



"How fair the garden..."

"How fair the garden amid the trials and passions of existence."

~ Benjamin Disraeli



ICHS Board Member Kathleen Perrin, our "Lawn Chair" (Chair of the Lawn Committee), addressed the ICHS members on April 1 with an overview of some of the History of Gardens. Kathleen has a degree in landscape design, and brought with her several books on the subject to pass around the room while she summarized from her seven pages of notes (!).

Her historical narrative reached back into far antiquity, from the earliest archeological record of cultivation nearly 10,000 years ago. With the development of irrigation around 5,000 BC, and farming as a specialized vocation at about 2,000 BC, horticultural pursuits became a major part of human life.

Obviously, the utilitarian aspects of working with plant life served a vital need for the population, but the aesthetic and beauty of nature led early civilizations to cultivate non-food plants as well. Decorative gardens were created for the glorification of gods and kings from ancient times. The Romans developed it into a science, and by medieval times the process was well refined. Villages and homesteads enjoyed herb gardens for food, but a major part of

gardening was given over to medicinal plants as well.

Through the centuries, with the influence of the high-born in many cultures, decorative gardening was established to a point where artistic style began to be expressed through a living palette. Through trade, more variety in plants and flowers was introduced around the world, expanding the potential - and the prestige - of highly decorative gardens. Most household gardens, however, still remained largely focused on "useful" plants with a mere sprinkling of cultivated flowering plants for fragrance and visual appeal.

In what is known as the "Colonial" period, garden layouts began to be more structured, and multipurpose gardens followed popular trends. Some of this was influenced by an emerging science of botany and ecology - how plants and soils and wildlife work in concert with each other (or not). The 1700s brought much scientific advancement in the area of classification, the emergence of selective breeding, and a formal methodology which led to more variety and more robust plants of all kinds. (One of England's most famous garden designers of the period was named Lancelot Capability Brown.)

The "Dooryard Gardens" of the 16th century became more elaborate as the upper classes could afford to indulge in dedicate gardens in imitation of the royal estates. By the 1800s, the style shifted to more "natural" gardens, with less structured groupings of native flowering species and ground cover.

The 19th century, which we often generally refer to as the "Victorian Era", saw many changes in the gardening world as society evolved. Seeds could be purchased in convenient packets by mail-order and shipped nearly anywhere. New techniques and equipment became available (the lawnmower was invented in the 1830s, among other things). Much of what we call "Victorian" garden style was actually a revival and adapta-

Continues on page 2

*"The kiss of sun for pardon,
The song of the birds for mirth,
One is nearer God's Heart
in a garden Than anywhere else on earth"*
— Dorothy Frances Gurney

MINUTES of the April '09 Mtg.

President Linda Ciangi called the April 1, 2009, meeting of the ICHS members to order at 7:10 p.m. at the Blanchard House. After a welcome to members and guests, copies of the latest Chronicle were passed out to the assembled members, with apologies from the Secretary for being so late with the publication. After a cursory review, it was moved by Linda C. and supported by Stephanie V. to accept the minutes as published therein - and passed.

Under old business, President Ciangi reported that the Ionia Expo enjoyed record attendance this year, and the caricaturist that we hired (with the co-sponsorship of Friends of the Library) was a huge hit. He stayed on an extra hour to supply the demand. Also, door prize winners were: Gloria Anderson, hand-painted stool; Cal

Continues on page 2

tion of the earlier Colonial style.

Prosperous folk began to invest in gardens not only for homes, but for public areas - parks and gardens for the community. Many great park projects were undertaken, nurturing the talents of dedicated landscape architects, including Frederick Law Olmsted, Charles Eliot, Baron Haussmann, Gertrude Jekyll, and Ellen Biddle Shipman.

These pioneers (and many others) lead to the later approach to garden design as an artist would approach a canvas, creating masses of color and shape to create compositions "in living color." Geometric styles and more subdued tastes of the Art Nouveau and Art Deco periods gave gardens a radical new look as the 20th century was born. But the Victorian Garden persists in many forms.

Many thanks to Kathleen for this fascinating and educational presentation. (Keep the passion!)



Pictured here in a garden is Miss Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932), an influential garden designer and prolific writer on gardens and gardening. In addition, she was a painter, decorator, educator, and pioneering photographer. She created over 400 gardens in the UK and USA, including plants she bred herself.

And keeping our garden fair...

The Blanchard House Lawn has been attacked!

Yes, it was attacked by volunteers with rakes, shovels and brooms. The entire lawn, from Main Street to Adams Street was thoroughly raked. This generated ten pickup loads for disposal. Eight have already been hauled away and the other two, which are stored behind the Carriage House, will be hauled away soon.

The lawn is greening up nicely and with Gerry Perry's plans to fertilize it, it should be the best in a long time. In addition, a creek cleanup crew will be working on April 24 to complete the outdoor cleanup.

A special thanks to this list of volunteers: Kathleen Perrin, Doni & Hank Knoop, Barb Ehlert, Kris Haskins, Bryan Quinn plus two helpers that he sent over, and of course Linda Ciangi for direction.

We are looking forward to using the lawn and carriage house for events this summer. (Thanks to Hank Knoop for this article.)

Smith, tiffany-style lamp; Barb Ehlert, sewing supplies shadow box.

Thursday evening workshops continue to be very productive. Hank K. and Kathleen P. trimmed trees, donations from the Nielson estate have been cleaned and sorted by Linda C., Barb E., Doni K., and Kathleen P. (We have some wonderful photos to share with our members and guests over the summer from this collection!)

The "Indoor Yardsale" at the Armory Community Center will be Friday and Saturday, April 24, 25. Donations are stacking up at Knoop's house and in the Blanchard House! Volunteers are invited to help with the set-up and pricing at the Armory on the 23rd starting at 9:00 a.m. If anyone has items that they can't get to the Armory that day, please contact Hank Knoop to arrange pick-up and delivery.

Remember: no clothing at this sale! Also, items left over after the sale will be donated to Enrich.

May 3, the Blanchard House will be opening our doors to guests on the annual Tri-Rivers Group museum tours called "Spring Into The Past." The theme is "Honoring Those Who Serve" and our display will salute some of our own members who have contributed significantly to our community: Joe & Joan McCord, Dave Cook, and Gerry Perry. (See article elsewhere in this issue.)

Summer Sundays at the Blanchard House will include as many activities as we can devise to make the afternoons fun and inviting. Hosts (when ever possible) will be in costume, and we hope to arrange special displays through the summer. A box will be set up to accept donations of canned food

which we will pass along to the local food pantries.

The Church Walk is coming on May 16th! Refreshments will be made available at the Blanchard House. Once again, Marilyn Nash is working on some unique displays for the Main Street windows.

Hank Knoop then delivered the Treasurer's report. FUNDS ARE NEEDED to balance the budget for this year, and though the concert in August is anticipated to be a significant boost to our coffers, other sources of income are still sought. Please share your ideas with the Board. Hank also noted that the insurance inspector would be touring the facility on the 2nd, and he (Hank) would accompany him. It was moved by Gerry P. and supported by Dave C. to accept the report. Motion carried. As always, copies are available on demand from the Treasurer.

In the new business category, the local Girls Scouts are organizing a Memorial Day Parade. They need volunteers and contributions, and interested parties can contact Carol Blundy at 527-9145 if you can help in this worthwhile endeavor.

The Free Fair kicks off July 17th this year! The Antique Village will feature a General Store theme, and our display will salute local businesses "then and now." Again, volunteers are welcomed. Marilyn Nash and Linda C. are working on a float for the parade, and are looking for help with this, too. Also, the Queens Reception at the Blanchard House is expected to happen as usual, thanks again to Joan McCord's efforts.

Our "Salute to the Superstars" show is set for August 16th at 2:00 p.m. at the Ionia Theatre. Tickets are \$12.50 in advance, \$15 at the door, and we are being supplied with 500 postcards and some posters from the promoters. We are free to make additional copies of these to disperse wherever possible. If anyone would like to help with publicity and promotion, please contact the President. Thanks to David McCord for reworking the poster design, and working on support via the Internet. Sponsors are being contacted to cover at least \$2500 in expenses. Thanks to the Chamber of Commerce for helping us to promote the sponsorship effort, and to our first \$250 sponsor, C&L Trucking, and to Wolbers for a donation of \$50 towards postage.

David McCord reported that he had forwarded a CD of words and pictures to Deb Dudek for her Walking Tour Brochures project which included content from many of our ICHS Home Tours past.

The Library is bringing the "Buseum" to Ionia on May 26 from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. This traveling museum is a display of WWII memorabilia, and well worth a visit.

David M. also reported that the website is continually being updated, and the new logo will soon be incorporated into the home page.

Bob Nixon noted that Bill Franch, long-time ICHS member and supporter, is now under Hospice Care at the

Heartlands facility.

Dave Cook reported that the "Reading Circle" is beginning to read "Clay Acres" - a novel by an Ionia native which depicts many local personalities and locations around Ionia from long ago - although they're all under different names in the book. Joe McCord, who has put together a table of who's who and where's where and offered to share it with the group.

The Enrich Kids Club will be helping with Blanchard House lawn care on April 24. Lawn Chair Kathleen Perrin asks for any interested members to help with some supervision that day from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Stephanie VanderMolen will be bringing Deb Dudek to our May meeting to talk about the history of cemetery and funerary customs of the past. Along these lines, a discussion ensued about the challenges of keeping our cemeteries in good condition. Oak Hill Cemetery, which seems to be a target for vandals, was a noted example. The McCords reported that they had spoken to City and Township officials in the past, and rewards are offered for any leads towards capture of the vandals, and other programs had been discussed. Stephanie was directed to contact Jason Eppler, Ionia City Manager, to see what might be done to continue pursuing this effort. The members of the ICHS are very much interested in pursuing the project if a plan can be devised that will "really make a difference." We hope to organize some cemetery tours later in the year for ICHS members.

The meeting was adjourned for refreshments at 8:00, followed by a presentation from Kathleen Perrin on "The History of Victorian Gardens."

MINUTES of the April '09 Board Mtg.

The ICHS Board met at the Blanchard House on April 14, presided over by Linda Ciangi. Present also were Doni and Hank Knoop, David McCord, Stephanie VanderMolen, and Kathleen Perrin.

The meeting began with a review of plans for the August "Superstars" concert. Promotional suggestions included: including a map on the back of fliers for out-of-town guests, seeking any opportunity to hand out postcards and fliers at other community events, promoting the "gift potential" of tickets, and promotion of the event through "community calendars" in publications and websites. Linda C. suggested setting up a table at the Farmers Market as an example. If anyone might have a chance to hand out fliers or put up posters, please contact President Ciangi. Also, when advance tickets are sent to the purchasers, copies of the Blanchard House brochures will be included. The question arose whether the Blanchard House would be open that day (a usual "Summer Sunday") during the concert. It was decided to ask the membership if someone was available to staff the house, and if so, the doors would be open.

Hosts are needed for the May 3 "Sprint Into The Past" event from

noon to 5:00 p.m., and the preceding Thursday evening workshops will be spent getting the place cleaned up and displays in place for the tours. President Ciangi asked the Board for funds to get the windows cleaned, and the Board agreed on an expense anticipated to be about \$125.

The Collection Cataloging issue was discussed, and David McCord was asked to try scheduling a session to review the process, from artifact to computer database, so the process could get started in earnest.

The "Docent's Guide" needs to be updated. Things have changed in the house, and the existing paragraphs are no longer accurate. It's been suggested that the format be changed to include more of a "list format" for tour guides to follow as they take guests through the house and grounds. Stephanie VanderMolen will begin the editing and updating, and any interested members are invited to help.

President Ciangi presented the idea of a "new member packet" which could include some basic info on how a member can "get the most out of their involvement" as well as a short survey of what their specific interests or talents might be. Ideas on this will be discussed further.

The museum needs some sprucing up, including some serious vacuuming. This led to discussion of getting a "Shop Vac" for the ICHS, and donations will be sought from the membership for this. It should be a heavy-duty unit capable of wet or dry use. (Think "basement and carriage house.")

"Wouldn't it be nice if someone wanted to get the dumbwaiter working?"

David M. reports progress with the Youth Program - the "scavenger hunt" has been revised and copies will be available soon for public use. He has also come across a large box of handles suitable for making jump ropes! This could be an engaging activity for kids at some ICHS event as well as sellable souvenirs both historic and nostalgic. Stickers with our logo and space for pricing have been supplied by Joan McCord. Cub Scout Leaders Dawn and James Salyer put together a "Historical Scavenger Hunt" for their group which leads participants to historical markers throughout the community. They've given the text of this to D.M. and their permission to the ICHS to use it if they like. It will be reviewed to see if we can adapt it for a hand-out or

special activity.

Info about the Tri-River Group will be added to our website. Presently, the group has no web page of their own, and this will provide a central place to get contact info about the entire group for interested parties. A link from the home page and the event info on the ICHS calendar will be set up.

Ideas for Summer Sunday activities were discussed, including kid's activities on the lawn (croquet, hoops, jump ropes, etc.) and inviting musicians to entertain on the front steps. The possibility of an ice-cream social or picnic event was hit upon as well, and some dedicated use of the carriage house can be considered, too. Nothing definite was decided, but all are in favor of something of this type.

There is a quite a step developing in the stones of the front walk at the bottom of the steps. Members of the board will seek professional input on the best way to fix this, as it is becoming a tripping hazard.

President Ciangi also spoke about a program at the State of Michigan which will introduce a new vehicle license plate available with funds that will go toward historical grants. The Board agreed that we should keep watch of this program for potential funding.

Finally, the July Potluck was discussed briefly, with the idea that we might try putting together some entertainment or activity to make the event a bit more special this year.

The meeting was adjourned at approx. 9:10 p.m.

Upcoming Programs and Events

Thursday Evening Workshops at the Blanchard House.

This is a great way to get involved. Stop in - 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, May 3

"Spring Into The Past" Museum Tour
includes the Blanchard House

Wednesday, May 6

Regular Meeting at the Blanchard House
Program: **Cemetery Customs**, presented
by Deb Dudek, with Stephanie VanderMolen

Saturday, May 16

IONIA'S HISTORIC CHURCHES
Walking Tour - 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday, May 18

Board Meeting at the Blanchard House

AUGUST 16: SALUTE TO THE SUPERSTARS

LIVE Concert at the Ionia Theatre to benefit ICHS
See our website for more info & get your tickets now!

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

SPRING INTO THE PAST!

For the 7th year, the Tri-River Historical Museum Network will have their museums open for tours on Saturday and Sunday, May 2nd and 3rd, from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. There are 19 museums in the group, and each one is unique to its location. (Ionia's Blanchard House will not be open on the 2nd this year due to a private party being held there that day, but hosts will be eager to welcome you on Sunday afternoon.)

To encourage everyone to visit the museums, we are trying something new this year. When you visit your first museum, you pick up a "punch card". Then, during May, June, July, and August, you can have your card punched at each of the listed museums. Turn your card in by September 1st with your name and address attached at any of the Tri-River museums. On September 14th there will be a drawing for CASH PRIZES: \$200 for first, \$100 for second, and \$50 for third prize.

Remember that the museums are open regular hours throughout the summer in addition to the "Spring Into The Past" weekend! You will receive a brochure with your punch card with this information included. Enjoy your summer months with visits into history!

Participating museums are:

Alton Historic Church Museum, Lowell	Averill Historical Museum of Ada
Bowne Township Museum & School, Lowell area	Belding Belrockton Museum
Boston-Saranac Historic Depot	Cascade Historical Society
Charlton Park Museum & Historic Village, Hastings area	Pine Forest Museum, Edmore
Fallasburg Historic Village & School, Lowell area	Fighting Falcon Museum, Greenville
Blanchard House & Museum, Ionia	Lyons-Muir Museum, Lyons
Lake Odessa Historic Depot & Freight House	Freeport Museum
Oakfield Pioneer Heritage Museum, Greenville area	Lowell Area Historical Museum
Portland Area Historical Society at City Hall	

**More information can be found on-line at www.ioniahistory.org,
including contact information for these museums.**

Church Walk

Mark your calendars for May 16th!

Several Ionia churches are participating on May 16th, including some special celebrations. The doors will officially be open from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.





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 1776, Ionia, MI, 48846 or via www.ioniahistory.org.

Ionia County Historical Society
P.O. Box 1776
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 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!

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

April 30 – Greenville Gliders of World War II

May 7 – The Biltmore Mansion

May 14 – American Castles

May 21 – Jerusalem

May 28 – Costa Rica

June 4 – White House Miniature

June 11 – New Zealand

June 18 – Surprise Feature!

June 25 – Paris, France

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