



THE OAKLAND COUNTY PIONEER AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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THE ATHLETIC JOURNAL --- STORIES ABOUT THE WISNER STADIUM PLAQUES

Research by Pam Schmaltz



Wisner Memorial Stadium

During the 1943 football season civic-minded citizens of Pontiac, Michigan decided that something should be done to provide adequate out door athletic facilities for boys attending the Pontiac High School. Further development of the Wisner Athletic Field was agreed upon.

The Chamber of Commerce took the lead, planned to promote a memorial stadium, as its part of the development, and started a campaign January 12, 1944 to raise at least \$50,000 to assure completion of the project. It was announced that the Wisner Memorial stadium would be dedicated to the men and women of Pontiac who served in the second World War.

It was estimated that \$50,000 would pay for:

Two practice football fields.

A clay, sodded playing field, equipped with lighting, for night football.

A baseball diamond.

A running track.

A wooden bleacher section, seating 2,500 persons.

A concrete stadium, seating 2,500 persons, equipped with two team rooms, showers, lockers, public rooms and a ticket office.

By September 7, 1944, the Chamber of Commerce fund-raising drive was so successful that \$50,670.25 was turned over to the treasurer of the Pontiac Board of Education. Gifts had ranged from school children's pennies to \$20,000 donated by the Pontiac Manufacturers Association. The City of Pontiac also deeded ten acres of land adjoining Wisner field to assure adequate space for the project.

The memorial stadium was completed in time for dedication on September 22, 1944. The ceremony took place that night, just prior to the football game between the high schools of Pontiac and Royal Oak, Michigan.

Accompanying pictures show the entrance to the stadium and a field-view of the structure. The floodlights surrounding the playing field are turned on each night, as the sun goes down, and left on until sunrise each morning. Thus, Pontiac is reminded every night in the year that it has contributed to a living war memorial which will serve its youth well for generations to come.

(ed: original photos not included)

The flag flies from the front tower of the stadium each day. Those persons entering the stadium to witness athletic contests may read the names of Pontiac's war dead from plaques mounted on both sides of the main entrance. The present temporary wooden plaques are to be replaced by permanent bronze tablets.

The picture of the main entrance was taken immediately upon completion of the stadium. Since that time, the plot between the sidewalk and the structure proper has been sown in grass. Evergreens have been planted at each one of the pilasters, and additional landscaping is planned.

By the time the stadium was dedicated, the overall project was well underway. A foot of clay had been placed over the playing surface of the old football field, new sod had been purchased, and a new sewer line laid. The portable bleachers were in place, and the area given the school by the city had been graded and drained. An additional football field, surrounded by a quarter-mile track had been laid out, as well as a baseball diamond.

The stadium, with the exception of plumbing and heating cost approximately \$37,500. The entire project, including fencing, additional parking areas, tennis courts, and further landscaping will amount to more than \$58,000.

In addition to donations, the services of William C. Zimmerman, architect, were given as a personal contribution. Mr. Zimmerman designed the stadium, and provided the drawings for its construction.

The Consumers Power Company made a substantial contribution by installing the poles, wiring and other facilities for night lighting of the football field.

The American Commission for living War Memorials, and the School District of the City of Pontiac, have had numerous requests for information on the Pontiac memorial from other communities wishing to sponsor projects of a similar nature.

The Athletic Journal Vol. XXVI No. 4 (page 24) December 1945

NOW ACCEPTING MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR 2023

Oakland County Pioneer & Historical Society is a 501(c)3 dedicated to education and preserving the history of Oakland County in the state of Michigan. The fiscal year runs from January to December and annual membership dues cover the same time period. Your dues may be paid by cash, check, money order, or credit card - in person, by mail, or by visiting our web site. (We are flexible.) Dues paying members are the backbone of our Society. Please consider OCPHS for your end of year tax deductible donations.

Thank you for your support.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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David Buchesky, Troy
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Laura Pylat Edwards, Waterford
Chris Richards and
Margie Cockle-Richards, Waterford
Susann Spilkin, Birmingham
Kathy Vergith, Clarkston
Nancy Walters, White Lake

Membership includes:

Free on-site use of our research library, plus reduced fees for mail, email, or telephone research. You'll also get an email (PDF) subscription to our newsletter, *The Oakland Gazette*. And of course, the satisfaction of helping to preserve and promote OCPHS's mission, preserving and conveying Oakland County's history.

Society Membership dues run from January to December of each year.
Please consider OCPHS for your end of year tax deductible donations. Thank you.

Here Are Memorials That Will Live!

Frank M. Richardson Editor *THE ATHLETIC JOURNAL*

December 1945

Because memorials that live will help build a stronger, healthier nation, *THE ATHLETIC JOURNAL*, with the co-operation of The American Commission for Living War Memorials, is devoting a portion of the December issue to specific examples of worth-while memorials now under way or in the planning stage.

In addition to descriptions of the memorial projects, there is mention of approximate cost, and how funds were, or are being raised.

On the next page is the story behind the greatest living memorial of World War I, the University of Illinois Memorial Stadium. The following pages contain mention of World War II memorials which are also destined to take important places among the memorials that will live and serve throughout the years to come.

There are many memorials, from coast to coast, which will be of interest to communities and organizations who have not reached a decision as to the type of project to undertake. Mention of a few of these memorials, some of which are described in this issue, may be of assistance.

Northampton, Pennsylvania, is sponsoring a community center which will cost \$100,000. Half of the amount is being raised by a fund drive, and the other half will be appropriated by the borough council. The center will include an auditorium for basketball games, meeting rooms, game rooms and similar facilities.

Kerrville, Texas, has a county community center planned which will cost \$100,000, the funds to be raised through public subscription.

Huntington Beach, California, will have a recreational memorial park covering 110 acres, with facilities for many types of recreation as well as Stillwater boating. The park will represent an investment of \$250,000, of which \$75,000 is for the land. The park is to be financed by city funds and a city bond issue.

Residents of a section of Contra Costa County, California, are planning a combined community center and church memorial which will cost \$100,000. More than \$30,000 has been raised by a community-wide drive.

Wellington, Ohio will convert its former town hall into a community center. The \$105,000 project, for which bonds are being sold, will include a swimming pool, basketball court, roller skating rink, and dining hall, as well as city and township offices.

Alumni and friends of Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois, have contributed \$105,000 toward a four-unit intercollegiate, intramural and physical education project which will be dedicated as a memorial to the sixty Knox graduates and former students who lost their lives in World War II. Drives for Funds will continue through 1946 and 1947.

Yankton, South Dakota, plans, through a \$115,000 bond issue, to establish a memorial park on forty acres of ground donated to the town. A swimming pool, bathhouse, and bleacher seating will be constructed first, to be followed by the installation of a wide range of recreation facilities.

Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan, will dedicate a new twenty-two acre athletic field and field house to its war dead, honoring specifically Lieutenant Chester M. Angell, by naming the memorial Angell Field. The \$300,000 project, \$50,000 for which was donated by Lieutenant Angell's parents, will be financed by contributions from alumni and friends of the college. A football field and scoreboard, a stadium, a field house, a baseball diamond, a running track, and a parking area, are included in the plan.

Pontiac, Michigan, through community-wide donations has raised more than \$50,000 toward a goal of \$58,000 to complete its Wisner Memorial Field, which



Here Are Memorials That Will Live! continued

includes a stadium, lighted football field, baseball diamond and tennis courts.

Lone Pine, California, dedicated a memorial plunge in July. The project represents a cash investment of only \$10,500, since all labor was on a community basis. Actually, the plunge is valued at \$35,000.

Coaches, residing in communities which are lagging behind to the extent that not even preliminary discussions have been held regarding erection of living war memorials, must take the lead in organizing memorial projects, especially if the projects are to be of the type which will play a part in the program to make and keep America fit.

THE ATHLETIC JOURNAL requests that coaches send in information on memorial projects contemplated in their communities, and also advise the JOURNAL of projects in which they are taking part.

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John L. Griffith Publisher Frank M. Richardson Editor



EDITOR'S NOTE:

For the past year Pam Schmaltz has been working diligently to flesh out the names emblazoned on the two bronze plaques flanking the original main entrance to the Wisner Memorial Stadium. The three hundred and twelve names are of soldiers and sailors from Pontiac and Oakland County who did not make it back from WWII to the arms of their families. For years there were only names on a wall, now there are stories to each of those names. Each of the individuals listed now has a biography, however short, and a record of their sacrifice in that conflict. This written tribute is due to the tenacity, hard work, and no few tears, of Pamela Schmaltz. OCPHS is grateful to have a member like Pam.

On another note, what do you mean Pontiac has a WWII Memorial? Well, yes we do, and it is hiding in plain sight. The Wisner Memorial Stadium is classed as a Living Memorial, that is, it serves a purpose more viable than merely a statue to view; it is an edifice useful to the community, meant to be used for generations to come. Pam not only found the stories behind the names on that edifice, she also found the story behind the memorial, hidden in the U S Archives! Pam found an obscure article written by a sports editor in Florence, South Carolina, that pointed to a full-page article in The Athletic Journal published in Chicago. That article (*reprinted on page 1 of this Quarterly*) has answers to questions that have eluded us in local sources!

Wow! Talk about tenacity and perseverance; I do not have enough gold stars to stick on this remarkable researcher!

Thank you, Pam, for making this article possible.

Barbara Frye

WISNER MEMORIAL PLAQUE PROJECT

Dave Decker

The Wisner Plaque project was inspired by long-time society member and Vietnam War veteran Fred Liimatta. Taking a cue from him, the late Ray Lucas and (not late) Dave Decker built a database of names and a general working structure to let veterans from the North Oakland County Veterans Treatment Court, part of the 51st District Court in Waterford, undertake researching each soldier. Using this framework, veterans assembled and identified appropriate sources for each soldier, adding basic information about each man. Veteran researchers involved in the project were Van Jones, Sam Carter, Derek Smith, Dino Villareal, and Alex Thayer.

We also thank the Honorable Judge Richard D. Kuhn for allowing court participants to earn community service through conducting research, the 51st District Court's probation department, and the court's late defense attorney Jack Holmes, for their support.

With the onset of the pandemic in 2020, court participation in the project was halted and that's when Pam picked up the research in earnest, fleshing out each man's story in often heartbreaking detail. Her superb efforts in taking up the work have given our society the opportunity to tell these stories and to offer great information for people wishing to research the fates of their fathers, brothers and uncles who may have only been an entry in a family tree.

Thank you, Pam.

Dave Decker

THE CHRISTMAS CANDLES

Robert C. Beattie

In the wee morning hours like sentinels stood
The candles of Christmas, gay emblems of good.
According to custom of years long ago,
There is luck to be gained from their flickering flow.
These candles are given, and never are bought,
For the value's enhanced by the donor's kind thought.
From the time of the lighting throughout the whole day,
The tinsel and tissue were caught in each ray.
Unmoved by our antics surrounding the tree,
They burned ever onward in grave dignity.
As daylight descended and darkness came on,
These tokens of friendship were burned out and gone.
But as the last flicker of flame died away,
We thanked our kind friend for their thoughts thru the day.

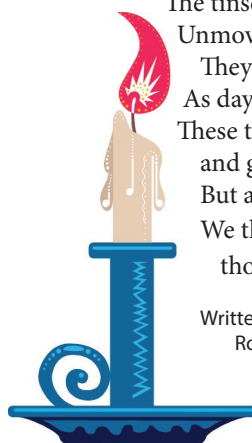
Written by:

Robert C. Beattie, formerly of Waterford Township,
and published in his *Christmas Poems*, 1953.

(Copy in the collection of OCPHS.)

Originally printed in the December 1971

Oakland Gazette Vol. IV ; No. 3





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GHOST OF DISHES PAST

A Night of Historic Cuisine

DINNER

Rissoles of Beef
Seasoned beef mince, lightly seared with soubise - a white onion sauce. Served with drop puddings.

Beetroot and Celery Salad
with goat cheese, pine nuts and a lemon vinaigrette.

Crushed Red Potatoes
with parsley, chives, garlic, and butter.

DESSERT

Raspberry Puffs
Chocolate dipped with raspberry cream.

A portion of this evenings proceeds will benefit
Pontiac's Historic Oak Hill Cemetery



Pine Grove's Summer Kitchen to be Restored

reprinted from September 1971

Members of the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society are busy laying plans for restoration of the summer kitchen and wash house at Pine Grove, the restored home of Governor Moses Wisner and Angeolina Hascall Wisner. Planning has been proceeding apace and word has now been received that a Federal grant in the amount of Four Thousand Dollars is being made available for this purpose. This amount must be matched by an equal sum to be raised locally, and both federal and state governments seek assurance that the County of Oakland supports the project.

The initial fund raising effort was the Society's Old Fashioned Ice Cream Social held August 29, 1971. Individual and corporate contributions will be solicited. The Board voted that any individual contributing One Hundred Dollars or more would be given a life membership in the Society. Contributions of appropriate furnishings for kitchen and laundry are also being sought.

The summer kitchen and wash house was often housed in an adjoining building to avoid having the "odor of vittles" and the steam from the boiler in the main portion of the house. At Pine Grove the brick building behind the kitchen wing served this purpose. It was connected to the kitchen wing by what in today's terminology would be called a breezeway.

The restoration project calls for repairing cracks in the brickwork, replacing the roof, restoring the floor and plastered walls and furnishing the building as it might have been furnished in the mid-nineteenth century. Items being sought include pots and pans, dishes and glassware, kitchen knives, wooden mixing spoons, candle holders, hanging or table lamps with or without reflectors, cupboard and old cupboard shelves, kitchen work table, kitchen chairs, crocks and casks, colander, skimmer, pie pans, dripping pans, butter making equipment (churn, milk pans, wooden bowl and paddle, butter molds), mixing bowls, pitchers, molds, cheese boxes, tea kettle, baskets, old kitchen range, washing machine, wash tub, kitchen clock, iron pots and iron bake kettle, wooden pail, old fashioned ice box, feather duster, old broom, recipe books, plate warmer, and wood box.

The blank below may be used by anyone wishing to contribute either money or furnishings. (*Blank not included in this reprint.*)
Oakland Gazette; Vol. IV, No. 2 ~ September, 1971

~ About the Society's Way Back Machine ~

Our quarterly newsletter, *The Oakland Gazette*

The Oakland Gazette, in (almost) continuous publication since 1968, is the newsletter for the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society. The newsletter not only documents important events in our history but also has really interesting articles written about local historical places and figures.

The older ones are a fun trip back into how the society operated in earlier times.

At our website (ocphs.org) look under the **Research & Learn** tab; **Resources**; **Oakland Gazette**; then scroll down to the Volume and date you wish to read.

<https://www.ocphs.org/oakland-gazette/>



IN MEMORIAL

Keith McClellan 1936-2022

OCPHS member Keith McClellan passed this past November, he was 85. Please keep his family in your thoughts. He will be missed.

Restoration of Kitchen Progresses

reprinted from May 1972

The small historic building behind Pine Grove that once served as a summer kitchen and provided "vittles" for the table of Governor Moses Wisner, now has a new foundation, thanks to the generosity of those Society members who have already contributed to the restoration fund.

The federal grant of \$4,000, earmarked for the summer kitchen's restoration under the National Historic Preservation Act, has almost been matched by equal local funds as required. To secure additional funds, the Society's Restoration Committee, chaired by Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Adler, is seeking contributions from individual and corporate sources throughout the county.

Contributions may be sent to the co-chairmen.

To work along the critical guidelines of historic preservation and restoration, the Society has sought the services of Harry M. Denyes, Jr. of Denyes & Freeman Associates, Inc., of Pontiac, as architect; and LaBar Stewart, Jr. a local contractor, is advising the Restoration Committee.

IN THE COMING YEAR

Connie Lektzian ~ Research Assistant ~ 1972

May our society grow, not just in numbers but in workers.

May our income increase, and at a greater rate than the prices we pay.

May our efforts to do the historically-correct job succeed and may those who simply want to beautify and romanticize finally see the light.

May our visitors all be most appreciative, intelligent and orderly, and may their numbers keep our guides busy but not overworked.

May our civic and government leaders continue to understand the importance of history for the insight and perspective it provides for today.

May the relations of our trustees and staff be characterized by mutual respect and harmonious cooperation.

May the donor we've always dreamed of finally materialize, with checkbook in hand and a desire to support our general program instead of creating another new project.

And

May our collections increase in both quantity and quality, and may your Research Assistant find the time to bring our accessioning and cataloging up-to-date!

Our thanks to the Editor of History News for his permission to use excerpts from his editorial of January 1972 - plus some slight changes . . . History News is a monthly publication of The American Association for State and Local History.

Ed Note: In keeping with the "way back machine" feel of this issue, this *wish* is reprinted from the November 1972 *Oakland Gazette*; Vol. V, No. 3. The Wish may be 40 years old, but the sentiments are still valid.

Connie Lektzian was a hard working Research Assistant in 1972 and, no slight to our current research crew, we need more volunteers like her. In this day & age research can be done at home on your own schedule. Please contact the office if you would like to volunteer. Thank you.

AROUND THE HISTORY CENTER...

Several OCPHS members have been recognized by the NSDAR for their efforts to preserve the history of their communities. Executive Director Mike McGuinness received a medal and certificate for *Excellence in Historic Preservation*. Pictured here with Barb Hofmann, Regent of the Lydia Barnes Potter Chapter of the NSDAR, Mike received his medal & certificate at the November

19, 2022, OCPHS Board of Directors meeting.



OCPHS Board First Vice President, Dave Decker, was also honored with an award for *Excellence in Community Service*. Pictured below with Board President, Sara Cote; Secretary, Barbara Frye; LBP Secretary, Pam Schmaltz; and LBP Regent Barb Hofmann, both also OCPHS members.



Lydia Barnes Potter Recording Secretary and OCPHS member Pam Schmaltz also received an award for *Excellence in Community Service*, primarily for her work on the Wisner Memorial Plaque project.



Message from Lydia Barnes Potter Chapter Regent Barb Hofmann

It was my honor to present this medal and certificate to Michael McGuinness who for the past four years has led The Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society aka The Oakland History Center in its preservation efforts. He has welcomed and encouraged Lydia Barnes Potter members in their volunteer efforts toward historic preservation and patriotism. This Certificate and medal recognize outstanding individuals and organizations that promote historic preservation in a myriad of ways. The recognition honors individuals in groups that have saved and/or preserved their local history, including restoration of buildings, collections, significant objects, monuments, cemeteries, and other important artifacts.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ON-LINE

Did you know you can renew your OCPHS Membership on-line at our website from the comfort of your home? Your support is what keeps us going strong for on to 149 years! Check us out!

<https://www.ocphs.org/membership-and-benefits/>

You can also find all kinds of research materials there, like maps and 50 plus years of past Oakland Gazettes, just follow the links. Enjoy!

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

Membership levels:

Student ~ \$15.00

Individual ~ \$20.00

Family ~ \$35.00

Non Profit ~ \$20.00

Patron ~ \$100.00

Benefactor ~ \$200.00

Friend of OCPHS ~ \$500.00

Corporate Sponsor ~ \$500.00

Volunteer

Opportunities

OCPHS has many ways you can volunteer your time & skills to enrich the Society and Oakland History Center.

Give us a call, we can find a good fit for you!

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The floor is open. We want the Gazette to reflect our Society, that is YOU! 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? Do you have an interesting story you would like to share? We want to know!

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

DOWNSIZING?

Do your kids not want your treasures? We can find your good stuff a new home. Do you have an old 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 us for a tax receipt.

Thank you for supporting your home town Museum!

2023 ANNUAL EVENTS

SUMMER SOCIAL ~ Last weekend in July

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MEMBERS ~ May

OAK HILL CEMETERY WALK ~ September

HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE ~ Second weekend in December

Details for these and other events held throughout the year will be in forthcoming Oakland Gazette and on our Social Media platforms. Stay tuned.

**THE OAKLAND COUNTY PIONEER
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BEST WISHES FOR A HAPPY NEW YEAR

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further information on our events!**

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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!

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ABOUT THE OAKLAND GAZETTE

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

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