

Pioneer Profile: Polly and Wardwell Green of Farmington

Wardwell Green was the son of Jarvis and Hopie (Short) Green of Coventry, Rhode Island. The family moved to Onatario County, NY where Wardwell was born 30 Aug 1793. Wardwell and his first wife had two children: a daughter, Cynthia Ann, born in 1817, and a son Leland, born in 1819, before his wife died. Wardwell was left a widower with two young children to raise, and he chose for his second wife, Polly Peabody, with whom he was united in marriage in 1820. Polly was born 26 Sep 1802 in Springwater, Livingston, NY, daughter of William Peabody.

In September 1823, Wardwell, along with his brother, Leland, and Capt. Rufus Thayer boarded a sailing vessel bound for the new territory known as Michigan¹. After reaching Detroit, the men headed to Oakland County looking for a place to settle, and chose 80 acres of land in section 32 of Farmington township. After paying for his land in Detroit, Wardwell Green returned to New York, and in the spring of 1824, brought his family to their new home in Farmington.

In 1824, there were only two other families in southwestern Oakland County; Arthur Power and George Collins. The Greens commenced building a log cabin, clearing land, planting vegetables, and raising a family. Polly bore eight children: Lucinda, Emily, Wardwell, Sidney, Betsy, Helen, Seneca, Jarvis Jay, and one who died in infancy.² As many pioneer settlers, Polly Green possessed the strength, courage and ingenuity of a frontier housewife and pioneer mother. She carded, spun, and wove wool into clothing, tanned and prepared buckskin, and sowed flax, harvested and prepared it for spinning and weaving into cloth.

On 9 Dec 1836, Wardwell Green set out with his wagon and horses for the market in Detroit. About 16 miles from home, one of the forward wagon wheels "dropped to the axle into a rut, stopping the team so suddenly that he [Wardwell] was thrown head foremost upon the ground, and his neck dislocated; the next

morning the body was found where it fell, the lines and whip still in his hands and the team patiently waiting the summons of him from whom never more summons



Polly Green

*Oakland County Pioneer Society
Photograph Collection, #58a*

came."³ Wardwell was buried in the Quaker Burial Ground in Farmington.

For the next 50 years, Polly Green remained a widow, possessing the faith and courage to raise her family, and keep them together. As her health failed in her declining years, her children took care of her. Polly was described as having a "singleness of purpose and laudable ambition, with sublime moral, mental and physical organization. She was true, unselfish and unswerving in her devotion to the highest duties of life."⁴ Polly Green died on 27 Feb 1886 in Farmington, and was buried next to her husband.

1 The obituary of Polly Green gives a fascinating account of the trip across Lake Erie, and how the men finally reached Farmington. See Pioneer Society Scrapbook No.3, p.99.

2 Biographical Record of Oakland County, p.294.

3 Obituary of Polly Green.

4 Ibid.

Letter from the President

Dear Friends and Members,

The warm weather has finally arrived, to say the least, it is about time. The society is now in the planning stages for the Ice Cream Social for this year, and as usual we are going to need plenty of volunteers to make it a success. If you have time that can be donated to help out or if you can bake a cake for donation please contact the office at 248-338-6732. We have many exciting changes that have been made during the past year and hope that you can be with us to enjoy them. The society now has a new house committee, which is chaired by **Marguerite Johnson**, and includes **Ann Irwin** and **Nancy Duffield**, also assisted by **Ruth Wall** and **Vivian Hardy**. I would like to welcome this new committee and thank them for their commitment to the society.

This year has started out with a bang and it appears that we will almost double the amount of services and visitors we have had in the past year. This is thanks to the dedication of all of the board members and many volunteers. I hope to see all of you at the Ice Cream Social as we have many exciting things planned for the event, as well as participation by several other area historical societies.

Michael Willis

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Society News and Views

From the Editor

This issue of the *Gazette* features more changes. As one of the few remaining **pioneer** societies in Michigan, I feel it is important for us to pay tribute to the old settlers, the pioneers of our county. The section on page one entitled "Pioneer Profile" will outline the lives of some of the earliest settlers in Oakland County. Every attempt will be made to spotlight settlers from each of the 26 townships in the county, and to use only material found in the Society's collections for the article.

"From Our Collections" is meant to illustrate the rich variety of materials from the Society's collections, including photographs, ephemera, oral histories, etc. that the Society has collected over the past 125 years. In addition, this section will provide readers with glimpses of life in Oakland County from the early 1800's to the present. These might be snippets from local newspapers, historical recipes or homeopathic remedies, or even poetry written by early Oakland County residents. Thank you for your patience and understanding as we make these changes. I hope you will enjoy this new format!

EDITOR'S NOTE: It was brought to my attention that in the last issue I neglected to give a byline to the author of the feature article. The article *Former Glory: The Hinman Estate* was written by **Leslie S. Edwards**.

Society Events

Ice Cream Social. In this issue of the *Gazette*, we have enclosed a flyer for the annual Ice Cream Social to be held on Sunday, July 30, 200 from 1-5pm. You will notice that instead of mailing out tickets, this year we are asking that you reserve your tickets in advance by mailing in your check with the form at the bottom of the flyer. We will then hold your tickets for you at the gate. In addition, we have instituted a benefit for members who do reserve in advance by giving you a discount of \$1 per ticket.

For those of you who live out of town, or cannot attend for some other reason, but would like to contribute to this annual fund raiser, you are welcome to send a check payable to OCPHS. Your contributions are vital to the success of your Society, and are, of course, tax-deductible. We are hoping that this system will help alleviate the confusion of each member receiving tickets in the mail that they cannot use. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us!

For the White Elephant Sale, we are taking donations of items in *good, working condition* such as small appliances, jewelry, glassware, dishes and cookware, Christmas ornaments, and accessories. We are not accepting any clothing of any kind, but we will have a table for hats, furs and handbags. If you would like to donate items for the White Elephant Sale, please contact **Connie Scafe** at (248) 625-2378 to arrange a time to drop off the items.

Potluck Picnic. For the past few years, the Society has held an Annual Dinner in October. This year, the

executive committee and the board of directors have agreed that instead of having a catered dinner at \$15-20 a plate, we would like to offer our members the opportunity to gather informally at Pine Grove for a potluck picnic. Actually, this takes us back to the beginnings of the Society, when there was an annual meeting in February and a Society picnic in the summer.

This year the picnic will be held on Saturday, September 9, 2000 from 12-3pm. All members are encouraged to attend and bring their family and friends. The Society will provide barbecues, hot dogs and hamburgers. All you need to bring is a dish to pass and a blanket to sit on! This is a way for the membership to gather and meet other members who share a common interest in the history and preservation of Oakland County in a fun, relaxed atmosphere.

Tours

Groups from school districts all over the county visited Pine Grove since January, including Waterford, Rochester Hills, Bloomfield Hills, Hazel Park, Pontiac, and West Bloomfield. We have also had home schoolers, groups from Macomb County, and adult tours including the Daughters of 1812. We would like to thank all of the members who donated their time to making the visit to Pine Grove a fun and educational experience. Special thanks goes to Guide Chairperson **David Hackett** who worked tirelessly to coordinate the guides, and who was present in his tall hat for each and every tour.

Feature Article: The West Novi Debating Club

by Leslie S. Edwards

In 1836, a 23 year old shoemaker and farmer by the name of Austin N. Kimmis came to Oakland County from Washington County, NY and purchased 40 acres of land in Section 9 of Lyon Township. By 1857, Kimmis had acquired 340 acres in Sec 8, Lyon Twp. During this same time, a man named N.G. Pinney had 160 acres on what was then known as the Detroit & Howell Plank Road in Section 7 of Novi Township. Around 1860, Pinney built a foundry there which was soon followed by the building of a few houses along the road. This area became known as the town of West Novi, and by 1867, included a blacksmith shop, a building which contained the post office and a "cabinet room" in which furniture and coffins were made, and just east along the road was a red schoolhouse, located in Fractional District No. 5.

By 1872, it appears as if Pinney and Kimmis traded property, with Pinney moving to Sec 8 of Lyon Twp. and Kimmis moving to Sec 7 of Novi Twp., on property adjoining that of Marvin Bogart. Kimmis doubled the size of the Novi property to 321 acres and, in addition, he owned 90 acres in Sec 12 of Lyon Twp. which was adjacent to his Novi property.¹

In September of 1868, at the annual school meeting held at the West Novi schoolhouse, Austin Kimmis Sr. presented the idea of a debating society. The idea was well received, and "under the guidance of Kimmis, Sr., who had had previous experience in an organization of this kind, the "West Novi Debating Club" was organized and held meetings during the winters of 1868-9".²

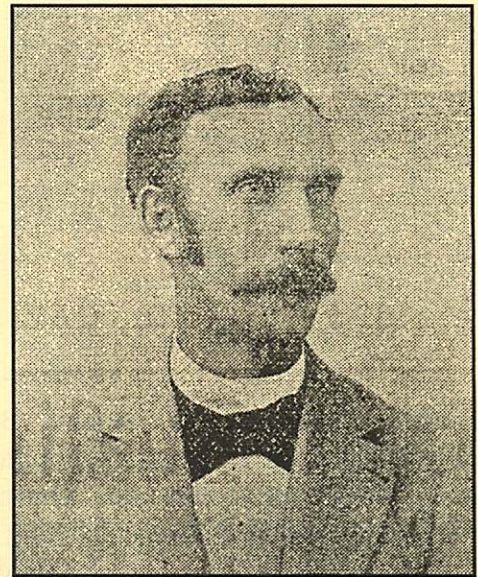
The Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society has in its possession the record book of the West Novi Debating Club. It was donated to the Society in 1967 by John Byron Powers who received it from Austin Kimmis Jr. The record book contains the minutes of the club's meetings from 1869-1874, and shows the evolution of the club from a group of citizens formed to debate topics, to one which became much more of a social gathering place and included music, singing and reports on issues of the day.

The WNDC meetings usually ran from October to April or even June, and were held on Saturday nights. The resolution (or debate topic) for the next meeting was always decided upon, and early debate topics ranged from politics or religion to light-hearted topics such as "tin cups ought to be abolished".³ Members were chosen to talk on either side of the question whether they believed in that side or not. James Clapp, who entered the club at age seventeen, felt that this type of training taught him a valuable lesson - that there were always two sides to every question. Each speaker was allowed fifteen minutes to present his or her side of the argument, and the leaders were given five minutes for closing arguments. "There

was no excuse for anybody attending the W.N.D.C. not having an understanding of the questions of the day."⁴

In 1871, the club began to charge an admission fee of 10¢ per person. Sometimes meetings were held at locations other than the schoolhouse, such as the one in December 1870 which was described as an "exhibition at Mrs. Haskins hall". Also in 1871, the minutes list the first female members, and at the meeting held February 5, 1871, "an Act making the ladies members of the Lyceum by signing the Constitution was acted upon and carried".⁵

The record book shows that early WNDC membership included the names of Kimmis, Bogart, Johns, Leavenworth, Woodman, Clapp, Power, Gage and Johnson.⁶ The annual meetings were usually held at the end of the season, and officers for the ensuing year were elected. The club had a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and janitor. In 1872, the first woman was elected to office, Mrs. Thomas E. Bogart, as Secretary. According to James Clapp, "in numbers at



Austin N. Kimmis Jr.

The Pontiac Gazette, December 14, 1894, p. 12.

least, possibly in other ways, the club ladies led the men. . .these were our stand-by essayists."⁷

Sometime after 1874, the WNDC ceased having meetings. In 1885, when Austin Kimmis Jr. returned home after graduating from University of Michigan law school, he went around the neighborhood and was able to renew interest in the club, which soon began going strong again. In the 1890's, local newspapers began to make mention of the club's activities on a regular basis. On June 10, 1894, Blanche Kimmis, the wife of Austin Jr. and former secretary of the club, died after an operation for a tumor.⁸ At a special meeting of the WNDC held on

(continued on page 4)

The West Novi Debating Club

(continued from page 3)

Saturday, June 16, 1894, a resolution was adopted praising Blanche for her contributions to the club.

In November 1894, the WNDC promised "to be more interesting and instructive than ever."⁹ Meetings were well attended and had become very favorable occasions which included reading, recitations, music, poetry, duets, historical talks and, of course, the debate discussion. Topics for the "talks" might include "the force of gravity" or "life in a cavalry regiment", while debates ranged from resolutions such as "the jury system ought to be abolished" to "boards of trade and their dealings in

The question which was chosen for the next meeting was then read which was,

Resolved - that in view of a bill passed by congress removing all disqualification from people of color and giving them civil rights equal to those of whites, that no woman is justified in refusing an offer of marriage from such persons on account of previous conditions color race or cast.

The leaders then chosen were

<i>D. Sage Duff</i>	<i>G. Bogart Jr.</i>
<i>A. J. Harrison</i>	<i>G. Johnson</i>
<i>J. B. Levermore</i>	<i>H. Woodman</i>
<i>Mr. Bogart</i>	<i>R. Chapman</i>
<i>Mr. Richardson</i>	<i>E. Power</i>
<i>J. Hager</i>	<i>D. Whipple</i>

Mr. Clark

Sec. Protem

options are advantageous to the farmer". By 1895, visitors were coming from as far as Farmington, New Hudson, Milford, Northville and beyond. "One can judge the high favor won by the West Novi Debating Society, when Mr. Rufus Carter made the six miles Saturday night and arrived on foot, in time to thrust his highly honored presence in their midst in time for opening exercises. He appreciates these meetings more than some almost within a stone's throw of the old schoolhouse."¹⁰

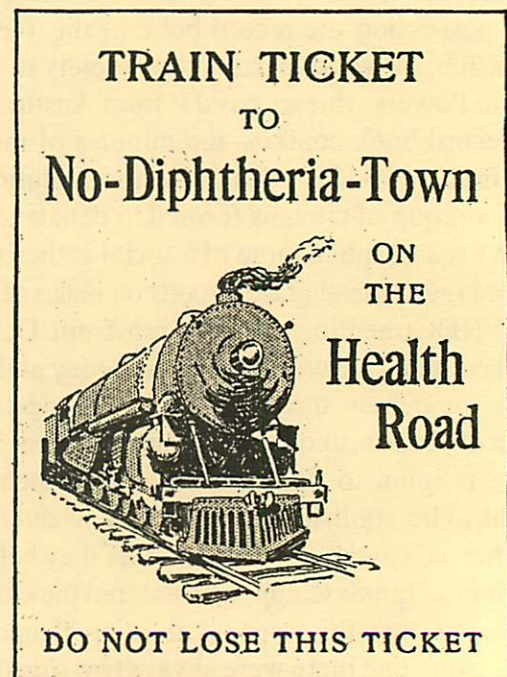
On June 13, 1897, founding club member Austin Kimmis Sr. died in Novi, and was buried in Novi Corners Cemetery. At a special meeting of the West Novi Debating Club held on Saturday, June 19, 1897, the club resolved that "in the early years of this society he [Kimmis] was one of its most faithful, able and active members, one of those whose discourses were always listened to with pleasure and profit, and to whom in the active years of his life was due very much of the success of the organization."¹¹

Gradually, the membership of the WNDC dwindled away, primarily due to deaths of the early members, as

well as distance separating those who had moved away from the area. According to Clapp, in order to "keep up old memories a "Homecoming" was started and we returned each year to the old schoolhouse for a picnic dinner, followed by a program, including, of course, a debate".¹² One of the final reunion meetings was held June 2, 1917, although meetings might have been held as late as 1918 or 1919.

The West Novi Debating Club was a local example of the nineteenth century's fascination with social clubs as a force for the development of popular education. It was an important venue for the local community in which the community could gather socially to express opinions, share ideas on popular topics of the day, and experience the camaraderie of a close group of friends and neighbors.

1. 1872 Beer's Atlas of Oakland County.
2. From a paper entitled *The West Novi Debating Club* by James W. Clapp, *Pioneers to Oakland County Collection*, Box 1-23, p. 1. Much of the early history in the paper was sent to Clapp by Austin Kimmis, Jr. who resided in California until his death in 1945.
3. WNDC Record Book, November 18, 1869.
4. Clapp, p. 6.
5. WNDC Record Book, November 18, 1869.
6. Marvin Bogart, J. Hamilton Woodman, and Daniel Johnson had been members of the 22nd Michigan Infantry.
7. Clapp, p. 3.
8. Obituary, *The Pontiac Gazette*, June 15, 1894, p. 4.
9. *The Pontiac Gazette*, November 16, 1894, p. 10.
10. *Ibid*, November 23, 1894, p. 10.
11. *The Northville Record*, June 25, 1897, p. 8.
12. Clapp, p. 6.



Small Manuscripts: Stetler, Gloria

This health booklet (ca 1929) was used to encourage children to receive their vaccines.

From the Director

The Society's Outreach Program has begun to blossom. On May 9th, members **Kathryn Daggy** and **Dave Hackett** gave workshops at Springfield Plains Elementary school's festival day "A Journey in Time". Both workshops were very well received by the children and teachers alike. In addition, I gave talks to the Ford Genealogy Club and the Oakland County Genealogical Society, and representatives from the Ferndale Historical Society and the Farmington Community Library came to tour our new facility.

Efforts to broaden our scope to include a wider spectrum of the county's historical organizations has met with very favorable response. This year's annual Ice Cream Social will include display tables from local historical societies that represent the various townships throughout the county. I have been making site visits to local historical societies, as well as libraries with historical materials. This serves a three-fold purpose: it lets the community know that OCPHS is interested in representing and preserving each of the geographical areas of our county's history, it cultivates a better community understanding of the types of historical materials that are available county-wide, and, most importantly, outreach promotes the Society's programs.

Many of the local communities have wonderful museum exhibits with artifacts representing early life in Oakland County, while others have collections of photographs, or print and manuscript resources that are available to researchers. One of the responsibilities OCPHS faces as a county-wide organization is to know where these resources are located, and to share information with other organizations to form a more cohesive body of representation of Oakland County's strong heritage. We all share in the common goal of preserving a long history of pioneer settlers; families and individuals who had the courage and determination to forge into unknown territories and create a life for themselves and their descendants. We hope that you will join OCPHS in our continuous effort to collect and preserve the history of Oakland County.



Library Happenings

The new shelving for the manuscript storage area arrived and was put together by WAM volunteers. The shelving is baked-enamel metal shelving appropriate for storage of archival materials. We are arranging the shelving to accommodate the variety of materials in our collection, including boxed manuscript collections, large bound newspapers, ledgers and account books, oral history tapes, and photographs.

In addition, Smith & Smith Architects in Pontiac graciously donated a ten-drawer set of map cases to the library. We are now able to store some of our largest maps and ephemera in these cases. We have also continued to rearrange the materials for easier access, and have begun to do some needed restoration on some of our scrapbook binders.

We would like to thank graduate students **Amber Elder** and **Holly Teasdale** for the fantastic job they did processing several of our manuscript collections. The collections have been boxed and are available for research and include the Charles Emerson Brown Collection, the Pontiac Area Federation of Women's Clubs, and the Nina Mae Williams Collection.

The official christening of the new Research Library will take place at the annual Ice Cream Social, Sunday July 30 at 1:00pm. A representative from the County Executive's office will be on hand to cut the ribbon.

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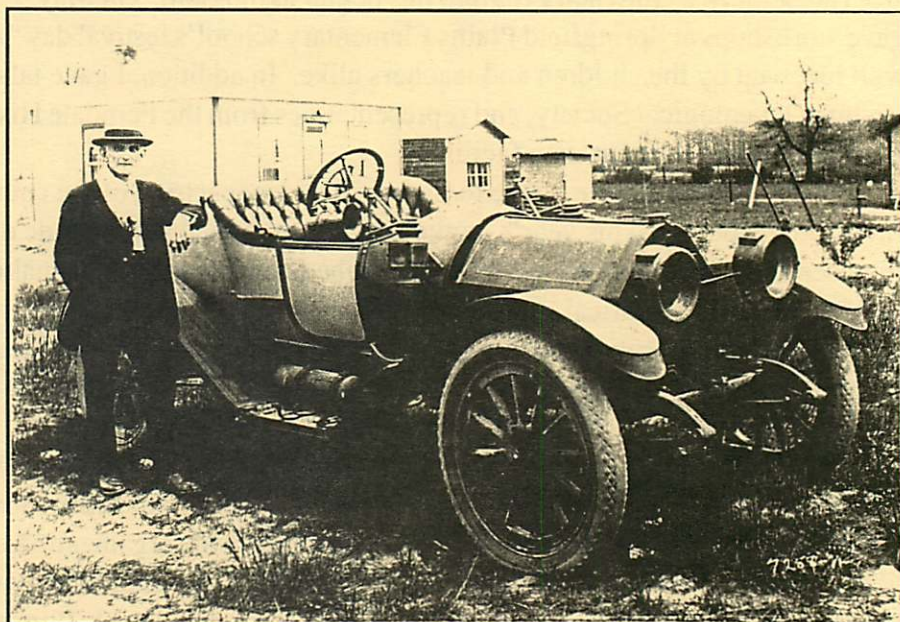
Marguerite Johnson

From Our Collections . . .

Oakland Motor Car Company

In 1893, a young businessman, Edward M. Murphy, started the Pontiac Buggy Company. In the early 1900's, he became interested in the "horseless carriage" and enlisted the help of Alanson P. Brush, a successful engineer. Brush designed the first "Oakland", a two-cylinder car, which he named after the county. Brush sold the rights to Murphy, and the car was built by Murphy's Pontiac Buggy Company in 1907. The Oakland Motor Car Company was incorporated 28 Aug 1907, with offices and a factory located on Oakland Ave. between Clark St. and Baldwin Ave., and on both sides of the railroad tracks. The creed adopted then was "We believe that when a good engineer designs a car, the basic principles, aside from simplicity and accessibility, are to eliminate friction, guard against distortion, reduce wear to the minimum and deliver the maximum horsepower to the driving wheels, with the least possible loss."

In 1908, the four-cylinder Oakland Model K, became an overnight success due to its hill-climbing ability, and



Photograph Collection: Automobiles

Oakland Motor Car, 1913. William Noble, trimmer in the Oakland Plant.

by 1910, over 4600 units were produced. In the summer of 1909, the Oakland Motor Car Company united with Oldsmobile and Buick under the GM umbrella, but retained its name and production of Oakland cars. In fact, the Oakland was the only car that was produced continuously through World War I, and in 1918 was a pioneer in production of a closed-body vehicle. By 1921,

the Oakland Motor Car Company ranked seventh in the world in the production of automobiles, and on March 18, 1922, the millionth Oakland car rolled off the assembly line.

In the fall of 1924, a team was hired to produce an inexpensive six-cylinder car, and advertisers felt that a new name would be more appropriate, and thus, in January 1926 "The Pontiac Six" was introduced. Public reaction to the new car was overwhelming and it outsold the Oakland, selling over 76,000 cars in 1926. In 1932, the company ceased production of the Oakland and became the "Pontiac Motor Division".



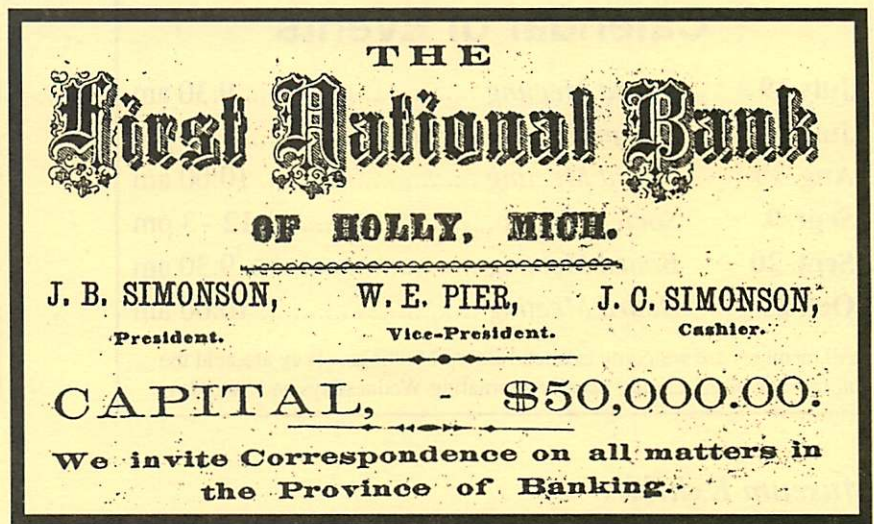
Hazel Dunlap Collection, Box 2-13

The inscription on the back of this postcard photograph reads: "Contractors building the first building of the Oakland Motor Car Factory. Cost \$30,000."

... From Our Collections

Soap Suds. - The value of soap suds as an article to be used in irrigating plants, appears not to be generally appreciated. Suds contains the food of vegetables a in a state of solution, and when applied, its effects are more immediate than those produced by any other stimulant that can be used. For irrigating gardens, especially during the summer, it is unequalled. But when used for this purpose, it is advisable to let it stand until it becomes putrid, as it will, in that condition, act with greater energy, and prove much more nutritive and salutary in its effects upon plants. If your garden beds are infested with insects, fresh suds from the laundry if sprinkled over them, will prove highly beneficial in arresting their ravages. It should be applied early in the morning to culmiferous vegetables, and perhaps the early morning is the best time to apply it the garden vegetables generally. A very excellent compost is made by mixing common swamp muck and common barn manure in equal quantities and saturate the mass with suds. By daily effusions of the liquid, the compost will be rendered highly energetic, and act with more excellent effect on any crop.

Small Manuscripts: Almanacs
Farmer's Almanac, 1860



Small Manuscripts: Doty Family I

The First National Bank of Holly was organized in December 1870 with a capital of \$50,000. The directors are listed on the back of this card (ca early 1870s), including Elias Doty of White Lake.

Community Service

Would you like to become involved in your community? The Society is looking for you to volunteer a few hours of your time in the following areas:

- the House Committee needs help the week of July 13-17 to ready the Wisner Mansion for the Ice Cream Social
- join the Guide Committee for our tours and special events
- volunteer in our Research Library (indexing, cataloging, or helping patrons)

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Oakland County Pioneer & Historical Society
405 Oakland Avenue • Pontiac, Michigan 48342
(248) 338-6732

Yes, I'd/We'd like to ☐ join ☐ renew

Name _____

Street _____ Apt. No. _____

City/State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

E-mail _____

☐ Check here if gift membership, from _____

Check desired membership category below and enclose this application with check or money order made payable to:

Oakland County Pioneer & Historical Society

(Send to the above address)

Memberships, except life, are for one year.

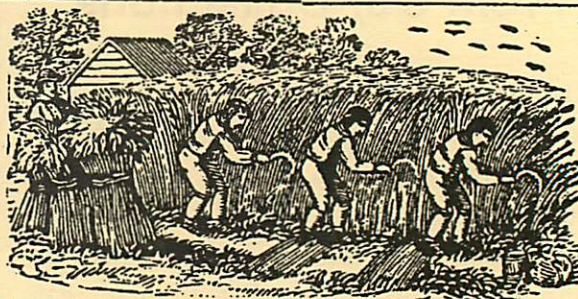
- ☐ Individual Member \$20.00
- ☐ Family \$50.00
- ☐ Senior Member (62 & over) \$15.00
- ☐ Student Member (18 & under) \$10.00
- ☐ Patron \$75.00
- ☐ Benefactor \$100.00
- ☐ Life Member \$200.00
- ☐ Life Couple \$300.00
- ☐ Organization (Non-Profit) \$50.00
- ☐ Business Member \$150.00

Contributions and bequests to the Society, including memorials, assure the continuing restoration of Society properties and promotion of Oakland County's irreplaceable historical heritage. As charitable donations, such contributions allow the donor to take income tax deductions.

Calendar of Events

July 19	Board Meeting	9:30 am
July 30	Annual Ice Cream Social	1 - 5 pm
Aug. 19	Board Meeting	10:00 am
Sept. 9	Society Picnic	12 - 3 pm
Sept. 20	Board Meeting	9:30 am
Oct. 21	Board Meeting	10:00 am

All members are welcome to attend Board Meetings. They are held the third week of the month, usually alternating Wednesdays and Saturdays.



Summer shrinks the mighty river,
And has made the small brook deep;
And the light gales faintly quiver
In the dark and shadowy tree.

Small Manuscripts: Almanacs
Hernick's Almanac, 1864

Museum Exhibits

The permanent exhibit "*Ice Harvesting in Oakland County*" is now on display in the Pioneer Museum, and is a fascinating look at a rural and commercial industry that was replaced by refrigeration. Thanks to **Ann Rock** for her creative input and exhibit design, to local artist **Teresa Ehinger** of Tempest Design for her framing design, and to **Jerome Rock** for volunteering his time in creating an ice house out of an exhibit case. Thanks also to the following local historical societies for providing us with photographs: Berkley, Oxford and Waterford. (This activity is supported by the Oakland County Regranting Agency, a program of the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs.)

Another new exhibit, "*Medicine in Oakland County 1837-1937*" is on display in the Research Library. This is a small exhibit spotlighting the variety of artifacts the Society has relating to the history of medicine in the county. From Orrison Allen's homeopathic medicine box to Dr. Bertha Van Hoosen's alligator doctor bag, you can see how medicine has progressed through the years.



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Pontiac, MI 48342
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