



Sanctuary and Deliverance

Underground Railroad Drama Captured in Vivid Mural

On an Easter weekend in 1847, 12 African Americans freed themselves from slave owning Kentucky farmers. They crossed over the Ohio River with the goal of reaching Cass County, Michigan, a vital stop on the Underground Railroad.

On Aug. 17, a gang of Kentuckians came to Cass County, raided local cabins and captured nine of the runaway slaves.

This incident set in motion a dramatic confrontation and a historic court decision with unexpected consequences.

On Oct. 23, 2010, a vivid, colorful and energetic outdoor mural was unveiled in Cassopolis showing the story from the river crossing to a jubilant day in court. The mural, *Sanctuary and Deliverance*, and a booklet on the events are a project of the Minority Coalition of Cass County, funded in part by grants from the Michigan Humanities Council.

“The fact that this event happened shows that this was a community where people who had been enslaved felt safe,” said Dr. Veta Tucker, professor of African American Studies and Literature at Grand Valley State University and author of the booklet *A Twenty First Century History of the 1847 Kentucky Raid*. “It had become a colony of African Americans, both free and formerly enslaved who were developing a community in that place because it gave refuge and safety without fleeing to Canada.”

The Chain Lake Missionary Baptist Church was founded by African Americans in 1838 in Cass County. The county was also home to a Society of Friends church. Dr. Alisea McLeod, a professor at Indiana University and a scholar consultant for the mural project, said many African Americans came to Cass County after being freed by Quaker farmers in North Carolina and Virginia.



Photos by the Michigan Humanities Council

Left: Ruth Andrews was the designer and lead artist for the Sanctuary and Deliverance mural.

Top: White and black farmers confront the Kentucky raiders demanding that captured slaves be released.

“The Kentucky Raid is a wonderful testament to cooperation, to many different groups that appear on the surface to be different, who find they have common beliefs, a belief in freedom, working together to achieve a cause that just seems right,” McLeod said, “I think when I come here this legacy and this spirit still lives in the citizens of the area.”

Cass County was known in the South as a hub for the Underground Railroad. The slave owners had sent a spy up north to Cass County to track down the runaways and report back to the owners.

On the night of the raid, the Kentuckians were met by a group of free blacks and whites by a creek in Vandalia.

“The situation was extremely volatile,” said Marty Kaszar, project director. “The Kentucky raiders were prepared and armed. Our folks were armed and it was going to get violent. The people stood up and said, ‘You

can’t take our people.’”

Josiah Osborn, a Quaker, stepped forward to calm the situation and proposed, with others, that the Kentucky raiders take their claim to the local court.

“So they did take their claim to the court in Cassopolis,” said Tucker, “It was a proper court but the magistrate was an abolitionist and he said their paperwork was not in order. The African Americans were even allowed to charge the Kentuckians with assault and breaking and entering.”

The African Americans were released and fled Cass County to Schoolcraft and Battle Creek, stops on the

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Upcoming Events: CALENDAR

Feb. 22, 2011

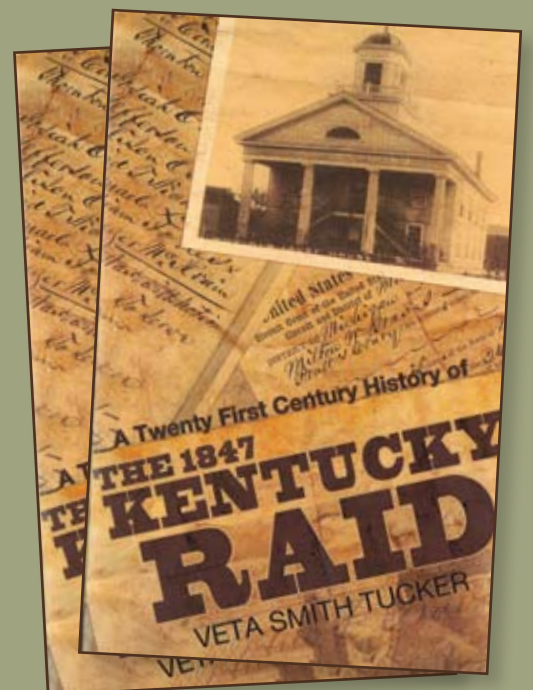
The Kentucky Raid – a Cass County Legacy

April 21, 2011

Historic Women of Cass County’s Underground Railroad

A Twenty First Century History of the 1847 Kentucky Raid into Cass County is available in color for \$10 and in black and white for \$5 plus \$1.50 postage. Contact The Minority Coalition of Cass County, PO Box 413, Cassopolis, MI 49031.

For more information: kentuckyraidmural.blogspot.com





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VISION

The Michigan Humanities Council will be known as a unifying force throughout Michigan, whose programs help people connect with one another and the places where they live, by fostering a greater understanding and engagement in the cultures, histories, and values which tell us who we were, are, and hope to be.

MISSION

The Michigan Humanities Council connects people and communities by fostering and creating quality cultural programs.

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Michigan Humanities Council Adds Seven to Board of Directors

The Michigan Humanities Council welcomes seven new members to its Board of Directors; three were appointed by Gov. Jennifer Granholm and the others were elected by the board. The three gubernatorial appointments are Jorge Chinaea of Clinton Township, Shakil Khan of Lake Orion, and Maralyn O'Brien of Canton. Chinaea and Khan were appointed on May 3, 2010, and will serve until Dec. 31, 2012; O'Brien was appointed on May 3, 2010, and will serve until Dec. 31, 2011. Chris Nern was elected on June 17, 2010, and will serve until Dec. 31, 2012. Bobbie Arnold, Robert Bartlett and Stuart Grigg were elected Oct. 28, 2010. Arnold and Bartlett will serve through Dec. 31, 2013. Grigg will fill a vacancy whose term ends Dec. 31, 2011.

Jorge L. Chinaea of Clinton Township is an Associate Professor of History and the Director of the Center for Chicano-Boricua Studies at Wayne State University in Detroit. Chinaea is the author of *Race and Labor in the Hispanic Caribbean: The West Indian Immigrant Worker Experience in Puerto Rico, 1800-1850* (University Press of Florida, 2005) and is a frequent presenter of Latino culture and identity and Latin American history at academic conferences across the United States. He has taught nearly 20 courses on the history and culture of Latin America. Chinaea earned his Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota in 1994.

Shakil A. Khan of Lake Orion is the president and director of the Multicultural Council of America, located in Troy. He is also president of the Dominican International College in Troy. Khan previously served as the president of the Multicultural Council in Windsor, Canada. His professional history includes serving as Dean of Clinical Sciences for the School of Medicine, Spartan Health Sciences University in St. Lucia, West Indies; and as Chief of Surgery for Smile Train Organization in the Dominican Republic. Khan has served as a life-long volunteer for cultural organizations, with experience in management, public relations, and fundraising.

Maralyn O'Brien of Canton Township is currently working for the Labor Program at Wellstone Action, an organization that supports and trains activists on how to run for political office and manage a campaign. She previously worked for the State Employees International Union (SEIU) as a senior field coordinator in Washington DC, as legislative coordinator for SEIU Healthcare Michigan's government affairs department, and as a political field organizer for SEIU's Michigan Quality Homecare Campaign. O'Brien earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Public Policy, cum laude, from Albion College in 2005. She currently is pursuing a Master's in Urban Planning at Wayne State University.

Chris Nern of Douglas is a community activist who has experience in fund raising and serving on the boards of directors for art and cultural associations. Nern is a retired Vice President and General Counsel for Detroit Edison, where he worked from 1973-2000. He was an adjunct professor of business law at Lawrence Technological University from 2003-2007 and at Madonna University and St. Mary's College from 2001-2003. Nern's board affiliations have included: the Saugatuck Center for the Arts, Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan-HOPE Fund, Birmingham-Bloomfield Cultural Council, Michigan Opera Theatre, and as Chief Operating Officer for the Cranbrook Academy of Art Summer Festival.

Bobbie Arnold of Midland is the president and CEO of The Charles J. Strosacker Foundation in Midland. She has been active in numerous community and volunteer activities including the United Way of Midland County Allocations Committee, the Development Committee and Board of Directors for the Mid-Michigan Regional Medical Center, the Legacy Center for Student Success and Midland Kids First Board. She attended Delta College in Michigan and Bellevue College in Seattle, WA.

Robert Bartlett of Novi is the president of the Michigan Colleges Foundation. He has spent more than 20 years in higher education in a variety of academic and administrative roles. He served in senior positions at Cornell University, the University of Chicago and the University of Rochester. Prior to joining the Michigan College Foundation he was senior consultant to colleges, universities, health-care systems and other non-profit organizations. He has an undergraduate degree from Stetson University and master's and doctoral degrees from Cornell University. He also holds an M.A.R. in religious studies from Yale Divinity School and was a post doctoral fellow in the Department of Education at the University of Chicago.

Stuart Grigg of Grosse Pointe is owner and president of Grigg Graphic Systems Inc. in Southfield. He is an associate in ASA Consulting Services LLC, which provides fund development counsel and services and education curriculum planning and education. He is also a partner in W.J. Bell Properties. He is active in several community organizations in leadership positions including the City of Grosse Pointe Foundation, Christ Church Grosse Pointe, Downtown YMCA, Family Services Inc., Friends of the Fox Theatre, Ronald McDonald House and the Wayne County Council for Art, History and Humanities. He attended Wayne State University.

Great Michigan Read Coming



The third Great Michigan Read program will launch May 2011.

Five regional subcommittees around Michigan are submitting short lists of titles for consideration. The subcommittees are hosted by Plymouth District Library/Redford Township District Library; Peter White Public Library in Marquette; Grand Rapids Public Library; Alpena County George N. Fletcher Public Library; and Public Libraries of Saginaw.

In January the Council will convene a selection committee to select a title.

The 2009-2010 Great Michigan Read was *Stealing Buddha's Dinner* by Bich Minh Nguyen, a memoir of her immigration to Michigan as a Vietnamese refugee and her childhood in Grand Rapids. The first Great Michigan Read was *The Nick Adams Stories*, a collection of short stories by Ernest Hemingway set in northern Michigan, where Hemingway's family vacationed in his youth.



Michigan Humanities Council



Courtesy of Lynne Brown

Jan Fedewa

Fond Memories and Farewell

By Jan Fedewa, Executive Director, Michigan Humanities Council

I have always found it difficult to say goodbye and saying farewell to the cultural community and all the wonderful people I have worked with, interacted with, laughed with, and celebrated with will be ever so difficult as I begin my retirement.

I often say when the performance concludes and the curtain closes, it gives one pause to reflect and talk about the final act, which in a way is how one may describe the conclusion of their work ... their retirement.

While I have many fond memories during my tenure as executive director, I will remember most vividly the lives we've impacted and the stories we've captured through our programs. There are several that I want to share with you.

Several years ago, I attended a Prime Time session offered in Saginaw. Prime Time is an inter-generational, humanities-based literacy program that bonds low-literacy, low-income families with children aged 6-12 around the act of reading. Using award-winning children's literature, the six-week reading, discussion, and storytelling program is held at public libraries. It reinforces the role of the family as a major social and economic unit; seeks to transform families into lifelong readers; and creates the precondition for all learning.

That evening when the storyteller finished reading the book, she engaged the students and parents in the discussion of the work. Her goal was to get them to think critically about the content and to participate in the dialogue.

The book that was read talked about Ruby who wanted to break her family's cultural tradition of young women marrying immediately following high school graduation. She diligently saved her money throughout her adolescent years to achieve her goal of attaining a college degree.

The scholar asked the children that evening if there is "a goal that they want to achieve and are willing to work hard to reach it like Ruby." Of course, several raised their hands and provided varying goals from wanting a new car, a new house, to games to wanting to go to college. She then turned to the parents and asked the same question. A single-mother raised her hand and said, "I am willing to work hard to get my GED."

For the past five years, we've collaborated with the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, National Endowment for the Arts, Poetry Foundation, Library of Michigan, and Michigan Youth Arts to bring Poetry Out Loud (POL) to high school students. This program encourages these students to learn about great poetry through memorization and performance. By encouraging students to study, memorize, and perform works of our literary icons, we help them master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage.

Margi Charette, a high school teacher from Holt, was one of the first teachers to implement the Poetry Out Loud Program. Through her leadership, Holt has had two state winners. But, more importantly, critical to Holt's success is Margi's belief in the program and its impact on students.

At testimony before the State Senate Appropriations Committee in support of funding for the arts and culture, she recapped the story of one of her students.

"The 2008 competition was especially rewarding for me as a teacher. Our school didn't have the state champ, but we had something better: full participation.

By that I mean we had Advanced Placement students, art students, athletes, special education students, and if-my-parents-would-let-me-I'd-drop-out students sharing the stage in our school-wide competition. On that stage was one of my shyest students. A deaf student who, through her interpreter, told me that poetry was difficult. Those of us who hear take the rhythm and cadence of speech for granted. So it was with some hesitation that Jessica agreed to participate in POL. But she did so because one poem in particular resonated with her—Poe's *Alone*.

And on the big day of competition, a very nervous but eloquent Jessica signed and recited the poem."

These are only a few examples of the hundreds of programs we bring to communities throughout the state illustrating why our work is so important to Michiganians. I know as the Council begins a new chapter, with a new leader, it will continue to embrace programs that enrich people's lives and provide a voice for so many.

I know the curtain is closed and my retirement is on the horizon. I will forever be grateful for the opportunity to be such a part of your lives and your hearts. Farewell!



Travis Walter of Holt High School was Michigan's 2006 Poetry Out Loud champion. In 2007, Sarah Harris of Holt won the event.

(Jan Fedewa will retire as Executive Director of the Michigan Humanities Council on Jan. 31)

Sanctuary and Deliverance

Delivered, Now Free

By Courtnee Anderson

Have you heard?
Dey comin'
Dey a comin'
Dey comin' after me
Is I to be scared?
Why should I fear?
There's more up here than I've ever seen
A Quaker on my side to hide me

Have you seen?
A white man,
Hunting like a spy,
Suspicious as can be,
Telling his men where to capture slaves on land that is free

Have you felt?
A mother's pain
When they barge in and take her baby away
Did you hear that scream?
Making her come out from hiding,
Childless mother held captive now crying

Have you heard?
I's not goin' back,
They can't make me,
We fought the fight,
We got the victory,
We kept the faith,
And we is free

Have you realized?
A raid took place so we can be delivered from slavery
So we could all live free,
Free from all the suffering,
Free to have integrity
Free to love
Free to breathe
Free to live in unity
Free to be proud of Cass County

The author of this poem is a student at Cass High School.

Mural *continued from page 1*

Underground Railroad.

Local artist Ruth Andrews proposed a mural to commemorate these events and acted as designer and lead artist.

"We were brainstorming about what we could do," said Adrienne Glover, president of the Minority Coalition of Cass County. "We had been on an Underground Railroad tour and wanted to do something about that. After the tour, Ruth said how about a mural."

The mural is on the wall of attorney Steve Woods' office on Main Street in Cassopolis. It depicts the key scenes by following a family from the crossing of the Ohio River, to the frightening raid, the confrontation with local farmers and townspeople in Vandalia, the dramatic court scene and a jubilant choir.

"I came up with a design that flows, a slant that turns around and turns around through the middle," Andrews said. "I was relieved it was going to work and fit the themes into that movement."

About 30 people climbed scaffolding to make their contributions to the project from painting to lettering, even if adding just a few symbolic strokes. The result is a burst of bright colors.

"I really feel strongly about colors and I wanted the colors to be intense and vibrant and meaningful,"

Andrews said. "We use a lot of contrasting colors. We used purple with yellow and blue with orange because it captures this high contrast."

Young artist Kendall Rucker was a key assistant in the mural project.

"I'm trying to bring art to the community," he said. "We don't have a lot of art here and one of my main missions is to bring art to areas that don't have it. To me this conveys the message of bringing the community together."

In the end the court decision in Cass County would be overturned in a Detroit court, long after the former slaves had escaped to freedom. The angry slave owners in Kentucky and elsewhere would push for stronger fugitive slave laws. The passage of those laws and the Dred Scott decision would help bring about the Civil War.

Adrienne Glover said that the response to the mural as it progressed has been positive and negative but that she is happy with the result.

"The important thing is letting people know and putting Cassopolis on the map. We have a history to be proud of," she said.



Above: An African American testifies in court against the Kentucky raiders and a jubilant choir rejoices.

Right: African American slaves escape across the Ohio River.



Artist Kendall Rucker and project director Marty Kaszar attended the unveiling of the mural Oct. 23.

Blowing in the Wind

Panels Tell Stories of Family Heroes

Ethereal.

That's how Mary Wright describes the sight of dozens of cloth panels blowing in the air. But those airy pieces of white cloth carry with them the collective memories of unsung heroes.

"When they are airborne, they are somewhere between the ground and transcendence," Wright said.

Wright is the project director for The Story Line Project, supported in part by grants from the Michigan Humanities Council.

The Pine Mountain Music Festival in Hancock came to Wright about helping to promote a unique project to stage an original opera in Finland and Houghton based on a 1906 copper mine strike in Rockland, Mich. Wright is a Hancock-based community artist who has produced more than 30 community art projects and was the recipient of the Governor's Award for Arts and Culture in 1999. Her projects have included blue and white chairs for FinnFest, a giant mitten in Hancock and family tree totem poles in Marquette.

Her idea combines the flair of conceptual art with the rich storytelling tradition of Michigan's north country.

"I was asked to conceptualize a project to spread the word about the opera so that people would associate themselves with it and make the cultural leap to the opera," she said. "They wanted to dispel the notion of opera as a snooty New York thing, which it isn't."

This opera is very much an Upper Peninsula thing. The opera *Rockland* has been composed by Jukka Linkola with a libretto by Jussi Tapola, leading opera figures in Finland. The opera concerns the struggle of copper miners to protest unsafe conditions and exploitation by the mining company. It emphasizes the courage of the strikers against formidable odds, including doing battle with Pinkerton agents.

The opera will debut in July 2011 in Nivala, Finland, and at the Rosza Center for the Performing Arts at Michigan Technological University in Houghton.

"The opera's theme is taken from the strike in the copper mines and the essential theme is that the miners showed courage in the face of adversity," said Wright. "In truth, we are all heroes in our own stories."

Wright proposed having school children and adults create 200-250 word stories about an ancestor who had shown courage in face of adversity. Participants are also encouraged to include a photo of the person if they have one.

"This fit school curriculums pretty snappily," said Wright of a renewed emphasis on Michigan history.

The short essays are written in the first-person voice of the heroic ancestors.

Then the magic begins.

"The stories are transferred onto white cloth and then they are sewn so they can be slid along a cable as panels to honor ancestors," said Wright.

Wright said she's received nearly 500 entries and displayed them at several schools and town centers in the UP. She would like to get thousands more. The plan is to have as many as 10,000 panels to display in Houghton for the debut of the opera.

Wright describes how the mass of panels will "cover Rosza Center for the Performing Arts, like feathers on a bird, and will also be displayed at eye level from tree trunk to tree trunk and lamp post to lamp post around the campus of Michigan Technological University."

"It's a very strong image outside as we've done," she said. "I've seen them hung in Chassell, a town outside Houghton, at Christmas time. People were reading them in hushed reverence. It elevates ordinary people to heroes."

Wright's own favorite is the story of Anna Podnar submitted by Kendra Turpeinen, a Chassell school teacher.

The panel shows a picture of Anna Podnar and her husband and begins, "My name is Anna Spolarich Podnar, and I was born in the mountains of Croatia in 1895. In my teen years, I was a shepherdess, taking my family's flocks to good pasture in the summer months. At the age of 16, I fell in love with John Podnar and followed him to the Copper County where he was working in the mines..."

Wright said the panel speaks to Anna's heroism in face of severe poverty and her husband's illness. Those are the stories that draw a region together.

"What's wonderful is that it's involving thousands of people," Wright said.

Wright said white cloth is a practical way to display the essays, light and easy to transport,

"But the other thing is, they're kind of like a version of prayer flags," she said. "It's essential that these



Artist Mary Wright creates community art projects. Here she is at this year's FinnFest.

ancestors get captured and not evaporate."

To further document these activities, Wright enlisted the interest of filmmaker Suzanne Jurva. The award-winning documentary filmmaker is based in Atlanta but is of Finnish ancestry and has roots in the UP. She will document the Story Line Project and the creation and presentation of the opera *Rockland*.

Wright has been happy with the response so far and encouraged by interest from the four UP universities about using the project as a writing exercise for students.

"I think that unanimously, they think it's a great project good for kids, good for students," she said.

Rockland
ROCKLAND

COMING IN 2011

Rockland THE OPERA

Rockland, an opera about a 1906 copper mine strike in Rockland, Mich., will be performed July 15 and 17 at the Rosza Center for the Performing Arts on the campus of Michigan Technological University as part of the Pine Mountain Music Festival. For more information on the production and tickets, go online to <http://pmmf.org>.

Sheepshank Sam Recruits a Logging Crew

A grandfather's legacy has been turned into an exciting way to bring an important part of Michigan history alive.

Roger Thompson created the Sheepshank Sam program for school children in 1996 by drawing on his family history, a rich part of Michigan's history.

"My grandfather worked in the lumberjack camps when he was young," Thompson said. "He stopped doing it about 1911-1912 when he got married and changed to being a blacksmith. He had a lot of old tools that I remember as a kid."

Now kids throughout Michigan are benefiting from those memories as Roger's son, Ben Thompson of Romeo, carries on the tradition by performing as Sheepshank Sam, Old Time Michigan Lumberjack and Teller of Tall Tales. The program is one of 204 featured offerings of the Arts and Humanities Touring Program, funded in part by grants from the Michigan Humanities Council.

"In the mid 1990s, social studies were not hitting Michigan history enough," said Roger Thompson, a retired fifth grade teacher in the Chippewa Valley school district. "I knew a curriculum to emphasize Michigan history was coming along. When I first started doing it in 1996, I could tell right away it was a hot item."

The program, aimed primarily at 3rd and 4th grade students, includes axes, saws, big wheels and sleighs to give kids a real feel for what it was like in Michigan's booming lumber days.

"Boys who usually fool around would quiet right down," Roger Thompson said.

It's a hands-on educational experience. Boys and girls get to find out what it was like work in Michigan's logging industry and try their skill at sawing, rolling and hauling timber.

"The whole program is based on setting up a camp. We have a camp owner and we have boys and girls dress in clothes from the 1880s," Roger Thompson said.

Ben Thompson calls the program a "historic play." He said learning to get up in front of people to perform and overcoming stage fright has been his greatest pleasure.



Ben Thompson plays Sheepshank Sam

The final part is From Woods to Sawmill. Sheepshank invites five more students to take the parts of loaders and deckers, a teamster, an ink slinger and a river hog to show how logs were moved from the deep woods to sawmills where trees were transformed into lumber. Students get to play horses for miniature sleighs.

Interspersed through all this are some giant-sized tall tales. Sheepshank tells of the time that Michigan was round. It was Paul Bunyan returning from a trip who dropped a mitten to create the Lower Peninsula.

Sheepshank offers shorter programs in logging activities and woodcraft. He also invites schools to serve up a lumberjack lunch or breakfast. The colorful menu might feature doorknobs (biscuits), sinkers (donuts), stove lids (pancakes) or loggin' berries (prunes).

Last school year Ben Thompson put on 70 programs throughout Michigan.

Some school districts go all out and make a day of it. At the Greenville Public Schools they set up a lumberjack camp.

"Lumber Jack Camp is a very popular event in Greenville," said Fran Gibbs, a fourth grade teacher at Lincoln Heights Elementary School. "We use a local camp that has a variety of buildings and open area surrounded by woods with white pines and more. The kids, teachers and parents dress for camp and many volunteers come."

Gibbs said students read and watch videos about logging camps and on their Lumber Jack day they talk in lumberjack lingo and eat lumberjack food.

"Our students respond so well when they hear Sheepshank because they know enough to be eager participants," she said. "We get a lot of grandpas as well who remember lumbering or had family members in that industry."

"It took me a long time to get over performing in front of people," he said. "Working with my dad, doing the show, helping him set things up I finally got enough nerve to do a small part of the show and then a little more. I said in my mind I'm not going to fear it anymore."

Two large folding tables are set up with the tools and clothing of that bygone era.

The typical Sheepshank Sam program is divided into three parts. Part one is a 40-minute introduction with a slide show, student role-playing as a banker and a timber baron and several tall tales. Part two is called The Lumberjacks during which Sheepshank builds his logging camp with his five volunteer student "lumberjacks." Sheepshank and his crew demonstrate the tools that were once used by the logging industry in Michigan's forests.

Contributions During the Fiscal Year 2010

(Fiscal Year 2010: November 2009 through October 2010)

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Mackinac Art Museum Showcases Contemporary Art

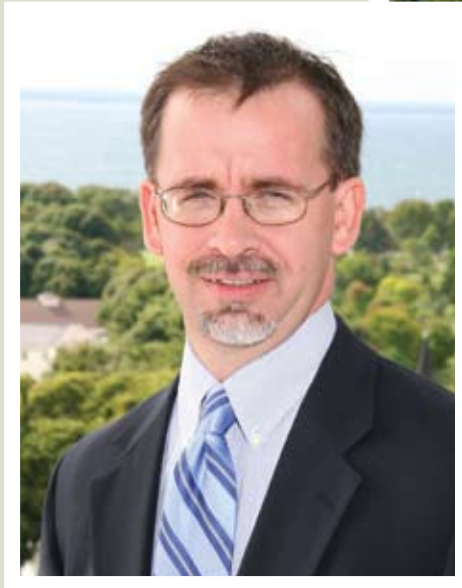
By Steven C. Brisson
Michigan Humanities Council Board of Directors

On July 14 the Richard and Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum was officially opened on Mackinac Island. Housed in the 1838 Indian Dormitory, the museum serves as a showcase for Mackinac State Historic Parks' fine and decorative arts collection and provides a venue for temporary exhibits of present-day artists.

The new museum was the result of a desire by the Mackinac Island State Park Commission to create a space for its growing art collection, the need to reopen a historic building to the public, and Richard and Jane Manoogian's great interest in both Mackinac Island and art. Solely managed by Mackinac State Historic Parks and fully funded by the Manoogian Foundation, the effort immediately garnered support among the island's artists and the Mackinac Arts Council. The artists responded with submissions to the inaugural juried exhibit of contemporary works, while the council provided a cash prize for a purchase award. Civic leaders, local residents, and summer cottagers have responded enthusiastically to the museum's opening, many feeling that it will provide a central focus to fine arts on the island.

A major art collector and patron, Richard and his wife, Jane, have been summering on Mackinac Island for over 15 years. Richard Manoogian also serves on the Mackinac Island State Parks Commission. When approached by Mackinac State Historic Parks Director Phil Porter to fund the conversion of the building into a modern art museum, he was immediately supportive. He was also hopeful that the museum would provide not only gallery space but art learning opportunities for island residents and visitors. Thus, hands-on and interactive components are incorporated throughout the galleries. The lower level contains a "Kids' Art Studio" where a museum interpreter provides guidance into the creation of art that can be taken home.

The project to convert the building into an art museum began nearly two years ago. Much care was



Steven C. Brisson



necessary to sensitively remake the 1838 frame structure into a suitable exhibition space. Climate control, fire suppression, and an elevator were among the additions. While a few of the works from the permanent collection had been exhibited in other park venues before, many had never been before the public. Conservation and framing were thus necessary for the majority of the pieces. Park carpenters and other trades people, as well as curators, the conservator, and the exhibit designer were focused almost exclusively on this project for this entire period. The final exhibits showcase paintings,

drawings, 18th-century maps, sculpture, decorative arts, Native American art and photographs. All were created at, or are connected to Mackinac.

A state-owned museum fully funded by a private donor with the enthusiastic support of the local community that provides enrichment to summer visitors from throughout the world...sometimes the stars align for everyone's benefit.

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Riding the Magic Carpet Theatre Brings Fairy Tales to Life



Nancy, Lise and Catherine
perform at Houghton Lake
Public Library

For the past 12 years, Michigan's Arts and Humanities Touring Program has funded thousands of programs in cities across Michigan, helping some of the state's best cultural presenters engage hundreds of thousands citizens across the state. In 2010, the Council has invested in excess of \$50,000 in more than 70 communities – including a presentation by Magic Carpet Theatre at the Houghton Lake Public Library on July 20.

The Council's online Touring Directory of more than 200 artistic and cultural presenters includes Magic Carpet Theatre. Along with a video clip

and booking information, it states: "... Imagination is the key to Magic Carpet Theatre. With only a bag of books, a scarf, and a couple of hats, these dynamic actors have been inspiring young readers and writers for nearly 20 years." Clearly, the group stirred the imagination of the 65 individuals who attended the interpretive literature presentation in Houghton Lake.

Magic Carpet Theatre features three women performers who bring familiar stories to life.

Tales interpreted by the trio included the German fairy tale, *The Fisherman and His Wife*, where the crowd was queued to make the sound of rain by rubbing their hands, snapping their fingers, and clapping their hands. Dr. Seuss's star-bellied *Sneeches* were whimsically sneered at. Children roared in laughter to Maurice Sendak's character Pierre, with the consistent and monotonous "I don't care" to everything, even Pierre's being eaten by a lion. And, the group completed their presentation with the tale, *Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain* by Vera Aardema. The presentation included a personal story of a visit to the plains of Kenya, and how the story reflects the meaning of rain and water to Kenyans... and the real-world impact of the saying, "dying of thirst."

JoAnn VanderMolen of Prudenville,

who attended the event with her two grandchildren, stated enthusiastically "it was an excellent program... Hopefully, events like this will encourage children to read more, and use their imagination while reading." This is an important point of the program – to challenge minds young and old, and to better develop critical thinking skills through literature.

Houghton Lake Library Director Donna Alward noted the perfect fit of the presentation into the library's summer programs. "I knew if a group was listed in the Touring Directory, it would be of the highest quality. And Magic Carpet Theater didn't disappoint. The group helped bring the books to life."

Engaging youth in literature through artistic performance and interpretation is just one of the many ways that the Michigan Humanities Council works with communities, schools, and local libraries to foster quality cultural programs. The Council encourages you to learn more about the programs offered and to watch its website, www.michiganhumanities.org, for updates on future funding opportunities to bring these programs to your area.