

## Chelsea Depot Honors Volunteers

Two longtime members of the Chelsea Depot Association were honored by the Depot board last week. Gloria Mitchell and Veretta Whitaker, both of Chelsea, have been volunteers with the depot for forty years, ever since the inception of the Association to preserve the building.

The current structure was built in 1880, when the Michigan Central Railroad established Chelsea as a passenger point. Chelsea was chosen for an experiment in upgrading the appearance of rural stations, and the depot served patrons until Amtrak took over, and they discontinued service to Chelsea and closed the station in 1981. Fearing damage from prolonged neglect, area citizens, including Mitchell and Whitaker, formed the Chelsea Depot Association in 1985, raising funds to purchase the building, and restoration began in 1986.

At the reception, held at the depot with dinner and cake for fifty family members and friends, the two women reminisced about the depot's early days. "We cold-called local businesses asking for support," Whitaker recalls, "and everyone was eager to help." After selling inscribed bricks to area citizens as a fund raiser, Mitchell remembers, "Veretta and I got down our hands and knees and laid those bricks." Chelsea DDA also assisted. The depot has never asked for state or federal monies.

The pair were presented with certificates of appreciation, and a plaque honoring them will be hung in the depot. Board members present were president Todd Gillihan, treasurer Sandy Riddle, David Riddle, Rick Eder, and rental agent Marsi Darwin. The depot serves as a venue for celebrations of all kinds, with the rental revenue covering expenses and improvements.

- Marsi Parker Darwin