



The Herstory Chronicles

Newsletter of the Women's History Project of Northwest Michigan

March 2014

Test your knowledge about women who made history

By Kathryn Orwig, PTK liaison

Women's History Month is just around the corner. The Alpha Rho Pi Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa will present "Two Truths and a Lie" on Saturday, March 15, at 1 p.m. in room 115 of the Fine Arts Building on Northwestern Michigan College campus.

Cleopatra. Boudica. Joan of Arc. Jane Austen. Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Emmeline Pankhurst. Coco Chanel. We all know their names. Most of us know what they did. Fewer of us know the facts of their lives. PTK students will choose a famous woman in history and will research her life.

For her presentation, she, acting the part of her chosen

(See PTK event on p. 4)

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Anishinaabe combination of 3 tribes

By Nancy Bordine

Such a bright and shining spirit Carrie Leareaux brought to us when she spoke at our 2014 Souper Sunday gathering. In her native *Anishinaabemowin* (Anishinaabe language) she greeted us in the Anishinaabe-kwe manner, telling us her spirit name ("Good Voice Woman" and "Good Earth Woman"), where she was from (Kewadin) and where she lives (Peshawbestown).



She taught us that the Anishinaabek Nation is a combination of three tribes: Odaawa (Ottawa), Ojibwe (Chippewa) and Bodwe'aadmii (Pottawatomi); that Anishinaabe means "Original People," "Good Man/Woman/Child," "Man lowered to Mother Earth."

With her sunny smile, and her hand cupped at her ear, Carrie brought *Anishinaabemowin* to life by having the audience practice enunciating *Anishinaabemowin* after her. "Our language is the link to our past, and will ensure our strength and identity into the future. It is our ancestors' collective interpretation of the world. Before we even speak or utter a word, we look towards *Shkakamikwe* (Mother Earth);



her energy comes up and through our feet, traveling through our spirit, past our heart, and the sound that comes. It is a great lesson to not get caught up with your "mind chatter," but rather to speak from your heart.

(See Souper Sunday on p. 2)

Your ray of sunshine

by Amy Barritt, president

The winter doldrums are in full swing, but that's not stopping your WHP Directors!

I hope you all took the chance to break the monotony and come out for Souper Sunday. If not, take the chance to read all about it in this issue, thanks to Vice-President Nancy Bordine. The event was a great success, thanks to the hard work of the directors and to Carrie Leaux, our

guest speaker.

On top of that, we continue to actively rebuild our Oral History Program. We have been working hard to create a sustainable program, using best practices from previous programs and developing more streamlined processes. Read more about that in this newsletter!

If any member (or non-member) wants to nominate someone to be interviewed for

the Oral History Program, please

contact Carolyn Micklatcher at 922-9418, cmick@chartermi.net.

We want to preserve the stories of women who have contributed to local communities, from across the Grand Traverse Region. Please help us to create a more complete archive with your nominations!



Souper Sunday *continued from p. 1*

When we learn and return to our language, we honor our ancestors and we return to our true spiritual-selves, one word at a time.”

The Anishinaabe believe that everything that was made by the Creator has a spirit in it—the plants, the animals, the elements, the earth, all those that walk, crawl, and swim. Through the conscious awareness and respect of all things/people/beings in our everyday interactions with each other, we are able to achieve balance and harmony.

Carrie explained the seven-grandfather teachings/gifts that guide Anishinaabek ways:

- Love:** s/he comes out in the open heart
- Respect:** to help him/her with your mind and heart
- Honesty:** to be straight with any race and all things
- Bravery:** to have a strong heart and courage
- Humility:** to lower one's heart with all beings
- Truth:** heart
- Wisdom:** in a quiet way to reflect on our experiences, and those of parents and grandparents

She pointed out that the true spirituality of these virtues is universal and valued in all parts of the world.

Carrie reminded us that we will be known by the tracks that we leave behind; that the grandfathers and the grandmothers are in the children—teach them well. Our elders are rich in memories, dignity, and respect. From them we inherit life, roots, and wings.

The Women's History Project leaves behind important tracks when we listen to our female elders, record their wisdom, and pass their words on to the children.

Miigwetch (thank you), Carrie!

*Native American isn't blood.
It is what is in the heart.
The love for the land, those
who inhabit it,
and the respect and
acknowledgement of the
spirits and elders.
That is what it is to be
Indian.*

—White Feather,
Navajo Medicine Man

Benzie Activities

March 7, Fri., 5–7 pm.

Opening reception for the show honoring Women's History Month: *Celebrating Women of Character, Courage and Commitment.*

Runs from March 7 through April. *Elizabeth Lane Oliver Center for the Arts*

March 7–22. Film: *It's a Beautiful Thing: Women Artists 1880 to 1940.*

Manistee Art Institute, Hardy Hall at the Ramsdell Theater

See women who fought for rights

The Benzie Area Women's History Project is showing the film "Made In Dagenham" at the Garden Theater in Frankfort on Saturday, March 8, 3 p.m., in celebration of Women's History Month.

This 2010 film uses the true story of women who worked at the Ford plant in Dagenham, England. Out of a total workforce of 55,000, there were 187 underpaid women machinists who primarily assembled the car seat upholstery in poor working conditions.

The film chronicles the larger issue in this dispute considering that women were paid an appalling fraction of the men's wages for the same work across the board on the sole basis of their sex. Refusing to tolerate this inequality any longer, the women machinists strike for equal pay for equal work. This strike leads to legislation for equal pay for work of equal value in the UK.

The Benzie Area Women's History Project has secured permission from Sony Classics to show this film. You don't want to miss it.

Donations will be welcome at the theater for BAWHP's scholarship, which is awarded annually to a "non-traditional" female student at NMC.

Two new "Legends of the Grand Traverse Region"

The History Center of Traverse City will celebrate new "Legends of the Grand Traverse Region" from February 5 through April 12. The Legends are **Father Fred (Edwin Fredrick), founder of the Father Fred Foundation, and Roy and Ellen Brigman, founders of Camp Roy-El**, which from 1952 to 1991 was a camp for children with disabilities.

While celebrating them, Legends also will highlight the people they served, who are often an under-acknowledged portion of our diverse population. Those with financial, social, mental, or physical challenges are valuable members of our community, and should be recognized as such.

The Legends celebrations will feature ongoing exhibits, and three public programs. Program attendance includes entry into the Museum. Refreshments will be served. Admission is free, but a \$5 per-person, free-will offering is welcome.

Programs

- **Feb. 20. *Father Fred and his Foundation.*** Author Paul LaPorte presented vignettes from his book, *Heart of a Priest*. Rosemary

Hagan, executive director of the Father Fred Foundation, spoke about the Foundation's recent growth and current activities.

- **March 6, Thurs., 7 pm. Panel: *Words CAN Hurt, and Help: How Changing Labels and Language Empower Persons with Disabilities.*** Our panel will examine how the language related to disability has changed over the years, and the reasons for and impacts of those changes. Panel participants include Jim Moore, executive director of the Disability Network of Northern Michigan; Susan Odgers, professor at Northwestern Michigan College and Grand Valley State University; and Melissa Claramunt of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights.
- **April 12, Sat. *Exhibit closing; Celebrate Camp Roy-El.*** Kathy Brigman Woods and Mary Ellen Brigman, daughters of founders Roy and Ellen Brigman, will reflect on their parents' work at Camp Roy-El. Former camp staff and "Handicampers" will share their experiences at the camp, and the impact it had on their lives.

Preserving our history through Oral History Program

By Amy Barritt

The “Oral History Program Update” is a new feature of our newsletter. Its purpose is to further your understanding of our program by reporting on how it has worked in the past and sharing planned improvements, upcoming changes, and our vision for moving forward.

The board agrees that we should be recording more oral histories in a given year than we have for the last few years. We currently have a backlog of at least 20 women whose stories we would like to preserve.

Although the program has been integral to the mission of the WHP since its inception, in the last few years we have seen a marked decrease in the number

of interview volunteers.

We have identified the weak point in our current training system. Nine out of ten volunteers who we trained to conduct interviews end up being unable to do so for one reason or another. This is discouraging considering the time spent in training them with no results.

In an effort to promote a more successful training system, the Directors have agreed that our interviewers need to be compensated for their time and travel expenses.

Our new Oral History Program features hiring contractors to act as interviewers, rather than relying on volunteers. This is not to say that the WHP no longer trains volunteers. However, the

Directors feel that, if we want to meet certain recording goals in a given year, this is the best way to do it.

Since this is a new aspect to our program, we have developed and updated the paperwork needed, such as contracts and invoices.

More importantly, we have updated our training handbook to reflect the use of our new digital recording equipment. We also reformatted the content layout so our interviewers can better use the handbook for quick reference.

We expect to finalize the necessary forms and hire our first interviewer within the next month, so stay tuned for the next newsletter.

Calendar

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

March

10 Board Meeting. Mon., 2 PM.

April

14 Board Meeting. Mon., 2 PM.

25 Book Discussion. Fri., NOON.

Crossing the Borders of Time: A True Story of War, Exile, and Love Reclaimed by Leslie Maitland

May

12 Board Meeting. Mon., 2 PM.

July

25 Book Discussion. Fri., NOON.

The Long-Shining Waters by Danielle Sosin

PTK Event *continued from p. 1*

famous woman, will present two true facts and one lie about the woman and will ask the audience to guess the lie. It may sound easy but you might be very surprised. The actress will respond to the answers and then

give a brief biography of her woman.

Come early to enjoy some refreshments and then join the fun as we try to figure out—and remember—what we know and don’t know about some of the

women who made history.

Women’s History Project of Northwestern Michigan and American Association of University Women-Traverse City Area Branch are sponsors of this annual event.

Oral History: Gretchen Votruba

Interviewed in 2002

My daddy's job took him to Cleveland when I was about 18 months old. I used to spend every summer with my grandparents. I would head up to Marshall as soon as school was out, and stay 'til the day before it started.

Grandpa and I used to do the shopping every day because we didn't have any refrigeration. Fortunately, we were right next door to the milk station, so I could run over there and get milk at noon time. We'd keep it in well water that was wonderful and cold!

Grandpa and I would go to the creamery to get butter. The floors were wet down there and I was always barefoot. That sure felt good after Main Street, because some days you had to hop because it was hot.

My dad taught me to drive 'cause they didn't have driver's training in school. When I was at home, he'd take me out in some of the new developments and places where the traffic wasn't bad, so I could learn to turn decent corners and learn to park. The fact is, I think he made me change a tire. I had to change a tire before I could take the car alone.

I went to Olivet to go to college. I started out being a camp counselor in the summers, and worked for the Battle Creek Campfire Girls. I became a

Campfire Girls executive, but I didn't like living on the dole from the Community Chest, so I went back to school to get a teacher's certificate. I started teaching in '38.

I knew Traverse City from having spent summer up here at Camp Arbutus. I just liked it and one of the other girls decided she liked it too; so the two of us moved up here in 1943.

I was teaching school during World War II. We worked on saving grease and getting out ration cards because they used the school as an easy place so people wouldn't have to go so far to sign up to get their sugar card or their meat card. I had the first Girl Scouts troop here too. We got started and went out collecting grease.

I met my husband when his family were members of the First Congregational Church. I lived in an apartment on the same block when I first came to Traverse City. I knew his wife and I knew their kids. Catherine died in '46; their youngest was only two at the time.

Bill was coming home from a Rotary Minstrel Show; he had black face and all. I was walking home across Union Street Bridge when he stopped and gave me a ride. We had a good visit that night, and then we started going together. We'd do things on Sundays with the kids and his mother. She'd have dinner and then we'd go for a ride. The kids

always thought they had to be in the water, at least on Memorial Day, even if it was cold, they would make a quick dip. We got married New Year's Day 1952, at the First Congregational Church Chapel.

Bill's father had come from Czechoslovakia when he was seventeen. His family went to the Bohemian settlement in East Jordan because they knew some people up there. He and his brother used to walk to Traverse City for supplies, and they'd carry a stool or a rocking chair home on their backs for their mother.

One time his father and his brother got on the wrong trail when they were leading a cow back to East Jordan. They found themselves at the end of Old Mission Peninsula. They had to tramp all the way back and come up the other side to get to East Jordan.

Frank was his name, that's where the 'F. Votruba' comes in on our store name. Frank was one of the builders of the Opera House Building. A matter of fact, ours is the only store still going from 1891.

My work with Child and Family Services took me all around the country. I drove miles and miles getting new babies from hospitals, as well as sick kids. All of a sudden I'd get a phone call, "We've got a sick kid over in Elk Rapids... can you

(See Oral History on p. 6)

Oral History *continued from p 5*

get over there and get him?" I entered two or three children into the hospital at different times when they had to go in. I still see some of the kids around that I knew when they were little. It was nice because I enjoyed all the foster parents. They were really wonderful! The kids were so cute and the other kids in the families were so understanding.

Oh, I used to take them and buy them shoes from when they needed 'em and get haircuts and different things like that. That was real rewarding. Goodness sakes, we did travel miles and miles.

I'm still volunteering there, and I'm still donating to them. They wanted to hire me at one time, but I said, "That would take all of the fun out of it, and I don't think Bill would approve of it. He'd rather I just do it to help."

1989 was the 100th anniversary of our State. The Michigan Women's Commission, under Governor Blanchard, selected Michigan First Ladies by

counties. Each county got somebody in there. Most of 'em have two; Grand Traverse was big enough to have three.

Child and Family Services nominated me. We were honored at a luncheon down in Lansing. I was so flabbergasted; it was a real honor, "Michigan 150th First Lady Award." My award said, "Traverse City's quiet giver, honored. Gretchen is a rare, warm, giving person. Everyone should have a friend like Gretchen."

Gretchen Votruba passed away October 9, 2004. She was 88 years old.

(Editor's note: I chose Betty Armstrong's memories about the 'Indians' for our last newsletter because it was her perspective of local history; how those involved in 'helping' the Ojibway saw themselves, and how they saw the native people; the irony of her deep respect for the 'Indians', and her acceptance of the government's assumed right to claim their land. Nancy Bordine, Board member)

WHPNM Mission

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

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Thank you for your support!

Send articles and announcements for the newsletter to Sandy, sansep19@earthlink.net, or contact her at 421-3343. Next deadline, Sept. 15. Those accepted are subject to editing for length and content.

WHP Book Discussion Group

You are invited to our book discussions

By Ann Swaney, co-chair

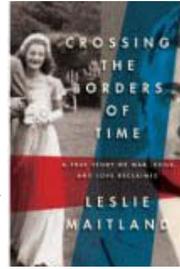
Join the WHP book discussion group this year. Our discussions take place in the Board Room of the History Center on Sixth Street—from noon to 1:30. We'll furnish snacks and beverages. Bring a sack lunch if you wish.

Books are available at the Traverse Area District Library and Peninsula Library. Also Horizon Books has the paperback for sale with a discount for book group members.

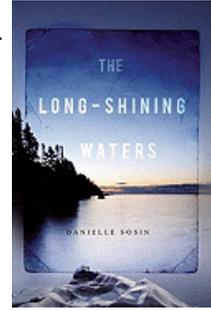
Our next discussions are in April and in July. Happy Reading!

- **April 25:** *Crossing the Borders of Time: A True Story of War, Exile, and Love Reclaimed* by Leslie Maitland (2013). It's the story of how Maitland's German Jewish mother, born Johanna Gunzburger in Freiburg, Germany, in 1923 managed

to flee the Nazi killing machine in 1938, with her father, mother, sister and brother, landing first in Mulhouse, France, moving as the Germans defeated the French in June 1940, finally leaving on the last ship out of Marseille, France, in 1942 before the harbors were sealed. Barred from entering the U.S. due to an indifferent FDR administration and an anti-Semitic State Department, the Gunzburger family spent more than a year in a Cuban detention camp before finally securing papers allowing them to move to Miami and later New York City.



- **July 25:** *The Long-Shining Waters* by Danielle Sosin (2012). It's a novel that intertwines the stories of three women living next to Lake Superior at different times in history. Grey



Rabbit is an Ojibwe woman struggling through a tough winter in 1622. Berit is living in a remote fishing cabin with her husband in 1902. Nora is a tough-as-nails bar-owner in the year 2000. Each faces challenges, which the lake's constant presence both helps and hinders.

Please call Ann at 223-7489 for further information.



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