

History Matters



Keego Harbor • Orchard Lake • Sylvan Lake • West Bloomfield

Newsletter of Greater West Bloomfield Historical Society

SPRING 2025 | APPLE ISLAND TOURS | SOCIETY PROGRAMS & NEWS | HITE PHOTO 100TH ANNIVERSARY | HISTORY OF THE WALLS FARM

Apple Island Tours 2025!



Experience the serene beauty of WBSD's Apple Island during this popular annual event. This is a unique opportunity to visit the 35-acre nature sanctuary at the center of Orchard Lake and learn more about its nature and history.

For Tour tips, details, and updates: www.gwbhs.org/apple-island-tours/

About the Trip: The tour begins at Orchard Lake Museum, followed by a quick bus ride to the Orchard Lake Road DNR boat launch (bus transportation provided by West Bloomfield Parks) and a pontoon boat ride to Apple Island. The tour of the island is self-paced. Allow 3 hours for the round trip.

Activities at Orchard Lake Museum: Orchard Lake Museum and Gift Shop will be open during the event. Outdoor activities include historical costume photo op, archaeology dig box, and old-fashioned games and crafts. Snacks will be available for purchase.

Tickets: Ticket donations: \$25 adult, \$15 child (ages 5-12). No children under 5 are allowed on tour. Tickets will be available for purchase at Orchard Lake Museum on a first-come, first-served basis during the event.

Advance Reservations: MEMBERS ONLY May 1 - June 7: Back by popular demand – GWBHS members* may purchase tickets and schedule their chosen estimated time of departure online! Must be present 15 minutes before planned departure time. Reservations are non-refundable, except in case of event cancellation due to weather.
*Members at the Individual level may purchase one advance

ticket. Other membership levels may purchase advance tickets for up to 6 people.

Support Apple Island Tours as a \$500 gold sponsor, \$125 silver sponsor, or \$50 Apple Island Champion. See details on Page 5 and at gwbhs.org/support/sponsorships/

Volunteers & Docents are needed! See what it's all about in training sessions, at the Orchard Lake Museum! RSVP the day prior at contact@gwbhs.org or (248) 757-2451.

- Second-grade student island and Museum docents on Wednesday, May 7, 7 pm
- Apple Island Tours volunteers and docents on Wednesday, June 11, 7 pm

Hite Photo Celebrates 100 Years

Hite Photo, a cornerstone of Detroit's photographic industry, is celebrating over 100 years of excellence. Founded in 1924 by Howard Hite, the company began with a modest loan secured by a Model T Ford. Over the decades, Hite Photo has grown into a thriving business, operating in two locations, West Bloomfield and Bloomfield Hills.



Today, the third-generation leadership of brothers Don and Tom Hite, along with fourth-generation Julia Hite, continue the family's dedication to preserving memories and delivering exceptional service. Their in-house scanning services ensure that family histories are kept alive for future generations. Unlike faceless online services, Hite Photo offers same-day delivery on products such as photographic prints, canvases, metal prints, and business printing, emphasizing the importance of fast and local service. As Don Hite Jr. states, "People want fast and local. They also want to know their memories and ideas are in good hands."

Continued on Page 5

From the Desk of President Gina Gregory

We are fortunate to see interest in our local history.

We began the year with the annual meeting, recognizing volunteers for their service: Rick Bartus for his Poker Rally leadership and Sue Williams for 13 years of service as GWBHS Treasurer. We welcomed Diane Eanes to another Board term.



We saw a new annual meeting/presentation attendance record. The event was held at the WB Library, with easy access. There was interest in Gregory Sumner's Michigan POW Camps in World War II presentation, with guests having an opportunity to purchase signed books. Other winter historical program lectures at the Library were also well received, with a UGRR presentation now available on the CCTV YouTube channel.



We installed a new accounting system and are working to upgrade the Orchard Lake Museum security system.

This spring guests enjoyed a walking tour at Orchard Lake Nature Sanctuary, will attend the Michigan Week Community Awards Breakfast, participate in the Memorial Day Parade, and look forward to Apple Island Tours and Appreciation Reception. Check out our new program with WB Parks: Apple Island Kayak Adventure.

Open House themes continue to share local and new Black history information, and historical tax roll books, with new and returning guests attending each time!

A significant milestone will be highlighted at West Bloomfield Town Hall. View the 100th anniversary exhibit, of and by Hite Photo, June - August, in the GWBHS exhibit case.

Finally, show your support for GWBHS history! Please

- Donate items, photos, or your memories at gwbhs.org/research/collectingmemories/
- Share your talents as a docent, collections volunteer, or committee member to lead a short-term activity
- Support by your membership, sponsorship, donation - what is allowed for a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

Updates from Anna Smith Museum & Communications Assistant

GWBHS is excited to announce an update in our efforts to "align" our digital collection. This January and February, student volunteer Ava Bagne from Bennington College in Vermont completed 200 hours of work with GWBHS as part of her school's Field Work Term. During this time, she was able to update almost 600 records in our digital collection, adding improved information and photographs to the record data. Thanks to Ava's efforts, GWBHS has made significant progress in our Collection Alignment project to "align" all 3,159 records in our digital collection with our physical collection and current Museum exhibit topics. In the future, we hope to finish this project with grant funding or continued volunteer efforts. You can view our digital collection with updated records online for free at GWBHS.PastPerfectOnline.com.



Ava Bagne finds a photo of her house while working on the Collection Alignment project

We also saw a successful return of our Apple Island Tours last year, after a five-year pandemic-related pause. Much of this success was due to the efforts of over 30 volunteers during the two-day event.

Looking forward, volunteers are needed for 2025 Apple Island Tours on Saturday, June 14, and Sunday, June 15. There are many different positions available, including on Apple Island, inside the Museum and on Museum grounds. If you are interested in helping with this event or becoming part of our dedicated volunteer group, please email contact@gwbhs.org or call 248-757-2451. Volunteers enjoy GWBHS events!

"I had an awesome time volunteering and loved everybody – felt like it was right where we were all supposed to be!"
Kelly Mandel, 2024 Apple Island Tours volunteer.

2025 Programs

May-August



Greater
West Bloomfield
Historical Society

Greater West Bloomfield Historical Society hosts and sponsors programs covering a wide variety of history topics throughout the year. Visit GWBHS.org for more information and final event details.

Apple Island Docent Training

Wednesday, May 7, 7 pm

Orchard Lake Museum, 3951 Orchard Lake Road

Would you like to lead a tour on Apple Island or guide a 2nd-grade class at the Orchard Lake Museum? Come see what it's all about. RSVP by Tuesday, May 6 to contact@gwbhs.org. No charge.

Greater West Bloomfield Michigan Week Community Awards Breakfast

Friday, May 9, 7 am

Temple Israel, 5725 Walnut Lake Road

Attend the Greater West Bloomfield Michigan Week Community Awards Breakfast alongside GWBHS and celebrate individuals and organizations serving our community. Details at michiganweek.org.



Keego Harbor Memorial Day Parade

Monday, May 26, 9 am-12 pm

GWBHS is looking for volunteers to join them in the Memorial Day Parade on May 26. Volunteers are invited to walk (and potentially carry a large flag), bike, or drive

their classic car. For details, contact duannesonneville@hotmail.com.

Apple Island Tours Volunteer & Docent Training

Wednesday, June 11, 7 pm

Orchard Lake Museum, 3951 Orchard Lake Road

Learn how to volunteer or be a docent at the Museum during Apple Island Tours! RSVP by Tuesday, June 10 to contact@gwbhs.org. No charge.



Apple Island Tours

Saturday, June 14, & Sunday, June 15, 10 am-3:30 pm

(Boat/bus driver break from 12:30-1 pm)

Self-paced guided tours of WBSD's Apple Island. 3:30 pm is last departure. Ticket

donations: \$25 adult, \$15 child (ages 5-12), no one under 5. Online reservations for GWBHS members only. Details at gwbhs.org/apple-island-tours/.

Open House Dates 1-4 pm (closed holiday weekends or when a program is elsewhere). Come see permanent exhibits interpreting local history and culture! *Free Admission, Donations Appreciated.* See GWBHS.org for final event details.

May
Friday: 5/16

June
Friday: 6/20

July
Sunday: 7/13
Friday: 7/18

August
Sunday: 8/10
Friday: 8/15



Orchard Lake Nature Sanctuary Open House

Sunday, July 13, 1-4 pm

Orchard Lake Museum, 3951 Orchard Lake Road

Join us and City of Orchard Lake Village representatives as we explore the history and formation of Orchard Lake Nature Sanctuary.



Appreciation Reception

Wednesday, July 16, 6-8 pm

Orchard Lake Museum, 3951 Orchard Lake Road

Members, supporters, and volunteers are invited for refreshments with one complimentary ticket per person for a raffle with terrific prizes. RSVP appreciated but not required by July 10 to contact@gwbhs.org or (248) 757-2451.



Local Postcards Open House

Sunday, August 10, 1-4 pm

Orchard Lake Museum, 3951 Orchard Lake Road

Travel through time as you view postcards depicting greater West Bloomfield through the years, including a collection of Keego Harbor postcards from Joan Walsh. Postcard presentation at 2 and 3 pm. Engaging permanent exhibits interpret local area history and culture.



Apple Island Kayak Adventure

Thursday, August 14, 5:30-8:30 pm
(\$7 for residents / \$9 for non-residents)

Discover the fun of kayaking Orchard Lake with West Bloomfield School District's (WBSD) Apple Island as our exploration destination. Before paddling back, we will hike the historic island with a WBP naturalist and a Greater West Bloomfield Historical Society (GWBHS) docent. This trip is for intermediate paddlers with their own watercraft and life jacket. Program made possible through WBSD & WBSD partnerships. Register through wbps.org.



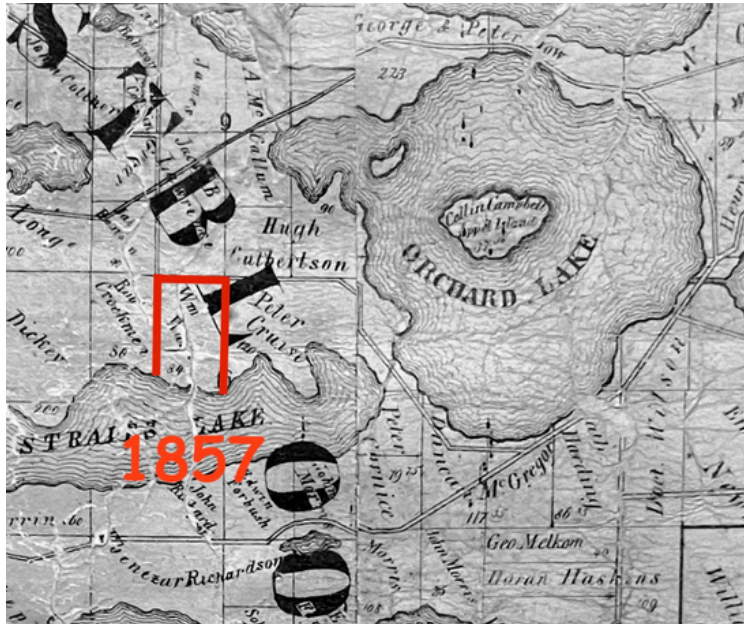
Shady Beach History - Walls Farm

In 1853, William Walls Sr. of Scotland purchased part of Section 16 in West Bloomfield Township from the State of Michigan. The Federal Government gave section 16 of every township in Oakland County to the state so that proceeds of the sale of the property could be used for schools in the area. Other property would be sold by the Detroit Land Office of the Bureau of Land Management. Two years later, he signed it over to his son, William Walls Jr.

William Walls Jr. married Caroline Walls from Springfield Township. Caroline was the daughter of James Walls and Janet Cram, who settled 40 acres of land in Section 35 of Springfield Township in 1836. William Walls Sr and Jr of West Bloomfield and James Walls of Springfield were from Scotland, their farms less than 50 miles apart in Scotland, but it was always said that they were not related. William Jr and Caroline had several children - son James was born in 1866. James continued to work on the Walls' farm in West Bloomfield. James married Nellie Orr and took over the farm.

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56	442	E 1/4 BOA	1/28/1855 11/29/1855	Walls(W)	to Walls Jr(W) WN	

Document showing William Walls Sr.'s purchase of land from the State of Michigan, section 16 in West Bloomfield Township in 1853



1857 map showing William Walls Jr. farm in West Bloomfield

It appears the farm may have had other uses. An article from the Pontiac Gazette, September 19, 1890:

"The camp of the seven Walter brothers was located on the farm of Willie Walls. It is an old campground, having for some seasons been the summer resort of John Minor and

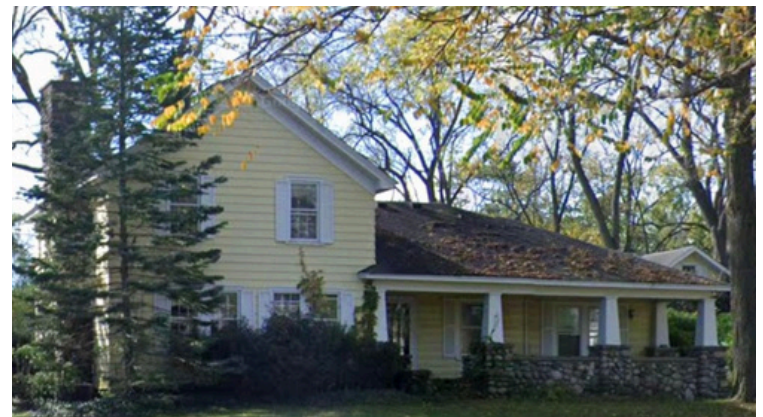
family of Ann Arbor, and C. A. Gaylord and family, of Detroit. Through the latter's kindness the tents and camp equipment were left for the use of the boys.

The Walls farm was located by (William) Walls, Sr., 47 years ago. The surface of the farm is undulating and very productive. The south side of the lake, as viewed from the camp, is a beautiful shore. Lying upon an elevation are the farms of Danforth Richardson, Wm. Borland, David Dickey, and Byron Dandison. On the west is the Robert Crickmore farm; on the east the old Peter Cruise farm, now owned by Anthony Emmendorffer.

On behalf of the seven Walter brothers, we can say that they are under obligations to Mr. Walls and his wife for the many favors bestowed, and camp luxuries so generously rendered during their week of camping. Those of the brothers who live pent-up city life in the western metropolis, will have pleasant inspiring memories of week in camp on Upper Straits Lake."



James Walls (son of William Walls Jr.) and wife Nellie Orr Walls



The home of James Walls, son of William Walls Jr. and Caroline Walls, at 5631 Old Orchard Trail

Author of the article, Dave Walls, is the great-great-grandson of James Walls of Springfield Township. This James' grandson James was the owner of the Walls farm at the time of its sale to create Shady Beach subdivision. The Winter 2025 edition of History Matters includes an article about Shady Beach subdivision's 100th anniversary in 2024.

Thank You for Supporting GWBHS!

GWBHS could not serve the community without the help of our partners, donors, members, sponsors, and volunteers.

BENNINGTON COLLEGE STUDENT VOLUNTEER - Ava Bagne

COLLECTION DONATIONS - Catherine Cangany, Adam Larky, Sarah Schultz, DuAnne Sonnevile & Kim Stone

EXHIBIT SPONSOR - Pat & Glen King, sponsors since 2021

MUSEUM SUPPORT - City of Orchard Lake Village

PROGRAM & OPEN HOUSE PRESENTERS - Carol Fink, Gina Gregory, Neil Hepburn, Kelly Hyer, Linda Kidd, & Sue Williams

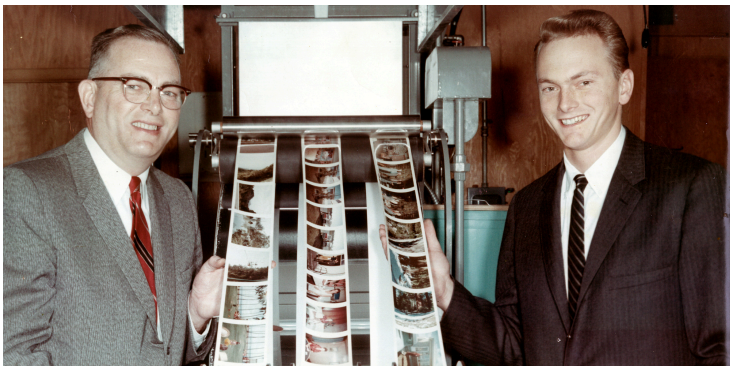
PROGRAM & OPEN HOUSE VOLUNTEERS - Janice Boyd, Hannah Dagg, Sudhansu Sinha, Anna Smith & DuAnne & Christian Sonnevile

PROGRAM PARTNERS - Orchard Lake Nature Sanctuary, West Bloomfield Library, & West Bloomfield Parks

PUBLICITY & GWBHS CONTENT VIDEOS - Civic Center TV

Hite Photo Celebrates 100 Years (cont.)

Demonstrating a strong commitment to veterans, Hite Photo offers free scanning of photos, slides, and documents related to military conflicts. These invaluable pieces of history are then uploaded to the National Archives at no cost, ensuring their preservation for future generations. Through its rich history and unwavering dedication to quality and community, Hite Photo remains a trusted name in photography, continuing to serve the West Bloomfield and Detroit area with pride and excellence. At Hite Photo, history is their business.



Sponsor 2025 Apple Island Tours!

Help make our signature event a reality: become a sponsor! Payments and logo artwork must be received by Wednesday, May 7, 2025. Questions? contact@gwbhs.org

Gold: \$500

- Your name/logo in printed event signage
- 6 complimentary tour tickets
- 6 complimentary annual GWBHS membership

Silver: \$125

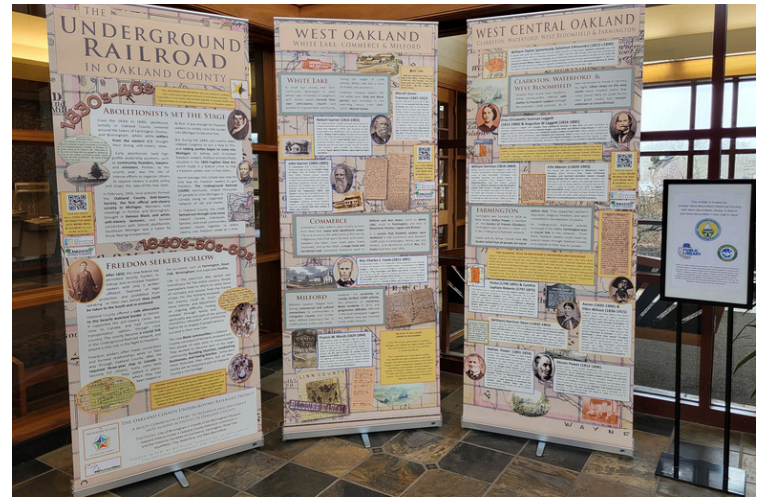
- Your name/logo in printed event signage
- 1 complimentary tour ticket
- 1 complimentary annual GWBHS membership

Champion: \$50

- Your name/logo in printed event signage



UGRR Traveling Exhibit Displayed



GWBHS hosted an Oakland County Underground Railroad exhibit locally in March and April!

Six exhibit panels are the result of "The Oakland County Underground Railroad Project," a multi-community public history project to research and provide access to evidence-based local Underground Railroad history. The project, led by The Birmingham Museum and Oakland County Historical Commission, is funded in part by Michigan Humanities, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Arts. The exhibit is enhanced with an accompanying website where users can find an interactive map, sources, and more information.

Thanks to The Birmingham Museum, Oakland County Historical Commission, West Bloomfield Library and West Bloomfield Town Hall for allowing GWBHS to show this exhibit to the community.



Orchard Lake Museum
3951 Orchard Lake Road
Orchard Lake, MI 48323

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Mission: enriching our communities by collecting, preserving, and sharing history.
GWBHS is a 501(c)3 organization open to all and has served
Keego Harbor, Sylvan Lake, Orchard Lake, and West Bloomfield since 1974.



GWBHS Membership Form

☐ New Membership ☐ Renew Membership ☐ *Gift Membership

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____ Phone _____

*Gift Membership From _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Membership • Jan. 1 to Dec. 31

- ☐ Individual \$25
☐ Family \$50
☐ Premier \$75
☐ Patron/Business \$100
☐ Life \$600

☐ Please contact me about volunteering with GWBHS

Please make checks payable to GWBHS.
Credit card payments are accepted through PayPal at gwbhs.org.

GWBHS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Donations
are tax deductible according to IRS regulations.

Membership includes access to Time Travelers reciprocal membership network.

Donation Form

\$ _____

☐ This is a one time donation.

☐ This donation is in memory of:

☐ This donation is in honor of:

Name _____

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Check # _____

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