

Here's the latest issue of the...

Ionia County Historical Society CHRONICLE

Ionia County Historical Society
P.O. Box 1776
Ionia, MI 48846

www.ioniahistory.org

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The *Almost* Monthly Publication of the Ionia County Historical Society — November 2007



Minutes of the November Meeting

The November 7, 2007, meeting of the Ionia County Historical Society was called to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Eclectic Gallery on Main St. in Ionia. In the words of president Linda Ciangi, "We are here tonight to begin a series honoring the businesses who have preserved the history of downtown Ionia by maintaining their building's origins." This series of meetings is being called the "Tin Ceilings Tour."

The secretary's report was accepted as published. The Treasurer's Report was delivered by Larry Tiejema in the absence of our Treasurer Hank Knoop. This included a summary of the Historical Society's annual report, copies of which are available upon request.

Under the heading of old business:

A new light fixture has been installed in the Blanchard House kitchen, with thanks to Rene Simon for his electrical services and to Doni Knoop and Barb Ehlert for their light shopping.

Decoration of the Blanchard House for the holi-
(continues on page 2)

IONIA, 1898

This month's program was presented by Joe McCord with a reading from the memoirs of Ralph "Tape" Benedict as reprinted in the Ionia Sentinel-Standard in a series in 1976.

This tale of Ionia's business district in the 1890's was told by Mr. Benedict in a long, rambling fashion. Excerpts were read by Mr. McCord from the paper and sometimes embellished with recollections of his own... with added comments from the audience.

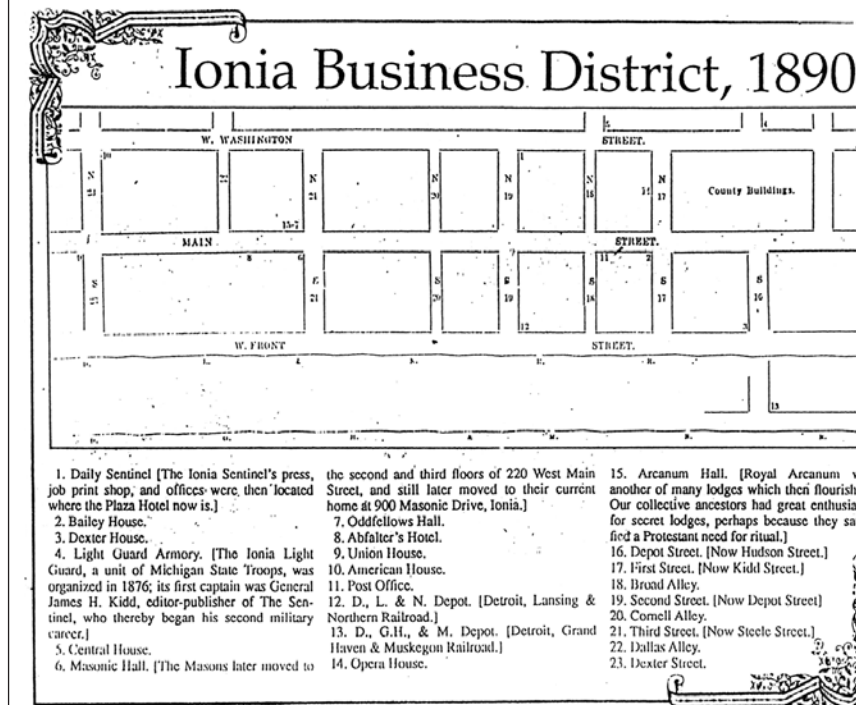
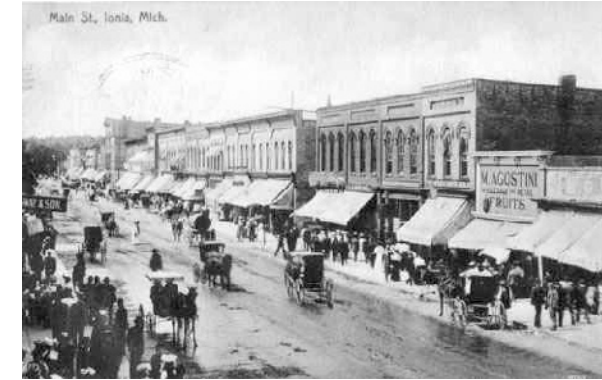
The story opens in 1898, when Mr. Benedict was only 5 years old, with a retelling of some of his adventures (and mischief) as a school child.

The narrative then took on the form of a tour, beginning at the corner of Main and Jackson streets and moving (somewhat disjointedly at times) block-by-block towards Dexter Street.

The members listening to the story contributed comments and stories of their own as each landmark store was mentioned - "My mother worked there for a while" and "He was quite a character" were common comments, as well as "That was a popular hang-out" and "Whatever happened to..."

Mr. Benedict's descriptions of the stores, restaurants, hotels, public buildings, and other businesses included tales of the owners and their clientele, plus the histories of the sites before and sometimes after the turn of the century.

The complete reprint of articles from the microfilms at the Library fill 16 pages, and are a very entertaining and informative read. Though some of the details are vague and not quite in synch with information in other sources, there is a lot of history in these paragraphs, and we are very indebted to Mr. Benedict (long since passed) for his narrative. And to Joe McCord for sharing a small portion of them with us.



I found the photo above labeled "circa 1900" on eBay. The building in the background is the American House (now the Ionia Hotel). The wagon says "Ionia Delivery Service, Sly & Chrysler" on the side. Sly & Chrysler were partners in business at the time the 1910 census was taken, but were recorded as "farmers" in the 1900 census. (Thanks to Annette McCord for researching this!)

<<< The diagram on the left here is from my big box of stuff (that's an official museum curator's term), and I'm not certain where I got it. It depicts downtown Ionia some years before Mr. Benedict's narrative.

Minutes of the November Meeting

days continues, and interested parties are invited to help. Two additional artificial trees - six foot or more in height - would be welcomed.

Thanks to those who have contributed to the decoration project for Main Street arranged and executed by Linda Ciangi and Marilyn Nash. Donations of decorations can be left at the Enrich office on Main St.

Thanks to the Gallaghers for their painting at the Blanchard House, and to Hank Knoop and the rest of the crew for the restoration of the iron work on the widow's walk.

The Ionia Christmas parade will be Friday, November 30.

Saturday, December 8th, the Historical Society will be hosting a luncheon at the Blanchard House. Tickets are on sale at the "Main Street Treasures" store and are \$10 each. The event will include "humorous readings" by Helen Dunn.

Also on December 8, two concerts are being held at the Ionia Theatre at 3:30 and 7:30 p.m. entitled "Peace in the Valley" by Fred Wolf.

A donation was happily accepted of \$38 from the month's tips at the Steele Street Coffee Shop. Also \$307 have been collected thusfar through the "Heat the House" fund thanks to WION, Americana Auctions, and Firstbank of Ionia.

Under new business,

there is an organ concert on Saturday Nov. 10 at the First Methodist Church, the All-Church Bazaar is Nov. 17th from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., and the Mrs. Claus Bazaar at the Middle School will be December 1st. The ICBS will have a table at the Mrs. Claus Bazaar to promote our activities, sell luncheon tickets, etc.

The Garth Brooks portrait guitar raffle will kick-off at the concert on December 8th, and the drawing will be at the 2008 B-93 Birthday Bash at the Fairgrounds on June 22nd. (We're not sure yet how many tickets should be printed, but the raffle license requires a quantity.)

Barb Ehlert has agreed to be in charge of the 2008 Historic Homes Tour, set for May 17, 2008. Bill Davis is already on board to arrange a presentation of native artifacts in the Carriage House.

The Blanchard House open house Sundays in December will feature Father Christmas on Dec. 2, Mr. and Mrs. Claus on Dec. 9th, and a "traditional" Santa on Dec. 16th.

The members thanked Celia and Dennis for their hospitality at the Eclectic, to Steele St. Coffee for (what else?) coffee, the McCords for refreshments, and also welcomed guests Denny and Margaret Heibarger to the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m. and the podium turned over to Joe McCord, this month's guest speaker.

DECEMBER 8th, 2007

The Ionia Theatre will present Fred Wolfe and music of the Christmas Season. Two Shows - 3:30 and 7:30 p.m. Tickets \$5 in advance, \$7 at the door. See you there!



If ever you have some interesting tidbit, story, or photograph that you think Chronicle readers would enjoy - particularly as it pertains to Ionia's colorful past, please don't hesitate to let me know. I will be glad to publish it in the Chronicle!

— D. McCord, Editor

CHRISTMAS at the BLANCHARD HOUSE

Bring your friends and family to the Blanchard House on Sunday afternoons in December! The house is decorated in the season's splendor for you to enjoy. Also - see the calendar for special plans!



The Chronicle is the official publication of the Ionia County Historical Society. It is written, edited, and published by David McCord, Secretary. Any comments, suggestions, or contributions should be directed to the editor care of the ICBS at P.O. Box 1776, Ionia, MI, 48846 or via www.ioniahistory.org.

AVAILABLE AT THE BLANCHARD HOUSE "GIFT SHOP"

A FEW OF THE ITEMS ON SALE and suggested donation for each:

Meredyth Jones Lithograph, "Ionia County Court House"...\$15

VHS Videos of Ionia Historical Subjects...\$10

Headlight Flashes 1896 (a publication of the Detroit, Lansing and Northern Railroad featuring 28 pages of Ionia information)...\$10

Ionia, 1907 Souvenir Book reprints...\$10

City of Ionia Centennial booklet...\$5

History of Ionia...\$3.00

... and more souvenirs and information!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST AND SUPPORT!

Planning for next year (already!)

First weekend in May is the Tri-River Museums Group's

"Spring Into The Past" tours of local museums.

May 17th will be the Ionia Historic Homes Tour.

Spring will also bring another Appraisal Road Show.

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 ICBS Treasurer, care of Box 1776, Ionia, MI 48846.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, St, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Please Check Your Membership Type:

Regular = \$20

Sustaining = \$35

Corporate = \$250

Life = \$1000

Gift = \$ _____

Free Honorary Membership for Students under 18

Please Share a Little Information:

Renewing Member

New Member

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

If you are already a member (thank you!), please pass this membership form on to a friend.

Upcoming Programs and Events

Wednesday, December 5, 7:00 p.m.
Regular Membership Meeting
Pot Luck and Christmas Stories!
at the Blanchard House.

Saturday, December 8, 12:00 noon
Blanchard House Holiday Luncheon
Program by Helene Dunn, ticket \$10 and are limited!
Get yours at Main St. Treasures, 414 W. Main in Ionia, or call Joan at 527-3369.

Concert follows at Ionia Theatre, 3:30 and 7:30 p.m.
Tickets are \$5 in advance / \$7 at the door

Blanchard House Holidays!

The Blanchard House will be open for visits during December to show off our seasonal decorations.

Dec. 2 = A visit from Father Christmas

Dec. 9 = Mr. and Mrs. Claus

Dec. 16 = Santa delivers holiday greetings!

Tuesday, December 18th, 7:00 p.m.
ICHS Board Meeting at Kitty's Café - Main St. Ionia

Wednesday, January 2th, 7:00 p.m.
Regular Membership Meeting
at Ionia Theatre - 201 W. Main Street in Ionia
Including a short movie - "The Snows of 1936" followed by "special entertainment"

Tuesday, January 16th, 7:00 p.m.
ICHS Board Meeting at Kitty's Café - Main St. Ionia

Wednesday, February 6, 7:00 p.m.
Regular Membership Meeting
Ionia County Court House
with your tour guide, Joe McCord

Tuesday, February 20th, 7:00 p.m.
ICHS Board Meeting at Kitty's Café - Main St. Ionia

Wednesday, March 5, 7:00 p.m.
Regular Membership Meeting
at Dood's Jewelry, 223 West Main St.
(part of the "Tin Ceilings Tour")

Travelogues at the Ionia Theatre

Come travel with us each Thursday at 9:30 a.m. for a FREE travel video, sponsored by the Ionia County Historical Society.



December 6.....Little Palaces-Historic Movie Houses

December 13.....Pacific Coast By Rail

December 20.....The Glory of Christmas

...and many more coming in 2008!

Don't forget to purchase your tickets early for the ICBS Christmas Luncheon on Dec. 8th! Seating is limited to the first 50 - tickets are \$10 each on sale now at Main Street Treasures, 414 West Main, Ionia.