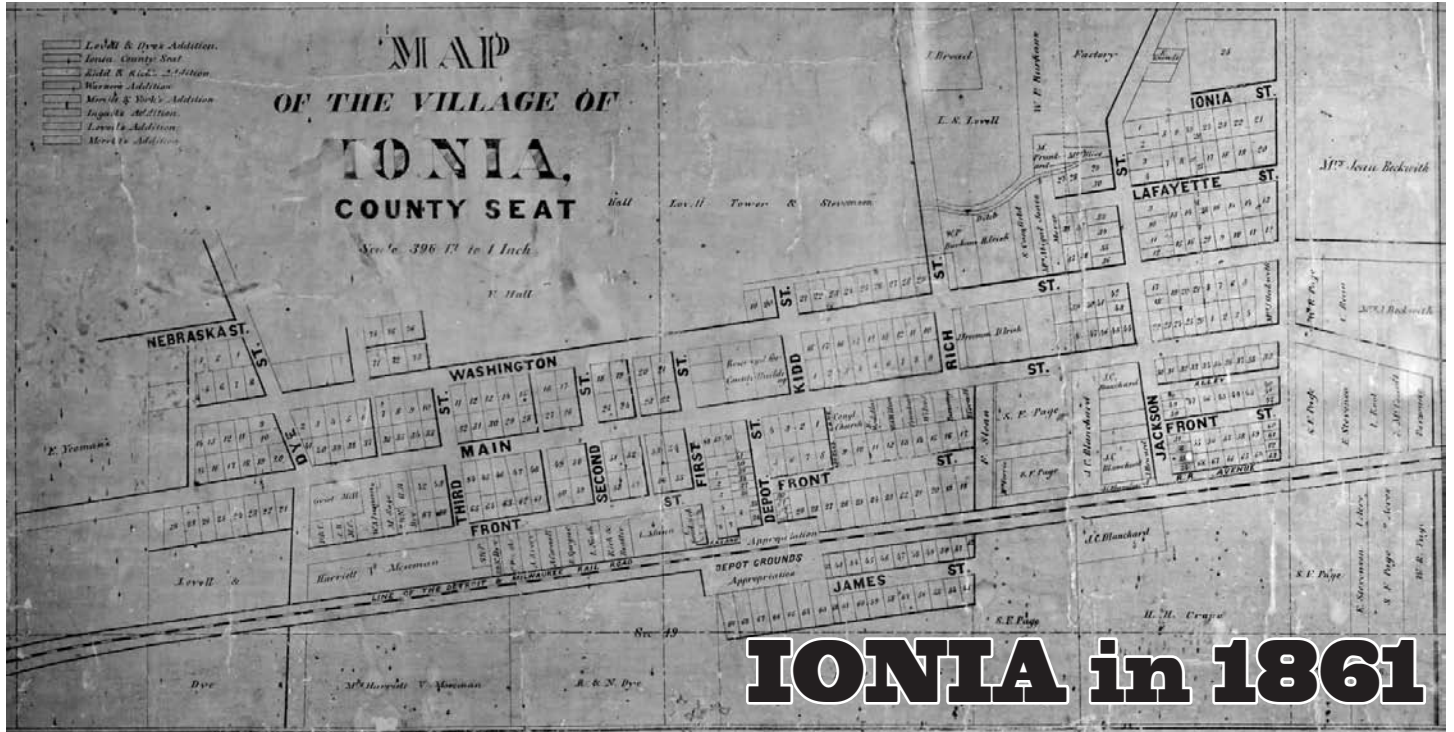




the **CHRONICLE**

The Almost Monthly Publication of
the Ionia County Historical Society



IONIA in 1861

- FROM THE EDITOR -

Dear friends — It has been a busy summer so far. This issue of the ICHS Chronicle covers THREE MONTHS of minutes and program reports. As in times past, I beg your indulgence for my tardiness in getting the news to you this summer. Please refer to the calendar in this issue — there are many opportunities for you to be involved in the ICHS activities, both as volunteer and participant. We hope you will find the time to help here and there.

— D. McCord, Secretary and Chronicle Editor

MINUTES of the May, 2011 Meetings

Key points from the May 2011 Historical Society meetings:

1. Repairs at the Blanchard House continue with the skills of Dick Baker and friends, as well as help from the usual volunteer members. Progress is being made!

2. Progress also continues in the sorting and cataloging of our collections of antiques and artifacts, with several work sessions and the learned eyes of a few key members. Many items that are not relevant to the Blanchard House or to Ionia history are being culled from the collection, some of which

will be for sale at the annual Yard Sale / Flea Market on June 10.

3. The Spring Into The Past event was a success, with thanks to all members who helped host our guests on April 30 and May 1. Thanks also to Sid's and Ionia Floral for loan of some beautiful arrangements for the house during the event.

4. A set of stereo photos of Ionia from 1872 have been donated. David McCord will scan to photos and provide copies for all to see.

The May 15th Country Music concert / fund-raiser was deemed a success by the event "producer" - President Linda Ciangi. Final dollar figures are

Continued on page 2

For this year's May program, David McCord presented the membership with information about Ionia in 1861. 150 years ago, at the outbreak of the Civil War, what was the latest news in the Village and the County?

Donning the character of a compositor for "The Ionia Gazette" (which was published in Ionia at the time), he presented the guests with a tour of the county by means of period maps and reproductions of engravings, photos, and the Gazette itself as a means to tell the story.

In 1861, Ionia County was still very much a wilderness community, with many pioneers living in log cabins, Native American neighbors still a common sight, and the everyday challenges of frontier life. The many small communities in Ionia County were just being established - or dreamt of - and speculators were dreaming big! The railroad had only been serving the County for a few years, and river traffic was beginning to decline. The telegraph put Ionia in touch with the world, and the State Roads both north and south were still being built to connect wagon traffic.

Many of the original settlers were still alive and active in their various communities, and a new generation of Ionia County citizens were beginning to make their marks. Some of today's villages did not yet exist, and some 1861 settlements were destined to fade away as progress shifted the fortunes of people and resources.

Ionia County in 1861 was less than 30 years old - as were the State of Michigan and the County Seat.

Continued on page 2

**NEXT MONTH: August Program:
Show-and-Tell (Bring your stories!)**

Minutes, continued from page one.

still being totaled, but will be reported when available.

5. A quilt is being made from donated fabric from the Todd family. The quilters say it will be ready by June to be raffled or otherwise.

6. Some donations have been received via the McCord, including a doll bed, some linens, and two civil war books.

7. We have received word that Lt. Gov. Brian Calley is seeking historic photos of Ionia County locations to adorn his office in Lansing. The board will pull some images from the archives for consideration.

8. The Antique Village at the Free Fair will have the theme "Made in Ionia." Members are asked to aid in putting together a display for the ICHS at this attraction.

9. Several renters lately have been requesting to have wine and beer at the Blanchard House for their events. Questions arose regarding our policy, which has always been on a case-by-case basis. It seems to be more prevalent of late, and members are also wondering about the regulations regarding wine on the grounds (outside the house). President Ciangi will research our obligations and restrictions on the subject.

10. It was noted that construction debris and equipment be cleaned up and hidden if possible during rentals.

11. Hosts and hostesses are needed for Summer Sundays at the Blanchard House. All members are urged to check their calendars for availability, and contact the President if you can help out.

12. President Ciangi also asks if anyone is interested in working on the float for the fair parade. Please contact her if you have a few hours to contribute. (The Fair is in late July.)

13. Every two years, the ICHS has had an audit of the books, and that would be this year again. Linda C. asked the board to support this effort, as well as a general consultation with Larry Tiejema, our accountant, and they voted "yes."

14. David McCord reported that we are sold out of "Dexter Journey" books again already. He will contact Hank to confirm the cost and quantity, and order more for the Summer season.

15. Stephanie VanderMolen is ready to arrange a walk-through at the Highland Park Cemetery with the plan to have a tour in the fall. She asked any interested parties to keep in touch.

16. The Nominating Committee needs to be established very soon. This will replace three directors this year, including our outgoing President. Please suggest potential nominees for the positions to the Board.

17. Kris Haskins noted that he wants to serve on the Building Maintenance Committee with Linda C. and noted that there is a serious need for someone to step up to take the reins for the Lawn Care Committee.

Alternative Education crews have helped, and a person is hired to do the serious mowing tasks, but someone needs to chair this effort.

18. Another round of sorting will be done by the Accessions Committee on May 29th in the morning. This will result in some items finding their way into the Yard Sale bins - but always results in some terrific finds of great value to our local history as well!

19. Pastor Larry Brown visited the Board at the May business meeting. He would like to host a Civil War Reenactment event next summer, and asked the ICHS Board if they would support - if not take part in - the effort. Kris Haskins volunteered to work with Larry on the arrangements.

20. The June 1 meeting will be a "book report" by Linda Ciangi - a fascinating account of the Civil War written from first-hand experience by a woman from Ionia who served as a nurse during the war.

MINUTES of the June 2011 Meetings

The meeting was brought to order by President Linda Ciangi on Wednesday, June 1 at the Blanchard House. She began with a report on the recent Country Music Review at the Theatre, saying that \$1,000 was earned for the ICHS.

The conservatory repair project is coming along. The inside is done, the outside still in process. Bids for the roof work to be done on the conservatory and back porch are being gathered now.

Progress continues in the sorting and filing of artifacts in the ICHS collections. Anyone interested in helping, please contact the Board - or attend the weekly Thursday afternoon work sessions at the house.

The Secretary report is available on request for the May meeting. Due to busy schedule, a Chronicle was not published for the month, and apologies were made. The Treasurer also made available his monthly transactions report.

500 Historical Society brochures have been forwarded to the Dept. of Transportation for them to distribute to their Tourist Welcome Centers.

The June 10th Yard Sale is coming along well, except for a lack of vendor response this year. The sorting and pricing is being done now. If anyone wants to help, please contact Doni Knoop.

Summer Sundays need volunteers to welcome our guests. Please consider donating a few hours this summer! Drop by the house at 1:00 p.m. to socialize.

Our inventory of "Dexter Journey" books has all been sold. Mike Gallagher moved to order 50 more copies. This was supported by Patty Simpson-Goeke and passed.

Larry Brown has proposed hosting some kind of Civil War reenactment in Ionia for next summer, and has

IONIA in 1861 continued

Into this excitement of growth and progress came the dire news of the rebellion. Everyone, of course, waited anxiously for news of the conflict. With the President's call for volunteers just a few short weeks before, local Ionia County youth were beginning to sign up with the new Michigan regiments. Governor Blair had committed men and money in support of Lincoln's efforts to maintain the Union, and the developments both North and South were the subject of conversation in every parlor, public house, and pulpit.

The crisis, although still not fully aflame, was reaching a power-keg level in May of 1861. Fatalities had occurred, threats were evolving into troop movements, and all-out war was imminent.

There were people alive in 1861 who remembered when Thomas Jefferson died - July 4th, 1826 (that's just 35 years earlier). Patriots on both sides of this divisive conflict quoted his words in defence of their actions. Appropriately, David drew his presentation to a close with a quote from the Declaration of Independence in an attempt to convey the deep issues of State's Rights and self-determination that lead to the Civil War. The nation was about to change dramatically and fundamentally in the following five years.

And Ionia County, Michigan, would be changing as well as the war, and all its after effects would reach home.



David McCord as "Compositor" for the Ionia Gazette, ca. 1861

approached the ICHS Board to partner on the project. More discussions will be had, and Kris Haskins has stepped up to be involved in the planning.

The meeting was then adjourned for this month's special program from Linda Ciangi: "The Boys in White." (SEE STORY - PAGE THREE.)

The Board and guests met for the June 15 Business Meeting at the Blanchard House.

Many rentals in recent weeks went well. A rental committee is being organized to address related issues and

policies - interested members please contact Linda Ciangi.

The June 10 Yard Sale was a success on some ways, less so in others. Only one vendor attended, but over \$1000 in sales for the ICHS. Thanks to Doni and Hank Knoop and the rest of the volunteers. Stuff left over is presently in the Carriage House.

The Free Fair's Antique Village exhibit at the Floral Building will be set up July 20th, and volunteers are needed. Carol Gallagher is chairing this effort, and the Board is considering a Civil War theme, but does not want to exhibit original artifacts. Copies and photos will be used instead.

The Free Fair Parade Float will be worked on the Thursday before the parade (the 21st). Members who would like to help, please contact Linda C.

The Maintenance and Repairs committee has met. Kris Haskins reports that Brian Quinn, Kathleen Cook, and Chuck Booth have begun serious inspection of the Blanchard House and have lists of needs and desires. Over the next month or so, and with additional meetings, they will present a prioritized list to the Board for action.

Items presently in this category before the board are: (A) Roof Repair for the Conservatory and Back Porch est. of \$5,000 has been received and endorsed and will probably be accepted. Some concerns were voiced regarding Historic District requirements for exterior work, and David McCord will check into this. (B) Kris H. is asking for approval for a \$350 budget to replace the cellar doors on the house. Stephanie V. made the motion, supported by Linda C. and passed.

The Tri-River Museums will meet Tuesday, June 21. In July they will meet on the 19th in Belding for a potluck. Tickets are on sale now.

Joan McCord is again planning a "Queen's Reception" at the Blanchard House to precede the Free Fair Parade. Anyone interested in helping, please contact her.

Some artwork has been donated by Celia Selleck done by local artists. The Accessions Committee (D. McCord) will respond. This brings up the need to write down the donation process in a form that we can share with donors and members to make it clear how the process works. David will work on this.

The next meeting will be the annual July Potluck - members and guests bring a dish to pass and stories to share! There will be a short Business Meeting following the food.

MINUTES of the July 2011 Meeting

Following the July potluck, the ICHS Board met to discuss several topics.

The first item on the agenda was regarding the repairs on the Blanchard House. With no apparent concerns for Historic District compliance, the Board discussed action for the roof repair project. Carol Gallagher moved to accept the bid by Snyder Roofing, with the expressed concern about "unforeseen overages" and that the Maintenance Committee be authorized to approve "reasonable adjustments up to \$500." This motion was supported by Patty Simpson-Goeke, and Kris Haskins said that he would invite someone from Snyder to meet with the Maintenance Committee next week to finalize the agreement. This motion passed.

Kris H. also noted that cellar door replacement was nearly complete, and came in under budget at \$225 (\$350 had been approved for the project).

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS!

Mr. Lincoln's not the only one!
The Historical Society needs you, too.
Please contact a Board member to volunteer for our worthy cause.

**THANK YOU
FOR YOUR SUPPORT.**

Kris also noted that the Maintenance Committee's priority list is still being composed.

The Carriage House needs to be cleaned up for summer visits and other uses. Kris H. expressed concern about the Yard Sale stuff and what would be done with it. Knoops said that they would box it and store it upstairs in the Carriage House for future selling opportunities. Kris asked the board to consider a more definite disposition of these items, wanting to get the Carriage House into "active service" sooner rather than later. For now, Stephanie VanderMolen moved to store the stuff possibly until the Mrs. Claus Bazaar. This was supported by Linda C. and passed.

Kris H. also requested that the board ask for more detailed reports from the Treasurer to include not only the monthly transactions but also the account balances and status of assets and investments.

Kris also pointed out that no individual on the board is responsible for the actions of the Board or the ICHS. The Board of Directors as a body makes decisions that represent the organization, and the Board is therefore responsible for anything done in the name of the entire organization.

David McCord has been appointed chairman of the Nomination Committee for this year, which will seek candidates for the three director's seats up for election in October. Interested parties are encouraged to contact him ASAP. Nominations must be closed by the September meeting.

Stephanie V. noted that progress is being made on the Cemetery Tour, presently set for October 16. She and four others met at Highland Park to walk about and discuss the possibilities, and a list of names of Ionia notables interred there have been started. The research will begin soon, but more volunteers to act as "narrators" at the various grave sites are still needed. She would like to do at least 6 or 8 sites, if not more, that afternoon. There are still concerns about the logistics of shuttling people to the site. Linda C. will ask the Dial-A-Ride administrator if they can offer some help for the afternoon, and how much that would cost.

Stephanie also suggested that a "Display Committee" might be a good idea to work on displays both permanent and temporary, for the house, museum, carriage house, and various events as well. This was thought to be a good idea, but no official action was taken.

JULIA WHEELOCK IONIA TEACHER GOES TO WAR

Linda Ciangi found modest little book called "The Boys In White" which was written by Julia S. Wheelock in 1870. The book relates her personal experiences during the Civil War from September of 1862 through July of 1865.

The narrative begins thus:

"Nine o'clock finds me in the old red school-house in the township of Ionia, Michigan, where are assembled the rural children and youth for instruction. Three days more and the term will close. This day promises to end as it began, full of joy and gladness—yet, knowing that the fearful battles



of Bull Run and Chantilly had recently been fought, we were anxiously waiting for tidings from the loved one who had gone to battle for the 'dear old flag' and, if need be, die to maintain its honor."

That loved one, her brother Orville, was in Company K of the 5th Michigan Volunteer Infantry. Notification was received later that day that he had been wounded on the field of battle. Julia and Orville's wife Anna set out the very next day for Washington. And so began an amazing tale of adventure, suffering, and first-hand experiences.

Orville died in a hospital before the ladies arrived in Washington, but Julia, on seeing the profound need for help there, resolved to do what she could. She reported to the Michigan Relief Association and the Sanitary Commission in Washington, and began her service with the Battle of

Continued on page 4



Julia Wheelock, seated far left.

JULIA WHEELOCK

Antietam. Over the next few years, she nursed and comforted, distributed donations and supplies, and dedicated herself to reaching every Michigan native she could. During these adventures she walked the trenches with the soldiers, and also met with dignitaries in state meetings at the capital. She relates meetings with General U.S. Grant, and meetings that included President Lincoln and his cabinet members, and “our own gallant General Custer.”

Julia suffered from sickness that took her from her duties several times, but she persevered. She met with Clara Barton and other notable organizers from the various relief organizations. She was also present in Washington during the assassination of Lincoln, and relates many details about that time, and seeing the President’s body lying in state at the capital building. The 26th Michigan presented her with an engraved gold watch in appreciation for her service to their unit during the war.

Julia Wheelock - a humble teacher from Ionia - is in the Michigan Women’s Hall of Fame, and her fascinating book is available at the Hall-Fowler library, as well as on-line (for free) as a PDF file. “It’s a definite must-read,” says Linda.

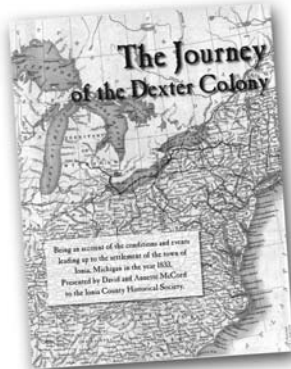


Julia married twice after the war, once to a Freeman and then to a Bullard. She is buried in Rock County Wisconsin where she passed on in 1926.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SERVE
on the ICHS Board of Directors
(or know someone who would be a good candidate)
Please **CONTACT**
THE NOMINATION COMMITTEE
care of David McCord, 527-3784
or david@mrwcreative.com

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)

Upcoming Programs and Events

Thursday Evening Workshops at the Blanchard House. 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, August 3rd, 7:00 p.m.

Program at the Blanchard House:

Historical Show & Tell

Presented by the Members (Bring your stories!)

Wednesday, August 17th, 7:00 p.m.

Business Meeting at the Blanchard House

ALL ARE WELCOME!

Wednesday, Sept 7th, 7:00 p.m.

Program at the Blanchard House

“FASHIONS OF THE PAST”

presented by Barb Ehlert & Friends

Wednesday, September 21st, 7:00 p.m.

Business Meeting at the Blanchard House

ALL ARE WELCOME!

Saturday, October 1st

UPSTAIRS DOWNTOWN TOURS!

Presented by Joe & Joan McCord

More information coming soon.

Wednesday, October 6th, 7:00 p.m.

Our annual meeting - no program, but

ELECTION OF THREE DIRECTORS

for the Board of the ICHS

REMEMBER: Only PAID members can vote!

Sunday, October 16th, 1:00 p.m.

CEMETERY TOUR - HIGHLAND PARK

“SPIRITS OF IONIA’S PAST”

Learn about Ionia’s outstanding citizens at their grave sides and monuments.

Wednesday, October 20th, 7:00 p.m.

Business Meeting at the Blanchard House

ALL ARE WELCOME!

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

For anyone without access to the Internet:

Call a Board Member with your questions or suggestions - they’re listed on the back page!



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!**

August 4 — Maui

August 11 — The Amazon's Manu - Peru

August 18 — The Seven Wonders

August 25 — Spain

September 1 — Down the Old Chicago Road

September 8 — CCC "Camp Forgotten"

September 15 — France

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