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WYANDOTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN THE WABEEK TEA ROOM

The former home of Henry Roehrig, merchant and past mayor of Wyandotte
Henry and his brother Carlson, together operated a men's clothing store on Biddle Ave.

Dear members of the Historical Society,

One of the first settlers of the Wyandotte community was Major John Biddle. Biddle had a colorful life in politics. He and his family lived in Detroit. Their came a time in his life where he need to get away from the madness of the big city. He liked an area south of Detroit where he wanted to build a summer home. It was a quite wooded area on he Detroit River. In 1835 he finished this estate. Biddle admired George Washington and Thomas Jefferson attitude about home living, Mt Vernon and Monticello. Major Biddle was Quoted “Open Hand Hospitality” to bring warmth and comfort to his family and friends. He named his estate “The Wyandotte”, for the Indians living here. He moved his family in a year later.

Today the home is gone and everything has changed. The home sat near Vinewood and Biddle, so close to our museum campus. Who would of known. I got this information from a book we sell in our book store, “Proudly We Record”. It was written by Edwina DeWindt. She was a great Historian. Today I am so glad she took the time to create a book on Wyandotte’s history to share with all of us today. Since her book there are other fine book written of our past and available in our gift shop.

Wyandotte is such a nice community for everyone to come home to. A great community to raise a family in. I feel the Major started something with his “Open Hand Hospitality”. This is only one story of many from the first settlers. Our Wyandotte Historical Society, City Fathers, Commission and Friends work very hard to preserve our past. We have one of the finest historical campuses in our downriver area. Please come, enjoy, learn and remember!

Chris Stieler

Valentine’s Day Open House at the Wyandotte Museums

The Wyandotte Museums will be open this Valentine’s Day for all to visit! Join us on Friday February 14, where we will celebrate the holiday at both the Ford-MacNichol and Marx Homes. There will be things to see and do for all ages:

Ford-MacNichol Home

- See the first floor decorated!
- Take a look at our collection of vintage Valentine’s Day Cards!
- Peruse or purchase items from the Biddle Shop!
- Get your picture taken as part of a life-size Valentine’s Day card!



Marx Home

- Share some sweets with those you care about!
- Learn about the history of Valentine’s Day and catch some classic film scenes on our projector screen!

Guests will also have the opportunity to take home our very own collectible Valentine’s Day cards as a keepsake for themselves or someone special!

Stop in between the hours of 5pm and 8pm on Friday, February 14 and be our valentine!

Call or email the Museums office for more info: (734) 324-7284, museum@wyan.org.

"Stars Upon the River" – WHS's Entertainment Program for

7:00 pm on **Friday - March 13th, 2020**

The Wyandotte Historical Society cordially invites you to attend our March entertainment program meeting titled ***"Stars Upon the River"*** that will discuss the history, development and design of the so-called "Day Boat" and the Excursion Trade vessels that once plied our local waters – many of which were built at our own Wyandotte Shipyards.

Presented by nationally recognized maritime historian and WHS trustee **Keith M. Steffke**, we will recall the beautiful

gleaming white steamships (both side-wheelers and propellers) that once travelled up and down the Detroit & St. Clair Rivers during the day, and provided memorable pleasure excursions on moonlit nights. We will also examine the vessels and steamship lines that would venture out across Lake Erie to the Put-in-Bay Island, and others that would call at the small trading ports along Lake St. Clair & the St. Clair River in order to deliver their goods and passengers to thriving villages and cities.

From the 1830's up until the 1990's there were numerous steamship companies from Toledo, Detroit and Port Huron that competed to provide fast and inexpensive transportation services to the cities along their routes. Frequently, "steamboat rate wars" would erupt as rivals tried to gain a share of the trade's market that provided this clean and efficient way to get a day's shopping in, or the means to visit out of town family and friends. We will discuss and remember the numerous ships of Capt.'s David and Eber Ward and John P. Clark, the Red Star, Star-Cole and (finally) the White Star Lines, along with the Ashley & Dustin Steamship Company and the many small wooden ferryboats of the old Detroit Belle Isle & Windsor Ferry Company, among others that were once common sights along our shores.

Steffke will also discuss the rise of the Amusement and Excursion Parks that grew up alongside the development of these interesting and now virtually extinct vessels. We will learn about how the City of Detroit turned a "Hog" into the "Belle of the Ball", when it bought an island in the middle of the Detroit River, along with other interesting and often humorous stories. Also explained and detailed are the former river island resorts that were once located on Fighting Island, Sugar Island, Tashmoo Park on the St. Clair Flats and, finally, the last remaining and well-remembered venture: Bois Blanc or "Bob-lo" Island. Steffke's highly acclaimed and entertaining programs will be illustrated with a plethora of extremely interesting period photographs, company brochures, stunning lithographs and other related rare materials from his family's maritime archival collection.

*** So grab a friend or two, and meet us at the **Marx House** at **7:00 pm** on **Friday, March 13th** for a fun historical program that will remind us of the deep whistles of the Bob-lo Boats, Baseball at Tashmoo Park, watching the engines methodically turn on these beautiful ships, and recall the unforgettable sight of the sleek white steamships that looked like ***"Stars Upon the River"*** as they pulled away from the dock after a beautiful moonlight cruise! The program ***is free to all***, and open to everyone - we also invite you to stay and visit for light refreshments and fellowship afterwards ~ don't forget to pass this Newsletter to a friend!

