

Pioneer Place Preserver

The Annual Newsletter of the Marilla Historical Society
Spring 2019



The Long-Awaited Book Arriving!

If you have not yet ordered a copy of the soon-to-be published book: The Woods, the Farms, and the People...the History of Marilla Township, you still can do so by contacting museum Director Jan Thomas at 231.362.3430. The cost is \$35 with all proceeds helping to support the work of Marilla Historical Society. If you have pre-ordered, you may pick it up during Open Hours or special events. Those who have paid for postage, your books will be mailed to you. This exciting book narrates early life in our township with great stories of the people and their community connections.

Do You Know This Soldier?

This photo, donated by Mary Esther Brooks, shows a civil war soldier that *may* be John Delvin. Writing on the back has two names though and neither of them John. One, written by the late Sharon Grossnickle, suggests that this may be Charles Delvin though John had no brothers by that name though his brother, William T. Delvin, died in the Civil War at Vicksburg, MS in 1863. Another possibility based on writing on the back of the photo is that this is DW Danville. Our records show no evidence of a DW Danville either, so perhaps this is, in fact, John Delvin as it was with the correspondence included in the donation. Find out about this soldier's connection to Marilla Township and more on this exciting donation story on page 3.

2019 Events Calendar

May 2, 2019 Annual Meeting
6:30 at Marilla Township Hall

May 27, 2019 Memorial Day Open Hours 10:00-12:00; enjoy refreshments special displays and a tour of the Museum spaces.

June 29, 2019 Founder's Day
Marilla Museum & Pioneer Place from 1:00-4:00: Celebrate community and enjoy a great meal, special displays, music, and children's games. Call for details.

November 30, 2019 Pioneer Christmas:
Experience the beauty of an early township holiday event from 5:00-8:00 p.m.. Dinner, music, tours, and stories. **Reservations required.**

Call Jan at **231.362.3430** for details.

Visit our website:

<http://www.hsmichigan.org/marilla/>

Director's Note

Greetings:

We're fast approaching the visiting season beginning in May. I always look forward to our regular "Open Hours" because it is such a delight to share our history with our guests. When we are told that we have a "treasure" in Marilla Museum & Pioneer Place, it spurs us on to continue to offer even better displays and programming. I have finally completed the historical narrative that chronicles the history of our community. Working on this project has heightened my appreciation for community builders everywhere. We have benefited from their efforts and succeeding generations will be all the richer for their endeavors as well. What we do to honor their progress gives us an opportunity to determine how we can contribute by adding building stones that the ancestors can be proud of. When you hear their stories, I hope that you will consider what you can do to make your community, wherever you are, one that you'll be honored to pass on to your children and grandchildren. The book titled The Woods, the Farms, and the People...the History of Marilla Township will be available for sale this spring.

Jan Thomas,

Director, Marilla Museum & Pioneer Place

Explore Local History Open Hours 2019

The Marilla Museum & Pioneer Place will be open each Saturday from 12:00 to 4:00 from May through October. Some special programs are being planned on selected dates. We welcome you and your family.

Be a volunteer....We Need You!

Volunteering at the Marilla Museum & Pioneer Place can be a lot of fun. Whether you greet visitors during Open Hours, work at events, or help with a special archival project, you are performing a service that is vital and greatly appreciated. We are only successful due to our volunteers.

If you have a special talent, we would welcome you to share it. We need:

- A committed **photographer** to take photos at events and to help archive our collection.
- A talented, **organized** person to work in the **archives** inventory system.

Call **231.362.3430** to see how you can help.

President's Report

Hello Friends,

Since 1980, numerous people have worked tirelessly to form, maintain, and enhance a museum that serves Marilla Township and an even wider community. Our visitors come from all over Michigan and beyond. Some have deep ties to the area while others are serious history buffs. Feedback from these visitors expresses appreciation for the efforts that the Township has made in creating Marilla Museum & Pioneer Place. I celebrate and thank people for all their efforts large and small that have contributed to making a dream a reality.

As a longtime volunteer and most recently as appointed president, I have observed gifts given in different forms that include funding, sweat equity, service as a member of the MHS Board, leadership, and volunteerism. All of these efforts have enabled the Marilla Historical Society, while operating in tandem with the Township Board, to provide a rich educational and recreational experience at a very low cost to taxpayers. Let's continue to honor the early community builders by preserving this treasure for present and future generations.

Understanding where we have been and where we are now can help us choose a wise path for the future.

Bob Thomas

President, Marilla Historical Society

Annual Giving

For a small, rural township, we have a very special organization in our Historical Society. Preserving our unique, local history takes resources. One of those crucially important resources is funding.

Our operating costs each year, including archival projects, programming, repairs and updates are mostly underwritten by our fund balance. Dues make up only a very small portion of operating costs. Please consider upgrading your level of giving to continue the great work of our museum on the enclosed envelope.

For 2019 we will anticipate needing funds to upgrade archival displays, artifact preservation, and some critical maintenance needs to our historic buildings.

We offer various dues levels and accept generous contributions beyond basic dues. In 2018 we had significant expenses related to building preservations costs. Keep our local history alive!

Museum Receives Donation of Civil War Correspondence & Photo

Julia “Love” Warren (nee Delvin) was a resident of Marilla Township who inherited letters from her father John to her mother Sarah from the Civil War period. She was a mere nine months old when her father wrote from “Camp near Charlotte, NC July the 29, 1863.”

John, who retired to North Manchester, IN, and was with the 130th Indiana Volunteer Infantry Regiment writes in one letter (no corrections for grammar or spelling made):

“Dear wife

it is with pleasure that I rite you a few lines to let you no that I am well and hope these lines find you all well I received your kind leter of the 18 and was glad to hear that you was all well I think that Mary has bad luck. I hant any news to rite this time every thing is reasable here and the rebles thick around here...”

While John writes in hopes of end to the war soon, it would be more than two years before his hopes were realized. He writes

“...but I think it wont be long til I will bee there if nothen happens I don't think I wil have to rite many leters and more to you I was sorry to hear you had to sta alone I wish I was there to sta with you now...it is warm here...I would like to see you and the children I will close buy sending my best wish to you all no more at present from John Delvin to Sarah Delvin and babes”

In the second letter, a page from what would appear to be a longer letter that didn't survive, John writes of the conditions of his conditions and longing for Sarah.

“I was prety sick a couple days last week I had the head ache the worst kind the old napsack made a prety hard piler I (think) if I was at home that your arm would make a beter piller for mee Tell the children that if the cars will bring there pap home some time if I live tell them to bee good children and pap will bring them some nice books to read I was glad to heare that my babe was a runer around so smart I must stop riten so no more at present but remain as ever yours from John Delvin to Sarah Delvin and children

rite soon”

It is possible that the “babe” is Julia, his toddler daughter. He did in fact return to his family from the war and, prior to its end, fathered his youngest child, a son named Abraham Lincoln Delvin. He then returned to his infantry unit near Charlotte.

John mustered out of the infantry on 2 December 1865 at Charlotte NC. He returned to Indiana where he died at age 52 on August 1, 1886. His obituary from The Democrat states “Death was caused by a complication of diseases.”

These recent acquisitions came from a donation from the collection of MHS Founding Board Member Mary Esther Brooks (nee Grossnickle), who said the letters and a civil war photo (on page 1) were from a trunk that came to her grandfather Hezekiah after the death of his brother-in-law, Sam Warren. Sam Warren was married to Julia “Love” Delvin. They had eight children (Pearl, Nettie, Fanonda, Samuel, Iva Leah, Rhea, Eugene and Fred) here in Marilla Township where they farmed. Julia, Sam and three of their young children are all buried in the Marilla Township Cemetery.

Local Civil War Soldiers

Marilla's part in service to the United States of America begins with the Civil War, April 12, 1861-April 9, 1865. It was noted earlier that settlers began to arrive in Marilla Township beginning in 1866, just following the war. The following people are listed on a Veteran's Schedule for residents of Marilla as having served in the Civil War:

Charles W. Babcock
William W. Bell
Andrew Britton
Sylvester Chesebro
Addison Colwell
Sylvanus M. Evens
John T. Holly
George F. Rinard
Jacob Rinard
Jacob Snowden
Emerson Snyder
John J. Stanton
James Leaver
George Leaver
David Gannon

For more on the impact of local soldiers in the civil war, you can read about it in detail and story in the book *The Woods, the Farms, and the People...the History of Marilla Township*. Read how the Gannon brothers joined the elite group of soldiers called “Berdan's Sharpshooters”.

Progress with Maintenance

We accomplished some major upkeep projects in 2018. The Pioneer Barn had a number of roof leaks that needed attention. The decision was made to have a roofing company apply a special coating to the entire roof in order to seal it properly. That was a costly procedure. Some other projects were:

- Major sealing of many cracks and openings in the barn that were letting weather and critters in. That accomplished our aim except for the time that we had very high winds with snow. We'll keep working on tightening it up. We're grateful to the volunteers who helped with the project.
- Application of fine mesh wire to all of the eaves to control invasion of pests (birds, bats, squirrels).
- We have a television monitor located in the barn now that we are hoping will give the opportunity for guests to view some of the great historical videos that we have.
- The Township has repaired the bell in the tower of the Township Hall and Community Center.
- A new split rail fence has been installed that sets off the pioneer buildings nicely. We enlarged the lawn area surrounding the buildings.

All of these expenses have set us back a bit so that we need to do some serious fund raising to build up our fund balance again. We would welcome any additional support that you can offer either with donations or volunteer work.

New Projects

Sometime this spring or early summer, we will construct a porch over the door of the Pioneer House. A porch goes a long way in helping protect the structure. In addition, the stair walls going down to the main basement museum will get a new paint job as well as the walls and ceiling of the basement hallway. We are in the process of having two new roadside directional signs announcing Marilla Museum & Pioneer Place.

Town Hall and Community Center Projects

Extensive remodeling and restructuring work has been accomplished on the kitchen and ADA entrance of the main building. What a change! In addition, the wood floors in the main meeting areas will be sanded and finished. Many thanks to the Township Board for making it happen. It's beautiful. Stop by to see the changes.

We have been working on an Old School Trunk project. The idea behind the trunk is that it will contain everything that is needed to teach a lesson or two from

a hundred years ago. It includes, slates, chalk, books, poetry, music, costumes, and items needed to set the scene. As the opportunity presents itself, things will be added. The trunk can be portable and be available to other historical groups to use for reenactments.

Marilla Historical Society Board

President, Bob Thomas, 231.233.9455

Vice President, Douglas Glick

Treasurer, Dixie Howes

Secretary, Douglas Glick

Jan Thomas, Trustee, Museum Director

Curator, Phyllis Cholette

Sonny Rewerts, Trustee

Terry Howes, Trustee

Would you like to become a member of our board? We welcome new board membership having added two new members since last year. Welcome to Douglas Glick and Sonny Rewerts.

Marilla Historical Society Cookbook Sale

Rhubarb Torte

- 1 c. flour
 - 2 eggs beaten
 - 3 Tbsp. powdered sugar
 - 4 ¼ c. flour
- 1/3 c. butter
1 tsp. vanilla
1 ½ c. sugar
¾ c. sliced almonds

Mix one cup flour, p. sugar, and butter until crumbly and pat on the bottom of an eight-inch square pan. Mix together ¼ c. flour, sugar, eggs, rhubarb, and vanilla. Pour over crust. Top with almonds sprinkled with a little cinnamon sugar and bake at 350 degrees for 35-40 minutes. **Delicious!**

This recipe is courtesy of Isabelle Danville.

The "**Country Cookbook**" is now on sale for \$5.00 and contains hundreds of great recipes by local cooks. (Postage not included.)

Pick one up by contacting Jan 231.362.3430