

# Historian

**VOLUME 2011, NO. 4** 

AUGUST 2011

**NEXT MEETING:** General Membership Program, Monday, October 3, Beulah Brinton Community Center, 2555 South Bay Street, 7pm: Bay View resident Sharon Cook will discuss the 1860 wreck of the Lady Elgin. Taking on the persona of her ancestor, Lady Elgin passenger Jane Cook, Sharon will recount the events of this noted Lake Michigan tragedy.

The Milwaukee Observatory: Celebrate the Birth and Rebirth of Milwaukee

BY NANCY TAWNEY

As it was last summer, the lawn of the Beulah Brinton House at 2590 S. Superior Street will again be the site of the Milwaukee Observatory from July 27 to September 20.

Working with Discovery World professionals, an inspired group of Bay View High School students has created a stunning new public art installation and educational experience. The Milwaukee Observatory is a tribute to the people of the Bay View and Clarke Square neighborhoods, an exploration of neighborhood history and a look forward.

The Observatory features four twelve-foot "Faces of the Future" banners representing the people of Milwaukee. Over forty markers point to different historically significant sites in Bay View, Clarke Square and beyond. At the center of the Observatory is the Cultural Memory House, where people can add their stories to the history of Milwaukee and explore their place in time.

The students created the Milwaukee Observatory in order to tell the stories of innovators, pioneers and immigrants. They wanted to celebrate the birth and rebirth of the city, and because each community has a unique history and cultural identity, they wanted one neighborhood to look to another.

The students designed portraits of themselves, and, using their portraits, they built the Cultural Memory House. Students were also inspired by the cabin of the first European settler in the Milwaukee area, Jacques Vieau. The walls and roof of the House are covered with the students' personal archaeology' banners. The interior walls feature images of 19th and 20th century Milwaukee immigrants. Inside is a community table where Bay View residents can share their neighborhood stories and artifacts. Students will be on hand to record stories, scan old photographs and historical

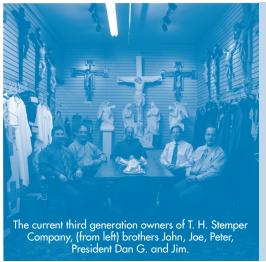


BVHS, Discovery World and Bay View High School are teaming together again to bring the Milwaukee Observatory to the Beulah Brinton House lawn this summer.

documents, snap photographs of Bay View residents and document artifacts specific to Bay View.

The Cultural Memory House is a celebration of both the students' artwork and the role that immigrants played in building this city.

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# T. H. Stemper Company Turns 100

BY RON WINKLER

Thomas H. Stemper (1883-1978) was born in Port Washington, Wisconsin, and graduated from the old Pio Nono College in St. Francis. From 1899 to 1903 he was church organist at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in St. Francis. He then moved to Manitowoc where he was the organist and a grade school teacher at St. Boniface Church from 1903 to 1906 before taking the same responsibilities at Milwaukee's St. Boniface Church from 1907 to 1910.

In 1911, Stemper purchased the bankrupt European Statuary and Art Company at 1125 E. Potter Avenue, founded in 1894. Two years later, Stemper purchased the bankrupt religious goods store, the H. E. Schwartz Company on 2nd and National that had been founded in 1898. Stemper moved that business to the Potter Avenue site but ran it separately as Milwaukee Church Supply.

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The Bay View Historian is published six times a year by The Bay View Historical Society.

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# Membership

\$20 Individual/\$17 Seniors (Age 65+) \$30 Household/\$25 Senior Household \$30 Nonprofit/Small Business

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Bay View Historical Society 2590 S. Superior Street Bay View, WI 53207 www.bayviewhistoricalsociety.org

The Bay View Historical Society is a nonprofit 501 (c) (3) organization. Your donations and in-kind gifts are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

BY NANCY TAWNEY

Summer seems to be the season most frequently chosen for family reunions. I will be attending one in Denver in early August and am looking forward to getting caught up on my cousins' lives. We will also reminisce about our family's past. To help with these recollections, we are extremely fortunate to be in possession of diaries that my grandfather kept from the 1890s until 1960. Having read them all, I am very grateful to Grandpa for keeping this journal of family information that we can refer to so many years later; they are a wonderful gift.

"Help preserve the past for the future" is a thought being used in literature from the Wisconsin Historical Society. It very succinctly states what the Bay View Historical Society is all about - being the keepers of local history for the benefit of generations to come. Just as Grandpa's diaries preserve the past for my family, the Historical Society strives to retain the details of Bay View life for all of us now and those who will come after us... gifts that keep on giving.

# MODEL T FORD CLUB SHOW OFF THEIR VINTAGE CARS





Members of the Model T Ford Club of Milwaukee in their vintage cars represented the Bay View Historical Society at the Humboldt Park 4th of July Parade.

# WANTED

The BVHS Archive Committee needs dress forms (those torso figures that dressmakers use to display and work on clothes) and padded hangers. We would love it if you have any that you'd like to donate! Please contact Janis Liedtke at (414) 481-2648 to arrange.

The Historical Society is in search of a donation of flatware to be used for various dining occasions at the Brinton House. If you have a set to donate, please contact Nancy Tawney at (414) 744-5674.

# **CORRECTION...AND REQUEST**

There was an article in the June 2011 issue of The Historian titled "Organist," and Richard Nephery was cited as the donor of the pump organ in the living room of the Beulah Brinton House. Bay View Historical Society member Jane Konings notified us that the correct name of the donor is Al Nethery. This beautiful instrument needs to be heard as well as seen. Do you know how to play a pump organ, or do you know someone who does? If so, please call Nancy Tawney at (414) 744-5674.

# WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

We welcome the following new members who joined the Society since May 1st:
Patricia A. Cynowa, John & Kelly Jankowski, Jean A. Larsen, Diane Pierce,
Rosemary Snyder, Robert & JoAnn Wamser





# Pre-Order a copy of Ron Winkler's Bay View

Ron Winkler has written a history of Bay View for Arcadia Publishing's Images of America series, and now you can pre-order your very own copy complete with photo archive! The 128-page text is packed with over 200 photographs, maps and illustrations from BVHS archives and numerous private collections never before published.

Beginning with a historical overview of the neighborhood, the book covers Bay View's early pioneers, steel mill, churches and schools, 'Little Italy', highways and byways, as well as recreation and entertainment of the era.

The anticipated publication is date December 2011. Books are \$21.99 each, and may be picked up at a to-be-determined event. For \$25, the book will be sent to you via mail. All profits from the book's pre-order will benefit the Bay View Historical Society.

Please make checks payable to the BVHS. Pre-order forms must be received by December 1.

NamePhone	
Number of copies to be picked up x \$21.99 = Number of copies for delivery x \$25.00 =	Bay View
Shipping Information:	
Name           Address	
City, State, Zip	District Control of the Control of t

# Historic Round-up

#### **GHS MAGICAL HISTORY TOUR**

Greendale Historical Society is hosting a Magical History Tour from September 28 to October 2. Highlights include the Al Ringling Theatre, the Bergstrom-Mahler Museum, the Pendarvis Historic Site, the Hearthstone Historic Museum, Villa Louis, the Old Wade House, a winery, brewery, casino and more.

The cost is \$549 for members of the GHS and \$649 for non-members. The cost includes deluxe motorcoach, lodging and admission to all historic sites. Prices are based on double-occupancy. A \$100 deposit will reserve your seat. For more information, call (414) 423 7064.

## ETHNIC MILWAUKEE: LECTURE SERIES OF URBAN ANTHROPOLOGY INC.

For 11 years, the anthropologists at Urban Anthropology, Inc. have been interviewing leaders of ethnic groups of the greater Milwaukee area. Now 6,000 pages of transcripts later, data is being tabulated, and a book by Dr. Jill Florence Lackey is on the way. Come and learn about Urban Anthropology's exclusive findings on Milwaukee's ethnicities.

Both talks will take place at 7 pm under the tents in the backyard of the Old Southside Museum at 707 W. Lincoln Avenue. Part one will be held on Wednesday, August 31, and part two on Wednesday, September 14, at 7 pm. The lecture is free, and reservations are not needed.

# UPCOMING MUSICAL **EVENTS AT THE BRINTON HOUSE**

Songs in History – September 15 Bay View Historical Society member Gail Toerpe and her son, Ted Toerpe, will present their "History of Songs and Songs in History" at the Beulah Brinton House. Enjoy the Toerpes Thursday, September 15, at 7 pm.

Lil' Rev and Larry Penn - November 27 Midwestern traveling musician and storyteller Lil' Rev and singer-songwriter Larry Penn will perform an afternoon concert at the Beulah Brinton House on Sunday, November 27, at 2 pm. Don't miss this Wisconsin treasure!

Refreshments will be served at both of these performances, and a free-will offering will be taken. Plan to attend these fantastic events at the Brinton House, 2590 S. Superior Street.

# A HUGE THANK YOU

Donna Pogliano, Dick Knepper, John Ebersol, Herb Knepper and Stan Doty have been painting the Brinton House this summer. John Ebersol also has rebuilt the back porch of the house. Their hard work to maintain the house is truly appreciated. Many thanks to all of you for your outstanding work.

# See Your Name in Print!

Write an article about Bay View history or of historical interest to BVHS members Word documents are ideal and articles must be 1,000 words

or less — photographs are a plus!

Contact Jenn Kresse at jrkresse@gmail.com or 414-531-0225 to find out more!



# The Will to Do It

BY BETH HILDEBRAND

In a nine-year period starting in the 1980s, when every fourth generation member in my family died. Nine relatives left seven properties, including Kneisler's White House - a Bay View historical landmark - to be dealt with. As the eldest child and the only Milwaukee resident, I was left with the task of dealing with what I now call "The Four A's of Passing": Attics, Auctions, Attorneys and Appraisers. Many of those relatives had passed away without a will, so there was lengthy court probate, costly taxation, senseless lawyers' fees and sibling infighting over items we all thought should be ours. I vowed never to let that be my memory to surviving family.

Without an expensive attorney, I created a very simple will using my computer and had it notarized by my bank; it's all legal.

I simply update it yearly as things change.

An easy, authorized State of Wisconsin Will/
Trust Form online can be printed out, and you can fill it out, sign it and put it in a safe, fireproof place. If you don't want to keep this document at your bank, consider putting it in your freezer in a sealed, plastic bag... just make sure someone knows where you are keeping it.

My will appoints an impartial, non-family personal representative, who has power of attorney for health and who knows my end-of-life wishes. Aurora Health Care publishes Five Wishes, an easy, fill-in-the-blanks booklet that enables adults to plan their care in case they become seriously ill. Call Aurora to request a free copy at (888) 863-5502.

My will distributes the bulk of my wealth to family loved ones and bequeaths money and personal things to people and places that have given me joy. I am specific about who gets what and why; then there will be no questions. Bequeaths include best friends, receiving artwork and even my fur coat, and my church, getting my yarn 'addiction' for their Prayer Shawl Ministry. I have earmarked money to a favorite camp for their craft center, Milwaukee Public Television for funding travel shows, a fiber arts school for knitting, the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation for Taliesin, the YMCA for the new 27th Street Branch and, of course, the Bay View Historical Society. (Having run Kneisler's



Kneisler's White House, 2900 S. Kinnickinnic Avenue, circa 1890.

White House for as long as I have, I know it takes a extraordinary amount of money to maintain and preserve a historic landmark such as the Beulah Brinton House.)

As I age and downsize into, I am now giving away things I want folks to have now and letting them know why. Other things I still enjoy are to be given away later in my bequeaths. I want no infighting over who gets this gal's diamond wedding ring!

I suggest you just do it now – take care of

that will or trust. While it's a chore, having created a will/trust is comforting; you know your intended wishes are in place. Don't forget to include the Bay View Historical Society in your will; I know they will put the money to good use for historic preservation in your memory!

Beth Hildebrand is a fourth-generation Kneisler and great-granddaughter of William C. Kneisler of Kneisler's White House.

# Yesterday and Today

BY RON WINKLER



John T. Meredith (1840-1911) was born in England, where he built iron and steel furnaces. He came to the United States in 1868 and built furnaces for Eber Brock Ward in Chicago and Milwaukee (Milwaukee Iron Company). For a time he was Bay View's Village President. In 1892 the Meredith Brothers Company was founded as general contractors by John and his brothers Richard and

George. Photo 1 is John Meredith's brick home built prior to 1888 at 607 East Lincoln Avenue (courtesy of Audrey Focault). Photo 2 from 1961 is how we see the home today

after it was greatly altered and remodeled to Dutch Colonial revival at an unknown date (from Bay View Historical Society's archives). It is difficult to believe that this is the same home, but descendant Audrey Meredith Focault has proof that it is. Other Meredith family homes can be seen on East Lincoln Avenue at 719, 733, 735, 739 and 741. Meredith Street was named for the family in 1900.





# INCREASE LAPHAM TURNS 200:

# Reenactors Portray Famous Milwaukeeans at Forest Home Cemetery

BY RON WINKIER

Each Memorial Day, Forest Home Cemetery is the site where notables in Milwaukee history are portrayed through first-person narratives by costumed guides. Guides painstakingly research and study these historical figures, gaining insight into the their characters' lives and the contributions they made to Milwaukee and the nation. On Memorial Day, the guides are stationed at the graves of these famous Milwaukeeans and share the information that they've learned. The event is

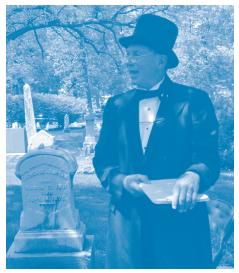


Ron Winkler, dressed as Increase Lapham, chats with society members Frank and Kathy Mulvey.

free and open to the public.

This year's featured historical figure was Increase Lapham – this year would have been his 200th birthday. He is known as the "Father of the National Weather Service." He is thought of as Wisconsin's first scholar, as well as Wisconsin's first great scientist.

Lapham's parents had thirteen children and could not afford to send them to school. However, Lapham's curiosity and keen sense of observation made him an acknowledged expert in history, engineering, geography, zoology, archaeology, anthropology, botany and meteorology. Even though Lapham had no formal education, he was the father of the Milwaukee public high school system and donated thirteen acres of land for its establishment. He was co-founder of Milwaukee Female College, later renamed Milwaukee Downer College, today a part of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Most people are familiar with Lapham Boulevard in Milwaukee and Lapham Hall at UWM. Additionally, Lapham Peak is the highest point in



Bay View Historical Society's Ron Winkler dressed as Increase Lapham on Memorial Day.

Waukesha County and is the former site of a National Weather Service's relay station.

Lapham was portrayed by Bay View Historical Society member Ron Winkler. Some of the other famous figures depicted included Ezekiel Gillespie, who won the right for African Americans to vote, Isaac Walker (brother of George Walker), William Mackie (business associate of Alexander Mitchell) and Edward Ryan, who was Chief Justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court.

# Southwestern Border Walk Features Churches

BY RON WINKLER

What major street was shifted to avoid a three-way intersection involving the street and two railroads? Where can you still find old farmhouses in Bay View? What major automaker purchased a dairy farm and built an assembly plant on the land? Which restaurant was built as a rooming house for apprentices of a major Bay View factory? Where on Howell Avenue could you have found a blacksmith shop and a foundry within one block of each other? Which church held its first services in the home of one of its members and then named its congregation for that member's home church in England? Which congregation was formed in a church that is still standing and that was built in

1873 by employees of the Milwaukee Iron Company? Which church changed its name during World War I in keeping with a nation-wide trend to eliminate German references? Which church left its original congregation in 1931 due to a disagreement over lodge membership and held its first services in the old Odd Fellows Hall?

You can learn the answers to these questions and more while visiting the historic sites featured on the Bay View Historical Society's Southwestern Border Walk, a two-and-a-half-hour guided tour taking place Saturday, August 6th, at 9:30 am. Society members Ron Winkler and Greg Wernisch will lead the walk, which is open to the public.

The walk is sponsored by the Society to help Bay View residents and visitors gain an appreciation of the history, architecture and lifestyle of the southwestern corner of Bay View. The tour will cover the area between Oklahoma Avenue and Morgan Avenue from the Lake Parkway to 6th Street. It will also include the area north of Oklahoma Avenue to Russell Avenue between Howell Avenue and Chase Avenue. When this area opened for settlement in the mid 1830s, it was turned into farms by families with familiar names such as Chase, Van Beck, Howard and Austin. It was added piecemeal to the city of Milwaukee between 1922 and 1929.

Additional highlights include Gauer Circle,

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# T. H. Stemper Company Turns 100



Thomas Stemper (far right) with his crew of skilled statue makers circa 1920.

## **SKILLED STATUE MAKERS**

Stemper's statuary company had hundreds of molds and manufactured statues in all sizes. He obtained his highly skilled workforce of statue makers from southern Italy where they had to serve a six year apprenticeship. They brought with them a special plaster that had been used for centuries. Stemper employed as many as twenty of these men up until the mid 20th century.

In 1946, the two businesses were incorporated as T. H. Stemper Company, with sons Daniel J. and Eugene taking charge. After Tom Stemper retired, he served as president emeritus and drove to the store each Saturday to work and confer with employees. Stemper's Tudor revival Bay View home, which he and his wife Elsa Van Assche (1890-1974) built in 1926, still stands at 3090 S. Superior Street.

In 1968 Daniel J. bought out his brother Eugene and ran the business until his death in 1980. Dan's widow Jean and three sons, Mike, Peter and Joe, then took over. Another son, Dan G., joined the team in 1989 and has been president ever since. Today the company is run by five third-generation brothers: John, Joe, Peter, Jim, and Dan G.

Over the years, the company manufactured statues, ecclesiastical wrought iron items and wood furniture such as altars, baptismal fonts



Thomas Stemper (left) and son Dan J. manufacturing furniture in the early 1970s.

and kneelers. Vatican II, with its elimination of statues and back altars, affected Stemper's business. In addition, a \$40,000 fire destroyed all of the statue molds. The company adapted and today sells church supplies to all denominations. The store is open to the public which can purchase books, gifts and religious art. The company also repairs statuary.

#### **BACK TO THE FUTURE**

One of the highlights at Festa Italiana is the Pompeii Sacred Art Exhibit, featuring statues of Jesus, the Virgin Mary and the saints, along with frescoes and hundreds of religious artifacts. Since 1980, the Stemper Company has been repairing and maintaining the exhibit items. The company also loans and/or donates items made in Italy to the exhibit.

Stemper's has become a model for consignment, a growing part its business. As churches merge, their surplus items like statues and artwork become available, and the company seeks new owners for the items to get them back into circulation. In this way, Stemper's carries on the tradition of its original business from 100 years ago.



A five-alarm fire of undetermined origin in March 1971 caused \$40,000 damage and destroyed the manufacturing molds used for statues, putting an end to that part of the business.

Continued from page one

# The Milwaukee Observatory

It is a place where the students and Bay View residents can preserve neighborhood history. This is the third year that Discovery World and Bay View High School have worked together through the Art and Archaeology of Me program.

This year the Milwaukee Observatory will be held in two locations, the Bay View Historical Society and Mitchell Park in the Clarke Square Neighborhood.

The Milwaukee Observatory will be open to the public from July 27th through September 20th. Bay View High School students will be at the Cultural Memory House on July 23rd, July 30th, August 6th and August 13th from 10 am until 2 pm. On August 20th and 21st, the Observatory will be at Mitchell Park. Some of the photos and

personal histories will eventually find a home in the Bay View Historical Society's collection.

The Milwaukee Observatory is the result of a partnership between Discovery World and Bay View High School. The students took part in *The Art and Archaeology of Me* program, working with Discovery World professionals and exploring archaeological methods and tools, research and interviewing techniques, media production, design and visual art.

For more information on the Milwaukee Observatory, including artifact documentation specific to Bay View, visit www.discoveryworld.org/bayview.

# 6th Annual Wine and Beer Tasting Recap

"Will it thunderstorm or won't it?" was the big question on everyone's mind leading up to the Annual Wine and Beer Tasting Event on Saturday, June 18th. Everyone was happily surprised when not one raindrop fell and a perfectly cool summer evening greeted our 70+ guests. The event was moved to June this year so it wouldn't compete with another wine tasting. Father's Day weekend was very busy for Milwaukee, and our attendance was down only slightly. Our profit from this event was around \$4,000.



Over 70 in attendance this year had their choice of 75 different wines and beers to sample.

A first for this event was selling tickets online and using social media to promote the event. The event was posted on our website, Facebook, Linked-In, and members were contacted via e-mail as well. Our promotion committee created the flyers. Thank you to Andrea Kozek for your proofing skills! We sold a grand total of two tickets online, but we hope this feature will be used more in the future. Thank you also to Eunice Beckendorf for managing our online ticket sales!

The Silent Auction did very well and brought in over \$1,300 dollars for the event.

The most talked-about items were a Schlitz Picnic Cooler (won by Tom Radoszewski), a silk chiffon scarf designed by Jan Falk (won by Sally Cartwright) and a pizza party for eight with Bay View Firehouse #11 (won by John Nehring). Thank you so much to Penny Manke for gathering our auction items, to Kathy Mulvey for organizing them and to Ruth Simos for helping during the event! Nancy Tawney was a great resource as a past-chairperson for this event and served as the Groppi's liaison this year. Her detailed binders of information helped immensely in the preparation for this year!

Donna Pogliano needed no direction with her decorations for the event, and it's a shame all of you weren't there to see them! Thank you to Frank Mulvey, John Sternkopf and Nancy Tawney for helping to set up the tables and to Haven Davis for helping with the desserts.

Lastly, we need to thank our sponsors: John and Anne Nehring and their Groppi's crew are amazing. They catered the entire event and donated 100% of the ticket sales to the Bay View Historical Society. Their daughter,



"Golden Idol" Danny Crivello delighted at the 6th Annual Wine and Beer Tasting.



It's easy to see why catering courtesy of G. Groppi Food Market draws a crowd every year.

Katie Nehring, and Enjoli Duval (Queen of Groppi's wine) were consummate professionals and gracious throughout the event. We can't thank them enough for the time and efforts they volunteer to make this event happen. (Please stop by Groppi's Food Market and patronize them. Let them know you are a BVHS member and appreciate what they do for our organization.)

We also wish to thank two other sponsors who donated money to offset some of our event expenses: Heritage Funeral Homes and Canopi's Events have sponsored us for several years. When you are in need of their services, we hope that you will think of them first.

Please visit our website to see photos of the event at bayviewhistoricalsociety.org. We strive to provide a fantastic event for everyone, so if you have feedback for us, please let us know. You may contact any of the committee members listed on the masthead via phone or contact us via email at bayviewhistoricalsociety@gmail.com.

We are planning the 7th Annual Wine and Beer Tasting event at the end of June 2012.

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# Southwestern Border Walk

built as an oval and named for Paul Gauer, Bay View's Socialist alderman during the administration of Daniel Hoan, Humboldt Park School, built in 1930, and Fritsche Middle School, built in 1963 during the baby boom and named for Gustave Fritsche, Bay View High School's first principal.

The walk starts at 9:30 am; it will begin and end at Unity Lutheran

Church, 1025 E. Oklahoma Avenue. The cost of the tour is \$5.00 for Society members and seniors, and \$10.00 for non-members. Admission includes tours of Unity Lutheran Church and St. Luke's Episcopal Church and a guided walk. Tickets may be reserved in advance by calling Ron Winkler at (414) 744-9404, or purchased from 9:00-9:30 am at Unity Lutheran Church on the morning of the walk.

# Calendar 2011

## **SATURDAY, AUGUST 6:**

Southwestern Border Walking Tour Unity Lutheran Church 1025 E. Oklahoma Avenue 9:00 am

# **SATURDAY, AUGUST 20:**

Beulah Brinton House Open to Public 2590 S. Superior St. 1:00 - 4:00 pm

## **THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15**

Songs in History Beulah Brinton House 2590 S. Superior St. 7:00 pm

# **SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17:**

Beulah Brinton House Open to Public 2590 S. Superior St. 1:00 - 4:00 pm

# **MONDAY, OCTOBER 3:**

General Membership Program Lecture: "Sinking of the Lady Elgin" Beulah Brinton Community Center 2555 South Bay Street • 7:00 pm

## **SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15:**

Beulah Brinton House Open to Public 2590 S. Superior St. 1:00 - 4:00 pm

# **Upcoming** Board Meetings:

- Tuesday, August 9, 6:30 p.m. Beulah Brinton House
- Tuesday, September 13, 6:30 p.m. **Beulah Brinton House**
- Tuesday, October 11, 6:30 p.m. **Beulah Brinton House**

Board meetings may be subject to change.

EIGHT ENCOURAGING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY BY PRESERVING, CELEBRATING AND SHARING BAY VIEW'S RICH HERITAGE.

Return Service Requested



