



the **CHRONICLE**

The Almost Monthly Publication of
the Ionia County Historical Society



A Message from the ICHS President, Kathleen Cook

Dear ICHS Members and Friends,

If you don't follow us on Facebook, you probably don't know what we have been up to.

If you remember, we had been renting space at the Ionia Sentinel Standard to store our overflow of treasures. The building recently sold, and we were given about a month to get our things out. The Sentinel has been printing the newspaper out of town for several years and they will continue, but the workers will work remotely. As a junior reporter, I have some happy memories of working there and I know that there are fellow Ionians who feel just as badly. It is hard to imagine anything else taking over that space. However, while preserving the past, it is important to prepare for the future.

As you know, the Ionia Community Library (ICL) was gifted the National Bank Building to be used as a library, should the millage pass. The millage came close to passing last November so the new plan is to try again on August 2, 2022. When the millage passes in August (I am being hopeful) the Hall-Fowler Home will become an Ionia Area Museum.

Folks, we need this millage to pass! We cannot afford to have

a building as beautiful as the bank remain empty or turned into something undesirable. It would require some form of government entity to preserve and maintain such a structure. This is one way that we can preserve the past and prepare for the future.



I think that it is important to make some things clear. There are some who believe that ICL can simply move into that space. Renovations must occur because banks and libraries serve differently. The bank building is much larger than the current library which means that more books, media resources and furniture will need to be purchased. Currently, when ICL purchases a book, one must be removed due to lack of space.

Thankfully, the partnership between the Historical Society and the library are strong and I was humbled when the Ionia Community Library Board of Directors offered to help. When they heard about our current storage situation, they offered us space to store our things in the back corner of the basement in the bank building. If the millage doesn't pass in August, I am afraid that ICL will be forced to sell the building and we will be homeless again.

Moving our items was both emotionally and physically draining. Our things took up two-thirds of the back half of the Sentinel with very little empty room. In one month, the board had to make decisions about what we should store, take back to the John C. Blanchard House, and what to sell. The stairway leading down to the bank had little head room for tall items,

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This prohibited our ability to store everything there. Suddenly, we had to come up with a quick plan for large items. One of our members, Heather Poland-Sizemore graciously agreed to store the Campbell cabinets at the Jewel Box (her store on Main Street). Jeff, who owns the Wagar House (305 Rich St.) purchased the cabinet that was once in his home. I am glad to know that the item went “home again” and that it will be cleaned up, cared for, and cherished. The old popcorn popper from the Ionia Theatre will be on display at Cook’s Creamery. It needs extensive work but maybe someone who does that sort of thing will spot it while it is there. Having our things on display at members shops is a win-win because it opens the discussion of preserving the past and our ideas for the future.



The silver lining of all of this is that the ICHS has obtained the Sentinel-Standard archives. Kim, who manages the Ionia Sentinel-Standard made it a priority that the historical society had all the bound issues in our possession! The owners of the Sentinel also own the Allegan newspaper, and when they sold the Allegan building, all those newspapers ended up in a landfill. They said that nobody wanted them but I find that hard to believe. Kim was proactive because she feared the same thing might happen in Ionia. If it wasn’t for Linda Ciangi and the relationship she built with Kim while writing her “Back in the Day” column, we would have a different tale to tell. Kim carefully wrapped each bound copy with butcher paper and labeled it. The copies date back to the 1800’s and they are fascinating to read through. Kim saved other items of interest such as darkroom equipment, pictures, and furniture for the historical society to sell. Kim is a hero.

The next time that you visit the Blanchard House, you will notice lots of different displays. For the time being, I want to reach out in several directions to tell our history. If you are on Facebook, you will notice how many people of all ages who are curious and passionate about our historical past. I have been posting different pictures (Bertha Brock Park, moving the first John C. Blanchard House to its current location, pictures from a Banner Grange Scrapbook, etc.). This elicits lots of memories and discussion. What is near and dear to your heart when it comes to Ionia?

In fear of leaving someone out, I want to express my appreciation to all of those who helped with the move. I don’t know of many groups that are as diverse in age than the historical society (and that is all that I am saying about age). Everyone working together and the board collectively agreeing what should be tossed, stored, sold, or taken back to the house is proof that we are a strong and cohesive group.

I hope that you will be able to join us at our next general membership meeting. If not, “Work Thursdays” will start up again soon and Spring into the Past is right around the corner. I feel like we are becoming more normal again as the Covid rates decrease. I am interested in your thoughts, ideas, and concerns about ICHS as we move forward. Please don’t hesitate to reach out to me or one of our members, especially if you are interested in becoming more involved.

Kind regards,
Kathleen

Our Plans for the Coming Months:

APRIL 6, 7:00 p.m. — Monthly Program — A TOUR OF THE WAGAR MANSION! The generous owners of the Wagar Mansion, 305 Rich Street in Ionia, have invited us into their historic home.

APRIL 27, 7:00 p.m. — BUSINESS MEETING at the Blanchard House.

APRIL 30 - MAY 1, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. — "SPRING INTO THE PAST" at the Blanchard House. It’s the annual opening of the museum season, with tours of the house and our special themed displays. This year’s theme: “Celebrating Women”

MAY 4, 7:00 p.m. — Monthly Program at the Blanchard House. (Program to be determined.)

MAY ??, (Time TBD) — Historic Downtown Ionia — A guided tour of the central business district inside and out presented by the Historical Society.

MAY 25, 7:00 p.m. — BUSINESS MEETING at the Blanchard House.

JUNE 1, 7:00 p.m. — Monthly Program at the Blanchard House. (Program to be determined.)

JUNE 29, 7:00 p.m. — BUSINESS MEETING at the Blanchard House.

JULY 6, 6:30 p.m. — Our Annual Independence Day Pot-Luck at the Blanchard House.

HOUSE & MUSEUM TOURS ARE BY APPOINTMENT ONLY. We will attempt to accommodate your schedule if volunteers are available. Contact Kathleen Cook (see back page).
NOTE: Some visitor restrictions due to Covid may be in effect at the house, so be prepared!



April 30 - May 1 at Local History Museums Throughout Central Michigan!

WAYBACK



1822 - 200 Years Ago —

Steamboat travel to the Michigan Territory continues to grow between Buffalo and Detroit. The first trip by the steamboat Walk-in-the-Water brought 29 passengers to Detroit in 1818. When Walk-in-the-Water was wrecked in 1821, its successor was the Superior, which brought 94 passengers in 1822. When the Erie Canal opened for business in 1825, this number rose dramatically, and between the months of April and May of 1830, 2400 settlers booked passage on steamboats to Michigan Territory.

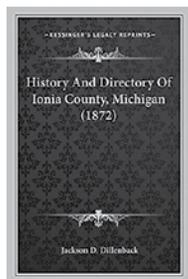
Also in March, Boston, Massachusetts was incorporated as a city, and the U.S. Congress combined East & West Florida into the Florida Territory. (Florida would not become a state until March of 1845.)

A Federal Act in 1822 provided public lands to undertake the building of a canal connecting the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River via the Illinois River. This project would have had a significant effect on the economy and accessibility of the upper Midwest ...if it had happened.

1872 - 150 Years Ago —

On March 1, 1872, President Ulysses S. Grant signed the Yellowstone National Park Protection Act into law. The world's first national park was born.

In the spring of 1872, the University of Michigan's Medical School graduated its first African-American student, William Henry Fitzbutler. Born the son of a slave, he had traveled to Canada with his family via the Underground Railroad. After graduation, he went on to found a medical school and hospital for African-Americans in Louisville, Kentucky. One of the four 'houses' to which U-M medical students now belong is named for him. Six women also graduate in this year; their names are listed after the male students' names and they are not included in the official class photo.



Local historians and researchers will be happy to know that this year marks the 150th anniversary of the publication of a great work of literature! "History and directory of Ionia County, Michigan: containing a history of each township: the name, occupation, location, and post-office address of every man in the county; a list of post-offices in the county; a schedule of population; and other valuable statistics / compiled and published by J.D. Dillenback."

1922 - 100 Years Ago —

The Ionia Mayors were a Central League baseball team based in Ionia. The team had been organized in mid-season in 1921, and started the 1922 season with high hopes. They were the only professional baseball team ever based in Ionia, and didn't last to play in the 1923 season.

In March of 1922, the Ford Motor Company announced that it had adopted a 40-hour, five-day work week with pay remaining at \$6 minimum per day (\$5 for new workers). The company also stated that it would hire 3,000 new workers to meet demand in light of the reduced work week.

On May 18th, the 6,000,000th Ford automobile was produced at Ford's plant in Highland Park.



On April 23, five inmates escaped from the State Prison in Ionia. According to the story in the Detroit Free Press, they sawed through the bars in a window of a new dormitory building. The building had been dedicated by Governor Groesbeck just a week earlier. They had been working on the building and had hidden behind some materials after their shift ended, making good their escape after dark. Guards saw them running across the fields by moonlight, and two of them were captured within a mile of the prison. Warden Thomas Burns reports that the other three apparently jumped a freight train bound for Detroit, where the three had connexions with the "Detroit Mob."

1972 - 50 Years Ago —

The building of the Ionia State Hospital was authorized in 1883 and was opened under the name of the Michigan Asylum for Insane Criminals in 1885. It was found that this name was objectionable as not all of the patients in the hospital were criminals, so the name was changed by legislative action to Ionia State Hospital. The patients committed to this hospital were insane felons, criminal sexual psychopaths, insane convicts from other prisons, patients transferred from other state institutions that had developed dangerous or homicidal tendencies, and persons charged with a crime but acquitted on the grounds of insanity.

Initially the hospital patients were housed at the site of the Michigan Reformatory, and around 1900 the first facilities were built on Riverside Drive south of the Grand River. When a large fire broke out at the hospital in 1921, all of the rooms at MR were needed to house prisoners, so the hospital patients were sent to the Riverside facility. Until 1972, the hospital was used for the treatment of the mentally ill as well as the criminally insane.



In the spring each year, Michiganders are used to setting their clocks forward an hour. But this didn't happen in March of 1972. The Daylight Saving Time Act was passed by the US Congress in 1966 requiring all 50 states to implement Daylight Savings, but in Michigan, for one year, voters chose to overrule that directive. The following year, Michigan was back in step with the rest of the country.

By the way, until the 1930s, Michigan was in the Central Time Zone (this map is dated 1924). Detroiters petitioned the Federal Government to switch to the Eastern Time Zone, following Ohio's example, and soon most of Michigan followed suit. So except for a string of counties in the western U.P., we're all in the Eastern Time Zone now.



On May 28, some White House Plumbers broke into the Democratic National Headquarters in Washington, D.C. There, in the Watergate Complex, they installed "listening devices." And the rest is history.



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 176, 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, P.O. Box 176, Ionia, MI 48846.

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Please Check Your
Membership Type:

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- Corporate = \$250
- Life Member = \$1000
- Student (under 18) FREE
- Enclosing an additional Gift = \$ _____

I am a:

- Renewing Member
- New Member

If you're a new member, how did you hear about us?

- _____
- _____
- Send my newsletter by US Mail.
- Send a link to get my newsletter by email.



MEMBER

Be sure to monitor our Facebook Page & Website for current information!



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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>



Visit us at www.IoniaHistory.org and find us on Facebook, too!

Thanks!