

## PLANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

By Charles Martinez

A series of planks found some seven feet below ground in the median of Grand River Avenue near Botsford Inn have historians and archaeologists puzzling over their purpose. A construction crew working on a sanitary sewer in the area made the discovery last year. Various historical groups and museums were contacted at the time and offered samples of the wood. This Society quickly accepted, visited the site, and subsequently filed a site report with John Halsey, State Archaeologist, in Lansing. As a result a State site number has been accorded the location.

Jean Fox, noted Farmington historian, believes the wooden feature may represent a portion of a corduroy road, one of the first improvements made during pioneer times to the surface of old Indian trails. The Grand River road was a segment of such a native American pathway, that led from Detroit across the Lower Peninsula ultimately to Lake Michigan. Because these trails were often heavily shaded by timber stands, water tended to collect and in time became mud holes. Settlers or military contractors dumped brush and logs into these spots and the term "corduroy" road was born.

A later advancement and another explanation for the presence of the wood at the site was the "plank" road. It was composed of boards from eight to 16 feet in length laid across and nailed to sills or "stringers" that ran parallel to the direction of the road.

Plank roads were constructed by private companies who were regulated by the Michigan legislature after the passage of the Plank Road Act of 1848. Tolls, which were collected at various locations along the route

to help pay the company's stockholders, were also standardized by the State. After a few years plank roads needed constant attention. Repairs were often accomplished through the liberal application of gravel.

By the turn of the century few plank roads were still in use. One was the Detroit-Howell Road completed in 1851 which ran past Botsford Inn. From 1900 to 1930 the Detroit United Railway line vied with the auto and truck in carrying passengers and products along Grand River Avenue.

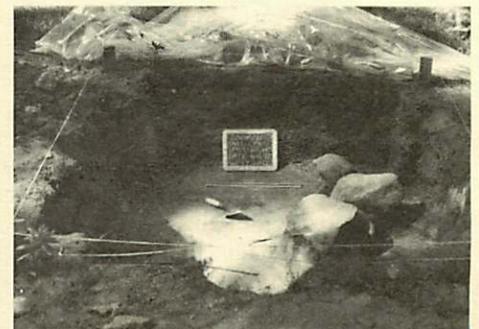
Although seven feet would seem a considerable depth for such a find, archaeologists believe the many grading operations, road repair projects, and the creation of the median strip helped mound up soil over the timbers. A spike associated with the DUR line was also retrieved by the Society field crew. The sample beam obtained from the site together with an appropriate plaque are being prepared for display in the Carriage House Museum at the Wisner House complex.



GM Job Bank assistants Mario Cordova (L) and Dan Guy hold a section of a "stringer" from the old Grand River plank road which was found near Botsford Inn in Farmington Hills. The specimen will go on display shortly at Pine Grove.

## Digging The Past At Pine Grove

The sound of the pick and shovel are heard in the land again as Pine Grove is visited by archaeologists. The "dig", which is to continue for most of the summer including the date for the Ice Cream Social, began near the Carriage House in June. There the field team sharpened their skills before attempting an investigation near the rear of the office area and the former well site west of the Summer Kitchen. As we go to press a series of test units and a small trench have been laid out south of the office area. There the foundations to the former Wisner greenhouse have been located. Quantities of flat glass from its roof and sides, together with animal bone and ceramic shards have been retrieved. It is hoped this on-going archaeological dig will be a point of interest at our Ice Cream Social. The aim is to recover material culture evidence that will help date the oldest portion of the mansion. The archaeological field team is composed of: Cheryl Grinnell, Mike Dennis, Dan Guy, and Mario Cordova under the direction of Charlie Martinez.



The first excavation unit for the 1992 field season at Pine Grove was laid out south of the Carriage House in June. Numerous artifacts from a twentieth century trash dump have been recovered here.

## Book Review F.Y.I.

(Wisner Library)

### MICHIGAN PLACE NAMES: The History of the Founding and the Naming of More Than Five Thousand Past and Present Michigan Communities

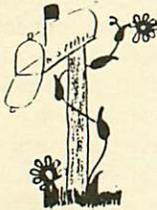
By Romig

This book serves as a key that unlocks the romantic story of Michigan's geographical origins. Like a gigantic patchwork quilt, bits of Michigan's colorful heritage adorn the road sides across the state. Community names preserve the stories of Indian Chiefs, famous statesmen, pioneer settlers, ethnic groups, world events, far-off battlefields, and half forgotten historical episodes.

Author Romig spent a decade researching printed sources, archives, historical collections, historical societies, and interviewing knowledgeable authorities in order to compile concise histories of more than 5,000 present as well as defunct Michigan communities. This publication is an indispensable research tool for those who seek such information and is one of the most sought after references in our Wisner Library.

Pauline Harrison

MAIL



Dear Pauline,

Thank you all at Wisner for making our afternoon so interesting and enjoyable. It was evident that a lot of time and effort was put into the Clothing Program and the Tours.

Much interest has been sparked in the Museum and I am sure we shall be visiting again in the near future. I am writing you because I promised pictures of our afternoon there. I am enclosing a check voted upon by the club for the Museum to be used as the staff sees fit. A small token of appreciation for an enlightening experience.

One picture shows you one of our members wearing the "mourning" hat and a picture of your sign at the display. Also, I have one picture of our members in old hats that is so awful I'm holding it for "Blackmail!"

Hope to see you all again soon.

*Sincerely,*

Evelyn Bratton

President,

Birmingham Estates Garden Club

## WISNER LIBRARY ACQUISITIONS

Oakland County Atlas - Real Estate Plat Map (1974)

City of Pontiac - Plat Map (1984)

From George to George: 200 Years of Presidential Quotations

The History of the Republican Party - Beryl Frank

Indian Names in Michigan - Virgil Vogel

The Story of Detroit - George B. Catlin

Oakland County, Oak Hill Cemetery 1822-1961

Modern Masters of Photography - Edited by Heyworth Camp

## ACCESSIONS

Our appreciation to all donors:

**Rex Lamoreaux** - Plat Book Lapeer County, circa 1932

**Charlotte Maybee** - Oil lamp, circa 1860

**Mrs. Noyce Strait** - Scrap Book, Pontiac City Centennial, circa 1961

**Ted Spekar** - Book, Michigan Women in the Civil War

**Birmingham Estates Garden Club** - Birmingham Estates descriptions with pictures

**John Cameron** (Oakland University) - Pontiac bottle collection, campaign buttons, and badges

**Marion Roush** - Nurse-type cap, circa 1950; Red Cross Aide uniform, circa WWII; Fur pieces

**Virginia Clohset** - Book The Legacy of Albert Kahn, circa 1987

**Beverly Tylman** - Slides, City of Pontiac Centennial, circa 1961 (31)

## MONETARY DONATIONS

- A substantial donation was sent in by the "Retired School Personnel" group from the Pontiac area. This consideration is greatly appreciated by our Society.
- Our thanks to Faye Donelson for her generous donation to our New Library Fund.

## MEMBERSHIP

We welcome our new members:

Steven Darling

Mayme Rinker

Jane Windeler

Alice Osmun

Mr. F.A. Cavataio

Howard and Patricia Cate

Leon B. Storm

## MEMORIAM

We are saddened to report the death of the following:

Mrs. William Gordon

Miss Elizabeth Halsey

Mrs. Edith Stark

Mrs. Edna Burke - A long-time active member of our Crafters Group

Gertrude Overton

Marjorie Ruslander

## QUOTABLE...

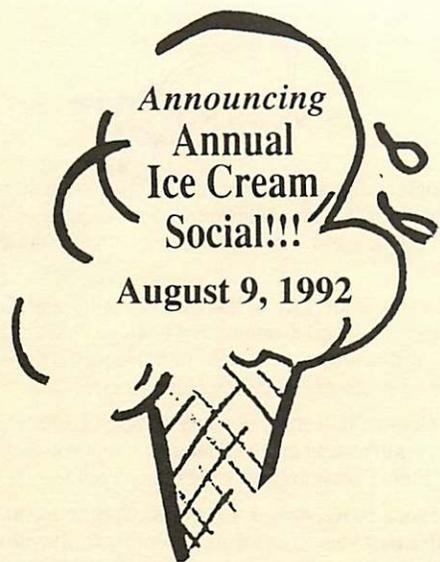
*Happiness is not something earned, it is a by-product of an attitude - an attitude that reaches out to give, not to receive; to serve, not to be served; to care, not to be cared for.*

- C. Neil Strait



Modeling Hat Collection  
Pauline Harrison (L) Evelyn Bratton (R)  
Garden Club President

Member with Mourning Hat



## ICE CREAM SOCIAL TIME... *Historically Speaking*

Date... July, 1980

As seen in the *Oakland Gazette*

Special feature of the 1980 Ice Cream Social will be the dedication at 3:30 p.m. of the Carriage House being reconstructed through the support of the City of Pontiac and Oakland County. Speakers for the dedication will be Mrs. Donald E. Adams, Oakland County Executive Daniel T. Murphy, Pontiac Mayor Wallace E. Holland, and Mrs. Edwin Adler. The original Carriage House, built in 1870 and its modern look-alike, which is nearly completed, will be dedicated during the Ice Cream Social on July 27th.

Gazette Editor - 1980  
Paula Stofer

## From the Archives at Wisner House ... Part I

### Early Beginnings of Our Society

Buried deep in a box of manuscript material stored in the loft above the library/office complex, mute evidence in the form of a key was found which would seem to confirm the early Society records relating to its history and developing ties with Oakland County government.

Manuscript notes on the box into which the Probate Court documents had been placed indicate that they had been given to the Society about 1960 and had come from the attic of the 1904 Court House, now down. Within an envelope which was soiled, stained, covered with layers of cinders and coal dust and printed with the return address of "Probate Court Pontiac, Michigan" was found a small key. The envelope was labeled "Ezra Jewell Key."

To understand who Ezra Jewell was and his influence on the Society, it is necessary to review the Society beginnings. The pre-organizational period of the Society began on January 6, 1874 with a published newspaper notice inviting all those pioneers in Oakland County to attend a meeting to be held on January 21, 1874 at the Court House to help in forming a county historical society.

The Organizational Meeting was held the following January 21st. The very first meeting of the new Society was held on February 27, 1874. The early published accounts of the Society meetings had been mounted in scrapbooks, the first of which was titled *Oakland County Pioneer Clippings 1873-1876, Vol. I*. Inside the front cover was the notation, "This book was indexed by the secretary in March 1900 by E.W. Jewell, Sec."

Submitted by  
Virginia Clohsett,  
Manuscript Chairperson  
OCPHS

Part II will appear in the next issue of the *Oakland Gazette*.

## A Larger Reality

By Paul Gagnon

The value of history – that is, of our knowing and understanding as much of it as we can – may be summed up in three phrases: it matures us; it heartens us; it sets us free. How do we grow in maturity, to understand the human condition and ourselves? First, of course, by direct personal experience – in the family, in school, on the street, at work and play, from our own joy and pain. But second, we grow by extending our experiences. Through history, biography, memoirs, imaginative literature, we can know, to some extent, what it meant to be a slave, or fight the battle of Verdun, or work the coal mines, or endure the Holocaust. We can enter a larger reality, place ourselves in time, compare ourselves with others. Indeed we may come to understand what "otherness" – a prime fruit of maturity – means.

The wider experience of history is not always cheerful. But neither will it justify despair. We come to understand what no other study makes so clear: the reality of both tragedy and comedy, of paradox, and of the beauty of work well done, of daily acts of human nurture. We observe how hard it has always been to build and keep civilization, or to better human life. But we also observe that these have nonetheless been done by brave people in the past. While history denies us the easy comforts of optimism and pessimism, it gives heartening proof that effort is not always in vain.

The study of history, more than any other discipline, frees us to choose for ourselves the paths we wish to take as citizens and as private persons. The dignity of free choice can arise only out of knowing the alternatives possible in public and private life, that immense range of approaches people have taken to order their political, economic, and social lives, to pursue personal integrity, creativity, and private happiness. Without historical memory, we are amnesiacs, prisoners of our immediate *milieu*, ignorant of the possibilities for liberation that the past reveals. The first aim of education in a democracy is to confer upon as many people as possible the power to freely choose for themselves. The study of history is the precondition to that power, and to our free search for the larger means of human history and life.

Paul Gagnon is Executive Secretary of the National Council for History

## Wisner House Librarian Honored

Lillian Paull was named to the Governor's Honor Roll for outstanding contributions as a volunteer librarian in Southeastern Michigan. The Governor's Honor Roll was created by the Junior League of Birmingham and supported by the United Community Services.

The Oakland County Historical Society also honored Mrs. Paull by awarding her with a "Certificate of Appreciation" for devoted and valuable services rendered for the years 1976-1992, it was signed by Rosamond Haerberle, President, and Charles Martinez, Operations Manager.

These awards were presented at the Society's May Board Meeting. A luncheon in her honor followed at the Carriage House, beautifully prepared and hosted by the Society's Crafters Group, and much enjoyed by all!



Lillian Paull

# PROFILES...From our Members

## PROFILES: MR. & MRS. DANIEL FOXMAN

### BIRTHPLACE:

**Miriam** - New Bedford, Mass.

**Daniel** - Cleveland, Ohio

PRESENT HOME: Keego Harbor, MI

### CAREER:

**Miriam** - Teacher

**Daniel** - Optometrist

### MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE:

**Miriam** - Volunteer in Israel

**Daniel** - Volunteer with Israeli Army

### FAVORITE BOOK, MOVIE, TV PROGRAM:

**Miriam** - Thornbirds, Yentl, Matlock

**Daniel** - Public TV

### HOBBY:

**Miriam** - Knitting

**Daniel** - Civil War Data research, and fishing

### SATISFYING ASPECT OF OAKLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY:

**Miriam** - Tour Guiding, History Lady

**Daniel** - Chauffeuring Miriam for her Tour Guiding and History Lady assignments

### HISTORICAL INTERESTS:

**Miriam** - History of education in the U.S.

**Daniel** - Civil War and World War II

### PHILOSOPHY:

**Miriam** - Honor everyone's right to their own beliefs

**Daniel** - Always treat others with respect and kindness.



Left to right: Miriam, Israeli leader, and Daniel on "duty" in Israel.

## Excerpts from the Oral History Collections...

Connie L. Scafe, Chairperson, Oral History Committee

## A NEW CAREER FOR WOMEN - 1907

Cora Parker Harrington born in 1889, was raised in Cass City, Michigan on the farm of her adoptive parents, the Matt Parker's. After attending high school she searched about for a way to make a living and heard of job opportunities at a place called Eastern Michigan Asylum.

From the time it was established in 1878, this special hospital stayed filled to capacity. There was an ongoing need for good workers. Headed by Dr. E.A. Christian, the hospital was the first of its kind to have a training program for attendants.

An interview was arranged and Cora set off for Pontiac. The test she took was designed to determine intelligence, stability and working habits. She was accepted to become one of several hundred workers.

Her first job was to make her own uniforms. Blue and white striped cotton for ankle dresses, and white linen for the aprons. She not only made the outfit, she also bought the fabric. Cora began a three year program in training similar to today's practical nursing courses. Classes met once a week, and she was given a ward of about twenty patients who had daily visits by a house doctor. The work began at 7 a.m. and ended at 9 p.m. This included meal breaks and a daily conference where attendants and doctors discussed the patients' problems. Cora led her patients on daily walks, organized games on the spacious lawns and accompanied them to church on Sunday. All of this in addition to their general care. For this she received \$4.00 a week, meals in the staff dining room, her own room and one day off a week.

In 1910 her class of sixteen young women graduated and proudly accepted their diplomas. A few months later, Cora married young Ed Harrington and in the custom of that day, she gave up her career to become a housewife.



- Archaeological digs at the Wisner Complex were started this June, and archaeologist Charles Martinez reports that the digs will be open for further digging and viewing up through "Ice Cream Social Time", August 9th.
- Michael Dennis, student from Oakland University, and Cheryl Grinnell, student from Oakland Community College, have been dedicated "diggers" in this project and hope to pursue a career in archeology. They learned of the dig in the *Oakland Press*.
- Oakland County Historical Society SPRING LECTURE SERIES proved to be interesting and well attended, reports Chairperson, Ruth Priestley. Future sessions are being considered.
- The new Property Records & Locations Committee has been busily engaged this past year in an effort to venture forth with documenting and organizing properties and collections in order to further activate the system already in place.
- A small "Secretary Desk" will be placed for auction at this year's Ice Cream Social on August 9th.
- A new library cart was delivered to the Wisner Library and was much appreciated by librarian Lillian Paull.
- Lavon DeLisle is offering Craft Classes on gift baskets and recycled jewelry "pictures". Interested persons for these classes are encouraged to call Lavon for further information. Her number is (313) 682-0681.
- Virginia Rodgers of the Oakland County Cultural Council reminds interested "Brown-Bag-Lunchers" of same at the Oakland County Executive Office Bldg., with speakers, every third Thursday at noon.
- Tourist flyers for the Oakland County Historical Society have been published and were sent to Michigan Tourist Bureau's. The flyer describes the Wisner House, it's history and the history of our Society and was developed by our Publicity Committee.
- Tom Wayne, long-time OCPHS caretaker, left our employ for an out of town position, and his replacement has been found. Tom will be missed.

## OFFICERS - 1992

President ..... Rosamond Haeberle  
 First Vice President ..... Clarke Kimball  
 Second Vice President ..... Kitty Daggy  
 Secretary ..... Miriam Foxman  
 Treasurer ..... Judy Dorchock

## Editorial Staff

Pauline Harrison, Editor  
 Rex Callaway, Assoc. Editor  
 Consultant: Charles Martinez  
 Photography: Harry Harrison,  
 Jack Moore, Bob Reynnells



Cora Harrington's class of 1910

This interview took place in 1976 when Cora was 87 years old. She had been in the Oakland County Hospital for several years. She said that Ida Ross was a classmate of hers and continued to work at the hospital for many years, now known as the Clinton Valley Center.

Statistics are from a compilation of information on CVC from the Wisner House archives.