



# the **CHRONICLE**

The Almost Monthly Publication of  
the Ionia County Historical Society



## The Delicate World of Underthings

Members and guests arriving at the September 7th meeting might have been somewhat embarrassed - if this had been 1890, I suppose. In the east side of the parlor were displayed an array of lady's undergarments!

Barb Ehlert had begun to put together a presentation on fashion "in general" from the Historical Society collection, but it was quite evident before long that (working from the inside out, as it were) this presentation could occupy a fair number of hours.

And so, she decided to end this chapter before she reached the outerwear!

There was, however, a bit of a hitch in the presentation in that Barb's glasses had broken just before the meeting - so Linda Ciangi came to the rescue and read the presentation while Barb showed off the delicacies.

Beginning with the simpler topic, they presented a quick summary of men's underthings. Less interesting, perhaps, than the feminine, and primarily nightshirts and drawers, union suits and "long johns" (named, they say, for John L. Sullivan). In later years, they noted the influence of the movies in men's clothing. A sudden drop

*Continued on page 3*

### GOOD SENSE CORSET WAISTS



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### MINUTES of August, 2011

The ICHS meeting of August 3, 2011, was called to order by President Linda Ciangi at 7:00 p.m. She welcomed guests that included Duane Todd and his wife. Thank-yous were extended to those who helped assemble the float for the Free Fair Parade, Kris Haskins, Hank and Doni Knoop, designer Marilyn Nash, and C&L Trucking who supplied the trailer, truck, and driver Chad Listerman. Our float, the Spirit of Ionia, won the Jack Lally Memorial Award for the best use of the parade theme, America On the Move. Riding the float were Gerard

Perry, Hayden VanderMolen, David and Annette McCord, several members of the VFW - and the Knoop's rooster, Hercules. Keeper of the Crows supplied several primitive Teddy Bears that decorated the float.

Joe and Joan McCord were thanked for hosting the Queens Reception again this year on the morning of the parade.

Our Antique Village display was arranged by Mike and Carol Gallagher and Hank and Doni Knoop. It featured a display commemorating the Civil War. When the Free Fair closed early due to threatening floods, the art and photography display from the Floral Building was moved to the Blanchard House as Linda Ciangi was in charge

of that department and felt it was appropriate for our Society to come to the aid of the exhibitors. Barb Ehlert was instrumental in helping to move the exhibits and arrange them there. Hank Knoop and his grandson, James, plus Lauri Tjalsma and others made the move a success.

Members of the Maintenance and Repair Committee are Chuck Booth, Kathleen Cook, Bryan Quinn, Linda Ciangi, and Kris Haskins. Kris gave a report on the progress made so far. The conservatory area and roof have been repaired and everyone who worked on the project discounted their prices as a donation to our Society. Kris reported the committee's first priority: to keep out the weather and to carefully document repairs that are made. They will meet as needed.

The Treasurer's Report was given

*Continued on page 2*

### FROM THE EDITOR

Dear friends —  
Thank you again for your understanding in regards to my busier-than-normal schedule these past few months. Again, this issue of the ICHS Chronicle covers THREE MONTHS of minutes and meetings. Please refer to the calendar in this issue — there are many opportunities for you to be involved in ICHS activities, both as volunteer and participant. I hope to get back on schedule with monthly editions of the Chronicle as the winter months approach.

— David McCord,  
Secretary and Chronicle Editor

**NEXT MONTH: Annual Meeting & Election.**  
**Be sure to pay your dues!**

*Minutes, continued from page one.*

by Hank Knoop. Kim Nurenbert, interior decorator, donated two dining room chairs to the Main Street Interiors store with the ICHS to receive the sale dollars. We were paid \$30 and the check given to the treasurer.

Linda C. reminded members that the September meeting would include the list of nominees for the Board of Directors with the election in October. Dues must be paid in order to vote. The terms of Kris Haskins and Stephanie VancerMolen are up for renewal, and President Ciangi cannot run again in accordance with the by-laws. She stressed that the new president will be chosen from this Board of Directors elected in October.

Show-and-Tell was the program, and Mrs. Bob Nixon donated a bell that she found in her travels which could have set on a hotel desk. (It's a beauty.) Duane Todd gave the ICHS an auction card from the late 1800s that has been in his family. Linda C. showed the Egg Shipper that was used on the Free Fair Float which had been found in the Blanchard House basement. Hank Knoop showed a suitcase his relative carried with him to this country when he left Germany after going AWOL from the army.

Joe and Joan McCord composed a letter that Joe read advising that they would no longer chair the Queens Reception, the Upstairs Downtown Tours, or the mailing of the Chronicle newsletters. They volunteered to continue hosting the Travelogues at the Theatre, and continue to represent the ICHS to the Tri-River Museums Group. Kris Haskins spoke for the Board in expressing thanks to the McCords for their dedication to the Historical Society and all their community service. All present stood and applauded the couple.

The meeting was adjourned to refreshments supplied by Church and Mary Booth.

#### THE BUSINESS MEETING:

The Board of Directors met in the Blanchard House on August 24 for the monthly business meeting.

The first order of business was with regard to broken windows on the front (office) storm door. The Maintenance Committee (a.k.a. Kris Haskins) would see to the repairs. The Board discussed the idea of motion sensors, motion-triggered cameras, and security cameras for the exterior of the house. No decisions were made.

The Thursday afternoon works sessions continue to sort and clean, and have once again assembled some objects to be assessed by the Accessions Committee. A tentative meeting of said committee was scheduled for Sept. 20. A suggestion had been made to offer the church organ in the Blanchard office to the Lyons Historical Society, since they now had more room. It was noted that it would be quite some time

before they would be ready for such a donation, if the offer would be made. The subject was tabled.

Some discussion was had regarding the Thursday Travelogues at the Theatre, and that the City of Ionia has apparently expressed some concern about risks involved in showing copyrighted material without license. The board decided to table this subject as well, pending further developments, but admitted that liabilities could be a real concern but the program should not be cancelled unless the City requested it.

The Sept 17th Duck Race plans are in place - Barb Ehlerlert and Stephanie VanderMolen volunteered to sell tickets. Linda Ciangi noted that WION had offered a special advertising package for \$180 for the event, and a motion was made by Kris Haskins (supported by Stephanie V.) to enter into a contract for that service. Kris also pledged \$50 toward the expense.

Forms have been submitted for a table at the Mrs. Claus Bazaar again this year where the ICHS will try to sell the remaining items from the June Yard Sale. One table is donated to the ICHS as a non-profit. Stephanie V. moved to pay for a second table, which was supported by Patty G. and passed. The Quilt will be on display and raffle tickets offered for sale at the Bazaar. Doni noted that the quilters would be adding a fabric tag to the quilt to denote the quilters' names, the date, and the ICHS logo. The drawing for the Quilt Raffle will be scheduled to coincide with the Community Expo in Early March.

With the introduction of the Cemetery Tour in October, and the resignation of Joan and Joe McCord from the chair of the Upstairs Downtown Tour (generally held the first weekend in October), the Board decided to hold the Upstairs Downtown Tour in the Spring of 2012 instead.

Linda C. asked the board for suggestions for a November program. A presentation on the "Blue Star Mothers" was suggested, but it was decided to poll the membership for ideas.

No progress has yet been made regarding the Nominating Committee, with apologies from chairman David McCord.

An invoice was received for renewal of the ICHS membership in the Michigan Historical Society. Patty G. moved to pay the \$50 annual fee, which was supported by Kris H. and passed.

David McCord presented the Board with a letter which he'd purchased that was written on stationery from the Bailly House in 1929. He asked the Board for a reimbursement of the \$5.00 purchase, for which Stephanie V., Kris supported, and the Board passed.

Linda C. stated that she would contact Snyder Roofing about coating the new roof on the Conservatory in black (restoring the look to the original). This would be a condition of the payment of their recent invoice for the work.

Joan McCord notified the Board that she would not be hosting the "Queens Reception" before next year's Free Fair Parade. The Board acknowledged her efforts in years past for the event, and will look forward to recruiting a new chairperson for the event next year.

Hank noted that the mailing list would need attention from someone, as well as the mailing of Chronicles to members who requested them. Patty Simpson-Goeke volunteered to maintain the list and do the mailings, with Hank's help and guidance.

A box of "Door-step Donations" were found at the Blanchard House when the Board members arrived. These included some photos and State Fair ribbons, as well as other miscellaneous items to be reviewed by the Accessions Committee.

Joan McCord submitted a written report from the recent Tri-River Museum Group's meeting, and this was shared with the Board members present. It was acknowledged that their November meeting would be hosted by the ICHS at the Blanchard House.

The Blanchard House will be decorated again by local merchants for the holidays. President Linda C. is making the arrangements and will inform the membership of the dates for seasonal cleaning and decorating.

## MINUTES of the September Meetings

The regular monthly meeting of the ICHS was called to order by president Linda Ciangi at the Blanchard House at approx. 7:00 p.m. She welcomed members and guests, and expressed thanks to the members who helped to staff the House during the Summer Sundays to welcome guests and give guided tours.

Secretary David McCord apologized for the lack of an August or September Chronicle, but hoped to put together a "quarterly" issue for the fall. Linda C. passed along a CD of photographs for use in the next edition. The Secretary pointed out that copies of the rough annotated minutes of the summer's meetings could be made available on demand.

Treasurer Hank Knoop shared his monthly report with the membership, noting that the report included the roof repair expense even though the check had not yet been sent, and also income from the sale of books (new and used). He also reminded members that their dues will come due on or before the October elections (please).

David McCord apologized again for his lack of action in regards to the Nominating Committee, and asked for the members to help if they could to recruit someone to fill the third of the three open positions.

Hank K. reiterated the plans for the Fall Festival Duck Race to take place Sept 17th at Bertha Brock Park. The race will begin at 3:00 p.m. and volunteers are needed to sell ducks

during the rest of the festival. The ICHS had purchased advertising time with WION for the event, \$50 of that expense was covered by a donation from Kris Haskins.

Stephanie VanderMolen reported that plans for the October 16th Cemetery Tour at Highland Park Cemetery were coming together, but "presenters" are still needed. Research is being done by Kris Haskins, Mike Gallagher, and David McCord on the "celebrities" for the event.

President Ciangi conveyed the Board's decision to postpone the Upstairs Downtown Tour until next spring.

The paperwork for the Quilt Raffle License has been submitted. Because the city had not yet set a date for the 2012 Expo, and a date for the drawing was required to get the license, the decision was made to have the drawing at the April 2012 ICHS meeting instead.

SS Peter & Paul Church is planning to organize some kind of commemorative event in 2013 for the Civil War 150th anniversary. A preliminary meeting has been organized for Sept 19th for all interested parties.

The Mrs. Claus Bazaar will be on December 3rd at the Middle School. The Board has been offered a free table at the event (as a non-profit), and has voted to pay for a second booth to support the Quilt Raffle display at the event.

Sad news was reported that Dick Baker had passed away unexpectedly during the night. He had taken sick on the weekend and admitted to the hospital. No more details were yet available. Doni Knoop moved that the ICHS send flowers or a donation in accordance with the family's wishes; Alice Whorley supported it and the motion passed.

The meeting was then adjourned and the podium was passed to the evening's program.

#### THE BUSINESS MEETING:

The ICHS Board gathered at the Blanchard House on Sept. 21, 2011 for the monthly Business Meeting. The first order of business was the expression of sympathy for the family of Dick Baker who passed away the week before. He had done much repair work on the Blanchard House, and his generosity and advice was much appreciated. Mrs. Baker would like to donate a wicker porch swing in her husband's memory. It was built at the Ypsilanti Reed plant. The Board voted a resounding "yes" to the offer.

Treasurer Hank Knoop delivered a brief report on the recent Duck Race at the Fall Festival. 453 Ducks were sold, and \$357 brought in (after prizes). Walt Downes won first place (or rather - his Duck did!) and Reis Thompson's came in second. The apples were very popular (thanks to Pearson's Orchard for the donation). Hank extended his thanks to the volunteers.

During the same time period, Linda Ciangi and Barb Ehlert conducted a tour of the Blanchard House and the Theatre for some visitors named Upton, who left a generous donation at the Blanchard House as well.

Stephanie VanderMolen was not in attendance at this meeting, but the latest plans for the Cemetery Tour were mentioned - specifically a meeting planned for Sunday the 2nd at 11:00 a.m. at the Cemetery for as many volunteers as can be there. Linda C. will pass out fliers at the Chamber breakfast on Sept. 27, and the flier has been added to the website.

The Annual Meeting is coming on October 5th. On the ballot for the three Board positions are Kris Haskins and Stephanie V. (incumbents) and Kathleen Cook. David McCord will supply the ballots. MEMBERS ARE REMINDED to get their dues paid so they can vote!

The Literary Club will meet at the Blanchard House on October 15th to celebrate their 120th anniversary. Cleaning for the holidays will begin after that.

The November 2nd meeting will be "Movie Night" at the Blanchard House - we will watch and discuss some vintage 16mm archive footage.

On November 15th the Tri-River Group will be meeting at the Blanchard House for Tea.

Linda C. spoke with John Lally about the fate of the L&D Hardware building and contents. The family still would like to see something significant done with the estate, but nothing definite has yet been decided.

The IHS Scholarship Foundation is discussing a photo contest for area high schools for next year, and the ICBS to put together a historic photo display to go with it. More to come on this topic as plans develop.

Hank Knoop mentioned that there were some very large expenses this year for repairs on the house, but that the checkbook balance is still in fair shape. In fact, (he pointed out) the balance is \$2000 more than when Linda C. took office six years ago. The board expressed their thanks to Linda for her remarkable efforts on behalf of the organization. Linda noted that it was not only her efforts, of course, but the efforts of many members that made this happen, and she thanked the Board for their work and support as well.

On Wednesday, Nov 30, the Women's City Club of Grand Rapids will be visiting the Blanchard House with 25 to 30 members. They are hoping to visit several historic sites in the community, and asked if a step-on tour guide could be arranged for them. David McCord volunteered to do so, based on the script he had done years before for a similar tour.

Tracy Hodgkins notified the Society that the "Christmas in Ionia" concert will be happening again. Details to come.

Mr. Lockwood called about donating an upright piano that had been

in the Blanchard House when the Lockwoods lived here. After some discussion, the Board voted to decline the offer. (Moved by Kris H., Supported by Carole G.) Linda C. will follow up with him.

Linda C. spoke with Lee Cooper of Snyder Roofing about getting the conservatory roof finished before the snow flies. Hank noted that he is holding the funds for the job until this gets done. Kris H. noted that he has a Blanchard House basement window nearly rebuilt and will install it soon. He will also be working on the replacement of the glass in the front (office) door. The Board also discussed replacing the carpet on the basement steps with rubber runner (better traction - easier to keep clean) as well as some of the other changes being made in the basement "museum" rooms.

Arrangements have been made for the January meeting to be held at the Signature Salon which is in the old Grand Trunk Depot, the February meeting at the First United Methodist Church, and the March meeting at the Ionia Post Office.

The Raffle License has been purchased for the Quilt Raffle this winter. Tickets will be sold at the Mrs. Claus Bazaar, as well as other opportunities. The date of the drawing has been set at the April ICBS meeting.

Finally, Linda C. asked if someone could be sure to open the house for the regular Thursday afternoon work sessions since she will be having eye surgery soon and will not be able to for the next two weeks. Several Board members volunteered to do so.

David McCord passed out copies of the most recent ICBS By-Laws (which had been requested several meetings ago) and also shared a new book he'd purchased on the history of Portland in which Leon and Maude Lockwood were shown before they'd been married.

# Underthings Continued from page one.

in the sale of undershirts can be traced precisely to a scene in "It Happened One Night" (1934). Clark Gable pulled off his shirt - and wore no undershirt! Scandalous! But then again, when Marlon Brando wore a T-shirt in "Streetcar Named Desire" (1951), sales skyrocketed. Ah, the mens' fickle fashions. (But we know who buys them, don't we?)



But the main focus of the presentation was on the lady's "supporting garments." Barb pointed out that, in nearly every case, the form and fit of the undergarment was determined by the outer fashion. The shape of a bodice, the bulk of a bustle, or the fullness of a skirt had much to do with what was underneath it. The objective was to conform the shape of the wearer to the clothes, or of the clothes to the wearer - or somewhere in between - in keeping with the "fashion plates" of the day.

Prior to the 19th century, many techniques for the support of high-fashion garments were developed - mostly restrictive and formal - which were worn by ladies of the gentry. But the common folk were more concerned with functionality, and all their clothing required a degree of flexibility and durability.

Then Queen Victoria ascended the throne. The young Queen was the ideal to which women on both sides of the Atlantic looked for the fashion of the day. And what was under those layers of fabric?

In the 1820s and 1830s, the layers included "knickers" (from "Knickerbocker" - a name invented by the author Washington Irving which was originally applied to lightweight shorts worn by Dutch colonists featured in his stories. The name was variously applied to inner and outer garments over the decades.)

To shape the large skirts, layers of petticoats were worn, and eventually crinolin came on the scene - a stiff petticoat of horsehair and linen. These underdresses were shaped by ribbing, and later in the century this ribbing became a garment on its own. The ICBS collection includes four crinolins of very distinct shape and construction that shows the evolving shape of the fashionable dresses of the time.

Corsets of various complexity came in and out of fashion through the Victorian era - sometimes worn under bodices that were nearly as "architectural" and rigid as the underwear. There were, of course, many warnings about the adverse effects of such restricted clothing - some quite true, and some more sensational. And so, in certain circles, there was a rebellion against the stiff high-fashion. The eponymous "Bloomers" - credited to Amelia Bloomer in the mid-1850s - were a reaction to the heavy sculpted dresses with billowy soft pantaloons instead - and worn under short skirts (just under the knee!). (They



Amelia Bloomer, c1853

## ...and more Underthings

were actually invented by a woman named Miller.)

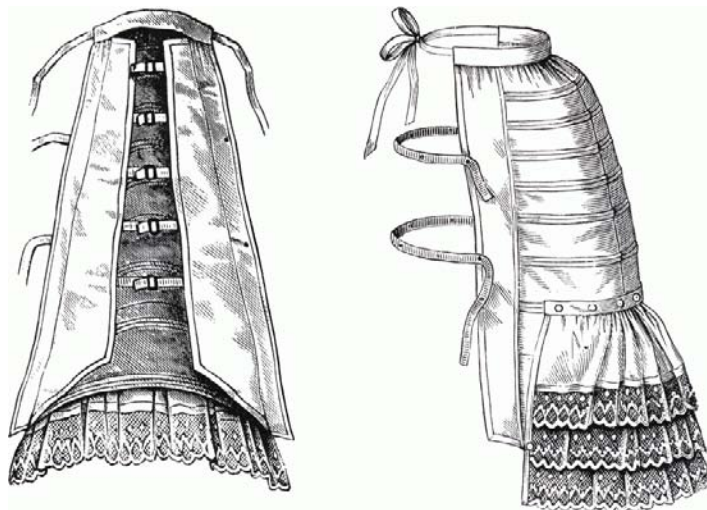
Steel hoops and wire cages suspended from the waist, and fastened oftentimes to the corset or upper garment, supported huge skirts which could be more than inconvenient! In fact, "Hoop Skirt Insurance" was sold to cover accidents with fire (open flames were everywhere in those days) as well as property damage (when whirling skirts could topple the furniture)!

The later century brought bustles (and bustle-supporting pillows, frames, and padding beneath them), which later faded from the scene. In addition, "dress improvers" included padded camisoles and shaping frames. At times, a woman of high fashion might be wearing as much as 14 pounds of clothing - under her clothing!

Something that proliferated high fashion amongst the less affluent during the mid-1800s was the development of industrialization, and the availability of new technology to the individual household - the sewing machine.

Now garments once made by hand could be mass produced (although that term was not coined until the 1920s), and therefore were cheaper and of consistent quality. And styles began to be deliberately designed for the mass market - to be easily manufactured and drive demand.

The sewing machine allowed individuals to produce (and



modify and mend) their own clothing faster as well. Also, new dyes and textiles brought an expanding variety of colors and textures to the marketplace. And with the new notions of progress - and a need for practicality - began to simplify the fashions as the 20th century approached. The fashions - and the undergarments - saw a "backlash" to minimalism and featureless simplicity by the 1920s that made women look more like young boys - shapeless and silky. Here, too, Barb had some examples from the ICHS collection to illustrate the style.

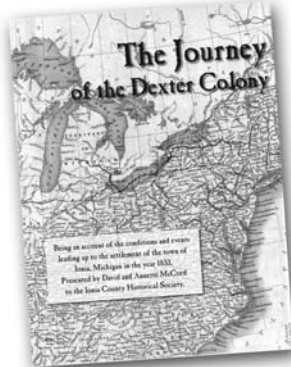
As with men's clothing, the movies had an impact on fashion in the 1920s and '30s which (with the grand historical epics) brought a modernized revival of some Victorian features. The necessities of economic depression and War brought new needs and eventually a wider distinction between daily clothing and eveningwear. And with each new wave of style and shape, new underwear literally changed the shape of the ladies who wore them.

Thank you, Barb, for this "tour of the boudoir" — we're looking forward to a look at the outer layers at a later date!



## The Journey of the Dexter Colony, 1833

David & Annette McCord have published their carefully researched story of the settling of the town of Ionia, lavishly illustrated with historic photos, maps, and engravings. It includes details from many historic documents, books and artifacts, and now CAN BE IN YOUR LIBRARY, TOO!



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Above: Hayden VanderMolen and Gerry Perry on the award-winning ICHS float!





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The Chronicle is the official publication of the Ionia County Historical Society. It is written, edited, and published by David McCord, Secretary. Any comments, corrections (of course), or contributions should be directed to the editor c/o the ICHS at P.O. Box 176, Ionia, MI, 48846 or via [www.ioniahistory.org](http://www.ioniahistory.org).

Ionia County Historical Society  
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# Thanks!

## Join Us at the Ionia Theatre at 9:30 a.m. every Thursday for **FREE ICHS Travelogues!**

- October 6 — Ancient Greece
- October 13 — Train through West Virginia
- October 20 — England
- October 27 — Scotland
- November 3 — Fantastic Follies (Animals!)
- November 10 — Costa Rica
- November 17 — Jerusalem

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