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WYANDOTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

April 2024

VOLUME 4

D. N. Perry.

The Detroit River Boat and Oar Co.

DESIGNERS AND BUILDERS OF

High Grade Pleasure Boats

— STEAM, GAS AND ELECTRIC LAUNCHES —



Racing Shells, Sail Yachts, Row Boats, Working Boats, Yachts
Tenders, Hunting Boats, Barges, Life Boats, Duck Boats,
Canoes, Yawl Boats, St. Lawrence River Skiffs.

Hand Made Spoon Oars and Sweeps a Specialty.

Works, foot of Orange St.,

WYANDOTTE, MICH.



From the Prez-

Special thank you to those who attended our annual Pisanki class! We hope all of you had a wonderful time and look forward to hosting the event next year.

As a reminder we are still collecting recipes until June, for our newest cookbook. Please email them to Wyandottehistory@gmail.com or mail them to 2610 Biddle Ave. Wyandotte MI 48192.

Wandering Oakwood

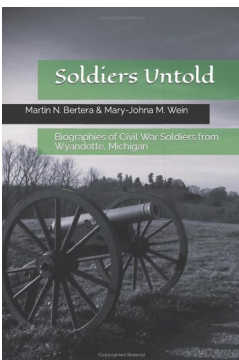
Horace Ocobock was born on February 17, 1831, in New York. Around 1856, Horace moved to Wyandotte and took a job at the Wyandotte Rolling Mill. During his lifetime, Horace also worked as Superintendent of the Watermill, state representative, alderman, deputy games warden, school inspector, and he served as mayor of Wyandotte in 1873. In 1909, the Herald reported "Mr. Ocobock is favorably known for his heroic rescues of drowning persons in the Detroit River.



These deeds were numerous, for he always lived near the river, but he would never discuss the rescues with anyone, and the number of lives he has saved will probably never be known." After living in the city for more than fifty years, Horace passed away at the age of eighty-three on September 1, 1914. "The surviving members of Mr. Ocobock's family are a son, John C. Ocobock of this city; three daughters, Mrs. Ari Woodruff of Ford, Mrs. Ella McKenzie of Grafton ND, and Mrs. Emma Tunison of Vaughn Washington; a brother Martin Ocobock of Birmingham Alabama, two sisters Mrs. J Corwin of Vaughn, Washington and Mrs. Jennie Moore, of Sandwich Illinois." (Wyandotte Herald 9-4-1914). Unfortunately, Horace is buried in an unknown location somewhere in Oakwood Cemetery.

Mary-Johna Wein

Monthly Program –Soldiers Untold



Join us Friday April 12, 2024 at 7pm for our monthly program at the Marx home. During the American Civil War, many men from Wyandotte went to fight for our nation. With no official Civil War list, we were able to compile more than 100 soldiers from the city and share their stories with all of you. Books will be available after the presentation for \$15 and 100% of the profit will go to the Wyandotte Historical Society so they can continue to preserve local history.

Pie & Ice Cream Social

Sunday May 5, 2024

1-4pm

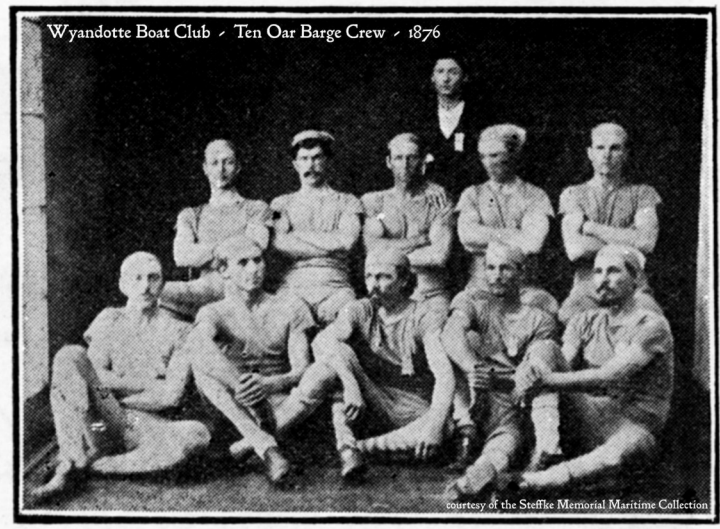


Rowing into the past

Over the years, people from all over the nation have come to Wyandotte to participate in rowing regattas. In 1875, John McKnight and a group of Wyandotte men got together and formed the boat club. The original members of the boat club worked long hard days at the Eureka Iron company then turned around to row and compete against other boat clubs in the region. During the 1870s, the Detroit river was heavily polluted from industry, and contaminated with Cholera, Typhus and all kinds of dangerous bacteria which prevented the Oarsmen from drinking the water. So the Oarsmen decided to bring a Beer Keg and ironstone tin cups aboard. Almost certainly the beer came from the Marx's Brewery and it would've kept the oarsmen feeling re-

freshed on a hot summer day. If they needed a "burst of speed" then they grabbed a stronger source of "courage and strength" and took a communal swig from the bottle of Johnny Walker Red Whiskey kept at the Cox'un's feet, in the back. Notice that there are some "Dew Rag" towels on some of the benches (worn around the neck of the men) and a few slop buckets for cold river water to help cool the men down, after an aptly named rowing "heat" to help prevent heat stroke. I believe that their first formal race was held during the

heat of the day on July 4th 1876 at the "Detroit River Navy Centennial Racing Regatta", and the Wyandotte men walked away with it, much to the surprise of the much more seasoned crews from the various Detroit & other area clubs, and there were many gathered down on the river for the various National Birthday races. It is interesting to note that they achieved their first win, after very little training. All of the men were "greenhorns" and not previously familiar with small boat handling according to period newspaper articles, except



for their trainer, captain & coxswain John McKnight. The completely "unknown" Wyandotte Crew quickly became a sensation that day, with their eye-catching, brilliantly colored barge. Their barge became known as the "Bonnie Blue Racer" and she went on to win virtually every race she was entered in and behind her was her powerful Ironworker Crewmen of "Y

& * "

Keith Steffke



Wyandotte Rowing Crew—Champion Oars of America—Saratoga 1892

N.T. Langlois, MD 3 M.C. Buscha, Bow W.R. Ocobock #2 Captain E.B. Nellis, Stroke



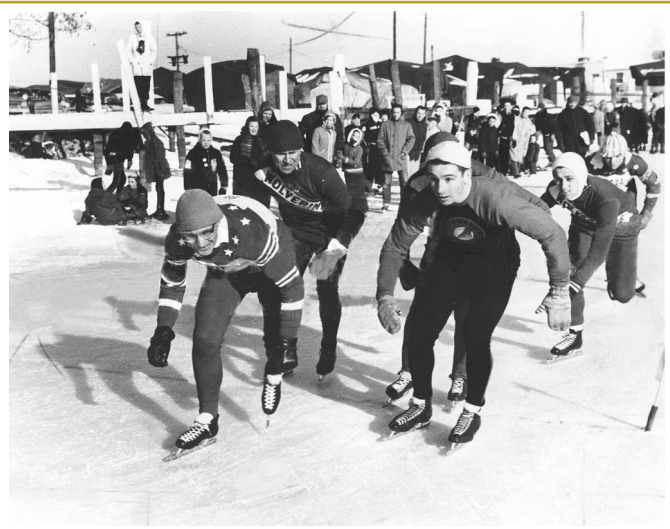
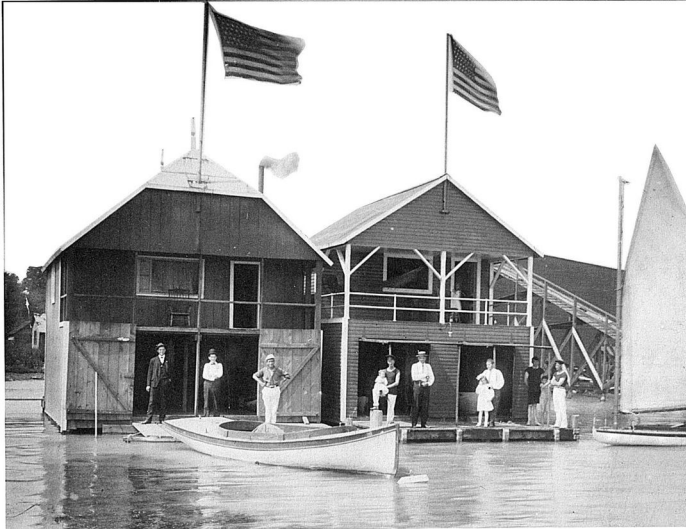
EARLY ST. PATRICK ROWING TEAM

The original team had many wins on their bonnie blue racer. In 1892, the Wyandotte Rowing Crew won the Oars of America in Saratoga, New York (team featured above). As rowing continued to thrive in Wyandotte many other teams started to appear. St. Patrick's Catholic Church (left) and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel both had rowing teams. St. Patrick's team was for parishioners of the church and Mt. Carmel's team was for the high school students.

Over the years, Wyandotte has been home to many rowing teams. Schools, church's, places of employment, and clubs started teams in the city to compete against one another. In 1944, William Krieger (2nd from the right) led an effort to incorporate the boat club as a non-profit. Shortly after, Wyandotte Chemicals deeded a parcel of land to the club including Burrell slip. Through donations and fundraising efforts, the clubhouse was completed in 1953. In the 1990s, rowing programs were expanded to include women. Today rowing is still a very popular sport in Wyandotte.



Mary-Johna Wein



Burrells slips provided year long recreation for rowing, swimming, boating, fishing, and ice fishing. The land was located at the foot of Mulberry street. Both pictures below are taken from Burrells slip. The photo to the right is a group of senior men skating before helmet regulations circa 1950. Photos from the Don Gutz collection.

 ***** *Historical Events happening downriver* *****

April 12, 2024 at 7pm—Soldiers Untold Presentation at the Marx (Wyandotte)

Come learn about the roles of Civil War Soldiers from Wyandotte during the American Civil War.

April 27, 2024 at noon—High Tea at the Historic Island home in (Grosse Ile)

Learn about the history of tea while enjoying a delicious lunch served on fine china! Tickets will be available for \$50 on Eventbrite closer to the event.

May 5, 2024 1-4pm—Pie and Ice Cream Social (Wyandotte)

Join us for our annual pie and Ice Cream Social. The artist guild will also have a selection of art-work available for purchase.

May 11, 2024 1-3pm—Railroad History Day at the (Grosse Ile) Railroad Depot

Come celebrate the 151 year anniversary of Canada Southern Railway connecting Grosse Ile via the railroad bridge in 1873. Information will be shared about trains and the role of the *Grosse Isle Train Depot*. *Free to all participants.*

May 11 2024 5:30 pm—RHS Mural Unveiling Ceremony (Wyandotte) Roosevelt

Join us for the mural unveiling at Roosevelt High School. At 6:45 the Rovasi Choral will be putting on a 50th anniversary concert. The event is free to attend.

May 17, 18, 19, 2024—(Wyandotte) City Wide Garage Sale

May 18 and 19, 2024 10am-4pm—(Taylor) Colonial Days at Heritage Park

Free Admission to a revolutionary war era encampment

Return Service Requested

Wyandotte Historical Society

Burns Home

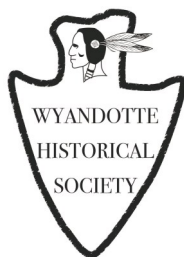
2624 Biddle Ave.

Wyandotte, MI 48192-5208

Phone: (734) 324-7299

Email: wyandottehistory@gmail.com

Website: wyandottehistory.org



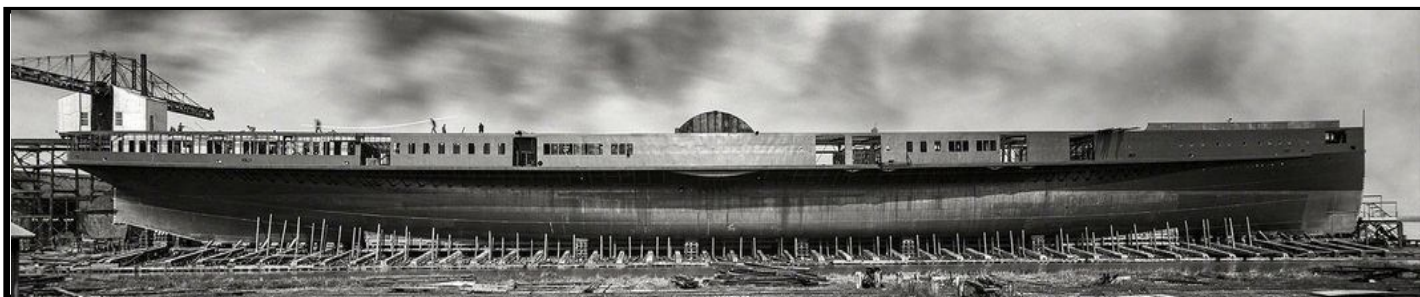
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