President’s Report

In the few minutes that we have, I wanted to touch on several items about the last year.

First, it is important to note that I have been president only since January, so many of these great accomplishments are due to the previous president’s leadership, Kay Oppliger.

So, where to start?

1. We’ve had varied and exciting programs this year, everything from automobiles and trains to firemen and Indians. We had an exciting field trip to the Vicksburg Historical Village which gave us some ideas and goals for our group. If you’ve never served on a program committee, you may not realize the effort it takes to come up with these ideas, book the programs, and prepare and distribute the flyers, send thank you notes, and many other things. We owe a lot of thanks to Joan and her committee, and the members of the previous committee who ensured a seamless transition.

2. Our archival committee has been working hard, sorting and cataloguing items, and preparing the policies and legal documents needed for people to feel comfortable with making contributions to our Society. Thank you Kay and your committee for your hard work.

3. Our fundraising efforts are continuing to gain steam. In the past year, we added OHS mugs to our list of sales items, and made plans to develop a calendar to sell focusing on historical barns and other buildings. We made a grant application, and although we were denied, we did make an application. We continue to get training on how to research possible grants and are assembling the documents needed. Thank you to the fundraising committee for their continued efforts.

4. There have been numerous major efforts by our Restoration Committee led by Kay. We owe them much for the many accomplishments this year, and just to list a few: we have heat and air conditioning in the Drake House; there was a window restoration workshop last June with Marc Ferrar and Peter Carroll, and more window work has been occurring this spring; a plastering workshop by Ellen Thackery of the MI Historical Preservation Network was conducted; clean up activities continue; the bathroom restoration is
nearly complete; rooms are being designed; plastering bids evaluated, etc., etc., etc. Great work folks!

5. Our maintenance committee, ably led by Stan, has started to become more active, and has taken over responsibility for some non-restoration items on the house and grounds. The committee’s activities continue to evolve, as the homestead projects move forward.

6. The Museum Committee has taken the beautiful display case in the lobby and filled it with different items of interest. Thanks to Mary Anne for leading this effort.

7. We completed an agreement of understanding with the Township outlining our roles concerning the Drake Homestead Restoration. The Township also adopted an Historic Overlay Zone as a way to help protect the historical structures in the township.

8. We’ve been able to utilize the efforts of two boy scouts two years now to help us with projects, and hope to continue and broaden this connection with community volunteers.

9. Our Harvest Moon Fundraising Dance was very successful. Lots of hard work went into it, but if you were there, you know a very enjoyable time was had by all.

10. Our Annual Appreciation Dinner was a wonderful event. Thanks to the volunteers who planned it.

11. Our committees have been fortunate to have someone willing to be designated as their chairperson. The committees are getting more and more active members, but they need you to join them.

12. Publicity continues to be good, with articles in the Gazette, Home Magazine, and more. Thanks to everyone who makes those contacts and gets the information to the right people on time.

13. We have the upcoming Benjamin Drake Birthday Party event coming up on July 18th. Don’t forget to come and enjoy this event. We need you to help out, but we also need you to bring your family and friends and tell everyone about it.

14. We held a visioning session in January, we continue to work on our Preliminary Application for Historical Status, updated our fundraising booklets, started compiling mailing lists, and let’s not forget those pesky bats and woodchucks. There are lots of things going on.

In these few minutes, I have not been able to provide an exhaustive listing of our activities for the past year. It is obvious that we have a great group of people in this organization. Your hard work continues to show results. However, I hope that you don’t think that this group is just about work. The
Oshtemo Historical Society is fun, we have great (and tasty) meetings, we talk and share experiences, and the work very satisfying too. Do as much work as you can or want to do, but remember that there is always stuff to do.

Thank you for a great year. I know this coming year will be even better as we continue to grow and see results.
New Business—Remarks about Kay

We would be terribly remiss if we didn’t acknowledge the contributions of one of our most involved, most hardworking, most passionate members. Over the past several years, she has led this organization with a vision of preserving and disseminating knowledge of the history of the Oshtemo area and has led the charge in restoring the Drake Homestead. It doesn’t matter if it is planning the design of a room, faithfully archiving a donated item or artifact, meeting a contractor, staining wainscoting, raking leaves, or hauling away junk. She is always there, ready and willing to pitch in, jump in, or do whatever is necessary. Her passion is undeniable. If you’ve attended only one meeting of the OHS, you know who this person is.

Please join me, and all the members of the Oshtemo Historical Society, as I present this gift certificate as a way of thanking and recognizing the many contributions to the OHS and the community, by our immediate past president, Kay Oppliger.

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Kay’s many efforts have prompted us to find a more permanent way to acknowledge her and our first president Elaine Branch for their willingness to lead this organization. The Board of Directors has prepared this plaque in their honor, which will be displayed at the Drake House for all to see.
OSHTEMO HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Minutes

MAY 21, 2009

The monthly meeting of the Oshtemo Historical Society was held on Thursday, May 21, 2009 at the Oshtemo Township Hall. President Sikora called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.

The following people attended:

Neil Sikora, President               Barb Adams
Kay Oppliger, Ex-Official Pres.     Irene Livingston
Joan Young, Vice Pres.              Lucille Dent
Starr Waldron, Treasurer            Emmore Dent
Jean Bourner, Trustee               John Albert
Jim Frey, Trustee                   Roy Secor
Mary Lou Paeglis                    Pat Carroll
Ray Syvert                          John Johnson, visitor

PROGRAM

Kay introduced our speaker, Warren Lawrence. For many years Warren lived in Vicksburg where he was very active in the community. He owned the Vicksburg Commercial Express for 10 years and taught history in the Portage Schools for 36 years. He was a charter member of the Vicksburg Historical Society and is on their board. He helped raise funds for the restored buildings. He spent 38 years in the Army National Guard. The title of his presentation was Taking the Message to Garcia.

His talk was about an essay written by Elbert Hubbard in 1899, just after the Spanish American War ended. It was the time of the Industrial revolution, labor movement, and conflicting interests about the operation of American businesses. Elbert Hubbard owned many businesses, including a soap company, which he sold at age 35 after it provided him with wealth. He then, in 1895, founded an artist colony in East Aurora, N.Y., and established there the Roycroft Press.

Hubbard’s son convinced him that the real hero of the Cuban War was Rowan, a naval officer. It was essential that President McKinley get a message to Garcia in Cuba. He gave it to Rowan. A week later Rowan was on the coast, three weeks later the message had been delivered. Elbert Hubbard wrote his essay in less than an hour. It is not about Rowan’s adventure, but about the kind of person he was and how important it is to have that kind of person in a business environment. The essay has been reprinted more times than any other piece of literature except the Bible.

Warren read the essay to us. The theme is that when a job needs to be done, give it to a man who will do it without asking questions and without delay. Hubbard understood business. The essay still inspires businessmen and businesswomen today.
After WW1 started Hubbard and his wife boarded the Lusitania. They saw the difficult situation about to unfold and went down to their stateroom to die.

Warren gave each of us a copy of Hubbard’s essay.

There was a break in the meeting to enjoy refreshments provided by Pat Carroll and Ray Syvert. Then the meeting resumed.

Roy Secor moved that the minutes of the April 16, 2009 meeting be approved. Mary Lou Paeglis seconded. Unanimous.

Starr reported that the balance in our account is $4,349.49. Copies of the membership list and the Treasurer’s Report were available. Kay moved that the Treasurer’s Report be accepted. Jim Frey seconded. Unanimous.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

PROGRAM - Joan
Joan spoke about next month’s program, Memoirs of a Company Rat on the Road. She also showed a post card which will be mailed to invite people to Benjamin’s birthday party and asked members to send to her the names and addresses of friends and relatives who would appreciate receiving the card.

ARCHIVAL - Kay
The committee has met three times since the last general meeting. Upcoming scheduled meetings are on May 26 at 6:30pm and May 28 at 9:30am. Two more sessions will be necessary to get the boxes upstairs and clear the house for the tour. Five or six people have worked very hard and accomplished a great deal. The committee finalized a Deed of Gift document, which was approved by the board last week.

MAINTENANCE
Stan was not at the meeting to report. Neil reported that Stan has been working with Millard Loy to improve the grounds. They have planted grass seed, mowed, and trimmed trees.

FUNDRAISING - Neil
Our attorney will give us information regarding volunteer liability. We are updating our handouts for future events. The committee is working on the preliminary application for state historical status and hopes to finalize it at the next meeting. Oshtemo Day, at Flescher Field, has been cancelled for this summer. The Benjamin Drake Birthday Party is coming up soon. There will be tickets for food purchases. The Oshtemo fireman will help us and will bring a truck to put on display. Neil will meet with the fire fighters to assure safety in the house. They have agreed to help remove the boards on the windows which have been restored. Kay will coordinate with them. We defiantly need volunteers! There is a sign-up sheet on the table. Volunteer assignments will be made later. At least one group of boy scouts will help us. Food will be only cake and ice cream, and liquid refreshments. There will be a bake sale. We need volunteers to bake birthday cakes to accompany a fancy decorated sheet cake which will be for display only. We will also need items for the bake sale. Elaine and Nancy are planning games.
A large tent will be available. Cleaning up the house will be a challenge. We have not yet determined where parking and the children’s activities will be. Any additional ideas for music would be welcomed. The publicity is moving forward but the committee would welcome more ideas. The next meeting of the BDBP committee will be Wednesday, May 27, at the Township Hall, at 4:00pm.

RESTORATION & DESIGN - Kay.
There have been two work days on the windows. The inside sashes have been washed, sanded, stained, and are almost ready for finishing. Along with Kay, four Tuesday Morning Masked Ladies have worked hard on them - Nancy Miller, Jean Bourner, Irene Livingston and Starr Waldron. The sashes still need to be taped before they can be sanded. Mark Ferraro is coming May 30, the next scheduled work day, from 9 to 11 am. The bathroom is progressing. Lights were purchased and have been installed. The fixtures have not yet been installed, either in the bathroom or the utility room. When that happens the water will be connected. The plastering will be done by Don Miller. Kay and Doug Burroughs met with him last Tuesday evening. The cost will be the same as the first bid. We will hire someone to remove wallpaper instead of our volunteers doing it. Kay has a list of things we have to do to prepare the rooms before Don Miller comes in. We may have to leave two windows off in order to boom up the blue board for the ceilings. Kay has a surprise of things which will be ready for the tour. She thanked all of the volunteers who have worked hard on the house, and have had fun doing it. It could not have happened without these workers. The good news is that the bats are gone.

MUSEUM COMMITTEE
Mary Anne was not at the meeting to report.

There was no Old/Continuing business.

New business
Neil thanked Jean Bourner and Jim Frey for their dedicated work as retiring board members. Neither member of the Nominating Committee was available so Neil turned the annual election over to Jim Frey. Two officers are up for reelection - President Neil Sikora and Vice President Joan Young. Two new Trustees have been nominated - Stan Rakowski and Millard Loy. Jim opened the floor for other nominations. There were none. Jean Bourner moved that the slate be accepted. Starr Waldron seconded. Unanimous.

President Neil Sikora gave an annual report. It was enlightening and lengthy and important. It has been attached along with these minutes.

Kay also offered thanks to Jean and Jim for their work as stalwart trustees and volunteer workers. She pointed out that the president does not do it alone. She also encouraged an ongoing change of leadership in order to take advantage of everyone’s talents.

Neil spoke words of appreciation for the wonderful job that Kay has done over the years. They also merit being read in full, and have been attached along with these minutes. He gave Kay a gift certificate to Wedel’s as a token of the appreciation of OHS. In addition, he displayed a
plaque which will be hung in the Drake House. It names Elaine Branch as the first president and Kay as the second. There is space for the listing to continue for a number of years.

Neil again thanked Pat Carroll and Ray Syvert for providing refreshments.

Jean Bourner asked that Neil’s reports be attached to the minutes of the meeting so all can appreciate them.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joan Young
Acting Secretary