



the **CHRONICLE**

The Almost Monthly Publication of
the Ionia County Historical Society



MINUTES of the April 2010 Mtg.

The ICHS meeting for April 2010 was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by president Linda Ciangi at the Blanchard House. She began with a welcome to new members Ruth Benjamin and Chuck Wren. It was moved by Cal Smith and supported by Kris Haskins to accept the Secretary's Report as published, which motion passed.

The subject of old business was commenced with thanks to Hank and Doni Knoop for chairing the Expo booth and to all who worked to make it a success. Also, thanks were extended to Hank, his nephew, and Kris H. for cleaning out the creek and other yard maintenance.

Thanks also to the Todd family for the Blanchard's red-rimmed china dishes - they are now on display in the dining room china closet. It been requested by Mr. Todd that the dishes be featured for a fund-raising event, which is being discussed.

And special thanks to Barb Hogan for her many hours and expertise in sorting, valuing, and cataloging the books from the "tea room." These books have been evaluated by the accessions committee — some will be sent to other area historical groups where they might be more relevant; some will be placed in the Blanchard House collection where they are relevant to the Blanchard House, the time period of the house's original occupancy (1880s), or relevant to Ionia history; some will be sold, either on eBay (for the more valuable books) or at our "yard sale" in June. Care has been taken to acknowledge and keep the books specifically donated where the donors can be identified. Barb Hogan has also cataloged the Blanchard family collection. Cal Smith wondered about period cook-

Continues on page 2

PLAY BALL!

Our guest presenter for the April meeting was Kris Haskins, ICHS Board member (*photo left*).

The origins of baseball are vague, but the stories of its origin are many. The earliest mention of a baseball-like game being played in the Americas was in the journals of Lewis and Clark, the famed explorers. In 1806, they recorded a game being played by the Nez Perce Indians involving hitting a ball with a stick! European roots include the game of "rounders" from Britain, of a general category of games involving "fielding, hitting, and running bases."

In the 1830s, the first teams in New York and Philadelphia were formed, and rules recorded. The Nickerbocker Club was formed in the 1840s in New York, and they published a widely accepted rule book in 1856 which marks the beginnings of the modern game of Baseball. The first National Association of Baseball Players was organized in Detroit in the early 1860s.

It is said that the War Between the States greatly influenced the spread of baseball, soldiers learning from each other the game and its variations. Certainly word-of-mouth was the first means of sharing the excitement of the game. But after the war, the newspapers began to take up an interest in the game.

In May 8, 1866, the Ionia County Sentinel published "a call for interest" to form a baseball club. By the end of May, the club was in place, its members being from the sociable strata of the community. Baseball, in its infancy, was less about competition and more about exercise. It was seen as a gentleman's pastime, to invigorate one's spirit and promote the best of health.

By June, the "Custer Baseball Club" included such dignitaries as J.H. Kidd (Retired Union General), J.C. Taylor (editor of the Sentinel), A.B. Morse (famed attorney), as well as prominent capitalists, industrialists, and bankers in the town. Soon after, a second club was formed in Ionia - the "Ionia Baseball Club" - because the Custer Club was full, limited to 40 members.

Neighboring towns formed up teams, and immediately began to organize games. On July 17, the Custer Club traveled to St. Johns to play the "Monitors." The temperature that day was near 100 degrees, according to General Kidd's journal. But the game was spirited and considered a success.

By the end of that year, there were 120 teams in Michigan, many sponsored by the newspapers. They quickly found that the performance of the various clubs were of interest to their readers. They would pour over the exploits of the teams in great detail, and folk began to turn out to support their favorites.

Younger clubs began to form up - youth and laborers - for whom the spirit of competition began to override the pleasantries of the game. The Ionia "Wolverines" was such a team. In a short time, winning began to take precedence over exercise.

Scoring in the early days was quite different than what we know today, hits and bases and catches all counting for something in the totals, and there were no innings.

Kris related many tales of Ionia Baseball clubs through the 1870s. The popularity of the games waxed and waned through the years, teams traveling the width and breadth of the state and beyond. A fascinating bit of history, Kris has written up his presentation - containing many more tales and much more information than what's published here - and says he will share this documentation with the Historical Society. Thanks to Kris for a great program!

"Lemon peel" Baseball from the 1860s



NEXT MONTH: MAY 5th— "The Journey of Ionia's Founders"
Presented by David and Annette McCord, relating the history and details
of the families who first settled the town of Ionia in May of 1833.

*April Meeting Minutes
continued from Page 1*

books for display in the Kitchen.

Hank Knoop then delivered the Treasurer's Report. It was moved by Stephanie Vandermolen and supported by Doni Knoop to accept the report, which passed. As always, detailed reports are available on request.

Under "new business," the board discussed a revision of the Historical Society's monthly meeting schedule. Secretary David McCord explained that the Board hopes to emphasize our mission of "sharing history" with the public by promoting the "first Wednesday" meetings as a venue for public programs, and promote them more deliberately to the community. This means also that we intend to minimize the amount of business conducted at these meetings, but to share as much information as possible on ICHS activities. The "third Wednesday" meetings, formerly referred to as "Board Meetings" will henceforth be called "Business Meetings," and all members and guests interested in the business of the Society will be encouraged to attend. These meetings will focus on "running the organization" and discuss funding, maintenance, policies, committees, and such. This change will take effect with the April "business" meeting, and if it proves to be effective and generally accepted, the plan will continue. As presented to the membership, this idea was generally accepted.

President Ciangi thanked the Thursday evening work crews for their efforts, including cleaning, sorting, and painting. The east parlor is more representative of the Law Office as it was originally used, including books shelves and writing desk. These cabinets contain books relevant to Ionia's history, accessible for researchers and interested visitors. The tea room floor has been painted and the furnishings are being rearranged somewhat to conform to the theme of the "tea room." The Michigan Artists paintings will again be proudly displayed here as well.

There are new fliers for the Johnny Cash Tribute concert coming up in August for anyone who has a place they can be put up. Brochures were also distributed for the Heartlands millage campaign.

Upcoming events include Tour Guide orientation on Monday, April 12, at 2:00 and 7:00 p.m. presented by Joan McCord. On April 24 from 1:00 to 4:00 will be an "Antiques Roadshow Appraisal" at the Commission on Aging. Joe & Joan McCord chair this event, Bob & Joan Nixon will act as cashiers, and thanks to appraiser Glen Rairigh for his generosity and expertise.

President Ciangi asked the Board to gather for a brief meeting following the night's program if possible. The meeting was then adjourned for refreshments, with the evening's program immediately following. (See story - page one.)

MINUTES of the April 7 Board Mtg.

The Board of the ICHS met immediately following the April 7 meeting to discussed a list of issues of immediate import. Present were Linda C., Stephanie V., Barb E. and Kris H.

With the M-21 detour set for April through Sept, there will be more traffic on Adams Street. The suggestion has been put forth that a sign be posted on or near the back fence, and the sign in the back of the house needs to be refurbished. Also mentioned would be the use of the ICHS logo on the signs.

A County-wide tourism council is being explored under the auspices of the Economic Development office. Linda C. attended the April 1 organizational meeting to represent the ICHS.

A letter has been drafted to send to area funeral directors and churches to offer the Blanchard House for funeral luncheons. We have hosted several recently which have been successful. The Board also voted to offer the Blanchard House for rent all year 'round, including the winter months.

The RAVE wine-and-cheese tasting party will be on May 14. This requires a vote of the Board to allow, which was approved (as has been before).

The House is rented for April 24th for a Prom Party - Linda C. will attend on behalf of the ICHS.

The rental to Ventra for their business meeting did not work out, but their representative suggested that we institute a "meeting rate" to rent rooms of the house for professional use. They also suggested we name the rooms. On a related subject, the City of Ionia website includes a link for local meeting rooms, and the Blanchard House should be listed also. This will be relayed to webmaster David McCord.

The "tea room" refurb is under way - furnishings moved for painting the floor, books sorted, etc. In that room is a four-piece settee which Barb Ehlert has offered to recover. The Board approved the idea, pending the selection of period fabric.

There is a Train Show coming up in Toledo where they have offered to include ICHS brochures. The suggestion was made to put together something special for them if possible (if there's time), but in any case, to send some of our "standard" brochure.

Joan McCord's "tour guide training" is coming up. The Board wondered about audio recording of the tour information for further training and possible self-guided tours. Again, David McCord will be contacted to check on the possibilities for this. Other historic "interviews" could be conducted as well.

An estimate is in the works to have the carpets cleaned - the cost will be shared with the Board and duly voted upon before a contract is agreed to. Martin's Lawn Care will be engaged to mow and trim this year. This decision was based on research by Kris Haskins, and approved by the Board.

The Board then adjourned until the "Business Meeting" to be held April 21.

MINUTES of the April 21 "Business Meeting"

The Business Meeting of the ICHS was brought to order by President Ciangi at 7:10 p.m. on Wednesday, April 21, at the Blanchard House. Also present were Directors Stephanie Vandermolen, Barb Ehlert, Kris Haskins, and Kathleen Larock, plus Secretary David McCord and members Joe & Joan McCord.

The board voted to place a sign on the tool shed, prominently displaying our logo to the Adams Street traffic, as well as preparing a sign for the south fence with hours of operation and web address upon it. Member Brian Quinn has offered to work on the signage.

Linda C. shared some information about the County Tourism Council being organized by the ICEA (director, Diane Smith). Linda will continue to represent the ICHS at these meetings for the time being, and keep us informed.

A draft of the letter to area funeral directors and churches was passed around for comment. This letter introduces the Blanchard House as a location for funeral luncheons and wakes, etc. The Board approved the wording, and Linda will pursue this further. Joan McCord suggested that the "capacity" figure in the letter for the number of guests in the house should be verified with the Fire Marshal; that the number used to be different than the "82" suggested in the letter.

The allowance for wine in the house by the RAVE group requires a vote of the Board. It was moved by Stephanie and supported by Kris to allow the wine, and passed.

The Board discussed the idea of naming the rooms for meetings and other reference. It was suggested that the members be polled for their ideas on the subject. It was also discussed to establish \$150 rental rate for meetings that would only use a room or two in the house, but not voted upon.

Barb Hogan has offered to help sell the more valuable books which the Accessions Committee has decided could be sold. She will be contacted on this subject.

Barb E.'s offer to reupholster the settee in the "tea room" was discussed briefly. Barb will research some fabrics for the project and they will be brought to the members for their consideration.

Stephanie will forward some information - fliers / brochures - to the Train Show in Toledo (as noted elsewhere).

Joan McCord was on site for "tour guide training" but only two members attended (the 7:00 p.m. session). She expressed disappointment in the condition of the house - furnishings and artifacts in disarray - for the training session. She'd hoped the advanced planning (months ago) would have ensured a better setting for the training. Future training will be planned as opportunity permits. Joe McCord (the younger) will offer his digital recorder for future narratives and interviews. (It's battery-operated and records onto

memory cards.)

The estimate for rug-cleaning all the lower floors is \$89.00. The Board approved this expense, and Linda C. will follow up.

There is a tree that needs trimming, and Sayers has given us a quote for \$150 to do the job. The Board discussed alternate services, and Hank will be asked to contact them for competitive bids. On a related note, there is fertilizer in the shed now for the lawn, but a spreader is needed - and someone to operate it! McCords have a spreader, if someone will volunteer to do the work.

All is set for May 1 & 2 for the "Spring Into The Past" including the punch cards and brochures (given to Barb Ehlert, the ICHS chair for the event). Volunteers are needed to staff the house that day. Joan McCord has put a display on Main Street for the event.

The Appraisal is all set for April 24, as noted elsewhere.

The Antique Village display for the Free Fair MAY be moved into the Floral Building. Apparently, this is still being discussed by the Fair Board. Doni and Hank Knoop are the chairpersons for our participation in this event. Any news forthcoming on the subject should be shared with them.

The decision needs to be made regarding the flowering plants for the front of the house. After some discussion, the Board agreed to let Kathleen L. make the decision and contact the Garden Club to implement it.

Doni K. asked the board for \$25 to promote the upcoming "yard sale" to be held at the Carriage House on June 11. The Board wished to have more information on the use of the \$25 before the vote is taken. City regulations for "yard sale" signage was discussed briefly, and the opportunities for free (or nearly free) promotion also mentioned.

Kathleen L. distributed copied of the updated By-Laws to the Board members for their review. These need to be approved by the Board to be in effect, which will happen at a future meeting after all have read this new version.

The Ladies' Literary Club met at the Blanchard House recently, and Linda C. brought out many artifacts from our collections related to this organization. She discovered a box of old financial records of the organization, and their disposal was discussed. The Literary Club doesn't want them. The Accessions Committee needs to review them before action is taken. These artifacts remain on display for the time being in the Parlor.

There are some artifacts that we would like to have appraised. Joan McCord will take them to the Appraisal Roadshow to see if Mr. Rairigh will give a verbal appraisal there.

The schedule for the Summer Sundays entertainments and programs were briefly discussed, and Joan McCord, Stephanie V. and Kris H. will have the schedule published when verified.

Saturday, June 26, is Alumni

Weekend in Ionia. The Class of '48 would like to visit the Blanchard House, which the Board approved.

Kris H. noted that he is not on the mailing list for the e-mails that come from the website. David M. will fix that.

Tuesday, May 11, the "Creative Works" class would like to host an activity on the Blanchard House grounds - something with lawn games. Stephanie V. will follow up, and David M. will donate the use of his Bocci set.

On May 12, the Hospital Auxiliary will meet at the Blanchard House, and would like a tour. Linda C. will follow up.

Stephanie got a call from the Ionia Community Theatre about the previously-discussed "Murder Mystery Dinner" idea. They would like to discuss this opportunity further, and Steph will report their conclusions to the Board.

Monday, June 7th, will be the Hamilton Book Signing - J & J McCord are hosting this, and all are invited.

July 21, the Grand River Canoe Excursion will be stopping at the Fair Grounds, and actor Jeff Daniels is scheduled to appear at the Ionia Theatre on August 22. The "Upstairs Downtown" tour is being planned for October again, as well.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

SPRING INTO THE PAST!

The Tri-River Historical Museum Network will have their museums open for tours on Saturday and Sunday, May 1st and 2nd, 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.

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; Fallsburg 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 info can be found on-line at www.ioniahistory.org, including contact information for these museums.

Upcoming Programs and Events

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

Saturday, May 1 & Sunday, May 2
 "Spring Into The Past" Museum Tours
 at the Blanchard House and other area museums.
 Volunteers and Visitors Welcomed!

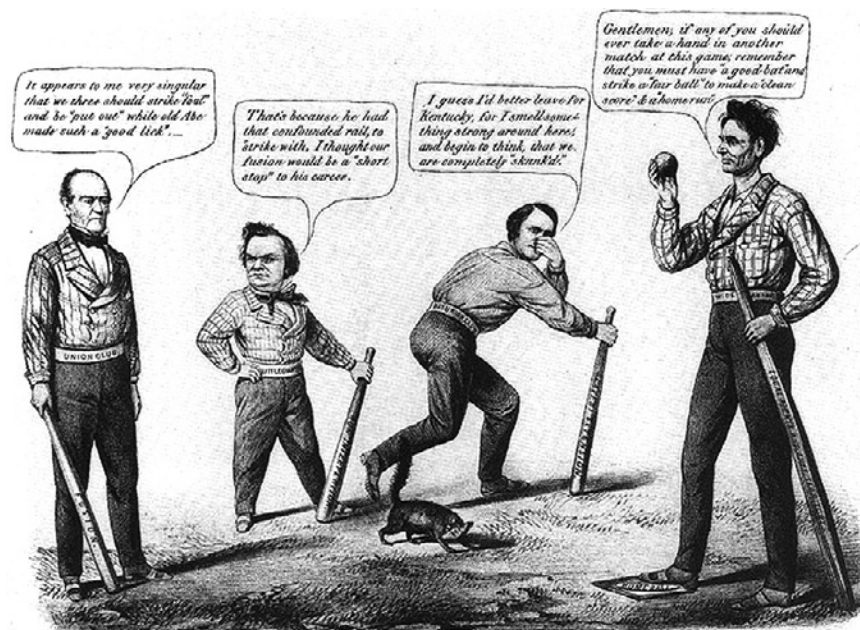
Wednesday, May 5, 7:00 p.m.
 Monthly Program at the Blanchard House
 "The Journey of the Dexter Colony, 1833"
 presented by David & Annette McCord

Wednesday, May 19, 7:00 p.m.
 Monthly Business Meeting at the
 Blanchard House

Monday, June 7
 Author R.L. Hamilton Book Signing
 (a newly released novel of the Civil War)
 at the Blanchard House

August 14, 8:00 p.m. at the Ionia Theatre:
TRIBUTE to JOHNNY CASH
 with Terry Lee Goffee - at the Ionia Theatre
 Proceeds to the Theatre and ICHS!

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



THE NATIONAL GAME. THREE "OUTS" AND ONE "RUN".
 ABRAHAM WINNING THE BALL.

We don't often think of Abraham Lincoln associated with baseball! This cartoon from the late 1850s (left) depicts Mr. Lincoln's winning the Republican nomination for President.

Here, too, is a reprint from the Ionia Sentinel, written by one of the old players looking back from August 28, 1874:

"The baseball fever is reviving here once more, and we may soon look for the usual procession of limping, black-eyed, big-knuckled youths, whose devotion to the "noble game" is loyal to the death. As for us, we have been thru it—have traveled a hundred miles to play a match, then returned totally blind, with a baseball in one eye and a cinder in the other, and been accused of having "been on a bum," when under a training that allowed no stimulants and scarcely a full meal. We have had our fingers knocked out of joint by a "fly," and suddenly jerked back by a comrade; have stood on base and had heel-spikes run thru our foot; have been knocked down by a bat and after all our personal sufferings, lost the game by a shamefully partisan ruling of the umpire; and we have had enough of such fun! We are willing to retire on the glory won, and leave the bat and ball to be wielded by younger men who have no families dependent on them, to mourn their loss in case of their untimely death. It is an interesting game, and we love to look on and see some other man get a punch in the groin, or a "daisy cutter" on the nose, or a "hot one" in the stomach. We love to see 'em climb for first base, or chase a long fly, on a broiling hot day. But we don't hanker to do so ourselves. The memory of the time when we used to beat the Grand Rapids boys at every match is enough for us, and we resign in favor of younger and more active muscle."



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 29 — Seven Wonders of the World

May 6 — March of the Penguins

May 13 — Spain

May 20 — Greece

May 27 — Grand Rapids Made

June 3 — A Taste of Holland

June 10 — Gettysburg

June 17 — Egypt

Ionia County Historical Society 2009-10 Board of Directors & Officers

Linda Ciangi, President — 527-4945
 Kathleen Perrin, Vice Pres. — 616-675-4618
 Kris Haskins, Director — 989-855-3685
 Stephanie VanderMolen — 616-755-0731
 Barb Ehlert, Director — 522-0844
 David McCord, Secretary — 527-3784
 Hank Knoop, Treasurer — 527-3130