

Winter 2011



471 South St
Suite 42A
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YOUR CONNECTION TO YESTERDAY

Member Update

Projects and Programs

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 12,
2011, 2:00 PM

“Read All About It!”
Exploring the History and
Stories of the Black Experience



An SMBHS Program in Recognition of Black History Month. In collaboration with Kazoo Books and the Portage District Library.

Featuring a lively book lovers panel discussion with the Executive Director of the Black Arts and Cultural Center; Gloria Tiller of Kazoo Books, and a representative from the Brown Sugar Book Club. Panelists will share their top two favorites from 2010.

Guest author is Denise Miller, poet and author of *Speak Easy*, a collection of her poems.

Unique round table “speed discussions” will follow. Join us for this opportunity to meet book groups, purchase books, and leave with a list of recommended books. No registration required.

SATURDAY, APRIL 2

9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

**“Finding Family:
Connecting with Family and Capturing
Family Stories**

Featuring Tony Burroughs, internationally known genealogist, author, teacher and lecturer. In collaboration with the Kalamazoo Valley Genealogical Society and the Portage District Library.

Morning sessions of this event will include genealogy workshops with local genealogists and historians on genealogy basics and doing family oral history. Mr. Burroughs speaks in the afternoon, giving advice on overcoming the challenges of doing family history. Box lunch is included.

Participants receive a genealogy toolkit with basics for beginning genealogy projects, family history forms, and resource lists.

To register, call Marsha at 324-9203.

Both events take place at Portage Library, 300 Library Lane, Portage, MI

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Research into the history of African Americans in southwest Michigan is the basic purpose of the Southwest Michigan Black Heritage Society. We realized early on in pursuing our research that, barring the excellent work of Dr. Benjamin Wilson, retired professor of African American studies at Western Michigan University, there had not been a lot published. That has made our work difficult and time consuming. Our friends at the WMU Archives, the local history room at the Kalamazoo Public Library, Willard Library in Battle Creek, and the Kalamazoo Valley Museum have been of tremendous assistance in helping us root out what is there. In addition, we have learned to go directly to the source—those who have lived much of the history of the area. That is why in recent years we have put so much emphasis on oral history and working with families to document their history. We have produced two publications:

The History Detectives Oral History Project and *Telling the Kalamazoo Community RACE Story*, both oral history projects.

We have just completed the digital transcription of the two-volume, hand-written Ampey family history that includes a wealth of information on most of the early African American families that settled in the region.

Our current projects center on the following topics:

- ?? Early Barbers: the First African American Professionals
- ?? Tracing the descendants of Dorothy Butler and her family who settled in Kalamazoo County after escaping slavery through the Underground Railroad.

We welcome suggestions and assistance from our membership in our on-going research.