

February 1985

Dear Friends,

We have been fortunate in having members, such as yourself, who are interested in the furtherance of our Society. However, to remain viable and continue to progress, we need to add new members.

At a recent meeting of the Membership Committee, it was suggested that if each of us would provide a list of 2-3-5 or more names of persons you thought might or should be interested in joining, we would write and invite them. As the donor of names and address you may remain anonymous and we will take it from there.

Please fill in the spaces provided below with your list, and enclose it in the envelope to the Membership Chairman, Marion Roush. Thank you.

Membership Committee

Name _____
Address _____
City/State/Zip _____
Phone _____

Name _____
Address _____
City/State/Zip _____
Phone _____

Name _____
Address _____
City/State/Zip _____
Phone _____



PINE GROVE

405 Oakland Avenue, Pontiac, Oakland County

Pine Grove was the estate of one of Michigan's pre-Civil War governors, Moses Wisner. Wisner, a native of New York, moved to Michigan in 1837 and purchased a farm in Lapeer County. He soon gave up farming and moved near Pontiac in 1844 to study law. An anti-slavery Whig, he became interested in politics and attended the first convention of the Republican party at Jackson in 1854. He was elected governor four years later. Upon the outbreak of the Civil War, Wisner raised an infantry regiment that eventually fought at the Battle of Chickamauga, but he died of typhoid fever in Kentucky in 1863 before the famous battle took place.

The Wisner residence which dominates the grounds of Pine Grove was built in 1845 in the Greek Revival basilica style. It features a two-story main section and a single-story side wing with a colonnade of fluted Doric columns. Wisner redecorated the house when he became governor and conducted much of the state's business here. Today the interior is completely furnished, using some of the Wisner family possessions. In addition to the house, Pine Grove has a root cellar, smoke house, and a school, all illustrating aspects of nineteenth-century rural life.

After Moses Wisner's death, his wife Angeolina maintained the residence until she died in 1905. It remained in the family until 1945 when it was sold to the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society for use as a house museum.

Michigan History Division
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Richard H. Austin, Secretary of State



Visitors are welcome to Pine Grove, the Governor Moses Wisner Historic House and headquarters for the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society. The buildings and grounds are open for drop-in visits by families and individuals during July and August on Tuesdays through Fridays starting at 1:00 with the last tour leaving at 2:30. Group tours, by reservation at least two weeks in advance, may be arranged from April through mid-December. Tours may also be arranged for the week following the Society's Victorian Christmas Open House, generally the second Sunday of December. There is an admission charge for non-members.

K-12 grade students and Senior Citizens...\$1.00
Other Adults...\$2.00

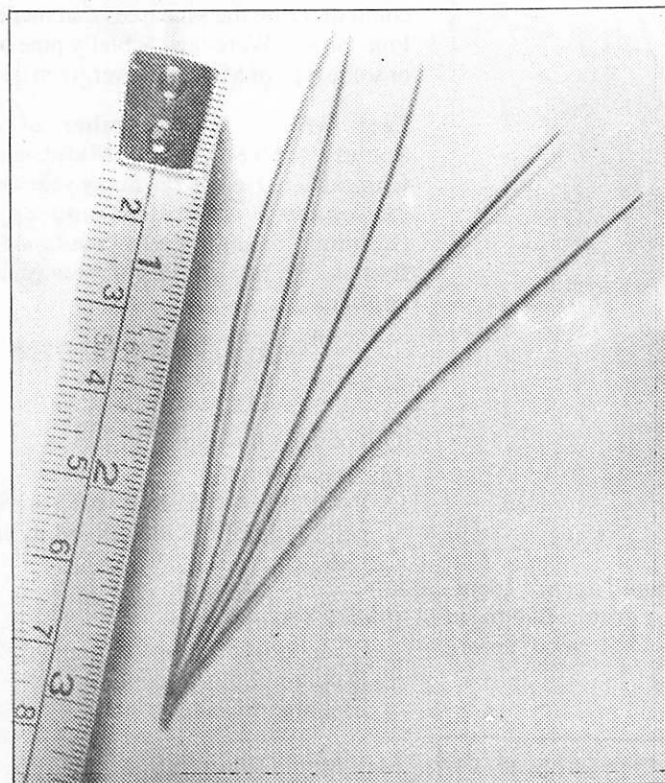


Trees at Pine Grove

by Jack Moore

The stately white pine is the official Michigan tree. Unfortunately, we do not have a mature white pine on the Governor Moses Wisner property. We have a goodly number of young white pines growing west of the schoolhouse along the southern fence area. The white pine needs a shaded area when it is growing and in later years will take off and become the dominant tree reaching towards the sky. Usually it prefers a light sandy soil. This tree is quite brittle when it is young and suffers seriously from heavy wet snow or ice on its branches. Quite often, the top will be broken off but it will bravely send out a new leader and in later years will show just a slight deformity in the main trunk. Key identification is five needles in a group approximately three inches long, soft touch at the ends of the needles. It is classified as "Pinus strobus." The latest addition to our young white pines is the Allen E. Priestley memorial white pine. This tree is perfectly shaped and is planted approximately half way from Oakland Ave. to the southern entrance to the Wisner home on the east side of the main drive.

There is a very large tree growing between the schoolhouse and the main drive. This tree is identified as a Norway Spruce "Picea abies." Originally brought over from Central Europe the



WHITE PINE, "Pinus Strobus," identified by the five needles in a group, approximately three inches in length, soft to touch at the ends.



White Pine, given in memory of Allen E. Priestley, by members of the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society, in 1984.

tree has become very popular in this country. Identifiable features are many of the smaller branches seem to hang in pendants; the needles are longer than the white or Colorado blue spruce; the cones are larger and do not project at right angles from the branches as on our native spruce trees. This tree produces excellent lumber, primarily used in construction materials.

From the historical notes, Moses Wisner wrote that he had planted a "spruce tree" in the orchard April 15, 1852. This would be on the north side of the Wisner property in the area of the present Wisner School. Later notes state that the top of this spruce tree was blown off during a heavy windstorm. This could have been the parent tree for the Norway Spruce that is presently located on the east side of our schoolhouse. My feeling is when Mr. Wisner wrote that he had planted a spruce tree that this was something special. Chances are that there were no other spruce trees in this area.

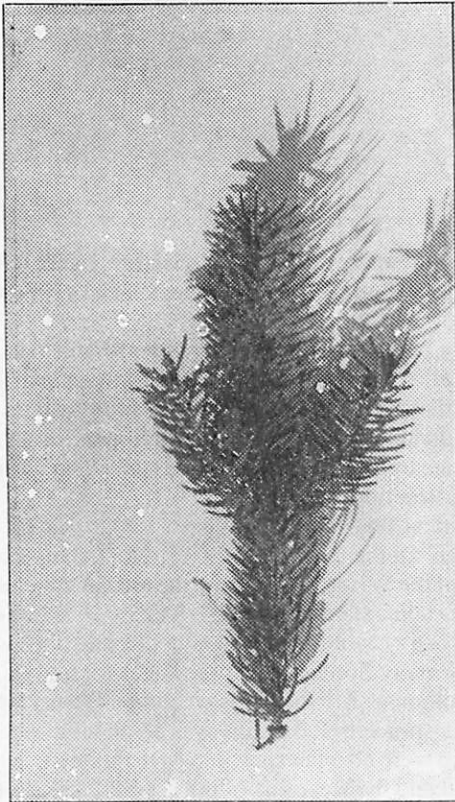
At the north end and the west side of the schoolhouse are two very large trees. There is a good number of feet between the ground and the first set of branches and this type of tree makes a lumber man happy due to the fact the trunk will produce lumber that is relatively knot-free. Although these trees are very similar to our native Red Pine these trees are Black Pines, "Pinus nigra." Common name for the tree is Austrian pine imported many years ago from Europe.

It would be very interesting to know how Mr. Wisner obtained these trees in as much as he was very much interested in the state of Michigan. Key identification, the needles are two to a group, five to six inches long, the needles on the black pine will bend before they will break but the red pine needles will break in two. There is a little more curve at the lower part of the black pine needle and the bark on the tree has a grayish color not red like the Red pine tree. Bark on the branches is quite black. Basically we are a little south of the natural range of the Red pine as shown in the U.S. Forestry Silvics manual.

The constant reference to large number of pine trees on the Wisner property is puzzling. What has happened to these trees? There is one reference that states a severe windstorm blew down twenty-five trees between the main house and what is now the Wisner school.

Also in reading the historical notes, we see reference to cedar trees but I have not been able to find a cedar on the property. Another historical note states that a certain time the Horse Chestnut tree was in blossom. Where did it go?

In the historical notes I have not found any reference to Mulberry trees yet we have some excellent large trees just west of

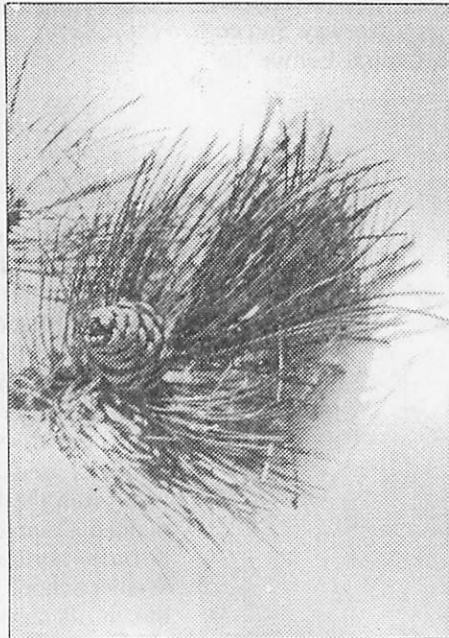


NORWAY SPRUCE, "Picea Abies." The small branches hang as pendants, needles longer than White or Colorado blue spruce, larger cones that do not project at right angles as our native spruce trees.



The giant Norway Spruce and two Black Pines along the front drive at Pine Grove.

the root cellar. Toward the southwest corner are wild cherry or pin cherry trees. An oak tree stands on the north side of the ramp going into the carriage house. Apparently this tree has been badly abused from the fires that have occurred in the barn and carriage house.



BLACK PINE, "Pinus Nigra." Identified by 2 needles to a group, five to six inches long, needles will bend before they break.

Memorial gifts for restoration of the original landscaping at Pine Grove are welcomed by the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society.

At the west side of the summer kitchen are several Box Elder trees, considered to be worthless trees they are fast growing and provide some shade in this area.

In the northeast section of the property are several apple trees. These could be a carry-over from the first orchard that was once on the north side of the house. Near the porch and driveway is a delightful old-fashioned crabapple tree.

I would like very much if someone could describe the pine trees that made up Pine Grove. Were they actually pine trees or some type of Michigan evergreen trees?

Jack Moore is a member of our Society's Ground and Maintenance Committee. He has for many years been an amateur naturalist, and enjoys camping, fishing, and all outdoor activities. He is also an amateur photographer.

New Acquisitions in Library

Gift of the following:

Mr. Joe K. Russell

Booklet: **Our Family in America**, genealogy of the Russell family in the U.S., by Joe Keith Russell.

Fred G. Chamberlain

Scrapbooks: Newspaper clippings from Oakland County collected by Mabel Linderman Chamberlain, c. 1925-36.

Mrs. Mary Dana Rentfrau

Photographs: Thirty-one photographs of Oakland County residents, donated in honor of her mother, Mae Hitchcock McCallum.

Wisner House Featured in Documentary

The Wisner Historic House will be featured in a documentary for cable television to be aired in February on Channel 3.

The documentary, "The Underground Railroad," shows how the elaborate escape network, which was organized by Michigan whites, helped slaves flee from southern states to Canada where they obtained citizenship papers and became free men.

Pontiac's Willie Payne is hosting the documentary and chose to use several rooms in the Wisner House because he said original furnishings in the home dates back to the 1800's and sets the mood.

Editor's note: There is no present evidence to indicate that the Wisner House was in any way a part of the Underground Railroad movement.

Calendar of Events

February 20 - 9:30 a.m. Board of Directors Meeting. Program by Oral History Committee, demonstrating the techniques used in making Oral Histories.

March 20 - 9:30 a.m. Board of Directors Meeting. Program: New slide presentation of buildings and grounds at Pine Grove.

April 5 - Closed for Good Friday

April 17 - 9:30 a.m. Board of Directors Meeting

Crafters Keep Busy

The Craft Committee is keeping busy during these winter months making hand-crafted articles to re-stock the Potpourri Shoppe in preparation for the Spring opening.

Anyone wanting to join this fun group, just bring ideas, a little talent and a sack lunch to the Carriage House at 9:00 A.M. on the following days:

February 13th and 27th; March 6th, 13th and 27th; April 3rd, 10th and 24th.

Need and Dreams List

A donation of any of these items will be greatly appreciated:

Carriage House: Standing blackboard

Library: City directories and phone books, photographs of places in Oakland County

House: Candlesticks and oil lamps, handmade rugs

Dining Room: Emerald colored glass pieces, banquet cloth, 19th century matched water goblets.

If you wish, you may also take a charitable tax deduction for such gifts.

Annual Dinner

The 111th Annual Dinner of the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society will be held on May 15, 1985 at the Main Event of the Silverdome beginning at 6:00 p.m.

According to General Chairman, Rosamond Haerberle, the program will be a Meadow Book Theatre Trunk Showing of Period Costumes, dating from the days of the Greeks through Modern Days.

This promises to be a most entertaining social event for our members and guests, so plan to attend and mark the date on your calendar now.

Victorian Christmas - 1984 Very Successful

Camilla Liggett was the lucky winner of the beautiful blue and white cross-stitch quilt that was raffled off during the Victorian Christmas Festivities.

The Open House and week of tours following were very successful and to our many dedicated volunteers who worked countless hours during this holiday celebration, we thank you.

Oil Painting Restoration Completed

When the Governor Moses Wisner Home was purchased in 1945, many of the original family furnishings were given to our Society by the granddaughter, Florence Clark Wallace. Among the items were eight oil paintings that had hung in the parlor. Down through the years they had become dirty and dull and many pieces had fallen off the gilded picture frames.

During the past two years all of these paintings have been restored and are again hanging in the parlor. The total cost for

County Historic Sites

The following Oakland County historic sites have recently been listed in the State Register of Historic Places:

Seymour Lake Methodist Episcopal Church of Oxford, Michigan Bass Hatchery in Drayton Plains, Fractional School District No. 10 Schoolhouse in Troy, Stephen Jennings House in Farmington Hills, Eber Durham House in Farmington Hills.

In Commerce Township the Commerce Roller Mill has been listed in the State Register as an official Historic Site.

The Grinnell Brothers Music Store in Pontiac has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Shoppe Items Available

Although the Poppourri Shoppe is closed until April 1st, such items as our delicious Bean Soup Mix and Dilly Dip are still available at our office.



WOMAN WITH TURBAN - One of the eight oil paintings from the Wisner parlor before restoration.

Organization of Oakland County

1819-1820

The first official Act relating to the organization of the County of Oakland, of which there is any record, is an executive proclamation by the Hon. Lewis Cass, Governor of the Michigan Territory, dated January 12, 1819, setting aside certain lands from Wayne and Macomb Counties to be included within the boundaries of Oakland County.

The following year, on the 28th of March, 1820, Governor Cass issued a proclamation establishing Pontiac as the county seat for Oakland County.

In 1820 the population of Oakland County was 330.

Terrible Murder in New County

Possibly the first murder of a white person in the newly organized Oakland County was that of Polly Utter and her small daughter, Cynthia Ann.

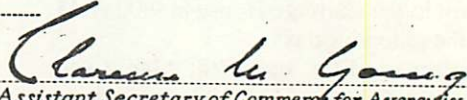
Mr. and Mrs. John Utter had come with their family and settled along the Saginaw Road in Section 14 of Bloomfield Township about 1824. On the evening of Monday, April 6, 1825, an insane man, Imri Fish, also of Bloomfield Township, killed both Mrs. Utter and her daughter with an axe. The murderer was immediately put in the jail at Pontiac, where he remained until his death in 1830.

Keeping Warm in Days Gone By

Before the advent of automobiles with comfortable heaters, earlier day winter travelers, riding in their open buggies and sleighs, used other means to protect them from the bitter cold.

Dressed in plenty of warm clothes, with heated stones or bricks to warm their feet, they then wrapped themselves in wool blankets or covers from the tanned hides of animals, made from cows, horses, bears, buffaloes, etc.

On the horse-drawn cutter in our Barn Museum is such a cowhide cover. This recent addition to our museum collection is a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Adler and is the tanned hide of the prize-winning cow from the 1983 Oakland County 4-H Club Fair.

Form No. AB-98	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AERONAUTICS BRANCH	Official No. 000001
Rating Certificate AIRPORT FOR LANDPLANES		
This certifies that the <u>PONTIAC MUNICIPAL</u> Airport,		
located at City of <u>PONTIAC</u>		
County of <u>OAKLAND</u> State of <u>MICHIGAN</u>		
at latitude <u>42° 38' 50"</u> , longitude <u>83° 24' 15"</u>		
and at an elevation of <u>970</u> feet above sea level,		
owned by <u>CITY OF PONTIAC</u>		
operated by <u>CITY OF PONTIAC</u>		
has been granted the rating of <u>A-1-A</u>		
Requirements of Airport Rating Regulations waived as follows:		
<u>NONE</u>		
Dated <u>February 11, 1930.</u>		
 Clarence H. Goring Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Aeronautics. <small>U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1928</small>		

The Pontiac Municipal Airport, now Oakland-Pontiac Airport, was the first airport in the United States to be given a rating of A-1-A by the Aeronautics Branch of the Department of Commerce.

First Black Woman to Own Land in Oakland County

The first black woman to own land in Oakland County was Lizette Denison. She escaped to Canada, with her parents, through the Underground Railroad, and in 1816 returned to the Michigan Territory a freed person.

On April 21, 1825, Stephen Mack, a member of the Pontiac Company, and his wife, Temperance Mack, gave to her quit-claim deeds to four lots, amounting to about 48 acres, located near the present Oak Hill Cemetery, in Pontiac.