

- EST. 1958 -

WYANDOTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

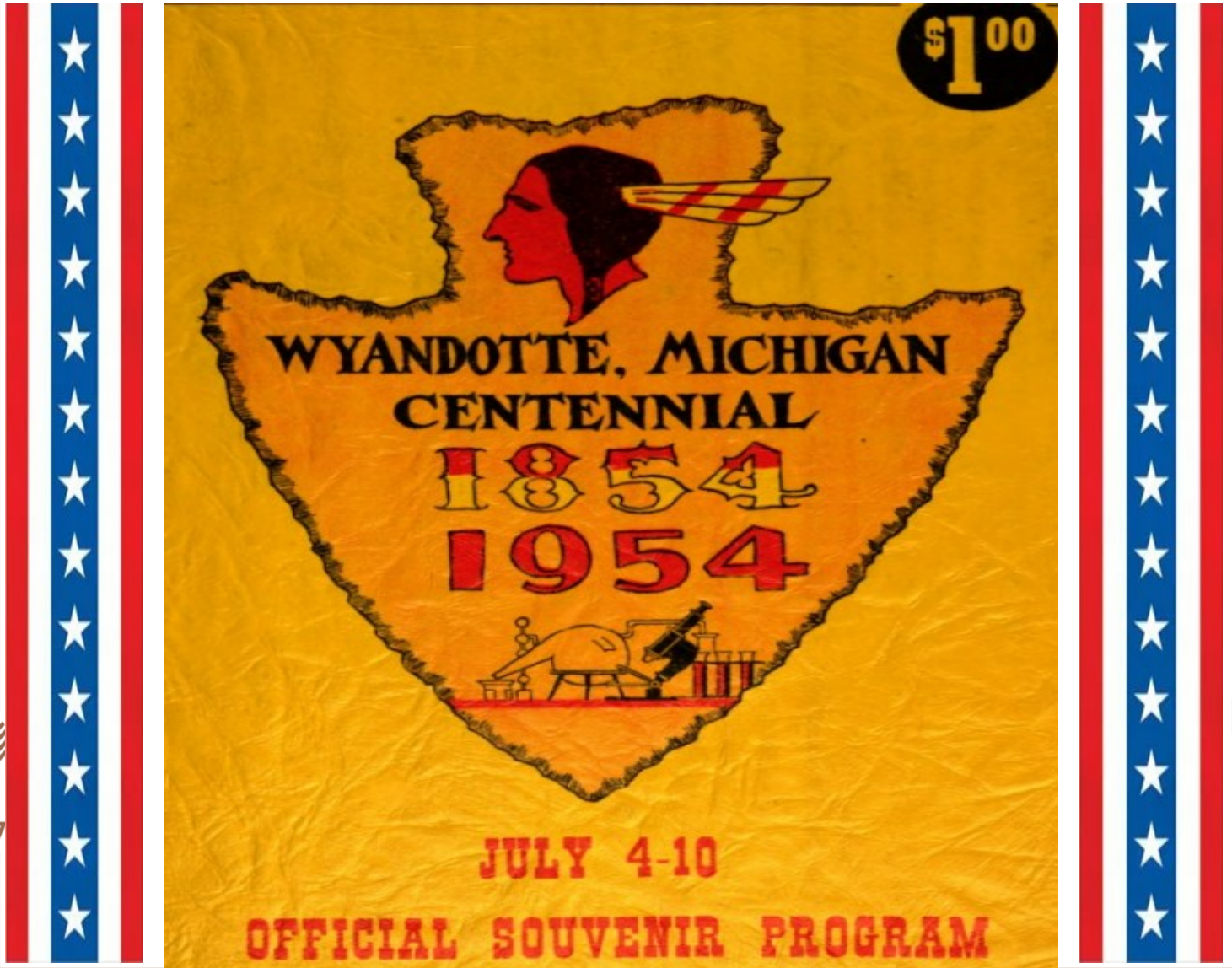
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

JULY 2023

VOLUME 7



Wyandotte's July 1954 Centennial Celebration was a very big event in the city!



From the Prez-

Over the years people have asked me, how did I get interested in local history? The simple answer is 150 Spruce Street. When I was a student at Roosevelt, I had to take a current events class. One of the things we did weekly was look at the local newspapers and see what was happening around us. I remember grabbing a copy of the News Herald, reading the headline "WYANDOTTE: Controversial Victorian house likely to be demolished". The thought of losing this magnificent piece of history was heartbreaking.

I wanted to learn everything that I could about this home in hopes that the city would decide to keep this gem, after all Wyandotte is a city that takes pride in being "A Historic Waterfront Community". The first task was to learn about who lived in 150 Spruce and the significance of the residence.

Antoine Labadie was born on December 1, 1838, in Ecorse Township, Michigan. He was the son of Felicity Rouleau and Antoine Labadie. As a child Antoine would help around the family farm, eventually he too would be a local farmer. On September 16, 1876, Antoine married Phyllis Beaubien and the couple started a family together. They built their family home at the corner of Biddle & Antoine Street. The same home that was once 150 Spruce Street.

Mr. Labadie worked as a local farmer for most of his life, but he also worked as a contractor, held a variety of township appointed positions and was treasurer of school district number 1 for over 40 years. Antoine was also responsible for donating a generous sum of money and some of the land from his family farm to help build a new church in Wyandotte. In 1914 St. Stanislaus Kostka was built at the corner of Antoine and McKinley Street.

Thirteen years after the new church was built, Antoine passed away. He died on November 7, 1927, at the age of 88. Today you can visit the grave site of Antoine and his family in Mt. Carmel Cemetery.

You may be wondering what happened to 150 Spruce? Well, the beautiful Victorian house was moved to the corner of third and maple street.

~Mary-Johna Wein



MORE OF WYANDOTTE'S HISTORIC HOMES...



Babcock-Smith Home

Years ago, someone told me about a house that was moved to the beautiful historic block of Biddle Avenue between Cedar and Spruce. Charles F. Babcock was born on February 17, 1852, in Napolin Ohio. He was the son of Mariah Everts and David Babcock. By 1870, the Babcock family moved from Ohio to Wyandotte. According to the 1870 census, Charles was a student in Wyandotte in 1870. On December 9, 1878, Charles married Isabella J. Eby. The couple quickly started a family and moved into a beautiful home they had built, 105 Vine Street. The Wyandotte Herald refers to Charles as "the best-preserved man in Wyandotte". Charles spent most of his life working at the Wyandotte Savings Bank and he also served as a secretary for the board of education. Charles was also considered to be very "prominent in business and in public affairs". On May 27, 1912, Charles passed away at the age of 60. Shortly after his passing, the Babcock family sold the house to Robert William Smith. Mr. Smith was born on May 12, 1875, he was the son of Elizabeth Henabley and John Smith Jr. Robert worked as a draughtsman for Harlan and Hollingsworth. The company was well known for manufacturing railroad cars and ships. Due to his job, Robert would have to work in Detroit and in Wilmington, Delaware. On July 15, 1900, Robert married Miss. Gertrude Campbell of Detroit. By 1910, Robert took a job working as an engineer for the Michigan Alkali company. It is believed that Robert designed the first self-unloading ship to sail in the Great Lakes, he named it Wyandotte. Robert would continue to work for the Alkali company for more than thirty years. In that time, Robert and Gertrude raised two children: Robert Jr. and Elizabeth. After the passing of Gertrude and Robert, Elizabeth continued to live in the home. Elizabeth worked as a local teacher and a counselor in Wyandotte and in 1989, she passed away. After the passing of Elizabeth, the Babcock-Smith home was moved to its permanent location at 2122 Biddle Avenue. ***Pic of this beautiful historic home below, left.***



Thank You !

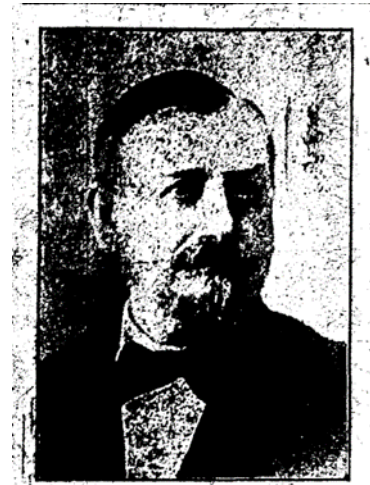
A huge thank you to all of our volunteers and members who attended the June 11th picnic. It was not only a huge success, but a tasty meal, wonderful conversation, and the biggest picnic crowd we have ever had!

~Josh Halasy



C.W. Thomas home

Over the years many old homes in Wyandotte have been demolished. While looking for information on the Babcock-Smith home, I stumbled upon this photograph of the home that once stood in its place. Somewhere in time, the second home in the photograph was lost to the wrecking ball. The home once belonged to C.W. Thomas and his family. When Charles Thomas was eighteen years old, he left Wales and came over to America. In 1860, Charles came to Wyandotte and worked as a grocer. After living in Wyandotte for three years, he noticed the town was missing something, a drug store. In 1863, Charles opened the first drug store in Wyandotte and became coined as Wyandotte's first druggist. In 1867, Charles married Miss. Elizabeth Thon, together they had five children. Charles worked very hard to make it in Wyandotte. Not only was he the first druggist in town but he also worked at the Wyandotte Savings Bank, was a member of the board of education, was the first to take a Masonic degree in Wyandotte, and was a trustee/treasurer of the Presbyterian Church. After years of hard work, the Thomas's dream home was finished in 1900. Charles really didn't get the chance to enjoy the home that he worked so hard for because on June 30, 1902, Charles passed away at the age of 65.



CHARLES W. THOMAS, SR.,
 who expired of heart trouble Monday afternoon.

Photo of Charles from the July 4, 1902 News-Herald.



You are cordially invited

to attend the 65th anniversary celebration of the Wyandotte Historical Society!

Saturday, September 9, 2023 — Bentley Banquet Center — 646 Biddle Avenue — Wyandotte, Michigan

Tickets \$40 a person or \$75 a couple

Checks payable to the Wyandotte Historical Society & can be mailed to 2624 Biddle Ave, Wyandotte, MI 48192

Reservations must be made in advance and tickets will be picked up at the door.

BOB-LO Island Adventure

I was so fortunate to grow up in the Downriver Area during the 1960's. Summer days seemed endless; we had Saturday afternoon matinees at the Wyandotte Theatre, enjoyed Coke at Neisner's Dime Store luncheonette counter, 4th of July fireworks and parade, and so much more: but the greatest thing was a day trip to Bob-Lo Island.

My family didn't go every summer, but when we did it was a great adventure. My mom would be up late the night before frying up a truckload of chicken, my grandma would make her outta-this-world potato salad, along with a million other sides, snacks, treats and a large thermos full of lemonade. Along with my grandma, aunts and cousins, we would arrive at the Bob-Lo dock at Bishop Park for the 10:00 am cruise. Dad would buy our boat tickets from a little wooden booth and we'd wait in line to board. Once on the boat, we would be greeted by "Captain Bob-Lo" and my sister Kathy and I would race to the top deck to have a better view. I think Bob-Lo island is 18 miles from Wyandotte, I can't remember how long it took us to get there, but it was a pleasure cruise!

Upon turning the last corner in the river coming towards the island, you could see the tops of the roller coasters, ferris wheels, and all the other tall rides. SO EXCITING!!! Once on shore, we'd first head to the picnic area and set up our table, which we'd call our home base, then off to the park my sisters and I would run! Dad would come with us; he always said it was because he didn't want us to get lost, but we knew he enjoyed the roller coasters more than us! Dad would purchase ride tickets for us, back then, you had to purchase tickets separately. Each ride took 2-3 tickets to get on (not like today's theme parks where you pay one price). One big downfall: once you ran out of money for tickets, you were done for the day. We never went to the midway or the arcade games; dad said they were a waste of money, and we'd never win anything anyway!

Oh, the rides! The Carousel, bumper, cars, scrambler, tilt-a-whirl, ferris wheels, roller coasters, jet rockets that went up in the air and you shot ray guns at the kid behind you – and so many more to choose from! There was the mini-railroad train that went around the entire island and "kiddie land," but my favorite ride was the Caterpillar. It was a typical roller coaster, but towards the end of the ride, the cars would be covered with a tarp -similar to a convertible car and for the remainder of the ride you'd be completely in the dark! Talk about scary fun!

Time to head back to home base to have lunch, rest and then head back to complete our mission. Well, as the day wore on, of course, the money would run out. I think my dad just told us this so we wouldn't miss the boat ride back to Wyandotte! On the cruise back home, there would be a live band playing and couples would be dancing, sometimes my parents included. We'd be tired and sunburned but the memories last forever! Bob-Lo opened in 1898 and closed its doors on September 30, 1993. Most of the rides were sold to other amusement parks and some items are on display at the Detroit Historical Museum.

—Karen Ramirez



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Wyandotte Historical Society

Burns Home

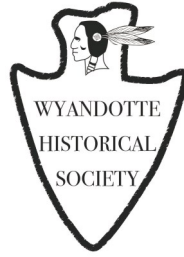
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Wyandotte, MI 48192-5208

Phone: (734) 324-7299

Email: wyandottehistory@gmail.com

Website: wyandottehistory.org



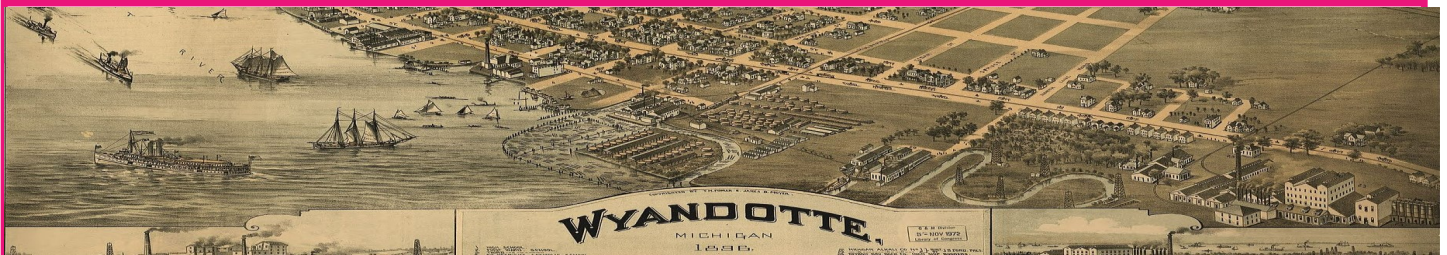
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