



the CHRONICLE

www.ioniahistory.org

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 ICCHS 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
ICCHS 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.

Calendar of Events on Page 3!

The Historical Society and Museum Staff (volunteers) are gearing up for the 2026 Summer Season. Read more inside...

The Board and Officers of the Ionia County Historical Society (a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Corporation)

- Kathleen Cook, President — 616-527-2626
- David McCord, Vice President — 616-902-0033
- Bryan Kimble, Director — 616-897-6592
- David Cusack, Director — 517-763-1770
- Jeff Verduin, Director — 616-433-5593

For information on your long-lost relatives in Ionia County, please contact the Ionia County Genealogical Society:
<https://www.migenweb.org/ionia/ICGS/icgshome.htm>

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

Spring 2026



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The Almost Monthly Publication of the Ionia County Historical Society



A Message from the ICCHS President, Kathleen Cook

Dear ICCHS members and friends,
Thank you to all our members for your support. Currently, we have almost 60 members, a

handful of business buddies and a few friends that I can call when needed. If you have not turned in your 2025-26 dues, it is not too late!

During January through March, though, we didn't hold membership meetings. Mary, David, and I worked actively with grant writer, Joelle Letts to meet grant requirements. Thanks to the grant, we secured a new roof for Blanchard House, hand painted exterior signs, and acquired items for a traveling museum. Without this funding, I would have hesitated to invest in the Adams Street building.

Many thanks to the Scouts of Troop 85 for their help moving items from the house to the new building. They treated the artifacts with care and managed the steps with remarkable skill—far better than I could have! I'm also grateful to Andrew Badder for his assistance transporting the Christmas decorations to the carriage house.

With improved weather, Barb and I have started meeting on Thursdays from 1pm to 4pm to deep clean each room. **We would really appreciate any extra hands and hope some of you will join us.** We have a lot of cleaning to do before opening the doors for tours and programs in the coming months.

Join us on March 21st at our Spring Fling (see ad right here) to say goodbye to winter! Admission is \$10 and supports house maintenance. Coffee, water, and punch will be provided; feel free to bring your own drinks and snacks to share! Bryan Kimble offered to DJ but, be ready—requests for a special song will cost you a dollar! I am so ready to see friends, listen to some great music, have a beer or three and play a game of euchre. I hope that you will join us!

Please join us on April 1st as we kick off our first general membership meeting of the year. We will host a **ribbon cutting event for the new roof.** Joelle Letts, who helped us obtain three grants in 2025, will explain the process. We could not have done this without her.

We're starting our 2026 season with:

- A New Blanchard House Roof
- New Exterior Signage
- A Traveling Display Kit
- New Security System
- The New Accessions Building

Prior to concluding this letter, I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to all individuals who generously dedicated their time, expertise, and financial resources to our organization. This year has been marked by significant accomplishments, and I look forward to continuing our progress in the coming months.

Best Regards,
Kathleen Cook, ICCHS President



Saturday, March 21, 2026

7:00 pm - 10 pm
Snacks - Music
Friends - Fun
Only \$10 ea.

BYOB

Bring a Snack to Share

RSVP to: info@ioniahistory.org



ICHS VOLUNTEERS HARD AT WORK IN THE “OFF SEASON”



THE “A” BUILDING

The Board of Directors embarked on two of our biggest projects in decades — the new roof on the Blanchard House, and the new Accessions Building.

The Accessions Building (see here with the Carriage House on the left) is not a public facility, but a warehouse and workspace for the Historical Society. The building provides over 1600 square feet to store artifacts and historic documents, including over 100 years of Ionia newspapers and almost 200 years worth of memorabilia.

There is also space for sorting, classifying, and recording the collections onto computer databases that one day will be available to the public for research.

The work is just beginning in the new building! If you'd like to help, please contact a board member (listed on the back of this newsletter).

The photo below is another of our grant acquisitions: A “Traveling Display” system that can be customized to showcase any number of historical subjects. This original configuration addresses the history of the residents in the local Grand River valley before the arrival of the white colonists in the early 1800s. The grant covered the design and production of these graphics, as well as the display hardware and furnishings.

If your organization, school, or event would be interested in such a display, please contact a board member. We can provide a static display and (depending on availability) an interpreter to provide more information on the subject.



As always, the ICHS Gift Shop is overflowing with goodies. We have souvenirs, books, postcards and other reproduction items relevant to Ionia and our history. Stop by the Blanchard House on a Sunday afternoon between May Day and Labor Day for a tour and a gift!



ATTENTION IONIA RAILROAD FANS!!!

Work has begun on a display of Ionia Railroad history. We're seeking artifacts, photos, and stories about the railroads in Ionia.

The first steam train in Ionia arrived from Owosso in October of 1843, and at one time the community was home to two round turntables, repair shops for engines and rail cars, and hundreds of skilled workers! It's not just about train wrecks, but the life- blood of commerce for over a century.

If you have something we can share with our guests and members, please contact David McCord. Thanks!



Above right, the Pere Marquette station in the 1950s; Above, the Grand Trunk “roundhouse”; left, the PM453 parked in Ionia.

MEMBER An alliance of over 25 small historical museums across mid-Michigan sharing local history and information.

TRI-RIVER HISTORICAL MUSEUM NETWORK

COMING UP:

To verify current details, please visit our website or Facebook.

- **Saturday, March 21, 7:00 to 10:00pm - the ICHS Spring Fling!**
Snacks, Music, and Friendly Conversation, raising money for our summer season!
- **Monday, March 30, 7:00 p.m. — ICHS Business Meeting** at the Blanchard House.
- **Wednesday, April 1, 7:00 p.m. — Program Night with our grant writer, Joelle Letts.** Learn about what we've received and what we might expect in the future.
- **Monday, April 27, 7:00 p.m. — ICHS Business Meeting** at the Blanchard House.
- **Wednesday, May 6, 7:00 p.m. — Program Night - Our season displays about Ionia's Railroading History**
- **Monday, June 1, 7:00 p.m. — ICHS Business Meeting** at the Blanchard House.
- **Wednesday, June 3, 7:00 pm — Program Night with Linda Ciangi** presenting “difficult history” — the KKK in Ionia.
- **Wednesday, June 25, 7:00 p.m. — ICHS Business Meeting** at the Blanchard House.
- **Wednesday, July 1, 7:00 p.m. — Our Annual Independence Day Pot-Luck** at the Blanchard House. Come on out, bring a dish to pass, wave the flag and have some great food!
- **Monday, July 6, 7:00 p.m. — ICHS Business Meeting** at the Blanchard House.
- **Wednesday, August 5, 7:00 p.m. — Program Night — to be announced.**

SUMMER SUNDAYS at the Blanchard House continue through September 1st (Labor Day Weekend) from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. **PLEASE**, if you can spare a few hours, extra volunteers are always welcomed!

NOTE: If you have any ideas or suggestions for programs or presentations of historical subjects, collections, or local information, **PLEASE let us know.**

Meanwhile, be sure to keep in touch (if you are on line) with Facebook!



Thank You to our “Business Buddies”

Thomas Classrooms & Modulars LLC

Wilson's Plumbing & Heating

Bredice Electric LLC

Cooks Creamery

Greg Cook Construction

Lake Funeral Homes

Sid's Flowers

Just Like Home Adult Day Center

JBM Lawn Care