A Bit of Ionia’s Health Care History

Our presentation for the January meeting was given in the Guild Room of the Ionia County Memorial Hospital by Hospital P.R. Director Laurie Tjalsma, accompanied by intern John Balice.

Behind a table covered with scrapbooks and memorabilia, Laurie told us a little of the long and colorful history of our local healthcare system.

The earliest record of an “Ionia Hospital” was the office of Dr. McCann located above the Ionia County National Bank offices on Main Street in the 1920s. His office was equipped with the most advanced medical equipment in the town at the time.

Sometime thereafter, a hospital was established by Ms. Belle Sawyer in a former residence on north Jackson Street (pictured here). The institution was run by donations. In March of 1943, the second director of the hospital, Mrs. Grace Elliot, declared that the hospital would be closing due to lack of funds.

The possible loss of the only such facility in the area caused quick action led by Ionia's Mayor Clarence Johnson. A series of special meetings resulted in rapid action to establish the community hospital. By August of 1943, Mrs. Hassie Thornton (owner of the Jackson St. facility) struck a deal to rent the place to the city. The name, Ionia County Memorial Hospital, was suggested by Allan Williams, to be dedicated to the memory of Ionia County’s men and women in the Armed Services.

Very shortly afterwards, the community began major fund-raising efforts to build a new hospital. With tremendous support, pledges from 50c to $10,000 accumulated to a total of over $365,000. By 1953, the new hospital on Lafayette Street was dedicated by Mayor Tony Balice. The final cost of the hospital was $650,000, much of which was granted by the government as part of the “Hill-Burton” legislation, established to assist communities with healthcare construction projects.

Within a few years, more capacity was required and a new 18-bed pediatric wing was added, and in 1958 a new expansion provided greater laundry and kitchen facilities. Throughout the 60s many more changes took place in addition to brick-and-mortar projects. In 1966 a master plan was created outlining future needs. That same year, the hospital received accreditation, justifying all the community’s efforts at providing quality health care. In the 1970s, a new emergency, intensive care, and coronary care units were added. Over the next 20 years, changes in health care funding and insurance caused many changes in how the hospital was run.

Now in partnership with Sparrow Hospital of Lansing, many new services and new technologies are available. Laurie took the ICHS members on a tour of the facility, in parts old and new, and spoke of on-going renovations.

Laurie also summarized plans underway to build a new health care facility south of town, and eventually a new hospital to replace the present hospital to further improve health care services in Ionia County in the coming years.

Many thanks to Laurie for her tour and presentation.
MINUTES of the January, 2011 Business Meeting

The Board of Directors of the Ionia County Historical Society met at the Blanchard House at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 19.

The first order of business was Stephanie VanderMolen’s report on the recent fund-raising program with Biggby Coffee. She noted that it was a great success, but the total donation was not yet determined.

Doni Knoop and Patty Simpson-Goeke are co-chairs for the Ionia Community Expo coming up on March 12, and we will have a booth to ourselves this year. They are seeking suggestions for the displays and volunteers to staff the booth. ICHS President Linda Ciangi is donating a quilt to be given away as a door prize that day.

At the next meeting, the Board and members of the Accessions Committee will study their calendars to attempt to find some dates for committee meetings and workshops. The committee’s task load is piling up!

It was noted that an agreement had been made with C&L Trucking to clear the snow from the Blanchard House sidewalks on those days when the Sheriff’s Department is not able to staff the job.

President Ciangi and Barb Ehler have donated some “plastic china” dinnerware for use at the House as needed.

The Board considered the idea of establishing a Donations Chairman to handle the paperwork and notifications connected with that process. The invitation will be extended to the membership at the next meeting.

In regards to Summer Sundays this year, a new Chairperson is needed to make those arrangements. It was suggested that we promote “Read, Relax, and Research” as a theme for the days without specific activities scheduled. The idea of a “sidebar” in the Chronicle to spotlight books in our collection might be an interesting feature, and entice people to come in and scan our book shelves so we can better share our collection.

David and Annette McCord are going to be sharing their “Dexter Colony” presentation with several organization in the area in the next couple of months. They would like to offer some of the Dexter books for sale, but there are only three left. Stephanie moved that we purchase another 25 books. This was supported by Patty and passed. Treasurer Hank Knoop handed the check to David McCord to cover the order.

Stephanie V. will be contacting people about arranging a late-summer tour and program at the Highland Park Cemetery. Some discussion was had about the format of that program, still to be defined. There is still talk about doing some kind of “murder mystery” gathering at the Blanchard House in collaboration with the Ionia Community Theatre, but nothing definite yet.

The Tri-River “Spring Into The Past” Museum Tours will be April 30 and May 1 this year. Stephanie V. and David McCord will arrange game-related activities for the weekend, both outdoors and indoors. David will look into doing a May Polar too.

The June 10 Yard Sale is being Chaired by Doni Knoop, and is expected to be a success. Artisans, crafters, and antique dealers are being contacted.

THE BOOK that documents the presentation given to the ICHS in May of 2010, FOR SALE!

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!

(For Mail-Order copies, please add $3.00 postage and handling.)

Upcoming Programs and Events

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

Wednesday, March 3th, 7:00 p.m.
Program Meeting at the Blanchard House
PROGRAM: blah blah blah

Saturday, March 12th
Community Expo at Ionia High School

Wednesday, March 16th, 7:00 p.m.
ICHS Business Meeting at the Blanchard House

Saturday, April 2nd
Appraisal Road Show – Commission on Aging

Wednesday, April 3th, 7:00 p.m.
Program Meeting at the Blanchard House

Wednesday, April 17th, 7:00 p.m.
ICHS Business Meeting at the Blanchard House

Saturday, April 30th and Sunday, May 1
SPRING INTO THE PAST
Annual Tri-River Museum Tours
A Weekend of GAMES for all ages!

Wednesday, March 16th, 7:00 p.m.
Program at the Blanchard House:
“The Home Front, 1861”
Presented by David & Annette McCord

For other upcoming events - visit the ICHS website at ioniahistory.org.
MINUTES of the
February, 2011
Business Meeting

The February meeting of the CISH Board of Directors was called to order by
president Linda Ciangi at 7:00 p.m. at the Blanchard House. Also pres-
ent were Secretary David McCord, Treasurer Hank Knoop, Vice President
Stephanie VanderMolen, Directors Pat Simpson-Goeke and Kris Haskins,
and past Director Barb Ehler.

The first order of business was a review of the upcoming programs
for the monthly meetings. Since the February program was cancelled due to
weather, the Board looked forward to the March program at the Presbyterian
Church, celebrating its 150th anni-
versary. In April will be a program
on Railroads in Ionia, presented by
Bill Davis, and discussion of summer
activities. In May will be a presenta-
tion on the 150th anniversary of the War
between the States - What it was like
in Ionia in May of 1861 - presented by
David and Annette McCord. June will
bring a program on the second world
war (details still to be confirmed).
July will be the annual Independence
Day Potluck, and August will bring a
special “Show-n-Tell” meeting to share
private collections and stories.
September will be a program about
Fashions of the Past presented by Barb
Ehler, and November is planned as
“Movie Night.”

Kris Haskins shared some of his
recent work on the transcription of
some Civil War letters, written by Capt.
T.G. Stevenson (John C. Blanchard’s
relation) which had been presented to
the ICHS by Duane Todd, a descendent
of Mr. Blanchard. He is scanning the
letters, and will then type the contents
into computer files to archive and to
share. Kris suggested that we devise
a plan to ensure the careful (and pro-
fessional) preservation of these let-
ters, which contain significant historic
notes.

Hank Knoop noted that the lawn
care proposal had been received with
the same terms as last year. It was
moved by Stephanie and supported by
Kris to accept the proposal, which
passed.

On behalf of the Chair of the June
10 “Yard Sale” (Doni Knoop), Hank
reported that plans are under way.
Fliers are needed for the public and
for potential vendors. Stephanie V. will
design these items. Notice should be
made in the Chronicle that Hank will
collect items for sale from anyone
who would like to donate. Also, help
is needed to set up the night before and
clean up after.

Hank also noted that he will be
repairing the cracked plastic in the
framed collection of historic carpet
samples hanging in the bathroom.

Stephanie asked if money had yet
been received from Biggby Coffee
from their ICHS fund raiser last month.
Hank said no, and Stephanie will con-
tact them. Also, Hank noted that no bill
had come from C&L Trucking for their
snow-removal services this season.

Stephanie shared an 1891 Ionia
Atlas that was received as a dona-
tion from a person in Eaton Rapids
recently.

Stephanie also has been in touch
with Brad Lang about arranging tours
of the Highland Park Cemetery, proba-
ble to be held on a late September
weekend as a fund-raiser for the ICHS.

Several aspects were discussed, spe-
cifically the car-parking challenges and
potential of shuttling people into and
around the Cemetery. More to come.

Doni K. and Pat Simpson-Goeke
are co-chairs for the Ionia Community
Expo booth, which will be on March
12. Set-up will be 6:00 the evening
before the event, and volunteers are
needed. Stephanie will put together
some fliers which will list upcoming
ICHS events and activities.

David M. brought in a new batch
of Dexter Journey books from the
publisher. Already five of them have
been sold. David and Annette will take
some with them to the Literary Guild
presentation on Saturday the 19th and
again on March 12 to the Genealogy
Society to sell. David and Annette also
plan to attend the Reenactors Fair in
Kalamazoo on March 19. Information
on several workshops for Historical
Organizations and Museums was
shared. It is hoped that we can send
representatives from the ICHS to some
of these.

Also on the calendar: April 2 will
be the Appraisal Roadshow, April 30
and May 1 is the Tri-River Museum
Tours (games arranged on the lawn
by David M. and Stephanie V.), and
May 15th brings Linda Ciangi’s Country Music Concert to the Ionia
Theatre (proceeds going to the ICHS
thank you Linda!). Linda noted a few
potential summer Sunday attractions,
including some rabbits! Participation in
the Fall Festival is expected, and the
“Upstairs Downtown” is again being
planned for October.

Noted chairs of various committees
include Alice Whorely, Refreshments
and Carol Galagher, Summer Sundays.
There is still a need for a Corresponding
Secretary and a new chairperson is
sought for the Accession Committee.

The Board set the date of Sunday,
February 27, at noon, as a meeting
for the existing Accession Committee
to look over many found objects to
determine their fate and discuss further
plans. ALL INTERESTED PARTIES
ARE INVITED TO HELP!

Stephenie and David reported on the
efforts in Belding to save their
historic buildings, and Stephanie also
noted that we should be thinking well
ahead of the October elections about
who might be interested in serving on
the board in the future.

David also reported that the “Travel
Michigan” website had brought us 16
referrals in the 4th quarter of 2010,
and that the domain registration for
the ICHS website has been renewed
according to the $50 budget set by the
Board in January. An invoice will be
forwarded to Hank K. accordingly.

Sympathies were expressed for
Mary Metzen on the recent passing of
her husband Jim, former ICHS Board
Member and active member for many
years.

The meeting was then adjourned at
approx. 9:10 p.m.
January 1861
The South Secedes.

When Abraham Lincoln, a known opponent of slavery, was elected president, the South Carolina legislature perceived a threat. Calling a state convention, the delegates voted to remove the state of South Carolina from the union known as the United States of America. The secession of South Carolina on December 20, 1860, was followed by the secession of six more states by the first of February: Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas. The militias of several of these states began to seize Federal property - arsenals, forts, and government buildings.

February 1861
The South Creates a Government.

At a convention in Montgomery, Alabama, on February 8, the seven seceding states created the Confederate Constitution, a document similar to the United States Constitution, but with greater stress on the autonomy of each state. Jefferson Davis was named provisional president of the Confederacy until elections could be held. On the 13th in Washington, the U. S. Electoral College makes Lincoln’s win official. As President-elect Abraham Lincoln begins his journey to Washington D. C. from Springfield, Illinois, President-elect Jefferson Davis journeys from Vicksburg, Mississippi to Montgomery, Alabama to accept the Presidency of the Confederate States.

And in Michigan...

Austin Blair was a delegate from Michigan to the 1860 Republican National Convention, which nominated Abraham Lincoln. He was also elected Governor of Michigan in that year and reelected in 1862, serving from 1861 to 1865. In his first inaugural address in January 1861, Blair recommended that the state offer its entire military resources to Lincoln for maintaining the supremacy of the U.S. Constitution.
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?

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

February 24 – Italy
March 3 — South America
March 10 — Colorado Scenic Train Ride
March 17 — Hawaiian Paradise
March 24 – Pacific Coast Highway by Car
March 31 — The Holy Land / Thomas Kinkaid
April 7 — Africa: The Serengeti

Ionia County Historical Society
2010-11 Board of Directors & Officers
Linda Ciangi, President — 527-4945
Stephanie VanderMolen, Vice Pres. — 616-755-0731
Kris Haskins, Director — 989-855-3685
Patty Simpson-Gokee, Director — 616-527-0676
Carol Gallagher, Director — 527-0961
David McCord, Secretary — 527-3784
Hank Knoop, Treasurer — 527-3130