



the The Almost Monthly Publication of the Ionia County Historical Society CHRONICLE



The Journey of the Dexter Colony, 1833

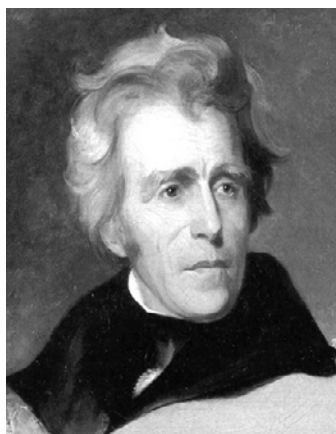
At the May meeting of the ICHS, David and Annette McCord greeted the members and guests in their 1830s costumes. The subject of their presentation was the journey of Ionia's founders in 1833, and the circumstances leading up to that fateful trip.

The introduction began with apologies for previous statements about this historic saga that have been told without historical accuracy. Some records and legends of that famous event have been found to be inaccurate, if not untrue. Through several months of research (which is always on-going), this report is an attempt to tell the real story as best it can be conveyed. Annette spent many hours researching through old books, publications, census records and genealogical databases to track down the facts. David scoured the Internet for maps and images and historical background to make the story come alive.

David began with a history lesson, covering events in the USA in the few years prior to the Dexter Colony's adventure. The Andrew Jackson presidency and all its controversies, including issues of state's rights, the threat of civil war. Social scandals and political power-plays were in the news. He also related tales of every-day life of Americans on the "western frontier" beyond the original colonies and the newer states. (There were 24 states at the time, Texas and California were still part of Mexico, the northwest boundaries of the Louisiana Purchase were still contested by the British. Indeed, most of the settlers of Ionia remembered the War of 1812 very well indeed. McCormick's famous reaper, the first American railroads, and the birth of photography were all in the news. And the opening of the Erie Canal just 8 short years before made settlement in the Michigan Territory possible for great numbers of pioneers.

The second part of the presentation addressed Mr. Samuel Dexter's lineage, and the circumstances surrounding his first trip to Michigan in 1832 with his cousin Dr. John R. Jewett. What most don't realize is that many of the Dexter clan had already moved to Michigan by this time, including Samuel's in-laws and many a cousin. David related this first meeting with Louis

Canal boat in the early years of the Erie Canal similar to the Dexter's own..



President Andrew Jackson, heroic purveyor of the pioneer spirit of America.

MINUTES of the Business Meeting, May 19, 2010.

President Linda Ciangi called the business meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. - also present were Barb Ehlert, Stephanie VanderMolen, Hank Knoop, David McCord, Doni Knoop, and Phyllis Lobdell.

Music on the Green is coming to Ionia again. Linda asked if the ICHS would like to be involved in some way. Linda will contact the organizer, Pastor Larry Brown, to discuss involvement for the August Third performance where we can promote the Johnny Cash tribute show. The Tuesday, July 13, show will also include an Art Show with a cash prize.

Linda has also been involved with the "I'm Smart" project for the Economic Development Corp, representing the ICHS. She also shared a brochure from the Ridgeline Company, which specializes in historic restoration projects.

Linda reported that Kitty's Café has been sold, and she has met the new owners. The ICHS has been very generously supported by Kitty in years past, particularly in the Chili Cookoffs. Doni K. suggested that we acknowledge her contributions with a Life Membership. Barb so moved, support and passed by the Board.

The Society received a letter from Jane Todd in which she gave us details

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NEXT MONTH: June 2nd— "History of the Ionia Free Fair"
Presented by Dave Hess, long-time Free Fair Director and Chairperson.

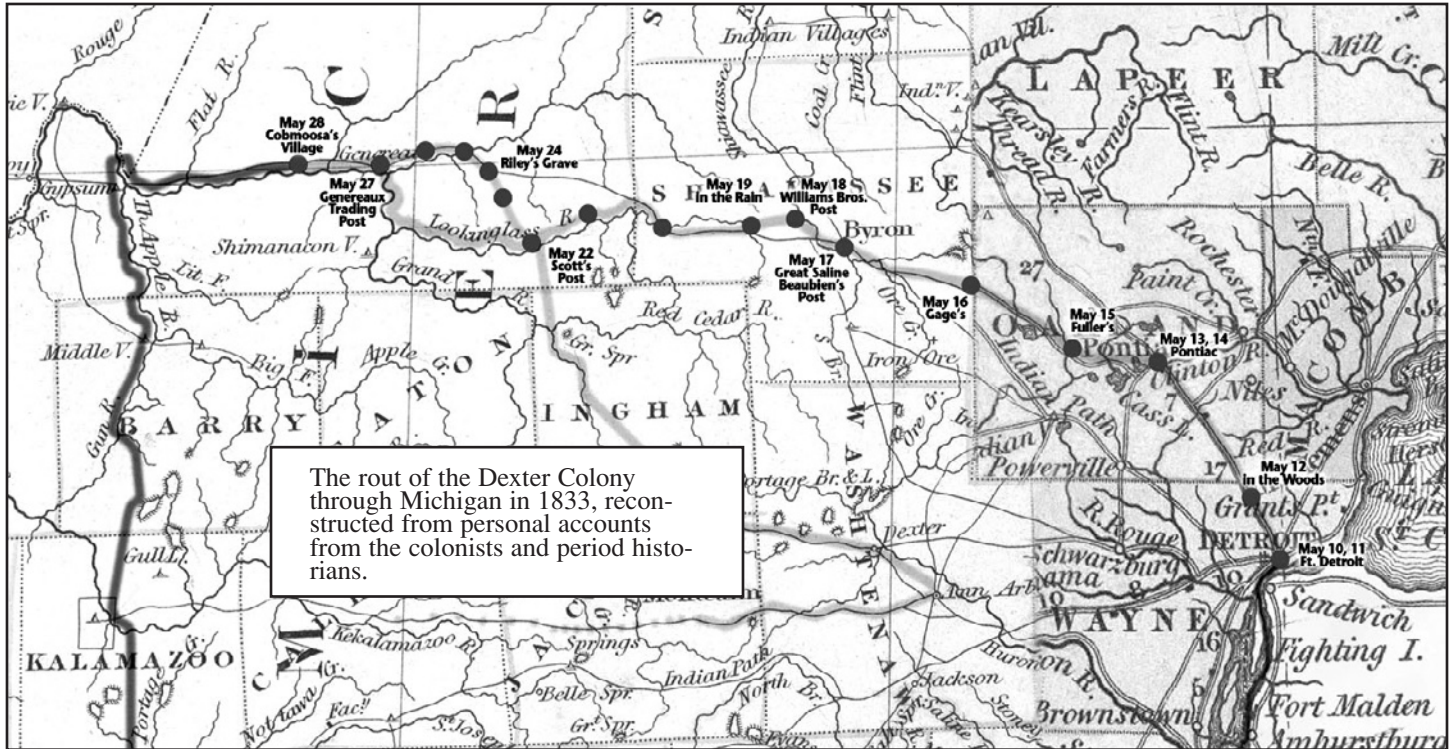
The Journey - from page 1

Campau at the Grand Rapids, and encounters with traders and Ottawa natives, and finally a journey to White Pigeon to file the claim.

In the third portion of the presentation, the actual “Dexter Party” was described - all those folks who signed on for the big adventure. All those families who sold all they had, gave up all their home-land connexions, and risked everything to settle in a new wilderness. There were 63 persons in the colony by the time they left the port at Buffalo. In that party, they ranged in age from 4 weeks old to 75 years old, and more than half the group were under the age of 15.

When they headed out from Detroit into the forest, they had six covered wagons, horses, oxen, cows, pigs, and dozens of children. They moved slowly through the road-less woods and swamps, stopping at the occasional trading post or Indian village. They spent many nights in tents along the trail. Along the way, one of the children died of a fever and was buried alongside the trail. Their provisions ran low, their supplies were drenched from days of rainfall, and their tools were dull from the cutting of the new wagon-road.

BUT, after all their hardships, 36 days from Herkimer County, New York and 16 days overland from Detroit, they finally reached their claim along the Grand River.



Minutes — from Page 1

regarding the Blanchard dishes and stemware recently donated.

Linda had 250 new Blanchard House brochures printed at OfficeWorks. The Board will be sending some of these B-House brochures to the D.O.T. to be included in the Tourist Centers at the state border.

Several items were acquired from the Huntley estate recently: a directory of Civil War veterans, pamphlet from the opening of the Ionia Theatre (1931), a 1910 Ionia Yearbook, several Kling family artifacts (to share with the Genealogical Society), and an 1861 Railroad booklet.

The new meeting format was discussed briefly, with comments for and against being shared. The earlier start time for the program is favorable on several accounts. It was suggested that a handout be prepared to share upcoming events and activities with the attendees in lieu of the “business” section of the “program” meetings.

Regarding the weekly workshop sessions, clean-up of the Blanchard

House is progressing well. The dressing room is done, and the upstairs “tea room” is nearly done. The membership will be invited to start a committee to choose floor covering for the Blanchard’s bedroom. Sue Garrison and Barb E. have volunteered to help with repairs needed in the conservatory.

The Board voted to have Joan McCord forward the donated 1953 wedding dress to the Belding Historical Society for their collection.

The Tri-River group will be meeting at Edmore on June 15th, at and including a tour of a historic home there. Then, on July 20th, the big summer luncheon for the group will be held at Belding. The ICHS is in need of volunteers to help provide cooking for the main dishes - interested persons please contact Joan McCord. Stephanie shared tickets for the luncheon (\$10 each) and small hand-outs for the event.

Plans for the upcoming “All Class Reunion” include a visit to the Blanchard House on June 26 & 27.

Funding is needed for the project to re-roof the carriage house. Hank Knoop composed a request for donations to be included in the Chronicle. Stephanie will layout the flier (with suggestions from the Board) in time for the next edition.

The revisions for the Funeral Luncheon letter were reviewed. Stephanie will set up the cover letter on ICHS letterhead to be sent to area Funeral Directors, and create a 1/3-page insert for our Blanchard House brochures to detail the rental arrangements, etc.

The June 7 book signing with R.L. Hamilton is coming up, being heavily promoted by the Library. Members are being encouraged to dress in historic costume. Details on the calendar and the ICHS website.

The ICHS Yard Sale / Flea Market plan is on schedule, chaired by Doni and Barb. A letter is going out to Blanchard House neighbors to let them know what’s happening, and signs are being prepared to put on the fence. There are four participants: the ICHS,

the Library, Garden Club, and a guy with a Mosquito Repellent device.

The Free Fair’s Antique Village will be in the Floral Building this year. In fact, it will occupy the ENTIRE Floral Building. Another item from the Huntley estate is Free Fair Parade films, which we hope to have transferred to DVD to play at the Village display. Linda also is working on a float for the Parade with a Railroad theme, working with Marilyn Nash.

The Summer Sundays schedule is shaping up nicely, thanks to Joan McCord’s efforts. Still to be confirmed are August 1 (a possible “photography” theme?) and August 22 (music by David McCord et al?).

Barb Hogan continues to catalog artifacts, and Carol Gallagher wants to be involved in the Accessions Committee. Said committee needs to get a meeting scheduled. Books which have been sorted and marked are ready to sell - some on eBay, some at the yard sale.

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

The Journey - from page 2

There, they made good Sam Dexter's bargain with the local Ottawa chief, Cobmoosa, and his band of natives. The Indians moved west, giving over their newly planted gardens and a few bark-covered wigwams to the settlers. Almost immediately, the fledgling town began to organize, to elect, to send representatives to the territorial government, and to carve a town out of the Michigan woodland.

David and Annette's presentation will soon be available in booklet form, complete with illustrations, maps, paintings and photographs. We hope those of you readers who missed the meeting will be able to get hold of a copy very soon.

The Tree Fell Silently...

Submitted by Hank Knoop, ICHS Treasurer

Yes, that is what happened to the dead tree in the corner of the Blanchard House lawn. As some of you recall, this tree was hanging across the creek, from our side, and precariously over the neighbor's house. Something had to be done.

Late one night, I received a phone call from Jerry Lilly of Lilly's Tree Service that the tree I had asked him to quote on had fallen over. He then went on to tell me that it missed the neighbor's house and landed entirely on our side of the creek. Yes, he and his crew had stopped there that evening and cut it down for us so that we could safely cut it up and remove the pieces. He only asked in return that we recommend him for tree trimming, cutting, and/or stump removal (grinding). By the way, he does excellent work and had economically and efficiently removed a large oak tree that was by our home on State Rd.

So, if you see Jerry Lilly, say "thanks." If you need tree service, keep him in mind and he will gladly give you a free quote.

P.S. Speaking of trees, ICHS Director Kris Haskins cut down several that needed to be removed from the back lawn of the Blanchard House. With a little help from other volunteers, these too have been removed. The view is now much better and grass should improve as well.

The Safari Club International will be coming to the Blanchard House Sunday, June 27th!

This hands-on display is a great experience for young and old alike. Volunteers from the Safari Club International Foundation bring an assortment of mounted displays of exotic animals. FREE and FUN!

The Tri-River Group

of Museums (which we are members of) will be hosting their annual potluck lunch and program "Hats On The Go" in Belding on July 20, 2010.

Interested individuals may contact the Board for tickets (\$10 per plate) and more information.

ICHS FLEA MARKET!

**Friday, June 11,
9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
at the Blanchard House**

*If you have items to donate,
please contact Hank Knoop.*

Ionia Free Fair Antique Village

Antiques & Volunteers Needed

(The volunteers do not need to be antiques....)

Yes, the fair is fast approaching and as most of you know the Antique Village has been moved to the Floral Building. Yes, the Antique Village has the entire floral building.

Based on a meeting that I attended today, May 23, at the Floral Building, that brings up several new opportunities. There will now be room to display more antiques and more volunteers are needed.

If you would like to share an antique that you have with others they can be loaned for the fair week. I have done this the last several years and it always has worked out great. I dropped off the items for display on Wednesday night before the fair opened and picked them up again at the end of the fair. The Antique Village staff do an excellent job of recording and labeling each item plus they will issue a receipt to the loaner. It will be even better this year, since the Floral Building provides floors, walls, and a roof. Don't laugh, the former Antique Village was in a large tent with plastic sheeting for sides and yes, with a dirt floor. If you would like to share one of your treasures for a short period of time, call Karen Merchant at 522 - 1495 to let her know that you are coming. (If you would like help getting an item there, and back, call Hank Knoop at 527-3130 for free & friendly service.)

Also, volunteers are needed so that four to six people are always in the Floral Building. All interests and physical abilities are welcome. People are needed by the doors, they can be seated, to provide information and others are needed to walk around and explain exhibits.

The shifts are: 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

2:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

6:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

These shifts are needed every day of the "ten best days of summer". Again, if you would like to work, please call Karen Merchant at 522 - 1495. This is fun, Doni and I have done this quite a bit the last several years. Oh, yes for everyday that you work at the fair you will receive a free parking pass good for that day.



JUNE 18, 19, 20 at the
Ionia Free Fair Grounds.

**ANTIQUE FARM TECHNOLOGY and
FARM FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!**

www.ioniafarmpower.org

Upcoming Programs and Events

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

Wednesday, June 2, 7:00 p.m.

Monthly Program Meeting

Dave Hess Presents

The History of the Free Fair

Monday, June 7, 7:00 p.m.

Author R.L. Hamilton Book Signing

(a newly released novel of the Civil War)

at the Blanchard House

Friday, June 11, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.

ICHS Yard Sale at the Blanchard House

Proceeds to support the ICHS

Wednesday, June 16, 7:00 p.m.

ICHS Business Meeting

at the Blanchard House

(All interested parties are welcomed!)

Wednesday, July 7, 7:00 p.m.

Annual Independence Day Pot-Luck

at the Blanchard House

EVERYONE WELCOMED!

Wednesday, July 21, 7:00 p.m.

ICHS Business Meeting

at the Blanchard House

Wednesday, August 4, 7:00 p.m.

Monthly Program Meeting

Bill Davis presents: **TRAINS!**

August 14, 8:00 p.m. at the Ionia Theatre:

TRIBUTE to JOHNNY CASH

with Terry Lee Goffee - at the Ionia Theatre

Proceeds to the Theatre and ICHS!

Wednesday, August 18th, 7:00 p.m.

ICHS Business Meeting at the Blanchard House

**BE SURE TO CHECK THE SCHEDULE OF
SUMMER SUNDAYS IN THIS ISSUE!**

— and —

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



Summer Sundays at the Blanchard House!

Please join us for our summer activities at the Blanchard House, 251 E. Main St., Ionia. Tours and entertainment from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. on Sundays during June, July, and August. Something for everyone!

June 6th

Horseless Carriage Display inside, and
outside there will be Model T rides.

June 13th

The History of Baseball in Ionia inside, and
game activities on the lawn.

June 20th

A Country School display inside, and on the grounds a
display and presentation of Indian Lore and Life.

(The kids will enjoy this!)

June 27th

Ionia High School Reunion weekend.

A display of memories, and we welcome the Safari Club
International traveling exhibit of exotic animals.

A hands-on display for your and old.

July 4th

A perfect day for a display inside honoring our veterans.

July 11th

The Ionia Community Band will perform on the lawn from
1 to 3 p.m. Inside will be a display of musical memories.

(Bring your lawn chair and enjoy the music!)

July 18th

A display celebrating the Churches of Ionia, with old
hymns being played on our antique church organ.

July 25th

Ionia Free Fair will be the high-light of the weekend,
including images of Fairs of Yesterday.

August 1st

[To Be Announced]

August 8th

Local History on display inside and a live Bird Show on
the lawn, with an eagle, owl, and falcon. Bring a lawn
chair and learn about birds of prey!

August 15th

A display about the pioneers who settled Ionia in 1833,
with genuine artifacts from our collection.

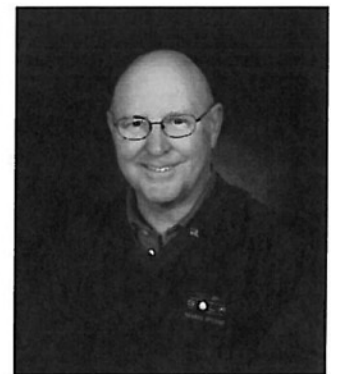
IONIA COMMUNITY LIBRARY &
IONIA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Presents

**"OH! HAST THOU
FORGOTTEN"**

Michigan Cavalry in the Civil War:
The Gettysburg Campaign



Richard L. Hamilton
Foreword by Michael Blake,
Author of "Dances With Wolves"



Monday June 7th, 7:00pm
Blanchard House

Civil War author Richard L Hamilton will give a book talk and book signing about the 6th Michigan Cavalry Regiment and the Battle of Gettysburg which he writes about in his book Oh! Hast Thou Forgotten. There is no admission charge.

Everyone is invited and refreshments will be served.

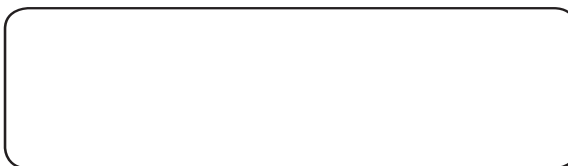


the CHRONICLE

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 ICHS at P.O. Box 1776, Ionia, MI, 48846 or via www.

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 ICHS 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 ICHS Travelogues!

April 29 — Seven Wonders of the World

May 6 — March of the Penguins

May 13 — Spain

May 20 — Greece

May 27 — Grand Rapids Made

June 3 — A Taste of Holland

June 10 — Gettysburg

June 17 — Egypt

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