



Olive Leaves

"Preserving History for the Next Generation"

Olive Township Historical Society Newsletter

Since 2004

Volume 7

Summer 2008

Decoration Day-Then and Now

One of the outstanding events of the year that was held in the Ottawa Station schoolhouse was on May 30-Decoration Day. Around 1900 there were many Civil War veterans in the neighborhood-Mr. Roberts, Mr. Balsam, John Welton, John Brown, Matthew Fellows, Enoch Rhodes among others. At school the children prepared recitations and singing groups. Also the neighbors partook in the programs. A group went to the lakeshore and gathered bluebells and lilacs. Years when the lilacs were early blooming, it was feared they would be gone by Decoration Day, which did happen on occasion. This was a great disappointment.

We looked forward to hearing Mr. Balsam sing "The Sword of Bunker Hill." He lived in Grand Rapids and attended our memorial as long as he lived. He was a white-bearded gentleman and was always there to sing his song. He was in his 90's when he passed away.

After the services in the schoolhouse, the children and young people and all that didn't have buggies and carriages, paraded to the cemetery, about half a mile south of the school. They carried flags, and after the service at the cemetery, the flags were placed on the posts that marked the final resting places of all veterans.

A century later the Olive Township Historical Society recreated that community walk. After the ceremony on Memorial Day (formerly Decoration Day) about 30 township residents ranging in age from infants in buggies, children riding patriotic decorated bicycles to adults walking or riding a farm wagon, strolled to the Olive Township Museum. There a crowd of over 100 gathered to enjoy a 1950's burger meal put on by the young people of Ottawa Reformed Church and see the exhibits in the museum. Displayed were military artifacts, family histories, school pictures, church displays and many patriotic accents in the room.



Thank you...

To all the volunteers who helped with cleaning the museum and setting up displays for our spring opening on Memorial Day. Several volunteers also cleaned up brush at the West Olive and Olive Center cemeteries and fixed fallen tombstones.



Life and Times of Edith Jacobsen-

Fourth in a series of pioneer settlers of Olive Township

Graduating from Fennville High School in 1931, Edith went on to Allegan Normal School for one year. She babysat for two children where she boarded-there was no tuition but she had to buy books. She made meals and also cleaned the pantry for them. She worked at the Michigan Canning Factory for many summers, starting at the age of sixteen, having to obtain a permit before being allowed to work. She also remembers working at Keeler Brass in Grand Rapids, an experience she hated.

While growing up, Edith's family lost their home to a fire. They stayed on a houseboat for a while and Edith remembers getting the measles, the **only** time she remembers the doctor coming over for her.

Edith was offered a job of helping a friend, Genevieve, to teach in Olive Center. Her friend was boarding by Corneles and Minnie Jacobsen, so Edith went to board there, too. About Thursday of the first week teaching in Olive Center, Genevieve's dad drove up by school. Genevieve went out to talk to him-came back in school and said, "Daddy's come after me-you can have the school!!!" Edith finished that year and the school board asked her to stay on, but she only had a certificate to teach in Allegan County. So she moved back home.

Jake Jacobsen, son of Corneles and Minnie, drove to see Edith almost every week. He drove an old Whippet car. They dated about three years often double dating with John Baumann and Grace Weener at times. John and Grace would ride with Jake to Fennville to go see Edith. Jake and Edith eloped and were married in South Bend, Indiana on December 12, 1935. They drove back home that same day because Jacob had chores to do on the farm.

One Sunday, Jacob and Edith returned home from church to find a note on the door-"Eason Wells died." That's how Edith found out her dad had died. They didn't have a telephone, so the call went to a neighbor.

Hattie Boers asked Edith to teach Anita how to play the piano. Edith said "she'd help out". That was the start of many years of piano teaching to many, many students.

Next newsletter we will continue with part three of this series.

[Living in the country and raising a family.](#)



8th Grade Graduation Photo
Edith Jacobsen: Teacher
Mildred Geertman
and Orlena Schumaker



Teacher's photo of Edith- Year ???

The Historical Society has books for sale that will give you more history on the township and

Do you have stories of Olive Township Settlers- or photos that you would like to share with the society??
Contact Kit and Sandy Karsten 875-8036.

Founders of Society Ride in Parade



The sun shone brightly on this years' Dandelion parade. The grass was green, buds were bursting on the trees and the dandelions were everywhere.

Several of the founding members of the society rode in the parade in a big yellow convertible. Kay owns the car which belongs to another era of big block engines and a big presence on the road. The car is about two city blocks long and handles like riding on a cloud. The driver had all he could handle to keep the 455 horse power engine from leaping out of the parade route and go screaming down 96th Avenue.

The society members were dressed in clothing from the past, our walkers handed out candy and Historical Society flyers to those on the parade route.

Society members participating in the parade were Bev Jaarsma, Dean Timmer, Glenn Ten Brink, Kay Headley, Kit and Sandy Karsten along with Deborah and Cassondra Wolters.

Historical Society Outing

Join us on Monday August 18, 2008 for a trip to the Zeeland Dekkerhuis Museum, 37 East Main, (across from North Street Christian Reformed Church) to see the gallery show:

“Lost and Found-Shipwrecks of West Michigan.”

The gallery show tells of the development of ships from sail to steam to gasoline power and from wood to iron to steel construction. In the same timeline you will witness how Lake Michigan became the resting place for these ships for reasons of weather, human error and unfortunate circumstance. After the gallery visit we will cap the evening and visit an old sailor at Captain Sundae and enjoy some delicious ice cream.

We will carpool from the Olive Township Historical Museum at 6:30 p.m. or you can meet us at the museum around 7 p.m.

Thanks to all who continue to donate or lend us your items for the museum displays. If you have old items, photos or memorabilia of Olive Township you would like to share with us. Contact Kit or Sandy Karsten

2008 Olive Township Historical Society Board

President: Kit Karsten

Vice President: Sandra Karsten

Secretary/ Treasurer: Bev Jaarsma

Assistant Secretary/ Treasurer: Deborah Wolters

Board appointed Trustees

Kathryn Headley -one year term

Glenn Ten Brink and Dean Timmer -two year terms

Sandra Poppema and Wayne Vander Zwaag - three year

~ OTHS ~
**“Preserving History for the Next Generations”
DVD**

A commemorative DVD of the events of last Memorial Day 2007 is available for a donation of **\$15.**

This DVD is destined to be a treasured keepsake
for veterans, families and friends to enjoy for years to come.
The 50 minute DVD includes live video footage of the flyover along with photos of the event
set to music ending with the scrolling of veterans names listed on the WWII monument.
To order your copies please call 875-8036 or 399-6939.

OTHS Books & Schoolhouses

These items make perfect gifts for any reason, any season. Need a gift for your family, friends or yourself?

These make unique one of a kind gifts. Be sure to contact us!
To order please call 875-8036.

Books

The History and Tales of Ottawa Station by Wanda Hepler ~ \$15.50 donation
Paging the Days of Olive by Harold VanderZwaag ~ \$20 donation
Mr. Turkey: A biography of Bil Mar Foods co-founder Marvin DeWitt - \$7.50 donation

School Houses

Detailed wooden replicas of the Ottawa & Ovens Schoolhouses
with historical facts printed on the backside are for sale. \$20 donation for each

Signature Quilt

The OTHS Sesquicentennial Signature Quilt still has room for your family names.
Help us make an historic memory quilt by signing your name to a square.
Call the number listed below for details.
Each name will be embroidered into the quilt.

*****The museum is open by appointment during summer months.*****

Link on to OTHS by going to the Olive Township Web Page at
www.olivetownship.com.

Check us out!

