

# Otsego County Historical Society Newsletter

February 2008



## FROM THE PRESIDENT



Hi all!

As I write this the sun is shining - can spring be far behind?

At the museum the window displays are changing and are done by Doris Schultz and Bea Axford. Be sure to stop by and see the beautiful job they have done.

There are many activities going on at the museum. In our Museum Gift Shoppe Ginny is making some changes and is busy finding more Michigan made products to include in it. You will have to check it out this coming spring. Our volunteers who are inputting information into our computer have been busy as well. They have been putting in a lot of hours to get all our material typed and scanned in. We also are in the process of working on a permanent float for the Historical Museum to put in the Alpenfest parade. There will be more on this in the next edition.

I'd like to thank Sherry Johnson and the rest of the Otsego Co. Historical Society Board for such a great job of caring for everything and everybody while I was away. They are all so wonderful and did a great job. Thank you! See you in the spring!

*Judy Kucharek*

## New Storage Cupboards!

Thanks to the skill and work of Curt Losee's class of young builders at M-TEC we now have new cupboards in the back room. All the material was purchased at UBC at a large discount. While at the Museum they also did some tile work by the back door.



We extend a thank you to Curt Losee and his students - Kevin Vickers, Gavin VanLuchene, Todd Greenfield, Nick Leech, Josh Shannon and Jared Elias and to Mr. Fiser at United Building Centers, Gaylord.

## Pirogi Class . . . how is this spelled????

This popular class with "chef" Rudi Edel and his wife Sandi will be offered on April 8 at the Johannesburg-Lewiston High School in Johannesburg. The school has a complete kitchen used to teach cooking skills to students. This is where the class will be held. As we get closer to spring we will have more details about the class. And once again, participants will take **pirogi** home for their family to enjoy. There will be a charge to cover the cost of supplies. Call us if you would like to get the registration materials when it's hot off the press. Leave a message at 732-4568.



CONTACT US AT: 989-732-4568 (Please leave a message)

## The Civilian Conservation Corps

Seventy-five years ago the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was formed to combat the unemployment crisis of the Great Depression. It was part of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal legislation. It quickly became one of the most popular New Deal programs among the general public.

Young men from unemployed families went to work camps where they worked on conservation projects in rural areas for about \$1.00 a day. (About \$425.00 a month in today's money). They were required to send \$25.00 a month home to help alleviate their family's poverty. These dollars were a tremendous help to their families and to the economy of towns across the country. The young men were 18 to 25 years old with most 18-19 years old. Many were from cities and had to be taught the basics of handling shovels, axes and



CCC members return from a conservation project.

saws. The conservation projects worked on included tree planting to replenish the nation's dwindling timber supply, flood and erosion control, building walkways and buildings in parks, installing telephone and power lines, fighting forest fires and even setting up bee hives and collecting honey. By the second year the CCC exceeded everyone's expectations. Often the CCC was referred to as Roosevelt's Tree Army for the estimated 5 billion trees they planted across the U.S.

Additional benefits provided by the program included a literacy program. In the evenings classes in reading and writing took place. Some 40% were taught to read and write while they were there.

Healthy living also had a large impact. Many of the boys arrived at camp suffering from malnutrition and were poorly clothed. With plenty of wholesome food, working in the out of doors and properly clothed for the weather they gained weight and strength.

With such a large undertaking Roosevelt used the Army personnel to set up the camps and to provide leadership. There was a routine with discipline. This had an unexpected reward for the country. When we entered WWII the army had learned from this experience to deal with large numbers of people quickly, setting up sleeping quarters and mess halls. The draft began in 1940. In 1941 a shift was made from environmental work to construction work on military bases. A year later the Corps was disbanded as financial resources and young people were needed for the war effort.

What has happened to the Corps today? Although the original CCC was closed in 1942 it became a model for state agencies in the 1970s. Today states, including Texas, California, Montana and Washington have programs modeled after the CCC. The Corps Network has grown to encompass 113 Corps programs, both urban and rural. Also, part of the Federal AmeriCorps program is the National Civilian Community Corps where 18-24 year olds can dedicate 10 months of service.

**What is our history with the Corps?** That is what we would like to find out. Do you know of anyone who participated in the program? We would like to get a list of Otsego County residents who were "CCC boys". If possible we would like to interview them about their experiences.

We know the Pigeon River Forest was a site for one project. There was also another one or two southeast of Johannesburg and of course some in the Grayling area. What were the projects in our county?

If you have information to share please call Ginny Brozowski at 732-9406. We will gather up information and begin the interviews in the spring.



Central Repair Garage at Gaylord handled major vehicle repairs for all 23 Michigan camps in the CCC in the late 30's and early 40's. The building later became the site of the Gaylord Manufacturing Co. and currently Auto-Wares, Inc.

## Sharing Your Stories . . . Oral Histories



We are always looking for ways to expand our knowledge of the local area. An important way to do this is through oral histories. All we need to do is to match an older person who is willing to be interviewed about their history and experiences with a person who tapes the interview. The information we get through these oral histories is added to our research files. It's fun and it's easy. So if you would like to be interviewed please let us know. Everyone knows a part of our history as a community. By interviewing many people we can get a better picture of communities' histories.

### *Ginny's Gems...*

*Deal with faults of friends  
as gently as with your own.*

### Volunteers Needed

The Museum will be opening on June 1st and volunteers are needed in the Museum Gift Shoppe each day that we are open.

The shifts are 10 - 1 and 1 - 4 Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The Gift Shoppe is closed Wednesday and Sunday.



If you are interested in an exciting volunteer job, call me at 732-9406 for more information and to get on the work schedule.

Ginny Brozowski, Gift Shoppe Manager

### *In Sympathy*

Sympathy is extended to former OCHS Board Member Roberta Hudson, in the death of her husband Tim. Tim and Roberta were active at the Museum and Tim will certainly be missed. Roberta has moved to Florida to live with their son, temporarily.

## ~ Member Profile ~

Meet Susan Smethurst



Susan serves on the Otsego County Historical Society Board of Directors and just finished working on one of our cemetery projects.

Susan and her husband Dave have lived in Gaylord for the past 38 years and live in their beautiful home on Sparr Road. They have been blessed with a son Ross and a daughter Brooke. They became grandparents for the first time when Brooke and her husband John presented them with a baby boy in May. Susan is busy now being a "Grandma" and she loves it!

Susan is well known in Gaylord as she was the Director of the Retired & Senior Volunteer Program for 17 years and followed that with the Directorship of the Volunteer Center which she founded in 1998. She retired in 2007 so she can now pursue her love of quilting and her grandson.

Susan enjoys antiques and working with the volunteers so we feel very fortunate that she said "yes" when we asked her to be on our Museum Board of Directors.

### Is Winter Over Yet?

Sounds like when the kids wanted to know "are we there yet?" If you like winter, and I do, this has been one of the nicest in a long time. But if you do not like winter, it is probably way too long for you. Having the Museum closed in the winter allows us to do a lot of rearranging of artifacts to make our Museum look fresh and new for you. Doris Schulz and Bea Axford have been busy redoing the window displays and making some changes inside the Museum as well. Thanks to both of these ladies our Museum is kept up-to-date at all times.

Doris Miller has always been a great help to Doris Schulz in doing the window displays. Doris died January 28th after battling cancer this past year. She will be greatly missed by all of us.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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### WE'RE SORRY . . .

We're sorry that Dover Township was inadvertently omitted from the list of 2007-08 members in the November newsletter.

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