



## *You and Your Friends are Cordially Invited to The Annual Christmas Open House*

### *At Pine Grove*

405 Oakland Ave.  
Pontiac

Sunday, December 7, 1975  
1 - 4 p.m.

Refreshments      Music

Admission

Adults \$1.00      Children 50c

### **Hanging of The Greens Set For December 3, 1975**

The seventh annual Hanging of the Greens will be on Wednesday, December 3. Starting time is 10 A.M. On that day, members of Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society will gather at Wisner House to decorate Pine Grove for the gala Victorian Open House. Any who wish to help—and that includes friends as well as members—are welcome.

This working crew usually brown bags it at noon with tea and coffee provided in the Wisner House office. Then it's back to work for the afternoon. Half the fun of the Open House is getting ready for it, and all it takes to be a participant, is to fill in the proper space on the enclosed card and mail to Wisner House—even the envelope is provided. So—wear your old clothes and don't forget your lunch.



*The fenced area between Pine Grove and the Wisner public school is open for parking. Also the Oakland Avenue United Presbyterian Church has kindly consented to let us use their parking lot across the street.*



## Year's Activities Reviewed At Society's Annual Meeting

At the annual meeting of the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society, which was held September 17, 1975 at the Oakland Avenue United Presbyterian Church, members gathered for a potluck dinner. The following were elected as new members of the board of directors: George Googasian, Carl Bird and Dorothy Yancey.

Highlighting the annual reports was an illustrated presentation by Charles Martinez on the archeological dig conducted on the site of the carriage house or barn at Pine Grove. Mr. Martinez was presented a special Certificate of Appreciation.

For the benefit of those members unable to attend extracts from some of the reports are printed below.

### Resident Agent's Report

The Resident Agent, Richard Hewitt, reported that he had completed the work necessary to carry out the Society's authorization at the 1974 annual meeting to make it a perpetual corporation. Also, he and the treasurer, Lillian Balmer, had met with representatives of the Internal Revenue Service and, following an audit, the Society was advised of the continuance of its tax exempt status. He also reported that a security system had been installed.

The Society, on recommendation of the Resident Agent, adopted additions to Article III of the by-laws authorizing the establishment of an endowment fund and the receipt of "restricted and special gifts, bequests, devises or other transfers of property for stated and specific purposes."

### Building and Grounds

House Committee co-chairpersons Edna Burke and Betty Hoard reported that the parlor ceiling at Wisner House had been repaired and painted and the window frames, so neglected over the years, had been scraped, puttied, sanded and painted. The committee recommended the installation of storm windows.

Chairman LaBar Stewart, Jr. of the maintenance committee reported that arrangements had been made to repair the roof over the porch and repaint the pillars and trim on the porch.

Cecil Dumbrigue, chairman of the grounds committee, received special commendation for clearing out the wooded area so that it could be mowed. Mr. Dumbrigue, with the help of Charles Williams and Emil Bruestle repaired the root cellar and removed unwanted growth from the foundations

of the buildings.

### Treasurer's Report

The report of the treasurer, Mrs. Richard Balmer, brought together all of the activities—for in one way or another "money talks" either as an income producer or an income depleter. Her figures showed that the Society is solvent and has made its money go a long way.

### Administrative Coordinator's Report

In her report Constance Lektzian, Administrative Coordinator, covered the programs at Pine Grove, discussed participation in and attendance at local history conferences and work sessions; and the general operation of the affairs of the Society.

### President Summarizes

The annual report of the President, Mrs. Donald E. Adams, summarized the year's activities and contained the following information not covered in the reports previously reviewed:

"A committee of which P. G. Burnett is chairman implemented the creation of a permanent endowment fund to assure the future maintenance of Pine Grove as the Society's headquarters. All life memberships are put in this account. It has received support not only through life memberships but also through outright gifts from our members on their own behalf and in memory of others. This is a continuing project and one which all of us can help through memorial contributions, bequests, etc. Speaking of bequests, one of our former active members, John E.

Linabury, left the Society some shares of General Motors stock, a welcome gift from a loyal friend. And one of our earlier bequests—from Sarah Van Hoosen Jones—has made it possible to repair the parlor ceiling and windows.

"I want to mention also governmental assistance which we receive. The County of Oakland has continued its support and representatives of the Michigan History Division of the Michigan Department of State have been generous in visiting us and giving constructive suggestions which we hope to implement...

"These monetary and professional contributions are most helpful. Equally, the hours of service contributed by our volunteers and the loyalty of our staff members help to keep our Society functioning. The reports tonight tell of some of these services, our issues of the *Gazette* enumerate others, and the supplements to the *Gazette* show research activities by our members. To all who contribute in any way we owe a debt of gratitude—more than that, to them we owe our actual existence as a functioning Society. We thank them all and know that because they enjoy it they will keep on and will enlist others. Special thanks are due our officers: vice presidents James Renfrew and Maurice F. Cole, secretary Mrs. Russell Pickering, treasurer Mrs. Richard Balmer, Resident Agent Richard C. Hewitt, and out Membership Secretary Marion Hodges Roush."



*The parlor, beautifully restored, passes inspection under a critical gaze.*



## Victorian Holidays Are Ahead

Victorian Open House will be held at Pine Grove on Sunday, December 7 from one to 4 p.m. The very able chairpersons for this event are Mrs. Allan Priestley and Mrs. James Burke, assisted by scores of member volunteers. A great deal of work and planning has gone into this festive event and it's no small skill to pull everything smoothly together.

In the true tradition of Pine Grove's holiday season, hot mulled cider and cookies will be served. Can you imagine a Victorian Open House without them? And, as always, we must rely on our members and friends to provide the cookies. These can be brought into Wisner House as early as December 4 or 5, Thursday or Friday. Wrap them well or place them in tightly covered boxes. And on that enclosed card, there is even a place marked for cookies!

*With this Gazette, you are being sent five tickets of admission. Inflation hasn't struck our prices—who else can make such a statement? It's still only \$1.00 for adults and 50c for children under 18. Tickets will also be available at the door.*

*Return money or unsold tickets to the Wisner House, 405 Oakland Avenue, Pontiac, Michigan 48058 before December 7—there is an addressed envelope for your use. Make checks payable to Lillian Balmer, Treasurer.*

Guides are needed in hour long shifts throughout the afternoon. This is a very gracious way for experienced guides to lend support to the Society. If some time has elapsed since last touring, it is advisable that guides come in to Wisner House for a little review. Things have been changed around. Costumes, of course, are a must on this date. A group of eight Girl Scouts will assist in guiding and will also be our carolers.

Host and hostess servers are needed from 12:30 to 4:30. As always, refreshments will be served in the old one room schoolhouse. In order to insure good planning and scheduling, it is very important that guides and servers send in the enclosed cards as soon as possible.

*The Pot Pourri Shoppe is being polished and restocked in anticipation of the Open House. It's a fun spot to be and if there are volunteers who think this may be the job for them, please let us know. Faithful Mrs. Eleanore Porter has sent us a new supply of mittens, baby sweater sets and cozy bed socks. Nothing could please us more than to*



*Mrs. Richard Wright and Mrs. James Burke, always active in the vital interests of the Society, participate in the Hanging of the Greens.*

*receive such lovely hand-made items.*

The decorations and entertainment in the old Drayton Plains schoolhouse are the special charge of Mrs. Margaret Ann Jackson. This year her tree trimming assistants will be county area students from the Hearing Impaired Classes of Webster School.

This schoolhouse tree will be topped with a doll, a Victorian doll, naturally, in old-fashioned garb. Once upon a different era, it was tradition to so trim a tree, and little girls used to wonder who would be the doll's new owner. Before Victorian Open House comes to a close, this doll will go home with a new owner.

For some time, the Plymouth Group of Pontiac's Congregational Church has been working on a comforter to be given to the Society for a drawing on Dec. 7. Lined with a lamb's wool batt, the comforter is covered in paisley polished cotton in shades of rosy red and green. This, with the old fashion doll, will be given to two lucky members or friends of the Society at 4 o'clock the day of the Victorian Open House. Mrs. William Rachwal is in charge of the tickets for the drawing. She may be contacted at 625-8220. Mary also is planning to make a spot mailing of these tickets to members, with the money to be returned to her. If you wish to purchase tickets for this drawing, call her at the above number. These tickets may be purchased December 7 at Pine Grove in the schoolhouse.

*So—Pine Grove has been readied for another Victorian Open House with costumed guides and Christmas wreaths, cookies and carolers, mittens and mulled cider. And over it all, a variety of musical sounds will echo through the house and grounds of Pine Grove. We hope to see you on Sunday, December 7.*

## Gifts Augment Endowment Fund

In April of this year, a letter went out to the membership from the Development Committee regarding an Endowment Fund. It was established to assure our Society a continuation of funds to maintain Pine Grove, the Governor Moses Wisner estate. The interest only from this new fund was to be used for operating purposes.

The response has not yet reached 100% of membership enrollment. However, the Fund has grown not only because of gifts for the Endowment itself but also through memorials and life memberships.

Since the last Gazette publication in July, the following have contributed.

### Endowment Fund

Rev. Thomson L. Marcero  
Mrs. James D. Burke  
Mrs. C. T. Ekelund  
Mr. & Mrs. W. B. Gregory II  
Mr. & Mrs. Richard J. Wright  
Mr. & Mrs. Courtland Richardson  
Mr. & Mrs. R. B. Coulter  
Mr. & Mrs. David C. Wallace  
Mrs. Iva O'Dell  
Mrs. Cecil Dumbrigue, life membership  
Miss Clara Gaylord, life membership  
Mrs. Clarence Clohset, life membership

*Memorials received for Mrs. Mildred Vining from:*  
Mr. & Mrs. Al Ruprecht  
Dr. & Mrs. John Joyce  
Mr. & Mrs. Earl Partica  
Mr. & Mrs. Ron Day  
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Warren  
Mr. & Mrs. Mark Murvey  
Mr. & Mrs. Lou Phillips  
Real Estate Programs & Services, Inc., Messrs. Dean B. Peterson & Timothy Affolder

*Memorials received for Mr. & Mrs. Harry Botting from:*  
Mrs. Marion Quarton Stecker  
Miss Winifred Quarton  
Mrs. Betty Quarton Hoard

*Memorials received for Miss Jessie Brewer from:*  
Mr. & Mrs. Carl Schmidt  
Marion E. Morse

The above represents contributions received as the Gazette went to press October 29.





*Charles Martinez, in diggers togs, was a working director of the excavation operation.*

## Bicentennial Spurs Barn Rebuilding

The impetus to recreate the barn and/or carriage house at Pine Grove came when the Pontiac Bicentennial Commission adopted the project as one of its goals and set aside funds as a "nest egg."

The plan envisions replacement or rebuilding on the original site of a barn similar to the one torn down in 1961. Appropriate old barns are being sought and favorable responses are being received. Suggestions as to the location of standing barns as near as possible to the site and available for the purpose would be welcomed.

The Pontiac Bicentennial Commission is seeking matching funds and the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society has pledged the proceeds from the Victorian Christmas Open House for the purpose. Proceeds from the Ice Cream Social, gifts from the Pontiac Business and Professional Women's Club and the Pontiac-Oakland Town Hall and from a number of individuals, and a grant from the Lula Wilson Trust have already been put in a special fund. Members may lend financial support through purchase of tickets to the Victorian Open House or by making a contribution designated for the carriage house fund.

Working on the project from the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society are Mrs. Edwin Adler, Miss Faye Donelson, Charles Martinez and LaBar Stewart, Jr., and from the Pontiac Bicentennial Commission Frank Mazza, bicentennial coordinator for the city, and Joseph Neussendorfer, chairman of the Commission.

## Archeological Dig Forerunner To Proposed Barn Replacement

The archeological dig at the barn and/or carriage site at Pine Grove is the forerunner of the move to replace the barn or carriage house torn down in 1961. Under the guidance of Charles Martinez, a member of the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society board of directors and past president of the Michigan Archeological Society, a volunteer work force spent several weeks during the past summer carefully excavating the site.

They located the foundations and a number of artifacts which may help to interpret life at Pine Grove during its century of ownership by the Wisner family. Mr. Martinez is now sorting and classifying the artifacts. An exhibit later will be prepared based on the findings.



*Miss Faye Donelson, center of the group, took an active part in the two weeks of digging on the carriage house site.*

## Bicentennial Quilt In The Planning

The Bicentennial Quilt, to be designed and made by the Quilting Guild, will truly picture Oakland County over the years. Efforts are now underway to obtain representative designs from different communities. These designs must be adaptable to a quilt block. For instance, Orchard Lake Historical and Scenic Society is considering using their logo of a pine tree, arrow and sailboat.

The individual groups may either sew their own block or submit their design to the Guild. Size of the block and position of each will be the decision of the Guild. A design for Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society will, of course, be part of the quilt.

Heading up the project are Mrs. Edna Bondurant and Miss Faye Donelson. This is an important project, and additional quilters are needed. Anyone who knows how to quilt—or wants to learn—may join the Guild. Call Mrs. Bondurant, 682-2291 or Miss Donelson 682-8508, or Connie Lektzian at the Wisner House, 338-6732.

## Bicentennial Sparks Membership Drive

As a personal bicentennial project, members of the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society have been urged to obtain at least one new member each.

The Society, now one hundred and two years old, was an outgrowth of the centennial celebration and was made up of members from all parts of Oakland County. This county-wide membership continues today.

Help us to grow . . . Pass on the enclosed new membership blank.



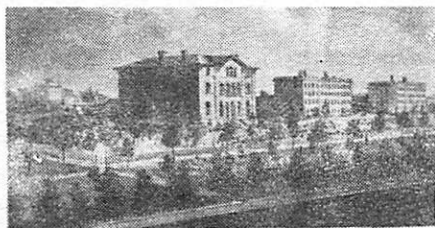
## The Moses Wisner Family 1815 - 1975

Ruth G. Priestley  
Part IV Charles Hascall Wisner  
1850-1915

Charles Hascall Wisner, the eldest child of Moses and Angeolina Hascall Wisner, was born on February 27, 1850 at Pontiac, Michigan. Named for his maternal Grandfather, Charles C. Hascall, he was nicknamed "Chip" and was called that all his life. By the time he was three years old he was a busy, mischievous little boy. On one occasion, his Pa promised him "3 little 3 cent pieces if he will be a good boy and mind his Ma." But there were so many exciting things for a curious little boy to do at Pine Grove.

Early in childhood Chip developed a love for the out-of-doors. Pine Grove was a wonderful playground on which to ride the pony Grandfather Hascall had given him and to play with his pet squirrel he kept in the cage his Pa made for it. There were trees to climb in summer and hills for sledding in winter. Spring brought new-born calves, sheep to be sheared of their woolly coats and ducks swimming in the marsh. Fruits and vegetables filled the root cellar, hams and bacon in the smokehouse, and chickens, eggs and fresh milk provided enough food, even for often unexpected guests. The pantry stored cookies, doughnuts, pies and his mother's prize-winning homemade bread that filled hungry little boys' stomachs. Helping hands were needed from all the family and when Chip was old enough he had to do his share. A baby brother, Frank, was born in September, 1854 and in November, 1856, little curly-haired Jessica completed the family circle.

In the mid-1850's Chip started to school and received all of his early education at the Pontiac Union School. Built about 1850 at Pike and Parke Street, now Wide Track Drive, the two-story brick building had two



Law Department, University of Michigan, about 1870.

classrooms and a recitation room on each floor and a seating capacity for 275. Three additional Union Schools were built in 1865 but Chip attended "Old Union", as it was called.

Political affairs were always topics of conversation in the Wisner household. In 1854, Chip was too young to know that his father was among the leaders in organizing the Republican Party, but he was nearly nine years old when Moses Wisner was elected the second Republican Governor of Michigan in the fall of 1858. Moses took Chip with him to Lansing for the inaugural ceremony on January 1, 1859. Angeolina and the two younger children had remained at home to care for Grandfather Hascall, who was very ill. On a mild winter day in late December, father and son travelled over the muddy roads to the State Capitol. With a population of about 4,000, several stores, workshops, hotels, mills and factories it was a flourishing town. In 1847, when the capitol was moved from Detroit to the more centrally located Lansing Township, in Ingham County, that area was just a wilderness. There was not a street, store, or even a single log cabin. The capitol building was built at once and occupied by the Legislature in 1848. In that simple white frame State House Chip watched his father take his oath of office. It was over very quickly. After a short speech by Ex-Governor Kinsley Bingham, a reply by his father, and congratulations from those assembled to witness the ceremony, they returned to their hotel. Later Moses told Angeolina that Chip behaved just fine but did get his clothes a little dirty.

Chip was old enough now to share in the excitement, the honor and the pride of being a member of the "first family of Michigan." One of the first parties hosted by Moses and Angeolina was held at Pine Grove on Friday evening, March 4, 1859. A large number of guests attended, including Ex-Governor O. D. Richardson, of Omaha, Nebraska, a former Oakland County lawyer, who had gone to the Nebraska Territory in 1854 and had been instrumental in framing that State's Constitution. Another guest was the Hon. Sanford M. Green. In 1845 he was a member of the Michigan State Senate and assisted in the revision of the Michigan Constitution. He was responsible for including in the revision a clause making life imprisonment the extreme penalty for homicide. It became law before most citizens of Michigan were aware of what had



Charles Hascall Wisner

happened. There was a great hue and cry over the new legislation, especially in Detroit, but the law remained, and has ever since. Grandfather Hascall, by then recovered, was there too. Although a life-long Democrat, he was strongly anti-slavery. That bestowed upon him sufficient grace to attend such a biased Republican festivity. The Pontiac Gazette reported that the Governor had "dispensed hospitality with a liberal hand and his amiable and accomplished lady did the honors with grace and dignity" and "few . . . can boast of ever having spent a happier evening." Angeolina always talked of the time when, in the fall of 1858, they were among those who entertained the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, at the Russell House in Detroit.

Another exciting event was when their barn burned on Sunday evening, April 8, 1860. The Legislature was in session so Moses was in Lansing and his half-brother Edward was away at College. It was between 8 and 9 o'clock, and the outdoor chores were finished when suddenly they heard a great commotion, people running from all directions shouting "Fire." Rushing outside they saw the hay barn on the north part of the farm engulfed in flames. They thought immediately of the oxen that had been tied up in the stable earlier. Those first at the flaming barn found the animals outside and the stable doors closed, thus the presumption that the fire was deliberately set, but that the arsonist had enough heart to save the animals.

In 1861, when his term as Governor was over the family settled back into much the same routine as before Moses' first and only political victory. The slavery question was leading to war,

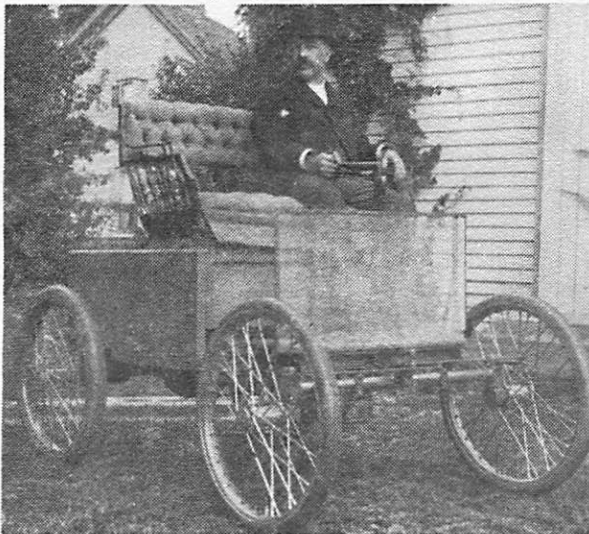
however. Chip saw his father, during every spare moment, reading military tactics and rules of drill and discipline. After war was declared in April, 1861, it became a family affair when on June 19th, Edward enlisted in the 5th Michigan Regiment and went to Virginia to fight in the Peninsula Campaign, in the first attempt to capture Richmond. Moses followed reports of the battles eagerly, hoping the conflict would soon be settled. The war became even more real to Chip when his father was appointed to recruit and train the 22nd Michigan Regiment of Infantry. Pine Grove was only a half-mile from the training camp, yet his Pa ate and slept with the soldiers instead of at home with them. On September 4, 1862 the 22nd Regiment left Pontiac for the battlefields of Kentucky. Chip was sad but proud too, for his father, in his Colonel's uniform, was a fine military figure, one that all

told them, but there was so little water he had "not even enough to wash my face."

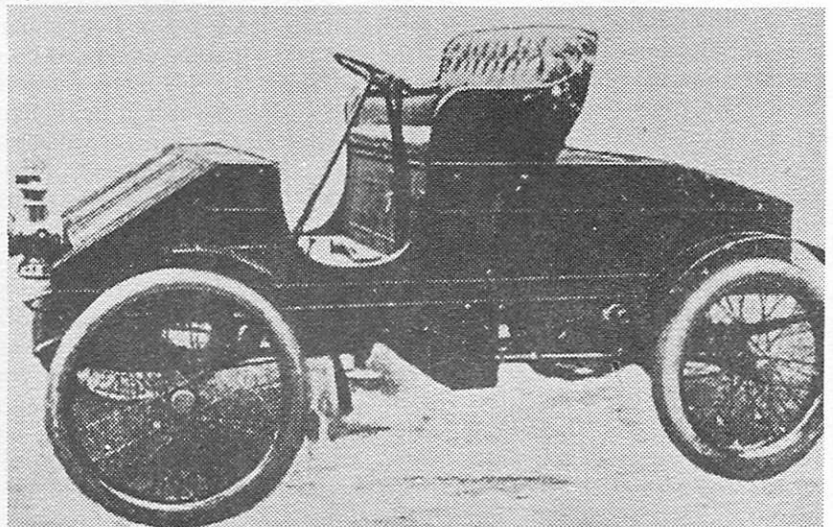
Angeolina had the children's pictures taken and planned to send them to him by Mrs. Lawrence if she returned to camp. They wanted to send him a box of newly harvested apples from their orchard but were told it was most uncertain that he would ever get them. The little family was filled with anxiety and loneliness, but still hoping husband and father would return home before winter set in. Then word came that Moses was ill with typhoid fever and had been moved to a private home at Lexington. December 1st, Angeolina went to be with him, leaving the children at home. Edward was also with his father. The days dragged on, Christmas Day came, and what a lonely day that must have been. On Monday morning, January 5, 1863 a telegram came saying Moses' life was near an

afternoon at one o'clock by Chaplain A. E. Mather, who, before joining the 22nd Regiment, was minister of the First Baptist Church in Pontiac. As the funeral procession made its way to Oak Hill Cemetery, Chip may have seen some of his school mates, for classes had been dismissed at the Old Union School to allow the children to participate in the funeral ceremonies. He was not quite 13 years old when his father died.

Augustus C. Baldwin and Angeolina Wisner were named executors of Moses Wisner's estate. Baldwin, held in high esteem by his associates, was active in the legal, political and civic affairs of Pontiac. When Chip was 17 years old he began reading law with Baldwin. In October, 1869 he entered the University of Michigan Law School. The sole requisite for admission to the two year course was that the applicant be 18 years old and give satisfactory evidence



Charles H. Wisner and his "Buzz-wagon", now recognized as the first automobile built in Flint.



The second Wisner automobile, built in 1902.

*Courtesy: The Flint Journal*

small boys looked upon with admiration.

One of Chip's daily tasks was to go to the post office for the mail. How eagerly they looked for letters from their father and so often were disappointed. Mail to and from the battle areas was very erratic; one was never sure messages or packages would reach their intended destination. Angeolina complained bitterly that while some of the ladies whose husbands were with Moses had received several letters, she had received only the one he had sent by Mrs. Lawrence, when she returned home from the camp in Kentucky. Moses tells her that he has written three letters to her and received only one. One letter he wrote in the woods of Kentucky, using a log for a desk. "I have not been sick a minute except for homesickness," he

end. Another the same afternoon announced his death.

Pine Grove at once became a house of mourning. Family and friends gathered to lend comfort to Angeolina and Edward when they arrived home on Wednesday noon. The casket was placed in the darkened parlor and there the family received those who came to pay their last respects. It was Angeolina's wish that there be no public display. When General Israel B. Richardson had died in November, 1862, his body was placed in the Oakland County Courthouse for public viewing. At that time Angeolina had expressed great dismay at what she termed "being gazed upon by an unfeeling world," and said, "I think there was no solemnity about it." The funeral service was conducted on Friday

of good moral character. The admission fee to the University for Michigan residents was \$10.00, for those out of State \$25.00 and was paid only once. An additional fee of \$10.00 was paid annually for incidental expenses. There were no dormitories. Students obtained room and board in private homes for \$3.00 to \$5.00 per week. In 1870 it was noted that "annual expenses of students for the last 7 years, including clothing and incidentals, have been on the average \$326.00."

On March 29, 1871, one month past his 21st birthday, Chip received the degree of Bachelor of Laws. He went to Flint to practice law rather than in Pontiac. In Flint, the Hascall family's old, established business connections could be helpful and besides it seemed like home to Chip who had spent much



time there as a child.

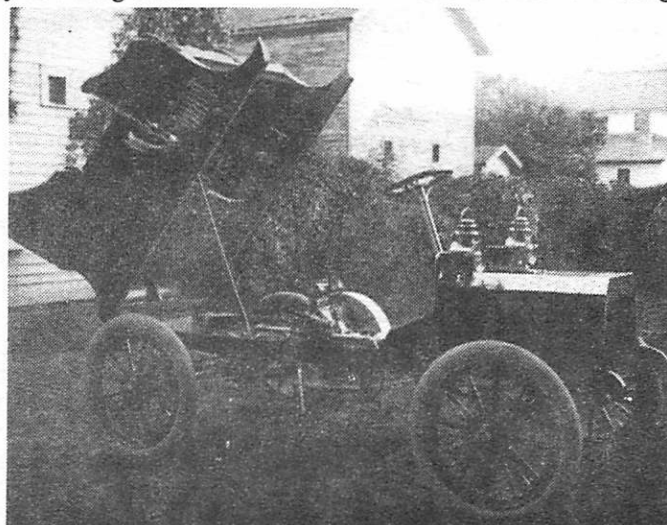
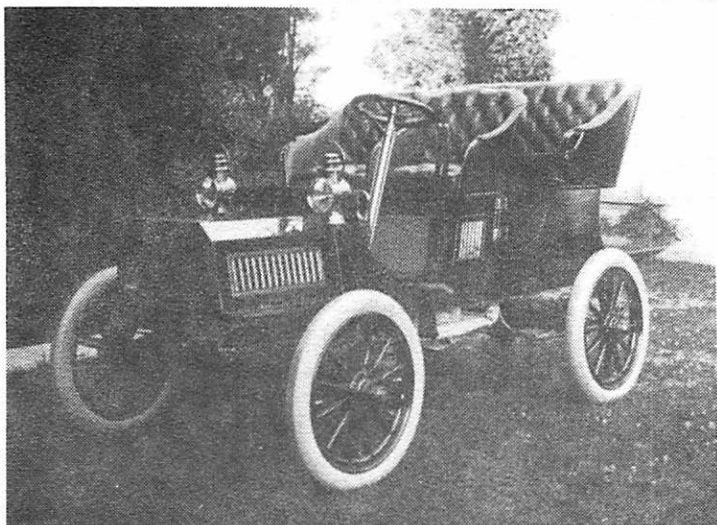
The following year he was married. On Wednesday, April 25, 1872 at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, Charles H. Wisner and Miss Florence H. Culver were married at Pontiac at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Culver, by the Reverend T. J. Joslin. After the ceremony they left on the 5:30 P.M. train for a honeymoon in the East. Florence was born in New York City and she may have wanted to introduce her handsome young husband to friends back home. They built a new home on Harrison Street, a short distance from the Hascall homestead. On September 15th they had just finished moving in when Florence was taken critically ill with a kidney infection and died on September 22, 1872. She was buried in the family plot at Oak Hill Cemetery. Chip, a widower after only five months of marriage, then moved to the Hascall homestead, and

marriage lasted nearly 40 years, and we're told it was a most happy one. All of those years were spent in the home they built when they were first married out on the edge of the city at 516 E. Court Street. Chip owned several large lots on which he built a spacious white frame house, shaded by tall maple trees that lined both sides of the street. This home proved to be more than ample for their needs. Their only child, a son, was born October 15, 1876 and died the same day.

Now well established in his profession, Chip was described as a keen, alert intellectual, - - industrious, painstaking, critical, with a reputation for integrity and a friendly manner that won respect and confidence from all who knew him. In 1880 he was nominated for the office of Prosecuting Attorney by the Republican Party and elected by the largest majority of any man on the ticket, nearly doubling that

Mayor of Flint and was also involved in numerous business and financial interests in that city.

In the fall of 1893, Charles H. Wisner was elected Circuit Judge for the 7th Judicial District to serve a six year term, succeeding Judge William Newton who had held the office for the previous 12 years. Soon after taking over his judicial duties the Shiawassee Bar Association said, "Judge Wisner, by his tact and affable manner, has done much to blot out the unpleasant relations that existed among the members of the Bar and the Circuit Court is not now called the "Circus Court", a name which it was sometimes dubbed under the former administration." He was elected to the Circuit Court four consecutive terms, from 1893 until his death in 1915, a total of 22 years. In one election he was opposed by Hugh McCurdy. The *Flint Globe*, a Republican paper urged its readers to consider the risk of having



*The third and last known car built by Charles H. Wisner.*

Angeolina went to keep house for him.

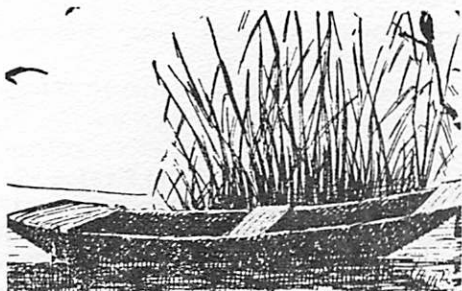
An ambitious young man, he and William O. Axford, a fellow law school graduate, from Rochester, Michigan formed a partnership with offices over 55 Saginaw Street in the center of Flint's business district. They were agents for a number of insurance companies and also notaries public. In 1874 Chip was elected a Justice of the Peace and at the same time was a County Court Commissioner.

Three years after Florence died he married again. On Wednesday morning, the 15th of December, 1875 C. H. Wisner, Esq. and Miss Helena Warren were married at the home of her father, Mr. Thomas Warren. Again, "immediately after the ceremony, the happy pair left for a trip East." This honeymoon had a happier ending, for their

of the presidential candidate, James Garfield. In 1862, he was re-elected, again by a large majority due, it was later declared, to the "popular approval of his official acts . . . and the high esteem by which he is held by his fellow citizens," this, "despite the general demoralization of the party that disastrous year." His father had been Prosecuting Attorney of Lapeer County, his uncle, George Wisner and his cousin Oscar Wisner, and also A. C. Baldwin were all former Prosecuting Attorneys in Oakland County. During this time he had formed a new law firm with Charles H. Johnson. In 1890 he was appointed Director of the Census for Genesee County. After completing that assignment he went into partnership with David D. Aitkens and Edward S. Lee. Aitkens was later a Congressman,

"a man so well equipped for the sacred duties of a Judge, so thoroughly a man in all the relations of life—humiliated by defeat at the hands of a man who is his inferior intellectually, professionally, morally and as a man among men." Generally he had the endorsement of both the Republican and Democratic Parties. It is said that his legal accuracy was such "that in one year, eight of nine cases appealed from his Court to the Michigan Supreme Court were returned with his decisions affirmed."

Judge Wisner had a diversity of interests aside from law and politics. He was also artistically inclined. The Wisner Historic House has a water color which resembles Pine Grove that he painted for his Mother in 1889 and two pastoral scenes in oils done in 1877.



*This sketch drawn by Judge Wisner while hearing witnesses in a divorce case in Wayne Circuit Court.*

He also liked working with wood. Much of his spare time, however, was devoted to mechanics. His father also was much intrigued with new inventions of his day. Moses said of the exhibits at the Buffalo Fair in 1848, "everything from steam sawmills to pincushions" and "one could spend a month there... without seeing half the fine things." He had a furnace installed at Pine Grove before it was the usual means of home heating, but the family said it never worked properly.

In a workshop in the carriage house behind his home, he experimented with mechanical ideas for over 30 years. Before "Ma" Bell was in general use he constructed an inter-office telephone between his law office and that of Long and Gold by simply stretching a string between the two offices and attaching a tin can to each end, thus achieving instant communication but no telephone bill. At his workshop he also owned and operated The Flint Reel Company, advertising that he "Manufactures Fish Reels, Electrical Machines, and Small Machinery."

About 1899 he began work on a horseless carriage. Flint produced carriages in such quantities it was known as the "Vehicle City". To revolutionize transportation, one needed only to invent a substitute for the horse. That idea was already being tried and tested in workshops all over the country. Charles E. and J. Frank Duryea built a gasoline powered automobile in Springfield, Mass. in 1893. Henry Ford completed his "quadricycle" in a shed behind his house in 1896. Charles Wisner too, succeeded in building an engine that would propel his two-seated carriage. Lawrence R. Gustin tells about that automobile in the *Flint Journal*. The "buzz-wagon", as it was called, was a "big, very noisy contraption with a big, heavy one-cylinder motor." Of his car Wisner said, "I built one with an air-cooled engine of my own design. It was not a complete success, especially

in warm weather, but it ran (and will yet) fairly well at moderate engine speed." This car is recognized as the first Flint-built automobile.

The buzz-wagon had its first public showing on September 3, 1900 at the Labor Day Parade. Marching up Saginaw Street, then on to Court Street, passing the Wisner's house, turning there on Lapeer Street and ending at the Fairgrounds, were the Chief Marshal, City Band, Police and Fire Departments and Flint Union Blues. Then came the Chairman, Speaker of the Day and Common Council, riding in carriages, followed by the Wisner automobile and numerous decorated floats. The newspapers declared the day a success—good weather, plenty of music and a large crowd, but said not a word about the Wisner automobile.

Charles Wisner built a second car and still a third. Gustin also quotes what Wisner said about the second car in *The Automobile Review*, January 1, 1903, "My last car has given me absolutely no trouble. I have had it completed about three months and have run it over all kinds of roads in all kinds of weather 895 miles and I have yet to record a single stop that was not desired... I have a coil, plug and carburetor of my own upon which I can absolutely rely... The car is painted dark maroon, with black striping and upholstered in dark leather."

Of the third Wisner car, Lena Wisner proudly writes, "Mr. Wisner is fond of mechanics and made this auto touring car himself. He made three, this is the last one and, of course, the most satisfactory. We enjoy it very much in the summer time. It goes beautifully, is almost never out of repair, is comfortable, holds five nicely, is a beautiful dark bottle green with brass trimmings." Charles Reitebuch lived just around the corner on Lapeer Street and described Wisner as always "tinkering with the carburetor". He often invited neighbors and friends to go for a ride. Reitebuch also told that the buzz-wagon stalled out in the Labor Day Parade. Wisner appears to have been hopeful of manufacturing the "Wisner." Not succeeding, he bought a Buick, then turned his attention to yet another interest.

He designed and supervised the building of a new Genesee County Courthouse. The Golden Jubilee of Flint (1885-1905) was held June 6, 7 and 8, 1905 and the city took this occasion to dedicate the Courthouse, along with several other new public buildings. Judge Wisner was general chairman for

that celebration and to him was also given the honor of making the dedicatory address for the Courthouse. He supervised the building of Flint's Masonic Temple in 1909 and during this same period built a second house on his property. Dr. and Mrs. Hazen S. Atkins lived in it for 25 years. Dr. Atkins, a veterinarian, used the carriage house for an animal hospital. "It was a beautiful house. Mr. Wisner used the very best materials," the Atkins told me, yet the Wisners remained in their old white frame house.

Although suffering with Bright's Disease, Judge Wisner continued in his judicial capacity until he died on July 6, 1915. He was 65 years old. A large gathering of friends and associates attended the funeral and accompanied his body to Oak Hill Cemetery for burial in the Wisner family plot, yet his only immediate survivors were his wife, Lena, a niece, Florence Wallace and her son David Wallace, and his half-brother Edward M. Wisner. Neither Charles nor Edward, who died in 1919, had children, and with their deaths, there were no make descendants to carry on the Moses Wisner family name. His younger brother Frank had died when he was 13 years old.

Lena lived in their home for another 10 years, until June 1, 1925 when she died at 79 years of age. She was buried at Glenwood Cemetery in Flint. By now the quiet tree-lined residential street was changing. In 1925, E. J. Cross and Son had a grocery across the street. By 1927 there was also a hardware store and the Great A. & P. Tea Company. Gertrude E. Germain, a nurse, and Clara A. Germain, a domestic, were now living in the Wisner house. Finally, by 1934, that block of Court Street had only commercial buildings and today the whole area is occupied by the I-475 Expressway.

The Wisner carriage house-workshop has been moved to Crossroads Village, a 19th century community, being reconstructed in the Genesee Recreation Area, north of Flint. It has been preserved as a symbol of America's transition from the agricultural age to today's industrial age, where dreams turned into reality and in turn produced the industrial giants of today.

Charles H. Wisner never became an industrial giant, yet time and time again, he was acclaimed a giant among men.

All source materials will be acknowledged in the next and final issue of "The Wisner Family".



# OAKLAND



# GAZETTE.

Vol. XMAS

A Special Issue Published by Don & Betty Adams  
to commemorate the Bicentennial of our country

December 1975

## An Invitation To Join The Oakland County Pioneer & Historical Society And To Attend The Annual Victorian Christmas Open House

**Sunday**  
**December 7, 1975**  
**1 p.m. to 4 p.m.**

*At Pine Grove*  
*405 Oakland Ave.*  
*Pontiac*

A little over one hundred years ago a group of residents of Oakland County from all walks of life joined together to found the Oakland County Pioneer Society in preparation for the celebration of the country's centennial. This society, made up of members from all sections of the county, still carries on with a slightly different name and with headquarters at the county seat—the Governor Moses Wisner Historic House called Pine Grove.

This year, in celebration of the Bicentennial, we are sending special greetings to our friends, an invitation to attend the Victorian Open House on December 7, 1975 (admission \$1.00), and a special request that you join the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society at this time when we are all turning attention to our heritage.

May you have a happy Christmas and a 1976 filled with occasions to express appreciation for the privilege of being a citizen of this great country.

Don and Betty Adams

