



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Charlotte Cooper



Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher, is quoted as saying "change is the only constant in life." This saying has also been translated to "the only constant is change." Change is occurring continuously, and is an always-to-be-expected condition. The only way some things can exist is by changing.

Wisner's Pine Grove is now 174 years old, and has reached that age through the care, administration, and attention of OCPHS. Society members have adapted to change in order to survive and grow. Look for the theme of "Change" in future *Gazette* articles.

Your Board of Directors changed in May. Four members retired to "Director Emeritus" status; Kari Vaughan took a leave of absence; and Dave Decker and Sue Grifor are new directors. The new lineup of officers are Charlotte Cooper, President; Sara Cote, First Vice; Rodger Zeller, Second Vice; Kathy Davis, Secretary; and Barbara Frye, Treasurer. There are some changes in policies, procedures, and events. Although the preservation of our buildings and treasured archives remains a constant focus, we will implement better and more efficient methods.

It is my pleasure to serve as your new President, and I am pleased to be surrounded and supported by kind, innovative, thoughtful, and really SMART people! If you haven't visited recently, please come and see us!

(Editor's note: Although I am no longer serving on the Board, I remain your faithful Gazette editor! Please continue to direct all newsletter correspondence to my attention - Kari)

**OLD FASHIONED
 ICE CREAM
 SOCIAL** Saturday
 July 29, 2017
 11 AM to 5 PM
 Pine Grove Historical Museum
 405 Cesar Chavez Avenue, Pontiac Michigan

★ Fun for the Whole Family! ★
 ★ Vintage Car Show ★
 ★ Legoland Discovery Center ★
 ★ Big Chief Chorus ★ Men of Grace ★
 ★ WWI Memorial with Lois Keel & Madden Brady ★
 ★ Tour the Wisner Mansion ★
 ★ Gift Shop ★ Antique Appraiser ★ Curiosity Sale ★
 \$7 per Person / \$15 per Family of five
 Admission includes FREE Ice Cream & Cake!
 ★★ FREE secure parking on site ★★

All proceeds benefit:
 The Oakland County Pioneer & Historical Society
 The Pine Grove Historical Museum
 * a Michigan 501(c)(3) non-profit organization *
 (248) 338-6732 ~ www.ocphs.org ~ office@ocphs.org

Headquarters of the
 Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society

We're only a month away from our Annual Old-Fashioned Summer Ice Cream Social, and it's gearing up to be an exciting one! In addition to your favorite activities (Curiosity Sale, historical presentations & exhibits, free cake & ice cream), this year we have a couple new additions to the program that you won't want to miss...

"Park It at Pine Grove" Car Show

Do you have a "classic" in your garage (and we don't mean that loud 1968 beer fridge)? Park it at Pine Grove on July 29! We're looking for people with 1975 or earlier classic cars to show off in front of the Wisner Mansion.

Free admission to the driver and one passenger plus free parking for a trailer and tow vehicle if needed. This is a wonderful opportunity to meet other car enthusiasts and have some great beauty shots of your car

taken in front of one of Pontiac's most historical landmarks. Contact Dave Decker at 248-770-2876 or the office for a pre-registration form.

LEGOLAND Discovery Center

Get ready to build with Legos and Duplos...it's not just for the kids! We are welcoming LEGOLAND Discovery Center to the Summer Social for the very first time. Their Master Builder, Clint, will supervise the Lego builds, and there could be some competitions as well as surprises! Younger children can "dive" into the Duplo tubs. There will also be pre-built models on display.

Members and Friends, we need your help to make this event our best yet! Areas in which you can serve include:

- *Be a sponsor (each \$25 donation earns a free family pass!)
- *Donate items for resale at the Curiosity Sale
 - *Bring a cake (single-layer, homemade or purchased)
 - *Set-up or tear-down
 - *Parking & safety patrol

Please contact the office if you wish to volunteer in any of these capacities...or simply where needed!

(New activities ads by Dave Decker and Linda Porter)

IN REMEMBRANCE

OCPHS mourns the loss of these dear friends...



Guy Duffield

Director Emeritus and longtime volunteer Guy Duffield passed away on April 16 at the age of 87. Guy worked for Chevrolet for over 40 years at the Proving Grounds and enjoyed sailing on Watkins Lake. In addition to OCPHS, he was a member of the Early Ford Club of Dearborn and the Michigan Regimental Roundtable. He worshiped for many years at First Presbyterian Church of Pontiac. His wife Nancy, also a dedicated

OCPHS volunteer, shared this memory of her husband:

"Guy was on the property (buildings and grounds) committee at OCPHS for just about all the years he was a member. He and Bob Nelson replaced hot water tanks, light bulbs and anything else too broken to salvage...and they salvaged anything else that could be salvaged! He did small paint repairs, hired the man who mows the lawn and worked with others to clear leaves and other debris. He was an all-around handy man doing some electrical, plumbing, and a lot of blind repairs. For many years he was the first one notified by the alarm company when something was amiss. Every time they called he would come over to be sure there was nothing wrong. This especially unnerved me when it was in the middle of the night, but he insisted he needed to be sure that everything was safe."

Memorial donations may be made to either OCPHS or First Presbyterian Church of Pontiac.

Jean Hilderley



Longtime OCPHS member Jean Hilderley passed away on April 18 at the age of 95. She was a graduate of Pontiac High School and Cleary College. Jean served as president of the Willis School PTA and was also involved with the Auburn Hills Historical Society, White Shrine and Eastern Star. She is remembered as living a positive, independent life. Jean was an 80-year member of First Presbyterian Church of Pontiac and was honored as its longest-living member with a luncheon in March.

Memorial donations may be made to either First Presbyterian Church of Pontiac or Common Ground.

Gerald Tewilliager



OCPHS supporter Sally Tewilliager's husband, Gerald, passed away on April 5 at the age of 84. Gerald and Sally were married for 61 years. He was a Korean War veteran of the United States Army and a retired lieutenant with the Bloomfield

Township Fire Department, having served for 30 years. Gerald also worked as a tree surgeon. Memorial donations may be made to the National Kidney Foundation.

(Duffield image courtesy of Barbara Frye. Others courtesy of The Oakland Press.)

DIRECTOR EMERITUS

Charlotte Cooper

OCPHS has almost 300 members, and according to our by-laws, "A Board of Directors shall have the general management and control of the business and affairs of the Society..." The current Board has thirteen directors, which are elected for three-year terms, and many directors serve for several terms. After ten years of service as a director, a person may retire with the distinguished title of **Director Emeritus**, which conveys merit and honor. A "DE" is no longer an active, voting Board member, but may attend meetings and may be called upon as an advisor.

At the Annual Meeting of the members held in May, four Board members retired and each was conferred the status of Director Emeritus: Bruce Annett, Amy Annett, Charlie Martinez and Mike West. These folks experienced many challenges and successes during their combined sixty-eight years of service. Congratulations and thanks are extended to Bruce, Amy, Charlie, and Mike for their years of dedicated service to the OCPHS Board of Directors!



Photo by: Linda Porter - 2014



Above: Mike West (left) & Charlie Martinez
Below: Amy & Bruce Annett (courtesy Amy Annett)

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS!

OCPHS welcomed two new faces to our Board of Directors at the Annual Meeting on May 17. Candidates were required to be OCPHS members in good standing, able to attend at least four meetings per year, and willing to actively work for the advancement of the Society. We are pleased to introduce these individuals and their goals to you, transcribed from the surveys they completed for our nominating committee.

Dave Decker



"I am 54 years old and an IT professional making a career change into historical research and historical preservation. I see real value in OCPHS resources. I wish to promote them in useful ways. There is a strong need for technical expertise within OCPHS. I would like to provide that and I think I can add substantial value to the Board and the organization." (Image courtesy of Joy Dockham)

Sue Grifor

"I am retired and have time to devote to my interests in local history. I want to work on new exhibits in the Wisner house, etc." (Photo unavailable)

We also welcome back to the Board these individuals whose terms were up for re-election in 2017:

Kathy Davis
Bill Grandstaff
Ann Johnson
Greg Kowalski
Linda Porter
Rodger Zeller

THE HAUNTED MANSION AT PINE GROVE
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2017
6 - 8 PM



Do you think you can play the ghost of one of the dearly departed Wisners? This year's Haunt will be just one evening. We are looking for actors, decorators, and people seeking something different going on in the house of Moses Wisner. A committee is now forming to plan this event. If you have "haunting" ideas to contribute, please contact Barbara Frye at frye_photo@att.net

(We are a family-friendly venue; we leave the really scary stuff to the folks downtown!)

CHARLES A. NISBETT AND THE CIVIL WAR

Gottfried Brieger and David Walls

On November 2nd, 2016 the Society received a special donation related to Charles A. Nisbett, a veteran of the Civil War serving in the 16th Michigan Infantry Volunteer Regiment, and a longtime resident of Pontiac. The collection consists of two packets of letters – one relating to the Annual Reunions of the 16th Michigan Infantry Volunteer Regiment and the G.A.R.; the other, mostly personal letters from Charles' father, Thomas P. Nisbett, concerning his travels, especially in the Soo region of Michigan.

Of particular interest are the letters pertaining to the Reunions. Apparently, in some capacity with the 16th Michigan Infantry Volunteer Regiment, Charles Nisbett must have sent out invitations. He saved the letters he received in return, including ones signed personally by President Rutherford B. Hayes in 1885 and two from General William T. Sherman in 1885 and 1889 gracefully declining the invitations.

We also received a ledger which contained the attendance records and minutes of the Reunions of the 16th Michigan Infantry from September 17th, 1902 – September 4th, 1929, representing a span of the 22nd - 49th (and last) Reunion. Charles is listed as president of the Regiment chapter from 1924 – 1929.

A nice collection of ribbons and medallions associated with the Annual Reunions was also donated, including a special medallion for veterans who participated in the Battle of Gettysburg on the occasion of the 30th anniversary.

The 16th Regiment was engaged in thirty-eight of the major battles of the War. A special certificate was issued to the Regiment's survivors on July 17th, 1865 by Col. B.F. Partridge, 16th Mich. V. Infantry, which attests to this. The battles spanned from the siege of Yorktown in April 1862 through General Lee's surrender on April 13th, 1865. A copy of this certificate was also donated.

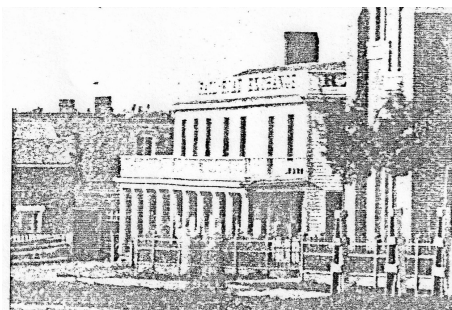
Perhaps the most intriguing donation was that of a well-worn 34-star National Flag, which dates the flag between 1861, when Kansas joined the Union, and 1863, when West Virginia became the 35th star. Accompanying the flag is a typewritten sheet headed: "The Old 16th Michigan Infantry Battle Flag." Upon consultation with the curator of flags at the State Capitol, we were told that their collection already has a flag for the Regiment, but this one is quite different. According to a 1933 clipping from the *Pontiac Press*, this flag was given to the Regiment by the women of Detroit, and was passed on to Charles as the last survivor of the Regiment. It will be an exciting research project to determine the identity of this flag.

Charles Nisbett arrived May 18th, 1850, from London, England. In addition to his parents, Thomas P. and Eliza, were his six siblings. Charles was three years old. His father was a shoemaker by trade and not very prosperous. He had traveled to America alone several times before, and decided to cast his lot with the new country. Thomas was not very successful here, either. However, when the Civil War broke out he obtained employment making boots for the army in New York. The family settled in Brooklyn and William P., Charles' older brother, eventually obtained a position working as an apprentice to a newspaper publisher. Charles also obtained employment, but it is not known what he did. All the siblings went to public school.

His father saw possible opportunities out west – particularly, in Michigan. There was not universal support for such a move. Brother William relates that when his employer was told of the idea, his response was "Let your parents go to Mitchigan (sic) if they want to. It is only a land of Injuns and wild animals. You stay here and after they get there and find they like it, they can send for you. Otherwise you will see the expense you save them when they return, and I know they will."



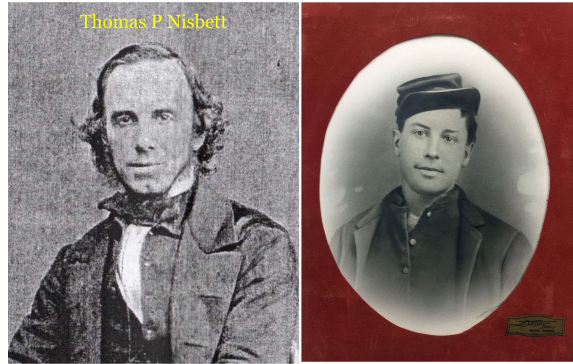
The Nisbetts arrived in Pontiac on Christmas Day, 1863 via the Detroit & Milwaukee Railroad and the family settled in at a nearby hotel, the *Railroad Exchange*. On New Year's Day, one of the coldest days on record, Charles' brother William noted the following: "I had been home but a short time and was just nicely thawing out, when a team, ice-covered, slowly drawing the heavy sleigh, stopped mechanically in front of the *Railroad Exchange* hotel, the driver remaining upright in his seat...the driver was freezing to death and already unconscious and, calling assistance, we carried the man into a small stove-less room...and, with snow and ice, proceeded to thaw him out..."



The Railroad Exchange Hotel

The family moved into a house at 117 Whittemore St. in Pontiac. Charles was 15 and the Civil War raged. He presumably found only meager employment so, when an opportunity arose to be a substitute for a drafted soldier, he took it. By way of background, during the Civil War draftees could buy their way out of serving by paying the government \$300. This was a considerable sum, amounting to about ¾ of a workingman's yearly salary. This had changed by 1865, when draftees were allowed to hire substitutes directly. The price promptly went up to \$800 - \$1,000. Overall, about 118,000 Union men chose this option. Charles substituted for Albert Buckle of Pontiac and enlisted in Company F, 16th Michigan Volunteer Infantry, on February 15th, 1865. His service did not last long, however. If he had been in good health during March and April of that year, Charles would

have witnessed and participated in the final battles of the Civil War in Virginia, culminating in Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House. After the War ended, he mustered out at Jeffersonville, Indiana, on July 8th, 1865. He is recorded as suffering from partial paralysis and a lung disease at the time.



Left: An early photo of Thomas P. Nisbett
Right: Charles, age 17, in his uniform (1864)

After his service ended, Charles held a variety of jobs including, in 1866, a position on the lumber ship *Seaman* plying the waters between Alpena and Detroit. He also worked in Big Rapids where his brother William had become established. According to the 1870 census he was back home in Pontiac, along with four of his siblings. By 1900 he was in Big Rapids, and another census notes his presence there in 1905.

At home in Pontiac, he married Anna Thurlby sometime between 1870 and 1872, when their first child, Louis Charles, was born. They had four other children: Annie (1875), Fred (1879), Ada (1882), and Flora (1889).

By 1884, Charles was president of the Michigan Refining Works, Inc., a business specializing in the refining of gold, silver, and platinum as well as producing dental amalgam, as this ad in the *Practical Dental Journal* shows:

ESTABLISHED 1875

Michigan Refining Works

Pontiac, Michigan

CHAS. A. NISBETT, - - - - - President

Refiners of Gold Dental Waste of all descriptions.

Manufacturers of Gold Plate, Gold Solders, and Dental Alloys.

Refiners of Dental Amaigam Scraps.

It has paid others and it will pay you to deal with one of the oldest refineries in the United States.

Your favors will be appreciated

Sole Manufacturer of the MICHIGAN WHITE DENTAL ALLOY

The refining of platinum requires a very high temperature; an accident occurred at the plant when a technician, installing a new oxygen-based torch, caused an explosion which cost him his life. On the lighter side, Charles was also somewhat of a poet, as this ad from the *Practical Advertiser* demonstrates:

*Maybe you have never tried it
In your practice, up to date—
Catching all the Golden granules
Having them remade in plate.
It will make you independent,
Gain you health and fortune too
And the time it takes to do it
Never will be missed by you.*

*Riches rest in scrap amalgam
Every man has left—forgot—
Find where yours is idly waiting
It will help to boil the pot.
Never chuck it in the spittoon
It is sure to make you cuss,
Now's the psychologic moment,
Get it all and ship to us.*

*We will either work it over
Or we'll mail you back a check.
Rather think you'll keep repeating,
Kause you'll find it pays, "by heck,"
Sooner sent—sooner paid.*

Refiners of scrap, sweepings and refuse containing all kinds of precious metals
and Manufacturers Michigan White Alloy.

MICHIGAN REFINING WORKS
PONTIAC, MICH.

From 1886 – 1928, the business is listed in the Pontiac City Directory. Charles was also an inventor, and we have copies of at least two patents that were issued to him. One is for an improved fire kindler, the other for a water wheel attachment for sewing machines, which would aid the sewing industry.

He was also active in city politics. There is a newspaper clipping showing him as an alderman in Pontiac sometime between 1901 and 1906.

Charles' son Louis became a metallurgist and joined his father in the business. Charles continued in business until 1929, when the company went into receivership.

Memorial Day 1933 found Charles with his great-granddaughter Betty Louise Nisbett, probably watching the parade, telling her stories from the War. Shortly after, Charles moved to Costa Mesa, California, and to the Sawtelle Soldiers Home, where he died on January 12th, 1935, the last survivor of the 16th Michigan Infantry Regiment. He is interred in the Los Angeles National Cemetery, among other veterans.





Part of the collection donated to the Society consists of the numerous ribbons, badges, and occasional commemorative medallions issued during the Annual Reunions. All images courtesy of the authors.

CURRENT EVENTS AT THE LIBRARY...

Barbara Frye

2017 marks the 100th anniversary of the United States entering into the Great War, the War To End All Wars, otherwise known as World War I. Your research librarians Pat Kaltwasser and Ray Lucas have spent the last quarter poring over records in the OCPHS archives to document the young men from Oakland County who went to fight for that great cause. Ray has compiled a database of over 3,000 of our citizens (farmers, clerks, recent high school graduates) who left the comforts of home to fight and sometimes die in France. Pat found transcribed letters to home from one young farmer, born in Pontiac, who made the ultimate sacrifice in France; Earl A. Tyrer wrote faithfully to his mother, describing his daily life spanning from Camp Custer to Paris. Pat's re-discovery is now available in the Carriage House Corner Shop for \$10. Ray and Pat welcome any names, objects, stories, etc you may have that will increase our WWI collection!

In the book department...Reida Gardiner and Terry Currin have been busy creating a book label system to find books more easily, and devising a way to search our collection digitally. Our hope is to eventually have an online "card catalog", the first step in a comprehensive inventory of our holdings.

Geoff Brieger and Dave Walls are currently working on a WWI Memorial Calendar for 2018, utilizing photographs from the OCPHS collection. It should be available for purchase at the Summer Social.

Research librarians are on-site during all office hours, ready to help you with your research project!

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):

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- 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)

It's been a busy season as our new regime settles into making history prettier around Pine Grove. If you haven't been by in awhile, plan to visit us soon to check out the newly repainted Drayton Plains One Room Schoolhouse and Carriage House interior. Even the kitchen in the Carriage House is in the process of becoming more beautiful. Accolades to the dedicated team working hard to bring our facilities up to date in the service of history.

After a successful spring auction sale, there have been exciting new developments in the revenue-generating arena. Fred Liimatta has turned up a venue for off-site marketing of donated items specifically for resale. We now have an arrangement with Albrecht's Auction House in Vassar, MI to sell selected items through their website. The proceeds then come back to OCPHS. This is a viable means of continuing to bring revenue to the Society while reducing material handling and storage costs. We can now process items that might have been more difficult to move and store until our next on-site event; meanwhile, the cash comes in faster.

The Growth & Development Team has had a slimmer schedule this year as our members (including me) have focused on catching up on personal activities so that we can adequately support future OCPHS activities. We are currently lending as much support as possible to the upcoming Summer Social.

We hope this note finds you happy and healthy and able to come and share with the next generation the exciting joys of supporting history. Best wishes and enjoy your summer; we hope to see you at the Social!

- Bill

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

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

Saturday, July 29- Annual Old-Fashioned Ice Cream Social

11:00 am – 5:00 pm
Admission \$7 per person /
\$15 family of five

Sunday, September 10 - “Nose to the Grindstone: Mills of Oakland County (Mini Lecture Series) 2:00 pm / Admission \$7

OCPHS Officers and Board of Directors

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

Mary Brevard - Bloomfield

The Ronald Bieri Family - Ortonville

Aaron & Mary Doughty - Clarkston

Duane Fueslein - Detroit

Scott Haughton - Bloomfield

**Dr. & Mrs. Bruce Henderson -
Bloomfield Hills**

Catherine Cangany - South Bend, IN

**The Charles & Demetra Leonard
Foundation - Pontiac**

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County Pioneer and Historical Society



Follow us on Twitter
Twitter.com/OCPHS

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Submissions, content suggestions or comments are
welcome.

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Editor: Kari Vaughan

Contributors: Bill Clink, Gottfried Brieger, Charlotte Cooper, Dave
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David Walls

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