

Small Disciplines and Big Initiatives



Three Year Plan in Place

Interested members, together with the Board, met over the summer to do some strategic planning.

First on the list of things to do as a group was the development of a website to be up and running by summer's end. The website will serve as a great introduction to our mission and work as a practical resource for our membership.

Other goals include an increase in grant funding for special programs and operations such as the annual book fairs and the year-long Motown 50th year celebration coming up in 2009. We are also looking to acquire a site to house the Society's archives.

Of course we want to expand our membership as well and to be able to engage members through work on special committees for grant writing, research, education, membership, and publicity.

Also important is the creation of various Society publications (in addition to our newsletter) that will make our work available to scholars and researchers. These publications could take the form of individual or serial monographs, books, or catalogues.

Another goal is an increase in youth involvement. We hope to revive the History Detectives program by developing ways of working with area educators who can bring the program to their classrooms.

Last on this list is to preserve partnerships and collaborations we currently enjoy and to add others when appropriate.

Maurice Sanders and his research team have initiated a project to identify the Colored (African American), Civil War Soldiers, buried in Cass Co. Calvin, Twp. MI. Most of the Soldiers were attached to the 102 USCT, but they are focusing on three cemeteries in Calvin Township - Chain Lake / Lake



Chicago Authr to Headline Book Fair

Ronne Hartfield, a native of Chicago, is a poet, writer and a former administrator



of two of the most important arts education organizations in the country. In 1991, she began serving the Art Institute of Chicago as the executive director for museum education. Due to her work there, Hartfield is internationally recognized as an expert in arts and multicultural education. Formerly she acted as the project director of Urban Gateways, the largest private arts organization in the United States and as professor of comparative literature and dean of students at the Art Institute of Chicago. She then returned to Urban Gateways as executive director. Under her leadership, the National Endowment for the Arts designated the organization a national model for artist training and community arts education.

Ms. Hartfield has earned undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of Chicago in History, Theology and Literature and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Humane Letters by DePaul University in 2006. She continues to consult with the Art Institute on a variety of projects. She serves as a trustee for the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation and the Rhode Island School of Design. She served as a trustee for Chicago's Columbia College and New York's International Sculpture Center for five years and has worked as a consultant for the NEA and the Rockefeller Foundation. She serves on the Executive Committee of the University of Chicago Women's Board; the Martin Marty Center at the University of Chicago Divinity School; the Dean's Leadership Council at the Harvard University Divinity School; and the Legacy Committee of the Illinois Holocaust Museum.

Ms. Hartfield is consultant to the National Endowment for the Arts; the U.S. Office of Education; The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.; and the National Institute for Museum and Library Services at Newberry Library in Chicago, as well as to museums in Brazil, London and Japan. She has been honored with travel fellowships to Japan, Mexico, South America and Germany, and has been twice selected as a Fellow by the Aspen Institute. She is a winner of a Rockefeller Foundation/Bellagio Fellowship.

Ms. Hartfield's book traces the journey of her mother Day from the border country of Mississippi and Louisiana to Bronzeville in black Chicago during the first half of the twentieth century. Through the eyes of her mother and herself she describes the life of the city and the middle-class culture of a unique neighborhood. She includes defining moments in black history as they are experienced by her family and others on Chicago's South Side, from the 1919 race riots to the murder of Emmett Till to the dawn of the Civil Rights movement. Her story is how one family responds to the "tangled roots of racism" in America and survives triumphant.

View Cemetery, Mt. Zion Cemetery, and Bethel Cemetery. The project was begun by Barbara Mitchell, several years ago and she has now passed it on to Maurice because he and others have transcribed and are in the process of transcribing tombstones for other cemeteries. The goal is to replace or to restore, the tombstones of those of their ancestors who fought with honor and courage in the Civil War. The mission is to not only identify the soldier and his burial location, but also to give some information about his family. Newspaper articles or obituaries are a

valuable resource. There may be soldiers who were from Cass County and went to war but were not returned to Cass County for burial. Their names and burial locations should be documented. The group also hopes to see, as the project is completed, that cemetery signs be placed at Bethel and Mt. Zion Cemeteries, along with a flag pole.

If there are any questions or concerns, please contact Maurice by email or telephone. maurice@atl.net 248.669.0991 home 313.460.9828 cell

UPCOMING EVENTS

November 10, 2007

"First Families: African Americans Who Blazed the Trail"

Portage District Library
300 Library Lane
Portage Michigan
2-4 p.m.

This is the second year for this event. Featured will be presentations by Sherman Ampey on the Ampey family, John Johnson on the Williams/Johnson family, and Maurice Sanders on the Allens of Cass County. All three of these gentlemen have done extensive research and will give valuable advice to those who may be thinking of beginning their own family history project.

January 16, 2008

Quarterly Meeting

Kalamazoo Public Library, Central Branch

Van Deusen Room
315 S. Rose Street
Kalamazoo, MI
5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Moderator for the panel:

Stephanie Esters of the "Kalamazoo Gazette."

In recognition of Martin Luther King's birthday and in anticipation of Black History Month our program will be "African American-First" in Kalamazoo. We will feature a panel of area residents discussing what their experiences were like being the first in their fields.

February 16, 2008

Fourth Annual African American Book Fair

"We All Got History"
Douglass Community Center
1000 W. Paterson • Kalamazoo, Michigan
12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Look forward to the best book fair yet with guest author Ronne Hartfield (see article p.2), author of *A Long Way Home: The Tangled Roots of Race in One Chicago Family* and local authors discussing and selling their books. In addition, this year for the first time we will be presenting workshops on the Friday evening and Saturday morning before the book fair. Ms. Hartfield will discuss her book and offer advice and counsel on how others can begin to develop their family history or individual memoir. A "meet the author" reception at Zazio's for life members will follow the Friday workshop.



President's Column Donna Odom

Welcome to our fall newsletter. During the month of August the Executive Board and others sat down to put some very serious thought to our direction for the next few years. The result was our strategic plan. The article on page two by board member, Howie Peak, summarizes the goals of the plan. Below is a list of some of the things that were included in what we want to preserve and what we want to avoid for the future. Where applicable, I have indicated what progress has been made in that area:

Avoid

- Duplication of what others are doing.

Progress: We have been in touch with three organizations that have similar goals in the areas of recognition of the African American heritage and involvement of youth and have begun dialogues with them towards collaboration.

- Deviating from our mission.

Progress: We have streamlined our upcoming book fair so that our concentration will be on recognizing and preserving our history and encouraging the community to research and document their own family histories.

Preserve

- Existing partnerships and Family Programs

Progress: We will again partner with the Douglass Community Center, the Kalamazoo Public Library, and the Portage District Library for activities surrounding the fourth annual book fair.

The Portage District Library will partner with us again for this year's "First Families" program (see "Upcoming Events")

The Kalamazoo Public Library will partner with us again for the second "Family Affair" in May.

Other exciting plans involve expanding our publications beyond the quarterly newsletter. Part of our mission is to educate the community about the rich African American heritage of southwest Michigan. Thus a goal is to begin publishing monographs on various aspects of that history.

Southwest Michigan encompasses several counties outside of Kalamazoo, and another of our goals is to begin outreach to some of those counties (e.g., Cass, Calhoun, and Van Buren) through programs and meetings.

So hop on board and join in the fun for the next few years of celebration and recognition of the African American contribution to southwest Michigan!

Donna Odom, President SMBHS

JOIN US TODAY!

Mail membership form to: Southwest Michigan Black Heritage Society
2507 Parkview, Kalamazoo, MI 49008

As a member, you will receive advance notice of all programs and events, newsletters, discounted rates on workshops, seminars, official publications and more!

Please enroll me under the following category (annual rate):

Adult Membership: \$12.50 _____

Senior (65+): \$7.50 _____

Family Membership: \$20 _____
(Two adults and children under 18)

Patron: \$100 or more _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please indicate how you can help our efforts:

I have family documents and photographs you can scan to become part of the archives.

I would like to help with research.

I am a photographer or videographer and can help document some of the historic places and significant people in Southwest Michigan.

I can design a website

I can help organize the archives.

I am an artist and I can help design exhibits and displays.

I can donate computer equipment.

Other: _____



THE CONNECTION TO YESTERDAY...

Newsletter

Fall 2007

“Third Time’s A Charm Smokin’ Good Barbecue”

It was a beautiful Saturday morning at the end of July. Blazing blue sky. Nice cool breeze under the canopies on the patio at R.Stanley’s. It was our Third Annual Membership BBQ.

Sipping sangria and eyeing big hunks of chicken on the grill – quartered, slow-roasted and applewood-smoked, then served with Calypso Sauce (a rum and jerk-seasoned mix with a little bit of sweet and a little bit of heat). That on a plate with Jamaican Peas and

Rice. It was all preceded by a grilled Pineapple Salad with Mango Vinaigrette. For dessert, members enjoyed R.Stanley’s famous White Chocolate Raspberry Cheesecake. It was a menu with a mission - to point up some of the African influences in Creole and Caribbean cooking, one of the area’s four great influences: the original islanders; the Carib Indians; the colonizing Europeans (the Spanish, the English, the French, and the Dutch), then the Africans, and finally the Chinese and East Indians. R. Stanley

Head Chef and SMBHS board member, Howie Peak, told the group there are folks who also believe there’s a fifth great influence - the Tourists! Their main contribution has been hamburgers and French fries.

Quoting from *The Cooking of the Caribbean Islands* by Linda Wolfe, Peak told the group further that “fifteen million slaves were imported to the Americas between 1518 and 1865. Exactly how many of these were taken to which island is not certain, but it is known that during one

century at the height of the slave trade two million Africans went to the British West Indies alone. Besides bringing certain foods with them—plants like okra and callaloo, taro and akee—the Africans developed a style of cooking that is basic to Caribbean food today. “Because they were so often fed with foods their masters rejected or that were cheap to raise and had little taste, they learned how to flavor their food cleverly. Pungent seasoning and spicing were essential to make poor foods palatable.”

Peak added that he considered it “one of God’s little ironies” that one of the best and most sought after cuisines anywhere in the world today is one more example that what somebody meant for evil, has certainly turned out for the good.



Chef Howie



Donna Odum, Sous Chef Monica, Al Odum, Maurice Sanders



Frank & Karen Blair, Phyllis Seabolt, Al Dixon



Josephine Balgar, Pat Phillips, Keyonny Hamphries



Romeo Phillips and The Johnsons



Phyllis Seabolt