

- EST. 1958 -

WYANDOTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2021

VOLUME 2

TO MY VALENTINE



The month of February may bring short days and cold weather, but it can also bring warm hearts on Valentine's Day! Valentine's Day cards or letters have been a way to express love and caring sentiments to those special in one's life for centuries. Until the 19th century, all of these Valentine's Day sentiments would have been handmade. The lovely handmade valentine pictured above was found in the Wyandotte Museums' Collection. It is from Tom to Jeanne. *(continued on page 3)*

A MESSAGE FROM THE PREZ

Dear Members of the Wyandotte Historical Society,

As our country starts administering the vaccination of the virus, I hope we will be seeing a lot less cases and we can start getting back to normal. I know we have a way to go. I would like to begin this month reminding us of when our city’s first large industry began in the business world.

Let’s go back to 1854 when Eber Ward, a Detroit businessman came to Wyandotte with a great idea. He brought to Wyandotte the idea and plans to build the first Bessemer steel mill in our country and called it the Eureka Iron Works. This process was the key to making large quantities of high quality steel. In 1888 they suffered a boiler explosion and never recovered.

A historical marker today stands in Bishop Park on the site of the former still mill. You can find it at the foot of Elm Street, at the Detroit River.

I feel this is where Wyandotte first began as a



community. We have been lucky that many successful industrial companies came to Wyandotte. They made work for many immigrants in growing our community. The citizens of Wyandotte stand proud of our great city history.

I would like to thank our members for the generous donations. You have given generously above the normal dues fee for this year. It has been a big help. It shows how so many people love and support the Wyandotte Historical Society.

Also a thank you to Jane Rasmussen for sitting in for Beth Labadie, the Editor of our Newsletter, while Beth recuperates from shoulder surgery. Nice job Jane AND all of us at WHS wish Beth, “GET WELL SOON”!!!

Christopher Stieler

Death Leaves A Heartache No One Can Heal

George Gouth has shared with us the recent loss of his sister, Elizabeth Johanna Gouth Kaern, Betty to her family and friends. She was the youngest of three children born to John and Elizabeth Gouth with two brothers, Johannes (deceased) and George.

With Wyandotte as her home, Betty attended Trinity Lutheran elementary school and Roosevelt High School, graduating in 1960. Continuing her educational studies at Wayne State, she met and married Heinz Kaern. Later, Betty moved with Heinz and their two sons to Germany. She resided there for 48 years, until her death.

All the many friend of George and his wife, Marleen share in their sorrow and their families will be remembered in our prayers and thoughts.

Ken Navarre

Join Us Online

While our newsletter is monthly, our website is updated often and you can access it by a laptop, computer, or a mobile phone at: wyandottehistory.org .

Also, did you know that you can renew your membership online and save the cost of postage? Simply go to the website and then select “Get Involved” and “Be a Member”. There are multiple membership levels to choose from:

- Student \$ 1.00
- Annual \$15.00
- Bronze \$25.00
- Silver \$50.00
- Gold \$75.00
- Platinum \$100.00

Recently we added a Document Center to store articles about various topics for posterity. Two new topes we added are “Families in Wyandotte” and “Homes in Wyandotte”. It is an opportunity to share historic stories and information about our families and homes with our families and friends wherever they may be.

It’s time for us to dust off those boxes of memorabilia in our attics and basements and share our heritage online.

Jane (Gies) Rasmussen

ROOSEVELT HIGH SCHOOL HISTORY

Woodruff Elementary Courtyard

On a walk through the halls at Roosevelt High School (RHS) I noticed something that I had never seen before. In one of the courtyards by the art room, I saw a plaque. I had been by this courtyard numerous times on my journeys around Roosevelt, but this was the first time I saw this sign:



It reads: "ARI WOODRUFF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MEMORIAL COURT
1903 - 1981
DEDICATED OCT. 23, 1982"

I had done a little research on Woodruff and knew of its location on St. Johns for the residents of Ford City. I also knew that it was closed in the early 1980's as Taft was going to be used as an elementary school for that area of Wyandotte.

What I had a hard time finding out was who dedicated the plaque and who had knowledge about it. When I talked to Wyandotte Alum Jeff Trudell who happened to attend Woodruff in the 1970's, he filled in the gaps.

Bob Johnson, who was the horticulture teacher at Roosevelt, was the person who dedicated the courtyard. He would maintain the many courtyards around the school and in the fall of 1982, had the courtyard dedicated. The interesting thing about the courtyard is that even though Mr. Johnson has been retired for a number of years, the courtyard still has many plants that are grown and used around the building.

If you are ever walking around RHS, you should definitely stop in to see this hidden gem.

George Purdu

TO MY VALENTINE

(from the front cover)

When we open up the little red heart on the front of the Valentine card, we see a small picture of Tom surrounded by flowers and his love note to Jeannie on the flip side.



While we do not see a date on the Valentine card we can infer that it is from the era of the first World War, based on the uniform that Tom dons in the small photograph.

Unfortunately, we don't know much more about the young couple. Do you have a Tom and Jeannie in your family ancestry? A Tom who was in WW I? We'd like to know more about this loving couple.



Another thing we see on the front of the card are blue flowers with yellow centers. During the Victorian era, "the language of flowers" or "floriography" was huge. The main idea behind floriography is that different flowers when sent to a loved one can mean different things without saying any words at all. Although it is difficult to tell exactly what kind of flowers these are, the flowers included on the card *might* be blue violets, which mean "faithfulness", or forget-me-nots, which mean "true-love memories, do not forget me".

Will you be sending a valentine to anyone this year?

Natalie Pantelis

ADIEU TO THE ICONIC HAVEN HOUSE

It did not fall to fire or the elements. It survived post WWII modernism and urban renewal. As businesses came and went, residents moved in and out of Wyandotte, young men and women went off to fight in various wars, and the overall landscape of Biddle Avenue changed, it stood strong and majestic.



For more than 150 years, the home at the northeast corner of Biddle and Vinewood made an indelible mark on the city of Wyandotte – so much so that its absence at the hands of demolition crews on December 28, 2020 has already proven to be bittersweet to those who pass by or remember all it once was.

Built just after the Civil War, the property was originally owned by Elizabeth Haven, whose husband, James, was a carpenter and pattern maker. After apprenticing for some time in New York, their youngest son, James De Alton began his own printing service out of the home in 1879. At that time, he was just fourteen-years-old and was unaware of just how successful he would grow to be.



By June of 1886, Haven became the owner of the Wyandotte Herald newspaper and would oversee its operations from the office on the south side of Oak Street, between Biddle and Van Alstyne (currently a small city parking lot).

From 1886 until his death in 1943, Haven, who became affectionately known as “Dolly” by Wyandotte residents, wore many hats. Not only was the proprietor of the Wyandotte Herald, but he was also editor and reporter. He married Wyandotte resident, Della Andrews in 1900 and they welcomed their only child, son James De Alton Haven, Jr. in 1906. J.D., Sr. remained in the family home after the deaths of both of his parents, and resided there until his own death.

Although the Wyandotte Herald would become the News Herald shortly thereafter, J.D. Haven, Jr., would go on to follow in the footsteps of his father, continuing on as a printer until his retirement in 1976. Receiving his own nickname of “Dee,” he would pass away in 1988.



By 1950, the Haven House at 2557 Biddle Avenue had changed hands and become Peggy’s Florist/Peggy’s Flower Shop/Flowers by Peggy and eventually Flower House Florist.

Stories abound from residents of the last seventy years, such as “I bought my corsage from there,” “I would stop there to get mom flowers,” “I loved that place because they had fresh flowers and the building was so unique,” or “they were always there to help with all our needs.” It was a popular place, and as we celebrate its legacy in the romantic month of February, the florist likely made many Valentine’s Day events much sweeter.

Like the print and floral shops that operated within its walls, the old Haven House is now gone. A fond memory, we can still enjoy its former glory in photographs and stories – a Wyandotte legend for many generations. So long, old friend.

Jesse Rose, Director, Wyandotte Museums

January 8, 2021

A Labor of Love

If you've driven by the corner of Elm and 4th Street lately, you may have noticed that there is a new "Private Property" sign up.



We couldn't be happier about the significance of that sign. The Mehlhose House & Station now has a family to take care of it! Amanda and Francisco Cosme purchased the property at 2941 4th Street to restore and preserve it as their forever family home!

As you make the turn from Elm to 4th Street you see the home, the garage, and the old Mehlhose Ice Cream Building. What a joy it is to see that Thomas Roberts Architects has repurposed the ice cream building to be their office.



There's the historic Mehlhose story to be shared and—the history being made this century by Thomas Roberts and the Cosme Family! We can't wait to see it unfold!



Jane (Gies)

Rasmussen

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Wyandotte Historical Society

Burns Home

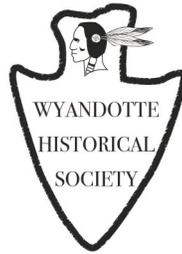
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**Wyandotte Historical Society 2021 Calendar
Tentative Dates to be Determined for Programs**

Discussions have begun about which month to begin the Historical Society programs for 2021.

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

**Wyandotte Cultural and Historical Commission
Museum Reopens on March 4th!**

The Museum Staff has been busy putting away the holiday decorations at the Ford MacNichol Home and cleaning it for upcoming events in 2021.

It will reopen for tours on March 4th!.

Wyandotte Historical Society Board of Directors

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