



The Oakland Township Historical Society (OTHS) Newsletter

www.oaklandtownshiphistoricalsociety.org Oakland County, MI



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OTHS President's Perspective 2026

I hope everyone stayed warm this winter and found ways to keep themselves busy. If you did not get a chance to visit Cranberry Lake Farm, it looked absolutely beautiful covered in a blanket of sparkling snow! Even so, we are looking forward to a warm spring and the year ahead. See below for ways that you help to beautify the grounds at the Farm. Also, check out our great lineup of exciting programs! The much anticipated second edition of the historic OT home book will be available in June. It contains an updated collection of photographs, maps, and stories highlighting more than fifty historic properties. Finally, we would like to welcome our newest board member, Nancy Kicinski.

Hope to you see you all soon. Anthony Kowalchick

Mission Statement

Gather, interpret, and preserve the history of Oakland Township.

CALLING ALL GARDENERS!

Individuals, groups, and scouts, we need you! Please adopt and care for a flower bed or herb pot(s), or donate time or flowers. We could also use help with weeding, watering, and planting. Text Michelle at 248-860-9945 for more information.



We hope to spruce up the gardens and attract more people and butterflies!

COMING THIS SUMMER...

The *Historic Homes of Oakland Township* book will be available for sale. The book features 25 homes and 15 landmark sites as well as a map of Oakland Township. Original colored photographs and artwork by Gerald Schuchard and historical details highlighting the unique history of OT. This second edition is fifty years in the making! The inaugural *Heritage in Oakland Township* was published in 1976. Unfortunately, some of the homes originally featured are no longer standing. In their place, some never before seen homes make an appearance.



THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN OAKLAND COUNTY.

See this new exhibit at the Paint Creek Cider Mill June 1-30, 2026.



EVENTS & PROGRAMS

The public is welcome to our events, most are free. For more information, or to submit program ideas or speaker suggestions, email Colleen at thsbarkham@hotmail.com

March 21, Sat.

Workshop: Writing Your Memoir

Led by Gloria John, PhD.

\$10 non-members.

Time: 9:30 am – 11:30 am

Location: Paint Creek United Methodist Church, 4420 Collins Rd.

RSVP here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904094DAAAC28A75-62227997-oths>

April 1, Wed.

The Story of the Van Doran Coverlets

LaVere Webster will present his very rare Van Doran coverlets and the history of their weaving at Stoney Creek Village in the mid-1800's. 7:00 pm presentation, Rochester Mills Beer Company 5:30 pm private room dinner with separate checks.

May

Field Trip

Details to be posted on our Facebook site.

June 3, Wed.

The American Revolution: We the People

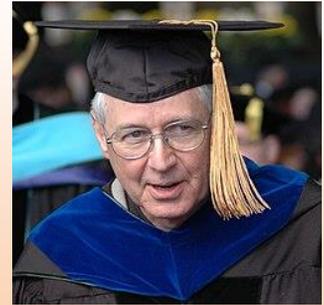
Presented by Robert Doran-Brockway, Project Director America250MI. 6:30 pm Potluck. 7:15 pm Presentation. Cranberry Lake Farm, Flumerfelt Barn.

Our programs are cancelled during severe weather. Become a member to receive updates.



“LET’S LEAVE SOME RUINS TO HELP US REMEMBER OUR PAST”

Dr. Richard Stamps, Oakland University Professor Emeritus, suggests that even though new, modern structures will continue to be built, often times at the location of a historic site, there still remains the opportunity to save something in which we can remember the past. As examples, he cites the rock wall on Rochester’s Main Street, the brick outline of the ice house at the Oakland History Center, and Baldwin Elementary School’s original two-story school facade. He understands the “need to make progress, move on, build new, more efficient buildings,” but asks “at what cost? In the process are we wiping out and forgetting the past and our history?”



OTHS BOARD MEMBERS

Anthony Kowalchick, President
Colleen Barkham, Co-VP & Program Chair
Alexis Pfarrer, Co-VP & Social Media Chair
Barbara Barber, Correspondence Secretary
Diana Borrusch, Director
Sue Fox, Treasurer
Nancy Kicinski, Director
Michelle Pfarrer, Recording Secretary
David Phillips, Director

LOCAL HISTORY – April 1st

LaVere Webster is well known in local historical society circles! Many might remember the 12 years of OTHS sponsored Appraisal Days at the Rochester Community House. LaVere was a key appraiser, with many areas of expertise. He counts as his avocations, museum curator and art conservator. In 2008, he started what is probably the most significant art project in our area—the restoration of the Marvin Beerbolm mural at the old Rochester High School. This Rochester themed mural was part of the Works Progress Administration started by President Franklin Roosevelt during the Great Depression. LaVere oversaw and with his team of volunteers completed the restoration in 2010.

HISTORICAL ARCHIVES

The OTHS historical archives collection is located on the upper floor of the Main House at Cranberry Lake Farm. Over the past several years, reference materials and artifacts have been cataloged. The archives are open to researchers most Wednesday afternoons. Many thanks to Sue Fox for all her efforts!

If you have historical photos, diaries, letters, or other artifacts reflective of the past we would love to hear from you. Even if you are not willing to donate them, please give us the opportunity to make a copy.

WRITE YOUR MEMOIR – March 21st

Gloria Nixon-John, PhD., has published essays, fiction, poetry, and pedagogical articles. She served as a director of the National Writing Project in Michigan, and she is a teacher consultant for Michigan State University’s Writing Project. In this workshop, Gloria will define the parameters and a variety of stylistic options used in memoirs. She will share her own writings and those of well-known memoirists. She will also share strategies regarding voice and craft and offer advice about revision. Isn’t it time you told your story?

SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATE

If you have not already checked out our social media sites, it's not too late! Alexis Pfarrer has posted some interesting historical stories. If you have an idea, story, or photo you would like to share, or have a topic request message Alexis. Although her PhD studies and teaching duties are keeping her busy she always has time for research. Many thanks to Alexis for all her efforts on our newsletters!



EXCLUSIVE SNEAK PREVIEW SOCIAL MEDIA POST

"GET UP EARLY IN THE MORNING, ALWAYS KEEP BUSY, BE OPTIMISTIC NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS."

Lorena Knowles Beebe, a long-time Oakland Township resident lived to be nearly 108—she was the oldest living person in Michigan. Born May 25, 1815, in Riga, Monroe County, New York, she was one of the eight children of Freeman and Aletha Knowles. She started school at six years of age, but since she had "weak eyes," she did not stay in school long. However, she did learn to spin. In 1836, she married Uriah Beebe, and in June 1845, they traveled to Michigan, first by ox teams to Buffalo, by steamer to Detroit, and then by horse to Oakland County. By 1857, Uriah Beebe owned 320 acres in Oakland Township, while Lorena's father, Freeman Knowles, had 167. The log house she lived in was made of slabs and had no flooring. There was a "chimney" of sorts made of sticks, and a fireplace with andirons and a crane and hook on which the family hung their kettles to cook. They climbed a ladder to go upstairs and for light there were tallow candles. She and her husband had six children, and after his death in 1863 she moved around some, eventually settling in Orion Township. On May 8, 1915, she reached "The Hundredth Milestone" and in honor of her 100th birthday, the Village of Orion proclaimed a civic holiday, all businesses were suspended, a big assembly was held, and all social, fraternal, and religious organizations were asked to partake in the event. The village was decorated and a program and dinner held at the M.E. Church was attended by 500 people. By 1920, at the age of 105, she was the oldest living woman in Michigan. After a brief illness, she died 16 days before her 108th birthday. Friends would remember her handmade quilts, the clean white apron she wore when visitors called, and her strong spirit. She is pictured here sitting upon a horse at age 98 ½.



Lorena (Knowles) Beebe, age 98 ½ years, Orion, MI
Source: Oakland County Pioneer Society Photo Album

Our OTHS Recording Secretary, Michelle Pfarrer, portrayed "grandma" Lorena Beebe and shared her remarkable story during Oakland County Historical Center's October 25, 2025, Haunted Mansion event.

Reference: The Oakland Gazette <https://www.ocphs.org/pdf/34-3-summer-2001/>

Join today to see more OT history on our Social Media Sites



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www.facebook.com/OTHSMI/

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COMING SOON... THE FARM IN BLOOM!

The apple trees at Cranberry Lake Farm will be in bloom from late April to early May.

The hollyhocks by the hen house will be in bloom late July through August.

Bring your friends and family!



NEW COLLECTION ITEMS DISPLAYED AT THE PCCM



The OTHS is exhibiting a fabulous collection of early 20th-century women's and men's fashion accessories at the Paint Creek Cider Mill. Featured among the collection are eleven ladies' hats from the 1940s-70s and one beaver top hat.

NEW COLLECTIONS ARRIVAL

We received a solid wood antique rocking chair complete with a pull out sewing drawer.



Thank you to all of our wonderful donors!

WELCOME NEW MEMBER

Allen Salyer

It's your memory, it's our history, it's worth preserving!

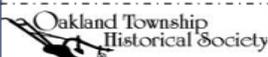


Do you have something to donate or a collection you would like to display? Reach out to our donations chair Diana Borrusch.



OTHS Membership

Help us continue to be a Society to be proud of. We welcome new members! Share the form below with a friend or neighbor.



Membership Application Form

Name _____
 Address _____
 City, State, Zip _____
 Phone _____ e-mail, _____

Membership Category:	Additional Donation:
Individual \$18 _____	\$ _____
Family \$25 _____	Total Enclosed _____
Patron \$50 _____	\$ _____
Business \$100 _____	New _____ Renewal _____

Make checks payable and mail with this form to:
 Treasurer, Oakland Township Historical Society
 384 Predmore Road, Oakland, MI 48363 (do not send cash)
 For more information contact Sue Fox at 248-342-7464 or e-mail othsmember@comcast.net

We need your help! Consider donating your memories, time, money, or skills to help us preserve our heritage. Do you have a story to share? Do you want to submit a written memoir to our archives or have us tape an interview with you? Do you have a barn more than 50 years old? Have you found any old arrowheads or other ancient artifacts? Do you want to help with the plant sale at Heritage Days, Flumerfelt Flea, Down on the Farm, restoration of Cranberry Lake Farm, or other fun things? Please indicate below. We will contact you!

YES! I have artifacts or historical photos, stories or other information YES! I would like to Volunteer with an event, committee, program, etc.
 The OTHS is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. All contributions and membership fees are tax deductible as provided by law.



Your Kroger purchases can help support the OTHS.
Sign up today and choose Oakland Township
Historical Society
<https://www.kroger.com/i/community/community-rewards>



We Love our Volunteers!

Are you interested in sharing your love of history, in supporting us by donating cash or articles, or volunteering your time? Our gardens are in need of care. Students and Scouts are welcome to put in community service hours.

There are multiple ways in which you could make a difference.



Only have an hour to spare?

Perhaps you would like to be a docent at one of our events. Or, perhaps, you would you like to be a speaker and share your historical knowledge? We especially appreciate help setting up chairs and cleaning up after programs and events.



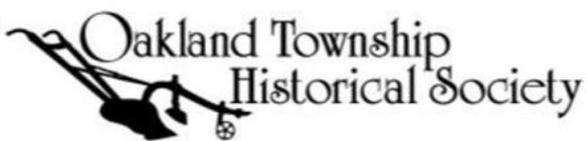
Discover a fantastic selection of items at the OTHS merchandise store including Ed Noble prints, Lyn Seiffert prints and note cards, *It's the Berries* recipe book, Carolyn Dulin ceramic art, and mill sack dish towels and aprons, to name a few. Contact Sue Fox. Visit our website to view Noble prints: <http://www.oaklandtownshiphistoricalsociety.org>



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

It's membership renewal time. If you are not sure of your status, reach out to Sue Fox by email at othsmember@comcast.net or call her at 248-693-9646. When sending in your dues, let her know if you have a phone number or home/email address change. Your ongoing membership directly supports the valuable services and programs we provide.

Your membership dues are more than a monetary contribution; they are an investment in our community and a legacy for those who follow us.



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