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WYANDOTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2022

VOLUME 8



SEARS DAYS TROPHIES

In June, the Wyandotte Museums received an exciting but curious donation of two trophies from the 1950s. Each, a bronzed hat inscribed on the crown, was presented during Sears Days. The donor, a notable collector of Wyandotte memorabilia, was not aware of Sears Days and wondered about the event which presented such elaborate and intriguing trophies to its victors. As can be imagined, museum staff has also been interested in finding out more and the research began shortly after donation.

Trophy one is a bronzed top hat and holds some weight. The inscription reads, "Wyandotte Winner 1950 Sears Days, We Did it For John Clark." The brim, band and crown can all be seen clearly. One wonders if the inscription was in honor of the early area settler and pioneer, John Clark, who founded Oakwood Cemetery, or John P. Clark, whose land comprises Clark Park in southwest Detroit.

(continued on page 3)

MESSAGE FROM THE PREZ

This month I am sharing a recipe with you courtesy of the Wyandotte Museums. It is a family recipe from Yvonne Latta. But first, please send us **your** family’s recipe for the historical cookbook we are compiling via:

- Email: wyandottehistory@gmail.com
- Mail:
Wyandotte Historical Society
2624 Biddle Avenue
Wyandotte, MI 48192
- Facebook.com/groups/wyn.historicalsociety

And now, here is the recipe from Yvonne Latta:

Aunt Mary’s Cake

- 2 cups of sifted flour
- 1 cup of milk
- 1 cup of sugar
- 2 eggs
- 4 teaspoons of baking powder
- 4 tablespoons of butter
- 1 teaspoon of vanilla

Sift flower and baking powder together. Cream sugar and butter together in a bowl. Add eggs, and vanilla, and beat well. Add flour and milk alternately, and mix well. Pour mixture into a greased and floured pan. Bake 30 minutes at 350 degrees.

Mary-Johna Wein, President

Pies and Disc Golf

The museum hosted the Pie and Ice Cream Social on June 26th, which included historic lawn games. One of the lawn games was disc golf putting. This game fits in well with the theme of the event but in my experience, most people don’t know what disc golf is, or how do discs/Frisbees relate to pies?

In 1871, the Frisbie Pie Company began in Bridgeport, Connecticut. The pies were sold in tins, very similar to what is available today. In the 1910s and 20s, children around the New England area would throw the tins for fun. Eventually Yale University began what could be considered the first Ultimate Frisbee league (though it was not called that at the time or similar to what is played today). The sport became increasingly popular in that area and Fred Morrison invented the plastic Frisbee in 1947. Wham-O acquired the rights to the Frisbee in 1957 and the flying discs were sold commercially across the United States. “Steady” Ed Headrick, an employee of Wham-O, improved the design of the Frisbee in 1964 so it could be faster and fly straighter in the air. Then Ultimate Frisbee officially began in 1968. “Steady” Ed became the Father of Disc Golf after officially inventing the sport in 1975 with further redesigns of the Frisbee to be even faster and smaller, and a new disc golf basket designed to stop discs mid-flight with chains and hold it in the basket’s bucket.

Discraft is the number one manufacturer in disc sports in the world and I am lucky enough to be a sponsored player of theirs. Not only do they make the best discs, but they are also headquartered in Wixom, Michigan and have been since 1979. Disc golf is an incredibly fun outdoor activity for people of all ages! Kids, adults, and seniors can all enjoy it since it is very cheap and easily accessible.

There is a great 9-hole beginner course right here in Wyandotte at Memorial Park and I recommend everyone give it a try!

Audrey Wicklander, Museum Assistant



IN LOVING MEMORY, MARLENE GOUTH

Marlene, loving wife of George Gouth, mother of Pauline and Karl and grandmother of Mike, Brian, Eri and Emi, passed away Thursday, July 7, 2022. Born May 8, 1934, Marlene is survived by her brother and three sisters.

After high school graduation Marlene was employed at the Bacon Library. While there, typing Edwina Dewindt’s handwritten notes for the forthcoming publication, “Proudly We Record,” she met her future husband. George would frequently stop at the library after a day at college. What began then was a lifetime relationship of 70 years of marriage celebrated this past May.

Marlene, frequented Historical Society programs and trips as her schedule permitted. She also, with George, co-hosted several of the annual summer pot luck picnics of the W.H.S. at their home.

We share in the sorrow of the family and extend our deepest sympathy to them. Our prayers and thoughts are with them.

Ken Navarre

SEARS DAYS TROPHIES

(continued from the cover)

The second trophy is a bronzed western hat and is much lighter. Just like the top hat, it is an actual hat that could be worn on the head, but it has been bronzed to create a trophy. The chin cord is still attached and has not been bronzed. The inscription on this award reads, "Wyandotte Winner Sears Days Round-Up 4th Period – 1954."

Wyandotte Museums staff and volunteers have yet to locate definitive information regarding an event called "Sears Days" in which trophies and awards were distributed. The fact each item has "Wyandotte Winner" inscribed leads staff to believe the event was not based in Wyandotte and could have been an event where the public gathered in a local or regional area and competed against one another. However, as there does not seem to be any information readily available, it is more likely Sears Days was a campaign whereby each individual store awarded prizes at their own events or as a reward for some sort of contest specific to that city or sales goals met by individual stores. After World War II, the company created an annual event titled, "Sears Days," offering steep sales on products, which also included item giveaways. It seems, this annual sales event occurred more frequently as time went on and was still going strong into the 1990s.

Founded in the late 1880s, Sears, Roebuck & Co. started selling items from their famed Sears Catalog in 1893. This helped them cater to those who did not live in large cities, which was a great percentage of Americans. After 1925, the company began to build stores throughout the United States and Wyandotte had its own Sears store, which closed in 1977. The Sears Catalog was discontinued in 1993. While most are likely aware you could find almost anything in a Sears store, when doing research on Sears Days, staff was surprised to find the company created some brands that are still very popular and important today. When thinking about these brands, the first one we may think of is Craftsman. But Sears also began the brands, Kenmore, Allstate Insurance and Discover Card!

Wyandotte Museums staff is interested in temporarily displaying the two trophies for the public to see. More to come on that, as well as the ongoing research into Sears Days as an event where awards were presented. If you have any information about Sears Days or the trophies, please contact staff at 734-324-7284 or museum@wyandottemi.gov.

-Jesse Rose, Museum Director



This Day in Michigan History – AUGUST 7, 1957

The Edmund Fitzgerald's keel was laid on August 7, 1957 at GLEW in River Rouge as Hull No. 301. The Fitzgerald was owned and funded by Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance after they became the first insurance company to invest in iron and mineral ores. Northwestern wanted the largest ship on the Great Lakes and after hiring GLEW, they instructed them to build her within one foot of the maximum dimensions required to fit the Saint Lawrence Seaway. Not only was she designed to be the largest freighter, but also the most luxurious for her crew and their guests... including air conditioning in the crew quarters!

Recently while looking through some maps for a research request, I found original blueprints of the SS Edmund Fitzgerald from Great Lake Engineering Works in River Rouge. The blueprints were donated by a GLEW engineer and Wyandotte resident, Lawrence Kretchmer, on November 14th, 1970.

To see the blueprints and learn more about the SS Edmund Fitzgerald:

- Go to the website: wyandottehistory.org
- Select "Document Center" and scroll down and select "Wyandotte Museum Archives".
- Click on the document, "SS Edmund Fitzgerald".

Audrey Wicklander, Museum Assistant

VICTORY GARDENS

As we get into August, a lot of people's gardens have already started to produce their first yields of fruits and vegetables. Whether you're looking to have your own fresh watermelon for a hot summer day, want to make some homemade pasta sauce with basil and tomatoes, or just want to try your hand at getting a green thumb, summer is certainly the season of gardening. I think it's also a good time to take a look at an old phenomenon in Wyandotte: victory gardens.

The idea of a victory garden likely conjures up images of backyards and schoolyards filled to the brim with vegetables in the midst of World War 2, but the concept actually has roots (no pun intended) from the first world war. When World War 1 began, the U.S. government needed to find a way to export large quantities of food to European allies to help with shortages in the continent without causing a food shortage back home. To answer this dilemma, the government began calling on regular citizens to grow their own food, framing it as a civic duty and a necessity to win the war.

These "war gardens," as they were referred to back then, were a concentrated effort between all aspects of society. The government worked with various businesses, especially seed companies, to both promote the idea of gardening as patriotic while also providing people with the supplies and instructions they would need to start growing and preserving their own food. Schoolyards, backyards, vacant lots, and practically any free space available were turned into sources of fresh produce. According to The Smithsonian Libraries, as the war came to a close, the head of the National War Garden Commission, Charles Lathrop Pack, gave war gardens a more positive name that would stick in the next world war: victory gardens.

With the entry of the United States into World War 2, the need to address the danger of food insecurity back home once again came up, now even more pressing due to the necessity of rationing food supplies to free up more for the war effort. And so, the victory garden movement returned to the lives of everyday Americans. Across the country, vegetable gardens once again sprang up, both as a way to ensure ample food supplies while also expressing patriotism and civic-mindedness, to the point where, according to The Smithsonian Gardens, around half of American families at the time had some sort of victory garden.

Wyandotte, like much of the nation, did its part in the midst of World War 2. You can find dozens of advertisements encouraging people to buy war bonds in the city's newspapers in the early 1940's, and bond drives were regularly held throughout the city. Scrap drives, paper drives, tin drives, and blood donations were carried out by the citizens of Wyandotte, all to help support the war effort. However, a crucial part of this wave of patriotism and community involvement was the growth of victory gardens.

The first step was to spread information. Newspapers such as the Wyandotte Herald offered tips for how to grow plants such as walnuts and encouraged readers to begin drying homegrown fruits and vegetables in the case of a surplus in preparation for possible future shortages of canned and stored goods. A lecture on how to garden was given at Garfield School, open to the entire public for anyone looking to get into victory gardening. The lecture, presented by Gordon Morrison of the Ferry-Morse Seed Company, covered a variety of topics from preparing the soil, to optimal times to plant, to protecting crops from disease. An overview of the information was then later published in the Wyandotte Herald on April 4th of 1942.

However, educating aspiring victory gardeners was only one part of the effort. Next up was actually supplying the necessary land and resources. The city government turned several private properties (with the permission of the owners) into spaces for community gardens, instituting a program where any citizen could apply for the usage of one of these new plots of land. The City Council also petitioned the State Land Board to keep property within the city free for usage as victory gardens and made purchases of equipment such as soil tillers, for preparing the land for growing food at no cost to applicants. Additionally, public auctions were held for building lots that could be turned into victory gardens for the time being and later be used for building homes, with an advertisement for the auctions in the Wyandotte Tribune giving the slogan of

(continued on page 5)

VICTORY GARDENS

(continued from page 4)

“victory garden sites today and home sites tomorrow.” The victory garden project was not solely a government endeavor, as the Wyandotte Garden Club sponsored the project and assisted in its establishment and maintenance.

Of course, the project wouldn’t have succeeded without the involvement of the Wyandotte citizenry, with the Wyandotte Herald saying in April of 1942 that so many had applied for the victory garden plots that “gardening is going to be the favorite sport of Wyandotte citizens this summer.” This sport would end up becoming a competition of sorts. In August of 1945, right at the war’s end, a contest was held where a group of judges would inspect citizens’ victory gardens to determine which one was the best, offering prizes to the winners.

Victory gardens maintained their popularity and prevalence amongst the citizens of Wyandotte throughout the war.



The victory gardens in Wyandotte emphasize a time of citywide collaboration, where government, newspapers, organizations, businesses, and regular citizens all worked together to help a common cause. Gardening in Wyandotte has a long history of patriotism and community associated with it. So, even though your gardening this August might not be to support any war effort, the tomatoes, beans, or whatever you choose to grow have a long history connected to them.

Clyde Granzeier

WANDERING OAKWOOD CEMETERY

The Lorenz Cross

Perhaps one of the most notable headstones in Oakwood is the Lorenz cross. It is pictured to the right with Maria Lorenz’s name engraved on the headstone on the cross.



Maria Müller was born on May 26, 1835 in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern,

Germany. Maria married Johann “John” Christian Theodor Lorenz before departing to the United States. The couple settled in Ecorse Township and started a family. John worked as a carpenter while Maria tended to the home and children.

On June 22, 1860 Maria gave birth to a daughter Wilhelmina “Minnie” Caroline Sophia Lorenz Meier. In 1863 she gave birth to another daughter, Frances and on July 3, 1866 Maria gave birth to Albert Friedrich Lorenz.

Albert was only two years old when his mother passed away on February 11, 1868. His father married shortly after Maria’s death and he had a total of fourteen children.

Albert went on to work as a laborer and in 1892 he married Miss Harriet Elizabeth Springstead. Albert worked a variety of jobs during his lifetime including laborer, hoop coiler, and firefighter. He also worked for the Michigan Alkali Company. Hattie took care of their home at 121 Chestnut Street and the children until her passing in 1918. After she died Albert moved to 860 Plum Street and he never remarried.

Albert passed away on July 1, 1935 at the age of 68. He is buried in Oakwood Cemetery alongside his wife Hattie. Albert is buried at one of the closest points to the cemetery gates, perhaps this was because he wanted to be buried close to his mother. Maria was once buried across the street at the “old cemetery”. Her headstone has been moved into Oakwood and has sat in a variety of places throughout the cemetery. Today you can visit Maria’s headstone near the Cherry Blossom tree.

Mary Johna Wein, President of WOCA

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Burns Home

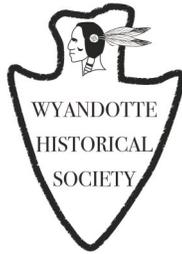
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- **Wyandotte Stars Annual Home Classic:** Saturday, August 27 at 1:00 pm at Memorial Field at 23rd St. and Pennsylvania
- **Fall City-Wide Garage Sale:** September 9, 10, 11 (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday)

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