



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



**A Message
from the ICHS
President,
Kathleen Cook**

Dear ICHS friends and members,

As you already know, the millage for the library didn't pass again. Linda Ciangi and I went to the last Ionia

Community Library Board meeting in November and they have not decided how they will move forward. Currently, they are paying to maintain two buildings. Against popular belief, they are not able to just move into the bank building. Once a historic building is vacated by one group and a different group moves in, there are laws that stipulate improvements. I will not go into all the aspects of the misleading information that was out there but I can assure you that the ICL Board of Directors and Citizens for ICL volunteers that worked toward passing the millage did their homework. They listened to all the "NO" voters in the past and tweaked the millage language to reflect what they were asking. To say that I am disappointed in the way the election played out is an understatement. However, we are only defeated when we quit! It doesn't look like the library will be moving out anytime soon so using the Hall Fowler home for a museum won't be happening the way I (and many) had hoped. Now it is time to figure out how the historical society will move forward.

I have spent the last month in conversation with historical society members trying to figure out how we can make our group stronger. We have all the bound copies of the Ionia Sentinels in our possession I would like to make them available to the public. However, having them digitized costs time and money. Our goal is to turn the house back into a Victorian museum and have a museum in another building. Even with the dehumidifier, our items in the basement are getting musty. We also have bats and they poop on things. This is not how we should be taking care of our most precious items. We are Ionians and we can do better but I need your help.

We need to increase our membership and number of volunteers. When you are out and about having conversations with others, please encourage those who show interest in history to check us out. When you talk to alumni, including those who have moved away, encourage them to become a paying member. The history that we are saving belongs to all of us. I want you to know that I am open to your input and ideas.

If you have not paid your dues, I hope that you will do so in the next few weeks. I am working on having a few "old home" tours during the winter months for members only. There are other perks to being a member such as paying less for renting the house for an event. The best reason for being a member is knowing that our local history and the house are being cared for and maintained.

Cheers and best wishes for 2023!

Kathleen



**A Message
from the Editor,
David McCord**

Allow me to present the Quarterly ICHS Chronicle - barely on time! I hope you are able to keep in touch with the Historical Society's activities and news items via Facebook. That (other than attending the meetings)

is the most effective way to get the current news. Of course, we encourage you all to get to the meetings if you can!

THE WINTER SCHEDULE is the most volatile, usually due to the weather. It costs hundreds of dollars to keep the Blanchard House pipes from freezing, and even more to raise the temperature to something comfortable for humans. So during the first few months of the year, we schedule visits to other sites for the monthly meetings.

BE SURE TO WATCH FOR DETAILS which we will share as soon as the arrangements are confirmed.

AS ALWAYS, you can contact a member of the Board to check on this information.

In the past few months, your Historical Society has not been idle! Since the last issue of the Chronicle in September, we have provided the following programs and activities:

- Members participated in the Michigan Wizard of Oz Festival on October 1st. The event commemorates not only the historic books (some written in Michigan) and the classic film (1939) show in our beautiful art-deco Ionia Theatre (at vintage prices!), but this year would have been Judy Garlands 100th birthday as well. Truly historic!

- The meeting of October 5th reviewed recent donations to the Society's collections, and members discussed some of the challenges of caring for these irreplaceable artifacts.

continues on page 2...

• On October 15th, the ICHS had a booth at the Bertha Brock Park Fall Festival. Bertha Brock served as Ionia's community historian 100 years ago, and members shared information with attendees as well as selling ICHS souvenirs and cookies!

• The annual "Spirits of Ionia" Cemetery Tour took place on October 23rd at the beautiful Highland Park cemetery. Again members shared stories of Ionia citizens interred at the cemetery with a look into our town in the 1920s. It was a successful event again this year.

• On Hallowe'en night, over 450 trick-or-treaters visited the Blanchard House for free goodies and a glimpse of the foyer through the open door (see right). (The weather was better than usual!)

• November was a fairly quiet month for the Historical Society, but on the 15th we hosting a meeting of the Tri-River Museum Network — representatives from more than 20 Historical Museums in Mid-Michigan gathered at the Blanchard House for their closing meeting of the 2022 season.



Linda Ciangi says "Thanks" to the Christmas Decorating Volunteers!

• December began as usual with our annual Christmas Pot-Luck on December 7th, and the house was filled with happy people, great food, and joyful holiday greetings.

• The Blanchard House was open for tours for three Sundays in December to show off our Christmas decorations. We had a good-size group of guests each week, and extend many thanks to the members who installed the decorations for the season!

Our challenges (and opportunities) continue into the winter months. It's a time for work behind the scenes, for planning and paperwork, and the ever-present need for fund-raising.

This is the part of the article in which I repeat the usual plea for help, both monetary and physical. Obviously, the ICHS needs money to continue to maintain the house and the artifacts we are entrusted with by the community. We also desperately need more volunteers to help with our events and activities. Please, if you can spare a couple hours a month, there are always things that need doing, no matter what your skill set might be!

Thanks for reading, and thanks for your support of the Ionia County Historical Society! We look forward to seeing you at an upcoming meeting, and please share your comments and questions with us online, via the Post, or in person!

Thank you, and Happy New Year!

- D. McCord, V.P. and Newsletter Publisher.

Save The Date:

Our calendar of upcoming events and activities.
To verify current details, please visit our website.

- Wednesday, January 25, 7:00 p.m. — ICHS Business Meeting at the Blanchard House (open to all).
- Wednesday, February 22, 7:00 p.m. — ICHS Business Meeting at the Blanchard House (open to all).
- Wednesday, March 1, 7:00 p.m. — A Members-only Home Tour at 138 East Main Street, the home of Mattie and Ian Hildebrandt - formerly the Harry and Coralane Boyes home.
- Wednesday, March 29, 7:00 p.m. — ICHS Business Meeting at the Blanchard House (open to all).
- Wednesday, April 5, 7:00 p.m. — Monthly Membership Meeting at the Blanchard House (open to all). *Program to be announced.*
- Wednesday, April 26, 7:00 p.m. — ICHS Business Meeting at the Blanchard House (open to all).
- Wednesday, May 3, 7:00 p.m. — Monthly Membership Meeting at the Blanchard House (open to all). **It's the 190th anniversary of the settlement of Ionia!** We will present a program in keeping with that historic event.
- Saturday & Sunday, May 6 & 7 — **"SPRING INTO THE PAST"** - the beginning of the museum season organized by the Tri-River Museum Network. More details to come!
- A "Church Walk" tour of Ionia's historic churches. Date & Time TBD - tentatively set for May 20th.
- Wednesday, May 31, 7:00 p.m. — ICHS Business Meeting at the Blanchard House (open to all).
- Wednesday, June 6, 7:00 p.m. — Monthly Membership Meeting at the Blanchard House (open to all). *Program to be announced.*
- Wednesday, July 5, 7:00 p.m. — Annual Independence Day Pot-Luck at the Blanchard House (open to all).

As usual, all events and activities are open to the public, and all are subject to change. Please follow us on Facebook for the latest information, or contact a Board Member for more!

"A LOOK BACK"

A glimpse into Ionia's History from the collections of John Palmer.

December 17, 1918:

MADE IN IONIA

BY IONIA
WOMEN



Paper Patterns Free to All
Purchasers of Sorosis Petticoats

The demi-yoke of Sorosis Petticoats will solve for you the vexatious problem of smooth rounded hips and decreased waistline. The material and workmanship are the best obtainable. Sorosis Petticoats sell for \$1.00 and upwards. The

FREE PAPER PATTERNS

are the latest effects in Suits, Jackets, Skirts, Shirt Waists, House Gowns, Children's Dresses, Kimonos, Etc., designed by a foremost fashion authority.

At any good dry goods store for the Sorosis Fashion Sheet select the design you prefer, mail us the coupon attached to a Sorosis Petticoat and we will mail you the paper pattern.

If Sorosis Petticoats are not sold in your city, send us the name of a dealer and we'll mail you the Sorosis Sheet of Fashions for your trouble.

SOROSIS GARMENT CO.
IONIA, MICH.

SOROSIS

550-Pound Girl Is Dead.
IONIA, Mich., Dec. 16—Bernice Brown, of Ionia, who weighed 550 pounds and was constantly gaining, is dead. Miss Brown, who was 24 years old, developed an abnormal appetite while attending school, and since then has consumed immense quantities of food. For the last few months she has been unable to rise because of her weight.

March 12, 1947, from the
Lansing State Journal:

Ionia Prosecutor, State Treasurer Get Wrong Auto

(Special to The State Journal)
IONIA, March 12 — Homer Miel, present Montcalm county prosecutor, and State Treasurer D. Hale Brake, a past Montcalm prosecutor, both of whom have sent many a car thief to prison, were taking a ribbing from friends Wednesday after discovering they had an auto reported stolen from Ionia in their possession.

It all started when the two fellow Stanton residents and former law partners attended a meeting of the Ionia-Montcalm County Bar association here Tuesday night.

Brake, leaving early with friends, tossed the keys of his new auto to Miel when the latter wanted to stay and told Miel to use his car to drive back to Stanton.

This morning, Brake was horrified to find that the auto the prosecutor drove back, though similar, was not his. Hasty inquiry to Ionia showed it one belonging to Louis Agostini, Ionia merchant, and which Agostini had roused Ionia police officials after midnight to report stolen.

Officials reported Brake's key had partly turned on the ignition in Agostini's car to enable Miel to start it on mistaking it for Brake's. Miel commented "I thought the car acted funny but I wasn't familiar with it."

Brake hastily drove the car back to Ionia to return it to Agostini with apologies. He then picked up his own machine still parked where he had left it to continue his trip to his capital office.

Blanchard House / The Secret Garden Gate



This gate once stood in the front of the Historic Blanchard House in Ionia Michigan. It now stands proudly behind a log cabin home in Lowell.

JULY 17 1897 from the Yale Expositor:

A Murder Near Ionia.

Moses Walker, a bachelor, who lived two miles west of Ionia, opposite the state house of correction, was shot and instantly killed by Wesley Bennett, a farm hand on an adjoining farm. Bennett had been keeping company with Lydia Vivian, Walker's niece, and they had just returned from the city. The woman jumped out of the buggy just as Walker came out into the road. He ordered Bennett away, having previously objected to his presence, and is alleged that he threw a piece of brick at the horse. Bennett refused to go and drew a revolver from which he fired three shots at Walker, all of which took effect, the third striking the heart. Bennett skipped home and was changing horses, apparently for flight, when the sheriff arrested him.





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
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 2022-23 Board of Directors and Officers

- Kathleen Cook, President — 616-527-2626
- David McCord, Vice President — 616-902-0033
- Bryan Kimble, Director — 616-897-6592
- 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 and find us on Facebook, too!

Thanks!