



# the CHRONICLE

The Almost Monthly Publication of  
the Ionia County Historical Society



## Ionia's Catholic Heritage



Our host at the February meeting was the Saints Peter and Paul Parish Church, with guest speaker Adam Rewa. Adam was introduced as the church's "office manager," but it is apparent that he could also be called the "historian."

Each ICHS member in attendance received a packet of information, including a detailed timeline of the church's history, reprints of newspaper articles and copies of photos that became the source of this report.

The location now known as "Ionia" was passed through by Catholic missionaries in the very early years of the 19th century, and a mission building was at Grand Rapids when that settlement was first established. The Catholic citizens of the village of Ionia were first officially served by the Rev. George Godez and other priests from Westphalia as early as 1844. In 1857, Ionia was a mission of Annunciation Parish in Corunna, with local services held in the home of Peter Hackett until the church was built (on property donated by Hackett) in 1863.

The original church (dedicated Nov. 1 of that year) was called St. Peter's, and was a simple wooden structure, situated where the front steps of the present church are now. The first resident pastor was Rev. Charles G. Bolte, who also established the first par-

ish school. Additional school buildings and enhancements to the church were added through the next two decades until the new church was built.

The core of the present structure was dedicated in 1882 as Saints Peter and Paul. The original church building was moved south of the street to be used as the school. Then in 1904, the new SS Peter & Paul Academy building was dedicated.

In 1915-16, the church building was enlarged and renovated, reaching its present dimensions, with new windows and furnishings throughout.

In 1924, "Yeoman's Castle" (the Yeomans family home south of High St.) was acquired as Ionia's convent, which was in service until 1971.

Ionia became a part of the Diocese of Grand Rapids in 1938, and both school and church continued to prosper through the years. Many remodelings enhanced the church and school as the decades went by.

The last High School graduating class from the Academy was in 1969, when the school began serving only grades 1 thru 8.

An entire article could be dedicated to the Lyon & Healy Tracker Organ in the church. Installed in 1901, it was originally pumped by hand. It was restored in 1985, and continues to be a highlight of the church, and the community. The organ was rededicated with a 100th anniversary concert in March of 2001.

Bilingual Masses and celebrations were started in 1985, and the following year a daycare program was established.

Members shared many anecdotes and personal recollections about the Church and its history, for many generations a significant part of our community's heritage. Many thanks to Adam Rewa for his presentation! *(More pictures appear in this issue on the inside!)*

### MINUTES of the February 2010 Mtg.

The February, 2010 meeting of the ICHS was called to order by president Linda Ciangi at approximately 7:00 p.m. at the SSPP Academy. Kris Haskins moved to accept the Secretary's Report as published, which was supported by Jim Larock, and passed.

Under old business, President Linda first addressed the upcoming

*Continues on page 2*



Valentine's Day event at the K of C [a.k.a. the Steele Street Hall]. The event will begin at 2:00 p.m., but volunteers are needed for set-up by 9:00 a.m., Sunday the 14th. Joe & Joan McCord will staff the ticket table, Barb Ehlert and Cal Smith will be in charge of the kitchen. Desserts will be supplied by the Lamplight Grill, Cakes Simply Done, Marti's Candy, Annette McCord, Barb Haskins and Doni Knoop. Decorations will be coordinated by Linda C. and Marilyn Nash. There are almost 20 items for the Silent Auction so far, and ten items for door prizes.

Also coming up will be the June Yard Sale at the Carriage House, and contributions from members and friends are gratefully accepted.

Hank Knoop then delivered the Treasurer's Report, which was not the best of news: expenses far outweighed income for the month of January. On the upside, however, we signed up several new "Business Buddies." Dave Cook moved to accept the Treasurer's Report, which was supported by Gerry Perry, and passed. As always, the detailed report is available on request from the Treasurer.

In the category of New Business, the Chamber Expo is coming up on March 13. Doni Knoop is chairing the ICHS involvement this year, and we will again share a booth with the Ionia Business and Professional Women's organization. (There is also a Bridal Shower scheduled at the Blanchard House for this date.)

April 24th will be our Antiques Appraisal Roadshow at the Commission on Aging, chaired by Joan McCord, with guest Appraiser Glenn Rairigh.

May 1 and 2 is the annual "Spring into the Past" Museum Tours. The Blanchard Family Collection will be showcased for our guests.

On August 14th, Ionia welcomes Terry Lee Goffe's tribute to Johnny Cash. Promotion has begun! The Ionia Theatre is co-hosting the event, and tickets will be \$20 and \$25. We will need to have 15 to 20 volunteers to help with the event, including ushers. Negotiations are underway to get a billboard to promote the event. Mary Cusack has offered to arrange some girl singers to perform a few Carter Family classics to open the show. More details coming soon!

Throughout the summer, many programs and activities are being planned. Joan McCord and Stephanie VanderMolen are working on several ideas for Summer Sunday entertainment. Any suggestions are welcomed.

Kris Haskins also reported on his communications with a group of Civil War re-enactors. He will be attending one of their meetings on February 24 to discuss several opportunities for their group in Ionia, including the Free Fair and Fall Festival.

With no other business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned. Members shared some refreshments (supplied by AliceWhorley), and Hank Knoop introduced the evening's guest presenter, Adam Rewa, for his presentation about SS Peter & Paul Church.

## MINUTES of the February Board Meeting

The Board of Directors for the Ionia County Historical Society met at the Blanchard House on Wednesday, February 17, 2010. President Linda Ciangi called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. - also in attendance were Kathleen Larock, Barb Ehlert, Kris Haskins and David McCord.

Linda reported that the Valentine's Day event was a success in many ways. This included financially: preliminary numbers are: cash in = \$1824, expenses = \$715 with some expenses still to be paid. Profit is expected to be over \$1,000. Thanks to all who helped to make this event a success!

Thursday evening work sessions continue, with much progress having been made in cleaning the china closet (Barb, Linda, and Kathleen) and artifacts continue to be sorted and cataloged. Kris H. noted that some items are being taken to the Carriage House that may be put up for sale at the June "Yard Sale" if the Accessions Committee and Board agree to do so.

The upkeep of the Blanchard House was discussed, including general clean up in preparation for upcoming visitors. Celia Jackson will be decorating. Dave Cook has offered a discount on floor finishing for the Society if the board opts to do so. This would pertain to the wood floors in the Kitchen and Conservatory. The actual amount is still to be determined. Cleaning of the carpets was also discussed, and professional estimates will be procured before a decision is made. \$500 has been received so far towards the Carriage house roof repair project. Grants and other sources of major funding are being investigated for that project by Cal Smith. Spring window washing will again be done by Clingers (they give us a great rate!).

The Accessions Committee has a digital camera, copy stand, scanner, and (thanks to Linda C.) the use of a slide/negative scanner and soon a postcard scanner. Discussion ensued as to whether these tools could be offered for use by visitors (for a donation) at the house.

Regarding the March 13 Ionia Chamber Expo at the High School, WION has offered a \$99 promotional package including several sponsorship spots, on-site interview, and more. The Board asked that David McCord contact the station to see if there is anything they could do for us for \$50.00. He will. [He did. They did not. —DM]

Linda shared a flier from the Northville Historical Society who will be hosting a Cemetery Walk on October 4. Hosting a similar event in Ionia has been discussed for some time now, and the Board would like to keep it on the agenda. The idea of arranging a tour of the Highland Park Cemetery for next

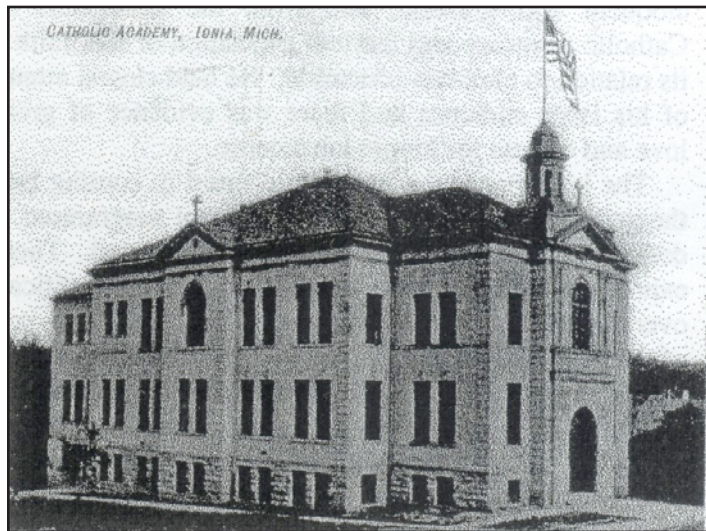
year's "Spring into the Past" event was suggested and met with support. The idea will be presented to the membership to gauge their reaction.

Kris Haskin's arrangements for a Christmas Music Program on December 16th continue, with several acts already committed and the full support of the Ionia Theatre. All proceeds for this event will go to area food banks, and Kris seeks the sponsorship (in name only) of the Historical Society. The Board unanimously supported the idea.

Kathleen reported that several e-mails had been received and responded to, and D. McCord noted that the website needs to be edited to remove the Valentine's Day event information.

Finally, Summer Sunday programs were briefly discussed, but the Board tabled the discussion until Stephanie V. can be in attendance.

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



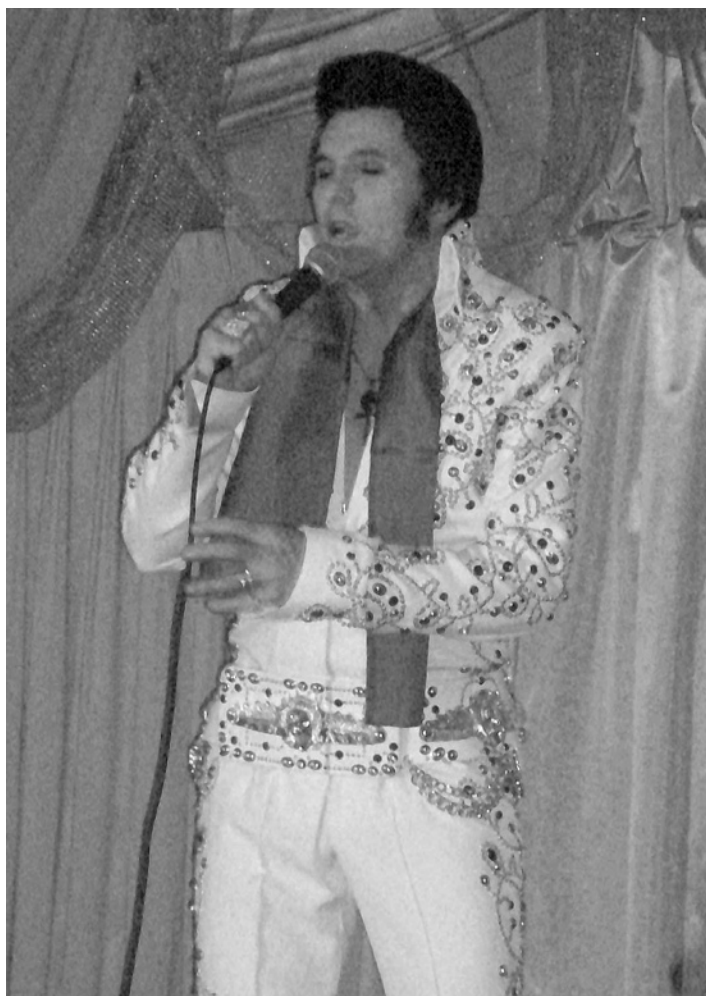
ABOVE — SS Peter & Paul Academy c. 1904 from a Postcard.

### The original St. Peter's Catholic Church of Ionia.

*(This is after the building was moved south of High Street to be used as the school, and later as a "general purpose" building.)*







ABOVE: A special Valentine treat was enjoyed by all when Elvis impersonator Fred Wolfe entertained a large crowd at the Steele St. Hall (the former K of C) on February 14th. Photo by Linda Ciangi

BELOW: The interior of SS. Peter & Paul in 1920 after major expansion.

## Upcoming Programs and Events

### Thursday Evening Workshops at the Blanchard House.

Stop in - 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, March 3, 7:00pm  
Regular Meeting at the Community  
Mental Health Building

Saturday, March 13  
Ionia Expo at the Ionia High School

Wednesday, March 17, 7:00pm  
Board Meeting at the Blanchard House

Wednesday, April 7, 7:00pm  
Regular Meeting at the Community  
Mental Health Building

Monday, April 12  
ICHS Tour Guide Training Session!

Wednesday, April 21, 7:00pm  
Board Meeting at the Blanchard House

Saturday, April 24  
Antiques Appraisal Roadshow at the  
Ionia Commission on Aging

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



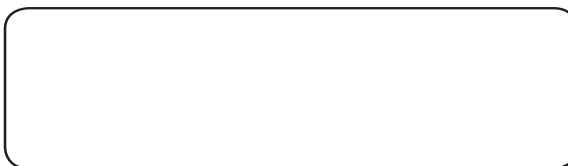


# the CHRONICLE

www.ioniahistory.org

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 ICBS at P.O. Box 1776, Ionia, MI, 48846 or via [www.ioniahistory.org](http://www.ioniahistory.org).

Ionia County Historical Society  
P.O. Box 1776  
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 ICBS Treasurer, care of Box 1776, 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 ICBS Travelogues!

March 4 — Mt. Rushmore

March 11 — Travels with Taximan

March 18 — Secrets of the Holy Land

March 25 - The Adirondacks

April 1 — Barn Red

April 8 — Ancient Rome (Blessed Easter to All)

April 15 — France

April 22 — Camp Forgotten (CCC)

### Ionia County Historical Society 2009-10 Board of Directors & Officers

Linda Ciangi, President — 527-4945  
Kathleen Perrin, Vice Pres. — 616-675-4618  
Kris Haskins, Director — 989-855-3685  
Stephanie VanderMolen — 616-755-0731  
Barb Ehlert, Director — 522-0844  
David McCord, Secretary — 527-3784  
Hank Knoop, Treasurer — 527-3130