



the CHRONICLE

The Almost Monthly Publication of
the Ionia County Historical Society



Happy Holidays!

Pictured here: Christmas Morning in 1866, from the cover of Harper's Illustrated Magazine. As we enter into this sacred and festive season, the Ionia County Historical Society is remembering a year of many accomplishments, experiences, and progress in the fulfillment of our mission. We look forward as well to a new year of greater opportunities as we strive to enhance the quality of our community.

In October -

The official "Annual Meeting of the Ionia County Historical Society" was called to order at approximately 7:00 p.m. on October 1st 2014. The corporate by-laws call for a very specific procedure to be followed, which was reviewed by President Linda Ciangi. It was moved by Phil Kahl to bypass the roll call, reading of public notice, reading of the 2013 annual meeting minutes, and annual officer reports, and to proceed directly to the election of Board members. This was supported by Dave Cook and passed by the assembled members. There were two seats on the Board of Directors up for election, and both Ally Cook and Patty Simpson-Goeke had been nominated to continue their service in that position. It was moved by Dave White and supported by Phil Kahl to record a unanimous ballot for both, and the members passed the motion. The Board of Directors are tasked to meet at their earliest convenience to elect officers for the coming year, and the next Business Meeting was announced for October 15 at the Blanchard House, all interested persons being invited. The ICHS Annual Meeting was then adjourned.

In other news...

The following paragraphs are gleaned from the minutes of the ICHS meetings for October and November of 2014. The detailed minutes from the general meetings, board meetings, and special committee proceedings are all available upon request from the Secretary. Likewise, detailed reports from the Treasurer can also be requested if so desired. — D.M.

Directly after the Annual Meeting, President Ciangi called the regular monthly meeting to order, welcoming guests and



members. She delivered a list of thank-yous to the Board and Officers, to key committee members, and the volunteers who supported the Society over the past year. She reviewed the major events and activities for the past year: fund-raising, public presentations, participation in community events. There were also a number of projects and maintenance challenges at the Blanchard House, new acquisitions, donations, and opportunities as well. She specifically thanked: Barb Hogan for her diligence in sorting and cataloging the growing ICHS collections; Barb Ehlert for managing the rentals and events at the House; Gordon Wright for helping with so many tasks throughout the year;

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For the November 5th meeting, we welcomed former Belding resident Al Bryant as our guest speaker. Al has been a career librarian, and now in his retirement travels around the state doing historic presentations on a wide variety of subjects. The theme for this visit was:



“A Brief Overview of America’s Fraternal Organizations”

Al had served for many years as the director of the Michigan Masonic Library in Grand Rapids, and became well educated not only in Masonic history but in the history of many other fraternal organizations. He put together a fascinating presentation on the subject, focusing on the growth and near-disappearance of dozens of such organizations over the past 200 years or so.

He made it clear that the vast majority of these groups were not “Secret Societies” in that they were never secret. In fact, they were very public, and their members extremely proud of their affiliations and community services. Rather, these were “Societies with Secrets” which lent a degree of seriousness and solemnity to their core principles. On the

other hand, Al pointed out that a few of the more obscure clubs of the past two centuries were much less successful - sometimes even abject failures.

Most such organizations, from the Grange to the Woodmen to the Elks and I.O.O.F., were originally folks banding together for personal enrichment and mutual support. In more than a few cases, this included a common fund for private insurance and old-age pensions. And many of them discovered too late that volunteer organizations are poor vehicles for serious financial endeavors.

Al shared stories of a host of different clubs founded on various scriptural foundations, biblical heroes and stories of valor and personal integrity. Addressing the questions from the floor, he explained many of the concepts behind rituals, rites, and the famous “secret handshakes” which were part of nearly all such groups. There are few surviving into the 21st century. Some have evolved into genuine insurance companies and community service groups, de-emphasizing their spiritual and moral focus. But some are still solidly centered on their mission of brotherhood and virtue.

Many thanks to Al for his fascinating and entertaining stories of what was once a major part of every community. We look forward to his next visit (he promised to return) with another fascinating topic!



Historical Society Raffle! “Home and Away”

...with Two Exciting First Prizes!

PRIZE PACKAGE 1:

Dinner for 10
catered at the
Blanchard House
by Olivera’s

PRIZE PACKAGE 2:

Gift Certificates:
\$100 Gas Card
\$50 Aunt Stephanie’s
\$50 Ionia Theatre

Tickets are \$1 each, 6 Tickets for \$5, or 25 for \$20!
Contact a Historical Society member to get yours!
Drawing will be held at the Blanchard House on
The drawing date is June 21, 2015, at 4:00 pm.

News (continues from page 1)

Hank Knoop for the many tours (some very “last-minute”) that he conducts; and the Keeper of the Crows for their support. In all, Linda conveyed thanks from the Board for all the members’ dedicated service and our Business Buddies support.

The Mystery Theater Company of Grand Rapids held a photo shoot at the Blanchard House, staging scenes invoking the classic mystery stories. They presented this showcase of these photos at a fund-raising dinner at Pietro’s in G.R. — great publicity for the Blanchard House.

The Cemetery Tour was held on the afternoon of Sunday Oct. 12th. It was a beautiful day at Highland Park where volunteers presented biographical presentations of eight of Ionia’s citizens interred at the cemetery. The event was well attended, and enjoyed by all, with thanks to the presenters and refreshments committee! Thanks also to the Ionia Free Fair for the use of the “people-mover” and to Ionia Township for their support of the event. All are looking forward to next year!

Carpet in the Master Bedroom has been laid in. There was a generous anonymous donation made to replace the 80-year-old carpeting that was disintegrating rapidly in that room. The furnishings will all be back in place in time for the Christmas decorations and holiday tour schedule.

“Home and Away” Raffle = Dinner for 10 at the B-House by Olivera’s PLUS a second first prize of \$100 gas + \$50 Aunt Stephanie’s + \$50 Theater Coupon. (See ad on page 2.)

Tours and Guests included visiting descendants of the Blanchard family, a visitor from Belgium, historic organizations from neighboring communities, and many local families and their guests.

Joshua Pardon’s Documentary on the history of the Ypsilanti Reed / Mitchell Bentley / GenCorp business is beginning to take shape. His students will be interviewing former employees in January.

Ionia Free Fair Centennial Book project - Deadlines in November called for a preliminary round of photos and captions to be submitted. Goose Elliot has been scanning and photographing images from the IFF archives, and other volunteers have been sorting and categorizing the hundreds (perhaps thousands) of photos and documents. 35mm slides are being scanned, too, and the publisher seems to be pleased with the production quality so far.

Blanchard House maintenance projects include evidence of roof leaks in the master bedroom and water in the basement. Greg Cook has been asked to take a look and give us recommendations to affect repairs. The repair and re-installation of the railing on the front steps has been delayed indefinitely as the person doing the work was called away on another project. (Please watch your step!) Work on museum displays continues with some refurbishing and repairs as well. There remains a long list of projects to maintain and keep the house in good order. As always, volunteers are welcomed!

Programs are being lined up now for the 2015 season:

January - visit to Jane and Mark Horrock’s home

February - The First Christian Church in Muir

March - TBD, refreshments by ?

April - TBD, refreshments by Patty S-G

May - “The Amazing Month of April, 1865” by David McCord, refreshments by Kathleen Cook

June - “The Marx Brothers” presented by Al Bryant

Plans are in the works to produce a new “throw” - a blanket woven with images of local historic buildings. Some members will recall that one was done previously and was a very popular project. It has been suggested that we might even do two - one

with local landmarks and another with only Free Fair buildings. More to come as cost estimates are gathered.

It was mentioned that the new hospital gift shop may stock some ICHS souvenirs for sale. Laurie Tjalsma at the hospital has contact the ICHS about some vintage healthcare artifacts that might enhance our historical collection. Arrangements are being made to receive these donations.

Gordon Wright continued from the initial research done by Laurie and Dave White regarding the improvement of the ICHS phone system. Through some negotiation, a deal has been struck with AT&T to install a “land line” link with the existing security system, a new wireless service into the Blanchard House, as well as a WiFi connection for computer users inside the house. This is great news for those folks doing research and correspondence at the House.

A contract has been signed for snow removal for the winter, once again working with C&L Trucking. There had been some talk to work again with inmates from the county jail, but their help can’t be counted upon (since it’s strictly a volunteer program).

Other donations from various estates and local families are adding some precious items to the collection. Part of the challenge is finding places to keep them, time to catalog and properly preserve them, and ultimately to display or store them. These acquisitions include a number of items from the Community Library, including a large desk/bookcase that belonged to Fredrick Hall who built the home which now houses our library.

The Holiday season began with a “gift bazaar” at the Blanchard House on the afternoon of November 30th. Several local non-profit organizations have decorated the Blanchard House for the Holiday season. Each organization chose a room of the House to decorate, and include a small display describing their organization’s mission in the community. The public will be welcomed on Sunday afternoon through December between 1:00 and 4:00. Some of the ICHS members who portrayed historic persons at the Cemetery Tour in October will reprise their roles for our guests on those Sunday afternoons.



100 Years Ago...



Image above is from *The Illustrated London News* of January 9, 1915: “British and German Soldiers Arm-in-Arm Exchanging Headgear: A Christmas Truce between Opposing Trenches” The **Christmas Truce** was a series of widespread but unofficial ceasefires along the Western Front. Men from both sides ventured into “no man’s land” on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day to mingle and exchange food and souvenirs. There were joint burial ceremonies and prisoner swaps, while several meetings ended in carol-singing. Men played games of football with one another, captured in one of the truce’s most enduring images. (There’s also a wonderful movie about this event!-DM)

Upcoming Programs and Events

Wednesday, January 7, 7:00 p.m.

The meeting will be held at the home of
Mark and Jane Horrocks
3370 N. State Rd.

Wednesday, January 21, 7:00 p.m.

Business Meeting — Location TBD

Wednesday, February 4, 7:00 p.m.

The meeting will be held at the
First Christian Church of Muir
138 W. Garden St.

Wednesday, February 18, 7:00 p.m.

Business Meeting — Location TBD

Wednesday, March 4, 7:00 p.m.

Meeting Program and location TBD

Saturday, March 15 — Ionia Expo

Wednesday, March 18, 7:00 p.m.

Business Meeting at the Blacnhard House.

Wednesday, April 1, 7:00 p.m.

Meeting will be held at the Blacnhard House
(No Foolin!)

Also coming in April:

“Appraisal Road Show”

at the Ionia Commission on Aging

Wednesday, May 7, 7:00 p.m.

Program at the Blanchard House

“The News of April 1865” by David McCord.

Also coming in May: “Spring Into The Past”

Tri-River Museum Tours

And once again, in June:

Annual ICHS Yard Sale



Check www.ioniahistory.org, and
LIKE US ON FACEBOOK!



200 Years Ago...

In 1814, with the downfall of Napoleon, the British were able to allocate more military resources to the American war, and Washington, D.C., fell to the British in August. In Washington, British troops burned the White House, the Capitol, and other buildings in retaliation for the earlier burning of government buildings in Canada by U.S. soldiers. The British soon retreated, however, and Fort McHenry in Baltimore harbor withstood a massive British bombardment that inspired Francis Scott Key to pen the “Star-Spangled Banner.”

On September 11, 1814, the tide of the war turned when Thomas Macdonough’s American naval force won a decisive victory at the Battle of Plattsburg Bay on Lake Champlain. A large British army under Sir George Prevost was thus forced to abandon its invasion of the U.S. northeast and retreat to Canada. The American victory on Lake Champlain led to the conclusion of U.S.-British peace negotiations in Belgium, and on December 24, 1814, the Treaty of Ghent was signed, ending the war. Although the treaty said nothing about two of the key issues that started the war—the rights of neutral U.S. vessels and the impressment of U.S. sailors—it did open up the Great Lakes region to American expansion and was hailed as a diplomatic victory in the United States.

News of the treaty took almost two months to cross the Atlantic, and British forces were not informed of the end of hostilities in time to end their drive against the mouth of the Mississippi River. On January 8, 1815, a large British army attacked New Orleans and was decimated by an inferior American force under General Andrew Jackson in the most spectacular U.S. victory of the war. The American public heard of the Battle of New Orleans and the Treaty of Ghent at approximately the same time, fostering a greater sentiment of self-confidence and shared identity throughout the young republic.



150 Years Ago...

“I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, do hereby appoint and set apart the last Thursday in November next as a day which I desire to be observed by all my fellow-citizens, wherever they may then be, as a day of thanksgiving and praise to Almighty God, the beneficent Creator and Ruler of the Universe.” This is an excerpt from “Proclamation 118” signed by President Lincoln on October 20, 1864. (Did anyone realize that this year was the 150th anniversary of that holiday?)

November of 1864 was significant in many respects, not the least of which was the re-election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency in the midst of the war. Much of his support was due to the victories of the Union in their invasion of the Confederacy under General Grant’s leadership. Battles and skirmishes occurred throughout the war zone as well as along the blockade

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150 Years Ago (from page 5)

lines in the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. A Confederate plot to burn New York City failed, although some damage was done to property and morale. General Sherman's invasion forces got underway during November with the objective of disrupting southern supply lines and taking the city of Atlanta.

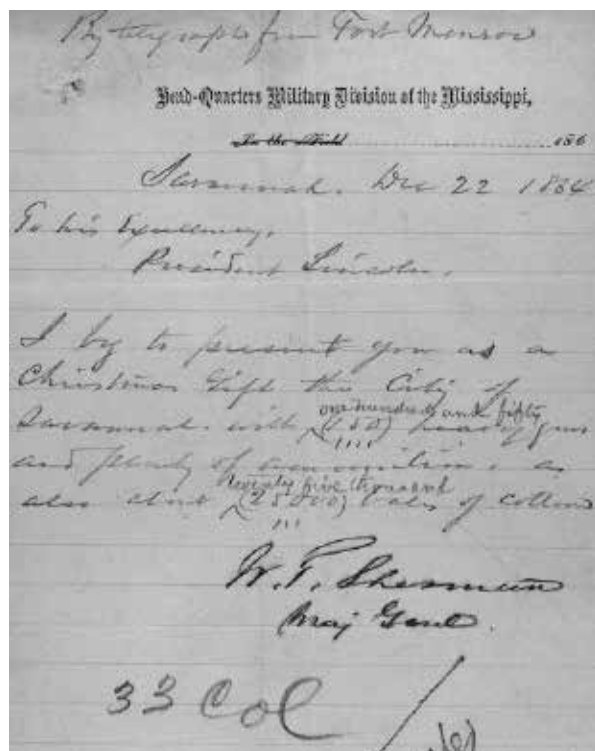
Though many military units were looking forward to digging in to winter quarters, major troop movements continued through the cold and snowfall of December. Supplying Sherman's great campaign was just one of many difficult tasks for the Union. In the Confederacy, the closing year brought continued desperation on both military and civilian fronts. General Longstreet's return to command and Jubal Early's defense of Richmond notwithstanding, the morale of the southern military was wavering. The Congress of the CSA was beginning to grab at radical solutions, including conscription of blacks into their armed forces, increased in-kind taxation, and near worthless paper money. President Jefferson Davis was inundated with letters from all strata of southern society.

A short telegram (right), from William Tecumseh Sherman to Abraham Lincoln, is dated December 22, 1864. "I

beg to present you as a Christmas gift the city of Savannah with 150 heavy guns and plenty of ammunition and also about 25,000 bales of cotton," Sherman wrote. The brief message came as a huge relief to Lincoln, who had been out of touch with Sherman for several weeks, since the major general had departed from Atlanta on his March to the Sea.

Sherman had fought for this plan, which involved severing 62,000 Union troops from supply lines and communications. His two columns of Union men conducted a campaign of fear, moving toward Savannah while destroying military targets and punishing civilians who tried to resist.

In a reply to the telegram that's dated December 26, 1864, Lincoln wrote: "Many, many thanks for your Christmas gift." He admitted to having been "anxious, if not fearful" when Sherman left Atlanta, but had decided to trust his general: "Feeling that you were the better judge, and remembering that 'nothing risked, nothing gained,' I did not interfere." The plot



having succeeded, Lincoln added, "the honor is all yours."

Georgians, naturally, saw things differently. Although Savannah surrendered relatively easily, the "March to the Sea" with its psychological affect on civilian support for the Confederacy, lives in Southern memory as one of the cruelest campaigns of the Civil War.



Just a few of the many things available at the Blanchard House / Ionia Museum Gift Shop.



The Journey of the Dexter Colony, 1833, by David and Annette McCord. A detailed history of the settling of Ionia.

\$12 each (\$15 with postage)

A History of Bertha Brock Park on its 80th "Birthday" by David McCord.
\$6 each



Walking Tour of Historic Downtown Ionia - 40-pages of history by David McCord.
\$5 each



DVD Video souvenirs!

• **'Sno Wonder DVD – 1936 Ionia County Road Commission + 1940 Bertha Brock Snow Festival**

Short films that show us a glimpse of the challenges and the fun of Winters in Ionia County a generation ago.

• **1939 "We're In The Movies"** A promotional film produced by Ionia businesses and organizations. It's a wonderful look into our town over 70 years ago.

• **1950s Home Show and Free Fair Movies**

• **1976 U.S. Bicentennial in Ionia**

• **1937 Ionia Airport Inaugural plus Bertha Brock Park's 1940 "Winter Festival"**

• **1973 Ionia Centennial Documentary**

• **"Ionia's First 150 Years" and "Ionia - A Look Back" - Documentaries by Monroe MacPherson**

DVDs are available for \$10 each!

ALSO AVAILABLE:

Reproductions of historic Ionia publications –

• **1887 "Headlight Flashes" Special Edition**

• **1907 Ionia Souvenir Book**

• **1973 Ionia City Centennial Program Book**



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!**

January 8 — The Story of Silent Night

January 15 — Blue Angels in Flight

January 22 — Venice to the Nile

January 29 — Zoo Life

February 5 — Hawaii - Paradise Sought

February 12 - Hawaii - Paradise Found

Ionia County Historical Society 2014-15 Board of Directors & Officers

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