# OAKLAND



## GAZETTE.



The first "Oakland Gazette" was published in Pontiac on February 7, 1844, as a Whig paper. In 1854 its name was changed to the "Pontiac Gazette". It is hoped that the new version of the "Gazette" will serve as well as well as its predecessor in bringing members of the Society into closer contact with the historical activity throughout the county, and more particularly with the aims and programs of the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society. In 1968 the "Oakland Gazette" will be published only occasionally, to be supplemented by letters. In 1969 we look forward to a regular schedule.

PUBLISHED BY THE OAKLAND COUNTY PIONEER & HISTORICAL SOCIETY 405 Oakland Avenue, Pontiac, Michigan 48058 313-338-6732

## PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES FOR 1968 PLANNED

The Program Activities Committee, Mrs. Richard Wright of Bloomfield Hills and Mrs. Robert Anderson of Pontiac, co-chairmen, has begun the planning of membership programs for the year. We hope that some of the plans will be of interest to you, and suggestions are always welcome.

- May 20-25 Exhibits by the Society at the Pontiac Mall directed by Mrs. S. M. Deyo.
  Many items from the collection will be exhibited for the first time.
  Your participation before and during the Michigan Week exhibition is
- May 22 Pontiac Mall Auditorium 10:00 A.M. Maurice Cole, V.P. of the Historical Society of Michigan and also of this society, will speak on "Oakland County A Century Ago".
- May 22 Annual Dinner at the Central Methodist Church, 3882 Highland Road. The speaker will be John Cummings, author of a recent book on Temperance Mack Entertainment will be by the Pontiac High School Girls Chorus.
- June The first of several planned tours of historic houses in Oakland County will be held at the 1854 Clarke House in Clarkston. Details for this visit will contained in a subsequent letter.
- September 18

Annual Meeting at the Supervisor's Auditorium in the Oakland County Service Center. 7:30 P.M. Members are asked to participate in a "Show & Tell" with items of historic interest or a collection that you would be willing to show.

- October A second house tour is planned.
- December A Dickensian Christmas at the Wisner House and School. We hope to make merry as did the Wisners, with a truly festive occasion.

The Society gratefully acknowledges receipt of a bequest totaling twenty-four thousand dollars by Miss Blanche Avery, teacher of English and French in Pontiac Central High School for many years and leader in the Society during its formative period. This generous gift will become the nucleus of an investment fund which will, for the first time, give assured income. In addition, amounts have been designated for two items of capital improvement, restoration of the porches on the Gov. Wisner House and complete check and upgrading of the electrical system in the same building.

#### HISTORIC PRESERVATION - WHY?

During the recent hearing on the future of Hawaii's Diamond Head, James Biddle, President of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, stated the reason for our being and also why we work for increased preservation of Oakland County's historic resources. In his statement Mr. Biddle said, "Preservation is expensive but quality has always come high. Land saved today from a tomb of concrete will be incredibly more valuable 20 years hence, not just in cash value but in the social enrichment of the lives of the population. I believe there is a growing awareness that our crime-ridden, strife-torn land is the result of the breeding of a rootless generation. We have handed on to them too little of the history and beauty of the past to which to cling as they move through life - now all of us must pay the bill that enriched those who cared only for rapid, private, personal profit. We must recognize that era to be past."

## JOINT ACTION TO GAIN EDUCATION CENTER

As this newsletter goes to press, the Society and the Pontiac City Historical Commission are working to effect a future for the 1858 Boss-Halfpenny House at 120 East Wide Track Drive in Pontiac. It is hoped to obtain adequate financing to move the house, slated for demolition, to the Society grounds as an educational center including classrooms, archival and library space. Examination by the Historic Buildings Committee of the American Institute of Architects has concluded it to be sound and worthy of preservation, while space for the educational services of the Society is a steadily growing need. As a county-wide organization and operator of its only history museum, we have an obligation to acquaint students with history and its method in a way proved to be more effective than the textbook. A building to fill this need would permit year-round service to more than 800 schools in addition to a junior society, and facilitate the creation of primary source materials for the entire range of the social studies. There is a proven need for a center for local materials to which educators and scholars might come. We are obligated to meet this need.

#### RESTORATION OF THE GROUNDS

Under the direction of Mrs. T. M. Pinney of Birmingham, winter meetings are being used for research and planning priorities in the large project of returning the grounds as far as possible to the country showplace created by the Wisners. The first section to be treated will be the front and side lawns of the house, where grading and planting will begin this spring. Also as soon as weather permits, the committee will begin pruning the many lilac bushes on the grounds. They very much need the help of anyone who enjoys gardening. If you would be willing to help please call 338-6732 and leave your name.

The Board of Directors announces the purchase of the property adjoining the Society grounds, at 32 Wisner Street. This addition will permit conversion of several areas in the Gov. Wisner House into restored area, and allow additional badly needed space for library, office and storage. Appreciation is extended to Mr. Leslie H. Hudson for the donation of his professional services in this important transaction.

Reservations for school group tours are now being received for April 1st through October 31st. With steadily increasing demands, additional volunteers are badly needed to become familiar with the historic properties and be available one day a week to act as interpreters. If you enjoy history and young people it would be a rewarding and enjoyable experience. Anyone who is interested is urged to call the Society office.

#### "OAKLAND COUNTY: THE EARLY YEARS"

A new 20-minute slide-tape program telling the story of Oakland County's settlement will be used as orientation for visitors to the Society properties this year. Also available for occasional loan to educational groups or community programs, the presentation utilizes contemporary visual material largely from the Society collection.

### LOCAL HISTORY GROUPS MEET

On January 24th this Society's education committee, led by Mrs. A. Wendell Green of Walled Lake, hosted a group of more than twenty representatives from eight historical organizations throughout Oakland County. Groups represented included the Rochester Historical Committee, the Troy Historical Commission, the Troy Historical Society, the Farmington Historical Society, the Birmingham Historical Board, the Birmingham Historical Society, the Oakland University Archival and Documents Division and members of your board. Over lunch in the schoolhouse common aims and activities were discussed and interest was expressed in several co operative projects including the production of educational materials, publishing a historical brochure, sponsoring junior societies and the establishment of a historical council for co operative action and exchange of information. Further meetings to work actively on such projects are being planned.

#### A SEARCH

In 1928 the Oakland County Pioneer Society purchased an 1821 map of Pontiac, which is not to be found among the collection today. It is quite possible that this map was deposited with someone for safekeeping. The Society would appreciate any information members might have concerning its whereabouts.

## OPEN HOUSE FOR PONTIAC OFFICIALS

Mrs. Marion Hodges Benter, Membership Chairman, acted as hostess for Pontiac City Commission and City Historical Commission members visiting the Wisner property on Sunday, January 14th. Entering the house, school and rootcellar through banks of snow is an experience very different from the usual summer visit, and adds new understanding to the life we attempt to re-create.

## RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Among the items recently received by the Society from the family of Miss Emma Howard are several fine additions to the archive in the form of newspapers and magazines of the 1800's, several pen and ink exercise drawings, a memorial colored lithograph of the 1840's, as well as a number of textbooks and almanacs from the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Exhibits of these and other similar aspects of the Society's collection will be announced during the coming months.

## THANKS TO MEMBERS

The skills and effort of several members of the Society are gratefully acknowledged. Mrs. A. E. Ayres of Drayton Plains has spent many hours on the dried arrangements used throughout the house during the winter months and on the textile collection which is being sorted, inspected and restored. Mr. Samuel M. Deyo of Orchard Lake has contributed excellently-done conservation work on the military collection, and Mr. Lyle Hoard has been responsible for numerous projects relating to maintenance and restoration of the buildings. Without such help we cannot progress.



ROCHESTER from the south c. 1899