

THE SHELBY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL REPORT 2015

2015 has been another good year for the Shelby County Historical Society. In January your Board of Directors and Committee Chairs met to make plans for the year and consider ways to increase membership and support of the Society in the County.

In February, during Black History Month, the Society again was a sponsor of the Community Tapestry Event. Several of our members were involved. Sanda Jones and Kerry Magan served as co chairs of the event and John Graham, Jim Cleveland and James Mulcahy also helped along with a number of community volunteers. The event which was held for the first time at the new Northside Preschool focused on the history of the black churches in Shelby County. Raymond Burse, President of Kentucky State University, gave the keynote address. The event drew a large crowd and helped us recruit several new members to the Society.

In March the Society presented a program on Sears and other catalog homes that were built in the early 1900's. Board member Sarahbeth Farabee and Shelbyville Historic District Coordinator, Fred Rogers, presented the program that was held on a Saturday morning and drew a nice crowd of about 35 people. We learned that several homes still standing in Shelbyville, including the home of Sarahbeth, are examples of Sears and other catalog homes.

In April the Society agreed to help sponsor a bus tour during Fair Housing Month. The Program began at the library and included remarks by Shelbyville Mayor Tom Hardesty and the Directors of the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights and the Kentucky Housing Corporation. Participants then boarded a bus and took a tour of Shelbyville and Simpsonville in areas that had been historically segregated. John Graham provided much of the historical information about these areas.

In May we were treated with a program by one of our own members, Allen Purnell, Jr. Allen's family owns the Old Stone Inn property in Simpsonville and he ran the restaurant there for several years. He spoke about the history of the Inn and some of the facts and myths that have been told over the years about the Inn. The program was attended by about 35 of our members.

In June the Society again had its History Camp for children ages 7-12. Over 50 children participated and learned about the depression years. The camp included appearances by Pee Wee Reese and Colonel Harland Sanders among others. This was the eighth year for History Camp which was again directed by John Graham. This program gives the children hands on opportunities to learn about the period being presented. John is able to gather a number of former and current teachers to help with the camp and also a number of high school students to work with the campers as counselors. The three day camp has continued to be a great success for the Society and helps create an interest in history for all those who participate.

The Society held its annual picnic this year in September on the grounds of the home of the birthplace of Whitney M. Young, Jr. which is now a museum in his honor and also currently has historical memorabilia from the former Lincoln Institute. Whitney M. Young, Jr. who served three U. S. Presidents played a key role in ending segregation in the United States. The museum is a hidden treasure for our county and is currently only available for tours upon request. About 60 people attended the picnic and toured the museum.

In November, the Society was able to have Dr. Mark Wetherington, who is currently Senior Research Fellow at the Filson Historical Society and was formerly its Director, present a program to our membership about the steamboat collision on the Ohio River near Warsaw, Kentucky between two passenger steamboats, the "United States" and the "America" in December of 1868. His presentation described the dangers of steamboat travel, but how it helped open up travel in the United States until being replaced by the railroad.

This year the Society also won an Education award for its History Camp from the Kentucky Historical Society. Three people deserve special recognition for this award. The first is Sherry Jelsma who first suggested a history camp and volunteered to get it started. She also was the one who prepared the application for the award. Sharon Hackworth also deserves recognition for her supporting role in history camp for which she has helped since the beginning. And finally John Graham who has over the past few years taken on the role of director of the camp. He has been the primary person responsible for the camp curriculum and for recruiting high school students to help with the camp. He has done an outstanding job and we should thank him for the time, energy and talent he brings to history camp.

Our History Museum has also been an important asset of the Society again this year. We are fortunate to have a number of volunteers who serve on the Museum Committee and help decide what will be on display. They have helped create a number of different exhibits over the years. This year they had the Shelbyville High School exhibit that was in part created by Duanne Puckett and also the museum committee. Sharon Hackworth has served as Chair of this committee. She also has recruited a number of volunteers to man the museum on Thursday and Friday of most weeks. Over 400 visitors have come to the museum each year and many are from other states and even other countries. Thanks to all of those who make our museum possible.

For many of our members the quarterly newsletter is their primary contact with the Society and its activities. Again this year Sherry Jelsma has done an outstanding job serving as editor. Masha Miller and Dixie Taylor also served as guest editors on the spring Quarterly and Duane Puckett served as guest editor on the fall Quarterly. We also owe a thanks to James Mulcahy, who formats our newsletter and Jim Cleveland, who sees that they all get mailed to our members.

I want to thank Jim Cleveland for being the Chair of our Membership Committee. He not only keeps up with our membership of over 225 persons, but he also sees that our members are made aware of upcoming programs and events through emails and postcards.

I want to thank Sanda Jones who oversees our website at shelbykyhistory.org. She continues to update our website and provide important information about the Society to the general public. She receives numerous requests for information through the website and passes those requests off to someone in the Society who can respond to the request.

I want to thank Masha Miller who has taken on the responsibility of providing genealogical research when requested of the Society. She has donated her time and all the payments for her research to the Society.

Charles Long also deserves recognition for his work as Chair of the Collections/Accessions Committee. He has for many years organized and cataloged items given to the Society. We appreciate the time and talent he provided again this year.