



THE OAKLAND COUNTY PIONEER AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

405 Cesar E. Chavez Avenue Pontiac, MI 48342

phone: (248) 338-6732

email: office@ocphs.org

website: www.oaklandhistorycenter.org

STORIES FROM THE WISNER STADIUM PLAQUES

By Pam Schmaltz



1st Lieutenant Donald Thomas Newcombe
US Army Air Corps
 23 February 1921 ~ 11 July 1944

In the course of researching the stories of the men whose names are on the two dedication plaques on the Wisner Stadium, I run across someone who had an interesting history, or a fascinating trip through his military career – or someone who just plain touches my heart. Don Newcombe is one of those, not the least because the photo above is amazing. If there was ever a man who loved what he was doing, it's Don and that plane. Don was Pontiac born and bred, mom and dad were Thomas and Gladys Newcombe, living at 90 South Roselawn when he entered the service.

Don was with the 386th Fighter Squadron, the Hell Hawks, attached to the 365th Fighter Group, flying a P-47 Thunderbolt #42-76343, nicknamed "Squeaky" for his fiancée who apparently had a rather high-pitched voice. Except, the day he died, his plane had been loaned to a buddy in his unit who managed to crash it into a barn (and lived to tell about it), so on July 11, 1944 Don took off from the airfield at Fontenay-sur-Mer, France, with 11 other planes from his squadron to attack an aerodrome near Angers, flying an unmarked plane.

There was a cloud ceiling of 800-1,000 feet above ground level, forcing them to skirt along the bottom of those clouds. Suddenly near Caumont, they broke into the open, finding a major battle raging below them, and now had anti-aircraft fire headed their way. They scattered, sheltering in the clouds,

several of the aircraft were damaged. Most made it home, but Don and his borrowed P-47 Thunderbolt, did not.

The villagers in Trois-Monts where Don's plane went down, were just sitting down to lunch when they heard the scream of a diving plane, then the explosion. They rushed to the scene, along with German troops who were in the area, finding that Don had died instantly. The Germans left, having no one to capture, leaving the villagers to bury Don beside the wreckage of his plane.

Because he was flying a plane with no markings, those villagers buried him thinking he was British. The teenage daughter of the landowner faithfully tended Don's grave for nearly two years until his body was removed by British troops in the spring of 1946. The Brits did not realize their mistake until the Americans came looking for him.

The War Department listed him first as MIA, changing his status to KIA a year later, still with no remains. In the spring of 1946, his parents were finally notified that he had been found. At the Newcombe family's request, Donald Thomas Newcombe, 1st Lieutenant, US Army Air Corps, 23 years old, was laid to rest in Normandy, with his fellow countrymen.

"The P-47 was a big, mean and nasty looking airplane. It looked every bit the part for the job it had to do. All of us that flew it absolutely loved it."

Frank Luckman, 388th Fighter Squadron

MEMORIAL DAY AT OAK HILL



A Memorial Day salute to Gen. Israel B. Richardson and Col. Moses Wisner by the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Tim Greimel, John Cohassey, and Wisner descendant, Ann Stevens.

Photo Credit: Barbara L. Frye



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Charlotte Cooper, Clarkston
1st Vice President: Sara Cote, Highland
2nd Vice President: Dave Decker, Clarkston
Secretary: Barbara Frye, Pontiac
Treasurer: Joy Dockham, Clarkston

Board Members:

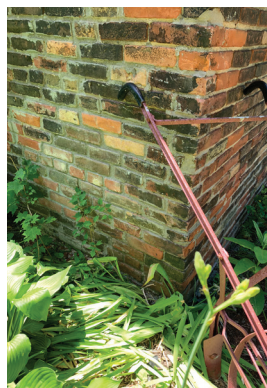
Nancy Calendine, Pontiac
Kathy Davis, Pontiac
Iris Dominguez DeLaO, Pontiac
Bill Grandstaff, Romeo
Gloria Harris-Ford, Pontiac
Dyann Hayes, Bloomfield Hills
Gwen Markham, Novi
Evan Monaghan, Pontiac
Connor Newton, Waterford
Linda Porter, Pontiac
Adrian Rawls, Pontiac
Rosie Richardson, Pontiac
Rita Ski, Birmingham
Skip Upcott, Pontiac
Rodger Zeller, Waterford
Ann Stevens, Pontiac

Executive Director: Mike McGuinness

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Dean Bevacqua, Pontiac
Melissa Bevacqua, Pontiac
Karen Cain, Pontiac
Sabrina Garten, Pontiac
Marguerite Little, Oxford
James McCampbell, Waterford
Phil McPeck, Lake Orion
Katie Neal, Troy
Carla Short, Waterford
Mary Sloan, Clarkston
Kathleen Stricher, Waterford
Frank Turner, Waterford
Heidi Warrington, Clarkston
Louis E. Holser, Clarkston

SUMMER KITCHEN REPAIRED!



Thanks to the skill and generosity of Al Hernandez, who donated his time and labor, the damage to the Summer Kitchen has been repaired at no cost to OCPHS. Thank you Herb for hooking us up! Networking pays off!

photo Credit: Barbara L. Frye

THE CASE OF THE MYSTERY SWORD

John Scholl & Dave Decker

For many years, there has been a sword on display in a case in our Military Room. Very little information was known about this sword – where did it come from? What kind of sword is it? The only reference we could easily find was from an inventory done in 2008. Veteran and OCPHS member John Scholl took on the task to learn more about this sword. His report follows:



“There is a sword in the collection with a tag that states it is a Cavalry Officers Sword from the War of 1812. The sword has a British crown on it, which suggests that it was made in Britain.

Modern sword making in England began under the reign of King James the First (1603 – 1625). Prior to that, individual blacksmiths made swords. The Crown was able to recruit sword smiths from Solingen, Germany, who had the knowledge to make quality swords in quantity. The first two were Joseph Jenkins and Johann Kindt. In 1690 Hermann Mohil was the first sword maker to become located on the river Derwent at Shotley Bridge. Here iron ore was in abundance and the river was fast flowing, which made an ideal place for sword making. Soon early sword makers would locate in this area.

I then checked with an expert in San Francisco. He identified our sword as an English hollow ground, pipe backed sword, manufactured between 1822 and 1845. It was an infantry officer's sword. It could have been made by one of two sword makers, Robert Mole and Sons, or William Buckmaster.

I did further research and determined it was the style of William Buckmaster. The blade is 32-1/4” inches long, and has a hinged piece on one side. This hinge was so the sword would lay flat against the wearer's body. The blade is curved. A curved blade is made for cutting; a straight blade is for thrusting. A sword collector in Britain then contacted me and said it was a Pattern 1822 sword. I am still doing research to try to determine where these swords were imported to the US or Canada.”



With John's extremely useful findings, we can now date the sword to sometime between 1822 and 1845. Digging into our records, we located an undated document titled “List of Gifts to the Wisner Home”. On that document, the number “605” is written next to this entry, likely an accession number:

“Mr. Harry Beaumont

Sword, canteen, spurs etc. owned by Mr. Beaumont's father and used by him in the civil war.”

A careful examination of the sword reveals a very tiny carving of what could be initials in the handguard, which may or may not be “H.B.” If that's the case, it does suggest that this is the sword carried by Harry's father.

With the lead into an accession number, we located its accession record which reports the donation to us in 1954 by Mr. Beaumont. The card details that Harry's father is John F. Beaumont, member of the 3rd Michigan Cavalry, and that he carried the sword,



Photo Credit: Barbara L. Frye

See page 3

MEMORIAL TO RAYMOND LUCAS

The Society and the greater community lost a dedicated researcher in late 2021. Ray Lucas had many interests that he pursued with great diligence and passion: Veteran Records, One Room School Houses, SAR Applications, and archaeology on the grounds of Pine Grove. Oakland History Center and the Society has been the grateful recipient of his many efforts.

Single handedly, over a period of three years, Ray quietly dug and uncovered the foundations of a building that once existed on the grounds, possibly between 1890 and 1910. Ray uncovered the foundation walls, bricks, bits of glass, and other “artifacts” that he carefully cleaned and preserved for the Society. Ray believed it may have been a machinery storage shed. There is also evidence it may have been used as a chicken coop. There are no written records to verify its actual use.

This became a labor of love. Many mornings driving into the Center you could see Ray silently working away in his “dig”. We miss Ray greatly. To remember him and his work a memorial stone was purchased by his friends and has been placed on the grounds of Pine Grove at his “Dig Site.” To absent friends, we will not forget you Ray.

For their generous donations that made this memorial a reality we wish to thank: Tyson Brown for the Auburn Hills Historical Society, Charlotte Cooper, Terry Currin, Dave Decker, Joy Dockham, Barbara Frye, Bill Grandstaff, Dot LaLone, Mike McGuinness & Ronnie Karpinski, Pam Schmaltz, Skip Upcott, Dave Walls, and Rodger Zeller. Also special thank you to Danny Losee of Perry Mount Park Cemetery, and his coworker, for personally delivering and placing Ray’s memorial.



Photo taken June 10, 2020 by Barbara L. Frye



MYSTERY SWORD (continued)

canteen and belt for two years during the Civil War. In the publication “Record of service of Michigan volunteers in the Civil War, 1861-1865” published in 1903, John F. Beaumont is listed on page 14:

Beaumont, John F. Enlisted in company A, Third Cavalry, Jan. 6, 1864, at Pontiac, for three years, age 21. Mustered Jan. 6, 1864. Mustered out at San Antonio, Texas, Feb. 12, 1866. Present residence, Clyde, Mich. John Beaumont died in 1940 and is buried in Highland Cemetery. His death certificate lists Harry Beaumont of Highland as the reporter of John’s death. Harry died in 1964 and is also buried there.

Did we get it right? Has the mystery sword been identified? Let us know what you think by emailing us at: gazette@pinegrovewisner.org

PRESIDENT’S COMMENTS



The 148th Annual Meeting of the Members

Annual Meetings of the past have included picnics, potlucks, dinners, and sometimes impressive speeches delivered by impressive men. But, times and customs change. Recently, we have attended Annual Meetings which were brunches in the Carriage House. We have had Annual Meetings outside, in the parking lot field while sitting on vehicles and standing on a picnic table, and under the trees near the Gazebo. Today we have the privilege of meeting in the Wisner School. We are casual, comfortable and dry, and there is no scheduled impressive speaker.

I have five things to tell you which will take under five minutes.

- (1) OCPHS now has a Planning Commission, which is recommending long-range actions for our Society and Property; Dave Decker, chairman.
- (2) OCPHS has hired an additional staff person. Feel free to talk with Evan Monaghan about his duties at Pine Grove.
- (3) I am soooo pleased to announce that the restrooms in the Carriage House will be updated. The plans have been printed for you to view at the office. Feel free to talk with Mike McGuinness regarding restrooms.
- (4) I am also sooooo pleased to announce that in spite of Covid and its variants, the Society is stable financially, is stable with its membership numbers, and with its activities. And part of this is due to #5, our volunteers.
- (5) Volunteering is critical to nearly all nonprofit organizations and charities. Independent Sector is an organization based in Washington DC, and on April 18, it announced that the estimated value of a volunteer hour in 2021 in the United States reached \$29.95.

How financially valuable were our volunteers in 2021? The volunteer hours last year for our Society were worth \$120,000. If you volunteered for OCPHS work on campus, at home, or someplace else, you saved us \$30 per hour! If you have volunteered in any way at any time, please stand and give yourself a big hug, a pat on the back, and a round of applause! Thank you, thank you, and thank all of you.

Warm regards,
Charlotte Cooper

(A copy of the amended 2022 OCPHS bylaws is available by request.)

WHAT YOU CAN LEARN FROM A 3-DOLLAR BILL

Gottfried Brieger, David Walls

You may never have heard the idiom: Phony as a Three-Dollar Bill, but they really existed for a time. The Society has one in its collection of Wildcat currency. The bills are part of a currency that came about because of a government shortage of money.



How did these banknotes come about? A bit of banking history nationally and in Michigan. The Bank of Michigan was chartered by the Federal government in 1806. Unfortunately there wasn't much banking to be done in Detroit at that date, and, even with Judge Woodward as president, it folded in 1809.

By 1818, a new Bank of Michigan was chartered, and by 1837, there was a total of 15 additional banks including a Bank of Pontiac. Then-President Andrew Jackson, the foe of a National Bank, closed this institution and the legislature decided to spread the assets among the various states. This influx of money caused wild speculation. The chartered banks loaned money wildly and promiscuously. An uproar ensued against the charter banks, and, finally, in 1837, the Michigan state legislature passed the fateful "Act to Organize and Regulate Banking Associations". Just a few excerpts will indicate the scope of the new law.

Any person, or persons, resident of the state, desirous of establishing a bank, are at liberty to meet, open books, and subscribe to the capital stock of such bank.

Three disinterested Bank Commissioners were to visit each banking house to establish the presence of specie (gold and silver coins), to support the capitalization. They were also instructed to review the books. A complex series of checks and balances was also included.

By 1838, 49 banks were established under this act, including the Bank of Oakland, Farmers & Mechanics Bank, Clinton Canal Bank, as well as the Oakland County Bank, all in Pontiac. They capitalized themselves to the tune of 11 million dollars, in a state which had a population of only 100,000. This occurred when most of the population was engaged in agriculture, and had little need for currency. In addition, the Federal Government had insufficient supplies of actual money, and passed the responsibility for the creation of new currency to the states. The state approved the printing of money by the

banks. Thus, the Wildcat currency was born.

What ensued when you were allowed to print your own money can be imagined. One of the three Bank Commissioners appointed to certify the banks, and who, incidentally, was one of four legislators to vote against the original law, was Alpheus Felch.

In a lengthy report to the legislature, he stated "...The result is too well known and it is believed not too strong language to assert that no species of fraud and evasion of law which the ingenuity of dishonest corporations has ever devised, have not been practiced under this act....". An example will be given later regarding the Bank of Kensington.

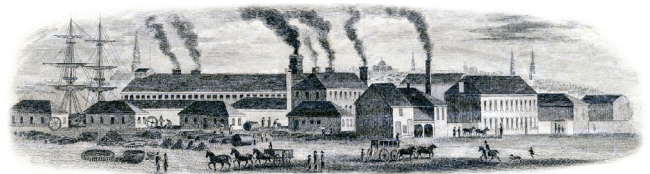
We will now examine some of these fascinating bank notes to see what can be learned from them. Virtually all notes are of uniform size, 3.5"x7", using a very thin paper. They were printed by well-known Eastern concerns like Rawson, Wright, and Hatch of New York, or the New England Bank Note Company of Boston and featured dramatic illustrations.

Here is an example:



We must assume that the originators wanted the note to reflect confidence-inspiring motifs. It notes that it is a chartered bank with \$250,000 in assets. It is signed by G.A. Williams as president, a son of Oliver Williams.

Looking at the vignettes, we have the following:



It is a steel engraving, undoubtedly of Boston Harbor, viewed from inland toward the bay. The same design was used on a 5-dollar bill of 1837 issued by the Lafayette Bank of Boston. The typical long wharves are shown, as well as other commercial buildings, a ship with two masts in the background.

Another vignette is even more interesting. It is a view of an early train. Passengers can be seen, sitting on top. Wood is being supplied for fuel.

The Pontiac and Detroit Railway was the first railroad to be



chartered in the Northwest Territory in 1830. However, it took until 1838 before the first train operated, a stretch from Detroit to Royal Oak that extended for 12.3 miles. Actually, for the first year there was no engine. The train was horse-drawn. The engine in the engraving cannot be seen clearly, but the passenger wagons, containing up to 18 passengers, were indeed modeled on carriage types and the coaches included the upper seating characteristic of coaches. The first train made it to Pontiac in 1843, the year this note was signed.

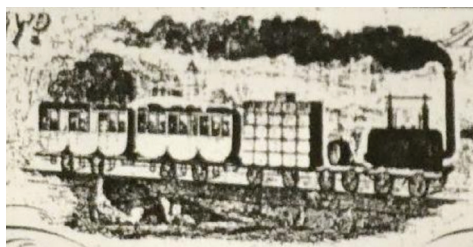
The final design shows a blacksmith, but in a rather idealized pose and outfit. Probably it did not represent a typical Pontiac blacksmith!

The bill was printed by the New England Bank Note Co. of Boston, adding an additional indication of quality for the bill, although no guarantee of its value.

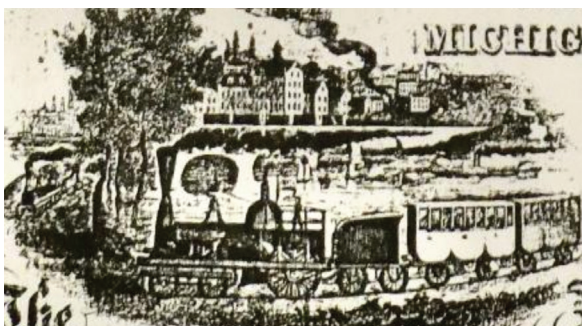


There is an account of the early travels of the train. The tracks were made of wood, covered with a thin strip of iron. These would occasionally break and puncture the carriage. The train also needed to stop periodically to acquire additional wood for the boiler. Nevertheless the design conveyed the exciting future for transportation in the state of Michigan!

Regarding the engine, it was pictured on various other Wildcat bills. The 5-dollar bill for the Bank of Pontiac, shows the following train in 1837:

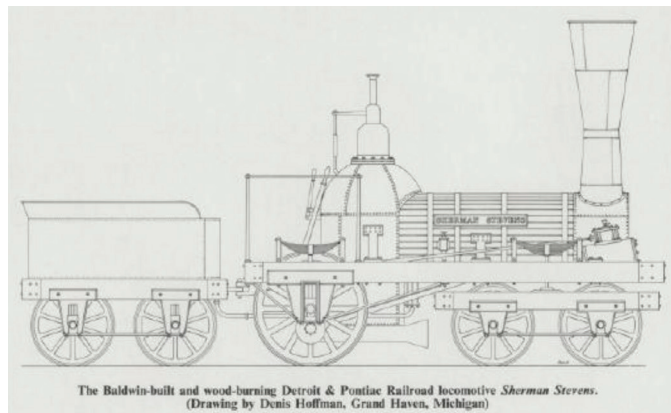


The Bank of Pontiac 50-dollar bill of 1837 gives a more accurate picture of the engine.



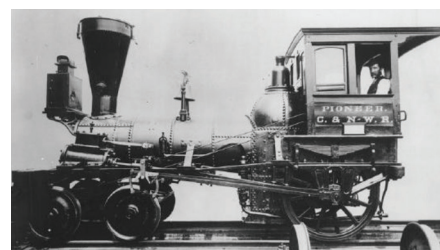
This was in fact one of the first 100 Baldwin locomotives built by Mathias Baldwin and partners. It was

purchased by Sherman T. Stevens, of Pontiac, in 1839. He placed his own name on the engine on a bright brass plate. He was in fact president of the Bank of Pontiac as well and held most of its shares! The design of the locomotive is shown in the following drawing:



An actual example of this engine is preserved in the collections of the Chicago Historical Museum, christened The Pioneer.

It should be noted however that the cab of the Sherman Stevens was not covered. The passenger wagons were in fact built like stage coaches, 20ft. long, with a row of seats on each side and a double row in the middle.



What happened to the Wildcat Banks? Perhaps the lamentable case of the Bank of Kensington will suffice. We do not know the date, but we know the story.

In 1838 the firm of Dwight and Dix bought a significant bundle of unsigned notes and put them into circulation. The bank was located in an isolated patch of land, and remains of it stood for some time. The remote location was not accidental. It was intended to make access to the bank difficult, because it did not have enough species (gold and silver coins) to allow redemption of their bills. During the recession in 1839, the bank could not sell enough of their paper. Dwight & Dix took \$ 50,000 in cash and moved to Milwaukee, where they were able to live well. The bills were worthless.



continued on page 6

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MEMBERS

The Annual Meeting of the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society was held Saturday, May 21, 2022, 11 am, at the Wisner School LLC. The Society is grateful to Lee Industrial Contracting for the use of this facility.

According to the OCPHS Bylaws and the Society Charter a Board of Directors is empowered to conduct the business of the Society.

Election of candidates for the OCPHS Board of Directors is held at the Annual Meeting. Four current Board members were reelected for an additional three year term: Charlotte Cooper, Sara Cote, Barbara Frye, and Rita Ski.

Our Annual Meeting is also when bylaws changes are considered and voted upon by the membership. This year a change was approved to reduce the number of official Board Meetings. The following is the new wording of Article V., Directors, Section 5.

“Regular meetings of the Board of Directors shall be held six times yearly, and the May meeting shall be replaced by the Annual Meeting. A quorum, composed of one-third (1/3) of the directors, is required to vote on any business. Electronic meetings may be held when necessary.”

A full copy of the amended Bylaws is available from the office by request.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Come one, come all to the greatest show in local history!

Our 53rd Annual Summer Ice Cream Social is fast approaching! Join us July 30 and 31 as our Oakland History Center is abuzz with activity ... and ice cream. This is our largest signature event of the year and it brings smiles to so many families. Please consider becoming an Ice Cream Social Booster at \$50, to help us keep the admission free for all of our attendees again this year! We also have sponsorship opportunities at the \$100, \$250, \$500, and \$1,000 level, too. All of our Sponsors and Boosters will have their names touted far and wide as champions of Oakland County's history. Please contact us today to discuss options! There is still room for groups that would like to have a display, too. See you at the Ice Cream Social!



Michael McGuinness

WHAT CAN YOU LEARN ... *continued*

Here is the banknote:



There is no cashier signature (on the left) and the signature is certainly neither Dwight or Dix. There is also no date, except for the printed 18__. Who is that fiend lurking in the dark next to the patriotic duo? Grasping hands?



Then there is also a pair of Native Americans smoking peacefully. We cannot know whether the printer made the choice of designs or Mssrs. Dwight & Dix. What we do know is that Michigan had a sizeable population of Native Americans in the 1830's.



What happened to the Wildcats? In 1844 the Supreme Court declared the banks as unconstitutional, thereby rendering all such currency permanently worthless. It was reported that some notes were accepted in the South, partly because the local paper currency was thought inferior. The bulk of the remainder was scattered, used for play, and occasionally used as a wallpaper substitute. The remaining notes are now collectors' items, but can teach us much about history and human nature.

Image Source:

Three dollar Oakland County Bank note is from the collection of G. Brieger
Five dollar Oakland County Bank note is from the collection of OCPHS
One dollar Bank of Kensington note is from the collection of OCPHS

Our 53rd Annual

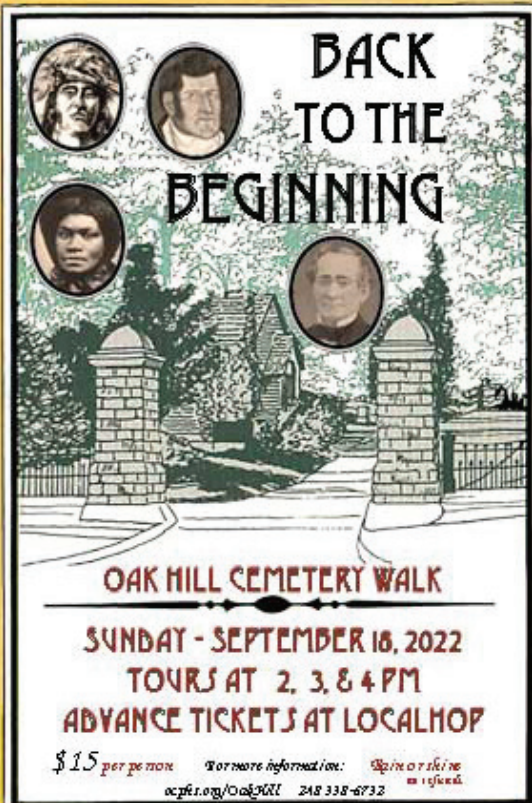
SUMMER ICE CREAM SOCIAL



TRACING OUR ROOTS
EXPLORING OUR AREA'S PAST
FAMILY FUN
FREE AND OPEN TO ALL

A Two-Day, Action-Packed Celebration
SATURDAY, JULY 30, 2022
SUNDAY, JULY 31, 2022
12:00 to 4:00 p.m. each day

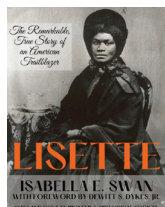
OAKLAND HISTORY CENTER
405 Cesar E. Chavez Avenue
Pontiac, Michigan
WWW.OAKLANDHISTORYCENTER.ORG

BACK TO THE BEGINNING

OAK HILL CEMETERY WALK
SUNDAY - SEPTEMBER 18, 2022
TOURS AT 2, 3, & 4 PM
ADVANCE TICKETS AT LOCALHOP

\$15 per person For more information: ocphs.org/OakHill 248 338-6732



Copies of the Reprint of *Lisette* are available at the office or our website:

<https://www.ocphs.org/product/lisette/>

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Nothing is constant except change. We embrace that concept wholeheartedly and so a new format for our Oakland Gazette is here. We've formed a committee to publish this beast, and we'll be adjusting our format to your needs as members.

With your help, we'll be putting your work here too. So, the floor is open. What do you want to know about the society? Do you have questions? We have answers! Do you have a fascinating history to relate about your Oakland County Ancestors? Were they a Revolution War Veteran and settled here after the victory? Were they a hero from any other conflict? Do you have an interesting story you would like to share?

We can publish it! Let us know via email – and submit articles to gazette@pinegrovewisner.org. We're happy to hear from you!

SPRING CLEANING TREASURES

Did you find something in the garage or attic that might be of interest to a History Geek? Perhaps you found a City Directory, or an old school yearbook. Items like that can find a new home in our Library! Donations to a 501 (c) 3 are tax deductible. Consider a donation, ask for a tax receipt. Thanks for your support!

2022 COMING EVENTS

Summer Ice Cream Social (53rd Annual!)
Saturday, July 30 + Sunday, July 31

Outdoor Summer Concert
Thursday, August 11

History of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution
In Partnership with the Patriot Week Foundation
Wednesday, September 14

Oak Hill Cemetery Walk
Sunday, September 18

Hauntiac Car Show + Woodward Scream Cruise
Saturday, October 8

Downtown Pontiac Walking Ghost Tours
Saturday, October 22

Harvest Festival and Farmers Market
Sunday, October 30

Historic Fashion Show
being planned

Holiday Open House
Saturday, December 10 + Sunday, December 11

**THE OAKLAND COUNTY PIONEER
AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

405 Cesar E. Chavez Avenue
Pontiac, MI 48342

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

Permit No. 868
Royal Oak, MI

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



**Follow us on social media and watch your email for
further information on these events!**

Find us on [facebook.com/OaklandHistoryCenter](https://www.facebook.com/OaklandHistoryCenter)



Follow us on Twitter
[Twitter.com/OCPHS](https://twitter.com/OCPHS)



[Instagram@oaklandcountyhistory](https://www.instagram.com/oaklandcountyhistory)

We regularly send out email updates between Gazette editions, including local history stories and details about upcoming events.

If you don't receive these and would like to be added to our email list, contact us today to let us know!

email: office@ocphs.org

phone: 248 338-6732

~ or message us on facebook ~



IN THIS ISSUE

- Page 1 Stories from the Wisner Stadium Plaques
Memorial Day at Oak Hill
- Page 2 Officers and Board of Directors
Welcome New Members
Summer Kitchen Repaired
The Case Of The Mystery Sword
- Page 3 Memorial to Raymond Lucas
President's Comments
- Page 4 What You Can Learn From A 3-Dollar Bill
- Page 5 What You Can Learn From A 3-Dollar Bill
- Page 6 Annual Meeting of the Members
From the Executive Director
- Page 7 Events Schedule
- Page 8 Contents



ABOUT THE OAKLAND GAZETTE

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

Volume 55 Number 2, June 2022

Editor: Barbara Frye

Gazette Crew: C. Cooper, P. Schmaltz, D. Decker, M. McGuinness

Gazette email: gazette@pinegrovewisner.org