

Winter 2011



471 South St
Suite 42A
381-9775

YOUR CONNECTION TO YESTERDAY

Member Update

Projects and Programs

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 12,
2011, 2:00 PM

“Read All About It!”
Exploring the History and
Stories of the Black Experience



An SMBHS Program in
Recognition of Black History Month. In col-
laboration with Kazoo Books and the Portage
District Library.

Featuring a lively book lovers panel discussion
with the Executive Director of the Black Arts
and Cultural Center; Gloria Tiller of Kazoo
Books, and a representative from the Brown
Sugar Book Club. Panelists will share their top
two favorites from 2010.

Guest author is Denise Miller, poet and author of
Speak Easy, a collection of her poems.

Unique round table “speed discussions” will
follow. Join us for this opportunity to meet book
groups, purchase books, and leave with a list of
recommended books. No registration required.

SATURDAY, APRIL 2

9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

“Finding Family:
Connecting with Family and Capturing
Family Stories

Featuring **Tony Burroughs**, interna-
tionally known genealogist, author,
teacher and lecturer. In collaboration
with the Kalamazoo Valley Genealogi-
cal Society and the Portage District
Library.

Morning sessions of this event will in-
clude genealogy workshops with local
genealogists and historians on genealogy
basics and doing family oral history. Mr.
Burroughs speaks in the afternoon, giving
advice on overcoming the challenges of
doing family history. Box lunch is in-
cluded.

Participants receive a genealogy toolkit
with basics for beginning genealogy pro-
jects, family history forms, and resource
lists.

To register, call Marsha at 324-9203.

Both events take place at Portage Library, 300 Library Lane, Portage, MI

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Research into the history of African Americans in southwest Michigan is the basic purpose of the Southwest Michigan Black Heritage Society. We realized early on in pursuing our research that, barring the excellent work of Dr. Benjamin Wilson, retired professor of African American studies at Western Michigan University, there had not been a lot published. That has made our work difficult and time consuming. Our friends at the WMU Archives, the local history room at the Kalamazoo Public Library, Willard Library in Battle Creek, and the Kalamazoo Valley Museum have been of tremendous assistance in helping us root out what is there. In addition, we have learned to go directly to the source—those who have lived much of the history of the area. That is why in recent years we have put so much emphasis on oral history and working with families to document their history. We have produced two publications:

The History Detectives Oral History Project and *Telling the Kalamazoo Community RACE Story*, both oral history projects.

We have just completed the digital transcription of the two-volume, hand-written Ampey family history that includes a wealth of information on most of the early African American families that settled in the region.

Our current projects center on the following topics:

- ?? Early Barbers: the First African American Professionals
- ?? Tracing the descendants of Dorothy Butler and her family who settled in Kalamazoo County after escaping slavery through the Underground Railroad.

We welcome suggestions and assistance from our membership in our on-going research.