

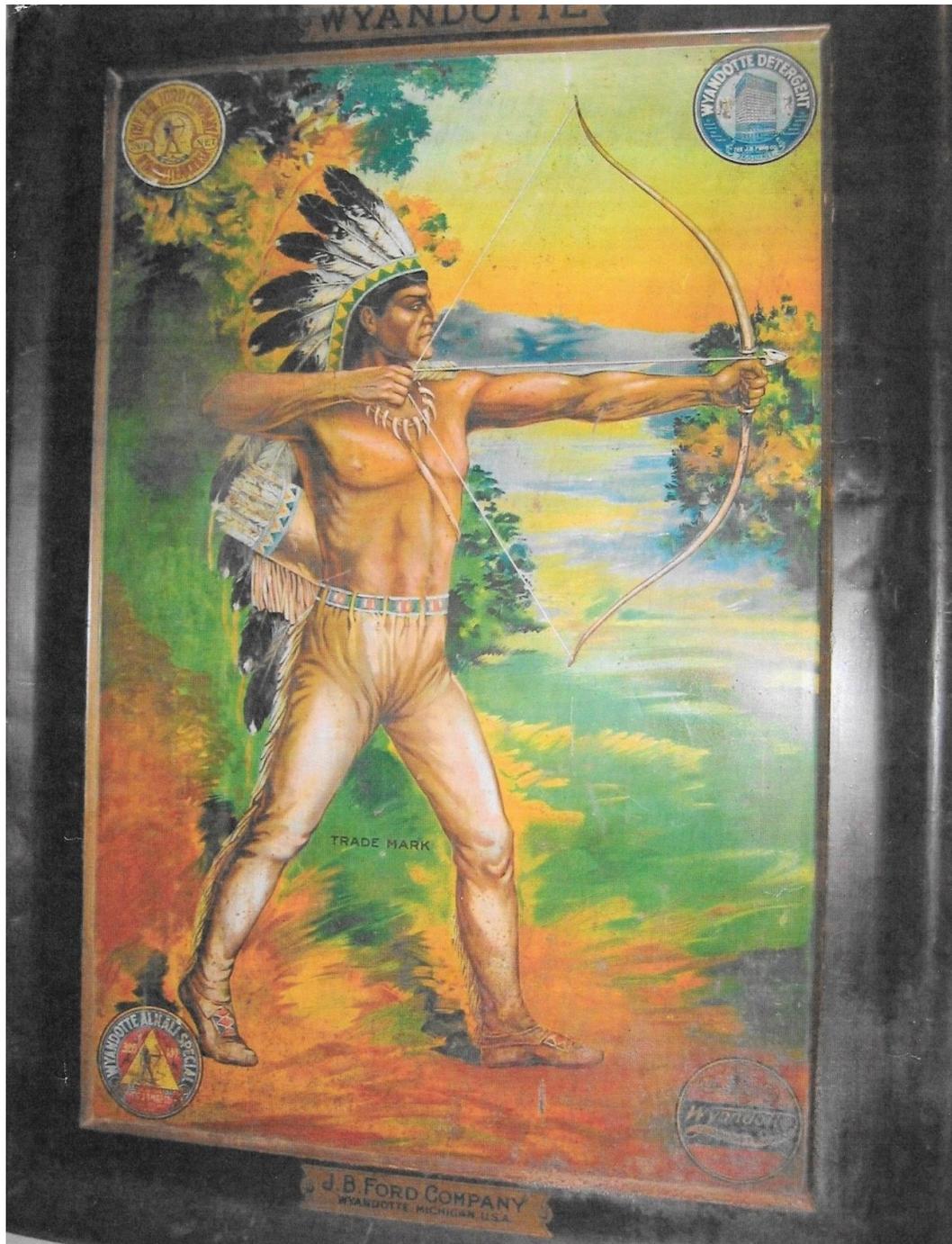
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WYANDOTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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THE FRONT PAGE



The trade mark advertisement for soap cleansers and detergents manufactured by the J. B. Ford Co. of Wyandotte. This important symbol was retained when the company became the Wyandotte Chemicals. Their fleet of ships were easily recognized by the smokestacks embellished with this native Indian standing proudly as though showing the way through the lakes. The upper portion was used as a sign above the West Plant on Biddle, flashing off and on during the nighttime darkness. One of these original signs is now part of the Wyandotte Museum Collections.

On October 17, 1890, Captain John Baptiste Ford purchased property along the Detroit River in what is now Wyandotte. He established the **Michigan Alkali Company** here in 1893. Ford had financial interests in several glass companies and chose this site for its proximity to resources needed to produce soda ash, a primary ingredient in the manufacture of glass. The deep strata of pure salt beneath the site was most important. Water from the Detroit River was used to extract the salt in solution form. The salt was used with limestone to produce a variety of sodium-based industrial and consumer products. The limestone was shipped from company-owned quarries near Alpena. In the early years Michigan Alkali's products included soda ash, baking soda and lye. Later soaps and detergents were added to their product line.

The properties are now listed as a MICHIGAN HISTORIC SITE. State signage is located in front of the Georgian Revival administration building at 1609 Biddle Ave. The administration building was designed by the Detroit firm of Chittenden and Kotting and was completed in 1907.



In 1943, Michigan Alkali consolidated with the J. B. Ford Company glassworks to become the Wyandotte Chemicals Corp. In 1969, it became part of the BASF group of companies, headquartered in Germany.

Our thanks to "If Monuments Could Talk" and state historical markers"

Ken Navarre

A MESSAGE FROM THE PREZ

Dear Members of the Wyandotte Historical Society;

Since the beginning of the Wyandotte Historical Society some 60 years ago, there have been many city leaders that supported our society and museums to make us strong today. They knew that persevering our past was so important. Mayor Joseph Peterson is sure one of them.

On May 17, 2020 Mayor Joe died suddenly. What a loss to our city. He did so much for our city. One of the many tasks was to look over our 3 museums. Joe always came through. Our society members and proud residents of Wyandotte know how costly it is to run and keep up our beautiful campus. He was great to work with. Great job Joe. Thank you Joe for all you did for us, you will never be forgotten. As President of this great society and a friend, may you rest in the warm and loving arms of Jesus, rest in peace.

Another month has gone by and the virus is still with us. No activity at the museums. No monthly board meetings since March. The only thing that has been happening is the progress of our new web site. The Web Site Committee has been working hard; you will see a new face of our web site soon.

Christopher T. Stieler

CONGRATULATIONS

Our congratulations to **Leo Stevenson** on his recognition as Roosevelt High School's distinguished graduate for this year. Stevenson is an important asset to the Downtown Business District and the City of Wyandotte.

The Henry Ford College Faculty Senate has awarded WHS board member (and HFC adjunct faculty member) **Kenneth Shepherd** a \$1000 grant to work on and lecture on the history of bars, saloons, and speakeasies/blind pigs in Wyandotte. The project will concentrate on small-scale sale and production of liquor Downriver and on the culture that developed in the area during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of the implementation of national Prohibition. Interest in Prohibition and activities associated with it has increased dramatically with this anniversary.

Wyandotte is a particularly significant area for this kind of investigation because of its early heavy manufacturing (steel production, boat-building, and auto parts) and the ethnic population it attracted as a result. No other Downriver community at the time showed the same diversity.

The project will use sources of Wyandotte history to tell the stories of the people who opposed the sale and consumption of liquor and beer Downriver, and those who, for their own reasons, produced, sold, and consumed the same. In particular, the lecture will examine the phenomenon of the "house bar": a residence that also served as a venue for serving alcohol. Some of them are still in existence.

IN MEMORIAM

We would like to take the opportunity now to remember the many members that have passed on during the last several months. Unfortunately we are not always aware of each one until a significant time has passed.

Sally Roulinson, a member of the Historical Commission at the beginning years of its existence. She is survived by her husband Dan and daughters Diane and Denise and a sister Dr. Susan Flinders. Sally passed away on Feb. 22, 2020.

Don Buhl, a supporting member of our society and an active participant in community activities. He spent his life in the automobile business, selling untold numbers of autos to the Downriver residents. Don passed away on Nov, 19, 2019 at the age of 93.

Robert Benson, affectionately known as Corki's husband. He was proud to introduce himself this way and always with a big grin. He is survived by his wife Corki, and children Shannon and Nicholas and a brother Paul. Bob's public service included the Planning Commission and the Design and Review Commission. Bob passed away on April 1, 2020.

Robert Hay, husband of the late Mary Ann Hay, survived by daughters, Karen, Elizabeth and Nancy Bozzo. Mary Ann was an active volunteer for the society and museum. She and Elizabeth assisted in mailing the newsletter for several years as well as the tabulating of volunteer hours. Their daughter Nancy has served on the society board and committees and currently is a member of the Cultural and Historical Commission. Robert passed away on March. 24, 2020.

Paul Gies, grandson of Jeremiah and Frances Drennan and last survivor of their daughter, Mary Drennan Gies. Of all the Drennan children, Mary was the only one who had children – 8 in total. Paul was the father of Jane Rasmussen, a new volunteer to the museum. Jane is also assisting the society in the development of their new website. Living in Seattle, Washington, Wyandotte kept beaconing her back to the family roots. After retiring last year, she purchased a condo here, and commutes back and forth between the two cities. Jeremiah and Frances purchased their home after the MacNichols left for Rossford, Ohio and occupied it for 60 plus years. Paul passed away April 1, 2019 at the age of 92.

On Behalf of the Wyandotte Historical Society we extend our deepest sympathy to the surviving members of our departed ones.

Ken Navarre