



# the **CHRONICLE**

The Almost Monthly Publication of  
the Ionia County Historical Society



## A Message from the ICHS President, Kathleen Cook

Dear Members and Friends of ICHS,

I hope this letter finds you feeling well. After shutdowns due to Covid, it feels good to be back in the swing of things. "Spring into the Past" was successful with almost 100 tourist over the weekend. Two of our visitors, John Palmer and Donna (Hepp) Ackley became new members. I would like to formally welcome them to the historical society.

The next time that you visit the house, it may look a little different. As we were moving things from the Sentinel Standard storage to the new location, I quickly realized that the donated space wasn't going to hold it all. I decided to select items that would help tell the story of local people and places that are near and dear to our hearts. Throughout the house you will see different displays. Unfortunately, it takes away from the 1880's feel of the house but I want people to see some of the treasures that we have. However, due to lack of space, I am worried that we may not have a spot for them in the future. As far as the basement is concerned, I think Linda has done a remarkable job displaying items but it really isn't a suitable place to showcase our most precious possessions. It is damp, musty, cold, and the stairway is dangerous. A lot of our visitors would be interested in seeing the basement but they have difficulty climbing the stairs. However, the historical society isn't the only group in town that is running out of space.

Before her marriage, Marian Hall became interested in library work. She served as custodian of the first public library which was located in a small front room on the second floor of the old fireman's hall on Kidd Street. This later became the site of the now present City Hall. After her husband passed away, she remained interested but recognized the problems associated with its location. The upstairs location wasn't suitable for some and the area was too small. It was then that Marian Hall-Fowler presented her childhood home on Main Street to the City for use as a public library. It was made a memorial to her parents. The gift was secured in 1902 through the efforts of Justice Robert Baerd, then a member of the City Council. The deed was made official on May 22, 1903.

I am going to be frank with you. That was almost 120 years ago. The library is too small and the books are too heavy for the Hall-Fowler House. As our mayor, Dan Balice once said, "We are loving it to death." All of you know how heavy a small box of books weighs. What do you think all those full bookcases are doing to the structure? The library staff has concerns about the

safety of the children and the stairway. A library today is very different than when we were youngsters; they have become more like a community center. With over 100 visitors on an average day, the Ionia Community Library refutes the notion that libraries are becoming obsolete! Let me tell you what patrons are doing on a typical day at the library.

Many are visiting to check out books but they are also coming in to print something off the Internet. Many patrons come in to use the computers because they don't have their own. Some don't have working printers and they need a physical copy. You would not believe the number of individuals who try to do business at the courthouse but can't because they have to fill the form out online. When they explain to the courthouse clerks that they don't have access to a computer, they send them next door to the library. For those who don't know how to navigate a computer, they can request the help of a library staff member.

Have you ever wondered why so many people are hanging out on the library lawn? They are using the WiFi because they don't have Internet services at home. Some patrons frequent the library because they are lonely and want to talk to someone who cares. In addition, there are programs offered to children, teens and adults. How many of you have ever heard someone say that there is nothing to do in Ionia? There are lots of things to do here and many come free because they occur at the library. All ages and all walks of life are welcomed at the Ionia Community Library.

Imagine for a moment what we could have. My daughter, and ICHS member Mattie Cook-Hildebrandt has been a library director in Chicago, Lake Odessa and at the Flat River Library in Greenville. All of them are several thousand square feet larger than Ionia's library and we are the County Seat! When I would ask Mattie about happenings at any of the libraries where she worked, I often wished that Ionia could offer the same.

Don't get me wrong, the staff at ICL do a tremendous job with what they have. In addition to libraries in other areas being larger, they also have conference rooms, small rooms for tutoring or supervised custodial visits, and offer items to check out things that one might not use routinely such as sewing machines, power tools, kayaks, etc. I cannot guarantee that the new library would have these items but I can guarantee that they do not have space for them where they are now.

I remember long ago thinking that Ionians will never support a library in another location if they lose access to the Hall Fowler House. The City owns the house and they can do what they want with it. They could turn it into an office or two. Luckily, our City officials recognize the need for a museum and they are willing to rent the house to be used as such. The house would also serve as a "historic library" for those interested in research local people and places. I can't say for sure what the layout would be but I can imagine an area where one could spread out and do research. I can imagine rooms dedicated to the pioneers, Ionia Free Fair, the schools, Ionia Correctional Facility and the State Hospital,

Business and Industry and more. I think Marian Hall would be pleased that honored her bequest of a historical library. Ionia's first museum started when Bertha Brock selected a spot in the library to showcase the pioneers and their things. I imagine that she would be delighted that these items will be returning to where they once belonged.

I no longer serve on the library board of directors but I have been involved with Citizens for Ionia Community Library PAC group since I received a phone call nearly twenty years ago from Joe and Joan McCord. Every attempt to pass the millage has failed but each election got us closer to passing than the previous.

The voters requested that an old building is repurposed instead of building new. That is being offered now. Fundraising was suggested, and that is happening. They have shrunk the cost down about as low as they can. Renovations will not be lavish but they need to do a few things to make it suitable. The space will be larger so they will need to purchase more books, shelving and furniture. Did you know that when our library buys a new book, they have to take a book off the shelf to make room? We can do better than that! So here is your chance to help. The new ballot language is asking voters to approve a millage of .98 mills for 20 years. The funds will be used to renovate the Ionia County National Bank Building, which was donated to the library.

I don't want to sugar coat anything. Let's consider what could happen if the millage doesn't pass this time. I can't say for certain but I don't think there will be a future attempt again for years, maybe decades. It would not be practical for the library to keep the bank building so I see that being sold. Who could afford to buy and maintain such a building? I worry that it might be sold to someone who might have good intentions but fails to have the income, resources and know-how to care for a building of this size. Honestly, I am concerned about it becoming an eyesore in the center of our downtown historic district.

As far as the Historical Society is concerned, I am worried. The most precious thing we have are the newspapers (Sentinel Standard and County News) all bound into books by the year they were published. Some go as early as the mid 1800's. Where will we store them and all the other stuff if the bank is sold?

The way I see it, we can solve three issues by passing this millage. We can create needed space for the library and the historical society. A library in the center of downtown would surely help the merchants. Wouldn't it be great to have a thriving downtown again? Recently, a visitor asked us to accept a family heirloom that would fit in perfectly at the Blanchard House. As difficult as it was to say, I felt they deserved an honest response. I told them that I was interested and I appreciate their offer, I couldn't accept their item until I know the results of the August 2nd election. You see folks; we might have to make some difficult decisions if this doesn't pass. We need you to explain our side of the story and we need your "Yes" vote.

If you are wondering how much extra you will be paying if the millage should pass, it is fairly easy to figure. Multiply the taxable value of your home by .00098 and the amount is the extra you would pay annually. Visit [citizens4icl.org](http://citizens4icl.org) or join the Facebook page "Take ICL to the Bank" to find out about upcoming events. If you are a "Yes" voter and would like to help, give me a call. As always, I am happy to answer questions or listen to your ideas and concerns.

Warmest regards,

Kathleen Cook, 616.527.2626



(above) Lucy Kimble and Ava Taylor helped us get the House ready for "Spring into the Past" last month. The event was a great success, with over 80 visitors to the house.

(below) Our new exhibit of Blanchard family artifacts set up in the main parlor. Many thanks to Bryan and Mary Kimble.



*Hill's Manual of Social and Business Form* by Thomas Edie Hill (1883) states the following as regards shaking hands:

"It is always the lady's privilege to extend the hand first. People who extend one of two fingers or part of the hand only when they attempt to shake the hands with you expose unbounded egotism, ignorance, foolishness, and serpentine hypocrisy. Offer the whole hand. It is an insult and indicates snobbery to present two fingers. A man who shakes a lady's hand with a tight squeeze and holds it unusually long will bear watching."

# WAYBACK



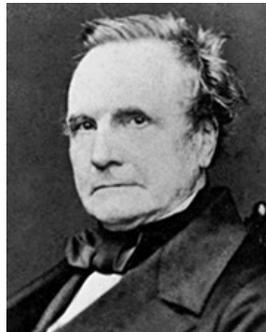
## 1822 - 200 Years Ago —

On June 6, a young fur trapper named Alexis St. Martin was visiting the general store on Mackinac Island when another trapper's gun fire accidentally. St. Martin's stomach wound was immediately treated by Dr. William Beaumont, the fort's physician. Thereafter, the peculiar way that the wound healed allowed Dr. Beaumont a unique opportunity to study the process of digestion within St. Martin's stomach through the healed opening of the wound. The study went on for months afterward, and Dr. Beaumont became known as "the Father of Gastric Physiology" based on this impromptu opportunity.



Also in June, Fort Brady was established at Sault Ste Marie. Named for Major General Hugh Brady, the 26-acre site was staffed by a full complement of regular infantry until the Mexican War in 1846. The original fort remained in service until 1892 when a new facility was constructed on higher ground. This "New Fort Brady" remained in service until 1944, and is now part of the Lake Superior State campus.

Over in England, an engineer named Charles Babbage addressed the Royal Astronomical Society with an exciting new proposal in mechanical technology. He called his concept a "difference engine" which he said would "apply machinery to the computation of astronomical and mathematical tables." The idea evolved over the next few decades into the first programmable calculating machines. Today he is often referred to as the "father of the computer."



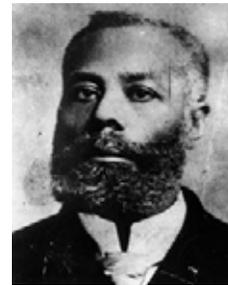
In the summer of 1822, stage lines were beginning to schedule regular runs between population centers in Michigan Territory. At this time, the service was exclusively within 30 or 40 miles of Detroit, with the exception of travel south to Ohio. Complaints about the condition of the highways came to the Territorial government regarding "logs, stumps, mud, and large holes impeding the progress



of all manner of wheeled vehicles." One of the major lines went out of business entirely due to the devastation of spring rains and floods.

## 1872 - 150 Years Ago —

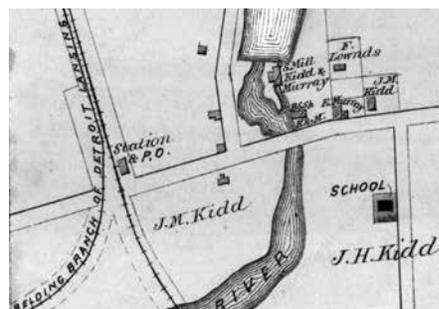
After the Fifteenth Amendment passed in 1869, securing black men's right to vote, many suffragists thought that the next amendment, the Sixteenth Amendment, should be devoted to woman suffrage. In June of 1872 a convention was held in Mercantile Liberty Hall in Philadelphia, PA. The attendees voted their support for Republican presidential candidate and Civil War hero Ulysses S. Grant with the hope that he would usher in this new political era for women. They were disappointed. During the campaign tours by the suffragettes, Susan B. Anthony visited the small Midwestern city of Ionia, Michigan, and addressed the locals at Union Hall at the corner of Main and 3rd Streets.



In July, Elijah J. McCoy, an inventor raised in Ypsilanti, patented the first automatic lubrication system for locomotives and other machinery. The device was so effective that it was difficult to sell imitations that weren't "the real McCoy." Thus, McCoy's name became synonymous with anything genuine or authentic.

Another enterprising retailer started a business that year that celebrates its 150th anniversary in August of this year. Aaron Montgomery Ward issued the first "catalog" for his mail-order business in July, 1872—a one-sheet listing of 163 available items and ordering instructions. He wrote the copy himself in a loft above a livery stable in Chicago, IL. Within a few months the catalog grew to several pages, and by 1875 included pictures of select products!

Railroads were the life of the nation in 1872. They were also international connections. The first steam-powered and propeller-driven ferry for railroad cars between the U.S. and Canada started in the summer of this year at Detroit. Construction of a railroad tunnel was also started, but that project was abandoned because of noxious gas and quicksand.



Map of Kiddville from the Atlas of Ionia County, Michigan published by F. W. Beers and Co. in 1875.

In Ionia County, a railroad branch was completed between the towns of Kiddville and Belding. The commercial success of the town of Belding was then connected to the world, but it was not so fortunate for Kiddville. (The Kiddville Post Office was closed in June 1894.)

According to Dillenback's "History of Ionia" published in 1872: "The Ionia County Agricultural Society has held sixteen annual fairs. Its grounds are located adjoining the village of Ionia, and comprise 20 acres of land on the bank of the Grand River. The race-track, half a mile in length, is one of the best in the State. The

officers in 1872 are: A.F. Kelsey of Berlin, President; W. D. Arnold of Ionia, Secretary; and James W. Loomis of Berlin, Treasurer.”

“Stebbinsville” was a station on the Detroit, Lansing, and Lake Michigan Railroad, and was platted in 1872 by J. Stebbins. It was considered a good location for shipping wheat, and contained one dry goods store, one grocery, and post office called Collins that had been established the year before. Though Stebbinsville didn’t amount to much, the Collins P.O. lasted until 1911.

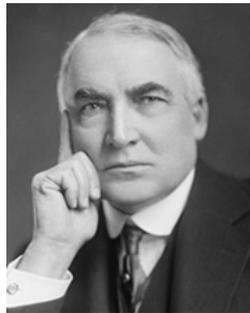
Easton Township’s first post office was called Avon, and was located at the home of Silas Sprague. The office came and went over the years. In 1866 Thomas Dildine was Postmaster, followed by A. C. Sprague, then George Corkins, the last in the office. The P.O. was discontinued in 1872.

*(Editor’s note: the Avon Post Office was located on the Sprague farm. About 100 years ago, the property was purchased by Joseph H. McCord, then parceled out to David C. McCord, then Joseph R. McCord, and now David M. McCord (me)!)*



### 1922 - 100 Years Ago —

The first U.S. President to be broadcast over the radio was Warren G. Harding on June 14th. The occasion was the dedication of the Francis Scott Key memorial in Baltimore, MD.



The same month, American swimmer Johnny Weissmuller became the first to break one-minute barrier for 100m



freestyle. He would go on to win five Olympic gold medals in the games of 1924 and 1928. Of course we all remember him as Tarzan in 12 feature films, as well as other great adventure movies in the 1930s.

Also on the water, a month later 18-year-old Ralph Samuelson became the first person ever to ride water skis! Just days before his 19th birthday, he rode his own invention at Lake City, MN. He

was beaten to the patent office by Fred Waller, who subsequently invented the Cinemascope process for movie-making. Samuelson was inducted into the Water Ski Hall of Fame in 1977.

In 1922 the D.A.R. installed a stone monument near the Floral Building at the Ionia Fairgrounds to commemorate the site of Chief Cobmoosa’s village.



That year the Ionia Free Fair was going strong! The photo at the top of the next column is of the crowd on the grand stand during the drawing for the car raffle that year.

The photo below that shows one of the main attractions for the fair for over a century: the harness races!



### 1972 - 50 Years Ago —

Just as our American flag has a pledge, so does our state flag! The Legislature enacted Public Act 165 of 1972 to declare the following pledge, written by Harold G. Coburn, as the official pledge of allegiance to the state flag: “I pledge allegiance to the flag of Michigan, and to the state for which it stands, two beautiful peninsulas united by a bridge of steel, where equal opportunity and justice to all is our ideal.”



On June 14, 1972, the U.S. EPA Administrator announced the final cancellation of all remaining crop uses of DDT in the U.S. effective December 31, 1972. The order did not affect public health and quarantine uses, or exports of DDT. In conjunction with this event, EPA and USDA jointly developed "Project Safeguard," a program of education in the use of substitutes for DDT. *(Quite a different message was promoted 20 years earlier, as seen below.)*



The headline "State Police Blast Law" was found in the Ann Arbor News archives for August, 1972. According to the article, State Police Director Col. John R. Plants "blasted" Ann Arbor's \$5 fine for public marijuana use, saying he intended to take steps to prevent the city from "providing a sanctuary for large-scale marijuana traffic." Ann Arbor Police Chief Walter Krasny said in an interview (published in the New York Times) that the trend toward open smoking had not escaped his notice. "I guess, unfortunately, marijuana is becoming a part of our way of life."



The Pine Knob Music Theater (officially the DTE Energy Music Theatre) is a 15,274-seat amphitheater located in Clarkston, Michigan. Its grand opening was in June of 1972 with an Andy Williams concert. However, on June 25, 1972 (a few days before Williams' appearance), there was a "pre-opening" concert featuring teen idol David Cassidy.

And the top movie of 1972:



**ANOTHER ICHS YARD SALE IS COMING!**  
**WATCH FOR THE SIGNS...**  
**JUNE 24-25 AT THE JOHN C. BLANCHARD HOUSE!**

Please help us maintain our historic home and museum! If you would like to donate something to the sale, please contact ICHS President Kathleen Cook.

(Subject to cancellation due to weather.)

## Our Plans for the Coming Months:

**HOUSE & MUSEUM TOURS CAN BE ARRANGED APPOINTMENT.** We will attempt to accommodate your schedule if volunteers are available. Contact Kathleen Cook (see back page).

**JUNE 1, 7:00 p.m. — Monthly Program** at the Blanchard House. "**Ionia's Connection to the 1915 Eastland Disaster**" — A video documentary followed by the Ionia side of the story by Kathleen Cook.

**JUNE 4** - We'll have a booth at the **Cruisin' Classics Car Show**. Volunteers are welcomed! If you'd like to help for an hour or two, contact Kathleen.

**JUNE 24, 25 — YARD SALE** at the Blanchard House if we can get enough volunteer help. This is a good fund-raiser for the ICHS, and we have plenty to sell! Please help if you can.

**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.

**JULY 14-15**—Setting up our display at the **Ionia Free Fair Floral Building**. As usual, everyone is welcomed to help set this up, and take it down again after the Fair.

**AUGUST 3, 7:00 p.m. — Monthly Program** at the Blanchard House. (To Be Determined)

**SEPTEMBER 7, 7:00 p.m. — Monthly Program** at the Blanchard House. Movie night again with clips from Josh Pardon's **Ionia State Hospital** interviews and displays from our collection.

**OCTOBER 5, 7:00 p.m. — Monthly Program** at the Blanchard House. (To Be Determined) and our **Annual Meeting and Election of Directors**. Dues are due, and must be paid to vote.

**OCTOBER 15 - Bertha Brock Fall Festival!** The ICHS will have a booth (bundle up!) and, as always, volunteers are welcomed.

**OCTOBER 22 - "Spirits of Ionia" tour** at Highland Park Cemetery (bundle up again!).

**NOTE: ALL SCHEDULED EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.**



# 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).

Ionia County Historical Society  
P.O. Box 176  
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, P.O. Box 176, Ionia, MI 48846.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, St., Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please Check Your Membership Type:

- Regular Membership = \$20 Per Person
- Business Buddy = \$40
- 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!*



### Ionia County Historical Society 2021-22 Board of Directors and Officers

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- David McCord, Vice President — 616-902-0033
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- Stacy Tchorzynski, Director — 517-763-1770
- Dave Cusack, Director — 517-763-1770
- Linda Ciangi, Secretary — 616-527-4945
- Mary Kimble, Treasurer — 616-897-6592
- Barb Ehlert, House Rentals — 616-522-0844

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](http://www.IoniaHistory.org) and find us on Facebook, too!

Thanks!