



EDITORIAL

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the Society's acquisition of the former Governor Moses Wisner home in Pontiac. It was during the turbulent times of World War II that a supportive organization was created and designated the "Oakland Pioneer and Veterans Historical Foundation." Spun from the Pioneer Society of Oakland County that was established in 1874, the new entity was designed to raise funds for the purchase and maintenance of the Wisner property. In so doing it was felt the Foundation as a nonprofit organization would help secure a much needed headquarters while all veterans who had faithfully served their country, as typified by Colonel Wisner in the Civil War, would have a memorial in their honor. In 1962, the Foundation and the earlier Pioneer Society were consolidated into the body we know today as the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society.

Over the years the Society has received many beautiful objects to be accessioned. Some belonged to the Wisner family; others have come from generous patrons of history throughout the County. Two, a severe contrast in size and type, are featured in this issue: the marble bust of Moses Wisner and an early 19th century snuffbox given to us by Estelle Hewitt Hemmenway. It is our intention to spotlight other rare and interesting objects from the Society's collections in future issues.

As for this issue some consideration was given to changing

its format from newsletter to journal. However, a more balanced approach was finally decided upon so as to offer the reader a blend of articles on historic topics and Society news.

Finally, in celebrating our 50th Anniversary at Pine Grove we look forward to the challenges of the future. One of the most important challenges is grooming the next generation of history lovers to take the reins of leadership.

Editorial Staff

HAEBERLE NAMED TO WHO'S WHO



Rosamond Haeberle

Rosamond Haeberle, Society past president, has been honored with a biographical insert in the 1995-96 *Who's Who of American Women*, according to Sandra S. Barnes, publisher. An advance certificate announcing the honor states that inclusion in the work is "limited to

those individuals who have demonstrated an outstanding achievement in their fields of endeavor and who have, thereby, contributed significantly to the betterment of contemporary society."

Ms. Haeberle joined this organization in 1980 after a 44-year-career in education, primarily as a music teacher. She taught in Kansas for eight years before moving to Michigan where she spent three years in the Waterford system, followed by 33 years in the Pontiac School District. Ms. Haeberle is currently serving on the Education, Guides, and the Programs and Society Events committees.

TAKING THE SHOW ON THE ROAD

Bringing an enjoyment of history to a county-wide audience is a leading article of this Society's constitution. To honor this commitment Pauline Harrison of the Clothing Committee and Priscilla Gaytan of the House Committee joined forces to display an assortment of historic garments and toys at the Rochester Hills Public Library during the past December. A real attention getter was a beautiful turkey feather cape which our organization has owned for some years.

In March Pauline Harrison organized a display of vintage wedding gowns for the First Annual Bridal Fashion Show at the Rochester Community House.

That same month Gil Haven, representing our Pioneer Museum,

brought a sample of early settlement artifacts for "show and tell" to a meeting of members from both the Royal Oak Historical Society and the Royal Oak Women's Historical Guild held at the Orson Starr House. Gil, together with Bob Reynnells and Jack Moore, have been leading exponents of such outreach programs.

ON THE MEND

"Now is the winter of our discontent," Shakespeare wrote in *Richard III*. It would certainly seem that way for several of our members who suffered medical complaints during the past season. Jean Giddings is apparently doing well at Canterbury on the Lake. If you wish to drop her a card or letter the address is: 5601 Hatchery Road, Room 104, Pavilion, Waterford, MI 48329. Virginia Clohset, Priscilla Gaytan, Don Daggy and Jack Moore are back at Pine Grove after varying periods of convalescence and are working on upcoming events and displays. Mary Lou Callaway is at home following surgery, and according to her husband Ross, is recovering nicely. Her address is: 6756 Red Cedar Lane, West Bloomfield, MI 48324. Word has also reached us that our membership secretary, LaVon DeLisle, has been under the weather too. All her friends wish her a speedy recovery. LaVon's address is: 4915 Sherwell, Waterford, MI 48327.

SPECIAL THANKS . . .

to Board Member William Voorheis who single-handedly reinforced the library annex flooring and then installed shelves in that upstairs room. He was also instrumental in

convincing Voorheis Construction Company of Pontiac to furnish at no cost all materials for the flooring and shelves, as well as provide gratis labor in the cutting of those shelves.

In the same spirit Ms. Gail Guth at Gresham Cleaners of Waterford has won our deep appreciation for hand cleaning the library annex rug without charge. This is the most recent favor she had done the organization. Without her help and the assistance of other vendors, who have generously contributed their services, the Society would not be able to accomplish its assigned tasks while staying within budget constraints.

CLOSE CALL

Without question one of the most critical decisions made by the Michigan Territorial Legislature affecting a proposed township in Oakland County occurred in March of 1834.

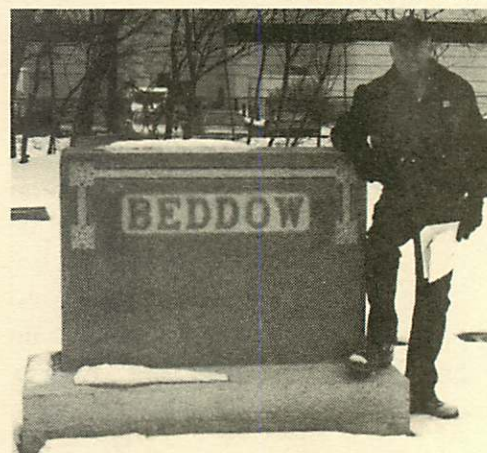
Shortly before that date, a band of hardy pioneers had gathered to petition for the admission of their township and select its name. All were convinced that the final choice should reflect the beauty and agricultural richness of the area so as to induce others to settle there. Many names were offered for consideration but all were eventually rejected. Finally, Chester Adams, a farmer respected for his energy and vision arose and said in a firm clear voice, "I propose we call our township Fruitland."

Perhaps it was the lateness of the hour, the presence of John Barleycorn, or the fertility of the soil but the name was unanimously accepted. At the next Territorial Legislative session, however, cooler

heads prevailed and not surprisingly an astute political decision made. The Territorial fathers decided that Township No. 1 North, Range 7 East should be named after one of their own members. And, that's how Lyon Township was baptized and separated from its neighbor Novi which as most of you recall had an acute name problem of its own. But that's another story.

TOMBSTONE MYSTERY SOLVED

Photo by Gaylor Forman



Beddow Family Monument
in Southfield Cemetery

The origin of a defaced cemetery monument that frustrated Franklin Village historical researchers for months has been solved through the dogged determination of two Society investigators. Combing through thousands of burial records at the Pine Grove library, Mike Dennie and Gaylor Forman found a match to the partial name on the vandalized stone. The deciphered inscription is said to read, "Harold E. Son of J.M. & Lizzie Beddow 1897-1899." Its origin has been traced to row 18 in the northeast corner of Southfield Cemetery.

As a token of its appreciation the Franklin Historical Society forwarded a check in the amount of \$100.00 to this organization for the speedy resolution of the mystery.

This is the third monument in as many years that the Society has been able to return to its rightful burial ground.

The 100 pound, cylindrically-shaped marker, known in cemetery parlance as a "pillow stone" was found in a brush pile near the intersection of Hickory and 13 Mile roads, Southfield, by a pair of area residents in September 1994. Jim Pikulas, president of the Franklin Cemetery Association, had it removed to the village for safekeeping while a determination of the grave site was undertaken. However, many measurements, photographs and rubbings of the stone failed to identify the decedent's name.

In mid-January of this year Ken Isreal, vice president of the Franklin Historical Society, contacted Charlie Martinez, operations manager, and asked for the Society's assistance in the matter. After viewing the marker Martinez put Dennie and Forman on the trail with the instructions, "make the stone's recovery location the epicenter of your search and then work outward from that point." It took the pair a total of 12 working hours before Dennie made the connection.

The next day Forman and Martinez visited Southfield Cemetery and found the concave stone base from which the marker was stolen. Although a weighty object, the pair could find no evidence that the headstone had been bonded to its base. Why the stone was defaced will probably never be known, Forman said. "Somebody tried hard to chip away the inscription possibly so the marker could be used for some other functional or decorative purpose in garden or home," Forman speculated.

Thousands of this country's cemetery monuments are defaced or stolen each year at a cost of millions of dollars to cemeterians or the decedent's next of kin, according to Martinez. A member of the Association for Gravestone Studies, Martinez tries to keep up with cemetery trends and the history of tombstones. He said *American Cemetery*, the industry trade magazine for 29 years, regularly runs a "News Notes" column detailing cemetery desecration state by state. "The record is appalling. Vandals are seldom caught, and if they are the fines and punishment by the courts are minimal," he noted.

Plans call for the replacement of the Beddow marker this spring in Southfield Cemetery which is maintained by the municipality's parks and recreation department. The Beddow family was well-known late in the nineteenth century and was linked to the cheesemaking industry according to local sources.

CAPTURED IN MARBLE

by Donald C. O'Brien



Gov. Wisner. 1860
Henry Dexter. *Fecit.* - Boston, Mass.
Marble 27" x 22"

In the parlour of the Wisner home rests a marble bust of Governor Moses Wisner, a likeness captured by itinerant sculptor Henry Dexter. The artist made his preliminary work in clay, probably at the Governor's Lansing office, and this marble copy was later completed in Dexter's Boston studio.

Dexter was born October 11, 1806 into a poverty stricken family in Nelson, New York. The family lived on a wilderness-surrounded farm trying to eke out a living on unproductive soil. However, the Dexters were not new to America as they could trace their ancestry through eight generations back to the Reverend Gregory Dexter of Olney, England. This Dexter was also a printer and, in 1643, he printed a dictionary of the Indian language for Roger Williams, founder of Providence, Rhode Island. In the following year, Dexter accompanied Williams to Providence and became the first educated printer in New England.

What aroused young Dexter's interest in art is unknown. Perhaps a peddler tried to sell him an engraving or a book with illustrations. Whatever the reason and lacking paper or paints, he was experimenting at an early age on scraps of cloth by painting with the juice of red and green berries.

At age eleven, his father disappeared and his mother was forced to return to her family home near the present community of Pomfret, Connecticut. There she placed Dexter on a farm for a number of years. The work was extremely hard, but the family treated him kindly. They even allowed him to go to school in winter where he stood at the head of his class.

At age 16, he was apprenticed to a blacksmith and over the next seven years he became a master at the trade. By 1828, he had married Calista Kelly, a niece of the artist Francis Alexander (1800-1880), who at the time lived in nearby Killingly. Alexander would later become a successful portrait painter in Providence and Boston.

Dexter continued to work at his trade, but during this time with typical Yankee ingenuity, he taught himself to paint. Undoubtedly, he toiled at his new avocation with Alexander's encouragement.

His progress must have been quite rapid, because he managed to have a painting exhibited at the Boston Athenaeum in 1834. By Spring 1836, he felt competent enough to take up the brush as a full time vocation. At that time he was painting portraits in Providence, but in the Fall of that year he moved permanently to Boston.

Somehow he came across some clay left there by the sculptor Horatio Greenough (1805-1852) and attempted modeling portrait busts. Quickly he realized that he had a gift for catching a likeness in clay and abandoned painting for portrait sculpture.

Over the next few years Dexter, now known as the blacksmith sculptor, completed many busts including such famous people as zoologist Louis Agassiz and poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Even Charles Dickens sat for him while on his grand tour of America in 1841.

He also did eight marble statues including the figural monument of the *Binney Child*. This was the first piece of sculpture to go into gardenlike Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge (1839) and it was also the first statue carved in marble in New England. Another interesting statue was *Gen'l Jos. Warren at Bunker Hill*, located at the famous battlefield in Charleston (1857).

Dexter's most ambitious project was a series of busts of state governors, executed in 1859-1860. Armed with a letter of introduction from Edward Everett,* Dexter went to Washington to gain approval of his venture from President James Buchanan. He was favorably received and the President allowed the sculptor to mold his likeness in plaster.

After completing the presidential bust, Dexter began his tour as an itinerant sculptor travelling by stage, train and riverboat. He visited the governor of each state except California and Oregon. In 1860, he returned to Boston with his plaster casts of thirty-one portraits and

exhibited them in Doric Hall of the state house.

His next step was to immortalize his subjects in marble. Unfortunately, the Civil War defeated his project. By the time war broke out, only four of the portraits had been completed including the Pioneer Society's copy of Governor Wisner. However, not all were carved in marble. The Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. has the bust of Governor Sam Houston (1793-1863). This was cast in bronze after the 1859-1860 plaster and it appears to be an excellent likeness.

Dexter continued to work in Boston and his output was remarkable for a self taught artist who, before his own attempts, had never seen any one model in clay or carve in marble. He died in the city June 23, 1876, slightly less than two weeks before our nation celebrated its centennial.

*Edward Everett was the statesman who delivered the principal oration at the cemetery at Gettysburg on November 19, 1863, but Abraham Lincoln's brief remarks, in the course of which he referred to "a new birth of freedom," ranks as the most memorable of all American Addresses.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The principal work for a study of Henry Dexter is John Albee, *Henry Dexter, Sculptor: A Memorial*, (Cambridge (MA): Privately Printed, 1898). This was written from Dexter's unpublished autobiography, letters, diary, poetry and notes. From this source, Adeline Adams wrote her biographical sketch of Dexter in *Dictionary of American Biography*, 3, Part 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930). See also Wayne Craven, *Sculpture in America*, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1968), (Hannah F. Lee), *Familiar Sketches of Sculpture and Sculptors*, (Boston: Crosby, Nichols, 1854), and Lorado Taft, *The History of American Sculpture*, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1930).

Mr. O'Brien edits the Newsletter for the American Historical Print Collectors Society. Last summer, he contributed to the *Oakland Gazette* a supplement, "Joseph Leo Marcero: An Early Pontiac Entrepreneur."

OFFICERS - 1995

President Gretchen Adler
1st V.P. Kitty Daggy
2nd V.P. Clarke Kimball
Secretary Miriam Foxman
Treasurer Dan Carmichael
Resident Agent Ed Adler
Operations Mgr ... Charles Martinez

EDITORIAL STAFF

Pauline Harrison Editor
Associate Editors Ross Callaway
Charles Martinez
Donald O'Brien

ESTATE PLANNING?

Actor George Burns is quoted as saying, "How can I die? I'm booked." Death, however, is inevitable and something for which we should all prepare.

When discussing your will with your attorney, consideration should first be given to loved ones - family and friends. You may also wish to include a non-profit organization in your estate planning. A specific bequest or percentage, no matter how small, to the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society would be greatly appreciated. Your gift would assure that the history, artifacts and documents of the past would be kept alive.

A great raconteur, when told of his imminent death is quoted as having said, "I had hoped that in my case an exception would be made." If only it were possible!

OAKLAND COUNTY PIONEER & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Founded 1874

405 Oakland Avenue
Pontiac, Michigan 48342

UP TO SNUFF

by Charles H. Martinez

Tucked away in a parlour secretary drawer at Pine Grove is a seemingly delicate object that conjures up the pleasures and social tastes of past centuries. It is a black lacquered snuffbox nearly three inches in diameter, whose cover displays a riotous drinking scene entitled "Life of London." Fashioned of *papier-mache* the container was a gift to the Society from a Mrs. Hemmenway about the time of World War I.

The taking of snuff, a powder consisting of finely ground leaves and stems of the tobacco plant, was first recorded by a Spanish monk in 1497. Father Ramon Pane accompanied Columbus on his second voyage to the New World and described this habit among the Dominican natives in his *De Insularum Ritibus*:

"Snuffing is through a tube, one end placed over the powdered leaf and the other in the nose, and so drawn up, which purges them much."

Father Pane's report equated the use of tobacco with a medicinal benefit, an endorsement that would be cleverly employed by tobaccoists for hundreds of years.

It was the Portuguese explorers, however, who quickly learned that the Indians of Brazil had cornered the snuff trade with a refined product that was unequalled in the Americas. So together with semi-precious gems, mineral samples, brazilwood, and screaming parrots came these mysterious plants to delight the Portuguese court. Word of their presence spread and a pair of Frenchmen, Andre Thevet and Jean Nicot, introduced them to the Gallic market between 1557 and 1560.

Under French influence the

pleasure of snuff became a fixation of the *haut monde*. In such circles to refuse a pinch of snuff was a personal affront. A ritual that reached the status of an art form, *L'Art de priser*, was decreed for its use: tap your snuffbox three times to free any powder adhering to the inside of the lid, place a pinch on the back of your left hand or thumbnail, produce a handkerchief, apply the snuff to a nostril and sniff. All, of course, should be done with flair and exaggeration of gesture. An incurable snuff-taker thus might expend ninety seconds out of every ten minutes taking a dose which would eventually consume thirty-six and one-half days per year or one-twelfth of a person's lifetime according to an 18th century expert.

Much of this social statement was made by the snuffbox itself. These containers came in all shapes, sizes, materials, and prices. A king or queen might acknowledge a service rendered by a subject with the gift of a gold snuffbox studded with diamonds. At the other end of the spectrum a much less expensive but more serviceable example is suggested by the Society's specimen. Its compact size with "macho" cover illustration was perfect for a traveling male who took his pleasures where he found them, snuff included.

More snuffboxes were made of *papier-mache* than any other material. Lightweight but extremely durable it kept the powder cool and moist while the receptacle's outer surface accepted a fine finish and served as an excellent ground for the artist's brush. The earliest recorded snuffbox in this material dated to c. 1744.

Women were certainly not adverse to using snuff. Like their male counterparts this action was often taken in the face of stern opposition from church and state; opposition that extended to all forms of enjoying tobacco. For example, when James I came to the English throne, he vowed

Supplement to the *Oakland Gazette*
Spring 1995
Vol. 28, No. 1

to eradicate this "damnable tobacco." Interestingly, his royal pronouncement on the subject *A Counterblaste to Tobacco* (1604) hinted at a health hazard of smoking we know today as lung cancer.

Yet, compared to the smoker, the snuffer had the advantages of discretion and the aesthetics of the container. The tiny box could be quickly produced and hidden whereas the pipe or cigar habitue was betrayed by telltale smoke and encumbered by recourse to tinderbox, candle, or hearth.

Snuff addiction left its traces too, of course. In a letter written to a friend in 1713, Princess des Ursins cattily confided on the looks of a French court beauty, the Duchesse D'Ollone, with the comment, "If she did not continuously have the tip of her nose smothered in snuff, here appearance would not in anyway be marred."

For the more fastidious lady there was always the Chinese snuff-bottle with its companion miniature spoon. The latter device helped keep the nails clean and excluded the occasional strange nose from making direct contact with your powder. Even this concession to hygiene did not escape the poet's barb:

"To such a height with some is
fashion grown
They feed their very nostrils with a
spoon."

From France snuff was introduced into England and Scotland in the 17th century. There it quickly penetrated the social conscience with the help of such literary figures as Shakespeare, Pope, Johnson, Pepys, and Addison. Shakespeare used the term as a noun or verb in at least eight of his plays and Joseph Addison made mention of it in a series of critical essays entitled the *London Spectator* (1711-12). Assuming the role of cleric, Addison complained:

"A lady of fashion too often pulls out her snuffbox of good Brazile in the middle of the sermon; and to show she has the audacity of a well-bred woman offers it to the men as well as the women who sit near her"

Snuff taking finally reached American shores in the 18th century with mannerisms diluted as one wag put it. The habit was doubtlessly reinforced by our French allies during the Revolutionary War. Wealthy merchants and great planters were the first to succumb to the magic powder. It was rumored that Dolley Madison was addicted to snuff even though it probably left "a permanent yellow stain under her pretty nose," as author Mary Cable wrote.

Aspin-off of snuffing that had less romantic appeal was the practice of "dipping." A splayed stick was dipped into the snuff container and rubbed over the teeth and gums. This became the rage in some circles where young ladies would gather to spend hours behind locked doors at a friend's home dipping, drooling, and giggling. And you thought skateboarding was dangerous! Before the end of the 19th century snuffing and dipping would lose ground to the draw of a cigarette, and the rest is history.

As for the Pine Grove container, the attire of the three males depicted on its lid suggest an early 19th century drinking bout. A tag attached to its base reads: "Snuff box of 'Grandfather Morris'/ Resided at Orchard Lake in the 30's / Presented by Mrs. Hemmenway." Research has shown this to be the gift of Mrs. Estelle Hewitt Hemmenway (1846-1923) whose name has been variously recorded as Hemenway and Hemmingway. She was the foster child of Dr. O.W. Hewitt (1818-1888) and Phebe J. Morris Hewitt (1823-1890) of Birmingham,

Michigan. It was apparently through the latter's maiden name that the box can be traced back in time. Although unresolved at this writing there might be a connection to the Morris family of West Bloomfield: William (1777-1835), George (1799-1863) and John (1801-1863) who are among the first landowners in sections 16, 21, and 22 of that township. Admittedly their name is associated with Morris Lake in section 22 rather than Orchard Lake a mile or so to the north.

Another who bore that surname was O.C. Morris. He once held title to at least six acres on the northwest shore of Pine Lake near the isthmus separating that body of water from Orchard Lake. His ownership, however, occurred much later in time so as to conflict with the phrase, "Resided at Orchard Lake in the 30's."

By placing a ban, albeit temporary, on smoking in the past, civil and religious authorities insured the success of snuff. Now, with all forms of tobacco consumption under a cloud, the Pine Grove snuffbox becomes a small but poignant reminder of the considerable social, economic, and religious controversy this strange plant has brought into our lives.

Photo by C.H. Martinez



Early 19th century papier-mache snuffbox from the Hemmenway Coll.

Mr. Martinez is the Operations Manager for the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society and is a frequent contributor to this publication.

A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bedford, John. *All Kinds of Small Boxes*. New York: Walker and Company, 1965.

Berry-Mill, Henry and Sidney. *Antique Gold Boxes*. New York: Abelard Press, 1953.

Cable, Mary and the Editors of American Heritage. *American Manners & Morals*. New York: American Heritage Publishing Company, Inc., 1969.

Courtney, Janet and Kennedy, Ruth S. *First Land Owners of Oakland County, Michigan*. Oakland County Genealogical Society, 1981.

Curtis, Mattoon M. *The Story of Snuff and Snuff Boxes*. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1935.

Durant, Sam'l ed. *History of Oakland County, Michigan ... 1817-1877*. Philadelphia: Everts & Company, 1877.

LeCorbeiller, Clare. *European and American Snuff Boxes 1730-1830*. New York: The Viking Press, 1866.

Morison, Samuel Eliot. *Admiral of The Ocean Sea*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1942.

Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society. *Non-current Records. Accessions 1901-1977*. Box 2-8, Pontiac, Michigan.

Pate, Joan ed. *Birmingham and West Bloomfield Cemeteries*. Birmingham, Michigan: Oakland County Genealogical Society, 1990.

Saltzer, Minnie Hunt. "Birmingham Before Today" *Birmingham (MI) Eccentric*. 14 January 1937.

Spevack, Marvin. *The Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare*. Cambridge (MA): The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1973.