2020 was a year of projects we didn’t finish, social activities we didn’t have, and vacations we didn’t take. One sign that this is ending is the Richmond Area Heritage Festival, scheduled to run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., June 26 and 27. This free event will celebrate local history and culture and the annual Log Cabin Day in Michigan.

Visitors will experience what life was like a hundred years ago, making the visit both educational and fun. Children will enjoy activities like antique games, rope making, bean sorting and corn shelling. There will also be a candy scramble, scrub board and petting farm. It will be a great place for families to stop by and enjoy the day.

One of the main attractions will be the large antique tractor and pre-World War II car show. Some of the tractors on display are still in use on a daily basis. Other tractors are showroom quality and qualify for display at leading museums around the Midwest. And there will even be a parade of these vehicles on Saturday afternoon.

Something new and exciting this year is the blacksmith exhibit. Many of you enjoy shows like “Forged by Fire.” You don’t need to sit in front of a television. At the Festival, you’ll feel the heat, hear the heavy hammers, smell the charcoal and hot steel, and watch metal take shape. These skilled metal workers will show and describe what it took for blacksmiths in the 1800’s to make metal bend to their will to make tools and parts.

Besides all these outdoor activities, you can tour the buildings in the Village, including the newly renovated train depot. In the Donley cabin you’ll see the impressive dining room table that one of the younger Donley’s made. A video of both the construction and significance of the table in the Donley history will be playing.

There will be new exhibits in the museum. Artifacts from the Richmond area, some of which are more than 100 years old, will be on display.

We can stop and think about the work and fun of farmers from previous generations by viewing their tools and techniques in the restored barn. The upstairs is now open, and visitors will find new exhibits there, in addition to the sleigh, wagon, and other farm equipment on the ground floor.

And then there are the demonstrations. The antique sawmill will run twice a day, making lumber from logs. A Model T powered corn shucker will exhibit how they husked corn in the old days. Other notable demonstrations include wool spinning, candle making, wood carving, and lace making.

Food will be available throughout the day. Artists will perform music. All in all, a great family event, and all free.
2021 Annual Meeting
By Christine Rowley

These are a few of the comments that were sent to us after the release of the 2021 Annual Meeting Video in January.

Very impressive video presentation!! Thanks for including those of us who are out of the city/state during the winter. Keep up the good work! Jerry & Pattie Papuga

Thanks for putting this together! It was great for a long-distance gal to be able to see members up and close. Thanks for all you and everyone does for Richmond and its descendants! It takes a village... Dorene Sykes Falmouth, Cape Cod, MA

Thanks to each of you for all you do in preserving the history of my hometown, Richmond. Margy Montgomery-Holzheuer

I loved the video. So much has been accomplished since we first met. RAHGS has become a well-known and highly respected organization. Go RAHGS. Blessings, Pat

Bob and I started the day by watching the annual meeting. VERY impressive!! You should be very proud. Lots accomplished and established over the years. Thanks for sharing it. Marilyn

Christine, ...The annual meeting video was very well done. I’m sure it’s much more work than just the in-person meeting. Good to hear everyone’s voice, which doesn’t necessarily happen even if you’re there in person from time to time as I am... Congratulations on a great run, and on your leadership in making sure a strong team is in place as you’re moving on... Cheers, John

Memorials & Donations
By Kris Nolan

In Memory of Fran Plagens:
Brenner, John and Marion
Connect, Advia
Deyo, Chris and Paul
Doane, Winifred
Doyle, Debbie
Foster, David and Susan
Gallette, Arlen
Jakubiak, Claudia
Jill Thompson Family
Luenser, Max and Sandy
Rengert, Keith and Sally

In Memory of Jim Shepherd:
Ginny Foster

In Memory of Rose Weeks:
The Weeks Family

In Memory of Ruth VanInwagen Claggett:
Kathy Schlager

General Fund:
Bernard, Richard
Borkowski, Martin and Louise
Foster, Virginia
Hirt, Robeert
Klaika, Janet
Kroger Rewards
Maranzano, Joe
Nolan, Kristine
Nye, Lori
Remer, Deborah
Schildge, Janice
Stewart, Mary
Ward, Charlotte
Yelencich, Penny and David

Recent Brick Orders

In memory of Frances Plagens:
by RAHGS

In memory of Nina Jackman:
by RAHGS

In memory of Florence Y. Sova:
by Garden Grove Park
“The Eighty-Nine Year Adventure”

By Charlie Fuerstenau

Born in August of 1919, at his family home in Richmond, Michigan, Charlie Fuerstenau’s parents were told by doctors that he was so sickly they would never raise him to adulthood. Yet despite those dire predictions, raise him they did. His Tom Sawyer-like life is chronicled in the latest release of Lakeshore Publication’s Inspiration Series of books, this one entitled “The Eighty-nine Year Adventure: The Life and Times of Charlie Fuerstenau.”

One day, when he was seven years old, his mother found him walking like a tightrope walker around the top of a silo in the barnyard using a pitchfork for balance. In his own words, Charlie, as he was known to his many friends, tells his amazing life story, written following his recovery from quadruple bypass surgery, a time he considered his second birthday. He wanted to leave his incredible story as an example for his grandchildren and great grandchildren and generations to come.

He never planned on having his story published beyond circulating it within his family. His wife, Doris, a librarian who loved books and reading, and their son Mark, had different ideas. They felt like Charlie’s life would be a great example for young people everywhere to follow.

In The Eighty-nine Year Adventure, Charlie shares a life well-lived, from his time as a child living in an era when the horse and buggy was the primary means of transportation and living in a house with no electricity was the norm. Chapters include his brave service to his country in World War II, and his adjustment back into civilian life. It documents his seventeen trips to Alaska to visit his son Mark’s family there. It also discusses he and Doris becoming a major part of the cheering section for his granddaughter’s athletic events.

He shares his thoughts about work ethics honed by working on the family farm as a child and practiced as a business owner during adulthood. The book includes the story of his amazing rescue by a former classmate during a crash landing he had behind enemy lines in Europe.

The eighty-three-page volume includes a foreword by his eldest son, former Nome Nugget newspaper editor and publisher Mark Fuerstenau, and many photographs of Charlie and his amazing life.

The book is available via Amazon books at a cost of $6.95 for the paperback edition, and $3.95 for the Kindle edition. It is eligible for free shipping with Amazon Prime.

Railroad Pump Car Restoration

By Norm Gibson

The Thursday afternoon work crew has taken on the project of restoring the railroad pump car. All of the wood was badly weathered and had rotted in places. The hand car will be completely disassembled, and all of the wood will be replaced, and all of the metal parts will be sandblasted to remove rust. Everything will be painted like pump cars were originally. This is a time-consuming process, but we hope to have it finished in time for the Heritage Festival at the end of June. You can follow our progress on Facebook https://www.facebook.com/groups/58728425377
The month of December is filled with religious celebrations; the birth of Jesus, the birth of Mohammed, the Jewish festival of lights, the winter solstice, the death of Zoroastrians, and a time of meditation as Buddha did. All of these events include a time of prayer.

In 1928 and again in 1977 new stamps were issued commemorating the encampment of the Continental Army at Valley Forge, December 1777 – June 1778 (150th & 200th anniversaries). The depiction on both stamps was of General George Washington praying. (Figure 1 and 2)

The 2-cent stamp depicting Washington kneeling at Valley Forge was first available on May 26, 1928. First Day sales were at the Philatelic Agency in Washington D.C. and in Lancaster, Norristown, Philadelphia, West Chester and Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. First Day sales were timed to coincide with the Midwest philatelic Exhibition in Cleveland, where the stamp was also sold First Day. (Figure 1 - Scott #645)

The 13-cent Washington at Valley Forge Christmas stamp was first available on October 21, 1977, at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. The stamp, designed by Steven Dohanos, is based upon the painting by J.C. Leyendecker (1874-1951). (Figure 2 – Scott #1729)

Unlike today when events are immediately documented and posted online, there is no photo of George Washington kneeling in the snow praying. Nor is there any document recording the event though there are several diary/letter accounts of oral histories being passed down from colonial soldiers to family members. If you look closely at the Scott #645 stamp you can see an assistant peeking out behind a tree and a group of soldiers talking around a campfire. What is known about George Washington was that his faith in the moral righteousness of the American cause never faltered.

Following two defeats against the British, including a battle at Philadelphia, Washington retreated with the Continental Army to Valley Forge. It located about 25 miles west of Philadelphia, and is a “defendable position with trade routes, and access to farm supplies”. With approximately 11,000 soldiers in Valley Forge, Washington immediately oversaw the lay out and construction of first crude huts for shelter and then log cabins which housed 12 men each. Not until his soldiers had adequate shelter did he vacate his tent for a local’s stone house. It was bitterly cold and there was a shortage of food, clothing and shoes.

During the 18th century, battles were not normally fought during the winter, so Washington would ask for his wife, Martha (Dandridge Custis) Washington (Figure 3) to join him at the camp. It is 110 miles from Mt. Vernon to Valley Forge and took ten days using carriage and supply wagons. When she arrived at Valley Forge, her wagons were filled with food, medicine, cloth, wool, and sewing supplies. At the stone house, which served as headquarters and home, Martha was called upon to write letters, stand with her husband at official events, organized a massive donation campaign for funds and clothing on behalf of the troops. With other wives, she organized a Woman’s Relief Squad, which knitted caps, mittens and socks and repaired pants and coats, as well as tending to the sick soldiers. The local Oneida tribe provided over 600 bushels of dried corn and taught the women how to prepare it for food.

General Washington’s letters to Congress describe these shortages as well as the desertion by some soldiers. “We had in Camp, on the 23rd Inst. by a Field Return then taken, not less than 2898 men unfit for duty, by reason of their being barefoot and otherwise naked. Besides this number,
sufficiently distressing of itself, there are many Others detained in Hospitals and crowded in Farmers Houses for the same causes.” (Washington, Dec. 29, 1777)

But by using eventual Congressional appropriations and supplies provided by the soldier’s wives, along with the military expertise of General Baron Von Steuben, Washington was able to turn the soldiers at Valley Forge into a disciplined fighting force.

As you bring this event into your February conversations, pretend it is to be Washington’s birthday (February 22, 1732). Imagine a dinner time conversation between Martha and George.

Kristine Ann McIntosh, a retired high school U.S. history teacher who migrates between RV parks in Arizona and Wyoming, is a descendant of the McIntosh and Claggett families of Richmond. Kristine, whose name is from her grandmother, Dora Elnora Kristine Petersen Claggett, is a second cousin to Christine Rowley. Kris’ history lessons using images from envelopes can be found on the American Philatelic Society C3a website.

Today is the first day of SPRING and Spring Has Sprung! It was beautiful here today. We will be starting work in the flower beds at the Village in April. I will be contacting “The Gardeners” to help me when the beds are ready to be worked. For your own home gardens, my advice is to wait until April 1 (or the last week in March) to prune roses, butterfly bushes, hydrangeas, clematis, etc. Also, I start cutting back the perennials that I let winter over and pull out weeds that I see. If you have any seeds that you want to start early, now is the time. I started mine indoors this past week. If you have any seeds to sow directly in the ground like annual poppies, nicotiana, cleome etc., you can clean a spot in your beds now and throw the seeds out in the beds in April.

If anyone has garden questions please feel free to call me, 586-321-8519.

I saw this posted somewhere and I am going to share it. It has been a tough year for everyone with the lockdowns, covid, etc. so remember:

I still Believe in “Amazing Grace”
That there is “Power in the Blood”
That “He Walks With Me and He Talks With Me”
That “Because He Lives I can face tomorrow”
ALL because of “THE OLD RUGGED CROSS”!

I LOVE all of those hymns!!!

In Memoriam

Nina Mary Jackman (nee Weldele), passed away peacefully at the age of 95 in Romeo, MI on January 6, 2021. She was born in Scobey, Montana and met and married Richard during World War II. Upon his return from the war, they moved to Michigan, living first in East Detroit and then in Ray Township, where they were longtime residents. Nina was an accomplished weaver and an avid genealogist.

Nina was the mother of 16 children. In 2010, Nina presented an educational and memorable program for RAHGS titled “At Home During the War Years.” Memorial donations can be made to the Alzheimer’s Association or to the Richmond Genealogical Historical Society.

Frances Elizabeth Plagens 92, of Richmond, passed away Sunday, February 21, 2021. She was predeceased by her husband Elroy and her son Calvin. A 1946 Richmond High School graduate, she was a lifelong Richmond resident and a Trinity Lutheran Church member. Frances’ long career as a realtor is well known in this area. She had a big heart, was a hostess to many tea parties, and found much joy in gardening and antiquing. She is survived by six children: Annette, Ken, Keith, Brian, Carol, and Marion. Memorials are suggested to Trinity Lutheran Church or the Richmond Area Historical and Genealogical Society.
Dave Leach loved cars—especially fast cars—so it was fitting that he would own a gas station in his hometown of Richmond. For many years he and his wife Bea owned and operated Dave’s Texaco Station in Muttonville. At that time, during the ‘50s and ‘60s, the price of gasoline was $.27 to $.32 a gallon, and a wrecker tow was $3-$4, depending on how far Dave needed to take the truck.

Dave’s business was unique among all of the other stations in the area because he also had two tow trucks. In fact, Bea served coffee to many state troopers at her home while they waited for Dave to return with the wreckage. Bea remembers filling out the necessary paperwork for AAA—a monthly task that was her responsibility.

Dave and Bea and their young family lived in a log cabin located just behind the station. The cabin, built by George Krohn, has been moved to another location, but the station itself has been demolished. The station and the cabin were situated on the corner of Gratiot and St. Clair Highway.

When he closed the station in 1965, Dave continued working as a self-employed trucker. Dave Leach passed away on March 6, 2001 at the age of 74.

Thank you to Bea Leach and Brenda Leach Johnston for contributing to this article.

Editor’s note: We are looking for stories and photos of old Richmond gas stations. If you can help, please contact the editor of this newsletter.
Columbus Depot

By Norm Gibson

The Columbus Depot that Joe Maranzano donated has been fixed up and painted. The platform was power washed, loose boards were secured with deck screws replacing nails that had come loose, and some of the foot railing was replaced. Broken siding and parts of a rotted wood window sill on the depot was replaced. Windows were caulked as needed. The damaged down spout was replaced. The building was power washed and sanded before painting. An effort was made to fix the bottom of the doors, but more work will need to be done on them. A copy of the sign has been mounted like it was in an old photo when Joe had it. The original sign will be on display in the freight side of the depot. Mike and Sean Buckert were hired by donors to do the work. Additional photos are on our Facebook site.

October Work Bee

By Norm Gibson

Various brick pavers in our walkways shifted and had become either trip hazards or looked bad. We also needed additional brick paving around our flagpole. A group of people, too numerous to mention here, came out and worked on the places around the museum, recognition area, flag pole, pavers in front of the schoolhouse, and the pathway to the back door of the cabin. With so many people working we were able to get the work done by lunch time. Without volunteers we wouldn’t be able to get very much done.

Long Term Preservation Committee News

By Rich Weinert

The LTP Committee met recently to discuss upcoming plans. The focus this year will be mainly working on the garage to make it into a vintage filling station. Similar to the old Goff’s filling station in town.

We will be reviewing the Agricultural Museum plans and will work toward applying for another grant to help fund its construction in the future.

The Schoolhouse exterior will be painted this year along with some minor wood trim repair.

Additionally, we will be inviting volunteers to help trim the lawn at the Historic Village. The City of Richmond is kindly going to be doing mowing.

To volunteer to help with the trimming click or go to: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090A4EA8AE2FA6FA7-rahgsI

Society Acquires Richmond Township Birth & Death Records

By Christine Rowley

Last fall while I was at the Richmond Township Hall looking for information, I came across the Birth Records from 1918-1944, and Death Records from 1914-1952. When I told the then Supervisor Cindi Greenia that they would be useful to have our genealogy department, she had all of them copied for us. The originals will remain in the vault at the Township Hall, but we are thrilled to add the copies to our collection. If you are interested in finding the record of someone you know, stop in the Village on a Thursday morning to take a look at this great addition to our genealogy corner.
Our mission statement:

- To share with others the legacy left to us by our forefathers, the migrants from the East and the immigrants from Europe, who with foresight and conviction built a better future for themselves and their children, and for the generations that followed.
- To honor and remember those who cleared the land, grew the crops, educated the young, and to pay homage to those who fought in the wars and sacrificed their lives for something they believed in.
- To encourage our community leaders to preserve the few historical buildings remaining today.
- To provide assistance to those who turn to us for help in finding their roots.

The general membership meetings/programs, which are open to the public, are held throughout the year. The Historic Village is open during Winter Festival, on Log Cabin Day, during Good Old Days, Thursday morning work bees, special events, and by special appointment. Watch the newsletter, the website, and Facebook for dates, times, and program information.