

# History Matters



Keego Harbor • Orchard Lake • Sylvan Lake • West Bloomfield

Newsletter of Greater West Bloomfield Historical Society

FALL 2025 | APPLE ISLAND TOURS | HISTORY OF THE SUNSET INN | SOCIETY PROGRAMS & NEWS | OLCCP 150TH ANNIVERSARY

## Apple Island Tours Rescheduled for One Day!



After the unexpected Saturday afternoon cancellation of Apple Island Tours in June, the community will have another chance 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:** [GWBHS.org/Apple-Island-Tours](http://GWBHS.org/Apple-Island-Tours)

**About the Trip:** The tour begins at Orchard Lake Museum, followed by a quick bus ride to the DNR boat launch (bus transportation provided by West Bloomfield Parks) and pontoon boat ride to Apple Island. The tour of the island is self-paced, with volunteer docents and presenters providing commentary at select locations. 15 steps to access the island. Allow 3 hours for the round trip.

**Activities at Orchard Lake Museum:** Orchard Lake Museum will be open during the event, with many fun outdoor activities, including: historical costume photo op, archaeology dig box, and old-fashioned games. The Museum gift shop will be open.

**Tickets:** Ticket donations: \$25 adult, \$15 child (ages 5-12 AND 55+ lbs), none under 5 years old. Tickets will be available for purchase at Orchard Lake Museum on a first come, first served basis during the event.

**Advance Reservations: MEMBERS ONLY** August 15 - September 7: GWBHS members\* can purchase tickets and schedule their chosen estimated time of departure online! Must be present 15 minutes before planned departure time. Reservations are nonrefundable, except in the case of event cancellation. \*Members at the Individual level can purchase one advance ticket. Other membership levels can purchase advance tickets for up to 6 people.

## The History of the Sunset Inn on Orchard Lake

In the spring of 1997, my wife Betty and I were looking for a lot on a lake in Oakland County on which to build our retirement home. After seeing a "Will Build to Suit" sign on what appeared to be a vacant lot at the corner of Indian Trail and Orchard Lake Road, about 200 ft north of Orchard Lake Road, I called the number. The son of the current owner, Michael Connor, told me that his mother owned the property. (Grandfather Robert Weaver purchased the Inn and gas station in 1927.) The entire corner property was for sale and had already been re-zoned into three residential building lots by the City of Orchard Lake, provided the 1876 Bed & Breakfast cottage formerly called "the Sunset Inn" and the old gas station on the corner, then known as the Orchard Lake Boat Livery (the gas station was turned into the boat livery during the Depression), were torn down, and the three lots improved.



*Orchard Lake Boat Livery on the corner of Orchard Lake Road and Indian Trail, 1997*



*The former Sunset Inn (facing Orchard Lake) prior to demolition, 1997*

*Continued on Page 5*



## *From the Desk* of President Gina Gregory

We enjoy connecting people to local history in person!



Second-grade WB School students enjoyed visits to the Museum and Apple Island.



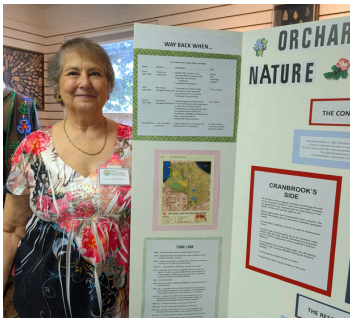
Our Keego Harbor Memorial Day parade GWBHS historic float was a hit!



Apple Island docents review their new donated historic high-definition photos of Apple Island!



Apple Island Tours are planned for Sunday, September 14, 10-3:40 pm. Make your reservation!



Lana LaFortune shared the history of how the Nature Sanctuary came to be owned by the City of Orchard Lake Village.



Julie Zhu's grandkids enjoyed pulling raffle winner tickets, even better was winning!

We appreciate Neil Hepburn sharing his WB resident Black history research at the WB Parks Juneteenth Jamboree.

We look forward to our new program with WB Parks, where guests visit Apple Island by kayak with GWBHS docents and WBP Naturalist! Reservations are full.

GWBHS is actively sharing our history and interesting programs are planned. As always, please support GWBHS with your membership, sponsorship, donations and volunteerism! Follow us on social media! We look forward to connecting with you soon.

## *Updates* from Anna Smith Museum & Communications Assistant

Hopefully, many of you were able to spend a summer afternoon at one of our programs or Open Houses, making memories learning about local history. I have enjoyed getting to know many of you this way and look forward to continuing in the fall. Though my main focus in GWBHS is our communications, attending our programs and learning alongside our many guests has been a joy.



Board member Linda Kidd & Anna at West Bloomfield Parks Open House in March

My goal for the fall and beyond is to bring more volunteers into the Society. While we appreciate your support through memberships, donations, and sponsorships, GWBHS would cease to be without volunteers! Consider becoming an Open House host, organizing files in the GWBHS collection, or working closely with me to update our online collection database. Just an hour of your time each month can make a huge difference in this organization, and in your community. If you are interested in becoming part of our dedicated volunteer group, please email [contact@gwbhs.org](mailto:contact@gwbhs.org) or call 248-757-2451.

Another way to support GWBHS is by donating your stories through our ongoing Collecting Memories project. Read more and submit your memories at [GWBHS.org/Research/Collecting-Memories](http://GWBHS.org/Research/Collecting-Memories).

After the unfortunate cancellation of Apple Island Tours on Sunday due to unexpected transportation issues, GWBHS is excited to hold rescheduled Apple Island Tours on Sunday, September 14 with boat transportation provided by Captain Riva of Tour on Orion. I hope to see many of you there – be sure to purchase your tickets in advance August 15 - September 7 if you are a GWBHS member!



# 2025 Programs

## September-December



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



### Pine Lake Marina Tour

Thursday, September 11, 2025, 6-7 pm  
Pine Lake Marina, 3599 Orchard Lake Road

(\$8 for residents / \$10 for non-residents)  
Gather at Pine Lake Marina for historical

information about the longtime marina, water taxis, the camp on Pine Lake, and trolley transportation with Ron Gay, Ron Hodess & Brian Golden. We'll walk to the nearby Interurban railway bed. Register through [WBParks.org](http://WBParks.org).



### Apple Island Tours

Saturday, September 14, 2025, 10 am-3:40 pm

(Bus driver break from 12-12:30 pm)

Self-paced guided tours of WBSD's Apple Island. 3:40 pm is last departure. Details at

[GWBHS.org/Apple-Island-Tours](http://GWBHS.org/Apple-Island-Tours).

### Indigenous Peoples' Day Open House

Sunday, October 12, 2025, 1-4 pm

Orchard Lake Museum, 3951 Orchard Lake Road

Indigenous peoples are known to have lived in West Bloomfield at the time of the first official survey in 1817. Come learn more about them!



### Orchard Lake Nature Sanctuary Autumn Nature Walk

Sunday, October 19, 2025, 2-3 pm  
4700 Pontiac Trail

Join naturalist Carol Fink for a walk through rolling terrain and explore

seasonal autumn beauty. Free admission, donations appreciated. Sponsored with Orchard Lake Nature Sanctuary.

**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](http://GWBHS.org) for final event details.

**September**  
Friday: 9/19

**November**  
Sunday: 11/9  
Friday: 11/21

**October**  
Sunday: 10/12  
Friday: 10/17

**December**  
Sunday: 12/14  
Friday: 12/19

### Heroes Appreciation Breakfast

Tuesday, November 4, 2025, 9-10:30 am

West Bloomfield Middle School, 6000 Orchard Lake Road  
Visit GWBHS at the annual Heroes Appreciation Breakfast and see our historical military memorabilia exhibit! Register through [WBParks.org](http://WBParks.org).



### WWI Polar Bears Memorabilia & GWBHS Military Collection Open House

Sunday, November 9, 2025, 1-4 pm

Orchard Lake Museum, 3951 Orchard Lake Road

Did any of your relatives fight Russians at the close of WWI? Thousands of Michiganders did. The Polar Bear Expedition is not hidden history, but few people know – find out more at this Open House! Share or donate your family military memories and objects.



### Presentation - Handwriting: Landscape of the Mind

Tuesday, November 11, 2025, 1-2 pm

WB Library Main Meeting Room, 4600 Walnut Lake Road

Ruth Holmes, CDE, is a professional handwriting and document examiner whose forensic and personnel consulting firm, Pentec, Inc., in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, advises individual, legal, and corporate clients in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. She provides a graphic understanding of handwriting and what it means for your life.



### Vintage Games Open House

Sunday, December 14, 2025, 1-4 pm

Orchard Lake Museum, 3951 Orchard Lake Road

Learn about The Strong's National Toy Hall of Fame and its recent inductees! Play with some vintage games and toys.

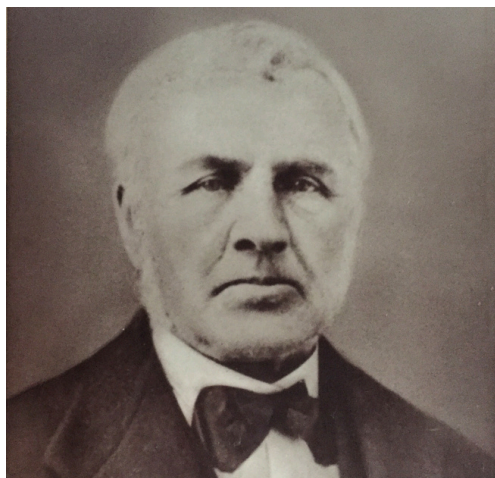




# A Brief History of Orchard Lake Community Church

Perched on the banks of Orchard Lake, Orchard Lake Community Church has been a house of worship for over 150 years. Founders, Colin and Caroline Campbell, began a faithful legacy that continues to thrive today.

The Campbells emigrated from Scotland, seeking new opportunities in America. The family established a successful dry goods store in the heart of Detroit. After several summers, they began to seek fresh air and relaxation away from the stress of the city. In 1856, Colin and Caroline purchased the large island in the middle of Orchard Lake as a summer retreat for family and friends, a four-hour wagon ride from the city.



*Colin Campbell*



*Caroline Campbell*

The Campbells were devout Christians. Even while vacationing, Caroline ensured all island guests took time for evening worship. Often, she would play hymns on the parlor piano, or lead prayer on the front porch steps. She longed for a more permanent house of worship to accommodate the growing lake community. In 1871, Caroline's vision began to take shape. Fellow Scotsman, Peter Dow, donated land along the shore for a chapel. The Campbell's son-in-law, architect Henry T. Brush, drew the design. The cornerstone

was laid in 1871, but economic upheaval delayed the completion for three years. Finally, on July 18, 1874, the chapel was dedicated, the first Christian church in West Bloomfield. It was a day of celebration shared by islanders, hotel guests, area residents, and even the governor of Michigan.

Over the subsequent years, daughter Caroline "Tina" Campbell devoted herself to the preservation of the chapel, in order to continue the traditional July and August services.

In the mid 1940's the nearby community of West Acres used the location for their growing Sunday School program, which led to the year-round use of the chapel. Not long after, the congregation joined the Presbyterian denomination.

In 2024, the congregation marked the sesquicentennial of the dedication of the chapel with a series of history-related events. A photographic retrospective of the history of the church was created, lining the walls of the historic chapel. The celebrations culminated in an outdoor worship service and picnic on the shores of Orchard Lake, complete with narrated boat rides around Apple Island.

As the church moves into the next 150 years, we share words from Tina Campbell's 1921 memoir that the little chapel on the lake has "been a witness to the countryside of our faith...and our effort to keep the fire glowing on His altar here."



*The church with educational addition, c. 1959*



*Colin and Caroline Campbell re-enactors during sesquicentennial celebrations, 2024*

**Christy Forhan & Pat Steele**

# Thank You for Supporting GWBHS!

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

**APPLE ISLAND TOURS PARTNERS** - City of Orchard Lake Village, West Bloomfield Parks, West Bloomfield School District

**APPLE ISLAND TOURS VOLUNTEERS** - Rick Bartus, Tom Bjorkland, Steve Briggs, Catherine Cangany, Hannah Dagg, Diane Eanes, Christy Forhan, Gina & Rob Gregory, Sue Grifor, Neil Hepburn, Mark Hooch, Mike Jewell, Linda Kidd, Leslie Landau, Debby Lemke, Anita MacSorley, Riley Mahar, Tom McClure, Paul Mellerowicz, Zara Mickley, Homayoon Missaghi, Shelby Nelsen, Karen Pushie, Derek & Anna Schraffenberger, Sudhansu Sinha, Anna & Rissa Smith, Pat Steele, Sue Williams

**APPLE ISLAND TOURS SILVER SPONSORS** - Complete Insurance Services Inc., Family of Suzanne Bentley Hadley

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**MIND THE GAP! FUNDRAISER DONORS** - Anonymous, Benjamin Blumenstein, Hannah Dagg, Carol Fink, Margaret Gregory, Rob Gregory, Carol Hack, Charles Packer, Michael Patton, Pat Steele

**APPLE ISLAND GROUP TOUR DOCENTS** - Hannah Dagg, Carol Fink, Christy Forhan, Rob Gregory, Neil Hepburn, Ellen Jacobs, Linda Kidd, Leslie Landau, Mel Pohl, Pat Steele, Helen Zenker

**COLLECTION DONATIONS** - Catherine Cangany, Janet Long, Frederick & Elizabeth Zydeck

## The History of the Sunset Inn on Orchard Lake (cont.)

Mike Connor told me that another couple, Dr. Jon Wiens and his wife Chris had also contacted him about the property. Connor suggested that we meet with Dr. Wiens to discuss developing the property together. After several meetings and discussions with Mike Connor, in 1997 Dr. Wiens and I formed a Limited Liability Company (LLC) to buy and develop the property. Our new "Sunset Properties" LLC bought the entire corner property from the Connor family. After tearing down and removing the old Sunset Inn, boat livery, and improving the three lots, in March of 2000, we commenced construction of our new home. Dr. Wiens and his wife built their home on the northernmost lot. Next to it, my wife Betty and I built our home on the former site of the Sunset Inn. The third lot was put up for sale and sold; construction on a new home began shortly thereafter. By 2005, all three new homes were completed and occupied.

Since living on Orchard Lake, our three children and their spouses have blessed us with six grandchildren. Needless to say, our family has spent, and still spends many happy

**APPRECIATION RECEPTION DONATIONS** - Dairy Queen, Gino's Italian Restaurant, Great Harvest Bread Co., Hite Photo, Lynn LaForest, Petite Gardens

**COMMUNITY EVENT VOLUNTEERS** - Detroit Area Corvair Club, Gina & Rob Gregory, Neil Hepburn, John O'Leary, Michael Pierz, Christian & DuAnne Sonnevile

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**MUSEUM SUPPORT** - City of Orchard Lake Village

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**PROGRAM & OPEN HOUSE VOLUNTEERS** - Neil Hepburn, Mark Hoffman, Linda Kidd, Kelly Mandel, Anna Smith, Joan Walsh

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**2025 HISTORY MATTERS NEWSLETTER SPONSOR** - William Rauwerdink (Winter)

**DONATION, GOLD LEVEL** - Bharat & Smita Bhatt, 2025

days enjoying beautiful Orchard Lake, both summer and winter.



*Betty and Fred Zydeck, builders and owners of the house on the site of the former Sunset Inn*

**Fred Zydeck**





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

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
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Warren, MI  
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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 \_\_\_\_\_

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\*Gift Membership From \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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### 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:

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