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WYANDOTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2021

VOLUME 11



The Ford-MacNichol Home Turns 125!

2021 marks the 125th anniversary of the completion of the Ford-MacNichol Home, built in 1896. Please join us as we celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Ford-MacNichol Home. The property will be open for the event on **November 6th and 7th, from 12:00 pm to 4:00pm.**

New exhibits will be on display and refreshments will be available at the Marx Home. Museum areas normally closed to visitors can be viewed and staff and volunteers will be present to provide information. Admission will be \$5.00 and all monies raised will go directly to supporting all facets of the Wyandotte Museum's needs, including preservation, events, exhibits and displays. We hope you can make it and can spread the word to others.

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MESSAGE FROM THE PREZ

Dear Members of the Historical Society,

The Thanksgiving Holiday is now upon us. Thanksgiving symbolizes the joy of loving, caring and sharing with one another. We also think of Thanksgiving amongst all mankind, and thank the Lord Almighty for all the blessings and material possessions bestowed upon us.

My Thanksgiving blessing to all of you is:

Let us be grateful to the people
Who make us happy.
They are the charming gardeners
Who make our souls blossom.

May all the good things of life be yours, not only at Thanksgiving, but throughout the coming year. So keep calm and eat lots of turkey!

Sincerely,
Christopher Stieler, President

It's Election Time!

Come and vote at the General Membership Meeting on Friday November 12 at 7:00 pm at the Bacon Library for the slate of Officers and Trustees for the upcoming year.

Following is the slate of candidates presented to and approved by the Board at their October meeting.

President:	Mary-Johna Wein
Vice-President:	Beth Labadie
Treasurer:	Ken Navarre
Secretary:	Ken Munson
Trustees:	George Gouth Kaylyn Crayne

SOCIETY PROGRAMS

After a long hiatus, we are back in business providing historical programs. In September Keith Steffke entertained the audience with stories about Wyandotte's shipbuilding industry. In October Joe Boggs talked about the Bootlegging Corridor from Toledo, through Wyandotte to Windsor. The winners were those who attended these exciting programs; the losers were those who missed them. But we are not through with our programs this year. We are happy to announce our next program:

**Wyandotte Toys & The All Metal Products Co.
Friday, November 12th, 7:00 pm
Bacon Library**

Step back in time as Dan Galeski talks about what was locally and affectionately known as the "Toy Works", the maker of metal toys in addition to toys made of wood and leather. Dan will have much to tell us as well as exhibiting some of his Wyandotte toy collection.



Ken Navarre, Treasurer

SANTA PROGRAM!

Our day with Santa and Mrs. Claus will be back this year, next month!



Santa & Mrs. Claus will be visiting the Bacon Library on Saturday, December 4th from 10:00 am to 12:30 pm and from 1:00 to 4:00 pm.

There will be stories with Mrs. Claus, visits with Santa and a fun craft as well. The Santa shop will also be open with inexpensive gifts for those special people in our lives.

Because we are still dealing with COVID, masks will be recommended and all workers will be masked.

Please join us for this fun day!

Beth Labadie, Vice President

THE FORD-MACNICHOL HOME TURNS 125!

(continued from the cover page)

A wedding present for Laura Ford and her new husband, George Pope MacNichol, the massive Queen Anne home was fit for Wyandotte royalty of the time. Built by Captain John Baptiste Ford and his son Edward Ford, for their beloved Laura (Edward's daughter), the land once boasted the grand home of former Detroit Mayor, Major John Biddle, who had served prominently during the War of 1812.

John Baptiste (J.B.) Ford began his plate glass empire in New Albany, Indiana in the late 1860s before creating the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company in that city. Hearing about the massive salt deposits in the soil in Wyandotte, he decided this would be the best location for his new venture and the Michigan Alkali Company was born. His son, Edward Ford, would start his own namesake plate glass company in Toledo, Ohio, which still exists today, having merged with the Libbey-Owens Sheet Glass Company in 1930, although under a different moniker.

The Ford-MacNichol Home is adorned with forty-three rooms, including seven bedrooms and three bathrooms. It was the height of technology at the time, possessing indoor plumbing, a coal furnace, and gas and electric lighting. The overall square footage rests at 6600. Sloping rooflines, well-defined gables, a grand wrap-around porch, asymmetrical features and the characteristic turret all signal its stature as a true Queen Anne mansion to beholden.

Across the street from the Ford-MacNichol Home is the Bacon Memorial District Library, which was originally built the following year, in 1897, and was the residence of Edward Ford before his daughter, Mary Ford and her husband, Mark Bacon became the occupants. The homes resemble one another in many ways, including the contemporary fixtures and amenities as well as the Queen Anne style. While the MacNichols left their grand home by 1905, relocating to Toledo, Ohio to be nearer to family and the plate glass business, the Bacons remained for several more years before retiring to California.

After the departure of the MacNichol family, the Drennans purchased the home. This prominent family consisted of patriarch, Jeremiah Drennan, his wife, Frances, and five daughters, Bernadette, Katherine, Mary, Marguerite and Josephine. Jeremiah Drennan held many influential roles in the City of Wyandotte and area in general, including various positions with the Eureka Brewing and Ice Company as well as a prominent attorney and probate court judge. In addition, he served on the board of many organizations such as the Wyandotte Business Men's Association, Holy Name Society of St. Patrick's Church, and the Mount Carmel Cemetery Committee. Daughters Katherine and Josephine would become teachers, Katherine even becoming an elementary school principal.



Long after Drennan daughters, Mary and Marguerite married and moved out, and several years after the passing of both Frances and Jeremiah Drennan, three daughters remained in the home into the 1960s. Stories abound from residents regarding Bernadette, Katherine and Josephine. Locals would relate tales of the old ladies who would peek through windows or the doors. Neighborhood children remember the "big scary house," thinking it was empty or tempting others to walk onto the porch. The ladies were notorious for their hermit-like status and became something of cult figures in Wyandotte at the time (along with the Hurst twins right across the street, who were their contemporaries). Eventually, Katherine and Bernadette passed away and the house went up for sale.

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THE FORD-MACNICHOL HOME TURNS 125!
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By 1967, the grand home at 2610 Biddle Avenue sat solemnly on the corner, empty as buyers



were scarce. Eventually, rumors of the funeral home across the way purchasing the property in order to turn it into a parking lot started to make their rounds. Hearing of this, Yvonne Latta (nee LeBlanc), who had been born and raised in Wyandotte, and was a passionate member of the Wyandotte Historical Society, purchased the home and began the restoration process. Yvonne, her husband and children, spent the better part of ten years re-shingling portions of the roof, fixing and replacing pipes and floors, updating the landscaping and bringing the home back into the modern age.

In 1977, the City of Wyandotte purchased the home from Yvonne Latta and furthered her efforts in an attempt to ready the property for its debut as a museum. After roughly three years of work, the newly-minted, Ford-MacNichol Home opened in 1980 to visitors. Forty-one years later, it stands as a testament to Wyandotte’s illustrious past through its residents and restorers and welcomes hundreds of guests annually.

-Jesse Rose, Museum Director

Did You Know?

The first election for the City of Wyandotte mayor and officials wasn’t in November. It was held on the first Monday of April, 1867.

**A Wyandotte Connection Through Time
 Milkins Jewelers**

While the Drennans were living at their home (now known as the Ford-MacNichol Home Museum) they were buying goods from the local stores in Wyandotte – probably milk from Johnson’s Creamery or Affholter Brothers Creamery, clothing from Minnie Armstrong’s “Ladies Shop” and Frank’s “Armstrong’s Men Clothing”, medicine from C.W. Thomas’ Drug Store (located at the current site of Total Health Foods), and jewelry from Milkins Jewelers.

Of all the businesses mentioned, you can still shop at the Milkins Jewelers, now as a Centennial Business in Wyandotte on Biddle Avenue.

Archibald Burdett (A.B.) Milkins opened his jewelry store when he was 20 years young in 1905 with \$85.00. The shop was on Biddle Avenue between Eureka and Orange Street. As his business grew, he then moved his jewelry business to the Marx Theatre building on the corner of Biddle Avenue and Sycamore in 1914. Needing even more room, he moved his business again in 1918 to the store’s present location between Maple and Sycamore.



What is interesting is that the Drennans owned property on the west side of Biddle between Maple and Sycamore and leased their properties to local businesses. The Milkins and the Drennans surely knew each other in the early 1900s. And now their great-granddaughters have met at the jewelry store.

Milkins Jewelers has continuously operated as a family business and its fourth-generation owner is Leslie Milkins-Alban.

Shop local this holiday season. Stop by 3160 Biddle Avenue; ring the doorbell, and walk through the historical doorway of Milkins Jewelers or visit them online at <https://milkinsjewelers.com>

Jane (Gies) Rasmussen

WANDERING OAKWOOD

A Connection To Affholter Brothers Creamery

On March 25, 1917 Frieda (Wohlfiel) and Edward Bartel had their first child, a girl they named Bernice Marie.

On December 15, 1918 Frieda and Edward had their second child, Edward Jr. Unfortunately Edward Jr. only lived 1 year and 4 months. He was buried in Oakwood Cemetery.

Almost a year went by and then Howard Bartel was born on March 21, 1921. Howard grew up at 842 Orchard Street with his family. It was a typical family at the time. His father worked as an iron worker and his mother stayed at home with the children.

At the age of 15, Howard started working for the Affholter Brothers Creamery. He would ride in the truck and assist the driver with deliveries. On October 25, 1938 while making deliveries Howard was in a fatal accident. The accident took place on Pardee Road in front of the old Fletcher School House.

The delivery truck driver and Howard were riding along when suddenly a pheasant appeared in front of the delivery truck. The driver swerved to avoid hitting the bird. He lost control of the delivery truck and tragically Howard was crushed beneath the truck. Howard Bartel lies buried in an unknown spot in Oakwood Cemetery along with his siblings.

Mary-Johna Wein, President
Wyandotte Oakwood Cemetery Association

**Official Anniversary of the Cornerstone at Roosevelt High School
November 1921**

This November 11th marks the 100th anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone at Roosevelt High School.. The official groundbreaking began in early 1921, and like most buildings of importance, a cornerstone was laid to commemorate the start of construction. The cornerstone simply says "A.D. 1921".

Due to the death of President Roosevelt in 1919, an invitation was sent to his son, Theodore to attend the laying of the cornerstone. Unfortunately, Mr. Roosevelt was not able to attend due to a previous engagement.

The dedication was attended by many school and city officials and from pictures of that day, Superintendent Frostic was proud of this moment.

Our own board member, Keith Steffke was able to come into possession of the trowel that was used by Jerome Bishop at the ceremony. The picture below is the trowel with the following words inscribed on it: Presented to, Jerome H Bishop Sr, Cornerstone Laying, Theodore Roosevelt High School, Nov 11 1921, Wyandotte Board of Education.



George Purdu

Affholters Brothers Creamery New Plant in 1931



**Please Welcome
Our Newest Member
Kaylyn Crayne**

Return Service Requested

Wyandotte Historical Society

Burns Home

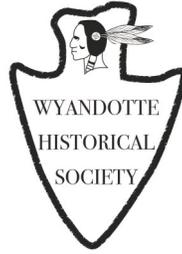
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UPCOMING EVENTS!

- **November 6**—Oakwood Cemetery Fall Clean-up 9:00 am to Noon
- **November 6 & 7**—125th Anniversary of the Ford MacNichol Home, Open House Noon to 4 pm each day
- **November 12**— Wyandotte Toys & The All Metal Product Co., 7:00 pm at the Bacon Library
- **December 3**— Festive Friday at the Ford MacNichol Museum
- **December 4**—Santa Program at the Bacon Library 10:00 am to 12:30 pm and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm
- **December 10 & 17**— Festive Fridays at the Ford MacNichol Museum

Wyandotte Historical Society Board of Directors

- * **President:** Chris Stieler
- * **Vice-President:** Beth Labadie
- * **Secretary:** Ken Munson
- * **Treasurer:** Ken Navarre
- * **Trustees:**
 - ◇ Karen Adkins
 - ◇ Dan Galeski
 - ◇ George Gouth
 - ◇ Kenneth Shepherd
 - ◇ Keith Steffke
 - ◇ Mary-Johna Wein
- * **Past President:** George Purdu

Wyandotte Cultural and Historical Commission

- * **President:** Sue Pilon
- * **Vice President:** Anne Ronco
- * **Commissioners:**
 - ◇ Nancy Bozzo
 - ◇ Eula Grooms
 - ◇ Don Gutz
 - ◇ Wallace Hayden
 - ◇ Jakki Malnar
 - ◇ Kenneth Munson
 - ◇ Kenneth Navarre
- * **Museum Director:** Jesse Rose
- * **Museum Assistant:** Audrey Wicklander