

OAKLAND GAZETTE

Oakland County Pioneer & Historical Society's Newsletter

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OAKLAND COUNTY'S GOV. VAN WAGONER CELEBRATED

Community Invited to June 26 Soiree, Pavilion Groundbreaking

You may not have heard his name before, but he shaped Michigan and our state's transportation systems. Murray D. "Pat" Van Wagoner led Michigan as Governor from 1941 to 1943, and was State Highway Commissioner for years prior. He was even an Oakland County native (and Drain Commissioner!) and graduated from Pontiac High.

To share more about his life and accomplishments, our History Center has partnered with the Van Wagoner family and will be the setting for Governor Van Wagoner Day on Saturday, June 26th at 11 am. Join us for this fun celebration, which will include the groundbreaking of a new outdoor pavilion planned for our campus and named in his honor. It will greatly enhance future event capabilities.

Relatives of Governor Van Wagoner have already contributed over \$5,000 toward the pavilion project, but we still are raising funds from the community for the balance. Please support as you're able!



SUMMER SOCIAL SET

Sponsors Sought for July 24, 25 Fun

Start building your appetites for ice cream and local history! Our Historical Society's 52nd Annual Summer Ice Cream Social is set for Saturday, July 24 and Sunday, July 25 from Noon to 4 pm both days. The event is free and open to all; don't miss this premiere event of the season!

Some of our highlights for 2021: Pontiac Transportation Museum vehicles featured, Pontiac Creative Arts Center showcasing their POP Exhibit, pony rides for children; massive Flea Market sale; live music; new history artifacts displayed; and much more!

We want you and your organization there. Contact us to be a part of the fun!

Sponsor Our Annual Summer Social

Your support allows us to make this special tradition free and available to the families of the community.

Please send sponsorship donations of \$25, \$50, \$100, \$250, or \$500 made payable to 'OCPHS' to 405 Cesar Chavez Avenue, Pontiac, Michigan 48342.

CAR CRASH CALAMITY

Vehicle Hits Fences, Summer Kitchen



May 18, 2021 was an intense day at our History Center, as an injured driver crashed through our exterior fencing at Cesar Chavez Avenue, crashed through an interior fence, and slammed into the Summer Kitchen. Assessments are underway to determine the extent of damage to the Summer Kitchen. The driver was in critical condition. Vehicle or property insurance may cover most repairs, but donations are being sought to help with the project.

SEARCHING FOR JOHN DANIELS: BIRMINGHAM'S REVOLUTIONARY WAR VETERAN

By Donna Casaceli & Leslie Pielack, Birmingham Museum

In preparing for the 250th Anniversary of the Revolutionary War, the Oakland History Center has started the "Patriot Project," a list of all the Revolutionary War veterans buried here in Oakland County. Birmingham has claim to one such veteran, John Daniels (1751- 1832), who is buried in Greenwood Cemetery. Museum staff were excited at the prospect of participation in this endeavor, and we dug into our files to write up a biography for John Daniels. To our dismay, there wasn't very much there. Unfortunately, before the internet, researching the Revolutionary War was long, painstaking work, which included traveling to libraries all over the east coast, so we had very little on file from early research done years ago. Thankfully, many records are now online, and we've made some new discoveries to fill in some blanks about Mr. Daniel's life and service.

We knew from past recognition by the Daughters of the American Revolution-Piety Hill Chapter that he served in the Revolutionary War, but little else was clear. When contacted, Piety Hill said they were not sure he was the right John Daniels and did not have any record to help sort that out. So, we began at the beginning. Daniels had descendants who lived here, and we had good information about his family line. He was born in Pomfret, Windham County, CT to Anne Grosvenor Daniels and Nathaniel Daniels (Sr.). Records indicate that his mother died when he was 10 and his father remarried and later moved to Worthington, MA. Nathaniel and sons (including John) were recorded by a local record as serving in the war. This was conclusive and reliable, but not very detailed. Where did they serve? When? Under whom?

Learn More About *the Patriot Project* from Barbara Frye on Page Seven in this Edition

Nathaniel and his sons Samuel, Nathaniel Jr., and Daniel all signed up in Worthington, but John is not found in those records. Yet, a The DAR certificate for Daniels' father, Nathaniel, well-documented history of Worthington written in 1874 notes John among the Daniels brothers who served with their father. (1) So why isn't he listed with them in the Massachusetts military rolls, we wondered? A broader search began. Several men named John Daniels show up in the Massachusetts rolls for the Revolutionary War, but they all lived a considerable distance from Worthington, making it less likely they were our John Daniels, whose entire family was in Worthington at the time. The only answer was to widen the search online and try to cross-reference any hits. After plugging in many different search terms, a solid lead came in an Ancestry.com search that led to a Sons of the American Revolution registry number and the location of Windham County, CT. Could this be a record of our John Daniels, who was born there and lived there during his childhood?

By centering the search on Wyndham County, we could try to learn about him by starting with his mother, who was born, raised, and died in Pomfret (Wyndham County). By looking at her family, we found some very interesting information. John's mother Anne was born into the prominent Grosvenor family.

Like many other American colonials, the Grosvenors had a long history of service in the military throughout the 1700s. Anne's father— John Daniel's grandfather—was Ebenezer Grosvenor, son of a well-to-do landowner in Pomfret who had several children, most of whom, like Anne, stayed in the area all their lives. (2) Anne's brother Ebenezer Grosvenor II, in fact, opened a tavern in Pomfret in 1771 (known at the time as the Ben Grosvenor Inn) that became a meeting place for officers and patriots during the Revolutionary War. For his part, Ebenezer II and several of his sons also served with American forces, including his son Thomas, who ultimately became a colonel. Thomas Grosvenor (e.g., Anne's nephew and John Daniels' first cousin) served under General Israel Putnam at the Battle of Bunker Hill, where he was injured. Thomas was also a friend to George Washington, who (along with his horse) was hosted by In 1789, Washington stayed at the Grosvenor family inn, hosted by Thomas Grosvenor, John

Daniels's cousin. Thomas at his father's inn in Pomfret in 1789, as recorded by Washington in his diary. (3)

These details are important, because we found records that a John Daniels served as a private under Colonel Thomas Grosvenor in Connecticut's 4th Regiment in Lieutenant (Abner) Bacon's Company. This John Daniels was a resident in the Canterbury area of Windham County, just a few miles south of Pomfret. Could this be the same John Daniels who was the child of Nathaniel and Anne Grosvenor Daniels, who was documented as serving in the Revolution with his father and brothers, but who didn't enlist with them in Massachusetts?

What makes this finding even more promising is that no other man named John Daniels shows up in census or birth records in Windham County between 1730 and 1780 other than our John Daniels (born in Pomfret in 1751). In addition, extensive family research by a Daniels descendant confirms that John Daniels, son of Nathaniel who served in the Revolutionary War is the same John Daniels buried in Greenwood. These various records, when cross-referenced, essentially rule out any other possibility. (4)

Where John Daniels went and what he did after the war isn't completely clear, but around 1779 or 1780 he married Betsey Horton (said to be from the Boston area). Around 1790 they settled in Rutland, VT, joining many of the other Daniels side of the family. The couple apparently moved around a bit; their son John Daniels Jr. (1793-1855) was born in New York, unlike his siblings who were all born in Rutland. Many years later, John and Betsey moved again, relocating to the Birmingham area in 1831. They died a year later, however, and were buried together at Greenwood Cemetery. John Daniels (Sr.) is the only known Revolutionary War veteran buried at Greenwood.

So how and why did John and Betsey Daniels end up in Birmingham? John Daniels Jr. seems to have been the motivating force that brought several siblings and his parents to the wilderness of Oakland County. The younger John bought property in 1823 and built a small cabin at what is now the northeast corner of Bingham and 13 Mile Road, making him a founding pioneer of Southfield Township. In 1824, John Jr. traveled back east to marry Julia Clark, returning to Michigan to settle. John Jr. was soon followed by his brother, Hiram Daniels (1801-1889) in 1830/31, who bought property in what became Birmingham (the Hiram and Rhoda Daniels house still stands near Pierce and Lincoln Streets).

Although John had been in poor health since about 1828, he and Betsey came here with Hiram to relocate near John Jr., possibly to be cared for as they aged. Sadly, both parents died in August of 1832, just three days apart, possibly due to a cholera outbreak in southern Michigan at the time. Although they were buried in Greenwood, their son John Daniels Jr. was buried in the Franklin Cemetery in 1855, near where he made his home.

But that wasn't the end of the Daniels family in Birmingham: Hiram, his wife Rhoda Bingham Daniels (1816-1862), and their descendants are also buried in Greenwood. What's more, the long Daniels/Bingham line continues even today to serve Birmingham through our very own City Clerk, Alexandria Bingham, who is the 6th great granddaughter of John Daniels Sr.!



1 *History of the town of Worthington, from its first settlement to 1874.* Springfield, MA: Clark W. Bryan & Co., 1874. <https://worthingtonhistoricalsociety.org/omeka2.6.1/files/original/a204f644c39cdf41cfe043218a01e9c.pdf>. Accessed 5/7/2021.

2 https://connecticutgenealogy.com/windham/pomfret_connecticut_biographies.htm. Accessed 5/7/2021.

3 <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/01-05-02-0005-0003-0007>. Accessed 5/11/2021.

4 Daniels, James Harrison. *The Daniels family, a genealogical history of the descendants of William Daniels of Dorchester and Milton, Massachusetts, 1630-1951.* Baltimore, MD: Nicholas A. Gossman Publishing Co., 1959. <https://archive.org/details/danielsfamilygen00dan>. Accessed 5/12/2021.



Member **Sally Quick** generously sponsored the planting of a 2020 Oak Tree here in honor of **Gretchen and Ed Adler**, who have continued to be such important supporters of our organization. Sally's parents, the late **Judge Robert and Fran Anderson**, were honored years ago when the Adlers sponsored an oak tree planting here. Turnabout is fair play, Gretchen and Ed! Sally is pictured above with the **Adler Oak** on planting day.

Speaking of **Sally Quick's** generosity, she also sponsored a bench installation here at our History Center in honor of member **Linda Zabik's** ongoing commitment to community service. Cheers to Linda!

Our Executive Director **Mike McGuinness** was part of **Macomb County Heritage Alliance's** annual program, alongside **Pat McKay** of **Rochester Hills Museum** and **Ron Campbell** of **Oakland County**.

Our large exterior sign along **Cesar E. Chavez Avenue** has been updated to provide more visibility and display our **Oakland History Center** name.

The life of **Charles Martinez**, a longtime local historian and past Historical Society leader whose passing was covered in the previous *Oakland Gazette* edition, was celebrated at this year's Annual Meeting.

Our Executive Director **Mike McGuinness** this month led ten groups of tours in downtown Pontiac showcasing the art and architecture of that historic commercial district. This took place during the **Pontiac Art Jam**; proceeds went to benefit our Society.

Two teams of **General Motors** employee volunteers took part in a cleanup day here, and they also donating and assembled two picnic tables for our grounds. Thank you, Team GM!

We applied for and were awarded a \$5,000 grant from **CultureSource** to refresh our Research Library's **computer systems** and expand our scanning capabilities.

The **Wisner Outhouse** (the deluxe three-hole model) on our campus was refreshed with the roof ridge replaced, a new paint job applied, and surrounding staging updated.

The **Woman's National Farm & Garden Association, Pontiac Branch** has been giving the **Wisner Herb Garden** a new lease on life. Many thanks to you and your green thumbs!

Society Board Member **Evan Monaghan** has been building new raised vegetable beds for our History Center campus.



Congratulations to **Professor Geoff Brieger**, a dedicated member of our Historical Society for 45 years, for being awarded our **Elizabeth Adams Lifetime Achievement Award**. He is pictured above, left, with Board President **Charlotte Cooper**, right, at the Historical Society's 147th Annual Meeting on May 15, 2021.

News Briefs

Latest Local History Happenings

We celebrated **Governor Moses Wisner's** 206th birthday on June 3, 2021 with a garden party and opening the Wisner Home for tours. The turnout was stellar and a modern portrait of the Governor created by Clarkston artist **Denyse Couture** was unveiled.

Our Historical Society, in partnership with the **Sashabaw Plains DAR Chapter**, was awarded a grant from the **National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution** for gravestone restorations at **Lakeview Cemetery** in Clarkston. More info to come on this dynamic project!

Last edition we shared the great news of new **Oak Hill Cemetery Section Markers** being made thanks to the generosity of past Cemetery Walk attendees and of **Larry Keehn** helping fund even more markers. Thanks to the dedication of Larry, and **Nancy and Don Calendine**, we are pleased to report the markers were successfully installed. With more projects in the works, our Oak Hill Cemetery Walk September 19th is not to be missed!

This Memorial Day, our members **Jen Burk** and **Sue Sinclair** took advantage of one of the two dates of the year that **Oakland County Cemetery** is open to unearth multiple headstones covered for years. They intend to keep at it!

We assisted the **Friends of the Clinton River Trail** and the **City of Auburn Hills** with historic research and content for an interpretive sign about the sheep-dominated and river-powered early economy. It will be installed along the trail.

In February, our Executive Director **Mike McGuinness** gave multiple virtual presentations on the fiftieth anniversary of the **racial integration of Pontiac's public schools**. It was watched by hundreds and led to him giving the same talk with **Oakland Community College's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Team** in April.

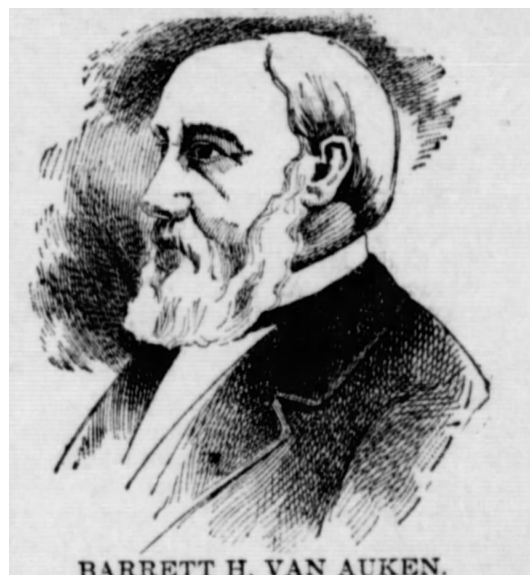
In March, our Executive Director **Mike McGuinness** presented on the centennial of the **Strand Theatre** in downtown Pontiac. It was given from the stage of the Strand, streaming on Facebook Live and reaching thousands virtually.

In April, **Dave Decker** gave a virtual presentation on the **Early Mill Towns** of Oakland County. Thank you for sharing your local history knowledge with the community, Dave!

Our **Outdoor Flea Markets** each weekend in May generated a total of \$4,000 in sales to benefit our Historical Society! Thanks for shopping; the sales resume later this summer.

Our Research Library was contacted by a Wisconsin resident seeking information on their ancestor buried in Pontiac's **Mount Hope Cemetery**. We provided them information on **Anthony and Helen Wayne's** life here (they came here for work in the automotive factories) and went out to Mount Hope to find their headstone and share a picture with them.

Speaking of Mount Hope, our member **Angela Rakowski** of Pontiac is pursuing multiple volunteer projects to help advance the cemetery's historic preservation. We look forward to partnering with her further.



BARRETT H. VAN AUKEN.

Our Research Library received multiple recent research requests regarding the **Eastern Michigan Asylum**, later known as **Pontiac State Hospital** and **Clinton Valley Center**. One such request, about a possible former patient from the 1880s, resulted in our uncovering an intense, fascinating, high-profile tale of New York City millionaire **Barrett Van Auken** (pictured, above, from a newspaper illustration). His descendant who had reached out to us was grateful for the new information we discovered.

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Staff

Mike McGuinness,
Executive Director

A Message From Our Board President

At the May 15, 2021 Annual Meeting we newly elected five Historical Society members to our Board of Directors and they are pictured, right, starting at the top: Iris Dominguez DeLaO, Gloria Harris-Ford, J. Dyann Hayes, Gwen Markham, and Connor Newton. Welcome and thank you for your willingness to serve our organization!

We also returned Nancy Calendine, Evan Monaghan, Adrian Rawls, Rosie Richardson, Skip Upcott, and Rodger Zeller for another term — thank you for returning.

Two Board Directors' time has concluded this year: Ronnie Karpinski and Priscilla Shelton. We're grateful for the time you invested and look forward to you remaining active, helpful members.

Our Historical Society continues to grow, adapt, and innovate. Please visit us and support as you're able. Thank you for your involvement in our important mission!

Charlotte Cooper, President,
Historical Society Board of Directors

**Welcome to our newest
Historical Society members!**

Dana Anderson, Ortonville. Anne Bassett, Berkley. Don Chisholm & Steve Moore, Pontiac. Stephanie Cochrane, Bloomfield Hills. B.J. & Kelli Damman, Beverly Hills. Christopher Dreyer, Ann Arbor. Jonathan Dreyer & Shuai Jiang, Ann Arbor. Susan Ebeling, Commerce. Richard & Sharon Freed, Pontiac. Tim Greimel, Pontiac. Gloria Harsten-Spann, Pontiac. Nancy Hawn, Pontiac. Cathy & James Karhohs, Grand Rapids. Jeff Karhohs, Nevada. Jo Van Wagoner Karhohs, Nevada. Roshonda Lance, Pontiac. Janet Merrick, Royal Oak. Pam Miller, Troy. Richard Ren, Chesterfield. Arlene Robertson, Bloomfield Hills. Paul Sandy, Farmington Hills. Duane & Linda Schutter, Indiana. Bob & Megan Shramski, Pontiac. Sue Sinclair, Pontiac. Gladys Smith, Pontiac. Charlene & Dan Sutherby, Leonard. Arlene Taylor, Pontiac. Dean & Rebecca Tisch, Florida. Christopher Tufty, California. Clyde & Helga Van Wagoner, Fenton. Craig Wesley, Washington State. Kristin & Michael Wikol, Pennsylvania. Dan Winter, Birmingham. Betty Yancey, Pontiac.



ANNOUNCING THE PATRIOT PROJECT

Call to Arms for Historic Research Action, by Barbara L Frye

I need your help. We are in the process of digitally preserving some of our more fragile manuscripts at Oakland History Center. One such article was labeled Revolutionary Soldiers in Oakland County. Turns out it was carbon copies of Pension applications for a number of soldiers, transcribed by Mrs. E. V. Howlett.

May Rockwell Howlett was a member of the General Richardson Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1909 at least. OHC has a boxed set of her papers. This particular collection was shelved in the Research Library, and seemed an excellent subject for digital preservation. Included in the pages was a list, dated December 1, 1984, of Revolutionary Soldiers buried in Oakland County.

Was this list complete? It seems not. Was there a complete list available anywhere today? Again, not in one place. Should this list be updated? Short answer, Yes!

There is ample information available online about the Revolutionary War Veterans who made Oakland County their home and are buried here, but it is scattered across a multitude of websites. I have not been able to find a complete list in one place. The *Patriot Project* is an effort to make that happen, a complete list, in one place.

This is where you come in. You are most familiar with the cemeteries and local lore in your community, information that may never have been gathered in a central place. You have the stories of your local veterans, those who fought to create this Nation. They deserve to be remembered and honored, even 245 years later.

Call our office at (248) 338-6732 or
email office@ocphs.org to assist

As proposed, the Patriot Project will not be owned by one entity, but by the Community, YOU. How it will be

eventually published is yet to be determined. As a Community we need to gather the data, find all of these Veterans, and make their stories known. We need the genealogical know-how of DAR, SAR, Genealogical Societies, Historical Societies, Cemetery Associations, Veteran Groups, and "History Nerds" to make this happen. If you can only add one name; that is the help we need to make the list complete.

Thank you for your time. Your efforts will be rewarded with the honor these Veterans receive. Sincerely, Barbara L. Frye



Catch our Oakland History Center's Upcoming Events!

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| Governor Van Wagoner Day (June 26: 11 am) | Summer Ice Cream Social (July 24, 25: 12 to 4 pm) |
| Outdoor Summer Concerts (Aug. 6, 13, 20: 7 pm) | Pontiac Bus Bombings Anniversary (Aug. 30) |
| Motoramas at Pine Grove (Sept. 11, 18, 25) | Outdoor Flea Markets (Weekends in Sept., Oct.) |
| Oak Hill Cemetery Walk (September 19) | Cassano Photography Exhibit (September 25) |
| Harvest Days Celebration (October 16 + 17) | Pontiac Walking Ghost Tours (Oct. 23 + 24) |
| Society Gala & Auction (November 6) | Christmas Open House (December 11 + 12) |

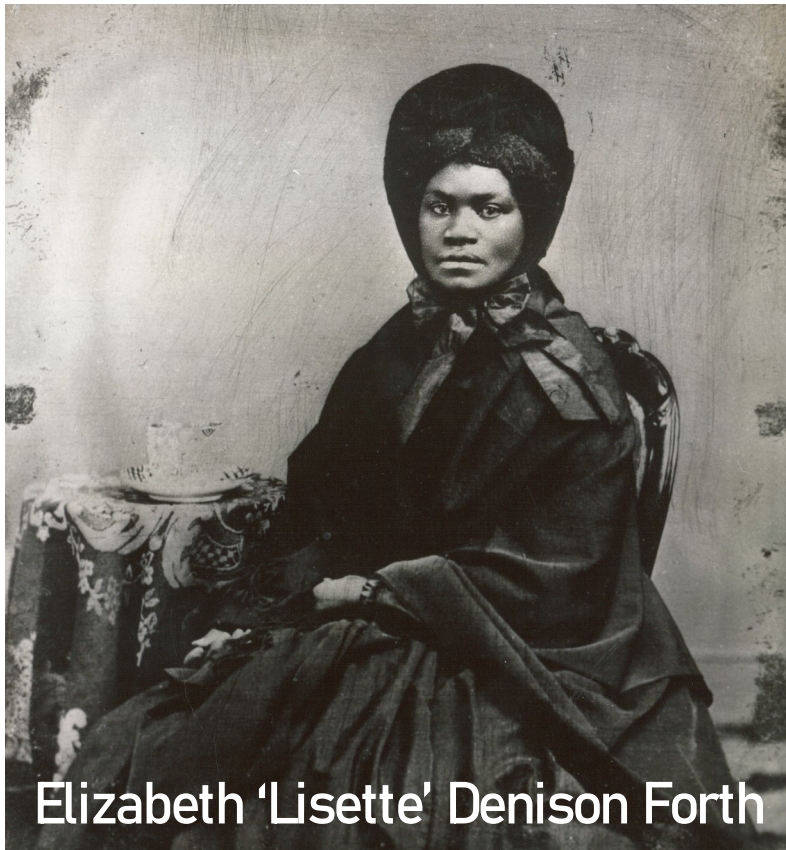
Oakland County Pioneer & Historical Society

*Saving & Celebrating Our
Local History Since 1874*

Located at our Oakland History Center
405 Cesar E. Chavez Avenue, Pontiac, Mich. 48342

Connect With Us

www.OaklandHistoryCenter.org



Elizabeth 'Lisette' Denison Forth

Pictured here is the first Black property owner in Oakland County, and the first known Black woman to purchase property in Michigan: Elizabeth Denison Forth. Our Historical Society is part of an ongoing, collaborative effort to share and commemorate her fascinating life.

You can stay in touch with us in between editions of the *Oakland Gazette*! Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram if you're on those social media platforms, where we post daily content. Sign up for our weekly email updates and you'll receive exclusive historical content + upcoming event invites.

Extra! Extra! Read All About It

Highlights from this *Oakland Gazette* issue

Page 1: Oakland County's Governor Van Wagoner Celebrated; Vehicle Crashes Into Campus; Summer Social Set

Pages 2-3: Searching for John Daniels, Birmingham's Revolutionary War Veteran

Pages 4-5: Society News Briefs

Page 6: President's Message; Directors

Page 7: *Patriot Project*; Upcoming Events

Page 8: Elizabeth Denison Forth's Story
