



# the CHRONICLE

The Almost Monthly Publication of  
the Ionia County Historical Society



## A VISIT TO ST. JOSEPH CHURCH

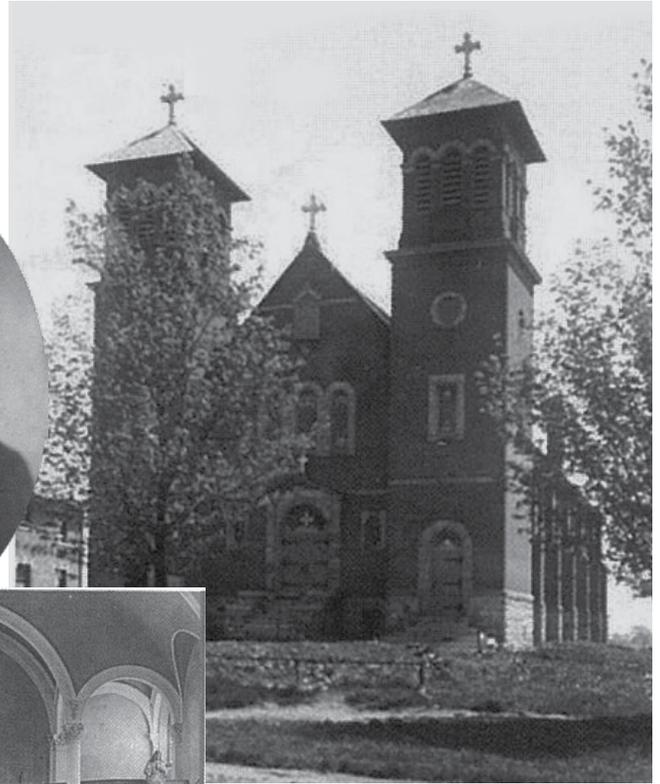
Members of the Ionia County Historical Society were welcomed to St. Joseph Church in Pewamo by Father Charlon Mason. Fr. Mason has been at St. Joseph for over 23 years now, and his tenure there has included some significant milestones.

The church celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2003 with the completion of extensive restoration, remodeling, and architectural modifications throughout the building. The results, as seen during our visit, are stunning. The impression of the church is a combination of beauty and reverence, reflecting the unpretentious faith of the parishioners, as well as their selfless contribution to the church.

Most of the interior walls and ceilings are covered in pressed tin, reflecting its long heritage in architectural detail. This is painted in a subdued color scheme that provides a comforting environment - particularly when the lights are low. The altars and statuary are impressive, including sculpted angels with gold-leaf wings, and below the 110-year-old crucifix, an ornate tabernacle cleverly back-lit through a small window. Father Mason described many of the challenges they faced while restoring the church, including some major architectural changes as well as small details. He pointed out also restoration of some stained glass, and installation of new pews and furnishings.

After our tour of the church itself (and entertainment in the form of their electronic bells), Fr. Mason showed us to the rectory. His residence there is beautifully appointed

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*Above Left: Father McCabe, the first Pastor. Left: The interior about 1904. Above: The church about 20 years ago (pretty much as it looks today... except for the piles of snow).*

## Ionia Township - Est. 1835

Our host for the March 5th meeting of the ICHS was Larry Listerman, Township Supervisor for the Township of Ionia. We met at the Town Hall at the corner of East Washington and Third. The east part of the building was built in 1901, and the west was added about five years ago, nearly doubling the size of the facility.

Larry has been the Township Supervisor for over 20 years now, and related some information to the members about exactly what role is served by a Township and its officers. Some of the services are required by the State, including administration of local elections, providing a voting place, determining assessments and collecting local taxes, and maintaining the cemeteries within the township (Highland Park and Tuttle).

In addition to those requirements, townships throughout the state provide other services as desired by their residents. In Ionia Township, this includes road maintenance and the arrangement of "clean-up vouchers" to keep the township neat. Maintaining the "secondary roads" falls to the Township, while the main roads are kept up by the County Road Commission. Some townships provide fire, ambulance, and law enforcement services as well, but Ionia Township relies on their long-standing relationship with the City of Ionia for many of those services.

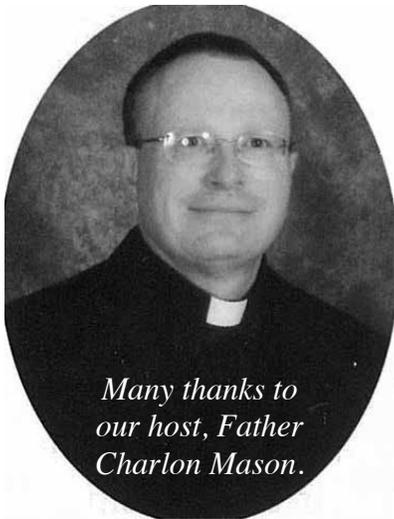
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## St. Joseph

with antiques - a veritable museum with Victorian furnishings and a variety of art pieces. From there, we walked down the block past the St. Joseph School to the Convent, which now serves as the Parish offices, library, and meeting rooms. There we browsed through scrap-books of the church's history, looked at artifacts from the church's early years, and heard still more stories of the church, school, and community.

Many thanks to Father Mason for his hospitality, and congratulations to the people of St. Joseph Church on their beautiful facility - an outstanding gem for the village of Pewamo.



*Many thanks to our host, Father Charlon Mason.*

## TIMELINE OF ST. JOSEPH CHURCH

- The cornerstone of St. Joseph's Catholic Church was laid in 1903, with the building being completed in that same year at an approximate cost of \$12,000.
- Reverend Father J.J. McCabe celebrated the first mass in our new church on Christmas Day of 1903.
- The Pewamo Parish had been a mission of St. John the Baptist Church of Hubbardston; but in 1906 we received our first resident pastor, Reverend Father Stephen Wittliff. Our present rectory was built at this time.
- In 1913 the first Catholic School was built, and shortly thereafter, the parish obtained the Dominican Sisters of Adrian as teachers in the school.
- Additional property was purchased in 1941 for a parking lot and an addition to the school playground.
- A convent was built for the Sisters at a cost of \$15,000 in 1942.
- In 1951 the church was enlarged and redecorated at a total cost of \$17,000. A new electric organ was also purchased after the redecorating.
- In 1959 the original Catholic school was razed and construction for our current school began.
- In June of 1993 a six-month project began to expand our school. At a cost of \$350,000, two new classrooms were added, our library was enlarged to include a computer lab, and the size of the former gymnasium was doubled. The new gymnasium also serves as our Parish Center. This project was made possible by donations alumni also coming forward with contributions.
- In June of 1996 the exteriors of our older parish buildings were given some much-needed attention, with the brick being cleaned and tuck-pointed. This project was completed at a cost of \$82,000.
- Starting in the year 2000, all our statues were refurbished. At the present, each of the seven large statues has been done, including our Stations of the Cross.
- The year 2000 was also the time second grade was added to the Catholic School, which had previously been a 3rd through 8th grade school. In the fall of 2003, there were 110 students enrolled in St. Joseph Catholic School.
- 2002 was another big year for St. Joseph Church, with a complete renovation of its interior as well as some exterior repairs and repainting. The total cost of repairs and renovation was approximately \$450,000.
- 2003 St. Joseph's Parish celebrated 100 years of faith and over 90 years of Catholic education.

## Raffle Tickets available now!

The Ionia County Historical Society is raffling off TWO fully catered dinners for up to 10 people at the historic (and romantic!) Blanchard House. The drawing will be held at the April 2nd meeting, and arrangements made with the winners directly thereafter. These dinners are being provided by:

**The Lamplight Grill  
and  
Gregory's Catering**

Tickets are available from ICHS members, and the costs are:

**\$1    \$5    \$20**

Per Ticket    For SIX    For 25 Tickets!

Continued  
from pg 1:

## Ionia Township

Larry had laid out some historical documents for us to look at, and also has hung framed Plat Maps of the Township on the walls as part of the permanent décor. Those maps date from the 1870s through the 1930s, and give a fascinating look at how the area has changed over the years.

In 1835, a meeting was authorized by the Michigan Territorial Legislative Council to be held on Monday, April 6 at the office of Antoine Campau & Co. (which had recently purchased the business of Louis Genereaux). This meeting was the first organizational meeting for the "Township of Ionia" which covered the entire geography of Ionia County. Within two years, the eastern third of the County was set off as "Maple Township", then other sections of the County organized into townships over the next few decades, finally resembling the division we have today by the 1860s.

"The Township is the closest government to the people, and the first place to get answers," says Larry. Our thanks to Mr. Linderman and to the Township Board for welcoming us into their facility for the meeting!

*Thanks to Mattie Cook for the photo!*



## 150 Years Ago



# NEWS OF THE REBELLION

The Lee family of Virginia inflicted a toll on Union forces around Richmond early in March, 1864. General Robert E. Lee was in command of the Army of Virginia, and his son, General Custis Lee turned back a force of 500 cavalry in defense of the Confederate capitol. The next day, his nephew, General Fitzhugh Lee, trapped the remnants of that cavalry unit and defeated them soundly.

During the first few weeks of March, General U.S. Grant was elevated to the rank of Lt. General and given command of all active U.S. forces.

As Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest began raids into West Tennessee and Kentucky, General William Tecumseh Sherman, meeting with Grant in Nashville, was promoted to Military Division of the Mississippi commanding the Department of the Ohio, Department of the Tennessee, Department of the Cumberland and the Department of the Arkansas. Major General James McPherson was promoted to Sherman's old position, commander of the Army of the Tennessee

Abraham Lincoln signed special legislation in this month, allowing Nevada and Colorado to become states even though they didn't meet population requirements. In the Confederacy, the popular battle flag known as the "Stars and Bars" was officially adopted as their national flag.

1st Regiment Michigan Infantry (colored) (Later the 102nd United States Colored Troops) was mustered in to service. Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War, Washington D.C., issued the following edict on July 24, 1863:

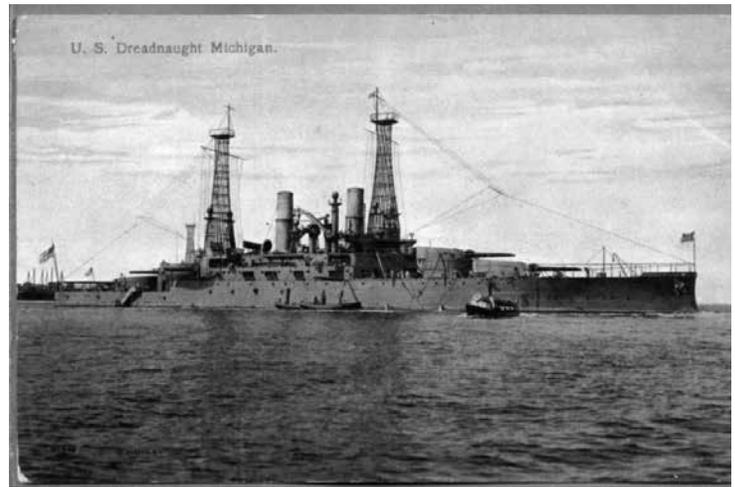
"You are hereby instructed to raise one Regiment of colored Infantry in the State of Michigan. To these troops no bounty will be paid. They will receive ten dollars per month, with one ration per day, three dollars of which monthly pay will be deducted for clothing, these troops will be commanded by white officers."

The regiment was organized in the summer of '63 with 895 men on its roll, receiving their commission into the service of the United States. The Regiment left its rendezvous at Detroit on the 28th of March, 1864, under the command of Colonel Bennett, joining the 9th Army Corps at Annapolis, Maryland, remaining at that place until the 15th of April, when they were detached from that Corps, embarking on steamers for Hilton Head, South Carolina, arriving there on the 19th of that month.

**MEN OF COLOR**  
**TO ARMS! TO ARMS!**  
**NOW OR NEVER**  
**Three Years' Service!**  
**FAIL NOW, & OUR RACE IS DOOMED**  
**ARE FREEMEN LESS BRAVE THAN SLAVES**

Men of color, this is your chance! The Government of the United States will pay every Able-bodied Colored Man to enter the Army for three years...

Wm. H. Foster	Mr. J. C. Smith	Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith
John H. Smith	Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith
Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith
Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith
Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith
Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith
Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith
Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith
Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith
Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith	Wm. A. Smith



## 100 Years Ago - March 1914

The first "USS Michigan" was the U.S. Navy's first iron-hulled warship. Launched in 1843, she operated on the Great Lakes for her entire career, was later renamed Wolverine and was decommissioned in 1912.

The second "USS Michigan" was a South Carolina Class "dreadnought" battleship, commissioned in 1910. 100 years ago, she began a run from Norfolk to Guacanayabo Bay, Cuba on 14 February, and returned to Hampton Roads on 19 March. Underway again on 16 April she joined American forces at Veracruz, where a confrontation with revolutionary Mexican forces was brewing. Reports of arms being imported from Germany prompted President Wilson to deploy U.S. Troops, and by May the U.S. Marines had taken control of the city.

The USS Michigan would continue in service through "The Great War," traversing the Atlantic many times in her distinguished career. She was decommissioned in 1922, disassembled and recycled as materials for the next generation of American fighting ships.

## 200 Years Ago - March 1814

In late February, 1814, an expedition under Captain Andrew Holmes was sent to capture a British outpost near the west end of Lake Ontario. The expedition consisted of mounted detachments from the 24th, 26th, 27th and 28th U.S. Regiments of Infantry with two six-pounder cannon, and they were later joined by rangers and militia dragoons from Michigan. The raiders, including the regulars, were dressed in buckskins against the cold and were armed with rifles and tomahawks. On 4 March, the Americans met the British in what would later be called "the Battle of Longwoods." The Americans took possession of the outpost with only seven casualties; the British suffered 65 casualties.

The British unit known as "the Michigan Fencibles" had been raised at Michilimackinac in the summer of 1813, mainly from trappers and voyageurs, with an initial strength of 1 Lieutenant and 50 soldiers. In March, 1814 command of the unit was given to Captain William McKay, late of the 5th Battalion, Canadian Embodied Militia, and shortly thereafter they proceeded a bold incursion southward via Green Bay to Prairie du Chien, in what is now Illinois.

## Minutes of the Meeting of February 5th, 2014

The members of the ICHS had a brief meeting in the rectory of St. Joseph Church, hosted by Father C.O. Mason. The meeting consisted of announcements of events and activities, namely:

President Linda Ciangi and Barb Ehlert attended the recent Ionia Free Fair Fund-raiser, where a historic photo donated by the ICHS brought in \$90 at their silent auction. At a January 25th Chamber event, another photo donation was purchased by Maureen Meade, and the ICHS gained valuable mention during the program.

Linda noted that the upcoming vote on Feb 25 would enhance the Ionia schools ability to bring new technology to the classroom, and passed around some information on the millage proposal.

Plans are in place for the Feb 23rd fundraiser / dinner at the Lamplight Grill between 3 and 6 p.m. — \$4 from each meal will go to the ICHS "Let's Floor It!" carpet fund.

Raffle tickets for the two "Dinner For 10" prizes are going well - more tickets have been printed. The winners will be announced at the May 4 "Spring Into The Past" event. Dinners are provided by the Lamplight and Gregory's Catering.

Christmas decorations will be taken down this week. Hank Knoop has arranged a work party for Thursday the 6th at 1:00 p.m.

The Ionia Expo on March 15th will be similar to years past, but some key folks will be elsewhere, so volunteers are needed to staff the booth. If interested, please contact Linda C. or Patty S.

Barb E. passed around invitations to Rose Scheller's upcoming Tea Party, February 16th at the Blanchard House from 2 to 4 p.m. Rose is requesting that folks reserve a spot, as there is limited accommodation for this event.

Welcome to our newest member, Keith Salter!

The March meeting will be held at the Ionia Township Hall, 1042 E Washington St.

## Minutes of the Business Meeting - Feb. 19th, 2014

The monthly Business Meeting for the ICHS was convened at 7:00 p.m. on February 19th at the Blanchard House.

The first item on the agenda was a report on the Feb 16th "Tea Party" organized by Rose Scheller and hosted by Gordon Wright. The event was limited to 30, and 29 folks were there. Rose noted that earlier publicity will help the event be even more successful in the future.

The February 23rd "Let's Floor It" dinner at the Lamplight is coming up. Each dinner purchased under the program brings the ICHS \$4.00 (Thanks to Rich Thompson for his support). Linda Ciangi will set up a small display on a side table

during the meal (from 4 to 6 p.m.)

The Expo is coming up on March 15th. Quite a few folks won't be in town for the event, so volunteers are needed to staff the booth. The Society will sell Raffle Tickets (for the Dinner Raffle) and some of our Souvenirs, as well as hand out information. Kathleen will update the "Save the Date" fliers and send them to Annette at Printing Essentials to run some copies for the event. Linda C. has started to put together a photo display also. Patty will check with Tina to see if there are any concerns about prize drawings, etc. Linda also reminded folks to publicize ICHS activities on Facebook!

The Literary Club will be meeting on March 15 from 10 to 1 at the Blanchard House. Linda C. and Barb Ehlert will be at the house for that meeting.

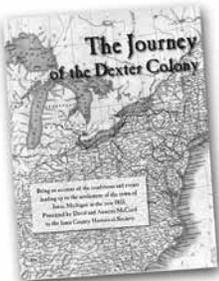
Linda reviewed some recent topics for "Spring Projects" at the Blanchard House and the grounds. Plans to pretty up the lawn have been discussed, and Dave White (who has been doing out mowing lately) is interested in working on this. Trim on the house could use a coat of paint also. But the big concern is about the slate shingles, some of which have been found on the ground. Hank Knoop will be contacting someone to look the situation over. Greg Cook has asked to observe and learn, so he can help in the future.

The plans for the Carriage House are hoped to commence after the spring thaw, including major clean-up and reorganiza

# 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.

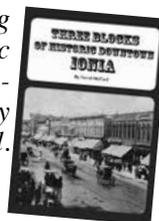


*The Journey of the Dexter Colony, 1833, by David and Annette McCord. A detailed history of the settling of Ionia. \$12 each (\$15 with postage)*

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



*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

tion. (Volunteers needed!)

On the inside, there is a beam under the kitchen that may require some reinforcement. There are still hopes to enhance the electrical in the basement. The building of bases under "L&D Shelves" is being headed up by Gordon W.

Hank K. presented his Treasurer's Report. Expenses lately, including Laurie Brooks cleaning (\$450) and the season's extreme snow removal (\$1200) added to the heating bills. Hank also reviewed the membership list to indicate some unpaid memberships that required some follow-up.

The members of the ICHS are asked to consider items for a Silent Auction to be held June 22.

David M. noted that hosting cost of the website have gone up, but that he is investigating alternatives that may save the ICHS around \$100 annually. He's also looking at some upgrade possibilities for the website, and has an invoice to submit for the domain registration (the ".org").

Barb E. asked the board to consider funds for more storage boxes, mostly for clothing and fabric artifacts. She's still checking into the cost, and will bring an estimate to the Board soon.

Linda C. will attend the upcoming Chamber Breakfast and represent the ICHS there. She will try to talk with Laurie Tjalsma about the possibility of the hospital helping to fund the restoration of Dr. Deffendorf's stained glass window as part of our "Healthcare History" display.

The ICHS has been invited to participate in the Library's "pajama party" reading session on March 27. Kathleen has more details on this event, and the Board was supportive.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

### Minutes of the General Meeting - March 5th, 2014

President Linda Ciangi called the meeting to order at the Ionia Township Hall at approximately 7:15 p.m.

She began with a report that Fox-17 TV had visited just the day before, touring the Blanchard House and collecting info there, then spending a "good hour" interviewing our good friend Gerry Perry who will soon be celebrating his 100th birthday. On that subject, the Sentinel-Standard published a story about Gerry and the upcoming celebration, scheduled for April 3rd at the Ionia Theatre.

Linda also said she had recently had breakfast with the GenCorp Retirees group, and spoke with them about collaborating with the Historical Society to have a "Company Picnic" at the Blanchard House

## Upcoming Programs and Events

**Wednesday, March 5, 7:00 p.m.**

The meeting will be held at the Ionia Township Hall.

**Saturday, March 15 — Ionia Expo**

**Wednesday, March 19, 7:00 p.m.**

Business Meeting at the Blanchard House

**Saturday, April 5th — 10:00-2:00**

Annual "*Appraisal Road Show*" with Glen Rairigh at the Ionia Commission on Aging!

**Wednesday, April 2, 7:00 p.m.**

"THE JOY OF SOX" at the Blanchard House.

**Wednesday, April 16, 7:00 p.m.**

Business Meeting at the Blanchard House

**Weekend of May 3 & 4**

"*Spring Into The Past*" Tri-River Museum Tours

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

Program at the Blanchard House presented by David McCord.

**Saturday, May 17**

Annual Upstairs/Downtown Tours in Downtown Ionia!

**Friday, June 5 & Saturday, June 6**

**Annual ICHS Antique Fayre and Yard Sale!**



Check [www.ioniahistory.org](http://www.ioniahistory.org) for more info, and

**LIKE US ON FACEBOOK!!!**



this summer. It would allow them to reminisce, and to help the ICHS put together the history of the business (no longer in existence) which was started in 1913.

Kathleen Cook reported that the Library would like to partner with the ICHS on more programs in the future, beginning with a March 27th "pajama reading party." They've asked ICHS members to dress in historic nightwear and read some period bedtime stories.

Kathleen also brought up the idea of hosting another bus trip, potentially a June 28th excursion to Shipshewana. There was general agreement from the members, so she will pursue that.

Volunteers are needed to staff the booth at the March 15th Ionia Expo, and the June 6-7 Yard Sale event. Please check with the Board if you can help!

The annual "Appraisal Road Show" is scheduled for April 5th at the Commission on Aging. Bring in your antiques and collectibles for a professional opinion - just \$5 per item - between 10 and 2 o'clock that day.

Linda reminded members that Tickets for the "Dinner Raffle" are still available, and selling pretty well. The drawing (for one of two catered dinners) will be on May 18th.

The meeting was adjourned at approx. 8:00. For more details on these and other ICHS activities, please contact us!



# 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 = \$50
- 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!**

*March 20 – Copper Canyon by Rail (54 min)*

*March 27 – Fantastic Follies - Animals (58 min)*

*April 3 – Black Hills (60 min)*

*April 10 – Northern France (Part 1) (60 min)*

*April 17 – Southern France (Part 2) (60 min)*

*April 24 – The Amish, People of Preservation (54 min)*

### Ionia County Historical Society 2012-13 Board of Directors & Officers

- Linda Ciangi, President — 616-527-4945
- Kathleen Cook, Vice President — 527-2626
- Patty Simpson-Gokee, Director — 527-0676
- Alli Cook, Director — 616-821-1406
- David White, Director — 989-855-2350
- David McCord, Secretary — 527-3784
- Hank Knoop, Treasurer — 527-3130
- Barb Ehlert, House Rentals — 522-0844