



Fall 2013

# History Matters

Greater West Bloomfield Historical Society  
Keego Harbor • Orchard Lake • Sylvan Lake • West Bloomfield



## Sylvan Lake Celebrates Dedication of Five Wayside Signs

*A new Wayside Exhibit sign marks the former location of the Sylvan Lake Inn, now the site of the Sylvan Lake Community Center.*



Representatives of the City of Sylvan Lake and the MotorCities Wayside Exhibit program announced the debut of five historical Wayside Exhibit signs in Sylvan Lake at the 48th Annual Sylvan Lake Garden Club Ice Cream Social on August 15.

Sylvan Lake Historian, Helen Jane Peters, and Eric Wiegand worked with MotorCities Director of Operations, Brian Yopp, and Nancy Thompson, from Oakland County Economic Development & Community Affairs, to develop the content for the signs.

“Eric and Helen Jane were great champions,” explained Thompson. “It’s great to see [the signs] finally in the ground. This marks the beginning of many more signs coming up in Oakland County.”

Posted throughout the city, the signs detail local stories that tie Sylvan Lake to the area’s automotive history. The topics of the five signs are:

- Sylvan Lake Inn (Sylvan Lake Community Center)
- Detroit Free Press Fresh Air Camp (Sylvan Lake Community Center)
- Detroit Interurban (intersection of Garland Street and Oakwood Street)
- Oakland County Boat Club (Ferndale Street)
- Ferndale Beach and Tower Beach (Ferndale Street)

The Wayside Exhibits are a project of the MotorCities National Heritage Area, which was created by Congress in 1998 “...to preserve the cultural and historic landscape associated with the automobile in Southeastern and Central Michigan.” GWBHS and area volunteers worked with representatives from MotorCities and local governments to design a total of 20 signs for Sylvan Lake, Keego Harbor and West Bloomfield. Crews are expected to install the remaining signs soon.

A report about the event by George Moore of Civic Center TV can be viewed online or on cable TV. Look for “Sylvan Lake Sign Dedication” on the On Demand page at [civiccenertv.com](http://civiccenertv.com), Comcast Channel 15 or AT&T U-verse Channel 99.



*Helen Jane Peters speaks about the Wayside Exhibits project.  
(l-r) Paul Anger – Detroit Free Press, Helen Jane Peters, Eric Wiegand,  
Brian Yopp – and Nancy Thompson*





## *From the Desk of President Gina Gregory...*

Lately I've been reflecting on how stories connect us in all of life. This is so true when looking at local history. Usually it's the shared stories that interest us most! During the winter, Exhibit Committee volunteers grouped the Orchard Lake Museum exhibit items to tell clearer stories. I expect when you visit the Museum you'll enjoy the changes as we've received wonderful feedback. We also wanted to share activities and stories to connect with the next generation. So now hands-on activities are available! (Read more about this in the article "Museum's New Exhibit Self-Tour Encourages Kids to 'Go Ahead!'")

What stories do you have to share about your local history? What's interesting about where you live? Ask that question of yourself and your neighbors, and you may be surprised how much there is to learn! That's what I found in my subdivision. To research this further, I came to the Orchard Lake Museum and was not disappointed. You may want to do the same. Indeed, that is how the recent Camps of West Bloomfield presentation and the "West Bloomfield Today" magazine article on the same topic came about – from folks learning about where they live and sharing their past experiences.

If you are interested in supporting our pursuit of information about local history, consider contacting GWBHS. We have been asked by the West Bloomfield School District to research and write about each school's history. So far, volunteers have spent hundreds of hours collecting photos and writing about schools through the 1930s (Peal of the Bell...History of the School System is available at [gwbhs.org](http://gwbhs.org)). We are looking for volunteers to carry this work through to the present. We also need volunteers to help with group programs, filing, and development/ financial health.

Finally, I invite you to enjoy the stories to be told at our exciting fall events as each has many to share. Take your pick!



*(L-R) Apple Island Dig Committee members, Rob Gregory, Gina Gregory and Carol Fink, with WBSD Director of Community Relations, Joey Spano, after the School Board granted approval to seek state and national historic site registration for Apple Island at its December 2012 meeting.*



### ***Thank You to Departing Board Member***

Thanks to Cara Kazanowski for many years of volunteer work and leadership. She served as Board Member, Vice President, History Matters Editor, Finance Committee Chairperson, Public Relations Chairperson and interim President (2012-13), and was a contributing writer for the Wayside sign exhibit project. She resigned as family responsibilities increased.

## *in the News*

### **40th Anniversary of GWBHS in 2014**

*GWBHS will celebrate its fortieth anniversary in 2014! We are gathering materials for an exhibit highlighting GWBHS past events and accomplishments. Do you have any event photos from when you were actively involved? If so, please send photos as 300 dpi scans to Gina Gregory at [gina@gwbhs.org](mailto:gina@gwbhs.org).*



## *Museum's New Exhibit Self-Tour Encourages Kids to 'Go Ahead!'*

Orchard Lake Museum, home to the collections of the GWBHS, is looking a little different these days.

The Exhibit Committee's recent rethinking of the exhibit space presents a series of new exhibits, including First People, Farming, Apple Island, Resorts to Residents, Fashions and Transportation. Two rotating exhibits, Innovators and a guest exhibit, will regularly introduce fresh stories and artifacts. The Communities Room features exhibits about the cities of Keego Harbor, Orchard Lake Village and Sylvan Lake. Self-Tour handouts guide visitors during their visit.

GWBHS members Jim and Gwynne Cherfoli volunteered as docents during museum open houses in July and August. "Almost every visitor mentioned that they would return," said Gwynne Cherfoli. "Many said that they had been driving by the museum forever and were so glad they finally stopped in. As docents, it makes us proud to be a part of such a dynamic museum collection."

Another big change at the museum is the addition of the kid-friendly "Go Ahead!" program. Brightly colored signs at many of the exhibits encourage visitors of all ages to "go ahead" and turn an apple press, touch artifacts or try on vintage fashions.

"We wanted to use a more interactive approach with the exhibits," said Exhibit Committee Co-Chair, Sue Williams. "Engaging visitors, especially children, with a message of 'it's OK to go ahead and touch and interact with this' gives permission to do more than just look at artifacts. It invites the visitor to become part of the exhibit. The reaction has been fantastic."

Visit the museum to view new displays in the Communities Room. In January, Innovators will feature George Lawton and curling memorabilia from the 1932 Winter Olympic Games.



*Joanna and Jaynie Halterman try out vintage hats and tools from the Wilkins gas pump.*



*Sisters Julia (9), Joanna (7) and Jaynie (7) Halterman, of Spring Hill, Tennessee (grandchildren of Pete & Helen Jane Peters) take the old wagon for a ride.*



*Julia, Joanna and Jaynie Halterman try on the vintage fire hats.*



## *‘Mary and Her Little Lamb’ Restoration Begins*

Detroit artist Roy C. Gamble’s 1928 painting “Mary and Her Little Lamb” was removed from the Orchard Lake Museum on July 10 to begin its restoration. The painting has been on display at the Museum since 1991, when it was retrieved from a plaster wall of the kindergarten classroom at Sylvan Lake’s Daniel Whitfield School. GWBHS hired the Detroit Institute of Arts’ Conservator of Paintings, Alfred Ackerman, to perform the restoration.

Helen Jane Peters of the Greater West Bloomfield Historical Society coordinated the project. “There is oil paint under the plaster that needs to be removed. Mr. Ackerman is scraping by hand and also using a solvent gel, which softens the oil paint and the plaster. After the back is clean, he will repair the tears and the front of the painting.”

Generous contributions from the community so far were enough to begin the restoration, but more funds will be needed to complete the project. Tax-deductible donations may be sent to GWBHS, designated for the “Mary Restoration Fund.”

The restoration work is expected to be completed later this fall. Once the painting is framed, it will hang in the lobby of the Sylvan Lake City Hall.

*Alfred Ackerman scrapes old paint and plaster from the back of the painting.*



*Emmendorf House pre-1900*

### **2014 Historic Homes Tour**

*Save the date! For the first time in 28 years, GWBHS will host a Historic Homes Tour! Living with History: Historic Homes Tour of Greater West Bloomfield will take place Saturday, June 21, 2014, from 10 am – 4 pm. Watch for more details to come about this self-guided tour of historic homes in greater West Bloomfield.*



*Emmendorf House circa 2011*

### **Volunteer Planning Meeting for Historic Homes Tour**

*If you are interested in volunteering to help with the Historic Homes Tour, please attend this upcoming meeting to explore how you can support and plan this event! Wednesday, September 25, 2013 7:00 p.m. Orchard Lake Museum, 3951 Orchard Lake Road. If you are unable to attend but would still like to be involved, call Judy at 248.808.0893.*



## *Digging for History at Annual Apple Island Tours*

The 2013 Apple Island Tours (May 18-19) brought visitors from across the state to experience local history and some beautiful weather on this little island at the center of Orchard Lake. This annual opportunity to visit the island always attracts a crowd and this year was no exception. Over 400 people of all ages visited the Orchard Lake Museum and then boarded a boat to the island.

A team of volunteers, led by coordinators, Mikki Chase and Judy Kerr, guided visitors throughout the event, managing logistics and sharing stories of local history along the way.

A special addition in 2013 was the presence of an archaeological team from Western Michigan University. Funded by a St. Francis Foundation of Michigan grant, the work is part of an effort to secure Michigan State Historic Site and National Register of Historic Places designations for Apple Island. In addition to the usual tour activities, this year's guests enjoyed interacting with the archaeologists at work. More information about what was learned can be found on the Facebook page Apple Island Archaeology Project.

Save the date for the 2014 Apple Island Tours on May 17-18.

### **Thank You to GWBHS Volunteers!**

*GWBHS counts on the hard work of many dedicated volunteers throughout the year. Thank you to everyone who helped make these recent events successful!*

*Apple Island Tours: Betty and Dave Bradbury, Steve Briggs, Mikki Chase, Angela Cini, Hannah Dagg, Carol Fink, Melissa Gilbert, Kim and Brian Granger, Gina and Rob Gregory, Barbara Hoffmann, Judy and Alan Kerr, Linda Kidd, Glen King, MaryAnn Lisac, Helen McAllister, Bill McIsaac, Jerry McManus, Paul Mellerowicz, Jeanne and Merrill Miller, Marge and Don Newell, Pete and Helen Jane Peters, Cindy Pryda, Molly Rozycki, Diane Santia, Andrea Soutlanian, Elinor Sturm, Eric Wiegand, Sue Williams. Thanks for community support from Orchard Lake Village Department of Public Works, St. Mary's Preparatory, West Bloomfield School District (owner of the Marjorie Ward Strong Woodland Nature Sanctuary, formal name of Apple Island) and West Bloomfield Durham School Services.*

*Archaeological Dig Dinners: Barb Krause, Carole Hovsepian, Gina Gregory, Jeanne Miller, Helen Jane Peters, Sue Williams. Thanks to Gino Santia for the dinner.*

*National Trail Day Walk: Betty and Dave Bradbury, Judy and Alan Kerr*

### **2013 Apple Island Tour Sponsors**

*Thank you to members of the community who helped sponsor the 2013 Apple Island Tours!*

- *Anonymous, West Bloomfield - \$150*
- *Anonymous, Orchard Lake - \$150*
- *Asha and Maden Gupta, Orchard Lake - \$150*
- *Lee Jones, Orchard Lake - \$50*
- *Caryn Jensen, Legacy Realty Group - \$50*



*Wilkins relatives visit the Orchard Lake Museum exhibit about their family during the Apple Island Tours.*



*Students from Western Michigan University excavate a pit at the site of the Devendorf House on Apple Island.*



Greater West Bloomfield Historical Society  
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**Membership Application**

Greater West Bloomfield Historical Society

Individual	\$20	Family	\$40
Senior Indiv.	\$15	Senior Couple	\$30
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Lifetime	\$600	Donation	\$___

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***Please contact me to volunteer.*** \_\_\_\_\_

Membership year is January 1 to December 31.

Please make checks payable to GWBHS.  
 Mail to GWBHS: 3951 Orchard Lake Road  
 Orchard Lake MI 48323

Through the West Bloomfield Library website  
 view a digital collection of more than  
 1600 historical photographs from GWBHS.  
 Go to [www.westbloomfieldlibrary.org](http://www.westbloomfieldlibrary.org),  
 click “eLibrary” and then “Digital Collections.”



**GWBHS Mission Statement**

*The Greater West Bloomfield Historical Society is a non-profit organization that collects, preserves, researches and stimulates public interest in the history of West Bloomfield Township and the cities of Keego Harbor, Orchard Lake Village and Sylvan Lake.*

