

# Looking Back • Moving Forward

## Leelanau County Historic Preservation Society



### CONTENTS

- 2 Historic Site Designation
- 2 New Board Members
- 3 Work on the Barn
- 4 Consultations
- 5-8 Accomplishing More together
- 5 Archaeology Day
- 6 Book Publication & Benefit
- 7 Bucket's of Rain Garden
- 7 Flower Garden
- 8 Plow Day



### Hello Friends

Our beginning was February 2017 when Leelanau County Board of Commissioners advertised for bids to remove the Leelanau County Poor Farm Barn. With more than 20 years of experience preserving Michigan barns, I knew this barn was not in as poor condition as they thought. It could be and I believed that it should be saved! As soon as I made my beliefs known publicly Barbara Siepker and Laurel Jeris joined in. They had already researched the barn history, and collected much of the nearly lost history of the Leelanau County Poor Farm. By April 2017 we incorporated the Leelanau County Historical Preservation Society as a 501©3, nonprofit organization.

We worked very hard to convince the Commissioners that the barn was worth saving and that our organization could do it. A year later, March 2, 2018, Leelanau County Historical Preservation Society entered into a 25-year lease with the County Commission. The rehabilitation is to take place within three years. The many donations received have demonstrated support of our goals. We were able to made immediate progress reinforcing the east basement wall before the end of the year.

Now as we begin our third year of rehabilitation we wanted to share the many successful projects and accomplishments that were made during 2019. We document our 2019 accomplishments here for your information.

Many thanks to everyone who donated time, money, and encouragement to this most important project.

*Steve*

Steve Stier, President



*Leelanau County Historic Preservation Society is a nonprofit, community and educational organization dedicated to facilitating the preservation and rehabilitation of historic structures in the county.*

*Formed in 2017 to save the Leelanau County Poor Farm Barn, our larger mission is to assist owners of historic structures in understanding these buildings and considering their future.*

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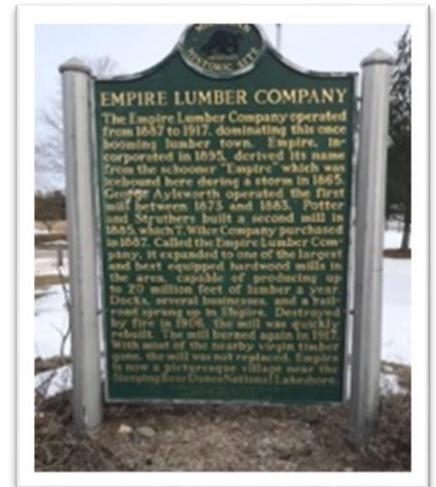
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## Historic Site Designation

Laurel Jeris

The Leelanau County Poor Farm site and barn have been designated as a Michigan State Historic Site, joining over 1,700 designated historic sites in Michigan.



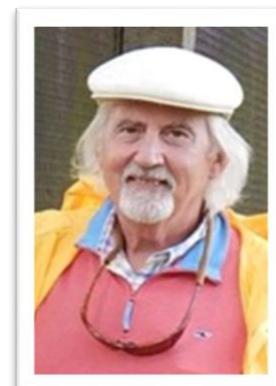
We are pleased to announce the approval of a Michigan Historic Marker by the Michigan Historic Commission. The marker text will display the story of the Poor Farm on one side and key features of the last remaining structure, the barn, on the other side. The cast metal marker (42 inches wide by 54 inches high – see sample above) will be dedicated in a public ceremony at a later date when public gatherings are safe once again.

The historic marker application required extensive research of primary sources to document all facts stated about the site. The Michigan Historic Commission reviewed and approved the marker application and collaborated with LCHPS in the development of the marker text. This designation will help to restore the history of the farm and barn to its rightful place as a significant way in which Leelanau County cared for its neediest residents.

The original farm acreage, west of Maple City, is now encompassed by the Myles Kimmerly Recreation Area, one of our three county parks. That Leelanau County has chosen to retain this farmland for the use and enjoyment of our residents speaks to the ongoing commitment of our county government to the health and welfare of our community.

## New Board Members

*Two new board members were added to the LCHPS board early in 2019. Meet Jane Cline and Tom Patton.*



# 2019 Work on the Poor Farm Barn

Stephen Stier

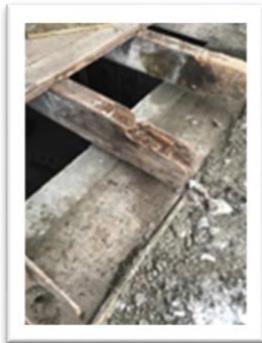
Rehabilitation work on the Poor Farm Barn has made good progress during 2019. Electrical service was installed with a 100-amp distribution box and two twenty-amp duplex outlets. This allows for work to continue using power hand-tools and lighting as needed.

Rotted members were removed and replaced. Materials needed for the south wall bracing replacement and timbers for strengthening the load capacity of the floor have been delivered to the site for upcoming work.

See below before and after accomplishments for work on trusses, floor joist, and floor repairs.



The rotted pieces of the middle three truss bottoms were all removed, replaced, and bolted together.



Rotted east ends of the drive floor joist were 'sistered' with two-by-eight lumber on each side.



A new sill and band joist were installed. Rotted flooring was replaced.



## Consultations

Barbara Siepker

Consulting services for historic properties is a part of the mission of the Leelanau County Historic Preservation Society. We offer our expertise and resources to other owners who are responsible for historic properties. Once people associated with historic properties in Leelanau County heard of our existence and mission, we began receiving inquiries about their buildings with regard to historical significance, structural stability, rehabilitation needs, and potential use.

Complimentary preservation visits and consultations have been provided, addressing these owner's interests and concerns for their structures. We have visited and provided information about:

- Shetland School
- Kilwy Store, Cemetery and Church
- Woolsey Airport
- Rolling Stone Grist Mill.

A Woolsey Airport relative requested our assistance in their quest to obtain a Michigan Historical Marker for this unique memorial airport and building. LCHPS has become their fiduciary partner.

*Through their book, **Historic Leelanau: Recognized Sites and Places of Historical Significance**, authors Byron and Wilson, and LCHPS hope to encourage the community to become more engaged with historic preservation to pursue obtaining Michigan Historical Markers that would benefit both locals and visitors with the narrative of Leelanau's history and to build cultural tourism in the county.*

LCHPS organized a presentation by Michigan History Center staff in Traverse City to explain eligibility and application process for Michigan Historical Markers. Forty individuals representing numerous organizations or historic structures attended.

We would be pleased to hear from you.

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## You Are Our Future

Leelanau County Historic Preservation Society is a 501 (c3) dedicated to the preservation and rehabilitation of historic structures in Leelanau County for the education and well-being of our communities.

In keeping with our mission, potential uses for the barn shall be educational in nature and/or clearly designed

to benefit residents of Leelanau County, and be in keeping with the Myles Kimmerly Park setting.

Donations may be made to Leelanau County Historic Preservation Society (LCHPS). Include your name/s and contact information, including full address, phone and email address. Mail to LCHPS, P.O. Box 331, Empire, Michigan, 49630.

Do not hesitate to contact us! Board contacts page 2.

*Thanks!*

## Accomplishing More Together



### Archaeology Day

Stephen Stier

**Michigan Archaeological Society  
Glen Lake Community Schools**

Because we planned to do minor excavating near the Poor Farm Barn, the LCHPS Board decided to do some archaeological investigating to discover and not disturb any artifacts that might be buried there. The Michigan Archaeological Society (MAS) was an obvious partner because of their knowledge and experience. Glen Lake Community Schools (GLCS), close by, provided the opportunity to connect with educators and students for learning and discovery.



Glen Lake Community High School students were introduced to archaeological exploration methods. GPS mapping at the Poor Farm site was done to locate outbuilding foundations. Area farmers familiar with the Poor Farm's operation (1902-1960), and Maple Valley Nursing Home residents assisted in identifying locations of original farm outbuildings. This information focused our investigation effort.



MAS recruited seven professional and avocational archaeologists from around Michigan to work with us instructing and mentoring students during the 'shovel testing' of the area around the barn Saturday, May 4, 2019 was set for the *dig*. The day before, MAS members came to Leelanau County to provide 12 high school students an orientation to archaeology and the *dig* process.

All the students were enthusiastic and learned great deal about the very basics of archaeology. Several interesting artifacts were unearthed from the time of the Poor Farm's operation which ended in the 1960's.

Learn more about the MI Archaeological Society at [Micharch.org/wp/](http://Micharch.org/wp/)



## Accomplishing More Together

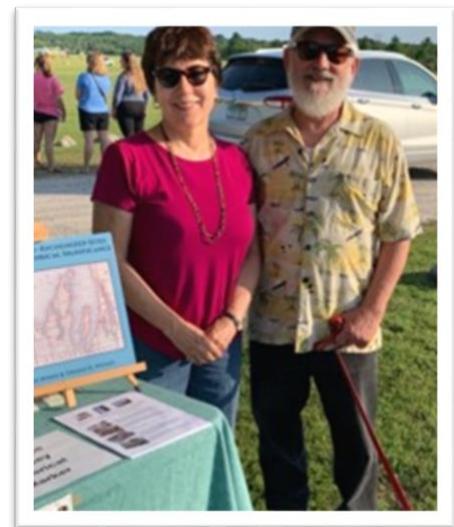
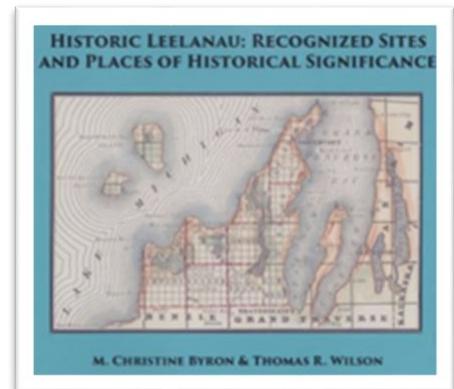
### Book Publication and Sales Benefit LCHPS

Barbara Siepker

*Historic Leelanau: Recognized Sites and Places of Historical Significance* was researched and written by authors M. Christine Byron and Thomas R. Wilson, and published by the Leelanau Press in 2019. The authors and publisher have donated the proceeds of all sales of this book towards the \$5,000 cost for the production of the Michigan Historic Marker that was recently granted. Additional sales are held in a preservation fund.

The book features 42 historic sites and buildings officially recognized in the Michigan Register of Historic Sites or the National Register of Historic Places.

Byron and Wilson toured the county promoting the book and sharing pictures and stories of many of our Leelanau County's historic sites. Programs were presented at libraries, bookstores, history centers (Empire, Leland and Omena), the Port Oneida Fair, and Woolsey Airport Fly-In. Copies are available at area bookstores and from Leelanau County Historic Preservation Society board members.



## Accomplishing More Together



### Buckets of Rain Garden

2019 was the second year that Buckets of Rain had a vegetable garden at the Poor Farm Barn site. A nonprofit organization, Buckets of Rain is supporting the rebuilding of Detroit by transforming blighted areas into agricultural oasis

*--growing hope, feeding lives -- one garden at a time.*

In addition to gardens in Highland Park, Buckets of Rain has gardens in our area at the Poor Farm Barn site and in Benzie County. When vegetables are ready for harvest, they are distributed to people in need in the Detroit area and in our area.

Our garden at the Poor Farm site is 50' x 100' and produced over 5,000 pounds or 20,000 servings of fresh vegetables.

More about Buckets of Rain:  
<http://www.bucketsofrain.org>



### A Flower Garden Too!

Inspired by a successful row of sunflowers along the south side of the Buckets of Rain Garden, board members and volunteers set about to grow flowers as well! An invitation to thirteen area gardeners and nursery/garden entrepreneurs resulted in a new 6' x 50' flowerbed along the south side of the big garden.

Flowers are primarily native and dry-tolerant species including: Bee balm, Black and Brown-Eyed Susan, Blue Lobelia, Butterfly Bush, Culvers Root, Daisy, Day Lilies, Asters, Coneflower, Lavender, Sedum, Yarrow, Tiger Lilies *and more!* Forsythia, Lilac -- flowering shrubs were planted in a smaller garden by the barn ramp and nursing home sidewalk.

Buckets of Rain plowed for a flower garden when they prepared their plot and provided some annuals that had started with the vegetables. We weeded well in preparation for May 28<sup>th</sup>, our flower pick-up, drop-off and planting day. We met a lot of kind folks who donated plants. Weeding and tending occurred throughout the summer and fall.

As spring begins, we look forward to the flower garden's first full year of blooms! In the future, this could become a nursery for other plantings throughout the Poor Farm Barn site.

Accomplishing More Together



## 2nd Annual Plow Day

### *Northwest Michigan Draft Horse & Mule Association*

Organized in May 1990 to preserve and enjoy the draft horse, the goal of this association is to keep the draft horse and mule heritage alive for future generations. This was an obvious organization to connect with to help prepare the ground for the vegetable garden and to demonstrate historic agricultural practices that were common to the Poor Farm.

Members of the Northwest Michigan Draft Horse & Mule Association brought draft horses, a wagon, and a horse drawn disc to fit the garden plot for the second year of the Buckets of Rain Garden. A harnessing demonstration identified the different parts of the tack and how the harness is assembled on the horse. Wagon rides were also provided around the grounds. Participants old and young were able to get up close and interact with the horses.

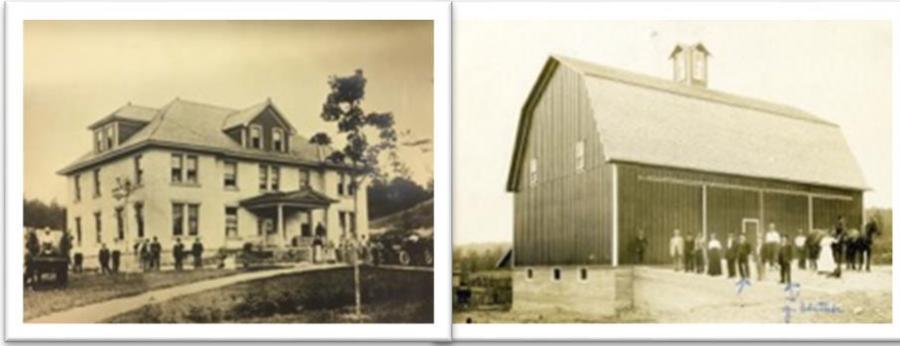
More about this group:  
<http://www.drivingdrafts.com/index.html>



*Tom Cyr narrates the harnessing process with Susan Zenker and Kathy Shutt.*

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*Leelanau County invoked the state mandated county responsibility to care for the health and welfare of county residents from the very first meeting of the Leelanau County Board of Supervisors on May 9, 1863.*

## Lessons from the Past

Laurel Jeris

Those who found themselves, for any number of reasons, with no alternative other than to reside at the Leelanau County Poor Farm had to deal with personal issues:

- Feelings of anger, sadness, grief, failure,
- Acute stress/anxiety over what such a drastic change in their living situation would bring,
- Often illness with chronic conditions brought on by poverty leading to desperate living situation.

From interviews with grandchildren of Charles and Mabel Coleman, the last farm caretakers (at farm from 1935-1961), and from the diaries of W. A. Craker and his wife, Carrie Craker (at farm from 1901-1912), we know that these folks worked hard to create a sense of community. The Leelanau County Poor Farm was established 16 years after the opening of the State Asylum in Traverse City, formerly known as the Northern Michigan Asylum. The theory of care in that facility was “work as therapy” and “beauty as therapy.” As such, the proximity of asylum as a preeminent example of the Kirkbride model as well as the national progressive agenda of the early 1900s supported creating community even on the poor farm. Said another way, the caretakers were running with the tide rather than against it.

The Poor Farm residence, completed in 1906 and designed by Traverse City architect, Jens C. Petersen, was a welcoming place, with large airy rooms, lots of windows, and flowers all around in the summer. This building was ahead of its time. Completed in 1906, it had central heating, lighting, and indoor plumbing with toilets and tubs. Few people in Leelanau County were living in homes with those amenities.

Despite the vast improvement in their physical environment, indigent folks who had no other option but “to go to the poor house” faced the loss of everything familiar in their lives as well as the crushing uncertainty of what was to come. A situation not unlike what we are facing today with the “stay-at-home” executive order from Governor Whitmer.

Some of us have the luxury of making the best of social isolation with access to technology to sustain virtual communities. However, far more are those facing the loss of income and the possibility of instant poverty and potential homelessness. The extent to which we broaden our social safety net and reach out to include everyone in our virtual communities will determine how we all fare in this crisis. Will we use this time to place ourselves squarely in the role of caretaker for our neighbors by reaching out in new and creative ways that do not expose others to COVID-19 but help them face the uncertainty of this time and the reality of social isolation?

Leelanau County invoked the state mandated county responsibility to care for the health and welfare of county residents from the first meeting of the Leelanau County Board of Supervisors, May 9, 1863. Their first legislative act was to appropriate \$5000.00 to the “[Civil War] Volunteer Family Relief Fund” (Mitchell, 2011, p. 204). To this day, that responsibility stated in our county charter has not changed; Leelanau County is still responsible for the health and welfare of its residents. However, our county government cannot do this alone. Today, it is up to each individual to not only protect one another from infection, but to see that we all have access to vital resources and do everything we can to assure that the effects of social isolation do not result in devastation approaching that caused by the virus.

Mitchell, John C. (2011). *Grand Traverse: The Civil War Era*. Suttons Bay, MI: Suttons Bay Publication (p. 204).



# Thanks to so many!

Since 2017 we have benefitted from the many individuals and organizations that have helped the Leelanau County Historic Preservation Society to form and to move forward. We are grateful for the assistance and cooperation of Leelanau County staff and commissioners. Volunteers, too numerous to mention, from across the region have shared their time, skills, and resources to make things happen. We are grateful for the work of craftsmen, businesses, and companies from this area and across the state. Our donors have been very generous in supporting LCHPS and our activities.

And, people of our region and beyond are interested, visit, and participate!



It Takes  
a  
Village!

