

Pioneer Place Preserver

The Annual Newsletter of the
Marilla Historical Society

Spring 2025

Marillahistory.org

9991 Marilla Road, Copemish, MI 49625



Greetings from Marilla Historical Society!

If you are receiving this newsletter for the first time, welcome! The Marilla Museum and Pioneer Place exists to preserve and share the fascinating history of Marilla, Michigan. We are a small non-profit organization, staffed by volunteers and supported entirely by donations.

**“Be the change you wish
to see in the world.” -Mahatma Gandhi**

2024 was a year of changes for the Marilla Historical Society. Most significant among these changes was the retirement of two people who live the quote of Gandhi every day and have been indispensable to the Marilla Museum and Pioneer Place for more than 25 of its 44 years. In June, Jan and Bob Thomas stepped down from their positions as Museum Director and MHS Board President respectively. Jan has recently written, “The museum work has been a passion for both of us! It has been a pleasure to see the museum grow to include 4 historic buildings.” Jan’s dedication to MHS continues through her ongoing work as Archivist.

“There is no doubt that the Marilla Museum & Pioneer Place would not be in the great shape that it is in today without the tireless energy and dedication of Jan & Bob,” said incoming MHS Board President Douglas Glick. “We encourage others to reach out to Bob & Jan to thank them directly too.”



At an event for the Manistee County Arts & Cultural Alliance on February 1, 2025, Bob and Jan were recognized by the MHS board and other local museum peers from the area with a set of wind chimes and a plaque that reads:

Proclamation

Whereas, volunteer community service is an integral part of the operation and spirit of the Marilla Historical Society; and

Whereas, we honor those who give generously of their time and talent to improve their communities; and

Whereas, Janice and Robert Thomas are crucially important people to the fabric of Marilla Township and the Marilla Historical Society; and

Whereas, the Marilla Museum & Pioneer Place is a model small museum and source of pride for Marilla Township, largely due to their work; and

Whereas, Janice and Robert Thomas have given years of service to the promotion of the history of our Township through dedication, research, organization, great meals and events, and intelligent and kind service;

Now, therefore, We, the members of The Marilla Historical Society Board of Trustees, in appreciation of the many years of service of Janice and Robert Thomas, desire that there should be a permanent record of your generosity. We thank you!

If you would like to reach out to Jan & Bob directly to thank them for their tireless commitment, you may send cards to the MHS or contact them via email at: janbobthomas2021@gmail.com

Donations to the MHS made in honor of Jan & Bob are deeply appreciated and we will be sure to notify them of your gift.

2025 Events Calendar

“Souper” Fridays

Two Fridays in April the MHS will host a gather with **homemade** soup, salad, bread and dessert. Our goal is to connect people in the community, to raise some funds for the MHS mission and have a little Marilla history as a side dish. Please join us at the Marilla Township Hall at 9991 Marilla Road from 5-7 p.m. Suggested free will donation minimum is \$15.00. Dates for 2025 are April 11 & 25.

Explore Local History

Open hours begin **May 3, 2025, 1-4 p.m.** and run through October 25th.

[Year-round Hours: Tuesdays 1-4]



We all know bees are essential to human survival. Worker bees are needed to keep the MHS mission alive too. Wish to become part of the buzz? Please reach out to connect with any board member to see how you can pursue your passion of giving back to our wonderful community. See contact info on the last page.

-Douglas A. Glick, MHS Board President

What is Planned Giving?

When you make a memorial gift in your will or living trust to the Marilla Historical Society, you help ensure the Museum will be here for the next generation. The attorney handling the writing of your will can make this happen. If you have questions about wishing to include MHS as a part of your legacy, please contact Douglas Glick, MHS Board President at 757.813.0311 or douglasglick@icloud.com

What is Memorial Giving?

When someone you love passes away, you may consider naming the Marilla Historical Society as a memorial fund recipient. Their name will be engraved on the brass plaque in the museum to forever recognize gifts in honor of your loved one's life.

2025 Membership

Become a member of the Marilla Historical Society! You will be actively preserving the wonderful heritage of Marilla Township. If you are a returning member, please consider increasing your membership level. Sadly, many long-time supporters pass away each year. New members are always welcome! **It's easy to become a member or renew at marillahistory.org/membership.**

What's in Store!

Have you visited our gift store, either in person or online (marillahistory.org/shop)? In addition to books and art, new items were just added! Aprons (\$25) and tote bags (\$20) featuring Evelyn Ritchie botanical prints make amazing gift for friends and family!



Come explore the beautiful array of cards (\$5.50/each or 2 for \$10) now available, featuring photos of local gardens and still-lives of historic artifacts on lovely card stock. These custom images are available for in-person purchase only, at the Marilia Museum. Send your loved one a set as a gift or write them a note letting them know you thought of them and support our museum at the same time!

President's Report:

“Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.”

-Dr. Syed Muhammad Zeeshan Hussain Almashhadi

I love this quote from Dr. Almashhadi because it incorporates what each of us are capable of in making our small slice of the world a better place. Preserving local history can be a path to understanding where we've been, assessing where we are now and dreaming of where we might like to be in the future. With the changes in the MHS organizational leadership, there are always new opportunities for growth. How will you be part of helping preserve local history? Will you increase your membership amount? Will you volunteer your special skills and talents as a docent, an event volunteer or as a board member? Will you come to events or spread the word to your descendants about why the Marilla Historical Society means enough to you to be getting this newsletter, perhaps even including the MHS in planned giving for your estate plans? Will you purchase items from our terrific museum gift store in person or online?

We all must do our part to honor those on whose shoulders we stand to keep the stories of our beloved community alive. We have one board vacancy for someone to step up to leadership. We have needs in the areas of photography and grant writing and can always use helping hands on work “bees” in which we tackle larger projects. Tell us if you love to garden and/or cook as we can use your gifts there as well.



New on the Quilt Trail

Have you been on the quilt trail yet? The Arts & Cultural Alliance encourages you to explore the trail by taking a self-guided tour to points of interest in local communities. For the map online see:

<https://www.allartsmanistee.com/quilt-trail>

Now, in addition to the quilt block on the MHS Pioneer Barn and the Church of the Brethren quilt block, both on Marilla Road, another quilt block can be seen at Lynda & Allen O'Shea's home on Wiitala Farm Road in Marilla.

The plaque commemorating the quilt block reads:

"In recognition of the Finnish family emigrating to Marilla, the O'Shea Family selected the Bear Claw quilt block pattern for their barn, built in 1914. The brown bear is the national animal of Finland and is featured prominently in Finnish mythology. The Finnish flag in the center is surrounded by the colors of the O'Shea family crest. The homestead appears in the 1896 Plat Book naming Fred Holm as the original homesteader. The Wiitala family arrived in 1905, raised 15 children, and maintained a very successful dairy farm for many years. The O'Shea family purchased the property in 1975.

"Our lives are like quilts – bits and pieces, joy and sorrow stitched with love." -Unknown

What's in Our Budget?

Projected Income Sources 2025	
Open Hours	\$350
Membership Dues and Donations	\$3,500
Events and Fundraising	\$1,200
Book Sales	\$500
Other Sale Items (prints, bags, etc.)	\$200
Total	\$5,750
Projected Expenses 2025	
Supplies – General	\$500
Supplies – Office/Archival	\$500
Maintenance and Repairs	\$1,500
Groundskeeping	\$100
Cleaning	\$2,500
Custom Hire (musicians, speakers fees, etc.)	\$500
Education/Workshops	\$350
Printing Costs	\$500
Events	\$500
Arts & Culture Alliance of Manistee Dues	\$50
Annual Licensing Fees	\$20
Michigan Historical Society Dues	\$50
Lease with Township	\$10
Insurance	\$410
PO Box	\$60
Website/Collections Management Subscription	\$450
Total	\$8,000

History Lesson 2025

(From the Jan Thomas book, Marilla: The Woods, The Farms, The People available in our [gift store](#).)



"Marilla Township residents have cultivated bees for many years. An early 1900 photo in the Marilla Museum archives shows Clyde Morris with his special bee keepers hat indicating that the Morris family was engaged in harvesting honey for family use and perhaps sold or traded to nearby neighbors or grocery stores as well. Sylvester Cheesbro's family were honey producers. The Cudney family continued with that tradition on the same property on Yates Road for many years. They placed hives in other farm properties and the bees were counted on for pollinating blossoms to ensure crop development. People who raise bees find its occupation to be interesting, absorbing and satisfying."

Most recently, Bruce and Terry Bahr were producing honey on their farm in Marilla Township. They sold locally and, because of their farm's proximity with the Manistee National Forest, they have contended with local bears (not Bahrs!) along with the occasional bee sting!

Bees are essential to crops and, therefore humans and animals that depend on plants. This year, you can do your part by planting a local bee garden. Daisies, coneflowers, phlox and Joe Pye Weed might just do!

Marilla Historical Society Board

Douglas A. Glick, President

Lynda O'Shea Vice President & Clerk

Alissa Aparicio, Treasurer

Maureen Carlson, Trustee

TJ Howes, Trustee

Susan Vegter, Trustee

Archivist, Jan Thomas

Meet the Board: Bios

Douglas A. Glick has been on the MHS board since relocating to Marilla in 2017. No stranger to Marilla, since his great grandparents, Rachel and Hezekiah Grossnickle came to Marilla to settle in 1903. Douglas recalls coming to "the farm" to visit his grandparents, Esther and Sharon Grossnickle as a youngster and he has always loved this place for its beauty and tranquility. Moving to Marilla in 2017 and renovating his grandparent's farmhouse to live in was a passion project and he is excited about all the possibilities ahead for the Marilla Historical Society in the future. Outside of his volunteer work, Douglas is a clinical social worker with a private therapy practice in Traverse City. He has been in the human services field for 33 years and was most recently Supervisor for Marilla Township from June of 2020 to November of 2024. Special focus for Douglas is the archiving of the MHS collection through a new museum software that will take a great deal of time to catalog in the coming years.

Lynda O'Shea has been on the MHS Board since 2022. She and her husband have lived in Marilla Township for almost 50 years and were Charter Members of the Marilla Historical Society. They live in what was once the historic Wiitala farm. Lynda enjoys flower gardening (and her gardens are remarkable), knitting, sewing, travel, and cooking (her consummate skills can be sampled at many MHS events, such as Souper Fridays). She enjoys working with her husband and two sons in their business at CBS Solar in Copemish. Her involvement with MHS stems from her desire to be more involved in her local community.

Alissa Aparicio has served as treasurer on the MHS board since 2021 and has been a resident of Manistee County since 2013. Her roots run deep in Marilla as she grew up spending many of her weekends and holidays at the dead end of 9 Mile Road. Her great grandparents were Leo & Iva (Grossnickle) Bahr. Her great aunt was Grace Fisk, a founding member of the Historical Society and it's first Treasurer. Outside of her volunteer work, Alissa enjoys reading, music, creating mixed media art and attending renaissance festivals. She will be teaching art this fall and enjoys being a caretaker of her family's history.

Maureen Carlson joined the Marilla Historical Society (MHS) Board in June 2024. She and her husband retired and moved to Marilla Township in 2022 after admiring the area for many years. Her background in marketing along with a fascination with local history drew her to MHS, first as a volunteer with projects and events, and now as a Trustee. "The people involved in the preservation of the Pioneer Buildings and the thoughtful displays of artifacts from the past are what makes volunteering here so wonderful" she commented. Maureen has found her niche by helping to manage the Museum's Facebook page, website, and outreach efforts. If you would like to receive an email regarding upcoming events at the Museum, send her a quick note at marillamuseum@gmail.com or follow our Facebook page at facebook.com/marillahistory.

Terry (T.J.) Howes joined the MHS board in fall of 2024 and is currently building a permanent residence on Bigge Road adjacent to the historic Howes family farm. Terry spent summers working between the Howes farm in Marilla and the Lamont farm in Pleasanton Township. Terry worked in the Environmental/Hazardous Waste field for several decades and plans to return to said career after completion of his residence. Terry is excited for the growth of the MHS and is glad to be part of it.

Susan Vegter and her husband Steve have been part/full time residents of Marilla Township for more than 19 years, purchasing the old Barnes property in 2005 and building a summer house there in 2015. They moved to the Marilla Township area full time in 2022, and Susan joined the Marilla Historical Society Board in 2024. After a long career in Information Technology, she was looking for ways to become more involved in local events and activities. She is an avid weaver and spinner and is on the Board of the Kaleva Art Museum as well as other Fiber Arts venues. As a life-long-learner she is particularly interested in the families and history of the Marilla area. She and Steve are supporting the efforts to catalog the entire inventory of the MHS Museum & Pioneer Place collection, and she is looking into repairing the large weaving loom located in the Pioneer House.

How to Contact Marilla Historical Society

- ◇ **Website:** Marillahistory.org
- ◇ **Email:** marillamuseum@gmail.com
- ◇ **Phone:** 231-379-0040
- ◇ **Physical Address:**
9991 Marilla Road, Copemish, MI 49625
- ◇ **Mailing Address:**
PO BOX 234, Kaleva, MI 49645

Thank you!

Your interest in and support of Marilla Historical Society is invaluable. Thank you for helping to keep history alive in your community!