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WYANDOTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2021

VOLUME 1



LOOKING BACK at LOOKING FORWARD

Upon reflection, 2020 was a year a lot of us would like to forget. Yet as the river continued to flow, Wyandotte kept going with resiliency, something it has done for generations with its rich heritage.

Looking back, in this issue we proudly present the world premier of "Wyandotte's Got Old Bones" by Wallace Hayden. And on our cover we appreciatively feature "LOOKING FORWARD" a sculpture by John Nick Pappas, pictured above in BASF Park. The sculpture is a tribute to the city's founding settlers, presented by the Wyandotte Street Art Fair as a Sesquicentennial gift to the citizens of Wyandotte. Bravo.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PREZ

Dear Members of the Wyandotte Historical Society,

Welcome to a new year! To many of us we are glad to see 2020 disappear. We begin to see the end of the tunnel for the deadly virus. Hopefully by midyear a good part of the country will have received the vaccination. Maybe the later half of the year we can get back to business.

Starting off the New Year, Mary-Johna Weins, Chairman for the Oakwood Cemetery Committee informed me about a new parking lot to be made on the south side of the cemetery. It would expand from the curb on Ford Ave north to the cemetery fence. It would provide 13 parking spots for the new building being build next to the police and court house.

We are not sure if they are going to be building on cemetery property. Much work is being done to research this space to see if it belongs to the cemetery. Your society board needs your help. Please contact our society office with concerns or information to help us. I know Don Gutz's face book page All Things Wyandotte is welcoming opinions also. "Please give me a call so we know how to proceed. The more we hear from the better support we have.

It becomes sad when our city tries to shrink historical sites. I know this cemetery has looked bad for many years. Many civic groups, residence and clubs have helped keep our cemetery look good.. But progress is being made. We have shown over the years that Wyandotte Mayors and Councils with Historical Commission and Historical Society care about our past. We all need to bond together to keep it this way.

Christopher Stieler

Thank You!

We recently wrote about the Society's continual upgrading of its office equipment to keep pace with current technology and the cost of doing so.

We continue to accept donations for this effort and we extend our sincere thanks to the donors who have already answered our call.

Ken Navarre

**Roosevelt High School History:
The Distinguished Graduate Program**

Beginning in 1991 and continuing to this year, Roosevelt High School (RHS) has recognized former graduates that have epitomized excellence in their life and careers. The program was spearheaded by many former RHS alums, including society board member George Gouth.

Criteria for a distinguished graduate include:

- * must have graduated from RHS at least ten years ago.
- * may have contributed to their chosen profession through outstanding individual performance or leadership, literary and/or professional publications, or recognized success in a particular field of work
- * may have contributed time, effort and/or money for a project to benefit the Wyandotte area or the community in which they now reside without attention or compensation.

There are currently over 85 members of the distinguished graduate program, with new members added every year. Some of the notable names included in the list are George Gouth, Ann Marston, Emerson Mehlhose, Gwen Fostic, and Benjamin Yack.

Plaques of all the individuals are located in the commons area of RHS along with a brief biography.

If you are interested in nominating someone for this honor, you can access the information at:

<https://roosevelt.wyandotte.org/about-us/distinguished-grads>

George Purdu

In Sympathy

We extend our deepest sympathy to Len Prusewicz on the loss of his wife, Maria.

In addition to being a member of our Society, Len served on the Cultural and Historical Commission. Prior to his retirement, Len was the Director of the Recreation Department.

We are saddened to hear about the news of Maria, his wife. Our prayers are with him at this time.

Ken Navarre

Wyandotte's Got Old Bones

By Wallace Hayden

Wyandotte's got old bones.

We've got the ancient river that cozies up to our snaggletooth shoreline flashing ever-changing hues of silver slate, serene blue and turbulent green. For three centuries the river has borne the rippling wakes of canoes, sailing ships, side-wheelers, excursion boats and gasoline runabouts.

We've got 7th and 8th generation families who pass distant cousins along Biddle Avenue oblivious to their familial connection.

We got grand homes shouldering wrap-around porches like dowagers dressed in around-the-neck mink scarves. Parlors and pantries, widow walks and carriage houses adorn these old homesteads.

We've got civil war era buildings of brick and blown glass with creaking pine floorboards that echo a century and a half of continuous commerce testifying to our prominent place in Downriver's mercantile landscape.

We've got an ingrained respect for those elemental 19th and 20th century dynamos—the railroad, the freighters and the factories that stamped out and delivered the hard iron that built bridges and won wars.

We've got the residual grit and grease of industrial graveyards. Long after their superstructures were pulverized by wrecking balls and replaced by parks and playgrounds, their toxic remains lie ominously beneath the soil like Poe's Tell-Tale Heart lies beneath the floorboards.

We've got the cozy corner taverns that for generations invited the working man to slide onto a stool and brush aside the daily grind with gulps of golden beer.

We've got murky, sepia toned memories, both repressed and slyly celebrated, of rum runners, bootleggers and fedora adorned gangsters.

We've got the religious, academic, literary, athletic, medical, musical, artistic, civic, charitable and service organizations that strive to encourage our better efforts and instincts.

We've got entrepreneurs, professionals, merchants, city workers, labors and homemakers who maintain the fabric of the community that connects and supports all else.

And finally, we've got ourselves, appreciating the past, engaging in the present and in ways that can't be fully foreseen, impacting the future.



Looking Ahead

Do you have a monthly calendar that you use to look ahead and plan your days? With the start of a new year, it is time to break out your new calendar for the year!

Many businesses back in the day would give out calendars to their patrons as a way to welcome them into the new year, help them plan ahead, and to act as clever advertising for their business.

We found this beautiful calendar in our collections from The Ladies' Shop that dates back to 1939!

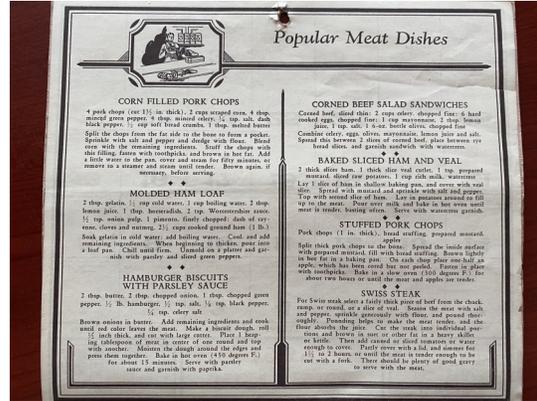
The Ladies' Shop, which sold "distinctive wearing



apparel" and gift novelties for women, was located at 2916 Biddle Ave., in the same building as Armstrong's-closest to the building which now houses R.P. McMurphy's (which would have likely been Bon Ton Confectionery or Schroeder's Café at the time).

Continued in the column to the right ->

What is unique about this calendar is that it is a "food calendar", and in addition to the months and dates it also provides people with tips for healthy eating, etiquette, and monthly recipes!



Another unique component of this calendar is that each date includes a tidbit of history of what happened on that day in the past.



Nowadays, our calendars usually only include national holidays. Wouldn't it be cool if every day offered a "today in history" tidbit? The calendar also includes the monthly birthstone (garnet for January) and monthly flower (snowdrop for January).

How will you use your calendar to look ahead this year?

Our New Membership Chairperson

Jane (Gies) Rasmussen is our new Membership Chairperson. She is retired, happy to be doing what she always wanted to do, but didn't have the time to do—in Wyandotte! She's looking forward to capturing and sharing our history with you here, and online.

Return Service Requested

Wyandotte Historical Society

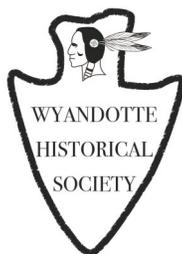
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Wyandotte Historical Society 2021 Calendar Programs Being Planned for 2021

In anticipation of the historic roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines and continued safe, healthy practices, we are beginning to plan programs for 2021.

For the latest news on upcoming events check our website at: www.wyandottehistory.org.

Wyandotte Cultural and Historical Commission Museum Closed – January & February 2021

It's that time of the year again! As we get ready for 2021, the Museum will be closed January and February. We can't promise how tours will occur once we reopen in March (staffed during regular hours or by appointment) however, we invite you to stay tuned for information in March's newsletter. Happy Winter!

Wyandotte Historical Society Board of Directors

- * **President:** Chris Stieler
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- * **Trustees:**
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- * **President:** Wally Hayden
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 - ◇ Don Gutz
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 - ◇ Kenneth Munson
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- * **Museum Assistant:** Natalie Pantelis