Members’ Home Achieves National Register Status

Two Bloomfield homes, the H. Augustus and Agnes (Cleveland) O’Dell House/Inch House and the John Endicott House* have been added to the National Register of Historic Places. Listing in the National Register honors these properties and recognizes their importance to our community. Historic homes such as these are tangible links to our past; they impart a sense of identity, stability and orientation to our community.

O’Dell began practicing architecture in 1903 and over the course of nearly 60 years left for us a significant body of work including the home he designed for his family. Society Board members Katie Kiyoo and Dwight Diener live in this special house on Tiverton Road, and it is through their exhaustive research that Bloomfield has recorded a new chapter in its history.

The Homeowners’ Story

After we had lived in our home for several years a friend casually asked about its history. We were a little sheepish because we knew nothing. Out loud, she tried to imagine who could have dreamed up a house with such imaginative features, especially the unusual slate roof and the exotic marble floor that both charms and disarms our friends. It was at her prompting that we began to connect its story to H. Augustus (Gus) O’Dell (right).

We located the O’Dell’s daughter Elizabeth, now in her 90s, in Seattle, Washington. She and her daughter Cathy have graciously, answered our questions insuring that the history of the house and the family would not be lost.

*More in a future issue of Legacy

Historic Schoolhouse Celebrates Sesquicentennial

In 1859 a group of farm families near the corner of Wing Lake and Maple Roads decided their children needed a proper school. This year the Wing Lake one room stone schoolhouse turns 150 years old.

We’re looking for stories, photos and reminiscences of past students, teachers and families.

Please contact a Board member or info@bloomfieldhistoricalsociety.org

INSIDE…
The story behind the Payne-Waugh Cemetery.
History of the PAYNE / WAUGH Cemetery
Society Historian John Marshall tackles questions you ask:

In the early days of pioneer farming in Bloomfield Township several small neighborhood or family grave-yards were created. These were small plots carved out of farmland and dedicated for the burial of the dead. The Durant 1877 History of Oakland County described many of these as did Birmingham and West Bloomfield Cemeteries, published by the Oakland County Genealogical Society (OCGS) in 1990. Most are clearly marked on the Township maps of 1872, 1896, and 1908, with the notation: “G.Yd.” or “Cem. ð”. The names of these early cemeteries are: Gilbert Lake Burial Ground, Greer Grave-Yard, Vaughn (sic) Cemetery, Porter Family Burial Ground, Kimble Grave-Yard, and Payne/Waugh Cemetery. Over time, the graves in most of these early burial grounds have been relocated to larger cemeteries in the area and the land reused for other purposes.

However, I became interested in the Payne/Waugh Cemetery because it neighbors the Bowers Farm where the Barton Farmhouse is now located, and it is not marked on any of the early township maps. The grave markers of six individuals were recorded by the DAR in their cemetery survey of 1924. The OCGS publication states that: “This Cemetery was located east of Woodward Avenue on Square Lake Road in Bloomfield Township. Those buried here were supposed to have been re-interred in Greenwood Cemetery in Birmingham, although no stones have been found there.”

The Search

I set about to locate this small obscure cemetery and to try to determine if the graves had indeed been relocated since 1924 DAR readings. In 1827 Freeman Waugh came from New York State and purchased the 160 acres of the SW ¼ of Section 02 in Bloomfield Township. In the same year that the Waugh arrived, Harmon A. Payne, also from New York State, became their neighbor when he purchased 80 acres in the SW ¼ of Section 01. The Waugh and Payne parcels were on the north side of Square Lake Road between Squirrel Road and Opdyke Road.

In March 1852 Freeman Waugh dedicated a small plot of only 4 rods (66 ft.) by 8 rods (132 ft.) to be used as a burial ground for his family and the family of his wife. The first burial in January 1856 was the wife (Clorinda) of Freeman Waugh. The other five graves were of Paynes. It appears that the Waughs and Paynes were not only neighbors but also related through marriage. However, even though I tried hard, using census data and genealogy databases, I was unable to nail down the exact family relationship. Whatever the relationship, the seven years between 1856 and 1863 must have been devastating for Harmon Payne, losing his wife as well as four children between the ages of 16 and 21.

The Payne / Waugh Cemetery Today

It is likely that no relocation of the graves ever occurred, since all of the property transactions from 1852 forward make reference to the family cemetery as an exclusion from the parcel in which it is located. The most recent is a transaction between Paul Robertson, president of Robertson Jamison Corp. (the developer of The Heathers), and the State Highway Commission on 18 January, 1979 in which this 66’ by 132’ plot is still identified as an exclusion.

The cemetery ground today, though heavily overgrown with weeds and small trees, is carefully marked off with a split rail fence. During an inspection made in November 2008, I saw no grave stones.

If the grave yard was not vacated, what became of the grave markers? A person from the neighborhood recounted the following legend:

- Floyd Beardslee, who owned the property between 1949 and 1963, moved the tomb stones.
- He discovered that some youngsters had been vandalizing the small burial ground. To prevent any future desecration, Mr. Beardslee took the following actions to conceal the grave yard:
  - Removed the grave stones, depositing them either in the bottom of the near-by lake in The Heathers or burying them in the berm of the road.
  - Plowed over the burial ground, and planted trees in the burial area.

Thus it seems unlikely that any attempt to probe the burial ground itself will yield an old grave marker.

May Clorinda Waugh, Purlina Payne and the Payne children, rest in peace.
Inch House
In 1925, Gus and his wife were among the first to purchase a lot in a subdivision (Stinchfield Acres) carved out of farm property being sold off by the heirs of Charles Stinchfield Sr., a wealthy timber man and banker. His 286-acre working farm named Stonycroft, was the result of uniting three small farms (Old Patchett, Crofoot, and Hagerman) in 1896-97. O’Dell selected a lot for his family that provided an idyllic setting for a country house. He named the house “Inch House” after his ancestral home in Athy, Ireland, and Tiverton Road after his mother’s birthplace in England.

O’Dell the Architect
Gus O’Dell was a modest man of exceptionally fine character. In his own words he was “a gentleman and architect who looks as straight as he is, and is as straight as he looks.”

A colorful man, his varied interests in hunting, fishing, golfing and riding often extended into his work which included the Black River Ranch (1923), the Bloomfield Hills Country Club men’s locker room (1925), Tam O’Shanter Country Club (1926), and the Bloomfield Open Hunt Club Indoor Riding Ring (1929).

Over the course of his career O’Dell continued to refine his forward-thinking approach to educational architecture as he designed schools that included Adams School/Birmingham (1921) and the award-winning addition to Wing Lake School/Bloomfield Twp. (1948).

In recognition of his work in the areas of service to the industry, and public service, in 1957 the Detroit Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) bestowed on him the Gold Medal, their highest honor. And, in 1960, he was named a Fellow by the National AIA, a crowning career achievement.

Throughout our research process we were struck by how quickly so much is lost. One of the goals of the Bloomfield Historical Society is to address this problem. As a result, we feel that it is our obligation to assemble our research materials in a way that could be useful to others. In addition to his own home on Tiverton Road, Mr. O’Dell was responsible for many imaginative houses in Detroit, Birmingham, and the Bloomfield area, and we look forward to documenting more of them as we go along.

Katie Kiyo and Dwight Diener

More on Inch House @ www.bloomfieldhistoricalsociety.org

Time Was…

From the June 11, 1909 Eccentric

QUIZ from a new resident! Will the Eccentric kindly tell us how to keep people from making paths crosslots over the lawn? Also tell us what to do to keep neighbors’ hens from scratching out all efforts for flower gardens and plants for improvement to premises.

A suffering citizen.

From the June 4, 1909 Eccentric

A dance at Terry Dunn’s Saturday night.

Sam Martin is building a granary.

John Benzin has sold his farm to Mr. C. Schultz. Mr. Benzin and family have moved to Detroit.

Mr. and Mrs. R. Nolan spent Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. S. Martin.

Jake Theut is putting up a wire fence which makes the farm look much better.

Quite a number of our young people attended the Junior Exercises at Birmingham last Thursday night.

The National Register of Historic Places ...

is the nation’s official list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archeology and culture.

Bloomfield area homes now included: the Inch House and the Endicott House, the Torrey House, two Frank Lloyd Wright houses — the Affleck home and the Melvyn and Sara Smith home — as well as Cranbrook.

State tax benefits include an income tax credit of 25% available for Department of the Interior-qualified rehabilitations.

To start the National Register process go to www.michigan.gov/shpo.

Information about the tax credits is at www.michigan.gov/hpcredit.

Compiled by Lanie Tobin
Old is the new Green

Everybody’s talking ‘green’ and ‘sustainability’. Join Ann Arbor preservation architect Gene Hopkins FAIA for a visual and interactive conversation that explores how sustainability and preservation go hand-in-hand.

The greenest of the building arts has always been historic preservation. It conserves the value of a structure’s embodied energy and natural resources. Instead of being consigned to a landfill, the building remains a vital legacy in the local history of our Bloomfield community.

Bloomfield Historical Society
www.bloomfieldhistoricalsociety.org

Who Are We?

We know some of the members of this school pageant, but not all. Can you help? Are you one? Drop us a note at info@bloomfieldhistoricalsociety.org. Hint: the photo was taken at the historic Wing Lake School.

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.

www.bloomfieldhistoricalsociety.org  info@bloomfieldhistoricalsociety.org