

SUMMER 2026

PRESERVE, PROTECT, AND PRESENT



TRAVERSE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Traverse Area Historical Society Newsletter is published quarterly.

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- *Vice President*

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Jim Warner

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FROM PRESIDENT SICILIANO'S DESK

Since our spring newsletter edition, we have devoted our time to our tours and lending support to the Traverse Area District Library efforts to expand research and archives services to the Carnegie Building.

We want to thank our new tour guides—Andrea Thompson, and Pete and Kathy Radakovich-- for volunteering to lead our Perry Hannah and His Neighbors Tour and our Oakwood Cemetery Tour. They have made a real contribution in helping us serve our patrons.

Summer and Autumn Tour Schedule:

Our schedule for the remaining summer tours is as follows:

Perry Hannah

September 26, Saturday, 9:30-11:30am

Old Towne

September 20, Sunday, 9:30-11:30am

Oakwood Cemetery

September 27, Sunday, 3 - 5pm

Oakwood Cemetery with a Halloween Twist

Sunday, October 25th, 3 – 5pm

Thursday, October 29th, 4 - 6pm

Please take advantage of these wonderful tours. The price of the tours remains at \$15 per person for this year.

Coming Autumn 2026 Programs:

September 20: Dr. Bradley Gills, Why rock the boat? Tribal fishing in the Grand Traverse Region

Dr. Gills will be speaking on the history of tribal fishing in our region. His talk will explore this rich history from the 1836 Treaty of Washington that preserved fishing rights for local Indian communities through the Grand Traverse Band's fight for federal

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FROM PRESIDENT SICILIANO'S DESK CONT.

recognition amidst the heated fishing controversies that defined the 1970s and 1980s, and on to the recent fishing compact settlement. This informative talk will showcase stories of survival, tragedy, perseverance, and how our Native neighbors have always been an integral part of our economy and communities from Northport to Eastport.

October 18: Michigan History Day Award Recipients' Presentation and the Society Annual Meeting and Social Event.

Join us to hear from the young scholars who received state and national recognition as part of Michigan History Day. It will be followed by our annual meeting where we will share the state of the society information and hold our board elections. We will cap off the event with wonderful refreshments and fun local history games as part of our social event.

November 15: Ann Swaney and Stephen Siciliano, History of Northwestern Michigan College: the first 75 Years.

Ann and Stephen will share gems from the NMC Archives and stories of the first 75 years from Les Biederman and the community founding the college to its growth to today. It is part of the college's 75th anniversary celebration.

History Projects

The Society has also been involved into two important history projects. These are described below by Board Members Emily Modrall and Marty MacLeod.

New Historic Marker Project

Emily Modrall

On June 2, TAHS board members joined Traverse City staff, board members and staff from the Groundwork Center, and Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians Chairwoman and staff to celebrate the installation of the revised State Historical Marker (S42) on West Grand Traverse Bay. The original 1957 marker was replaced with the new marker through the collaborative efforts and support of the above organizations and the Michigan Historical Marker Program. The new marker is larger, bilingual, and reflects the long history of human life on Grand Traverse Bay. The following photograph includes the new sign and our partners. It was taken by Jeff Smith from the Groundwork Center (next page)

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FROM PRESIDENT SICILIANO'S DESK CONT.



Opera House Historic Artifact Display Project Marty MacLeod

HISTORICAL EXHIBITS – The society's historical offerings at the City Opera House continued throughout 2026, with displays highlighting the Clinch Park zoo; local pharmacies and “druggists,” as they were known back in the day; vintage footwear and local makers/sellers; and – currently! – area schools, starting with the very first at Old Mission. These eye-catching displays in the glass “vitrine” are available to all; the COH lobby is open to

the public Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10 to 4. Please stop by to enjoy these fun and educational quarterly displays. If you have a collection of local items that would make an interesting theme, please contact the TAHS board – we would love to literally showcase them!



Clinch Zoo Exhibit



Pharmacy Exhibit



Vintage Shoe Exhibit



School Exhibit

FROM MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE JORDAN OWEN'S DESK

What You Can Do to Help Grow the Membership of TAHS

The Traverse Area Historical Society is blessed to have a sizable, stable membership roll of nearly 150 members. We thank those who maintain their memberships and recognize them as true stewards of our organization's mission. Among the board of the

Society, an ongoing discussion is how we can grow our numbers, knowing that without a doubt there is broad interest in our community about the history of the Traverse region, as demonstrated by the large followings of our social media accounts and the active discussion of historic local images and artifacts on Facebook and Instagram. We draw the same conclusion from the consistent attendance of non-members at our tours and presentations at TADL. I believe that our first step towards growing our membership numbers is for our current members to invite their friends and family to attend one of our tours this fall or one of our monthly presentations through the winter months. Although I hesitate to mention it in the final weeks of summer, consider giving the gift of TAHS membership this holiday season. The changing of seasons is an opportunity to plant the seeds of TAHS's future by growing the number of stewards of our shared past.

FROM COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE CHAIR SICILIANO'S DESK

We Traverse area historians have had "Christmas in August" this month! Gifts include Dr. E.L. Thirlby's urology test kit, a Hannah & Lay Mercantile promotional yardstick and a McCool's "Velvet Ice Cream" single-serving carry-out carton.



Dr. E.L. Thirlby's urology test kit

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FROM COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE CHAIR SICILIANO'S DESK



McCool's "Velvet Ice Cream" single-serving carry-out carton

These are only three of seventeen new historical artifacts accepted by the TAHS Collections Committee for addition to the TAHS museum collection. Pieces from our ever-expanding collection are currently being used in exhibits in the lobby of the City Opera House. The full collection is being held in safe keeping for the time when a more robust local museum display will be possible. Perhaps that time is coming soon, given Traverse City's recent agreement to have professionals from the Traverse Area District Library manage the Con Foster Collection. In the meantime, the TAHS is striving to provide professional level care to the artifacts we are collecting. That effort has been greatly facilitated by a generous grant from the Historical Society of Michigan, which enabled us to purchase metal shelving and archival-quality storage material. Artifacts will soon be boxed and moved unto those shelves.

Additional items recently donated:

- A Snowflake Cigar box and invoice
- A metal tag from the Traverse City Boat Company
- A Northwestern Michigan College 1951 wall plaque made by the Burwood Corporation
- A 1932 mini-desk calendar from A.T. Petertyl Choice Meats,
- A 1919 ribbon and medal from a Grand Traverse Grand Army of the Republic gathering
- A thin Oval Wood grocery tray
- An Oval Wood wooden block from which such trays were scooped
- Two bus tokens from the Traverse City Transit Company
- Two pool and lunch tokens from the Board of Trade
- Two small cardboard pill boxes of the Hannah & Lay Mercantile Company

If you have historic local artifacts, you would consider donating, please contact us!

You can e-mail at traversehistory@gmail.com, or call at 231-995-0313.

FROM TREASURER OFFENHAUSER'S DESK

As members receive this newsletter, TAHS is beginning to focus on our budgeting. Soon I will prepare a budget vs actual for this year. Once that has been reviewed, the board will begin the process of preparing a Fiscal 2027 budget that will be put in front of the membership at our annual October meeting.

FROM WEBMASTER GILL'S COMPUTER

This past year we have seen growth in traffic to our at website <https://www.traversehistory.org/>. We have had visitors from all over the US this year, with a particular jump in May and June thanks to better advertising of our walking tours. I continue to work on enhancing the user experience, and I invite our membership to let us know what you think we should be doing better in terms of providing easy access to information about TAHS, programming, and other information about our work and the history of our region. Traffic to our Facebook group has also steadily increased and we have made some great connections with community members sharing their own images and artifacts. Our main goal for the upcoming year remains the same as last year: to enhance the site to further engagement by providing our members and the general public with more dynamic content.

NEWS FROM THE TRAVERSE AREA DISTRICT LIBRARY

Amy Monette, Local History Collection & Kingsley Branch Manager

Hello from the Local History Collection!

It has been a busy summer in the Local History Collection! We were delighted to help our friends at Northwestern Michigan College celebrate their 75th anniversary with an exhibit highlighting NMC's history and its impact on our community. The exhibit will remain on display at TADL Main through August 31st. Should you miss it, please visit the Dennon Museum Center, which is featuring a wonderful exhibit exploring NMC through the decades to continue their year-long celebration! Looking ahead to September, our next Local History exhibit will take a look at one of Traverse City's most recognizable historic buildings: the Grand Traverse County Courthouse. The exhibit will explore the history of the courthouse and the role it has played in our community over the years. Stop by the 2nd floor exhibit case at TADL

Main throughout the month of September to take a look! You can find more information about the exhibit at this link: <https://www.tadl.org/event/localhistoryexhibitcourthouse>

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NEWS FROM THE TRAVERSE AREA DISTRICT LIBRARY

Amy Monette, Local History Collection & Kingsley Branch Manager

Pictured here is a black and white photograph taken by S.E. Wait of the Courthouse (left) the Sheriff's residence with Jail attached (right), and in the far center background, Boardman School, captured around 1907.

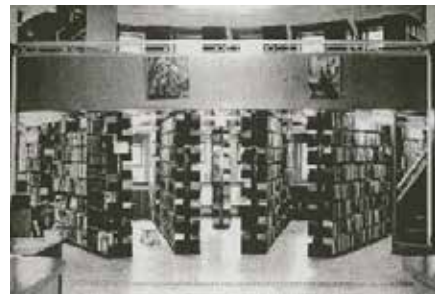


We are also excited to announce that the Local History Collection has been awarded an Improving Access to Information Grant through the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), administered by the Library of Michigan! This grant will support a major project focused on the Camp Roy-El Collection, which documents the beloved summer camp founded by Roy and Ellen Brigman in 1952 for young people with disabilities.

The collection contains photographs, slides, films, videotapes, and other materials documenting the camp and the experiences of generations of campers. Grant funds will help us digitize and make more of this remarkable collection available online, while also improving the preservation and organization of the original materials. We will also be hosting an exhibit, public program, and reunion for those who loved the Camp. Additionally, we are building a shareable framework to support our peer partners in the region who need additional training in preservation. We are thrilled to have the opportunity to bring more of Camp Roy-El's story to the community and honor the legacy of the Brigmans.

And, perhaps most excitingly, we have wonderful news to share about the future of the Carnegie Building on Sixth Street! Thanks in no small part to the tremendous support of Traverse Area Historical Society and its members, TADL has successfully petitioned to partner with the City of Traverse City on a vision for the building's future. Once the current lease period concludes, TADL is slated to return to its historic home, where we hope to create a vibrant community space, city museum, and special collections library. The space would bring together our community's Local History Collection and the City's Con Foster Museum Collection, providing professional stewardship and expanded public access to these important community resources. We are incredibly grateful to our TAHS friends for advocating alongside us throughout this process. We look forward to continuing this work together and welcoming you back to Sixth Street!

Pictured here is the interior of the Carnegie Library after 1963, when the Library underwent an extensive remodel which included modern shelving and new flooring in the Rotunda. Photographer unknown.



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 | LIKE US ON FACEBOOK: TRAVERSE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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