



LETTER FROM MIKE WEST, PRESIDENT



Looking back on 2011 is analogous to the opening line of a "Tale of Two Cities." OCPHS enjoyed some good times and we encountered some difficult times. Although the roof replacement presented a task of many challenges we overcame that and finished the year with surprisingly great results.

The first task of 2011 was to get the Wisner House roof and all related work completed. That was a major job and thanks to the Wisner House team of volunteers and the generosity of our members and donors it was completed and has enhanced and improved the House.

Meanwhile, other teams of volunteers held the Meet and Greet, Small Talk Series, Tours, Summer Social, Donor Event and Victorian Christmas Open House. Brooks Patterson introduced the Civil War Map from the Wisner House porch and that led to a Civil War Bus Tour which began at Pine Grove. The Ice House Dig was completed, the Pontiac Garden Club Tour brought a large number of visitors and the Rotary Club sponsored a bike tour with a stop at Pine Grove. One of the "jewels" of 2011 was receiving the *Historic Preservation Recognition* award from the DAR.

In addition to the many successful activities of 2011, OCPHS enjoyed enrolling 72 new members and, thanks to tremendous volunteer effort, careful stewardship, and your support, we finished the year with an operating surplus of \$4,800: One of our very good years!

For 2012, we are returning our focus to the key elements of the Strategic Plan. 2010 was the first year of implementing the Plan and we had great success. 2011, with intensive work on the Wisner House roof replacement, got us off track. Following the Strategic Plan ensures fulfilling our Mission and Vision Statements, and ultimately our destiny. We will be working on this during our board meetings throughout 2012. A summary of the Plan is included on our website (click on the *Society* page), or contact us for a copy if you'd like to learn more.

We had our second "Meet and Greet" for new members February 21. Also our first Small Talk on February 26, with another coming up March 18. The Summer Social Team is already cranking up for another banner event. The Wisner House Team is working on several House improvement projects and the Library Team is increasing its work to catalog our books, photos and records electronically. 2012 is off to a great beginning.

One way you can support OCPHS is by donating items to our Auction and White Elephant events. These have been a great source of revenue for us and we would like 2012 to be better than ever. Please contact Anne or Fred Liimatta @ 248-332-1247 or 248-931-3583.

Stop by Pine Grove any Tuesday or Wednesday; you will enjoy seeing the many activities our members are engaged in. And, remember that board meetings are open to all: Join us.

See you at the Governor's place,

Mike West, President

LTU STUDENTS TO STUDY SCHOOL HOUSE



Melanie Eitoff, Carly DeCocker, and Abby Schroeder

Students from Lawrence Technological University in Southfield met at Pine Grove February 16 to begin a class project on the Drayton Plains One Room School House. Senior students from the University's College of Architecture and Design will assess the building's structure and report their findings and preservation recommendations. The report comes at no charge to OCPHS, and the girls gain class credit and valuable experience on a real world project. We thank OCPHS board member Bruce Annett and LTU adjunct professor James Conway, a project manager at Historic Fort Wayne, for arranging this opportunity.

COOKING AT THE HOMESTEAD HEARTH

By Anne Liimatta

On Saturday January 21, OCPHS members Cathy and Nelson Haynes of Waterford invited us to their country home for a warm and friendly day of fireplace cooking, as it was done in colonial days. Six curious society ladies showed up for class at 11 a.m. wearing aprons and sturdy shoes, ready to prepare a meal from scratch at this unique all-day event which ended in a sit-down meal for family and friends. What a ball! Cathy and Nelson hope to plan another class this fall. Come hungry.



Washing butter at the Haynes' Early American Cooking Class

MRS. WISNER'S KITCHEN: A NEW COOK BOOK

Speaking of cooking, we are pleased to announce a new publication that promises to provide a few smiles as well as a few pounds: *Mrs. Wisner's Kitchen: A Cooking Book*, debuted in late January and is now available for purchase. Editor and long-time member Jo Pate has assembled recipes from the time when the Wisners lived at Pine Grove, using ingredients that would have been common during that era. Sit back and relax, thankful it is no longer necessary to prepare your own rabbit or squirrel for dinner (unless you prefer it that way), or get busy in the kitchen discovering new recipes made the old-fashioned way. Library volunteer and docent Catherine Hoffman assisted Jo by providing charming illustrations to compliment the book. Copies are \$14, with proceeds supporting OCPHS. Mmm, mmm, good.

SMALL TALK SERIES BEGINS

Two of our own, Brian Golden and Fred Liimatta, will kick off our 2012 Small Talks in February and March. Brian's presentation on the interurban railroad system in Oakland County proved so popular that he was asked to offer it again. Fred's stint as a docent led him to do further research on root cellars, and he

found information he just has to share! Please join Brian on February 26 and Fred on March 18 at 2 p.m. for these entertaining presentations. This year's Small Talk chairwoman, Kathy Davis, is lining up more speakers: Details to come.

WISNER HOUSE WORK CONTINUES

As our members know, in 2010 the Wisner House fell victim to a vandal. He was caught, convicted, and has not returned. The magnitude of his damage was huge, but your donations to last year's Wisner House Roof/Restoration campaign, insurance proceeds, and tremendous volunteer effort allowed us to repair chimneys and masonry and to completely replace the roof, downspouts, and gutters in 2011.

In addition, your support is helping us to continue actions to protect and preserve the historic Wisner House. Exterior lighting, electrical upgrades, furnace repairs, and better access to the basement areas are among the recent projects that improve security and safety. Thank you to the House Management Team and other volunteers who are preserving Pine Grove.



The Wisner House shines with new nighttime lighting

CREATIVE ARTS CENTER HOSTS THE CORNER

Visitors have the opportunity to learn more about Pontiac's African American culture through a new exhibit at the Creative Arts Center, 47 Williams St. in Pontiac. *The Corner: The Emergence of the African American Community in Pontiac*, focuses on the intersection of Bagley and Wesson Streets, which became the epicenter for the city's African American population

Churches, the UAW, the automotive industry, small businesses, civil rights, arts and music, and professionals are among the topics explored. The exhibit runs through March 22, and is sponsored in conjunction with the Creative Arts Center and the Greater Pontiac Sesquicentennial Committee. More information can be found at www.pontiac.mi.us/cac or by calling 248-333-7849.

VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE THANKS

By Anne Liimatta

Saturday, December 3rd dawned comfortably—fairly sunny, above freezing, and no wind. This was good news for our group that walked in Pontiac's Holiday Extravaganza parade. There were over a thousand participants in the parade, and OCPHS did a great job representing Pine Grove. We had students from the Troy International Academy, the Duffield's snazzy vintage Chevy convertible, and many Society members who marched or rode the route. We passed out candy and VOH flyers galore!



Society friends on parade

The White Elephant Sale in the School House started at noon. Our thanks to the volunteers who staffed the sale, those who donated, and the buyers who bought items! Local librarians Antoine Richardson of Pontiac and Stephanie McCoy of Auburn Hills assisted in creating the new school house display of period children's books.



Detail from the children's book display

Guests strolled from room to room, listening to tunes from the antique parlor piano played by Dan Delmastro, and learning about a Civil War Christmas from our docents. Judy Hudalla and daughter Barb sold lots of merchandise in the gift shop, adding to the day's financial success.



Dan Delmastro at the piano

Annie Hunt in costume

Christmas carols by the Notre Dame/Marist Academy students and the Church Street Singers put everyone in the spirit as visitors feasted on delicious home-baked cookies and hot chocolate! Refreshment Chair Joan Hayes praised her crew, who kept everyone going through the line. Nelson and Cathy Haynes told the stories of the Summer Kitchen and Farm Museum in authentic style.



Carolers from Notre Dame Prep/Marist Academy

The 2011 Victorian Open House and White Elephant Sale raised \$2,300 for OCPHS! Your support for our annual events provides much needed resources for the Pine Grove budget. Whether you help by attending, purchasing tickets or sponsorships, donating goods for our sales, or even by saying a prayer for the beloved Wisner property, your membership means everything. We sincerely thank you for helping us save the past to share with the present and to preserve it for future generations. Wishing much joy and good health to us all in 2012!

Anne Liimatta, Kathy Davis, Joan Hayes, Judy Hudalla, and Dee Nance, VOH Co-Chairs

See more photos on [Facebook.com/Pine Grove Historical Museum](https://www.facebook.com/Pine-Grove-Historical-Museum)

REMINISCING: WISNER HOME AND SCHOOL

By Ruth D. Woods-Newmarch

After my marriage to Roy E. Woods in 1948, we found a little apartment in Pontiac on Putnam Street. Needless to say, apartments are so confining and I found myself going off on little walks to learn about the surroundings. A lovely country scene caught my eye—the picturesque old brick home, nestled among the huge trees at the curve of the rutted drive. Each day, another hidden view popped into my sight...an exciting experience for me! It kept me wondering, wouldn't it be fun to travel back in time to discover just what stories the grand old home had to tell!



Ruth Woods-Newmarch

I found out that it was the home of a former state governor, Moses Wisner, and his [grand]daughter was still living in it!¹ I could see the large barn in the back, and the horse stables. The old smoke-house on the north side stood bravely throughout the “yesteryears” and wore the cracks and crannies of by-gone times. The large, bricked-in room, unattached to the main house, was a puzzle to me, until I found out in later years that it was a kitchen! It was built away from the main house as a fire precaution. It most likely had other advantages, like lack of grease and smoke in the house, lack of noises, and no unsavory odors. It also answered the question of why the dining room dishes always had covers.

Southwest of the mansion was a huge covered walk-in root cellar. It was naturally cooled beneath the ground, and was divided into different sections in which to store items for protection from the severe winter cold, and also for protection from the summer heat.

Noticing the Wisner School adjacent to the lovely home, I spoke to the principal, Mrs. Agnes Cox, and offered to substitute there. She was happy to have in mind someone to call in an emergency, for at that time each principal was responsible for obtaining their own substitute teachers. I had helped out a few times in January 1949 and at the beginning of the second semester was hired in to fill an opening. It was a long-term affair, for I spent the next twenty-six years teaching at Wisner School.

I recall that Wisner had all wooden floors and stairwells closed in. Renovations were in order, for

the school had been built in 1911. 1952 brought quite a change in things. It was made brighter, cleaner, and safer. Many new parts won over the old. I'm glad that they saved the old slate boards and used them for the next twenty years. I remember the pleasure in using the various styles of wooden tables and chairs, the old hanging globe and the pull-down maps. They had a magic lantern to focus pictures on a screen and we created our own mimeographs to make copies for the children's work. It took one large jelly roll pan, filled with gel on which the stencil sat. One paper at a time could be pressed on the gel to make a copy. To make enough for your class of forty pupils it took twenty five minutes. That is, if your stencil lasted that long!

The school playground extended only several yards out to the south of the school, making it difficult for playtime games, and, therefore, staggered recesses had to be planned. Finally, after Moses Wisner's [grand]daughter died, the Wisner estate gave us permission to extend our playground farther to the south, making it a great improvement for our playground.

During the war years the population grew fast in Pontiac, and more room was needed in the schools. I taught my first few years at Wisner in the basement. It was a spacious room, but was always noisy, for that is where all the lavatories were. Plus, it was a way to get to the gym. I was happy to be asked to teach in one of the barracks they had on part of the playground. The barracks were used during the war and were a temporary expedient and thus weren't the best for classrooms either. We had to run back and forth between the barracks and the main building for drinks, lavatory, lunch programs, etc., no matter if it rained, blew, or snowed. We usually prayed for pleasant weather and less noise on the playground. I wore boots all winter long, for cold air crept up through the planked floor. Also, we dared not to leave books on the top of the bookcases under the windows, for we would be greeted in the morning with a pile of snow on them, or, they'd be wet from the recent rain shower! All this we had to contend with, but we learned to laugh about it, to make it more bearable.

In 1975 they renewed Wisner School again and turned it into an alternative school. Before this, the barracks were removed and the playground was extended again to reach an area close to the Wisner Home.² I finally had a wonderful room on the second floor, southeast corner—and looking over the quiet pleasant country scene that I had so much admired many years ago. I remember the school children, coming there in the spring to dance their May Pole dance. I could see bus loads of children coming to

tour the large brick home and its surroundings. Now there has been a historical school building brought in and placed under a group of trees on the south side.³ Children come to visualize how schools were used years ago. The mothers and fathers can relive their memories and those of their parents!

Now that I am ninety years old, I find great pleasure in reliving and renewing my memories from so many years past. I am so proud and grateful that we have a Historical Society which loves offering the public messages of the past—their heritage.

After Wisner was used as an alternative school, I went to Lincoln School, which had been turned into a fifth and sixth grade school. I spent five or six years there and then retired in 1981, concluding my thirty nine years of working in the educational profession.



Wisner School, as viewed from Pine Grove, February 2012

Editor's Notes:

¹ Florence Clark Wallace, Moses Wisner's granddaughter, sold the house to our Society in 1945 for our headquarters and museum.

² OCPHS leased property to the Pontiac School District for use by the Wisner School.

³ The Drayton Plains one room school, ca. 1865, was moved to Pine Grove in 1965.

Mrs. Woods-Newmarch submitted her memoir to OCPHS in 2010 to share with those interested in the Wisner School. Sadly, she passed away this past December at age 91. Her wonderful reminiscences show that we all have history to share; notice how her story reveals not only her own experiences, but details about daily life, technology, and the evolution of a city. At this writing, both the Wisner School on Cesar E. Chavez Avenue and the Lincoln School on Hillside Drive are closed and vacant. The Wisner School is currently for sale.

IN OUR LIBRARY: TALES FROM THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

We are often asked if the Wisner House was a stop on the Underground Railroad, the secret network of people and places that helped slaves escape from bondage in the 19th century. While there is no evidence that this property was part of the Railroad, Moses Wisner did speak publicly and adamantly against slavery and for preservation of the Union—causes to which he gave his life.

Ray Lucas, member and volunteer, drew our attention to a fascinating chronicle of stories about Oakland County's involvement in the Underground Railroad in Volume I of the Oakland County Pioneer Papers, pages 133 – 143a. Prepared in 1915 by the General Richardson Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the pages detail the efforts of many County citizens to end slavery.

The Fugitive's Lament, a 19th century poem written by Elisha Roberts of Farmington, concludes the chapter. A few stanzas are reprinted here:

Excerpts from
The Fugitive's Lament
By Elisha Roberts

Though I am in the cotton field
Hard toiling now a slave
The driver's lash no more I'll feel
But prove myself a brave

The dipper points to the North Star
That star now beckons me
Saying, arise and break your bond
And flee to Canada

I now have started on the track
I will risk my master's scowl
I hear him calling to his dogs
I hear his bloodhounds howl

I have to toil, to sweat, to bleed
And labor hard for you
To cultivate a filthy weed
For you to smoke and chew

Your cup is full unto the brim,
Of all iniquity
And if you would break off your sins
First let your slaves go free

Or tattered must your stripes appear
And pale will grow your stars
They will be dimmed and blotted out
By grief and bitter tears

SHOPPING ON-LINE CAN BENEFIT OCPHS

Many of us now do our shopping over the internet, but you may not know that using a website called shopformuseums.com is an easy way to let your on-line purchases benefit the Society. Leslie Pielack of the Birmingham Historical Museum passed along the information encouraging other local groups to join. We are now among museums all across the country registered to benefit from this program.

It is a simple concept: Participating stores donate a portion of sales to the museum of the shopper's choice. It costs nothing for the shopper or the museum to register, and the price of your purchase doesn't increase to cover the donation.

Major retailers such as Macy's, Kohl's, Sears, and Amazon.com participate. A small percentage of each purchase is distributed to the designated museums on a quarterly basis.

To get started, follow these steps:

1. Go to shopformuseums.com
2. Register (it's free and easy)
3. Choose a Museum Partner from the list
4. Select your store and shop

Remember next time you're buying on-line:
Extra Clicks = Extra Cash for OCPHS!

WE'RE COMBINING OUR FACEBOOK PAGES

Until recently, we had two identities on Facebook: OCPHS Wisner and Pine Grove. This ensured that people could find us no matter which term they used (Wisner, OCPHS, or Pine Grove) but it also resulted in duplicate content and effort to maintain both sites.

So, thanks to volunteers Sara Cote and Gayle Willis, we're combining the two sites into one group, now known as Pine Grove Historical Museum. If you're among the millions on Facebook, or if you want a fun way to get started, look us up on [Facebook.com/Pine Grove Historical Museum](https://www.facebook.com/PineGroveHistoricalMuseum), and "like" us today!

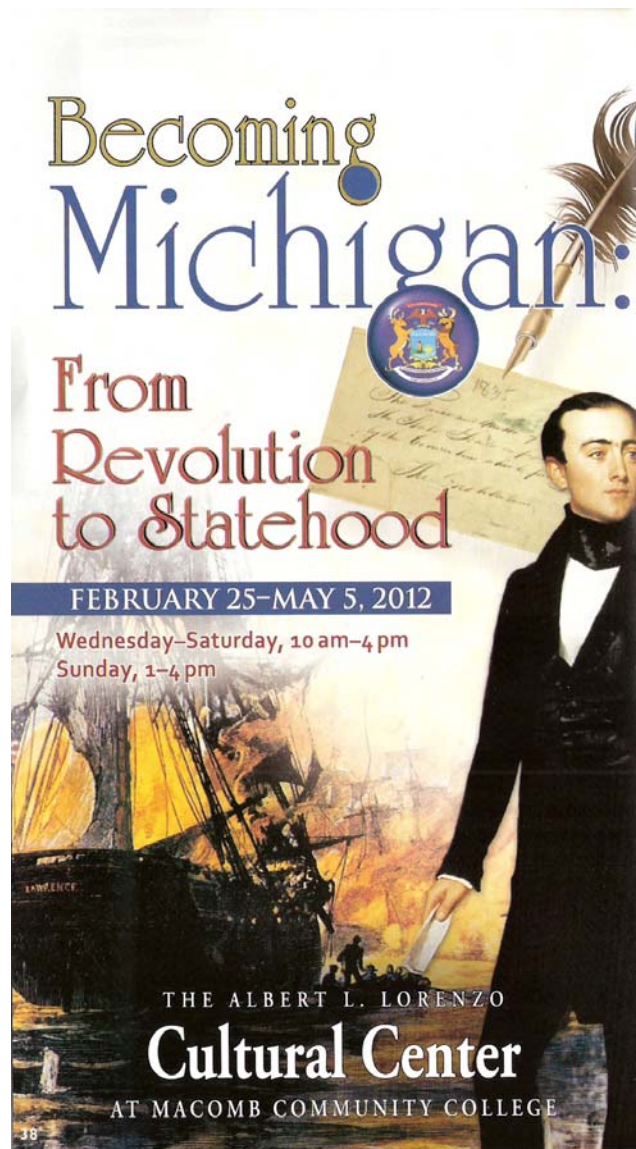
HOW WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR GAZETTE?

We are exploring the possibility of making the *Gazette* available electronically by email as a PDF document that can be read on any type of computer.

If you would prefer to receive future *Gazettes* via email, please contact the office to let us know.

LORENZO CULTURAL CENTER EXHIBIT

We are very pleased to have ten of our artifacts, selected by accessions manager Geoff Brieger, on display in the Lorenzo Cultural Center's newest exhibit, *Becoming Michigan: From Revolution to Statehood*. The exhibit runs February 25 – May 5, and features a wide variety of presentations, activities, and displays you won't want to miss. For more information, call 586-445-7348, or view the full program brochure at lorenzoculturalcenter.com.



Inside front cover, Lorenzo Cultural Center Brochure

LOCAL HISTORY CONFERENCE, MARCH 30-31

Also sure to be of interest is The Historical Society of Michigan's *Local History Conference*, March 30 – 31 at the John Lewis Center on the campus of Macomb Community College. Call 1-800-692-1828 or visit hsmichigan.org for more information.

CALL FOR CANDIDATES: SURVEYS DUE MAY 1

We invite OCPHS members interested in serving on the board of directors to contact the office for an information packet detailing requirements and a survey to complete and return by May 1st.

A slate of candidates will be presented at our Annual Meeting and Election on Saturday, May 19. Board members serve three-year terms; officers are elected annually. Our success depends upon the hard work of members willing to serve. If you would like to explore this possibility, please let us know.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Our members contribute not only financial support, but interest and involvement to help preserve Pine Grove and Oakland County's heritage. If you're not already a member, or if you have yet to renew your dues, please use the application at right or sign up on-line at www.ocphs.org. Join or renew now and your dues will be good until **July 1, 2013**.

The following people have joined OCPHS since the last issue of the *Gazette*. Welcome!

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| Brogan, Maureen | Royal Oak |
| Charvat, Laurie | Greenville |
| Cooper, Charlotte | Clarkston |
| Gnaster, Mark | Brighton |
| Hunt, Thomas & Annie | Keego Harbor |
| Millerman, Tim | Bloomfield Hills |
| Radcliff, Jennifer | Clarkston |
| Shenouda, Pam & Family | Bloomfield Hills |
| Williford, R. Paul | Waterford |

IN REMEMBRANCE

Bruce Smith passed away in December. He and his wife, Doris, were long-time Pontiac residents and advocates of historic preservation. They resided with their daughter, Natalie, in Sammamish, WA after leaving Michigan.



Bruce and Doris Smith

Frederick Stockwell, brother of OCPHS benefactor Isabel Stockwell and son of Ross and Lizzie Belle Sawyer Stockwell, passed away in February at the age of 98. Our November 2011 *Gazette* featured a story about Mr. Stockwell's grandmother, Eliza V. Sawyer, and the Stockwell family of Pontiac.

Membership Application

Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society

Memberships received now extend until July 1, 2013

Name

Address

City/State/Zip

Phone

Email

Send my *Gazette* by: U.S. Mail Email

What prompted you to join?
(Optional, check all that apply):

- Interest in History
- Invited/Introduced by Member/Friend
- Copy of *Gazette*
- Attended Event or Tour
- Research Library
- Newspaper/Magazine Article
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Website
- Other

Membership Categories:

- \$15 Student
- \$20 Individual
- \$20 Non-Profit Organization
- \$35 Family (2 adults & minor children)
- \$100 Patron
- \$200 Benefactor
- \$500 Friends of OCPHS
- \$500 Corporate Sponsor
- \$Additional Donation Enclosed: \$ ____

Already belong? Consider giving a gift membership or inviting a friend to join, too! Everyone is welcome.

Mail this form with check payable to OCPHS to:

OCPHS
405Cesar E. Chavez Ave
Pontiac, MI 48342

For your convenience you may also join or renew on-line at www.ocphs.org. Thank you for your support!

We are a 501(c)3 organization.
Donations are tax deductible in accordance with applicable law.

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Pontiac, MI 48342

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

Feb. 1 – Mar. 22: Pontiac Creative Arts Center

The Corner: Emergence of the African American Community in Pontiac. Call 248-333-7849

Feb. 25 - May 5: Lorenzo Cultural Center

Becoming Michigan: From Revolution to Statehood
Exhibit includes OCPHS artifacts. Call 586-445-7348

Feb. 26: Small Talk, 2 p.m. in the Carriage House

Interurban Railroad System and Mass Transportation, 1900, with Brian Golden

Mar. 18: Small Talk, 2 p.m. in the Carriage House

The Root Cellar: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow
with Fred Liimatta

Mar. 30-31: Local History Conference in Warren

Sponsored by the Historical Society of Michigan
Register at hsmichigan.org or call 1-800-692-1828

Mar. 21: Waterford Expo, 5 – 8 p.m. at Mott H.S.

Showcase of local businesses and organizations,
Including OCPHS. waterfordchamber.org

May 19: OCPHS Annual Meeting & Election

Watch your mail and our website for details.

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

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Editor: Amy Annett

Contributors: Mike West, Anne Liimatta, Ray Lucas,
Ruth Woods-Newmarch

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