

- EST. 1958 -

# WYANDOTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

JULY 2021

VOLUME 7

WYANDOTTE'S  
3<sup>RD</sup>  
*Annual*  
ARTIST  
MARKET  
*"and*  
**"STREET FAIR..."**

**AUGUST 27 · 28 · 29**

1<sup>ST</sup> STREET DOWNTOWN WYANDOTTE

THURS & FRI  
10<sup>AM</sup> to 9<sup>PM</sup>

ARTISTS DEMONSTRATING  
PORTRAITURE  
GLASS BLOWER

SATURDAY  
10<sup>AM</sup> to 5<sup>PM</sup>

100 OR MORE ARTISTS  
*also*  
"YOUNG PEOPLE'S ART SHOW"

It was called something different; located on a different street; held later in the summer and now—it has evolved into The Wyandotte 60th Street Art Fair! It would be great to see you there, July 7th thru the 10th on Biddle Avenue in Downtown Wyandotte. (Read more about it on page 2.)

### MESSAGE FROM THE PREZ

Dear Members of the Historical Society,

July is a special month for us here in Wyandotte. Not only is it the hottest month of the year, it brings many favorite events. We love the parade, Street Art Fair, barbecues with family and friends, and concerts. You have the idea.

The Fourth of July reminds us of the great value we have, "Our Freedom." Allow me to share with you what was written about the event. An historic author, Lindsay Lowe, wrote: "On July 2, 1776 The Continental Congress voted in favor of declaring independence from Great Britain. The Declaration of Independence was officially adopted two days later, marked by ringing of the Liberty Bell at Independence Hall in Philadelphia."

John Adams wrote in a letter to his wife on July 3, 1776: "I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated, by succeeding Generations, as the great anniversary Festival."

Although our Fourth of July celebration falls on a different date, today's July 4<sup>th</sup> festivities would look familiar to Adams who called for the people to celebrate the day with "Pomp and Parade, with Shews, Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forever more."

To all, have a happy 4<sup>th</sup> and a wonderful summer!

Christopher Stieler, President

### THE AMERICAN FLAG



A new star is added to the American Flag on July 4<sup>th</sup> after the state's admission into the Union. This is decreed by law. No U.S.A flag ever becomes obsolete. Each flag, with its variation in stars, can be legally flown today.

To see a list of the dates, number of stars, and the states that entered the union go to our website at <https://www.wyandottehistory.org/> and select Explore, Document Center, and then the category "The American Flag".

### WYANDOTTE STREET ART FAIR

The 60th Street Art Fair is on for July 7-10 and the Wyandotte Historical Society will be there! Come join us in our white tent, #724, by Old City Hall on Biddle Avenue.

We will have items for sale including: Tashmoo prints, Betty Trombetta prints, afghans of historic Wyandotte places, Cat's Meow Village wooden replicas of Wyandotte landmarks, and of course books and pamphlets on Wyandotte topics you may not have known about.

We are looking forward to seeing you!

### How Did It All Begin?

*By Gloria Dunn*

Friday, September 28, 1962, dawned cold, wet and gray. A handful of artists—actually six members of the Acanthus Art Society—clustered under the dripping overhang of a vacant storefront on First Street. Throughout the day, perhaps a dozen visitors passed by at a discreet distance, paused to view the artwork and ponder upon what a strange breed these artists were.

Fred Schafer, the group's cartoonist stood ready to sketch anyone who would pose, Berneda Watts showed her pastel landscapes, Helen Kaszowski brought along her delicate sculptured porcelain figurines, and Minerva Fredericks exhibited hand fired ceramics. I showed my oil paintings and hand wrought silver jewelry and Etta Hopkins {my mother} her fine pottery. Meanwhile chairman Leonore Clark distributed fliers to businesses throughout the downtown area. We who were there couldn't have known the history that was being made!

The second day was a different matter—bright and cheery with a brisk breeze that sometimes sent fragile watercolors flying through the air. Twenty-three artists and craftspeople turned out and the work was strung out between Maple and Elm on wires stretched from the utility poles. A hundred or so passersby slowed down a bit, curious as to what was happening in downtown Wyandotte.

The Wyandotte Street Art Fair was born!!!

### The Museum’s Delft Tiles

It is like a scene out of a European palace, country cottage, or children’s book: ninety-two miniature likenesses of the Dutch countryside and waterways, all glistening white with embellishments of a bright and beautiful blue. The grand Ford-MacNichol Home boasts many high-end forms of internal features, including marble and porcelain fireplace surrounds, golden oak wood and moldings, and leaded clear and colored glass. Perhaps the most intriguing and seemingly out-of-place sight for visitors is the Delft Blue tiling that flanks the former coal fireplace register in the Library of the home. Staff and volunteers speak briefly about it. Guests frequently raise an eyebrow or say, “wow.” But, what do we really know about the importance and history of these wondrous pieces?



Firstly, the tiles themselves are all hand-painted and were imported from Delft, Holland at the time of the construction of the home, which was completed in 1896. Each depicts a different scene and no two are exactly alike. At the time of installation, Delft Blue tiles were not a new idea. In fact, they had been around for some time and had graced many homes and other structures. But, in the small industrial town that was Wyandotte, they were quite glamorous and spoke of a wealth unknown to many.

The tiles were first created in Holland in the sixteenth century. The small, but bustling town of Delft would become the home of the industry, which not only fired and painted tiles and pottery, but also tableware and other utilitarian items for the home, including chamber pots, bottles and vases. Other Dutch towns would become integral in the industry and by the mid-seventeenth century, Delftware experienced its most important and initial wave of massive success. Dignitaries, artisans and other well known people were decorating their grand properties with the pieces.

The true heyday of Delft pottery and Delftware was from the 1640s through the 1740s, and included not just Delft Blue but earthenware decorated in many colors, from reds to greens and even yellow hues. They tended to depict a robust array of subjects such as flowers, windmills, ships, wildlife and homes. The pieces were also created to honor various cultures around the world. By the late eighteenth century, the industrial revolution in Europe allowed other countries, primarily the United Kingdom, to hone their own craft, utilizing mass production techniques to create their own version of the pretty earthenware. As a result, the desire for the Dutch imports waned in popularity due to greater accessibility and lower prices.

By 1896, true Delftware and Delft Blue pottery was not as cherished as it once was. However, the Ford and MacNichol families had the wherewithal to honor this beautiful industry and bring it to the little city of Wyandotte to be appreciated. Regardless of popularity at the time, it was still quite expensive to have ninety-two different pieces commissioned and imported for installation.

There are still two companies in the Netherlands operating much the same for over 300 years, creating traditional Delftware, and they have online presences in order to make purchases. There are cities in Michigan, such as Holland, where items are also imported and sold and they too have websites for perusal and ordering. Pricing is dependent on the piece itself, most tiles starting around the \$30.00 mark.

Come take a tour of the Ford-MacNichol Home and see our beautiful Delft tiles in their full glory and let us know your favorite scene!

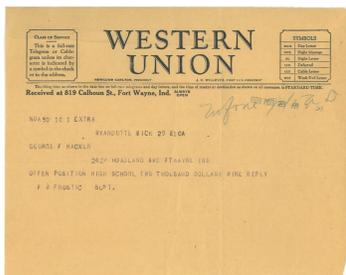


### Hacker Family Donation

Recently, the museum was lucky enough to acquire a box of documents belonging to George and Kathryn Hacker, who were Wyandotte residents throughout World War II. The Hackers were very active in education, as George worked at Roosevelt as a teacher and Kathryn was an advocate of early education. They did not live in the city very long, but their story and their artifacts along with it are certainly an interesting glimpse into Wyandotte family life before and during World War II.

George F. Hacker was born in Oceola Township in May 1903. He grew up on a farm with his parents, Benjamin and Mary, and his Uncle Theodore encouraged him to get an education. George graduated from Howell High School and attended the University of Michigan, where he was class president during his junior and senior years. It was there that he met Kathryn Willson and they married on August 23, 1926. George first taught at Battle Creek High School, where he was voted Most Popular Teacher during the 1927 school year. The Hackers had their first child, David, that same year.

On August 25, 1928, George received a job offer from Wyandotte Schools Superintendent Fred Frostic for a teaching position at the high school for \$2,000 per year (which is worth \$31,234.39 in 2021).



He accepted the job and began nine days after receiving the offer. They moved from Fort Wayne, Indiana (where Kathryn’s family was) and lived at a rental property at 2301 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. George was set to receive raises every two years, but between 1931 and 1935, he had a 10% pay cut every year. George obtained his Master’s in Education from the University of Michigan in 1930.

Naturally with so many pay decreases over the years, the Hackers had to think about their future. It was likely that George was set on completing a doctorate (though there is no documentation that he finished it) as the family took a trip to Mexico City.



Hackers in Mexico in 1935

They drove from Wyandotte to Mexico City (which would take approximately 36 hours in 2021 without traffic or breaks) in the hopes that George would use the experience for his dissertation. The family made the trip together in 1935.

George made the trip in 1936 himself, writing detailed letters to Kathryn throughout the journey. He interviewed education officials and traveled to different schools around the Mexico City area and led lectures on topics such as: “Church vs. State in Mexico,” “Socialist Schools in Mexico,” and “Mexico through the Camera’s Eye”. (He was also a self-proclaimed cinematographer.) He took many photos and videos of



Mexico Picture in 1935

everyday life and cultural sites in Mexico, and kept a journal of all the things he bought each day with the prices and his mileage.

*(continued on page 5)*

**Hacker Family Donation**

*(continued from page 4)*

The most George ever made at RHS was \$3,220 (\$50,287.36 in 2021) but with a newly bought house at 1840 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, the arrival of their second child, Deborah, two trips to Mexico for research, and sending David to an experimental high school completion program in Chicago, it was not enough for what the family needed.

The Hackers felt the effects of World War II like everyone and had to ration supplies and started their own Victory Garden with squash, zucchini, rutabaga, chard, and other vegetables. During this time, George was growing concerned about his job at RHS and often dreamed that the students would do harm to him. (Although it was documented that the students really liked him, he often found illegally-purchased alcohol in his car during Prohibition after students told him to leave his car unlocked for them.) He was also monitoring other teachers' salaries to compare to his own.

Kathryn, as mentioned earlier, was very involved in education. After David was born, she started an at-home kinder-care program at their rental house on 23<sup>rd</sup>. She earned her Masters at the University of Michigan and was employed at the Merrill Palmer Institute in Detroit. Kathryn was active in education conferences in Michigan and wrote pamphlets and magazine articles to help parents start education early in the household before children entered kindergarten age. She was also President of the Wyandotte American Association of University Women.

After the war, the Hackers moved from Wyandotte back to Fort Wayne where Kathryn's father owned an insurance agency. It was hit by a financial crisis; however, it seemed like a blessing as it provided George with a new career as an insurance agent.

Due to the gender roles at the time, Kathryn stayed at home and took care of the children and household, since after the war, it was now expected that she would not work because her husband could provide for the family solely on his income. Kathryn died in Fort Wayne in 1981, and George died in Mexico City while visiting friends in 1988.

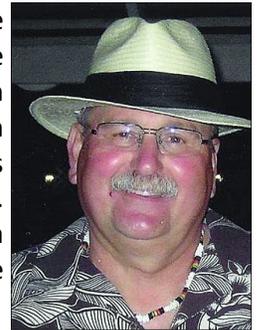
Thank you again to Deborah for donating her family's belongings to us. We at the Museum certainly find her parents' story fascinating!

Audrey Wicklander

**ROOSEVELT HIGH SCHOOL**

**Distinguished Graduate 2021 - Donald Cox**

The next inductee into the Roosevelt Distinguished Graduate Class of 2021 is Donald Cox. He was born on March 31st, 1947, in Wyandotte. He graduated from RHS in 1965 and then began his life's work in serving our country. He first served stateside as a Military Police Officer during the Vietnam War.



After serving for two years, he then joined the Wayne County Sheriff's Department, where he served for the majority of his career. He served in several capacities: the Youth Bureau, Road Patrol, a Police Academy instructor, and his favorite assignment, Motorcycle Officer. He was promoted to the rank of Sr. Detective in 1979 where he served for the remainder of his time on the force.

Don was also very involved with the Local 502 Union. He was elected President in 1980, and served in that capacity for 15 years. His leadership as Union President was sought after by many national and local unions during this time.

He had a strong connection with the youth of the area he served. He worked to help fund summer camps for the children of Samuel Gompers Elementary School and worked to provide tutoring for these students as well.

Don worked many other positions in the County. He served as Director of Administration in the Wayne County Justice Department, a Department Executive in the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office, and then returned to the Sheriff's Department where he served as Sheriff Warren Evans' Chief of Staff. Don retired from the county in 2004, but was not done from working. He worked at the DMC where he served as Director of Security and then briefly at the Detroit Landbank where he was Manager of Investigations.

Don never forgot his Wyandotte roots and lived in the city for his entire life. In talking with friends and neighbors of Don, he loved the Downriver area and especially Wyandotte. He passed away in 2014 and left an indelible public service mark on this area for over 40 years. Don always tried to give back to those in the community and that will never be forgotten.

George Purdu

Return Service Requested

**Wyandotte Historical Society**

Burns Home

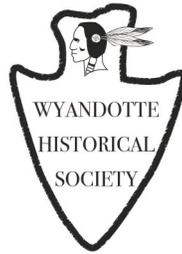
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**Website:** wyandottehistory.org



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**UPCOMING EVENTS!**

- The 60<sup>th</sup> Wyandotte Street Art Fair is scheduled for July 7, 8, 9 & 10.
- The Wyandotte Stars Annual Home Classic is scheduled for August 28.
- The Fall City Wide Garage Sale is scheduled for September 10, 11 & 12.
- The Historic Cemetery Walk is scheduled for October 15 & 16
- The Halloween Open House is scheduled for October 22.

**Wyandotte Historical Society Board of Directors**

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- \* **Past President:** George Purdu

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- \* **Museum Director:** Jesse Rose
- \* **Museum Assistant:** Audrey Wicklander