



The only publication dedicated to the history and heritage of Oakland County

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THE OAKLAND COUNTY PIONEER AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
405 Cesar E. Chavez Avenue Pontiac, Michigan 48342

July 2011

LETTER FROM MIKE WEST, PRESIDENT



Summer has brought a new wave of activity to OCPHS. We have been very involved with events supporting Pontiac's Sesquicentennial. On June 18th, Pine Grove was one of the destinations on the Rotary Club Bike Tour; July 16th we will be on the Pontiac Garden Club's Historic Home and Garden Tour.

The Sesquicentennial Committee has organized a series of Symposia with the intention of developing a plan for the future of Pontiac. Geoff Brieger, one of our members, is very involved with this activity. The first Symposium was June 25th at Baker College. Two speakers, one from Pittsburgh, PA and the other from Youngstown, OH talked about the actions their cities are taking to ensure their future. I especially enjoyed the lead slide shown by Jay Williams, Mayor of Youngstown. It said "First You Need a Vision, Then You Need a Plan." That was exactly the process that Detroit Executive Service Corps led us through in developing the OCPHS Strategic Plan and what enabled us to achieve a banner 2010.

This June saw Ray Henry and Bill Powers launch the roof replacement work on the Wisner House. The masonry work was just completed and the roofer will now begin. Many thanks to Ray and Bill for the tremendous amount of work they have contributed to this job. Thanks also to the many OCPHS members and friends whose donations enabled us to get this work started.

In closing, I would like to make you all aware that the great effort, work and contribution so many of you have given will soon be noted with prestigious recognition. The Waterford Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) nominated OCPHS to their National Association for their Historic Preservation Recognition Award. We just received notice that our nomination, out of many candidates, was accepted and we will be one of the few Historical Societies to receive this Award. What a great honor, thanks to all of you!

See you all at the Summer Social, Saturday, July 30th 12 – 5 p.m. Fred and Anne Liimatta are managing the Rummage Sale and will be accepting your household donations starting July 1st (248-931-3583).
Best Regards, Mike West

SUMMER ICE CREAM SOCIAL: JULY 30, 2011

By Mary Connell

This summer's theme is *Rally Round the Flag* and with the flag pole fixed (thanks to Bruce Annett, his daughter Katie, and an anonymous donor who provided funds for parts and eventually an entirely new pole), we can indeed rally round the flag.



As this year is the beginning of the Civil War Sesquicentennial, we are planning a grand event! We need everyone's help to accomplish our ambitious goals of 400 attendees, \$5,000 profit, and 20 new members!

How can you help? See page 3

CIVIL WAR MAP UNVEILED AT PINE GROVE

From the porch of the Wisner House on a beautiful April morning, county executive L. Brooks Patterson unveiled a new map in a series highlighting county history: *Oakland County in the Civil War*.



With assistance from costumed reenactors, L. Brooks Patterson reveals the new Civil War map from the Wisner House porch.

OCPHS provided information for the map, which was produced by the county's Department of Planning & Economic Development. Melissa Luginski, a new board member, was extensively involved in compiling research for the map. Copies are available for \$20 through the county and will be offered at our Summer Social as well.

Continued on page 2

CIVIL WAR MAP UNVEILED

Continued from page 1

Union soldiers and ladies on the Wisner porch



OCPHS President Mike West mused that the gathering may have been similar 150 years ago, when Moses Wisner prepared to lead the 22nd MI regiment to battle.

Fellows dressed as Union soldiers and ladies in 19th century attire looked on as Mr. Patterson spoke about the map and the importance of preserving the county's history.

Asante Danquah as a Union drummer



Brian Golden, president Mike West, county executive L. Brooks Patterson, and members Mike and Ellen Zehnder at the map ceremony April 21.



PONTIAC HOME AND GARDEN TOUR JULY 16

The Pontiac Garden Club and the Pontiac Historic District Commission will host a city-wide tour of gardens and historic homes, including the Wisner House, on Saturday July 16. *The Hidden Treasures of Pontiac* will be a colorful walk into the past amid summer's blooms and blossoms. It is a special event during the city of Pontiac's 150th anniversary celebration, where guests may explore wonderful gardens along with homes dating from before the Civil War to Pontiac's economic heyday of the 1920s. Docents wearing period clothing will greet and inform participants of the rich history of the city. Included is a complimentary tea at Seneca Street hosted by Grace Centers of Hope, and an Ice Cream Social at the Murphy House, a premier bed and breakfast. Tickets are \$18 in advance and \$20 the day of the event. They may be purchased now at Goldner Walsh Nursery, Detroit Garden Works, and the Pontiac Creative Arts Center. For more information contact Rick David at 248-766-4817.

TIME TO RENEW!

For most members, July 1 marks the date to renew annual membership dues with the Society. Dues provide a key part of our yearly income—funding that makes our programs, events, mailings, and on-going operation possible.

Not sure if your dues are due? Your membership card or the label on this *Gazette* may show your status, or contact us and we'll check for you. We have about 325 members in good standing, but we're also carrying quite a few folks whose memberships lapsed a while ago, and whose subscription to the *Gazette* will end with this issue. We hope *everyone* will choose to renew and to remain a part of OCPHS.

Membership renewals will be good until July 1, 2012. An easy way to provide additional help is to upgrade your membership to a higher category (individual to family, family to patron, etc.) or to add a donation to your dues payment.

If you are already paid for the coming year, why not pass the enclosed reply envelope on to someone you know? Current members are our best ambassadors: Invite a friend to join, or give the gift of membership!

Please take a moment now to respond using the enclosed envelope, or to renew on-line via the convenient membership link on our website, www.ocphs.org. Thank you for your loyal support!

SUMMER SOCIAL: HOW YOU CAN HELP

Continued from page 1



1) Bake a cake or two and drop off at the Carriage House Saturday after 9 am.

2) Help set up tents, tables and chairs at 9 a.m. We are planning on having Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Beecher Stowe and Governor Moses Wisner speak from the porch veranda. We need 50-60 chairs set up on the lawn in front of the veranda. Tables and chairs need to be set up for relaxation and eating in the food area. We have a special treat with Allen Grund, "The Would Man" who will entertain with his original Civil War songs on guitar.

3) We need someone with assist with picking up tables and chairs from the Chief Pontiac Federal Credit Union Thursday or Friday around 10 a.m. (requires stairs), store them and bring them over to Pine Grove on Saturday. Also, someone to help **reload the truck and return them** to the Credit Union on Monday.

4) Plan to be at the Social at 4:30 to assist with take down and closure.

5) Help with food, beverages, and trash: Trash cans need to be labeled and set out. Empty pop can receptacles need to be labeled. Pop and water need to be placed in coolers and iced. Food areas need to be set up. Hot dogs need to begin cooking. Help keep food and drink flowing throughout the day.

6) How about working the Welcome table, telling new people about OCPHS and encouraging them to join. Matching funds for new memberships are still available. Hand out programs and tell attendees about the afternoon's activities.

7) Dress in period attire and act as a docent. You don't need experience. We will supply a costume and info on your assigned location.

8) Serve as parking lot attendants and security people to assist with flow of traffic in and out, assist handicapped persons, and to provide security help for the White Elephant Sale.

9) Assist with placement of signage for activities and with directing attendees

10) You can be so helpful in advertising and encouraging attendance. Make copies of the enclosed flyer and give to your friends, relatives and neighbors. Pass the word via email or Facebook. Word of mouth is the best advertising!

11) Donate items for the white elephant sale. Clear your home of unwanted goods and we'll sell them at the Social! You may drop them off at the Carriage House during business hours, or call Fred Liimatta at 248-931-3583 and he'll pick them up!

As you can see, help is needed in every area. Please call 248-338-6732 and leave a message, or send an email to www.ocphs.org. We will reply as soon as possible. Hope to hear from you soon and see you at the Summer Social July 30, noon - 5!

Sponsorships are available in \$25, \$50, \$75 or \$100 dollar increments. They provide an extra level of support. Sponsors are listed in the event program and receive complimentary admission.

Tickets (\$5 per person, \$10 family up to 5 people) will be available at the gate. (No additional mailing will be made before the event).

Active duty military personnel and their families (up to 5 people) are admitted free of charge through our participation in the Blue Star Museum program.



NEW EVENT: ANTIQUE/COLLECTIBLE AUCTION

This year we will auction some special items on the evening before the Summer Social. These items have been donated for the auction, culled from our collections as duplicates, or simply not in keeping with our collection focus. The auction will be held in the Drayton Plains One Room School House:

FRIDAY EVENING, JULY 29
PREVIEW: 6 – 7 p.m.
AUCTION: 7 p.m.
SEATING LIMITED – REFRESHMENTS
ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT OCPHS!

REMEMBERING THE ENLISTED MAN

By Ray Henry

By now, most history-conscious Americans are aware of the celebration of the sesquicentennial of the Civil War. On April 12, 1861, the war that pitted brother against brother, American against American, began with the shots fired on Fort Sumter. The American Civil War consisted of more than 50 major battles and 5,000 minor battles. Over 360,000 Union soldiers and 260,000 Confederate soldiers died, and many more were wounded. In addition, as many as 100,000 civilians died. Just about every family in America had someone in the war, and about one out of every four soldiers participating in the struggle died. The names of the generals and the officers who fought in the Civil War have been woven into the fabric of our national legend, and the streets, avenues, and boulevards we navigate today bear their names. But what of the enlisted man, the man whose name is forgotten?

Currently on display in the Civil War Room of the Moses Wisner House is an artifact of the war—an artifact that guides us into the past and reveals the story of an enlisted man from Oakland County. He was a simple man—a farmer—who served his country and returned home to marry his sweetheart and father eleven children. He is remembered because of the gun he carried during the war—an artifact donated to the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society. It is in fact one of the earliest gifts to the society, and is enumerated in the list of “Pioneer Relics in the Collection of the Society” that appears in the 1912 *History of Oakland County* by Thaddeus De Witt Seeley. In this list of 134 “relics” we find the following entry for item number 120:

“Spencer carbine, property of C.E. Sherman, Company C, Tenth Michigan Cavalry, Civil war.”

But who was C.E. Sherman? Are there any clues other than the gun he carried that will shed light on the life of this common soldier of the Civil War? Thanks to the Internet and the wealth of genealogical and military records available to the modern researcher, the answer is yes. Charles Edgar Sherman was born in Avon Township on September 29, 1843. He was the son of George W. Sherman (1809-1868) and Deborah Benedict (1817-1893). We know that he enlisted in Hadley, Oakland County, Michigan on March 11, 1863. At the time of his enlistment, the war had been raging for two years and “Charlie” was nineteen years old. He enlisted in Company C of the Michigan 10th Cavalry as a private, but on October 1, 1865 he was promoted to full blacksmith. The Michigan 10th Cavalry under the command of Colonel Thaddeus Foote was organized

at Grand Rapids between September 18 and November 23, 1863. Other Oakland County men in Company C of the Michigan 10th were Charles C. Clover of Pontiac, Henry Dockham of Oxford, and William L. Hoffman of Pontiac. A large majority of enlisted men in Company C were from Lapeer. The regiment lost two officers and twenty-nine enlisted men who were listed as “killed in action or mortally wounded,” and 240 enlisted men who died of disease, for a total of 271 fatalities. Charlie was one of the lucky ones. He was mustered out of service at Memphis, Tennessee on November 11, 1865 along with the rest of the Michigan 10th.

After returning home, Charles Edgar Sherman married his bride, Louella M. Bayley, on December 23, 1866 in Pontiac. They bought a farm in Lapeer and went about the business of building a family of eleven children. Charles Sherman died on January 16, 1916 in Pontiac. He was seventy-two years old and the cause of death was listed as “La gripe,” or influenza. At the time of his death he was a retired farmer living in the home of his daughter, Mrs. James D. Martin, who resided at 24 Murphy Street, Pontiac, Michigan. He is buried in Pontiac’s Oak Hill Cemetery (Block 9-035). Since Charlie’s Spencer carbine was listed in Seeley’s 1912 *History of Oakland County*, it would appear that he donated the weapon to the Society during his lifetime.



Spencer Carbine

Invented by Christopher M. Spencer (1833-1922), the Spencer carbine was one of the most popular firearms of the Civil War. However, it was not issued for use during the war until the latter part of 1863. Even though it was patented on March 6, 1860, the Army was reluctant to purchase the Spencer early in the war because of the cost; the Spencers cost twice as much as muskets and the cost of ammunition was also high and difficult to supply to the soldier in the field.

On August 18, 1863, Christopher Spencer met with President Lincoln and gave Lincoln an opportunity to test fire the weapon. Lincoln hit a six-inch wide pine board at about forty yards with at least six shots. Following this meeting, Lincoln authorized the purchase of Spencer’s carbine for use during the last two years of the war. In all, more than 95,000 Spencers were purchased by the Federal government. The Spencer proved to be very reliable

Christopher M. Spencer



under combat conditions, with a sustainable rate-of-fire in excess of 20 rounds per minute. Compared to standard muzzle-loaders, with a rate of fire of two to three rounds per minute, this represented a significant

tactical advantage. However, a dense cloud of smoke was produced by a line of soldiers firing Spencers in rapid fire, and this made it difficult to see the enemy. As a result, regiments armed with rapid fire repeaters had to be moved aside during major battles. Many soldiers became attached to their weapons, considered them trusted friends, and gave them names. Near the end of the war, Congress passed a bill allowing soldiers to purchase their weapons at the time they were mustered out. Charles Sherman most likely paid \$8.00 for his Spencer carbine and carried it home to Oakland County. Today, it serves as a reminder of the many enlisted men who served their country in the War Between the States.

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Seeley, Thaddeus D. *History of Oakland County, Michigan*, vol. 1. Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1912.

RESEARCH ASSISTANCE APPRECIATED

We are proud to print a testimonial received from one of the many people helped by our library volunteers:

Thanks to the Society in general and to Joan Hayes in particular for helping me toward a probably unattainable goal—100% accuracy in my genealogical records. I value your presence and your help. Mary Lee MacDonald, Charlottesville, VA

CIVIL WAR COT QUILT READY FOR RAFFLE

An item of great comfort to the Civil War soldier would have been the quilt for his cot. Our quilting group has assembled the beautiful replica, below, that will be shown and raffled at the Summer Social.



Quilters Anne Liimatta, Dee Nance, Bettie Pitchford, and Mary Connell (l - r), along with Beverly White and Nancy Calendine, created this commemorative cot quilt to be raffled July 30.

INDEPENDENCE DAY, 1838

Reprinted from the *Pontiac Courier*

There was a grand old-fashioned celebration this year in Pontiac, and political parties, at least for a day, forgot their customary and foolish bickerings. The committee of arrangements consisted of the following prominent citizens: Wm. Draper, O. D. Richardson, Dr. O. Chamberlin, Francis Darrow, S. Beach, E. B. Comstock, A. B. Newcomb, David Paddack, Schuyler Hodges, T. W. Barber, S. C. Munson, G. H. Brodhead.

There was a grand procession headed by a band of twenty-six of the most prominent and beautiful young ladies of the place, representing the States, with an elegant silk banner borne before them. A band also graced the occasion with their presence, and two old soldiers of the Revolution were given the post of honor; these were Ithamir Smith and a Mr. Beach. The Declaration of Independence was read by Rev. Lemuel P. Bates.

OCPHS MEMBER WINS WRITING AWARD

Congratulations to Betty Lou Cooke on winning an Excellence-in-Writing award from the International Society of Family History Writers and Editors. Her first-place award was presented at the National Genealogical Society's Annual Family History Conference for her article, *The Michigan Grandfather I Never Knew*. Born in Pontiac, Betty is currently working on a family history for her six adult children.



Society members proudly marched along Dixie Highway in honor of our troops during Waterford's 2011 Memorial Day Parade

OCPHS WANTS YOU!

By Anne Liimatta

The Waterford Memorial Day Parade had a huge turnout, with lots of excitement and community involvement! OCPHS had twelve good-looking, energetic members participate, remembering our veterans and passing out candy and flyers for the Summer Ice Cream Social. The weather was beautiful and we had a lot of fun. Guy Duffield's 1975 Chevy Caprice was a real hit! Thanks a lot to those who were able to join in the fun. As you can see, our costumes really said *historical, old, and vintage!*

We want those of you who might find the nerve to dress up and join us to consider doing it later this summer at our various Pine Grove events. We need guides, watchers, and assistants for two large tours coming up: The *Hidden Treasures of Pontiac* historic home and garden tour on July 16th (see page 2) and our Summer Ice Cream Social on July 30th.

Why not give it a try? **WE NEED YOU!** Come in and pick out a costume. You will love getting involved! If you pick a room to guide, we'll give you the major talking points. Help with set up or shut down activities, serve cake and ice cream, work at the White Elephant sale, do some gardening beforehand. There is lots to do. Help to ensure that OCPHS is secure for the future. We can do it if we all do something! Of course your continued membership dues are a big blessing, but we also hope you'll share in the friendship and feeling of a job well done to preserve our past. Call and come in any Tuesday to learn more. **YOU** are our most valuable asset!

ANNUAL MEETING MAY 21, 2011

By Mary Connell

Guy Duffield presented the candidates for the board of directors. Incumbents Amy Annett, Bruce Annett, Mike West, and Rodger Zeller were re-elected. We are pleased to announce two new members to the board, Melissa Luginski and Kathy Davis. Gaylor Forman moved from the regular board to emeritus status, joining other volunteers who have served as directors for at least 10 years.

Elected to the Executive Committee were Mike West, President; Ray Henry, 1st Vice President; Guy Duffield, 2nd Vice President; Mary Connell, Secretary; and Amy Annett, Treasurer.

A new position of Parliamentarian was established and Michael Willis was elected. Congratulations to our board members and may all have an inspiring and fruitful year.

Rich Stamps gave a brief update on the progress of the Ice House dig (see page 7). William Powers presented a program on Historic Preservation and its many benefits, not only to the structures restored but to the community as a whole. He stressed the need to resolve preservation issues as they appear to ensure the integrity of the buildings. Mike West reinforced the needs of the Wisner House and the tasks before the board for the coming months.

We welcome all members to come by and visit on a Tuesday or Wednesday, see what we are doing, and have a chat. Annual reports are available on request.

NELSON'S GIFT ENHANCES HISTORIC VILLAGE

OCPHS director Bob Nelson, a long-time member of the Waterford Historical Society (WHS), sponsored the latest addition to their historic village: Nelson's Filling Station. The ribbon-cutting ceremony on June 22nd was attended by several OCPHS members, as well as representatives from the Waterford Chamber of Commerce and Oakland County's Bret Rasegan, who presented a proclamation from county executive L. Brooks Patterson saluting Bob and WHS on the occasion of the grand opening. Bob has been a valued supporter at OCPHS as well, serving on our board and on the grounds crew, and providing the opening gift to the Wisner House Roof Replacement Campaign. Congratulations, Bob, for your work promoting county history and historic preservation!



Bob Nelson (center) and WHS president Sally Strait prepare to cut the ribbon for Nelson's Filling Station at Waterford's Historic Village

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Members and volunteers are the life blood of OCPHS. We welcome the following new members who have joined since the last issue of the *Gazette*:

Gerdom, Thomas	Grand Blanc
Hathcock, Larry	Ortonville
Ring, Carol	Berkley
Reeve, Shirley	Rochester Hills
Mutch, Kathleen	Novi
Roncelli, Jan	Bloomfield Hills
Gorney, Dan	Bloomfield Hills
McGuinness, Michael	Pontiac
Schwarz, Margaret	Pontiac
Pryor, Claire	Waterford
Baber, Larry	Waterford

ICE HOUSE, HERB GARDEN UPDATE



Dr. Rich Stamps stands in what used to be the Wisner's Ice House

For two years, the rear half of Pine Grove's herb garden has given way to the research efforts of student archeologists, who uncovered not only the foundation walls of the former ice house, but the trash the Wisners left behind while living at Pine Grove. With the advent of modern refrigeration, the ice house site literally became a dumping ground. Hundreds of artifacts, ranging from a wagon wheel to an automobile tire, tell more than the casual observer might realize about early 20th century life. The excavation has now been filled, but examination and interpretation of the artifacts discovered will continue.

Meanwhile, the front half of the herb garden remains undisturbed, to be tended by volunteers from the Pontiac branch of Woman's National Farm and Garden Association. The group held its June meeting at Pine Grove and brainstormed about how best to care for the garden and enhance its educational value. They have long supported the herb garden as part of their community service work.

The full garden will ultimately be restored, but with markers to provide detail about the archeological finds as well. We are excited about the ways in which both the herb garden and the ice house dig will enhance knowledge of history for our visitors.

IN REMEMBRANCE

We extend our sympathy to the families of the following members of OCPHS:

Mrs. Joann Hatley, wife of Life Member Robert Hatley. Mrs. Hatley passed away earlier this year.

Dr. Paul Kofi Egbo, husband of OCPHS member Carol Egbo, who died in June following a long illness.

Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society
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DATES TO PUT ON YOUR CALENDAR:

- Jul 1:** Membership Renewals Due
- Jul 16:** Pontiac Home and Garden Tour
- Jul 29, 6 p.m.:** Antique/Collectible Auction
- Jul 30, 12 – 5:** Summer Ice Cream Social
- Sep 11, 2 p.m.** Small Talk: Rochelle Danquah
“Underground Railroad in Oakland County”
- Nov 6, 2 p.m.:** Small Talk: Ron Campbell &
Jackie Hoist “Lighthouses Along the Rivers of Steel”
- Dec 10, 12 – 4:** Victorian Christmas Open House

The *Oakland Gazette* is a publication of the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society. Information, story ideas, or comments are welcome.

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Editor: Amy Annett
Contributors: Mike West, Mary Connell, Ray Henry, Anne Liimatta, Karla Richey (map ceremony photos)

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Wisner House Roof Replacement Begins

WISNER HOUSE ROOF REPLACEMENT BEGINS!

Masons Dietmar Hansen and sons pause briefly for the camera during extensive repair work needed in preparation for replacing the Wisner House roof. Preservation of this historic landmark is made possible through your generosity—*thank you* to our donors, members, volunteers, and contractors!

