



the **CHRONICLE**

The Almost Monthly Publication of
the Ionia County Historical Society



Happy New Year!

“Happy New Year!” That greeting will be said and heard for at least the first couple of weeks as a new year gets under way. But the day celebrated as New Year’s Day in modern America was not always January 1.

The celebration of the new year is the oldest of all holidays. It was first observed in ancient Babylon about 4000 years ago. In the years around 2000 BC, the Babylonian New Year began with the first New Moon (actually the first visible crescent) after the Vernal Equinox (first day of spring).

The beginning of spring is a logical time to start a new year. After all, it is the season of rebirth, of planting

new crops, and of blossoming. January 1, on the other hand, has no astronomical nor agricultural significance. It is purely arbitrary.

The Romans continued to observe the new year in late March, but their calendar was continually tampered with by various emperors so that the calendar soon became out of synchronization with the sun.

In order to set the calendar right, the Roman senate, in 153 BC, declared January 1 to be the beginning of the new year. But tampering continued until Julius Caesar, in 46 BC, established what has come to be known as the Julian Calendar. It again established January 1 as the new year. But

in order to synchronize the calendar with the sun, Caesar had to let the previous year drag on for 445 days.

Although in the first centuries AD the Romans continued celebrating the new year, the early Catholic Church condemned the festivities as paganism. But as Christianity became more widespread, the early church began having its own religious observances concurrently with many of the pagan celebrations, and New Year’s Day was no different. During the Middle Ages, the Church remained opposed to celebrating New Years. January 1 has been celebrated as a holiday by Western nations for only about the past 400 years.

150 YEARS AGO — DECEMBER 1860

The cover of Harper’s for December 20 depicted a variety of happy scenes for the holidays, but the news on its inside pages was grave. There was a new independent republic on the North American continent! The Republic of South Carolina had seceded from the Union, and would soon be followed by several other states. Dissatisfied with the sectionalist trends in the politics and legislation of the United States, and the weak response of President Buchanan to the situation, the threats of the South’s leadership became all too real. The dubious election of Abraham Lincoln, whose outspoken animosity towards the South’s right to dissolve their allegiance to the Union, inspired the Southern Convention to act. South Carolina was the first, and declared itself a “sovereign state” by vote of the legislature on December 20, 1860. The Confederate

States of America would not be officially formed until March, 1861. So, for nearly 3 months, the “Palmetto Flag” represented a “free and independent state.”



MINUTES of the Dec 15th, 2010 Business Mtg

On Wednesday the 1st of December, the members gathered for the annual Holiday Pot-Luck. There was no agenda for business, but many thanks were expressed by all for another great year in the ICHS. Through the efforts of many key people, and the support of all our members, Business Buddies, visitors, and supporters in our community, 2010 was deemed a success.

The Business Meeting was held at the Blanchard House on Wednesday the 15th, brought to order by President Linda Ciangi shortly after 7:00 p.m.

The first item (“Christmas Present”) was a report on recent events, including a successful participation in the annual Mrs. Claus Bazaar (which brought in over \$200 this year), and visits to the Blanchard House during our Sunday afternoon hours (successful despite the wintery weather).

Some suggestions were then shared regarding plans for “Christmas Future.” The president will seek to appoint a Holiday Committee for next year to organize the various activities for the Society. Tina Connor-Wellman at the Chamber asked if the ICHS would like to have the Blanchard House open the afternoon of the Christmas Parade for next year, to add to the community’s festivities (and advertising) for the day. It was also suggested that we invite the Garden Club to the annual pot-luck, as well as the various businesses and service-providers that help out during the year (lawn-care, window-washing, etc.).

There are several rentals on the calendar for the Blanchard House in upcoming weeks, and all arrangements are in order.

Looking at other upcoming activities...

January meeting will be on the 5th, at the Sparrow-Ionia Hospital. Members are asked to enter through the Emergency Entrance, and proceed to the “Guild Room” where members will be given a tour of the facilities. The business meeting will be held on January 19th at the Blanchard House.

February’s program (on Wednesday the 2nd) will be at the Ionia Theatre, with a special program at 7:00 p.m. Before that program, members are invited to dine at the Lamplight at 5:30 for social hour. (A count for dinner is

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**NEXT MONTH: January 5
Ionia’s Hospital**

MINUTES

Continues from page 1

needed so the restaurant can prepare a place for ICHS members. Please make your plans in time for the January meeting if possible.) The monthly business meeting will be Feb. 16th. The March program will be presented on the 2nd at the Presbyterian Church in celebration of their 150th anniversary.

In addition to regular monthly meetings thereafter...

March 11 will be the annual Community Expo at the High School where we will again have a booth, and April 2nd will bring another Appraisal Road Show at the Commission on Aging. April 30 and May 1 will be the annual Tri-River Museums Weekend ("Spring Into The Past"). Being May Day, the Board discussed hosting some special activities on the lawn, including outdoor games and possibly a May Pole, period music and costumes, and a possible scavenger hunt (a popular Victorian pastime).

A new chairperson for Summer Sundays is being sought. The Board noted that it will be difficult to follow the great job done by Joan McCord this year, but the impact of a successful Summer Sunday program has been proven now, and the opportunities should not be missed. Being the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, displays on that topic are an obvious choice this year. But also for summertime, a "Teddy Bear Picnic," or an "American Girls Picnic" were suggested. (This being less formal than a "Tea"). It was noted that later in the summer there would be fewer mosquitoes to spoil the picnic - perhaps an August time frame.

There was a call from a person asking about the history of the property

where the Ford dealership was. It was a real estate broker, not so much a historical interest. This prompted a discussion about such inquiries, and the Board agreed that sending these folks to the Court House and City Hall is the normal response. Owners would be another matter, such as a recent inquiry about the former site of Rod's Bar, now called "Barb's Bargains," who is seeking historical information about the site.

Carol Gallagher shared the plans put together with suggestions from the Garden Club and Kathleen Larock for the Gardens at the House, with a projected budget of \$150 to \$175. After some review & discussion, Carol G. moved that the plan be adopted for next spring. The motion was supported by Patty S. and passed.

The subject of ICHS responsibilities for keeping the snow off our sidewalks was discussed. While arrangements with the Sheriff's Dept for inmates to do the work is a great arrangement, it is not entirely reliable. On those days when inmates are not available, the ICHS is still in need of the service, and subject to a fine if the walks are not cleared. The Board will look into services for hire, and check with our neighbors at McKaig and Balice about their arrangements, as well as others.

Kris H. also noted that the Carriage House is in need of some professional cleaning. The roof project caused quite a mess, and before the building can be used for public displays or demonstrations (as well as storage), this should be done. It was noted that some money was left over from the roof project that might pay for this service. Research continues so that this can be done in the early spring.

Carol G. suggested that we put together a flier to hand out that explains

Upcoming Programs and Events

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

Wednesday, January 5, 7:00 p.m.
ICHS Meeting at the Ionia Hospital
(Tour of the facility.)

Wednesday, January 19, 7:00 p.m.
ICHS Business Meeting at the Blanchard House
All members welcomed!

Wednesday, February 2nd, 7:00 p.m.
Meeting at the Ionia Theatre
Dinner at the Lamplight before the meeting.

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

Saturday, March 11th
Community Expo at Ionia High School

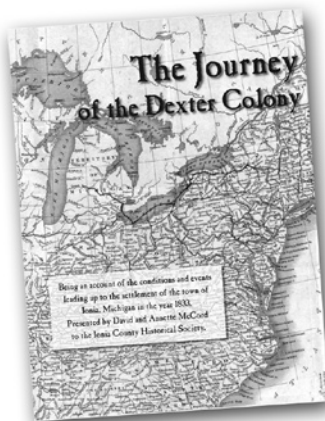
Wednesday, March 16th, 7:00 p.m.
ICHS Business Meeting at the Blanchard House

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

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

THE BOOK that documents the presentation given to the ICHS in May of 2010, IS READY!

David & Annette McCord have now published this carefully researched story of the settling 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!



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.)

ways to donate, major projects that we use donations for, so that people will be more confident about how their donations might be used, or so they can donate to specific projects.

Hank Knoop volunteered to take our excess Christmas decorations to the "Rave Store" to be donated to needy neighbors.

Stephanie V. had received a call from someone seeking support for a historic marker at the burial site of Chief Okemos. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Joan McCord shared some notes about upcoming events, including the 2011 Upstairs-Downtown tour (to be October 1st) and events of other Tri-River Museums. She also sent the schedule for the Thursday Morning Travelogues at the Ionia Theatre. There was also information via the Genealogical Society about a series on Museum Curating presented by Grand Valley State University in March. David M. will look into this further and keep the Board informed.

Next November, the Ladies Literary Club would like to hold their 120th anniversary meeting at the Blanchard House. We have, in the past, granted a free use of the facility to them, which requires Board approval. Stephanie V. asked that

the Board clarify the policies about free use, rental discounts and special arrangements. The Board concluded that such would be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

The statue in the west garden needs to be covered for the winter. Carol G. noted that the Garden Club had taken care of this in the past, but Hank said he will be sure it gets done.

Meeting was adjourned at approx. 9:00 p.m.

There are a few **WWII** memoir books still available!

Memories of local families compiled by the Ionia County Genealogical Society, these keepsakes are only \$53 each. If you would like one for your family, please call Joan McCord at 527-3369.



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 6 – Exciting Destinations!

January 13 – Guatemala

January 20 – Trans-American Train Ride

January 27 – Germany

February 3 – Worlds of the Maya

February 10 – Wonders of Natures

February 17 – England

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