



The Herstory Chronicles

Newsletter of the Women's History Project of Northwest Michigan

September 2011

Join our discussion

This informal book discussion group meets at noon on the last Friday of January, April, and October. The July discussion will be on the third Friday. Book selections alternate between fiction and non-fiction.

Everyone is welcome.

Please call Ann Swaney at 995-1065 for more information.

Selections for the coming year are:

- **October 25.** *A Short History of Women* by Kate Walbert. The novel takes in historical events from the social upheaval of pre-World War I in Britain to VJ day in New York City. It is available in paperback at Horizon Books and all local libraries.
- **January 27.** *A Stronger Kinship: One Town's Extraordinary Story of Hope and Kinship* by Anna-Lisa Cox. In the heartland of the United States 150 years ago, where racism and hatred were common, a community decided there could be a different America. Here

(See Book Discussion on p. 4)

Don't miss the Annual Meeting

Please join us for our **Annual Meeting and Luncheon**, which will be held at the History Center of Traverse City on **Saturday, October 22, from 11:30 AM to 2:00 PM.**

Anne-Marie Oomen will be the keynote speaker. Oomen is well known in our region as a passionate poet, playwright, memoirist, and speaker. Her topic will be "**Making Your American Map: How to Travel with All the Grandmothers Looking On.**" She will have her books available for sale after the talk.



Oomen is author of two memoirs and a full-length collection of poetry. She has written and produced seven plays. She is faculty editor for the *Interlochen Review*, founding editor of *Dunes Review*, and former president of Michigan Writers, Inc. She serves as instructor of creative writing at Interlochen Arts Academy and at the Solstice MFA at Pine Manor College.

The WHP Annual Meeting will begin with a delicious luncheon, followed by a short business meeting and our special keynote speaker.

So, save the date: **Saturday, October 22.** More information and the reservation form are on the insert.

New faces at the History Center

The History Center of Traverse City welcomed **Bill Kennis** as its new executive director in July 2011. Bill has experience in the non-profit sector as well as being a former business owner.

Bill earned a Master of Business Administration degree from Michigan State University.

The Center also welcomed **Maddie Buteyn**, who holds a Bachelor of Science degree in History and Museum Studies from Beloit College. Her responsibilities include museum displays and special events.

President's Corner—

See you at the Annual Meeting!

by Kathi Houston, president

Thanks for your interest and dedication to this organization! I look forward to greeting each and every one of you in October at our Annual Meeting this year.

We will have a chance to hear about the progress of the support for the History Center, our own Oral History Project, the works of Anne-Marie Oomen, and our book group.

Look elsewhere in this newsletter for details and registration information.

See you in October!



WHPNM Mission

To preserve and recognize the contributions of women to their families and communities in northwest lower Michigan.

Oral History: Audrey M. Nieuwkoop

Interviewed by Etta Rajkovic and Sandy Seppala on April 1, 2011, at Audrey's home in Manton, Michigan.

Audrey was born June 17, 1915, in Manton, Michigan, to Thomas and Hattie MacKenzie Baynton. Her birth mother died in the influenza epidemic of 1918. Her father was not in good health and was unable to care for his eight children. As was usual at the time, the community came to their aid. A telephone call was made to (John) Whitney and Ella Seaman Hubbell asking if “they would take in a little girl” and that’s how she came to live with the Hubbells, who subsequently adopted her. This was a far cry from later “red tape” that would be associated with adoption.

The Hubbells were old enough to be Audrey’s grandparents: Whitney was 52 and Ella 46, and their daughter was married and had a daughter. Despite their age, Audrey said that they did everything young parents would do. She said, “When I was little we took a horse and sleigh to go the three miles to town so I could attend basketball games and other activities. They attended everything I was a part of. We lived on a farm. On the farm, we had a windmill that pumped water into a tank in the house. The toilet... well, that was a few steps behind the house.

“At night we used ‘other facilities’... a chamber pot, which was then emptied in the morning. We didn’t have indoor plumbing until 1940. Electricity didn’t come to the farm until 1947.

“When I was about 10 years old, I took the train by myself from Manton to Traverse City to visit family, and then returned home. I had to change trains in Walton Junction as the train from Manton continued to Petoskey and the train to Traverse City was on a spur. You couldn’t let a kid do that now. My birth family, the Bayntons, lived in the Traverse City area.

“During the Depression, we didn’t feel poor as everyone was in the same boat. The government wasn’t saying ‘now this is a poor family’... Everyone helped everyone else doing things that you couldn’t do today because of regulations. If you had cows, you had milk and cream. My father would bring milk in cream cans to town and sell it for two cents a gallon. People would come with buckets to buy it.

“People were frugal and creative. Animal feed sacks, which were small prints, were washed and then used to make shirts, blouses, and dresses. Scraps of fabric were saved for patches or quilt squares. Other feed sacks of unbleached muslin became tablecloths with embroidery or lace added. That was a different era that led to sayings such as ‘Waste not, want not’ or ‘Use it up, wear it out, make it do or do without.’

“After high school, I attended Wexford County Normal in Cadillac for one year, which would have counted as one year of college if you went on to further education. But, with one year, you could teach at a one-room country school for three years. I taught all subjects in kindergarten through eighth grade for two years. Some of the students were almost as old as I was. I don’t look back at this as the happiest time of my life. It was hard. I had 27 kids in kindergarten through eighth grade and then you’d go to a school in town and they would have 27 kids in the same grade, so you can see why consolidation of schools was good.

“In 1936, I married Bernard Nieuwkoop and we moved to a farm north of Manton. We had three daughters. We raised everything on the farm including cows and chickens.

“As the Depression ended, my husband found work as a carpenter and we gradually eased out of farming. He found full-time employment as a carpenter and we moved to Battle Creek. I started work at the Upjohn Company Conference Center. I did a little bit of everything. I was the program director, newsletter editor, and photographer, and did whatever else needed to be done.”

Audrey says she loved every job she ever had.

They returned to Manton in 1978 upon retirement, where Audrey continued to write and was active in the community. She is a founding member of the Manton Museum, contributing family heirlooms and information. She also helped research the history of each commercial and public building in Manton, noting each owner and type of establishment throughout the years.

She self-published a children’s book titled, *Elly, Homestead Girl*, in 2003. This book is about her adoptive mother, Ella, the Seaman family, and growing up as the early settlers arrived in northern Michigan. Audrey said, “Warren Seaman, my adoptive mother’s father, homesteaded in the Cedar Creek area in 1869.”

Audrey presented history programs at the local schools for many years, bringing to life the history of the Manton area to schoolchildren. She also continues to write articles for the local newspaper and continues her research on her families: the Seamans and the Bayntons.

Audrey summarizes her life by saying, “I’ve lived in the best of times and the worst of times. I’ve lived in the horse and buggy age and the space age. In prior centuries, no one had seen that much change.”



Audrey, left, with her cousin (a few times removed) Sandy Seppala and Sandy’s granddaughter Margaret Kay.

NWHM Legislation Passes Out of House Committee

The National Women’s History Museum bill in the House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure was passed on September 8. Next stop, the House floor.

The NWHM bill was attached to other legislation supported by Committee Chairman John Mica (R-FL) and re-introduced as HR 2844, the National Women’s History Museum and Federal Facilities Consolidation and Efficiency Act of 2011. Representative Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) is a cosponsor of the bill.

The boundaries of the site that NWHM will be allowed to purchase is located at 12th Street and Independence Avenue, SW., adjacent to the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

NWHM urges support for the passage of HR 2844. Please contact your Member of Congress to encourage their support for this bill. For more information on NWHM and legislation, go to www.nwhm.org.

Mark your calendar...

October 22

Annual Meeting with lunch and a speaker. *History Center*

November 14

Board meeting. Mon., 2:00 PM. *History Center*

Book Discussion continued from p 1

schools and churches were completely integrated, blacks and whites intermarried, and power and wealth were shared by both races. But for this to happen, the town's citizens had to keep secrets, break the laws of the world outside, and sweep aside fear and embrace hope.

In a historical-detective feat, Anna-Lisa Cox uncovers the heartening story of this community that took the road untaken. Beginning in the 1860s, the people of Covert, Michigan, attempted to do what then seemed impossible: love one's neighbor regardless of skin color as oneself.

- **April 27.** *Yellow Raft in Blue Water* by Michael Dorris. Michael Dorris has crafted a fierce saga of three generations of Indian women, beset by hardships and torn by angry secrets, yet inextricably joined by the bonds of kinship.
- **July 20.** *Comfort Me with Apples: More Adventures at the Table* by Ruth Reichl. The second volume of Ruth Reichl's memoir picks up Reichl's story in 1978, when she puts down her chef's toque and embarks on a career as a restaurant critic. Whether sharing her recipe for the Big Chocolate Cake she used to woo her second husband or chronicling her culinary tour of China in letters mailed across the world to her ailing father, her second memoir offers the eclectic menu of her middle years: a broken marriage, a new beginning, romance in Paris, heartbreak in Barcelona, and always another exquisite meal ahead.

Board of Directors

Karen Anderson
Nancy Bordine
Kathi Houston
Shirley Murray
Jane Purkis
Etta Rajkovich
Tina Tank
Martha Vreeland

Shauna Quick and
Ashley Flees,
Phi Theta Kappa Liaisons,
NMC
Sandra Seppala,
newsletter editor

Join WHPNW

Women of Wisdom: \$10

Students: \$10

The Rest of Us: \$15

Business/Organization: \$25

Dues payable to WHPNM;
send to address below.

Thank you for your support!



Women's History Project of Northwest Michigan
322 Sixth Street
Traverse City, MI 49684