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WYANDOTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

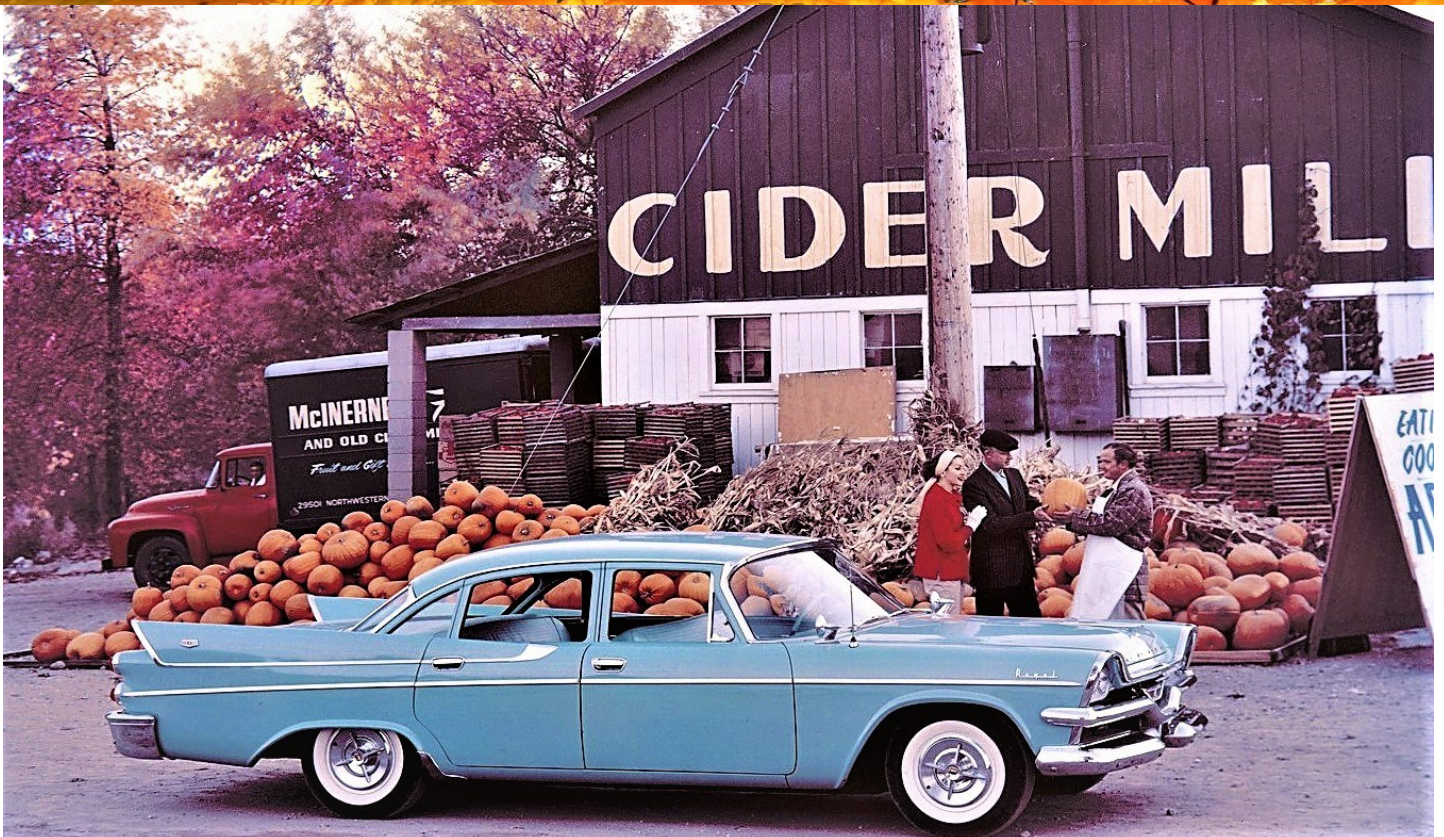
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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Autumn in Michigan



The above photo was taken in 1957 at the McInerney Cider Mill in Southfield, MI

“UNCLE BERNARD”, MY SPIRIT GUIDE by Josh Halasy

Autumn in Michigan. As that glorious time of year fast approaches, many people get into an “all things Fall” mood – cider & donuts, chili, football, horror movies, Halloween, and on and on. Ghosts and spirits are always a popular topic this time of year, too. But this is a tricky one, because while most of us know the afterlife exists (of course there are skeptics), it is largely the unknown and the unexplained. Many people have stories of when they were stopped in their tracks due to an encounter with “the unknown”, and here is mine.

Last winter, I was informed one day by a friend who has, shall we say, a “gift”, that there were three spirits around me that day. I was taken by surprise and amazed that the spirits were confirmed to be my late Grandpa (who died in 2015) and his brother (who died in 2002). I say “confirmed” because multiple facts, their names, etc that my friend could NOT have known, were told to me. However the third person, a guy named Bernard? I had NO idea who that was.

Since I didn’t know a Bernard, but the other two I certainly did, I asked my friend if any more info could be supplied so I could dig deeper and do some research to see if I can find out who he was. I was told Bernard died young, older than 30ish but younger than 40ish, and was a beer man. While Grandpa and his brother were just randomly visiting that one winter day, Bernard is ALWAYS with me. I thought, “I have a guardian angel? This is just like “It’s a Wonderful Life!”. It was time to start asking family members questions and get on ancestry.com

What I found out was shocking- there WAS a Bernard Sieg in my family. He was my grandpa’s uncle, which explains why he was with my grandpa and his brother! Why did I not know him? Because Bernard, a lifelong Wyandotte resident, died on August 3, 1946 at the young age of 36 (from aplastic anemia, a blood condition). My grandpa would have only been 10 when Bernard died, but after talking with my mom, she absolutely remembered grandpa speaking about “Uncle Bernard”. Oh, and did I mention, he worked at a brewery? That explains him being a “beer man”. My friend let me know that Bernard really wanted me to visit him at Mt. Carmel Cemetery. I have many relatives buried at Mt. Carmel, including my late dad, and my mom & I even have a plot there for when our times come. But I had no idea where Bernard was. I looked and could not find him. No worries, he let my friend know what section of the cemetery he was in, describing a very specific tree right by his grave. And believe it or not, that is how I found his resting place.

This was all fascinating to me, but I had to wonder why was a relative of mine, who died 37 years before I was born, with me all the time? My friend explained he was likely my “spirit guide”. We all have one, a relative who passed away before our birth who stays with us throughout our earthly life. Oh, and one more thing. I had a picture of Bernard and didn’t even know it. It was taken in 1928 at my great-grandfather’s wedding. Bernard was there since he was the younger brother of my great-grandpa. When I had seen the picture in the past, I never knew who the young guy in the photo was. But now I do. He is Uncle Bernard, my spirit guide. And it’s so cool to know that he is always with me. Makes you wonder...who is your spirit guide?



Photo taken June 28, 1928



From the Prez

Hello all,

I am looking forward to celebrating the 65th anniversary with all of you on September 9th! If you have not purchased tickets and would like to go, we still have a few tickets remaining, but they must be purchased in advance.

Have a great September,

~Mary-Johna Wein

Charles LaBelle (1806-1867) was born in Assumption, Canada, on August 1, 1806. Just one day after Charles was born, his parents, Magdeleine Audet Dit Lapointe, and Antoine Charles LaBelle had him baptized. When Charles was a young boy, his family moved to Michigan Territory in the District of Detroit, known as Grosse Isle. On September 25, 1827, Charles married Francis Perry. Sorry to say, Francis would die in 1851, and he would marry again on May 31, 1852, this time to Elanore Helen Mainville. Between both marriages, Charles would have over a dozen children. By 1860, Charles and his family moved a short distance across the Detroit River to Monguagon, Michigan. Now a father of three children, he worked at a stone quarry outside town. In June of 1862, he lost one of his children, his four-year-old daughter, Julia, the cause of death unknown. On January 22, 1863, Charles mustered into Company D, of the 9th Michigan Cavalry. For a time, he served as a cook for the regiment. During Morgan’s Great Raid of 1863, Labelle’s Company had the honor of capturing an important officer, as The Daily Cincinnati Inquirer Newspaper reported:



That on a country road. General Morgan’s Assistant Adjutant General Colonel Alston was captured near Lebanon, Kentucky yesterday, and brought to the city and confined in a military prison on Columbia Street; Colonel R. A. Elson was captured the evening of July 5 on the road from Lebanon to Bardstown, KY together with an escort of 20 men. By Lieutenant Large of the 9th Michigan Cavalry.

On March 17, 1864, Charles was discharged at St. Louis, Missouri. Just three years after he returned home, Charles died on January 26, 1867. He is buried at Mt. Carmel Cemetery in Wyandotte, Michigan.

~Marty Bertera & Mary-Johna Wein

Last year, I was honored to present Nancy Lange as a lifetime member of the Wyandotte Historical Society. Nancy was born and raised in Wyandotte and in 1952, she graduated from Roosevelt High School. Nancy held the Wyandotte museum and Historical society, near and dear to her heart. She has been involved in the tea parties, cemetery walk, tours, and a variety of events the museum has held over the years. She truly was an inspiration to all of us! Even when Nancy wasn't feeling well, she tried her best to volunteer and give back to the community. If Nancy wasn't at the museum, you could often find her working in the garden, spending time with her three daughters, volunteering at the salvation army, at Lake Erie Metropark, or wandering around greenfield village. On July 30, 2023, Nancy passed away at the age of eighty-nine. Nancy lived a beautiful life; we are so thankful that she shared part of her life with us volunteering around the museum. While she is no longer physically with us, her memories will live on in all our hearts...



~Mary-Johna Wein

For many years, I have been taking photos of headstones and cataloging them to find a grave. Headstones with pictures tend to always catch my attention because many of them have been cracked, fallen off or are no longer in a great state. While walking in Mt. Carmel Cemetery I noticed the headstone of Providenza Giacopelli. I've seen this headstone hundreds of times, but this time was different, someone had her photo replaced and I thought this was something worth sharing with all of you.



Providenza "Pearl" Vitale (1903-1933) was born on January 25, 1903, in Ferraseni, Italy, daughter of Angelina Cozislio and Augustine Vitale. In 1914, Pearl came to the United States. She married Francesco Giacopelli and on March 6, 1920, she gave birth to their first child. By 1930, Francesco and Pearl had four children and lived at 226.5 Hudson Street. On March 20, 1933, Pearl died at the age of thirty. Pearl's story touched my heart because she passed away ninety years ago, and she hasn't been forgotten. Somebody somewhere decided to replace her photo and keep her memory alive.

~Mary-Johna Wein

Below photos show soldiers in arctic conditions...Story on next page



Frederick Michael Bigler was born on April 19, 1893, in Wyandotte, son of Emma Otto and Charles Bigler. The Bigler family lived at 79 Oak Street and raised three boys there, William, Frederick, and George. By 1910, Charles owned the Bigler meat market, there he was the local butcher. On June 5, 1917, Frederick enlisted in Company K of the 339th Infantry Regiment. The 339th was created in June 1918, to go and help fight on the western front in France. However, some of the soldiers would be given a different mission. The 339th Infantry Regiment, the 1st Battalion of the 310th Engineers, the 337th Field Hospital, and the 337th Ambulance Company, were all regiments that came from the 85th division and were trained at Camp Custer in Battle Creek, Michigan. These men were about to board the Harrisburg and set sail for Archangel. Archangel was a Russian port located approximately 600 miles north of Moscow. In September 1918, the troops finally reached their destination, they were told that their mission would be to help reopen the eastern front. However, the mission became to fight the Bolsheviks and return Russia to a government elected by the people. These men were going to be sent in frigid cold temperatures to fight the Bolsheviks. Due to the conditions of northern Russia, the soldiers were given the nickname Polar Bears. The snow was piled waist-deep, weather conditions often plunged to forty-five degrees



below zero, and frostbite became a common problem amongst the Polar Bears. Not only did soldiers have to worry about horrible weather but they had to watch their every move, Bolsheviks tended to dress in white clothing to camouflage with the snow. Unfortunately, Frederick was wounded, and he became sick. He was sent to England to board the ship Adriatic. On January 31, 1919, Frederick was back on American soil. After returning to Wyandotte, Frederick got a job working as a butcher at Bigler's meat market. On March 23, 1933, Frederick died at the age of 39, he is buried in Mt. Carmel Cemetery.

Photo above—Frederick Bigler at Biglers Meat Market circa 1909.

Photo to the left—A Christmas 1918 advertisement to buy war stamps

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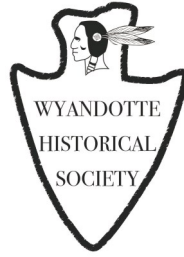
2624 Biddle Ave.

Wyandotte, MI 48192-5208

Phone: (734) 324-7299

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