

# Plank Road Dispatch

Volume 19

Issue 1

March, 2015

**Plank Road Museum**

Drake Memorial House

## **FROM THE TOP- President Gillis**

Well, here it is, the first e-newsletter. While we have made progress over the last few years to obtain e-mail addresses, it didn't amount to most of the membership. Today, only 10 will need to be mailed by the United States Postal Service. You will note that in the To: section it contains the words, Unknown Recipient. This was chosen as some individuals like their e-mail address to be private. It also means that you will not get one full page of addresses before you get to the newsletter. This is the wave of the future and the further demise of the postal service because of the high cost of mailing a first class letter. This will allow us to keep you more informed on a monthly basis, where before we had cut way back on mailings because of paper, ink, stamps and address labels not to mention the assembly time for more than one page for several volunteers. If you have any problems opening it, please email [patriciag8@frontier.com](mailto:patriciag8@frontier.com) to see what we can do to correct the issue. Look for the next one the first part of May.

The winter months were quiet on the two museums floors. Work on Mondays consisted of accessioning and cataloguing as usual, with more emphasis placed on getting several new exhibits ready at the Plank Road Museum. These are continually improving as more and more artifacts continue to be donated. Work on the Porter Oil Field exhibit has added a booklet containing oral histories of persons who were still with us for the Monday Morning Coffees sponsored several years ago. An interesting donation gave the research library an extensive history of Porter Township, but also included many facts on the oil fields. This will be included in the new booklet with some added photographs, including one of workers and their identities. While the booklet will be available at the exhibit, it will be used as a fund raiser for the society at a price of \$5.00 each. It would be nice to offer this as a complimentary copy to visitors but that doesn't pay any bills. A corporation sponsorship may yet provide for its publication. My sincere thank you to those individuals who gave of their time and provided us with some local history on what it was like to work in the oil fields and of the families who moved into the area and followed the oil trail.

We were honored at the Breckenridge Area Chamber of Commerce Dinner held on March 28 at the United Methodist Church and were presented recognized for the visual improvements House, (painting of outside buildings) the doors and subsequent installation of steps at the Plank Road Museum. Also contributions to the community were the Saginaw Valley Shopper now the personally have experienced their space in their publication for various sincere thanks to the chamber.



with a plaque. We were to the Drake Memorial and the final installation of the white railings on the new recognized for their Lisa and Scott Guthrie for Saginaw Valley News. We generosity in contributing projects and fundraisers. Our

*Award received at the Breckenridge Area Chamber of Commerce Annual Dinner -  
l to r: Linda Chapin, Pat Gillis, Lisa and Scott Guthrie.*

*Commerce Annual Dinner -*

The special meeting held in February dwelt on our new theme, "Clear Vision and Common Goals". At this meeting we determined some of the more basic and yet undone projects that need doing over the next ten years. For the Drake House, it has long been a desire to restore the musical instruments. The largest of these was the player piano. A source was found and an estimate of \$6000.00 was obtained. The bid also included several other items in the house for a total needed of \$7700. A grant request submitted to the Gratiot County Community Foundation for \$6000.00 was granted. This organization has been a tremendous partner and friend to 501c3's and our organization in particular. Linda Chapin and her crew put together an Antique Sale of the many over-abundant artifacts at Drake House for March 27 and 28. That fundraiser came in under \$900.00. She plans another towards the end of

summer. Margaret Elliott, the donor of the property, had mentioned several times in my talks with her that items could be sold to raise money for restoration. Our deaccessioning policy allows for this, if the funds are used to restore or add an item to the collection. A soup supper scheduled for April 15, at the United Methodist Church is on a donation basis to raise additional funds towards the \$1700.00. Anyone wishing to make a monetary donation towards this effort are encouraged to contact Glenda Bloomquist, our treasurer at 681-5048, or leave a message at the society office, 842-1241. Donations can also be mailed to BWAHS, Inc. 404 E. Saginaw, P O Box 52, Breckenridge, MI 48615. The other 10-year goals are to have the oil paintings restored that were painted by Rhoda Drake. The upkeep of the garden and ponds will always be an ongoing concern.

The prospect of adding additional exhibit areas and a parking lot to the Plank Road Museum site were also touched on since we have acquired the Burtch property. One of the drawbacks of starting anything in the near future is how to pay for the type of structure we choose, as well as how to sustain it after it is here. We are attempting to reinvent ourselves. We need a solid foundation of giving in donations from people, businesses, society members and other foundations, who will commit to a certain contribution amount on a yearly basis. Fundraisers can't come near what our needs are now and especially not for what expenses might be in the future. Most museums work this way, and only have fundraisers as sales of books, lectures, etc. In our grant applications to other foundations, or for corporation gifts, we may use the total of our museum volunteer work hours towards our in-kind donations amount. We hope to get that started again in this new year. Other projects at the PRM include restoration of the leaking windows and painting the ceiling, both large, expensive undertakings.

The Gratiot County Herald continues to publish articles written to "Honor Gratiot's Past" with society members from the Ithaca, St. Louis, Riverdale and Breckenridge areas as its authors. This arrangement touches on a lot of different and interesting subjects that have happened over the last 160 years. They are well researched articles and 'keepers' for the students of history. Our Facebook page has 237 "likes" as of today. Announcements of events and special notices and photos appear there periodically. Check out "The Breckenridge-Wheeler Area Historical Society" Facebook page.

**Events scheduled thus far for the coming year:**

**April 15** - Soup supper, Methodist Church from 5-7.

**May 8** – Plant Sale with a possible May 29 and 30 for plants left over

**May 8 and May 16** for museum openings. The 16<sup>th</sup>, a Saturday, will coincide with the openings of the Gratiot Historical Museum in Ithaca and the St. Louis Museum. If you haven't visited them in a while, you can make a day of it. Each one has special exhibits and stories to tell. Bring the entire family, the neighborhood, they will all love to have you.

**June 28** – Music Sunday from 12-4 on the lawn at Drake House. Bring your lawn chair and feast on a Picnic Lunch with hot dogs, chips and drink. We will enjoy the newly restored musical instruments, and live music with several band members from the community on site. Donations accepted.

The Annual Meeting and Election of Officers is coming up in June. Please consider serving in this most important area too. Further details in the next e-newsletter.

**Volunteer Opportunities for the summer:**

Dusting and cleaning of museums – May 4

Tour Guides (docents)

Lawn Mowing and/or raking

Maintenance work

Research a new subject, your choice, in our research library - Make a presentation or lecture on your area of interest or expertise – we can schedule YOU!

And always, accessioning and cataloguing at the Plank Road Museum

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Call us and give a suggestion on what you would like to see and do – we can't think of everything. Your input is appreciated. Call one of these following:

*Pat Gillis, Joel Colbry, Karen Giles, Glenda Bloomquist, Nancy Shankel, Gail Cole, Carrie Schaub, Jim Gillis, Mike Doty, Dave Briggs, Sheila Rummer, Dale Clingenpeel and Linda Chapin,*