

FALL 2025

PRESERVE, PROTECT, AND PRESENT



TRAVERSE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Traverse Area Historical Society Newsletter is published quarterly.

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INSIDE THIS NEWSLETTER

• From President Siciliano's Desk

- *Recent Programs & the Society's Annual Meeting*

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

FROM PRESIDENT SICILIANO'S DESK

Since our summer newsletter edition, our work has focused on completing our four different historical tours. We offered a total of seven tours this autumn. Our most popular tour was the Perry Hannah & His Neighbors walking tour. Sixty-two attended eight different dates of this tour. We concluded the tour season with our Oakwood Cemetery Tour with a Halloween Twist. Thirty-seven attended one of these two tours. In total, the society had 132 attendees enjoy one of more of our tours.

We may offer a special Holiday Season Perry Hannah & His Neighbors Walking Tour in December. More information will be shared via our Facebook, Website and Email blasts.

FALL PROGRAMS:

We held three programs this fall:

September 21st: Board member Emily Modrall presented 'The New Anishinaabe Cultural Markers in Kchi Wiikwedong (the Grand Traverse area)'. She described the origins of the project to honor the Native American trails and their history in our region. It started with finding trail markers that had been placed starting in the 1940s. Most recently Frank Ettawaghesik had completed this trail project by placing the final fourteen markers by 1987. Above is one of those markers.



Frank Ettawaghesik wrote a history of this project and it can be found at

<https://cadillacmichigan.com/old-indian-trail-cadillac-to-traverse-city/> Dr. Modrell then explained the historical research needed for the new trail marker project through such sources as the Hinsdale Archaeological Atlas of Michigan and learning from Mr. Ettawaghesik and other elders in the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians.

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FROM PRESIDENT SICILIANO'S DESK CONT.

After almost five years of planning and implementation, nine new trail markers have been placed. Two different shapes for the new trail project are used:



Seven of them represent each of the Seven Grandfathers' Teachings of Love, Respect, Truth, Wisdom, Honesty, Bravery, and Humility. Two others placed at Clinch Park and Peterson Park describe the history of the Native Americans in our region. Each marker has a QR code that links to additional information about what the marker represents.

Eighteen attendees enjoyed the program and asked several questions. For those wanting to see a recording of the presentation, please go to youtube.com/watch?v=goyAAEVp8_E&feature=youtu.be

October 12th: Michigan History Day Award Recipients' Presentation and the Society Annual Meeting and Social Event.

Our October program began with one of the Michigan History Day Scholars sharing his experiences having competed successfully at the local, state and national level. George Kaynor was a national finalist in the category of written reports and placed in the top thirty students nationwide. His topic was on the tragic Triangle Shirtwaist Fire in New York City in 1911. He shared how the loss of 146 factory employees led to state legislation to better ensure the safety of factory workers. Part of these efforts was led by Frances Perkins who later became the first woman to become a member of the president's cabinet.



National Finalist George Kaynor

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FROM PRESIDENT SICILIANO'S DESK CONT.

The presentation was followed by our annual social event where we enjoyed good food and two brand new local history games. One asked attendees to match the photographs to the names of those individuals who were the first in Traverse City. These included such firsts as the first female physician, the first Cherry Queen, and the first mayor. The other game asked attendees to match the photographs of location buildings that what had been previously located there. For instance, what was located on the present site of the Post Office on Union Street or St. Francis Church. All enjoyed the games and tested our knowledge of local history. Much thanks to the creativity of Peg Siciliano and Marty MacLeod.

The social time was followed by the business annual meeting. I shared the state of the society report. It follows here:

“Since our last annual meeting, we have met our society mission in presenting history through offering seven monthly programs. These included:

November: Kim Kelderhouse, Executive Director of the Leelanau Historical Society, presented a program entitled “Clues, Tidbits and Surprises in Researching Leelanau History. 38 attendees

January: Board member and Historian Marty MacLeod presented on Legacy: Perry Hannah and his Neighbors. 32 attendees

February: TADL Librarian Zoe Schwartz presented on Julius Steinberg, Bargain Giver: From peddler to Opera House Proprietor and Beyond. 52 attendees

March: Author Valerie Winans presented on the life of our 22nd Governor, Edwin Winans. 32 attendees

April: Aviation historian Grace Yakuber presented on the history of the Traverse City and area airports. 43 attendees

May: Board member and writer Peg Siciliano presented on West Bay as Traverse City's Economic Engine. 29 attendees

September: Board member and Project Coordinator Emily Modrall presented on the completion of the first nine markers of the 'The New Anishinaabe Cultural Markers in Kchi Wiikwedong (the Grand Traverse area). 18 attendees

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FROM PRESIDENT SICILIANO'S DESK CONT.

In addition to our programs, we have offered three different historical tours this summer. In addition to our Oakwood Cemetery tour led by Peg Siciliano, Marty MacLeod has provided the walking tour of TC's Old Towne, and she and Peg have also offered the tour entitled: Perry Hannah and His Neighbors, A Walking Tour of Sixth Street and Environs. Thus far ninety-one community members took advantage of our tours.

Our newest function has been to the collection and display of three-dimensional historic artifacts. Our acquisitions include artifacts from the county sheriff from one hundred years ago. We have also displayed artifacts at the Traverse City Opera House. These include WWII-vintage sheet music and popular musical instruments from Board member Jim Warner's extensive collection.

Finally, we have given support for the Michigan History Day Program and its Students. Several society "board and members participated in the Michigan History Day at West Middle School in March. We had the pleasure of serving as judges, evaluating wonderful student projects, including exhibits, documentaries, posters, websites, and papers. The quality of the projects was shown in that several of the projects advanced from the district to the national finals. The presentations today gave you a wonderful example of these young scholars' work.

Much thanks to all of you who help us meet our mission of preserving, presenting and protecting the history of our Grand Traverse Region."

My annual report was followed with the presentation of our proposed 2025 budget. We continue to run at a small deficit as we rent a second storage unit to house three dimensional historic artifacts to protect them. Our goal will be to preserve them until a history museum can be established in Traverse City.

We concluded our annual meeting with election of offices. Marty MacLeod, Emily Modrell, and Peg Siciliano were reelected, and Jordan Owens was elected to his first term.

We concluded the meeting with recognizing Sharon Jennings for her decades of service on our board and as membership chair. She was honored with a certificate of appreciation from the board and awarded lifetime membership in the society.

November 16th: Jennifer Loup will present on the History of the Clinch Park Zoo and the Traverse City Miniature City

Our board secretary Jen Loup shared her experiences and significant research into the history of the Clinch Park Zoo and Traverse City Miniature City. The story started with Floyd Clinch who donated the land to the city for the park. The park was named after his son Duncan.

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FROM PRESIDENT SICILIANO'S DESK CONT.

It soon became the location for the city museum named after Con Foster, Traverse City Mayor and entertainment entrepreneur. The park became the home of the Traverse City miniature city. The miniature city was laid out as streets in the Traverse City with the buildings being built approximately to scale.



Miniature City after the Grand Traverse Parkway was built.



Park Entrance in 1930s

The city eventually decided to divest itself of the miniature city because it continued to suffer from vandalism and was costly to maintain. The miniature city went through a number of owners.

The remaining collection of several of the buildings are still preserved today at the Music House Museum in Acme. Two of the current buildings are picture below:



Two of the Miniature City Buildings

One of the entertainment features of the park was trains. The last train at the park was a quarter size steam locomotive that took visitors around the park. Despite the engine having its share of mechanical troubles, it was a crowd favorite.



Steam Miniature Train

The star of the zoo was of course the animals. The zoo had a great variety of animals including snakes, fish, ravens, eagles, crows, owls, hawks, turtles, otters, bears, deer, moose, bison, wolverines, fox, and coyotes among many others.

A number of the zoo residents had been pets prior to coming like Igor the wolf. Others came as orphans and after having been injured prior to their arrival at the zoo. The animals definitely had interesting personalities. Ace the crow was known to tell staff who it did not like "good bye!"



Igor the Wolf



Ace the Crow



One of two Eaglets born at the Zoo

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FROM PRESIDENT SICILIANO'S DESK CONT.

The staff did a wonderful job caring for the animals and sometimes were tasked to recover them as the free-range birds wandered into town. Among their successes was the birth of two eaglets at the zoo. This was an extraordinary development as eagles rarely give birth in captivity.

But despite its successes and the thriftiness of staff to manage cost—that included collecting roadkill and expired produce at local grocery stores to feed the animals—the city decided after conducting a feasibility study to close the zoo in 2007. The city determined that the location was no longer feasible for the animals due to noise and space limitations and the zoo's zoological society did not have the resources to take the zoo over or find a new location. As a result, the staff successfully found new homes for all the animals.

The audience asked good questions and provided additional memories of the park. The presentation had thirty-four attendees in person and an additional nine via zoom. The link to the program is found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Koeuy8kOy3M>

FROM MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE JORDAN OWEN'S DESK

I'm honored to introduce myself as the new board member who serves as the membership coordinator for the Traverse Area Historical Society. My name is Jordan Owen, and I'm stepping into a role that has been expertly maintained by Sharon Jennings for many years. Sharon's dedication to our society has been exemplary, with a meticulous attention to detail that has set a standard I will strive to uphold. At the 2025 TAHS Annual Meeting, Sharon was deservedly honored with a Lifetime membership for her outstanding service.

As I assume this responsibility, I want to share where we stand as of December 1, 2025. Our society currently has 142 total members, demonstrating our community's strong interest in preserving and celebrating our local history. This breaks down to 118 individual memberships, 23 life memberships, and one junior membership. For the past month of November, we welcomed 3 new members and processed 4 renewals, as the year's end will bring a greater number of renewal notifications in the mail. As always, you are welcome to renew by mail or online at traversehistory.org.

Looking forward, I'm excited to share that we'll be implementing some new tools for membership management and communication. It's my goal that the introduction of any new tool will help us serve you more efficiently while maintaining the personal touch and high standards that Sharon established. Rest assured, any changes will be designed to enhance your membership experience, not complicate it.

As we move ahead, I encourage you to reach out with any questions or concerns about your membership. I look forward to working with you to help facilitate your interest in our shared history and the growth of TAHS.

FROM COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE CHAIR SICILIANO'S DESK

The TAHS Collections Committee is excited to announce the acquisition of an iconic piece of Traverse City history: The Oleson's artesian well sign that hung on the east side of Oleson's original grocery store at 901 West Front Street. Those "of a certain age" well remember the sign, and artesian spring, that graced that location for decades. Today the Oleson's building hosts Loco Boys Brewing.



The Oleson Sign in the Original Location



The Current Oleson Sign Artifact

The sign is in safe storage while the Committee investigates the appropriate steps needed to refurbish it to a better condition.

The TAHS has also been contacted by two donors with sizable collections of local artifacts who are interested in donating to the Society. Stay tuned for further information!

The Committee met in October and received training on the legal steps and documentation required to manage the artifact collection in a professional manner.

Thanks to those participants:

Fred Nelson, Peter Doren, Bonnie Smith, Miles Lindberg, Marty McCleod, Jim Warner and Peg Siciliano.

FROM TREASURER OFFENHAUSER'S DESK

Since our last newsletter there has been little activity financially for the Society. Our budget for 2026 was presented to our membership and approved at our October 2025 meeting. As previously reported, our budget for '26 is similar to our '25 actuals.

We contributed \$2175 to the State of Michigan for an updated historical marker in September, located at the mouth of the Boardman River. It highlights the interesting story of Le Grande Traverse. Most of this and other recurring expenses were offset with our membership dues and donations, plus our income from the popular walking tours. Happy holidays.

NEWS FROM THE TRAVERSE AREA DISTRICT LIBRARY

Amy Monette, Local History Collection & Kingsley Branch Manager

Hello from the Local History Collection!

The TADL Local History team has been hard at work dreaming up new ways to bring the past to life—and we can't wait for you to see what's coming. Our second-floor display case will continue to feature rotating exhibits pulled straight from the archives, and this year we're teaming up with a few community groups for themed collaborations. We switch things out regularly, so consider this your friendly nudge to stop by each month and take a peek!

Behind the scenes, we're already thinking ahead to one of Traverse City's biggest milestones—the 100th anniversary of the National Cherry Festival in 2026. We're preparing photographs, documents, and other treasures now, since we expect lots of curious visitors and researchers when the celebration rolls around. This ongoing work underscores how deeply the Festival is woven into Traverse City's history—and how much there still is to discover.

This November also brought a chance for staff across all six district libraries to gather for Traverse Area District Library's annual in-service day—a whole day of learning together. Local History staff were invited to present to the 100+ library staff present on their work. Zoë Schwartz from the Main Library highlighted the global reach of our small but significant archive, noting how many local collections connect Traverse City to broader stories and places, while Mary Morgan from the Peninsula Community Library explored making family connections on Old Mission Peninsula, leading to a wedding! Both sessions sparked great conversations and reminded us how many stories are still waiting to be told.

If you haven't seen it yet, Zoë also wrote a fascinating article on the history of the Northwestern Michigan Fair from 1868 through the 1950s. Zoë uncovered so many wonderful promotional posters for you to see!

NEWS FROM THE TRAVERSE AREA DISTRICT LIBRARY CONTINUED

Amy Monette, Local History Collection & Kingsley Branch Manager

You can read it here:

<https://www.tadl.org/posts/dont-miss-northwestern-michigan-fair-first-half-twentieth-century>

And for a final bit of excitement: during the first week of September, we digitized a privately held collection of the Gardner-Hannah Family that offers a wonderful glimpse into the lives of Claribel and George W. Gardner—Perry Hannah’s daughter and son-in-law. The collection includes family letters, photographs, and even Perry Hannah’s brief 1852 diary. At one point he jokes that writing it is his “greatest undertaking,” which may explain why he didn’t keep going! Thanks to the generosity of Peg Jonkhoff and the Jonkhoff Family, who hold the originals, the full collection is now available online for viewing and downloading by all: **<https://localhistory.tadl.org/collections/show/53>**

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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