



The Almost Monthly Publication of  
the Ionia County Historical Society

# the CHRONICLE



## AMERICA'S SONGSTER STEPHEN COLLINS FOSTER

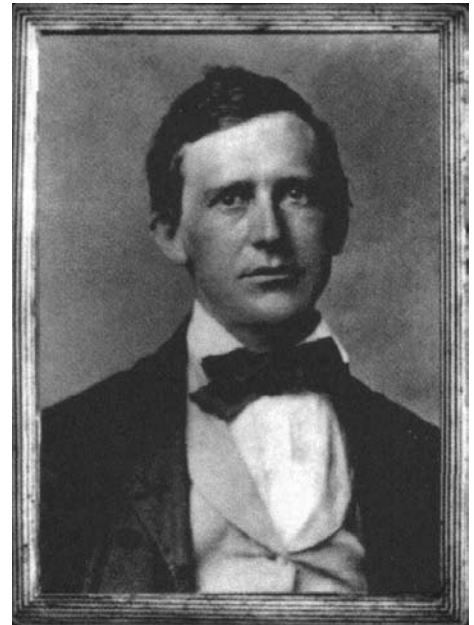
It was the Fourth of July, 1826. The Nation was celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, and also mourning the death of former Presidents Jefferson and Adams. In the small town of Lawrenceville, PA (as in so many other towns across the country), a celebration was held on the lawn of the town founder's home. And while the town's aristocracy made speeches and fire the cannons, in the Foster mansion one Stephen Collins Foster was being born.

At the May 2nd, 2012, meeting of the ICHS, David McCord presented biographical information about the

most popular American songwriter of the 19th century, interspersed with performances of some of his songs (both familiar and obscure).

The program opened with "Oh Suzannah!" - probably Mr. Foster's best known song - played (appropriately enough) on the Banjo. Other songs performed for the members were:

Nelly Was a Lady, De Camptown Races (Do-Dah!), Old Folks at Home (State Song of Florida), My Old Kentucky Home (State Song of Kentucky), I Dream of Jeanie, Hard Times Come Again No More, That's What's The Matter, Why No One To Love?, If You've Only Got A Mustache, and Beautiful Dreamer.



The Foster catalog includes hundreds more songs, many familiar but many more rarely heard over the past 150 years. For the first decade after the publication of Foster's first song in 1844, he worked for his family's shipping business in Cincinnati and Pittsburgh while writing "minstrel songs" and "parlor ballads." As the songs began to rise in popularity, performed around the country by the hottest acts touring the nation, Foster's confidence also rose. By 1850, he resolved to try making a living writing songs - something that had never been done in the United States before.

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FOSTER'S MELODIES.  
NO. 41.

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FAIRY-BELLE

SONG

Written and Composed by

STEPHEN C. FOSTER.

AUTHOR OF  
"WILLIE, WE HAVE MISSED YOU, LINDA HAS DEPARTED",  
"MY LOVED ONE AND MY OWN, &c."

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BOSTON:  
OLIVER DITSON COMPANY.

New York: C. H. DITSON & CO. Chicago: LYON & HEALY. Boston: JOHN C. HAYNES & CO. Phila.: J. E. DITSON & CO.  
Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1850, by FOSTER, FORD & CO., in the Clerk's Office of the Dist. Court for the Southern Dist. of New York.  
Copyright, 1871, by MRS. S. G. FOSTER and MRS. MARY FOSTER WELCH.

### MINUTES of the Membership Meeting, May 2012

The May 2, 2012 meeting of the ICHS was brought to order by president Stephanie VanderMolen at approximately 7:00 p.m. at the Blanchard House.

The agenda for the evening began with a report from Linda Ciangi on the progress being made on the displays in the museum (basement). One of the new display areas includes information on the Ionia Theatre, along with a set of the original seats from the theatre dating from 1931.

Linda and Barb Ehler are making

great progress in the clean-up / fix-up department, including display cabinets downstairs and the wood floors upstairs. Greg and Kathleen Cook have also done some painting in the basement. The call went out for volunteers to help in these final few days before the "Spring Into The Past" museum tours weekend. In addition, there are still hopes for a display on the history of the Ionia Post Office building - celebrating 100 years of service this year. (This will hopefully be coordinated with a gathering of USPS employees and alumni sometime this summer.)

Kathleen Cook and Hank Knopp are making progress in cleaning up the yard, and the Garden Club has visited

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**NEXT MONTH:  
The Salem Train Wreck!**

*Minutes, continued from page one.*

the Blanchard House grounds and have begun to work on the flower beds.

The Accessions Committee has laid claim to the small room on the second floor formerly called the "Resource Room." This space will be used to sort and catalog artifacts and documents, and will be "closely guarded" while work will always be in progress. More to come on this vital topic - interested members please report to David McCord to help with the process.

Plans for the Civil War Re-enactment in September continue, as reported by David M. and Linda C. It looks like the weekend of Sept. 8 will be an exciting one, with many historic activities centering on Ionia's role in the War Between the States.

In preparing items for display, the large reproduction of a bird's-eye view drawing of Ionia published in 1868 that was donated by Walt Downes needs a frame. Mary Booth volunteered to make that happen for us, so the view can be on display this summer.

Upcoming events include the May 5 & 6 "Spring Into The Past" museum tour, affiliated with the Tri-River Museum Group, and the Upstairs-Downtown Tours in the historic buildings of Ionia's business district on Saturday, May 19th. (During the Upstairs-Downtown Tours, many other activities will be going on downtown for the public to enjoy, hosted by the Red Brick Street Merchants Association.)

June 1 & 2 will bring the annual "Antique Fayre and Flea Market" on the lawn of the Blanchard House. Chairperson Doni Knoop reports that there are 10 vendors signed up this year, and still room for more, and

that more donations can be accepted to offer for sale, raising funds for the Historical Society.

Chuck Wren invited the members of the ICHS to a May 12th Barbershop Music event, to be held at East Grand Rapids High School (with 2:00 and 7:00 shows). He also invited interested singers to their weekly Tuesday evening gatherings.

Hank Knoop shared the Treasurer's Report with those assembled, noting (again) that expenses exceed income for another month. The main income on the books this time was the \$800+ dollars earned in the Quilt Raffle, with thanks to Doni K. for her chairing of the raffle, plus the donors, sewers, and sellers. (Patty Simpson-Gokee being the top-seller). The greatest expense was the annual insurance expense of nearly \$1200.

The meeting adjourned for the evening's program, with the closing note that the June meeting will be a presentation on the Salem Train

### MINUTES of the May 16th Business Meeting

The monthly Business Meeting of the ICHS was called to order at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 15, at the Blanchard House.

The meeting began with a report on the success of the "Spring Into The Past" museum tours which took place the preceding weekend. Everyone reported positive experience except one regarding the decision of the Board to open the doors at noon on Sunday. The other museums on the circuit opened at 11:00 a.m. and the Board decided that next year we could follow that convention.

The Upstairs-Downtown tour plans are coming together. As always, more volunteers will be welcomed to help in any capacity. Tickets and tour-guide packets are ready, and the weather report looks good. Merchants will provide Model-T rides as in the past, and we will have bottled water for sale. Main Street access will be restricted, and the "Red Brick Merchants" will be hosting a downtown yard-sale during the day, and some music will be provided on the street as well. Also, the 1997 "Business District Walking Tour" originally written by David M. for the Home Tour that year has been updated (with thanks to Amanda Ford for retyping the document). Copies have provided to offer for sale at the Upstairs-Downtown tour and other opportunities as well.

An inquiry was received to ask if the 1930s Road Commission film depicting Winter roads might someday be available for purchase. David McCord will check with the producer of that film to see if that would be OK, and if so, he will pursue making DVD copies to offer for sale.

The new quilt (revealed at the membership meeting two weeks ago) will be offered up for a raffle, as well as for sale at \$800 before the raffle starts. A Chairperson is needed for the next raffle.

President Stephanie V. asked if a new column might be included in the Chronicle to ask for help in answering eMails that we receive (usually through the website). Many of the inquiries are forwarded on to the Genealogy Society, but some are related to the town and landmarks rather than people. The Board was supportive, but a process was not decided upon at this time. Wording will be devised

to ask the eMailers for permission to reprint their inquiries in the Chronicle to see if members could help with their answers.

The Board would like to have a float in the Free Fair Parade (July 21st?) again this year, and the thoughts are to promote the upcoming Civil War Re-enactment coming in September. A chairperson is needed to put the float together, and past chairperson Linda C. is eager to help. Carol G. will be in charge of the "Queen's Reception" at the Blanchard House before the parade. She is looking for a few helpers. Joan McCord asked about sending invitations to the various parade queens, and Linda reported that Dave Hess would take care of the invitations when he sends out information on the parade to those organizations.

Also at the Free Fair will be our historical display in the Floral Building again. Carol G. will help the Knoops in putting this display together.

Carol and Patty reported on progress in the flower beds at the Blanchard House, where some progress has been made thanks to the Garden Club. Patty will be planting Lavender along the fences - hopefully in June. The debris from the removal of the trees some months ago continues as well.

Kathleen C. noted that "the bees are back" in the front of the house. It's been suggested that a bee hive be placed in the gardens at the front of the house to coax the bees out of the house. More research will be done on this subject and reported to the Board.

There are also estimates being gathered regarding the painting and sealing of windows, the exteriors of which are extremely weathered and in need of repair and repainting.

Linda C. showed the Board a painting of the Tower House found in the ICHS collections. After some discussion, it was decided to offer the painting to the owners of the house, and if they are not interested, to offer it for sale to the Portland Federal Credit Union who seek local art for their lobby decor.

The plea was voiced again for commitments to staff the house on Summer Sundays this season. Only a few names are on the calendar so far, and more are needed. Interested members, please contact the Board soon to get on the schedule. If members are interested in helping with tours, orientation and training is available on request!

Linda C. reported plans continue for the USPS "birthday party" at the Blanchard House and progress in putting together a historical display for the event. Linda wants to scan the contents of the Post Office scrapbook acquired from the Huntley estate for our archives, and Annette McCord will get an estimate for the project. Once scanned, the digital files will be shared in a slide show format. The membership will be asked to donate to the project.

David McCord had donated some

## SOUVENIRS

MEMORIES & MOMENTOS    IONIA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY    HERITAGE & HISTORY

*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*

### DVD VIDEO SOUVENIRS!

*These movies have proven to be our most popular offerings to date, and recent discoveries have added several popular new titles to the list:*

- 1939 "We're In The Movies" *A promotional film produced by Ionia businesses and organizations. The soundtrack has been lost, but the images present a wonderful look into our town over 70 years ago.*
- 1950s Home Show and Free Fair Movies
- 1976 - The 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

## Stephen Foster

*Continued from page 1*

Stephen married, and had a daughter, but could barely provide for them on his meager musical income. Authorship rights and royalties were not established in the publishing business at the time, so what he was paid was generally for first publishing rights or performance rights - but seldom did he actually see a profit from his song writing. He moved to New York City in the late 1850s to be closer to the theater business and the publishing houses, but his wife and daughter stayed behind in Pennsylvania.

His fortunes dwindled over the years and he could not afford to pay his rent, selling all the rights to his own compositions wherever he could. By 1860, he was penniless and generally drunk, but still apparently on fair terms with his family, who sent him funds now and then.

The man whose music would be known around the world as the hallmark of American music died in 1863. His was not a war wound, but a cut suffered from a fall in his tiny New York apartment from which he bled to death. In his pocket was a worn leather wallet containing 38¢ and a small scrap of paper upon which he had written "dear friends and gentle hearts."

If you're interested in learning more about Stephen Foster and his music, there are several remarkable biographies available - including one written by his brother Morrison and

steel shelving to the ICHS some years ago, but the Board has decided that it will not be used in the Carriage House as originally intended. Therefore, David will take these shelves back. Arrangement still needs to be made to remove them from the Carriage House and get them delivered to David's house. Volunteers will be thanked profusely!

The Budget Committee still needs to be organized, and the various committees still need to submit their budget information (historical and projected) to the Treasurer. Hank noted that his schedule will be very limited in the coming months, such that he won't be available for much "budgeting." During this time, the committees can still formulate their own budgets and share them with the Board for future planning.

Other upcoming events include the June 1 & 2 "Antique Fayre and Flea Market." Chairperson Doni K. reports that 10 vendors have signed on so far, and donations to sell for the ICHS fund raiser can still be donated to the event. Volunteers will also be on the grounds on Sunday the 3rd to host a "clearance sale" for whatever might be left over from the previous two days.

Linda C. reported briefly on the continuing plans for the Civil War Re-enactment in September, chaired by Pastor Larry Brown. This is developing into an impressive event, and should be very successful. A full report on the details will be published soon in the Chronicle.

Letters have gone out to former employees of the State Hospital, inviting them to be a part of the upcoming

Documentary Film (as noted in previous minutes). The Blanchard House will be used to film these interviews, and some ICHS archives will be accessed for information as well.

The Board was presented with a list of expenses from Linda C. asking for their consideration for reimbursement. After some discussion, the Board decided that they needed time to review the details further before they could vote on the action to take.

## NEWS OF THE REBELLION 150 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH:

After a week-long struggle against heavy defensive fire, the U.S. Navy under Admiral David Farragut succeeded in taking the city of New Orleans from the Confederacy. This city, probably the most important of all Confederate cities, will surely change the course of the war. On the first of May the occupying Federal forces entered the city under General Benjamin Butler, and martial law secured the city and all its river ports for the Union.

On May 5, Major General James Longstreet [CS] nearly defeats Major General "Fighting Joe" Hooker [US] during a rear-guard action. This and several smaller battles culminated in the defeat of Union forces by Stonewall Jackson's troops in the Shenandoah Valley on the 7th.

In addition to the taking of New Orleans, this was a month of significant Naval conflict elsewhere. On May 10, the US Navy repelled an attack by

### Upcoming Programs and Events

Friday & Saturday, June 1st & 2nd  
***The Annual Historical Society Yard Sale!***

Wednesday, June 6, 7:00 p.m.  
Regular Meeting at the Blanchard House  
**"The Salem Train Wreck"**

Wednesday, July 4, 7:00 p.m.  
**ANNUAL INDEPENDENCE DAY POTLUCK!"**  
at the Blanchard House.

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

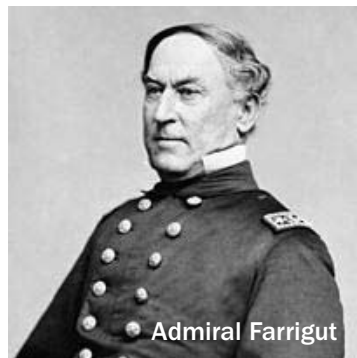
Wednesday, August 1, 7:00 p.m.  
Regular Meeting at the Blanchard House  
**with Music by Sally Harris**

### SUMMER SUNDAYS

will begin very soon. Have you signed up to host at the Blanchard House yet?

*ALSO - Join the membership on the weekly Thursdays work sessions. Come and help with the collections, the research, and the displays!*

For other upcoming events - visit the ICHS website at [ioniahistory.org](http://ioniahistory.org).



Admiral Farragut



General Butler



# the [www.ioniahistory.org](http://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](http://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!**

*June 7 – The Middle East*

*June 14 - Sherman Hill (Battle of Trains)*

*June 21 - Bryce & Zion National Parks*

*June 28 - The Miniature White House*

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— **SAVE THE DATE: JULY 14, 2012** —

*and watch for Art in the Park at Bertha Brock Park*

### Ionia County Historical Society 2011-12 Board of Directors & Officers

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