

- EST. 1958 -

# WYANDOTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2023

VOLUME 8

**BLOSSOM QUEEN** REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

FAMOUS MICHIGAN FRUITS

BENTON HARBOR • COLOMA • WATERVLIET • MILBURN • Sodus

PRODUCE OF U.S.A.

PACKED BY WATERVLIET FRUIT EXCHANGE WATERVLIET, MICHIGAN

The image is a vintage fruit label for 'Blossom Queen'. It features a central illustration of a woman's face with a crown of pink blossoms. To the left are two red apples, and to the right are three peaches. The background is dark blue. Text includes 'BLOSSOM QUEEN' in large yellow letters, 'REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.' in small white letters, 'FAMOUS MICHIGAN FRUITS' in a yellow banner, a list of Michigan locations (BENTON HARBOR, COLOMA, WATERVLIET, MILBURN, Sodus) in white, 'PRODUCE OF U.S.A.' in white, and 'PACKED BY WATERVLIET FRUIT EXCHANGE WATERVLIET, MICHIGAN' at the bottom.

*Late Summer and early Autumn are great times to pick fresh, juicy Michigan fruit. Michigan orchards are full of peaches in August, then September & October bring tons of apples, pumpkins, and more!*



*YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO.....*

**THE WYANDOTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S  
65TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION!**

*When:* SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2023 at 5 PM

*Where:* THE BENTLEY BANQUET HALL (646 Biddle Ave, Wyandotte)

*Tickets:* \$40 EACH or \$75 FOR A PAIR

*Get ready for a wonderful evening of food, laughs, and reminiscing.*

*Hope to see you all there!*



## FROM THE PREZ-

This year, the Wyandotte Historical Society is celebrating their 65th anniversary. I started volunteering at the museum thirteen years ago, right after I graduated from Roosevelt. In the past thirteen years I have been honored to meet so many wonderful people, some whom I even consider as family. We have so many amazing volunteers and I truly cherish all of you. On Saturday September 9, 2023, at 5 pm we will be celebrating our 65th anniversary at the Bently Banquet Hall. Tickets are \$40 each or \$75 a pair. I truly hope to see all of you there as we celebrate this anniversary. Have a wonderful month! ~Mary-Johna Wein

\*\*\*\*\*

## WANDERING OAKWOOD...

Throughout the museum, you can find a wide variety of pictures on the walls. I often wonder who the people in the photos are or what they did in their lives. One of the pictures on the third floor is the graduating class of 1896. In the top left is Issac Wilber Strong. Issac was born in the family home at 172 Chestnut Street on Tuesday December 18, 1876, son of Elizabeth Baxter and Issac Fuller Strong. In August 1879, Issac's father passed away leaving behind a wife and two children.

After the passing of Mr. Strong, Elizabeth took in several boarders. The 1880 census lists the following people living at 172 Chestnut...Elizabeth (45), Geneva (22) and Issac (3) along with their servant Minnie Evans (17) and 6 boarders: Albert Guignes, William Preston, Ralph Devereux, Bernard Hopkins, Richard Round and Edward Garret.

In 1896 Issac graduated from Wyandotte High school, that same year his mother Elizabeth would pass away on November 26th at the age of 65.

After the passing of both parents Issac went on to become a chemist but unfortunately, he would come down with Bright's disease. On September 29, 1899, Issac died at the age of twenty-two. He is buried somewhere in Oakwood Cemetery, location unknown.



## TOURING THE WYANDOTTE MUSEUMS CAMPUS – A SERIES BY JESSE ROSE

### *The Music Room Pianos*

Welcome to our first story in a series highlighting archives, artifacts, and structural pieces around the campus of the Wyandotte Museums. These will include the three buildings on the main lot: the Ford-MacNichol Home, Burns Home, and Marx Home. For this pilot story, we would like to share the intriguing provenance of the two pianos which reside in the Music Room of the Ford-MacNichol Home.

### **\*\*\*Baby Grand Piano – South Wall along the Windows\*\*\***

The Wyandotte Museums' iconic baby grand piano was donated in late 1987 by Fred and Judy May. I had the exciting opportunity to talk with Judy recently about the piece as I had many questions and was doing some research for a guest. She passed along the interesting past of an instrument which traveled many miles before resting in the Ford-MacNichol Home in Wyandotte.

Although our donation records state the piano dates from 1916, staff believes it to be from roughly a decade later. A Shoninger piece, the founder of the company, Bernard Shoninger, opened shop in 1850 in Woodbridge, CT, moving to New Haven following a devastating fire in 1865. Organs and melodeons (a small style of organ) were the original instruments manufactured in the factory, but by the 1890s, the increase in popularity of pianos signaled a shift to the exclusive creation of those instruments and Shoninger halted production of organs. After Bernard passed away in 1910, his son Simon became the head of B. Shoninger & Co., holding this position until he died in 1921. Simon's son, Alexander led the company through most of the 1920s, a decade which welcomed a new location: New York City. By 1930, the piano company was sold to a larger conglomerate and the name plate was retired around 1965. The inclusion of New York on the piano tells staff it likely dates from the 1920s.

The Shoninger baby grand piano originally belonged to John Van Wazer and his family. Van Wazer was a public school teacher in Chicago and the family owned property on Drummond Island in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. John and his wife, Florence, had one child, a son, John Jr. The junior Van Wazer attended Harvard University and had an illustrious career as a chemist following graduation. He worked for many chemical companies before transitioning to teaching, becoming a chemistry professor at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee. The Mays purchased the Van Wazer home on Drummond Island and brought the piano to Grosse Ile when they moved to that city. At the time of its donation, it had never lived in Wyandotte.

### **\*\*\*Upright Piano – East Wall opposite the Fireplace\*\*\***

The beautifully-carved upright piano dates from the 1890s. It was donated over sixty years ago by Mrs. Hilda Haynes, a Wyandotte resident. The maker of the instrument was the Berlin Piano Company, which was founded in Berlin, Ontario, Canada in 1890 by a group of local businessmen. The company was sold twice before its name was dropped from the piano line in 1924.

Mrs. Haynes and her husband, Clifford, were married in 1920. They eventually purchased a home on Van Alstyne which had been owned by the O'Brien family. The patriarch, Clarence, was a notable physician and surgeon in Wyandotte. He was born and raised in Nova Scotia, Canada, where he also received his medical license. Emigrating to Michigan in 1904, he quickly became a popular doctor in our city. Unfortunately, a heart ailment cut his life short at the age of forty-seven, in 1923. When the Haynes' purchased his home over a decade later, the piano was still inside.

### *Interesting Tidbits*

~Grand pianos are roughly 6-7 feet in length, while baby grands are under 6 feet long. Concert grand pianos are another version, and are the largest of all, at over seven feet.

~Hilda Haynes, donor of the upright piano, passed away in 2001 at the age of 98. This was 80 years after she was married to her husband (who died in 1959).

~Museum volunteer and docent, Bruce Slinger, utilizes the baby grand piano to teach students of all ages as part of the Music at the Museum program. Mr. Slinger teaches on an instrument made by Shoninger, a similar sounding name!

## WYANDOTTE—THEN AND NOW

It's great to see the history that we have preserved in our historic waterfront community, but let's not also forget that so many of our gorgeous, unique, historic homes were torn down to make room for generic, ordinary housing. A wise man once said, **"SO MUCH OF OUR FUTURE LIES IN PRESERVING OUR PAST"**.

*~Josh Halasy*



*The Bishop Home, "then" and "now"*

Return Service Requested

**Wyandotte Historical Society**

Burns Home

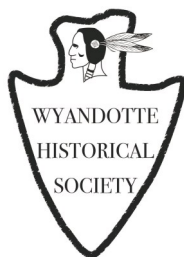
2624 Biddle Ave.

Wyandotte, MI 48192-5208

**Phone:** (734) 324-7299

**Email:** wyandottehistory@gmail.com

**Website:** wyandottehistory.org



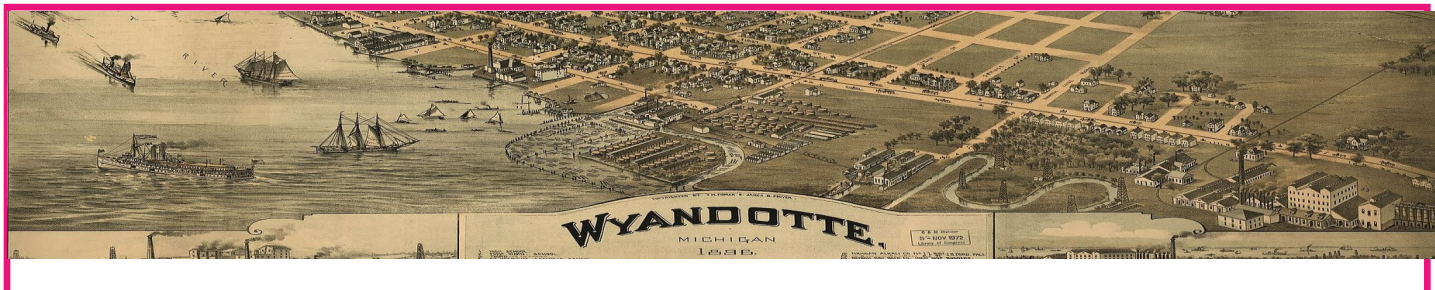
Non-Profit Organization

U.S. Postage Paid

Permit #106

Wyandotte, MI 48192

Address Label



**Wyandotte Historical Society Board of Directors**

- ◇ **President: Mary-Johna Wein**
- \* **Vice-President: Dan Galeski**
- \* **Secretary: Ken Navarre**
- \* **Treasurer: Karen Adkins**
- \* **Trustees:**
  - ◇ **Kaylyn Crayne**
  - ◇ **Josh Halasy**
  - ◇ **Beth Labadie**
  - ◇ **Ken Munson**
  - ◇ **Karen Ramirez**
  - ◇ **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: Julia Moore**