

- EST. 1958 -

WYANDOTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 12



A NORMAN ROCKWELL CHRISTMAS

Message from the Prez

I would like to take the time to wish you all a very Merry Christmas! As we get ready to end 2022, try to remember “the magic of Christmas never ends and it’s greatest of gifts are family and friends”. Years ago I received a card with that quote and decided that I would no longer buy gifts for my niece and nephews; instead the kids are given the gift of an experience. Over the years we have done a variety of things but the true gift is getting to spend time with one another. This holiday season surround yourself with people that you love and enjoy the holiday season together.

Merry Christmas!

Wandering Oakwood

Lewis Crist was born in Warren County Pennsylvania circa 1839. When Lewis was 22 years old he enlisted in Company D of the 83rd Pennsylvania infantry. On August 26, 1861, he mustered in but on June 27, 1862, he was injured in battle at Gaines’ Mill, Virginia. On June 15, 1863, Lewis was discharged due to his injuries. After his discharge, Lewis lived near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania before reenlisting in Company M of the 21st Pennsylvania Cavalry on February 8, 1864. Lewis would serve less than six months until he was admitted to the hospital on August 4, 1864 and would be considered “unfit” for further field duty.

After his discharge Lewis came to Wyandotte and worked at the Michigan Alkali Company. Unfortunately, in August 1895, Lewis was painting a tank in the employ of the Alkali Company and fell off of a ladder. The injuries were so severe that Lewis died from injuries on Aug 24, 1895. For more than fifty years Lewis’s headstone has been missing in Oakwood. Within the next 60 days Lewis will receive a new military issued headstone and it will sit where the original stone once was.

GOOD BYE GOOD FRIEND



It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of our friend of 50 years and friend to so many. GEORGE GOUTH passed very quietly on November 6th , following a stroke three weeks prior.

There will be a celebration of George’s life in our next edition.

WHAT’S NEW

The Society Historic Plaque Committee is nearing completion on a new plaque program. Its purpose is to promote awareness and appreciation of homes and buildings that contribute to our heritage.

It will be called the Wyandotte Centennial Plaque. Criteria for application is:

1. Age of building – 100 years minimum.
2. Structure must be in good state and condition.
3. Cost: Current projected cost \$25 paid by applicant.

The plaque will have on it - Historic Landmark, Construction date and Wyandotte Historical Society.

If possible, the plaque should be displayed on the exterior where it can be easily visible.

Currently we are awaiting a sample of the plaque to present the program to the Society Board for approval.

We are also pleased to announce that we have 2 applicants already. Our goal is to be operational by the first of the new year.

Ken Navarre

The 2022 Cemetery Walk

As the most recent edition to the Wyandotte Museums' staff and one of the newest members of the annual Cemetery Walk volunteer group, by the time the weekend had ended, I came to understand why this particular event plays such a significant role in the museums seasonal calendar.

The devotion displayed by the volunteers who helped make this event a success and the citizens of Wyandotte was inspiring. Though, I was unable to attend the cemetery walkthrough, I was still able to hear the stories of each of the chosen citizens that would be portrayed. Each story was thoroughly researched and provided a unique viewpoint of Wyandotte's legacy spanning well over a century.

This event was an immense undertaking that required meticulous preparation and constant communication between the events in the Ford-MacNichol Home, cemetery, and the Marx Home. In my position as campus coordinator, I helped oversee the movement of guests around the campus and offered a hand to the volunteers at both houses. I also served as the eyes and ears of museums staff while they were at the cemetery. In this role, I had the privilege of witnessing the reactions to the work that had gone into preparing the Ford-MacNichol Home, and more importantly, hearing the comments and conversations of our guests. While this event required the aid of countless individuals, knowing that the public is still enthralled enough each year to come back provides ample motivation for all involved.

As I stated last month in my brief bio, the Wyandotte Museums is an institution that strives to serve the public and provide a place where everyone who volunteers and visits feels like family. It serves as a venue where local history is stored, told, and preserved by a close-knit group of employees and volunteers. This group understands the significance of promoting and demonstrating how the community's shared past still effects the present. After witnessing the steadfast and unwavering devotion that everyone put into this event, I can say without a doubt that this is true.

by Brian Branham



This holiday season you can give the gift of a WHS membership. With the purchase of the membership the recipient will receive a monthly newsletter, discount in the gift shop, exclusive membership on ticketed society events and most importantly you will also help to support our beloved society.



Don't forget to visit the museum during their Festive Fridays—December 2, 9, and 16—from 5-9 p.m. All the rooms will be decorated and the beautiful crystal tree will again be in the parlor. There will be games for the kids and hot cocoa and cookies.

All holiday events including the Santa Program are free of charge.

Servants at Christmastime

I have quite an interest in Victorian women and especially working-class Victorian women and as some of you may know, I have completed my final thesis project for my Master's degree around new interpretation surrounding the servants that were in the Ford-MacNichol Home in the year 1900. Something I came across in my research was that the holidays were a particularly busy time for servants and they may have gone from working 5/6 days a week and 12-15 hours per day to working 7 days a week around the clock during the holiday season to keep up with their employer's busy lifestyle. None of the following information is specific to the Ford-MacNichol Home since we do not have any first-hand accounts from the family or the servants on what they did, but stories from women that were exactly like them help us to approximate what the Ford-MacNichol servants did and how they could have been treated. To preface, the Ford-MacNichol Home had three female servants in 1900: a cook, a housekeeper, and a children's nurse.



During the duration of the year, live-in servants could visit family on their days off but, since there were no days off during the holiday season, it was extremely common that servants could not see their families between Christmas and New Year's. Even through 'normal' times of the year, it was not allowed for the servant's families to come to their employer's house for a visit, so the family coming by the home during Christmas week was unheard of. According to many home journals, it was quite common for employers to give their household employees either extra pay or a gift. One historic house museum in Chicago has documentation that their household staff in 1894 made between \$5 to \$10 more during the month of December (between \$172 to \$354 in 2022). According to the 1892 Ladies Home Journal, good gifts for a servant could be a new outfit or slippers, a small desk or bookshelf, a fresh set of linens or a soft pillow for their bed, or a pretty basket. It was noted that gifts should be given at Christmas to servants to end the year on a good note between employer and employee but the gift should be work-related and not personalized.

It was somewhat common in very large mansions (much larger than the Ford-MacNichol Home) to hold a "Servants' Ball," which would normally take place between Christmas and New Year and usually consisted of a Christmas dinner and gift exchange for all staff. This is the most lavish of examples; because it was also somewhat common for household staff to not receive any extra pay, gift, or dinner from their employer at all. The servants could have also worked many extra hours with no extra pay because employers said (in modern terms), "you knew what you were signing up for" and "at least you have a job." Most households were somewhere in the middle of those two examples.



To prepare for the holidays, households with servants very commonly had the servants decorate. Sometimes, the family would decorate the tree together without their servants. Decorating was not done weeks in advance like we do today, but instead usually a day or two before the holiday. In a wealthy Victorian household, it was normal to have a tree with candles as well as glass, paper, and tin ornaments and a US flag or velvet fabric as a skirt, stockings hanging from a fireplace, cards propped on the windows and tables, and greenery, garland, bows, and wreaths throughout the house (only where guests could see them). Other than decorating, servants had to be on hand to take care of the children, cook the meals, and handle any parties that may have been at the house. They may have even helped pick out

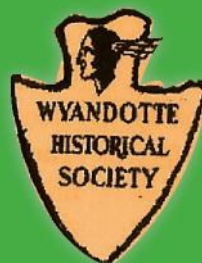
the gifts for the children! We will never know what the servants in the Ford-MacNichol Home did exactly during the holidays, but it's very likely they had a decent Christmas with their employed family.

Wyandotte Historical Society
Presents
Santa and Mrs. Claus



Saturday, December 3
Bacon Memorial Library

Story time with Mrs. Claus
Tell Santa your wish



Visit Santa's Secret Shop
Do a fun craft

10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
and 1 to 4 p.m.

Return Service Requested

Wyandotte Historical Society

Burns Home

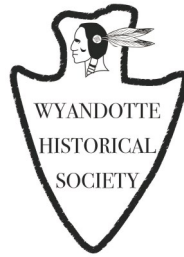
2624 Biddle Ave.

Wyandotte, MI 48192-5208

Phone: (734) 324-7299

Email: wyandottehistory@gmail.com

Website: wyandottehistory.org



Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit #106
Wyandotte, MI 48192

Address Label



- **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
- **December 2, Friday from 5:00 to 8:00 pm** —Festive Friday at the Ford MacNichol Museum, 2610 Biddle
- **December 3, Saturday 10:00 am to 12:30pm and 1:00 to 4:00pm**—Santa Program at the Bacon Library
- **December 9 and 16 from 5:00 to 8:00 pm** —Festive Fridays at the Ford MacNichol Museum, 2610 Biddle

Wyandotte Historical Society Board of Directors

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

Wyandotte Cultural and Historical Commission

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