



**LOCAL HISTORY LEGEND**  
**CHARLIE MARTINEZ PASSES**



It is with a heavy heart we report the passing of longtime Historical Society member, previous leader, and renowned local historian Charlie Martinez in late 2020. Though his health had been failing in recent years, and he was in his late eighties, it does not make the loss easier. He impacted so much of our Historical Society – and for so many decades. In 2020 we named him our Lifetime Achievement Award winner and a sign was installed naming a

tree on our grounds in his honor; the chosen tree is intentionally close to multiple sites where he conducted archaeological digs here over the years.

In 2012, Charlie's eightieth birthday celebration was held here in the Carriage House. At that happy gathering, his friend and fellow local historian Geoff Brieger rose to deliver remarks on Charlie's noteworthy life and accomplishments. Included here are Professor Brieger's lovely words on Charlie Martinez:

He's universally known, who's a native Detroiter, educated in a time when Latin was still taught and there was academic rigor in our school system. Today, as we celebrate his eightieth birthday, we need to ask: What have you been up to, Charlie, for the last six decades at least? Well, it turns out, quite a lot.

Aside from employment in radio, television, and public relations, to which I cannot speak, he's been engaged as a steady and versatile student of local history, particularly what we call historical archaeology. For those of us who are as fascinated by what went on before we came on the scene, and particularly by the evidence which can be gathered by a minute examination of the physical remains buried in the soil, people like Charlie are needed to do the careful physical work of excavation, as well as the research and interpretation required to provide a reliable account of history. This is hard physical and mental labor, and not many are up to it, although Charlie has continued in this endeavor up to this day. I would add incidentally, but not insignificantly, that the financial incentives do not loom very large for this work. It requires the devotion and enthusiasm that Charlie has had for thirty or more years.

He has participated in over fifty archeological projects, often as an associate of well-known archeologists, such as the late Arnold Pilling of Wayne State University, as well as Gordon

Grosscup and Thomas Killion at Oakland, who has moved on since. They have worked on sites such as Fort Lernoult, Fort Wayne, Fort Michilimackinac, but he has also worked on Apple Island tracking down the Chief Pontiac legend, has helped excavate Thomas Edison's boyhood home in Port Huron and, even now, is engaged in a project along with Richard Stamps, Carol Egbo, and myself in locating the site of the Oliver Williams homestead in Waterford Township. In addition, over time, he has become an expert on prehistoric Indian artifacts in Michigan, which has resulted in the publication called "Hammering Out the Past." He's also a specialist in historic funeral practices and customs. This area, in fact, has occupied a great deal of time and effort, as he's been working on the book, "Dead Reckoning," which chronicles these practices.

As if this were not enough to keep Charlie busy, Charlie has written an excellent and informative history of West Bloomfield, entitled "Song of the Heron," characterized by a fluid and entertaining style, as well as scholarly rigor to back up his historical assertions. When the local papers uncover some historical artifact, or need background, they invariably turn to Charlie. In addition, he has also given numerous presentations, has been a regular contributor to our *Gazette*, and has lectured at local universities. The services he has rendered to the Society are too numerous to recount here, but I will mention his major contributions in the archeology and rebuilding of the Carriage House, his steady concern for the Wisner Mansion and last, but not least, his decade of leadership as the Executive Director of Pine Grove during the nineties.

Is that not enough for one life at eighty? Charlie, you deserve not only our congratulations on your birthday, but also our thanks for making local history yourself in such a gratifying way.

Charlie's response to these remarks: "... and I owe it all to you guys!" *Image of Mr. Martinez courtesy of OCPHS*

**OAK HILL CEMETERY SECTION MARKERS ARRIVE**

*Nancy Calendine*

It takes many volunteers to make projects like this possible. We have been fortunate to have a great deal of very passionate people that donated their time and resources to raise the funds to make this happen. A total of 12 markers were purchased; 8 to be installed on the northwest side of Oak Hill and 4 of which were generously paid for by Mr. Larry Keehn to mark the sections on the southwest side of the cemetery. As soon as weather allows we will be installing the markers.

*Image courtesy of Nancy Calendine.*



## **PRESIDENT'S CORNER**

**Charlotte Cooper**



Culture is a competitive advantage. A team with a great culture seems to have an extra layer of strength, tradition, resilience, belief, and power that makes it unstoppable. The team at Oakland History Center has been unstoppable, even in a pandemic.

The Board of Directors has had virtual meetings and has become more proficient using Zoom. Recent business consisted of adopting a resolution calling for Oakland County recognition of Elizabeth Denison Forth and of de-accessioning a small blue suitcase which did not fit with our collection.

The Annual Meeting of the Members will be held outside on Saturday, May 15. Business will include voting for a change in bylaws to allow for multiple ways to vote at the Annual Meetings.

It is again that time of year to consider candidates for a three-year term on the Board of Directors, and the Nominations Committee has presented an inclusive and diverse slate. Included in this Gazette are biographies of each candidate. All OCPHS members in good standing may vote in person or by proxy. You may contact the office for further information and assistance. I hope you will attend the May Meeting and vote in person.

**The team at Oakland History Center looks forward to officially re-opening for business this spring. Please consider visiting our lovely campus when all the tulips are blooming.**

Happy Spring! *Charlotte*

## **FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**Mike McGuinness**



The purpose of our Historical Society, the very reason for our existence, is to save and share our local history. For 147 years now, we have been advancing our mission. Every effort undertaken in that cause is carrying out a tradition that began generations before we were born. Every person involved is building upon the foundation that previous members have labored to create and maintain.

A crucial component of saving and sharing our local history is through the written word. And for our storied organization, this *Oakland Gazette* newsletter is an important element of advancing our mission through the

written word. Our newsletter has been a steadfast feature for many decades.

In recent years, the driving force in consistently creating a quality newsletter has been our Editor Kari Vaughan. A member for years, including time on the Board of Directors, Kari has masterfully juggled the newsletter responsibilities while also caring for her children. This edition of the newsletter is her last, as she's expressed a need for the newsletter demands to be handed off.

On behalf of past, present, and future Historical Society members I sincerely thank Kari Vaughan for her years of excellent volunteer work as the *Oakland Gazette* Editor. Just as she was building on the foundation laid by volunteers that went before, she has strengthened this foundation for the volunteers to come.

Kari, we are grateful for your exhaustive time invested in this task. We are thankful for your continuing membership, and future opportunities to help save and share local history are always open to you as your time availability allows! Again, thank you.

Somberly, we are still processing the news of Charlie Martinez's death. A devoted historian and enthusiastic archaeologist, Charlie worked for many years as the primary staff member of this Historical Society and later served on the Board of Directors. He authored multiple publications and personally was involved with many digs at our site and throughout the region. This organization, and I personally as our current Executive Director, are standing today on the foundation that Charlie Martinez helped build. I am literally and figuratively following in his footsteps – and even writing this from the Carriage House that he played a part in getting rebuilt. We remember his life and celebrate his many contributions to the preservation of Oakland County history through the decades.

Fellow local history advocates, our nonprofit welcomes your time and talents. Our time to make an impact on this earth may be limited, but together we can make a big impact. Join in ways that work for you, give when you can, learn more about topics that interest you, and participate at times that would be enjoyable.

For those reading this newsletter for the first time, or just coming to know our work, welcome. This storied *Oakland Gazette* has reached you for a reason – and we can't wait to have fun saving local history alongside you.

With gratitude and optimism, *Mike*

**JOIN US FOR THE OCPHS ANNUAL MEETING & SPRING  
CELEBRATION SATURDAY, MAY 15 AT 11:00 AM OUTDOORS AT  
OUR OAKLAND HISTORY CENTER**

**PRESENTING DR. GEOFF BRIEGER WITH THE BETTY ADAMS  
LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

**REMEMBERING THE LATE CHARLIE MARTINEZ**

**SHOWCASING OUR LATEST GROUNDS ENHANCEMENTS**

**ELECTING OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS (ALL OCPHS MEMBERS  
WITH CURRENTLY PAID DUES ARE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE IN PERSON  
OR BY PROXY)**

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS CANDIDATE PROFILES

**Nancy Calendine, Pontiac.** Nancy has been a member of the Historical Society for five years, three of which have included service on the Board of Directors. She has been the driving force behind many preservation efforts at Oak Hill Cemetery, coordinating the Oak Hill Cemetery Walks every year, and coordinating mausoleum restoration projects and the Pontiac State Hospital memorial monument dedicated to the patients buried at Oak Hill. She and her husband, Don, were also part of the Historical Society's successful carriage restoration efforts and helped secure the MotorCities National Heritage Area grant for \$1,500 that went toward the carriage work. Nancy writes: "Being involved with the Historical Society in recent years has been so rewarding. I was able to work with many of the members on projects that helped to preserve some of Pontiac's wonderful historic places. My love of genealogy and history had led me to explore Oak Hill Cemetery and see the need for preservation. Since 2016, along with much help from others and the Oakland History Center, we have raised thousands for restoration projects at Oak Hill Cemetery." Her other community involvement includes volunteer cleanups throughout the Pontiac community, as well as gardening at Oak Hill Cemetery and past Pontiac Garden Club activism.

**Iris Dominguez DeLaO, Pontiac.** Iris works for Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency as a caregiver. She has been a member of the Historical Society for the past two years. She has been a consistent presence at our many programming activities, including as the coordinator of concession sales at many of our outdoor flea markets. A native of Mexico, and fluent in Spanish, Iris has successfully engaged many local Mexican American community members to attend events at our Oakland History Center or support us with online votes when we were competing for the Pontiac Impact Challenge, through which we won \$5,000. Iris writes: "I am eager to share my knowledge of our Mexican American community's history to enhance our Historical Society's inclusive representation. I've really enjoyed the expanded activities at the Oakland History Center and look forward to continuing my frequent volunteering here. The momentum is really strong and we should keep expanding our outreach throughout the community." Her other community involvement includes volunteering at Walton Charter Academy and Orchard Lake St. Mary's.

**Gloria Harris-Ford, Pontiac.** Gloria is a retired professional municipal clerk, with degrees and certifications in that field including Master Municipal Clerk certification. She served the city of Lathrup Village in southern Oakland County as their City Clerk for years. Gloria is an active Pontiac Central High School alumna, organizing multiple class reunions and helping lead the fundraising campaign to restore the Chief Pontiac statue that once stood in Pontiac High School (and Pontiac Central), and today is on public display at the Pontiac Schools Administration Building. She has been a member of the Historical Society for three years. Gloria writes: "As a member of the Board of Directors, I intend to be a part of the continuing efforts to preserve the history of the city of Pontiac and all of Oakland County that would be inclusive of all residents." Her other community involvement includes previous service as a Pontiac Charter Revision Commission member and Welcome Missionary Baptist Church active membership, as well as organizing of multiple Black History Month displays and programs, among many roles.

**J. Dyann Hayes, Bloomfield Hills.** Dyann is a retired teacher and worked in school districts in Pontiac, Lansing, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and Georgia. She graduated from Michigan State University with an Elementary Education degree, with concentrations in History and Language Arts. She has been a member of the Historical Society for two years. In the past, she worked with the late Hubert Price, Jr. on the Pontiac Sesquicentennial exhibit on "The Corner" in Pontiac, which was the center of cultural and commercial life for Pontiac's black community for decades. Dyann writes: "I am committed to our community's important history and looking forward to future progress. Saving our local stories is personal to me. My mother was a Rosie the Riveter in Pontiac's factories during the war and was one of the first Black employees of Pontiac School District. On the Board of Directors, I hope to further connect our local schools and their students with our Oakland History Center and their local history exposure." Her other community involvement includes active All Saints Episcopal Church membership, Bound Together tutoring volunteering, Golden Opportunity Club membership, and Healthy Pontiac We Can Coalition participation.

**Evan Monaghan, Pontiac.** Evan is a chef, leading his culinary small business of Plain and Fancy Food LLC. He has served on the Historical Society Board of Directors for three years and has been a member for three years. He has filled multiple Summer Ice Cream Social and Holiday Open House volunteering roles, and he served on the Board's Finance Committee and Grant Committee. We partnered with his business for a successful "Dishes Past" historic culinary fundraiser and he recently raised funds for us via Facebook for his birthday. Evan writes: "I hope to continue to bring local history to the community and set OCPHS on a strong path for the future." His other community involvement includes Growing Pontiac and the Pontiac SUN Time Bank.

**Rosie Lance-Richardson, Pontiac.** Rosie is Chief Executive Officer of Beyond Now Concepts. She obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science as well as a Masters in Secondary School Administration, both from Oakland University; her post-graduate work in secondary school administration was at Wayne State University, and additional post-graduate studies at the Graduate School of Education were at Harvard University. She has been a member of the Historical Society for four years, three of which has included service on the Board of Directors; her focus has been on education at OCPHS, and has expanded youth enrichment activities and participation. Rosie writes: "I currently serve on the Historical Society Board of Directors as the chair for the education programs for our schoolhouse. I am interested in researching, presenting and preserving the education aspects of education in Pontiac as related to African American contributions. I would like to create programs and projects that encourage young people to become a vital part of the Historical Society. I want to encourage retired educators to bring creative projects. I am committed to supporting my family and community." Her other community involvement includes serving on the Pontiac Public Library Board of Trustees, Pontiac Lion's Club, OLHSA Council, and Sky's the Limit Board of Directors.

**Gwen Markham, Novi.** Gwen is in her second term as the Oakland County Commissioner for District Nine, representing the cities of Novi and Northville and Novi Township. She is Chairperson of the Oakland County Commission Finance Committee, Vice Chairperson of the Oakland County Human Trafficking Task Force, and Lake Board Member for Walled

Lake, among many other past and present leadership roles. Previously, she was an elected member of the Novi City Council. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science from Western Michigan University. She has been a member of the Historical Society for three years. Gwen writes: "I am a longtime Oakland County resident, and was born in Pontiac. My parents graduated from Pontiac High School in 1941 and I graduated from Pontiac Central High School in 1971. I appreciate the work done by the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society to preserve our history." Her other community involvement includes the American Association of University Women (AAUW) Novi-Northville Chapter and past president of the Friends of the Novi Theatres. On a personal note, her father Daniel T. Murphy was the first Oakland County Executive.

**Connor Newton, Waterford.** Connor is a museum professional and educator, currently working at Meadow Brook Hall in Rochester Hills and in the Waterford School District. He obtained his Associate Degree from Oakland Community College, his Bachelor of Arts Degree from Wayne State University, and his Master of Arts Degree from Wayne State University. He has been a member of the Historical Society for three years, volunteering at the Summer Socials, Christmas Open Houses, outdoor concerts, flea markets, and other events. Connor writes: "I'm a sometimes writer, full-time history enthusiast, and passionate volunteer from Drayton Plains, Michigan. I've lived near the spot where the Clinton River naturally splits into what was once a state fish hatchery, in whose waters I saw soft-shelled turtles and searched for crawfish as a boy. I'm excited to bolster the extraordinary efforts of the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society with my experience in customer relations and research, and with my skills as a communicator, historical interpreter, and educator." His other community involvement includes serving as a Board Member for the Waterford Historical Society, and a member and volunteer of the Genealogical Society of Flemish Americans.

**Adrian Rawls, Pontiac.** Adrian is an antique collector, specializing in vintage and antique décor, and is a self-employed antique dealer and consigner. He has been a member of the Historical Society for 14 years, and served on the Board of Directors for the past three years. In addition to serving on the Board, he has been a part of the House Committee, small talks and lecture efforts, carriage restoration team, and more. Adrian writes: "As a board member, I want to grow our membership and interest in the museum. I want to share our history with our community. I am very smart and want to share my knowledge. Preserve our history and grow our collection of Oakland County historical gems. Let's keep our donations rolling along and have many more successful events and amazing antique sales." While in grade school he was part of student government and student leadership, as well as ongoing community volunteer projects.

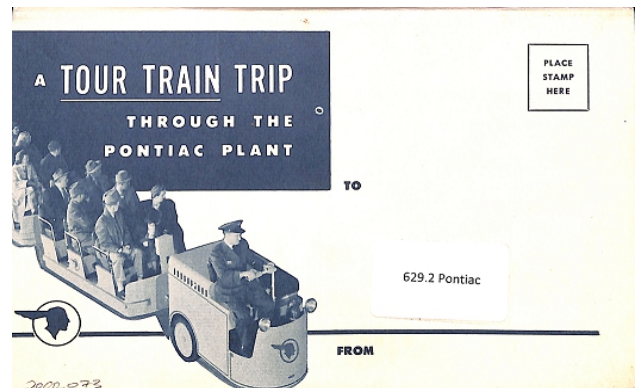
**Ernest R. (Skip) Upcott, Pontiac.** Skip is retired from Oakland County, and is also a military veteran. He manages an antique printing operation, Vintage Press. He obtained his Bachelor of Arts in English at Oakland University. He's been a member of the Historical Society for seven years and serving on the Board of Directors for the past three years. He's volunteered at multiple Summer Socials and other events, and donated letterpress printing of our business cards and personalized promotional coasters for many of our events. Skip writes: "Pontiac born and raised - attended Wisner School from 1952 to 1959, then on to Lincoln Junior High and Pontiac Central High School. Pontiac is my hometown as well as my parents' hometown and *their* parents

adopted Pontiac back at the turn of the century. It means a lot to me historically. I would like to continue working with this fine group of Directors as well as incoming participants. Kudos to our Executive Director, Mike McGuinness, who is showing us how high we can fly." His other community involvement includes veterans' organizations and past work with the Pontiac Jaycees.

**Rodger K. Zeller, Waterford.** Rodger is a retired educator, having obtained his Master of Arts in Teaching and working for decades in the Pontiac School District. He has been a member of the Historical Society for 22 years, 19 of which has included service on the Board of Directors. In recent years he's been active with the Summer Social planning, docent roles with tours, and maintaining the massive rose hedge on the campus. Rodger writes: "I am excited to be a part of preserving local history. Our organization is going through a renaissance and I want to be a big part of that turn around. As a board member, I can help see that we are putting in place procedures and directors that will help to make OCPHS a prime focal point for local and regional history." His other community involvement includes a Deacon role at Bethany Baptist Church of Waterford and the Michigan Association of Retired School Personnel.

**A Tour of the Past: Pontiac Assembly in the 1950's**  
*Benjamin Bird*

**Part I: A Journey through the Plant, Imagined**



Imagine that it is the early 1950's. You are a budding young car enthusiast, waiting in line behind the rest of your tour group. Eager with anticipation, you can hardly wait to partake in the incredibly popular tour through the Pontiac Motor Division assembly plant. Shuffling behind the rest of the line, you manage to step up into the last car of the electric tram. Just as your tour guide finishes explaining the necessary safety precautions and instructions, you step on board the tram as the last passenger in the last seat. The tram accelerates smoothly from the passenger-loading room into the bowels of the plant. Passing by a myriad of window-lit spaces and indoor lighting, the tour guide explains on the intercom impressive statistics about how many Pontiacs the plant made this year, how the plant was involved in the manufacture of many of the cars and guns that helped the county win the war, etc. However, your attention does not hold for long despite the impressive recollection of the plant's history of national recognition. The tour guide's voice fades into the background as you are greeted by a grand symphony of industrial machines both large and small. Some of these machines may only measure several feet in length or height, while others may measure up to or over a hundred feet in length by more than 10 feet in height. Regardless of their size, all of these machines have the same common purpose: to shape, form, or deform iron, steel, and other raw materials into useable

components. The thick smell of oil, grease, and smoke permeates your nostrils as the tram continues its journey forth through the plant. Having completely forgotten about the tour guide, or the people sitting with you inside the tram, you watch in complete awe as the workers and their machines produce automotive parts in concert with each other. The intense pounding and grinding of various presses and grinders combined with the great whirring noises of drills, lathes, and other powerful machines sing resoundingly inside your eardrums. Innumerable clangs, bangs, and dings burst through the din of this industrial cacophony. Machine operators exhibit the same precision and repetitive consistency as their mechanical counterparts to some rhythm only they seem to know. In sync with this rhythm, the many machine operators and assemblymen work at a frantic but consistent pace, producing and combining an endless variety of components like clockwork. **Gradually, the tram makes its way past the innumerable lines of press machines and lathes. The number of windows and indoor lights increases as you make your way towards the assembly lines. Assembly workers—equipped with an arsenal of power-driven tools—help put together different segments and parts from their respective sub-assemblies onto the main conveyor. An accumulation of parts and components emerges on the assembly line conveyor with a new identity: that of an automobile in its infancy of assembly.** Moving on down the last stage of the line, this early-stage automobile continues to gain mass and change shape with the addition of more components and parts. Riveting, welding, bolting, hammering, lifting, buffing, polishing, screwing, etc. bring this budding young vehicle close to its final stage. By the time that this fully-grown car literally rolls off the line, the final product emerges at last: a brand new Pontiac Sedan!

**Part 2: Rediscovering and Re-identifying the Past**



While the journey I've described above may not be the most accurate reflection of the step-by-step process of assembly at Pontiac General Motors in the 1950's, my intent is to capture the general essence of what it might have looked and felt like to a casual bystander taking part in a tour through the plant at the height of the United States as the unquestioned leader of the automotive world. Although it is simply impossible to visit the Pontiac plant as it once was in its 1950's heyday, the many photographs, memories, stories, and artifacts that are still here today remind us of what it might have been like. However, the process of finding, compiling, fact-checking, cross-referencing,

and general research can prove an exhausting task. Even the most stubborn of individuals interested in Pontiac's history as an automotive production and assembly hub might find the task daunting at times. Of course, this would be much less difficult if you just happened to run across a tour-guide pamphlet of the once-popular Train Tour through the Pontiac Plant. In fact, this is exactly what happened while I was curiously perusing the shelves of the OCPHS library! Tucked in between other carefully stored publications and records in the automotive section, a small, foldout pamphlet—not much larger than the size of a postcard—sat quietly on the shelf. On the front page, a black and white photograph prominently showed an electric tram being driven with nearly a dozen passengers in tow. In large capitalized words the caption

read: "A TOUR TRAIN TRIP THROUGH THE PONTIAC PLANT". Fascinated, I turned each page, following along on the journey of this yet unknown make of Pontiac Sedan. With each page turned, the process came further along. From bare metal frame, the sedan grew and grew until the body was finally added near the last several pages. As excited as I was to find this pamphlet, there was little to no information in the records about where, when, or how this pamphlet was ultimately received. Of course, my curious mind did not sit well with the available records, and I took it upon myself to take a deeper look.

**Part 3: A More Precise Date of the Train Tour Pamphlet**



Having recently conducted a significant body of research about General Motors in the city of Pontiac, I felt confident that I could identify a better date range for the pamphlet, and perhaps even the specific make and year of the Pontiac sedan featured in the pamphlet. With a combination of the research I had already done, and a copy of the Society's *The Complete History of General Motors, 1908-1986*, I set to work on identifying the date of the pamphlet and the

make and model year of the sedan. The first step I took towards dating the pamphlet was to review the research and notes I had already compiled. By re-reading through an August 19, 1957 Pontiac Press article, I discovered that although walking tours through the Pontiac plant had existed before 1950, the "train tours" through the plant had not existed until 1950. Next, I corroborated the information I discovered in the first step by reviewing a photographic printout of 1950's Pontiac East Assembly—featuring the same electric tram seen in the pamphlet—which I found by carefully sifting through online materials within the official General Motors Photo Store (in partnership with GM Media Archive). The photograph contained a description which read as follows:

In response to the public's growing interest in automobiles, Pontiac offered guided tours of some of its plants in the early 1950's. The narrated tour of Pontiac East Assembly included a trip down the final assembly line on an electric tram.

Lastly, I read through relevant sections of *The Complete History of General Motors, 1908-1986* while doing side-by-side comparisons of the two Pontiac sedans pictured in the last 2-3 pages of the pamphlet. With a good deal of patience, I identified the most likely year and model of Pontiac: A 1953 Pontiac Chieftain. More specifically, the Chieftain in the top photograph of the pamphlet appeared to have two door handles on each side, which would make it a 4-door sedan model. The Chieftain in the bottom image—which had one door handle on each side and a white marking handwritten on the windshield which read "Deluxe"—appeared to be a 2-door deluxe model. In conclusion, the findings and research as described in the steps above help provide a more precise historical date range and context for the Train Tour Pamphlet. This pamphlet could not have been made before production and assembly of 1953 Pontiac Chieftains began, at some point between late 1952 and early 1953. *Images courtesy of Ben Bird.*

**THE CHARLIE MARTINEZ LITHICS COLLECTION -  
THE WAY FORWARD**  
*Dave Decker*

The Oakland History Center is the curator of around 600 stone tools, organized into subcollections. They are a point of pride for us, but not just because we curate them. These collections were created by Charlie Martinez, a man who dedicated his life to the History Center's mission and served it in many capacities over his years. Charlie is the author of the book "Hammering Out the Past", where he assembled his research and shared his knowledge about these objects. In his work, he greatly expanded the knowledge we have about Oakland County's Native American presence. He created the body of work around these tools that lets us work with them today. The project we've undertaken is a way to carry Charlie's work forward, in a very small way, and is dedicated to his memory.

People often have a picture in their minds about our ancestors from thousands of years ago, perceiving people from the past as crude, ungroomed, unlearned people with no sophistication or culture. Until you hold one of these artifacts in your hand, and realize just how much skill, talent and practice is required to make a blade or an axe out of a rock. Many of the artifacts in our lithics collection must have taken hours, even days, to make. They were highly valuable objects – that barbed axe would likely be the equivalent in value of a high-end car today. They were not only used by their makers, but they were also traded, worn as ornaments, and passed down to children as heirlooms. Their value to us today is invaluable – they can teach us so much about these people from thousands of years ago, that lived where we live, saw some of the same lakes we do, and walked the same ground as we do today. It's humbling to have a small part in celebrating their history. We at the History Center will celebrate it by sharing it with you.

#### **On Lithics**

"Lithic" according to Merriam-Webster, is "relating to or characteristic of a (specified) stage in humankind's use of stone as a cultural tool". In this collection, there are arrowheads (or points), celts, axes, hammerstones, bannerstones, and gorgets, each type having their own purpose. Not that we have a full understanding of these objects – how a gorget was used, for example, is a matter of some debate amongst people who study them. Some of them are unfinished – perhaps the maker was unhappy with what they were making. Maybe they found a better core (stone), and decided to start over. Which just goes to show, our predecessors could be as picky as we are. The History Center's relationship with these lithics has been one of examination, study, and caretaking. A great many of them have been extensively examined by archaeologists, not least among them Charlie Martinez, our director for so many years. Charlie made substantial contributions to our understanding of Oakland County lithics, and through his publication "Hammering Out the Past", has made a lot of this information available to the public. That book is available from the society – just ask for a copy (if we're mailing it, it'll cost you postage, though). We aren't going into detail about how these artifacts were used by their makers. This article is about how we are going about the protection, care, and study of them. We aren't going this alone, either; we've engaged with several subject matter experts in doing the work, and are working with local archaeologists and Oakland County Parks to ensure we're doing it right. Before any discussion about these lithics – let's make the "point" that all the lithics in our collection were collected by farmers, landowners, or collectors over time. Some of the objects are associated with registered archaeological sites where later evaluation projects were undertaken. Where appropriate we have recorded that provenance to say, "this was found here too" – but they weren't dug out of the ground and given to OCPHS. It's the opposite: In some cases, the donation of the objects triggered examinations of the sites where they were found. To our knowledge, all of them are objects that were found on the ground, and have no other known context.

#### **The Collection**

Our lithics are organized by subcollection, each defined by how and when they were donated to the society. There are around 600 lithics across all the collections. **What are our objectives with this collection? Why are you talking about it now?** For some time, the lithics collection has lain dormant in our storage room. But it's a great collection, and we think it should be seen and become a prominent

part of our exhibits. To make that happen, some work needs doing. Here's what's happening now:

- We are inventorying the collection, and organizing it by subcollection.
- We are re-packaging them for storage and display in a controlled way.
- We are putting some tracking methods in place so they can be located, loaned, and displayed.

Our exhibit strategy with these collections is to allow researchers and lecturers to access them, to put part of the collection on loan to interested historical groups (and certain lecturers), and to use them to learn more about the Native American presence in Oakland County. Some will be displayed online; some will be displayed on our campus in various exhibits.

#### **A Progress Report**

The main goal of our work on this collection is to ensure its future through inventorying and protecting each lithic. Another is to store the lithics in a way that protects them. **To those ends, we've bagged each lithic in a clear heavy plastic bag. Each one has the lithic and the original paper envelope in which it was kept, since the envelopes have information about the lithic – they may have a sketch, a description, and the collection/accession number on them.** To inventory the lithics, we've enjoyed the company of Ben Bird, who has scrupulously inventoried each lithic. Using his inventory, we've incorporated information from other sources – specifically, the notes made about each collection and/or piece by Charlie Martinez, Richard Zurel, and Richard Stamps. We also have photos of some of the objects taken as part of a grant, which are being matched to the lithics. The next step in the project is to add each lithic to our PastPerfect software, listing as much information as we can about each one, incorporating the photos. This will take a while – many of them haven't been photographed, and we'll be doing that as we go along. Once the data entry is complete and we're satisfied that the collection is properly recorded and stored, we'll create inventory lists, put some information together about each subcollection, and make arrangements for loaning and displaying the lithics on our campus and elsewhere.

#### **The Credit Goes To...**

\*Dr. Richard Stamps, for advising and educating us on our lithic collection's origins and on the Native American presence in Oakland County.

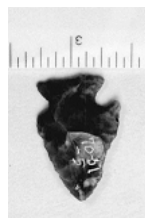
\*Carol Bacak-Egbo, historian for Oakland County Parks, for advising us on the Native American presence in Oakland County, and for introducing us to Ben Bird.

\*Katie Root and Bia Cassano, for assistance in bagging and sorting the collection.

\*And last but certainly not least, Ben Bird, for his invaluable commitment to seeing the most arduous, difficult part of the project through – taking the inventory, bagging lithics, creating tracking systems, and documenting our efforts. If you look elsewhere in this gazette, you'll see some of the results of Ben's "side job" – research into the tours given at auto plants here in Pontiac.

**It goes without saying – but we'll say it anyway – this type of project is not done in a vacuum, and not without incurring costs. If you would like to support our efforts to bring this collection to the public, your financial support would be beneficial and very much appreciated.**

*Images courtesy of Dave Decker*



**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!**

OCPHS is pleased to welcome the following new members who have joined since our last publication...

**Micah 6 Community, Pontiac**

**Barb Allison, White Lake**

**Karen Evans, West Bloomfield**

**Shana Jackson, Pontiac**

**Lisa Kelley, Auburn Hills**

**Dr. Jim Kruer, Georgia**

**Robert Lowry, Waterford**

**Mattie McKinney Hatchett, Pontiac**

**Patricia Peck, Waterford**

**Edna Randolph, Pontiac**

**Wendy Shepherd & Ken Hershenson, Southfield**

**Jeff Stehle, Brownstown**

**Kerry Tolbert, Pontiac**

**Jerry Walsh, Pontiac**

**Eric Willson, Ferndale**

***OCPHS Officers and Board of Directors***

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**Membership and Donation Form**

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Send my *Gazette* via:  U.S. Mail  Email  
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**Please Make Me a Member!** (indicate level):

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- \$20 Individual
- \$20 Non-Profit Organization
- \$35 Family (two adults & minor children)
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- \$500 Friends
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**What Prompted Your Support?** (check all that apply):

- Interest in Oakland County History
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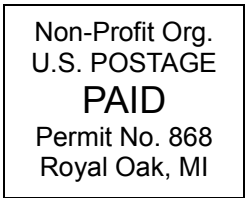
Mail this form with check payable to OCPHS to:

**Oakland County Pioneer & Historical Society**  
**405 Cesar E. Chavez Avenue**  
**Pontiac, MI 48342**

For your convenience you may also join or donate online at [www.ocphs.org](http://www.ocphs.org). Thank you for your support!

We are a 501(c)(3) organization  
*Donations are tax deductible in accordance with applicable law*

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**



**MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**

***\*All upcoming events are TENTATIVE, considering uncertain public health or other external factors.***

April 11 @ 3:00 pm: “Early Mill Towns of Oakland County” Virtual Presentation

May 1 @ 11:00 am – 5:00 pm: Outdoor Flea Market Launches (Saturdays)

May 15 @ 11:00 am: Annual Meeting and Outdoor Celebration

June 3 @ 6:00 pm: Governor Moses Wisner Birthday Celebration

June 14 @ 2:00 pm: Flag Day Ceremony

June 26 @ 11:00 am: Governor Van Wagoner Celebration and Pavilion Ground Breaking

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Save the Dates: Summer Ice Cream Social (July 24 and 25), Outdoor Summer Concert Series (August 6, 13, 20), Fiftieth Anniversary of Pontiac Bus Bombing (August 30), Motoramas at Pine Grove (Fall), Oak Hill Cemetery Walk (September 19), Harvest Days Celebration (October 16 and 17), Downtown Pontiac Ghost Tours (October 23 and 24), Gala Auction (November 6), Christmas Open House (December 11 and 12)

*Oakland Gazette* is a publication of the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society. Submissions, content suggestions or comments are welcome.

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***Follow us on social media and watch your email for further information on these events!***

***IN THIS ISSUE:***

Page 1: Local History Legend Charlie Martinez Passes; Oak Hill Cemetery Section Markers Arrive

Page 2: President's Corner; From the Executive Director

Page 3: Board of Directors Candidate Profiles

Page 4: Board of Directors Candidate Profiles con't.

Page 5: A Tour of the Past: Pontiac Assembly in the 1950's

Page 6: The Charlie Martinez Lithics Collection – The Way Forward

Page 7: Welcome New Members; Membership & Donation Form

Page 8: Mark Your Calendar!