

# History Matters



Keego Harbor • Orchard Lake • Sylvan Lake • West Bloomfield

Newsletter of Greater West Bloomfield Historical Society

SPRING 2026 | APPLE ISLAND TOURS | GRANT RECEIVED | SOCIETY PROGRAMS & NEWS | CLOSE & TIED LOCAL ELECTIONS

## Apple Island Tours, June 13 & 14!

Experience the serene beauty of West Bloomfield Schools' Apple Island, a nature sanctuary listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This is a unique opportunity to visit the 35-acre island 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)

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

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

Tickets: \$40 adult, \$15 child (ages 5-12), no one under 5 years old permitted. For the first time, all tickets will be available for purchase online before the tours! Tickets open early for GWBHS members on May 1, then to the general public on May 15.

Support Apple Island Tours with our "Float the Boat" fundraiser on Facebook! Details on page 5.

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](mailto:contact@gwbhs.org) or (248) 757-2451.

- Second-grade student island and Museum docents on Wednesday, May 6, 7 pm
- Apple Island Tours volunteers and docents on Wednesday, June 10, 7 pm



## Grant Received for New Exhibits!

GWBHS is excited to announce our Greater West Bloomfield Diverse History Project, made possible in part by a major grant from America250MI. GWBHS is one of only three organizations in Oakland County selected as a Round 2 America250MI History Grant recipient!



During this project, we are collaborating with expert organizations and community members to develop new exhibits highlighting Black, Chaldean/Iraqi Catholic, and Jewish history in greater West Bloomfield, exploring these communities' significant economic, religious, and cultural experiences and contributions. Partners include West Bloomfield School District - United We Walk, Chaldean Cultural Center/Chamber of Commerce and Jewish Historical Society of Michigan. The result will be a 6'x5' floor-standing fabric exhibit panel for each group. Each panel will be displayed in rotation at the Orchard Lake Museum, then transported and displayed at other community locations.

We also are encouraging long-lasting community participation by gathering personal recollections of Greater West Bloomfield. Memories related to our communities' Black, Chaldean, and Jewish history will be added to our online digital collection, along with interviews and objects.

The Diversity Project's first panel, on local Jewish history, will debut at the Orchard Lake Museum during a June 28 Open House. For details, see page 3.



**JHSM**  
JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN

This project is the beginning of a commitment by GWBHS to collaborate with community stakeholders to tell a more complete story of our history.

We look forward to sharing more information about this project in the coming weeks via social media and our website, [gwbhs.org](http://gwbhs.org).

## From the Desk of President Gina Gregory

We've seen so much this year. March 12 was a horrific day for the Greater West Bloomfield community with the attack on Temple Israel. Our support is with the Jewish community.



Five GWBHS volunteers helped with collection research efforts by West Bloomfield High School students in a March Museum visit

**GWBHS is honored to receive an America250MI, Round 2 grant.** Of 240 applicants, only 45 grants were awarded! Our plan is to utilize program grant criteria to “continue the Revolution” by expanding the stories we tell and better recognize diversity in Greater West Bloomfield. More elsewhere.

**American Revolution soldier Levi Greene**, whose final years were in West Bloomfield, will be featured in programs and community activities. I'm excited to share biography details of the signer of the Declaration of Independence, John Hart, my 8th great-grandfather. More details soon: Memorial Day Pine Lake Cemetery program, and national July 8th first reading of the Declaration of Independence.

**Former GWBHS support staff**, Cory Nummer and Shelby Nelson, and I enjoyed meeting at the Historical Society of Michigan, Local History conference in March. We attended a presentation by Cory Nummer on “Detroit Red Wings: A Century of Hockeytown.”



Shelby Nelson, Troy Historic Village Adult Program Director, Gina Gregory, Cory Nummer, Ilitch Companies Curator

**Apple Island Tours “permanently” returns to the second weekend of June: June 13 & 14, 2026!**

## Updates from Anna Smith Museum & Communications Assistant

Even in winter, there are plenty of happenings at GWBHS! I was grateful to work alongside volunteers to submit grant applications in January, which resulted in an America250MI grant awarded to GWBHS to develop new exhibits. Our two library presentations saw great turnout, and even better audience reception. I am always finding ways to share local history with the community, whether posting on social media or designing YouTube presentations (updates soon!).

We were fortunate to have community members visit the Museum and share their memories of the 1976 tornado, with the 50th anniversary of this devastating storm falling on March 20. Consider donating your stories, tornado-related or otherwise, to GWBHS through our Collecting Memories project at [gwbhs.org/research/collecting-memories](http://gwbhs.org/research/collecting-memories). Several news outlets also published stories on the tornado, including The Oakland Press, WXYZ-TV Detroit and West Bloomfield TODAY magazine.

The project to update our online digital collections is ongoing. Thank you to Gabriela Supper, who volunteers to update records with new information and images. The GWBHS Communications Committee is meeting monthly, deciding how to utilize our revamped digital collections - it's a long process, but progress is made step by step!

If you're a fan of Antiques Roadshow on PBS, be sure to watch their recent episodes at Castle Farms in Charlevoix! Martha Green, with whom I had the pleasure of collaborating to write this winter's newsletter article on Revolutionary War veteran (and later WB resident) Levi Greene, appears. She shares her family's history, including the powder horn carried by Levi in the Revolutionary War.

Moving into summer, I hope you are interested in volunteering during Apple Island Tours! It takes a large team to put on our signature event, with many different positions available. Contact me at [anna@gwbhs.org](mailto:anna@gwbhs.org) or 248-757-2451 for details.

## In Memoriam: John Marshall

GWBHS is saddened to hear about the passing of John Marshall, 1940-2026.

John had an upbeat attitude and was very helpful to GWBHS, generously sharing his historical research findings with property boundaries, early surveyor's diaries, and other topics. John helped found Bloomfield Historical Society and was an active member. He will be missed.

John gave a presentation at West Bloomfield Library in 2019, where he shared information with the community about the 1818 Expedition into Oakland County. He was also instrumental in the research and creation of the History Outdoors: MotorCities Markers exhibit panel commemorating 200 years since surveyors set a post where Bloomfield, Pontiac, Waterford and West Bloomfield meet.

*continued on Page 5*

# 2026 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](http://GWBHS.org) for more information and final event details.

### Apple Island Docent Training

**Wednesday, May 6, 2026, 7-8 pm**

Orchard Lake Museum, 3951 Orchard Lake Rd

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 5 to [contact@gwbhs.org](mailto:contact@gwbhs.org).

### Greater West Bloomfield Michigan Week Community Awards Breakfast

**Thursday, May 7, 2026, 7 am**

Shenandoah Country Club, 5600 Walnut Lake Rd

Attend this annual event alongside GWBHS! Details at [www.michiganweek.org](http://www.michiganweek.org).

### Keego Harbor Memorial Day Parade

**Monday, May 25, 2026, 9 am-12 pm**

Cass Lake Rd

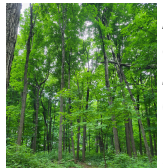
GWBHS is looking for volunteers to join them in the Memorial Day Parade on May 25. Volunteers are invited to walk (can carry a large flag &/or dress historically), bike, or drive their classic car. For details, email [duannesonneville@hotmail.com](mailto:duannesonneville@hotmail.com).

### Apple Island Tours Volunteer Training

**Wednesday, June 10, 2026, 7-8 pm**

Orchard Lake Museum, 3951 Orchard Lake Rd

Learn how to volunteer or be a docent at the Museum during Apple Island Tours! RSVP by Tuesday, June 9 to [contact@gwbhs.org](mailto:contact@gwbhs.org). No charge.



### Apple Island Tours

**Saturday, June 13, and Sunday, June 14, 2026, 10 am-3:40 pm**

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

Orchard Lake Museum, 3951 Orchard Lake Rd

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/).

### Juneteenth Jamboree

**Friday, June 19, 2026, 11 am-2 pm**

Covenant Baptist Church, 5800 W Maple Rd

Visit GWBHS at this year's Juneteenth Jamboree! Details at [juneteenthwb.org](http://juneteenthwb.org).



### Greater West Bloomfield Jewish History Open House

**Sunday, June 28, 2026, 1-4 pm**

(Free admissions, donations appreciated)

Orchard Lake Museum, 3951 Orchard Lake Rd

The Greater West Bloomfield Diverse History

Project is made possible in part by a major grant from America250MI. This project results in three exhibit panels about our local Black, Chaldean and Jewish history. Help celebrate the debut of our local Jewish history exhibit, in collaboration with Jewish Historical Society of Michigan!

### Sharing the Spirit of America — Reading of the Declaration of Independence

**Wednesday, July 8, 2026, 6 pm**

North Farmington Cemetery, Farmington Rd south of Walnut Ln  
Gather in an effort with Americans around the world to simultaneously read aloud the Declaration of Independence. For more America250MI programs, visit [america250mi.org](http://america250mi.org).



### Orchard Lake Country Club 100th Anniversary Open House

**Sunday, July 12, 2026, 1-4 pm**

(Free admissions, donations appreciated)

Orchard Lake Museum, 3951 Orchard Lake Rd

Celebrate Orchard Lake Country Club's 100th anniversary, 1926-2026, with historical photos and a book of activities over 100 years.

### Appreciation Reception

**Wednesday, July 15, 2026, 6-8 pm**

Orchard Lake Museum, 3951 Orchard Lake Rd

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](mailto:contact@gwbhs.org) or (248) 757-2451.



### City of Sylvan Lake History Open House

**Sunday, August 9, 2026, 1-4 pm**

(Free admissions, donations appreciated)

Orchard Lake Museum, 3951 Orchard Lake Rd

The City of Sylvan Lake is the fourth-smallest city in Michigan at 0.51 square miles. Despite its size, the city has a long and well-documented history. Join us and learn about "the prettiest little city in the state of Michigan!"



### Apple Island Kayak Adventure

**Thursday, August 20, 2026, 5:30-8:30 pm**

(\$11 for residents / \$13 for non-residents)

DNR Orchard Lake Boat Launch, 4060 Orchard Lake Rd

Discover the fun of kayaking on Orchard Lake with West Bloomfield School District's (WBSD) Apple Island as our exploration destination. We will hike the historic island before paddling back. A WBP naturalist and GWBHS docent will accompany you as your guides. This trip is for intermediate paddlers with their own watercraft. You must bring your own boat and life jacket. Program made possible through partnerships with WBSD and WBP. Fee is per person, not per watercraft. Register through [wbparcs.org](http://wbparcs.org).

### 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.

#### May

Friday: 15

#### July

Sunday: 12, Friday: 17

#### June

Sunday: 28

#### August

Sunday: 9, Friday: 21



# 2025 Election Tie and Other Close Local Elections

By Sue Williams (with comments from DuAnne Sonnevile)

Close elections in small cities are no surprise. Low voter turnout often results in cliff-hanging tallies, especially when there are no major issues on the ballot. In 1958, with only 567 Keego Harbor voters casting out of a registered 1,395, Glen Munger retained his position as City Constable, nipping Harry Tucker 273 to 272 votes. The local paper, The Interlake News, called it an “unusually hard fought contest” but Tucker declined a recount. In 1977, Robert Stimmel defeated Nelson O’Shaughnessy by three votes in an Orchard Lake election held after long and heated squabbles the previous year resulted in two council recalls and several resignations.

Still, close elections don’t bother some folks. Dave Bradbury, City Councilman from 1968-74 was edged out by three votes for Robert Carter, 261 to 264. Dave’s wife Betty just said “Well, I’m glad.” Dave dealt with it by playing hockey and could not be reached for comment by the media.

McCullen, City Clerk Nancy Morogi, plus family members and others there to witness the proceedings.

The coin toss was held inside because of a previous mishap at another city. During the toss, the coin hit a terrazzo floor and rolled into a nearby koi pond. Since they only had one coin, they had to go back into the building and ended up getting a coin from a police officer. “This probably added a little levity to a very tense situation,” said DuAnne.

“I won the quarter toss, having been assigned “tails” so I got to draw first, explains Sonnevile. We were told not to open the folded papers until the second person had also drawn, then to open it at chest height for all to see. Mine read “elected” making my official count 240 to Sean’s 239.”

O’Bryan said he was “grateful” to be a part of the entire event. A low-tech solution to a tie breaking election makes history, said DuAnne, “It was something most people will never see.” She plans to donate the original ballot, the “elected” paper, official certificate and other memorabilia to the GWBHS collection.



1977 Orchard Lake City Council election article

A November 2025 Orchard Lake City Council two seat election took things to a higher level. Kevin Kroger received 315 votes, but DuAnne Sonnevile and Sean O’Bryan, both running for the other seat, each pulled 239 votes.

According to Sonnevile, “I was ahead by four when the polls closed, but early voting and overseas ballots had not yet been counted. I was surprised to learn on Thursday, November 13 that there was officially a tie and the winner would be chosen November 14 at the Oakland County Election Office in Pontiac.”

The ceremony was held according to 1954 Michigan Statute guidelines and was actually read out loud to ensure accuracy. The two candidates were assigned “heads” or “tails” on a coin drop to determine which one would be first to draw a folded piece of paper from a box declaring them “elected.” Conducting the ceremony was Oakland County Clerk Lisa Brown, Joe Rozell, Oakland County Director of Elections, three members of the Board of County Canvassers, Orchard Lake Mayor Gerry



DuAnne Sonnevile holding her “elected” paper and certificate of election

## Restoration at St. Mary’s!

By Paul Mellerowicz

This summer, the 1877 water tower from the Michigan Military Academy on the campus of Orchard Lake St. Mary’s Preparatory will undergo a \$250,000 restoration. The restoration is funded by a gift from the St. Mary’s Class of 1975. The tower will get a new period-accurate roof, windows and brick repairs. A full report will follow in the fall issue.



# Thank You for Supporting GWBHS!

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

**ANNUAL MEETING BREAKFAST** - Gino's Italian Restaurant & Petite Gardens

**COLLECTION DONATIONS** - Angus White

**COMMUNITY EVENT VOLUNTEERS** - Neil Hepburn & Gina Gregory

**EXHIBIT SPONSORS** - Tom Bjorklund, Gwynne & Jim Cherfoli, Pat & Glen King, GWBHS Memorial Fund for John Breeze Long

**"FLOAT THE BOAT" FUNDRAISER ARTWORK** - Sofie Delidow

**HIGH SCHOOL FIELD TRIP DOCENTS** - Carol Fink, Linda Kidd, Neil Hepburn, Anna Smith & Sue Williams

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

**PROGRAM & OPEN HOUSE PRESENTERS** - Tom Bjorklund, Diane Eanes, Carol Fink, Gina Gregory, Neil Hepburn & Sue Williams

**PROGRAM & OPEN HOUSE VOLUNTEERS** - Tom Bjorklund, Scott Donegan, Neil Hepburn, DuAnne Sonnevile & Gabriela Supper

**PROGRAM PARTNERS** - Orchard Lake Nature Sanctuary & West Bloomfield Library

**PUBLICITY & GWBHS CONTENT VIDEOS** - Civic Center TV

## Will You Float the Boat?

Since 1982 we have partnered with West Bloomfield School District to provide affordable opportunities for the public to visit Orchard Lake's Apple Island, our community's incredible natural and historic resource. If you love the island as much as we do, please help us "Float the Boat," and donate to our fundraiser on Facebook. Rising transportation costs are challenging our ability to continue offering public tours at family-friendly prices. This year's tours are dead in the water unless we raise \$5,000 by May 15.

If you love Apple Island, please give. If you have been meaning to visit Apple Island, please give. If you just love a good pontoon ride, please give. All hands on deck are needed to keep this exceptional program ship-shape.

All Float the Boat donors will be recognized in print. Donors of \$150 and up will receive complimentary tickets to Apple Island Tours. See our website for complete details and ways to give. Thank you for your support!



## In Memoriam: John Marshall (cont.)



Representatives from each municipality next to the 1817 Bloomfield, Pontiac, Waterford & West Bloomfield survey marker, 2017 (L to R: Steve Stone, Eric Wiegand, John Marshall, Helen Jane Peters)

## In Photos: Roosevelt School Demolition



Last days of Roosevelt School



Demolition begins, December 2025



Remainder of the school after demolition, 2026



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

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Warren, MI  
Permit # 164

**Board of Directors**

Gina Gregory	President
Linda Kidd	Recording Secretary
Carol Fink	Corresponding Secretary
Diane Eanes	Treasurer
Catherine Cangany, PhD	Historian
Hannah Dagg	Communications, Exhibits
Sue Grifor	Community History
Jerry Nechal	Sylvan Lake representative
Karen Pushie	Membership database
Susan K. Williams	Collections

**Save the Date!**

**GWBHS Euchre Fundraiser**  
**Saturday, October 10, 2026, 7 pm**  
Orchard Lake Community Church, 5171 Commerce Road  
Details to follow in Fall 2026 History Matters!

**Committee Chairs**

Steven Briggs	Finance Committee
Neil Hepburn	Community Relations
Don Newman	Group Programs

*Do you have experience writing grant applications? Contact [anna@gwbhs.org](mailto:anna@gwbhs.org) or (248) 757-251 to join our Grants committee.*

**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
- Household    \$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](http://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 \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Check # \_\_\_\_\_

Total Amount Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

