



Centennial Ice Cream Social

Sunday, July 28, from 1:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M. has been set for the annual Ice Cream Social of the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society. It will take place on the lawn of the Wisner Historic House, 405 Oakland Avenue, Pontiac. To honor the one hundredth year of the Society's organization, special plans have been made for the Social.

Chairperson for the event is Mrs. Edwin Adler. Gretchen will be assisted by Mrs. Robert Anderson, Mrs. Robert Warrington, Mr. Richard Hewitt, Mr. Richard Hendershott and Mr. P. G. Burnett. Mrs. Warrington is in charge of the food. Mrs. Warren Rice and Mrs. Daniel Foxman are co-chairpersons for the Tour Guide Committee.

Some of the attractions include—

- ★ THE FRANKLIN BAND — Complete with straw hats and brass instruments, this band will be on hand for your musical entertainment. In addition, a calliope, brightly painted and decorated will lend its happy sounds to the Social.
- ★ AN ICE CREAM WAGON — Trundling over the Wisner grounds, this ice cream wagon will dispense cones for those youngsters attending with their parents.
- ★ OLD CARS — On special loan to the Society, these antique beauties once burned up the roads at 15 m.p.h. On Sunday, July 28, they will have a more leisurely pace up and down the Wisner drive.
- ★ DOOR PRIZES — The Quilting and the Stitchery Classes, with the guidance of teacher Billy Ann Maley, undertook projects for the benefit of the Ice Cream Social. A quilt, completely hand made in a cornucopia design in shades of green will have a new owner. A wall hanging with embroidered panels depicting herbs will go to the second name drawn. The quilters will be hard at work during the Social.

Ice cream, homemade cakes and lemonade will be served. Each year this event has grown in popularity. Last year the



Serving committees were kept busy by the hundreds who attended last year's Ice Cream Social.



The Franklin Band

supply of homemade cake ran out. Servers had to dash home to get their frozen Sara Lees out of the deep freeze. One member brought a huge cake that had been baked and decorated for use as a groom's cake. SO - - members are urged to send or bring a cake if at all possible!

Parking

The Oakland Avenue United Presbyterian Church, across the street from the Wisner House, has kindly consented to allow parking in their church lot. Due to the traffic on the Wisner grounds by the antique cars and ice cream wagon, only committee members who will be working all day will use the Wisner House parking lot. All others are urged to utilize the Wisner school lot and the Church parking lot.

TICKETS

Enclosed with this Gazette, please find 5 tickets for you and your friends. Please return any money or unsold tickets to the Wisner House, 405 Oakland Avenue, Pontiac, Michigan 48058 before the Ice Cream Social. Make checks payable to Lillian Balmer, Treasurer.

ICE CREAM SOCIAL—Tear off and mail to Wisner House, 405 Oakland Avenue, Pontiac, Mich. 48058 in the enclosed envelope as soon as possible.

I will serve as—

| | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Host-Guide | _____12:45 to 2:00 | _____2:00 to 3:00 | _____3:00 to 4:15 |
| Host-Server | _____12:45 to 2:00 | _____2:00 to 3:00 | _____3:00 to 4:15 |
| Sales | _____12:45 to 2:00 | _____2:00 to 3:00 | _____3:00 to 4:15 |
| (Pot Pourri Shoppe) | | | |

I will bring _____ cake(s) Sunday forenoon or Saturday between 1 and 4 P.M.
Any questions, contact Joan Warrington 674-2186

Name _____ Phone _____

The Moses Wisner Family

1815-1974

Part I Moses Wisner—Pioneer, Lawyer, Politician

Moses Wisner was of the fifth generation of Wisners in America. He was born in what is now Springport Township, Cayuga County, New York, on June 3, 1815 to Moses and Nancy Merwin Wisner, the twelfth of their sixteen children. Eight of these children died before reaching fourteen years of age. Moses' father, a colonel in the War of 1812, was the son of Lieutenant Thomas Wisner, who fought in the Revolutionary War. He was the son of Adam, the son of Johannes, the first of the Swiss family of Wisners to settle in America.

Moses' parents were farmers, well respected, but of modest means. His early education was acquired in the common schools of Springport Township but his keen interest in learning is reflected in the books on philosophy, history, literature, military tactics, etc., that line the bookshelves at Pine Grove. It is said that while Moses and his brother George had to do their share of toilsome farm labor, they often shirked their agricultural duties in the interest of cultivating their minds.

George W. Wisner, two years older than Moses, was apprenticed to a printer at Auburn, New York, when he was fifteen. He later went to New York City and became editor of the *New York Sun*. In 1835 he came to Pontiac, Michigan, studied law and when admitted to the bar in 1839 opened a law office with Rufus Hosmer.

It isn't known whether Moses was also apprenticed to learn a trade, but he was still in Springport in 1833 when he was eighteen. He came to Michigan in 1837 and purchased land in Lapeer County. It was heavily forested, uncultivated farm land. After two years of back-breaking drudgery, he decided that was not the life for him so one day he said to himself, "If I can't make a



living at a more congenial job than this, I will starve." He changed his farm clothes for a business suit, mounted his horse, came to Pontiac and began the study of law with his brother George and Rufus Hosmer, who by now had a very successful practice.

When he became a licensed attorney in 1841 he returned to Lapeer and opened a law office in the village. Lapeer County was then without a prosecuting attorney. A petition, signed by 67 of the residents recommending Moses Wisner as a "suitable and well-qualified person to perform such duties as devolve upon a prosecuting attorney", was sent to Governor William Woodbridge. Moses received the appointment on January 22, 1841.

During this same year he was married to a former schoolmate and neighbor, Eliza Richardson, of Springport Township, New York whose forebearers had come to America about the same time as William Penn, in 1682. Her parents were Samuel and Sarah Thompson Richardson, well-to-do and held in high esteem in the area. Eliza was said to be a beautiful, high-minded and dignified young lady. In 1842, a son, Edward M. was born to Moses and Eliza.

Apparently being prosecuting attorney in that rural community of Lapeer didn't prove much of a challenge for Moses, for the State Attorney General noted that he had received no report of "official business" done by Lapeer County in 1842. At any rate, in 1844 Moses moved his family to Pontiac and shortly thereafter entered into a co-partnership with Wisner and Hosmer. Their office was located on Lawrence Street, on the rear of the lot now occupied by the Community National Bank. A younger brother, Oscar F. Wisner, was a partner in the law firm of Peck and Wisner, on Saginaw Street.

Politically, Moses Wisner was a Whig. His family had long considered it a duty as well as a privilege to take part in political affairs. Moses Wisner, Sr. and an uncle, Samuel Wisner had held township offices in Springport. In the spring and summer of 1844, Moses campaigned for Henry Clay, the Whig candidate for President. George W. Wisner was also the Whig candidate for U.S. Representative for the 3rd Congressional District of Michigan. Henry Clay Clubs were organized in Pontiac, Springfield, Oxford, Troy and other towns in this area and Moses was often asked to lecture at their meetings. At the Clay Cabin, headquarters of the Whig Party in Pontiac, noisy, boisterous meetings with rousing speeches, banners, bands and the firing of cannons kept the candidates constantly in the public mind. Politics then was a serious and extremely partisan affair. Even the Whig ladies, although not allowed to exercise their franchise, did their share in helping to promote the success of the candidate of their husband's choice. They attended the meetings, prepared bountiful supplies of meats, pies, cakes, etc., for the public dinners that went on during the campaigns and they always prayed for a bright sunny day for a Whig rally and for rain when the Democrats gathered. In spite of their efforts, Henry Clay was defeated and George also lost to the Democratic incumbent Hunt.

On July 2, 1844 Moses signed an agreement with Joshua Terry and his wife Lucinda to buy 28.3 acres of land in the Southwest Quarter of Section 20, Pontiac Township. This property he later called Pine Grove. It is thought that the part of the house now used as a library and office by the Pioneer and Historical Society had already been built, since the purchase price of \$1,000.00 was above the usual rate for just acreage. The final papers were signed on September 23, 1844. The deed notes that Lucinda Terry had been duly questioned apart from her husband and "acknowledged that she executed the deed without fear of compulsion of her said husband."

How bright the future must have seemed to Moses during those early months of 1844. Secure in his profession and a landowner, now he and Eliza could begin the establishment of a lifestyle as satisfying as she had left as a bride back in New York. Their aspirations were quite typical of the vast majority of Americans the Frenchman, de Tocqueville found in his tour of America in 1831: "The American grows accustomed only to change and ends up regarding it as the natural state of man", and concluded, "How could

the American be anything but an optimist?"

In late July, 1844, Helen, was born. This joy was quickly turned to sorrow, for on Monday, July 29, Eliza was dead. The **Oakland Gazette** gave no hint of the cause, only that "Eliza Wisner, aged 24 years, amiable, active in the performance of every duty, sincere, affectionate and unpretending, she has endeared herself to a large circle of friends who deeply feel her loss. Her death was calm and resigned, for her the grave had no terror. Aside from the grief she felt for the affliction of her husband and friends she was leaving, she died without a pang." On August 1st, the baby Helen died and both were buried in Oak Hill Cemetery. Now Moses, at age 29, had to begin a new life alone. He and little two year old Edward went to live at the home of Ephraim S. Williams, an early Oakland County pioneer and local military figure.

Four years after the death of Eliza, Moses was married to the fair and sprightly twenty year old Angeolina Hascall. She was born March 4, 1828 at Auburn, to Charles C. and Nancy Rounds Hascall who had come from Cayuga County, New York to Detroit, and then to Auburn where they bought a farm, built a woolen mill, a store and a hotel. "General" Hascall, so-called because of his appointment as head of the local militia in the Toledo War, sat in the first town meeting in Pontiac in 1827 and was town clerk in 1829-1830. Angeolina was nine years old when they moved to Flint where she grew up. In those days there were very few public schools and Angeolina, her brother Charles, cousin Martha and another boy, Stebeda Stephens, were tutored by a Mr. Wakeley, the schoolroom being in the office of her father's store. It was on a visit to Pontiac that she met Moses Wisner. They were married in 1848 and came to live at Pine Grove.

Moses continued to buy more of the adjoining lands and by the 1850's, after numerous additions, the first small house became the spacious country estate of Mose's dreams. There were several outbuildings, a large stock barn about ¾ of a mile to the north of the house where Moses raised prize Angus cattle, an orchard where the Wisner school now stands, a grapery, vegetable and flower gardens and a greenhouse attached to the house. The numerous pine trees eventually became so dense they cut off the view of the Saginaw Road, now Oakland Avenue. At times they became a temporary hideout of inmates who had wandered away from the State Insane Asylum nearby. Attendants there frequently asked



ANGEOLINA WISNER

permission to search among the trees for their wandering charges.

Three children were born to Moses and Angeolina—Charles, always called "Chip", Jessica and Frank. Edward was now attending Mr Bacon's School for Boys in Detroit. Washington A. Bacon was a well-educated, successful teacher but many of his pupils found the discipline much too rigid for their liking. Charles O., the eldest son of George W. Wisner, also attended the same school but another son, Oscar F. wouldn't stay, even for a week.

Angeolina was kept busy looking after such a large household. One of her specialities was baking and the pantry always contained cookies, pies or doughnuts. She won prizes at the Fair for her homemade bread. Hired household help was difficult to find and even more so to keep. If a hired girl were offered a few pennies more a week than she was already getting she was apt to give notice in the midst of getting dinner and leave as soon as the dishes were done. Mrs. Thomas Drake had an excellent girl, but lived in fear that someone else would offer her \$2.00 a week and the girl would leave. Someone did and she left on a Friday at 7:15 A.M.

In the fall of 1847 George W. Wisner left the law firm, and with H. H. Duncklee and N. I. Rawson purchased the **Detroit Advertiser**. He was the editor until his death in September, 1849. Rufus Hosmer took over the editorial duties of the **Advertiser** and Moses then continued his law practice alone. He was an active member of the Oakland County Bar Association and had the reputation of being a very fine lawyer. Among his colleagues were William Draper, Augustus C. Baldwin, Thomas J. Drake, Morgan Drake, Michael Crofoot and Junius Ten Eyck. Moses also had the reputation of having almost indecipherable handwriting. One day Thomas Drake, a tall thin man, always very careful of his personal appearance, came into court to plead a case. He placed his tall silk hat upside down on a table near his brother, Morgan Drake, who carelessly upset an inkwell into the hat. Upon completing his argument, Thomas Drake started to leave the courtroom. Reaching the door

he put on his hat and as the ink began to slowly run down his face he turned and addressed the Judge: "Your Honor, I desire to solemnly protest the efforts of Moses Wisner to write his name in my hat."

Moses gave careful consideration to the best interests of his clients. When convinced of the right course to follow in defense of his subject he became a formidable opponent. His vigorous, manly figure, high pale brow, flashing dark eyes and jet black hair coupled with his deep resonant voice, vivid imagination, forceful logic, active wit and biting sarcasm made him an outstanding personality in the courtroom. According to J. M. Howard, "as an advocate he had few equals." In the case where Guy M. Trowbridge's house was burglarized Moses Wisner aided the prosecution. He made an effective closing argument by discharging a pistol which was claimed to be unloaded, damaging only the theories of the defense. In the Tully murder case Moses Wisner, Thomas Drake and Michael Crofoot conducted for the defense. On December 5, 1857, John, Robert and Charles Tully were accused of wilfully murdering their father to obtain \$600.00 the old man had hidden in the house. The trial resulted in an acquittal for Charles, but a conviction for Robert and John, who were sentenced to life imprisonment at Jackson. Impressed by their clients who persistently maintained their innocence, Wisner, Drake and Crofoot procured a reversal of the first verdict. A new trial, in which evidence given on the witness stand by *their brother* Charles, as well as affidavits of fellow-prisoners imputing guilt to other unknown parties, also drew an acquittal for John and Robert, thereby exonerating all the three sons of killing their father for his money. There is also an oft told story that illustrates Moses' ability to make a quick rebuttal. While prosecuting a case of felony, Michael Crofoot, again being on the defense, had made a powerful appeal to the jury for sympathy for the prisoner because of his poverty and family. Moses then proceeded to make an even stronger impression on the jury: "The law knows no difference between the rich and the poor criminal and the criminal with a family or one without, but in the language of the Holy Scripture, 'He that danceth must pay the fiddler'." Laughter broke out from all corners of the courtroom and Judge Turner, a very dignified jurist, but who appreciated a good thing now and then, leaned over and said, "Governor, the chapter and verse if you please." Another burst of

Planning Committee Organized

Mr. Richard C. Hewitt has been appointed Chairman of the newly formed Planning Committee. The purpose of the group is to recommend projects and goals to the Board of Directors for action at their discretion.

Mr. Hewitt has appointed the following subcommittees:

Restoration, Maintenance and Landscaping

LaBar Stewart, Jr., Chairman

Cecil Dumbrigue

Ways and Means

P. G. Burnette, Chairman

James Renfrew

Mrs. Edwin L. Adler

Mrs. Charles F. Roush

School and Youth Group Assistance

Richard Hendershott, Chairman

Mrs. Gordon Bryant

Archives and Cataloging

Miss Faye Donelson, Chairman

Mrs. Ralph L. Sievwright

Bicentennial

Richard C. Hewitt, Chairman

Mrs. Edwin L. Adler



One of Henry Ford's 1903 Model "A's" will be on display July 28.

Sun Dial Added To Herb Garden

An attraction added to the Herb Garden this summer is the sun dial purchased from funds given in memory of Whitney Prall.

Mr. Prall spent many hours following his retirement working on restoration of the Wisner house and grounds.

The Men's Garden Club again this year has assumed responsibility for tending and replanting the herb garden.

Visit Potpourri Shoppe

The staff has been busy ordering new items and refurbishing the store in preparation for the Ice Cream Social. Part of the Shoppe will be moving out to the lawn for this event of July 28.

Turnabout dolls, hand-crafted by Blue Ridge Cooperative, will be sold. Commemorative pewter demi-tasse spoons are being offered for the first time. These have a handwrought look. Many items, including herbs, pictures and books are offered.

Pontiac Bottle Club

Sometimes, yesterdays trash has a way of becoming today's treasures. Old bottles that once contained spirits, bitters or patent medicine guaranteed to cure all ills, have become true collectors' items.

The Pontiac Bottle Club, under the direction of George Davis, President, and Larry Blascyk, Vice President, are planning an exhibit of old bottles made or used in Oakland County in the 1850's and '60's. They will be on display at the Ice Cream Social July 28. Don't miss them.

[Continued from Page 3]

laughter, but Moses, with an air of well-affected astonishment turned to the desk and exclaimed, "Great God, is it possible we have on the bench a person so ignorant of the Holy Scriptures?"

The question of slavery was becoming more and more the primary political issue and Moses Wisner was strongly anti-slavery. Sentiments created by the Kansas-Nebraska Bill in 1854 brought about a political upheaval in Michigan politics and Moses Wisner's political affiliations from then on were greatly altered. Meetings to protest passage of the bill were held during the late winter and spring by the Whigs and Free Soilers. Immediately after the bill was passed in May, 1854 Joseph Warren, editor of the Detroit **Tribune**, an anti-slavery paper, initiated a plan to disband both the Whig and Free Soil parties and organize a new party to be composed of all opponents of slavery extension. A petition calling for a mass convention on July 6th at Jackson obtained over 10,000 signatures and contained names of leading citizens from the Whigs, Free Soldiers and many Democrats. In his efforts to secure the co-operation of the many different factions Warren says, "Amongst the members of the Whig

party who warmly seconded and efficiently aided me were J. M. Howard, Moses Wisner, Chas. Draper, Levi Bacon and W. M. McConnell."

Moses was among the thousands who gathered "under the oaks" on Thursday, July 6, 1854 at Jackson. A platform "opposing the extension of slavery and its abolition in the District of Columbia" and proposing "Republican" as the name for the new party was adopted. Moses Wisner was a member of the Nominating Committee that selected a slate of candidates for state offices, headed by Kinsley S. Bingham for Governor. Moses declined the nomination for Attorney General but was later nominated as a representative to Congress for the Fourth District.

The party conducted a vigorous campaign and Moses was in great demand as a speaker. He was among those who took a more radical view of the situation, believing that the struggle between the free labor and the slave labor systems was now approaching a crisis and that the political power held by the slave states and territories must be broken before the problem could be solved. The Republicans won all the state offices, but Moses, running in a traditionally Democratic district was defeated by George W. Peck.

Moses Wisner was one of several

Republican candidates considered to replace Senator Lewis Cass whose term of office was due to expire in March 1857. Zachariah Chandler, another candidate, badly wanted the office and brought in a large lobby to his support, mainly from the center and western parts of the state, the strongest Republican areas, and won the election.

In 1858 Moses Wisner was elected Governor of Michigan, the first to come from Oakland County. Before election day he visited nearly every county in the state. Believing that the very existence of the Constitution of the United States and the liberties of the people were at stake, Moses spoke out boldly to all those he addressed, fearing neither the rebuke of his opponents or loss of public opinion. He won the election over Charles E. Stuart, the Democratic candidate by 9,135 votes, a majority even greater than that previously obtained by Kinsley S. Bingham, his immediate predecessor.



Mrs. Allen Priestley, whose article on the Wisner family begins on page 2 of this issue, is a new member of the Society.

Deeply interested in research of this type, Ruth is a 1973 history major graduate of Oakland University.

Subsequent issues of the Gazette will carry the remaining two parts of the Wisner Family history.