

A meeting of the Board of Historical Society of Greater Lansing, as held at the Lansing Public Library, 401 S. Capitol, Lansing, Wednesday, July 10, 1968.

The following persons were present:

Richard Hathaway, President
In Charge Michigan Section
State Library

Special Guests:

Joseph Kimbrough, Director
Lansing Public Library

Mrs. Richard (Jan) Frank
423 N. Pine
Lansing, Michigan

David C. Crippen, Director
Historical Society of Michigan
2117 Washtenaw
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Others:

Charles Leneweaver
1714 Pingree
Lansing

Rajee Tobia
409 N. Jenison
Lansing

Mrs. Harry G. Noble
920 S. Washington
Lansing, Michigan 48910

R.K. Clark
741 Wisconsin Avenue
Lansing, Michigan 48915

Bill Lloyd
Michigan State University

Mrs. George Wiskeman
Box 317 B., R4
Lansing, Michigan 48906

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Box 317 B., R4
Lansing, Michigan 48906

Mrs. Harley (Alice) Franks
1927 West Rundle
Lansing, Michigan 48910

Mrs. Helen Wallin
1245 W. Grand River, Apt. 12B
East Lansing, Michigan 48823

Mrs. Patricia Porter
430 Townsend
Lansing, Michigan 48933

President Hathaway called the meeting to order at 7:45. His goals are productive activity and wants us to recognize our deficiencies. First, what do we want to do, second, how do we want to do it, and third, what means are there to do it.

He felt that we needed other functions than that of collecting. Mrs. Jan Frank wanted to know how many members there were and the average age. It was agreed there were about 65 members with an average of 45. She wanted to know if there were any business firms or agencies that were contributing to our support and there were none.

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Mrs. Wiskemann explained that the activities of the past year were our monthly program and this was the limit of our activity. We haven't solicited any funds and have no projects.

The lack of cooperation of our local paper was discussed. Hathaway was going to have Birt Darling come to our meeting and see what could be done about more publicity. Various members have tried and failed in getting our news in print. It was suggested that we supply the newspaper with a local history quiz each week. Alice Franks said that in Wooster, Ohio there was a column called "Behind the Tombstone," which did this sort of thing. Jan Frank said we should go "to the top," and go after the deadline was passed.

Mr. Lloyd said we have to look at what we are going to publicize. We need something with a real punch. The trend is to de-emphasize history at the moment. Some historical societies have shrines they keep up--homes with grounds opened to visitors--permanent meeting places. We should consider what we have to offer the public.

Mr. Hathaway agreed and said that we are handicapped in that we do not have a shrine or a permanent meeting place. But, this is not insurmountable for we are able to share with the public library, a small section in the library available for a rotating exhibit. This will give us publicity and get notice for our activities and it can be an asset to the library. He then called on Joe Kimbrough, Director for the Lansing Public Library.

Bob Clark wanted to interrupt to tell the group of the original planning committee of which he was a member (as well as Geneva Wiskemann) and that plans for a local history room where the Lansing Society could meet, was part of the original plan, but hadn't materialized.

Mr. Kimbrough then told us that there were various committees and that the reason the local history room didn't come to pass was there were priorities given and that history was left out because of the lack of money. It is a policy of the Board of Education that no group could use the Lansing Public Library as a regular meeting place--that address was not to be used by any group, but that Historical Society meetings could be held at the Library on a month to month basis. He said that the exhibit lady at the Library would be happy to turn some of the work over to the group. The local history room should be completed by fall and once in operation can be opened about three days a week. Our group might consider donating time to keep the room opened and serve the public at other times.

He went on to say that Virginia Summers will be retiring in a couple of years. He felt that in return for help from our society it would be fair to let us use the room for meetings where people could browse and there would be larger rooms available for special meetings.

Bob Clark said "This is music to our ears."

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Kimbrough continued that the bids let for the room had come to more money than was available. The response from the public has been tremendous. They have been given a pier glass mirror, a piano, a sofa, a secretary desk, a lady's and gentleman's chair. Alexanian has donated a lovely champagne-colored rug with a floral pattern and the wall paper will be a soft white with gold design. The style will be Victorian and they will keep it pre-1860. The Museum will loan paintings, clocks and other items and it will be a room we can be proud of. The Historical Society of Greater Lansing can be the guild or the PTA.

Hathaway said this is one area where we can look to accomplish something and that our members should jump at the chance to serve.

At this point in the meeting Mr. Kimbrough took the group to visit the local history room which is in the process of completion. There is need for a crystal chandelier which is urgent as it will be installed under the contract if one can be located soon. They need small tables and chairs and small items where perhaps our members could assist.

Our first meeting this fall could be used to talk about staffing this room and possibly an open house with our Society acting as host. Kimbrough said the last two weeks in October will be given to a Fine Arts Festival. The full collection of the Robert Thom paintings will be on display with Mr. Thom being a guest.

Mr. Lloyd then wanted to know about the Michigan Historical Commission Museum, if the Historical Society could use its facilities. Mrs. Wiskemann stated that this building on North Washington Avenue is in the urban renewal area and is already surrounded by the Community College complex. Much of the collection is already gone and it will all go eventually. We might better direct our energies elsewhere. Mr. Lloyd also wanted to know what other cities were doing.

Mr. Hathaway stated that there is a combination problem for our Society: Membership and funds for printing and postage. We were about to talk about this problem when our guest appeared: David R. Crippen, the new Director of the Historical Society of Michigan who had driven up from Ann Arbor to be with us.

Jan Frank said there is no magic answer there are too many other distractions. When you think of the term of the presidency, in one year, things are not going to blossom in this short time. We should work out a two-year or a five-year plan. We are going to have to set little goals along the way. There is a lot of money in Lansing and there should be some fairy godfathers and god-mothers. We need a plan to show potential donors.

She went on to say that history was very much a part of her early life in New York State. They knew where the battles had been fought up and down the Hudson. There is no history in Michigan schools and our young people are just not exposed to it. This is a fantastic area. A local history society should be started in the school.

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Kimbrough interrupted telling of the needs of the children who come to the library. Virginia Summers is writing a history of Lansing and perhaps our Society could promote this. Ford Ceasar is also writing a history for the third grade.

Hathaway returned again to the problem of financing projects and increasing our membership. Crippen, the new Director for the Michigan Historical Society comes from a background of history. He felt that local interest is paramount, and that membership, if big enough and high enough would do the job. We need an annual fund drive or a sustaining fund. Perhaps we could influence a local resident to back our projects--it need not be public. Perhaps we could interest local industries or foundations. Get the local "fathers" on the Board. Get prominent citizens to serve.

Then the matter of memberships was discussed. It was suggested that we start a new category. Mrs. Frank thought we could get a local bank to become interested. Mr. Lloyd wanted to know how much money we were talking about. Hsthaway thought in terms of \$1,000.00 as a start. It was thought we might develop a brochure to bring local history to Lansing--make it more exciting and work up a program to promote history for Lansing and the community.

Hathaway thought Mr. Lloyd, Mrs. Frank and himself could work together on a membership and fund brochure. It was felt we needed more specific goals and when you are talking to any organization about money you have to have something in hand--some plan.

Hathaway wondered if we could agree to put together a publication outline goal and program and have a committee raise the money for publication. Mr. Lloyd suggested that we go talk with the mayor or perhaps the planning board for help. Mrs. Noble said there was a law in Ohio where the County Commissioners could give \$5,000.00 for historical projects.

Mr. Leneweaver wondered what kind of a brochure we wanted. Mr. Hathaway said one to show people for funds. Kimbrough has had an offer from a private person for help in printing a brochure. We could set one up for fund raising and membership. It was suggested that a membership reminder should be sent out by September--that a brochure should be made up to present to our first meeting. Leneweaver wanted to know how many we needed: 300-400 or 20,000. He will see what he can do by the end of July or the first of August.

Mrs. Noble said we must not discount young peoples' interest in history. Mrs. Frank thought our age group was too old. Mrs. Noble thought the children would cooperate and that our organization might offer a prize for some sort of participation.

Mr. Crippen suggested we send our ideas to Hathaway. Hathaway wants ideas within the next two weeks. This should be for programs, publications, and any other suggestions. He wants a list of the annual reports which have not been published so that some thought can be given to them. It was felt that Mr. Crosby's annual report this year on the State Capitol

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was especially appropriate and should be published along with others.
Hathaway will appoint an editor for the Town Crier and a program chairman.

Mrs. Porter agreed to draw up a mailing list to be used in our fund drive and membership campaign.

In discussing the dues, there was only one suggestion and that was raising the organization membership from \$25.00 to \$100.00. The Society dues would remain at \$3.00 annual, life membership at \$100.00, associate membership at \$8.00 (this includes \$3.00 for local dues plus the \$5.00 for dues in the Historical Society of Michigan).

Mr. Crippen told us he was at our service and that he and the Society wants to help us in any way they can. They can contribute brochures and aid in the joint annual membership. There is a balance of \$22.00 in the treasury.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Submitted by Helen Wallin
July 11, 1968