

Vol. 51, No. 2

Dedicated to the history and heritage of Oakland County, Michigan

June 2018

THE OAKLAND COUNTY PIONEER AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Charlotte Cooper



All of a sudden, we are halfway through 2018! The gardens were lovely this spring, and the new gazebo is "in the Grove." We have new volunteers and an intern! Van has made remarkable improvements to the landscape, and Shawn is working on various projects. Reba, an Oakland University history major, is navigating the Past Perfect software, and Pam helps with the obituaries and scrapbooks. Many thanks to all four!

The North Oakland YMCA is running a leadership/service academy program; students will be volunteering at least one day per week, for nine weeks, here at Pine Grove. We look forward to having these young folks on the property to learn some of our history and do some work for us. Members remain active in the 1818 Expedition study group and Oakland County 2020 Bicentennial celebration. Board member Dave Decker assembled an exhibit for the Pontiac Arts and Culture Crawl to celebrate the city's 200th birthday and, with the help of several volunteers, we welcomed 400 visitors into the beautiful former Pontiac State Bank, now the Cathedral of Valor. The display came back to Pine Grove for the 144th Annual Meeting on May 19th, at which Dave gave a presentation. We own some amazing artifacts!

At the annual meeting, five amendments were made to the OCPHS Bylaws, and eleven individuals were elected to the Board of Directors. These folks bring new ideas,

experiences, talents, and diversity to the Board. I recently signed the \$9,000 insurance premium check and was very grateful for your generosity and prompt responses to our Annual Giving Campaign. We are aware that many worthy organizations ask for your support, and when you choose OCPHS, you truly make a difference!

And speaking of money, the Society has been awarded a grant from Pontiac's Neighborhood Empowerment Program.

The exterior of the Carriage House will be re-painted this summer with the \$6,000 award. We are preparing more applications to submit to various foundations for our projects.

So now, grab your cup of Starbucks, your bottle of Stella Artois, your can of 7-Up or your glass of Stolichnaya and enjoy catching up with the happenings of your busy Society!

Warm regards, Charlotte

Save the Date!

Saturday ~ July 28th 2018

11 AM ~ 5 PM

OLD FASHIONED

ICE CREAM

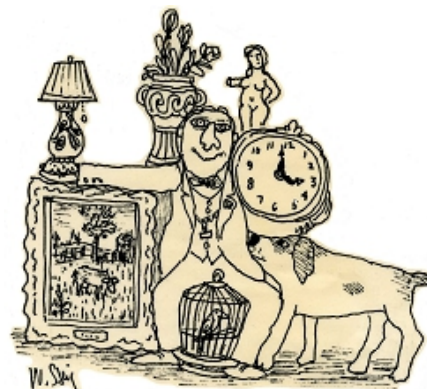
SOCIAL

at Pine Grove



The Wisner House at Pine Grove, headquarters of the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society

Watch your mailbox for information on how
YOU can contribute to this beloved annual event!



Possessions are part of the self.

Doing a little spring cleaning this year?

Downsizing your home?

Please consider OCPHS for your saleable charitable donations. We have two event fundraisers at which your treasures can benefit OCPHS & Pine Grove – the Summer Social and the "Grande Night To Remember" Dinner Auction. You get a tax deduction and your treasures find a new home! Thank you for your support!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

OCPHS was invited to the Birthday Party & Grand Opening of 47 North Saginaw and the Pontiac Little Art Theater (also known as PLAT) in downtown Pontiac on March 18th. We greeted guests and related the history of the building and the Turk family who owned and operated a grocery business at that location for much of its 150-year lifespan. Many thanks to the organizers of this fun event!



Representing OCPHS, from left: Linda Porter, Larry Hathcock, Brian Golden, Annie Hunt, and Barbara Frye. Photo courtesy of Annie Hunt.

WWI EXHIBIT RECEIVES DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

John Scholl, exhibit designer

In early March, I attended a talk on Michigan in World War I at the Michigan Military Technical and Historical Society Museum. There I met Dennis Skupinski, who is the chairman of the Michigan World War One Centennial Commission. I invited him to come to Pine Grove to see our WWI display in the Schoolhouse. Dennis visited on March 21st and was met by Charlotte Cooper and myself. He spoke with volunteer research librarian Ray Lucas and was very impressed with the research he had done on WWI. Ray was kind enough to show Dennis through the library, where he took several photos. He then went over to the Schoolhouse to view the WWI display and took several more photos. He came back to the Carriage House and I showed him the Farm Museum, and then we went to Oak Hill Cemetery to visit the grave of Harold Furlong. Dennis stated that he would register

OCPHS with both the State and National WWI Centennial Commissions. He also sent an email after his visit: "I also wanted to thank you and the staff at the Museum for everything, everyone was great. I just love the setup of the Library, Schoolhouse and Governor's Mansion, once again thank you for inviting me."

I wish to thank Sue Grifor for her help and insight on the WWI display.



John Scholl and Dennis Skupinski in the Drayton Plains One-Room Schoolhouse at Pine Grove. Photo courtesy of John Scholl.

WELCOME FUTURE OCPHS PRESIDENT!



On April 5th, Robert and Kari Vaughan (your faithful *Gazette* editor) welcomed their second child. Lilyanna Adaire Vaughan weighed 8 lbs 8 oz and was 20 inches long. She joins her big brother Camden as a future history lover and (her mother hopes) a future active member of this Society!

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS!

At the 144th Annual Meeting on May 19th, eleven individuals were elected to serve three-year terms on the Board of Directors. We are pleased to introduce them and their goals for OCPHS!

Nancy Calendine

Nancy has been active with OCPHS for seven years. She is a member of the Pontiac Garden Club and gives walking tours of Oak Hill Cemetery. She is interested in the stories of early Oakland County residents (and knows where they are buried!) Nancy wants to help preserve our history and participate in fundraising activities.

Christian Frink

A passionate member of the Pontiac community, Christian is also the garden director for Micah 6. He is employed as a bartender and attends Rochester College. Christian is interested in developing programs targeted at youth and young adults. He has already gained experience working within the boards at both the college and Micah 6.

Dr. Ashok Gupta

Dr. Gupta is a semi-retired physician in the Pontiac area and has been active with OCPHS for eight years. He is interested in helping spread information about the rich history of the medical community and local hospitals.

Ronnie Karpinski

Ronnie holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and a Master of Science in Finance. He is interested in promoting events for OCPHS. He feels it is important to get more people to connect with local history and increase OCPHS' presence in the community.

Amy McIntyre

Amy is a local goat farmer and soap maker who works at City Girls Farms. She is active in the Pontiac Community Gardens. An interest in historical reenactment and all aspects of history gives her an opportunity to influence the next generation and show them how the past can be relevant today without the barrage of present technology. She wants to use the past to bring more value to our current approach to everyday life.

Evan Monaghan

Evan is a food program manager who would like to make the community aware of our unique

history and wants to make OCPHS the vehicle for getting the word out. He is eager to dig deeper into the archives to find interesting personal stories of the county's early days.

Sheri Morgan

A retired Pontiac resident, Sheri has been an enthusiastic member of OCPHS for five years, working both as a docent in the Mansion and on the Mini Lecture Committee. She is very proud that her family has been a part of Pontiac's history for over three generations.

Adrian Rawls

Adrian has been a hands-on worker for OCPHS for many years. He helps clean, decorate, and assists with special events as well as Mini Lectures. He is an active docent and has gained knowledge in many aspects of the Society's history. He feels that "we need to share the knowledge (history) before it is forgotten" and hopes to bring a new generation into our membership ranks.

Rosie Lance-Richardson

A retired Pontiac school teacher and administrator, Rosie has had opportunity to experience many events at Pine Grove. She has four wonderful children and two grandchildren. Rosie is a trustee on the Pontiac Library Board and has served on several other boards, both elected and appointed. She completed undergraduate and graduate studies at Oakland University, Wayne State University, Harvard University Graduate School and Walden University.

Priscilla Shelton

A self-employed Pontiac resident who brings a well-rounded resume to our Board. She is an antique dealer, interior decorator and motivational speaker who has been a member of OCPHS for four years. She has participated in the Victorian Open House and other events. Priscilla is interested in Pontiac's early history and willing to give talks to generate interest in that history.

Ernest (Skip) Upcott

Skip has been active with OCPHS for over five years and does much of the printing for our special events. He is recently retired from Oakland County and plans to devote more time to his printing business (his first love!) He has his own printing press in his basement. Skip was born and raised in Pontiac. He is married with four daughters.

PONTIAC PHOTOGRAPHERS 1843 – 1935

Gottfried Brieger, Barbara Frye, David Walls

One of the great resources of the Society is its collection of photographic images, which is distributed in an alphabetical file and the archives.

The archives collection, in turn, is divided into named, boxed photo collections, individual photos associated with named boxed family collections, a series of 19th century photo albums, and a collection of daguerrotypes, tintypes and ambrotypes (more about the distinctions between these types later).

Sadly, the entire collection has an inherent flaw: Many images lack identification, both as to subject as well as to photographer. The photo albums in particular suffer from this loss of identity. However, in a few cases the photos show the name of the photographer either in front or on the backside, and this allows us to attribute these images to local Pontiac photographers.

Little was known about most of these photographers until the monumental *Directory of Early Michigan Photographers* was produced; with over 8,000 entries, it is now available online (Tinder, David V. **Directory of Early Michigan Photographers.** William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, 2013; online edition). With the information from this directory, we can learn a good deal about Pontiac photographers, even if the individual subjects are not necessarily identifiable at this time. This is the subject of this brief essay.

The Tinder Directory lists 100 photographers in Pontiac, starting with one A. Goodell, who advertised his presence in Pontiac at the Hodges Hotel in 1843, and ending with Avery B. Crandall and J.E. Tolin in 1935. This is remarkable when we consider that the daguerrotype photo process only became publicly available in 1839; itinerant photographers like Goodell brought this process to Pontiac just four years later. He, like most of the other photographers listed, came to Pontiac for only a year or two, then moved on to neighboring towns or alternate professions. Some of course stayed on much longer, like John H. Benson, who worked in Pontiac for almost 40 years (1859-1898), or William H. Brummitt, who photographed in Pontiac 23 years (1871-1894). Because of the short stay of most photographers on the Pontiac list, it is now possible to date many unidentified photos rather precisely, of course with the proviso that the photographer, on moving to a different locality, did not continue to use some of his Pontiac card stock until exhausted. For photographers with a longer residence, like Benson and Brummitt, a closer study of the design on the photo backboards will allow a closer dating.

John Benson was born in New York state in 1820 and came to Romeo, Michigan, in 1855 to start his own business, then moved to Pontiac to open up a gallery in 1857. Notably, in 1859, he married Catherine Allen, daughter of Orrison Allen, an original settler of Pontiac. She was the first female child born in Pontiac. Benson's work is best described by his advertisements at the time. In 1860 his ad reads: "AMBROTYPES, The Most Clear, Distinct, and lifelike, taken at the old stand over Tuthill's Boot and Shoe store, Pontiac, in all kinds of weather. Also photographs, which are beautiful and lasting pictures on paper, taken all sizes. Photograph view of gentlemen's dwellings taken on short notice. Call and examine specimens." By 1867 new amenities are added: "Ladies from a distance who patronize this room and wish to make their toilet before sitting, will be pleased to learn that there is a room...specifically fitted for their use." He offered many types of photos ranging in size from 14" x 17" to 2.5" x 4" carte-de-visites as well as stereoscopic views. His work was repeatedly recognized at Oakland County fairs. He continued in his profession almost to the end of his life and died in 1901.

Below are examples of Benson's work:



Cabinet cards, J.H. Benson





*Stereoscopic view, Saginaw St. looking north,
J.H. Benson*



*Ambrotype, Catherine Allen Benson, wife of
J.H. Benson*

William H. Brummitt, another long-time photographer in Pontiac, was born in England in 1837 and came to New York in 1855, where he set up an art gallery with a fellow artist. In one of his advertisements he noted that: "...Being practical artists and doing all our own work, we have the advantage over galleries that employ artists to do the work, who usually receive one-half the price of the picture..." After working in Toronto, Philadelphia, and Detroit, he made his way to Pontiac in 1871 and promptly set up a studio, where he offered to "...take pictures of Residences, Factories, Stores,

Machinery, and Landscape views, either Stereoscopic or of any other size or style..." In February of 1874 he offered to take free portraits of the 150 remaining pioneers of Oakland County. We do not know whether this ever materialized, but we do have copies of a 14" x 17" group photo which he took outdoors of most pioneers on September 17, 1874. Competitors soon arrived in Pontiac and a regular price war broke out; nevertheless, Brummitt was able to establish a branch gallery in Holly. In 1878 he sold his Pontiac gallery to another photographer, H.M. Kittle, and became a

saloonkeeper for a couple of years. In August of 1879 he reoccupied his gallery in Stout's Block, Pontiac, and proudly announced "...that he has again commenced business AT HIS OLD STAND which he has thoroughly refitted and supplied with all the necessary accessories to make the VERY BEST and LATEST STYLES OF PICTURES..." He was taking babies in the tenth part of a second and claimed "...The babies all like me and I like the babies, so bring them along and just let me show you how quick I can take a picture."

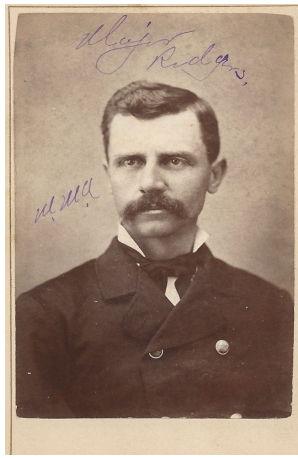
Brummitt continued his work until 1895, when he sold his gallery. He died on February 23, 1898, leaving behind a substantial legacy of photographs and paintings.



Baby by Brummitt, cabinet card ca. 1884



Oakland County Pioneers, W.H. Brummitt, 1874



Major John Sumner Rogers, 1882, Superintendent,
Michigan Military Academy
Cdv by W.H. Brummitt



Gardner McKnight, 1878, Cadet,
Michigan Military Academy
Cdv by H.M. Kittle

**The Michigan Military Academy was founded on the shores of Orchard Lake, Michigan, by Captain Joseph Sumner Rogers in 1877. Cadet Gardner McKnight was one of its first students.*

A continuation of this article, detailing the four major types of photographs popular in the 19th century, will appear in the September 2018 *Gazette*. All images courtesy of the authors.

Membership and Donation Form

Name: _____

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Send my *Gazette* via: ____ U.S. Mail ____ Email
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Please Make Me a Member! (indicate level):

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

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- ____ 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

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

Lori Lockwood (Waterford)
Connor Newton (Waterford)
Mike Witkowski (Waterford)
Paul Bertalan (Sterling Heights)
Amy McIntyre (Pontiac)
Peter & Linda Stouffer (Holly)
Pam Schmaltz (West Bloomfield)

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

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

Saturday, July 28 -
Old-Fashioned Ice Cream Social
11:00 am – 5:00 pm

Admission \$7 per person / \$15 family of five

Sunday, September 16 -
“Women in the Civil War”
(Mini Lecture Series)

Presented by Bill Grandstaff
2:00 pm / Admission \$7



Wednesday Evenings in the Carriage House
6:00 - 7:30 pm

These informal sessions are designed to teach our members and friends more about the Wisner Family and the Pine Grove estate. Various topics on the family, property, Oakland County pioneers and related subjects will be covered. Speakers will vary and there is **no charge** to attend (donations are always gratefully accepted).

These sessions are intended to be interactive, so bring your memories, stories and items to “show and tell.” Most of all, bring your questions! If we do not know the answer, we will find it together!

Suggestions for topics are welcome and will be seriously considered. If we do not have sufficient information on a topic, our enthusiastic research volunteers will dig into the OCPHS archives! Join us!!!

OCPHS Officers and Board of Directors

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Evan Monaghan

Sheri Morgan

Linda Porter

Adrian Rawls

Rosie Lance-Richardson

Priscilla Shelton

Skip Upcott

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



SAVE THE DATE!

Friday, October 5, 2018

Lafayette Grande, Downtown Pontiac

***"A Grande Night To Remember" Dinner
and Auction benefiting OCPHS &
Pine Grove***

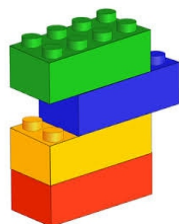
**Plan to join us as we auction off some
unique treasures and celebrate westward
expansion into Oakland County 200 years
ago!**

Details coming soon!

***Donations of saleable items now being
accepted. Please call the office to
arrange pickup of large items.***



HISTORY IN LEGOS!



Ever wondered what the historic Wisner Mansion would look like as a Lego model? The wait is over!

OCPHS is working with a professional builder to create a Lego model of the Mansion to be displayed at Pine Grove, in time for the Victorian Open House. Of

course, work of this caliber is costly; please contact us if you are a Lego enthusiast and can help us offset our expense. Board member Linda Porter is overseeing this project.

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Submissions, content suggestions or comments are
welcome.

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Editor: Kari Vaughan

Contributors: Gottfried Brieger, Charlotte Cooper, Barbara Frye,
John Scholl, Kari Vaughan, David Walls

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