

# Neighbors

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**JULY 2026**

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A regional newspaper serving Cass County, Michigan and the surrounding area, with distribution at homes and businesses in Dowagiac, Cassopolis, Edwardsburg, Vandalia, Jones, Marcellus, Decatur, Union, Sister Lakes, and Three Rivers, and mail delivery at homes on Diamond, Eagle, Birch, Corey, Donnell, Indian, Magician, Shavehead, Baldwin, Long, Dewey, Cable, Juno, Christiana, Painter, Paradise, Stone, Buck, Lewis, Big & Little Twin and Bair lakes

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## Field Trip

**National New York  
Central Railroad  
MUSEUM  
Elkhart, IN, Pages 6, 7**

A photograph of a black steam locomotive, number 3001, at a museum. The locomotive is the central focus, with other rail equipment visible in the background. The scene is outdoors on a grassy area.

# Regional News

## Underground Railroad Days in Vandalia, July 11-12, 11 am - 5 pm

You can learn about Underground Railroad (UGRR) and its legacy in Cass County on July 11-12, 11 am-5 pm, based in Milo Barnes Park in Vandalia. The Underground Railroad Society of Cass County (IURSCC) sponsors guided tours of 1847 Kentucky Slave Raid. You can visit Civil War soldiers of 102nd United States Colored Troops. Four URSCC buildings welcomes you in open houses. The Bonine House is Victorian home James E. and Sarah Bogue Bonine, Quaker abolitionists and station masters in UGRR. Bonine Carriage House sheltered fugitive slaves (called now freedom seekers) in 1850s. Stephen Bogue House was important site in 1847 Kentucky Slave Raid. Brownsville School was integrated public school from 1840s - 1950s. Village of Vandalia sponsors art and crafts booths, food, and family events on Vandalia grounds. More info on [www.urscc.org](http://www.urscc.org).

## CCCC Corn & Sausage Roast

The CCCC will be holding its annual Corn and Sausage Roast fundraiser on August 29 from 2-11 p.m. The event will feature great food, live music, raffles, and 50/50 drawings.

## Cassopolis summer events

The Village of Cassopolis has announced its summer community event lineup, including Beach Bash, Rock the Block, Lakeside Live and Beach Blanket & Blockbusters. For events, dates, times and full details visit the website: <https://cassopolismainstreet.com/>

## Beckwith Theatre performances

The Beckwith Theatre Co. will present these performances this season:

**The Sunshine Boys** by Neil Simon

August 21-23 and August 28-30

**Wait Until Dark** by Frederick Knott, October 9-11 and October 16-18

**A Christmas Carol** by Charles Dickens, December 3-5 and 11-13 .

Tickets to events can be purchased at online at [www.beckwiththeatre.com/box-office](http://www.beckwiththeatre.com/box-office) or by contacting the theater at [BeckwithTheatreMI@gmail.com](mailto:BeckwithTheatreMI@gmail.com), Phone (269) 782-7653. For more information contact the [BeckwithTheatreMI@gmail.com](mailto:BeckwithTheatreMI@gmail.com), **782-7653**

## CASS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY LECTURES & EVENTS

The Cass County Historical Society has announced the following 2026 lectures and events:

**Edwardsburg History Museum – Antiques Roadshow**, July 21, 6 pm, 26818 Main Street, Edwardsburg.

**Ed Lowe Foundation Tour of Penn Church** – Cassopolis, Aug. 17, 6 pm, 58220 Decatur Road, Cassopolis

**Jake's Country Meats Farm Tour**, Sept 15, 6 pm, 55721 Decatur Road, Cassopolis

**Annual Fall Festival** – Newton House, Oct. 19, 4 pm, 20689 Marcellus Hwy., Decatur

**November Lecture** – TBA

**Christmas at Newton House**, Dec. 5, 1 – 4 pm, 20689 Marcellus Hwy., Decatur,

Unless otherwise stated, a short business meeting will start at 5:30 pm with lectures or tours beginning at 6 pm.

For information visit [www.ccmihistoricalsociety.org](http://www.ccmihistoricalsociety.org).

## Myers to speak at Edwardsburg

The Edwardsburg Area Historical Museum and the Uptown Improvement Association will co-sponsor a series of lectures by Bob Myers at 7 pm at the Edwardsburg Branch of the Cass District

Library. There is no admission charge.

Events include:

■ Thurs., July 9: "Myths Busted: History Myths or Facts."

■ Thurs., Aug. 20: "Disaster at Fort St. Joseph: Pontiac's Rebellion."

■ Thurs., Oct. 15: "The Worst Colonel I Ever Saw": Francis Quinn and the Battle of Shiloh."

## A Taste of Ireland, Bored Teachers

Direct from Off-Broadway and London's West End, the internationally acclaimed A Taste of Ireland Company comes to the Lerner Theater in Elkhart with its flagship production, A Taste of Ireland: The Irish Music & Dance Sensation on Tue, Oct 27, at 7:30 pm.

The Lerner will also feature Bored Teachers: "Is It Friday Yet?!" Comedy Tour on Thursday, November 12 at 7:30 pm. The Bored Teachers Show is a comedy powerhouse that anyone who's ever been in a classroom can relate to

For questions or more info contact The Lerner Box Office, 574-293-4469 or email [info@thelerner.com](mailto:info@thelerner.com)

## Mental Health Symposium

The Lerner Theater will host the 2026 Mental Health Symposium with Sheryl Swoopes & Friends on Thursday, August 13 beginning at 5:30 pm.

The 2nd Annual Mental Health Symposium brings together music, mental wellness, and motivation in an unforgettable event led by WNBA and Basketball Legend Sheryl Swoopes. A 2016 Nasmith Basketball Hall of Fame inductee Swoopes has broken barriers in music, fashion, culture and basketball worldwide. Beyond the basketball, her journey has been deeply personal and

inspiring, and we are pleased to host this Q&A and community discussion.

The cost to attend will be Adults - \$17.15, FREE to Students.

## Michigan 2026 elections

On Aug. 4, Michigan voters will decide the respective party nominees in the primary elections for a variety of races including 110 Michigan House races and 38 Michigan Senate races. All Michigan communities will have a general election on November 3.

You can find out what is on your specific ballot through the Michigan Voter Information Center at <https://mVIC.sos.state.mi.us/Home/Index>

To register to vote visit [mVIC.sos.mi.us](http://mVIC.sos.mi.us) or visit the Cass County Clerk's office at 120 N Broadway, Suite 200 Cassopolis Monday through Friday from 8 am - 5 pm (closed from noon until 1 pm. for lunch.)

## Neighbors is for sale

After nearly 25 years publishing Neighbors, Fred Stein and Phil Vitale, the founders and operators, have started thinking about retiring. If you think this might be for you, qualified buyers should contact Fred for more information at:

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# Regional Calendar

### MISC. AREA EVENTS

**July 3-5 - 1776**, Beckwith Theater, Dowagiac, 7:30 pm Fridays and Saturdays, 2 pm on Sundays, [BeckwithTheatreMI@gmail.com](mailto:BeckwithTheatreMI@gmail.com), 782-7653

**August 21-23, 28-30 - The Sunshine Boys** by Neil Simon, Beckwith Theater, Dowagiac, 7:30 pm Fridays and Saturdays, 2 pm on Sundays, [BeckwithTheatreMI@gmail.com](mailto:BeckwithTheatreMI@gmail.com), 782-7653

**October 9-11, 16-18, Wait Until Dark** by Frederick Knott, Beckwith Theater, Dowagiac, 7:30 pm Fridays and Saturdays, 2 pm on Sundays, [BeckwithTheatreMI@gmail.com](mailto:BeckwithTheatreMI@gmail.com), 782-7653

**December 3-5, 11-13, A Christmas Carol** by Charles Dickens, Beckwith Theater, Dowagiac, 7:30 pm Fridays and Saturdays, 2 pm on Sundays, [BeckwithTheatreMI@gmail.com](mailto:BeckwithTheatreMI@gmail.com), 782-7653

### CASSOPOLIS MAIN STREET LAKESIDE LIVE

Lakeside Live summer lineup events are planned for every Thursday throughout the summer, with free live music from 6-9 pm. Food trucks will be available along with Food Truck Alley at the beach.

#### Events will include:

July 2 - the Brunk Bros.

July 9 - Bastain Steven Music  
 July 16 - The Turnups  
 July 23 - The Sandbar Bums  
 July 30 - Pablo's Great Revenge  
 August 6 - Now & Then Band  
 August 13 - Jesse Cline  
 August 20 The Paper Cups  
 August 27 - Dr. Rob and the Revivers

### EDWARDSBURG MUSEUM (EAHM) JULY 2026

**18 - Speaker: Bob Myers**, Historical Society of Michigan: "The Wreck of the SS Chicora," 7 pm, Edwardsburg Branch of Cass District Library

**21 - Cass County Historical Society meeting with an "Antiques Roadshow"** assessment of family heirlooms, 6 pm, EAHM.

**24 - Edwardsburg Area Historical Museum, Hacienda Fundraiser**, Mishawaka.

**JULY 28-Nov. 7 - Display: "Thimbles, Thread and Tea."** Remembering Betsy Ross and the Boston Tea Party during America's 250th anniversary, EAHM.

### AUGUST 2026

**6-9 - U.S. 12 Historic Heritage Trail Garage Sale**, EAHM.

**16 - Open house after All-School**

**Reunion**, 3 pm, EAHM

**20 - Speaker: Bob Myers**, Historical Society: "Pontiac's Rebellion," 7 pm, Edwardsburg Branch of Cass District Library.

### SEPTEMBER 2026

**17 - History Hounds film** presentation from the Historical Society of Michigan, "Exploring Michigan's Podunk Towns," 7 pm, EAHM.

**26 - Sauk Trail Festival: Echoes of Our Past, 1775-1875; 10 a.m.-4 pm**, EAHM.

### OCTOBER 2026

**15 - Speaker: Bob Myers**, Historical Society of Michigan, "The Worst Colonel," 7 pm, Edwardsburg Branch of Cass District Library.

**31 - Witches on the Porch**, 6-7 pm, EAHM

### NOVEMBER 2026

**10-Dec. 12 - Display: "Stars, Stripes, and Christmas Lights:** A red, white, and blue Patriotic theme for Christmas, EAHM.

**24-28 - The EAHM closes for Thanksgiving break**

### DECEMBER 2026

**3 - Christmas Tree Lighting**, 6:30 pm, followed by open house, EAHM.

**12 - EAHM closes and re-opens in mid-April 2027.**

### DOWAGIAC EVENTS

[www.dowagiacchamber.com/](http://www.dowagiacchamber.com/)  
**LIBRARY EVENTS**

For **Cass District Library** events visit <https://www.cassdistrictlibrary.org/events/>

For **Dowagiac District Library** events visit <https://www.dowagiacdl.org/events>.

For **Marcellus Township Memorial Library** events visit <https://www.marcellus.michlibrary.org/>

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# Lake Life with Jane

## Hope your summer's going well

by **Jane Boudreau**



**H**ey Neighbors! It's a new month, so here I am! I hope your summer is going well. I can't get enough of being outside, digging around in my garden, or just lounging in the sun without a care in the world. And... I've finally learned how to use our grill! What a feat! I'm very good in the kitchen, but give me a different way of cooking, even on a glass-top stove, and I'm perplexed. On nights we grill, I make all the sides, and since men are fearless and love fire, they are in charge of the barbecue. Well, I can't say all men are fearless. One summer night I made my own version of a smash burger: two ground beef patties with a slice of cheddar cheese between them, then sealed all around the edges. And that was the night my son caught the grill on fire. While running around looking for something to extinguish this fire, my burgers ended up looking like chunks of coal. A good lesson might be to have the men in the kitchen assembling the food, while the women stand outside around the grill, drinking cocktails and choosing the playlist. Sounds good to me!

If I had to choose, I would say *This Book Made Me Think Of You*, by Libby Page, so far is my favorite book of the year.

However, we still have five more months left, and I have a stack of books to read; it's just that good. Tilly Nightingale, while suffering the loss of her young husband, is contacted by Alfie, the owner of a local bookstore. (Please don't confuse this book with last month's, which also involved a bookstore.) She's told that there is a birthday gift waiting for her from her husband. Puzzled, she goes to the bookstore and finds that her husband had arranged for her to receive twelve books, one for each month, for a year. Each book holds a letter from him, encouraging her to move through her pain and turn the page on her first year without him. Alfie had met her husband, learned of his terminal disease, and the plan he had hatched. I won't give too much away, so I'll get to the part where I highly recommend this book as one of your summer reads. It is clever, heartwarming, and romantic. I think the writing is in much of the same vein as Jojo Moyes (*Me*



Before You, *The Giver of Stars*). I give this book five stars.



### July Signature Drink

This month we have an oldie but goodie: Long Island Iced Tea. You might remember it being all the rage back in the 1970's and '80's after it was introduced by TGI Friday. It had a lofty reputation for being a very strong cocktail, given all the liquor involved. That's debatable, as back in my working-girl days, having one or two of these delicious drinks at Happy Hour did not impair me. Embolden me, maybe. For the ladies in my office, Happy Hour was not only the free hors d'oeuvres and half-priced drinks, but a flirting fest. But I digress. The ingredients are measured out in a tall Collins glass over ice, then topped with your choice of cola; I'm a Diet Pepsi girl myself. This is a lovely drink to serve a small group. You might also double, or triple the ingredients in a decanter, and the rest is simple. And once that decanter runs dry, remember my etiquette rules for the signature drink: anyone hinting for another is given a leftover bottle of Pepsi or kicked to the curb.

### Long Island Iced Tea

#### Ingredients:

3/4 oz. vodka  
3/4 oz. white rum  
3/4 oz. Silver tequila  
3/4 oz. gin  
3/4 oz. triple sec  
3/4 oz. \*simple syrup  
3/4 oz. fresh lemon juice  
Cola

#### Directions:

Combine all ingredients and pour in a tall Collins glass over ice. Top with a splash of cola. Add a lemon slice and stir well.

\*I make my simple syrup by mixing equal parts sugar and very hot tap or filtered water. No need to boil.



### July Recipes

This month's recipes are in no particular category. Some are old standbys, and others are a twist on the usual salads. All are simple, so you (or the guys) can get out of the kitchen quickly. Enjoy! *Grilled Peach and Prosciutto Pizza*

1 lb. store-bought pizza dough  
olive oil  
3 cloves garlic, thinly sliced  
1-2 cups fresh mozzarella, thinly sliced  
1-2 peaches, cut in slices around the pit  
12 thin slices of prosciutto  
1/3 cup fresh basil, roughly torn  
1/4 c reduced balsamic vinegar

Flatten the dough into a disc on a well-floured surface. Slice in half and form each half into a flat shape. It doesn't have to be perfect.

Set your grill at medium heat and arrange the peach slices on the uppermost rack. Meanwhile, brush one side of each pizza dough disc with olive oil. Lay that side down on the grill. Grill for 2 minutes with the lid closed.

With tongs, flip the pizzas; they should be golden brown with grill marks. Brush this side with olive oil and check on those peaches, which should be gently sizzling but not burning, then flip once they are lightly browned. Grill for another 2 minutes with the lid closed. Slide the pizzas onto a wooden paddle, and the peaches onto a small plate. Top each pizza with equal amounts of peaches, garlic, prosciutto, mozzarella and basil. Drizzle the balsamic vinegar over, and serve. Grilled fruit is insanely delicious, and a win-win with the kiddos.



### Chickpea, Cucumber and Tomato Salad

#### Ingredients:

2 1/4 c cucumbers, diced  
1 c tomatoes, seeded and diced  
1/4 c red onion, diced  
2 T fresh lemon juice  
1 T fresh flat leaf parsley, minced  
1 T olive oil  
15 oz. can chickpeas, rinsed and drained.  
Salt and pepper to taste

#### Directions:

Chop, mix, taste, and serve. This salad has a Mediterranean vibe, so feel free to substitute or add: Cherry tomatoes, feta cheese, fresh mozzarella, Kalamata olives, cilantro, mint, and oregano. Enjoy the chopping!

This is a different potato salad from what we Americans are accustomed to. It's healthier, creamier, and doesn't have the usual mayo that we are used to for our summer side dish. And that's great because you don't have to worry about it sitting out and going bad!

### Herbed Potato Salad

#### Ingredients:

2 lb mixed baby new potatoes or fingerling  
3 large cloves of garlic

1/2 c raw cashews, soaked in hot water for 30 minutes and drained  
1 T Dijon mustard  
1/3 c olive oil  
1 c fresh basil, chopped  
1/4 c fresh dill, chopped  
1 T chives, chopped  
Sea salt to taste  
Pinch of red pepper flakes  
Juice of 1 lemon

#### Directions:

Place the cleaned potatoes in a large pot with the garlic cloves, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 10-15 minutes until fork-tender. Drain, and set aside the garlic cloves. Return the potatoes to the pot, cover it, and let them steam for an additional 15 minutes.

Combine cooked garlic, cashews, mustard, and olive oil in a food processor. Blend until smooth. Add a bit of warm water if too thick.

Cut potatoes in half once cooled. Add cashew mixture, basil, dill, salt and pepper, lemon juice, and a pinch of red pepper flakes. Toss gently and chill. You can serve this warm or at room temp. Bon 'Appetit!



I may have forgotten to wish everyone a great Fourth of July! It's probably one of the best days and evenings of the whole summer on the lake! See ya next month!

*Jane Boudreau is a writer, blogger, and newspaper columnist. She lives on Diamond Lake and in Chicago, with a little place in the mountains of Asheville, NC. You can reach her at [blindy9@yahoo.com](mailto:blindy9@yahoo.com)*

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# Our Children

## Getting out and about this summer

by **SANDY FLEMING**

**S**ummer break is in full swing, so it's time to get the family out and about to enjoy the season! There's more free time for the kids, and adults sometimes can sneak away for a day or two off. Take advantage! According to author Neetika Prabhakar at <https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/family-benefits-of-going-outside-together>, family outings are much more than ways to occupy the kids or to stave off boredom. These expeditions allow the family to spend time together, possibly get some exercise, strengthen family relationships, and of course, build skills and learn together.

The fun doesn't have to break the bank or take a lot of time, either. Week-long family vacations are grand fun, but sometimes even overnight getaways seem out of reach due to work schedules and other commitments. If this is the case for your family, you're going to love this list of local ideas that are close to home, free to inexpensive, and engaging and entertaining. Some are on a schedule while others are very free-floating and can be done almost any time. There are activities for the great weather days and some for the rainy weather or hot days. Consider trying one or more of these suggestions each week, and watch your kids blossom!

Find the fun by watching your local paper for announcements, or jumping online to look up a community or group's webpage. Sometimes, groups also hang posters around town in public places to advertise events. Keep your eyes peeled! Community Theater

Many smaller towns have their own community theaters that put on one or two plays each summer (and even year-round). Look for family-friendly plays near you! Locally, Barnswallow Theater is in Edwardsburg, Tin Shop Theater is in Buchanan, the Elkhart Civic Theater is over in Bristol, Indiana, and Beckwith Theater Company in Dowagiac are just a few of the places to check out. If you watch their schedules, many of these companies put on plays specifically with children in mind for acting roles and as audience members. When you visit historical places, many have re-enactment plays related to their theme, too. The great part about community theater events is that they are inexpensive and they are FUN!

### Public Libraries

Nearly all libraries put on summer

programming. Check your local library's Summer Reading Program – there are often special events just for kids that are related to the year's reading theme. In addition, many libraries have story hours for younger kids, game activities, movie nights, and expert speakers for the entire family. Watch for puppet shows, magic shows, science demonstrations, author talks, and much, much more. And while you're in the library, be sure your library cards are current so you can check out books, movies, and other materials to use at home for a while. It's an amazing resource that is often overlooked and underused.

### College Events

Nearly all of us have a college or community college in our backyards. Around here, watch Southwestern Michigan College, Lake Michigan College, Notre Dame, Bethel College, Saint Mary's, and Indiana University at South Bend to name a few. The colleges offer community education classes, concerts, plays, lectures, art exhibitions, and sporting events, many of which are free to attend. Some even have small museums or displays you can go through.

### Local Museums

Look around your hometown and nearby towns. Most have some sort of museum that is dying for your patronage! In Edwardsburg, there is the Edwardsburg Historical Museum. Niles has a historical museum, and so does Dowagiac. Cassopolis has the Pioneer Log Cabin that you can go through. Bristol has their historical museum as well. There are kids' museums nearby, as well, like Curious Kids in St. Joseph Michigan and Science Central in Fort Wayne. Check out the Dinosaur Museum in South Bend, Ruthmere Museum in Elkhart, the art museums in Elkhart and South Bend, or one of the many other local attractions. These are great places to spend a fun afternoon learning with the family, and many have little to no admission costs.

### Local, County, and State Parks

If outdoor adventures are your thing, be sure to take some time to go hiking, picnicking, or do other activities at your local park. Most towns have small parks that have playgrounds. There are a number of really interesting county parks in Cass, Berrien, Elkhart, and St. Joseph counties. We even have some state and national parks not too far away, like Potato Creek just a bit south of South

Bend, Chain of Lakes between here and Fort Wayne, and Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore over by Michigan City. Warren Dunes, Silver Beach, and much more pop up over along Lake Michigan. Check their websites to find organized events like hikes or bird watching, crafts, or other activities, or just take a few hours to explore and see what's there. For example, Bonnyville Mill park in Elkhart County has a working grist mill that you can tour, as well as great hiking and beautiful picnic areas. We have several local botanical gardens with even more fun activities and camps scheduled: Wellfield Botanical Gardens in Elkhart, International Friendship Gardens a bit east of Michigan City, and Fernwood Gardens and Sarrett Nature Center in Berrien County. Did you know that Sarrett has a fabulous butterfly house that you can walk through? The botanical gardens usually have a bit of an admission fee, but they are well worth the money. Again, check the park's website for a schedule of organized events, particularly on weekends.

### Local Zoos

You probably have visited Potawatomi Zoo in South Bend, but it's always a fun diversion. If your group enjoys zoos, there are several others that make nice day trips. Michigan City has a great zoo, and so does Fort Wayne. Chicago has Lincoln Park Zoo that is free to tour, as well as Brookfield Zoo which is a bit more pricey but huge. And don't forget Binder Park Zoo up in Battle Creek!

### Farms and Orchards

We are blessed to live in farm country, and there are many farms that have visitor programs where kids can learn a bit about where their food comes from. And later in the summer, check out the many U-Pick orchards and farms in the area. There's something about picking your own fruit that every family should experience. You can find farms where you can pick apples, peaches, pears, blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, and much more. You can even pick your own grapes at a few places in Berrien County over by the wineries. In the fall, you can also plan an outing to Amazing Acres in Edwardsburg or any of the other corn mazes in the area.

### Fairs, Festivals, and Concerts

Communities love their festivals! Most small towns have something to celebrate in the summer. There's a list of

festivals and fairs in Southwestern Michigan at <https://kzookids.com/festivals-fairs/> and a list of events in northern Indiana at <https://indianafestivals.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/2026-ISFG-WEB-12-29.pdf>. Most festivals have little to no admission cost, vendors to shop at, food, and sometimes rides and snacks for the kids. Niles, Buchanan, Elkhart, Bristol, Dowagiac, and Cassopolis all host summer concert series, as well. Just grab your blanket or lawn chair, and head to the park, village green, or other central location to enjoy a wide array of music. And we've just scratched the surface! Keep your eyes open all the time for fun that crops up spur of the moment style. Gather the group and be spontaneous. Not only will you bust the boredom blues, you will also be making memories for the whole family. Plus you will be actually giving the kids a leg up in school. A lot of reading comprehension depends on a wide array of experiences, getting ready for the trip takes planning skills, and you can even work in math if you have the kids help with money, travel times, and distances. Ask them to keep a diary or journal about their travels, and you'll hit the writing button too. Have a scavenger hunt at your destination, talk about what you see and do, and read related books before you go and after you've been somewhere. These are all great ways to keep brains active over the summer months and limit that dreaded summer skills slide while you have some fabulous family fun!

\*\*\*\*\*

*Sandy Fleming is a tutor, educational consultant, and writer living in Edwardsburg. Check out her websites at <https://learningnook.com> and <https://sandyflemingonline.com>.*

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# Field Trip



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Elkhart is a natural home for the museum; NYC's Robert R. Young Yard (now Norfolk Southern's Elkhart Yard) is the second-largest freight classification yard east of the Mississippi River. Just as when the railroad first arrived in Elkhart in 1851, Elkhart functions as a vital link in the chain connecting the Atlantic Seaboard with the Midwest and beyond.

For complete information on hours, entry, events, exhibits, location, etc., visit <https://www.cityofelkhartin.gov/departments/national-new-york-central-railroad-museum/>




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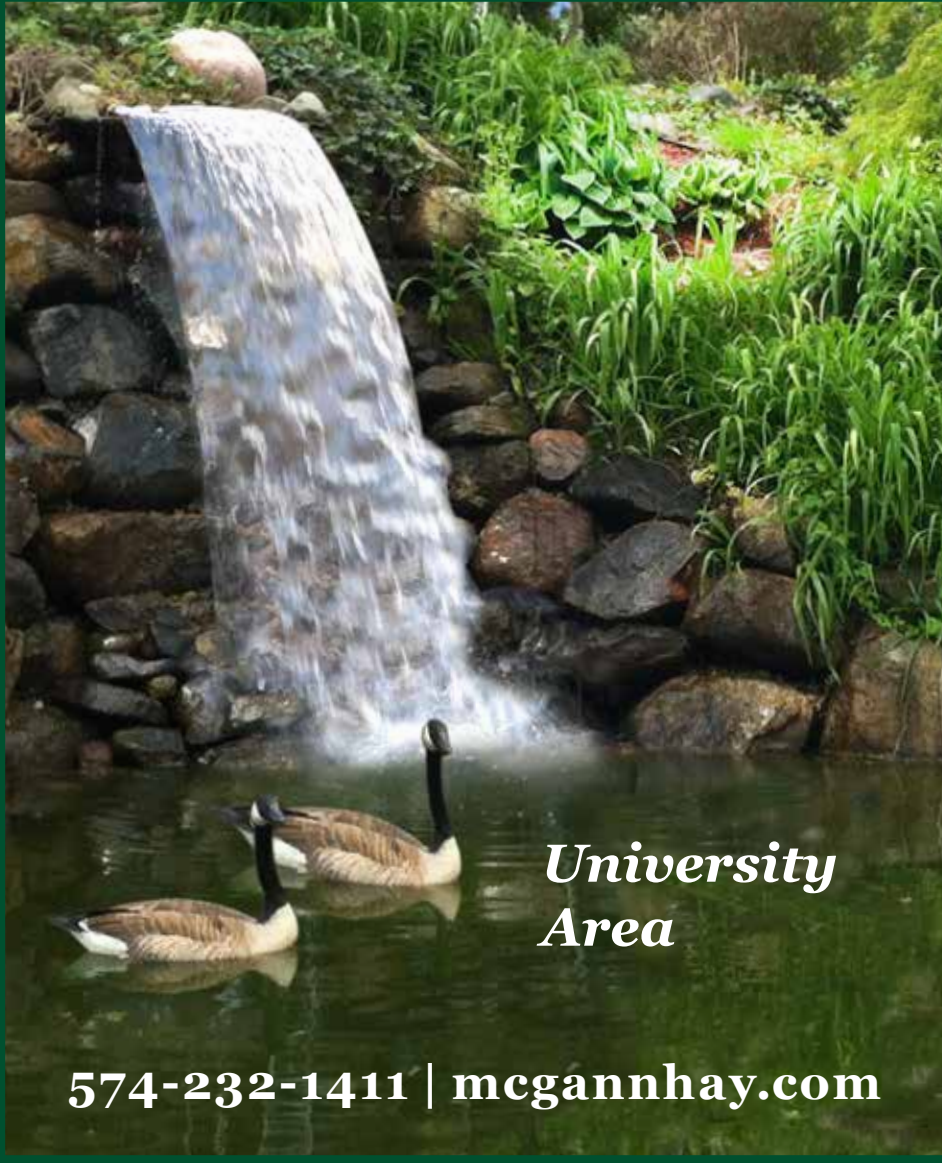
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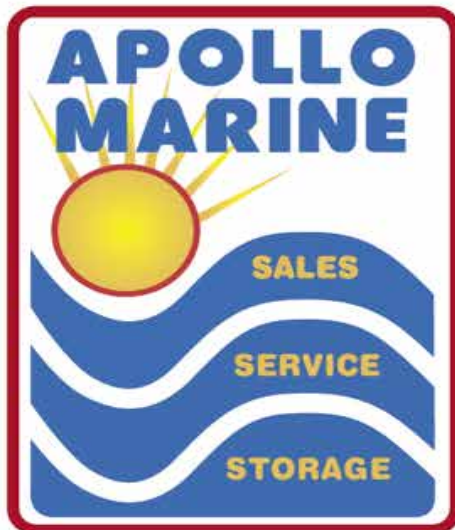
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# Historic Postcards

## Historic postcards depict rich scenes of the past

In this issue of Neighbors, Jerdon Real Estate of Dowagiac, owned by Floyd Jerdon and his son Tom, has again provided antique postcards of a few of the many lakes and towns in our area.

Floyd and his wife Donna started collecting post cards more than 20 years ago, and since Jerdon Real Estate specializes in marketing lake property, it was a natural fit that Floyd's interest be directed to the lake cards. The collection now numbers many thousands.

Jerdon has used many of his postcards featuring the Sister Lakes area in a book written by RL Rasmussen. The

book, which retails for \$ \$39.95, is in its second printing by the publisher, Arcadia Publishing.

Among other places, the book may be purchased at the Jerdon Real Estate office on M-62 West, and at Whistlestop Gifts, which is operated by the Dowagiac Chamber of Commerce.

For more information or to get a copy of Jerdon's book, visit the website: [www.arcadia-publishing.com](http://www.arcadia-publishing.com)

In this edition of Neighbors we have selected postcards showing images of various plac-

es around Cass County. In future issues, we will couple additional cards from one or more of the area's lakes with views of nearby communities, lakes and countryside.



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# Nature Notes

## American bittern decline in SW Michigan

by Jonathan Wuepper  
Manager

Local History Branch  
Cass District Library  
145 North Broadway St.  
Cassopolis, MI 49031  
jwuepper@cass.lib.mi.us

**D**on Estep of LaPorte, Indiana photographed an American bittern back on May 3, in a marsh near New Buffalo. The American bittern is a medium-sized heron, which remains inconspicuous among the cattail marshes due to its brown and white plumage.

During the breeding season the American bittern nests in cattail or sedge marshes which border ponds and lakes. They also nest in bogs, wet prairies and meadows and occasionally hayfields.

In eastern North America, American bitterns can be found during the nesting season from the southern shore of the James Bay and central Quebec, south to the Ohio River. However the species is absent in most of Ohio, Indiana, southern Wisconsin and the southern lower peninsula of Michigan due to habitat loss.

At the time of European settlement, circa 1830, in Berrien County, the American bittern was much more common than today. The first local record of the species occurred in about 1880, when it was listed among the species reported shot by local hunters in the marshes surrounding Benton Harbor.

According to ornithological literature,



American bittern (left) on May 3, in a New Buffalo Twp. marsh. Photo by Don Estep of LaPorte.

Bald eagle (center) with fish in talons, May 27 at New Buffalo. Don Estep.

Eastern garter snake (right), June 4 at Baroda Twp Park. Brad Anderson of Bridgman.

American bitterns became sparse or absent over much of the farming regions of the Great Lakes States in the years following World War II. I am unaware of any confirmed breeding observations in Berrien County in the last several decades, although I would not be surprised if they were confirmed to be nesting in Grand Mere State Park, Sarett Nature Center or the Galien River County Park.

Most recent American bittern records from Berrien County likely represents migrant birds. On average the first American bittern each spring is reported during mid-April. Migration reaches its peak in early to Mid-May. In the fall,

most American bitterns depart our area by October and spend the winter months in the southern Atlantic and Gulf states south into Mexico and Central America.

One bird species that has made a remarkable comeback since the mid-20th Century is the bald eagle. One of these majestic birds was photographed by Don Estep at daybreak on May 27 at New Buffalo Harbor. It is believed that this bald eagle is tending to eaglets in a nearby nest!

Bald eagles can be seen in Southwest Michigan during any month or the year, but are most common during the spring and autumn migration. There are likely a half dozen nesting pairs of bald eagles in

Berrien County. In recent years I am aware of nesting bald eagles from remote areas of the Paw Paw and St. Joseph Rivers.

Brad Anderson submitted a photo of an eastern garter snake, found on June 4 at Baroda Township Park. The eastern garter snake is the most common snake in Southwest Michigan. It is a non-venomous snake found in a variety of habitats including urban and suburban landscapes.

Jonathan Wuepper is an area naturalist. Report your sightings to him at [wuepperj@gmail.com](mailto:wuepperj@gmail.com)

# Local History

## Old homes in Cass County

by Jonathan Wuepper  
Manager, Local History Branch  
Cass District Library  
145 North Broadway St.  
Cassopolis, MI 49031  
jwuepper@cass.lib.mi.us

**S**ometimes history gets lucky. During 1859 when photography was in its infancy, John Piper of Dowagiac took his photographic equipment into the Cass County countryside, taking Ambrotypes of homes owned by men who paid a subscription for a new wall map being published by mapmakers Geil, Harley & Siverd in Philadelphia. The forthcoming wall map was hand-painted, showing the farms, acres of each farm, schoolhouses, blacksmith shops, etc. in each township of Cass, Van Buren and Berrien Counties. An Ambrotype is a positive photograph on glass, very fragile, and came into popularity in the US in the late 1850s.

Since it was not yet possible (or perhaps cost prohibitive) to print images directly on the canvas map, drawings were made of each of the images, and appeared in the margins of the wall map. One such image was that of the farm house of Augustine Reading, section 15, Ontwa Township, Cass County, Michigan.

I was pleasantly surprised to find that this home still stands as of June 2026! Using information located in the Local history Branch of the Cass District Library, I was able to determine this house is of the Vernacular architectural style. The late historian Stan Hamper wrote of the Vernacular style: "Economy



Left: Screenshot of the drawing of the Augustine Reid Reading (alternate spelling: Redding) home, appearing in the margin of the wall map titled: "Map of the Counties Cass, Van Buren and Berrien" by Geil, Harley and Siverd (1860). This drawing was made by copying an Ambrotype. This house still stands today in section 15 off May Street, Ontwa Township.

Top Right: Photograph of same home, taken June 23, 1980, for Cass County Inventory of Archeological & Architectural sites. Credit: Cass District Library.

Right: Reading home, now owned by Dan Stutsman & family. Photo taken June 2026. Jonathan T. Wuepper.



and utility were the objectives in the vernacular and resulted in a variety of designs and the use of many different materials and treatments which were independent of prevailing styles and generally incorporating less fancy trim."

Augustine and Catherine Redding moved to Ontwa Township in 1835, and moved to Van Buren County in 1869. Augustine died in 1882 and is buried near Bangor. His wife, Catherine, passed away in December 1885 and is buried in the Edwardsburg Cemetery.

I was also able to come up with several names of previous owners of the

house after the Readings. Most notable was Peter Keen & heirs, of Elkhart, who owned the home and farm from 1869-1902. The Keens were incorrectly attributed to being the first owners of the home. In 1902 the Peter Keen Estate sold the home and farm to Samuel Hoke. The home and farm currently belong to the Dan Stutsman family.

There is interesting information on the families that previously owned the home, but space does not permit it. However, John Piper, the man that took the Ambrotype photos had an interesting, but short life. In about 1860, Piper and

family left Dowagiac and moved to Battle Creek, where his occupation in the 1860 census was listed as "artist". At the start of the Civil War, Piper enlisted in Company D of the Western Sharpshooters regiment. He resigned in 1863, re-enlisting in Company F, of the First Michigan Sharpshooters. Piper was promoted to Major on November 24, 1863. He fought in many of the major battles of the war. Local newspapers reported that Piper was shot through the head, killed instantly, on May 12, 1864 at the Battle of Spotsylvania. His body was never recovered.

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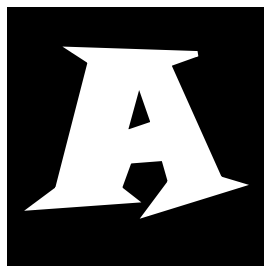
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## Better to light a single candle than curse the darkness



As I gracefully adapt to the changes from senior citizen to grumpy old man, I find myself increasingly sedentary, sitting well back in a fading, mostly comfortable but worn recliner, my feet elevated and my emotional and psychological well being idling like a suicide car in a garage. I have no physical

evidence (unless you count the testimony of my beloved spouse), but I imagine there are wisps of black sooty, smoke venting from my ears, and that my lips are curled in a churl of impotent rage at the indignities and inequities the combo that mid-septuagenarianism and a rapidly deteriorating physique are dumping upon me.

I suppose I could light that one proverbial candle rather than curse the darkness, but I've rarely rolled that way. When faced with adversity, self doubts and daily doses of dotage I've traditionally been more prone to roll myself out to the kitchen, nip a cold pint out of the refer and self-justify my gloom by zoning out over some forgettable, hackneyed, mental-floss of a novel or a mindless NY Times crossword that has cheat-at-will answers conveniently listed in the back appendix.

But of late I seem to be noticing a diversion in the force, and I find myself numbly staring out the window at my front yard, which I'm told is the same yard I've been staring at for the past 25 years..

Even though it doesn't seem to have changed much, what's left of my memories are indicating some hard, definitely maybe kind of truths. Most of the old fishing cottages that used to be out there have money-morphed into mega-mortgaged McMansions. The swampy wooded shore directly across from me was long ago slashed away, and the up-north lakey look that shore once sported has become a manicured, city-looking grassy lawn. The rickety, leaning old piers that once wharfed rickety, leaky sailboats and time-worn wooden row boats are now flanked with brightly colored jet skis, \$100,000+ super-powered motorized monsters and wave running tsunami producers that seem better suited for the Great Lake Gitchigoomie than Birch's banal blandness.

But that's just the grumpy old man in me blocking

that once sloe-eyed but hyperactive lake dog who used to howl at the moon, swim and fish and sail when life was slow and easy and my knees didn't hurt and my arthritis hadn't turned my hands into hideous claws and I could sleep through a whole night without having to get up for a bathroom break every couple hours ...

Back before I got so old.

And grumpy.

On the rare days when I feel like it might be worth chewing through the restraints to get up in the morning; when the sun dawns bright and clear and the lake surface is calm and soothing; when my eyes are focusing well and the demons that plagued my nighttime dreams have gotten a two-cup Folgerizaton to drive away my waking hallucinations, the view is pretty good, and I start thinking I can see things like I used to see them.

And, oh, the things I can see out there today.

On a day like today, with apologies to Barbara Streisand, I can see forever ... and back again.

As I'm writing this today, the lake is reflecting a spectacularly blue sky, with big, puffy, fluffy white clouds floating around like giant cotton balls drifting over the far shore. The longer I watch and the more my mind drifts along with the cotton swabs and as I drift away from my laptop's keyboard, I started seeing the clouds rearrange into shapes that resemble mythical creatures, fairies' arms, dragon's heads and lions' manes. And though I haven't visited a dispensary in weeks, I've completely forgotten what I was trying to write, and I drift with the clouds to memories so sweet I'm going to need an emotional insulin infusion.

As I was writing this today, I suddenly remembered the elation of buying a lake house (but bracing myself against the accompanying mortgage-o-phobia caused by the obscene numbers and incomprehensible, overly legal-ized fine print on the closing documents).

And as I was writing this today, I remembered buying my first boat, a small, wooden flat-bottomed fishing boat that had two splinter-laden oars and a wee putt-putt outboard that would only start with half a can of starting fluid blasted into the carb and two-dozen arm-wrenching pulls on a worn rope cord with a blister-inducing metal t-shaped handle. And I remembered the awe of the first summer visitors here; the ducks and

the herons and the swans and the coots, and I remember the first photo-worthy fish, a good-sized, hungry-looking smallie that I held out at arm's length both to make it look larger in the picture and to hide the Cheshire cat grin that was plastered across my face.

As I was writing this today, those and a hundred other memories spilled over my sea wall into the yard ... and I realized that old man or not, I'm in the "golden years of my life, and I should relish all the memories and the experiences, the friendships and love.

But then, as I was writing this today, the proverbial other shoe fell, and that kinda put a damper on things.

And I remembered meeting the neighbors for the first time and sharing a happy hour with on the deck with the notorious Bad Patty and her husband Bill and a floppy-eared Bassett hound named Ethyl; and I remembered year after year of happy hours after happy hours filled with laughter and friendship and fun and Ethyl fur. And then I remembered that both Ethyl and Bad Patty had moved on to their big lake in the sky ... and that kind of put a damper on things.

Then I remembered brother Chris visiting and the two of us sitting and having a beer (or several) and listening to music and laughing at old family jokes about our brother Paul (who Chris and I always said was an only child) and carrying on for hours and making plans for next time and on and on and on. And then I remembered both Chris and Paul had moved on to his big lake in the sky ... and that kind of put a damper on things.

Then I remembered all the summer days, years ago, when I'd look out my window and see the sun shining and the wind blowing up a small gale, and I'd go jump onto my sailboat and join the fleet for hours of hard-fought, hiked-over races ... and then I remembered all my friends and sailors who aren't here to sail with anymore .. and that kinda put a damper on things.

And as I was writing this today I realized that golden years be damned, I've become that grumpy old man.

And unfortunately, the only things golden about golden year as of old is are the golden stuff running down the inside of my leg.

And that kinda puts a damper on things.

Maybe tomorrow I'll light a candle if it doesn't rain. Or maybe I'll just look out the window.



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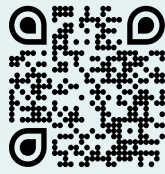


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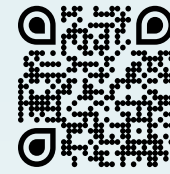


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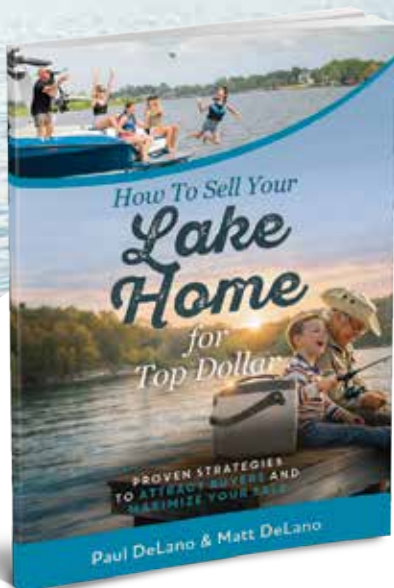
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