

FEBRUARY 2024

PRESERVE, PROTECT, AND PRESENT



TRAVERSE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**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

Since our last newsletter in November, we inaugurated our 2024 society monthly program.

On January 21, local historian and retired medical social worker Christopher Reiser, who currently serves as president of the Peter Dougherty Board of Directors, provided his insights into the life of Reverend Peter Dougherty. Mr. Reiser will describe how Dougherty, having earned his divinity degree at Princeton Seminary, proceeded to spend the rest of his working days ministering to Native Americans in Michigan first in Old Mission, then Omena and finally in Wisconsin.



1 (above) Reverend Peter Dougherty
2 (right)

Mr. Reiser explored Dougherty's life through his diary, church records and correspondence as well as the voices of others who knew Reverend Dougherty¹. He also looked at the social forces that swirled around him at this time in the young United States of America. Mr. Reiser concluded his presentation about the work to restore the Dougherty house² in Old Mission that was completed in 2019.



Twenty-two attendees in person and twelve via zoom learned about the successes and challenges that Dougherty faced bringing Christianity to his Native American mission amidst a political environment that was increasingly hostile to Native ownership of their ancestral lands. The recording of the program can be found at <https://youtu.be/THSulphXSUQ>

Our February program Jeffrey Jaeger presented a critical analysis of General Custer's performance at the battle of Rio Hill. A brief and minor cavalry raid conducted largely as a diversion from the Dahlgren Affair, Rio Hill was the only contested action fought in Charlottesville, VA during the Civil War. Federal troops were led by George Custer³ who made many of the mistakes that characterized his career and death. Battle analysis done during a 2016 "staff ride" reveals good examples of modern combined-arms tactics and lessons learned that can be applied in the future.

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FROM PRESIDENT SICILIANO'S DESK CONT.



3 (above) Brigadier General George Armstrong Custer USV

4 (right) "Burning a bridge on the Rivanna, Feb. 1864" by Alfred R. Waud.

Mr. Jaeger described Custer's mission to destroy facilities in Charlottesville. Unfortunately, Custer failed to do a reconnaissance of the area and did not realize that he was facing a much smaller Confederate force. When he captured two Confederates, they convinced Custer he was greatly outnumbered. Nevertheless, he decided to divide his command even though it was contrary to sound military tactics. When his command finally encountered the enemy, he destroyed some of the Confederate cannons but still convinced he was outnumbered, then retreated.

After his retreat, Custer's other accomplishment was the destruction of the Rivanna bridge shown below in a period illustration.⁴



Custer's mistakes at this skirmish were repeated with far graver results in his final battle at Little Big Horn where his failure to reconnoiter his enemy's position and his decision to divide his force led to the destruction of his immediate command.

Twenty-five attendees in person and five on zoom enjoyed the presentation and asked several questions about Custer and his career and his Michigan roots. The recording of the program can be found at <https://youtu.be/-y8WXZocCzw>

Looking ahead to our March program, Peg Siciliano, TAHS Board member and occasional local history writer for the Record Eagle, will present "Rutted Dirt to Interstates; Tents to Motels: How Roads and Lodging Changed between 1910 and 1970."

Through the magic of vintage Traverse-area photos, the audience will be treated to three tourist excursions "Up North." The first in 19-teens, the next in the 1940s, and the last in the 1960s. And my, how things changed over those years!

Come to our program on March 17 th at 2:00 PM at the Traverse Area District Library or <https://www.tadl.org/event/traverse-area-historical-society-12095>

register to access the program via zoom at
<https://www.tadl.org/event/traverse-area-historical-society-12095>

FROM MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIR JENNINGS' DESK

Our membership number now stands at 163. We are happy to welcome new members Susan Smith and Nancy Bordine.

On a sad note, we have lost longtime Life member Wilma Lemcool.

We are still hoping to hear from our members whose families have connections to the history of this area. Please contact me if you would be willing to share your family's story at **sharon2331@gmail.com**

FROM TREASURER OFFENHAUSER'S DESK

Recently, we ran an actual vs budget report for the previous year. This report revealed a strong cash flow surplus for the Society. Going forward, TAHS will be in good financial stead to take on new and ongoing history projects, and to meet, if any, unforeseen expenditures.

January showed some welcomed membership renewals and donations. We thank our members and friends for your valued contributions. This influx offset our annual donation given to TADL in support of the ongoing archival cataloging. Also, in January, the Board resolved to retain a CPA firm to prepare our upcoming tax return. Due to the increased complexity of our reporting, it was thought that an outside professional service would be worth it's modest cost.

NEWS FROM THE TRAVERSE AREA DISTRICT LIBRARY

By Melissa A. McKenna, Department Head, Adult Services & Supervisor, Local History Collection

Happy First Anniversary, Citizen Historians!

It was almost one year ago that sixteen of your neighbors attended a program to learn how they could become part of TADL's Citizen Historian program and about the projects available to help the Local History Collection. We want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has donated hours as a Citizen Historian, bring awareness to their contributions and work, and invite new people to join us!

Volunteers were trained to help with two projects last year - tagging photographs already online through the Local History Collection and inventorying the historical pamphlet files located in the Adult Services Dept on the second floor. By far the most popular work has been with the historical files. Which is understandable, because looking at the old stuff is fun! But keep in mind that online photo tagging can be done from anywhere, even if you're a snowbird for part of the year.

We've had 6 faithful Citizen Historians volunteering 115 hours total to date. Huge thanks to Gini LeClaire who has worked the most hours so far, helping us to sort out what's in the historical pamphlet files. She'll tell you that it's tiring work sometimes. But we've already used the inventory that's being created to help patrons at the Reference Desk. This is a very valuable tool to help people looking for local history information.

There's still lots more work to be done on both projects. If you'd like to be a part of this group who will be helping to tell the story of Grand Traverse County, please be sure to first watch the Information Session recording and then email Melissa at mmckenna@tadl.org to get started.

And just so you know how important this work is, we'd like to share some statistics with you. In the past year, the Local History page on TADL's website had over 5,000 unique users and over 158,000 image views.

By contributing to these projects, particularly those online, you'll be facilitating global access to the rich history of Grand Traverse County. Our Citizen Historians' efforts ensure that everyone can discover and appreciate their Traverse City heritage, no matter where they are in the world.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERS



Would you like to...

- Be a docent on a history walking tour?
- 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](http://traversehistory.org) | LIKE US ON FACEBOOK: TRAVERSE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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