

Otsego Area Historical Society

Vol 1. No. 2
November 2002

IN THIS ISSUE

Name the Newsletter
Museum News
Gabe or Washington Street
Otsego Reminiscences
Ka-La-Ma-Zoo (A Legend)

Once again this little piece filled with curiosities, tidbits and irrelevant particulars organized in no particular (or relevant) order has found its way to your mailbox. If the information found within its margins helps to satisfy your cravings for a bit of local history, then honor the ones who have gone before us, for it is they who have left their mark upon our town in one way or another. It is only the editors' job to sort and sift through the literally thousands of interesting stores available for illustration or education. Therefore, our compiling and writing turns this quarterly task into hardly a task at all, but rather a joyful sharing of histories, traditions and an odd occurrence or two.

I would like to remind all of you who are still giving deep and thoughtful consideration to the naming of our newsletter that time is running out, and we shall soon choose an appropriate title by the next edition. So, if that perfect name arrives during a brainstorm, give Nancy Boettcher or myself a call before it washes away down the drain.

We recently took our original 1880 bird's eye view of Otsego to Kal-Blue Reprographics in Kalamazoo where it was scanned and prints were made. The reproductions are beautiful and perfect in every detail. As soon as we can secure a local printer and an affordable price we will begin taking subscription orders for more prints. This will be an excellent fundraiser for the society and we will need your help to make it successful. Stop by the library to view this piece of art and history. The historical society has plans to send one copy to the Library of Congress for their bird's eye map collection.

Ryan Wieber

MUSEUM NEWS

Plans for renovating the downtown Waterworks building are still in progress, with Phase II of the project completed by Capital Consultants and DesignWorks. Phase II provided the historical society board with preliminary 3D perspective drawings and preliminary floor plans. These plans are available at the Otsego District Public Library for viewing.

Engineers were able with the help of the Otsego DPW, to pump out five feet of water from the lower level of the 1916 pump room addition. The water has been present for many decades and it has always been assumed to be ground water that has seeped in one way or another. Once pumped out, the water began to slowly come back in, leading the engineers to believe that it is arriving via old, corroded pipes that connect to the well just north of the building.

continued on page 2

GABE STREET OR WASHINGTON STREET?

Shortly before the end of the Civil War, Gabriel Adams, a freed slave came to live in Otsego. There are two accounts of his arrival here. One account says he came with a family from Kentucky named Henry. His obituary in the April 18, 1879 issue of the *Otsego Union* reads: "Died in this village April 5, 1879, Gabriel Adams a colored citizen. He had been a slave and was brought to this town during the war by Mr. Wm. Mansfield. By patient industry he had accumulated some property which he left in the hands of Mr. G. B. Norton to pay his funeral expenses and debts.

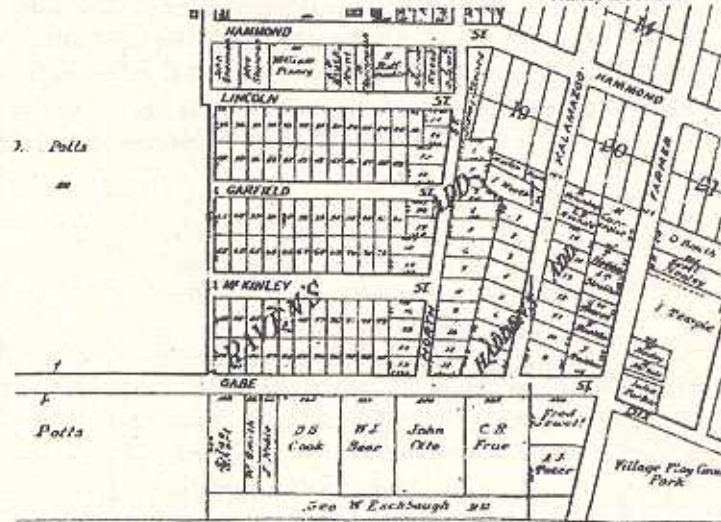
Mr. Adams became a resident of the Village of Otsego and is listed in the 1870 Census as a 26 year old man whose occupation is "laborer." He lived in a hut-like shack near the end of a road that ran along the south edge of the original platt of Otsego until his death in 1879. The road became known as "Gabe" Street until 1919 when several residents of the street petitioned the City for a name change. The City Commission minutes of May 5, 1919 read: "Moved and supported that in as much that the residents and property owners on Gabe Street have petitioned this Commission to change the name of said street to that of Washington or some other suitable name, that we grant said petition, renaming said street that of Washington Street in conformity with the wishes of said petitioners. Motion carried."

In the *OTSEGO UNION* dated May 8, 1919 the following article appears:

GABE ST. NO MORE- NOW WASHINGTON ST.

"The name of Gabe Street became distasteful to the residents of that part of the city and a petition was presented to the Commission to have the name of the street changed to Washington Street. The petition was granted by the Commission and Gabe Street is no more."

Nancy Boettcher



1913 Platt Map