



the **CHRONICLE**
 The Almost Monthly Publication of
 the Ionia County Historical Society



Yes, it's been a while...

Dear friends of Ionia History — Thanks for your patience in this busy season. The objective to publish an “Almost Monthly” Newsletter for the Ionia County Historical Society has completely gotten away from me this year. I apologize for the lapse. As yet, there are still only 24 hours in a day (although I've petitioned for that to be increased as soon as possible).

Meanwhile, there have been many great ICHS activities and community events to report, as well as programs and projects at the Blanchard House. I will try to summarize the seasons' highlights here and enumerate the upcoming activities as well.

The last Chronicle to be published was in April (!), so there are four months' of stuff to report. I'll begin with our presentations at the regular “first Wednesday” meetings each month:

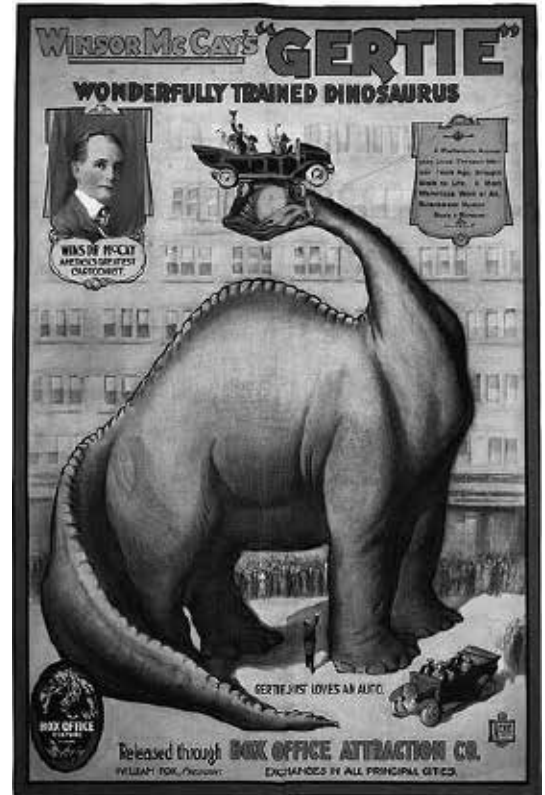
THE MONTHLY PROGRAMS —

In May, I presented the members with a pair of biographies, the first being Zenas Winsor (one of Ionia's first settlers) and his adventurous career in West Michigan and beyond. The second was the story of Zenas Winsor McCay, so named in honor of the Ionia pioneer by an employee - Robert McCay. Later dropping the “Zenas” from his name, Winsor McCay became one of the premier cartoonists, illustrators, and animators in America - credited with pioneering the field of moving pictures during the earliest years of the field. Winsor McCay was raised in Spring Lake, MI, and his family later moved to Edmore, where their tombstones can be seen today.

The program for June was on the history of Magic presented by Dave Odette - a professional magician himself. Dave shared some of his collection of century-old promotional posters, books, and devices used in the performance



Zenas G. Winsor, Ionia pioneer (above), and Winsor McCay poster (right). Promotional poster of a famous late-19th century female magician named Ionia. (She never performed in the United States, according to Dave O.)



of “prestidigitation” and “legerdemain.” In addition to the ancient mystical arts associated with the field, he told us about the great magicians of the past 200 years, from the earliest illusions to the modern Las Vegas-style spectacles. Dave also pointed out that the state of Michigan is significant in the history of the subject. He ended his presentation with a few demonstrations of “table magic” to the delight of the audience.

In July, the members of the ICHS gathered for the annual Independence Day Pot Luck at the Blanchard House—a social event for members to share stories and discuss the ICHS and its projects.

The August program was intended to be a viewing of some 35mm slides from the collection of Monroe MacPherson, but yours truly botched the plans entirely, having misplaced the power cord for the projector. So the meeting was less formal than we'd planned, and that program was rescheduled to fill the September bill.

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Several exciting presentations are being planned for the coming months. As is our usual practice, the meetings for January, February and March will be held at a different location - still to be confirmed. (All other monthly programs are hosted at the Blanchard House.)

EVENTS —

Looking back at the April edition of the Chronicle, you'll see that plans were under way for the "Spring Into The Past" museum tours in early May. As usual, the ICHS participated in this widespread open house with 22 other Mid-Michigan museums. Shortly thereafter, the Upstairs-Downtown Tours were held again in Ionia's business district, with a very good turn-out (despite threatening weather).

June brought the annual "Yard Sale and Antique Fayre" at the Blanchard House, which was a great success once again. There was also a Silent Auction to raise funding for the ICHS, and the usual Summer Sundays and other tour groups through the house and museum. The ICHS participated in the Wizard of Oz Weekend, hosting part of the event's costume contest.

The focus for July was on the Antique Village display at the Ionia Free Fair, including booths filled with artifacts from many area Historical groups. The Historical Society Board approved a project to put together a commemorative publication on the Ionia Free Fair's 100th Year, 2015 (watch for more info coming soon) and this project was "kicked off" in July.

August focused on visitors to the Blanchard House - tour groups from Cub Scouts to families to visiting antique car clubs came to the house to learn about our community's fascinating stories.

PROJECTS —

Displays within the house continued to evolve during the summer months. Most noticeable is the new carpeting in the front parlor. Donations are still being accepted to cover the last of the cost for this project. The gardens and grounds have seen some changes, as well as some within the house. The church organ that came to us from Muir some years ago has been moved into a new home - back into a church in Muir! In addition, the desk top that came from



4th of July, 1834, in New York City.

the State Capitol (following the remodel in the 1950s) has been turned over to the State Historical Commission. Displays in the basement of the house also continue to be refined, keeping visits fresh for returning guests and allowing the ICHS to display more and more artifacts.

The Historical Society is privileged to be custodians of many of the area's most precious historical records and information. In that role, the organization has acquired many, many boxes of new materials to be cataloged. Much of this is well organized, but still must be inventoried. (If anyone is interested in helping with this task, please contact the board!)

Throughout all these months, a host of small activities, chores, and improvements continue to be made. All the members of the ICHS - whether you donate money, time, talent, or ideas - are very much appreciated by the

community and our guests. Those of us who host visitors to the Blanchard House will attest to the universal positive comments we get from everyone, and (having no governmental support) we know that all this is possible because of our contributors. As always, there is never a shortage of work to be done! So if you would like to help, please contact a board member today.

COMING UP —

In the coming months, there are many recurring events as well as some new projects on our calendar. Here are a few of the highlights:

September will bring the annual Duck Race at the Bertha Brock Park's Fall Festival, Sept 20th. This event raises significant funds for the ICHS to see us through the coming season, so please support this fun family event.

The month of **October** is filling up fast. The first Wednesday meeting will be the Annual Business Meeting



and Election of two Directors to the Board. This is an opportunity to review the past year's activities - what was successful as well as what we learned from our mistakes. This is also the time to look forward to the coming year and talk about new ideas as well as improving upon the old ones. The Tri-River Museum Group (of which we are members) is arranging a bus trip to visit several northern Michigan museums on October 14th. October will also bring the fourth annual Cemetery Tour - that committee is still looking for some helping hands for the event, if you're interested.

November's Wednesday program will be "Secret Societies of the 19th Century" presented by Al Bryant, formerly of Ionia County. Late November harkens the beginning of the holiday season, and there are great plans in the works to attract folks to the Blanchard House for the holidays.

The December meeting is our traditional Holiday Pot Luck, and members are invited to bring along interesting stories, pictures, and artifacts related to the holiday. As usual, we'll be participating in the Mrs. Clause Bazaar and other seasonal traditions this year.

On a more mundane topic, the Blanchard House is, after all, a 134-year-old house. There are many maintenance issues that require labor, and sometimes professional help, to keep the house "healthy" and the collections within our care in good order. The third Wednesday of every month is when the Board conducts its business meeting. This is where all these essentials are discussed and arrangements made to maintain our precious historic site. If any reader of this publication would like to become involved in this process, please stop in at one of those meetings. Many hands make light work, as the saying goes, and with a few more volunteer hours each month we can make a huge difference in our organization and in our community. Thanks to everyone who does contribute in whatever way you can!

SPECIAL NOTE:

Minutes of the summer's meetings, as well as copies of the Treasurer's Reports, are available on request from the Secretary and Treasurer of the ICHS.

The Historical Society gets plenty of calls from folks

near and far asking if we can help with their historical research. Sometimes they seek information about an ancestor, sometimes a business or institution, and sometimes about a house they've just bought. Often these requests are redirected to the County offices, or to the Genealogy Society - but we do want to help people find the information they seek whenever we can. If you'd like to help respond to these requests, please let a Board member know and we'll be happy to help you help!

100 YEARS AGO — Sept. 1914

The HMS Oceanic, sister ship of RMS Titanic, sank off Scotland, and the last passenger pigeon, a female named Martha, died in captivity in the Cincinnati Zoo.

President Wilson orders American wireless stations to make their services accessible to any European powers who wish - including the Germans. This leads to serious U.S. diplomatic involvement in the war, eventually the deployment of ground troops to Europe. The far-flung empires of Germany and Britain take the war to colonial locations around the world.

Meanwhile, in Ireland, the Irish Republican Brotherhood and other organizations decide to force their hand regarding self-government while Great Britain is embroiled in the "Great War."

150 YEARS AGO —

General William T. Sherman took the city of Atlanta, GA, ordering that any building not useful to the Union Army should be burned. Such was the importance of taking the city that Lincoln ordered a day of national rejoicing on September 5th 1864.

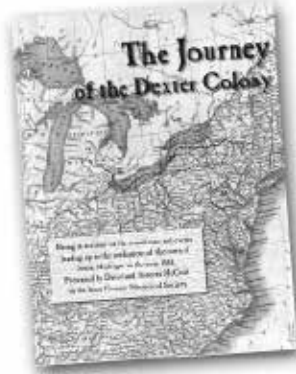
General George B. McClellan accepted the Democratic nomination for U.S. President, but Lincoln's fading popularity was enjoying an upswing after news from Atlanta. Union General Grant pressed for a more aggressive strategy against Confederate forces, but this month would not see any success to rival the taking of Atlanta.

200 YEARS AGO —

In 1814, Francis Scott Key penned a poem called "The Star Spangled Banner" which would later be set to music and, in 1931, become the U.S. National Anthem. Key was inspired by the bombardment of a Maryland fort by the British, and the original title for his poem was "The Defence of Fort McHenry." Also during this month, American naval forces took control of Lake Champlain in upper New York. At the same time, General Andrew Jackson was marching southward, driving the British and their allies toward the gulf coast.

The Journey of the Dexter Colony, 1833

David & Annette McCord have published their carefully researched story of the settling of the town of Ionia, lavishly illustrated with historic photos, maps, and engravings. It includes details from many historic documents, books and artifacts, and now CAN BE IN YOUR LIBRARY, TOO!



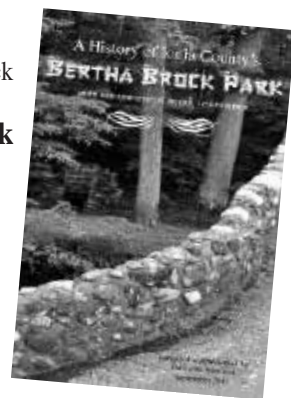
FOR ONLY \$12.00 EACH
and a portion of each sale will benefit the Historical Society. **GET YOURS NOW! (Add \$3 for mailing)**

A new publication is now available for your library! In commemoration of the 80th anniversary of Ionia's Bertha Brock Park, David McCord has written

A History of Bertha Brock Park - its founders, its development, its significance in our community and our state. This small publication contains many photos, newspaper articles, and recollections of people who were instrumental in the park's story.

The price is just \$6.00 each, on sale for the holiday season!

Get your copy at the Blanchard House to help support the **Ionia County Historical Society.**





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
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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!**

September 18 — House on the Rock

September 25 — Special Presentation...

Judy Hyunh's trip to China

October 2 — Touring Ireland

October 9 — Wilderness of the Eastern U.S.

October 16 — Wilderness of the Western U.S.

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