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WYANDOTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

March 2024

VOLUME 3

Quick-chick cutouts to garnish your
SWIFT'S PREMIUM HAM

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Or write Martha Logan, Dept. PH-1
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See what Swift has hatched up for your
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stuffing lemon halves with mashed sweet
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HAM**
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Easter Ham advertisement, 1953

From the Prez-

Last month the historical society and museum put on a vintage valentine event. The event featured photographs, valentines, wedding dresses throughout the years and more. A special thank you to all the volunteers who made the event possible.

JOIN US

Friday, April 12th at 7pm to learn about our newest publication, "Soldiers Untold". The book talks about the lives of Civil War soldiers from Wyandotte, MI and the influence the war had on their lives. Books will be available for purchase for \$15 at the event.

Mayors of Wyandotte

Ira John Kreger was born in Wyandotte on April 9, 1892. He was the son of Catherine Racho and Charles Kreger.

On April 1, 1917, Ira married his wife Stella and started a family. Ira worked as a grocer and the family rented a home in Pine street.

In 1928 Ira was elected as mayor of Wyandotte. He served until Joseph A. Smith took over in 1931. One of the challenges Ira faced during his term as mayor was the passing of his wife. On January 8, 1929 the Windsor Star reported "Mayors wife dies...Mrs. Stella Kreger, 30 years old, wife of Mayor Ira J Kreger, passed away... besides her husband she is survived by two children".

On May 12, 1934 Ira married a stenographer from Detroit, Miss. Alma Josephine De Witt. They would be married for the rest of his lifetime. On November 5, 1966 Ira passed away at his home of 3455 third street. He is buried at West Mound Cemetery in Taylor, Michigan, next to both of his wife's.

Mary-Johna Wein





BACK BY *VERY*** POPULAR DEMAND...**

3rd Annual Pisanki Making Class!

Come join us Friday, March 8, 2024 at 7:00 pm at the Marx Home and learn how to make your very own Pisanki (polish Easter eggs)!!!

Historical Society members Sue & Josh Halasy will teach the class, and the cost is only \$10 for members and \$15 for non-members. Due to the limited seating please reserve a spot by emailing the Historical Society at wyandottheistory@gmail.com or leave a message at 734-324-7299.

Wandering Oakwood....

Frank Albert Karth was born on February 26, 1855 in Germany. When Frank was twelve years old his parents and three brothers, moved to Michigan. In 1876, Frank married Bertha M. Selke. Before 1880, Frank would open up the F.A Karth hardware and tin shop located at the corner of third and elm street. He owned and operated the shop for more than fifty years before his passing. On May 27, 1926, Frank passed away at the age of seventy-one. His obituary says he left behind his wife "Mrs. Bertha Karth, five daughters and three sons, Mrs. John Lawrence, Mrs. William Zeschin, Mrs. John Caser, Mrs. Edward Raether, Miss. Bertha Karth, John, Walter and Albert Karth, all of Wyandotte and 10 grandchildren".



Speaking of Oakwood...

Josh Halasy snapped this photo of a creepy fog rolling through Oakwood Cemetery on January 23, 2024.



BLUE JACKET – SHAWNEE WARRIOR AND LEADER by Susan Roppel

Hello, history buffs, new contributor here. At our local library, I checked out a great magazine the City of Wyandotte published in 1917 to attract people to our area. In the history section, it briefly mentioned a native Chief named Blue Jacket who was said to be notable. Sparse of detail, it only said he had lived here, and made his home in an orchard just south of what would be Eureka Rd and Biddle. Since that is my neighborhood, I became curious to know more. I did a bit of easy research, and he was a famous and fascinating man.

Chief Weyapiersenwah, also known as Blue Jacket, was a Shawnee war chief. He was born in West Virginia around 1735, and little is known of his early life. As a chief, he lived in a village on Deer Creek in what is now Ross County OH. He participated in Dunmore's War and the American Revolutionary War on the side of the British, with a focus on his lifelong purpose of maintaining Shawnee land rights.

When the British were defeated, he lost a powerful ally and that struggle became harder. He is known for, along with Miami Chief Little Turtle, having secured the largest victory over the United States ever won by the indigenous peoples, in the Battle of Wabash vs Northwest Territory governor Arthur St Clair in 1791.

That victory was short-lived, as the Americans, alarmed at the defeat, raised a professional army, and, under the command of General Anthony Wayne, defeated Blue Jacket's confederate army in the Battle of Fallen Timbers in August of 1794, in an area just south of what is now Toledo, OH. He was compelled to sign the treaty of Greenville in August of 1795, ceding much of Ohio to the US, as well as the Treaty of Fort Industry in 1805, relinquishing even more.

Blue Jacket had a wide communications network among the many tribes of the region, as he engaged actively throughout his life in efforts to unify the native peoples, to defend and retain their lands. He travelled widely, to areas as far as Pennsylvania and Missouri, in his efforts. As he aged out of active warfare and was pushed out by the treaties, he moved his tribe at various times, to the Wabash/Fort Wayne area and to Wapakoneta. He farmed, hunted and traded in whiskey he purchased in Cincinnati, always active in diplomacy and strategy on behalf of the tribes, and by all accounts was a savvy businessman with diverse interests. Around 1800, he moved his home for a final time to a joint Wyandot-Shawnee village on the shore of the Detroit River, first in the area of Browns Town, near present day Van Horn Rd, which was the home of his son George Blue Jacket, and he then established his home just south of Maguaga, which is present-day Wyandotte. It is said he had a fine cabin, with furnishings and housewares on par with the white settlers. His home was said to be in a fruit orchard just south of what is now Eureka Rd, possibly at what is now Orange and Biddle, and he was known to be a gracious and welcoming host to visitors. Here he lived until his death around 1809. He and the Wyandot Chief Walk-in-the-Water are both said to have been buried not far from his cabin. The latter was later removed to Canada, and it is speculated that Blue Jacket may have been moved there as well, as it was the home of his wife's people.

More than one source mentions that the local tribes eventually lost their land here due at least in part to the whiskey trade, many falling victim to alcoholism and debt. Blue Jacket, for all that he was a champion for the cause of the native peoples, was himself a whiskey trafficker and an alcoholic, and so, likely contributed in some measure to that downfall.

In his diplomatic travels, Blue Jacket met and inspired a new generation of leaders committed to the cause of indigenous land rights, including most notably the renowned Chief Tecumseh, whose place in history is more prominent.

Such was his fame that, decades after his death, in 1877, a story was published about Blue Jacket, asserting that he had actually been a white man named Marmaduke Van Swearingen, who had been captured and adopted by the Shawnee. This story was popularized in a well-regarded historical novel and in a play, which continued to be performed in OH until 2007. There was much debate among historians through the years, but eventually DNA testing of his ancestors and those of Van Swearingen proved that rumor to be false. Blue Jacket was a true Shawnee.

So, not unlike our dear friend Lucille Ball, he did not live most of his famous life here in our fine town, but this was once his home, and so we get to claim him as ours. When I walk my neighborhood, where his home once stood, I can almost imagine his way of life, and wonder if his remains are still here, forever as much a part of Wyandotte as you and I.

While there is no shortage of beautiful artist renderings available to see when searching his name, there are no actual known images of him available. In his later years, he was said to be a very heavy man (the description “very gross” was even quoted from one source of his time), who was nonetheless of a jovial and likeable nature. Chief Weyapiersenwah aka Blue Jacket is recorded in history as a courageous warrior, a gifted statesman, a diverse and successful entrepreneur, and a respected leader of men.

If you want to learn more about Chief Blue Jacket, there are several online resources, but the best source I found was a book at our Bacon Library entitled Blue Jacket – Warrior of the Shawnees by John Sugden, which is only available in the local history area upstairs, and cannot be checked out. The biography by historian Allan Eckert is more widely known. Our local history area is available to the public between 1 and 4 on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Both books are also available on Amazon for purchase.

If you'd like to purchase the 1917 City of Wyandotte publication, rather than just checking it out from the library, the Historical Society had it reprinted, and we have copies available for purchase at our museum store. It's great stuff!



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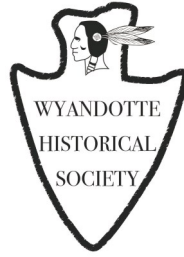
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