

LEGACY

A newsletter of the **Bloomfield Historical Society**

Bloomfield, Oakland County Michigan

Spring/Summer 2007

Volume 2 Issue 1

Bloomfield Historical Society members help fulfill Mission

Preserving documents and artifacts from Wing Lake School Historical Centre

First, a little history...

About 1859 a group of farmers near the corner of Wing Lake and Maple Roads decided their children needed "a proper school". The one room stone Schoolhouse that resulted, attributed to area stonemasons named Purdy, has survived for nearly 150 years. Youngsters who carried the names of Sly, Pickering, Forman, Case, and Thurber and other pioneer families walked as much as a mile or more each way to attend school there.

As the farms and orchards nearby were subdivided one by one, the Schoolhouse slowly grew too small. In 1929 the seventh and eighth graders were sent off to join their peers at the Judson Bradway School near Maple and Lahser, just a year after a young woman named Geneva Kneisel Forslund had come to teach. A bonus for her, since she could increase classroom instructional periods from ten to fifteen minutes per grade.

After WWII ended, fifth and sixth graders moved to the Vaughan school, a formal kindergarten program was started (and only a year later also moved to Vaughan) and, in 1948, a single classroom



addition was finally built to handle the increasing school population. More classrooms were added in the 50's and 60's until, with additional schools being built in the area, Wing Lake closed as a district elementary school in 1973.

The Schoolhouse became the setting for early Michigan history to come alive as each fourth grader in Bloomfield Hills Schools experienced a half day of life in a one room school circa 1890.

Transition

In 1975-76, as part of Michigan's celebration of our country's Bicentennial, the community restored the interior of

the stone Schoolhouse and rededicated it as the Wing Lake School Historical Centre. Many records, photographs and materials, some dating back to the late 1800's, were gathered from the community to begin a collection documenting the history of Bloomfield in hopes of creating a museum-library.

The Schoolhouse instead became the setting for early Michigan history to come alive as each fourth grader in Bloomfield Hills Schools experienced a half day of life in a one room school circa 1890. A "Schoolmarm" led them through penmanship, recitation and lessons in proper Nineteenth Century deportment.

National Register of Historic Places

There are only five structures in Bloomfield listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Three are homes, one

built in the mid-1800's and two designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Cranbrook and a railroad bridge from the 1920's complete the list.

The Society set out to add a sixth and seventh site to the Register and was delighted to learn that both Wing Lake School's 1948 addition and the original 1859 Schoolhouse met the criteria to be listed. Research we prepared for the preliminary application placed the Schoolhouse and the addition in historical context. Their location was one of the touchpoints of the exploratory party of Austin Eli Wing, whose journey through the Bloomfield area laid to rest any misgivings about this being a good place to grow crops and raise a family.

This research took many months and numerous volunteer hours, some actually spent correcting previously published reports. Michigan coordinator for the National Register, Robert Christensen, verified the research and judged the suitability of both buildings for listing. Christensen noted how the '48 addition had "used contemporary design while employing similar fieldstone materials to complement, rather than copy, the historic Stone School," and how it was a model then - as well as today - for enlarging an historic building without compromising its original character.

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If Plat Maps Could Talk...

Discover the history of your house on June 7 (page 4)

Local oral histories now on CDs

In the early 1970's local anthropologist Patricia Pilling recorded a series of interviews with several of the area's senior citizens, some of whom were descended from pioneer families, some had just lived in the area for decades.



Originally released on cassette tapes, the histories have been converted to more stable digital form and put on CDs in a

joint effort by the Library and the Birmingham Historical Museum.

The interviews take the listener back in time to a day when many of our main thoroughfares were still dirt

roads, horses were not uncommon and you got dressed up for a trip "into town (Birmingham)". Many

of the interviewees were born in the late 1800's or early 1900's and shared stories of everyday life as well as their reaction to more historic events.

The CDs are copied exactly from the original cassette tapes, so there are many in each volume. They make quite a change from listening to talking books in your car.

Time to renew ?

Our new membership year started April 1 and, if you haven't renewed your membership already, we hope you do so. We depend on your support.

Letters to Kittie

The family of William and Sarah Barden Craig (daughter Kittie is on the right in this undated photo) owned the historic log home on Lone Pine just east of Franklin Road from 1845-1897.



When the Society presented a program on the Craig Log Home in September 2006, Rob Bogardus and his wife Mary of Washington MI were among eleven direct descendants of the Craig family and four spouses who attended. Rob and Mary have since uncovered photos and letters dating back to 1882. Library Director Karen Kotulis-Carter personally scanned the materials to a CD and returned the originals safely to the family .

The letters (mainly from Sarah to her daughter Kittie) don't record momentous

events in history but instead tell of ordinary family activities in the days before regular telephone use. One letter tells of crops such as potatoes, cabbages, onions, tomatoes and beets that were planted in the garden and then "canned, dried (*sic*), preserved & pickled" for use during the winter, as well as other "news" of a family apart.

It is this kind of correspondence that helps enrich our knowledge of life in the Bloomfield area.

Are there treasures in your attic, perhaps an old trunk from "days gone by," that you might be willing to share with the community? Let us know.

NOTE: The completed CD is available in the media section of the Library and can be viewed on either a Windows PC or a Macintosh. Just ask a Librarian or type in "Craig Family" as the subject in the Library's online catalog. Mary has annotated the letters and photos (in two Word documents - be sure to look for them) which are also available with the images of the letters and photos.

Fulfilling Mission — preserving documents from the Stone School

Continued from page 1

The Society printed explanatory brochures, posted information on our website and talked with members of the media in an attempt to educate the public about the '48 addition's importance to the community, but the school district administrators were unconvinced.

Today

Preparations are being made to demolish all of the additions to the historic stone Schoolhouse to make way for a large new building to provide a more appropriate facility for the county-wide developmental center. Members of the Society's Preservation Committee volunteered to conduct an inventory of the school's artifacts as well as of the collection started in 1976 which had sat, undisturbed, for decades until rediscovered by the Society.



Committee Chair Marilyn Tuchow and Pam Carmichael packed the contents, from flags to early text-

books to a feather duster, for transfer to the old Booth School while they await completion of construction and determination of what the next chapter will hold for the Stone School.

Thanks

The Society, and additional Preservation Committee members Rebecca DeBruin, Dorm Dickerson and Vicki Ross, would like to thank Birmingham Historical Society, Oakland County Historical Commission, and the Oakland the County Board of Commissioners for their support.



Society members Marilyn Tuchow and Pam Carmichael flank Marcia Gibbens, Executive Director of Instruction for Bloomfield Hills Schools, as they review old materials found at Wing Lake School Historical Centre.

Who is he and where did he come from?

He's actually a character from an ad in an early 1900's edition of the Birmingham *Eccentric*. Find him in the new collection of the first 16 years of the *Eccentric* that have been made available digitally by the Library, a project which took many volunteer hours to process (including work by Society members). Issues date back to January 6, 1872 and continue

through 1902.

While not yet searchable, each issue provides a fascinating glimpse into the history of the area, complete with ads, stories from other communities and even a bit of gossip (some about ancestors of people you may know who are still living here).



You can amble to your heart's content through the pages of yesterday at the Library's website at: <http://www.btpl.org/Archives/archives.html>.

(Caution: this may be habit forming!)

Buildings Curator from TheHenryFord

On Craig Log House construction

Jim McCabe graciously shared his knowledge of log home construction with us. Some highlights:

- The Craig home falls into the category of folk or vernacular architecture. It tells us more about where it's located and the people who lived there, than it does about when it was built.
- Round logs and square notching is one of the simplest and quickest of log construction methods. This indicates that the house represents the first phase of settlement or that it was built by someone with limited skills in log construction – or both.
- The house is a first-period European settlement building and, while its style is primarily British, there are also characteristics of Swedish building traditions. This leads us to believe that either original settlers Abraham and Betsey Sodon or William Craig himself could have constructed the home. A puzzle yet to be solved.
- The home is a remarkable survivor since its construction features usually do not stand the test of time.

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Cranbrook Archivist will talk about Uncovering the History of
Your Home: *Discovering a Sense of Place*

Who built your house? Was there one before it, or was it a farm? An orchard? Cranbrook Archivist Leslie Edwards will talk to us about many intriguing ways to uncover that history. She'll have visual examples of how to use maps, city directories, photos, manuscript collections and official records to help provide answers - or more questions. Leslie is the former administrative director of the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society and has degrees from Michigan State and Wayne State and a Certificate in Archival Administration, so she has a lot of experience in dealing with local sources.

This is the latest in our Local History/Local Resources series, co-sponsored by the Bloomfield Township Public Library and the Society.

Admission is free and open to the public.

Thursday, June 7, 2007 – 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

**Bloomfield Township Offices Auditorium
4200 Telegraph Road, Bloomfield Township**

– NEWS FROM THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD –

Annual Meeting

At the Society's Annual Meeting on April 22 we elected two new officers: Barbara L. Keller as Secretary and Al Magnus as Treasurer. We welcome them to their new posts and thank outgoing officers Chuck Kirkpatrick and Katie Kiyo for valiant service, both of whom will be staying on as Directors (and we hope the cookies stay, too!)

Class Notes

The Board of Directors is divided into two classes: one half elected in even-numbered years, one half in odd-numbered years, each with a term of two years.

The following were elected to the Board of Directors in the Class of 2009: Dorm

Dickerson, Al Eicher, Barbara L. Keller, Kathryn Kiyo, Al Magnus, Steve Raphael, and Marilyn Tuchow.

Thank you from all to Wilma Cotton who retired from the Board but continues as an active committee member.

Welcome to our new Liaison

Jay Cravens has been selected the new City Manager of Bloomfield Hills. This is significant because we hope to do our part to help the City celebrate their 75th Anniversary later this year. Jay comes to his new assignment from across the state where he was manager of Cascade Township, just south-east of Grand Rapids.

We added a new e-mail address:

bloomfieldhistory@sbcglobal.net. Feel free to let us know what's on your mind with comments, suggestions or opinions.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Bloomfield Historical Society is dedicated to fostering an appreciation of the rich history of the Bloomfield area by identifying, promoting and conserving our heritage. We encourage research to educate and engage all generations.