

Vol. 41, No. 3

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

September 2008

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

I would like to begin by thanking the many volunteers who worked very hard to make *A Day at Pine Grove* a success. The weather was great and the many displays and music were wonderful. Over 200 people attended this event and all enjoyed the day. I owe a special thanks to several people for their hard work: Kitty Daggy, my co-chair; Nancy Duffield for her design work; Guy Duffield and Mike West for the car display; Jan and Kimberly Bell for their work in making the house presentable; Judy Hudalla and Scott Tupper for general assistance in everything that had to be done; and my wife, Gayle, for her help in weeding, trimming and cleaning the grounds. Thanks, too, to Mary Connell who handled all the publicity for this event. Without these great volunteers we could not have done any of this.

Also, a team of volunteers worked our booth at the *Arts, Beats and Eats* again this year. Judy Hudalla did a great job, as usual, in getting the workers for that very long weekend. Once again my thanks go to the many people who donated their time.

Success is measured in different ways. Financial success is the bottom line, of course; but I also measure it by the team work, attitude, and commitment of the many volunteers it takes to make our organization work. I am very proud to work with each and every one of you. Keep up the great work.

Mike Willis

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

FRIENDS OF OCPHS

Nancy & Guy Duffield
Florine Isgrigg Galbraith
Jo & Larry Pate

BENEFACTORS

Miriam Foxman
Byron Stout III, of Wichita, KS

PATRONS

Beatrice Catherino Jeffery C. Clark
Ann & Richard Irwin Vivian Eddy
Bob & Leigh Sowles Nancy Scott
Corydon & Marian Randall
Mr. & Mrs. Fritz Troff
Pontiac Regional Chamber

NEW MEMBERS

Dick & Debbie Anderson - Waterford
Fred Lieberman - Rochester

2009 CALENDAR AVAILABLE

The 2009 calendar is ready. It has 12 photographs of historical places, cars and events, including four entries by other county historical societies: Birmingham, Northeast Oakland County, Ferndale and Rochester. The calendar price is \$10 when picked up at our office or \$12 if mailed to you. If you wish to order on-line you can do so at www.ocphs.org and pay by PayPal.

OAKLAND COUNTY PIONEER AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2009 CALENDAR



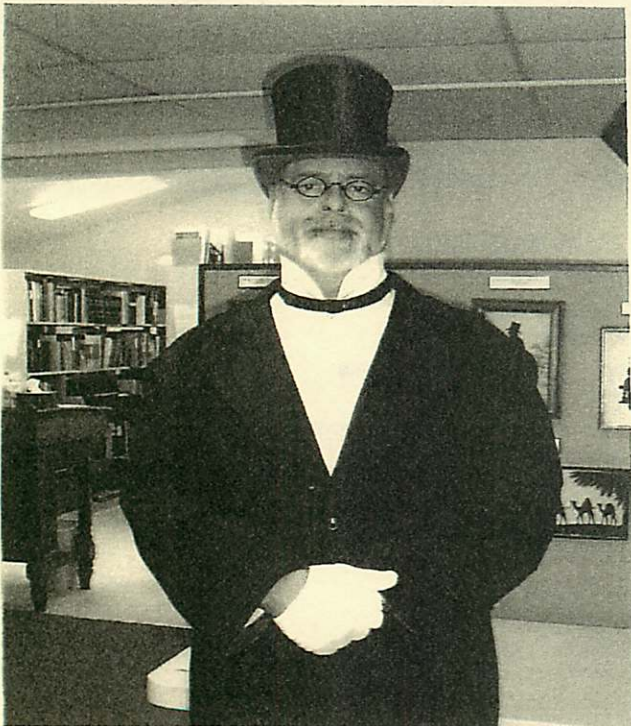
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A DAY AT PINE GROVE A SUCCESS!

Sunday, August 17, the day after the Dream Cruise, was the day for the summer event at *Pine Grove Center*. The Creative Anachronists were busy demonstrating their handicrafts: tatting, weaving, bobbin lace making, wood carving, butter making. Nancy Peters displayed her array of quilts in the schoolhouse; Miriam Foxman, our jolly schoolmarm kept the young 'uns in line in the schoolhouse, as well. Mike Willis grilled hot dogs for lunch, and Barbara Irwin served cake and ice cream for dessert. The Church Street Singers entertained on the schoolhouse front steps, and the Celebration Barbershoppers roamed the grounds with their four-part harmony. There were 12 wonderful classic cars on display, from an Oakland car to Neil Armstrong's parade car. A representative from DuMouchelle Galleries helped with antique appraisals, and silhouettes were created by Bonnie Brede. The Wisner house, farm museum, and other out-buildings were explored by our guests. Chauncey Costello and his father Chan, Pierce and Chase Hamburg and their father Dan, of Boy Scout Troop # 1005, of Bloomfield Hills helped with set-up and take-down of tables, chairs, and tents.

We had a surprise visitor, as well! Moses Wisner, in person, was here throughout the day and he spent some of his time in his house and talked to children and adults about his life at Pine Grove and his experiences as governor of Michigan. We are grateful to Brian Golden for bringing him to us. We are going to see much more of Governor Wisner (and Brian) in the coming months.



The Governor's frockcoat was made for him by Alla of Tailor King of

ANOTHER GREAT TOUR

Our guides were kept busy when the *Camp Phoenix* youngsters, sponsored by the Pontiac schools and the local YMCA, visited this summer. School buses came in waves, and 171 young boys and girls descended on us. They had a brief look at the Wisner house, shook their heads in disbelief at the schoolhouse, peeked in the root cellar, summer kitchen and privy. Their favorite place seemed to be the farm museum. This was their first look at a washboard, pitch fork, ice saw and butter churn. The punt gun was the most impressive item – they couldn't believe its size, and the fact that few people could lift it alone.



We were pleased to introduce them to their great grandparents' world; however, our guides were exhausted. Thanks to all who helped: Kitty Daggy, Miriam Foxman, Nancy Duffield, Rodger Zeller, Todd Irish, Jan Bell, Mike West, Judy Hudalla, Mike & Gayle Willis, and Richard Stamps.

CIVIL WAR REMEMBRANCE

Early this year officials from the Lorenzo Cultural Center and the Macomb Community College visited Pine Grove and met with Charlie Martinez, Society Historian. Their quest was the loan of certain items from our collection for display in the planned "Michigan's Fight for Freedom: The Civil War Era" program. Eleven items were selected for the February 27th through May 4th exhibit. Martinez prepared background information on the artifacts which included a sword and scabbard once owned by Capt. Almeron S. Matthews who served with Col. Moses Wisner's 22nd Michigan Infantry Regiment. Among the other objects were the famous Chickamauga log, a battle-scarred relic from that bloody 1863 battlefield; and a wooden crutch used by D.S. Howard, three-time Pontiac Mayor who was wounded in the Battle of South Mountain, Maryland. As Educational Sponsors of this event our Society joined the ranks of such prestigious institutions as: the Michigan Historical Museum, Library of Congress, National Archives and Records Administration, and the Smithsonian Institution.

OUR NEW GARDENS

Jim Slezinski of Goldner Walsh Garden & Home has again transformed an unsightly bit of land into beautiful gardens. Our new entrance to the carriage house was bordered by sparse plantings and unsightly ground cover. Overnight, Jim and his crew from the nursery transformed the gardens with bright flowering bushes, small trees and colorful flowers. All plantings are appropriate to the Victorian era. They include: A native tree called *Juneberry*, a white fringe tree sometimes called the "*Old Man's Beard*" due to its appearance; the ornamental shrub hydrangea called *Annabelle*; a dwarf Korean lilac imported to America in the early 20th century; viburnum called *Blue Muffin* because of the berry-like groups that form in the fall; fragrant sumac, a sprawling low-growing shrub; an everblooming shrub rose (the same as the hedge of roses street-side); a red *Buckeye* tree that attracts hummingbirds; and, *Carefree Beauty* and *Double Knockout* rose bushes.

The gardens are beautiful now and they will be beautiful in every season of the year. Stop by and smell the flowers.

Jim Slezinski – thank you, and your team, again.

LULA C. WILSON COMMUNITY OUTREACH GRANT

We are pleased to report that our grant application to the Lula C. Wilson Trust was approved in full. Our proposal was designed to increase exposure for OCPHS, foster community involvement, and help cover operating costs. We will use the funds to support and improve our website, our quarterly newsletter, and our Sunday small talk programs, and to offer family passes for our community events in order to introduce Pine Grove to more members of the community. We thank the Wilson Trust for their continued support of OCPHS and our programs.

MCGREGOR FAMILY GIFTS TO OCPHS

OCPHS has received a generous Endowment gift from Colonel George F. McGregor of North Carolina, brother of long-time board member and volunteer, Jean McGregor Milton. The McGregor Endowment was given in memory of Mary Ellen Wood and George B. Austin, Fannie Austin and Frank McGregor, Jean McGregor Milton and the William Beech Family, and their descendants, the English family who settled in Rochester, Michigan in 1836 and began this lineage in Oakland County.

Another of Col. McGregor's relatives, Mrs. Marilyn Taylor Zavorski of Massachusetts, has forwarded extensive genealogical information for our library. Family names include Beech (sometimes spelled Beach), Hersey, Yates, Woods, LeRoy, Austin, McGregor, Taylor, Zavorski, and Hall, with some research extending as far back as the 1600s!

As an Endowment, the principal of Col. McGregor's donation will remain intact, while the earnings on the invested gift will provide operating support for Pine Grove. We are grateful for these important financial and genealogical gifts, and for the lasting impact they will have in preserving Oakland County's history.

SOCIETY EVENTS FOR 2009

The scheduled events for 2009 are all outlined in the new calendar, but here are some details:

We are planning three *Small Talks* for this coming year. Each will be on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, last for about an hour, followed by cookies and coffee. Each program will be a welcome outing for a wintery afternoon.

Sunday, January 18: SMALL TALK

Dale Kutche, a teacher in Waterford, will share items and stories from his extensive collection of military artifacts, including books, photographs, weapons, uniforms and hats, covering military history from the War of 1912 through the early twentieth century.

Saturday, February 14: SMALL TALK

Richard Stamps will present an *Update on the Oliver Williams Project*. Oliver Williams was a pioneer of Waterford, and the search is on to find his original farmstead.

Sunday, March 15: SMALL TALK

Bruce Annett will present *Small Wheels, Big Fun*. Almost as quickly as the new-fangled automobiles filled our streets, scaled down versions became popular toys for boys and girls. In recent years scale model vehicles have attracted a growing adult market. Come and hear how you can start or expand your own collection.

Saturday, April 18: SPRING FLING

We have arranged with Goldner/Walsh for a program by their horticulturalist, Joel Miller, who is preparing a special talk about the plantings at the Pine Grove Center, followed by a tour of their greenhouses. This is a perfect time to see all the flowers in bloom. The program will be from 11 am to 1 pm. Save the date.

Saturday, May 16: OCPHS ANNUAL MEETING

Leslie Edwards will be our speaker. New directors and officers will be elected. All our members are invited to attend and to vote for Board of Directors members. Guests are encouraged to attend our meeting and enjoy our program.

Wednesday, June 17: LUNCH WITH BOARD OF DIRECTORS

This is the regular date for a Board of Directors meeting. We are inviting all our members and friends to come to this meeting and join us for a

pot-luck lunch following the meeting, to meet the board members, ask questions and find out what we do.

Saturday, July 18: CITY GARDEN TOUR

The Pontiac Garden Club sponsors this annual event and OCPHS is pleased to be on the tour. Visit the beautiful gardens in the Pontiac area, then relax with lemonade and cookies at our Pine Grove and see our gardens and visit the Wisner House which will be open for tours.

August: ANNUAL FUND-RAISING EVENT

Date and programs not determined at this time.

September 4,5,6,7: ARTS, BEATS & EATS

October: WALKING TOUR OF OAK HILL CEMETERY

This event will be co-sponsored with the Pontiac Garden Club. Date is not determined.

November: SMALL TALK

To be announced

December: VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS

Mark your calendars and plan on joining us.

We regret to announce the death of Mary Wessels, a resident of West Bloomfield and a long-time member of OCPHS. She was a retired teacher and librarian with the Pontiac Public Schools and a research librarian for our society for many years. Mary died August 8, 2008.

NEW LISTING OF OCPHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Amy Annett – Waterford	(Treasurer)
Bruce Annett – Waterford	
Janice Bell – Waterford	
Kimberly Bell – Macomb	
Kathryn Daggy – Auburn Hills	(Secretary)
Guy Duffield – Waterford	(2 nd Vice President)
Gaylor Forman – Bloomfield Hills	
Miriam Foxman – Keego Harbor	
Brian Golden – Farmington	
Judith Hudalla – Waterford	
Barbara Irwin – Waterford	
Annalee Kennedy – Sylvan Lake	
Charles Martinez – West Bloomfield	
Joan Pate – Bloomfield Hills	
Corydon Randall – Bloomfield Hills	
James Slezinski – Lake Orion	
Michael West – Bloomfield Hills	(1 st Vice President)
Michael Willis – Pontiac	(President)
Fran Wilson – Bloomfield	
Rodger K. Zeller – Waterford	

Eleanor E. Borkenhagen of Huntington Beach, California has sent some obituaries of people who had roots in the Pontiac area. Anyone interested in having any of these notices, please contact our office.

Conrad E. Elck, born Sep 23, 1936 in Royal Oak – died Oct 21, 2007 (Orange Co. Register)

G. Nelson Fizzard, born Jun 27, 1932 in Pontiac – died May 18, 2007 in Phoenix, AZ

Alfred Robert Mancini, born Ferndale – died Dec 28, 2006 (Orange Co. Register)

Jim Fullmer, born Oct 14, 1951 in Royal Oak – died Feb 22, 2007 in Santa Monica, CA

Alice Helen Wolf, born Aug 27, 1926 in Pontiac – died Oct 30, 2006 Santa Ana, CA

CONSIDER A CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP

Our Pine Grove Center is a destination of interest in Oakland County. The Gov. Moses Wisner Home and grounds are important to the history of the city of Pontiac, county of Oakland and state of Michigan. We encourage businesses in Pontiac and the surrounding county to contribute to the care, upkeep and improvement of our buildings and grounds. As we are sure you know, older buildings require a great deal of work to keep in good repair, and the maintenance of the gardens and grounds is constant and costly. We invite your yearly sponsorship of \$500 to benefit the Wisner legacy. Each new sponsorship will have a business-card size announcement in the next four issues of the *Oakland Gazette*.

Visit our facility and see what we have to offer. Call our office and ask for Amy for more information. 248.338.6732.

THE CENTRAL SCHOOL BELL

The school bell from the Central School has had a prominent location on the grounds of the Pioneer society for several years.

In 1820 Pontiac was settled. The first schoolhouse was a frame building erected in 1824, and was soon followed by three district schools – a red brick one at the corner of Auburn and Parke; the second on Mt. Clemens street near the entrance to Oak Hill Cemetery; and a third where the Episcopal church stands on Pike street.

In 1844 an Educational Society was founded and in 1849 the "Old Union" school was built on the site now occupied by Central School on Pike Street at the corner of *The Loop* (Woodward Avenue).

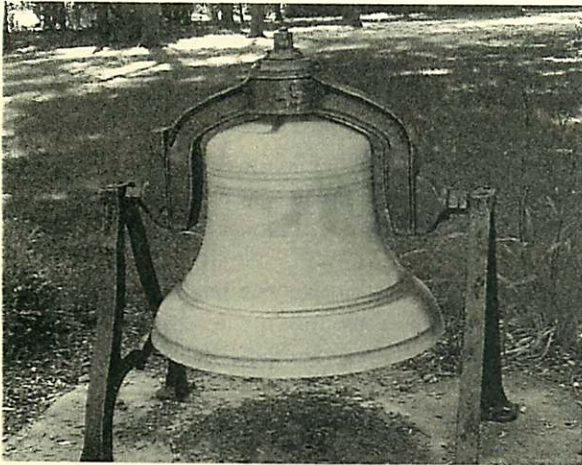
The school bell was purchased from the Meneely Bell Company, Troy, New York for \$200. It was hung in the belfry of the Central school about 1854.

It rang at 8:30 every morning – ½ hour after St. Frederick's bell rang. The principal, Mrs. Marian Hinkley was instructed sometime early in 1950 to discontinue letting it be rung because the scaffolding that held was getting weak. Sometime later it was taken down and discarded under Wisner stadium. Mrs. Hinkley was not notified of the removal of the bell. When she found out about the missing bell, she and two of her teachers went to the stadium, investigated, and when she was told what poor shape the bell was in, she demanded it be cleaned up and placed in the front entrance of the school, where it was still standing at the 70th anniversary of the school, in 1965.

When Central school was no longer to be used as an elementary school, the bell was transported to Wisner House. It was too heavy for the floor of the schoolhouse where it was to be placed, so the Michigan Society, Children of the American Revolution donated the funds for the mounting on which it now stands.

The dedication of the new home for the Central School Bell was held on August 7, 1983.

The clapper for the bell has never been found, but if you go to the Pine Grove Center to see the bell in person, just pat it gently with your hand, and it will sing softly for you.



(Sadly, the old Central school now has a "for sale" sign in front of it.)

FROM THE NEWSPAPERS....

Pontiac Daily Gazette – January 21, 1896:

A new law in Georgia says that a woman's earnings shall be her own. Have husbands no rights?

The oldest flute in the world is made of the thigh bone of a sheep and was found in a tomb on the Nile.

Pontiac Gazette – July 4, 1890:

Arrangements have been made whereby the *Gazette* and the *Detroit Weekly Tribune* can be secured for one year for \$1.50.

L. March, living near Holly, has a cow that is the mother of four calves within eleven months.

D.L. Davis has the exclusive sale for Pontiac of the celebrated W.B. "Marguerite" corset, which he will sell for one week at 69 cents. Sold everywhere for \$1.00.

Elliott's drug store is now furnished with an all night electric light, electric night bell, and a competent Registered Pharmacist to attend to the wants of those who may need medicine. Prescriptions at any time of night.

Bert North and Nate Hickey, one day this week caught a pickerel that weighed 15 pounds.

Pontiac Gazette – January 22, 1892:

R.J. Lounsbury is having stone drawn for a fine new residence on Andrews street. It will occupy the present site.

Miss Edith Cook is quite sick with the grippe.

Henry Whipple, of Novi, has captured seven foxes this winter.

The mortuary list thus far for this year is unusually heavy, largely among the invalid and old age classes. The prevailing cause of sickness and death is influenza.

Pontiac Gazette – Friday, August 15, 1879:

The damaged spire of the Congregational church, caused by the recent tornado, has been torn down. A more modern and less lofty pinnacle, of the Gothic order of architecture, is to take its place. C.M. Prall, builder, has the job.

Seymour Smith, for several years manager of the Hodges House, has severed his connection therewith, and is about to take possession of the Union House, at Oxford.

Charles L. Fish has our thanks for a sample of superior Lawton blackberries. They were fully ripe and very large.

The *Gazette* has been designated as the paper in which to be published the annual list of lands for sale for taxes, in Oakland County.

OAKLAND COUNTY ITEMS IN 1819 PHILADELPHIA NEWSPAPER

by Bruce J. Annett, Jr.

Oakland will be home to a “numerous and happy society of mechanics and farmers,” predicted 1819 newspaper

A rare 1819 Philadelphia newspaper that includes a report on Oakland County's attributes for settlers and announces Pontiac's selection as the seat of government for Oakland County has been donated to the Society.

The report appeared in the May 31, 1819 edition of the *Philadelphia Weekly Aurora* and enthusiastically describes Oakland's potential for “mechanics and farmers.” The article appeared very early in the migration of easterners to the Michigan Territory, predating both Michigan statehood and the opening of Erie Canal. Col. Stephen Mack and 14 associates had founded Pontiac just six months prior to the appearance of the *Aurora's* report.

The source of the *Aurora* article was a posting from the *Detroit Gazette* that had appeared earlier that spring. The *Gazette* article or a transcription of it made its way to Philadelphia where it gained the attention of the editors of the *Aurora*, who determined that news from what was then America's western frontier would be of sufficient interest to their readers to carry in their paper. There were only some 300 residents in all of Oakland County at the time.

The *Aurora/Gazette* article also references the 1818 expedition in which the observations of Rev. John Montieth and several other Detroit business leaders corrected federal surveys done in 1815-16 that had concluded the entire region was a swampy quagmire. The Monteith expedition's report, recounted in the November 13, 1818 *Gazette*, reversed and repudiated the earlier federal surveys that had led Congress to recommend that most land bounties for veterans be offered in territories other than Michigan.

The dissemination of such news about Oakland County's true attributes to population centers in the east would have considerable affect on settlement patterns. In some areas of the county, for example, within the next several decades about a third of the new pioneer families would be former residents of New York state.

The new Oakland County was split off from Macomb County that had been formed in 1817. (Michigan's first county, Wayne, was created in 1815.) Until surrounding areas to the north and west had sufficient population, Oakland was the administrative and judicial seat for nearly a third of the lower peninsula, and would not be reduced to its current size until 1836.

Benjamin Franklin Bache (1769-98), the grandson of Benjamin Franklin and heir to his printing equipment, founded the *Aurora*. Bache was a fervent anti-federalist who advocated stronger state governments, and was a frequent critic of President Washington. Upon his death during a yellow fever epidemic, the paper was taken over by his widow, Margaret, and others.

The first printing press had not arrived in the Michigan Territory until 1809. Territorial governor Lewis Cass encouraged the founding of the *Detroit Gazette* in 1817 by eastern journalists Ebenezer Reed and John Sheldon, according to Willard Carl Klunder, who authored *Lewis Cass and the Politics of Moderation*. The *Gazette* was Detroit's first newspaper of importance, and it published until 1830, said William Stocking and Gordon Miller, authors of *City of Detroit, Michigan, 1701-1922*.

Bruce Annett purchased the May 31, 1819 issue of the *Aurora* recently via auction and donated it to the Society.

The *Aurora* article's text in full, follows:

PHILADELPHIA WEEKLY AURORA

Vol. 10 (sic) No. XV, Page 117

May 31, 1819

From the *Detroit Gazette*

Pontiac – The commissioners appointed by governor Cass, to select the site for a seat of justice in the county of Oakland, after having explored the country, have unanimously decided that Pontiac is the most eligible point.

This place is owned by a company of gentlemen residing in this city, and is laid out into convenient village lots of 60 feet front by 140 in depth -- the main streets are 100 feet in width and the cross streets 60. It is 25 miles from Detroit, in a northwesterly direction, and situated on the river Huron of St. Clair [today the Clinton River], which bends around the site, embracing the south and west sides.

The Huron in consequence of its descent and the elevation of its banks, furnishes at the village excellent mill seats and other privileges, and it is with no small degree of satisfaction we state that exertions are now making by the company to erect a grist and saw mill. Several good sites for mills can be found on the river Huron, below Pontiac, and as it takes its rise from several small lakes, it is not, like most streams, subject to freshets [a sudden overflow or flooding] or want of water. In a westerly direction, about two miles distant from Pontiac, commences the chain of small and beautiful lakes, a description of which was given in the report of an exploring party, and published in this paper eight or ten weeks ago. The country that surrounds Pontiac, and in the vicinity of the lakes, is very inviting to the farmer; it may truly be called the first quality of wheat land, and resembles very much the celebrated wheat land in the western part of the state of New York, commonly called the Genesee country. An advantage, the want of which furnishes a great objection to many good tracts, is possessed by the land which has been offered for sale in this territory, which is, that of having numerous springs and brooks of clear and wholesome water. The small lakes above mentioned without, we believe, a single exception, have gravel bottoms, are of the best water, have high and beautiful banks, and, what renders them more inviting, they contain myriads of excellent fish.

A road, opening a communication to this excellent portion of the country, is already cut, and waggons (sic) have passed five miles beyond Pontiac on the Sagana [Saginaw] trail. A contract has been made by the territorial government, assisted by a few liberal and spirited individuals, to complete a turnpike the ensuing season, on the most difficult part of the road laid out by the commissioners from Detroit to Pontiac.

By associations, such as the Pontiac company, much good can be done and many facilities afforded to the settlement of this territory, which could not be embraced in the exertions of individuals not acting in concert. Mills, which may be considered as the buds which bloom into villages in new countries, can be soon erected, and the purchasers liberally credited, and the mechanic and the farmer better encouraged and supported. The gentlemen composing the above company, for their exertions, which will doubtless result in much good to the community at large deserve the best wishes of every friend to the interests of the territory; and it is not we think, a random assertion to say, that they will live to see a numerous and happy society of mechanics and farmers heap benedictions upon their heads, for being instrumental in placing them in the village of Pontiac and its beautiful vicinity.

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**OAKLAND COUNTY PIONEER &
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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FUTURE GENERATIONS**

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Oakland County Pioneer & Historical Society

Name _____

Street _____ Apt. No _____

City/State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

E-mail _____

☐ Check here if gift membership from: _____

**MEMBERSHIPS ARE FOR ONE YEAR, FROM JULY 1
TO JULY 1 OF EACH YEAR.**

☐ Student.....\$15.00
☐ Individual.....\$20.00
☐ Family (children under 18).....\$35.00
☐ Non-Profit organizations..... \$20.00
☐ Patron..... \$100.00
☐ Benefactor..... \$200.00
☐ Friends of OCPHS..... \$500.00
☐ Corporate Sponsor..... \$500.00

Check desired membership category and enclose
with this application and check or money order
made payable to Oakland County Pioneer &
Historical Society and mail to above address.

