: Selected Historic Shorts: Presentations on Favorite Historic Sites, TADL McGuire Room, starting at 1pm.

Tour Guide Training

We are seeking individuals who would like to become tour guides, as well as people who would like to be tour guide assistants. For those interested in volunteering, Larry Hains will be holding a cemetery training tour on Sunday, **May 20 at 3:00 p.m.** Jenny Loup will be holding a downtown walking training tour on Saturday, **June 2, at 10:00 a.m.**

Summer Tours

This year we are not charging a fixed rate for our tours. Instead, we are asking for a suggested donation of \$10.00/adult when attending a tour - with the understanding that all monies go directly to the Traverse Area Historical Society and our goals to preserve.

Downtown Tours

Every 4th Saturday June-October. Tours begin at 10:30. This year the tours will begin at the statue of Perry Hannah on the corner of Union Street and 6th street. The tour will last approximately 1 1/2 - 2 hours.

- June 23
- July 28
- August 25
- September 22
- October 27

Cemetery Tours

Tours of Oakwood cemetery will run every 3rd Sunday, June-September. This year they will begin at 4:00 in the evening. The group will gather at the corner of Steele Street and East Eighth Street.

- June 17
- July 15
- August 19
- September 16

Our popular Halloween tours of Oakwood Cemetery will take place on October 28 and 29th, starting at 5:00.

The downtown and cemetery tours could use YOUR help! We would love to have more member involvement in the tours and we can always use new and additional enthusiastic assistants and guides. Stay tuned for events at the end of May in which interested parties can join a veteran guide for a tour to learn about how to present on behalf of the TAHS. After you get your feet wet as an assistant, you could work toward guiding tours on your own! If you'd like to be directly contacted about this opportunity, please message Jen Loup, events chair, at loup.jen@gmail.com.

Opportunities for Volunteers

Would you like to...

- Be an assistant for TAHS downtown or cemetery tours?
- Help out at the archives under the supervision of Amy Barritt, special collections librarian?
- Consider being a program presenter at an upcoming monthly program at TADL?
- Write an article about history or nature for the Grand Traverse Journal?
- Explore ways of getting local history into the schools?
- Serve on a board committee to work on such projects as newsletters, mailings, programming or maintaining the website?
- Help organize and execute a TAHS Friday Night Live event?
- Attend TAHS board meetings to find out more about board activities and what you might do to participate?
- Or...do whatever job you think would be useful to the Society?

Leave an email at contact@traversehistory.org if you are interested in doing any of these things.

Link to TAHS Website

To connect to the Traverse Area Historical Society website, click on <http://traversehistory.org>.