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Dedicated to the history and heritage of Oakland County, Michigan

September 2018

THE OAKLAND COUNTY PIONEER AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Charlotte Cooper



I often write about change, which is the only constant, and the only thing on which we can rely. I hope you enjoyed the hot and humid summer, which seems to be finally changing into autumn, one of my favorite seasons. What happened at Pine Grove this summer? The gazebo is here and on its foundation. It still needs "skirting" and a ramp. It is very serene and peaceful, and there are plans to stage some of the 2019 Summer Social there.

Be sure to read the article about this year's Social, written by Rodger Zeller.

Did you see the front page articles in the Oakland Press regarding the Farmington Carriage Barn? That barn is now residing, dismantled, at Pine Grove. This is Oakland County historic preservation in action. We hope to have it reassembled by 2020 in honor of the county's bicentennial. Be sure to read the article by Dave Decker, leader of the project.

What else? We now have an active Finance Committee, Publicity Committee and Grants Committee. The switchover to Quick Books is completed. The research library has been reorganized. Old computers are being replaced with newer and faster models. More people visit for tours and to do research; the parking areas are often full of cars! Finally, our grounds continue to become more attractive with the help of volunteers.

We continue to become better known by the public and fellow museum organizations. Efforts and financial donations by members, good publicity and events, and participation in community and professional activities continue to increase the public's awareness that Michigan's oldest county-based historical society is very much alive and well. One of our members writes, "In-kind and labor donations of the professional caliber are particularly beneficial to OCPHS. These donations should not be downplayed as insignificant; they offer OCPHS a value that could not otherwise be obtained while staying within our budget. Cash donations and grants are always needed to maintain our standing in the community, but offers of labor and goods by our members and the community should be valued just as highly with our gratitude." I agree, and I value what you do to keep us growing, changing, and viable.

Warm regards, *Charlotte*

UPCOMING OCTOBER SHENANIGANS!

(From left: Fred Liimatta, Eddie Delbridge, Bill Clink, Amy Annett, Linda Porter. Image courtesy of Joy Dockham.)

Our Auction Planning Committee invites you to "Saddle Up!" on Friday, October 5th for our annual Dinner & Auction. Live and silent auctions will benefit OCPHS & Pine Grove. We're celebrating westward expansion into Oakland County 200 years ago, so come in your "Western" gear! You can "saddle up" even earlier than our mailed flyer told you! The fun begins at 6:00, not 6:30, so gather your posse and ride on over early! Tickets on sale now!

**Back this year
by popular
demand!
Come meet
the "ghosts"
of the Wisner
family and
enjoy a
spirited
evening
suitable for
both old and
young!**



The Haunted Mansion
at Pine Grove

A Family friendly tour of
19th Century customs sponsored by
Oakland County Pioneer & Historical Society
405 Cesar E. Chavez Avenue - Pontiac, MI 48342

Saturday, October 20, 2018
6 pm – 8 pm

Children's Crafts and light refreshments
served in the Schoolhouse after your tour.

\$10 per person
Tickets sold in the Gift Shop

(248) 338-6732 www.ocphs.org

A NAME ON THE WALL

Fred Liimatta, Board Member & Vietnam Veteran



There are two plaques prominently placed at the entrance to the Wisner Memorial Stadium. The 300 names listed are brave local men lost in WWII.

One of those men, Robert Sterling, was a lieutenant in the Reserve Navy Air Force. After a dive bombing attack in the Pacific, his aircraft experienced mechanical failure and was unable to

return to the carrier. After an extended search, Sterling was declared a casualty of combat.

Every American who takes the oath to serve in the military is willing to accept a similar fate. The price of freedom is extremely high, but for those who have served, it is more than worth the cost.



For the past three years, OCPHS has hosted an annual picnic to honor our service people. This year's picnic, held in August, was once again a wonderful time of fellowship. Thank you to all of our local active and veteran service folks!



(Images courtesy of Fred Liimatta)

BOARD MEMBER FEATURED IN "CANVAS PONTIAC"

We love to brag on the personal accomplishments of our members! A photo taken by Board member Linda Porter, titled "A Mid-Summer's Garden," was selected for display in this year's Canvas Pontiac event. The top 25 out of approximately 150 entries were reproduced onto 8 x 10 foot canvases that are displayed around the city of Pontiac for one year.

Judges typically include a Pontiac resident, an Oakland University art staff member, and a representative of the Detroit Institute of Arts. Maps listing the locations of the canvases and names of the artists are available at several establishments in town. Linda says it's exciting and an honor to be one of the Top 25!



(Image courtesy of Linda Porter)

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT – VAN JONES ***Joy Dockham, Operations Manager***

OCPHS is situated on nearly five acres with many old beautiful trees and multiple flower beds. It would be an understatement to say that we have a lot of land to maintain. Being a mostly volunteer-based organization does not lend itself to a full-time grounds crew or even regular grounds volunteers. Basically, we pay to have the lawn mowed and then try for the occasional group volunteer work day to get the leaves off the ground or mass-manage another project. This year, however, has been different. If you have been to Pine Grove this summer, it is hard to miss how beautiful the grounds look. Much of that work has been done by our one-man volunteer crew, Mr. Van Jones. You might not have noticed Van; he is a quiet man who moves purposefully around Pine Grove every morning. Van started volunteering last February. In early spring he told us he enjoyed yard work and, if it was alright, he would like to work outside. Once we all stopped stammering in shock, we said that would be wonderful! More accurately, Van has owned the yard. He arrives every day at 9am like it was his paying job. He trims trees and rakes leaves, pinecones and walnuts. He has developed his own routine and magically makes it happen. If we had paid Van for his work this summer, it would have been thousands of dollars; yet he did it for free. Volunteers at Pine Grove are such a gift, and Van is a special one. I love to drive onto our campus in the mornings because it is so beautiful. If you stop by, look for the quiet man moving around the grounds, doing his thing. Van is a rare soul, and we have made a wonderful new friend. It's a win for everyone.

Thank you, Van!

NEW GRANTS COMMITTEE FORMED

Evan Monaghan, Committee Chair

The Grants Committee held its initial meeting on September 5th. At the meeting, members began solidifying the structure and role of this new committee and identified three "focus areas" (programs or needs to find funding for over the next six months): Office Staff/Administration Salaries; Wisner Mansion Climate Control System; and Digitizing the Collection/Expanding Research Programs. Going forward, the committee will also develop a standardized system for grant requests. Chaired by Evan Monaghan, members include Sara Cote, Christian Frink, Dave Decker, Ronnie Karpinski and Priscilla Shelton.

2018 ICE CREAM SOCIAL

Rodger Zeller, Planning Committee Chair

July 28th was a mild, sunny, low-humidity day that provided a perfect backdrop for our annual Summer Social. Our Opening Ceremony featured the Peace Jubilee Brass Band with authentic period instruments.

We heard from Brooks Patterson and Mayor

Waterman. Afterward, the Big Chief Chorus sang wonderful songs from bygone days. Standing nearby was the Oakland County Sheriff's Mounted Patrol Unit.

Many folks were taking pictures next to the horses. The schoolhouse hosted two fine presentations: Jack Mason gave an account of General Israel Richardson's life, and Rochelle Danquah detailed Oakland County's contributions to the Underground Railroad. The Porch Talks included pertinent comments from Moses Wisner, Abraham Lincoln, and Rochelle Danquah. There was also a skit put on by children from Pontiac Theatre IV.

As people wandered the grounds, they encountered a lineup of old cars and displays from various authors, historical societies, and others. Many hurried over to have wood turner Ray Frase make them a spinning top. Most finally made their way to the Curiosity Sale in hopes of finding hidden treasures. When it was time to relax, they wandered over for cake and ice cream or a hot dog meal.

As always, the Wisner Mansion was open for tours.

Many guests mentioned that they had never been inside before! When the dust settled, we found that we took in about \$7,000 towards the upkeep of Pine Grove. A big "thank you" goes to our dedicated group of volunteers. Together, we did it!

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In Honor of Charlie Martinez ~ by Dr. Richard Stamps
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We Remember:

In Memory of Gale & Connie Scafe ~ by Joyce E. Scafe

In Memory of Bart Clark ~ by Diane Clark

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In Memory of Beatrice & Richard H. Frye ~

by Barbara L. Frye

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In Memory of Samuel Zalotes Morse ~

by Catherine Jo Dixon

In Memory of Robert Nelson ~ by Fred & Anne Liimatta

In Memory of Jeanine Saputo ~ by Colleen Barkham

In Memory of William E. Shillaire ~

by Edward J. & Carol A. George

In Memory of Jacob & Winifred Van Wagoner ~

by Patricia Andrews

In Memory of Margaret Wilmot ~ by Claire Pryor

In Memory of Lena Stewart ~ by Mr. & Mrs. Cliff Blose

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In Memory of Lena Stewart ~ by Lloyd & Carole Johnson

In Memory of Lena Stewart ~ by Gary & Cindy Kayser

In Memory of Lena Stewart ~ by Mrs. Rosemary Loy

In Memory of W. E. C. Huthwaite ~ by Motoko Huthwaite

PONTIAC PHOTOGRAPHERS 1843 – 1935

Gottfried Brieger, Barbara Frye, David Walls

****Part 1 of this article appeared in the June 2018 Gazette. We present to you now Part 2. Images are courtesy of the authors.***

There were four major types of photographs which were popular in the 19th century. The first was the **Daguerrotype**, invented by Louis-Jacques-Mande Daguerre in 1835 and introduced to the world in 1839. Briefly, the process required the coating of a sheet of metal, usually copper, with a thin layer of silver. In order to achieve the best result, the silver layer had to be highly polished. The plate was then exposed to iodine fumes, although bromine or chlorine also worked. Now came a crucial sensitization step which called for exposure of the plate to mercury vapor. This process had to be carried out in the dark or with a special safelight; the plate was then placed in a light-tight covered frame and transferred to the camera. It should be pointed out that the iodine, bromine and chlorine vapors were toxic and, even more so, the mercury vapors!

Once the plate was exposed in the camera for the required amount of time, which could be seconds to several minutes, it needed to be treated with a fixer, known to old-time film developers as sodium thiosulfate. The dried image was extremely fragile and had to be carefully mounted under a glass plate. Standard cases became available for permanent storage and images survived well for over 150 years. Because the image is in silver, the view varies with the perspective of the viewer.



Louis Daguerre; daguerrotype photograph

The elaborate process required to create a daguerrotype was soon superseded by a technically simpler process called the **Ambrotype**. This method started with a glass plate, but it was coated with a solution of iodized collodion (gun cotton),

dipped in a solution of silver nitrate, and transferred wet to the camera, with exclusion of light. Exposure times were shortened to five to sixty seconds.

Again, development and fixing was required. The resulting image was quite different from the daguerrotype, being essentially a negative. In order to view it properly, the plate had to be backed with a dark fabric (often black velvet) before being mounted in a suitable frame.



Ambrotype photographs

The **Tintype** brought further simplification to photography. A thin sheet of iron was coated with a dark lacquer or enamel. After drying, the iodized collodion was applied and the plate could actually be used wet or dry. This was tremendously convenient. The plate could then be exposed for the photo, followed by development and fixation. The whole process took only a few minutes and thus required no elaborate studio. Tintypes were popular at carnivals and fairs, and were often sold by sidewalk photographers. Sizes of tintypes were quite variable. By using a special twelve-lens camera, tiny 0.75" x 1" images could be created by the dozens. These were known as "gems." The most popular sizes ranged between 2 3/8" x 3 1/2" to 4" x 5 3/4" but could be as large as 11" x 14".



A "gem" tintype



Tintype 2 ½ " x 3 ½ "

All three types lend a nice sense of antiquity to ancestral portraits. These photo types remained in use through the 1870's, but were gradually replaced by another type of image – the **Albumen** print.

These were conveniently made from negatives, prepared initially by processes similar to the daguerrotype and ambrotype. The albumen print was created from 100% cotton paper coated with an egg white and salt emulsion which was dried. This paper was treated with silver nitrate solution, then dried while being kept from bright light. Combining the treated paper with the negative and then exposing it to sunlight (in the early days) produced an image, after which the excess silver salt was removed with sodium thiosulfate. The final dried image could then be attached to a variety of cardboard backings, providing stability and a platform for adding the photographer's name in front and additional information on the back. The most popular 19th century portraits were the carte de visite (2 ½ " x 4"), roughly the size of a business card, and the cabinet cards (4" x 6 ½ "), a little larger than a postcard. Of course with the availability of a paper format, many other sizes were also available, especially for advertising purposes.

There is much else that we can learn from these early photographs; individuals posed in typical clothing of the period, mostly their finest, of course. To help create an upscale ambiance, photographers also employed a variety of props, especially armchairs and backdrops which require a study in and of themselves. Even though we may not know the subjects of many of these old photographs, careful examine yields many secrets; and for the benefit of future historians, please identify YOUR photographs!

For those interested in the many photographers who worked in Pontiac, please see: Tinder, David V. *Directory of Early Michigan Photographers*. William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, 2013; online edition.

SERENDIPITY

Barbara Frye, Board Member

On August 5th, Rodger Zeller and I attended a "Meet & Greet" sponsored by the MMA at the Flint Children's Museum on University Avenue in Flint. The Michigan Museums Association, of which OCPHS is a member, encourages engagement, expertise, and advocacy, with an emphasis on face-to-face collaboration. The MMA shares resources to promote standards and practices that make the Michigan museum community thrive. The meet & greet included a tour of the Flint Children's Museum, which is designed to appeal to children 3 to 8 years of age (some of us older "kids" got into the interactive displays!) If you have children or grandchildren in that age range, I recommend a visit!

During the lunch portion of the event, our table mate was a delightful young woman, Megan C. McAdow, who is the Collections Manager of the Ruth Mott Foundation & Applewood. It turns out Megan knows Pine Grove quite well. She and Keith Bennett (a long-time OCPHS Board member) were responsible for organizing our basement museum as it is today! Megan was an intern with OCPHS while she was studying at Oakland University. During her internship, she decided the basement artifacts really should not be on the floor, and with Keith's carpentry skills, turned the collection into a museum-quality display. She told us that our friend Leslie Edwards, who just retired from Cranbrook, organized the Ice House dig. It would appear that Pine Grove and OCPHS can be a stepping stone to greater positions in the museum community.

OCPHS Board members have attended two MMA sessions this summer and several are planning to attend the MMA Conference in Dearborn later this year. Meeting with other museum colleagues who have overcome some of the same issues we deal with is a win-win for everyone. Membership in the MMA can help OCPHS in many ways and it is our goal to be more involved with the larger museum community for continued growth.



For more information, visit
www.michiganmuseums.org

THE FARMINGTON BARN:
WHAT THE HECK, OCPHS?

Dave Decker, Board member & Project Leader

Many of you are aware, through the press and through our own efforts, that OCPHS is in possession of a disassembled barn from Farmington. The short version of the “barn story” is that we agreed to accept the structure for storage for one year and, if a Farmington historical group wanted it, we’d return it, all at no cost to OCPHS. It’s a great barn!



That story changed quite a lot when the relationship between the developer and contractor fell apart. We were left with no resources to save the building, which we feel deserves to be saved. And the timing for saving the building was very short – less than a month. When one of OCPHS’ benefactors stepped forward and agreed to advance the funds to disassemble and move the building to Pine Grove, we began to think this could actually happen. And then it DID happen. We contracted with Mark Stitt of Stitt Barn Preservation, a third generation barnwright, to disassemble the barn and move it to Pontiac. In less than four days, Stitt took down the barn and moved it to Pine Grove.

And so, everyone, meet “Barney Rubble:”



Why did OCPHS decide this barn was worth the cost and effort of saving it? A few reasons, really, but let’s start with the obvious:

*It’s a historically accurate barn from the early 20th century with many of its historical details left intact, right down to the hay in the feed chutes.

*It tells a story of town barns and how our ancestors used them. The story is also one of Farmington and its growth as one of Oakland County’s earliest and most successful towns.

*It’s a carriage barn, and we have a carriage that needs a home.

And the less obvious:

*Because sometimes the “grand gesture” is important. Through this barn, OCPHS has garnered a fair bit of very positive press. We have made friends in Farmington and in the historic barn preservation community. Most importantly, our gesture saved a historic structure from destruction.

*Because it’s right there in our mission statement: “To preserve and convey the history of Oakland County and its role in American history.”

*Selfishly, because it’s a legacy. We are in the unique position of being able to add to the Pine Grove story and to its campus, to reach a new audience and new donors and, well, to make our mark.

So, what now?

First and foremost, *fundraising* through both private support and grants. Our commitment to re-erecting this barn does not have any place in our budget. Our benefactor has advanced \$20,000 to move the barn to Pine Grove. This is not a donation. It must be repaid. We currently have *promised* commitments of around \$10,000, but that’s only half, and they’re not in the bank yet. We need your help to identify donors and repay this commitment. To do that, we’ve created a gofundme campaign on our website which includes perks for donating.

(see www.ocphs.org/the-farmington-barn)

We’ve reached out to the Michigan Historic Preservation Network and the Michigan Barn Preservation Network for advice; we’re hoping for their assistance in developing interpretive displays and planning support.

When are we raising the barn? Hopefully next year, possibly the following year. The barn needs substantial work before it can be erected again, and the cost will be significant; this is the biggest investment in a Pine Grove building in many years. After it’s raised, it will be an interpretive space – like the schoolhouse – displaying the barn’s features and how they worked. The stalls and carriage bay will be interpreted in period style, with appropriate decoration. Items from the collection in our Carriage House museum will be displayed there. Our 1901 Standard Vehicle carriage will be housed in the carriage bay, with appropriate tack and hardware. The carriage needs a lot of TLC, and the first step in getting that done is to give it a home. The hayloft will contain the collection and also be used for storage. It will be modified so that the barn roof can be seen from the entranceway. The wood floor will be replaced with concrete for safety and stability. We think it will look nice painted red to match the other buildings on the campus.

We need your help! We are in need of donors, both financial and in-kind. If you know of any individual or organization interested in saving this structure, please have them contact us.

(Images courtesy of Dave Decker)

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)
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- ☐ \$ In Memory of / Honor of (provide name):

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

- ☐ Interest in Oakland County History
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- ☐ Attended Event or Tour
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- ☐ Other (specify):

Mail this form with check payable to OCPHS to:

Oakland County Pioneer & Historical Society
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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

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

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

Friday, October 5 -
Saddle Up! Dinner & Auction
6:00 – 10:00 pm
Tickets \$40 (\$35 by 9/21)

Sunday, October 14 -
“1818 Exploratory Expedition”
(Mini Lecture Series)
Presented by Dave Decker & Company
2:00 pm / Admission \$7

Saturday, October 20 -
The Haunted Mansion at Pine Grove
6:00 – 8:00 pm
Admission \$10

Sunday, November 11 -
“1928: Last Best Year of a Generation”
(Mini Lecture Series)
Presented by Bruce Annett
2:00 pm / Admission \$7

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

Thomas Cox (Ferndale)
Louise Thorton (Laguna Beach, CA)
Nick Garzoni (Bloomfield Hills)
Charles Adams (Coral Springs, FL)
Rita Ski (Birmingham)
Margaret Denmark (Bloomfield)
Charlotte Fischhaber (Clinton Township)
Sue & Gene Tozzi (New Rochelle, NY)

PICTURESQUE IN PINE GROVE



Now gracing our grounds is this beautiful gazebo! It previously stood in front of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church on Pontiac Road in Auburn Hills (Gloria Dei began as St. John's Lutheran Church of Pontiac in 1927; in 1962, it moved to Pontiac Township, now Auburn Hills, and the name was changed to Gloria Dei). The funds to build the

gazebo were donated by Roxanne Alfson and Faye (Alfson) Gorecki in memory of their parents, Carl and Evelyn Alfson. Erected in 2001 at a cost of \$10,000, the gazebo was used for outdoor worship services, weddings and special events. A brick pathway was laid around the gazebo; inscribed bricks were sold to members and friends of the church to raise money for the surrounding "Glory Garden," pathway and maintenance. Once worship services at Gloria Dei ended in January 2018, Roxanne and Faye chose to donate the gazebo to OCPHS. We thank Gloria Dei and research volunteer Ray Lucas for their efforts to bring this wonderful structure to its new home at Pine Grove. (Image courtesy of Joy Dockham)

(Information provided by Scott Johnson)

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Submissions, content suggestions or comments are
welcome.

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Editor: Kari Vaughan

Contributors: Gottfried Brieger, Charlotte Cooper, Dave
Decker, Joy Dockham, Barbara Frye, Fred Liimatta, Evan
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