



The Almost Monthly Publication of
the Ionia County Historical Society

the CHRONICLE



Artifacts of John C. Blanchard are Donated!

ICHS Members Elated!

Board of Directors Express Their Gratitude!

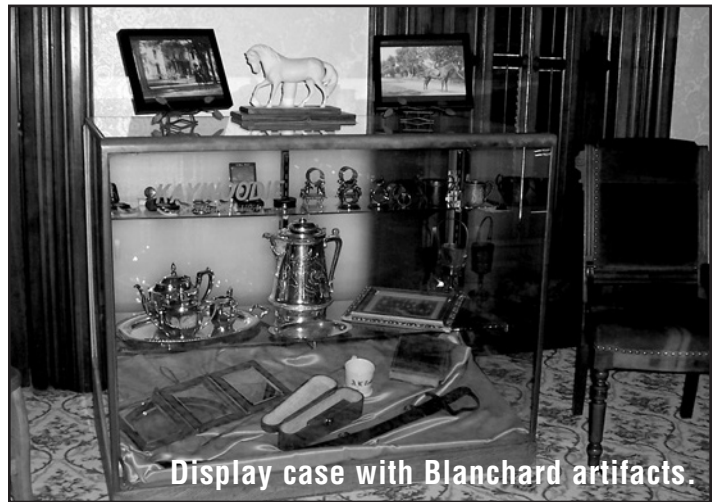
The members of the ICHS were honored to welcome Duane Todd to our meeting on November 4th. Mr. Todd is the great-great-grandson of John C. and Harriet Blanchard.

"Fifty-nine years ago," Mr. Todd began, "my grandfather made me swear on the family Bible that I would keep John Blanchard's watch and these other artifacts in the family, to be passed on to my own grandson if that day should arrive, and not before I turned 72 years old." This year, that 72nd birthday arrived, and having no grandson to pass these things on to, and with the blessings of his daughter Jane, Mr. Todd chose to turn these priceless items over to the care and keeping of the Historical Society.

John and Harriet's daughter, Ellen (usually called "Nettie"), married Albinus Todd in 1876, and the couple set up housekeeping in Carson City, MI. With many connections of family and business in Ionia, the families remained close through the years. Nettie and Albinus were the parents of Celsus Valois Blanchard Todd (called "Valois") who married Addie Carr in 1902. Their son Paul Todd (born 31 August 1903) married Helen Valentine, and they are the parents of Duane Todd (our speaker) and his sister Mary Louise.

Mr. Todd related several tales of his own memories of his Grandfather, Valois Blanchard, who spent the last 10 years of his life wheelchair-bound. Grandfather related many tales to Duane and his siblings of life in the family - of days on the family get-away at Boise Blanc Island, stories of the home in Ionia, and tales related to some of the artifacts which were on display during this presentation.

Central to the oath referred to above was John C. Blanchard's gold watch - not only a valuable artifact in its own right, but an accessory always kept close to John C. throughout his life. The fob on this watch terminates in a gold toothpick which retracts with a few gentle twists into a small black cylinder. According to the family tradition, Mrs. Blanchard was quite a stickler for etiquette, as much as John C. was a bit of a tease. Picking one's teeth at table was, of course, unthinkable, and Mr. B. would ceremoniously pull out this gold toothpick and slowly raise it towards his mouth, playfully threatening to employ it. However, at the last second, he would stop, redirect his attention to his watch, and declare that it appeared to be "time for a slice of pie." This light-hearted episode was apparently not unusual, as Mr. and Mrs. B. shared many similar differences of demeanor.



Display case with Blanchard artifacts.

He noted that John C. was known for a mischievous sense of humor, and that he would occasionally arrange to get into trouble with his younger relatives when they visited.

Duane recalled stories related by his grandfather, Valois, of visits to the family at the Blanchard House, where the women were quite formal and "Mother Blanchard" was very much in control of the welcoming of guests. Valois, apparently, was made to sit quietly in a straight-back chair while the ladies had their tea and conversation, or he would be watched by a hired neighborhood boy, with whom he had a little freedom to roam the grounds and get into a little trouble.

He also related a story about one of the many family artifacts brought to the Blanchard House this evening. It seems a local Odawa Indian leader (whose name is not remembered) and his band were coming upriver to visit the area. This was a regular seasonal visit, but some children who saw them coming went into a panic. The youngsters called on the town constables and reported that "the injuns were invading." Because of John C.'s long-standing good relations with the natives (having grown up with many native playmates), he was called to confront the "attackers." When the constable came to the door of the Blanchard house, their maidservant went

Continues on page 3

MINUTES of the November '09 Mtg.

President Linda Ciangi called the meeting to order at the Blanchard House, 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 4, 2009. After a welcome to our members, new members, and guests, she asked that the Board meet briefly after the meeting with Cal Smith to discuss the plans for food at the Chamber After-hours Event.

It was noted the Secretary's report contained an error: the name

Continues on page 2

is “LaRock” not “LaRoch.” It was moved by Cal Smith and supported by Bob Nixon to accept the minutes as published, with this edit. The motion carried.

Under “Old Business” was a recap of the October 29 Chili Dog Challenge. The event was again a huge success, and thanks are extended to Kitty Cole at Kitty’s Café for furnishing all the supplies and doing the cooking, and also to Hank & Doni Knoop, Kris and Barb Haskins, Cal Smith, Bryan Quinn, Jane Yenchar, Patty Simpson and the Gallaghers. 300 chili dogs were sold and \$187 dollars added to our Treasury!

The menu is nearly ready for the November 12 Business After-hours. Thanks to Cal Smith for handling the details. Cash donations from the membership will be appreciated to help pay for this event.

The Holiday decorations have begun. “Keeper of the Crows” have completed decorations in the front office. “Eclectic” will decorate the dining room, “Sid’s” has chosen the parlor and front porch, and “Ionia Floral” will do the hall, stairs, and “tea room” upstairs. This will be done in time to show off at the November 12 event.

Hank Knoop then delivered the treasurer’s report. The numbers looked good for the past month. Larry Tiejema passed around the annual financial summary, and reviewed the major points. He moved that Hank Knoop be added to the paperwork for the investment accounts, which was supported by Joan McCord and passed by the membership.

Under “New Business,” the Mrs. Claus Bazaar will be December 5th at the Ionia Middle School from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The ICHS will have a table there to sell items and distribute publicity for upcoming events. The Stone Cottage in Howard City has donated a box of jewelry for sale and we’ll also be selling decorations and framed photocopies of historic pictures. Alice Whorley is preparing some decorations for sale. Members are asked to sign up to staff the table for this event, and contributions are welcomed of items for sale.

February 14th will be a Valentine’s Day Party with an “Elvis for Everyone” theme. Fred Wolf will be performing Elvis love songs, and there will be a dessert table. President Ciangi is asking the board to approve ICHS sponsorship of this event, at no risk to the treasury. Fliers are being prepared and tickets will be available in time for the Mrs. Claus Bazaar.

Plans are in place for another Appraisal Roadshow in March.

The ICHS will be partnering with the Ionia Theatre to bring Terry Lee Goffee’s internationally known Johnny Cash Tribute show to our town next August. Details are being arranged now, and all interested members are encouraged to contact President Ciangi if they’d like to help. Sponsors are being sought for the event, and proceeds will be shared equally with the Theatre.

David McCord noted that there

will be a Flag Retirement ceremony by local Boy Scouts to commemorate Veteran’s Day on Wednesday, November 11 at Bertha Brock Park, and invites all members to attend.

Plans have begun for next year’s October Upstairs-Downtown event, with several property owners already expressing interest to be included.

Donations to the ICHS this month include:

An antique violin played by Robert Bills - given by his son Roy and daughter Luella. (Robert Bills played football for Ionia High School in 1917; Roy Bills had donated the Guitar to the ICHS for our raffle 2 years ago.)

Gerry Perry presented the membership a brief presentation of a “Cobbler’s Last” - special iron forms used to repair shoes which had been donated to the Enrich organization and passed along by Dave Cook.

David McCord noted the donation of a flatbed scanner for the Accessions Committee’s use, as well as a framed hand-written document dated in the late 1700s which had been found at the Blanchard House, several numbered prints of Spud Jones’s drawing of the Ionia Courthouse (to be offered for sale by the ICHS) and delivery of the framing/matt-cutting tools recently purchased for the ICHS.

Several community events were reviewed (all of which will have occurred by the time this newsletter is published) and upcoming Blanchard House rental dates were shared as well. President Ciangi reminded members that the schedule for rentals and other ICHS events are being recorded on a wall calendar in the kitchen, as well as on the website (thanks to Stephanie VanderMolen).

The meeting was adjourned with a reminder that the December 2nd meeting will be a Pot Luck Dinner, with social hour beginning at 6:00 p.m. Please bring your service and a dish to pass. Hank Knoop was then asked to introduce our special guest speaker for the evening.

Brief Board Meeting of November 4

The Board of Directors of the ICHS met briefly after the regular meeting on November 4, 2009, to discuss two issues:

1. The menu and other arrangements for the November 12 Chamber After Hours event. The revisions presented by Cal Smith were all accepted by the Board. He asked for use of an additional “George Foreman” grille, if anyone has one. Kathleen said she could create some small cards to describe the dishes on the tables. It was acknowledged that the budget originally proposed for the event was being surpassed, but the Board felt it was worth the experience and the publicity.

2. Barb Ehlert moved that the Board approve sponsorship of the Valentines Day Party, noting that Linda C. has promised that, whatever the outcome, ICHS funds would not be needed for the event. Sponsors are being

sought, the total investment expected to be around \$875. Tickets will be sold for \$10 each. Kris Haskins supported the motion, and the Board approved.

The meeting was adjourned following this vote.

MINUTES of the November Board Meeting

The Board of the Ionia County Historical Society met at the Blanchard House at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 18. The meeting was brought to order by President Linda Ciangi, attended by Stephanie VanderMolen, Kris Haskins, Barb Ehlert, Hank & Doni Knoop, Kathleen Perrin LaRock, and David & Annette McCord.

At the request of Kris H., President Ciangi handed out copies of the most recent ICHS By Laws, asking the Board to review these for accuracy, etc.

Linda reported that the Christmas decorations at the house by local businesses has been a great success, and several of the businesses have already asked to be included for next year. These decorations were in place for the recent Chamber After Hours, which was also a great success. The Board discussed favorably the idea that we host the event again next year. Final accounting will be forthcoming soon - Hank K. and Cal Smith will meet to summarize the expenses at the Thursday evening workshop here at the House.

The Tri-River Tea on the 17th was well received. The expenses of the “Tea” have thus far been covered by President Ciangi, and she is waiting to see what monetary donation might be coming from the group to help cover it. After that, she will submit for a reimbursement as appropriate.

The Mrs. Clause Bazaar is coming soon (December 5) and the ICHS will have a table there to sell souvenirs and publicize the organization. President Ciangi asked the board if they felt it too early to sell tickets for the February 14th “Valentines Day Dance” with Fred Wolf (see below). The board agreed this would be a good time to start, and Stephanie V. will get a flier and tickets ready for that event.

The Valentines Day Dance will cost the ICHS \$250 for the site and \$400 for the performance, but President Ciangi notes that, regardless of the results, the event will not cost the ICHS anything. At \$10 per person + sponsorships to help with expenses, she expects to make a profit for the ICHS. More to come.

The Calendar was passed around and dates filled in for December’s Sunday afternoon open houses. Any interested members are welcomed to contact Linda if they’d like to help. The hours (1:00 to 4:00 p.m.) will be advertised, with Sunday, Nov. 29 being a “tree-trimming party” to get the big 12-foot tree in the front parlor finished up.

Hank K. and Linda C. will try diligently to get the Business Buddies let-

ters out within the next week so we can boost those membership contributions. In addition to our own lists, Linda will check with Tina at the Chamber about using the membership mailings to promote these memberships.

Some discussion was had regarding grants and funding for specific projects. It’s too late to get in on the 2010 Community Foundation grant schedule this year, but more grants will be researched in the coming months.

The discussion about the potentially diseased tree in the yard was brought up, and the issue was tabled until spring, when the tree can be better inspected. At that time also, general discussion of the lawn and grounds will be on the agenda again.

Doni K. noted that she had seen some wrinkling in some wallpaper in the dining room, and wondered about temperature and humidity in that regard. No definite conclusions were made, but the issue was noted by the Board.

The Calendar of Programs for the coming year was discussed. Previous notes could not be located by the Secretary, so Hank K.’s notes were brought out, and the calendar is tentatively set as follows:

January: Potential program at the Ionia Theatre, showing a vintage film. Gary F. will be contacted.

February: Saints Peter & Paul Church program (arr. by Hank K.)

March: To Be Determined - Hank will contact Joan McCord, who had some suggestions

April: Ionia Baseball by Kris Haskins

May: Artifacts of Ionia’s Founding Families by David McCord

June: Ionia Free Fair Memories by Dave Hess (arr. by Linda C.)

July: Independence Day Pot Luck - program will be entertainment TBD

August: Possible program on Railroads (Linda C. will locate a presenter)

September: To Be Determined

October: Annual Meeting (no program)

November: Possible Veteran’s Day program (T.B.D.)

December: Christmas Pot Luck (as usual)

Another suggested topic was “A Blanchard House Retrospective” to review all the restoration work over the past 35 years. The Board hopes to identify a member or members who could address this topic.

Finally, Treasurer Hank K. noted that the ICHS has a five-year CD for \$20,000 that has matured. If nothing is done by the 26th, it will renew for another five years at 3.00 %. Hank suggests that we go with two CD’s of a shorter duration, namely \$10K for 2 years and \$10K for 3 years. The Board agreed, and this will be implemented. Also, Hank noted that the current assignees are David McCord, Larry Tiejema, and Bob Nixon. He asked that Bob Nixon be removed from the CD list and himself be added. The Board agreed and this, too, will be put into affect as soon as possible.

The Board adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Blanchard Artifacts - continued.

into a “tizzy” and went running in fear down the street. Mrs. Blanchard had to go after her (which must have been an exceptional event in itself). Anyhow, Mr. Blanchard went to parlay with the Odawa leader, who was easily brought into the make-believe hostilities to entertain the panicky youngsters. As a token of peace and friendship, the native leader presented Mr. Blanchard with an arrow, which curtailed the native uprising and made them all momentary heroes. Now when Mr. B. returned to the house, being a bit of a prankster, he put the point of the arrow under one arm as he approached the front door. The poor servant girl answered the door and saw the master of the house swooning, feigning a mortal wound. This threw her again into a state of fearful anxiety, until calmed by the returning hero. This arrow—a dark, slim shaft with a metal point and no fletching—and the story behind it are part of the collection presented to the ICHS by Mr. Todd.

Also in the collection are many documents, including a certificate from the Mayflower Society attesting to the membership of Hanna Blanchard (through the lineage of her mother, Harriet Brewster Blanchard), and several civil war letters, which former Ionia librarian Deb Dudek has volunteered to transcribe for us. One of the gems of the collection is the Blanchard Family Bible, containing valuable family records. In addition, there are photos and newspaper clippings, official documents and books, a silver tea service, medals, and many other small heirlooms.

Mrs. Sandy Todd, Duane’s wife, took up the story, relating their particular dislike of the clock that had been in Mr. Blanchard’s office for many years (part of the collection being donated). While living with relatives, the couple slept in a room above a small alcove in which the clock sat. The clock’s chime (actually a small bell sound) would carry all too well through the walls of the house and wake them on the hour. It had been Duane’s job to wind the clock when he was young, so he had no difficulty in demonstrating the chime for us.

Mr. Todd also related a story about the silver tea set, which has a broken handle. According to the tale, the handle broke when he was 13 years old, and he got the blame... although, he says, it wasn’t him that did it.

There are many more stories, and many more artifacts, which the ICHS will lovingly accept into our collection. The Board of Directors has noted that the accession and preservation of these items is a top priority, and will be diligent custodians, to be sure.

Our thanks to Mr. Todd and the family for his spirited presentation, for sharing his tales and family insights, and also for keeping his oath for so many years so that he could bless us with these precious memories.



Upcoming Programs and Events

Thursday Evening Workshops at the Blanchard House.

*This is a great way to get involved.
Stop in - 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.*

Wednesday, December 2, 6:30p
Regular Meeting and Holiday Pot-Luck
at the Blanchard House

Sunday, December 6
HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE
at the Blanchard House.

Sunday, December 13
HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE
at the Blanchard House.

Sunday, December 20
HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE
at the Blanchard House.

Wednesday, December 16, 7:00 p.m.
Board of Directors Meeting
at the Blanchard House.

Wednesday, January 6, 7:00p
Regular Meeting - location to be announced

Wednesday, January 20, 7:00 p.m.
Board of Directors Meeting
(location to be announced)

Wednesday, February 3, 7:00p
Regular Meeting - location to be announced

Sunday, February 14
at the Ionia K of C hall
A VALENTINE'S DAY PARTY
with Fred Wolf's “**Elvis for Everyone**” show.
(Watch for more information soon!)

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

To receive the Chronicle via the Internet, please be sure that the Secretary, David McCord, has your e-mail address! This will save us money each month, and you may get your Chronicle quicker, too! Send your e-mail address to:
info@ioniahistory.org



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 1776, Ionia, MI, 48846 or via www.ioniahistory.org.

Ionia County Historical Society
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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!**

December 3 — The Great Smokies

December 10 — American Castles #3

December 17 — "Christmas Special"

Many more are being scheduled for the New Year - be sure to watch the Chronicle and the ICHS website for the schedule in the coming months. And thanks for your patronage!

Ionia County Historical Society 2008-09 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