

JOIN US TODAY!

Mail membership form to: **Southwest Michigan Black Heritage Society**
2206 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)

Life Member: \$125 _____

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:



2206 Parkview
Kalamazoo, MI 49008

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THE CONNECTION TO YESTERDAY...

Newsletter

First Families:

African Americans Who Blazed a Trail

On Sunday, November 11th the Society presented the second annual family history program in partnership with the Portage District Library. The program, "First Families: African Americans Who Blazed a Trail," took place at the library, where genealogy enthusiasts, historians and first family members heard the histories and viewed photographs, memorabilia, and videos of some of the original African American families to settle in southwest Michigan.

Presenters included:

Sherman Ampey of the Ampey/Goens family of Kalamazoo County.



Sherman Ampey modestly refuses the credit for gathering the family information. He gives that honor to Tom Ampey, his 2nd cousin, who passed on in 1992 and left a wealth of family information of which Sherman has become the guardian. Unbeknownst to the rest of the family, Tom had spent 50 to 60 years documenting the family history in notebooks in his home. After he passed and his wife Dortha was put into a nursing home, Sherman discovered that there was literally a truckload of material on the Ampey and Goens families. As elder of the family, Sherman has felt it his duty to take on the preservation of those materials.

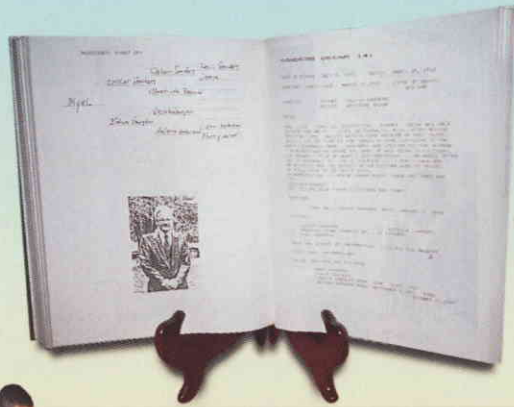
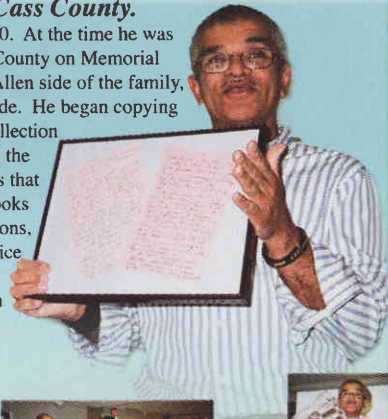
John Johnson of the Williams/Johnson family of Kalamazoo County.



John is new to doing family research, having just begun seriously about a year ago. Besides being a board member at large of the Southwest Michigan Black Heritage Society, he is also active in the Kalamazoo County Historical Society and the Kalamazoo Genealogical Society. Exposure to these organizations has whet his appetite for finding out more about his family. His daughters had begun some research, but their busy professional lives no longer allow them to put the time to it. He also has a cousin who had acted as the family historian, but she has had health problems, so she is no longer able. It now rests on John, and he is ready to meet the challenge. His goal is to develop an organized and systematic plan and to begin collecting oral histories, letters, and photographs.

Maurice Sanders of the Allen/Sanders family of Cass County.

Maurice Sanders started collecting family information in about 1970. At the time he was spending a lot of time in the African American cemeteries in Cass County on Memorial Day and other times of the year. He already knew a lot about the Allen side of the family, but it was at that point that he got really interested in the Sanders side. He began copying dates from the tomb stones and taking pictures. He continued this collection of data and information for about 15 years, spending many hours in the basement of the Cass County Courthouse, looking at the old ledgers that had been handwritten with a quill pen. He skimmed through the books until he found mention of Sanders, Allens, Vaughns, Stewarts, Wilsons, or Andersons – all surnames that connected within his family. Maurice dedicated his first book, Descendents of Allen-Sanders, to his grandmothers and mother. In it can be found about 274 names with as much information as he could find for each person.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Friday, January 25, 6:00 – 10:00 p.m.
"Genealogy Lock-in"
 Kalamazoo Public Library
 315 S. Rose Street
 Kalamazoo, MI

A free after-hours event just for genealogists! Explore reference materials and databases, learn how to use the microfilm reader/scanner/printer, save microfilm images to CD or flash drive – or just take advantage of free copying and printing during the event. You may bring your own laptop and use the library's WIFI network. Free reserved parking in the library lot.

Registration required; call 553-7808 to register beginning January 7.

Hosted by: Dr. Roman Phillips, retired professor emeritus of music and education at Kalamazoo College and a former member of the Portage City Council.



Sunday February 3, 3:00 p.m.
"Lift Every Voice: 1900-1920"
 Kalamazoo Valley Museum
 230 N. Rose Street • Kalamazoo, MI

This is the first film from the PBS series, "I'll Make Me a World," that will be presented each Sunday throughout February at the Museum. This segment covers the trials and triumphs of the first generation of African Americans born into freedom: vaudeville stars who struggled to transcend the stereotypes of the minstrel tradition and talented musicians in New Orleans who created the exuberant sound that the world came to recognize as the original American music - jazz. Oscar Micheaux, who made motion pictures that reflected the complexities of black life during an era of racial segregation and conflict, is also featured.

Sunday, February 10, 3:00 – 4:30 p.m.
"Without Fear or Shame: 1920-1937"
 Kalamazoo Valley Museum
 230 N. Rose Street • Kalamazoo, MI

Second film in the "I'll Make Me a World" PBS series. These are years of massive migration from South to North, white fascination with "Negro" entertainment and arts, and the day of the "New Negro" in politics and culture. Focusing on the creative movement known as the Harlem Renaissance, the program highlights Langston Hughes, Zora Neal Hurston, and women blues singers. Hosted by: Dr. Michelle Johnson, historian and Zora Neale Hurston scholar.



UPCOMING EVENTS CONTINUED

Friday, February 15, 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.
African American Book Fair Advance Workshop
 Kalamazoo Public Library • 315 S. Rose Street • Kalamazoo Michigan

Ronne Hartfield, distinguished author and featured speaker for the Fourth Annual African-American Book Fair will present the first of two workshops. Through the story of the creation of her book, *Another Way Home: the Tangled Roots of Race in One Chicago Family*, she will emphasize the importance of the individual family history in illustrating the broader sweep of human experience and serving as a prism through which one can see the external world and its conflicts and complications, especially those related to racism. In addition, she also will offer advice and counsel on how others can begin to develop their family history or individual memoir. Book-signing will follow.

Saturday, February 16, 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.
African American Book Fair Advance Workshop
 Portage District Library • 100 Library Lane • Portage, MI

Second of two workshops based on Ms. Hartfield's book. Book-signing will follow.

Saturday, February 16, 12:00 -3:00 p.m.
Fourth Annual African American Book Fair
 Douglass Community Association • 1000 W. Paterson
 Kalamazoo, MI 49007

Featured speaker is Ronne Hartfield, author of *Another Way Home: the Tangled Roots of Race in One Chicago Family*. In her talk Ms. Hartfield will describe how she came to write her book and how her experience growing up in a mixed race household became a source of strength and courage for her. Local authors, including Christina McGrinson, author of *Forever Friends* will present and sign copies of their books. Sale of books by African American authors.

Sunday, February 17, 3:00 – 4:30 p.m.
"Bright Like a Sun: 1935-1954"
 Kalamazoo Valley Museum • 230 N. Rose Street • Kalamazoo, MI

Third film in the "I'll Make Me a World" PBS series. Challenging experiences move African American artists to adapt and expand their creative visions. Paul Robeson, the legendary singer and star of stage and screen, uses his artistry and fame to fight for social justice in the US and abroad. A vibrant art school is built in Harlem where young African American talent can be nurtured. Young musicians begin to play bebop and "cool" jazz. Hosted by: Alfreynn Roberts, award-winning soprano who performed in the Detroit Opera's production of "Porgy and Bess" and has sung with the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra.

Sunday, February 24, 3:00 – 4:30 p.m.

"The Freedom You Will Take: 1985 – Present"
 Fourth and last film in the "I'll Make Me a World" PBS series. The contemporary cultural landscape is transformed by the power of African American film, performance, dance, rap music, and spoken word forms. Young musicians, poets, and other creative talents express the hopes and challenges that bring America into the new millennium. Hosted by: Denise Miller, KVCC instructor of English and African American Literature, poet, and artist.



President's Column Donna Odom

Happy New Year! Hope your holidays were filled with family, fun, and great food! This is the time we traditionally take a look back at the previous year and either congratulate ourselves on the things we've accomplished and/or make a list of things we resolve to accomplish this new year. This year I asked friends and family to make a list of the five best things that happened to them in 2007. In that same vein, here are the five highlights of the year for the Society:

1. We completed our three-year strategic plan. A major accomplishment that will be our guide in planning activities and programs.
2. Our website went on-line. Take some time to check us out and feel free to contact us with suggestions (www.smbhs.org).
3. We obtained a grant from the Kalamazoo Community Foundation that will help fund our 2008 book fair.
4. We were successful in securing Ronne Hartfield, distinguished author and arts educator, for the 2008 book fair.
5. We increased membership by 20%.

In this issue of the newsletter, we report on the second annual first families program. We continue to marvel at the time and effort these family historians have put into chronicling their family histories and we are inspired by the will and determination it took to overcome the obstacles and challenges they faced in their migrations from the South to settle here in southwest Michigan.

Take note also of the "Mark Your Calendars" column that lists some of the events in February in recognition of the month of Martin Luther King's birthday and Black History Month.