

MAY 2020

PRESERVE, PROTECT, AND PRESENT



TRAVERSE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FEATURED ARTICLE:

More Old Town History!

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

BOARD MEMBERS

Stephen Siciliano

- *President*

Brian McCall

- *Vice President*

Jenny Loup

- *Secretary*

Matt Groleau

- *Treasurer*

Larry Hains

Sharon Jennings

Jim Warner

Peg Siciliano

INSIDE THIS NEWSLETTER

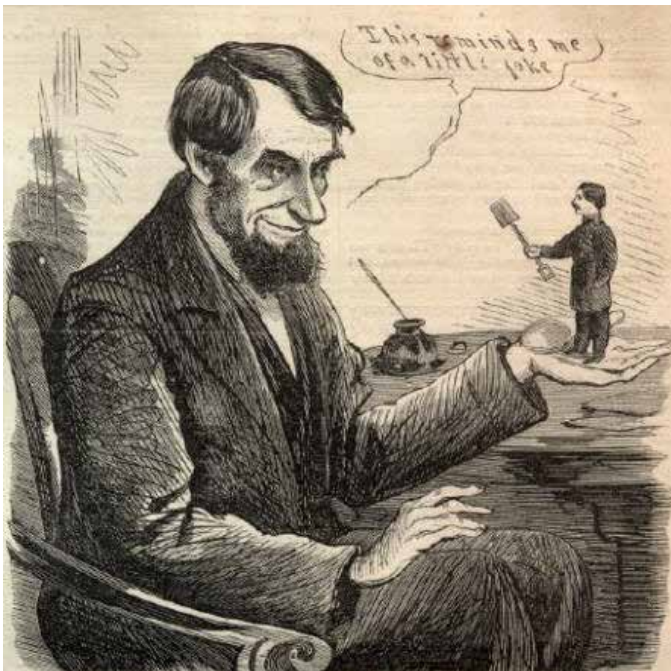
- **From President Siciliano's Desk**
- *Continuing Successful Programing*
- **The Preservation Corner by Peg Siciliano**
- *Con Foster Museum Collection*
- **From the Desks' of Our Board Members
& Much More!**

PRESERVE, PROTECT, AND PRESENT

FROM PRESIDENT SICILIANO'S DESK

This spring has seen the Society deal with the extraordinary event of the COVID-19 Pandemic like the rest of our community members. In light of the Governor's executive order, we ceased in-person operations in March. As a result our March, April, and May monthly programs were cancelled as well as our April Board meeting. We also moved to a virtual format for our May board meeting and await further direction from the state and local health departments regarding future activities.

Despite the limitations from this health crisis, the Society has been busy. Prior to the state action, the Society held its February monthly program entitled "Abraham Lincoln through the Eyes of Political Cartoonists" on February 16th. This encore presentation was enjoyed by about twenty community members, some high school students, and members of the TAHS, Old Mission Peninsula Historical Society, and Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. I recounted the challenges and triumphs of the 16th President as he kept the Union together and ended slavery in America.



The Society has also become involved in a new partnership this spring. Our society has for several years given historic tours of the Oakwood Cemetery. These tours have resulted in attendees donating funds based on their appreciation of what they learned. The Society Board decided in keeping with its mission of preserving, protecting and presenting the history of the Grand Traverse region to contribute to the cemetery. We decided to devote as much as one half of our revenues from the tours towards the ...

Continued ...

FROM PRESIDENT SICILIANO'S DESK

... Oakwood Cemetery. Based on guidance from the sexton, we decided to contribute to the Sons of the Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) for their outstanding contribution to the preservation and history of the Civil War veterans and family members interred at Oakwood. We learned that the SUVCW was in the process of seeking to purchase additional headstones for veterans and members of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) as well the signage for the last Civil War veteran buried in Grand Traverse County; we thought funding these efforts was an ideal way to support them. We also decided to contribute funding for the important preservation work of cleaning of the current Civil War veteran headstones in the cemetery.

The two men receiving headstones are William Bond and Robert Bell. The SUVCW research identified these as GAR members and so they had some relationship to the Union Army. Mr. Bond it appears was a member of the United States Colored Troops. The headstones have their names, years of birth and death, and that they were members of McPherson GAR Post 18.



Our Society has deep respect for the Robert Finch Camp No. 14--SUVCW and their work in presenting the history of the American Civil War to our local community and in the extraordinary work in remembering the contribution of those who fought to preserve the Union and end slavery in our nation. These soldiers' contribution to our country cannot be underestimated. It is a natural fit for the TAHS to partner with the SUVCW to assist them in their historic preservation work.

We hope all our members are staying well during the spring. We look forward to resuming our tours this summer in accordance with state and local health advice.

FROM MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIR JENNING'S DESK

The current number of TAHS members is 156. We have seen a drop in our number recently and hope when life returns to normal, and we can resume our activities, that our number will go back up. We need you, our loyal members, to spread the word that TAHS is working hard to preserve the history of this area and we need the help and support of all our citizens. Stay safe and well dear members. You are very important to us!! We hope to see you soon!

We are sad to report the passing of one of our longtime members, Chick Coley. Chick had been a volunteer for us at the History Center and he and his wife, Janet, have been active members of TAHS for many years. Chick will be greatly missed by the history community of TC.

THE PRESERVATION CORNER BY PEG SICILIANO

Con Foster Museum Collection

In late February City Commissioner Roger Putman met with three TAHS Board Members (Matt Groleau, Larry Hains and Peg Siciliano) to discuss the current status of the collection. Further meetings are planned, but City work on the collection has slowed due to the COVID-19 situation. An April update from Commissioner Putman indicates: "The collection remains safely preserved and in protected storage. [Efforts to return Native American items are continuing.] I am also consulting with my son Tyler Putman, Director of Interpretive service for the Museum of the American Revolution in Philadelphia, and daughter-in-law Dr. Nicole Belolan, Historian in Residence at Rutgers University Camden New Jersey, to continue with efforts to identify and obtain grant sources so the collection can be digitally inventoried. Thank you and the Historical Society for helping to preserve the History of our City. Your dedication and efforts are very much appreciated. Can you imagine 100 years from now and what history will record of today's unfolding events? My very best for a quick and healthy return to brighter days. I will forward any new developments and info as I receive them."

At the February meeting there were preliminary discussions on the possibility of Con Foster Collection pieces being lent out for display at appropriate places such as the Dennos Museum or Traverse Area District Library. The TAHS representatives stressed that such loans would be made following strict national public history standards regarding legal paperwork, security and environmental protections. Discussion on this possibility will continue in later months as the City is able to return to more normal activities.

Continued ...

THE PRESERVATION CORNER CONTINUED BY PEG SICILIANO

Good News on this Coming Summer's Petertyl Archival Internship!

Michele Howard, Director of the Traverse Area District Library, is hopeful that TADL will be able to continue partnering with the TAHS on the Petertyl Internship. If offered, this summer will be the second year of this most recent reiteration of the Petertyl Archival Internship Program.

It is felt that an Intern could be trained and put to work on appropriate projects in a fashion that would maintain whatever health restrictions (due to Covid-19) were in place at the time of the Internship.

Howard states: "I feel that the historically significant time through which we are living only reinforces the continuing need and importance of Local History. I'm glad your group is still willing to fund this position.'

The Petertyl Program offers each participant a \$500 stipend, underwritten by the TAHS. Interns are trained in archival methods, and work on the processing of collections in the TADL Historic Archives.

Further details are forthcoming.

Record YOUR Experiences during this Historic Time

Local stories of living through the COVID-19 Pandemic

The TAHS is proud to be partnering with the Traverse Area District Library to preserve the essence of our daily lives during these unprecedented times. We are asking that you send us accounts of your lives and feelings. They will be archived in TADL's Historic Archives.

Accounts could range from a few sentences, to a photo with captions, to several paragraphs or more.

Continued ...

THE PRESERVATION CORNER CONTINUED

BY PEG SICILIANO

There are two ways to send your accounts:

1. Go to the TAHS's Facebook page and post your comments.
2. E-mail your accounts to traversehistory@gmail.com.

Twenty-five, a hundred years from now our descendants will want to know what it was like for us in the Spring of 2020. Help us save these memories for them.

Additional Ways to Preserve Your Experiences

There are several other groups recording these experiences:

- Living Through the Coronavirus – National Writer Series invites you to share your story of quarantine and COVID-19 through essays.

- Leelanau Historical Society invites Leelanau residents to share their thoughts, photographs and stories about this pandemic. Please email your submissions to: info@leelanauhhistory.org or reach out by phone to discuss your gift with the curator: (231) 256-7475.

- Michigan History Center – The Michigan History Center is documenting the impact of the coronavirus emergency on Michiganders through your stories. Learn how you can add your story to the record of this unprecedented event.

- COVID-19 Oral History Project– The COVID-19 Oral History Project is a rapid response oral history focused on archiving the lived experience of the COVID-19 epidemic. Anyone is welcome to record and upload their oral histories.

- COVID-19 Photo Archive -Two English photographers have started this platform to begin building a digital archive of photographs taken during the pandemic. Anyone is welcome to add photos to the site.

- Telling Our Stories in the Age of COVID-19 – A researcher at Cornell University is collecting journal entries from people who wish to share their experiences during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Continued ...

THE PRESERVATION CORNER CONTINUED BY PEG SICILIANO

Preservation of the Hitchcock/Goodale Farmhouse Foundations

More progress has been made over the winter months on this project determining what to have on the commemorative plaque which will be placed at the site. The text has been written and the family decedents have provided numerous historical photographs for us to work with. The last steps will be selecting which photographs to include and then captioning those photographs. After that, the design layout will be completed and submitted to the city Parks and Recreation committee for final approval before having it produced. We are looking forward to having this project completed sometime this coming summer!

FROM PROGRAM AND EVENTS COMMITTEE CHAIR LOUP'S DESK

2020 Tours

As we all are adjusting to new rules and regulations due to Covid-19, TAHS tours and programs will require more information and time to finalize for the summer and the fall of 2020. Unfortunately, we had to cancel the programs scheduled for March, April, and May, but we do hope to include those presenters and topics in future programming. March was to be a presentation by Traverse City's Oakwood Cemetery sexton, Branden Morgan, on the history of the Oakwood cemetery. In April we had planned on hosting Chris Roxburgh of Historical Shipwrecks of Michigan for slides and explanation of some regional shipwrecks. Please check our facebook page - Traverse Area Historical Society -- and our website - www.traversehistory.org -- for updates. We plan to continue offering programs of interest pertaining to local history as soon as we are able!

TAHS has been in contact with the Traverse Area District library as they discuss their own opening requirements and use of their McGuire room for future programs. Also, TAHS is monitoring state and local regulations regarding outdoor gatherings as we plan ahead for a summer tour schedule for both downtown tours as well as tours of the Oakwood cemetery. As we explore options, please keep in touch with us at traversehistory@gmail.com, through the Traverse Area Historical Society Facebook messenger app, or through program chair Jennifer Loup at loup.jen@gmail.com. We look forward to seeing you soon and safely for local history programs and events, even as we pass through this historically significant time!

FROM TREASURER GROLEAU'S DESK

My what a difference 3 months make. Since our last newsletter it seems that so many things have changed due to the impacts of Covid-19. And we at the TAHS have not been financially immune from the impacts.

The most significant impacts we have seen for the organization have been on the revenue side. As most of our book sales at this time of the year are done at our Monthly Programs and through local book retailers, our book revenues have decreased by just over \$300 compared to this time last year. We have also seen a reduction of \$425 from Membership revenue as we have had fewer new members join (we typically get new members from our programs) and have had a number of existing members who have not sent in their renewals. And while donations as a whole are up compared to this time last year, they would have been down by just over \$700 if it hadn't been due to the major donor we had step forward last year who is making monthly contributions. I certainly believe the lack of renewals and donations is almost entirely due to the financial concerns that have come about due to the pandemic.

However, it isn't all bad news. Your historical society is still in sound financial shape due to the support we have received over the past number of years as well as how the organization's finances have been managed. We had two Certificates of Deposit mature since the last newsletter and those brought just over \$500 in interest income into our coffers. And thankfully our major donor commitment we received has continued despite what has happened in the economy. And finally, we have successfully kept our operating costs well under control, and they are in fact running below budget so far for this year.

Because of our sound financial position, we made our annual contribution of \$1,200 (\$100 per month) to the Traverse Area District Library to support the activities in the archives. In addition to that, we were able to support a project being done by the Sons of the Union Veterans of the Civil War that aligned with the mission of our organization. Furthermore, we are still positioned to support students participating in the Michigan History Day competition and are still planning to fund the Petertyl Internship program for this coming summer.

As a final note, I simply want to say how very much we appreciate the support we receive from our members and donors. While we never know what tomorrow may bring, you can rest assured that your financial contributions will continue to be used wisely to Preserve, Protect, and Present the history of the Grand Traverse region.

More Old Town History!

Today, the southeast corner of Union St. and Lake Ave. is the home of Brady's Bar. That corner has a long and interesting history. Prior to 1866, there was nothing there except some scrub pine trees and slash left from the pine harvest. Then in 1866, Perry Hannah built the first bridge across the Boardman River connecting the village with the land south of the river. Soon a short road was cleared that connected Union St. to the state road (known today as Silver Lake Road) and travelers from the south had an easy access to the village. William and Jane Shilson, early managers of the Hannah, Lay boarding house saw the possibilities for a hotel located south of the river and in 1872, Jane Shilson contracted with a local builder and soon Traverse City had a new hotel with accommodations for 40 guests. When the railroad arrived in November of 1872, the newly named Boardman River House was ready for business. Soon a first-class livery stable was built behind the hotel to accommodate the influx of traveling salesmen.

In 1891 the Chicago & Western Michigan Railroad announced plans to run a spur along the southside of the river with a passenger terminal to be located on Union Street just twenty yards north of Boardman River House. The Shilson's lost no time taking advantage of this windfall. Thomas Shilson who had become manager, added a two-story addition to the building and renamed it the Shilson House. Meals and light refreshments were served at the hotel but no alcoholic beverages were available. Those wishing to imbibe found it necessary to walk two doors to the south to Harvey Pierce's Saloon or further down the street to Novotny's Saloon. Pierce's was known for its music box that played extremely loud music that could be heard all up and down Union Street. Novotny's was famous as a favorite haunt of members of the Bohemian community and was known for its good ethnic food and music.

The barn and former livery stable behind the hotel were hit by lightning in 1912 and destroyed by fire. In 1929, the hotel was sold for \$5,000 and became known as the Union Hotel. Bernard "Bun" Brady purchased the building around 1940 and renamed the business Brady's Bar. It soon became more commonly known as "Bun Brady's". The building was badly damaged by fire in 1988 but was carefully renovated and restored much as it was in earlier years.

Bob Wilhelm and Bob Wilson



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!

TRAVERSEHISTORY.ORG | LIKE US ON FACEBOOK: TRAVERSE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Traverse Area Historical Society - PO Box 7051 - Traverse City, MI 49696-7051