

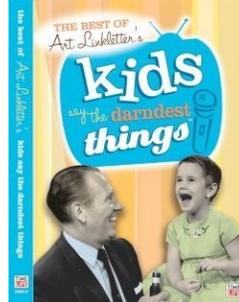
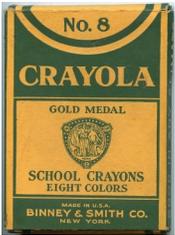
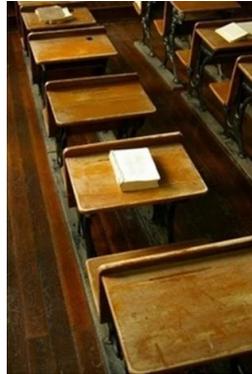
- EST. 1958 -

WYANDOTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2021

VOLUME 9



This is a "blast from the past".

Who knows what treasures you may find at the Fall City-Wide Garage Sale.

MESSAGE FROM THE PREZ

Dear Members of the Historical Society,

Each month our Newsletter Committee is hard at work, bringing you great topics and reminding us of great historic stories. This month is no exception. Who knew garage sales would make for interesting reading material?

Many people may not know that the garage sales in the U.S really got started in the Ship Yards in the early 1800s. Our ship yards would sell unclaimed cargo at a discounted rate. Later in the 19th century the sales moved to community centers and churches. Garage sales or rummage sales really began to grow within our neighborhoods in the 1950's and 1960's.

Americans host 6.5 to 9 million garage sales a year, selling used goods from our homes that become someone else's treasure.

Wyandotte is no exception. For the past several years Wyandotte residence have been able to get involved in The City Wide Garage Sale. It happens two times a year and you can register now for the last one of the year. It is fun to get involved, trying to find a special treasure for you or a loved one. You never know what you may find!

I am pleased to announce that our society is all back to normal. Starting in September our monthly program gatherings will begin. Please find dates and times for events in this newsletter and on our website at wyandottehistory.org.

Sincerely,
Christopher Stieler, President

Looking Back in September

- **September 8, 1883** - The Northern Pacific Railroad across the U.S. was completed.
- **September 9, 1776** - The United States came into existence as the Continental Congress changed the name of the new American nation from the United Colonies.
- **September 16, 1908** - General Motors was founded by entrepreneur William Crapo "Billy" Durant in Flint, Michigan.

Mark Your Calendar!

Please join us at the **Bacon Library** on Friday **September 10th** at **7:00 pm** for the first entertainment program that the Wyandotte Historical Society (WHS) has been able to host since February of 2020!

WHS board member Keith M. Steffke will present ***"On the Ways in Wyandotte - a history of the pioneer metal shipbuilding industry of Wyandotte Michigan"***. A nationally recognized maritime historian and master model maker, Steffke will present another of his award-winning programs illustrating Wyandotte's tremendous contributions to the shipbuilding industry of the Great Lakes region and abroad.



Many of Wyandotte's shipbuilding innovations were considered radical at the time, but would become the industry standard within a generation. The legacy of the city's maritime manufacturing past can still be seen today among the modern freighters that ply along our beloved Detroit River.

Using extremely rare archival materials and photographs from his family's "Steffke Memorial Maritime Collection," Keith will entertain and educate you and your guests with the recounting of numerous maritime milestones, quirky inventions, humorous anecdotes, and great tales of the Great Lakes.



So bring a guest and please join us as we celebrate Wyandotte's shipbuilding industry from 150 years ago.

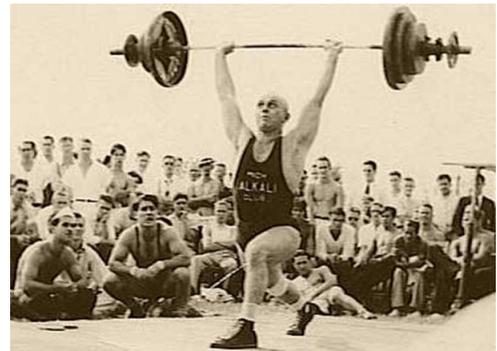
Wyandotte and The Olympics

After a one-year delay, the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo may now be over. Whether you are an avid viewer or not, the event is notable for bringing people from all corners of the world together for a common goal. These athletes represent countries, states, districts, and even small cities and towns. One such small locale, believe it or not, is Wyandotte.

While films were transitioning from silent to sound and the Roaring Twenties were coming to an end, all eyes were on Philadelphia. The year was 1928 and the United States Olympic Trials were being held in the City of Brotherly Love. At these trials, was the senior rowing crew from the city of Wyandotte, Michigan. The team may have been an unlikely entry, but Wyandotte's history in the "oldest organized sport" was very decorated. The Wyandotte boys put up a good race, but were edged out by the Yale crew by a fraction of a second – just five hundredths of a second to be exact. Yale would in turn be defeated by California who would go on to represent the United States in that year's Olympic Games in Amsterdam.

Fast-forward to the next decade. Politically and socially speaking, the 1936 Berlin Olympics were rife with issue from start to finish. American, Jesse Owens, was undoubtedly the break out star and face of the Games. Back here in Wyandotte, citizens were cheering for a man by the name of Stanley Joseph Kratkowski, a world-class weightlifter who was already an experienced Olympian, having participated in the 1932 Games in Los Angeles.

Stanley Kratkowski was born in Poland in 1912 and his family emigrated to the United States within the following year, where his father went to work as a laborer, settling in Detroit. Eventually, Stanley and his younger brother, Casimir (Cass) became representatives of the Michigan Alkali Club. Both competed, along with several other club members, at the Olympic Trials in Philadelphia in early July 1936. Cass placed fourth in the heavyweight division and Stanley was the first-place finisher in the middleweight class, securing himself a spot in the Berlin Olympics.



The ten-man weightlifting team from the United States competed with varying results. Anthony Terlazzo, who had also participated in the 1932 Games, took home gold in the featherweight class. Stanley Kratkowski lifted 337.5 kilograms (about 744 pounds) which left him around thirty-three pounds shy of the bronze medal. He ended up placing fifth overall in the middleweight class – the exact same standing as the 1932 Games.

Though Stanley Kratkowski didn't medal during the Olympic Games, he became something of a local celebrity. Just before he qualified to represent the United States during the 1936 Games, his name was listed as inspiring "Champions' Day" in Michigan, a day which celebrated heroes of the sports world in the state. Other illustrious names on the list included teams such as the Detroit Tigers and Detroit Lions, as well as individuals such as Joe Louis. Champions' Day was held on April 18, 1936 and was a gala event.

Not much seems to be known about Stanley Kratkowski's life following his weightlifting career. He remained in Detroit for some time and then ended up in Alabama. It was there, in the city of Mobile, where he passed away at the young age of fifty in 1962. He will never be forgotten in this area, and we can continue to celebrate him as we look fondly on the included picture of him in action, representing the Michigan Alkali Club as an Olympian.

-Jesse Rose, Museum Director, August 12, 2021

The Exciting Life of Bill Littlewood

The staff of the Wyandotte Museum has been catching up on some accessioning of donations and one we came across recently is pertinent to a famous Wyandotter, William H. Littlewood. The donation consists of binders of information on his life, as well as videotapes of the work he has done, and many, many pictures and newspaper articles about him. Personally, I found his story extremely fascinating and even though I grew up in Wyandotte and love Wyandotte history, as well as geography and geology, I had never heard of Bill before. So, who is Bill?

William H. Littlewood was a world-renowned oceanographer, polar explorer, and Foreign Service officer. He was born in Detroit on April 16, 1924. He grew up in Wyandotte and said in an interview in 2001: “The people generally had little interest in the world outside of Wyandotte. However, I started to collect stamps at about seven or eight. And that opened the world to me, and led me into a wonderful life of worldwide adventure and travel.” He noted that his geography and biology classes in Wyandotte schools sparked his interest even more. His dad moved from bank job to bank job around metro-Detroit, and Bill and his mother lived in Florida for a while during his grade school years before coming back to Wyandotte.

At Roosevelt High School, Bill was involved with band, drama, tennis and the Rifle and Philatelic Clubs before he graduated in June 1941 – shortly before Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. At the time of Pearl Harbor, Bill was a biology student and ROTC member at the University of Florida. However, he was still 17 and could not be drafted. Instead of going home to Wyandotte as planned for Christmas, he went on his first expedition to Tamaulipas, Mexico to study zoology for the University of Michigan. When Bill turned 18 in April 1942, he decided to enlist. Bill was assigned to the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) and went to Princeton University. This was short-lived as the ASTP was disbanded after three semesters and Bill was sent to the 98th Infantry Division in Alabama. The 98th Infantry was then sent to Hawaii to protect the islands against a possible second Japanese attack.

Considering the Japanese did not attack a second time, Bill and his company “were bored.” While bored, not able to pursue his love of science, Bill worked as the Pacific Correspondent for the *Wyandotte News Herald* – and was paid \$10 per story (equivalent to \$157 today)! For the rest of his service duration, he stayed safe in Hawaii where he met tons of actresses and models but never tried to flirt with them as he “couldn’t afford it.” When he got out, he went back to college and received his Bachelor’s from the University of Florida and Master’s in zoology from the University of Michigan. After receiving his Masters, he briefly taught biology at Champlain College in New York.

In 1950, he found a job (as a civilian) in oceanography with the Naval Oceanographic Office to use the then-new SONAR technology to map the ocean for military purposes. At the time, he was not very excited for that type of work, but he loved the zoology aspect of it. Soon after training as an apprentice, he became the Chief Oceanographer to the U.S. Navy. The Naval Oceanographic Office was based out of Suitland, MD and operated two naval ships. Still in 1950, Bill went to Trinidad, Newfoundland, Azores, Madeira, and Senegal. It was also in 1950 that Bill went on his first Arctic exploration trip on an icebreaker ship.

In 1951, he traveled to the Mediterranean and had dinner with Prince Rainier of Monaco. To the right is a photo of Prince Rainer on Bill Littlewood’s ship with Bill’s handwriting at the top: “ Prince Rainer visiting Bill Littlewood’s oceanographic ship when in Monaco.”

Bill also traveled to Tangier and Denmark where he met his future wife, Bente. They married in 1954 and she moved to the United States.

(Continued on the next page, page 5.)

*Prince Rainier of Monaco visiting
Bill Littlewood's oceanographic
ship when in Monaco*



The Exciting Life of Bill Littlewood

(Continued from page 4.)

Bill was then part of the Naval program Operation Deep Freeze (the American military’s scientific exploration of Antarctica) and welcomed a baby girl. To the right is a photo of Bill with “Wyandotte SKORTEX” during Operation Deep Freeze (1956/1957) in Staten Island, NY.



At the same time, Bill was the leader of the American Oceanographic Team in Antarctica during the International Geophysical Year (IGY), which was a massive collaboration between almost every major country in the world (except China) to peacefully conduct many physical science projects around the globe.

During the IGY, Bill identified several land formations in the Arctic, which are now called Littlewood Nunataks and Littlewood Volcanics.

Alana - A picture of 'Littlewood Nunataks' taken by someone who landed on the ice (see plane on horizon). The two shelters are 'refuge huts' if a visitor gets stranded there. The metallic one was built by a RUSSIAN Expedition some years ago.



To the left is a photo of the Littlewood Nunataks with Bill’s handwritten note to Alana Paluszewski, former library clerk at RHS who collected these documents and photos for Bill’s 2005 Distinguished Graduate award. Bill’s note to Alana reads: “Alana—a picture of the Littlewood Nunatucks taken by someone who landed on the ice (see plane on horizon). The two shacks are ‘refuge huts’ if a visitor gets stranded there. The metallic one was built by a RUSSIAN Expedition some years ago.”

After welcoming a baby boy, Bill settled down from months-long exploration trips and worked what he considered “desk jobs” across the world – which I’m sure most of us would consider the complete opposite. His roles over the years included: Science Attaché for Scandinavia, Oceanographer for NASA, Diplomatic Leader to the 2nd Oceanographic Congress in Moscow, Science Attaché in Japan, Chairman of the Washington D.C. chapter of the Explorer Club, and Associate Chairman of the Office of Science & Technology for the U.S. State Department. In the 1970s, Bill worked out of Indonesia and was a part of the project to develop the Tiltmeter, which is an instrument that predicts volcanic activity – this technology would be used during the eruption of Mount St. Helens in 1980 and helped save countless lives. Bill retired from the Foreign Service in 1981 and received the civilian equivalent ranking of a three-star general.

He went on over eighteen explorations in his life before he passed on December 21, 2012 at the age of 88 in Bethesda, MD. He is interred at Arlington National Cemetery. Bill was awarded the honor of being an RHS Distinguished Graduate in 2005, as well as earning countless other awards from various countries and international science organizations for his scientific achievements. Overall, Bill was a huge part of physical science development in the 20th century and I’m sure the City of Wyandotte is proud to have been a part of Bill’s life.

Audrey Wicklander, Museum Assistant

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Wyandotte Historical Society

Burns Home

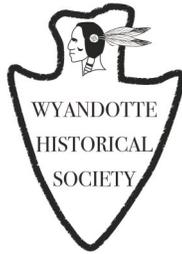
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UPCOMING EVENTS!

- WHS Program “On the Ways of Wyandotte” is scheduled for September 10
- 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.
- Festive Fridays are scheduled for December 3, 10, & 17

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