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WYANDOTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

October 2022

VOLUME 10



A Hallowe'en Party 100 Years Ago

Dennison's Bogie Books were a popular guide to help the woman of household prepare for a Hallowe'en party. They were published from 1912 to 1935. The 1922 edition had a step-by-step guide to having a successful Hallowe'en party. Just turn the page to see what the guide said.

(continued on page 3)

MESSAGE FROM THE PREZ

This past month Father Mark Borkowski gave a wonderful presentation about Polish immigration and the formation of Polonia in Wyandotte. Wyandotte's first Polish community settled just beyond the railroad tracks around Tenth Street. Technically it was on the outskirts of Wyandotte in a little place known as New Jerusalem. New Jerusalem was not a very large area but it did become what was known as Glenwood and eventually it was annexed into Wyandotte.

As the Polish immigrated here they needed their own place to go to church and a school so their children could learn about Polish culture and continue to speak Polish. So in 1899 the cornerstone for Our Lady of the Scapular Church was laid. After the church was built the parish soon realized that it was too small for the needs of the Polish community. A new church was built so more people could attend mass and the old church stopped being used as a church. Eventually two more Polish churches would be built to meet the needs of the growing community.

Mary-Johna Wein, President

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

**Friday, November 11 at 7:00 pm
At the Marx Home, 2630 Biddle**

Local historian and award-winning author **Alana Paluszewski** will present "Wyandotte at War: A Michigan Town Fights back in WWII" based on her new book which documents the sacrifice of Wyandotte's warriors along with the challenges of our hometown heroes during WWII.

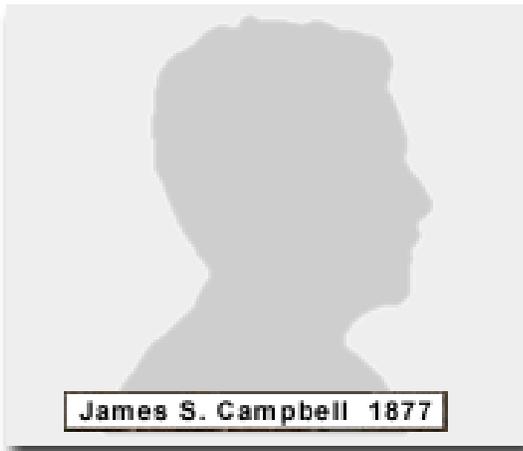


**WYANDOTTE
AT WAR**
**A MICHIGAN TOWN
FIGHTS BACK IN WWII**

Featuring the wartime correspondence
of Cpl. Frank C. Caswell, USMC



A Wyandotte Mayor is Missing!



Have you seen a picture of James S. Campbell? He was the Mayor of Wyandotte in 1877 and the proprietor of the Campbell Hotel. His picture is missing from the City of Wyandotte website of Past Mayors at:

http://wyandotte.net/government/past_mayors_of_wyandotte.php

Please let us and the City of Wyandotte know if you find a picture of Mayor James S. Campbell.

REST IN PEACE

We are sad to announce the death of longtime Historical Society member and volunteer, Rosemary Nagy Bucska. Rosemary passed away on August 16, at the age of 92.

Rosemary was active in several other community capacities, including the Zoning Board, the Recreation Commission, and the Library Board. She was also active with the Wyandotte Speed Skating Club during the 1960s and 1970s.

Rosemary is survived by her husband Charles of nearly 69 years, sons David and Thomas, daughter Mary Lynn Treppa, 7 grandchildren, 14 great-grandchildren, and 1 brother.

The Wyandotte Historical Society members extend their sincere condolences to Charlie and Family. Our prayers are with you in this time of sorrow.

Ken Navarre

A Hallowe'en Party 100 Years Ago

(continued from the cover)

An acrostic invitation is the best way to catch your guest's attention, with something like the following:

Hail, my good friend!
And how would you
Like, by the way of diversion, to
Lend a few hours
Of your life to the learning of
Wonders that only the
Eerie folk tell truly?
Even so, come to my home on the
Night of October 31st, 9 o'clock sharp.

PS – Bring a pumpkin lantern as your ticket of admission”

Making your house seem out of the ordinary will surely keep everyone on their toes. Put a large “DETOUR” sign on your front door, but have an encouraging arrow nearby that leads your guests to the cellar door.

The ghost of the butler stands at the cellar door and will receive everyone's pumpkin lanterns as a sign of good faith and then they are allowed entry into the cellar. At this point, the men and women separate into different rooms in the cellar.

The hostess will be stationed in the hallway and will receive the ladies. The hostess will be perched on a ladder, with a black drape over herself, men's shoes on the floor, and a witch's hat and mask over her face. This will make her appear as a giant witch. Using batteries attached to an electrical device, the witch will invite her guests to shake her hand – but they will receive a *shocking* surprise!



The host will be a “devil of a good fellow” under his devil costume. The men will receive their own capes and masks and will be given ten beans by the host. The ladies will join the men, and with the beans, the men will bid on who their partner will be. The winning partner will be given a wax boutonniere with their table number.

The laundry room will be an unexpected place to serve dinner! Setting up the laundry as a “pirate den” will suggest to your guests that hidden treasures will become known. The recommended menu is cold ham, potato salad, olives & cheese, sandwiches, doughnuts, and cider.

A gypsy will be stationed in the attic to read twelve fortunes for your guests throughout the evening so your guests can know what to expect this coming year. Each guest will receive their birthstone as a charm.

Weird costumes are encouraged! (Their words, not mine)

Adult games make for a marvelous evening! Such as the candle blowing game, where a woman will be blindfolded and presented with ten candles in front of her, however many lit candles remain at the end of thirty seconds – that's how many years she has left before her wedding day. There is also the apple paring game, where a woman has to pare an apple in one long piece. If the apple is pared correctly, she will throw the peel over her left shoulder and the peel will become the initial of the man she will marry. If the apple is pared incorrectly, she will never marry.



If children come to the party, a separate room will be their party room. Each child will receive a crepe paper hat and toy. Popcorn, candy, apples, and nuts can be provided for their nutrition.

So what do you think?! Would you attend this 1922 Halloween party today?

Audrey Wicklander, Museum Assistant

OCTOBER RECALLS EERIE EVENTS FROM WYANDOTTE'S PAST

It's October, and we know what that means: a month of cool weather, scary movies and spirited fun. Halloween is just around the corner and, as spooky as the holiday may be for many, some actual events in Wyandotte history are so eerie, we wonder if the time of year played a part. Read on for three tales of mystery which appeared in the Wyandotte Herald around Halloween 1935.

Albert Hammer was a tailor in Wyandotte from the time he arrived from Germany in 1912, until his early demise. He married his wife, Frieda around 1910 and fathered three children. Initially residing on Biddle Avenue, by 1930, the family was living in a modest home on Spruce. By all accounts, circumstances for the Hammer family were positive. But, on October 19, 1935, Mr. Hammer left his home without having breakfast; made his way to his tailor shop at 116 Oak (currently The Dotte Pub), and hanged himself. The Wyandotte Herald article at the time speculated worry over financial woes was what drove the 49-year-old tailor to take his own life. One can only wonder what precipitated such an event, which likely shocked Hammer's family and neighbors and caused a lifelong tragedy for his son-in-law who found the body hanging in the shop from light cords.

The unfortunate death of Albert Hammer left an emotional fog over the community. But an actual fog rolled in over the Detroit River around this time and struck havoc to lake travel. Over a two-day period, heavy blankets of dense fog caused strife to at least eighteen ships. Many could not traverse the cooling waters of the river and were halted midstream. Several others, such as the Wyandotte-built Pioneer, ran aground in the main channel. The weather event, blamed on an oncoming cool wave, felled ships stretching from Wyandotte south to the mouth of Lake Erie and over to the Canadian side of the water. While all travel was stopped, things finally went back to normal on the third day.

Cooling temperatures may have caused the fog that settled over the Detroit River that October. But an intense heat could be blamed for the sad events of our final tale. William Pinkert, 29, was an employee at the All Metal Products Co. (Wyandotte Toys) and had been born and raised in Germany. By October 1935, he had been married and divorced once and was separated from his second wife, with whom he had a six-month-old daughter. Ten years William's senior, Hazel Gordon was born in Indiana and was a housewife residing at 113 Cedar in Wyandotte. Hazel had been married 22 years and had three teenage children. Her husband was a conductor for the railroad. At some point, William and Hazel met and fell in love with one another. An affair was rumored and is believed to be the reason behind their tragic demise. On October 24, 1935, the bodies of both were found in a wrecked automobile in Flat Rock. Each had been killed by a single gunshot wound in what appeared to be a murder-suicide. Notes found in their possession added truth to rumors of the affair. While we may never know the true reasons behind such a sad and gruesome end, Hazel's story is further compounded by the premature death of her youngest daughter less than five years later. June Gordon Block succumbed to double pneumonia exacerbated by pregnancy, two months after her twentieth birthday.

These are mysteries of lost lives due to sadness or the inability to make life changes for fear of anything from destitution to scandal, or the loss of loved ones, or failure to provide. And it's strange thinking about a blanket of fog covering a small town at a time when residents of all ages were dressing up in horrific garb and parading around the city.

Halloween is a time for tricks and treats, but as Wyandotte's past reveals, reality can be much eerier than fiction.

Jesse Rose, Museum Director

The Wyandotte Halloween Parade

Fall is upon us, and Halloween will be here soon enough. As the weather starts to cool down and the trees start to turn deep shades of red, a lot of people are likely making plans for this October. Everyone has their own traditions for Halloween. Maybe you're thinking of a costume to wear, planning a trip to the nearest apple orchard, or looking forward to this year's Wyandotte Cemetery Walk. However, there is one tradition going back to the 1930's that I think would be fun to bring back: the Wyandotte Halloween Parade.

Originally known as a mardi-gras celebration, the Wyandotte Halloween Parade was created in 1933 as a way to reduce vandalism around Halloween by giving young people an event to look forward to. It seems that Wyandotte had a history of mischief during Halloween in earlier times, with acts ranging from soaping windows to tossing garbage onto porches to, in one instance, chucking (or in this case, shucking) an entire corn stalk through someone's window. Needless to say, there was definitely an interest by at least some members of the community to find an alternative arrangement for All Hallows' Eve.

Sponsored by the Recreation Commission, this celebration was a massive undertaking with multiple smaller events within. The biggest, of course, was the parade itself. Beginning at Roosevelt High School and spearheaded by the school's marching band, both children and adults would put on their costumes and march down Eureka to Biddle to Vinewood before finally ending at Bishop Park. There, the rest of the festivities would begin. These included a concert performed by local bands, apples and other treats for the parade's participants, and, most importantly, a costume contest.

This contest was one of the highlights of Halloween, with hundreds of children competing to see who could win the prizes for the best costumes. Categories for the contest included individual competitions for the prettiest, most original, and most comical as well as competitions between local schools for the largest number of costumed participants or the best group costumes. Contestants had to get creative, and they certainly met the challenge, as one of the first winners of the costume contest brought a live chicken with him to enhance his outfit. The prizes themselves were donated by the Wyandotte Merchant Association and included items like tennis rackets, a croquet set, rollers skates, and boxing gloves. Once the winners had been selected and prizes were given out, the night was ended with a massive Halloween dance in the streets.

The Wyandotte Halloween parade was a resounding success, with roughly six thousand attending the first one back in 1933. Additionally, while other Downriver communities still struggled with the usual Halloween chaos, Wyandotte's resident pranksters seemed to have been far too caught up in the festivities to get up to their usual tricks. On the night of the Halloween parade, reports of vandalism in Wyandotte were virtually nonexistent. The event ended up going strong for decades, with newspapers in 1959 still providing info about what the yearly Halloween celebration would be like. It also seems like Wyandotte inspired other nearby communities to put on similar festivities after the success of the first event. Notably, it seems like interest in the celebration not only remained steady (hundreds to thousands joined the party each year) but also expanded outwards. The Greyhound company provided transportation both to and from the Halloween celebration for any nearby Downriver schools.

While nowadays our Halloweens don't have the same level of pranks, we also sadly don't have these same city-wide Halloween celebrations full of parades, music, dancing, and costumes. Perhaps, with their original goal achieved, they simply saw fit to put the whole thing to rest. Now, to those of you readers who are as sad about this loss as I am, I'm not saying we bring back the mischief in hopes of restarting the celebration...but wouldn't it be fun to have a parade again? Happy Halloween everyone!



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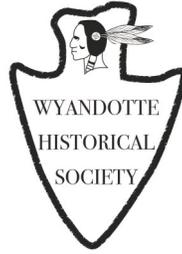
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- **October 21, Friday from 5:00 to 8:00 pm** —Hallowe'en Open House at the Ford MacNichol Museum, 2610 Biddle Avenue
- **November 11, Friday at 7:00 pm**— Alana Paluszewski presents "Wyandotte at War: A Michigan Town Fights back in WWII" at the Marx Home, 2630 Biddle Avenue
- **December 2, 9, and 16 from 5:00 to 8:00 pm** —Festive Fridays at the Ford MacNichol Museum, 2610 Biddle Avenue

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