

# Ionia County Historical Society CHRONICLE

The *Almost* Monthly Publication of the Ionia County Historical Society — June 2008



## A History of coffee



Members at the June ICHS meeting were educated and entertained by Bill Drummond's very enthusiastic presentation on the history of coffee. With occasional comments by his wife and partner Maureen, the owners of Steele Street Coffee in Ionia delivered a fast-paced, fact-filled, and fascinating story spanning 1000 years.

He began with definitions of the more popular variations on Espresso: Latte, Cappuccino, Americano and Breve – as well as some other terms and conventions one encounters when browsing the menu at modern coffee purveyors' establishments. Bill has been trained as a "barista" (professional coffee preparer).

Coffee cultivation began in Ethiopia over 1000 years ago. According to legend, a goat-herder witnessed his flock becoming quite energetic after nibbling the fruit of the coffee tree, and tried it himself. From that humble (and not-so-tasty) beginning, the industry has grown to become the second most traded commodity in the world – second only to oil!

Early on, the leaves were dried, ground, and boiled – but the caffeine "high" was missing. The beans were stored in brine to preserve them, and the run-off from this process was drunk (in a brew called "Arabian Wine") – but that was not terribly satisfying. By the 13th century, however, the modern roasting process had begun to evolve. In many cases the beans were literally fried in a pan – a recipe that is still followed in some places today. In the late 1400s, the first commercial coffee enterprise was established. By the 1600s, the trade was a major contributor to the success of the Dutch commercial empire, and Capt. John Smith of American Colonial fame was a key figure in the trade.

Wars were fought over coffee and trade routes, and ransoms were paid in coffee. In many circles, the brew was condemned (as many desirables are) and strictly regulated (to the advantage of the privileged classes). But at some point a lone coffee tree was smuggled into Brazil – and the American coffee industry was born. From descendants of that one tree, 70% of the world's coffee is now produced!

The growing season, climate and soil conditions for coffee are quite specific, and where coffee CAN be grown, it

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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, suggestions, corrections (of course), or contributions should be directed to the editor c/o the ICHS at P.O. Box 1776, Ionia, MI, 48846 or via [www.ioniahistory.org](http://www.ioniahistory.org).

## Minutes of the May '08 Meeting

*(Because there was no ICHS Chronicle in May, the minutes are reproduced here for the record in the June issue. — Ed.)*

The May 7, 2008, meeting of the Ionia County Historical Society was called to order by president Linda Ciangi at 7:10 p.m. at the Blanchard House. The Secretary's Report was reviewed and accepted by general consensus as published in the Chronicle. Treasurer Hank Knoop delivered his report, which reflected a deficit for the preceding month due to a \$1214 annual insurance payment. Removing that from the mix, Hank points out, would make our monthly income-versus-expenses nearly even for April '08. The Treasurer's report was accepted into the record by general consensus.

With the calendar as a guide, President Ciangi proceeded to Old Business, starting with the May 17 Historic Tour event. Chairperson Barb Ehlert prepared sign-up sheets for hosting the homes and public buildings on the tour, and Stephanie VanderMolen began recruiting immediately to fill the schedule. Programs are nearly done, awaiting final info about the Dial-A-Ride Trolley. Dawn Ketchum at Dial-A-Ride said that the trolley would not be available without payment of approx. \$450 (which we cannot afford to pay). Barb and Linda C. will speak to City Manager Jason Eppler to see if that situation can be resolved without \$\$, but meanwhile, Brian Quinn spoke up and said that he would attempt to collect the necessary funds ASAP, in case the city didn't change their decision. (Thanks to Seymour VanDerkse for his generous donation on-the-spot!) Bob Nixon suggested that some area churches had buses that we might borrow as a back-up plan to provide guest transportation for the tour. Also on May 17th are several area events, including a yard

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## A History of coffee

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IS being grown. There are no more places for coffee to be planted but through the tropical “coffee belt” where it is now.

There are many breeds and strains of the coffee plant these days, and familiar names like Java and Mocha are now part of the vernacular. In recent years, much attention is paid to “Free Trade” coffees, which monitor the trade to ensure a degree of fairness to the coffee farmers. (Bill recommends a movie called “Black Gold” for more information.)

From the “royal beverage” of the 1600s, coffee became more accessible over the years. In England in the 1700s, the first coffee shops became popular. These gathering places became the haven of intellectuals, and were called “penny universities” for the knowledge to be gained from the patrons.

Professional coffee roasting began in the 1820s, saving coffee drinkers a step in the preparation of their chosen brew. By the turn of the century, the Hills Brothers had built their business selling ready-roasted coffee. In the 1880s, the French developed the first espresso machine, which was refined by the Italians in the early 20th century. In the 1920s, the first espresso machines were imported into the U.S. and coffee rose swiftly in popularity – particularly in the wake of prohibition.

The industry struggles today with standardization and consistency, and training for coffee vendors is becoming more readily available as time goes on. Bill and Maureen welcome any questions about the beverage, and will gladly help anyone to sample the wide range of flavors and preparations available today. We thank Bill for his energetic presentation!

### May '08 Meeting

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sale at the Commission on Aging, Library Book Sale, Zion Church rummage sale, and Quilt Show at the Presbyterian Church.

President Ciangi then reviewed a few recent events, with thanks to the volunteers that made them happen. These included the Appraisal Roadshow (which brought in \$240), Armory Yard Sale (which earned over \$300), the Ladies Night event, and the “Spring Into The Past” Tri-River museum tours.

May 27th, Ionia will be visited by the “Bus-eum” – a traveling exhibit commemorating WWII



POWs. The bus will be at the Ionia Library from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

On June 7, ICHS members will be hosting the Roy Bills Portrait Guitar exhibit at the Eclectic Gallery during the downtown classic car show. This will be from 10:00 to 5:00 p.m. and we'll be selling raffle tickets. Rob Pearson will also provide a free concert at 1:00 p.m., and thanks to Stephanie V. for the flier design!

June 21 and 22 will be the B-93 Birthday Bash, and our big push for Raffle Ticket sales! We need plenty of volunteers for our booth at this 2-day event, and we'll be drawing the winning ticket on

Sunday afternoon. Please contact President Ciangi if you can be there to help!

Also upcoming is the Farm Power Show at the Fairgrounds on June 27.

In the category of New Business, all ICHS members mourn the passing of Ralph Bartelt, charter member of the ICHS and past president – one of our most valiant volunteers for many years. David McCord suggested that the Historic Tours be dedicated in his name, which was supported by the membership. A card was passed around to be sent to the family.

Barry Trierweiler loaned the Society photos taken by his grandfather, Ormison Hillborn, a local Ionia photographer. They will be scanned into the computer for future use, some of which may be framed and put on exhibit in the upstairs parlor (our “Ionia Artists” room).

Joan Nixon has graciously agreed to be the refreshments chairman; she will be keeping track of who has volunteered for monthly snacks at our regular meetings, and will also start a “cookie jar” fund for times when we need to purchase some goodies.

Bill S. [*sorry Bill... lost your name - ed.*], occasional visitor to our meetings, showed the membership his recently published book on U.S. Commemorative Medals. This exhaustive reference is the only such collection of facts and illustrations available anywhere, and the de facto standard for collectors of such memorabilia. It represents over a decade of research and writing.

The president then called Gerard Perry to the podium, where he surprised yours truly, David McCord, with the presentation of a special Scout of the Year award from the G.R. Ford Council, BSA, for services rendered. (Thanks, Gerry!)

The meeting was then adjourned for refreshments and further discussion on details of the upcoming Historic Tours.

### Minutes of the May Board Meeting

The ICHS Board meeting of May 19, 2008, was brought to order by President Linda Ciangi at approx. 6:00 p.m. at the Blanchard House. Also present were Doni Knop, Gerry Perry, and David

McCord.

The first order of business was evaluation of the Home Tour and suggestions. Approx. 70 tickets were sold, but final financial reports are not in yet. It was suggested that each member of the committee write up a short report by the June 4 meeting and hand them to the President, who would then meet with the Chairperson, Barb Ehlert, to review and evaluate. It was moved by Doni to form a committee (not of Board members) to review and respond to those suggestions.

Summer Sundays are coming soon and volunteers are needed.

June 7th art show at the Eclectic Gallery (Roy Bills' guitars) will include a table for the ICHS where we can sell raffle tickets. This is coordinated with the downtown auto show and a concert by Rob Pearson and We Three Strings. It was suggested that we provide \$20 to Roy Bills to help cover his gas to get there.

June 21 and 22 will be the B-93 Birthday Bash, and ticket sellers are needed to be on site most of the weekend to sell raffle tickets for the Garth Brooks guitar. The drawing will be Sunday afternoon at 4:00 p.m. Details will be reviewed at the June meeting.

June 24 is the start of a series of concerts on the Courthouse lawn. Pastor Larry Brown is running the event, and asked if the ICHS would like to be a \$50 sponsor. The board members present unofficially agreed not to.

July 10 thru October 23 the city will be encouraging downtown merchants to stay open later, and President Ciangi suggested that we try to have the Blanchard House open those evenings as well. If visitors were not forthcoming, the time could be spent sorting, scanning, and cataloging our collections. Doni K. was very much in favor of this and suggested that Thursday evenings be established for such endeavors until further notice regardless of the city's plans.

July 15 will be a Tri-River Museums pot luck in Belding.

July 17 – 26 will bring the Ionia Free Fair. We have to get serious about our display for the Antique Village, and folks to volunteer to host the displays there, too.

“Duel of the Decades” event

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## May Board Meeting

will be August 7 (proceeds to the ICHS) and August 21 (proceeds to March of Dimes). Marilyn Nash is preparing a float for the Free Fair Parade to publicize the event. Doni K. donated \$25 towards this effort.

Joan McCord has suggested an "Upstairs Downtown" tour for the fall, and perhaps a church walk in the spring of '09. More discussion on these items will ensue.

Other fund raising opportunities include:

- Printing of historical calendars similar to those printed for the BNI last year. Linda C. is pursuing this project. (Some issues remain RE the previous calendar sales.)

- Offering the Blanchard House as a setting for family portraits, to be coordinated with an area photographer. Doni K. is working on this one.

- Theater Dinner / Dinner Theater ideas are being developed by Stephanie VanderMolen.

President Ciangi also called for a Building and Grounds Committee to be formed to help coordinate recurring maintenance tasks as well as special projects in and around the Blanchard House. This will be discussed further with the general membership at the next meeting. Linda will contact Tony Raymor about his proposed back door replacement project. Doni K. suggested that we create a formal carpet fund as well.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

## Minutes of the June '08 Meeting

Prior to the monthly meeting, members visited the Steele Street Coffee Company where they could see another "tin ceiling tour" location. The coffee shop is in a historic building where they had restored the tin ceilings for their store.

The meeting was then called to order by President Ciangi at the Blanchard House at 7:24.

The president began with a request to establish a Building and Grounds Committee to help maintain the property. She asks that any interested parties contact her.

A proposal has been brought to the ICHS to utilize the Blanchard House for Christmas Family

Photos by local photographer Becca Usher. She would promote the project, and manage all the necessities for the photo sessions and packages offered the customers, and she would share the proceeds (a discounted price) with the ICHS. The sessions would be scheduled for late October. Brian Quinn suggested that very deliberate advertising be done, in addition to Ms. Usher's efforts. It was moved by Barb Ehlert and supported by Mike Gallagher to accept the proposal. Some further suggestions were made as regards the promotion of the project.

The Secretary's reports from the previous months' meetings were made available in hardcopy to interested members. There was no Chronicle for the month of May — those reports will be published to the membership in general next month. Treasurer Hank Knoop shared his monthly report with the members. The April report had shown expenses of over \$2,000 and income around \$850. Curiously, the May report showed expenses of \$855 and income of \$2,627 — offsetting the previous month's deficit almost exactly. As always, details are available on request from the Treasurer. Both reports were accepted by the membership.

Under old business, the president began asking for volunteers to host the Blanchard House for "Summer Sundays." Someone made off with the kitchen calendar where the schedule had been posted, so she asked that anyone who had already volunteered please let her know so she could update the new calendar.

During the Ionia Main St. Car Show on June 7th, the ICHS and Eclectic Gallery will be co-hosting a showing by Ray Bills of his country star guitar portraits. Volunteers are needed, as this will be another opportunity to sell raffle tickets.

Linda is also working with B-93 to sell raffle tickets at the Birthday Bash on June 21 and 22. The drawing for the guitar will be the afternoon of the 22nd. Volunteers are needed to be at the event to sell tickets all weekend. Contact Linda C. if you can help.

Coordinated with later hours in some Main St. stores in Ionia, the Blanchard House will be open Thursday evenings during July and August. This will be used as

## Upcoming Programs and Events

**Wednesday, July 2th, 6:30 p.m.**  
**Annual Independence Day Pot Luck Dinner**  
at the Blanchard House

**Wednesday, July 16, 7:00 p.m.**  
**ICHS Board Meeting**  
at the Blanchard House

**Wednesday, August 6th, 7:00 p.m.**  
**Regular Membership Meeting**  
at the Blanchard House

*For additional events and activities, please read the minutes, and refer to the website. Thanks.*

an opportunity for our members to help sort, catalog, and store artifacts in our collections during those hours. Any interested parties are welcomed.

On July 15 at 11:00, the Tri-River Museums group will be hosting a program on "Culinary History" at the Belrocton, along with a pot luck luncheon. Then in the evening, in Ionia, will be "Music on the Green" at the First Methodist Church.

Ron Story was then introduced to present a check from the Ionia County Foundation to the ICHS in response to a grant request for funds to be used in the preservation of the clothing and textiles in our collection. The \$500 will be used to purchase appropriate supplies.

The membership was adjourned for refreshments and the June program, after which the meeting was reconvened briefly for further information from Joan McCord on the progress being made for the "Upstairs Downtown" event for this coming October. She also shared information about school visits and rentals at the Blanchard House. Also noted was the donation of an oil painting by Alice Lassner, who painted the image of the Blanchard House during this year's home tour. The meeting was officially closed at 9:10 p.m.

## Minutes of the June Board Mtg.

The June Board Meeting was brought to order by president Linda Ciangi at approx. 7:05 at the Blanchard House. Also present

were Barb Ehlert, Doni Knoop, Stephanie VanderMolen, Gerry Perry, Secretary David McCord, Treasurer Hank Knoop, Director Emeritus Joan McCord, and Joe McCord.

Before the meeting got to the agenda, it was noted that Joe McCord had donated collections of canes and yardsticks to the museum, and that there had been recent visitors to the house who were descendents of the Potawatomi native Pewamo, after whom the town was named by founder John C. Blanchard.

The president reviewed the sign-up sheet for the Blanchard House "Summer Sundays" and filled in a few more names. Volunteers are always welcomed for this duty. A suggestion was made by member Sara Jezewski that special displays be set up for those Sundays, and Doni and Barb will put out some quilts for the immediate future. D. McCord suggested a display of hats with their stories (if known).

The Building and Grounds Committee still needs to be organized. Hank K., Joe M. Gerry P. are de facto members of this committee, but others will be welcomed. "Job One" for the committee is to start a list of things to be done, and continue to add items to the list as they are discovered. This list will be kept in the office at the Blanchard House, and suggested tasks can be added by anyone. Also, Kathleen Perrin has volunteered to work with the Garden

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Here's the latest issue of the...

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

[www.ioniahistory.org](http://www.ioniahistory.org)



## 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 1776, 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!

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## June Board Mtg.

Club on the grounds and flowers.

President Ciangi delivered an update on the fund raisers in progress. The guitar raffle will end on June 22 at the B-93 Birthday Bash. She handed volunteer packets to those present who would be working at the Bash to sell tickets, etc. The funds from this raffle have been designated for preservation expenses.

"Duel of the Decades has been set for August 7 and August 21. August 7 proceeds may be designated for the upkeep of the house and the carpeting fund, but this has not been decided for certain.

The Fall Festival (Sept 13) will see the return of the Duck Race (a big hit last year!), chaired by Hank Knoop again.

The membership voted in support of renting the house for Christmas portraits through arrangements with Becca Bales Usher. More information will be coming soon. Ms. Usher will begin promoting the program right away.

Stephanie V. presented some information on the hosting of a Mystery Theater at the Blanchard House. She has not been successful in contacting the Ionia Community Theater, so she turned to other sources for cost and schedule information, which indicated that 40 guests at \$50 each would result in a potential profit of \$970 for the ICHS. Joan McCord noted that she had mentioned the idea to several Ionia Community Theater members, and they were very interested in the event. Stephanie was given alternative contact info for the Ionia troupe to try again to make contact. Scheduling the event would depend on the Community Theater performance season. More info will be coming.

President Linda has been working on the calendar project, and estimates that 200 calendars could bring in around \$2000 when they're sold. Upcoming Thursday evening workshops will be watching for photos to be used for this year's calendar.