



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



## Monthly Programs —

The ICHS was privileged to hold our January 18th meeting at the home of Paul and Teri Lantz at 480 Lafayette Street. They welcomed members and guests into their century-old home, gave us some early and recent history of the house (locals often call “the Post house”), and guided small groups through the house. While the entire home was memorable, the kitchen and first-floor bathroom were particularly nice. By far, the basement level was most enjoyed by everyone with its “speak-easy” theme and Paul’s own “family museum.” Many thanks to the Lantzes for their hospitality!

The March program was sponsored through the Ionia Community Library, featuring Mike and Penny Messer and a multi-media tour of the Lighthouses on Michigan’s West Coast. Through Penny’s award-winning photos and Mike’s impressive “drone video” footage, they shared historical information and entertaining facts about two dozen lighthouses. They began with the light at St. Joseph (built in 1832, it was the second light put into service on Lake Michigan) all the way to the “Old Mackinac Point Light” (now part of the State Park, and which ended service in 1957 when the Mackinac Bridge opened). Many thanks to our presenters and to Dale Parus at the Library for this fascinating program. To see more of Penny’s photography, visit pennysfromheavenLLC.com. (Thanks, too, to Joyce Hamp who brought in a



Lake Erie Lighthouse throw to share.)

## ICHS News —

NOTE: There is a change to the program schedule for April’s meeting. Instead of the hoped-for presentation on Route 66, we will be sharing some of the wonderful artifacts that have been donated to our care over the past several months. Each item has a story behind it, and they range from paper products to prison doors.

There were also a couple of other typos in the “Express” issue last month: The Antiques Road Show runs from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., and the “Spring Into The Past” is May 6 & 7 (not 6 & 8). Please update your calendars.

Rentals at the Blanchard House are proving to be very popular, with new inquiries coming in weekly. We have weddings, receptions, reunions, meetings, and special programs on the calendar now. If you’re interested in booking the Blanchard House, please contact us soon to reserve a date and time!

The Blanchard House is suffering some water damage due to the leaking roof (again). It can be seen in the dressing room on the second floor. Arrangements have been made to have it professionally inspected as the weather allows. There are many other tasks to be addressed in the maintenance of the Blanchard House, from urgent to optional. (We have a list!) If you or someone you know has specific skills in such matters (especially

willing to donate some time and expertise), or if you would like to serve on the Maintenance and Grounds Committee, please get in touch with the ICHS Board of Directors.

The ICHS has taken on the responsibility of cleaning up Cornell Alley in downtown Ionia. The city will be placing a plaque at the alley entrance to acknowledge this, another example of our organization's visible presence in the community. If you get a chance, your help would be appreciated.

The ICHS "business meetings" are usually held on the third Wednesday of each month. Due to schedule conflicts, the March business meeting will be on the 22nd, 7:00 p.m. at the Blanchard House. At these monthly meetings, the Board of Directors and Committee Chairs come together to manage the affairs of the Historical Society. If you would like to know more about the inner workings of the organization, or become more involved in making things happen, please stop in. The meetings are always open to the public and interested members.

### **Managing the Artifacts —**

We continue to receive more donations of historical artifacts from friends and families. Due to space limits and already-too-busy volunteers, we continue to fall behind on processing these items. In addition, cataloging the existing collections built up over the past 40+ years has not been completed.

The new Accessions Committee has made great strides in getting this situation addressed lately, and they've begun to implement new procedures. Details will be coming soon, but meanwhile, the Historical Society Board has decided upon the following criteria for accepting new donated items:

(A) Items relevant to local Ionia County history;

(B) Items owned by the Blanchards, Stevensons, and Lockwoods are given priority as residents of the house;

(C) Modern items pertaining to recent and current Ionia history that should be retained for future historians will be accepted on a case-by-case basis;

(D) Items relating to the later Victorian lifestyle [1875 - 1905] which will enhance visitors' experience at the house will be considered.

All potential donations are open to consideration



and review, first by the Accessions Committee based on the criteria above, then by the Board of Directors who may engage further expertise to evaluate items on a case-by-case basis. Items rejected for whatever reason will be returned to the donor. Items donated may be offered for sale by the ICHS at their discretion. If items are more relevant to other museums or organizations in the area, donors will be referred to them.

This all sounds very formal, and that's intentional. Because the ICHS is responsible for a huge amount of unique and irreplaceable artifacts, we need to maintain as much information about these items as possible to fulfill our mission, retain our 501(c)(3) status, and acquire reasonable insurance coverage (as we can afford it).

On a related note, the ICHS continues to struggle with limited storage space. Several rooms in the Blanchard House have been given over to storage and to work areas. The Board is looking into off-site storage options, hoping to find safe, stable, and accessible space to keep valuable artifacts that are not on display at any given time. With our tight budget, it's a challenge to make a commitment to a long-term plan. Any donations to this cause would be greatly appreciated!

### **Plenty of Projects —**

The Historical Society generally pursues two types of projects: The first type is "bringing history to people and the people to history." This includes making resources available as displays and resources for research, conducting tours both at the Blanchard House and elsewhere, plus the management and maintenance of the facility and artifacts in our care. The second is to raise money, which includes dues, admissions to our public events, sales of souvenirs and other items

donated for the purpose, and generous donations of money from individuals and businesses.

At any given time, there are probably a half-dozen projects in the works in either of these categories. Work at the Blanchard House never ends as we attempt to maintain the house in all its Victorian splendor and historical significance. Events such as those found on our calendar take planning and special arrangements all year round. Behind the scenes, work is always being done to pull together themed displays in the museum, and documenting our fascinating Ionia history continues as well. There are presently four new book projects in the works (and others being considered) that will ultimately be available through the ICHS gift shop.

Check our events calendar here and on the website to see how you can help. Our involvement in the community takes time and effort as well. We will have a presence at the Ionia Expo, the “Spring Into The Past” museum tours, the Cruisin’ Classics car show, the OZ Festival, the Ionia Free Fair parade and Antique Village displays, and others. In addition, our own events include the Upstairs-Downtown tours and Antique Fayre, plus tours on Summer Sundays at the Blanchard House.

The Historical Society looks forward to your support of all these activities! Thank you in advance.

### **Our Internet Presence —**

The new ICHS website is nearing completion! As this newsletter is being written, the final edits are being made to text and photos on the new site. This new site allows much easier administration of the site’s content than the old site did (so content can be more up-to-date), and adapts the site to optimal displays on smart phones and tablets (the old one did not). The new programming behind the site will also offer us compatibility with many new features we hope to incorporate in the coming months. Watch for an announcement soon when the new site goes “live” and let us know what you think!

We continue to be in touch through Facebook, sharing announcements and fielding questions from online inquiries. With over 1300 “likes” we are reaching a wide range of interested people with every message. If you’d like to help with Facebook administration, please contact the Board of Directors.

### **Our calendar of upcoming events.**

- Saturday, March 11, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. — Ionia Business Expo at the Ionia High School. The ICHS will have a display at the expo and will be selling souvenirs. Volunteers welcomed!
- Wednesday, March 22, 7:00 p.m. — ICHS Business Meeting at the Blanchard House (open to all)
- Saturday, March 25, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. — Antiques Roadshow with Glen R. at the Ionia Commission on Aging - \$5 per item donation, please.
- Wednesday, March 29, 7:00 p.m. — Program at the Blanchard House by author and survivor of the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, sponsored by the Ionia Community Library
- Wednesday, April 5, 7:00 p.m. — Program: Review of the Winter’s Donations, at the Blanchard House
- Tuesday, April 18, 7:00 p.m. - Presentation by Tracy Groot, author of Sentinels of Andersonville, sponsored by the Ionia Community Library
- Wednesday, April 19, 7:00 p.m. — ICHS Business Meeting at the Blanchard House (open to all)
- Wednesday, May 3, 7:00 p.m. — Program at the Blanchard House by Three Husbands and one daughter on the Loose: “A Century of Songs”
- Saturday May 6 & Sunday, May 7 — “Spring into the Past” Tri-River Museum Tours; ICHS Blanchard House “Summer Sunday” begin, 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, May 17, 7:00 p.m. — ICHS Business Meeting at the Blanchard House (open to all)
- Saturday, May 20, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. — Annual Upstairs Downtown Tours, downtown Ionia
- Saturday, June 3 — Ionia Cruisin’ Classics Car Show on Main Street Ionia (ICHS will have a booth)
- Wednesday, June 7, 7:00 p.m. — ICHS Program at the home of Char Sherman in Lyons (details to come)
- Saturday, June 17 — Ionia Oz Festival (ICHS Booth)
- Saturday, June 17 — 16th Annual Ionia Farm Power Show at the Ionia Fair Grounds
- Wednesday, June 21, 7:00 p.m. — ICHS Business Meeting at the Blanchard House.

## Caring About Our Heritage — (Editorial Comment)

Officially, the Ionia County Historical Society's mission is: "To preserve and promote our rich local heritage and instill a sense of pride in our community; to care for the artifacts and archives entrusted to us and provide access to history for those who seek it; to support related educational programs, cultural organizations and activities." This was adopted by the organization in 1994, and continues to be the foundation for what we do.

One of the key words in that mission statement is "preserve." Those two syllables embody a wide range of challenges, from keeping old documents from being thrown into a dumpster to ensuring that precious heirlooms are protected from neglect and decay. In terms of a museum like ours, "preservation" is defined as "the practice of maintaining artifacts by providing a stable storage or display environment in order to minimize further damage or deterioration." This leads to a couple of other related terms: "conservation" (mitigating further deterioration) and "restoration" (including cleaning and repair while still preserving the integrity of the artifact).

All these facets of preservation take time and money (no surprise there) and a certain level of expertise, whether the artifact is a book or a building. For the most part, the Historical Society has the means to clean an antique book and keep it safe. We have hundreds of books, newspapers, photos, and documents in our care, and spend significant time and money to ensure that they are preserved. At the other end of the spectrum, we have two buildings - a 126-year-old mansion and its carriage house. Most folks know what it takes to "preserve" a modern residence. Multiply that by 126 years and you'll get some notion as to the challenge here.

At a recent meeting at City Hall, ICHS President Kathleen Cook read a statement into the record on behalf of the Historical Society. This statement emphasized how the ICHS as an organization strives to preserve our heritage and supports efforts by others to do so. Our mission does not say the ICHS is against progress, but we do see our history as a major contributor to our quality of life and a source of community pride. The closing sentence of that statement says it simply with the phrase "consider the historical

implications."

We'd all like to be able to say more, do more, and spend more to preserve every historic treasure in our community for future generations, from books to buildings. But we can't. Just like individuals, the ICHS can only do so much, and we need to concentrate our efforts on things that we are able to do that will make a positive difference. (Plus, the ICHS is an all-volunteer organization; each of its members has their own life to live, too.)

One of the things that we can do is let people know what we value and why we think it's important. Ideally, others will appreciate that sentiment, then begin to share that sense of value for "old stuff" and what it stands for, from books to buildings.

— D. McCord, ICHS Secretary

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# THE WAYBACK MACHINE...

1817 —

In February of 1817, the latest innovation in municipal lighting began operation in Baltimore, MD, with the formation of the first coal gas company in the United States. Just two weeks later, the first public gas lights were lit in that city.

March 1817 — James Monroe took office as the 5th President of the United States. He had been one of the first Senators in the newly formed U.S. Government, then Governor of Virginia, a member of the diplomatic team in France which negotiated the



Louisiana Purchase, and both Secretary of State and Secretary of War during the War of 1812. He ran for president as a member of the Democratic Republican Party, earning 80% of the electoral votes over the Federalist Party which was fading in power.

**1867 —**

Across the Atlantic, the first ship passed through the Suez Canal in February, and Johann Strauss' "Blue Danube" waltz premiered in Vienna, Austria.

In March of the same year, Michigan passed a "vital statistics law" that required counties to record births and deaths. The law also required Michigan counties to send copies of marriage records to the Office of the State Registrar (see address above). (Marriage Licenses were not required until 1887.) Michigan also became the first state to tax property to raise money for a University in the same month.

The U.S. Congress created the Department of Education, approved the construction of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., and purchased Alaska (a.k.a. Seward's Folly") from Russia for \$7,200,000.

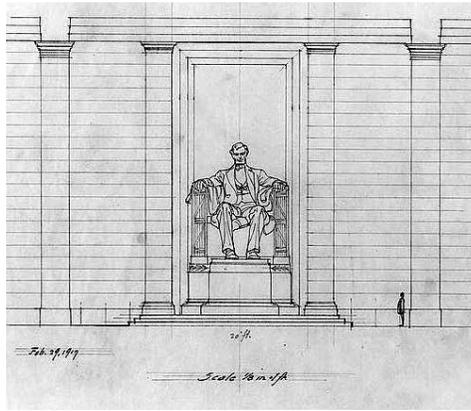
Elsewhere in the U.S., the Jesse James Gang robbed a bank in Savannah, Missouri.

**1917 —**

Admiral Tirpitz of the German Navy announced unlimited submarine war, and days later the U.S. liner Housatonic was sunk by German sub and diplomatic relations were severed. The Associated Press reported Mexico and Japan would ally with Germany if the U.S. entered the World War. Meanwhile, revolution was brewing in Russia following the abdication of the Czar.

Congress passed a law curtailing Asian immigration, overriding President Wilson's veto, and the Supreme Court upheld the 8-hour work day for railroad employees.

It was early months of 1917 when the Michigan State Police — then known as Michigan State Troops Permanent Force (Michigan State Constabulary) — was founded. The organization was created as a temporary, wartime emergency force to replace the National Guard



for internal security. The Michigan State Constabulary's original mission had little connection with the now-familiar functions of criminal investigation and traffic regulation associated with the current state police.

The first jazz song ever recorded was "Dixie Jazz Band One Step," performed by Nick LaRocca Original Dixieland Jazz Band,

released by RCA Victor in Camden, New Jersey.

**1967 —**

In the winter of 1967, one of the biggest and baddest blizzards struck Michigan. It went down as one of the all-time worst blizzards in Michigan's history mainly because of the way the weather conditions changed drastically in a short amount of time. In days leading up to the blizzard, some areas featured temperatures in the 50s and 60s.

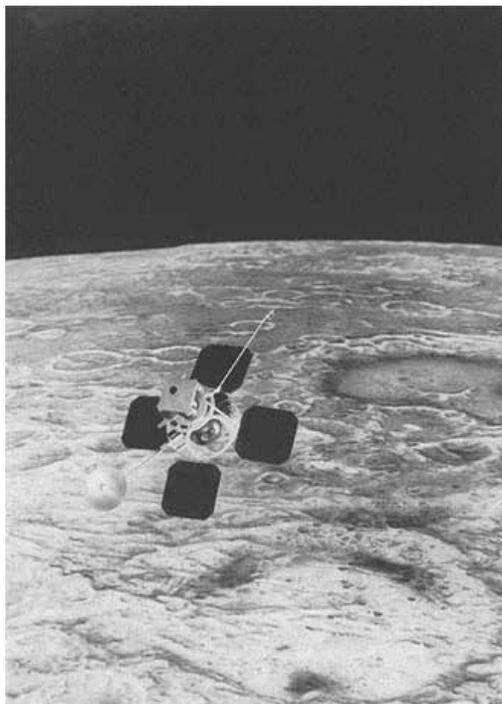
In the entertainment world, "Wild Thing" hits #20 on the pop singles chart by "Senator Bobby" (a parody), Aretha Franklin recorded "Respect" and "Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour" premiered on CBS.

Beatles' "Penny Lane," single goes #1, unseated just days later by The Turtle's "Happy Together."

Events of early 1967 included the launch of the U.S. Lunar Orbiter 3 plus nuclear tests in the Nevada desert as well as in Siberia. While the U.N. Secretary General U Thant introduces a proposal for peace in Vietnam, U.S. troops begin the largest offensive yet in that ill-fated war.

In sports, Muhammad Ali was ordered by selective service to be inducted and New York Yankee Mickey Mantle hit career home run #500.

And here in Michigan, WCMU TV channel 14 in Mount Pleasant, MI (PBS) began broadcasting.

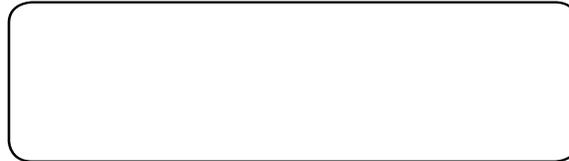




# the [www.ioniahistory.org](http://www.ioniahistory.org) **CHRONICLE**

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).

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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 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!

## Have you got something to donate?

The Historical Society accepts most donations of antique and vintage photos, documents, or larger artifacts IF they are relevant to Ionia's history in some way. Please contact a board member for more information, and be sure to get a receipt for your donation—it may be tax-deductible! (We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.)

### Ionia County Historical Society 2017 Board of Directors & Officers

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For information on your long-lost relatives in Ionia, please contact the Ionia County Genealogy Society.  
<http://ionia.migenweb.net/ICGS/icgshome.htm>