



Vol. 50, No. 1

Dedicated to the history and heritage of Oakland County, Michigan

March 2017

THE OAKLAND COUNTY PIONEER AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Fred Liimatta



With our 45th anniversary coming up this year, I suggested to the wife that we renew our vows. It would be a great way to memorialize that beautiful day in the Rose Garden at Elizabeth Park, Hartford, CT where she promised to "love, honor and obey" till death do us part. It sounded like a winning idea

to me, until my sweetheart unexpectedly came up with a few prenuptial agreements for the second time around! I quickly offered up an alternate plan, on which we both wholeheartedly agreed – the "romantic cruise." She went in February and I'm going in March!

Kidding aside, Anne has treated me like a king all these years and I will love her with the last breath of my body. We have been blessed with children, grandchildren, health, laughter, and a lifetime of friendship and surprises. So how does this relate to OCPHS? Glad you asked...

OCPHS as an organization was founded in 1874. Over this mighty span of 143 years we have gone, one could say, from conception to birth, through infancy and childhood, into adulthood and now enjoy the gravitas of the senior years. We may not view this place as our spouse, but it sure is our baby! Its nurturing depends on all of us, from the newest members to the longtime members, from the youngest to the oldest.

Thank you, thank you, thank you to each and every member, from those who generously renew their memberships year after year, who maintain order in the collections, meet and greet visitors, provide historical information to the public, preserve the buildings and grounds, plan major events and balance the budget! It IS a busy place...and it sure DOES remind me of marriage. Keep up the good work! - Freddie

**FAST, FURIOUS, FUN!**

Thursday evening, April 13th, 2017

Gift Shop Open 5pm - Preview 6:30 - Bidding starts 7pm

Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society

Auction held in the Carriage House at Pine Grove

405 Cesar E. Chavez Avenue, Pontiac 48342

for further information please contact:

www.ocphs.org ~ email: office@ocphs.org ~ phone: 248 338-6732

When the cold days of winter give way to the warm winds of spring, one's thoughts turn to romance...the joy of finding that one item needed to complete your collection or that new piece to spruce up your home décor. Our dedicated "vintage rescue" team has been hard at work locating great treasures for those searching for romance.

Donations of auction items are currently being accepted! We are ready and waiting to help find a loving home for what's no longer needed around your house. We can take a bag full, a box full, an attic, basement or garage full, even a house full. Your donation is tax-deductible and benefits the work being done here at Pine Grove. Drop off small loads at the Carriage House or contact the office to arrange for pickup of large items. Check out our Facebook page for photos of select items to be auctioned, and drop by early to see what's new in our gift shop!

P.S. If you cannot attend, Amy says it's OK to write a check to support the cause!

For the auction team - Bill Clink



OCPHS is seeking dedicated, enthusiastic folks to join our Board of Directors. Directors serve three-year terms and are elected by the membership at the Annual Meeting on

May 17, 2017.

If you are interested in serving on our board, please contact the office for an application packet. Applications are due by April 30.

HATS OFF TO OCPHS RESEARCH TEAM

Every day, our dedicated team of researchers is bringing to light new information gleaned from the valuable resources in our library! We are especially pleased when we can share the fruits of our labor with folks eager to learn more about a dear family member. Julianne Kanouse Burns of Ionia contacted us in January for information on her relative Lillian Drake Paull. Using notes that she left behind and articles from past issues of this newsletter, the team learned that Lillian was chairman of OCPHS' library and also served on the Board of Directors. She was instrumental in indexing our scrapbook collection and organizing the document archives. Ms. Burns wrote an email expressing her appreciation, which we share with you now as an example of the wonderful things our team is doing!

*“Thank you so much for the information. Reading it and looking at the pictures in the articles of Lillian actually brought tears to my eyes finding out about all that she did and how highly respected she was for her work with your organization. The photos showed how much, as time went on, that she came to resemble my maternal grandmother, her aunt. Lillian must have been very modest in regards to her accomplishments, as she never told us all that she was involved with over the years with your organization. It is my hope that sometime later this year, my two sisters and I will be able to make a trip to Pontiac to visit the Wisner Mansion. I will be sharing all of the information that you sent with other members of our family. Thank you. With Sincere Regards,
Julianne Kanouse Burns”*

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, GAZETTE!

The *Oakland Gazette* turns 50 this year!!! The very first issue of our member newsletter was published in the spring of 1967.

As a fitting birthday gift, research assistant Barbara Frye has inventoried and organized our copies of past volumes and scanned each one into a searchable pdf file with a digital article index. A half-century's worth of invaluable information is now easily accessible on our library computer. In addition, paper copies of each newsletter have been bound into books (each spanning a ten-year period) to facilitate research. Come on in and catch up on 50 years' worth of good reading!



CALLING ALL ACTORS!

This year, OCPHS members will have two opportunities to portray a favorite Wisner Family figure! New this summer at our annual ice cream social, costumed members of the Wisner Family will interact with our guests! (By the way...this a great time to SAVE THE DATE!)

OLD FASHIONED ICE CREAM SOCIAL

Saturday July 29th, 2017
11 AM to 5 PM

Pine Grove Historical Museum
405 Cesar Chavez Avenue, Pontiac Michigan
(248) 338-6732

★ Fun for the Whole Family! ★

- ★ Civil War Cannon fired on the hour ★
- ★ Tours of the Governor's Mansion ★
- ★ \$7 per Person / \$15 per Family of five
- ★ Admission includes FREE Ice Cream & Cake!
- ★ ★ FREE secure parking on site ★ ★

GENISYS CREDIT UNION

Blue Star Museum

All proceeds benefit The Oakland County Pioneer & Historical Society
www.ocphs.org

For our Haunted Mansion at Pine Grove in October, we hope to populate the mansion with Wisner ghosts to tell individual stories of the people who lived in this fine home. This will be a one-weekend event.

Our events are always family-friendly and educational! If you are interested, please contact the office for more info.

MINI LECTURE SERIES 2017

New year, new name, new topics! Our former "Small Talk" lecture series is better than ever with informative and engaging topics that you won't want to miss. This year's lineup is still in the works, but we've already got some great presentations to mark on your calendar today!

Sunday, March 26 –
The American Army in Normandy: From Omaha Beach to the Falaise Gap
Presented by Jim Craft

Sunday, May 7 –
Architecture Styles: If Walls Could Talk
Presented by Ron Campbell

Sunday, June 11 –
Myths & Legends of the Civil War
Presented by Bill Grandstaff

Sunday, September 10 –
Flour Milling in Oakland County and Pontiac
Presented by Dave Decker

All lectures begin at 2:00 pm in the Carriage House. Admission cost of \$7 includes light refreshments.

WISH LIST UPDATE

Jo Pate, Wish List committee member

OCPHS' "Wish List" was presented to our membership as a way to keep you aware of the needs and wants of the various committees who maintain the buildings both inside and out, as well as giving our supporters opportunities to contribute to the upkeep and improvement of our facilities.

In the past months, several "wishes" were expressed and resulted in an outpouring of support from our members with donations of park benches that now grace the grounds. The call for new mannequins on which to display our vintage clothing was answered with a donation of four new dress-forms. When you visit the Wisner House, you can now see some of the beautiful clothing in our collection!

A new opportunity is available! The main room of our Carriage House is badly in need of renovation. The carpet is stained, worn in places and needs replacing. A coat of paint and minor repairs to the walls are required. A secondary gift shop in the Carriage House would appeal to our visitors, but display shelves are necessary. The kitchen needs updating with new cupboards and counter tops.

You can help! Your gift of any amount will be put toward any of the below projects you choose. You will be acknowledged as a donor in the *Oakland Gazette* – and, at the "reveal" of the completed renovations, you will be an honored guest.

Cost estimates of needed repairs include:

Carpeting for main room, stairway & office - \$6000
Painting & wall repair - \$3000
Display shelves for gift shop - \$500
Kitchen updates - \$3500

Please call the office if you wish to make a tax-deductible contribution, and watch for updates on our progress!

MILITARY COLLECTION DRAWS AUTHOR TO PINE GROVE

Barbara Frye, research assistant

We hosted a very interesting visitor at Pine Grove on February 15! Kim Crawford, author and quite the expert on the Michigan 16th Infantry in the War Between the States, met with Geoff Brieger to discuss the collection of artifacts we recently received from the descendants of Charles Nisbett. The below photo shows Kim and Geoff examining a photograph of Mr. Nisbett holding the flag that was donated to OCPHS as part of the large collection of military & reunion pins and medals. Geoff is currently writing an article on Charles Nisbett and his achievements in Pontiac, which will appear in a future edition of the *Oakland Gazette*. We would love to have Kim Crawford come back and visit...hoooo boy, does he have some wonderful stories to tell!



(Photo courtesy of Barbara Frye)

**“LINCOLN AND HIS POSSIBLE VISITS TO
PONTIAC”**

W. Ernest C. Huthwaite

From the editor: What causes a story to become associated with a location, and how can thorough historical sleuthing help us determine the truth? In the following article, which originally appeared in the November 1983 issue of the Oakland Gazette, the author seeks to shed light on a legend associated with our own Wisner House. This article is reprinted in its entirety; no edits have been made for space or grammar.

The question of whether or not Abraham Lincoln visited Pontiac and the Wisner Home has been recurring for many years. For many years it had been said and believed that Lincoln visited Mr. Moses Wisner at his home on Oakland Avenue, Pontiac, Michigan and that he had stayed overnight as a guest there. Numerous efforts have been made throughout the years to verify such a visit.

For forty years the late Judd Robbins served as a reporter for the then Pontiac Daily Press and covered the news of Oakland County, Michigan. Mr. Robbins and the writer some years ago spent a whole afternoon at the Hodges House, a hotel then located at the southwest corner of Saginaw and Pike Streets in an effort to learn if Mr. Lincoln perchance had in fact come to Pontiac at any time and stayed at that hotel. The Hodges House was built in 1838 and in 1962 was demolished in an urban renewal project. At the time of the completion of the hotel structure in 1838 it was said that the Hodges House was the finest hotel in America west of Buffalo, New York.

In our search for information we talked with the clerk and others about whether or not Lincoln had stayed in the hotel, and further tried to locate any hotel registers or records during the period from the opening of the hotel and thereafter. We rummaged through the attic of the hotel in search of old registers and other records of the past history of the place. We found none. The manager of the hotel, though helpful in our search, was able to give us only scant information of any records. Later we learned that it was the practice of the hotel management during that era that when the pages of its journal or record of registration was “used up” to paste plain sheets of paper on the already filled up pages of signatures for additional and economical use. Mr. Robbins and I were disappointed, but our search

discovered nothing to indicate any visit by Abraham Lincoln to Pontiac, Michigan.

It appears that the only time Lincoln was in Detroit, Michigan was in 1848. He was a passenger on the Steamer Globe from Buffalo to Detroit on his way home to Springfield via the Great Lakes during the period from September 24, 1848 until October 5, 1848 (when he arrived in Chicago and registered at the Sherman House). The next day he appeared at a Whig Rally at the courthouse as the principal speaker. His address consumed two hours.

The Steamer Globe stopped briefly at Detroit, and it is unlikely that Mr. Lincoln had very much, if any, opportunity to visit as far away as Pontiac, Michigan. There is, of course, always the possibility that he did. The only time which has been definitely established of his appearance in Michigan was at Kalamazoo, Michigan at the Republic Convention held on August 27, 1856. His speech at the convention and the doings there are covered by the late Thomas I. Starr in his book entitled “Lincoln’s Kalamazoo Speech.” Mr. Starr was a native of Troy, Michigan, and “discovered” the speech which until his discovery had been forgotten.

Before the Steamer Globe stopped in Detroit, Michigan it had passed a place called Fighting Island on the Canadian side of the Detroit River. The island contained a strand. Mr. Lincoln noticed the island shore and the shoreline to the river and other features of the location. It is said that at that time he conceived the idea how stranded vessels on rivers could be floated again, and back in Springfield later he prepared plans and specifications which were the basis of a patent later granted to him by the United States Patent Office. Previous to his embarkation at Buffalo on the Globe, Mr. Lincoln had been on a speaking tour of cities in Massachusetts, including Boston, which he made after the adjournment of the session of the United States House of Representatives of which he was a member from Illinois.

Mr. James F. Joy, the President of the New York Central Railroad, lived in Detroit, and the railroad terminus at Detroit was at the foot of Third Street at the river. The Steamer Globe probably docked or stopped within a block or two east of the railroad station. Mr. Joy’s office was at the station building, and while the idea may be farfetched, there could be the possibility that Mr. Lincoln

visited him. This possibility bears no relationship to the question of whether Mr. Lincoln visited Pontiac. It is noteworthy that Mr. James F. Joy retained Mr. Lincoln as legal counsel with himself in the case of the Illinois Central Railroad Company versus McLean County in the Supreme Court for the State of Illinois at a later date.

Biographically Lincoln has always been a great subject of research. More books have been written about his life than any other mortal man. New material is being published each year. Research concerning him is and has been an ongoing quest, and it appears will continue unabated. It would be helpful if any of the members of our historical society and/or the readers of the Oakland Gazette would write to the editor and send any and all information as to the "myth" of Lincoln's coming to Pontiac, Michigan. It would not be unnoticed and might provide worthwhile material to continue the quest and destroy the "myth."

From the editor: The late William Ernest Cecil Huthwaite was an attorney practicing in Pontiac and a member of OCPHS' Board of Directors.

QUESTERS FUND PANTRY PROJECT

Amy Annett, Treasurer

We are pleased to report that the Ellen Scripps Booth chapter of the Questers has generously provided a grant to help us refurbish the Wisner House pantry. Their gift will be used to repair the pantry's walls and to paint or wallpaper them in a style appropriate for the period. The Wisner House committee, chaired by Kathy Davis, is at work on the renovation plan, which includes advice from Oakland County's preservation architect, Ron Campbell. In the coming months, the refurbished pantry will once again help interpret the story of the Wisner family and daily life in the 19th century. We are delighted that the Questers chose to support this project and we welcome them as a new partner in our mission to preserve and convey Oakland County's history!

APPRECIATION NIGHT 2017

On February 8, we showered our donors, volunteers and special friends with love and appreciation on an evening created especially for them! The smiles on their faces say it all!
(Photos courtesy of Linda Porter)



(More photos page 8...)

OCPHS is pleased to welcome the following new members who have joined since our last publication:

Julianne Kanouse Burns (Ionia)
Myrna Lee (Clarkston)
Deborah Schira (Bloomfield Hills)
Gerald Wade (Waterford)
Betty Wilcock (Rochester Hills)
Dennis Winowiecki (Bloomfield Hills)

AROUND THE COUNTY

Can't get enough Oakland County history? Check out some of the projects and events being undertaken by our partners in preservation!

The Rochester Hills Museum at Van Hoosen Farm has made a portion of their historical collections available online. Over 7,000 catalog records (including archival photographs, documents, and objects related to the greater Rochester area and the Taylor/Van Hoosen family) have been uploaded. To access the online database, please visit www.rochesterhills.pastperfectonline.com

In addition, the Rochester Hills Museum has digitized their collection of the *Rochester Era* newspaper dating from 1873-1949; it is available on the Oakland County Historical Resources website. For instructions on how to search the newspaper collection, please visit www.rochesterhills.org/newspapers

The Greater West Bloomfield Historical Society will host a couple events in April that local history buffs are sure to enjoy...

*April 4 @ 1:30 pm –
Sylvan Lake Community Center
“Four Corners Post Bicentennial
Commemoration: The 200th anniversary of the setting of the corner post for four townships (Waterford, Pontiac, West Bloomfield & Bloomfield)”*

*April 9 from 1-4 pm -
Orchard Lake Museum
“Lake Life: History of our Local Lakes”
(Information and artifacts about Cass, Sylvan and Orchard lakes displayed and shared.)*

There is no charge for these events.

Membership and Donation Form

Name:

Address:

City/State/Zip:

Phone:

Email:

Send my *Gazette* via: U.S. Mail Email
(Please add \$5 to cover cost of printing and postage if sending via U.S. Mail)

Please Make Me a Member! (indicate level):

- \$15 Student
- \$20 Individual
- \$20 Non-Profit Organization
- \$35 Family (two adults & minor children)
- \$100 Patron
- \$200 Benefactor
- \$500 Friends
- \$500 Corporate Sponsor
- \$Gift Membership (provide recipient's name & contact info):

Please Accept My Donation! (indicate preference):

- \$ Annual Giving (general operating costs)
- \$ Fill In the Gap (expanding hours & services)
- \$ Preservation (historic buildings & contents)
- \$ Where Needed or Other (specify):
- \$ In Memory of / Honor of (provide name):

What Prompted Your Support? (check all that apply):

- Interest in Oakland County History
- Invited/Introduced by Member/Friend
- Received Copy of *Gazette*
- Attended Event or Tour
- Research Library / Archives
- Newspaper / Magazine Article
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Website / Facebook
- Other (specify):

Mail this form with check payable to OCPHS to:

Oakland County Pioneer & Historical Society
405 Cesar E. Chavez Avenue
Pontiac, MI 48342

For your convenience you may also join or donate online 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

FROM THE GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

TEAM

Bill Clink (Co-Chair)

With the active economy in Oakland County, many of our members and volunteers are busy catching up from the lean years. We have reduced the number of meetings to allow our team to earn money to support their history habits! That being said, we are pushing forward in hopes of having another great year at Wisner.

You've read that our outreach program has netted us a generous grant from the Birmingham/Bloomfield Questers. You've also seen that we had a great turnout for our Appreciation Reception last month. All present had a nice time! If you could not attend, please know that we missed you and continue to appreciate all that you do for this organization.

Please contact the office if you are available to help with this year's gardening and grounds maintenance activities. We want Pine Grove to look the best it ever has! Help for a day or adopt a bed to care for all season. Here's hoping our landscape team is rested up and ready to go!

I encourage you to join us for our 2017 Mini Lecture Series and bring a friend or two. The same goes for our auction on April 13! As a reminder, the doors of the Carriage House are open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 11-4 for you to come visit or study. Finally, if you are on Facebook and have not yet "liked" our page, it is a great resource for keeping apprised of upcoming events and important announcements.

Keep growing and developing in your love of history!

- Bill

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

We look forward to seeing you at these upcoming events...

Sunday, March 26 -

"The American Army in Normandy: From Omaha Beach to the Falaise Gap"
(Mini Lecture Series)
2:00 pm / Admission \$7

Thursday, April 13 -

Spring Auction
Preview 6:30 pm
Bidding begins 7:00 pm

Sunday, May 7 -

"Architecture Styles: If Walls Could Talk"
(Mini Lecture Series)
2:00 pm / Admission \$7

Sunday, June 11 -

"Myths & Legends of the Civil War"
(Mini Lecture Series)
2:00 pm / Admission \$7

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APPRECIATION NIGHT 2017
CONTINUED...



**A HUGE thank you to all who planned,
executed, and attended this delightful evening!**

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Twitter.com/OCPHS

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Submissions, content suggestions or comments are
welcome.

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Contributors: Amy Annett, Bill Clink, Barbara Frye, Fred Liimatta,
Jo Pate, Kari Vaughan

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