An Evening Well Spent  
A Successful Berrien County Historical Association Signature Event: Alexander Hamilton

Liz Muhlenbeck, PhD, the current BCHA Board President and professor in the School of Business Administration at Andrews University, gave a speech encouraging all to stoke the interest of history and help the History Center in its mission to preserve and present the County's history. Finally, the main attraction, Alexander Hamilton, portrayed by Eben Khuns of the Commonwealth of Virginia, took the stage where he captivated the audience with first-person recollections.

After gathering coats, their dates, and auction items, attendees were sent on their way with a smile and an apple in their hand generously provided by Tree-mendous Fruit Farm.

Thank you for making the event a success!

On Thursday, October 25, 2018, at 6 p.m. at the Lake Michigan College Mendel Center, the Berrien County Historical Association Board and Staff welcomed members and friends to the annual Signature Event: Alexander Hamilton. This may have been the best one yet! The evening began at the check-in station right inside the door, and then guests were greeted and directed to their tables by Bob Norris. Guests then enjoyed an hour of social chit-chat, a cash bar, and began bidding on the 65 silent auction items, varying in as much value as category. There were two live auction items: a weekend stay at a victorian home and a diamond ring.

As the lights dimmed Stephen Smith, BCHA Board Member and an attorney at Foster Swift, Collins, and Smith, stepped up to the microphone to welcome everyone to the event and ask for a moment of silent gratitude. The meal of salad, a choice of sliced roast beef, cherry balsamic viniagrette chicken, or eggplant parmesan, and blueberry cobbler served a la mode, was enjoyable and shared in the company of friends and family.
Berrien County Historical Association Board and Staff

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Kathy A. Cyr, Executive Director
Kelsey A. Curnutt, Museum Services Coordinator
Yarleth Gomez, Collections Manager

BCHA Mission Statement

The mission of the BCHA is to collect, preserve and interpret the history of Berrien County through exhibits, tours, publications, and educational and community outreach programs for public benefit.

Learn more about the BCHA by visiting www.berrienhistory.org

Director’s Comments

By Kathy Cyr

Dear Friends,

As we approach the end of 2018, and reflect back on all that we have accomplished in the past 12 months, we are amazed that we have offered 51 programs to the public. This is an incredible amount of work for just 2 full-time and 1 part-time staff members. We are indebted to those community members who volunteered their time and expertise to help with the programming or actually provide a program for the attendees education and enjoyment. Some of our program speakers are provided with an honorarium to help cover their expenses. We are most appreciative of the Berrien Springs –Eau Claire Rotary Club, Berrien County Historical Association (BCHA) Board of Directors, and BCHA Members, who have given generously of their monetary support to meet that financial obligation.

We are in the process of planning for 2019 and are looking for volunteers to assist with some of the school programs. The first of which will occur on Thursday, January 17 in the Courtroom. A St. Joseph High School teacher has his class conduct a mock trial and we are looking for volunteers to serve as members of the jury. Interested? Contact us at 269-471-1202 or email us at info@berrienhistory.org. We will keep you informed of other opportunities as they arise.

Knowing that the staff’s time is limited, we have partnered with a local travel planner Kay Walker to help BCHA with planning the Heritage Tours. Kay has put together a great trip to South Dakota from May 28 – June 5, 2019. Some of the highlights of the trip are: Mt. Rushmore, the Badlands, Crazy Horse Monument, Black Hills, Wild Horse Sanctuary, Deadwood, Spearfish Canyon, Iron Mountain Road, Mammoth Site, Bear Country USA, Wall Drug and Prairie Dog Town. We are putting the finishing touches on this trip and hope to have the trip booklet in the mail to you in December. A second trip will be planned for September to the Berkshires in Massachusetts/Vermont or you can opt to travel in October with the Berrien County Travel Club’s Colors of New England. Unfortunately, the Collette trip to New York City proved too costly for only three days of site seeing, so we will consider that at another time and create one of our own.

Speaking of our newsletter, as many of you may be aware we have only managed to produce two in 2018. Newsletters take a lot to produce: time, printing, folding, mailing, etc. With this in mind, in 2019 we will begin an e-newsletter that includes many of the same features as the printed newsletter but will be more regular with upcoming events—so make sure we have your email!

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Feeling pretty on the costume warehouse tour in Stratford in September.
Dear BCHA Members and Friends,

I am the worst mother. Ever. My kids agree. Whenever we go on vacation, rather than go to waterparks or popular hang-out spots, I typically insist on doing something educational and usually connected to history. This year for spring break, we all agreed to return to our former home in Kentucky. We’ve done most of the family-friendly historical things to do near Louisville, so I suggested we explore more of the state and follow the Underground Railroad. We started off in Harrodsburg, KY south of Lexington, at the Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill and had a fascinating tour of the community. We learned that these Shakers did not participate in the Underground Railroad, but did help to purchase the freedom of several slaves. Next on our trip was Maysville, KY where there is an Underground Railroad village and several historical buildings. But to our dismay, they were all closed for the season. So we went to the Underground Railroad Museum. Again, closed. We crossed over the Ohio River and made our way to Ripley, OH to the John Rankin house. Up on top of a tall bluff overlooking the river, Rankin’s house stands in a clearing where runaway slaves could see his conductor’s signal light in the window. But it was closed, as well as a house owned by a freed slave who was also a conductor on the railway. We next tried the birthplace and childhood homes of Ulysses S. Grant, but they were closed too. On to Cincinnati and the Freedom Center, but it was closed for the day. The house where Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of Uncle Tom’s Cabin, lived was also closed. So instead of “Underground Railroad”, the theme of our vacation became “closed for the season”. I’m disappointed that my kids didn’t get to learn about this time period of American history up close (of course I had researched and brought with us materials, worksheets, and stories to read in the car – worst mom, remember?)

I’m so happy that the Berrien County Historical Center at Courthouse Square is never closed for the season. Our dedicated staff ensures that people can access Berrien history all during the year. I think Berrien County is fortunate to have the Courthouse Square open to teach visitors of our local history and serve as a symbol of our justice system in Michigan.

We want to continue to “be open” in our community. That is why we are asking you to partner with the Berrien County Historical Association to be more involved in preserving and sharing our local history. The upcoming Annual Appeal is one way that you can participate. Our goal this year is $6,000. Please consider how much you can give. Your gift, above your membership dues, will directly impact our operating budget to allow our staff to continue to provide the level of service the community has come to appreciate and expect through our outstanding programming, research services, exhibits, archive management, and building restoration initiatives.

Thank you for your continued support,
Liz Muhlenbeck
President, Board of Directors

P.S. Upon returning from spring break, I found out there is an Underground Railroad stop in Cass County 25 miles away from my house, and a former Shaker community down the road from us in Berrien Springs. Load up the car kids… we’re off to visit history! Yay!
John Frambach Receives Frank J. Ward Memorial History Award

On Tuesday, April 17, people gathered in the Courtroom at Courthouse Square for the Berrien County Historical Association Annual Meeting. Kathy Cyr, Executive Director, reported on all that occurred over the past year. It was during this meeting that we said farewell and thank you to two BCHA Board Members: Robert Feldman, who was the Board Treasurer, and Gary Campbell, who has served as Board President since 2016. We welcomed three new Board Members: Mary Ellen Drolet (current Treasurer), Dennis Hollinsead, and Mariann Litznerski; and welcomed Liz Muhlenbeck, PhD, as the new Board President. The keynote speaker for the evening was Steve Arseneau, Director of the Dowagiac Area History Museum, who presented “The World Wide Webb Miller”, about the reporter from Cass County who recorded world events from World War I to Ghandi. The Annual Meeting is also when we present the Frank J. Ward Memorial History Award. John Frambach was the 2017 recipient of the Frank J. Ward Memorial History Award, presented to him by Liz Muhlenbeck. Since 1989, Frambach has been a historical reenactor with the Fort St. Joseph Militia; was a charter member and one of the most dedicated players of Berrien County’s vintage baseball club, the Cranberry Boggers, in the 1990s; helped form Mary’s City of David’s vintage baseball club, the House of David Echoes; created the Heritage Garden outside the Murdock Log House at the History Center in 2002 and continues to maintain the garden ensuring the types of beds and plants are appropriate to the 1830s; presented programs at the History Center ranging from Heritage Gardens to serving as “Potions Master” for the “Harry Potter Day” in 2007; and served on the board of directors of the History Center from 2000-2005.

Frambach has always been ready to lend his expertise to the History Center whenever needed. In short, he has been one of the History Center’s most reliable resources for many years and as a thank you for his many contributions to the preservation and interpretation of Berrien County History, we are pleased to award the Frank J. Ward Memorial History Award to Mr. Frambach. In his response, Frambach stated that “history is more than dates and names in books. History is the story of people.”

Summer Programs

From May through September, the History Center is open later and on Sundays-allowing us to provide more learning opportunities for the community. This summer we had programs on Sundays that varied from musical programs to historical information, as well as our Thursdays at Courthouse Square summer series. In total we had 22 programs available. Our last summer program was on Sunday, September 30. Bob and Candace Myers came as the Common Soldier of the American Revolution and his counterpart. We are currently planning new programs and lining up new speakers for summer 2019. Make sure you are signed up to receive emails for the most recent updates on all programs; we love having you visit!
We are currently gearing up for another strategic planning session (the previous session was held in 2014), and your input is needed. We began gathering responses at the Signature Event, the BCHA Board of Director’s annual fund raising event held on this past October 25. If you were not able to attend the event or are not on our email list and received an online survey, we encourage you to complete and return the enclosed survey. Your responses are very important to us to help us with future programming and activities held at the History Center at Courthouse Square as well as where the resources will come from to support the continuation of the work provided by the Berrien County Historical Association DBA The History Center at Courthouse Square.

We wish you a blessed Holiday Season and hope that you will join us on December 6 from 6-9 p.m. for the community wide “Kindle your Christmas Spirit” event.

Sincerely,
Kathy A. Cyr
Executive Director

Sidewalk Super Saver!

Earlier in 2018, we paired with Mrs. Peddie’s second-grade classroom for a fundraiser. While on a trip to the History Center, the students noticed some cracks in the ceilings (now fixed by the county) and were very worried about the History Center falling apart. After some discussion the students spearheaded an online fundraiser to replace the wooden boardwalk. This fundraiser is still live and if you would like to help out, visit www.gofundme.com/a-pathway-to-history. There is still a long way to go but every little bit helps!

From the Collection


Edward K. Warren owned a dry goods store in Three Oaks where he learned that many women were unsatisfied with their whalebone corsets which became brittle and stiff with continued use. With this in mind, he developed a corset that used turkey feathers which were both durable and flexible, patenting the design in 1883. This led to the organization of the Warren Featherbone Company.

He and Mary Louise were great contributors to the community and started the Edward K. Warren Foundation to oversee the management of two 200-acre tracts of forest and beach which later became Warren Dunes State Park and Warren Woods State Park.


Edna died in New York in 1962.

The photograph shown here is of Edna Warren Lackey seated in front on a sled on what appears to be a snowfield. The rest of the group are unidentified.
BCHA on the Go

One of the unique opportunities we offer members and friends of members is to travel to other historical locations. In the past these tours have been on busses and within the United States. Last September was our first extended tour in Canada, and this year we ventured even further abroad for our summer tour to the Holy Lands of Israel and Jordan, led by two prominent biblical archaeologists. In addition, we went to Hannibal and Ste. Genevieve, Missouri in the Spring and to Stratford, Ontario in the Autumn. We love these tours because it lets us get to know you better and learn other region's local history along the way.

Historic Missouri  April 22-25, 2018

Hannibal, Missouri is the boyhood home of the celebrated American author, Mark Twain, and it was the first stop on our tour to Historic Missouri in April. While there we ate at the Star Theatre and enjoyed the 1938 film version of Tom Sawyer, took a tour of the Mark Twain museums, explored the Mark Twain Caves, and even visited with Tom and Becky! The group then went to Ste. Genevieve--the oldest European settlement west of the Mississippi. We had phenomenal guides who went above and beyond the expected lines of duty - even to get us after-hours access to the local museum!
Holy Lands of Israel and Jordan  July 2-15, 2018

In the 17th and 18th centuries, young individuals would go on what was termed the Grand Tour - exploring cities important to western development. In July people from all over the United States and Canada stepped on an airplane and journeyed to Israel and Jordan for a two week adventure that would be their Grand Tour. It was a tour not to be soon forgotten; it included a walking tour of Jerusalem, a dip in the Dead Sea, visits to (remote) archaeological sites, viewing the Dead Sea Scrolls, a ride on a fishing boat on the Sea of Galilee, an intimate meal at the home of a Jordanian, visiting a mosque (a first for many!), walking through spice markets, and exploring the ancient city of Petra.

Stratford Festival  September 7-10, 2018

For the third and final tour of 2018, we went to Stratford, Ontario for the Stratford Festival in September. Though this was a 4-day, 3-night, tour we were able to accomplish a lot! We saw five plays, took in a behind-the-scenes tour of the theatre, were led on a tour of the gardens, and even saw the costume warehouse where we were able to try on a couple costumes ourselves!
Picture taken during Kindle Your Christmas Spirit 2017 by Karen Campbell.

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Kindle Your Christmas Spirit, Thursday December 6, 2018, 6 pm
Kick off the Holiday Season with the Berrien Springs Village holiday open-house. At the History Center the Trinity Lutheran School will have their Christmas program, a fire going in the Log Cabin with a volunteer blacksmith providing information about Pioneer Christmas traditions, and someone in the forge for a blacksmith demonstration. This evening is a great way for you and your family to spend time together.

South Dakota Adventure, May 28-June 5, 2019
Announcing the first history tour of 2019, with the Berrien Springs Travel Club, we will be heading to South Dakota for an unforgettable adventure. We will see Mt. Rushmore, the Badlands, Crazy Horse Monument, and more! More details to follow. Call 269-471-1202 to reserve your spot!

Continuing and Upcoming Events

Picture taken during Kindle Your Christmas Spirit 2017 by Karen Campbell.