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**Executive Director:** Lori Taylor-Blitz

BIHS E-Letter to the Community  
June 2020

**Lori Taylor-Blitz BIHS Executive Director**

Greetings friends and supporters of the Beaver Island Historical Society. It is nice to visit at a distance and see so many of our friends return to the island. 2020 certainly is slated to be an unforgettable year for the history books! We have all been challenged to adapt our lifestyles and sense of community around an unwelcomed pandemic.

As so many other island traditions are being *reimagined* BIHS decided to produce this E-Letter to connect with our community and share our board member perspectives as we move forward and continue with activities to advance our mission of sharing and *PRESERVING* the history of Beaver Island and the Archipelago. While usually the society is more focused on the *sharing* portion of our mission, this year we must focus on the *preserving* and operate in a manner that protects our community base. Sadly, the BIHS annual events that we all look forward to are cancelled this year. We anticipate a better outcome in 2021.

But, the museums will open! The Marine Museum will open on July 1 and the Print Shop will open soon after, but the actual date is still to be determined. The museums will be open Wednesday, Friday and Saturday 11-5. The Protar Home will be open on Wednesdays beginning July 1., 11-1. All public health precautions will be observed. Members of the community can make a reservation to tour the museums outside of our regular hours by calling the Print Shop 231.448.2254. Please be patient with us as we navigate through these uncertain times and know there will be more time for *fun in 2021*.

**Mark Engelsman, BIHS President**

The COVID-19 health crisis has had a sudden and substantial impact on all of us, leaving those of us in the cultural heritage sector to change our business models with an unknown end. Since March 2020 most cultural institutions have been indefinitely closed with exhibitions, events and performances canceled or postponed.

BIHS has responded with clarity of purpose to this unexpected change. We have sought state and federal aid to assist with operations expenses. In an effort to remain connected with our community and to raise spirits we are making a cultural product available online and we have developed a plan on how to safely reopen our museums.

As BIHS navigates 2020, we will remain committed to our mission of preserving our cultural heritage, defining our sense of place and addressing the public's demand for cultural activities in a safe and sensible manner.

**Mike Weede, BIHS Vice President**

One of the Marine Museum's assets is a trap net fishing boat, named the Miss Bay City. She currently sits next to the Marine Museum in an unusable state and not secure. The Society plans to use the boat as an outdoor museum that will share the story of trap net fishing. This facility improvement, The Miss Bay City Boat

project will safely secure the boat and provide public access to it. We will extend the current entrance ramp along the front of the museum to the Miss Bay City. The new ramp will serve as a viewing platform with the water lapping below the stern and blue sky above.

The project includes building a boat cradle to replace the existing logs. The cradle will secure the boat and keep her upright placing her level with the building and foot lighting will be installed. Signage will also be installed to provide the unique story of the boat, an overview of fishing on Beaver and acknowledge sponsors. The public can self-guide through the boat making it a perfect addition to the existing self-guided historical trail through downtown St. James.

Construction will begin in the fall and a grant has been submitted to help offset the cost.

### **Bobbi Welke, BIHS Treasurer and Construction Leader**

Great progress was made on building the new Print Shop addition. Then, the world changed. The work was halted for the safety of the construction workers and the community but resumed on May 7<sup>th</sup> as directed by Michigan state officials. The construction work is expected to be complete by early July after which new exhibits will be installed. We look forward to being able to share this wonderful new addition with all of you as soon as it is finished when we can do so safely. Beaver Island and its archipelago have tales to tell and legends of lore to reveal. We want you to learn about these new stories when they are ready to be told!

### **Maeve Green, BIHS Secretary**

I serve as the secretary of the BIHS board. I've been a member of the board since I moved back to the island in 2016. Growing up on Beaver Island, I was always fascinated by the stories of days gone by on Beaver Island. As a kid, I used to love going to Jerry LaFreneiere's pole barn to look at his old photos and relics on the walls and listen to the stories that were passed around. I was lucky to grow up spending time with people of all ages and, because of this, I learned about our history through stories and music.

Beaver Island has a very unique history. The Beaver Island Historical Society has done a wonderful job of making our history accessible to those who visit our museums and historical sites. We have also increased our social media presence so we can offer our history to those who are not physically able to visit our museums.

I enjoy finding ways to involve our youth in Beaver Island history. While teaching at the Beaver Island Community School, I worked on a few island history projects for students. One being the Beaver Island History Day. During the most recent History Adventure we had students climb the lighthouse tower to act as a lighthouse keeper, move ice blocks using Beaver Island ice tongs, recreate the Zolton Sepeshy mural 'Hauling in the Nets', and complete other tasks that would have been common tasks of past Islanders. This wonderful historical connection was planned and executed by school staff members and a great group of community volunteers.

### **Sheri Timsak, BIHS Trustee**

The Beaver Island Historical Society cookbooks are here! I remember when my mom bought me the first BIHS Cookbook many years ago and I used it so much that I basically wore it out. The cookbook is awesome with recipes and memories from cover to cover!! Please pick one up at the museums and enjoy the recipes and history of Beaver Island.

Another memory—I remember the first time I heard about Dr. Feodor Protar. I was with my grandma Lizzie Mooney and she had many stories to tell about the good doctor. He was and still is very special to Beaver Island. I remember her telling me about the time she needed his knowledge. She said he was so kind and, knowing they were poor farmers with 6 boys to raise, he said she could pay with a chicken. I laughed and she reminded me of the simpler times when things were done that way. After that they were fast friends and when she would bake she would always remember him. Now I try to pay it forward by going out and cleaning around his tomb when I can. I know they are both smiling down and thanking me.

### **Angel Welke, BIHS Trustee**

When I married Paul Welke nearly 20 years ago, I already loved Beaver Island. When we go off-island on vacation in the winter for a couple weeks after day 8 or 9 we look at each other and agree on two things: (1) we miss our dogs and (2) we miss home. That is it...Beaver Island is home. It is where we live and work and play. But it is also a place of amazing natural beauty, peace, quiet, history and solitude.

One of my favorite things to do is give new visitors a ride to town from our airport. I have a set tour I do from Welke Airport to Whiskey Point light then on to wherever they want to be dropped. I am amazed at the questions and it never fails that they toss a question at me I've never been asked. I love that. I get to share my love of this island with new visitors and they still surprise me.

#### **Tracy Paquin, BIHS Trustee**

After much discussion and deliberation, the BIHS Board of Directors decided to open our museums and one historical site this summer. The Marine Museum and the Print Shop Museum will be open July 1 through the end of August. They will be open Wednesday, Friday and Saturday 11am-5pm.

CDC recommended protocol will be followed at all locations. Masks are required and will be provided for those who don't have one. Hand sanitizer is available and social distancing is encouraged. One member of each household will be asked to sign their name and give contact information in the event contact tracing is necessary. A docent and an intern will be on site to assist with these requirements. Each museum will be cleaned and disinfected every day.

We welcome you to enjoy our history and stay safe doing it. We are looking forward to seeing you this summer.

#### **Craig Turnbull BIHS Trustee**

One of the historical sites on the island that the Society manages is Heritage Park. I have been intrigued with the vision of Heritage Park becoming a vital space on our island. It was a traditional practice in many towns and villages to set aside a day, usually Sunday, for music, games and fellowship at the park. Heritage Park seems like a natural, to serve such a function.

#### **Dickie McEvoy, BIHS Trustee**

The Beaver Island Historical Society is excited to be assisting Charlevoix County and Networks Northwest in the restoration of the Beaver Head Light Station. The tentative plan is to create a Historical recreation and education center on the site. They have just announced the Beaver Head Lighthouse tower is open to the public.

Great Lakes Wood Working company offered to replace the deteriorating door on the lighthouse tower. Owners, Tony Gatliff and Mike Mancinelli are working on a custom-fit 40-inch door. Tony, Mike and their crew have been working on the door this winter and hope to install it this summer. Many thanks to Tony, Mike and the crew for their efforts and contributions.

#### **Alan Vicstein BIHS Trustee**

**High Speed Internet (Pools of Service)** The Beaver Island Historical Society is one of eight anchor institutions working to create interim "pools" of 200 Mbps symmetric service at key island locations. This will be available for public use in the workspace at the Library, Community Center, Museums and Township Buildings. It will also be used for township and county business at these connected locations: halls, county building, transfer station, governmental center, St. James fire hall, Health Center, School and Municipal Docks.

This high-speed service will also allow the Museum to provide virtual access to Museum exhibits and allow visitors and staff to participate in on-line meetings and collaborate virtually with other organizations.

**John Fiegen BIHS Trustee and Development Chair**

Dear friend of the Beaver Island Historical Society, I'm sure you agree that we are all experiencing a new way of life in this rapidly changing world. I hope you and your family are safe and healthy. During these unsettled times the Beaver Island Historical Society is making every effort to continue to preserve and share the unique history of our island.

We are facing a summer of less tourists, less income and continued operating expenses. In addition, the Print Shop Museum addition is only partially completed due to the virus-related work stoppage. Now more than ever your membership support is vital to us. If you have already joined us this year--thank you. If it has slipped your mind--please join us now! [Click here to join us as a new member or renew an existing membership.](#) Or print, clip and return the slip below to BIHS, P.O. Box 263, Beaver Island, MI 49782.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
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**MEMBERSHIP YEAR: JANUARY 1 – DECEMBER 31**

Beaver Island Historical Society P.O. Box 263 Beaver Island, MI 49782

Student/Senior \$25 _____	Individual \$35 _____
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We would like to help the Beaver Island Historical Society in its mission of Keeping Island History alive by becoming members or renewing at the indicated level: