



The Herstory Chronicles

Newsletter of the Women's History Project of Northwest Michigan

April 2012

They put on their coats and left

by Dorothy Wilhelm French

My grandmother, **Kate Smith Wilhelm**, was born on South Manitou Island on April 18, 1868. The islands were settled before the mainland as they supplied wood for the steam ships.

Her mother, **Mary Jane Burdick**, married **William Smith**. William arrived on the island in 1860 and, since he could read and write, he became the bookkeeper for Burdick's Store. Mary Jane was teaching school. They had two children, **George and Kate**.

After finishing school, daughter Kate Smith left the island and came into Traverse City to find work. Julius Steinberg hired her to work in his store.

Steinberg had established the "Reliable Trading Place" in Traverse City in the 200 block of Front Street. He sold dry goods, clothing, carpets, hats and caps, and furnishing goods. Kate joined three other employees: Herbert Bagnell, Ida Stanton, and Etta O'Neill.

(See Put on their coats on p. 2)

Celebrating Women's History Month at NMC

NMC student **Shauna Quick** had more grandmothers to talk about than the average college student at the Northwestern



Ashley Flees, dressed as her grandmother, shared some stories she learned from her grandmother.

Michigan College Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society's annual Women's History Program on March 10. The program's theme was *Generations of Women Making History* and featured grandmothers of NMC students and of women from the Women's History Project.

Shauna prepared a slideshow with photos of all the grandmothers featured that afternoon. Neither WHP members **Tina Tank** nor **Nancy Bordine** could attend, so they gave their grandmother stories to Shauna, who was able to claim their grandmothers as well as her own. "I am proud of my grandmother and fortunate to claim Nancy and Tina's grandmothers too," said Shauna, as she introduced her own grandmother, **Nancy Vincent Brooks**, and mother, **Anna Quick**, both in attendance.

Another student, **Erica Hamilton**, also brought her grandmother, **Patricia Danford**, to the program.

WHP chair **Kathi Houston** described the life of her grandmother, **Centa Bihler**, who she showed in a photograph standing among a flock of sheep. "I know she was a city girl from Augsburg, Germany, so this photo with a field of sheep amuses me," chuckled Kathi.

WHP board member **Dotty French**, born three houses away from her present residence in Traverse City, told of growing up among Traverse City's founders and original business owners.

WHP board member **Carolyn Micklatcher** shared stories of grandmother, **Gertrude Westjohn Lichty**, who supported advanced education for her entire family.

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Mr. Steinberg became increasingly upset over what he considered to be excessive non-business conversation between his four employees and customers who came into the store to buy or to visit. On November 18, 1893, the four employees came into the store to be handed handwritten copies of Special Instructions No.2:

To All Clerks and Employees:

No conversation will be allowed between clerks or between clerks and customers or friends except on purely business matters or aid in making a Sale.

The four employees read the Special Instructions No. 2 and put on their coats and walked out of the store.

Mr. Steinberg wrote to Kate's father asking him to meet with him. He wanted Smith to urge Kate to come back to work. She would not submit to "Special Instructions No.2" and refused. But she was without a job only for a very short time because she received two letters from employers who had read about the "walk out" in the newspaper.

One was from C.E. McManus, seller of crockery, notions, and toys, who wrote that "he understood that she was out a situation at present" and offered her a job.

The second letter was from Wilhelm Bros., who wrote "we are in need of more help in our store. If you are open for a position in this line, kindly let us hear from you at once. We

Recognizing and appreciating women

by Kathi Houston, president

March included many great events, activities, and press that centered on the annual recognition of women's history, thus making it easy to avoid comments about the weather!

Seriously though, your board has been involved with putting our mission forward in a number of ways, including the Phi Theta Kappa Women's History Month presentation highlighting our grandmothers; the Benzie Area Women's History Project's screening of the film, *The Harvest/La Cosecha*, on International Women's Day; and their upcoming education day on April 28.

In the next several months, we will feature new ways to appreciate the oral histories that have been completed in the last eleven years by recorders from our organization. The recorders included **MaryAnne Rivers, Nancy Doughty, Jody Clark** and **Anne Magoun**.

Carolyn Micklatcher, current board member, is working with archivist **Peg Siciliano** and board member **Sandy Seppala** to archive each oral history document so that it can be used both for research and interest purposes.

The History Center board has welcomed our support of their continued progress on the plan for their healthy operations. We will continue to be involved since we are residents of the building.

The Northwest Michigan region has no end of examples of women leading, creating, recording, restoring, and inspiring. Join us on the path of recognizing and appreciating the women and their contributions. I hope to see you soon!



are looking for a clerk of good business experience only." She accepted that position.

Anthony J. and Emanuel founded Wilhelm Bros. in 1886 at the corner of 8th and Union Streets. In 1902, the partnership was dissolved and Emanuel opened a store at the southwest corner of Front and Union. Anthony then changed the Wilhelm Bros. name to A.J. Wilhelm.

In June 1896, Anthony married Kate Smith. Kate not only kept her position as a clerk but also kept all of the records for the firm.

She and Anthony had three sons: Ralph, George and Lyle. They lived on East 8th Street close to the store. Today it is attached to the Frederich house and is called Dakoske House.

Kate Smith Wilhelm died in 1932 of tuberculosis.

Oral History: Theresa Schaub

These are excerpts from an interview with Theresa Schaub of Lake Leelanau. The interview was conducted by Jeanne Dzik on October 31, 2002.

Theresa Schaub (TS): I was born in the early twenties, when farming was the chief occupation of people around here. My father and mother had a farm... diversified farming.

Jeanne Dzik (JD): With all of the food that your family raised, I imagine that you didn't have a great deal of trouble surviving during the Depression.

TS: No, we didn't. We had enough to eat... meat, potatoes. We had our own flour, which was ground at the mill. Father took the wheat to a grist mill and they ground it. And they sifted it so it came out in four different grades. The first was the white flour. You used that for bread. Then the shorts, the second ones that made good pancakes. Then the "middlings" and the bran were used in food for the calves and the other animals. Things that you bought in a store, like sugar, that was in short supply.

JD: What did you buy when you went shopping and where did the shopping take place?

TS: My father did the shopping. Mother did not go to the grocery store. She provided him with a list, he went downtown to Lake Leelanau to the co-ops usually, and got what little needed to be purchased. Once in a while there was a trip to Traverse City and that was an occasion, for maybe, clothes. But we could buy shoes in Lake Leelanau and you

could also order things from the catalogues. Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward catalogues were standard volumes in our home. We didn't go to the movies. We didn't spend money on that kind of thing.

JD: Could you describe the typical things that your mother or your grandmothers did most any day?

TS: My father was the one who got up and made the fire in the wood stove and put the oatmeal on to cook, in a double boiler. But, mother did the rest of the breakfast and it was a big one: potatoes and meat, as well as the oatmeal and some kind of fruit and bread on the table, too. There was no dishwasher. And there was no hot water heater until I was in the third grade. You heated the water on the stove to wash the dishes, to wash the clothes, to wash your hands, to wash anything... take a bath.

On Mondays, Mother did the laundry and it seemed like it took all day long. Men worked in the field and they get spots on their clothes, so their clothes had to be rubbed before you put them in the washing machine to get the bad spots out. It was a tedious task. We had clotheslines, but in the wintertime you dried them as best you could indoors.

JD: Did the church play a significant role in your life?

TS: Yes, it did. I knew as a child that my great-grandpa's sister donated her part of the family homestead for the ten acres that the church and the school and the convent were built on, Saint Mary's Church, Saint Mary of the Assumption. We went to mass every morning in nice weather.

JD: And so your family has been one of the landmark families in the founding of that church?

TS: Of the church and of the village, of the community... yes!

My father's mother and father lived at the edge of the village. When I was in first and second grade, I had lunch there every day. Grandma would tell us all kinds of things about what had happened in the old country, where she lived when she was a little girl, before she came to the United States. How Grandpa was a baby who wasn't going to survive in Buffalo with all the air pollution, so they had to come and find a place where they could live where the air was clean. And so they wound up in Lake Leelanau. Imbedded in all of these stories was their attitude toward how you ought to behave, how you ought to live, what was valuable, what was worthwhile.

JD: If you had everything to do over again, what might you do differently?

TS: I don't think there is much I would do differently, in the

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Oral History
continued from p. 3

major things. Now, come to the minor foolishness, probably, but... It would have been nice to go and work in some other cities, but my parents were becoming older, my mother was incapacitated, and I was needed at home. That's where I really wanted to be. I had to wait a bit to get a job in Traverse City, nearby, so that I could be where I was needed. And I was grateful that a job was presented just at the time when my father couldn't get his driver's license renewed anymore.

JD: What advice would you give to young women today?

TS: Well, I would suggest that they take some time and think carefully before they make any moves. Consider what their priorities are. What's most interesting? What's most valuable? What do they want to be like at fifty years old? What kind of a person do they want to be? And then, proceed slowly, working on that. And they probably will revise their ideas along the way. Be open to that kind of thing.

WHPNM Mission

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

Women's History Project
continued from p. 1

WHP member **Ann Swaney's** grandmother, **Etta Kelley Brainard**, taught in a one-room schoolhouse and was the first woman in her county to take an airplane ride.

Student **Ashley Flees** came dressed as her grandmother. She shared some humorous conversations that she and her grandmother had recently about her grandmother's life and views.

Student **McKenzie Campbell** and librarian **Linda Ruby** both spoke fondly of their grandmothers' influence on their lives.

Nargilya Gasanova, from Turkmenistan, told of the extraordinary hardship and courage of her grandmother, **Asya Gasanova**. By 1936, both of Asya's parents had been labeled as enemies of the people by the communists and imprisoned. Left alone at age 12 to earn a living and care for two younger sisters, Asya began her first job. Late at night after working she studied.

There were more hard times and joys for Asya, but with perseverance she became a pediatrician, practicing for more than fifty years.

Nargilya knows the drive for success in her own studies comes from Asya, who hungered more for knowledge than bread as a twelve-year-old girl in Turkmenistan.

Winding up the program, **Joan Sheard** and her eight-year-old grandson, **Logan**, charmed us with his willingness to "protect" her. She had confessed to him she was a "little nervous" so he volunteered to help. Joan spoke of all the things she had learned from her grandchildren. "I think I shall go home and write them each a thank-you note," she told us, reminding us what treasures grandmothers and grandchildren are.

Once again, PTK celebrated Women's History Month in a very meaningful and interesting way.

Thanks go to Women's History Project for its support and to American Association of University Women-Traverse City Area for support and providing refreshments.



Nargilya Gasanova shared the story of her grandmother, who lived in Turkmenistan.

BENZIE AREA WOMEN'S HISTORY PROJECT

in association with the *Benzie Area Historical Society*, presents

Our 30th Annual Education Day

Toward a New Definition of Peace: Women and the Nobel Prize

Saturday, April 28, 2012—10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Benzonza Congregational Church, Barber Street, Benzonza

Join us in April for a full day of presentations and workshops. Our **30th Annual Education Day** is set for Saturday, April 28, at the Benzonza Congregational Church. Registration will begin at 9:30 a.m., and we'll start at 10 a.m. with music by a trio of young women, **Incan Descent**.

Since the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to **Baroness Bertha von Suttner** in 1905, only fifteen women have won the award—three of whom were jointly awarded the prize in 2011. Liberian Women's rights campaigner **Leymah Gbowee**, and **Tawakkul Karman**, a female icon of the protest movement in Yemen, shared the 2011 award with Liberian President **Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**. We will celebrate the lives of the fifteen women who have shown that a peaceful world, in addition to the absence of armed conflict, must include equality in society and a more equal distribution of resources.

After a lunch created by **Still Grinning Kitchens**, **Mary Ann Rivers** and her daughter **Elizabeth Rivers** will join forces (and voices) in a concert to celebrate our 30th year. Then we have scheduled three concurrent workshops. **Wanda Joseph** and **Carol Voigts** will lead an interactive session: *From Understanding to Change*, a look at the biases we all have and how they continue to hold back marginalized groups in our society. A book discussion will be led by **Anne Gwaltney** featuring the book *The Bluest Eye* by Nobel Prize winner **Toni Morrison** (if possible, please read the book in advance). And **Amy Stevens** will facilitate an open discussion of the moral dilemma: *Should we tolerate intolerance?* When cultural belief and practice conflict with basic human rights.

Fees pay for our program expenses, which we try to keep low, and also support an annual \$500 scholarship for a non-traditional female student at Northwestern Michigan College—this year Andrea M. Pellicci of Elk Rapids.

For more information, call (231) 882-5373, email infobop@bawhp.org, or pay a visit to www.bawhp.org



For access (listening devices, interpreter services, or enhanced text for the day's program) please contact Cindy Shapiro at 231-378-2588 or email access@bawhp.org ASAP. The church is wheelchair accessible.

-----REGISTRATION FORM-----tcw

NAME(s) _____

Address _____

City/Zip _____ Phone _____

Email Address (please print legibly!) _____

Benzonza Congregational Church, Sat., April 28, 10 a.m. _____ @ \$15* (students \$12) \$ _____
(Lunch is included in the fee. \$20 admission at the door—pre-registration by April 21 is preferred to help with lunch planning)

Optional Contribution toward BAWHP Scholarship (tax deductible): \$ _____

Check here if you'd like a receipt for scholarship donation

Check Enclosed for this amount: \$ _____

Checks should be payable to the Benzie Area Women's History Project (BAWHP)

Mail to: 8464 Orchard Hill Road, Beulah, MI 49617-9702 *for reduced fee registration, contact BAWHP

80 years of Grand Traverse Musicale

The History Center presents 80 years of the **Grand Traverse Musicale**. The grand opening of the exhibit with musical performances will be held on Sunday, May 6, 2–5 PM. The mission of the GT Musicale is to support and encourage young musicians through scholarships, and to present quality musical and outreach programs.

You also are invited to help celebrate by attending one of the High Teas that will be held at the History Center. The teas will be \$20 and will be held from 3–5 PM on Thursday, April 12 and 16, and Saturday, May 10 and 24. Call 929-7036 to make reservations.

Calendar

All meetings are held at the History Center
unless designated otherwise.

April

27 Book Group. Friday, NOON. *Yellow Raft in Blue Water* by Michael Dorris

28 Benzie Area Women's History Project 30th

Annual Education Day. Saturday,

10 AM–2:30 PM. Theme: *Toward a New*

Definition of Peace: Women and the Nobel Prize. \$15 (\$20 at door), includes lunch. *Benzonia Congregational Church*



May

6 Grand Traverse Musicales Grand Opening of Exhibit with musical performances. Sun., 2–5 PM.

14 Board Meeting. Mon., 2 PM.

June

11 Board Meeting. Mon., 2 PM.

July

20 Book Group. Friday, NOON. *Comfort Me with Apples* by Ruth Reichl

Send articles and
announcements for the
newsletter to Sandy,
sansep19@earthlink.net, or
contact her at 421-3343.



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Women of Wisdom: \$10

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Dues payable to WHPNM;

send to address below.

Thank you for your support!



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