



*Governor Moses Wisner Mansion (ca. 1845)*

Vol. 38, No. 2

*The only publication dedicated to the history and heritage of Oakland County*  
Published by THE OAKLAND COUNTY PIONEER & HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
405 CESAR CHAVEZ AVENUE, PONTIAC, MICHIGAN 48342

Summer 2005

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT....

Fellow members, we are facing difficult and challenging times at our Society. We have the beautiful landscape plan that we would like to implement; we have the GM grant to develop plans for a new building that would have comfort facilities, meeting room, exhibit area and a kitchen; however, we do not have the funds to proceed with either project. We need new professional storage shelves in the library, and major painting and repairs to the buildings; however, not enough funds are available for these projects either.

We have a detailed Collection Management Assessment report prepared by Leslie Edwards and Ann Rock that would organize and preserve our unique collection, from antique clothing to rare books and artifacts. A great deal of man-power is needed to proceed, along with additional funds.

Our membership must draw together to focus on the needs of our Society: new and active members; support and participation in our fund-raising events; publicity for our organization; and financial support.

Our Pine Grove complex is often called a little-known gem. This issue of *Gazette* will up-date you on the opportunities for you to get involved and help make the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society a well-known and vibrant organization and a show-place in the community.

## LILLIAN PAULL MEMORIAL GARDEN

The Pontiac Garden Club has recently cleaned out and replanted this memorial garden with plants donated by Goldner Walsh Nurseries. Thank you ladies - and Goldner Walsh - it is beautiful!

## PIONEER SOCIETY EVENTS....

- The *Second Saturday*, July 9 is the date for the next Wisner Mansion tour. In conjunction with the house tour we will have a mini **Used Book sale**. Used books can be dropped off at the carriage house Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 11 am to 4 pm, any time before July 9. All members are encouraged to clean out their bookcases for this event.
- The Board of Directors will meet Saturday, July 16, 2005 at 9:30 am.
- The Pontiac Garden Club is sponsoring a **Garden Tour** on Saturday, July 23, and included is a stop at Pine Grove with tours of the Wisner Mansion and an introduction to our gardens and the new Victorian plan we have for the restoration of our grounds. Tickets are \$12. and are available in the carriage house.
- The *Second Saturday* Wisner Mansion tour date, August 13, will feature a **White Elephant** sale. Please bring your items for donation to the carriage house after the July 9 book sale.
- The OCPHS Board meeting is Wednesday, August 17, at 9:30 am.
- **Arts, Beats & Eats** is scheduled for Labor Day weekend, September 2,3,4,and 5. As in the past, OCPHS is manning a booth, and volunteers are needed for the entire 4-day event.
- **Victorian Christmas** is scheduled for December 11. Hanging of the greens will be December 8 and de-hanging December 16. The Wisner Mansion will be open for tours during the Victorian Christmas week, and tours of schoolchildren and adult organizations are encouraged. **This is our only major fund-raiser for the year and your participation is important.**

### IN MEMORIAM

Virginia Stecker DeBenham Rodgers passed away Thursday, June 16, 2005 at her daughter's home in Augusta, Georgia. Virginia had been an Historic District Commissioner, Trustee of the Franklin Historical Society, a member and docent of the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society. She was a member of the Board of Directors of OCPHS at the time of her death. A memorial service will be held July 23 at 11 am at Franklin Community Church, Franklin. Our thoughts and prayers are with her family.

### COLLECTIONS ASSESSMENT REPORT

This report was prepared by Leslie Edwards and Ann Rock by a grant from Oakland County to assess, evaluate, organize and preserve the holdings of our Society. It encompasses everything from the Wisner Mansion, schoolhouse, other outbuildings, to manuscript collections and antique clothing. Preservation, storage, and organization of materials for ease of access for research and retrieval purposes are covered. When we have time to digest the detailed recommendations, we will determine what projects can be done by staff and volunteers. Then, it will be our responsibility to hire a Collections Manager to over-see the remaining projects, such as inventorying collections, cataloging, and supervision of student interns and volunteers. There is a lot of work ahead of us, and this assessment report points the way to getting control of our collections and preserving them for future generations. Leslie and Ann have done an outstanding job for us and we are truly grateful.

### GIFT SHOP NEWS....

Just in time for Christmas shopping, we will have a mini-gift shop available in the Library of the Carriage House, from September 1 until after Christmas. Among the new gifts are hand-made bird houses for \$10. each, made by **Keith Bennett**; hand-made doll quilts; hand-knitted baby caps; small toys; candles; and a changing variety of merchandise suitable for gifts. Don't forget we have several books for sale, including Charlie Martinez's *Song of the Heron* and Bruce Annett's *Asylum: Pontiac Grand Monument* and Geoff Brieger's *Pontiac, Michigan: A Postcard Album*, and others.

### THANK YOU TO THE PONTIAC POLICE DEPARTMENT

We are inviting all the members of the Pontiac Police Department and their families to a Open House on Saturday, September 10, 2005. They will have free tours of the Wisner House, School House, and Farm Museum. Lemonade and cookies will be served. The local Police have been so good about keeping track of our buildings and grounds, that we felt this would be a way we could thank them.

So, **thank you**, for patrolling our grounds, answering false alarms, responding when we hit the wrong code on entering, and chasing down bats that disturb our security sensors. We are grateful to have you around!

### TOURS FOR ADULTS ARE AVAILABLE....

Letters have been sent to our membership announcing the availability of tours of the Pine Grove complex for adult groups. We urge you to share this information with other organizations to which you belong. Remind them, too, of the Victorian Christmas House tours.

We will be sending flyers to Retirement communities, church fellowship organizations, historical and genealogical societies. If you know of particular groups that should be notified of this opportunity, please call our office with name and address of a contact person.

### DO YOU REMEMBER?

1. head lights dimmer switches on the floor
2. ignition switches on the dashboard
3. heaters mounted on the inside of the fire wall
4. real ice boxes
5. using hand signals for cars without turn signals
6. blackjack chewing gum
7. candy cigarettes
8. home milk delivery in glass bottles with cardboard stoppers
9. peashooters
10. newsreels before the movie
11. metal ice trays with lever
12. roller skate keys



## LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PLAN PRESENTATION

Jim Slezinski of Goldner Walsh Nurseries has presented a landscape plan for the Wisner grounds that takes your breath away. It is based on designs for formal gardens and grounds in the Civil War era. Since Gov. Wisner died young, and was not able to fully implement any plans he might have had for the homestead, we have to assume that this plan would be his dream. The gardens are formal with many trees and small structured gardens. On the south entrance, hydrangea would be at the base of the house, fronted by a boxwood hedge. Tall bright perennials would be planted at the base of the house in front. The plan for the front Promenade starts through a topiary arborvitae arch/gate along a crushed pebble walk defined by clipped boxwood hedges, ending at an oval seating area with benches, a gazing globe or sculpture, surrounded by french hybrid lilacs. There is a formal 19th century-style garden planted with red and gold/yellow annuals. The entrance from the drive to the south entrance of the house would be a memorial walk of brick pavers passing a formal 19th century-style annual garden bordered with 30-inch black wrought iron fencing and an ornate entry gate. A classic-style conservatory would approximate the original one. On the street-side there is a hedge of prickly roses that are of original German stock.

This is a "concept" - and an expensive one, at that. Implementing all of it would make our grounds the show place of the community. It is not an impossible dream. People are volunteering, now, for various projects. The Pontiac Branch of the National Farm and Garden Club have "adopted" the herb garden and are now refurbishing the herbs and planting new, and appropriate plants. We have had an offer to donate lilac bushes to the project. The idea of making the brick walk-way from the drive to the porch a "memorial" walk by selling bricks that can be engraved as memorials or honorariums is being planned, and we have some people ready to buy.

We have not yet decided on how to approach the project completely, but the rose bushes at the street are an appropriate starting place. The rose bushes are *Rugosa Rosa*, with a small pink flower and many thorns. The price would be \$20.00 per bush and 150 are needed to extend from the property line on the north to the driveway on the south. You can "buy" a few roses at any time. They must be ordered soon so they can be planted in the autumn. This initial planting would be a grand start on our master plan. A fund has been started for this project and every \$20. bill would be one step further on this major project.

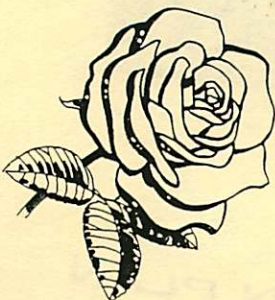
The second major step is the memorial brick walk-way from the drive to the south porch. By purchasing these bricks you can honor anyone, or consider a memorial for our pioneers - and yours. We do not yet have prices, but will let you know before Christmas.

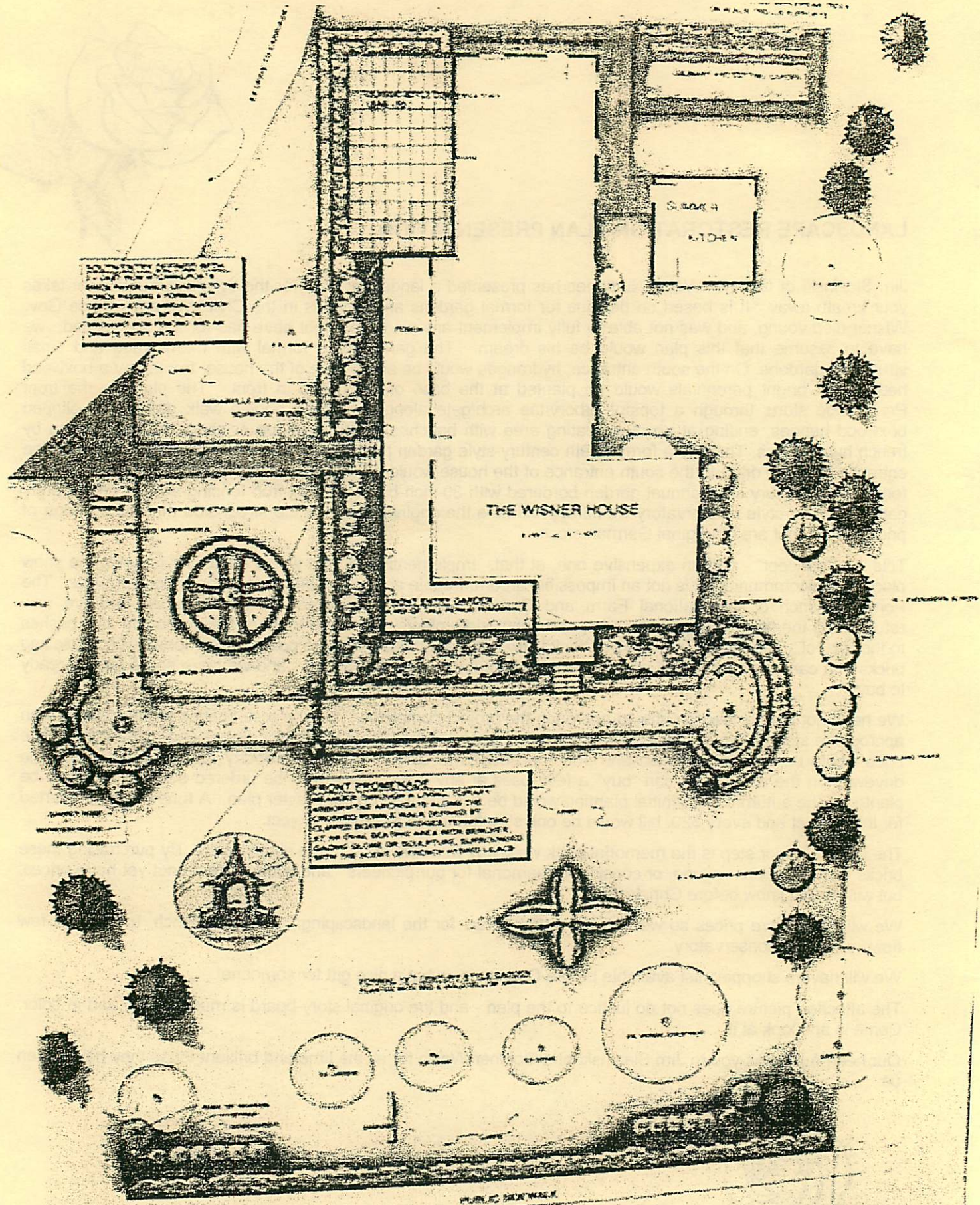
We will soon have prices so we can buy other things for the landscaping: a tree, a bench, fountain, a few flowers, even a conservatory.

We will have a shopping list available before Christmas - what a nice gift for someone!

The attached picture does not do justice to the plan - and the original story-board is much larger, and in color. Come in and look at it.

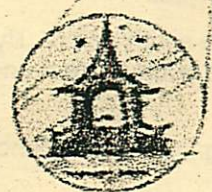
Our heart-felt thank-you to Jim Slezinski and Goldner Walsh for all the time and brilliant ideas they have given us.





TO THE FRONT PORCHENADE WITH  
A GRASSY AREA IN THE CENTER  
AND A WALKWAY LEADING TO THE  
FRONT PORCHENADE. NORMAL PLANT  
MATERIALS AND A SMALL GARDEN  
BED SHOULD BE PLACED IN THE  
CORNER OF THE PORCHENADE.

FRONT PORCHENADE  
REAR PORCHENADE  
THE PORCHENADES SHOULD BE  
DESIGNED AS A SERIES OF  
ARCHWAYS TO ALLOW THE  
CIRCULATION OF AIR AND LIGHT  
TO THE PORCHENADES. THE  
FRONT PORCHENADE SHOULD  
BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC  
SIDEWALK AND THE REAR  
PORCHENADE SHOULD BE  
OPEN TO THE REAR PORCHENADE.



# LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PLAN

## HOW YOU CAN VOLUNTEER....

We need to raise money to keep this organization running, and the events listed Society Notes need the time and energy of all our members.

The Second Saturday Wisner House tours are being supplemented by a book sale in July and White Elephant sale in August. On July 9 we need workers to set up tables and books by 10am, and sellers from then until closing time. We need **6 to 8 volunteers**.

OCPHS Board meetings are open to all members - you do not have to be a member of the Board to attend. Come and visit and learn for yourself what we are trying to accomplish. You may even want to run for the Board yourself! Dates are July 16 and August 17.

The Pontiac Garden Club is sponsoring a garden tour for Saturday, July 23 and Pine Grove is one of the stops. Proceeds from this project will go **Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society** for our gardens! Take the tour - tickets are available in the carriage house. We will need volunteers that day to serve lemonade and cookies and help in the gift shop. Guides will be needed as well. A flyer is enclosed.

The Second Saturday Wisner House tour on August 13 will also feature a white elephant sale. Clean out your closets, basements and attics and donate your "unusables" to our sale. No clothing, please. We need lots of help for this event. Guides, of course, and helpers to set up, monitor and sell merchandise. We will need help from 10 am to at least 3 pm.

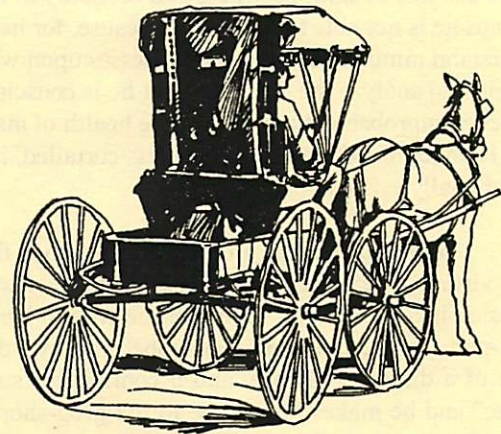
**Arts, Beats and Eats** will be Labor Day week-end. Those of you who have worked on this event in the past know how much work it is, but also how much fun. Sign up again for Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday times. Or all of them!

We are having our Victorian Christmas Open House for the first time in 3 years. We need everyone's help. We have the Hanging of the Greens on December 8 and need workers to decorate the house - inside and out. The Open House is Sunday, December 11 and we need hosts and hostesses, lots of home-made cookies, guides, "go-fers". The Mansion will be open for tours of adult and children's groups during the week of December 12 to 15. Dehanging of decorations will be December 16, and we need help here, also. This is our major fund-raiser of the year - so get involved!

**Members and friends of Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society can sign-up to work at any or all of these events just by calling our office 248.338.6732. Ron Fisher, our Operations Coordinator, has volunteer work-sheets ready for sign-ups.**

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS....

**Fred Boaston**, Wentworth, NH  
**Coralyn Daniels**, Rochester Hills  
**Gina Gregory**, West Bloomfield  
**William R. Hess-Powers**, Clarkston  
**Todd Hunt**, Pontiac  
**Kay Kinnen**, Katy, TX  
**Neil Munro**, Pontiac  
**Dwight Roberts**, Belleville  
**Julie Skeene**, Southfield  
**Chris Voydanoff**, Pontiac



## LIBRARY UPDATE.....

We are pleased to have several volunteers in our library. Joan Hayes, Joan Miller, Donna Mallonen and Diane J. Walker were introduced to you in the last issue of the *Gazette*. Our newest volunteer is **Gottfried Brieger**. Geoff is a retired chemistry professor from Oakland University, whose love of history and interest in Pontiac is apparent. He is currently working on up-dating and organizing our Pontiac notebooks. You may know him from his book *Pontiac, Michigan, A Postcard Album*, which is available for sale in the carriage house. (By the way, this book would be a great Christmas gift for anyone interested in historic Pontiac.)

The library staff is pleased to announce that we have on loan from the Oakland County Genealogical Society, the microfilm of the original Oakland County Marriage Records 1827 - 1919. These are available for research during normal library hours.

## THE COUNTRY KITCHEN 1850

A symmetrical education is extremely rare in this country. Nothing is more common than to see young ladies, whose intellectual attainments are of a high order, profoundly ignorant of the duties which all acknowledge to belong peculiarly to women. Consequently, many have to learn, after marriage, how to take care of a family; and thus their housekeeping is, frequently, little else than a series of experiments; often unsuccessful, resulting in mortification and discomfort in the parlor, and waste and ill temper in the kitchen.

How often do we see the happiness of a husband abridged by the absence of skill, neatness, and economy in the wife! Perhaps he is not able to fix upon the cause, for he does not understand minutely enough the processes upon which domestic order depends, to analyze the difficulty; but he is conscious of discomfort. However improbable it may seem, the health of many a professional man is undermined, and his usefulness curtailed, if not sacrificed, because he habitually eats *bad bread*.



If this subject has a direct bearing upon the health of families, so also does it exert an immediate influence upon their virtue. There are numerous instances of worthy merchants and mechanics, whose efforts are paralyzed, and their hopes chilled by the total failure of the wife in her sphere of duty; and who seek solace under their disappointment in the wine-party, or the late convivial supper. Many a day-laborer, on his return at evening from his hard toil, is repelled by the sight of a disorderly house, and a comfortless supper; and perhaps is met by a cold eye instead of "the thriftie wifie's smile;" and he makes his escape to the grog-shop, or the under-ground gambling room. Can any human agency hinder the series of calamities entailed by these things? No! The most active philanthropy, the best schemes of organized benvolence, cannot furnish a remedy, unless the springs of society are rectified. The domestic influence of women is certainly one of there. Every woman is invested with a great degree of power over the happiness and virtue of others. She cannot escape using it, and she cannot innocently pervert it. There is no avenue or channel or society through which it may not send a salutary influence; and when rightly directed, it is unsurpassed by any human instrumentality in its purifying and restoring efficacy.

Mrs. Cornelius in "The Young Housekeeper's Friend" 1850

In the interest of restoring peaceful harmony in your home, here is a recipe for "Good Bread"

### STONE GROUND CORN BREAD

1 1/2c cornmeal (fresh ground if possible)  
2 c flour  
4 t baking powder  
1 1/2 c sugar  
3 t salt  
4 eggs  
3 c buttermilk  
1 c oil

Combine all ingredients and mix well. Pour into greased loaf pans about half full. Bake at 350 degrees until done to the touch, about 45 minutes to 1 hour.

# MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

## Oakland County Pioneer & Historical Society

405 Cesar Chavez Avenue - Pontiac, Michigan 48342 - 248-338-6732

Yes, I'd/We'd like to join OCPHS!

Memberships are for one year.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Street \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_  
 Check here if gift membership from \_\_\_\_\_

<input type="checkbox"/> Student .....	\$15.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior (65 & Over) .....	\$15.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual .....	\$20.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Couple .....	\$35.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Family (Parents & Children) .....	\$50.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Profit Organization .....	\$20.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Patron .....	\$75.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor .....	\$150.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Sponsor .....	\$500.00

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

### Oakland County Pioneer & Historical Society

(Send to the above address)

Contributions and bequests to the Society, including memorials, assure the continuing resotation 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.

#### Memorials and donations....

to Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society are one way to honor past and present members who have made a difference in your life. The enclosed letter from Gale and Connie Scafe honors such friends. With her permission, part of Connie's letter is printed.

*These are people that most of you never knew or met. They were all very important to me when I started to work in 1970.*

*In memory of:*

**Marge Ruslander** - she was a very active Board member and excellent guide. She gave me my first lessons in guiding. She backed me on many of my projects and I much appreciated her help.

**Mary Green** - she was a Board Member who ran our small store. She tried very hard to get approval of other Board Members to increase the stock in the store. At that time we sold only slides, post cards, rulers and pencils. It was a struggle to get approval to sell anything else.

**Ellen Rice** - an excellent guide and Board Member. She took part in the fire prevention lessons I organized. The Fire Department came over and gave us hands-on demonstrations on safety and use of our fire extinguishers. Ellen worked on all phases of the Victorian Open House, including guiding and decorating. She was invaluable and a great help to me.

**Lottie Hudson** - I relied on her a great deal. She and her husband headed the committee to restore the privy. She had fun with that one. She was on the Victorian Open House group at the very first Christmas festival, and stood with a bucket of water as the candles were lit on the tree. She was very special to me.

*In honor of:*

**Ernestine Williams** - she was one of our hardest working guides. She lived in Holly and willingly drove to Pontiac when we had tours. I recall asking her to guide three days in succession. She was always ready to help me whenever she could.

**Mary Vogt** - She took over our store from Mary Green when she retired. She kept it stocked with items that reflected the era of the house. We sold everything from doll heads to whimmey-diddles. She served tirelessly on decorating the property for the Victorian Open House.

Connie Lektzian Scafe wrote a local history column "Another Day" for the Clarkston News for many years..



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ocphs@wwnet.net

<http://wwnet.net/~ocphs/index.html>

*PRESERVATION OF THE PAST  
FOR THE ENRICHMENT OF  
FUTURE GENERATIONS*

## MUSEUM AND LIBRARY HOURS

TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY

11 am - 4 pm

Please call before coming

WISNER HOUSE TOURS

by appointment

GROUPS WELCOME

CALL FOR INFORMATION

248-338-6732

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