



Vol. 52, No. 4

Dedicated to the history and heritage of Oakland County, Michigan
THE OAKLAND COUNTY PIONEER AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

December 2019

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Charlotte Cooper



On December 21st, Ann Johnson and I traveled to Gettysburg, PA to receive memorabilia items relating to the Michigan 22nd Volunteer Infantry. Ann had been contacted by Terry Thomas, who was looking to downsize his collection and wanted the items to be placed in the care of OCPHS.

BOARD OF DIRECTOR ELECTIONS

Each spring, seats on the Society's Board of Directors are available to be filled. Current Vice President of the Board, Sara Cote, is Chair of Nominations for 2020. Board members whose terms expire in May 2020 have the option to retire, take a year off, or apply as a candidate for 2020-2023. New applicants will also be considered. Please contact Sara at cotesara78@gmail.com for application information. The deadline for completed applications is **March 1, 2020**.

The wonderful collection includes the Civil War canteen used by John J. Snook, in a velvet cover made by his wife, which was traditional after the war; two red velvet photo albums in excellent condition, containing photos of the Snook family of Rochester, MI; Grand Army of the Republic ribbons and pins of the Michigan 22nd; a small Bible carried by Asa Prior during the war; and a glass negative of the 22nd at a GAR reunion, which will be used to create a standard print. The Society looks forward to displaying these items at our Annual Meeting on Saturday, May 16th.



OAKLAND COUNTY BICENTENNIAL 2020 CALENDARS AVAILABLE

The momentous Oakland County Bicentennial year is upon us - and OCPHS has created a commemorative Bicentennial 2020 Calendar! For \$10, with proceeds benefiting the Society, you can enjoy twelve months of stunning historic images from our collection. The featured images are from the downtown Pontiac centennial celebrations for Oakland County over a century ago. Not only that, but important dates from Oakland County's lifespan are featured throughout the calendar. Visit our website's store or contact the office to purchase yours!

As changes happen, many things remain consistent, particularly the passion and commitment to OCPHS and Pine Grove. In the words of one loyal member, we "Preserve the Past, Live in the Present and Plan for the Future." We invite you to join us in this adventure of historic preservation and celebration!

Best wishes for a Happy, Successful and Prosperous New Year! - *Charlotte*

Above: Board member and Moses Wisner descendant Ann Johnson with the new Michigan 22nd collection. Photo courtesy of Charlotte Cooper.



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Mike McGuinness



To the members of our beloved Historical Society...thank you and season's greetings! This has been a very impactful season for our organization, and that success is directly attributable to your support. Our mission of preserving and celebrating Oakland County's phenomenal history is so special, so important and yet so often overlooked. We are changing that every day, and we are changing it together.

As I continue to immerse myself in this role and get a deeper understanding of our organization's past, I want to emphasize the crucial support of Mr. Patrick Tooman. A number of years ago, the Wisner mansion was in a very vulnerable place, and the Society was similarly vulnerable as it endured a national economic recession. If not for the generosity of Mr. Tooman and other supporters who stepped forward during that trying time, our nationally significant historic site may not have weathered the storm. Although it precedes my tenure, today I am looking at an intact and protective roof on the Governor's mansion, and for that I want to profusely thank Mr. Tooman for his past financial support of that project.

Oakland County, a diverse and dynamic place that has had an outsized impact on our nation's history, celebrates its bicentennial in 2020. On March 28, 1820, Oakland County's government was formally established. Not wishing to let this milestone go by unheralded, our organization is working hard to facilitate celebrations throughout the entire year. Here are our Society's plans, which would be greatly enhanced by your involvement:

*A commemorative Bicentennial 2020 calendar, chock full of interesting images and dates from the county's history and available for purchase for \$10 each;

*Daily "On This Day in Oakland County History"/ #Oak200 posts to our social media pages;

*Printing of "Early Oakland County History" pamphlets, which have already been generating a positive response;

*A Bicentennial Lecture Series at various locales throughout the county;

*Bicentennial Gardens created by community members and, hopefully, by you (check out the article on Page 5 to learn more);

*A Pontiac historic home and garden tour;

*Grave marking for Governor Moses Wisner;

*Installation of a Bicentennial Landmark on the Pine Grove campus, to be unveiled at the Summer Ice Cream Social in July;

*Creation of an Oakland County children's activity book and our "Buddy the Bicentennial Acorn" mascot;

*Bicentennial Gala in October;

*Planting of bicentennial oak trees and further enhancements to our campus to mark this auspicious year.

Thank you again for your involvement in our special organization. As you're able, please consider making a financial contribution to OCPHS in concert with the bicentennial. If we don't tend the flame, we cannot pass the torch to successive generations so that our knowledge, our artifacts, our site and our Society are still here for the 2120 tricentennial!

Above: Santa Mike with visitors to the Victorian Christmas Open House showing off their creations from the gingerbread house decorating contest.

Below: OCPHS had a strong presence in this year's Holiday Extravaganza Parade in downtown Pontiac. Parade marchers included (left to right): Payton Orr, Rodger Zeller, Dr. Richard Stamps, Barbara Frye, Juanita Lindsey, Debbie Topolewski, Sara Cote, Pam Schmaltz, and Mike McGuinness. March with us in 2020's parade on December 5th! Photos courtesy of Mike McGuinness.



**OAK HILL CEMETERY WALK BREAKS
RECORDS, FUNDING GOAL FOR
MEMORIAL MET**
Mike McGuinness

Thank you to the many OCPHS members who attended the successful Oak Hill Cemetery Walk on September 22nd, and a special thank you to Board member Nancy Calendine for her continued dedication to this annual initiative. This year's Cemetery Walk broke attendance and fundraising records, with many attendees sharing effusive praise for the experience. \$2,650 in ticket and merchandise sales was generated. Tours ran non-stop for three hours and the volunteers who portrayed historical figures and helped make the event possible were amazing.

The theme for 2019 was "From the Cook Book to the Court House," inspired by the suffragist cookbook of a similar title, and local women's suffrage leaders buried in Oak Hill Cemetery were the focus. This year, the logistics of a greater number of attendees prompted the change of convening at our Pine Grove campus and shuttling over to the cemetery. Thank you to SMART for generously providing the shuttle buses and drivers.

As with previous cemetery walks, all proceeds go toward repair projects at Oak Hill Cemetery, located on University Drive (formerly Mount Clemens Street) in Pontiac. This beautiful, historic cemetery is unfortunately showing its age in certain areas. Thankfully, the dedication of Nancy and Don Calendine, Larry Keehn, Lori Miller, Barbara Frye, Joanne Green, Renee Voit-Porath and many other volunteers is evident. In 2018, Cemetery Walk proceeds were put toward long-needed repairs to the Resurgam Mausoleum. We are excited to report that a collaborative project, with the City of Pontiac and Covenant Cemetery Services also actively invested in the effort, was successfully completed in recent months.

Proceeds from 2019 will go toward a new project on the horizon. Section 11 of Oak Hill contains the graves of hundreds of asylum patients from Pontiac's state hospital. If regular visitors to the cemetery never knew that fact, there is little wonder why: Apart from stones with individual patient numbers, there are no memorials or identifiers of those buried there. Research has produced those patients' names and, thanks to the generosity of Cemetery Walk attendees, we now have the resources to proceed with an asylum patients' memorial marker!

***2020's Cemetery Walk is set for the afternoon of
Sunday, September 20th!***

**MACABRE AND MYSTERY OF THE HALLOWEEN
SEASON BRINGS OUT BIG CROWDS**
Mike McGuinness

The Society made a big splash this October with large crowds for Bruce Annett's *Story of Pontiac's Asylum* lecture, the *Ghosts of Wisner Mansion* discussion, the *Witches of Salem* talk and the Haunted Museum costume party, respectively!

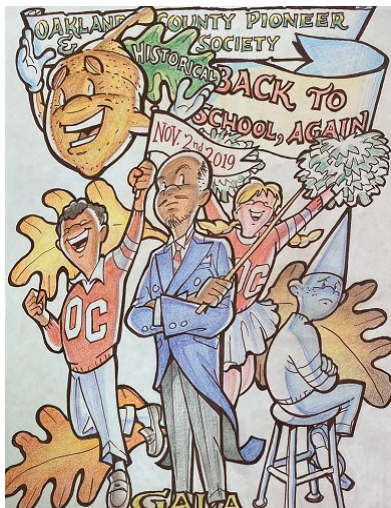
OCPHS member and Emeritus Director Bruce Annett spoke to over 300 attendees (a full house!) in downtown Pontiac's historic Crofoot Ballroom on the history of our local asylum. The Eastern Michigan Asylum for the Insane, later Pontiac State Hospital and Clinton Valley Center, was located near present-day Elizabeth Lake and Telegraph Roads in Pontiac. The asylum opened in 1878 and closed in 1997 and was tragically demolished in the following years. Bruce riveted the packed crowd and, following his remarks, Executive Director Mike McGuinness facilitated questions and feedback. Multiple former employees and family members of former patients in the audience shared firsthand perspectives. Hundreds of dollars was raised for an asylum patients' memorial to be erected in Oak Hill Cemetery near their overlooked graves and several new members joined our Society at the incredibly successful event.

The Ghosts of Wisner Mansion and the *Witches of Salem* were popular topical discussions held in our Carriage House. *Ghosts* reflected on those Wisner family members who died in the mansion, the funeral customs of their era and testimonials by some of our volunteers who have had strange experiences on our historic property. *Witches* featured member Vesta DeRiso, a local descendant of multiple individuals who were both accused and accuser. Vesta enchanted the packed room with the history of the Salem Witch Trials. There were other attendees who similarly have ancestors that were involved in this tragic chapter of our nation's history. Also in October, member Robert Dustman held forth with a riveting presentation on his latest book, "Slaying of the Innocents."

Another successful first for our Society was the Haunted Mansion costume party. Thanks to everyone who participated in the festivities - and plan on joining us this coming autumn as we continue taking our offerings to the next level!

GALA AUCTION A TRIUMPH

Mike McGuinness



OCPHS' fall gala and auction was a triumphant success. On November 2nd, the "Back to School Again" themed soiree was held at the historically renovated Wisner School in Pontiac, right next door to Pine Grove. It was the best turnout and highest fundraising totals of our galas thus far!

Special commendation is in order for our gala Governor's Level Sponsors **Lee Industrial Contracting** and the **Sashabaw Plains Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution**. Further commendation is due our Executive's Level Sponsors **Minox LLC**, **Oakland County Treasurer Andy Meisner** and the **Liimatta Family**.

Thank you to all who attended, donated and volunteered! A big shout out to Board member Linda Porter for her efforts. Member Eddie Delbridge helped sponsor a fun new addition to the festivities – a photo station!

A program book was also a new feature this year, with community members and area businesses given opportunity to purchase advertisements. The "Back to School Again" theme played prominently, with the program dubbed the Gala Yearbook and featuring many historic images of Pontiac Schools and pages taken from past Pontiac High School yearbooks.

In 2020, our fall fundraiser will be dubbed the Bicentennial Gala in keeping with our Oakland County Bicentennial focus. Start contemplating today any special packages you might like to offer up for auction, or if you know anyone who'd like to advertise in the Bicentennial Yearbook!

Above: Pontiac artist David W. Smith masterfully illustrated the 2019 Gala "Yearbook" program book cover.

2019 VICTORIAN OPEN HOUSE

Kathy Davis, event chair

The weather was pleasant with sunshine and mild temperatures. We hosted about 150 guests and took in around \$2,000. The Wisner House came alive with wonderful flower arrangements by Kathie Henk. The Carriage House was bursting with cookies and hot drinks, a Vintage Holiday Market with many items for sale, and a beautiful Christmas tree. Linda Cote and Cindy Clink were gracious hostesses to our visitors in the Carriage House.

Sara Cote worked in the Gift Shop and did a great job on short notice. Barbara Frye and Nancy Calendine made special wreaths to sell. Charlotte Cooper and Ann Johnson put together a new display in the 2nd floor display cabinets. Rosie Richardson offered various new activities and contests for children in the Schoolhouse, and Santa stopped by for a visit! The Summer Kitchen and Root Cellar were also open and festive.

The docents did a great job welcoming and entertaining our guests. Music on the piano was provided by Jo Anne McClure, and Musica Royale performed in the Family Room. Thanks to Larry Hathcock, Duane Getzmeyer, John Scholl, Dwight Keith, Sue Grifor, Linda Porter, Reida Gardner, Joan Hayes (and Bob Hayes, who delivered water to those in need), Rodger Zeller, Dale Kath, Janet McAlpine, Mr. McAlpine, Adrian Rawls, and Linda Watson (decorations).

Thanks to all sponsors, volunteers, Board members, and especially our Executive Director, Mike McGuinness.



A beautiful floral display, crafted by The Henk Studio of Pontiac, graced the Dining Room during the VOH. Photo courtesy of Mike McGuinness.

This year's VOH was generously sponsored by the following: The Henk Studio, Lunghamer Buick GMC, Peel's Country Market, Amy Annett, Charlotte Cooper, Sara Cote, Margaret Demark, Gaylor Forman, Mark W. LaChey and Linda Porter.

PINE GROVE ADOPT-A-GARDEN INITIATIVE

Mike McGuinness

Our Society's historic Pine Grove campus is a place for beauty to flourish and history to blossom. Thanks to volunteers and community members like you, our Governor's Mansion and five acres can really dazzle. And, with Oakland County's Bicentennial year upon us, it is a fitting time to take our museum's gardens to the next level.

You, or a business or organization with which you're affiliated, are cordially invited to adopt one of the areas of our museum grounds to bring to life this spring and summer!



You would have creative license to imagine and plant a garden section – and your generous efforts would be acknowledged throughout the year on our grounds and shouted from the rooftops through our communication channels. We are open to a flower bed or garden area being named for a loved one or favorite historical figure, if that might be meaningful for you. We will handle the watering, of course, but your creativity and green thumb would help our historic grounds really pop for the bicentennial.

The goal would be to have your slice of historic heaven ready for debut before May 30, the date of our inaugural Pontiac Historic Home and Garden Tour. Your talented handiwork will be on display and celebrated by hundreds of adoring new fans.

The following are over twenty options for possible garden areas, most being extremely manageable spaces. I will assign them as I receive notification from interested parties:

- Entrance Sign Flower Bed**
- Driveway Large Flower Bed**
- Mansion Front Entrance**
- Mansion South Porch Beds**
- Mansion South Path and Planters**
- Mansion Greenhouse Flower Bed**
- Gift Shop Brick Paths**
- Gift Shop Exterior Planters**
- Historic Herb Garden Tending**
- Summer Kitchen Flower Beds**

- Schoolhouse Flower Beds**
- Courthouse Foundation Stone**
- Rear Root Cellar Flower Bed**
- Gazebo Flower Beds**
- Carriage House North Beds**
- Carriage House South Beds**
- Parking Fence Flower Beds**
- General Entrance Planters**
- Spadafore Shed Flower Beds**

***Lillian Paul Memorial Garden – Linda Porter,
Continuing Point Person
Additional, New Planter Locations Also Welcomed***



Are you inspired by these gorgeous photos of our campus? Please contact Executive Director Mike McGuinness at office@ocphs.org or 248-338-6732 if you have any questions or would like to adopt a flower bed. *Photos courtesy of Dave Decker and Mike McGuinness.*

FIELD TRIP!

OCPHS hosted a class from Alcott Elementary in Pontiac earlier this month. The kids had a blast! *Photos courtesy of Mike McGuinness.*



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

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

Anne Albaum – Birmingham
Kristi and Russell Anderson – Waterford
Wendy Anderson Nardone – Waterford
Steve Armstrong – Waterford
Tami Arreguin – Detroit
Melissa Arrowsmith – Ferndale
Gerri Barclay – Beverly Hills
Kathy Bilger – Livonia
John Bry – Pontiac
Nenner Buckhaultner – Bloomfield Hills
Jen Burk – Pontiac
Leree Cardona Telisky – Pontiac
Christina Cattell – Bloomfield Hills
Carol Czechowski – Bloomfield Hills
Dorothy Darlington – Connecticut
Mary Davis – Auburn Hills
Angela Dolehanty - Waterford
Iris Dominguez DeLao – Pontiac
Nancy Derby – Bloomfield Hills
Russ DeVriendt – Pontiac
Robert Dustman – Auburn Hills
Jerome Feig – Oak Park
Debbie Figa-Kent – Clarkston
Lori and Patrick Fitzgerald – Clarkston
Karin Hadden – West Bloomfield
Judy Hauser – Waterford
Heidi Hedquist – Orchard Lake
Ken Henig – Union Lake
Ray Henry – Rochester
Gerry Irwin – Waterford
Jay Kaplan – Oak Park
Sherri Karabelski – Troy
Gerhardt Knodel – Pontiac
Rick Lyons – Lake Orion
Brian Major – Pontiac
Peggy and Allen Marshall – Pontiac
Tim McNally – Pontiac
Mary Ann Mohring – Bloomfield Hills
Ginny Norvell – Clarkston
Payton Orr – Waterford
Leslie Pielack – Oxford
Brett Reynolds – Pontiac
Amber Ruple – Pontiac
Liz and Joe Salata – Waterford
Laura Schartman – Pontiac
Amy Singh – Clarkston
Lorelei Smith – Waterford
Cathy Soldan – Pontiac
Patti and Jon Stowell – Waterford
Diane and Pete Sylvester – Waterford
Raymond Tarabasi – Bloomfield Hills
State Representative Jim Tedder – Clarkston
Shirley Tenuta - Pontiac
Maureen Thalmann – Oakland Township
Janet Tyler – Pontiac
Linda Zabik - Waterford

...and a big thank you to those who have recently renewed your membership dues!

**A reminder on Memberships...The Board of Directors previously voted to align the membership cycle with the calendar year to make it more user-friendly for our members. If you haven't renewed your dues in awhile, January 2020 is a great time to make your membership current! All members who have joined or renewed since this past July, however, get the bonus of having their membership last the duration of 2020 as the new cycle goes into effect. Please contact the office with any questions or to update your membership status.*

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Save the dates of the following events coming up in 2020, and watch for further details on these and more!

January 23

Oakland County Bicentennial Lecture Series:
Robert Gibbs on Oakland County's Downtowns
(additional lectures will take place throughout the year)

May 16

OCPHS Annual Meeting & Election

May 30

Pontiac Historic Home & Garden Tour

June 13

Governor Moses Wisner Grave Marking Ceremony

July 25

Summer Ice Cream Social &
Bicentennial Landmark Dedication

August 7

Summer Outdoor Concert Series

August 21

Summer Outdoor Concert Series

September 20

Oak Hill Cemetery Walk

October (date TBD)

Bicentennial Gala Auction

October 17

The Haunted Mansion

November 14

"Dishes Past" Historic Cuisine Dinner

November 28

Vintage Holiday Market & Hanging of the Greens

December 5

Marching in Downtown Pontiac's
Holiday Extravaganza Parade

December 6

Victorian Christmas Open House

WISNER HOUSE REPORT - DECEMBER 2019

Kathy Davis, House Committee chair

*Bruce Bandy has been diligently monitoring temperatures in the house, which is part of the climate control system.

*Adrian Rawls has arranged various artifacts for displays throughout the house and introduced new dishes to change and brighten the Dining Room.

*Sue Grifor has organized and changed displays in the Green Room, including the addition of early 1900's Christmas postcards. She has also displayed different artifacts in the Military Room.

*Linda Watson has organized the docents' clothing closets for both men's and women's use. She is happy to assist docents needing help with their outfits.

*The Wisner House needs funding for work on several areas, especially the brick tuck pointing exterior areas, for which the lowest estimate was \$23,000.

OCPHS Officers and Board of Directors

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(Please add \$5 to cover cost of printing and postage if sending via U.S. Mail)

Please Make Me a Member! (indicate level):

- \$10 Student
- \$20 Individual
- \$20 Non-Profit Organization
- \$35 Family (two adults & minor children)
- \$100 Patron
- \$200 Benefactor
- \$500 Friends
- \$500 Corporate Sponsor
- \$Gift Membership (provide recipient's name & contact info):

Please Accept My Donation! (indicate preference):

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

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

- Interest in Oakland County History
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- Newspaper / Magazine Article
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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!

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ARTIFACT INVENTORY BEGINS

The September 2009 issue of the *Oakland Gazette* reported that "intern Emile Hurly and member Charlie Martinez have inventoried every inch and every item in the Wisner House - a huge undertaking and long overdue." A 2020 inventory will begin in January, conducted by the Collections committee and the Library Research committee, using information stored in PastPerfect, the Society's museum computer program. The inventory should be completed by April 1st. If you are interested in assisting, please inform the office and you will be contacted.

Find us on Facebook.com/Oakland
County Pioneer and Historical Society



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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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Mike McGuinness, Kari Vaughan

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