



the **CHRONICLE**

The Almost Monthly Publication of
the Ionia County Historical Society



A Night at the Movies!

It wasn't an episode of Mr. First Nighter (and if you get that reference, you're as old as these films), but a premier of historic entertainment nonetheless.

The Historical Society was given several large reels of 16mm film (and dozens of cassette tapes) from the estate of Monroe MacPherson, long-time ICHS member, founder of the WION radio station, and producer of many travelogues and historical documentaries. There was also a projector in the bequest, but unfortunately all the rubber belts had disintegrated, and repair of that machine was going to cost a significant amount.



Recently Mary Kimble came across some old 16mm Castle Films that had been in her family for many years. (These films were produced by one Eugene Castle who purchased the rights to reproduce hundreds of newsreels, comedies and cartoons for home entertainment from 1924 through 1977.) These films included shorts from

Abbot and Costello, Woody Woodpecker, George Pal's Puppets and sensational daredevil newsreels. Mary wanted them transferred to DVD so she could preserve them, and share them with her family. She bought a vintage 16mm projector and asked David McCord if he could figure a way to do the transfer. Several months ago, a digital video camera with just that capability became available, and the Castle films were transferred.

David had told Mary about the 16mm films in the ICHS collection, and once the old Castle films had been "digitized," she no longer had use for the projector itself. So she generously donated it to the ICHS - and now we have the means to actually see what's on those 70-year-old reels of celluloid!

So the members of the ICHS gathered together to see what David M. had discovered. To the clickity-clack of the vintage mechanism, the members were impressed by the rich color and smooth action on this decades-old film. No soundtracks had been preserved, so David

Continued on page 3

From 1939:



From 1950s Home Show:



From 1950s Free Fair:



MINUTES of the Board Meeting, October 19 2011

The Board of Directors gathered at the Blanchard House for their October meeting at 7:00 p.m., President Kris Haskins presiding. Kris recapped recent activities, including the Annual Meeting and elections, Accessions Committee activities, a luncheon at the Commission on Aging, the 120th Anniversary of the Literary Club (which was celebrated at the Blanchard House), and a few others.

Stephanie V. delivered a report on the success of the Highland Park

Cemetery Tour, which earned a total of \$510 for the club (for only a \$30 expense!), and she thanked all the participants for their support.

A \$1,000 donation was recently received from Don Jandernoa. The heartfelt thanks of the entire organization will be extended to Don for his continued support.

There was some discussion of committees and their role in the administration of the Historical Society. (See the November 2 minutes for a list of these committees.)

Chair of the Building and Grounds Maintenance Committee Linda Ciangi (along with comments by Kris H.) reported that seasonal maintenance

issues are on the front burner, including snow removal, cleaning the gutters on the House, raking and clearing leaves and brush. All these are being researched to see what services can be paid for and what will be done by volunteers. Kris mentioned the tree removal issue briefly, saying that more information would be forthcoming at the next meeting. Also, Kris had done much painting in the basement of the Blanchard House, and he submitted receipts for \$121.20. Stephanie V. moved to pay these expenses, supported by Patty Simpson-Goeke, and passed by the Board. Also, the Board noted that the final payment to the roofing company should now be made and the Treasurer (not present) needs to be notified. Secretary David McCord offered to pass that directive along, as well as receipts for postage and print-

Continued on page 2

**NEXT MONTH: Annual Holiday Pot-Luck!
Seasonal Goodies and Christmas Tales**

Minutes, continued from page one.

ing of the recent Chronicle. It was also noted that Clinger's still needs to be paid for window washing services.

The November calendar was reviewed, including the regular Program Meeting (Movie Night - presented by David McCord), the Tri-River meeting on the 15th (being hosted by Linda Ciangi), the M1 Non-Profit Expo on the 17th (also being arranged by Linda C.) and the November 30th visit from the Grand Rapids Women's City Club (more info to come soon).

The Holiday Open House Hours for the Blanchard House will be November 27th, and December 4th, 11th, and 18th from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Barb Ehlert agreed to schedule volunteers for those hours, and Linda C. will coordinate the cleaning and decorating of the House for the season, again this year by local merchants.

Linda C. also reported that she had spoken with John Lally about the fate of the L&D Hardware and the large amount of antiques that the family has. Discussion continues about what will become of the property and its contents, but the ICHS has been acknowledged as an "interested party."

Linda noted again the "School Spirit" theme for next year's Free Fair Photo Department and the Board's inclination to set up a historic schools display for that event.

A brief discussion ensued regarding the availability of grants for specific programs, and the suggestion made that a documented history of the Elks, and/or other Ionia Fraternal and Civic organizations, might be worthy of a grant. It was noted, however, that time is short to submit for a grant from the Ionia County Foundation. The topic will be discussed further.

Stephanie V. asked the Board to solicit ideas for fund-raisers and activities for next year so a plan can be put into action as soon as possible to get on everyone's calendars.

It was also noted that the website needs an update as to the hours of the Thursday afternoon work sessions, both in the notes and the calendar. Webmaster David M. will comply.

Kathleen Cook shared a flier for an upcoming program by the Ionia Community Library and the Ionia Theatre entitled "Bernhardt on Broadway" scheduled for November 12. The program includes a presentation by Carol Dunitz as Sarah Bernhardt, and music from the Ionia High School Chorale. Tickets are \$16, and the program starts at 7:30 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

MINUTES of the November 2nd General Meeting

The ICHS Program Meeting for November, 2011, was called to order by president Kris Haskins at 7:00 p.m. in the Blanchard House. President

Haskins began by expressing the condolences of the membership to the families of Seymour VanDerske and Bess Jimos Kiliopoulos - long-standing ICHS members who recently passed away.

Kris noted a situation with two rotting walnut trees near the Carriage House, and that plans were being discussed on how best to address that situation.

He then reviewed the upcoming schedule of activities for the ICHS, with comments from the members involved in each. This included the upcoming Tri-River meeting on November 15th at the Blanchard House. Also, the November 17th Non-Profits Expo on Main Street sponsored by the M1 Credit Union where the ICHS will be hosted at Keeper of the Crows. (There is a potential to win \$300 donation based on public votes at the event.) On the 30th, the ICHS will host a visit from the Grand Rapids Women's City Club, including several tours around town. Doni Knoop offered an update on the Dec 3rd Mrs. Claus Bazaar (Ionia Middle School) where the ICHS will be selling various items and raffle tickets for a quilt. She also offered fabric to anyone who would like to make some items for that sale. Linda Ciangi also shared a schedule of events coming up at the Ionia Theatre.

David McCord delivered 25 copies of his recent publication - a 40-page History of Bertha Brock Park - available from the ICHS for \$6.00 a copy. \$2.00 from each sale goes to the ICHS. He also noted that orders are being taken for a Historic Ionia County Poker Deck - souvenir card decks offered by the Ionia County Genealogy Society as a fund raiser - for only \$10 per deck. Stephanie VanderMolen donated a copy of the 1877 Dellenbeck History of Ionia, and also shared a table-full of photos from the recent (and very successful!) Highland Park Cemetery Tour.

David McCord, as an introduction to the evening's movie program, acknowledged the donation of the 16mm Movie Project to the ICHS by Mary Kimble (which made this movie night possible), and also the MacPherson family for donating the films to the ICHS. The meeting was then adjourned, and the projector was soon set in motion!

MINUTES of the November 2nd Board Meeting

President Kris Haskins called the Board to order at a special session during the last minutes of the November meeting. Present were Stephanie VanderMolen, Kathleen Cook, Carole Gallagher, and Secretary David McCord.

The first order of business was a discussion about a pair of walnut trees near the carriage house. Lillys Tree Service has inspected those trees, and recently took down a dead limb.

They recommended taking the two trees down soon, as they are rotting fast and very near the building. They would perform the task in exchange for taking a third tree from the grounds in payment. After some discussion, the Board decided they would like to look over the tree situation in the daylight before making a decision. They also agreed that this could be done via "phone vote" as time permits.

The Board would like to have copies of the current membership list to be provided at or before the next meeting by Patty S. for purposes of recruiting for committees and events (as well as general information).

The next item on the agenda was in regards to two issues in the Bylaws. First, the Bylaws state that the Board should meet quarterly (rather than monthly as has been done), and he feels that the core business of the organization should be adequately addressed in this way. Events and activities of the group will still require more frequent meetings (generally at the committee level), but the Board itself should be able to operate the business of the ICHS on four meetings a year. To initiate this schedule, the next Board of Directors meeting will be the third Wednesday of February, 2012.

Also, addressing financial issues, President Haskins would like to have a full report of the ICHS financial status from the Treasurer at that February meeting. He noted that (according to the Bylaws) the Treasurer's duties include sharing more detailed financial status reports than what we have been getting. A very high priority for the Board should be to develop an annual budget to help plan and appropriate funds throughout the year. For this, he would like to have a Finance Committee organized from the membership. Interested members can contact him for further details.

The core committees that are needed to operate the Historical Society effectively were discussed at the last Board Meeting. That list includes (as of this date) the following Committees. Those which have chairpersons now are so noted; the others still need someone to take charge:

1. A Rental Committee - to set policy and administer the rentals of the Blanchard House.

2. A Finance Committee - to set a budget and advise the Board regarding funding issues.

3. An Accessions Committee - to deal with the artifacts and documents in the ICHS collections (presently chaired by David McCord).

4. An Events Committee - to plan and coordinate events and activities of, for, and by the ICHS (presently chaired by Stephanie VanderMolen).

5. A Recording Committee (a.k.a. "Scrapbook Committee") - to keep a record of events and activities, newspaper clippings, and relevant records throughout the year (presently chaired by Kathleen Cook).

6. A Membership Committee - to maintain a current list of members and their contact information, plus mail the newsletters and other membership-news communications (presently chaired by Patty Simpson-Goeke).

7. A Building and Grounds Maintenance Committee - to monitor and administer the maintenance of the Blanchard House and property, both for routine upkeep and special needs (presently chaired by Linda Ciangi.)

8. A Public Relations Committee - to act as ICHS representative to the community, the press, the public, and other history-related organizations.

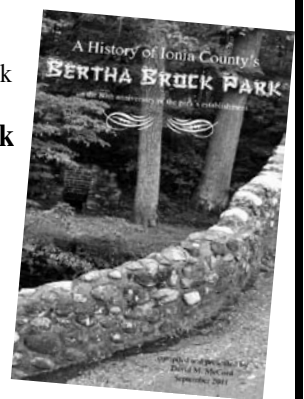
9. A Displays Committee - to arrange displays and interpretation of artifacts and collections in the Blanchard House and Carriage House, and to arrange and host special displays for special events (often at other sites).

Stephanie V. discussed a few ideas for upcoming events, and wishes to pursue active discussion among the members about the schedule of events for next year. Kris H. encouraged her to do so, and call as many meetings as she felt necessary to pull together ideas and plans. This included an idea for a fashion show, a program (or series) on the prisons in Ionia, and the continuation of traditional annual events for the Society.

The meeting was adjourned about 8:30 p.m.

A new publication is now available for your library! In commemoration of the 80th anniversary of Ionia's Bertha Brock Park, David McCord has written **A History of Bertha Brock Park** - its founders, its development, its significance in our community and our state. This small publication contains many photos, newspaper articles, and recollections of people who were instrumental in the park's story. **The price is just \$6.00 each, on sale for the holiday season!**

Get your copy at the Blanchard House to help support the **Ionia County Historical Society.**



Movie Night!

Continued from page one.

encouraged the audience to share their comments as the films played out.

First we saw various images of the City of Ionia taken in the fall of 1939, including churches, downtown businesses, and residential scenes. Then the real purpose of this first film became evident as detailed scenes from inside various Ionia businesses were shown. We watched employees of the flour mill, the brewery, the Coca-Cola Bottling Company, the dairy, a laundry, and MacPherson's Hatchery at work. We watched as a make-believe couple (the "husband" was Richard Schlernitzauer, but the "wife" remains unidentified) shopped the various stores in town, from lumberyards to yard goods, jewelry, appliances, food, and furniture. There was even a visit to the soda bar at MacNamara's, and a booth at the Martha Washington for lunch. Other scenes showed the High School Band (marching in the mud) and a staged reception as a chugging locomotive came to a stop before the Pere-Marquette station. The old cars and old fashions were charming to say the least, but many members recognized the "players" - from businesspeople to teachers. There were some rather odd scenes being acted out here as well - and having not a copy of the script for the film, it's not really clear what kind of scenario was being performed. It didn't appear that the scenes were all in the right order, but still the entertainment value was there.

This 1939 film lasted approximately 40 minutes. In his research, David has discovered that the film had been contracted by area businesses (possibly by the Chamber of Commerce) through a professional production company belonging to John B. Rogers of Fostoria, Ohio. Rogers made many community promos like this one, and later became successful doing biographies of celebrities, and later a producer, actor, editor and director (including the film "Andy Hardy Comes Home") and worked in television as editor into the 1960s. (The Smithsonian has a collection of Rogers' films on file - not sure if this Ionia gem is preserved there or not!) The city of Marshall, Michigan, also has a J.B. Rogers hometown movie from 1940, and there are probably many others. The archives of the Ionia County Fishing & Hunting Club (one of the sponsors of this 1939 Ionia film) includes a copy of the ticket offered at the film's premier in February of 1940 at the Ionia Armory - a 25¢ admission!

The next film for the evening was a mid-to-late 1950s record of the JayCees Home Show (a February event) at the Fair Grounds. It, too, followed a family (real or not) as they walked through the home show looking at exhibits and products on display there. Obviously not as professional a film as the first, the merchants at the Home Show were very familiar to the audience - as were their displays of "the latest sensation for the home." No film credits are available for this one.

And finally, after a brief intermission (for more popcorn and cider!), the third film of the evening was also from the late 50's / early 60's featured the Ionia Free Fair. This gem was a bit more polished, with title cards and a logical sequence of events, from the parade to the final fireworks.

The film includes an address from Governor G. Mennen "Soapy" Williams, who left office in 1961. That, and a look at the cars in the parade, gives us a reasonable way to date the film. It's the Ionia Free Fair - what more needs be said?

There are still two more reels of film to be seen by audiences at the Blanchard House, and the members there were all in favor of another Movie Night someday. In the meantime, David reported that all three reels had now been transferred to DVD, and are being prepared for duplication. Soon these will be made available for a small fee, with proceeds to the Historical Society. Watch for more information in a future issue on how you can get copies for your own DVD collection!

Upcoming Programs and Events

Wednesday, December 7, 7:00 p.m.

Our Annual Holiday Pot-Luck!

ALL ARE WELCOME!

Don't forget the Holiday Open Houses

Nov. 27 and Dec. 4, 11, and 18
at the Blanchard House!

Wednesday, January 4th, 7:00 p.m.

Program Meeting will be held at the
Signature Salon on Adams Street
(The former Grand Trunk Railroad Depot)

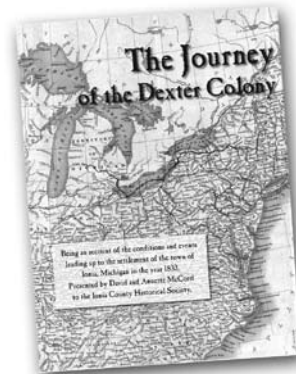
Wednesday, February 1st, 7:00 p.m.

Program Meeting at the
First United Methodist Church on Main St.

For other upcoming events - visit the ICHS
website at ioniahistory.org.

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!



FOR ONLY \$12.00 EACH

and a portion of each sale will benefit the Historical Society. GET YOURS NOW! (Add \$3 for mailing)



the www.ioniahistory.org **CHRONICLE**

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.

Ionia County Historical Society
P.O. Box 176
Ionia, MI 48846



JOIN TODAY!

If you'd like to help us preserve the area's heritage, please fill in the form below and send it, with check or money order, to the ICHS Treasurer, care of Box 176, Ionia, MI 48846.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, St., Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Please Check Your Membership Type:

- Regular = \$20
- Sustaining = \$35
- Business Buddy = \$40
- Corporate = \$250
- Life = \$1000
- Free to Students under 18
- Gift = \$ _____

Please Share a Little Information:

- Renewing Member
- New Member

If you're a new member, how did you hear about us?

Thanks!

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

November 10— Costa Rica

November 17 — Jerusalem

November 24 — No Movie (Happy Thanksgiving!)

December 1 — Winter Wonderland by Rail

December 8 — Christmas Special

December 15 — Christmas Special

December 22 — No Movie (MERRY CHRISTMAS!)

Ionia County Historical Society 2010-11 Board of Directors & Officers

Kris Haskins, President — 989-855-3685
 Stephanie VanderMolen, Vice Pres. — 616-755-0731
 Kathleen Cook, Director — 527-2626
 Patty Simpson-Goeke, Director — 527-0676
 Carol Gallagher, Director — 527-0961
 David McCord, Secretary — 527-3784
 Hank Knoop, Treasurer — 527-3130