



GAZETTE

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Dedicated to the history and heritage of Oakland County, Michigan THE OAKLAND COUNTY PIONEER AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY 405 Cesar E. Chavez Avenue Pontiac, Michigan 48342

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Charlotte Cooper



It starts with YOU. With your support, all of these amazing things happened in 2018:

*Barn from Farmington

*Book signing and speakers

*Enhanced alarm system and upgraded internet

*Expedition of 1818: Research, development, presentations and partnerships

*Gazebo

*Grants received

*Increased donations and sponsorships

*Office computer replaced

*Oakland County Bicentennial Group participation

*Oakland County Genealogical Society books now stored at Pine Grove

*Oakland County newspapers transferred from OC Law Library to OCPHS

*Outreach

*Professional development

*Property maintenance

*QuickBooks transition

*Service volunteers

*Wedding gowns and suits showcased from our vintage collection

*Wilson luggage and Wisner pistol returned home

It is obvious you care about Pine Grove, and your support has made such a difference for our Society. We thank you so very much! Now we Pioneer Ahead, Pioneer Onward, and Pioneer into 2019! It's going to be another great year!

Warm regards, Charlotte

OCPHS SHARES IN CASUAL DAY FUNDS Mike West

Casual Day is a weekly, optional Oakland County government employee fund raising activity. Individuals who choose to dress casually on Fridays contribute \$1 to the Casual Day Fund. Then, in December, L. Brooks Patterson, County Executive, and his team select county non-profits to share in the funds. This year, as in several prior years, the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society was included among the twenty recipients that shared in \$34,500 collected during 2018. As they did last vear, OCPHS members Linda Porter and Mike West attended the awards ceremony to accept the donation from Mr. Patterson. Amazingly, since its inception the Casual Day program has raised over \$900,000 for charity, all donated by county employees! We thank Mr. Patterson and all county employees for contributing to this fund and choosing OCPHS to participate. This gift is important in helping cover our operating expenses, enabling us to continue the Society's 144-year tradition of preserving and conveying our county's history.



Linda Porter and Mike West (shown below at last year's ceremony) accepted the Casual Day award for OCPHS.

Photo courtesy of Mike West.



The 2019 OCPHS Calendar is here! This new calendar focuses on the pioneers who established and developed Oakland County. Some may already be familiar to you, like Thomas Drake or Oliver and

Mary Williams. Others are truly fascinating personalities like Elizabeth Denison Forth, the first black female property owner in 1825, or Jacob "Little Jake" Seligman, an immigrant who arrived alone in Pontiac at age seventeen in 1860 and soon became the leading clothier in town. Purchase yours on our website or at the Carriage House office. Calendars can also be mailed direct to you!

THANK YOU NORTH OAKLAND FAMILY YMCA! Joy Dockham, Operations Manager

This past summer, OCPHS had the wonderful opportunity to host a "Leaders-In-Training" group from the North Oakland Family YMCA. These middle school and high school students were part of a service learning and leadership camp sponsored for the first time through the YMCA. Program director Brittany Barron asked if we would be willing to host a volunteer group for several days during the summer, and we said of course!!! Over the seven days that the students were at Pine Grove, they cleaned the schoolhouse from top to bottom, cleaned out and reorganized the sheds, and helped move items for the Curiosity Sale over to the tent. They scanned documents and raked up pine needles, pine cones and walnuts. They weeded flower beds, trimmed back shrubs, washed benches, and moved pavers. They cleaned the downstairs Farm Museum. In short, they did a little bit of everything, and we tried to expose them to the best parts of this place. We invited them to our Summer Social and several came with their families. It was a terrific way to be involved with our community and to teach the next generation the history behind our campus.

We hope that the kids enjoyed coming to Pine Grove as much as we enjoyed having them. I want to thank Charlotte Cooper, Dave Decker, Rodger Zeller, and Van Jones; without their day-to-day help, I could not have successfully coordinated the students' activities. It was a busy, fun, exhausting, good time and I hope we get to do it again next year. THANK YOU North Oakland Family YMCA! You made a difference this summer at OCPHS!

MOTOR CITIES RECOGNITION AWARD "CARRIAGES TO CARS" Mike West

A few years ago, OCPHS accepted the donation of a 1901 Standard Vehicle Carriage. Arrival of the Carriage initiated curiosity among some of our members and we began researching the Standard Vehicle Company, uncovering a rich but forgotten chapter of the City of Pontiac's history. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Pontiac was a leader in the production of carriages and wagons, not only in Michigan but in the nation. The huge infrastructure that was in place quickly transitioned to the horseless carriage and gave rise to GM Truck, GM Pontiac Motors, and even produced bodies for Henry Ford's Highland Park Model "T" plant.

OCPHS library staff and members began to find photos, catalogs, newspaper and magazine articles which illustrated much of that rich era of Pontiac history. I assembled that information into a Power Point presentation, "Carriages to Cars, Pontiac's Forgotten History" and, on behalf of OCPHS, spoke at several local civic and historical societies.

Motor Cities National Heritage Area is a division of our National Park Service and is dedicated to promoting local automotive heritage. For the past twenty years, they have held a ceremony at the State Capitol in Lansing which gives recognition to projects that are significant in preserving Michigan auto history. This year, "Carriages to Cars" was a finalist. Barbara Frye and Dave Walls, lead researchers, and Helen and Mike West were in the Rotunda Room at the State Capitol to accept the award on behalf of OCPHS. In addition to receiving the award, the ceremony provided an opportunity to meet other historical and preservation societies and share ideas.

And the 1901 Standard Vehicle Carriage? It will be brought out of storage, spruced up, and maintenance work done so that it can be used for its intended purpose, "preserving and promoting the history of Oakland County." More on that project in a future Gazette!



Mike West, Barbara Frye, and Dave Walls accept the award for "Carriages to Cars." Photo courtesy of Helen West.

SPRING CLEANING – STARTING NOW!!! Jo Pate

Have you ever had a conversation with yourself that nags you to do something that you know must be done, but you don't even know where to start, such as, "I need to clean out the attic?" Well, that conversation has been ongoing at OCPHS for quite some time, and now it is time to start cleaning out OUR attic!

Here is a basic but not comprehensive list of what needs to be sorted through and organized:

Picture frames
Antique bones
Men's clothing
Infant clothing
Laces
Jewelry
Spinning wheels
Glass bottles
Quilts

Here is how you can help! We need to redesign the attic for more efficient storage space and create an area for processing incoming and outgoing items which can also double as a place to prepare displays. We are also seeking suggestions for organizations that could use our excessive items, and we need to do an inventory of all available spaces, cabinets, shelves, and rooms suitable to house displays in the Carriage House, Wisner mansion, and schoolhouse. We want our members and friends to share in making these decisions. Thinking together, and then working together, is much more productive – and certainly more fun.

If this sounds like fun to you (or maybe you have just always wanted to know what is stored upstairs!), please call the office and let Joy know you are interested. This project will begin this winter.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH Barbara Frye

OCPHS has been stepping up its commitment to share Oakland County history with the community at large in this bicentennial year. President Charlotte Cooper, Board member Barbara Frye, and Dave Decker were involved with the 1818 Exploratory Expedition Study Committee to commemorate the expedition by Detroit businessmen into the interior of Oakland County. This expedition and the Pontiac Company opened up this area to settlement and 200 years of progress for the county.

President Cooper is on the Oak200 Committee, ramping up activities for the bicentennial of Oakland County in 2020.

The 2018 Oakland County Heritage Conference invited OCPHS to provide historians to lead two walking tours through Oak Hill Cemetery. Nancy Calendine and Barbara Frye graciously accepted the challenge and guided 80 conference-goers, with commentary on historic figures buried there and the symbolism found on Victorian-era grave markers. Their contribution to the conference was acknowledged with smiles and many expressions of "Thank you!"

Lastly, OCPHS once again participated in the Holiday Extravaganza Parade in downtown Pontiac. Society members walking in costume braved the elements, to the delight of parade viewers. In connection with that endeavor, OCPHS was invited to provide historians to narrate the Trolley Tours that the Pontiac Public Library runs through Pontiac after the parade. Once again,

Nancy Calendine and Barbara Frye rose to the occasion, developing a route, researching buildings, printing images of long-gone structures, and telling the story of Historic Pontiac. Main Street Pontiac, as well as Wisner Stadium, Pine Grove, Franklin Boulevard, the Pontiac Creative Arts Commission and Dr. Harold Furlong, the Sibley-Hoyt House, and Oak Hill Cemetery were some of the highlights of the tour.

OCPHS is also involved in the planning stages of the 2019 Pontiac Arts and Culture Crawl, and working with the city to continue its bicentennial commemoration. Plans are to create a time capsule throughout 2019 for eventual burial at City Hall or another suitable location.

The Mission Statement of our Society says that our role is to preserve and convey the contribution of Oakland County in the evolution of American history. Society members endeavored to fulfill that mission this past year and will continue to do so in the coming years!

QUICKBOOKS, HERE WE COME Joy Dockham

Amy Annett served as OCPHS' treasurer for over a decade. She was amazing and did incredible things with the Excel program. During her tenure, Amy kept track of all things financial. She is highly attentive to detail and extremely conscientious; there is nothing that she cannot remember. Unfortunately, no person can oversee something forever, no matter how amazing they are, and last year Amy told the Board it was time to find her replacement. Realizing that no one else was equipped to do what Amy had done, it was time to wrestle our financial reports out of Excel and into QuickBooks. Our Financial Committee began the transition process in January 2018; we have made lots of adjustments and reconfigured accounts, classes, general funds, and restricted funds. We dug through all sorts of information to figure out the best ways to track our financial records going forward. When your financial team is mostly volunteers, things are usually crazy, occasionally fun and always an adventure, but we've progressed forward. As 2018 draws to a close, OCPHS' financial records have moved into the 21st century and will be more available to committee members.

Board members, treasurers and accountants to track. A big thank you to Amy Annett for her help with the initial transitioning process and to the other members of the Financial Committee for their hard work and patience: Bill Grandstaff, Barb Frye, Dave Decker, and Ronnie Karpinski.

THE HAUNTED MANSION AT PINE GROVE Barbara Frye, Haunt Instigator & Wandering Spirit



It was a cold and stormy night...really! It was cold, wet, and rather windy, but we persevered! This year's Haunt featured a family reunion of the spirits of the Wisner family, coming back to share memories of their beloved home. Housemaid Catherine Wellers greeted guests in the Gift Shop, and Judge Charles Wisner (known to the family as Chip) showed off his watercolors in the Dining Room. Alpheus Clark (Jessie's husband) told stories in the Family Room, while Moses (the Governor) and his wife (Angeolina) held sway in the Formal Parlor. Edward Maxwell Wisner, the eldest son, came for a visit and entertained quests in the informal study upstairs. Wisner's granddaughter, Florence Wallace, ushered guests out of the Mansion and over to the schoolhouse for light refreshments. An Itinerant Preacher wandered about the grounds with young Frank Wisner, and an Undertaker, skeletal horse, and a Grave Digger greeted patrons on the short walk past our tiny cemetery to the school. We even had ghosts projected on a screen in our "new" gazebo! What a lovely Haunt; everyone enjoyed themselves, guests and spirits alike!

We had a dedicated crew of 31 volunteers who worked very hard in a short period of time to research, decorate, develop their stories, and plan for this event. They are to be commended for a job well done.

Cast (in order of appearance): Catherine – Jane Karaguleff Chip – Jason Womack Alpheus – Bruce Toncray Moses – Bill Grandstaff
Angeolina – Annie Hunt
Edward – Rodger Zeller
Florence – Debra Jackson-Dechert
Undertaker – Fred Liimatta
Grave Digger – Joe Alessi
Preacher – Nick Karaguleff
Frank – Gavin (Juanita's grandson)

Support Crew: Amy Annett, Laurie Bishop, Nancy Calendine, Charlotte Cooper, Sara Cote, Joy Dockham, Nancy Duffield, JoAn Green, Barb & Judy Hudalla, Ann Johnson, Juanita Lindsey, Ray Lucas, Patricia Malloy, Debi Parrott, Pamela Richards-Hugli, Pam Schmaltz and Reba Yousif

Videographer: Jonah Duffield

After all was said and done, we can call it good and look forward to the next "Family Reunion!"

(2018 cast photo taken by Nick Karaguleff; edited by Barbara L. Frye)

A ROOTIN' TOOTIN' GOOD TIME AT OCPHS' 5TH ANNUAL FALL AUCTION!

Members and friends "saddled up" to celebrate westward expansion into Oakland County 200 years ago at the Lafayette Grande on October 5th.

Auctioneer Fred Liimatta led the stampede of history lovers eager to find unique treasures. Karen Carter, Chief Forecaster for WWJ-TV/WKBD-TV Detroit, graciously served as Mistress of Ceremonies. Over \$6,000 was raised in support of OCPHS and Pine Grove. All we can say is...YEEHAW!



Bill Clink, Fred Liimatta, and Karen Carter are ready for the rodeo! Photo courtesy of Linda Porter.

We thank the following sponsors of Saddle Up! For their part in another "Grande" evening:

Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Annett, Jr. Mr. Bill Clink Ms. Sara Cote Mr. Dave Decker Ms. Eddie Delbridge Mr. and Mrs. Ron Finch Mr. Robert Karazim and Ms. Karen Jorgensen Mr. and Mrs. Fred Liimatta Ms. Linda Porter Mr. John Scholl Mr. Scott Stewart Mr. Tim Travis Bellezza Salon & Boutique Bryan's Coney / Pete's Coney / Walt's Coney Carl's Golfland City Girls Farm Digs Consignment Studio Erebus Escape **Erebus Haunted Attraction** Fillmore 13 Brewery Marla Michele Must Photography On The Hunt Antiques Pontiac Creative Arts Center Saginaw Street Consignments Mr. Tim Shepard / Riker Building Virgie Geroux Vintage Anonymous Friends of OCPHS

LAWYERS, GUNS AND (NO) MONEY Dave Decker

Twelve years ago, in 2006, OCPHS was approached by a gentleman in Ohio who had something interesting to show our researchers:



This is a Colt Pocket Revolver, Model 1849, manufactured in 1862. As a collectible weapon, it's pretty great, but it's not in the best shape. There's pitting, and the metal coating (called "bluing") is worn off. It's certainly something that a Civil War

aficionado would find fascinating. As a donation or potential purchase for our collection, though, this type of gun wouldn't really interest us. Until we saw the spine of the handgrip (the back or grip strap):



MR. OHIO GENTLEMAN, YOU HAVE OUR FULL AND UNDIVIDED ATTENTION.

In 2006, our OCPHS crew exchanged several emails with Chuck Defer from Garrettsville, Ohio. He had kept this gun since the early 1990's, when it was gifted to him by a family friend. When Mr. Defer asked his friend about the history of the gun, he said it "probably came from a Kentucky Colonel."

In December of this year, OCPHS, by way of being goaded by Geoff Brieger, our esteemed local author and professor, located Mr. Defer online. We inquired if he still had the gun and if he was still interested in the possibility of OCPHS acquiring it for our collection. Well, he was interested. He had done his due diligence and was aware of our connection to Mr. Wisner. He felt the gun's rightful place was here, at Pine Grove.

As is always true of all things historical, the process of taking possession of the gun is complicated. Mr. Defer is loaning the pistol to us for an indefinite, albeit likely permanent, period of time, subject to our performing some due diligence of our own:

*We'd like to get the gun appraised by two separate appraisers to assure a good valuation.

*We'd like to do in-depth research to attempt to prove Moses Wisner owned this gun, and to try to determine when and where he purchased it.

*The Colt Manufacturing Company offers an archival search for where the gun was originally shipped in 1862. We are required to pay for this information.

*The gun is in Ohio. We are not in Ohio. There will be a road trip needed to meet with Mr. Defer and see the gun for ourselves. *Once in our possession, we need a safe place to store it.

All of these factors require some level of funding. We hope to have the pistol in our possession by mid to late January 2019. Which is where you, our valued members, come into the picture. Can you help us with this wonderful acquisition?

*Who among you is a gun collector or aficionado?

Do you have knowledge about this type of gun?

Who would have been its typical owner? How would they have likely obtained it? We have many sources here for attempting to find out if Moses Wisner purchased it, but we'd like your opinions!

*Who among you have had a gun appraised? Are there specific appraisers we should approach about a gun of this era and type? Can you share their name with us?

*We are in need of a very secure display case for this gun, and probably at least one rifle. Can you recommend a case, or manufacturer, which is (a) period appropriate, (b) permanently installable, and (c) has unbreakable glass for our Civil War Room?

*Funding. Costs are projected to exceed \$1,500. If you wish to help us fund this endeavor, please contact Joy at our office to discuss the particulars.

Thank you!!!

In the meantime, watch this space and our Facebook page to see how things are progressing!

CARRIAGE HOUSE GETS FACELIFT



The refreshing sight of a newly painted Carriage House awaits those who visit Pine Grove, thanks to the City of Pontiac's 2018 Neighborhood Empowerment

Project grant, awarded to OCPHS to "Scrape, Prepare & Paint Carriage House Library Building at Pine Grove." Recognition is due the following individuals, whose team effort brought this project to fruition:

*Dave Decker, who submitted the grant application and received the reward on behalf of OCPHS

*Kathy Davis, who solicited the painting company and oversaw the project

*Sean Anderson, a summer volunteer who replaced rotting clapboards on the Carriage House in preparation for painting

(Photo courtesy of Barbara L. Frye)

IN REMEMBRANCE

Ann Johnson, Board member and descendant of Moses Wisner though her father, pays tribute to her late parents...

My dad, Don Stevens, passed away on September 4, 2018, at the age of 92. He was most proud of his service to his country. He entered the Army at the age of 19 and served in the 4th Armored Division ("Patton's Best." they were called). After returning home he spent the rest of his life working as a carpenter. He loved to have big gardens, fish, and hunt. I have many memories of time spent with him (my parents were divorced) but what I most remember are the times I went to job sites with him, his cigars more chewed than smoked, that small swig of beer at a friend's house, and his laugh. RIP Dad, I miss you.

My mother passed away on June 6, 2018, at the age of 98. Mom is hard for me to describe; her life was filled with many ups and downs. The highlight of her life was her two grandsons, Ryan and Brad. She was someone who meant what she said and called it as she saw it. She would tell you that her parents came from Russia and Grandpa worked hard for his family. She was a fan of U of M football and basketball and could clear the room when she started yelling during a play. I miss my mom more than I can say, but thank goodness for all the memories. RIP Mom.

JoAn Legge



We are saddened to report the passing of longtime OCPHS member JoAn Legge on March 25, 2018. JoAn's family moved to Pontiac when she was a young child. She graduated from Pontiac High School in 1944, where she was active in theater and choir. She was employed by the Pontiac School District for over 30 years and a long-time resident

of Sylvan Lake. JoAn was active in the Pontiac Optimist Club, a faithful member of All Saints Episcopal Church, and served on the board of the Pontiac-Oakland Symphony and Symphony of the Lakes. She loved to travel and upon her retirement enjoyed devoting more time to painting in oils, acrylics, and watercolors. OCPHS extends its condolences to the family. Memorial donations may be made to the Pontiac Optimist Club or Heart to Heart Hospice of Genesee County.

(Photo courtesy of The Oakland Press)

Membership and Donation Form

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Name:	
Address:	As 2040 seems up also as weeks away she'ts
City/State/Zip:	As 2019 gears up, please watch our website, Facebook page, and future newsletters for upcoming events and a schedule of Mini Lectures!
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):	
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Please Accept My Donation! (indicate preference):	Charlotte Cooper
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Oakland County Pioneer & Historical Society 405 Cesar E. Chavez Avenue Pontiac, MI 48342	Anne Liimatta Fred Liimatta Evan Monaghan Sheri Morgan
For your convenience you may also join or donate online at www.ocphs.org . Thank you for your support!	Linda Porter Adrian Rawls Rosie Lance-Richardson
We are a 501(c)(3) organization <u>Donations are tax deductible in accordance with</u> <u>applicable law</u>	Priscilla Shelton Skip Upcott

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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

Ross Pursifull
Dr. Graham Cassano
Heather Clark
Devan Green
Darla Van Hoey
Laure Dorchak
Judy Benscoter
Vanderbilt Jones
Randy Seid

MATILDA'S LUGGAGE GOES HOME

A piece of luggage, with gold-embossed lettering ("M.R. Wilson Rochester, Michigan") and blue lining, was found in a Carriage House storage room in September of this year. Library researchers speculated that it might be the initials of Matilda Rausch Wilson of Meadow Brook Hall in Rochester. A phone call was placed to Madeline Rzadkowolski, curator of Meadow Brook, who told us that it matched three other pieces of luggage donated back to Meadow Brook this year (including one by the Waterford Historical Society) and stored in their trunk room. It seemed the luggage had been sold at auction years ago, and Madeline was strongly interested in reassembling the set.



It matches the other pieces in the set, right down to the colored ribbon on the handle. Photo courtesy of Dave Decker.

And so the case of the...case...came to a happy end; it was returned to Meadow Brook in October, to the delight of their museum staff. How did Matilda Rausch Wilson's luggage get to Pine Grove? We have no idea, but it has gone home, which is good museum practice. OCPHS is in a unique position - as a county historical society, we have an obligation to preserve and share history. Sometimes, sharing history means giving it back to its rightful owner!

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Royal Oak, MI

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Oakland Gazette is a publication of the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society. Submissions, content suggestions or comments are welcome.

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Editor: Kari Vaughan

Contributors: Charlotte Cooper, Dave Decker, Joy Dockham, Barbara Frye, Ann Johnson, Jo Pate, Kari Vaughan, Mike West

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