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Canton Historical Society
(Michigan)

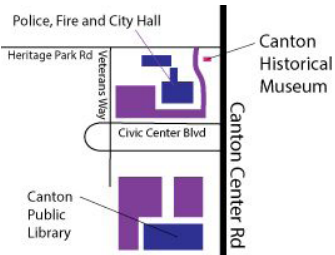
MUSEUM HOURS

CLOSED FOR THE SEASON
REOPENING MAY 2024



VISIT THE MUSEUM

1022 Canton Center Rd.
Canton, MI 48188



The Canton Historical Society would like to thank all of the dedicated members who continue to show interest in the museum's education and preservation efforts. We appreciate your ongoing support!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kim Mabie *President*
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Heather Piegza *Secretary*
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David Curtis
Evan Hall
Karen Krepps
Branden McEuen
Max Rumbaugh

CANTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Est. 1834

Spring 2024 · Edition CXX

Canton, Michigan

THE STORY OF THE POLE BARN AT THE BARTLETT/TRAVIS PRESERVATION PARK SITE

by Dave Curtis

In 1975, a small group of Canton residents began meeting with the intent to form a Historical Society. Within two years the Society had been formally established with the intent to collect, preserve, and share information about the history of Canton. After its establishment, Roy Schultz and others went around and asked Canton farmers to donate old used farm equipment to the Society. When they were unable to obtain certain implements they felt represented farming in Canton they attended farm auctions and purchased various pieces of equipment.

These pieces were displayed on the south side of the museum on Canton Center Road. As the pieces sat outside there was concern about protecting the equipment.

FIRST STRUCTURE BUILT TO PROTECT FARM EQUIPMENT

In March 1984 Historical Society President Bart Berg appeared before the Township Planning Commission to reach an agreement on building a shelter on the southwest corner of the museum to store farm equipment. The estimated cost of this project was \$9,000.

The CHS Board minutes of June 30, 1984 show a motion was made to have Bill Tesen, Bart Berg, and Roy Schultz use their best judgment and get the protective structure built. Society member and architect Tivador Balogh designed a structure for the society.



Later board minutes of 1984 state: "Shelter to house the Society's old horse drawn implement display was completed to be soon filled with the story of our past." On June 24, 1985 The Canton Township Board of Trustees resolved to name the equipment shelter on the grounds of the Historical Museum in the memory of Hagbard (Bart) Berg.

(story continued in next newsletter!)

WHO IS THE MYSTERY DONOR?

We are looking for the donors of some farm equipment that was left at the Pole Barn this spring. If you are the one who donated the plow and rake, please let us know so we can properly record and catalog the donation and display the items. Thank you!



VISIT TO THE SITE OF A FORMER HOMESTEAD

by Kathy Martin

In 2014, Kathleen Shepherd Sleek wrote a book entitled *Ghost by the Side of the Road: The Legacy* about her experiences growing up in a farmhouse (from 1960-1972) on 5903 Canton Center Road. Kathleen included a detailed history of the previous occupants of the house and included many photos of these occupants and the site. The farm was in existence between 1831 and 1973, when the farmhouse was demolished and the land was abandoned.

On Thursday, March 28, 2024, Kathleen and her husband Mike took CHS members Evan Hall & Kathy Martin and two Township employees with video equipment and a drone to the undeveloped site where the house and outbuildings had stood.

Not much of what had once been a vibrant homestead—born in the early 1840s—remained. What had once been a farmhouse (built in 1876), barn, outbuildings and gardens is today an overgrown tangle of branches from smaller trees, tree roots, and a ground cover of myrtle.



Mike Sleek holds a wooden post from a fence that was in the property.



Foundation for ice house.

There is cast-off debris, much of it from the neighboring oil change company which stands where the barn once was located.

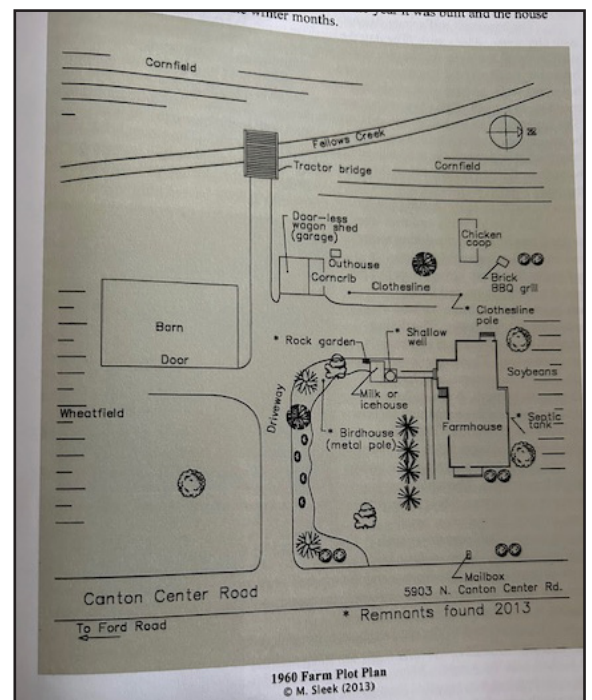
The site is one of only a few along busy Canton Center Road which remain undeveloped.

The group did find a few remnants of the farm: the concrete foundation for the milk/ice house, a few rocks from the adjoining rock garden, a post from a fence, a few bricks from what had been a mid century barbecue grill. The house had been leveled and there was not even an indentation where the basement would have been. Makeshift sandstone picket grave markers were also not discernible. It is believed these were baby graves from one of the early families on the site, possibly the babies of Benjamin and Arline Conner during the 1870s. Kathleen spoke of several other family memories & stories passed down from earlier generations of residents. It is hoped that in the near future, a more in-depth interview with Kathleen and her husband can take place.

Copies of Kathleen's book are available for sale through the Canton Historical Society.



Kathleen Sleek on the site of property her family lived in between 1960 and 1972.



Plan of property where Kathleen grew up.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES WITH CHS

by Max Rumbaugh

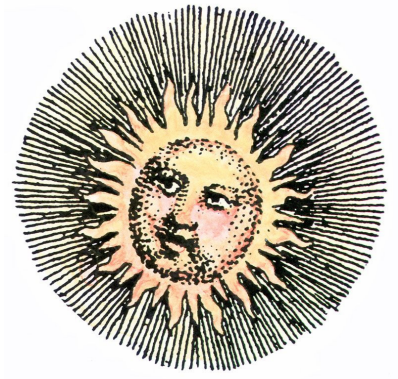
The days are getting longer, and the afternoons are getting warmer. These are signs that I love. They make me think of spending more time outdoors and enjoying nature with sports, hiking, bird watching, and spending weekends enjoying the sun.

The changes also remind me of all of the history and nature in the Canton area. We have so much history in this area. If you read our newsletter, you have seen a few of the unbelievable things that have occurred in the Canton area in the past. We recently moved to the Canton area and am getting to know all of the wonderful places and stories of the area. It is truly amazing what I have learned in just the short time here. That is why I wanted to get involved in the Canton Historical Society. I want to do my part to help preserve this history.

I am also starting to see so many activities to do during the summer. The calendar is starting to fill up. Just from the Canton Historical Society, we have so many activities. We have just held our **Easter Egg Painting** and everyone had a great time. Also, we have the **Game Night on May 15**. Soon, the Bartlett-Travis House on Ridge Road will open for **tours** with improvements and updates. We are excited for you to see all of them. Then, we have the **Canton Historical Museum** on North Canton Center Road to see many of the artifacts of the area. Next, we have **tours at the Farm Museum** in Preservation Park. All of these and we are currently working on some additional activities for the area such as lectures, more game nights, and craft activities throughout the summer.

We are excited for all of these activities for Canton. Just as a reminder, we are a non-profit organization that is here for you. *We cannot do any of these without help from you and our volunteers.* All we ask is that you become a member of the Canton Historical Society, make a donation, and/or volunteer your time, so that we can continue these activities and to be able to provide the Canton area with the education of the history in this beautiful and amazing area.

We look forward to hearing from you and hopefully seeing you at some of our activities this summer. Enjoy the sunshine and warm weather!



FROM THE NEW CHS PRESIDENT

First, I want to thank all our resolute volunteers and Board members that have donated so much time and energy to CHS over the years. Some members have been volunteering for over five decades and others less than five months. The countless hours they put in towards keeping our organization up and running is incredible. They are the custodians of documents and collections, both past and present, that make it possible for CHS to preserve and promote the history.

Second, I would like to thank all the members that have stepped forward in the last month to offer their services as museum docents. We continue to need volunteers; however, I am heartened by the positive response we have received from our call for assistance. I hope that more members and others in our community will consider offer their time and services as well. We can't do it without your support.

Third, I want to thank the Canton Public Library and Canton Leisure Services for including us in their events and their willingness to collaborate with CHS to promote and preserve Canton's history. We are honored to work with these establishments to serve our residents.

Lastly, I thank Canton Township Board Members and the department staff that have opened their doors to discuss the future of Canton's historical sites, make critical repairs to buildings, and consider our future needs. While we take care of the items in the museums and present them to the public, they take care of the physical sites, making sure they remain structurally sound to ensure they will be here for coming generations.

While we are the keepers of Canton's past, the real history is you. We hope you will continue to join in the journey.

Kimberly Mabie, CHS Board President

GETTING TO KNOW THE CANTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Some of our newer members may not be familiar with the Canton Historical Society so we would like to share our overall mission and goals in this newsletter and also in future editions.

We strive to preserve Canton's history and cultural heritage through community education, activities, and cultural events. We value our historic buildings and sites, but we also represent the people who have lived and continue to live in our community. We aspire to forge strong partnerships with diverse groups as means to engage the community in our shared history.

It's often thought that Canton Township doesn't have much "history" or that it's only about the pioneer settlers of the area. However, our history encompasses a wide range of inhabitants. There is a lot of history here and we're still making it. You don't have to grow up in Canton to have history here.

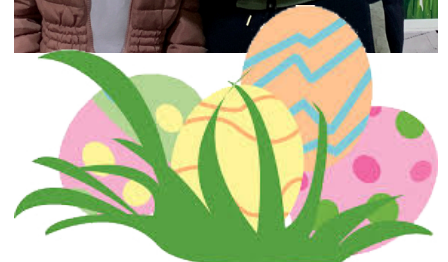


Everyone that has visited or lived in Canton for any length of time has history here, including you. Please consider joining the CHS and help us create and preserve our shared history while keeping our community vibrant and prosperous. To join CHS please fill out the form on the bottom of page 5 or contact us at 734-391-9352 or info@cantonhistoricalsocietymi.org.

EGG-TRA SPECIAL PAINTING EVENT

by Kathy Martin

Saturday, March 23, 2024 was a cold & blustery day with the remnants of a recent spring snow storm on the ground. The outside chill permeated inside the poll barn at Preservation Park, but the inside atmosphere was cozy. A small group of guests arrived and were ready to employ their painting skills on cardboard or wooden eggs. Children and their families were able to choose from a wide selection of paint colors and let their imaginations flourish. There were several inside games, snacks and a spring backdrop to create a photo memory of the afternoon. Guests had an enjoyable spring experience and several mentioned a hope to return for next year's event. We look forward to continuing to offer these fun and festive community events, as well as adding new events to the calendar as well!



BECOME A CHS DONOR!

Your donations can help the work of the Canton Historical Society to grow. We rely on both artifact and monetary donations to continue our work documenting and sharing the rich history of our community!

Donor Levels

The Cherry Hill: \$1000-\$500

The Sheldon: \$499-\$250

The Denton: \$249-\$100

For monetary donations, please email info@cantonhistoricalsocietymi.org or send to P.O. Box 87362, Canton MI 48187.

For history (object) donations, please contact martinrws@gmail.com.

Thank you!



MEMORIALS

Our condolences go out to the family and friends of **Louis Fischer**

The Canton Historical Society is sorry to hear about the death of long time member Louis James Fischer who passed away peacefully on February 6, 2024 in Canton. Born on September 26, 1938 in Ann Arbor, Louis served his country as a Corporal in the Marine Corps from October 1956 to October 1958. He was a man of high integrity.



Louis descends from German blacksmith Michael Fischer who settled in Canton at Sheldon Corners in 1847. It is unusual for a family line to remain in the same area for so long. Mr. Fischer was very active with the small engine club and held yearly events at his home. Louis and wife Mabel participated in several events at Preservation Park, showcasing a variety of farming skills including grinding dry corn into cornmeal. Pictured above is Louis in one of his antique tractors. He will be greatly missed!

Ready to join the Canton Historical Society?

We'd love to have you!

Please indicate the level of membership desired and send in this form with payment.

☐ Individual - \$15

☐ Family - \$18

☐ Student - \$5

☐ Patron - \$50

☐ Business - \$75

☐ Sponsor - \$200

☐ Donation - \$_____

☐ Renewal - \$_____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

☐ Yes, I am interested in volunteering with the Canton Historical Society. Please contact me about upcoming/ongoing opportunities.

Please mail completed form to: Canton Historical Society, PO Box 87362, Canton MI 48187