

09/12/2019

Last week we hosted 6th grade students from University Liggett in Grosse Pointe for the annual student dig at the Warner farm. Nearly 70 people participated including forty-three students. The event began with a presentation in the Hicks school on historical, genealogical, and archaeological research of the Warner family. As always, the mystery item session was very well received. Thanks to Duane Watters of Duane Watters Masonry for donating the prizes and to Beth Carr for several mystery items she brought. The students also received a tour of the house and cellar. In between tours, they participated in various activities such as corn shelling and stilt walking. Thanks to my cousin, Tina Sanderlin, for bringing a pair of donkeys for the kids to pet and learn about.

Despite a morning forecast of just 15% chance of rain, we were hampered with several intermittent showers. Luckily, just after lunch, the rain tapered off allowing the students to experience excavation and screening. We were fortunate to have a large number of volunteers (14 this year) that allowed for smaller groups. The volunteers oversaw the students who shoveled soil from a large pile behind the school into buckets. The buckets of dirt were then screened through 1/4" mesh. A number of artifacts were found including glass, nails, bone, and ceramics. Most notable was a rimsherd of "Sydenham" in blue, from a saucer. "Sydenham" was made by Joseph Clementson of Shelton, England and dates to 1853. Many thanks to all of the volunteers who helped set up, excavate, mentor students, backfill, and put the equipment away. Thanks also to Dr. Bev Smith for loaning extra tripods and screens.

While the students were taking the tour and participating in activities, volunteers slogged through the rain helping to complete seven quarter units. Completion of the units just south of the school will allow screened soil from the student dig to be used for fill around the cement foundation. The excavation yielded a scatter of historic artifacts including nails, glass, a sherd from a salt glazed crock, among other items. Many thanks again to all of the volunteers including undergraduate students from several area universities new to the site: Justine Sears (EMU), Alex King (EMU), Reid Ellefson-Frank (MSU), Tabitha Robinson (UM-Flint), Jessica Pavlik (UM-Flint), Genevieve Rainey (UM-Flint), & Ben Wood (UM-Flint).

In August, a Warner family reunion was held at the farm with seventy five people attending. Family members from as far away as Texas, Missouri, and even England were present. Many thanks to Warner family member, Bob Singer, for donating a McCoy Aunt Jemima cookie jar dating to the 1930s/1940s. The cookie jar, when pulled from its box, was met with applause and enthusiasm from all of his cousins. They remembered it quite fondly especially for the cookies that my great grandmother, Laura, kept it filled with. It has been placed on the kitchen counter where it formerly sat. Thanks also to Elroy Warner who donated an antique rectangular trunk that was also formerly at the Warner farm. It is believed that the trunk was also a personal item of Laura's. The trunk has been placed upstairs at the foot of one of the beds.

In between the reunion and student dig events, we were able to complete some restoration work on the house and school. The exterior of the house had been completely scraped and painted in 2015 and was in need of some minor maintenance. Thanks to my uncle, Chuck Warner, for assistance in touching up a number of areas on the exterior of the house. Thanks also to my wife, Kerry, for painting the front addition interior of the school. The main section of the school has been reorganized with a number of pottery wheels lined up as well as a loom. Eventually shelves will be placed along the west wall that will showcase a chronology of ceramics dating to the early to mid 19th century in particular patterns recovered at the site.