

# IONIA COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Ionia County Genealogical Society is a non-profit volunteer group whose mission is to create awareness and preserve family histories within the Ionia County area. The focus of this group will be to develop genealogical resources and to assist all those seeking local history.

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March is National Women's History Month, and so it is the focus of this newsletter to honor women in Ionia County who made a difference or a special contribution in history. We had hoped to have each township represented, but didn't get the response that we had looked for. We hope you won't be disappointed with the selection of women we have represented here. Some are from history, some are from today. All have made notable contributions. If you have someone in mind that you would like to see in a future newsletter - send it to us and we will use it next year. Thank you to those who took the time to answer our requests.

This year has brought us to a realization that had not been made clear to us before. The board of directors at a recent meeting found out that although we try hard, we are not superhuman. It was a great disappointment to many of us who had been secretly wearing the red "S" on our chests. We realize that we need help. We need a back up plan in the case of a crisis. It all started early in the year....Our correspondence secretary went to Florida for a couple of months, so I took over her responsibilities, thinking "This won't be too bad - I can handle it." After all, all she has to do is send out welcome packets to the new members - no problem. And it wasn't. Then, our treasurer and one of our trustees decided to go to Florida, too! She was only going to be gone for one week - no

problem - I can handle that - I mean, how difficult can it be? Then our dear editor tells me that her father is dying and she needs help with the newsletter. Although the pressure was coming on, I thought about what I went through a year ago when my father-in-law was dying and how important it is to support those who are going through times like that. Well - what I DIDN'T plan on was to get sick myself! All of a sudden I found myself not feeling well and ended up in the hospital. Suddenly everything came to a dead stop! The worst part was that there was no one who knew what to do.

Well, we have decided that can't happen again. So, that is what brings me to this special request. We need to have "assistants" to help out when someone is unable to do their duties. I have the Vice-President, Lori FOX (thank God for her!), who is my assistant, but now we need assistants to help out the following people...Correspondence Secretary (this person should have e-mail access), Treasurer, and Editor of our newsletter. Please - if you would be willing to help any one of these people by being a "back-up" plan, let us know! We appreciate it so much. Many hands make light work. Help keep YOUR society running smoothly by pitching in and helping out. It feels good to give of yourself - trust me! Thank you!

We have a wonderful board of directors and I thank them for pitching in and working until 11:30

p.m. to put out the last newsletter. I know that there were things missing from it, but it was the best we could do considering the circumstances. Thank you for your understanding.

~ Pam SWILER, President  
Ionia County Genealogical Society

### HERE'S TO GOOD WOMEN!

May we know them.  
May we be them.  
May we raise them.



Was your early life shaped by this extraordinary lady? See page 3 for her fascinating story!



## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

- Terry **CAMPBELL**  
1542 Breton Road SE  
East Grand Rapids, MI 49506  
(616) 949-9343  
E-mail: <camperry@bigfott.com>  
Researching: **HAIGHT, HIGHT, WHEELER**
- Victoria **CANNON**  
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Researching: **O'NEILL**
- Elda **DICKINSON**  
4140 S. Fitzer Road  
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No email or surnames listed.
- Susan **FOUNTAIN**  
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(616) 527-3213  
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Researching: **HOLLIDAY, THORNTON, FOUNTAIN**  
(note: Susan is the niece of Bill **COLLEY**)
- Margaret **GANDY**  
PO Box 207  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055  
(no further information available – this was a gift membership)
- Dennis **HOLLY**  
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(517) 647-7723  
Email: <dlholly@webtv.net>  
Researching: **KOELZER, HIGBEE, HILL, HOLLY**

Here's a nifty tip from Pam:

If you are searching for military records for women in America - you may want to check out this site, which includes who to contact to get what you are looking for.  
<http://www.womensmemorial.org/>

## JANUARY SPEAKER

by Jim **MOSES**

Dorothy **CLORE** gave an interesting talk called "Writing In Your Own Voice...For The Fun Of It" to our society in January. Dorothy is a retired teacher of English who enjoys instructing others about writing. She says that we should all write journals or diaries, but we should not give our descendants 'just a document of the crops and the weather'. She enjoys writing colorful stories and encouraged us to do the same. Be descriptive, and be specific. Ms. Clore told us that we should pick a topic and then dive into it, writing our feelings as well as just the facts of the story.

One thing Dorothy said was that we should start writing by ourselves so others won't think we are writing about them. We should also write as though we will be the only ones reading the material. Of course, if our work survives others will read it later, and the more we share our feelings the more those other people will understand us.

There were several topics that Dorothy gave us during this workshop. She would give a style of writing, like a letter, or poetry, and ask us to write something in that style. The object is to find a writing style or two that we enjoy, and feels good to us, and then to write in that style because we are more comfortable with it.

Creative writing will be hard for us at first, but as we practice we will be able to write things that other people will eventually find pleasing. If we are writing about our own lives there are all sorts of ways to word things that will make them interesting. The workshop was a 'hands on' experience and I think that everyone who attended realized that we can write from the heart and write something that will be of value later.

~ from an unidentified Ionia Co. newspaper, dated 1904:

Mrs. Jane M. **BLANCHARD** was born in Chatauqua County, N.Y., Jan. 15, 1836, and died at her home here Wed. night, Nov. 30, 1904. She came with her parents to Michigan in 1837 and her girlhood days were spent at the old home a mile west of Matherton.

Oct. 15, 1853, she was married to H. F. Blanchard, who died Jan. 17, 1897. To this union were born three daughters; two of whom survive, Mrs. George **MATTHEWS** of Alba, and Miss Grace Blanchard of this place. Miss Ella Blanchard died about twenty years ago.

Funeral services were held at the M. E. church at one o'clock today, conducted by Rev. Geo. **BULLEN** and burial was made in the family lot at Hubbardston.

Mrs. Blanchard was highly respected and will be greatly missed in the church of which she had been a devoted member many years.

## HOW TO BE AN UPITY WOMAN

Wake **UP** to your magnificent potential.  
Let **UP** on the "shoulds" in your life.  
Dress **UP** whenever you want.  
Loosen **UP** and be silly.  
Give **UP** trying to do everything for everyone.  
Get **UP** your courage to be you-nique.  
Stand **UP** for yourself and your opinions.  
Face **UP** to what needs changing and do it.  
Lift **UP** your spirit in thanks for who you are.  
Open **UP** to the love around and within you.     ♥ ♥ ♥



# HELEN ROBINSON

By Lori HANSEN

A humble woman, Helen Robinson never wanted to do things in a manner that would call attention to herself. So instead she did things in her own quiet way. Nearly a lifelong resident of Orleans township, Helen was born on August 22, 1906, to Francis Eugene AZARIAH and Helen Jeanette DECKER, trailing three brothers who were many years older. Helen attended Piper and Orleans Schools, her last few years driving a horse and buggy herself back and forth from her home on Decker Road. Helen then moved to town for her remaining two years of schooling at Belding High School, where she graduated in 1924.

After obtaining her teaching degree in 1925 from Ionia County Normal School, Helen returned to Piper School to begin her teaching career, earning \$810 per year for each of the four years there.

On June 5, 1929, Helen married Harold E. ROBINSON and, for the next two years, taught at Hayner School. In 1931 Harold and Helen moved to the home where she would spend the rest of her life. She taught five months at Shanty Plains, leaving because she was expecting her first child.

"I never expected to go back to teaching because it was very hard for a married woman to get a job," Helen later said.

Their son Richard was born in 1932, followed by Marilyn in '35, Elaine in '37, and Gayla in '38, and raising a family took precedence. There was the weekly washing to do, and as there was still no electricity on the farm five miles east of Belding, it was all hung on racks to dry. There were the 21 loaves of homemade bread a week to bake; the garden produce, chickens and beef to raise for canning. Without electrical refrigeration, she felt 1000 jars were needed to get their family of

six through the winter. There was also the bookwork and deliveries to make for the five years Harold ran Robinson Dairy from their home. Still, she found time to collect for the American Cancer Society in the Greene School District for over 25 years.

The need for farmers during World War II kept Harold frozen to the farm, unable to take a higher-paying factory job. And when Helen heard of a shortage of substitute teachers, she resumed teaching part-time. In order to renew her certification, Helen began taking education classes again.

Helen taught at Dorr, Lambertson, and Chittle, several of the one-room school houses in the area. Her schools were important to her, her students even more so, and she tried to tailor her programs to fit the children, especially those with special needs. When at Dorr School she was faced with the problem of fighting among the students, so Helen planned box socials and carnivals to raise money to purchase playground and baseball equipment. It solved the problem.

After all four children were in school, Helen returned to full-time teaching. She worked at Hallpark School and Forest Grove in Belding, and in Baldwin Heights and Cedar Crest Schools in Greenville, and Smyrna School, ending her career at Belding Jr. High.

Following World War II, Helen began sewing quilts and mattress ticking. She became involved in the Orleans Grange and the Banner Grange and began taking census counts for both Orleans and Otisco Townships. Harold and Helen held chicken barbeques to help raise money for the first Orleans fire department.

Having a desire to help special education students, Helen began taking weekend classes at Western Michigan University in that field while maintaining her teaching duties and the activities of her own family.

In 1960 after graduating from WMU with a B.A. in special education, 35 years after she started, Helen began teaching special education at the Greenville Baldwin Heights School. By this time, Harold and Helen were enjoying the addition of grandchildren to their family. They had six when Harold died in May 1962. Six more would follow.

Helen also taught special education Sunday School classes at First Baptist Church and at Shiloh Community Church. She often said, "The Lord gives me strength to teach five days and will also give me strength to teach on Sundays."

After 11 years teaching special education, Helen, at age 65, had to take mandatory retirement, the end of a teaching career she had for nearly 33 years.

"Daily Bible reading and prayer keeps our thoughts in tune with Him. I think the most important things in life are being a Christian, having good health, and having work that you like. For me, it was teaching," Helen wrote in a family memory book in 1990.

Although retired, Helen continued helping students by tutoring from her home, something she did until 1994, only taking some time off when she fell and broke her back in 1991. Helen also began helping with the Election board and did mending at the local nursing home until she quit driving at the age of 85.

She often heard from many of her former students and enjoyed following the activities of her 39 great-grandchildren. Helen died in July 1995 quietly in her home, just one month shy of her 89<sup>th</sup> birthday.

[Photo on page one taken in 1995. Look for a picture of Helen in the classroom on a later page of this issue!]



## MAILBAG

~ Update on the **STEDMAN** photo in the last issue!

Linda **STRODTMAN** writes:

"On page 5 you have the photo of the Stedman's Lunch room [which was] at Long Lake not Portland. The owner of the lunch room is my great grandfather James E. Stedman. Likely one of the women is one of his spouses. We think it would be Cyrena (Rene) **MILLARD**. [Stedman] was born in 1853 in Lorain Co. Ohio. He married December 19, 1875 to Ida Emaline **MULFORD** in Lyons, Ionia County, MI. He Died Oct 23, 1934. He probably died of cancer of [the] prostate, according to Ionia Co. Courthouse records, Book D273, #12650. He was a retired farmer at time of death (78 years, 11 months, 8 days). By Ida Mulford he had three sons. Besides Ida Mulford and Rene Millard he also was married to Dora B. **HALL (GRIFFIN)** (last wife). I think he is buried in Woodard Lake Cemetery.

His three sons were:

Bert Emory Stedman (my grandfather) —his second wife was my grandmother Bessie Lenore **HILLABRANDT**.

George S. Stedman who married Mary **PATRICK**.

John L. Stedman who married Nettie **SNOW**.

My Aunt Frances (Stedman) **HUMPHREYS** still lives in Ionia [and] my mother Margaret (Stedman) **TANNER** lives in Dearborn."

— Linda Strodtman  
<[strodtma@umich.edu](mailto:strodtma@umich.edu)>

"Nobody can make you feel inferior without your permission."

~ Eleanor **ROOSEVELT**

The first white female born in Danby Twp., Ionia County, was Jane **COMPTON** who later became Mrs. Jane **PEABODY**. Eliza **RUSSELL** was the firstborn white female in Otisco Twp., Cook's Corners.

~ from an unidentified Ionia Co. newspaper, dated 1916:

**Mrs. Mary McGRAW** was born in County Cavern, Ireland in 1839. In 1861 she set sail for America and after several weeks of being drifted back and forth by the winds in the small sail boats, finally landed.

In 1865 she was united in marriage to Dennis McGraw who also came from Ireland. To their union five children were born, two daughters, Mrs. Claud **PETTIT** of Detroit, Mrs. Frank **CLARY** of Carson City, and three sons, Dennis, John and Mike all of this place; there are also surviving fourteen grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

When but a young woman she was left a widow, her husband having contracted mud fever from an Illinois flood, and Mrs. McGraw was left alone in the wilderness with small children to care for and where she endured much hardship.

In 1895 she moved to Hubbardston and there resided until the angel of death called her to her reward Feb. 22, 1916. Services were held in St. John's Catholic church, Hubbardston, of which she was a faithful member and interment was made in the cemetery there where she will rest peacefully beneath her moss covered mound and silent stars of night until the footsteps and trumpets of the choirs of angels shall awaken her and bring her to her heavenly crown of glory.

"Old age ain't no place for sissies."

~ Bette **DAVIS**

## The History of the Founding and Naming of Past and Present Ionia County Post Offices

from: *Michigan Place Names*  
by Walter **ROMIG**, L.H.D.; Wayne State University Press; Detroit 1896

**HACKETT'S SETTLEMENT**; founded by Peter and Bernard **HACKETT**, in the southeast corner of Orange Township, in 1837; Irish and Catholic.

**HUBBARDSTON**; in 1835, James R. **LANGDON**, of Montpelier, Vermont, bought 2000 acres which included most of the present town; from him in 1852, Joseph **BROWN**, of Kalamazoo, bought 240 acres, which included the Fish Creek water power, and built a dam and a sawmill; in 1853, he was bought out by Thomas **HUBBARD**, Wilson **HOMER**, Noah **HITCHCOCK** and Newton W. **TAYLOR**, and in 1865, they platted the village; given a post office as Plains on Sept. 13, 1858 with Linus **VanALSTINE** as its first postmaster, it was renamed for Thomas Hubbard on Dec. 27, 1859; incorporated as a village in 1867.

**IONIA**; when established in 1831, the county was named after the ancient Greek province; in 1833, a party of sixty-three, from Herkimer County, N.Y., led by Samuel **DEXTER** (1787 – 1856), who had prospected the site the fall before, settled here; Erastus **YEOMANS** became its first postmaster of Ionia, the first post office of the county, on Aug. 29, 1835; Mr. Dexter had the first plat of the village made and recorded in 1841; incorporated as a village in 1865 and as a city in 1873.

**JEFFERY**; storekeeper Lyman J. **CLARK** became the first postmaster of this rural post office in Danby Township on Oct. 11, 1899, the office operating until Nov. 15, 1902.

**JOHNSTOWN**; storekeeper Frank L. **KEECH** became the first postmaster of this rural post office on



April 16, 1898, the office, which was 3 miles from Orleans, operating until Sept. 15, 1903.

**KEENE**; the first actual settlers were Edward **BUTTERFIELD** and Cyrus **ROSE** who cleared some land here in 1837 and settled in 1838; later in 1838, James **MONK**, from Canada, founded the Canadian Settlement; the township was organized in 1842, and the town was named after it; Wallace **DAVENPORT** became its first postmaster on June 22, 1868; the office was closed on March 28, 1884, but was restored from Aug. 7, 1884 to May 11, 1886; Mr. Butterfield had the township named after his native Keene, N.H.

**KIDDVILLE**; George W. **DICKINSON**, a New Yorker, built a sawmill here in 1836, and the settlement which followed became known as Dickinsonville, but its post office, opened on June 20, 1838, with Mr. Dickinson as its first postmaster, was named Otisco, after its township, which had been named after Otisco, Oswego County, N.Y.; Mr. Dickinson sold his mill to James M. **KIDD**, of Ionia, in 1845; Mr. Kidd platted the village and on Aug. 20, 1855, became the first postmaster of Kiddville; William E. Kidd became its last postmaster in 1878, the office being closed on June 26, 1894.

**KOSSUTH**; this rural post office was named for the Hungarian patriot, Lajos (Louis) **KOSSUTH**, who visited the U.S. in 1851; Goerge W. Dickinson became its first postmaster on Dec. 6, 1855, the office operating until 1868.

**LAKE CITY**; See **RICHMOND CORNERS**

**LAKE ODESSA**; Humphrey R. **WAGER**, a capitalist from Ionia and Stanton, developed the Russell Settlement into the village of Bonanza, which he so named because he saw great promise for it; Horace F. **MINER** became its

first postmaster on May 17, 1880; when the Pere Marquette (now C. & O.) Railroad came through, the village was moved about a mile southwest and renamed Lake Odessa, as was its post office on Aug. 10, 1880; incorporated as a village in 1889; named after Odessa Township and its three lakes, Jordan, Tupper, and Augst, all named for early settlers.

**LYONS**; it was originally the site of the Indian village of **CHIGAUMISHKENE**; the first white settlers were H. V. **LIBHART** and family, from Naples, N.Y., in 1833; on Feb. 24, 1836, Lucius **LYON** wrote Edward Lyon: "the place is called Arthursburg... but we will change the name... I own the whole town site... It will become one of the most important towns in Michigan"; platted on both sides of the Grand River and recorded as Lyons by Lucius Lyon on Nov. 26, 1836; Trunian H. Lyon became its first postmaster on Dec. 31, 1835; incorporated as a village in 1859; its township was organized as Maple in 1837, but was renamed Lyons in 1840.

**MAPLE**; it was first settled by Robert **TOAN**, with his sons, Robert Jr., William, and Thomas, in 1837; the Maple post office was first opened in Lyons Township on July 11, 1838, with Zena **LLOYD** as its first postmaster, and when he moved his home here in Portland Township, he carried the office with him; the office closed on Sept. 14, 1868, but was restored from Sept. 28, 1868, to Nov. 30, 1901; named from its location on the Maple River, it was also known as Maple Corners.

**MATHERTON**; Asaph L. **MATHER**, Dr. Norton **BECKWITH** and James R. Langdon built the first sawmill in North Plains Township here on fish Creek in 1843; Asaph L. Mather platted the village in 1851, and named it for himself; his brother, Dr. William Mather, became its first postmaster

on March 2, 1848, while Asaph was appointed the second in 1850, the office operating until Dec. 3, 1965.

**MIRIAM**; here in Otisco Township a small Catholic settlement was founded in 1841 by John **ALBERT**, an itinerant German clock peddler, a native of Baden, who now became a farmer; it was soon given a church which became a shoolhouse when a second church was erected in 1871; when given a post office on Oct. 10, 1882, with Adam **HEHL** as its first postmaster, it was named after their parish church, St. Mary's; the office operated until April 30, 1902; it was also known as the German Settlement.

**MONTROSE STATION**; See **MUIR**

**MOUNT VERNON**; See **SMYRNA**

**MUIR**; the village began in 1854 with the lumber mill of Soule, Robinson, & company (Ambrose L. **SOULE**, Andrew Byron **ROBINSON**, and Rev. Isaac **ERRETT**); it was platted in 1857; on Sept. 12, 1857, Mr. Robinson became the first postmaster of Montrose Station, so named because some of the early settlers had come from Montrose, N.Y.; railroad superintendent, H.K. **MUIR**, was instrumental in having the Detroit, Muskegon & Western (now Grand Trunk) Railroad come through the village and they renamed it for him on Feb. 15, 1859; incorporated as a village in 1871, with Mr. Robinson as its first president.

✉ ✉ ✉

~ ~ Many thanks to Jane (**MUTCH**) **COOK** of Lake Odessa for sharing this information with us! As space and time permit, we will publish more post office histories in future issues.



**DOOR SCHOOL - 1951, ORLEANS TWP., IONIA CO., MI**



**BACK ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: RON JACKSON, DAVID BARR, FRED BARR, ORVILLE GUILLES (SP?), HELEN ROBINSON, UNKNOWN, DON BALLARD, CHARLES DICKENS, HOWARD JACKSON, LEO TRAYNOR**

**2<sup>ND</sup> ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: KAREN JACKSON, UNKNOWN JOHNSON, UNKNOWN BARR, DORMAN MASON, RICK? RITTERSDORF, GLORIA DICKENS, UNKNOWN YEASLEY, PAT RABEY, UNKNOWN, BEVERLY RABEY.**

**FRONT ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: UNKNOWN, UNKNOWN, UNKNOWN, KAREN TREYNOR, DONNA RABEY, JOY RITTERSDORF?, UNKNOWN JOHNSON, UNKNOWN JOHNSON, UNKNOWN YEASLEY, GRACE BARR.**

**-PHOTO COURTESY OF GAYLA ROBINSON**

*~ As always, our Readers are invited to write us with additional names and corrections*

**4-H Women of Notable Mention**

Helen **SIMON** has been a 4-H leader in Ionia County for the past 61 years. She was given an award from the governor last year because she has also been a leader longer than anyone else in the State of Michigan! Quite an accomplishment I would say!

In doing research to find

information about women in Ionia Co., I was disappointed when I contacted the 4-H County Extension Office. I wanted to know who the first 4-H leader in Ionia Co. was and was unable to get that information because I learned that it has been the past practice of the office to delete a member once they are no longer active. I have been assured that practice will no longer be the case. So, if you

know someone who has been a 4-H leader in the history of the county, send the information to me and I will put it in my file for next year. Until then, let us congratulate the following women who are still active 4-H leaders:

Alma **BARR** - 41 years  
 Virginia **FERRIS** - 43 years  
 Betty **SHETTERLY** - 43 years  
 Ardie **FERRIS** (no relation) - 40 years

~ Pam Swiler



## FEBRUARY SPEAKER

by Jim MOSES

The speaker for the February meeting of the Ionia County Genealogical Society was our Vice-President, Lori FOX, who helped us make sense of the census. Lori started with a brief history of the census, detailing some of the differences among the various census counts from the first in 1790 up through 1930. She told us about the earlier counts, which were done by marshalls using their own forms. This first census took eighteen months to complete. Each succeeding census added information, but many of the counts were of fairly limited use because they only listed the head of household, with a count of the people who lived in that house.

The census figures for the early years were supposed to be copied and posted so corrections could be made. After the corrections were done, the whole count was forwarded on to Washington. By 1850 the census had taken a dramatic step forward because everyone in the house was counted. Lori gave us details of further changes as the counting process became better. Once the Bureau of the Census was established in 1902 there was a permanent organization to oversee the count and work on improvements.

Even with all of the improvements over the years there have been problems. Spelling was not a strong point for many enumerators and since there was a lot of illiteracy, some people couldn't spell their names or check the spelling of the enumerator. The handwriting differences of the enumerators contributed to errors in interpretation. Numbers sometimes looked the

same, such as '4' and '9'. Many people did not age ten years between counts because people were not concerned so much with details as we are today. Sometimes people were missed, or, if they were not home, the neighbors were asked the questions. The wording on the census forms does not let us know when this happened, however.

Despite the problems with the census, Lori reminded us that it is still one of the most important research tools we have. She offered us some tips to help us get more out of our research. She said to check the families on either side of our ancestors because they might be relatives or might have moved with them to new locations. It will be easier to track them if you can find others sharing the same migration patterns. Remember that the census is only as good as the enumerator. Remember that more people were missed than people who were counted twice. Remember also that copies were hand-made (no photocopies were around at the time). Another stumbling block is that the census day changed over time. Lori's talk gave us a new perspective on our census research and helped all of us to be able to get more out of it.

## IONIA COUNTY "FIRSTS"

1<sup>st</sup> Ionia City female Clerk:

☆ Alice TAYLOR 1924 – 1927 ☆

followed by

Renah KITSEN 1927 – 1931

Mina UNDERWOOD 1931 – 1935

Alta WILLIAMS CROXENS

1935 – 1939

## CONDOLENCES

Our sincere sympathy is extended to Gretchen and Fred SLATER. Fred's aunt, Phebe Slater GEIGER, aged 99, died earlier this year.

## MUIR'S OLDEST WOMAN IS FAMOUS FOR QUILT MAKING



by Frank T. WHITE

MUIR, Oct. 20 – To live 86 years is in itself no little thing, even though it gives one the right to boast being the oldest woman in town, but to have health and faculties unimpaired and to have left a happy mental condition of optimism are truly added blessings.

Mrs. Sophia FIEBING is 86 and has the right to the "oldest woman" title, of which she is proud, but she has another unusual distinction.

During the past year she has pieced and hand quilted, with remarkably fine stitches, 14 patchwork quilts of beautiful and intricate patterns. To a person familiar with such work the quilts are masterpieces of the art. To those who have a flair for figures and statistics it will be interesting to mention that one of the patterns



has 576 blocks of light and as many of dark fabrics, each with 20 separate pieces. This gives a total of some 28,000 pieces, each of which is sewed in by hand.

Great as this task may seem, it is by no means the only one she undertakes. From time to time she does other bits of plain or fancy sewing, and aids in the housework. She also finds time for the neighborly visits and moments of conversation with friends which are among her delights.

Mrs. Fiebing has a most refreshing manner of looking at affairs of the day and intermingling her views with her recollections of days long gone by.

She recalls the day when Muir was a wilderness and when her home there was one of about a half-dozen in the entire community. A time when the Indians were more numerous than the whites, in the locality, and when communication with the outside world was principally by word of mouth, as incoming visitors to the neighborhood told their bit of news as they passed through to other parts of the woodland.

Somehow, although Mrs. Fiebing has lived a busy life in the village, she has managed to keep abreast the times. She likes to discuss affairs of the day and proves by her views that her faith in the future of the world is not shaken by modern trends of living.

Her modernity is indicated by the fact that she wears her hair in as modish a bob as that of the young women of the town but, it must be confessed, she has not quite been able to bring herself to the short skirt fashion.

"Short skirts are all right," she says. "I like them and I like the young women who wear them, but I do not like them for myself."

"This talk that bobbed hair and short skirts are wrong is just ridiculous. Youngsters these days are as fine a lot of young people as I ever saw and fully as good as they were when I was a girl. The only trouble is that some of the old folks forget the things they did and

said when they were that age. The world has nothing to fear as far as the rising generations is concerned."

Although she takes no active part in political affairs she is intensely interested in political matters and discusses them with every evidence of understanding. She thinks prohibition, from a theoretical point of view, is right, but is not satisfied that it is proving a practical success at present.



**MORE "FIRSTS"**

Julianne **ACKLEY** - 1st teacher at Cook's Corners.  
 Amelia **SAVINS** - 1st teacher in Belding.  
 Arabella **HEWITT** - taught at Hought School for \$1/week.



If you can't be a good example, then you'll just have to be a horrible warning.

~ Catherine **AIRD**



**Hartwell School 1912-1913**

Teacher – Myrtie **HASKINS**

Back row: Douglas **EDDY**, Shella **VIBBER**, Floyd **COLLEY**, Marie **GATES**, John **BRANSON**, Glennie **GATES**

Middle row: Basil **POWERS**, Siloam **STEVENS**, Gretta **VIBBER**, Wilma **BRANSON**, Nevah **BRANSON**, Edna **HARWOOD**, Olive **EDDY**

Front row: Dannie **FULLER**, Russell **BRANSON**, Ralph **VIBBER**, Alfred **GATES**, Percy **COLLEY**, Sadie **FULLER**

This building is still standing on the corner of David Hwy and Hartwell Road, just east of Saranac. It has been well maintained and is currently the office of Paul **SPOELSTRA** who has his American Express business there. We have been told that he has quite a collection of history about the school displayed in the building. We are sure that he would welcome visitors!

-photo on loan from Marilyn **CAHOON**

I believe the second half of one's life is meant to be better than the first half. The first half is finding out how you do it. And the second half is enjoying it.

~ Frances **Lear**



## Mailbag, CONT'D

Pam Swiler received the following letter:

"I have been cleaning out my father's house and ran across some family photos from the 1800's. I'm not sure why my dad had these, except that he was a professional photographer. One of the cards in the album is from a photo studio in Ionia, Michigan. The studio name is Sharpsteen. The last names in this album include: **JONES, ALLYN, KANAUSE**. I would like to try to return these to the family. They are some great old pictures, and the album is very old too."

Pam adds, "This album is being donated to our society - if there is anyone who can prove a connection to the family, we will be happy to give it to them as per the wishes of the current owner."

**Joan McCORD** shares this:

"The ICGS was referred to me by Mary W. **WESSELS**, Librarian at the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society. I am a researcher working with an independent documentary filmmaker in Montreal, Canada, looking for information on Sarah Emma Evelyn **EDMONDS** and Jerome **ROBBINS**. During the Civil War, Sarah served in Co. F of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Michigan Infantry between May 1861 and March 1863 under the assumed name of Frank(lin) **THOMPSON**. Robbins, whose place of enlistment was the town of Matherton in Ionia Co., was also in Co. F of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and knew Sarah (or Franklin Thompson) very well, and they corresponded quite a lot. The filmmaker and I are looking for any additional materials (we do have the materials from the Bentley Historical Library concerning both of these parties), and would be interested if anyone in the ICGS has knowledge of any other materials on these two people. Sarah's married name from April 27, 1867, was Sarah **SEELYE**."

She lived in Fort Scott, KS, from 1881 to 1893, and then moved to La Porte, TX, where she died on Sep. 5<sup>th</sup>, 1898. Thank you very much for anything that you can provide us."

Collette **LEBEUF**, Researcher  
(514) 849-6947  
Fax: (514) 849-9825  
Email: clebeuf@nataxis.ca

## MARCH SPEAKER

by Jim **MOSES**

The Ionia County Genealogical Society was entertained by Baron Daibher Mac Coilliane O'Carbhaile of Gavelkynde Mac Choerdiegh (aka David **McCORD**) and the Templar Conner the Grey (Robert **SMITH**) who represented The Society for Creative Anachronism and gave us a very good presentation on what the society does and why it exists.

They started with a little history of the society, and told us that most members adopt a persona from the Middle Ages in Europe, since that is where most of our ancestors came from. The Middle Ages span a long period from about 650 to 1650 AD, so there is a long time that can be studied by the members.

David, as one of the founders of the Ionia group, gave us a description of his place in the society. Each person tries to learn as much as he can about the person he portrays. He dresses in clothing of the time and tries to adopt the accent of the time. There are events that portray things that would have been happening at that period of history, and they even try to have their food as close to what would have been available then as possible. In other words, they try to re-enact what could have been happening during those long-gone days. The costumes and events are meant to bring history alive in this non-profit service organization.

David and Robert work with schools and try to teach about life during the Middle Ages, when disease was a dangerous thing because things like hygiene and antibiotics were not around. They teach about the five percent who were in the noble class, the 10 percent who were scholars, guildsmen or craftsmen, the 65 percent who were laborers or farmers, and the 20 percent who were destitute paupers. David has adopted the persona of a tenth century Irishman who was a beggar. He had enough education so he could entertain with his singing and playing and thus earn enough so that he didn't always go to sleep hungry. Robert portrays a Scotsman from the thirteenth century, and talks about the crusades and fighting.

The Society teaches all kinds of things from the ages gone by, such as archery, armor making, juggling, brewing, heraldry and instrument making, among many others. There is quite a large membership in our area, and they are always seeking more members so they can share history and do projects that help the community. As a service organization they are always trying to help others. Their meetings are on the second Sunday of each month at the Ionia Theater at 3:00 pm. They would be glad to see you.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Graduating Class of Ionia High School 1871

Mary **BELLAMY**  
Nettie **BIGNELL**  
Dora **BURDICK**  
Emma **RICE**  
Anne **WOODRIDGE**

☆ ☆ ☆

~ thanks to Suzanne  
**CARPENTER** for this item!



## First Families Banquet Committee – help?!

The First Families of Ionia County Society is seeking some help for the upcoming banquet, which will be held on October 26. Our group is growing quickly, and it has become quite difficult for our small committee to do everything that is necessary to host a banquet for so many people. The help we are seeking is from First Families members as well as people who do not belong to the group. We would like to ask people to help with certain things, such as putting together the program, preparation of the programs, and setting up the banquet, as well as putting tables and chairs away afterward. One thing we would like to ask non-members of First Families to do is to help with certain other activities, such as selling tax booklets, post cards and our other books (from Betterway Books and also our Ionia and Montcalm History book). Another thing this same group of people can do is to help during the banquet such as helping the caterers serve dessert or punch, etc. There are a few other jobs that need to be done, too, such as mailing invitations, etc.

None of these jobs is very hard, nor will any of them take much time, but with a committee of only a few, we have been doing all of them each year, and we need your help. If you would like to help us, please contact me by phone at (517) 647-7310, or [jmoses@mvcc.com](mailto:jmoses@mvcc.com) and I will be glad to explain some of the things we need. If you can spare an hour or two, that is all it will take. We will have a specific list of what we need at some of the upcoming ICGS meetings, but if you want to help with something, please contact me right away.

Thank you very much.  
Jim Moses, Chairman,  
First Families of Ionia County  
Society

## Memories of the Belding Basket Company

She was a weaver at the Belding Basket Factory. Her eight hour work day began at 7 a.m. At noon Lela Allison COLLEY (DEAL) would hurry to her Root Street home, relax a bit while eating lunch and listen to her favorite soap operas.

One day in 1952, plant owner Vance LOYER asked Lela to stay at the factory during the noon hour, as a photographer would be there to prepare for a brochure advertising the basket manufacturing process. Lunch hour was the best time to do this as it wouldn't take away from production time.

Lela was photographed at her work bench as she was weaving a basket. At that time the Belding company was the only manufactory in the country still making baskets of pounded ash and maple wood. Workers at this Belding company produced several types of baskets, enough to fill several railroad boxcars per month which were shipped throughout the country.

First thing each day, Lela would go into the steam room, grab a bundle of hot, wet splints (strips of raw wood), take them to her work bench where she arranged the vertical splints on a base then wove the horizontal strips to form a basket. The rims and handles were attached with small tacks.

"I wore finger cots (protectors made of rawhide) but even then I got slivers and not little ones either. By the end of the week the skin of my fingers was worn very thin. We got ten cents per basket that we made. The smaller baskets were harder to weave and we got even less for them, but I still liked weaving (braiding) the best of all the jobs there," recalls Lela.

For a short time in 1944 Lela transferred to the sewing department on the top floor. The war in Europe created a greater demand for tents, shovel carriers, portable seats and laundry

hampers made of canvas.

"It was a happy day when they told me I could go back to the braiding room," said Lela with a smile.

"In the dozen or so years that I worked there," says Lela, "I met some really nice folks." She lists them starting with Arthur JAMES, who was the superintendent, Roy WOOD, the foreman, the Rev. H. S. ELLIS, one of the lumber buyers, Thelma SIMMONS, the floor lady, Paul and Gert NICHOLS, Bob HANSEN, Edna ROWE PACKARD, Mable CLARK, Ann REGAN, Vera EVERHART, Anita BARNES and Barbara BUSH.

The Basket Factory closed in 1955. Before that, the business declined to the point that in 1953 Lela applied for work at Fisher Body in Grand Rapids where she retired in 1960. Lela has two daughters Julia BRIMMER and Susan FOUNTAIN and four grandchildren. Her husband Robert Deal passed away in 1991. Retirement has given her more time to catch up on reading and tending her many flower gardens.

"The Basket Factory is a beautiful building and it was really well built. I wish a good use could be made for it," mused Lela. "Where I worked, because the floors were so thick, the sounds of the saws and pounding machines didn't even bother me."

~ This article was first published in the Belding Historical Society's Newsletter, "The Reporter", (Sep 2001 – Mar 2002 issue). Many thanks to Helen SALZMAN for sharing it with us.

### Our Deepest Sympathy

is extended to the family of Dottie PIECHOCKI, whose father, Donald SIMMONS, passed away on January 31. Mr. Simmons was born in 1922 and graduated from Belding HS in 1939. His burial was in Smyrna Cemetery.



## BERTHA MILLIGAN BROCK



Ionia County's **Bertha MILLIGAN BROCK** is a well-known name in this county. The park on M-66 which bears her name is a fitting tribute to a woman who has given much to her community.

Mrs. Brock was born in Ionia on August 18, 1860, the daughter of Mrs. and Mrs. William **MILLIGAN**. She graduated from Ionia High School in 1879 and married Loren P. Brock in April 1883. Her death, which occurred at the home of her daughter, Gertrude, in Princeton, N.J., in January 1933, was mourned by the entire Ionia community.

Bertha Brock was especially well known as a historian. She was a member of the Stevens Thomson Mason chapter of the D.A.R. She wrote many letters, checked deeds and other public records to obtain data and facts to support the many genealogies she wrote, and contributed to the Hall-Fowler Library. She was also instrumental in obtaining donations of many of the items of the **DEXTER** and **ARNOLD** families which were put on display in the historical rooms of the library.

An example is a letter dated April 4,

1929, that was written to Olive **ARNOLD BROWN** requesting Olive to contact her father's brother, Burt W. Arnold, to see if he had an Arnold family bible. A copy of the letter was sent to the Ionia Historical Society by Mary **GATZEMEYER**, a descendant of Job Arnold. Mrs. Brock stated in the letter that she went to the National Bank to look over the Bible there that belonged to the Dexter Arnold branch of the Arnold family and was in the bank for safe keeping. She had looked at this Bible previously and copied data from it for Mr. Walter **YEOMANS**. This time she and Mr. **SMITH**, cashier, went over the Bible again and she observed that "Mr. Smith tried to determine the different handwriting as to the ages."

Mrs. Brock's earlier quest had opened her eyes to the possibility that Hannah Arnold, wife of Job, mother of Arnold, Dexter and Phebe Arnold Yeomans, had come to Ionia County with Dexter who came to live in Easton in 1836. "Would Dexter Arnold leave his old mother in Fairfield, Herkimer Co, N.Y. alone? Would she not come to Ionia Co. with him where she would be near her three living children?"

Olive Arnold was asked to get in touch with a great aunt, Mrs. Rebecca **BUCHANAN**, to see if Mrs. Buchanan could shed any light on the question. Mrs. Brock went on to state that, "When the Oliver Arnold Cemetery was destroyed in 1927 - in grading for the new highway from the south into South Ionia, and the bodies removed to Balcom cemetery near - there was one adult body excavated that Mr. Fred Arnold, grandson of Oliver, could not account for - and if she cannot be found in the Dexter Arnold's plat - she might possibly have been with her son Oliver in 1839 the year she died, and died and been buried over there as that was a number of years before a bridge was built across Grand River from Ionia to South Ionia".

Mrs. Brock's letter went on to tell Mrs. Brown how some of the family stories and history came about. "I think I told you the story concerning a hammer that Oliver Arnold brought when he came to Ionia, that was given to me by Fred Arnold of South Ionia to place in the historical rooms of the Public Library in Ionia—Mr. Fred Arnold told me that Oliver Arnold's father was Job Arnold - who with his brothers, John and Turpin came to Rhode Island from England before the Rev. War - crossing the ocean in a sailing vessel. On board, was a carpenter, also coming - and had his kit of tools. The carpenter sickened, died and was buried at sea, and the tools were divided among the Arnold brothers - Job having the hammer, keeping it until Oliver brought it here, where it was in South Ionia from 1833 until about 1926 when it was placed in the historical rooms.

Later, I was trying to get trace of Turpin **ARNOLD** - as my sister's daughter in Los Angeles, Cal. married Arnold **PEEK** - his mother being a Miss Arnold - and she told me she knew there was a Turpin Arnold back in her family somewhere which came from North Carolina —so I wrote to the Rev. War Dept. Washington D.C. telling them the story of the three brothers - they sent me a copy of the Rev. War record of Job - and John - but had none of a Turpin—but from this the Job who was granted a Rev war pension, when he lived in Fairfield, Herkimer Co., N.Y. - was born at Smithfield, Providence Co., Rhode Island on Oct. 16, 1760."

Bertha's letter went on to say, "So I knew from this at once that Fred Arnold's data doubtless belonged one generation back at least - and much to my astonishment this idea of mine proved this doubtless, by data in the Bible at the National Bank for the first record is that of Job Arnold -who died 'in his own house' in the year 1776 aged 70 years.



His wife, Freelove Arnold died the 23th [sic] of March 1811 aged 90 and had lived a widow 34 years. Doubtless it was Job Arnold the grandfather of Oliver, Dexter, and Phebe **ARNOLD YEOMANS** who came across the ocean with two brothers John and Turpin--and the Job to whom was given the hammer. --And Job Arnold, father to Oliver, Dexter, & Phebe Yeomans was named for his father Job. The handwriting in the family record in the Bible - is written many years earlier - recording the death of Job who died in 1776-- also a little later recording the death of Freelove his wife - Then in recording the deaths of Job Arnold (the son) and Hannah **DEXTER** his wife -- and I think surely the Bible must have belonged to the first Job--as it was printed in 1712 in London England and the record of his death looks so very old."

Some history was given in this letter as well. Hannah **DEXTER ARNOLD**, wife of Job "Jr", was a descendant of Gregory **DEXTER**, who was the head of a printing establishment in London, England. Mrs. Brock stated that the story goes that Roger **WILLIAMS** wrote his book Key to the Indian Languages of America while sailing to England and contacted Gregory Dexter to have the book printed. Mr. Williams persuaded Gregory Dexter to emigrate to Providence, R.I., where Mr. Dexter became the second preacher in the Baptist church of Providence and lived to be 90 years of age. Copies of Roger Williams' book are rare, but there is a copy in the Congressional Library and in the public library in Providence, R.I.

The Stevens Thomson Mason Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution sponsored the dedication of the Bertha Brock Park. The dedication was given by Libby **COWAN** on September 9, 1934. In her dedication she spoke of Mrs. Brock's many accomplishments: at Riverside Park, site of the original

Indian Village, a drinking fountain made from a huge boulder and bearing an inscribed bronze tablet; a commemorative tablet at the site of the original Arnold Cemetery; the marking of the Sessions School House with a bronze tablet; the marking of the small park by the Armory in Ionia and also Waterworks Park; the closing of the street between the Courthouse and the Library for a continuous stretch of park; and Bertha Brock Park which is located a few rods from the Old Welch Mill, the first for grinding grain in the county.

Mrs. Brock was the historian for the D.A.R., curator for the library and was active in many other areas of the community. She was the wife of Loren and a mother to Gertrude and Stuart, all of whom survived her. She had an active family life in addition to her public life. ■

*[The information for this article came from various newspapers; Bertha Brock's obituary; her correspondence -- shared by Mary **GATZEMEYER**; and the Bertha Brock Park memorial dedication address given by Libby M. **COWAN** in 1934.*

*Thanks to Pam Swiler and to Heidi **NAGEL**, of the Ionia Library, for contributing these materials. My personal thanks and gratitude to Leora **SLOSSER**, who came out of (semi-)retirement as Editor Emeritus when I cried "Help!" Leora condensed 14 pages of material -- including several pages of old-style handwriting -- into this interesting article about one of Ionia's most notable women. Thanks, Leora! -- Dottie]*

Whatever women must do they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good. Luckily, this is not difficult.

~ Charlotte **WHITTON**

## Women on the Police Force

Sheriff Duane **DENNIS** was very helpful when asked about women in the history of the Ionia County Sheriff's Department. He stated that it was common practice in history that the wife of the Sheriff would be the Matron Dispatcher for the force, although there is no official record of their names. Elhanon **CURTIS** was the first sheriff in Ionia County, beginning in 1837. He only worked one year, then he was replaced by a new sheriff. There has never been a woman sheriff in Ionia County, although Sheriff Dennis assured me that it wasn't because there could not be one. There currently are 18 women on patrol in the force, and the numbers of female corrections officers are about equal to men due to the increasing number of women being incarcerated.

The first woman Patrol Deputy in Ionia County was Julie **WILES** in 1979. Julie came to Ionia County from Traverse City after an extensive hunt for a job. "Police departments were just not hiring women back then," Wiles stated. Ionia County had an official complaint filed against them for failing to hire women on the force, so when Julie applied, they hired her. She originally thought that this would be a "stepping stone" for her, but enjoyed working with Sheriff Terrance **JUNGEL** and the community so much that she stayed on for 14 years. Julie brought a lot of great innovations to Ionia County while she was on patrol. Officer Wiles started the first D.A.R.E. program for Ionia County in about 1985. Wiles chuckled as she told the story of how she was pregnant and they didn't know what to do with her because she couldn't work out on patrol in that condition, so they



sent her for training in the D.A.R.E. program. When asked what positive changes took place with women on the force, Julie stated the biggest change was with Criminal Sexual Conduct cases - rapes, incest, etc. For the first time, Ionia County women had a woman officer to assist during investigations of these highly sensitive cases. Wiles also helped to start the Domestic Violence Board for Ionia County. In 1987 the V.F.W. recognized Officer Wiles' accomplishments by awarding her the statewide Police Officer of the Year award. Today Julie works for the Social Services Department in Lansing and is active with several other programs in Barry and Eaton Counties.

~ contributed by Pam Swiler



*Phoebe Yeomans*

N. Y., where she was married to Erastus Yeomans, March 19, 1815. This union was a most happy one in all that makes home the "one ray of happiness that survived the fall," and a home the influence of which pervades as with a blessing the lives of those reared around the hearthstone.

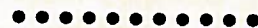
The children born of this union were Sanford A., Amanda D., Harriet, Hiram, Sarah M., Emily, Mary M., Harriet A. Possessing to an eminent degree soundness of judgment and moral force, she stood by her husband, "staying up his hands" and bearing with unwavering spirit the burdens and hardships of a pioneer mother. One incident may be mentioned as illustrative of her character. The delusion of Millerism which swept over the land found many believers among her neighbors and friends. The church of which she and her husband had been almost life-long members did not escape, the pastor himself becoming a convert. In one of the last meetings before the direful day her intense convictions overcame a naturally retiring disposition and, rising in her place, she denounced the whole thing as sham and delusion, disgraceful alike to a Christian profession or common intelligence.

On the conclusion of her remarks the meeting was closed, no one feeling able to escape the force of her denunciation.

It is impossible in a few brief lines to do justice to a life like hers, and it must suffice to say that she was faithful to her day and generation in the sphere in which she moved.

"Honor and shame from no condition rise:  
Act well your part; there  
all the honor lies."

In this sense hers was a life crowned with honor. She "entered into rest" June 25, 1864, and her memory is treasured as a rich heritage by her descendants and friends.



## PAPER TOWNS

In 1836 - 1837, Michigan was covered with so-called paper towns. About every third landowner felt called upon to plat a village in the woods, and then, with a beautifully-colored map showing what looked like a city with manufactories, mills, stores, churches, and every necessary appointment, would hurry Eastward to dispose of village lots in his Michigan town. Strange to say, victims were plentiful in those days, for there was a fever in the East to speculate in Western village-lots. As not one in twenty or more of these paper towns ever came to anything, lot-purchasers came to grief upon every hand when they came to understand how mythical their villages were. . . . Roof and Bell surveyed for speculators no less than eight paper towns, not one of which ever lived.

~ These two articles are from the "History of Ionia and Montcalm Counties, Michigan, with Illustrations", by John S. SCHENCK, 1881; reprinted by the ICGS and available for purchase. Contact Dale JACKSON if you'd like your own copy.

## ONE OF IONIA'S FIRST "FIRST FAMILIES":

Mrs. Erastus YEOMANS was born in Smithfield, R. I., March 18, 1797. Her parents, Job and Hannah Arnold, were of prominent families in the early history of Rhode Island. She was one of a large family of children, and early gave evidence of that amiability and strength of character which as wife, mother, and friend made her in these relations a tower of strength through life. At the age of ten she received a present of a pair of gold ear-rings for her faithful attendance, day and night, upon her grandmother, who was entirely blind. At the age of twelve a string of gold beads was the recognition of her continued faithfulness to her charge. Her educational advantages were limited to the common schools of the time. She removed with her parents to Fairfield, Herkimer Co.,



## Highlight on First Families of Ionia County Society, Member No. 12

### PATRICIA A. ZANDER

If you have ever visited the Saranac Public Library, this face may look familiar to you. Pat Zander recently retired as the librarian and now has time to spend on one of her hobbies, GENEALOGY!

Pat was born **Patricia Ann REED** in Ionia County, the daughter of **Warren Clarence Reed** and **Mable Mae DILLON**. Patricia continues to reside in the county today.

**Warren Clarence Reed** was born in Ionia County on November 25, 1907. He married **Mable Mae Dillon** on December 7, 1941, in Ionia Co., Michigan. Warren was the son of **Burton Lewis Reed** and **Vina C. CRANE**.

**Burton** was born the son of **William C. Reed** and **Mary Ann WEST**. He was born in Berlin Township, Ionia Co., and worked as a grocer for a living. He died January 25, 1950, a widower, in Ionia County, from coronary thrombosis and arteriosclerosis.

**William C. Reed** was the son of **William** and **Sarah Reed**. He was born January 25, 1835, and died September 14, 1891, in Ionia Co., of Bright's disease. He worked as a farmer. He married **Samantha SHILTON**, the daughter of **Benjamin** and **Hannah Shilton** of Orange Township, Ionia County.

In 1860 he purchased 80 acres in section 10 of Berlin Township. **Samantha** died in January of 1872, leaving one child, who was the only survivor of four. Later, he married **Mary Ann WEST**.



**William Reed** was born near Bunker Hill in Massachusetts in 1805. He lived the life of a sailor for a few years before he decided to visit his grandparents in New York. There he met **David BEEBE**, the father of his first wife, a school teacher in Oakland County, Michigan, **Sarah Beebe**. He had traveled with Mr. Beebe to Michigan. **William Reed** and his wife moved to Berlin Township in 1836, where he purchased 160 acres of land in section 3. Later he purchased an additional 110 acres in section 10. He died in June of 1873. He was married three times and fathered 10 children.

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If you are interested in more details on this line, contact the ICGS First Families Committee and they will help you.



## 2001 – 20002 Calendar of Events - Ionia County Genealogical Society

### April 2002

- 2 7:30 p.m. First Families of Ionia County Society Committee Meeting at Swilers'  
13 1:00 p.m. Regular Membership Meeting; program topic is "Resources at Western Michigan University Archives" – Sharon Carlson is the speaker  
23-24 Allen County Public Library Trip with WMGS  
25 7:00 p.m. Board of Directors Meeting at Swilers'  
27 10:00 - 2:00 Depot Museum open to public for research  
27 Ionia Women's Festival – Volunteers needed to help at our booth. Contact Pam Swiler or Lori Fox.

### May 2002

- 7 7:30 p.m. First Families of Ionia County Society Committee Meeting at Swilers'  
11 1:00 p.m. Regular Membership Meeting; program topic is "Boston Township" – by Marilyn Cahoon  
23 7:00 p.m. Board of Directors Meeting at Swilers'  
25 10:00 - 2:00 Depot Museum open to public for research

### June 2002

- 4 7:30 p.m. First Families of Ionia County Society Committee Meeting at Swilers'  
8 1:00 p.m. Regular Membership Meeting; speaker is Carole Callard on "Canadian Research"; Lori Fox will do a First Families class in the Depot immediately after the meeting  
27 7:00 p.m. Board of Directors Meeting at Swilers'  
29 10:00 - 2:00 Depot Museum open to public for research

### July 2002

- 2 7:30 p.m. First Families of Ionia County Society Committee Meeting at Swilers'  
13 1:00 p.m. Regular Membership Meeting; speaker is Pam Rietsch – the "Map Lady"  
25 7:00 p.m. Board of Directors Meeting at Swilers'  
27 10:00 - 2:00 Depot Museum open to public for research

### UPCOMING SPEAKERS & EVENTS:

- August 10 - Shirley Hodges will be speaking on "Church Records: The Tie That Binds".  
September 1 - Deadline for First Families applications  
September 7 - "Know Your Junk" Appraisal at the Lake Odessa Library 12 noon – 4:00  
September 14 - Jim Lyons: "Researching the Revolutionary War Soldier"  
October 12 - Marilyn Steward & Pam Swiler - Family Tree Maker Workshop  
November 9 - Joni McCord – "The History of the City of Ionia"  
December - No meeting

\*\* All regular membership meetings are held on the second (2nd) Saturday of each month, except December, at 1:00 p.m., in the Community Room of Lake Manor on Emerson Street, Lake Odessa, just west of the Depot Museum. The public is welcome and refreshments will be served. In addition, the Depot library will also be open following each monthly meeting until 5:00 p.m.

#### ICGS Newsletter:

Editor: Pamela Swiler

Asst Editor: Dottie Piechocki

NEED TO REACH US? ICGS, 13051 Ainsworth Rd., Route #3, Lake Odessa, MI 48849, PH: (616) 374-3141  
FAX: 616-374-8424 or email: <pkswiler@voyager.net>



## IN HER OWN WORDS

By Roslyn M. Fahrni

Roslyn Mary FAHRNI was born three years before the 1929 depression. She can remember her father coming home and telling her mother about the banks. She did not understand what it meant but in the next few years she would grow to understand how it affected her family and all their friends and relation.

During the 1930's, Roslyn attended several country schools. Her father worked by the month for different farmers and lived in their tenant house. In those days they had not thought of insulation – the houses were very drafty and cold.

She went to the Durkee School the year it closed and then went into Lake Odessa. The school buses were red, white and blue. The buses were really crowded. Later she moved into the Saranac area and attended high school, graduating in 1943. The World War II was going on then. Many young men were leaving to go into service.

Through friends she met the love of her life, Bruce Fahrni, and they were married Dec. 15<sup>th</sup>, 1943. They farmed with his father and raised two daughters, Joy HORNING and JoAnn LEAZENBY. After a few years Bruce's father had a heart attack and Roslyn worked side by side with her husband through every kind of job that came up until Bruce died April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

Roslyn is a member of the Clarksville Bible Church, Clarksville Lions Club, and Boston (Saranac) Historical Society. Roslyn opened her home to have the first meeting of this society and was the first president of that group. She wrote a news column for the Freeport News and Clarksville Record for seven years. She and her husband Bruce are members of the First Families of Ionia County Society. Bruce and Roslyn were honored to be in the Farmers Hall of Fame.

While Roslyn and Bruce worked the land they found arrowheads the Indians had used while living on this land. With help from others, and studying many books, along with travelling for many years, Roslyn learned about the life and tools these Indians used while living here. She has been a guest speaker at many schools, clubs and churches in the area.

Roslyn is most thankful for the kind and loving home her husband provided for her and for the family and friends she has come to know during her lifetime.



Please check the membership listing for errors, corrections, omissions, etc. Notify Pam Swiler with any changes ASAP!

We strive to keep our information as accurate and up to date as possible. Your help is much appreciated!

-Thanks!

The First Families Banquet theme for this year is Ionia County in the Military. It will be the focus of the group to honor Ionia County residents who served in any branch of the military beginning with World War I to the present. We would like photos to display at our banquet along with a brief history of their service. If you would like to have your family member honored, send a scanned image of your family member along with name, rank, dates served, and any other item of interest to ICGS. No photocopies please – thank you. All items become the property of ICGS.