

FEBRUARY 2021

PRESERVE, PROTECT, AND PRESENT



TRAVERSE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FEATURED ARTICLE:

Keystone Brick Manufacturing

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

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- *Working Around the Current Health Crisis*

- **From the Desks' of Our Board Members
& Much More!**

FROM PRESIDENT SICILIANO'S DESK

Our society continues to work on projects within the limitations placed on us due to the pandemic. The planning phase of the Goodale-Hitchcock project is nearing completion as the signage text has been approved for fabrication and the bench purchases are being explored.

Our programs remain virtual and widely successful in conjunction with the Traverse Area District Library. We hosted photographer Chris Roxburgh for our December program entitled quote "Historical Shipwrecks of the Great Lakes." Chris is a nationally published photographer environmental advocate, and local author. He shared his photos and diving stories from shipwrecks of the Great Lakes via zoom. Chris' pictures from local and statewide historical shipwrecks found an enthusiastic audience of 100 attendees.

Board member Peg Siciliano presented our January program "Pandemics in Michigan: 1918 and today." Nearly 30 attendees came to hear this timely topic on how the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918 compared and contrasted with the current Covid-19 pandemic especially in Northern Michigan. Peg showed some of the important lessons to learn from these events one hundred years apart.



Peg used several photographs from the Archives collection. Here are two. The left photograph is of Julia A. Thoreson who graduated from the Traverse City State Hospital Training School for Nurses in 1911. She is in her military uniform, so the photograph was likely taken between 1918 and 1919 when she served in the US Army.

The right photograph is of a Streetscape: Front Street looking east from Union in 1920, just as the Spanish Flu pandemic was winding down. The Masonic Building and City Opera House appear on the right of the photos.

Thank you for your continuing support. Look forward to seeing you at our February program.

FROM PROGRAM AND EVENTS COMMITTEE CHAIR LOUP'S DESK

On Saturday, February 27th at 2 pm, TAHS Board Vice President and Interlochen Arts Academy history instructor Brian McCall will present “Reelecting Lincoln” — The 1864 Presidential election that saved the Union”. As we have all seen in the past year, elections have consequences, and Abraham Lincoln’s bid for reelection was one for the ages. The fate of the Civil War resulting in Union victory and the future of slavery in the United States hung in the balance. With thousands of young men in camps or on the battlefields, Lincoln and the Republicans needed to find a way to count their votes to finish what the war had started—and the absentee ballots returned by soldiers favored Lincoln 3-1 over his Democratic opponent and former Union general, George B. McClellan.

Brian McCall will cover the runup to the race and how Lincoln and his teams of skilled military leaders and political professionals turned the tide first on the battlefield and then at the ballot box. His victory sealed the fate of the Confederacy and ensured the death of slavery in America.

To register for this event, please go to: <https://www.tadl.org/event/traverse-area-historical-society-presents-reelecting-lincoln-the-1864-presidential-election-that-saved-the-union-zoom/>

In addition to our February program, our past programs are also available on the TADL YouTube channel -- <https://www.youtube.com/user/TADLnotjustbooks> :

- Traverse Area Historical Society presents - Great Lakes Maritime Academy: The First 50 Years
- Traverse Area Historical Society presents - Pandemics in Michigan: 1918 and Today
- Traverse Area Historical Society presents - Michigan Shipwrecks with Chris Roxburgh
- Traverse Area Historical Society October 25th Annual Meeting

You find some of our past programs on YouTube. Here is the link for an introduction to the Oakwood Cemetery Tour with a Halloween Twist: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCvUyRoSoFg>

We hope you are enjoying our programs and look forward to seeing you at our next monthly program.

FROM MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIR JENNINGS' DESK

As of February 2021 the current number of TAHS members stands at one hundred fifty one. We are happy to welcome new members Steven Veatch, Julie Povolo, Jordan Owen, Gregory Luyt, Frances Bluhm, William Weltyk, Paul McCarthy, Kathleen Jones, Kathleen McClanaghan, Michele Howard and Mary Link. We appreciate the support from all our members as we strive to keep the history of the Grand Traverse Area alive and aid TADL in preserving the wonderful artifacts that tell our story. We couldn't do this without you! We miss seeing you and getting to know you at our programs but hopefully you are taking advantage of our Zoom presentations during the pandemic. Stay well dear members and hopefully we can be together again soon!

FROM TREASURER GROLEAU'S DESK

Looking back on a challenging 2020, your Historical Society is excited to let you know that we ended the year in a solid financial condition. While our revenues fell short of budget, we were able to contain our costs and still end the year with a positive net income while continuing to provide our normal support for the historical archives at TADL, as well as supporting students who competed in the Michigan History Day Competition. While we were unable to do the Petertyl Internship as well as our seasonal walking tours over the summer due to COVID, we were able to redirect our efforts and assist our community in other ways in line with our mission.

With our 2021 budget in place, we are excited to embark on a new year full of possibilities. We are hopeful that we will be able to restart some of our regular activities in the upcoming year and start to return to a sense of "normalcy". While we continue to take a conservative approach to our finances, we are committed to continue our financial support for TADL, the Michigan History Day competition, the Petertyl Internship (assuming it can resume in 2021), and other special projects as they arise and are approved by the TAHS Board. We thank you for your continued interest and support which allows us to preserve, protect, and present the historical record of Traverse City and the Grand Traverse area.

Keystone Brick Manufacturing

Early brick production in the Grand Traverse Region seems to have been a matter of good fortune on the part of the homesteaders.

When a farmer was lucky enough to discover a deposit of the right kind of clay on his land, he had a wind-fall source of potential income. Whether the windfall became a short-term cottage industry or full-scale brick factory depended on the size and quality of the deposit. The earliest known local bricks came from the Whipple farm out on the Peninsula in 1867 where for a short time, 15,000 bricks per day were produced.

Then in about 1872, a large deposit of high-quality clay was discovered about five miles south of Traverse City on Hoch Road just east of Keystone Road. A small brick factory was built by a Major Newcomb near the newly laid railroad tracks and the Keystone Brick Company became the first local large scale brick producer. Keystone bricks were considered top quality and were used in some of the homes along Washington Street as early as 1874. As Traverse City grew, the business thrived and a boarding and eating house was added to accommodate the workers. Twenty years later, in about 1894, as the source of clay appeared to dwindle, increasing the costs of extraction, and eventually the operation was closed down.

In 1904 the old brick factory reopened under new management and was renamed the Traverse City Brick Company. New technology was introduced that was able to economically extract the clay and once again the Keystone area became an important source of bricks. A rail siding was laid, new drying sheds built, and a large steam boiler added. In 1906, the Keystone factory employed 42 Workers and produced 4,000,000 bricks. Three million remained in Traverse City and used in various construction projects. The following year, production once again began to fall off and eventually, the dwindling supply of clay along with competition from southern Michigan resulted in the final closure of the Traverse City Brick Company. Today nothing of the old factory remains visible from Hoch Rd. Perhaps an alert hiker exploring the tree-covered clay hills to the north of the road might discover some old foundations and cuts into the hills that would reveal the location of the brick factory.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERS



Would you like to...

Be a docent on a history walking tour?

Help out at the archives under the supervision of Katheryn Carrier, special collections librarian

· **Explore ways of getting local history into the schools?**

Serve as all-around helper with regard to tasks that must be carried out regularly—newsletters, mailings, or maintaining the website?

Attend TAHS board meetings to find out more about board activities and what you might do to participate?

Attending TADL board meetings to let that board know we have a keen interest in maintaining the archives at the library.

· **Or...do whatever job you think would be useful to the Society?**

Leave an email at traversehistory@gmail.com if you are interested in doing any of these things. We can always use more help to preserve, protect, and present history!

CONNECT WITH US ONLINE!

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