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**An exploration of several early Michigan county fairs as  
community arts organizations of the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s.  
(Volumes I and II)**

**Avery, Julie Ann, Ph.D.**

**Michigan State University, 1992**

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AN EXPLORATION OF SEVERAL EARLY MICHIGAN COUNTY FAIRS  
AS COMMUNITY ARTS ORGANIZATIONS  
OF THE 1850s, 1860s, AND 1870s

Volume I

By

Julie Ann Avery

A DISSERTATION

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College of Arts and Letters  
Interdisciplinary Program

1992

## ABSTRACT

### AN EXPLORATION OF SEVERAL EARLY MICHIGAN COUNTY FAIRS AS COMMUNITY ARTS ORGANIZATIONS OF THE 1850s, 1860s, AND 1870s

By

Julie Ann Avery

To date the early county fair has not been recognized for its role as a community arts organization. During the last half of the nineteenth century the county fair was often the only place where area residents could view a collection of creative works. This artwork spanned a broad spectrum of creative endeavor from needlework to photography and painting. Through the fairs, individual successes in the arts were acknowledged, and community standards were both reflected and created. The county fairs of this study sought and encouraged quality in the arts through their activities and were often the only community based agency facilitating involvements in the visual arts.

Through four county case studies, the agricultural societies, their fairs, and the cultural life of these remote communities are explored during the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s. St. Joseph County, Ionia County, the Grand Traverse region, and Ontonagon County were



selected based upon the numbers of occupied farms reported to the census, and to represent the state geographically.

The history and development of the agricultural fair in America, and the cultural life available in these remote, rural communities are discussed. These early fairs are reexamined in light of the purpose and goals of contemporary community arts agencies. Primary data for this exploratory study was gathered through the weekly newspapers of the period.

These early county agricultural societies viewed themselves as leading their communities towards the future. The fair was an inclusive, democratic agency involving a true cross section of the community. The discovery and recognition of quality was the predominant reason for competitions at the fairs. Premiums rewarded the work of individuals and inspired individual and community pursuits. These activities both reflected and contributed to the aesthetic values of the community, and the inclusion of the arts spoke to their value in the life of the community. The creative activities at the fairs had a significant impact on the cultural life of the communities they served. In a surprising number of ways, the activities of these early county fairs parallel the contemporary work of today's community arts agencies.

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**Dedicated to  
Charlie Kimes  
&  
the Js**

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# INTRODUCTION

The early county fair has not been widely recognized for its role as a community arts organization. During the last half of the nineteenth century, the county fair was often the only place where area residents could view a collection of creative works. These artworks covered a broad spectrum of creative endeavors including needlework, decorative works of wax and found objects (hair, shells, mosses, seeds), ornamental brackets and cushions, photography, drawings, and paintings.

The importance of the county fair in advancing the agricultural interests of society is generally acknowledged for this time in America, when increasing self-sufficiency was a strong motivating factor. That these efforts included crops and livestock is well known, but the interests of the early agricultural societies also extended to domestic manufactures as well. The production of cloth, and especially wool, took the concerns from the farm into the home as well as the factories. At the earliest fairs, domestic manufactures were the products of the home and farm: foodstuffs, cloth and needlework, tools, and doors. These included quilts, hearth rugs, samplers, drawings of cattle, paintings of farm scenes, as well as adapted tools and home cabinets or toolboxes.

Through the fair, individual successes, as well as new techniques and methods, were shared and acknowledged. Farmers, their wives, and children were inspired and intrigued with what they saw, and went home to try something new or adapt their own techniques.

Elkanah Watson, known as the "Father of the American Agricultural Fair," had created a new type of democratic agricultural society, which engaged the common farmer and acknowledged all aspects of his life. Watson was both a learned and traveled gentleman. He had done business on both sides of the ocean, privately and for the government; he was also a patron of the arts. He brought all these aspects of life into a new model for county agricultural societies. To make an impact, the fair had to truly engage the whole community, and this meant the farmer and his wife and all of their pursuits. Watson's first fairs included exhibits and awards across the range of agriculture and home arts. Men and women participated, and they learned and celebrated both agricultural and domestic achievements.

Today the artistic community continues to expand the boundaries and definitions which explain art. We are accepting an expanded concept that real art can include more than just the museum or performed masterpieces. University and community professionals alike recognize the importance of accepting a broad range of creative efforts and extending access to the arts to all levels and races within our society. Even with the controversies concerning public funds and the arts and to the extent arts education should be a part of a total curriculum, attention to the arts is becoming more inclusive than exclusive. Since the late 1950s, community arts agencies throughout the country have been working to create access to a broad range of

arts for all people. We acknowledge that the traditional dances, decoy carvings, and quilts of our ancestors are valuable, creative, and artistic endeavors that can be respected, enjoyed, and learned from, similar to a symphony performance or a sculpture.

With this evidence of a willingness to reexamine and reevaluate the past and to expand for the future, it is interesting that the movement places its beginnings quite recently in time. Histories generally point to the first local community arts agencies in the late 1950s. The formation of the National Endowment for the Arts, in 1965, spurred the development of a national network of state and local community arts organizations. Earlier activities which foreshadowed and encouraged community arts activities included the Chautauqua of the late 1800s and early 1900s and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) programs in the 1930s which brought arts centers into many communities and murals into many post offices. However, both the established Chautauqua circuit and the WPA could be described as being imposed from without. Growing from within the community is, a characteristic of a true community arts agency.

The early county fair, through a local board of directors or trustees, set its own course and was truly an indigenous reflection of the agricultural and domestic interests of its extended community. Though these fairs did receive encouragement from the state agricultural society, there were no directives from outside. The county fair was shaped by the community and its interests. While agricultural interests were primary, the arts were there from the beginning. They were embraced in the bylaws and competitive

categories and were evidenced by the items entered in exhibitions and by the enthusiasm generated by those items within the community.

-----

This is an exploratory study examining several Michigan county agricultural societies and their fairs during the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s. Michigan educator Kenyon Butterfield, internationally recognized for his work promoting agricultural education, designated this period as the "Golden Age" of the agricultural fair. At this time, fairs were primarily educational activities. Exhibition and judging were core elements, with the awarding of premiums/prizes providing a method to recognize individual achievement.

In order to cover the state geographically, for this study, Michigan has been divided into four parallel regions, as illustrated in Figure 1 at the end of this introduction. Three societies of the lower peninsula are examined. Case studies examine the cultural life of the time, the agricultural societies, and their fairs. Case studies are St. Joseph County, Ionia County, and the Grand Traverse Region. In the fourth area, Ontonagon County, in the Upper Peninsula, is examined, although not in as great detail.

The cultural life of the community is addressed through the arts organizations and arts opportunities available to area citizens. Individual artists are not included unless they were active within the framework of a community arts organization or provided a service, e.g., painting or music lessons, to community members. Architects and photographers, for example, are included in some cases because of

their entries and exhibitions at a fair or their work with community cultural organizations. Community literary and musical organizations and, sometimes, dramatic clubs were active within each of the communities of this study. With rare exception, the only opportunity for individual involvement in the visual arts within the community existed because of the county fair.

-----

The purpose of this study is to provide an arena within which to examine the early county fair and document it as a community arts organization as well as an agricultural one. Through the inclusion of a broad range of creative work, the fair filled a void that was not addressed by any other community agency. It may also become necessary for contemporary community arts professionals to look further back into their own past in order to capture an accurate picture of their history.

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The research has utilized the newspapers of the times as a resource which recorded the activities of community arts organizations, agricultural societies, and their fairs.

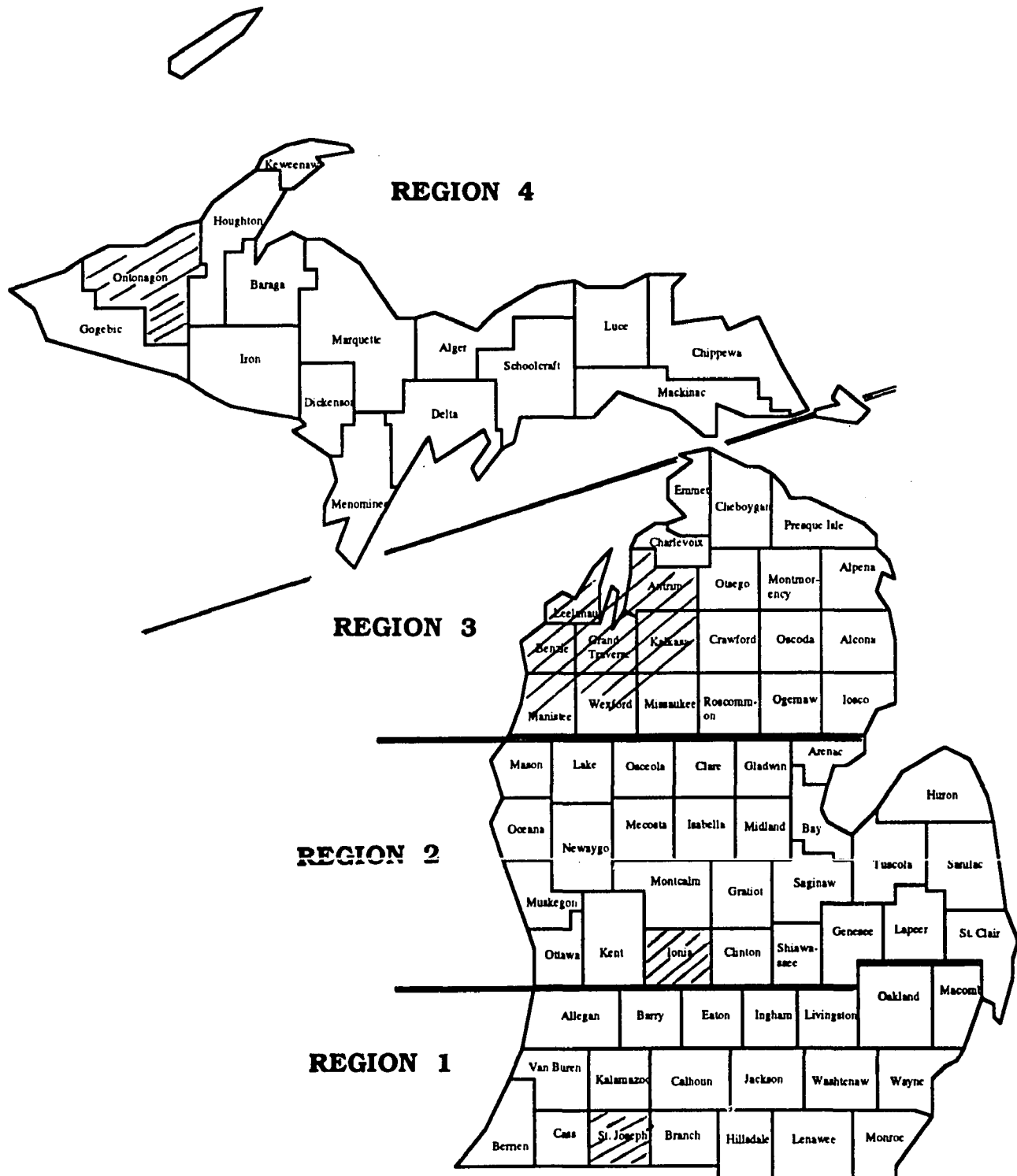


**Figure 1**  
**Michigan Map: Four Parallel Regions of Study**

## **Chapter 1**

# **METHODOLOGY**

### **Identification of Focus Counties**

The first challenge of this study was to identify Michigan counties which were representative across the state and where early records were available. Michigan's more populated and metropolitan communities were eliminated from consideration. Attention was focused upon the more remote and rural regions of the state, in order to determine if the arts would appear as a part of the county fair activity outside of the influence of the more sophisticated population centers.

Direct contacts with county fair agencies throughout the state provided very little historical information about the fairs of this period. Where organizational or fair histories existed, their information often did not reach back this far in time other than with a cursory mention of dates and dollars or premiums awarded. County histories published in the 1870s and 1880s often mentioned agricultural societies and fairs, giving brief overviews or interesting anecdotes. Period newspapers provided primary information about the fairs and the community life of the times. Because the fair was a prominent annual event, it received extensive coverage with more description and detail than other community or regional events. Editors themselves were often active in encouraging the formation and maintenance of the



agricultural society, and in encouraging citizen participation. Reports of the society business and progress were also extensively covered. Most cities of any significant size had newspapers during the latter half of the nineteenth century. In the 1960s the Michigan Newspapers on Microfilm Project of the State Library of Michigan identified these newspapers and coordinated a statewide effort to microfilm and preserve those that remained to ensure this source of historical information would not be lost. One of the most complete microfiche collections of Michigan's newspapers exists at the Library of Michigan, the state library agency. The major research and historical library collections in the state cooperated in this project, as well. These include the Bentley Historical Library, in Ann Arbor, and the libraries of Eastern Michigan University, the University of Michigan, and Wayne State University.

Population growth generally moved from Michigan's southern border to the north. Agricultural interests, one of the first activities of a newly populated area, also developed from the south to north. The emergence of agricultural societies and fairs followed in this pattern as well. The organization of societies in most southern tiers of counties began early in the 1850s. Further north, societies in the Grand Traverse Region began in the 1860s, and Upper Peninsula societies did not appear until the late-1860s and early 1870s.

This pattern is also reflected by statistics gathered in early censuses which tallied the number of occupied farms per county. The period between 1850 and 1870 is considered the "Golden Age" of the agricultural fair. Early in this period the southernmost three or four

tiers of Michigan counties had occupied farms. At about the center point in the lower peninsula, farming existed primarily along the west coast of the state at this time period. There were hardly any occupied farms reported in the census for the north-central and northeastern lower peninsula counties. Michigan's Upper Peninsula counties reported few occupied farms during this period.

Charts reflecting the numbers of occupied farms in the counties of each region were constructed to aid in identifying focus counties. Figures were gathered from the 1850, 1860, and 1870 censuses.

**Table 1**  
**Occupied Farms in Region One**

(Sources: Statistics of Michigan in 1850. Compiled for the United States Census. (Lansing, 1861), 323-329. Statistics of the State of Michigan Compiled from the Census of 1860. (Lansing, 1861) 310-318. Statistics of the State of Michigan Collected for the Ninth Census of the United States, June 1, 1870. (Lansing, 1873) 274-278, cxvii.)

| <u>1850</u>             | <u>1860</u>             | <u>1870</u>             |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Oakland 3,559           | Oakland 4,252           | Lenawee 4,315           |
| Washtenaw 2,546         | Lenawee 3,258           | Oakland 4,076           |
| Lenawee 2,471           | Washtenaw 3,230         | Wayne 3,637             |
| Jackson 2,282           | Hillsdale 3,162         | Washtenaw 3,585         |
| Calhoun 1,834           | Calhoun 2,843           | Hillsdale 3,472         |
| Livingston 1,653        | Jackson 2,596           | Jackson 3,310           |
| Wayne 1,632             | Wayne 2,493             | Macomb 3,039            |
| Branch 1,436            | Macomb 2,484            | Calhoun 3,020           |
| Hillsdale 1,411         | <b>St. Joseph 2,233</b> | Kalamazoo 2,896         |
| <b>St. Joseph 1,354</b> | Branch 2,162            | Monroe 2,894            |
| Macomb 1,317            | Monroe 2,139            | Barry 2,792             |
| Monroe 1,284            | Kalamazoo 1,940         | Van Buren 2,779         |
| Kalamazoo 1,100         | Allegan 1,828           | Branch 2,709            |
| Ingham 1,084            | Cass 1,789              | Livingston 2,692        |
| Cass 952                | Livingston 1,779        | Ingham 2,680            |
| Barry 750               | Berrien 1,656           | Berrien 2,481           |
| Eaton 747               | Eaton 1,606             | Eaton 2,415             |
| Berrien 694             | Ingham 1,576            | Allegan 2,411           |
| Van Buren 488           | Barry 1,470             | Cass 2,403              |
| Allegan 270             | Van Buren 1,395         | <b>St. Joseph 2,204</b> |

In Region 1, the most southern area of the state, all 20 counties had occupied farms in each of these years. Table 1 lists, by year, the count of occupied farms from highest to lowest. The numbers of occupied farms in Region 1 ranged from 270 to 3,559 in 1850. By 1870 the numbers had grown to between 2,204 and 4,315.

**Table 2**  
**Occupied Farms in Region Two**  
(Sources: See Table 1.)

| <u>1850</u>      | <u>1860</u>        | <u>1870</u>        |
|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Genessee 1,476   | Kent 2,634         | Kent 4,065         |
| Kent 885         | Clinton 2,074      | Genessee 3,568     |
| Shiawassee 746   | <b>Ionia 2,027</b> | <b>Ionia 3,168</b> |
| Clinton 652      | Genessee 1,781     | Ottawa 2,904       |
| Lapeer 628       | Lapeer 1,544       | Clinton 2,600      |
| <b>Ionia 613</b> | Ottawa 1,174       | Shiawassee 2,328   |
| Ottawa 204       | Tuscola 882        | Montcalm 1,878     |
| Sanalac 88       | Shiawassee 826     | Lapeer 1,877       |
| Saginaw 79       | Saginaw 564        | Gratiot 1,764      |
| Montcalm 26      | Sanalac 408        | Tuscola 1,637      |
| Tuscola 13       | Gratiot 333        | Sanalac 1,511      |
| Newago 12        | Montcalm 298       | Saginaw 1,322      |
| Midland 4        | Muskegon 194       | Huron 1,079        |
| Gratiot          | Huron 148          | Isabella 881       |
| Huron            | Newago 107         | Muskegon 526       |
| Isabella         | Bay 102            | Newago 516         |
| Muskegon         | Isabella 99        | Oceana 487         |
| Oceana           | Oceana 83          | Mecosta 469        |
| Mecosta          | Midland 71         | Osceola 349        |
| Osceola          | Mason 43           | Mason 310          |
| Mason            | Mecosta 30         | Bay 271            |
| Bay              | Osceola 3          | Midland 185        |
| Lake             | Arenac             | Lake 40            |
| Clare            | Clare              | Clare 13           |
| Arenac           | Gladwin            | Arenac             |
| Gladwin          | Lake               | Gladwin            |

In Region 2, as illustrated in Table 2, the numbers were much smaller; only 13 of the 27 counties had occupied farms recorded in the 1850 census, and this count ranged from 4 to 1,476. By the 1870 census there were still several counties that did not show occupied farms, but the figures had risen from 13 to 4,065.

In the Upper Peninsula and the top third of the lower peninsula, this picture changed quite dramatically, as is illustrated by Table 3.

**Table 3**  
**Occupied Farms in Regions Three and Four**  
 (Sources: See Table 1.)

| <b>Region Three</b>   |                    |                    | <b>Region Four</b> |                  |               |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------|
|                       | <b><u>1850</u></b> | <b><u>1860</u></b> | <b><u>1870</u></b> |                  |               |
| Alcona                |                    |                    | 11                 | Alger            |               |
| Alpena                |                    |                    | 23                 | Baraga           |               |
| Antrim                |                    |                    | 385                | Chippewa         | 48 43 56      |
| Benzie                |                    |                    | 365                | Delta            | 16 14         |
| Charlevoix            |                    |                    | 227                | Dickinson        |               |
| Cheboygan             | 30                 | 31                 |                    | Gogebic          |               |
| Crawford              |                    |                    |                    | Houghton         | 25 89         |
| Emmet                 | 55                 | 183                |                    | Keenaw           | 15            |
| <b>Grand Traverse</b> | <b>70</b>          | <b>620</b>         |                    | Luce             |               |
| Iosco                 |                    |                    | 30                 | Mackinac         | 14 8 9        |
| Kalkaska              |                    |                    | 51                 | Marquette        | 30 5          |
| Leelanau              | 54                 | 570                |                    | Menominee        | 9             |
| Manistee              |                    |                    | 37                 | <b>Ontonagon</b> | <b>72 129</b> |
| Missaukee             |                    |                    | 5                  | Schoolcraft      |               |
| Montmorency           |                    |                    |                    |                  |               |
| Ogemaw                |                    |                    | 2                  |                  |               |
| Oscoda                |                    |                    | 2                  |                  |               |
| Otsego                |                    |                    |                    |                  |               |
| Presque Isle          |                    |                    |                    |                  |               |
| Roscommon             |                    |                    |                    |                  |               |
| Wexford               |                    |                    | 62                 |                  |               |

In both locations almost no occupied farms were reported in the 1850 census. None were reported in Region 3. By the 1870 census 15 of the 21 counties showed occupied farms, but only 5 of these had more than 200 occupied farms. In the Upper Peninsula 2 counties reported occupied farms (14 and 48) in the 1850 census. By the 1870 census, 8 counties reported occupied farms, with the top number counts being 89 and 129.

Focus counties for the case studies were selected through a process which involved identifying counties having higher numbers of occupied farms across the years and for which newspapers of that period were available. County-seat newspapers were preferred, but when not available, newspapers with a stated interest in the activity of the county or the region were sought. In Region 1, because of the large number of occupied farms within all of the counties of the region and the prevalence of farms within the entire time span, almost any county would have been an acceptable choice. St. Joseph County was selected for the case study. Situated in the center of the range of numbers of occupied farms, St. Joseph County was in the top half of the count for both the 1850 and 1860 census tabulations. Ionia County was selected from Region 2. Across the three census years, the number of occupied farms in Ionia County placed it in the top third of the range of 27 counties. For Region 3 there was only one possible choice. Prior to 1870 Grand Traverse County included a larger geographical area than it does at present. This region had no occupied farms listed in the 1850 census, but for the 1860 and 1870 censuses, Grand Traverse had the largest number of occupied farms:

the seventy occupied farms in 1860 had risen to 620 by 1870. The Upper Peninsula was also a clear choice: Ontonagon County had the highest number of occupied farms in both the 1860 and 1870 censuses, though these numbers were only 72 in 1860 and 129 in 1870.

### **Review of the Literature**

Information from three distinct bodies of knowledge was sought in order to provide the foundation necessary to evaluate the early county fair as a community arts organization. The role and functions of the contemporary community arts agency provide the model through which to view the early fair and consider its contribution to the arts of the community. Secondly, a picture of the cultural life of these communities was important. What were the cultural organizations and activities available in small, remote, and rural communities of the middle west during the second half of the nineteenth century? Finally, information about the American agricultural fair was important. How did our county fair develop, and what was its function and place within these early rural communities? This information was gathered through traditional search processes in library and historical collections as well as through contacts in related professional organizations, such as fair and exposition associations, county fair boards, and historical societies, and with practicing professionals in these fields.

### **Data Collection**

Data was gathered through reading the weekly newspapers from the particular locales. Information recorded included items concerning the agricultural societies, their fairs, and the community cultural organizations and activities which occurred. The model used for this collection of information involved the identification of a focus fair within each decade and the gathering of community detail across a sufficient amount of time to identify cultural and arts-related activities and organizations which existed within the community.

|            |    |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |               |    |    |    |   |   |   |            |  |  |
|------------|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---------------|----|----|----|---|---|---|------------|--|--|
| Months: 10 | 11 | 12 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9             | 10 | 11 | 12 | 1 | 2 | 3 |            |  |  |
|            |    |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | previous fair |    |    |    |   |   |   | focus fair |  |  |

**Figure 2**  
**Model Data Collection Schedul. - Each Decade**

A time period of one and one-half years surrounding the focus fair provided the opportunity to observe the community-based activities as well as any entertainments and arts-related activities which were brought into the communities. This time period also included the previous fair. Though the focus fairs provided a comparison and progression from decade to decade, information on the organization and development of the society, as well as its first fairs, was also recorded. Basic information from each society and fair was sought, including bylaws, constitution, board members, categories of competition, descriptions of items, premium winners from the creative categories, etc.

The gathering of information descriptive of the cultural life of the community was limited to established community cultural

organizations such as musical, dramatic, or literary groups. Entertainments and programs brought into the community for the benefit of the population as a whole were also recorded. Opportunities provided for citizens to participate or learn in an arts area were noted as well. The activities of individual artists, unless related to community organizations or something impacting the citizenry at large, were not included.

In order to maintain the flavor of the historical era, the reporting of events has utilized the phrases and terminology of the day. This is apparent in both the quotes and discussions. It is necessary to acknowledge that both meaning and opinion has changed since the mid-1800s. The use of "Indian," "colored," or "crippled" is in no way intended to demean the Native American, African American or handicapper populations, but only reflects the historical usage. References to articles from other lands as "curiosities" likewise utilizes the language as it was reported in the newspapers of the day. Although Oriental baskets and cloth made from the bark of trees by "natives of the Sandwich Islands" may have been considered "curiosities" to the fairgoers of this study, they are regarded as legitimate items of artistic and cultural expression, worthy of scholarly study by professionals in universities and museums today.

Upon completion of the data collection for a case study, a chart was compiled of the individuals whose names emerged in order to observe patterns of involvement. Information charted included name, city, year, category of activity, type of involvement, and miscellaneous data. Categories of activity recorded were fair, music, visual art,



performance, home talent, literary, lecture, dance, tour, and drama. Types of involvement included judge, visual art, entry, premium award, and committee membership. Two types of information were sought through the creation of these charts. First, whether there would be a pattern of involvement by the same people across time, and second, if individuals active in one community cultural organization (including the agricultural societies and fairs) were also involved in other organizations.

Further research was conducted to seek information on specific community cultural organizations or individuals who emerged as active within a community. This research was focused at the local or regional level and included local historical collections and resources, such as libraries, historical societies, and arts councils.

Two general surveys were developed to uncover the availability of information on county agricultural societies and fair-related items. County and regional fair association offices were contacted with a questionnaire which sought to uncover the availability of historical information as well. Forty-two mailings were sent to fair associations in areas having high numbers of occupied farms during the late 1850s and early 1860s. A second survey was sent to Michigan museums and historical societies having collections, with the objective of locating items known to have been connected with fairs and early photographs of fairs. These agencies were also asked to identify exceptional items of the types of things that were entered into the competitions of the fairs of the period, e.g., hair or feather wreaths, spatter work, etc. Visits were made to three major collections to view these types of

articles first hand. Copies of each survey and summaries of the results are included in Appendix A and Appendix B.

**PART I**  
**THE BACKGROUND**

## **Chapter 2**

# **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Community Arts Today: A Window to the Past**

In his recent testimony to Congress in support of the National Endowment for the Arts, Dr. Patrick Overtone, assistant professor of communication and religious studies, Columbia College (Columbia, Missouri), focused on the role of the arts in the community and the importance of access to the arts in rural and remote areas:

For people in rural and small communities, arts is not past tense, something which has already happened--an event or a thing. Art is present tense, a verb that excites, challenges, demands, changes, reveals, angers, threatens, and encourages . . . When you only look at art as a product that can be defined as good or bad, we objectify it. In the process, we remove it from the realm of everyday life of people. This makes art powerless to affect lives because it is out of context and art was never meant to be out of context. In the final analysis, art isn't objects, it isn't performances, it isn't products. It is people. People telling their story. It is people preserving their cultural heritage, exploring the condition of their lives, expressing their dreams and their fears, expanding and creating new inscapes that challenge and change their lives and their communities in which they live.

"Community arts" emerged as an independent term in the early 1970s. Prior to this time, in the arts, when "community" was used, it was always connected to a specific art form--theatre, symphony, choir, etc. This contemporary usage suggests a citizenry interested in participating, avocationally, in an arts activity. "Community arts" as a concept can be traced back in our history. Robert Lynch, chief executive officer of the National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies

(NALAA), suggests that it began in America from the "first glimpses of community need and local interest in art for all in the late 1800s."

Maryo Ewell, a community arts specialist with particular interest in the arts life in rural areas, believes that "community arts has its roots in the early days of chamber music, when families and friends made music together for their own pleasure and inspiration; and even earlier when religion and art, reverence and expression, were one and the same thing."<sup>1</sup>

In the Michigan communities of this study, from 1850 to the end of the century, arts in the community showed many faces. There was the local band, making music for dancing and celebration after the barn raising or for the Sabbath school festival. Community arts was also the 36 voices strong that came together for twelve weeks of rehearsal to produce the Cantana of the Rose and then performed for the entire community. When a traveling professor came to town, community arts was the citizens' participation in planning and executing a musical convention. Local audiences attending a school exhibition or a performance of the young people's drama club showed both pride in the youth of the community and appreciation for and enjoyment of the arts as entertainment. Community arts was also shown by the pride exhibited by a local "subscription" that built a pavilion at the center of town for the band, or the crowd's approval when the band led the parade for the county fair. Community arts was

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<sup>1</sup> Nina Freedlander Gibans, Community Arts Council Movement: History, Opinions, Issues (New York: Prager, 1982), 26-32; Cheryl L. Yuen, Community Vision: A Policy Guide to Local Arts Agency Development, (Washington, D.C.: National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies, 1990), 1; Maryo Ewell, "The Search for Roots: 1933-1965," in Arts for America: A Vision for the Future, (Washington, D.C., National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies, 1988), 11

literary societies so strongly supported that their membership, with community support, built their own buildings, providing the region with a public hall, lecture series, entertainments, and access to literature and the world through a local library.

For this study, the contemporary community arts concept will provide us with a window--a lens through which to view the past and reevaluate the role and presence of arts activities at the early county fairs in Michigan. Today's community arts agencies serve many functions. They exist as a resource for both the artist and the community. They identify artists and assist in bringing them to the awareness of the community. Both artists and community members are exposed to new works, processes, and techniques. Education and training are other functions which the community arts agency provides. The American county agricultural society emerged with parallel purposes.

The county fair aimed to provide a forum as well as an incentive. Through exhibition and acknowledgment, farmers came together to learn from one another in areas of agricultural production and domestic manufacture. Like the contemporary community arts agency, whose motto might be summarized as "all the arts to all the people," the early county fair also sought to involve, democratically, the entire community as well as the broad range of their efforts: from crops and livestock to products of home labor. From the beginning of the American county fair, this range of attention included the fine arts as well as the creative and ornamental activities which enhanced items of practical household use and decorated the lives and the homes of the individuals in the communities here examined.

### **The Community Arts Movement--the Background**

The history of community arts is summarized here from the words of two leaders in this movement. The first is Robert Lynch, president and chief executive officer of the National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies (NALAA). In his speech at NALAA's 1988 convention, Lynch spoke of recurring stages of "surges forward and setbacks" describing the progress of this movement. Ironically, it began with a setback--Christopher Columbus' discovery of America. That was the beginning of the end, so to speak, of a strong native population which dealt with the arts as a strong and ongoing part of community life. "Many native American tribes didn't even have a separate name for art, it was so integrated into everyday life--dance, clothing, body decoration, storytelling . . ." He notes that the early Americans were "not an 'artsy crowd.'" From the Pilgrims forward we were a work-oriented people. Almost everything was created new. At first, there was a lot of competition and little interest in the community as a structure. America was an isolationist society. The creation of the United States did not change this early attitude. "John Adams is quoted as saying that he and his contemporaries had to make war so that their children could concentrate on agriculture and commerce, so that their children's children could be concerned with art and culture." Arts organizations were scarce before the 1800s, and much of the art which existed was imported. When theatres and museums emerged in more populated areas, along with some local artistic organizations, in the second half of the nineteenth century, these were

not intended for the masses but for the wealthy and cultured of America.<sup>2</sup>

Lynch identifies the groundwork for the community arts movement as emerging in the late 1800s and early 1900s with the Chautauqua, which "left a hunger for the arts in communities throughout the young nation." University land grant programs of the 1930s provided programs which "promulgated the idea that the arts, along with everything else...needed to be shared with everyone." Also at this time, the Works Progress Administration (WPA), though it was imposed from the outside, "was a fascinating precursor of today's local arts agencies. . . . A taste of the arts was beginning to nurture a taste for the arts."<sup>3</sup>

World War II radically changed American isolationism. Shortly after the war the first agencies were founded with concerns for the community as a whole and to provide it with art and arts services. A small group of both private and public organizations emerged across the country. Progress was very slow, for by 1956 only about 55 local arts agencies existed. In 1965, the establishment of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was a boost. Part of the NEA's legislation required that 20 percent of its funds be distributed to the states. From this, the state arts agency system was born. This system created a model of decentralization which led to the establishment of local arts agencies and councils. These organizations served as a vehicle for distribution of both federal and state dollars as well as to

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<sup>2</sup> Yuen, Community Vision, 3-5.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



encourage and provide community arts services.<sup>4</sup> Michigan was one of the first of the state arts agencies. This network provided a means for statewide networking and a mechanism for the distribution of federal and state dollars for the arts.

Maryo Ewell is community programs director for the Colorado Council on the Arts and Humanities. She has a long history of interest and involvement in rural arts access and community arts development, beginning in her childhood. Her father, Robert Gard, pioneered rural arts outreach through the Agricultural Extension Services of the University of Wisconsin. Ms. Ewell approaches the movement's history with her "stories of seven key turning points of recent decades to arrive at our current situation."<sup>5</sup>

Ewell's first story is about government involvement in funding the arts and the public establishment of arts organizations. This begins in 1965 with the NEA legislation mandating officially designated agencies in each state. The second story begins with the cultural activities of the Junior League organization with the establishment of cultural arts committees. Some of the earliest Local Arts Agencies (LAAs<sup>6</sup>) have their beginnings in the activities of these community-minded service organizations.<sup>7</sup> Virginia Lee Comer, consultant on the arts for the National Junior League in 1943, is considered a "Johnny Appleseed"

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Arts for America, Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Chris Van Antwerp, past Executive Director of the Michigan Association of Community Arts Agencies, clarifies the difference between community arts agencies and Local Arts Agencies by saying that LAA's are specific arts organizations designated by their municipal governments as representative of the arts community. This designation is necessary to be able to compete for and receive federal and sometimes state dollars specified for this type of agency. Community arts agencies are any arts organization/agency that is doing arts for the community.

<sup>7</sup> Yuen, Community Vision, 3-5.

of culture, sprinkling the idea of arts councils in many counties as she traveled the country.<sup>8</sup>

Another story hinges around the formally organized Community Arts Councils established in Quincy, Illinois; Winston-Salem, North Carolina; and Cannon City, Colorado, between 1947 and 1948, to support local arts. This version does not credit the federal government but suggests that LLAs emerged where they were needed, ". . . eventually reaching a critical mass and exploding into the movement we see today."<sup>9</sup>

The third story is "surrounded by the Great Depression, Franklin Roosevelt, and the WPA." Public works projects encompassed all areas of the arts, from architecture to ornamentation, from murals to easel painting and sculpture. Theatre, music, poster graphics, stained glass, printmaking, and writing activities were also subsidized by this governmental effort which sought to employ citizens and artists. The WPA even established "Community Arts Centers and Federal Arts Galleries, staffing one hundred arts centers in twenty-two states."<sup>10</sup>

Two other stories are centered in the Midwest: Baker Brownell's concept of "human community," in Montana in the mid-1940s, and Governor Bob LaFollett's "Wisconsin Idea," "which pushed for the entire citizenry of the state to have the broadest possible education . . . and yielded a wealth of models for arts development around the turn of the century." "Cultural animation" is the crux of Ewell's sixth story and the only one with roots outside the United States. Here the artist

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<sup>8</sup> "Our Early Leadership," in Arts for America, 14.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

is not only a mirror for the community but also assists the community in finding its own identity. "The ongoing struggles of people of diverse heritage in asserting their identities within a society which values the melting pot" is the final story, and perhaps the newest, in light of the recent emphasis on multicultural history and contribution.<sup>11</sup>

The review of community arts leads us in many directions, into many communities. The contemporary community arts agency reflects and serves the particular locale from which it has sprung. Characteristics which are attributed to community arts groups focus on the "indigenous . . . grassroots . . . neighborhood . . . and local" concerns and needs of the people who are there. Nina Freedlander Gibbans, in The Community Arts Council Movement, suggests that the biggest contribution of this movement has been in broadening the definition of the arts to "include more art forms and more publics into the mainstream of the arts, and to bring public awareness to their importance."<sup>12</sup>

The philosophic foundation of community arts provides another framework for acknowledging the arts: the scholarly, art history approach where art is a masterpiece and the artist, a unique and rare member of society, is but one aspect of the community arts program. Today's community arts leaders dream of reaching into all segments of their populations and including art forms from the total range of experience. The experience and process of making art have become just as important, perhaps more so, than the art object, be it a

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Gibbans, Community Arts Council Movement, 26-32.

sculpture or a choir performance. No standards are set, but quality is always sought, and the opportunity for participation and enjoyment in the arts ranks equally with the opportunity to learn new arts techniques.<sup>13</sup>

Because the community arts agency reflects its locale and meets the unique needs of its community, there is no definition or checklist against which to measure it. Robert Lynch notes that the similarities among community arts agencies are often simply that "each [serves] one particular locale."<sup>14</sup> The NALLA suggests in its publications, however, that there are common goals shared by most successful, local community arts agencies. Goals fall into six major areas and will provide a framework to view the early county fair in Michigan. These goals include a recognition of the importance of quality when dealing with the arts and the importance of extending access and enjoyment of the arts to all facets of the community. Attention to cultural pluralism is another area--including the arts and cultural traditions of black, Hispanic, native American, and other minority cultures as well as the white, European traditions. This speaks to the extension of the definition of the arts beyond the fine arts, recognizing folk arts and traditional crafts and skills as well. The successful community arts agency works to create an environment which nurtures artists and other arts organizations as well, and increasingly, sees its members involved in community planning to promote the cultural history and future of their locale.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Arts for America, 1-2.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

## **Arts in the Community: 1850-1900**

From the metropolitan centers of the East to smaller, remote, rural villages, the arts are found way in every community. In order to recognize the community arts role of the county fair, it is first necessary to observe the cultural life of the rural communities of the period. This discussion will survey the arts and cultural activities found in the communities of the Midwest and emphasise rural Michigan communities. The cultural life of St. Joseph and Ionia counties, the Grand Traverse Region, and Ontonagon County will be covered in more detail in each of the case study sections of this study.

After land was cleared and families were settled, the arts and a cultural life emerged, even in the most rural settlements. Symphony orchestras and museums found homes primarily in the large population centers before 1900. However, avenues for creative expression existed in singing schools, community bands, painting lessons, and literary societies, even in small-town America.

Lewis Mumford, in his study of the arts in America between 1865 and 1895, calls this period The Brown Decades--"Brown" because the country "looked different, darker, sadder, soberer" and because the rapid industrial expansion was changing the color of the cities; "Soberer" because the country was mourning Lincoln's death and was weary from the Civil War. "Society was adapting its colouration to the visible smut of early industrialism"; soot from the factories had sprung up everywhere. Even in the majestic wilderness, with endless views,

the smoke of the steam engine was cutting across the face of the new country, almost ahead of the frontier itself. Mumford makes clear, however, that these times were not just “a mirror of our vices and infirmities” but also the source of many of the elements important to future cultural growth. American literature flourished. Thoreau's reverence for the landscape was seeping into the American consciousness, creating an individual and collective awareness which, however slowly, would grow. Frederick Olmstead brought the idea of parks into the urban center, impacting on city planning and showing the need for separate traffic patterns as well as spaces for relaxation and repose. Roebling's Brooklyn Bridge provided evidence of the beauty of new materials and technology, a concept which applied to industry as well as to architecture. Visual artists turned increasingly toward home, both in subject matter and in their approaches and methods.<sup>16</sup>

Up to this time, competition for the cultural heart of the new country existed between Boston, New York City, and Philadelphia. But by 1860 Philadelphia and Boston had “ceased to be real alternatives to artistic residence in New York.”<sup>17</sup> Architectural extravaganzas were created for the homes and business establishments of the wealthy. Music thrived, and after a slower start due to religious influences, theatre caught up in Eastern society. Artistic and cultural organizations grew up to meet the needs of the expanding cultural life. Moving west, towards the frontier, the arts had to wait for

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<sup>16</sup> Lewis Mumford, The Brown Decades: A Study of the Arts in America 1865 - 1895, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1931; Dover, 1955) 7, 21.

<sup>17</sup> Neil Harris, The Artist in American Society: The Formative Years 1790 - 1860, (New York: George Braziller, 1966) 266.

communities to emerge from the forests. As the human effort required in the new regions changed from total manual exertion, the increase in leisure time and the need for social interaction opened the door for recreation and artistic expression.

### **Arts in the Midwest**

Waterways provided the avenue for transmitting early settlers to the Midwest. Both the rivers and the Great Lakes took pioneers westward and aided in their settlement with transportation and power. Judith Barter, in the introduction to Currents of Expansion. Paintings in the Midwest, 1820-1940, identifies Pittsburgh as one of "the first cities of the trans-Appalachian West, and a nucleus for river traffic during the early nineteenth century." Pittsburgh attracted artists as well as commercial interests. Pittsburgh's first art gallery and museum were established in 1828. In 1859 the Pittsburgh Art Association drew on the collections of 60 of its citizens and held its first exhibition. Pittsburgh's Carnegie Library opened in 1890 and celebrated with a major exhibition of European paintings.<sup>18</sup>

Cincinnati: Farther westward, Cincinnati's economic leadership had been established by 1825. Between 1818 and 1858 a natural history and art museum, The Western Museum, was a part of Cincinnati's community. John James Audubon was the museum's first taxidermist and drawing instructor. During this period Cincinnati established an Academy of Fine Arts (1838), and the Western Art Union Building was opened in 1847. In 1854 the Ladiew Gallery of

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<sup>18</sup> Judith A. Barter and Lynne E. Springer, Currents of Expansion: Paintings in the Midwest, 1820 - 1940 (St. Louis Art Museum, 1977) 11-12.

Fine Arts was formed, and after the Civil War it became a part of the McMicken School of Design, founded in 1868. Cincinnati's May Festival was formed in 1872. This nationwide festival of singers featured mixed choruses, singing in English, with an enlarged orchestra. The May Festival remained a major festival for many years.<sup>19</sup>

St. Louis: Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, St. Louis rivaled Cincinnati as the cultural center of the New West. Flourishing, even before the Civil War, the music store of Balmer and Weber became one of the largest in the West. In its 1867 series on cities of the West, the Atlantic Monthly commented on St. Louis as an early culturally aware community, ". . . as early as 1800, almost 3,000 volumes were owned by the 700 inhabitants of St. Louis." The first picture exhibition was held in 1821 and featured masters of French, Flemish, and Italian schools. Albert Koch's St. Louis Museum opened in 1836. Artists received patronage there and remained to paint. One artist, Leon Pomarede, is reported to have supported himself working primarily as a theatre painter about this time.<sup>20</sup>

The St. Louis Mercantile Library Association was organized by city merchants in 1845, and by 1859 it had 14,000 volumes. While St. Louis had no permanent art gallery at this time, citizens loaned their art to charity or to the library for exhibition. From the mid-1840s on, art was included at the annual Agricultural and Mechanical Association Fairs. "The continued success of the fairs led to more interest in the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 13-14; John Tasker Howard and George Kent Bellows, A Short History of Music in America (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1957) 144.

<sup>20</sup> Barter and Springer, Currents of Expansion, 15-17; Jean Lincoln, "Music in Michigan Before 1860," (Thesis, Masters of Music, Michigan State College, 1939), 112.



fine arts section, and in 1857 prizes were awarded." The great success of this enterprise led a group of citizens to form the Western Academy of Art in 1859 with the " . . . purpose of cultivating, drawing, and painting, collecting works of art, and founding and supporting schools of art." Actually, three separate schools were established: One was open to anyone; admission to the others, modeled after the National Academy of Design in New York, was left to election by peers. The first exhibition was held in 1860. Henry T. Blow, the first president of the academy, was also a member of the St. Louis Philosophical Society, which was dedicated to improving the educational systems and the quality of life in the city and making "St Louis the nation's cultural capital." His intense devotion to the importance of education later took Blow to his position as the first United States Commissioner of Education, in 1889. <sup>21</sup>

Chicago: Emerging as the next cultural center, Chicago had already been in commercial competition with St. Louis. Because of the advent of the railroads, Chicago moved ahead of St. Louis. As early as 1834, with only 600 residents, the Old Settler's Harmonic Society was established. In 1850 Chicagoinis got their first glimpse of opera when Bellini's La Somnambula was brought over Lake Michigan from Milwaukee.<sup>22</sup> By 1859 the Chicago Art Union was formed, and they held their first exhibition within five years. About 1864 Uriah Crosby built an opera house "which included an auditorium, rental studios, artists' supply shop, and gallery." This became the headquarters for the Chicago Academy of Design. In order to keep the enterprise

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<sup>21</sup> Barter and Springer, Currents of Expansion, 17-18.

<sup>22</sup> Howard and Bellows, A Short History of Music, 112.

going, an "Opera House Art Association was formed, following the model of an art union." The Great Fire of 1871 was a blow to the artistic life of Chicago, but along with the city, the arts community soon recovered, and by 1878 a new Academy of Fine Arts was financed by local businessmen. This academy changed its name in 1882 to the Art Institute of Chicago.<sup>23</sup>

### **Michigan**

J. Gray Sweeney, guest curator for the exhibition "Artists of Michigan from the Nineteenth Century," characterizes the delay of arts activity in Michigan:

. . . emerging from a virtual wilderness to a major industrial and urban center in less than a century. With the rapid pace of its gigantic development--unparalleled for its growth in population and development of economic and material infrastructures--the needs of the arts, and of the visual arts in particular, were often deemed of secondary importance

. . . The creation of art institutions like the Detroit Museum of Art or the Hackley Art Gallery occurred slightly later than similar developments in Buffalo, Cleveland, Chicago, Indianapolis, St. Louis . . .<sup>24</sup>

Detroit's first major art exhibition was held in 1852 at the Fireman's Hall. A second was held the next year; then it was almost thirty years before another local exhibition of equal significance was held. The first Fireman's Hall show was unusual in that it consisted primarily of works by local artists: "419 paintings, 159 engravings, 42 works of sculpture--most pieces were drawn from Detroit's private collections."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Barter and Springer, Currents of Expansion, 20.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 76.

It was not until 1875 that local artists formed the Detroit Art Association with the hope of establishing a permanent art gallery in the city. The next year their first exhibition received comment in The New York Evening Post. In 1879 the Detroit Art Club incorporated and sponsored regular talks on art. By 1883 the Detroit Sketching Club and Detroit Watercolor Society had organized. The Art Loan Exhibition, held in 1883, was staged in the hopes of creating attention and interest in a museum for Detroit. The exhibition included 4,851 paintings, watercolors, pastels, prints, and photographs, evaluated by the press to be worth \$4,827,380. Most of these works came from abroad. Nearly 135,000 visitors attended the show. Senator Thomas Palmer donated the initial \$10,000 to establish a museum, with the stipulation that \$40,000 be raised from other sources. The new Detroit Museum of Art opened in 1888.<sup>26</sup>

In drama, the first theatricals were offered by officers stationed at Detroit in the late 1700s. By the mid-1800s several buildings had been used as theatres in Detroit. Dunbar notes that the number of buildings used for theatricals provides evidence that theatrical performance was quite popular by 1830. The Athenaeum Theater was erected in 1864 and sent a touring company across the state. The Detroit Opera House opened in 1870 within one year of the Athenaeum's destruction by fire.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 77-79.

<sup>27</sup> Willis Fredrick Dunbar, Ph.D., Michigan Through the Centuries, 2 vols. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1955) 421.

**Music in Michigan**

In her survey of the pioneer period in Michigan, Jean Lincoln states that "music represented almost the only cultural activity apart from the churches" in which the early citizens could partake. Musical associations started in Michigan about mid-century. In Detroit the Harmonic Society organized in 1849, for the purpose of rehearsing "oratorios and the highest grade of sacred and secular music." While most of the early societies started to practice sacred music, they gradually included secular and instrumental music. In 1850 another early organization was established. The Detroit Musical Association sponsored a ten-day musical convention that included daily practice, classes, and lectures covering "Rudiments of Singing," "Thorough Bass," "Musical Composition," "History of Music," "Biographical on Great Composers," "Leading Choirs and Orchestras," "Church Music," and "Vocalizing."<sup>28</sup>

Musical associations were organized across the state, in both populated and rural areas. A Niles Musical Association met in 1838. The Ypsilanti Musical Union had 60 members in 1858. A society in Marshall provided the community with "a fine selection of books, both vocal and instrumental," in 1854. Lincoln also reports associations in Ann Arbor, Jackson, Lansing, Kalamazoo, Battle Creek, and Grand Haven in the early 1850s. Regional groups existed as well. The Lenawee County Philharmonic Society presented a concert series during the 1854 season, and the Valley City Musical Association was

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<sup>28</sup> Jean Lincoln, "Music in Michigan," 1-21.

organized in Grand Rapids in 1856. The Old Folks Association was a statewide choral society that held state and sectional conventions as early as 1857.<sup>29</sup>

### **Musical Conventions**

Singing schools and musical conventions were ways that smaller communities could receive training and experiences when they did not have a regular teacher. Often several communities would join to support a traveling professor. Teachers visited or toured and provided classes and rehearsals, which often resulted in public concerts for the community. Lincoln reports a Detroit singing school advertised as early as 1821. Niles, Marshall, and Allegan had singing schools between 1845 and 1859. In 1858 musical professor A. M. Selleck, of Detroit, arrived in Centerville, St. Joseph County (one of the focus sites of this study), to meet with "the singers and friends of vocal and instrumental music at Millington Hall" for the purpose of "carrying out a musical convention." One week later the Western Chronicle reported that the closing concert of Mr. Selleck's musical convention, at the Presbyterian Church ". . . was a very fine thing. The pieces were well chosen and well sung, reflecting credit alike upon the teacher and his pupils."<sup>30</sup>

In 1868, in Ionia, another of the communities of this study, the Ionia Sentinel welcomed "Professor W. C. Webster, of Detroit, . . . in town for the purpose of organizing some classes in music."<sup>31</sup> Six

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 23-28.

<sup>30</sup> Lincoln, "Music in Michigan," 9-17, 31-34; (Centerville Michigan) Western Chronicle, January 21, 1858; February 4, 1858.

<sup>31</sup> Ionia (Michigan) Sentinel, 19 June 1868.

years later, through the efforts of local citizens, Professor Henry Gordon, of Wayne County, was brought to Ionia " . . . for the purpose of organizing and conducting schools for musical instruction." Within three weeks about 250 people were attending the three classes in vocal music organized by Professor Gordon. In February he took on the reorganization of the Disciples Church Choir, and by March he had moved his family and made Ionia his permanent residence. Professor Gordon provided classes for the adults and children. He taught the children "to sing by note," and their concerts were proclaimed a "delightful treat" to the community. Beginning in October Gordon traveled to Lowell to teach music classes as well.<sup>32</sup> He also took charge of the music for the annual exhibition of the high school. The next year, in 1875, Henry Gordon published a circular suggesting the organization of a musical institute for the summer, which would "afford a rare opportunity to all persons desiring to improve themselves in vocal music, and if successful, will furnish our citizens with a rich treat in the public exhibition to be given by members of the institute."<sup>33</sup>

### **Home Performances**

Home talent was an important part of the musical history of Michigan communities. Lincoln states that there was a "natural desire to demonstrate to the rest of the town what had been accomplished by individuals or classes . . . this lead to many concerts and recitals."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 1 May , 6 February, 11 September 1874.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 17 March 1875.

<sup>34</sup> Lincoln, "Music in Michigan," 85.

In St. Joseph County, September 1856, Professor Mills, aided by about 40 ladies of the village, presented The Flower Queen to the citizens of Constantine, St. Joseph County. The Constantine Weekly Mercury noted that "Mr. Mills' high reputation is sufficient guarantee for the entertainment . . . and places him among the most distinguished professors of music in the West." The editor went on:

We have long desired to aid in lifting the public taste in the West from its vitiated musical degradation . . . the only way to do this desirable object is by encouraging masters who are not only capable themselves of appreciating true harmony, and refined poetry, but of lifting the intellects of others to an appreciation of them, by the introduction of the best compositions, instead of the low buffoonery of the African melodies, and the ragged and discordant pipings too often palmed off to us in exchange for a cold quarter by traveling concertos.<sup>35</sup>

The Flower Queen was such a success that it was held over for a second evening performance.<sup>36</sup>

In Ionia, throughout the period of this study, there were several major home performances each year. In 1866 the Festival of the Presbyterian Society presented a series of tableaux on a stage erected for the purpose at one end of Union Hall. Five scenes were presented: Paganism, Christianity, Faith, "the finest in the series, War . . . represented by a multitudinous collection of dead, dying, weeping, groaning and terror struck figures," and Peace, "represented by figures engaged in industrial and useful pursuits." The Ionia Cornet Band and the Glee Club participated in this community performance which put \$300 in the society's treasury.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Constantine (Michigan) Weekly Mercury, 11 September 1856.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 September 1856.

<sup>37</sup> Sentinel, 3 July 1866.

The annual holiday concerts of Mr. H. Baroth and his pupils were looked forward to every year. In 1868 the audience was surprised during the intermission to suddenly have Dan Rice's Great Show make a grand entrance. Baroth's troupe did a farce on Rice's Circus and Menagerie and poked great fun. Dan Rice had recently been in the area and had been offended by remarks on the show published in the Sentinel. To make his point, Rice went so far as to publish "an abusive circular against the editors . . . and circulated it all over Ionia County."<sup>38</sup> Several months later, again under the direction of Baroth, the ladies and gentlemen of the Ionia Glee Club presented the Cantata of the Pilgrim Fathers for the community. Mr. Mitchel, an artist from Detroit, was brought in to create a backdrop for the performance. His work in scene painting was admired by the community, as were the efforts of the home cast and director. "Taken in all, our citizens have never before had an opportunity of witnessing any entertainment produced by home talent so honorable to the place and participants as this."<sup>39</sup>

### **Community Bands**

The community band was the most common and most popular form of musical entertainment. The band was the "vernacular traditions' equivalent to the symphony orchestra."<sup>40</sup> By the 1850s many communities had brass bands; they were referred to as brass bands, cornet bands, or just "the band,. As early as 1849 Gillemen's

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 3 January 1868

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 1 May 1868

<sup>40</sup> H. Wiley Hitchcock, Music in the United States: A Historical Introduction, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988, 1969), 124.



Band of Detroit traveled across Michigan, their tour including Jackson, Lansing, DeWitt, Lyons, Ionia, Grand Rapids, Niles, Paw Paw, Kalamazoo, Battle Creek, Marshall, Coldwater, Adrian, Hillsdale, and Monroe. Lincoln cites one of the earliest references to a band in Michigan in 1837, in Monroe. Niles had "one of the most active bands in the state, organized as early as 1842." In 1849 the Jackson Brass Band bought a carriage and 'rode through the city serenading the people." Bands depended totally upon local support for their existence. Often subscriptions or benefit concerts helped them to purchase new instruments and pay bills. They traveled to neighboring communities to play and struggled to find the funds for their travel.<sup>41</sup>

All of the communities in this study had bands, and their activities mirror the findings of Lincoln's study. In St. Joseph County the Three Rivers Brass Band and the Centerville Sax-Horn Band were both active in 1856-57. Charles P. Hubbard, instructor for the Centerville Band, was a "Professor of Military and Quadrille Music." He composed, published, and arranged music for bands as well as taught lessons on numerous instruments.<sup>42</sup> There were also several prominent dance and quadrille bands in the county. In 1871 Hull and Arnold's Quadrille Band was honored as the "Pioneer Quadrille Band" in the area; organized in 1837, they continued to provide dance music into at least the mid-1880s. <sup>43</sup> F. M. Crossette organized his cornet band in 1871 ". . . from fragments of other bands, many of the members having

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<sup>41</sup> Lincoln, "Music in Michigan," 101-104.

<sup>42</sup> Sentinel, 1 February 1866; 4 July, 2 October 1856; 9 and 30 April 1857; 5 October 1865.

<sup>43</sup> L. H. Everts Co., History of St. Joseph County Michigan with Illustrations Descriptive of its Scenery, Palatial Residences, Public Buildings, Fine Blocks . . ., (Philadelphia: L. H. Everts Co., 1877) 124.

previously achieved meritorious distinction as expert performers.' Crossette's Silver Cornet Band included sixteen instruments: cornets, clarinets, trombones, a drum, cymbals, and piccolos. Crossette's band played for community events, and parades and honored citizens with serenades throughout the region. In 1874 they were selected to "attend the Governor . . . at the laying of the cornerstone of the statehouse." <sup>44</sup>

Ionia County supported many bands. The Sentinel reports on bands in Portland, Howe, Westphalia, Saranac, Lowel, and Ionia. The Ionia Cornet Band announced the 'reconstruction of their band" in 1866, with Mr. C. H. Axtell as their leader. Axtell had been the director of the regimental band "of the 76th Calvery, which as a brigade was often seen dashing into the front with Custer at its head." In 1874, because of increasing interest in the community, the "band pledged to play publicly once or twice a week if the citizens would build them a stand." Throughout this period several exchanges appeared in the press. "Pro Bono Public" noted that "we feel we have been considerably duped and victimized" by not having public concerts from the new band. "The boys" responded in kind:

If they want open air concerts, let them crack open their coconut wallets and give 'the boys' a lift of a dime or two. Let them prepare a suitable bandstand on the public square, 'Neath the shade of the monument there, and the boys will be found willing and anxious to elevate the morals of the community sky-high, if exceeding great wind and blowing will accomplish it.

Eventually, 200-300 persons subscribed and the band shell was built. In the spring of 1878 the Lowell Cornet Band traveled to Ionia and

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 123-4; Sentinel, 12 June 1871.

gave a benefit for the "Ionia boys' through a concert and amateur minstrel show.<sup>45</sup>

Seven communities of the Grand Traverse Region supported bands. The Traverse City Band also benefited from the building of a bandstand on the courthouse square. In addition to the typical public performances, the Traverse City Band often played on propeller excursions in Grand Traverse Bay and up into Lake Michigan.<sup>46</sup>

### **Vocal Music**

Lincoln indicates that church music did not play an important role in Michigan until later in the pioneer period. Congregational singing was not developed until later, when organs were more available to each congregation. The first organ was brought to Detroit about 1812.<sup>47</sup> In 1868 one of the communities of this study reported success in getting ". . . what has been long desired, a pipe organ" for the Presbyterian church. The organ was specially ordered from Boston from the very firm which had supplied organs for the Plymouth and other prominent churches. In order to complete the subscription for paying for the organ, "all lovers of good music" were encouraged to contribute towards the cost of the organ.<sup>48</sup> Two weeks later, perhaps connected with the coming of the new organ, the editor of the Sentinel included "Plain Talk About Music" in the June 26th issue. Longer than most local items, and more editorial in content, "Plain

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<sup>45</sup> Sentinel, 14 and 26 August 1866; 17 July 1868; 20 September 1863; 1 May 1866; 7 September 1874; 10 July 1874; 7 September 1874; 5, 12, 19 and 25 March 1878;

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 25 July 1878.

<sup>47</sup> Lincoln, Music in Michigan, 37.

<sup>48</sup> Sentinel, 12 June 1868.

Talk” started with a summary of the power of music and encouraged a cultivation of sacred music within the Ionia community:

We say then, in conclusion, that Christian people must cease to regard sacred music as a matter on which they can be indifferent, or of the support of which they can be negligent, and yet guiltless. They must cease to regard music as only appropriate to the drawing-room, or scenes of gayety and festivity, or to the theatre and military parade. They must no longer view it as a luxury and elegant accomplishment, expensive and superfluous. They must no longer blame those who love it, for effort to promote it and make it what it should be in public worship. They must no longer consider it a mere art, and its effects a series of enchantment not belonging in association to religion. And, finally, it must not be cultivated as a matter of taste; but let all make conscience of learning to sing that they may thereby render themselves happy and useful to those over whom these can shed its benign and happyfying influence.<sup>49</sup>

This perhaps exemplifies the delay in embracing church music, expressed Lincoln.

Singing was often included in the primary grades. Public school exercises almost always included singing and music along with their discussions, dialogues, essays, etc. At teachers institutes sessions or lectures on music were sometimes included. Singing schools were conducted in the churches, sometimes with the purpose of promoting better congregational singing, but often simply because the church provided an appropriate space. Sacred-music societies were also formed for this purpose. The most active church school was held at St. Marks, in Grand Rapids. In 1874 Miss Ionia Bell Reynolds, who had presented concerts “in all the cities and towns of west Michigan,” left her singing career to accept a position in a large church in Grand Rapids. According to press reports, she was to receive a “larger salary

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 26 June 1868.

than is paid by any other church in Michigan, \$1,000.”<sup>50</sup> Many female seminaries and girls' schools offered courses in music and drawing. The Young Ladies School, of Traverse City, started in 1868 by Miss Hazen, advertised to include music, French, and drawing, but for an additional fee. <sup>51</sup>

The popularity of the piano boomed in the nineteenth century. Between 1830 and 1860 the production of pianos increased more than eight times. By 1860 this represented one piano for every 1,500 Americans:

|      |        |                   |
|------|--------|-------------------|
| 1829 | 2,500  | Instruments built |
| 1851 | 9,000  | Produced and Sold |
| 1860 | 21,000 | Manufactured      |

**Figure 3**  
**Piano Popularity in the Nineteenth Century**  
 (Source: Hitchcock, Music in the United States, 79.)

Along with this was “an extraordinary output of music from American publishers, though most [was] utilitarian, intended for household use as pleasant diversion and without pretensions to high artistic value.”<sup>52</sup> In all the communities of this study, pride in the establishment of music stores, the arrival of new instruments, and the local availability of new sheet music were reflected in the newspapers.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 27 February 1874, 23 January 1874.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 19 November 1868.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

## Theatre

The spread of theatre followed the expansion of the country, along coastal settlements, and with the agriculture and timber activity.<sup>53</sup> In 1800 there were no theatres west of the Alleghenies, "but by 1850, every major town and city of the Midwest had at least one, and several had two or more."<sup>54</sup> This is not to say that these theatres were production houses, with casts and staffs, but rather, community halls, within hotels or block buildings. These community facilities could accommodate the traveling performing troupes and lecturers, in addition to providing space for community meetings, church society festivals, and school exhibitions. After the Civil War era, opera houses were built by many Michigan communities, especially between the 1860s and 1900. The last thirty years of the nineteenth century have been called the "golden age" of opera house construction. In most cases the facility was pursued by private enterprise, as a profitable business venture. Examples include the Beckwith Memorial Theatre, at Dowagiac, and the Tibbitts Opera House, in Coldwater. Even Calumet, at the top of the Upper Peninsula, opened an opera house by 1900.<sup>55</sup>

## Touring Companies

The first plays in Michigan were probably amateur theatricals done by General Alexander Macomb's troupes in Detroit, between

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<sup>53</sup> Frank Rutledge, "An American Theatre Seminar: Its Literature and History," (East Lansing, Michigan State University, 1988).

<sup>54</sup> Mary C. Henderson, Theater in America: 200 Years of Plays and Productions, (New York, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1986), 10.

<sup>55</sup> Willis Fredrick Dunbar, "The Opera House as a Social Institution in Michigan," Michigan History V 27, (October/December 1943) 668-669.

1815 and 1821.<sup>56</sup> In 1866 the Detroit Atheneum Company gave performances in both Ionia and St. Joseph counties. Advertised as a "regularly organized and permanent theatre company of Detroit, under the management of G. A. Hough, the eminent comedian, scholar and gentleman," the company, comprised of over 45 ladies and gentlemen, presented Uncle Tom's Cabin and The Hidden Hand in both communities. In 1868 Stevenson's Atheneum Company came to Ionia with a spacious pavilion (probably a tent) capable of seating nearly one thousand persons. They presented several entertainments, including The Denouncer and The Irish Dragon. Also in 1868, Carter's Theatrical Company of Grand Rapids toured cities in that general area, including Ionia and Greenville.<sup>57</sup>

Because of its position geographically in the most settled portion of the state, Ionia County received touring entertainments from outside the state in much higher numbers than did the other case study counties of this research. St. Joseph County was next, with the northern counties following. Typical of the times, entertainments included the circus and other "combination" shows, such as Robinson's Circus & Menagerie, Adam Forepaugh's Circus, and The Great Pacific Menagerie & Circus of E. J. Warner. Violinists Alf Howard and Z. T. Wolohon and Bach's "celebrated band from Milwaukee" are examples of instrumental music which came into these communities. Vocal performers included the Swiss Bell Ringers of the Berger and Peak Families, LaRue's Minstrels, Happy Cal's

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<sup>56</sup> Richard J. Hathaway, "Culture Comes to Mid-Michigan," Michigan in Books, V. 11 (Winter/Spring, 1970) 1-10.

<sup>57</sup> (Constantine, Michigan) Weekly Mercury and St. Joseph County Advertiser, 31 May and 7 June 1866; Ionia (Michigan) County Sentinel, 10 July 1866, 17 July 1866; 3 January 1866, and 15 May 1868.

*Minstrels, and the Alleghenians.* Companies such as Blake's Dramatic Troupe, McFarland's Theatrical Troupe, Healy & Cohan's Hiberniana, and the May Fisk Combination brought theatrical performances such as Rip Van Winkle, The Woman in Red, Don Caesar, and Old Phil's Birthday to the citizens of these communities.<sup>58</sup>

Unlike local performances of singing schools, glee clubs, tableau entertainments, and school exhibitions, local dramatic performances were seldom found in the communities of this study. The Sentinel reported a Grand Rapids amateur dramatic society, called the Cricket Club, in 1868. The Dramatic Club of Lyons was active in 1874 and 1875, meeting regularly and playing in some of the smaller villages.<sup>59</sup>

### **Literary Societies**

Discussion groups and literary societies were apparent in colonial society from the earliest times. In the second decade of the nineteenth century there was a growing movement in the United States "to form similar groups throughout the country, and create a national organization." The general term for these clubs was "lyceum," although many different names were common. In addition, women's study clubs spread across the nation in the late 1860s, emerging in cities and villages, ". . . meeting in one another's homes to study art, music, history, geography, and literature." These groups existed primarily for self-education and intellectual advancement. The women's clubs offered an educational opportunity for women, where

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<sup>58</sup> Sentinel, 9 August 1866, 11 June 1868, 11 May 1871, 17 September 1857, 22 December 1874, 3 October 1873, 18 September 1869, 27 March 1874, 24 September 1869, 25 September 1874, 20 November 1874, 11 December 1868, 10 May 1872, 23 April 1874, 15 May 1874.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 and 6 February 1874.



little existed. Activities for self-improvement included lectures, discussions, and demonstrations. They were often the stimulant for the formation of public schools and libraries as well.<sup>60</sup>

As early as 1818 adult education organizations were formed in Detroit. In 1830 Lewis Cass and Henry Schoolcraft were among the founders of the first attempt at a statewide organization, the Lyceum of Michigan. "Young men's societies" were a favorite type of lyceum organization. In 1832 the Detroit Young Men's Society was formed. They "debated, sponsored lectures, and held scientific demonstrations, and later became a main stop on the lecture circuit for visiting speakers from the East." Between the 1830s and 1850s many societies were formed in Michigan. In his essay "Culture Comes to Mid Michigan," Richard Hathaway, then director of the Michigan unit of the Michigan State Library, lists Monroe, Adrian, Ann Arbor, Marshall, and Niles among the Michigan communities with active lyceum organizations. Early in 1846 the Lyceum of Ingham County, was formed, whose purpose "shall be the mental improvement of its members and the promotion of general education." Besides the lecture format, the Ingham organization took on two other parts of the lyceum movement, "debate and the library."<sup>61</sup>

In each of the focus communities of this study, lecture, literary, and library societies were predominant and active components of the cultural community. Regular meetings were held, and lectures and often courses or lecture series were presented during the winter months for the community at large. While it is not always possible to

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<sup>60</sup> Hathaway, "Culture Comes to Michigan," 1-2; Theodora Penny Martin, The Sound of Our Own Voices: Women's Study Clubs 1860-1910, (Boston, Beacon Press, 1987), 104.

<sup>61</sup> Hathaway, "Culture Comes to Michigan," 2-5.

determine sponsorship from the newspaper reporting, it is probable that the majority of these lectures were the organized efforts of these groups. Speakers and topics covered a broad range of subjects. In several cases the community library was a result of efforts of the organizations, e.g., the Traverse City Ladies Library Assoc and the Young Men's Christian Association cooperated in providing a library. In both Ionia and Traverse City, these organizations raised funds for buildings to fulfill their organizational needs as well as to provide services, meeting rooms, and offices to the community.

### **Summary**

Cultural and artistic life in the small towns of Michigan did not mirror that of the major cities of the nation during the second half of the nineteenth century. Arts and cultural activities did, however, exist. The arts moved into the more remote and rural areas later in time and with less sophistication than existed elsewhere. There were fewer opportunities for arts involvement. There were no symphony orchestras, classical choirs, and museums in the remote and rural communities. These types of cultural institutions existed along the eastern seaboard and were emerging in the major population centers of the Middle West. Larger communities also supported the existence of working artists, in both the visual and performing arts. Increased wealth and population afforded patronage and educational opportunities, and these opportunities attracted artists and provided for their support.

The intense physical effort required in pioneer settlements and rural life was infrequently broken by community gatherings which

included music and speaking performance--oratory. Individuals with interest and/or talent in the arts could pursue these activities at home and as a part of a community organization or activity if there was leisure. Clubs and societies brought like-minded citizens together for musical and dramatic efforts. Literary or lyceum groups fostered self-education and often provided the community with entertainment and educational opportunities through lecture series. These organizations also often brought the first community libraries into being.

While entertainments and lectures occurred frequently in the small towns of this period, there was a marked absence of visual arts opportunities at the community level. The closest thing to a museum in the communities of this study was the drugstore in Traverse City, where E. E. Miller kept displayed hundreds of Indian curios, baskets, and artistic objects. The galleries of art and art stores spoken of in these communities are synonymous with the photographic studios in Ionia, Centerville, Constantine, and Traverse City. Some of the photographers were acknowledged as artists, but it was their technical skill that was applauded, not their creative eye. Primarily, the local artists acknowledged as such in the press were in music: the band leaders, selected music instructors, and Miss Ionia Bell Reynolds, a vocal performer who presented concerts in western Michigan. Only one professional (visual) artist was uncovered in this study. Mr. J. Z. Dudley, of Three Rivers, was a portrait painter, yet only one reference was made in the press to his work or his existence.<sup>62</sup> Opportunities to learn about drawing and painting were likewise very limited,

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<sup>62</sup> Weekly Mercury, 3 August 1871.

compared to private lessons and community opportunities to learn or be involved in musical, oratory, and even dramatic experiences. With the exception of a few paintings being put on display at a local store for the community to view, the only opportunity to see drawings or paintings came during fair time. Drawings, paintings, and other ornamental and decorative works were displayed by the wealthy of the community or were entered for competition by the creators. In either case, the community at large saw a variety of work and techniques and spoke with makers of art at fair time.

### **The American County Fair**

Fairs are noted from the beginnings of recorded history, and prehistory, with harvest festivals and celebrations. During the eighth and ninth centuries, fairs and markets provided a place where people could purchase or trade necessities. Early fairs were often a part of religious celebrations, and the church took advantage of this opportunity to connect with commerce. Fairs were sanctioned by the ruling authority, whether the church or the Crown, thereby providing a safe haven for merchants and common folks alike to do business and gather goods in peace. During fair time, specialized courts were empowered to "administer justice as speedily as dust can fall from the feet." The "fair letter," or letter of credit, emerged as the Italian merchant's contribution to the fair. Uniform weights and measures and inspection or grading of goods were other marketing devices and aids created by the fair. By the fourteenth century fairs emerged on major trade routes. From the sixteenth century onward, fairs were

associated less with the church and more with commerce and trade. As cities were established and permanent marketplaces were accessible to more people, the primary need for fairs diminished.<sup>63</sup>

As early as 1723, in Edinburgh, Scotland, gentleman farmers organized agricultural societies for mutual aid and to study technical problems affecting their farming. Members met several times a year to discuss particular questions, to read dignified papers for one another, and to enjoy company. Sometimes premiums were offered, but only the wealthy could actually compete in these major experiments.<sup>64</sup> Like other European traditions, the market fair and gentlemen's agricultural organization were brought to the new world. Market fairs, however, never gained the degree of popularity in America that they had enjoyed in Europe. Pioneer agricultural societies in America were active as early as 1785 in Philadelphia and Charleston and common by 1800. These early societies failed to involve the working farmer because they were "conducted on a plane of high learning." These "literary societies . . . with their exclusive gatherings, imposing memoirs, and select foreign correspondence, made little impress on the husbandry of their day."<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> R. W. Morrish, A History of Fairs, (Chicago, University of Chicago & the International Association of Fairs and Expositions: 1929), 3 - 31.

<sup>64</sup> Wayne Caldwell Neeley, The Agricultural Fair, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1935), Columbia University Studies in the History of American Agriculture, 43-46.

<sup>65</sup> Fred Kniffen, "The American Agricultural Fair: The Pattern," Annals of the Association of American Geographers V xxxix, (December 1949, No. 4), 266.; Earle D. Ross, "The Evolution of the Agricultural Fair in the Northwest," Iowa Journal of History & Politics, (July 1926) 445. This final quote is taken from Bidwell and Falconer's History of Agriculture in the Northern United States, 1620-1860, 186.

### **Transition From the Market Fair and Learned Society**

Increased national interest in self-reliance included efforts to popularize the agricultural enterprise. The importance of "domestic manufacture" included the products of agriculture as well as industry. In 1804 Dr. William Thorton, the first commissioner of patents for the United States, suggested a fair for the sale of livestock and domestic products. From 1804 to 1806, at the Capitol in Washington, three fairs were held under the patronage of the United States Patent Office. Both competitions and exhibitions were featured.<sup>66</sup> The sale was becoming a show. The award and recognition aspect was important enough that both governmental authorities and private citizens contributed to a premium fund. During the first decade of the nineteenth century, annual sheepshearings (the third type of event of this transition period) were the most popular rural festivals in America. Increasingly, the wearing of goods of domestic manufacture was a patriotic expression, and sheep breeding was a "widespread mania." Competitions were included in the festival. The most rapid workman was given a prize. Speeches were added as a component of the event as well. The social importance of the fair equaled the educational significance. Breeders took the opportunity to gather and exchange information, and visitors were entertained by the events.<sup>67</sup>

Attempts to popularize agricultural enthusiasm led increasingly to a democratization of the societies and the establishment of exhibitions in which all farmers could compete. Wayne Neeley identifies three ingredients in this development: the post-revolutionary zeal for

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<sup>66</sup> Ross, "The Evolution of the Agricultural Fair," 446.

<sup>67</sup> Neeley, The Agricultural Fair, 46-49.

domestic manufactures was essential to the movement which eventually created the American agricultural fair as a unique enterprise. The long social heritage of agricultural organizations in England and America laid the foundation, but only in America would the attention become focused not on the elite of society but on the average farmer and his family as the key elements of change.

The third factor which crystallized the birth and acceptance of practical agricultural societies was the leadership of a unique individual, Elkanah Watson. It was through Watson's vision and direction that the Berkshire Agricultural Society became a prototype for a new type of agricultural society. Here, working farmers could become members by paying small dues, and the agricultural fair was relied on as a vehicle to arouse interest through prizes and exposure. New methods and ideas of improving crops and products of the agricultural community were exposed and demonstrated to the American farmer.<sup>68</sup>

**Elkanah Watson, "Father of the Agricultural Fair"**<sup>69</sup>

By 1807 Elkanah Watson was a rich Albany businessman and banker, who "after having apparently exhausted all other prospects for adventure, found himself ready to engage in farming."<sup>70</sup> In the late 1700s Watson was in association with the firm of John Brown, carrying money and dispatches between France and America, and working with

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 50-54, 64-65.

<sup>69</sup> Ross, "The Evolution of the Agricultural Fair," 446. This reference is taken from Butterfield's "Farmers' Social Organizations," in Bailey's Cyclopedia of American Agriculture, vol. IV, 292.

<sup>70</sup> Neeley, The Agricultural Fair, 59.

Benjamin Franklin, John Brown's agent in France.<sup>71</sup> The Dictionary of American Biography notes that Watson was a "prophet whose visions were startlingly accurate, but he often lacked the patience and talent necessary to their practical achievement." Two early business ventures had collapsed. Throughout his life Watson was devoted to causes. Before taking on agriculture, he fought for local improvements, free schools, canal systems, and turnpike roads for his new nation.<sup>72</sup> By the time he ventured into farming, he was considered a successful businessman both in America and Europe and was acquainted with most of the public men of his day. His travels had taken him across the world and across America. Elkanah Watson was also an avid patron of the arts and a philanthropist.<sup>73</sup>

His biographers and his personal journals record the place of the arts in his life. He admired architecture throughout his travels, commenting on country houses and monuments alike. About Notre Dame he wrote, ". . . its painted windows of immense size, and the superb decoration of the alter, excited by profoundest admiration." On a visit to France, he noted in admiration, "Almost every Frenchman is adept in playing on some musical instrument." On one trip he escaped from business activities ". . . and hastily ran to contemplate the object of my anxious inquiries--a little, old and dilapidated dwelling--the birthplace of Shakespeare." Watson was as intrigued with the people of the land as he was business and elite society in

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<sup>71</sup> Arthur Pound, Native Stock: The Rise of the American Spirit Seen in Six Lives, (New York, MacMillan Co., 1931), 264-5.

<sup>72</sup> Dictionary of American Biography (New York, Scribners Sons, 1936), 541.

<sup>73</sup> Neeley, The American Agricultural Fair, 59-60.



which he moved: “. . . while toward Manchester, through an interesting country . . . Allured by the animating tones of violins we stopped at a farm house, and round a country frolic in full tide, lads and lasses dancing, with all their might and hearts . . . ” Numerous notations in his journals reflect his interest and delight in the arts of his time: visits at the Louvre, seeking out a portrait of Franklin, his acquaintance with visual artists, sculptors, and writers, and his intrigue with Dr. Franklin’s “armonica,” an “instrument, of his own invention,” and the music which it produced.<sup>74</sup>

Throughout his life Watson commissioned portraits from artists of his day. John Singleton Copley painted him twice--first, in 1782, when Watson was twenty-four years old, and later in 1821. Watson’s pride is reflected in a journal entry about this work: “. . . it is pronounced, by artists, second to no painting in America, and has, at their earnest request, been deposited in academies and schools of painting, as a study for young artists.”<sup>75</sup> This portrait was painted at the time of the ceremonies when King George III declared the lost colonies “free and independent states.” Watson is pictured as he probably looked on that occasion. He attended the ceremonies, as did Copley and fellow American painter Benjamin West. Afterwards, Watson and Copley returned to the studio where Copley put on the final touches, including the American flag. “Copley thought it hardly decent to paint in the Stars and Stripes until the King had spoken. This was, I imagine (said the subject and background designer), the

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<sup>74</sup> Winslow Watson, Editor, Men and Times of the Revolution: Memoirs of Elkanah Watson, Including his Journals of Traverse in Europe and America from the Years 1777-1842, (New York, Appleton, 1861, 2nd edition), 120, 170-8, 188-9, etc.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

first American flag hoisted in Old England." Watson was deeply interested in symbolism in art and encouraged its appearance in the works he procured.

F. R. Spencer and Ezra Ames also painted Mr. Watson. In Spencer's 1826 portrait, Watson is holding in his hand the 1811 annual report, his first as the first president of the Berkshire Agricultural Society. Ezra Ames' portrait of Watson shows Watson as an older, more humorous gentleman. This work must belong to the agricultural era as well, for the engraver, V. Balch, worked into it numerous agricultural symbols: plows, wheat sickles, and beehives. In 1824, at the age of seventy, Watson sat for another painting by Spencer. Here, the artist shows him in a more patriarchal pose. Watson also had medallion portraits of himself and his wife Rachel done about 1821.<sup>76</sup>

Elkanah Watson brought all of his life's interest and experience to his participation in the American agricultural revolution. He influenced the American farmer by creating a new, democratic agricultural society and its vehicle, the agricultural fair. He "saw to it that the annual fairs developed artistic, even spiritual features. A patron of art at twenty-four, he was never a man to celebrate earth only."<sup>77</sup> Through his democratic approach and interest in the entire community, he created the model by which a nation began to improve and revolutionize American agriculture.

Soon after returning to America in 1784, Watson secured a pair of prized merino sheep, whose wool was definitely superior to that of

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<sup>76</sup> Pound, *Native Stock*, 230-232. Pound is discussing the episode and quoting Watson. Also 201, 258, 263-4, 247 and illustration opposite title page with caption.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 257.

local sheep. His goal quickly became seeking ways of interesting his neighbors in these sheep, and in the better breeding of stock. American leaders were pushing for less reliance on England in many areas. Increasing the quantity and quality of wool production for domestically produced fabric and clothing was a priority.<sup>78</sup> Watson notified his neighbors and tied the merinos under an elm tree on the public square of Pittsfield (Massachusetts). A crowd gathered to see the sheep, and Watson was applauded for his speech. This exhibit drew quite a bit of attention and imbued in Watson the idea of creating a new kind of agricultural society. He wrote in his journal:

Many farmers, and even women, were excited by curiosity to attend this first novel, and humble exhibition. It was by this lucky accident, I reasoned thus, if two animals are capable of exciting so much attention, what would be the effect on a larger scale . . . and from that moment, to the present, agricultural societies, cattle shows . . . have predominated in my mind, greatly to the injury of my private affairs.<sup>79</sup>

In the fall of 1810 a public notice announced an exhibition of stock on October 1. It was addressed to the farmers of the county, written by Watson, and additionally signed by 26 others of the county.<sup>80</sup> It closed with: "It is hoped this essay will not be confined to the present year, but will lead to permanent cattle shows; and that an incorporated Agricultural Society will emanate from these meetings, which will be hereafter possessed of funds sufficient to award premiums."<sup>81</sup> At this event cattle were displayed and a committee was appointed to arrange for the next show. Animals and

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<sup>78</sup> Neeley, The Agricultural Fair, 60-1.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 1; Pound, Native Stock, 255-257.

<sup>80</sup> Watson's Memoirs says 26 signed, and Pound's Native Stock says there were 28 who signed.

<sup>81</sup> Watson, Men and Times of the Revolution, 421-2.

farmers alike paraded around the square, and at the end Watson "stepped in front, gave three cheers, in which they all united," and then they parted.<sup>82</sup> That winter the Berkshire Agricultural Society received a charter from the legislature, and plans began for a larger festival for the following September.

Watson purposefully sought to engage the common farmer through all aspects of his work and life. The fair was the means to educate the practicing farmer to the advantages and ways of improvement. Though there were premiums for livestock awarded at the District of Columbia fairs, and perhaps earlier in South Carolina, the Berkshire Fairs were probably the first which stressed educational functions to the practical exclusion of all others. Livestock, crops, and all products of domestic manufacture were part of the fair. Essential to success was participation from the entire community: artisans, clergy, businessmen, farmers, and women. The female influence "was considered of the first importance to the success of the society." Watson would later devote a separate day to women's activities and products, from foodstuffs to cloth and ornamental work.<sup>83</sup>

The Berkshire Fair of 1811 was indeed that "formal and extended festival"<sup>84</sup> which Watson had envisioned. According to agricultural geographer Fred Kniffen, this festival set the prototype for American fairs to the present day. Through competitive displays of agricultural products and domestic arts, judging, parades, lectures, exhibits, and demonstrations, citizens came together to celebrate the harvest, enjoy

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<sup>82</sup> Neeley, The Agricultural Fair, 62.

<sup>83</sup> Kniffen, "The American Agricultural Fair: The Pattern," 266.

<sup>84</sup> Watson, Men and Times of the Revolution, 423.

one another, and expand their knowledge through inspiration, observation, and demonstration.<sup>85</sup>

### **Berkshire Agricultural Society - Second Annual Show 1811**

Elkanah Watson recorded in his journal:

The day was beautiful; and, at an early hour, the village was thronged with thousands of excited and interested spectators.

Fine domestic animals were seen approaching the place of the exhibition, from every direction. [The procession was] splendid, novel, and imposing, beyond anything of the kind ever exhibited in America. It cost me an infinity of trouble, and some cash; but it resulted in exciting a general attention in the Northern States, and placing our Society on elevated ground. In this procession were sixty-nine oxen, connected by chains, drawing a plough held by the oldest man in the country; a band of music . . . a platform on wheels followed, drawn by oxen, bearing a broadcloth loom and spinning jenny, both in operation, by English artists, as the stage moved along . . . [then came] mechanics with flags . . . and another platform, filled with American manufactures . . . <sup>86</sup>

Watson was a showman! The local sheriff and three mounted marshals led the one-half mile long procession. For further effect, members of the society wore badges of wheat cockades tied with pack thread in their hats and officers had green ribbons. Two hundred members participated.<sup>87</sup>

Throughout the next several years, the fairs grew in both size and elaboration. Premiums increased threefold, to \$208 the next year. Addresses and ceremonies were added to acknowledge the awards. In 1813 women's work was more apparent. Competitive categories became detailed: seventeen prizes went to agricultural products;

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<sup>85</sup> Kniffen, "The American Agricultural Fair: The Pattern," 266-7.

<sup>86</sup> Watson, Men and Times of the Revolution, 424.

<sup>87</sup> Neeley, The Agricultural Fair, 63. "Wheat cockades "were made by tying two heads of wheat together. These were used as a designation for the officers and members of the society.

fifteen went to women's domestic manufactures and eleven to men's; twenty were awarded for livestock. Watson worked hard to ensure women's participation as well as that of the clergy, realizing that full community acceptance would result in increasing participation and impact. Odes, adapted to the occasion, were sung by a full choir. He coached clergy in their harvest home prayers. To round out the 1814 exhibition, the young men of the community organized a grand agricultural ball to close the festivities.<sup>88</sup>

Watson summarized the principles of the "modern plan" as including a public exhibition which made animals and products familiar to the farming community. This attention encouraged and excited others in emulating approaches and products. Competition then

. . . awakened scientific investigations, and their practicable application  
 . . . domestic industry was fostered, and its labors accelerated.

The instant the name of the successful candidate was announced, the eyes of an exhilarated audience were flying in every direction, impelled by the strongest curiosity to see the fortunate . . . The effect cannot be described; it must be seen, to be realized. I sincerely hope that the time is not remote when these patriotic and laudable exhibitions, so well calculated to promote improvement in agriculture and domestic manufactures, will be familiar to every part of the Union.<sup>89</sup>

The news did indeed spread! Mr. Watson journeyed far and wide speaking to farmers and encouraging the adoption of the Berkshire model. By his own account, all counties of the Northeast (except Rhode Island) had organized societies by 1819, and they spread

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 63-4.

<sup>89</sup> Watson, Men and Times of the Revolution, 429-430.

rapidly southward to North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, and Kentucky.<sup>90</sup>

### **Fair Expansion in the Nineteenth Century**

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the new agricultural societies had become the chief agent for the formulation and expression of rural opinion. Nearly every state and county had organized agricultural (and often horticultural) societies. According to United States Department of Agriculture reports, only 40 agricultural societies had been organized before 1841. Ninety-eight more followed by 1850. Then, 435 new agricultural societies were organized between 1851 and 1860. By 1868, 420 more had begun. The following table charts the dates of organization for agricultural societies through 1868:

**Table 4**  
**Date of Organization of Agricultural Societies**  
 (Source: Neeley, The Agricultural Fair, 87.)

Numbers and percentages of agricultural societies reporting date of organization to the United States Department of Agriculture in 1865, by five-year periods

| <u>Years</u> | <u>Numbers</u> | <u>Percentages</u> |
|--------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Before 1841  | 40             | 4.0                |
| 1841-45      | 30             | 3.0                |
| 1846-50      | 68             | 6.8                |
| 1851-55      | 185            | 18.6               |
| 1856-60      | 250            | 25.1               |
| 1861-65      | 178            | 17.9               |
| 1866-68      | 242            | 24.3               |
| Totals       | 993            | 100.0              |

During this period the fairs were primarily educational, using exhibition and judging as the core elements, with premiums

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<sup>90</sup> Neeley, The Agricultural Fair, 70-1.

recognizing individual achievement. Annual addresses and evening discussion sessions provided information and exchange. The exhibition inspired and encouraged individuals to improve methods and to attempt new practices. The festival atmosphere provided recreation and allowed individuals to meet and share with neighbors they rarely saw throughout the working year.

Kenyon L. Butterfield designated this period, from 1850 to 1870, as the "golden age of the agricultural fair." Butterfield was a Michigan educator and international "pioneer and prophet in the cause of agricultural education." He was a successful college administrator, serving as president of Michigan State College as well as of Rhode Island State College and Massachusetts State College. Throughout his professional career he focused on promoting the development of "an adequate civilization for those who till the soil and live in rural environment." His efforts brought him recognition from his own government as well as from others throughout the world. Through public appointments, research studies, and organizational contributions, Butterfield promoted increased attention on the farmer. His educational efforts for the farmer and in country life activities impacted rural peoples in America, throughout Europe, and in South Africa, China, Japan, and India. He founded and became president of the World Agriculture Society and led the American Country Life Association.<sup>91</sup>

Butterfield was "among the first to define problems of adult education and to suggest a program for its solution." His concern for

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<sup>91</sup> National Cyclopedia of American Biography. (New York, James T. Whitehead & Co., 1939) Vol XXVII, 138-9.



the farmer and rural life influenced legislative support of "extension teaching, research, and resident instruction in agriculture and home economics." Butterfield's description of this period as the "golden age of the agricultural fair" caught hold. His designation was used in practically every resource covering the American agricultural fair reviewed for this study. His recognition of the educational aspects of the county fair mirrored and extended those of Elkanah Watson.<sup>92</sup>

It was in the Midwest that the new societies and fairs found their greatest popularity. Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and Missouri made up the Midwest of America. These eight states had only 32.3 percent of the population but had 55.3 percent of the agricultural societies. See Table 5 and Table 6, pages 65 and 66, which represent the distribution and spread of agricultural societies in 1858 and 1868.

According to agricultural historian Wayne Neeley, "These societies with their annual fairs were part and parcel of the expansion of the great agricultural Middle West." It is impossible to know exactly how many of the societies did hold fairs, but their reports to the U.S. Department of Agriculture indicate that a significant number of them did. Neeley identifies two major roles that fairs filled: first, they were the agency through which the majority of information was provided to the agricultural community--information about crops, breeding, equipment, and agricultural practices. This information included the home as well as the field. Secondly, and of no less importance, fairs provided an opportunity for annual celebration for these rural people

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

who lived a difficult, strenuous, and remote life at best. Farmers and their families had rare opportunities to rest: on Christmas, the Fourth of July, and an occasional community picnic, or perhaps a circus. The fair, unlike these events, was directly connected with the daily work and life of the farmer. Besides gaining information to improve crops and animals, the farmer and his entire family could enjoy the company of remote friends and share the fruits of their labor and recreation. Neeley reports the first wave of formation of societies cresting between 1820 and 1825. State legislative support existed prior to this but was generally withdrawn in the '20s. Then, in the 1840s, both public and private revival of industry and support encouraged a new period of agricultural expansion.<sup>93</sup>

In the Midwest, Ohio and Illinois were earliest in their adoption of the Berkshire Plan. Ohio's first agricultural society was organized in 1820 and held regular county fairs after 1828. The Ohio Legislature provided for the formation of county societies in 1833, spurring organization across the state. Illinois had a state agricultural society as early as 1819, although it disbanded in 1823. A county society held annual fairs from 1822 to 1825 (where premiums were offered for farm products as well as for wolf scalps). Nine northern Illinois counties chartered a district organization in 1839 and held four fairs before disbanding in 1846. In 1853 a successful state society was organized under the leadership of the Sangamon County Society. The first Illinois State Fair was held at Springfield in October of 1853. That same year in Iowa, local societies in the southeastern part of the

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<sup>93</sup> Neeley, The Agricultural Fair, 80-90.

state organized a meeting which resulted in the formation of a state society. The Jefferson County Society got the attention of the agricultural community by pointing out that "Iowa was the only free State in the Union without such an organization." Iowa's first fair was at Fairfield in October of 1854. With the exception of a couple of local societies, Wisconsin's county society movement started at about the time the state society was formed, in 1851. Minnesota fairs were started early in the territorial period. The first county societies there were organized in 1852 and 1853; the Hennepin County Society held its first fair in 1854. A territorial society was in operation between 1855 and 1860, holding joint fairs with the Hennepin County Society during most of that time.<sup>94</sup>

**Table 5**  
**Distribution of Agricultural and Horticultural Societies, 1858**  
 (Source: Neeley, The Agricultural Fair, 84.)

Numbers and percentages of the state and local agricultural and horticultural societies reported to the United States Commissioner of Patents in 1858 and the numbers and percentages of the total population in 1860, by geographic division.

| Geographic Division   | Numbers        |           | Percentages |            |
|-----------------------|----------------|-----------|-------------|------------|
|                       | Population     | Societies | Population  | Societies  |
| New England           | 135,283        | 5         | 9.9         | 10.4       |
| Mid Atlantic States   | 7,458,985      | 184       | .7          | 20.1       |
| E. No. Central States | 6,926,884      | 308       | 22.0        | 33.7       |
| Iowa, Minn., Mo.      | 2,028,948      | 135       | 6.4         | 14.8       |
| South                 | 11,133,361     | 165       | 35.4        | 18.0       |
| Pacific States        | 444,053        | 12        | 1.4         | 1.3        |
| All Other Territory   | <u>315,807</u> | <u>13</u> | <u>1.0</u>  | <u>1.4</u> |
| Total                 | 31,443,321     | 912       | 100.0       | 100.0      |

<sup>94</sup> Ross, "Evolution of the Agricultural Fair in the Northwest," 446-448.

**Table 6**  
**Distribution of Agricultural & Horticultural Societies, 1868**  
 (Source: Neeley, The Agricultural Fair, 84.)

Numbers and percentages of the state and local agricultural and horticultural societies reported to the United States Commissioner of Agriculture in 1868 and the numbers and percentages of the total population in the 1870 with the percentage increase in numbers of societies and populations over 1858 and 1860 respectively, by geographic division

|                            | Numbers        |                   | Percentages |                   | % Increase  |                   |
|----------------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|
|                            | Pop<br>1870    | Societies<br>1868 | Pop<br>1870 | Societies<br>1868 | Pop<br>1860 | Societies<br>1858 |
| <b>Geographic Division</b> |                |                   |             |                   |             |                   |
| New England                | 3,487,924      | 139               | 9.0         | 13.4              | 11.2        | 46.3              |
| Mid Atlantic               | 8,810,806      | 186               | 22.8        | 18.0              | 18.1        | 1.0               |
| E.N.Central                | 9,124,517      | 390               | 23.6        | 37.7              | 31.7        | 26.6              |
| Iowa, Minn., Mo            | 3,355,021      | 181               | 8.7         | 17.5              | 65.3        | 34.0              |
| South                      | 12,288,020     | 62                | 31.8        | 6.0               | 10.3        | -62.4             |
| Pacific States             | 675,125        | 6                 | 1.7         | .5                | 52.         | -50.0             |
| All Other                  | <u>816,958</u> | <u>68</u>         | <u>2.1</u>  | <u>6.5</u>        | <u>158.</u> | <u>423.0</u>      |
| Total                      | 38,558,371     | 1,032             | 100.0       | 100.0             | 22.6        | 13.1              |

## Chapter 3 THE MICHIGAN COUNTY FAIR NETWORK

### First Fairs

Earle Ross, in "The Evolution of the Agricultural Fair in the Northwest," reports that Michigan's earliest attempts at starting fair-holding societies were in the 1830s, but these were not maintained.<sup>1</sup> One of these early efforts occurred in St. Joseph County. Farmers of the area gathered in White Pigeon on January 27, 1838, to discuss the establishment of a county agricultural society. The next meeting, set for February in order to give committees time to develop reports, seems to have never occurred. A "state fair" was called in Ann Arbor for the fall of 1839, but only two exhibitors appeared.<sup>2</sup>

The Kalamazoo county society claims that Michigan's first county fair was in 1846; however, the Michigan Farmer notices fairs and county society activity in their first year of publication, 1843.

Editorials encouraged agricultural associations and their benefits:

Aside from the circulation of agricultural papers, nothing has done more to promote the agricultural interests of our country than the organization of state and county agricultural societies. . . . A spirit of emulation is excited among the members, that often leads to

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<sup>1</sup> Ross, "Evolution of the Agricultural Fair in the Northwest," 448-9.

<sup>2</sup> H. Everts, History of St. Joseph County, (Philadelphia, Everts & Co., 1877), 68-69; Lew Allen Chase, Rural Michigan, (New York, MacMillan Co., 1922), 336.

experiments, improvements, and discoveries, the result of which proves highly important and valuable to the farming community.<sup>3</sup>

According to the 1843 Michigan Farmer, "In Livingston, Monroe, Washtenaw, and two or three other counties, there are, we believe, societies which bid fair to do much to promote the farming interests."<sup>4</sup> The Livingston and Washtenaw county societies held fairs in 1843, and Jackson County did so in 1844. In the January 15, 1844, issue of Michigan Farmer, the constitution of the Jackson County Agricultural Society was published as an example and to encourage others across the state. (The Michigan Farmer was published in Jackson.)<sup>5</sup>

Michigan was the first of the Midwest group to hold a state exhibition. The Michigan State Agricultural Society was organized at Lansing on March 17, 1849. The Michigan Legislature incorporated the society and provided for matching state aid of \$400, upon proof that the society had raised an equal amount through voluntary subscription or membership fees. The funds were for use, in part, for premiums on "articles, productions and improvements . . . to promote the agricultural and household manufacturing . . . " Thirty-one Michigan counties were represented at that meeting by their vice presidents and executive committee members. Most, if not all, of

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<sup>3</sup> Michigan Farmer, (Jackson.), "Editorial," 15 May 1843.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 15 July 1874.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 15 May 1843 -Livingston County Agricultural Society Premium List along with an editorial encouraging agricultural societies; 16 October 1843-Washtenaw County Agricultural Fair reported; Jackson County Agricultural and Horticulture Society Meeting announcement; 15 November 1843-4th Annual cattle show of the Washtenaw County Agricultural Society noting premiums awarded "to the ladies,"; 15 December 1843-Jackson County Agricultural Society's announcement of a fair and cattle show for October [1844]; 1 January 1844 printed the constitution of the Jackson County Agricultural Society as a model for others to follow.

Michigan's counties were represented. See the appendix for a list of the county representatives and first state agricultural society officers. Richard W. Welch, in his County Evolution in Michigan shows thirty-one counties in 1840 with growth to only thirty-seven by 1852.<sup>6</sup>

The new state society held its first fair that fall, on September 25, 26, and 27, on a farm near Detroit. In competition for \$1,000 in premiums, over 600 items in thirty-three categories were entered by Michigan residents. Judges appointed for the committees included representatives from 20 Michigan counties as well as from Lafayette, Indiana; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Amherstburg, C. W.<sup>7</sup> The largest category of entries was "Needle, Shell and Wax Work," which received 86 entries. (Thirteen livestock categories together totaled slightly over 200 entries.) "Needle, Shell and Wax Work" incorporated a broad range of decorative items: ornamented fire screens, furniture, and clothing; embroidered room borders, spreads, and tidies; quilts, toilet cushions, counterpanes, lamp mats, and shades; shell work; wax flowers; and an embroidered mourning picture, "Mary at the Tomb," entered by Henry Rae, from Detroit. The "Paintings and Drawings" category was announced to include work by Michigan artists such as animal paintings, watercolors, cattle drawings, and a drawing of the show grounds for the society. This category had close to the smallest numbers of entries, with seven busts, statuary, engravings,

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<sup>6</sup> Transactions of the State Agricultural Society, with Reports of County Agricultural Societies, (Lansing, Published by the Legislature, 1849) 1-12; Richard W. Welch, County Evolution in Michigan, 1790 -- 1897, (Lansing, Michigan Department of Education, State Library services, 1972), 27-28.

<sup>7</sup> Canadian West, according to Acronyms, Initialisms and Abbreviations Dictionary, Fifteenth Edition, (Detroit, Gale Research Company, 1991) p922.

daguerreotypes, and paintings. The judging committee combined these two categories and awarded 25 premiums in "Needle, Shell, Wax Work, Painting, &C." Items awarded included ornamental needle, shell, wax, and hair work; quilts and furniture covers; woven and crocheted shawls; daguerreotypes; and paintings.<sup>8</sup>

Judges for these combined categories included A. R. Terry, W. N. Carpenter, Samuel A. McCoskry, and Henry Ledyard. Ledyard was later elected mayor of Detroit, in 1855.<sup>9</sup> Carpenter was a prominent Detroit business executive and merchant engaged in land dealing and lumber manufacturing. He may have done art work himself, as there was mention in the Detroit Free Press of a "landscape by someone of the same name, as the only work in the Art Union show of 1850, by a Michigan artist." McCoskry was a bishop in Detroit and Terry had "a most excellently cultivated farm" in Avon Township and taught school for a time. Gibson lists a Ralph Terry from Plymouth in 1891 who did some bone carving.<sup>10</sup>

A "Miscellaneous" category accommodated 85 items that did not fit elsewhere. Fancy work, arts, and craftsmanship included an ". . . illuminated Bible and ledger . . . a copper tea kettle . . . Indian baskets . . . a guitar . . . hair work . . . jewelry from Lake Superior silver . . . [two lots] of drawings . . . specimen printing . . . maps . . ." and furniture.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Transactions. "Proceedings of the Executive Meeting," 36-46; "Proceedings of the First Annual Fair," 47-69; "Reports of Examining Committees," 70-92.

<sup>9</sup> Michigan Farmer (No. 2, 1849) 1062

<sup>10</sup> Ibid 1210; Arthur Hopkin Gibson, Artists of Early Michigan: A Biographical Dictionary of Artists Native To or Active in Michigan 1701-1900, (Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1975) 66, 226.

<sup>11</sup> Transactions, 1849, "Report of the Executive Committee," 33-35; "List of Premiums," 36-46; "Proceedings of the First Annual Fair," 45-87.



In March 1849 the legislature updated an 1844 “act for the encouragement of agriculture” and provided for taxation to benefit the county societies for the rewarding of premiums and the diffusion of knowledge. The first state record is in the 1849 Transactions of the Michigan State Agricultural Society, which includes reports from Calhoun, Kalamazoo, Lenawee, Monroe, Oakland, and Washtenaw county societies about their activities and progress in organization. These are summarized here to indicate society activity at the time.<sup>12</sup>

Calhoun County residents formed their first society in January 1849 for the “promotion of agricultural, horticultural, pomological, and household interests.” Their first fair was held on October 20 and 21 of that year. Premiums awarded included recognition for needlework, hearth rugs, ornamental shawls, counterpane, and furniture covers.<sup>13</sup>

Kalamazoo County reported that its society was organized in Schoolcraft in January of 1846. Premiums of about \$300 were awarded at the fair held in Kalamazoo on October 8 of that year. The Kalamazoo Gazette reported that “whatever is remarkable or peculiar by excellent in the range of agricultural production will be collected together for exhibition, comparison and exchange.” Portraits, castings, specimens of embroidery and needlework were among the items awarded premiums at this first annual fair. Fairs were held in 1847 in Kalamazoo, 1848 in Schoolcraft, and 1849 in Kalamazoo.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 131-159.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 1850, 161-89; Kalamazoo (Michigan) Gazette, 25 September 1846;

The Lenawee County Agricultural and Horticultural Society was established in January of 1849. Their first county fair was held on October 9 and 10 of that year, in Adrian. Three premiums were awarded in "Fine Arts" for paintings and a daguerreotype. Their category of "Domestic Manufactures" included rag and ingrain carpeting, lamp mats, quilts, decorated work, and picture frames, as well as cloth, clothes, and furniture. The report of the society's executive committee which judged this area noted that:

. . . we see by the encouraging and welcome presence of their smiling wives and blushing daughters, that a feeling of interest in the objects for which this society was formed is thoroughly awakened throughout the county. We can but indulge the pleasing hope that an impulse has now been given that will result in great good to the citizens of our county.<sup>15</sup>

In the closing remarks of his annual address at the Lenawee County Fair, the Honorable Horace Benis noted the importance of the arts and creative endeavors as a part of the rural community and the society at large:

. . . country gives every evidence of becoming the first agricultural nation in the world--the land is free from all oppressive burdens . . . Not only that, but every art, useful and fine, is bursting into a luxuriant life here, with a rapidity unparalleled in the history of the world.

Whose chisel is it that now excels all others in shaping the stubborn marble into a thing of classic beauty? An American's whose magic hand hath transcribed the wild grandeur of our scenery to the speaking canvas, and held it up to the admiring world? An American's. Who hath caught the lightnings of Heaven and harnessed them to the swift-winged car of interchanging thought? An American.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 1849. "Report of the Executive Committee, Lenawee County Agricultural Society," 199-200.

Honor to the arts. The world has too long honored the destroyer, instead of the creator--the iron-handed warrior who tears down, and not the toiler who builds up. But a brighter day is dawning, when things will be appreciated according to their true value--when the eye of man shall no longer be dazzled by the gaudy trappings of the childish pomp of war; and in that rational era, will the sun of progress wither the laurel wreath of the warrior, and place the diadem of fadeless honor upon the brow of honest toil. It is but a few years since men began to act through organizations for the advancement of the arts of peace; yet the men of war have held their revels in every age. Public opinion has advanced much in this respect during the past twenty-five years--art unions, agricultural societies have cast in a powerful influence for the peaceful arts, yet there is much to be done--there are dark spots yet that must be illuminated--there are those yet who feel no interest in an association, the object of which is to help forward true progress; they are the men in whose seminiferous souls the relics of barbarism, flying before the light of reform, have taken refuge, as the owl flies from the sun to the darkest recesses of the earth. They are the sluggards that sleep yet, and will not awake until midday.<sup>16</sup>

The Monroe County Society was formed in June of 1849 to "promote the improvement of agriculture and domestic manufactures." Premiums from their first fair, on October 18 of that same year, were awarded primarily for livestock, grains, and dairy products. Awards included a horse rake and cultivator plough. Arts and fancy work entered were examined by the "Discretionary Committee." In their report, this committee acknowledged that they were ". . . by no means qualified to do justice to the several competitors." Chairman John Burch included a comment on the arts:

Our attention was irresistibly attracted towards several superb paintings and drawings, executed by Mrs. Mayhew and the Misses Van Brunt, of Monroe. They were splendid beyond our powers of description, and must be seen in order that their merits may be duly appreciated.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 191-209.

Specimens of embroidery, worsted needlework, lamp mats, decorated ottomans, and clothing, as well as quilts and rag carpeting, were also commented upon. "There was a pair of slippers presented by a little girl seven years of age, the superior workmanship of which elicited expressions of wonder." Agricultural implements, beehives, barrels, and horseshoes were included under "Miscellaneous" that first year. "In conclusion, we will say to the farmers of Monroe, strive to be better prepared another year, and don't forget to bring the ladies with their handiwork."<sup>17</sup>

Oakland County organized their society in July of 1849 and had their first fair in October. The arts were accommodated under "Miscellaneous Articles," with watercolors and landscape painting included along with wreath work, wax fruit, embroidered work, and "perforated work by little girls." The category of "Domestic Manufactures" included rag and wool carpet, yard goods, coverlets, quilts, and clothing, among other items.<sup>18</sup>

The Washtenaw Society also formed in July of that year and had their fair in early October. Information about their premiums was not included in their report.<sup>19</sup> Whether this was a reorganization of the 1843 group reported earlier in the Michigan Farmer or a new effort was not discovered in this research.

These were the earliest of the Michigan county agricultural societies. Figure 4 shows the early founding dates for many of the county societies in Michigan. Even the brief exposure presented here

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., "Monroe County Agricultural Society Report," 211-221.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., "Oakland County Agricultural Society Report," 224-230.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., "Washtenaw County Agricultural Society Report," 231-234.

demonstrates that these early Michigan agricultural societies included creative activities as one of the concerns within their communities. Even when the arts were not defined by the first competitive categories, citizens often brought the arts to the fairs. Ultimately, the societies reflected these interests in their established categories and the premiums which recognized meritorious work.

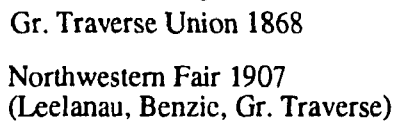


**Figure 4**  
**Founding Dates - Early Michigan County Agricultural Societies**

## Arts at the Fairs

Emerging as democratic organizations, the new agricultural societies sought to improve their communities through the vehicle of an annual fair. This exhibition summarized the successes and progress of a year's work. The fair also provided a means for recognition, inspiration, and informal education that could influence the future.

Arts at the fairs covered as broad a range as the livestock and produce which were exhibited there. As previously noted, Patrick Overton, commenting on the importance of the arts in rural communities of the 1890s, cautions us not to focus our concern on the product, but to see art in ". . . the realm of everyday life of people. . . [because] art was never meant to be out of context. . . art isn't objects, it isn't performances, it isn't products. It is people. People telling their story."<sup>20</sup> The arts from early county fairs seen throughout this study did grow from and were intertwined in the lives of those who produced them. Quilts, hearth rugs, lamp mats, and decorated articles of clothing were brought to the fair. These were among the utilitarian items which had been ornamented. Individual creative effort enhanced these "necessary" items, which brightened the homes and lives not only of those who created them but of those who used them. Other arts at the fairs were more purely ornamental. Nature provided the raw materials for much of this artwork. Shells, seeds, rocks, moss, leather, hair, wax, etc.,--"found objects" in today's vernacular-- were the mediums with which many items were

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<sup>20</sup> "Arts, Artists, and Community" 4-5. These comments, noted on page 18, Chapter 2 .

ornamented. Shelf brackets, Bible stands, picture frames, and boxes were enhanced using these materials. Beads, wire, grasses, and aluminum were also used. Ornamental works of a more decorative nature, such as pictures, bouquets, or wall wreaths, were also produced with these materials. Photography and the so-called "fine arts" were part of the annual fairs as well. Drawings, etchings, and paintings were also part of the fair although sculpture and pottery were hardly apparent during the time periods investigated in this study.

Individuals brought their own work to the fairs. Bylaws and rules usually indicated that only the owner or producer of items could enter them into the competition for premiums. At times there were special premium categories which provided for the exhibition of "collections" of items. These allowed for area residents who owned the works of others to share them (or show them off,) to the community at large. The opportunity for exhibiting items at the fair outside the competitive effort also existed. This was most often taken advantage of by area merchants; however, collections of artworks and curiosities were also exhibited by individuals. Evidence indicates that judges, who could not compete in a category they were judging, sometimes exhibited their own work. Music was also a part of the county fairs, first purely as entertainment and later as a competitive category.

### **Rationale for a Broad View of the Arts**

In addition to the rationale of current community arts agencies, the validity of county fairs as community arts agencies is also inferred



from cultural scholars and historians. Recalling the earlier discussion of the contemporary community arts scene, one can see that the early county fair demonstrated interests which parallel the goals of community arts agencies of the 1990s. In their democratic approach, agricultural societies sought to involve all members of the community in their annual fairs. By including a range of creative activities at the fairs, the agricultural societies recognized these activities of citizens in their communities and gave value to individual participation in the arts.

There is other contemporary support for an extended, democratic view, both in the inclusion of all citizenry and in a broadened definition for the arts. Holger Cahill, in his forward to Arts for the Millions, reminds us of John Dewey and his followers who

emphasized the importance and pervasiveness of the aesthetic experience, the place of the arts as a part of the significant life of an organized community, and the necessary unity of the arts with the activities, and objects, and the scenes of everyday life.

Cahill worked to support these connections throughout his career in his attention to folk and traditional arts and through his work at the Works Progress Administration bringing arts closer to individuals within communities. In his essay, "Material Culture Studies in America, 1876-1976," Thomas Schlereth addresses a number of the changing patterns which have affected the study of the ". . . things they left behind." Concerning the changes in museum collecting, Schlereth describes a move from collecting only "objects d'art," original and unique items made by individuals who are recognized as Artists (with a capital letter), to the addition of the gathering and

study of more common items, as well as the activities of the people who made and used them. On another level, even the classic art historian's scholarly interest in American artworks produced during the time of this study (1850s through early 1870s) acknowledges the expression of those things and experiences unique to the American scene as a dominant subject matter. This content included the landscape and its qualities, as well as the activities and attentions of ordinary people. John Wilmwerding includes a "flourishing of folk art" as well when he states:

It is no accident that these other artistic forms developed concurrently during the middle quarters of the nineteenth century. Together they [folk art, genre painting, and neo-classicism in sculpture and architecture] reflected the fervent interest in the lives of ordinary citizens and the equally fervent belief in the establishment of a moral order, both inspired by democracy.<sup>21</sup>

Each of the creative products brought to the county fair represented an individual expression, one which transformed personal experience into symbols. Whether simple or complex in design, technique, or skill, these artworks, like the agricultural products at the fair, represented the efforts and aspirations of their makers. In The American Renaissance, R. L. Duffus offers an argument which can bridge time in acknowledging the value of this extended, democratic type of access to the arts--inclusive arts, for all people. Duffus

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<sup>21</sup> Francis V. O'Connor, Editor, Art for the Millions, "Forward: American Resources in the Arts," by Holger Cahill, (Greenwich, Conn., New York Graphic Society, 1973) 33-34; Thomas J. Schlereth, Editor and Compiler, Material Culture Studies in America, (Nashville, Tennessee, American Association for State and Local History, 1982) , 1-75; John Wilmerding, American Art, (Middlesex, England and New York, Penguin Books, 1976), 85-160, quote: 100.

acknowledges the importance of "doing" in the arts as a learning technique as well as a means to appreciation.

. . . Naturally, it is the acquisition of an unexpected proficiency that gives the thrill to amateur art work. One finds that the gap between himself and the professional artist, while wide enough, is not the chasm between two worlds. . . a new delight has been revealed, that of seeing things as the artist sees them--which means, perhaps seeing them for the first time in one's life as they actually are. This new adventure of seeing is the amateur's greatest exploit. The adventure of the fine arts may not lie primarily in any canvas, mural, statue or building. It may consist of a greater awareness of life, a more vigorous response to an environment. And an increasing interest in the creative process may testify to the nation's virility as did the settlement of the old west.<sup>22</sup>

### **Utilitarian, Decorative, and Fine Arts**

Arts at the fairs can be thought of as falling into three large categories. Since there is a great deal of overlap, these divisions are not mutually exclusive. Utilitarian articles were household articles and clothing ornamented in creative ways, primarily by needlework. Decorative arts may have served useful purposes in the home as well, but a larger ornamental effort was involved. These two divisions become blurred when one considers, for example, an elaborate quilt or parlor bracket heavily entwined with wax vines, or a quilt centerpiece made from 6,000 pieces, or another quilt made of silk scraps from gowns of England's royal family. One can question the amount of actual use these items might have incurred. Bridging the decorative arts and the fine arts were totally ornamental items made of natural objects. These included pictures, wreaths, and floral arrangements made from seeds, feathers, wax, etc.

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<sup>22</sup> R. L. Duffus, The American Renaissance, (New York, Knoff, 1928), 216-7.

Using fine arts, as a division for this discussion comes from both common thought, which defines the fine arts as including painting, drawing, sculpture, etc., and from the frequency that this term was used as a category for premium competition at the fairs studied. Another term for this grouping not carrying the elitist stigma would be better; however, such a term is hard to identify for several reasons. Some of the painting techniques represented at the fairs were far from any concept of fine arts in that they employed the designs and formulas of others for production. "Two-dimensional works" is not an appropriate term because, though small in number, sculpture and pottery did appear at the fairs. Photography in many forms was also included in the arts at the fairs. Ambrotypes, daguerreotypes, and photographs were most often included in a category which included "fine arts" in its title.

In the discussion which follows, the arts discovered at the fairs of this study will be addressed. Discussions of techniques or definitions of terms will be provided only for those uncommon to contemporary usage.

Utilitarian items which incorporated creative work primarily involved needlework of all kinds. Exceptions to this were baskets and boxes, fancy brackets, and penmanship.

Baskets and boxes made from all types of materials and for a variety of purposes were brought to the fairs. These containers were intended to hold letters, jewelry, cards, spices, scraps, sewing work, and wax fruit, among other items. The baskets and boxes were created in many ways--with crochet, worsted work, beads, wire, tin,

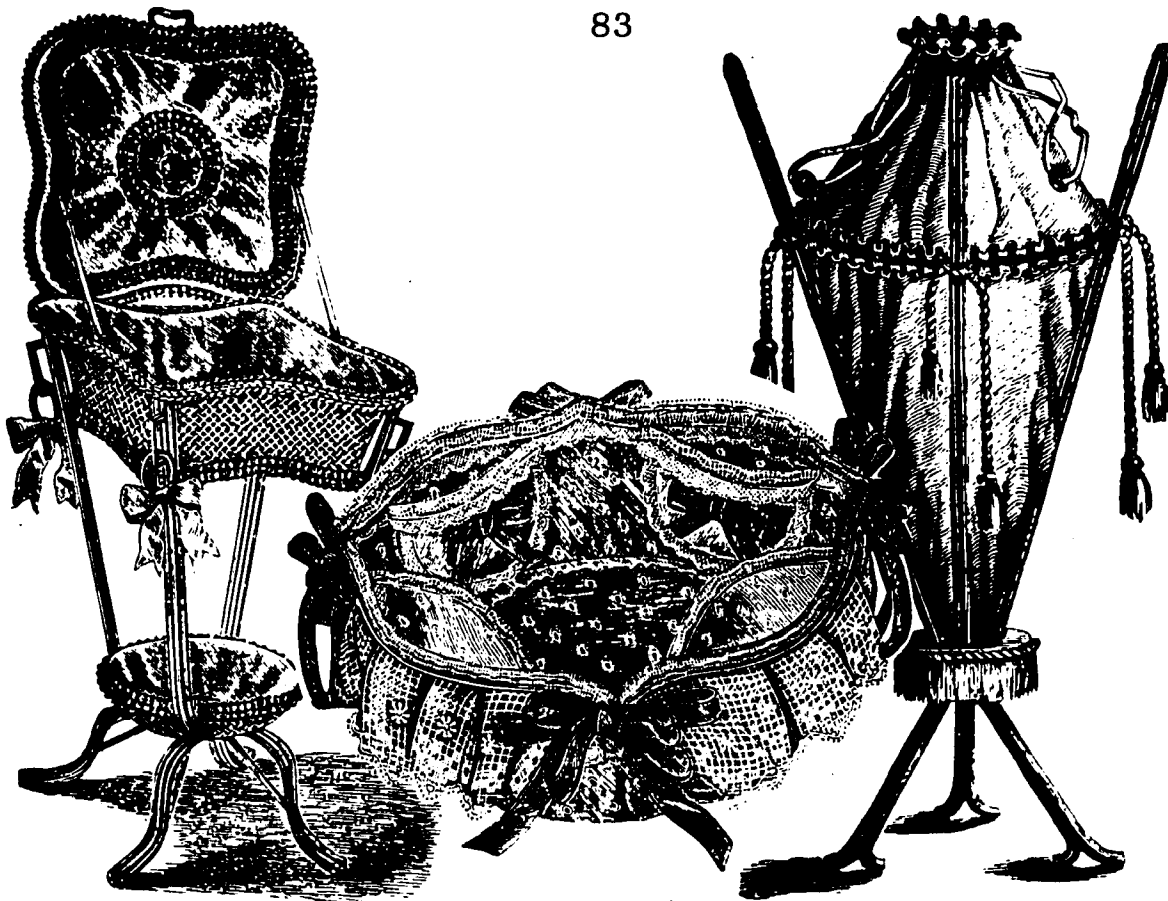


**Figure 5**  
**Standing Scrap-bags and a Toilet-basket**  
 (Source: Household Elegancies, 172, 174-175.)

mosses, cones, and sea grasses. Mrs. C. S. Jones and Henry T. Williams, in their book Household Elegancies, published in 1875, indicated that “. . . a tasteful parlor is not completely finished until a useful little work stand is made, and furnished with a box and basket.” In addition to the purposes noted above, baskets and wall pockets were often present in homes of the period to help keep a room in order by holding loose papers and other odd items which might otherwise present an untidy appearance. The standing scrap bags illustrated in Figure 5 are examples of these “modern improvements,” designed as an aid to help keep a home neat. Instructions provided in Household Elegancies show how these “. . . may be made quite

ornamental at little expense. . ." with paper, ribbon and other commonly available materials.<sup>23</sup>

Brackets, parlor brackets, or fancy brackets, as they were sometimes referred to, added a decorative element to the corners of open doorways or across arches. Brackets also provided small ornamental shelves for art objects or clocks. A fret saw allowed for the carving of these intricate designs. This recreation was promoted as very appropriate for the ladies and even small children. The advertisement shown in Figure 6 shows this special saw along with an intricate fancy bracket. The books for sale included patterns and instructions for this home recreation.

Carpeting was also entered into the fair competitions. Most seen in this study was rag carpeting, probably hand woven in strips and sewn together for household use. Ingrain carpet appeared at the fair as well. It is not known exactly what is meant by this. One museum curator understood this to refer primarily to early Jacardian loom weaving. It is questionable that this process would have been available in these rural and remote communities. The dictionary suggests that ingrained refers to work where the yarn is died prior to the weaving of the work.<sup>24</sup>

Crochet work was very common at the fairs. Specimens of crochet showed the variety of stitches which could be performed. Afghans and coverlets were made of silk, cotton, and worsted yarns.

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<sup>23</sup> Mrs. C. S. Jones and Henry T. Williams, Household Elegancies: Suggestions in Household Art and Tasteful Home Decorations, (New York, Henry T. Williams, Publisher, 1875), 159-177.

<sup>24</sup> Val Berryman, Interview by the Author; Nina Fletcher Little, Country Arts in Early American Homes, (New York, Dutton, 1975), 192-216.

# ORNAMENTAL DESIGNS

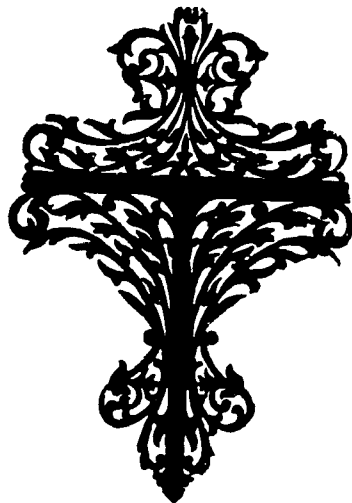
—FOR—

## Fret-Work, Scroll Sawing, Fancy Carving,

—AND—

### HOME DECORATIONS.

Fret-Sawing has become an art of such wonderful popularity that the interest in it has been shared by both amateurs and professionals to an astonishing extent. Hundreds are earning large sums of pocket-money by cutting these beautiful household ornaments, and selling among friends or acquaintances, or at the art stores.



Ladies and the Young Folks find in it a fascinating recreation, and are making dozens of fancy articles at small cost, to decorate their homes in a charming manner, or to give as Holiday Presents to friends. The following books contain mechanical designs of full size for immediate use, and are invaluable alike to the amateurs, ladies, young folks, mechanics, architects, and all of professional skill.

PART 1 contains full size designs for Picture Frames, Small Brackets, Book Racks, Fancy Letters and Figures, Ornaments, Wall Pockets, etc. (Has patterns worth at usual prices over \$5.) Price 75 cts., post-paid by mail.

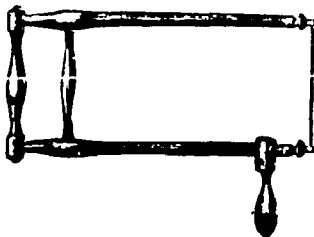
PART 2 is devoted exclusively to designs of Brackets of medium to large size, all entirely new, and of the most tasteful detail and execution. (Contains over 50 plans, worth at least \$15.) Price \$1.00, by mail, post-paid.

PART 3 is devoted to Fancy Work, Ladies' Work Baskets, Easels, Crosses, Match Boxes, Pen Racks, Paper Cutters, Calendar Frames, Thermometer Stands, Watch Pockets, Fruit Baskets, Table Platters, etc. Nearly 100 designs, many of them really exquisite. Price \$1.00.

The above books contain over 300 patterns, all beautifully printed in blue color. These books are the only ones yet issued in the U. S. The patterns are mostly original, designed expressly for these books, and in execution, choice selection, taste, cheapness, they may be safely esteemed the best collection yet produced.

The whole series of three costing but \$2.75, contains upwards of 300 patterns, worth at usual values over \$30. All sent post-paid by mail on receipt of price.

## Bracket and Fret Saw.



With this bracket saw, the designs and directions, very desirable articles can be made for Fairs, etc., which will sell quickly and at a good profit. With it you can make beautiful articles for presentation gifts. With it you can help beautify your homes. With it you can make money. To parents desiring a USEFUL GIFT for their children, we would call attention to this Bracket and Fret Saw, for it not only affords great pleasure, but it helps to cultivate a mechanical taste.

Price with 25 bracket and ornamental designs, 6 bracket saw blades, also full directions for use. Sent by mail for \$1.25.

Address HENRY T. WILLIAMS, Publisher,  
46 Beekman Street, New York.

**Figure 6**  
**Fret-work Scroll Saw Advertisement**  
(Source: Household Elegancies, end pages)

Counterpanes and coverlets referred to bed coverings. Made from a wide variety of fabrics, bed coverings were plain, woven, embroidered, and pieced, and along with quilts, they were taken to the fairs in large numbers. The variety of quilts included those which were patched or pieced into patterns and made of silk, cotton, or wool. White quilts were all one color (usually white), with the stitching providing the decorative element. Quilt patterns identified at the fairs of this study include "Log Cabin" and "White" quilts, but one can assume that a variety of patterns as well as "Crazy Quilts," were represented among those listed simply as patch quilts. Unusual quilts were noted. One was made of cloth from the bark of trees by the natives of the Sandwich Islands. Another quilt centerpiece was comprised of 6,000 pieces. Quilts were submitted by ladies, ninety-plus years old, and quilt blocks were done by children. Crib quilts also made an appearance at the fairs. Marsha MacDowell, curator of folk arts at the Michigan State University Museum, notes that this art form, in more recent times, has begun to be acknowledged as portraying ". . . a significant cultural and historic record . . . that is clearly linked to both personal and community experience." Since 1984 the Traditional Arts Project of the Michigan State University Museum has been involved in recognizing, collecting, and preserving quilts and information on the traditions and heritage of Michigan quilting.<sup>25</sup>

Mosaic and patchwork covers for ottomans or footrests were displayed at fairs. Piano covers also won premiums. A mosaic ottoman

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<sup>25</sup> Marsha MacDowell and Ruth D. Fitzgerald, Editors, Michigan Quilts: 150 Years of a Textile Tradition, (East Lansing, Michigan State University Museum, 1987), ix, 170.



cover entered under a needlework category was probably a brightly embroidered or woven design and not tiles or stones cemented together.

Cushions of all types were brought to the fairs. Pin cushions, beaded cushions, and toilet cushions were some of the small types of pillows. These may have been intended primarily for use in one's toilet, to aid the process of grooming, bathing, hair dressing, etc. In addition to possible uses in the sewing box as pin cushions, these toilet cushions provided a safe and consistent location for keeping hat and clothes pins as well as other types of jewelry. Cushions discovered through this research were described as beaded and embroidered. One striking toilet cushion was ornamented with lace and beads. Though no toilet basket was identified in this research, it is likely that some of the many baskets entered at the fairs were made to serve this purpose as well. Figure 5 includes a toilet basket, conveniently designed for holding the assorted items one would need to contend with prior to retiring for the evening, such as hair pins, jewelry, a watch, etc.<sup>26</sup>

Embroidered stitchery of all kinds was used to decorate clothing and many of the fabric and needlework items brought to the fair. In addition, Berlin work was common at that period in time. Referred to today as needlepoint, each slanted stitch crossed two vertical and two horizontal threads. This type of needlework was most often done with worsted (woolen) yarns on canvas. During the early part of the

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<sup>26</sup> Jones and Williams, Household Elegancies, 172.

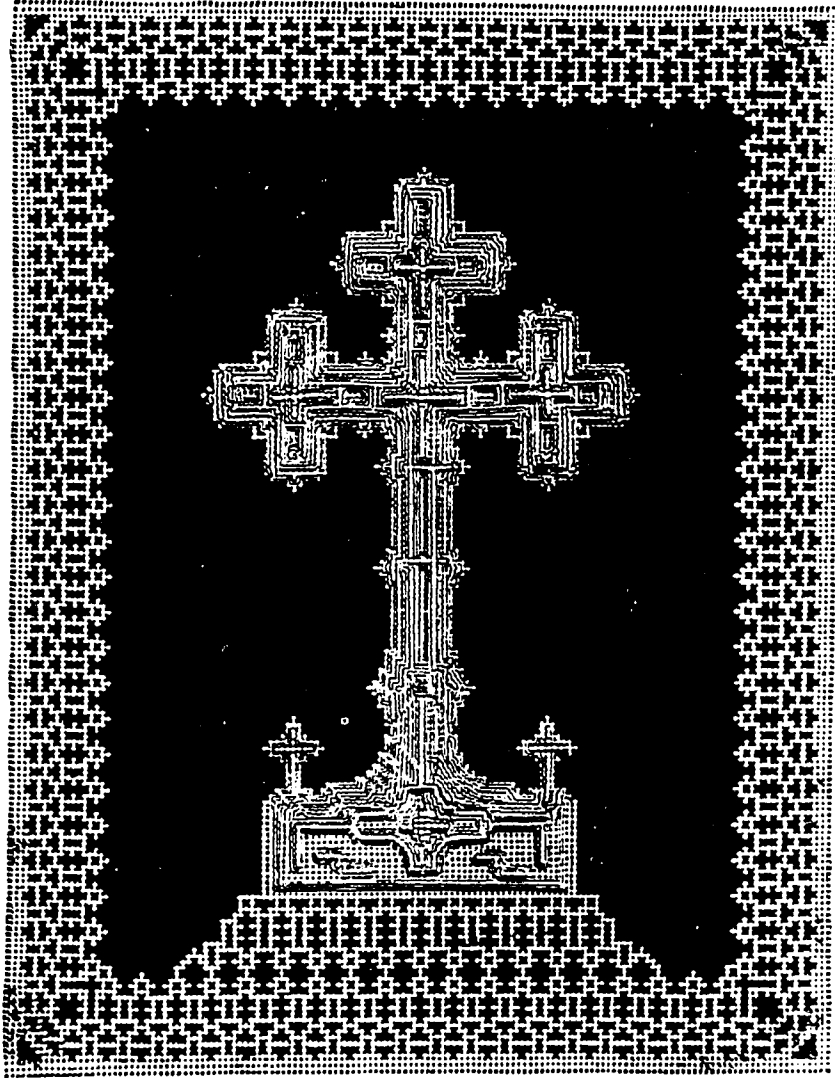


**Figure 7**  
**Cross in Perforated Card Board Work**  
(Source: *Household Elegancies*, 250.)

nineteenth century, Berlin work gained in popularity as preprinted designs became available on paper and cloth. Embroidery on paper was sometimes also referred to as Berlin work or perforated work. Because canvas backing was expensive, perforated paper and cardboard were also used as backing. As these more fragile materials were stitched over with silk, cotton, or fine wool thread, they were made much more durable and could be used successfully for

bookmarks, card cases, wall mottos, or pictures. An elaborate cross done in perforated cardboard work is shown in Figure 7.<sup>27</sup>

Lamp mats were always needed in the home to soak up drips of oil from the lamps and to protect table and mantle surfaces. Because of this ongoing need, they must have been constantly discarded and newly made. This research uncovered lamp mats at the fairs made of any thing available, including moss, silk, and worsted work. The Michigan State University Museum has a large variety of lamp mats in its collection, including one made of paper, with a border design of fringed paper, as well as some made of cotton, with designs richly embroidered around the edges.

Small, decorative rugs served many purposes in the homes of the times and appeared at the fairs as well. "Hearth rugs," "fancy rugs," and "worked rugs" were the descriptive terms which appeared in this study. Rugs may have been distinguished by their structure, such as braided, hooked, or woven, or by an applied design. A heavily embroidered technique using heavy yarns was sometimes called a "worked" rug. Worsted rugs were probably heavily done in a similar manner with wool yarns. Hearth rugs were commonly used to protect other carpeting or the floor from sparks and cinders of the fire. Small, ornamental rugs were often decorated with repeating geometric patterns or floral designs. Hooking and shirring were also

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<sup>27</sup>Betsey B. Creekmore, Traditional American Crafts, (New York, Hearthsides Press Inc., 1968), 66-70, 124; Katharine Morrison McClinton, Collecting American Victorian Antiques, (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), 250-1; Jones and Williams, Household Elegancies, 250.

common methods of rug construction. Shirred rugs were made of tightly folded strips sewn to the backing fabric.<sup>28</sup>

Tatting is a kind of lace that is created through a looping and knotting process by the use of a small bobbin or shuttle. The process is similar to, although more elaborate than, the old fishnet making done with a hand shuttle. Specific descriptions of the tatted items were not discovered through this research, however; like crochet, a large array of items can be made or enhanced with this process. Collars, vests, shawls, pillow covers, and lamp mats can be tatted.<sup>29</sup>

Tidies were small covers made to protect the arms and backs of chairs and sofas. They were made of many things, from plain homespun cotton to fancy lace, and were plain or embroidered.<sup>30</sup>

Watch cases and holders were made specifically to hold a gentleman's or lady's watch after one retired in the evening. The Michigan State University Museum collections have watchcases made from a variety of materials--decorated cardboard with needlework edges, wire, and beads. Some are small basket-type containers, similar to the toilet basket illustrated in Figure 5; others are intended to hang on the wall. These wall pockets were placed close to the bed for convenience and safekeeping.<sup>31</sup>

"Specimens" of creative work were entered into the fairs. A specimen included several examples of a particular type of work. Marbling and graining were painted replicas of different types of

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<sup>28</sup> Little, Country Arts, Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, (New York, The World Publishing Company, 1964, 1953) 1493.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 1523.

<sup>31</sup> Berryman Interview.

marble or wood. These techniques were used to enhance a piece of wooden furniture or to create the illusion of a marble mantle.

Examples at the fairs included one specimen of graining which demonstrated four different kinds of woods. Also at the fairs were specimens of various needlework, lettering, penciling, penmanship and card writing as well as carriage painting and varnishing.

Not only were useful items enhanced to provide pleasure to both the user and the maker, but ornamental items were also made and brought to the fair. With an increasing availability of spare time, the creation of purely decorative items provided an avenue for creative expression and recreation, and resulted in elaborate ornaments for the home. The raw materials for these artworks were close at hand and easily attainable. These decorative works appeared at the fairs in large numbers, and based upon the newspaper reports, they were admired by the entire community. Besides learning from one another within the community, newspapers, ladies' magazines, and books offered descriptions of these techniques and processes. Art Recreations: Being a Complete Guide to. . . [over 30 processes,] was offered in 1868, when its publishers, who were dealers in pictures and artists' materials, were overwhelmed with a ". . . constant receipt of letters, from all parts of the country, asking for information in various departments of ornamental work." This manual provided detailed directions for such processes as gilding; moss and cone work; hair, shell, and feather work; paper and artificial flower making; wax

molding; and a large variety of drawing and painting techniques, as well.<sup>32</sup> These were the decorative and ornamental works at the fairs.

Agricultural wreaths, or farmers' wreaths, were elaborately constructed, decorative arrangements which were often encased in frames and covered with glass or gesso to protect them for the future. These were not simple seed mosaics, glued flat onto a board. Three-dimensional flowers, vines, and leaves were constructed separately and then combined into an ornamental wreath. The Henry Ford Museum and most other museums with collections of decorative pieces from this period have elaborate examples of this type of work. This research discovered one such work containing over 100 varieties of seeds. Another agricultural wreath exhibited at both county and state fairs, was reported as having been sold at the state fair for \$125. Seed work was also used to ornament other items, such as picture frames or boxes.<sup>33</sup>

Beads were used in many ways to ornament useful articles or to make elaborate pictures. They were added to knitting to enhance already complicated patterns. For this method beads, in the proper order for the design used, were threaded onto the yarn or thread being knitted and then pulled forward and held in place when the stitch was moved from one needle to another. In all-over designs of one color, beads added sparkle. More intricate designs of flowers, birds, and lettering involved threading the various colors of beads

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<sup>32</sup> Madame L. B. Urbino, Prof. Henry Day, and others, Art Recreations: Being a Complete Guide to Pencil Drawing, Oil Painting, . . ., (Boston, J. E. Tilton and Company, 1868) 5-6.

<sup>33</sup> McClinton, Collecting American Victorian Antiques, 254-256.

needed for the design one row at a time. Beaded embroidery, also sometimes called Berlin work, involved adding a bead to each embroidery stitch. This process was popular for wall pictures. Beaded flower wreaths were also embroidered onto a dark needlepoint background. Beginning as early as 1850, magazines such as Godey's, Peterson's, and Graham's printed directions and included patterns for beadwork items, e. g., wall pockets, watchcases, pin cushions. Beaded bags were also made. The reticule was a small bag created in a netlike fashion with beads. Bags were also woven totally with beads. These were intricately done and often incorporated elaborate and colorful designs.<sup>34</sup>

Cones and shells provided a variety of small, textural, and colorful pieces from which to construct flowers and geometric designs to enhance many articles. Boxes, vases, hair ornaments, pictures, and ornate centerpieces were constructed from these items, many of which could be found in a “. . . ramble through the woods and fields.” Figure 8 shows examples of cone work, a frame, and the construction of an acorn leaf. Flower arrangements were also created from cones and shells. Piano wire was wrapped for stems, and beads added highlights. These pieces were typically attached with putty or wax and were sometimes varnished to aid in protection.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Creekmore, Traditional American Crafts, 70; McClinton, Collecting American Victorian Antiques, 253.

<sup>35</sup> Urbino, Art Recreations, 298-300; Jones, Household Elegancies, 220-230.

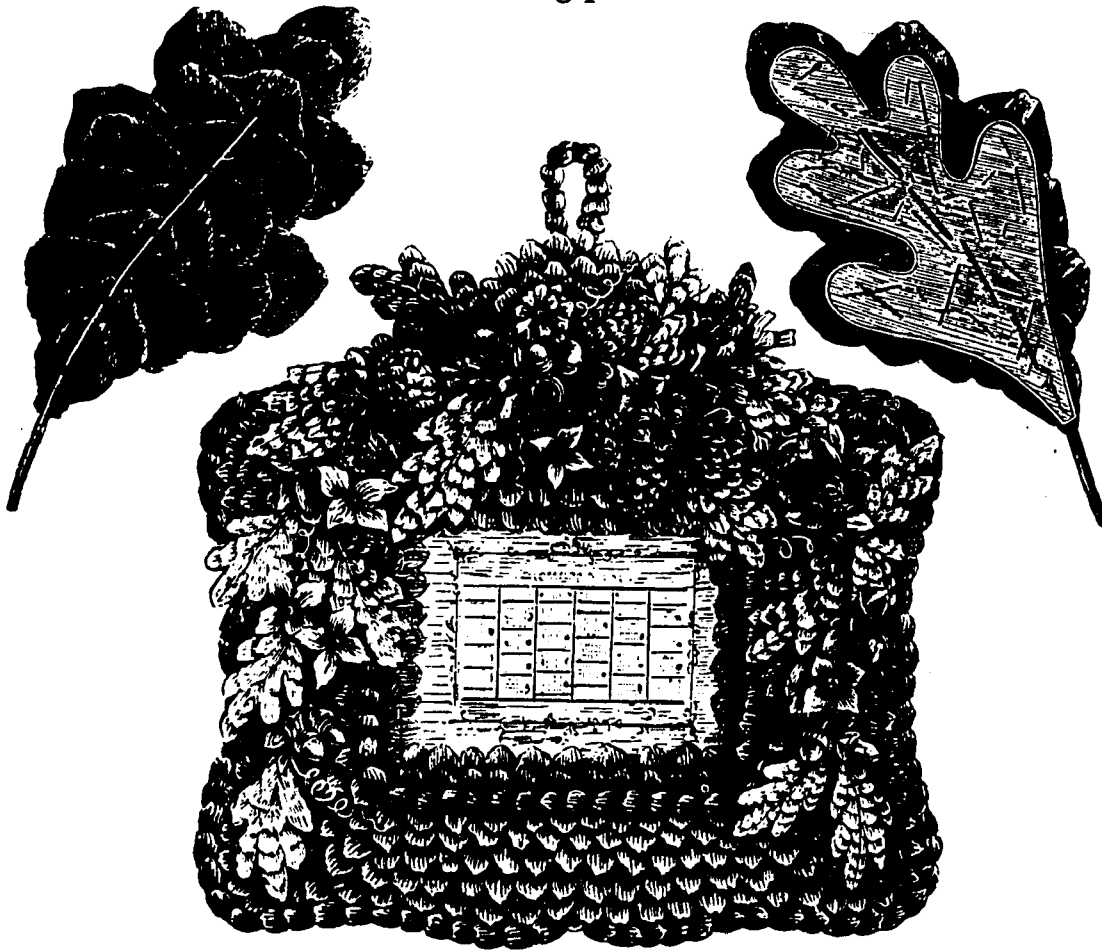


**Figure 8**  
**Cone-work Frame and Acorn Leaf**  
 (Source: Household Elegancies, 219-221.)

The crystallization of grasses and leaves to create “frost work,” was accomplished with “alum dissolved in cold water,” and created an effect on leaves “. . . as if being thickly dusted with diamond powder.” This process added to the longevity of the natural materials and contributed to impressive arrangements and pictures..<sup>36</sup>

Feather work flowers and wreaths could be strikingly beautiful. One wreath discovered in this research was said to have brought out spontaneous expressions of amazement by those who saw it. Feather

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<sup>36</sup> Jones, Household Elegancies, 47.



flowers were constructed by cutting and shaping feathers and gluing or binding them together, or on a cardboard base, to form all the parts of flowers and leaves. When it was discovered that chicken feathers could be easily dyed (duck and goose feathers cannot because of an oil coating which helps the birds float), another avenue for color was opened. Art Recreations provides instructions for dying feathers to obtain specific colors, such as blue, yellow, orange, red, and lilac. Some feather flowers were constructed on the stem, for arrangements. These were combined with peacock feathers, pampas grass, and other dried materials in bouquets. Elaborate arrangements and ornate wreaths were constructed on a backing. Many of these were encased in shadow-box-type frames or within domes to protect and preserve them. Feathers were also used to make pictures for the wall.<sup>37</sup>

One cannot imagine the elegance of a beautiful hair wreath or flowers until it is actually observed. Interest in using hair for ornamental purposes began with the sentimental remembrance of a relative or friend. Amateur work in this area became popular in the mid-nineteenth century, when popular ladies' magazines began to include patterns and instructions. Small groupings of strands were combined, made smooth, and looped, twisted, and braided into various configurations for the different portions of flowers and leaves. Very fine wire held sections of hair together and fastened flower parts as well. Wire also provided a structural element for weaving hair and

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<sup>37</sup> Creekmore, Traditional American Crafts, 106-107; Urbino, Art Recreations, 296-297.

wire to form leaves. Scissors, wire, darning and knitting needles, and pinchers were among the tools necessary for making these elaborate artworks. Flowers, arrangements, wreaths, and “family trees” were designed and constructed of “. . . live hair, that is, hair from the head of a living person. . .” Sometimes fine beads were added. Hair work was encased in a shadow frame, display box, or dome and used in decorating the home, as a painting would be, or as a centerpiece.<sup>38</sup>

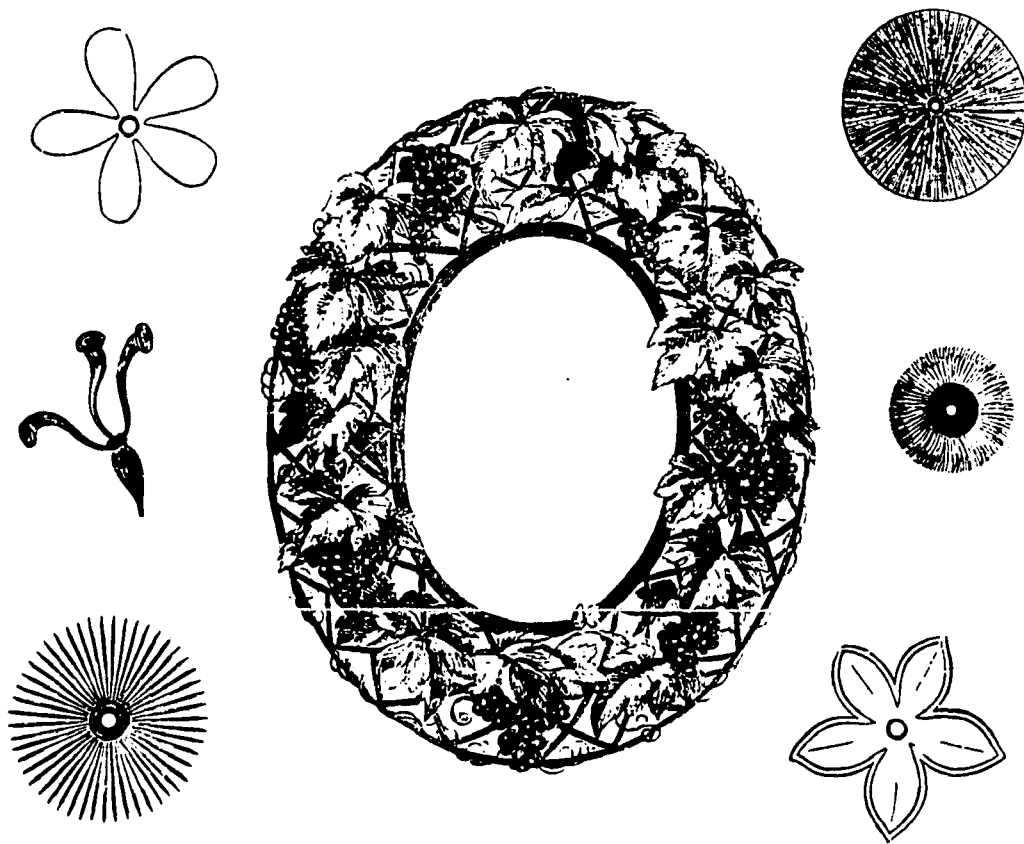


**Figure 9**  
**Leather-work Flower Patterns and Picture Frame**  
 (Source: Household Elegancies, 123-4.)

<sup>38</sup> McClinton, Collecting American Victorian Antiques, 259; Urbino, Art Recreations, 294-5.

Leather work, according to Madame Urbino, in Art Recreations, “. . . when well and tastefully done, closely resembles rich carving in wood. . .” Leather constructions of flowers and vines were added to picture frames, clock faces, and entwined around table legs and wall brackets. Instructions directed consulting real flowers in order to make patterns which would closely imitate nature. Figure 9 shows the pattern pieces necessary to create a leather flower and a leather picture frame.<sup>39</sup>

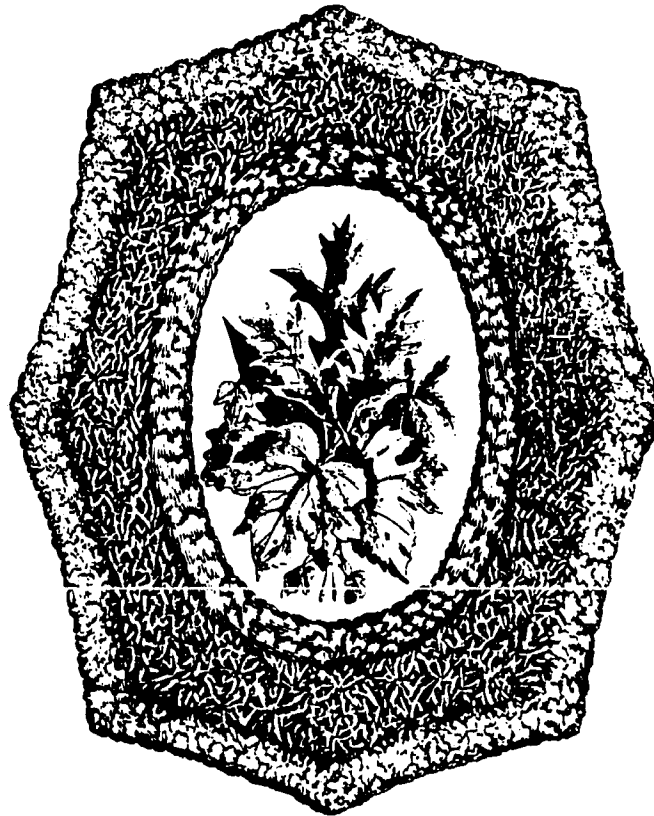


**Figure 10**  
**Moss-work Frame**  
(Source: Household Elegancies, 55)

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<sup>39</sup> Jones Household Elegancies, 119-138; Urbino, Art Recreations, 241-256.

Moss decorative work and pictures were created from the endless varieties of this natural element readily available to many rural citizens of the nineteenth century.

A fertile imagination and inventive mind will readily perceive the many objects for which moss work is well adapted--vases neatly and tastefully covered with delicate mosses. . . crosses, little towers, ancient and moss grown, for watch stands, frames . . .

This moss frame is just one example of the many uses of this material. Moss pictures were made as well, with watercolor for the background sky, "landscapes, ruins, bridges, rocks" were constructed into a design to add beauty to a home.<sup>40</sup>

Skeletonized leaves were also created for flowers, bouquets, and other decorative uses. The process for producing these delicate "phantom leaves" was both tedious and labor intensive. Leaves were painted with bleach or "chlorine of lime," weighted down, and soaked in rainwater. As the body of the leaf rotted and changed to a pulp, periodic careful brushing and scraping was necessary to remove this part, leaving the stem and veins--the skeleton of the leaf. Finished leaves were then pressed in books for flat drying, or shaped for a specific use. Leaves were combined for wall pictures and used to decorate items in the household. Figure 11 shows an arrangement made for a glass shade.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Urbano, Art Recreations, 291; Jones, Household Elegancies, 66-90.

<sup>41</sup> Jones, Household Elegancies, 34-35.



**Figure 11**  
**Skeleton Leaf Design for a Glass Shade**  
 (Source: Household Elegancies, 34.)

Spray work, or spatter work, was a popular decorative treatment which could be applied to almost any smooth surface. India ink, or another dark medium, was sprayed or spattered over an arrangement of pressed leaves or flowers to leave the silhouette of the object. Initials or other cutout designs were also used. The feeling of depth and increased interest of design were achieved by applying the color in several different layers and removing or adding design elements

throughout the process. A spatter-work design for cushions, screens, portfolios, etc., is shown in Figure 12.



**Figure 12**  
**Spatter-work Design**  
(Source: Household Elegancies)

Waxwork required tools and more elaborate processes than did many of the other decorative works shown at the fairs of this study. Dippers, brushes, molding tools, and actual molds were used to create flower parts, leaves, and fruit of wax. Colorful autumn leaves could be preserved for bouquets by carefully dipping in wax. Wax flowers, however, had to be carefully created, part by part. Patterns, similar to those used in leather flower work, provided guides for constructing flowers. The assortment of tools used in waxwork provided the forms

necessary for shaping the different parts of flowers and leaves. Wax fruit was molded, with leaves and stems added.<sup>42</sup>



**Figure13**  
**Tools and Molds for Waxwork**  
 (Source: Household Elegancies, 178-9.)

Worsted yarns were used in needlework of all kinds and in making rugs as well, because of their durability. Worsted yarn is usually wool which is tightly twined. Because of this property of construction, it is a hard yarn, as opposed to soft and fluffy yarns. It wears well and can be woven into a tight, smooth cloth. Worsted yarns

<sup>42</sup> Urbino, Art Recreations, 265-284; Jones, Household Elegancies, 175-212.

were also used in constructing artificial flowers for arrangements and wreaths, such as have been observed with many of the other natural materials previously discussed. Worsted flowers and leaves observed in several museum collections were constructed by the looping, knotting, and fringing of yarn. Flowers resulted from the careful combination of shapes, again, with nature as a model. The resulting colorful and decorative arrangements and wreaths were mounted on background boards and often encased in shadow boxes for display.

As time went on, "fine arts" as a competitive category ultimately made its way onto many of the premium listings and was used in designating category titles. Fine arts items were primarily drawing, painting, and photography. Statuary, sculpture, and pottery discovered through this study were also included in the fine arts categories. Within each of these areas there were many different designations and descriptions. Drawings of all types from portraits to landscapes, from livestock drawings to architectural drawings, were done in pencil, crayon, and watercolor. Paintings also encompassed this type of variety. Executed in oil, watercolor, india ink, and crayon, paintings of many media were represented at the fairs. Crystallized paintings, probably referring to pictures made in the process previously described, also were found in the fine arts categories. Grecian and Oriental paintings were noted, as well as paintings done on glass, velvet, and oil curtains. Etchings and lithographs were entered, as well as, the mass produced "chromos." Monochromatic works in both drawings and paintings were found. "Medley" and "cluster" pictures appeared, and pose a mystery this researcher was



unable to resolve with other than a common sense interpretation. Engravings, drawings, and photographs appeared in each of the case studies. Hardly a year went by that photographs were not included at the fairs of this study. Ambrotypes, daguerreotypes, and photographs of many forms were brought to the fairs. Photographs were done on china and patent leather; in size they spanned from miniature to life-sized; and they were plain or colored with india ink, watercolor, and oils. Appearing only in the fine arts categories, "original" and "copy" were often designations in award categories and in descriptions which appeared in the press. These terms were used for both drawings and paintings. Unusual terminology and obscure processes uncovered through this research are discussed below.

"Chromos," or "cromos," appeared at the fairs of this study, and in one region, questions about the propriety of including them in competition with original work was expressed in the newspaper. In the 1860s the lithographed picture was upgraded by the new chromolithograph process. The chromolithograph ". . . used a separate stone for each color, anticipating modern color reproductions of painting." Louis Prang is credited with bringing this new process from Germany in 1864. The next step after hand coloring of lithographs, was chromos by artists, such as Albert Bierstadt, Eastman Johnson, and Winslow Homer. This process made these works more broadly available and "drew doubtless welcome revenues from Prang chromos of a few of their canvases." More crudely produced chromos, ranging in price from \$.50 to \$3, were available to decorate the walls of homes and offices. These were

probably the type that the East End Picture Store, of the Grand Traverse Region, included in their inventory. Chromos were available representing a variety of scenes, “. . .darling little boys, doggies, kitties and flowers and birdies, and travelogue scenery often of California. The mere titles indicate the tone: Maidens Prayer, After the Story, The Captive Child,. . .” Chromos were often offered as premium awards at the fairs and as encouragements for magazine and fund-raising subscriptions during the period of this study. Contemporary antique dealers in paper products have these early chromos, along with hand-colored illustrations of the 1860s. Chromos may have been a poor cousin to the small, mass-produced statuary also available about this time.<sup>43</sup>

One “cottage monument” appeared in this study and won a premium at the St. Joseph County Fair. Research has not revealed the identity of this item. Dr. Sada Omoto, professor in American art history and architecture at Michigan State University, suggests that it might be a geometric outdoor statuary.

It is interesting that original engravings and lithographs appeared at the fairs of Ionia and St. Joseph counties. Fair rules required that items entered be produced by their maker. There were, however, opportunities to exhibit personal collections--the works of others. That these were the original works of county residents was implied by the newspaper reporting and the awards won.

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<sup>43</sup> J. C. Furnas, The Americans: A Social History of the United States, 1587-1914, (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1969, 268-631.

Medley engravings, photographs and drawings, and cluster pictures remain a mystery. Although numerous printed resources, librarians, art historians and museum curators cannot confirm this, the term "medley" may refer to the combination of several images into one work. Perhaps the Pioneers of Grand Traverse, (Figure 40) a winning drawing from the Grand Traverse Region, might illustrate a medley drawing. This work has a central drawing with four smaller portraits placed at each of the corners of the work.

"Grecian" and "Oriental" referred not to the content of a painting but to the process of execution. Both types were found at the fairs and were common to the period. Grecian painting involved to a process whereby an engraving or drawing was attached to a wooden frame and moistened with coats of turpentine and "Grecian varnish" on the back until it became transparent. ". . . When ready to paint, the back will have an even gloss all over it; when perfectly clear . . ." it is then prepared and ready. With the lines and shading of the engraving fully visible, the work was painted, ". . . the shading of the engraving serving the same purpose in [the painting as the engraving]." When the painting was complete, it was cut from the frame and hung for display in the home. The transparency of the work added to its visual impact. Oriental painting was done on glass and was used for tabletops as well as for wall art. Printed designs, as well as kits including special paints and instructions, were available via mail order through ladies' magazines and arts supply houses. Publishers of Art Recreations described some of the designs which were available: "one, a handsome wreath, with fountain, birds, etc.; the other, an elegant vase

of flowers, with birds' nests, butterflies, etc. when wanted for a table stand, forms for chess playing."<sup>44</sup>

Pencilling and scrollwork in pencilling were also included in the fine arts sections. According to contemporary antique dealers, this artwork appears to be highly elaborate designs based on such things as birds and flowers, and elaborate, ornate script. This type of work often appears on calling cards from the period and exhibits the imagination and skill of its maker.

Daguerreotypes and ambrotypes were photographic processes spanning the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s. The daguerreotype was originated in the late 1830s in France and quickly appeared on the American scene. New Yorkers heard about this new process in the Morning Herald, September 30, 1839, when it was described as the ". . . taking on copper [of] the exact resemblances of scenes and living objects, through the medium of the sun's rays reflected in a camera obscura." A daguerreotypes is an original, or a one-of-a-kind print. Robert Taft's Photography and the American Scene notes that the popularity of this form declined quickly in the mid-1850s, with the advent of the ambrotype, or "a daguerreotype on glass." The ambrotype is a thin negative, fixed onto glass and then laid on a black surface to be viewed as a positive because of the reflected light. Dave Tinder, a Michigan collector and researcher of early Michigan photography, has expressed surprise at the continuing usage of the "daguerreotype" to describe works exhibited at county and state fairs after this period; he suggested that this term was misused or reflected

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<sup>44</sup> Urbino, Art Recreations, 77-128, 197-210.

publishers ignorance of the different processes. The terminology, however, was also used in the categories, specific items, and awards given at the fairs, and probably simply reflects the continuing use of older processes outside of the more sophisticated, cultural centers of the country.<sup>45</sup>

Other artwork represented at the fairs deserves comment. The work of artisans and craftspersons (like marbling and graining) were included, but usually outside of the decorative and creative categories. Products like carriage painting and varnishing and the work of tinnerns and coppersmiths were included in competitions and were awarded premiums. Musical instruments, both locally produced and those from national manufacturers, were exhibited at the fairs. Local taxidermists as well as amateurs received premiums for their "stuffed birds." In the Grand Traverse Region, a "fairy castle," in 1869, and an "air castle," in 1878, were exhibited at fairs. Both were done by women. Mrs. Perry's "air castle" won a premium from the "Needle & Worsted Work" category, but it is unknown if the other "fairy castle" was stitchery or an actual construction.

The arts and decorative articles brought to the fairs were created with a variety of materials and through many different creative processes. Artworks by young and old alike, and from all facets of the community, demonstrate that individual expression in the arts and

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<sup>45</sup> Robert Taft, Photography and the American Scene: A Social History, 1839-1889, (New York, Dover Publications, Inc., 1938), The Dover edition first published in 1964, is an unabridged and unaltered reproduction of the work first published by the MacMillan Company in 1938. 14-15, 123-125; "Photo History and Preservation Workshop, Notes and Handouts," (Main State Archives, 1984). Tinder, "Correspondence."

creative activities were happening and valued in these early Michigan communities. Decorative work and activity in the arts enhanced many of the useful items of everyday life. Artworks were produced which graced the homes of the community. These creative endeavors provided avenues for recreation and the opportunities for personal expression and creative challenge for those participating.

AN EXPLORATION OF SEVERAL EARLY MICHIGAN COUNTY FAIRS  
AS COMMUNITY ARTS ORGANIZATIONS  
OF THE 1850s, 1860s, AND 1870s

Volume II

By

Julie Ann Avery

A DISSERTATION

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

College of Arts and Letters  
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**PART II**  
**CASE STUDIES**



## **PREFACE TO CASE STUDIES**

Case studies from four Michigan counties are offered here as a way to examine the early county fairs and their role in the cultural life of the communities that they served. The counties selected span Michigan's geography from its southern to its northern borders and represent rural areas of the state. Beginning after the pioneer period, when the singular struggle to clear the land and feed a family gave way to the more collective effort of developing communities, these case studies focus on the cultural activities which were provided through community-based organizations and public-oriented entertainments. It is within this framework that one can begin to assess the role of the early county fair as a community arts organization.

Population and settlement in Michigan occurred earliest at the most southern portions of the state and moved northward, and these case studies reflect this progression. Agricultural societies and fairs in the southern portion of Michigan occurred at the earliest points of time as well. Focus years for the study of the St. Joseph County area and the city of Constantine were the mid-1850s, the mid-1860s, and the early 1870s. Ionia and Ionia County, farther north and toward the center of the state, are examined in the late 1860s and early 1870s. As is the Grand Traverse Region, with attention to Traverse City. In order to include all portions of Michigan, Ontonagon County, in the west central portion of the Upper Peninsula, is also examined during

the late 1860s, a time when the first agricultural society appeared in the midst of mining country.

Cultural organizations and entertainment opportunities were available to citizens in all of these regions. Both the numbers of organizations and the existence of public entertainments were much more prevalent in the communities of the lower peninsula than they were in Ontonagon. Community-based musical and literary organizations provided citizens with opportunities to broaden their knowledge and participate with others who had similar interests. In addition, these organizations provided services and programs which met broad educational and entertainment needs of the communities they served. Public programs, such as lecture series and home talent productions, grew from the efforts of these societies. Home talent productions also gave young and old alike the opportunity to learn an art form as well as to demonstrate their talents and skills, entertaining family, friends, and the community at large.

Individual involvement in a broad range of dramatic arts activities was possible through community-based literary and dramatic societies. From recitation, oration, and debate to amateur dramatic productions and extravagant musical performances, opportunities for such involvement existed in the communities of this study. For musically inclined citizens, community bands, choirs, glee clubs, and practice groups brought opportunities to improve vocal or instrumental skills and to work with larger groups in performance as well. Area bands traveled to perform and support local events of all kinds with their music.

This range of arts involvement was also reflected in the activities of the young. Term-end and year-end school exhibitions included students demonstrating in personal dramatic arts, musical performances, tableaux, etc. Sunday school concerts brought community musical leaders and students together for holiday events and annual programs. Despite these activities, however, there was an absence of opportunity in other arts. There were no community-based organizations for those interested in the two-dimensional arts, the visual arts. A few opportunities did exist for art classes, e.g., pastel painting from a home-based teacher and art classes taught at the Young Ladies School, but the numbers do not compare with the opportunities for learning and involvement in music and the dramatic arts.

It can be assumed that groups of friends quilted together and learned from one another by sharing techniques and designs. One could also infer that the home artists who made hair flowers, or decorated a parlor bracket with leather leaves, or hooked the image of a family pet into a hearth rug, or painted a view from a river bank took great pride in sharing their work with family and friends. These activities, however, did not provide community-wide access to the arts, nor did they offer opportunities to learn from groups of others also involved in the same types of activities. This absence was remedied when the agricultural societies and their fairs appeared on the scene and brought the whole community together for celebration and exchange. The exhibitions and competitive categories provided an avenue for rural citizens to come together and share their work

more broadly. They also provided these people with opportunities to view the works of others. Exhibitions at these early fairs included creative works as well as livestock, crops, household wares, carriages, and tools. Even before there were designated arts categories, a large array of creative works was brought to the fair and won premiums. Creative categories appeared quickly and, through time, evolved to accommodate the variety of works brought to the fair. The evolution of the organization of categories and grouping of like items demonstrates careful and purposeful attention to developing appropriate groupings for items and titles to represent the various creative categories.

The following case studies are offered as a means of examining the cultural opportunities which existed at the community level. The county fair is featured along with the literary and musical organizations of the times. Together, these types of organizations provided these rural areas with community-based opportunities across all the arts.

OUTLINE MAP OF  
**ST JOSEPH CO**  
 MICHIGAN.

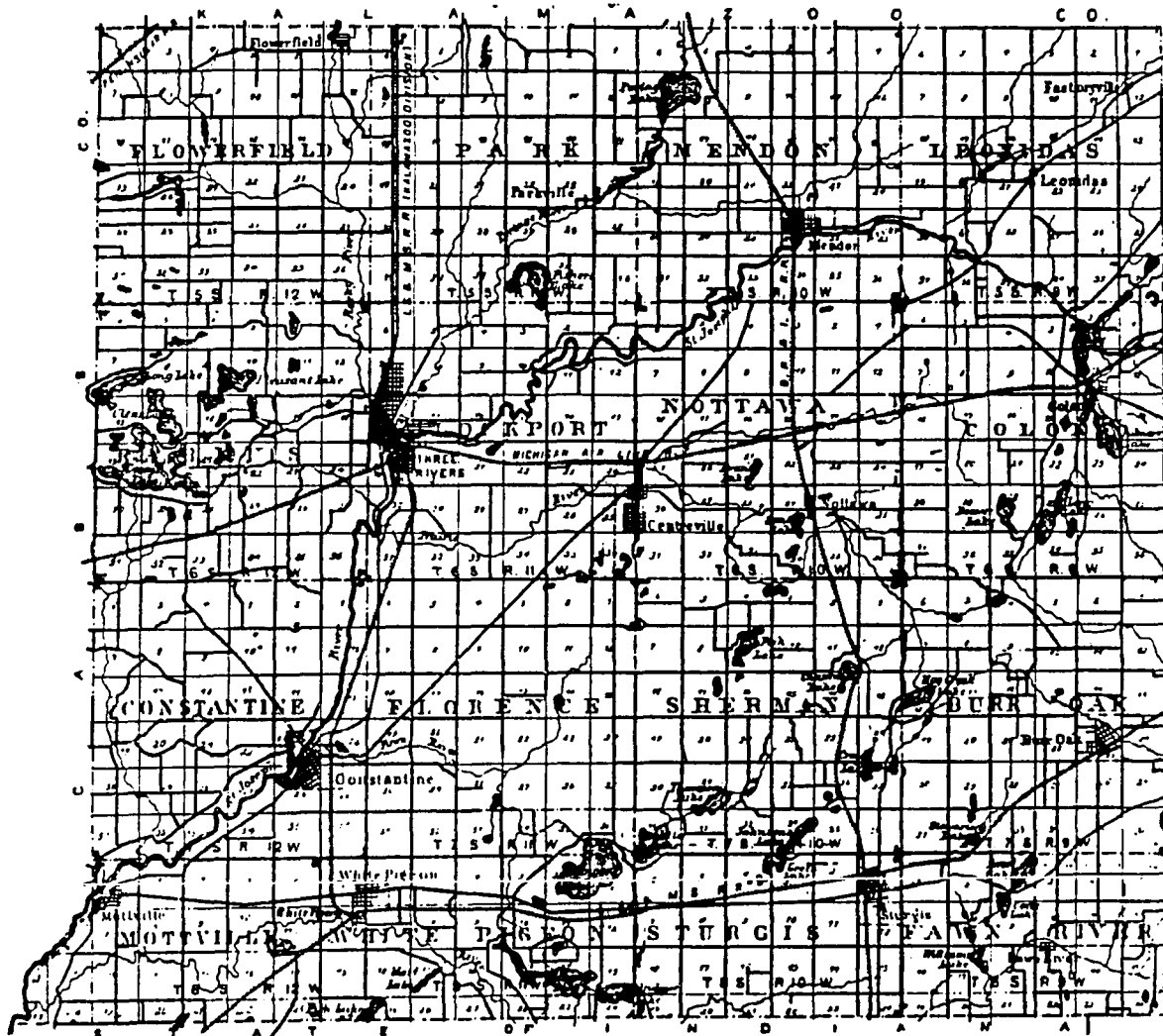


**Figure 14**  
**St. Joseph County, 1877**  
 (Source: Everts, *History of St. Joseph County*, 1877.)

## Chapter 4

# ST. JOSEPH COUNTY

It was not until after the opening of the Erie Canal, in 1825, that St. Joseph County, Michigan, received its first permanent white settlers. Reports of the vast, rich prairies of southwestern Michigan spread quickly and drew many who were interested in farming. In the 1838 Michigan Gazetteer, these prairies were praised as "not exceeded for their fertility, by any in this or any other state." Unlike many locations in Michigan and the Midwest, the prairie land of St. Joseph County did not need years of hard labor to clear off forests and rocks before crops, livestock, and families could thrive.<sup>1</sup> The fertility and livability of this land had long been recognized, even before the native Americans who resided there in the early eighteenth century. The 1867 Gazetteer of the St. Joseph Valley, Michigan and Indiana, described evidence of unique "peculiarities" which seemed to serve both the agricultural and aesthetic needs of an early people:

In various parts of this and the adjoining counties are found interesting traces of a species of agriculture practiced by a race that inhabited this region at some very remote period. These remains are in the shape of ancient garden beds, laid out with mathematical precision, and occupying, oftentimes, a great extent of ground, frequently covering from one to three hundred acres in a single field or garden. They are generally found in prairies or burr oak plains. They appear in fanciful shapes, but order and symmetry of proportion seem to govern. Some are laid off in rectilinear or curvilinear figures, either distinct or combined in a

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<sup>1</sup> Roger L. Rosentreter, "Michigans 83 Counties: St. Joseph County," Michigan History Magazine, March/April, 1991, 8.

fantastic manner, in parterres and scolloped work, with alleys between, and apparently ample walks or avenues, leading in different directions, displaying a taste that would not discredit a modern pleasure garden.<sup>2</sup>

The Gazatteer also noted the surprising fact that “the Indians of the neighborhood were evidently in perfect ignorance of [the agricultural mounds] their originators or their uses.”<sup>3</sup>

At the time St. Joseph County was officially organized, in 1829, 1,000 people populated this area. By 1840 the county population had jumped to more than 7,000 settlers. Because of its central location to the county, Centerville became the county seat and later became the permanent home for the county fairgrounds. By the early 1830s, the communities of Mottville, Constantine, Burr Oak, and Three Rivers had been settled. In 1850 the county population had grown to 12,000, and the census listed St. Joseph County as having 1,354 occupied farms. In 1860 St. Joseph County had 2,233 occupied farms, with a county population of 19,362, comprising 5,372 families.<sup>4</sup>

The Gazetteer provides a brief tour through the incorporated villages of St. Joseph County in 1867, a midpoint of this study. Descending the St. Joseph River, the villages of Colon and Mendon, each with about 600 people, sat along the river. Three Rivers got its name from its position at the joining of the Portage River and Rocky Creek of the St. Joseph. The railroad connected Three Rivers with White Pigeon to the south and Kalamazoo to the north. The population

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<sup>2</sup> T. G. Turner, Gazetteer of the St. Joseph Valley, Michigan and Indiana with a View of Its Hydraulic and Business Capacities (Chicago, Hazlitt & Reed Printers, 1867), 26.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>4</sup> Rosentreter, “Michigans 83 Counties: St. Joseph County,” 8; Statistics of Michigan, 1870, lviii-lxiii; State of Michigan Census, 1850, 323-9; Constantine (Michigan) Weekly Mercury and the St. Joseph County Advertiser, 9 March, 1871.

at this time was about 2,500. Three Rivers, being at the head of navigation on the river, frequently received light draught steamers from "Lake Michigan, Lockport, Brooklyn, and Canada" before the great East/West railroads were completed. The hydraulic power there was surpassed in the state only by Grand Rapids. Moving a few miles to the south, both on the river and the railroad, was Constantine. In 1867 the population of this "handsomely laid out" town was just over 1,500 inhabitants. The Gazetteer notes that Constantine "is one of the most beautiful and live towns of the West, and is worthy of the particular notice of those who are seeking locations for business." Further south along the railroad line sat White Pigeon, with a population of about 2,000. Twelve miles to the east, along the railroad, Sturgis also had a population of nearly 2,000. Further east, Burr Oak had about 800 residents. Situated just a few miles south of Constantine, on the St. Joseph River, was Mottville. Both the rivers and the railroads added to the vitality of many of the St. Joseph County communities, providing access to transportation and power.<sup>5</sup>

### **County Wide Information**

The Constantine Weekly Mercury/St. Joseph County Advertiser was the major source of information for this case study, as it was for the citizens of the times. This newspaper was published weekly, from offices in Constantine, between 1845 and 1871. The Mercury was also concerned with coverage across the whole county, as indicated by its second title. While providing news of national and international interest and focusing on Constantine community activities, the

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<sup>5</sup> Turner, Gazetteer, 27-28.



Mercury regularly covered county government and major community activities in Centerville and Three Rivers as well. Constantine, Three Rivers, and Centerville sat triangularly to one another within close proximity, allowing their citizens to travel easily between for shopping and attending meetings, as well as for entertainments and socializing. Where there were gaps in the availability of the Mercury, Centerville's Western Chronicle and the Three Rivers Reporter were used.

In a format similar to other newspapers of this period, page one of the Mercury usually contained a poem and light reading, such as a short story or essay and some humorous anecdotes. "Tambourine Girl, a Tale of San Francisco" was included on page one of the January 29, 1857 issue. Page one also always included "Business Cards," kind of a county-wide business directory. International and national events followed, with local events and personal items being noted before the ads. Exceptions to this format occurred only infrequently throughout the year. At times page one was used for a reprinted address from the County Teachers Association Institute or for a national politician's speech or local minister's Thanksgiving message. Michigan's proposed new constitution also made page one. Periodically, there would be a news-type item of general interest, such as "What German Schools Teach" or "Theatre in China."<sup>6</sup> At least twice each year, the St. Joseph County Agricultural Society would be featured on page one. In the spring new fair dates would be announced, along with the rules and regulations for the fair and the new list of premiums to be awarded by the society. Sometimes the premiums would be repeated

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<sup>6</sup> Constantine Weekly Mercury, 19, November 1857, 9 November 1870.

several times through the spring and summer months. After the fair page one would provide the arena for publishing the results of the competitions with all the premium winners listed by category. Community happenings and tidbits were usually found on page two or three. At times correspondence from Mendon, Three Rivers, or another community would catch the readers up on news from another village that had not been reported directly. Ads from New York, Boston, and other metropolitan cities were prevalent in the press, as well as local businesses or individual ads for "estrayed" cattle. St. Joseph County citizens were presented with a catalog of opportunities--from farm implements to books and musical instruments--with each issue of the Mercury.

### **Cultural Life Within the County**

St. Joseph County business-related arts involved photographers and music stores as well as individual instruction in music and painting. Craftsmen of the county included a bookbinder, who was also a "skillful taxidermist," and tanners. Another artisan was either available in the community or brought in by banker George Crossette when he arranged for the grounds of his "splendid" new dwelling house, in 1871. The Mercury editor praised his "enterprise and good taste to have the grounds about it graded and laid out by a practical landscape artist . . . we trust the example may not be lost."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 3 November 1870, 17 June 1871, 27 April 1871.

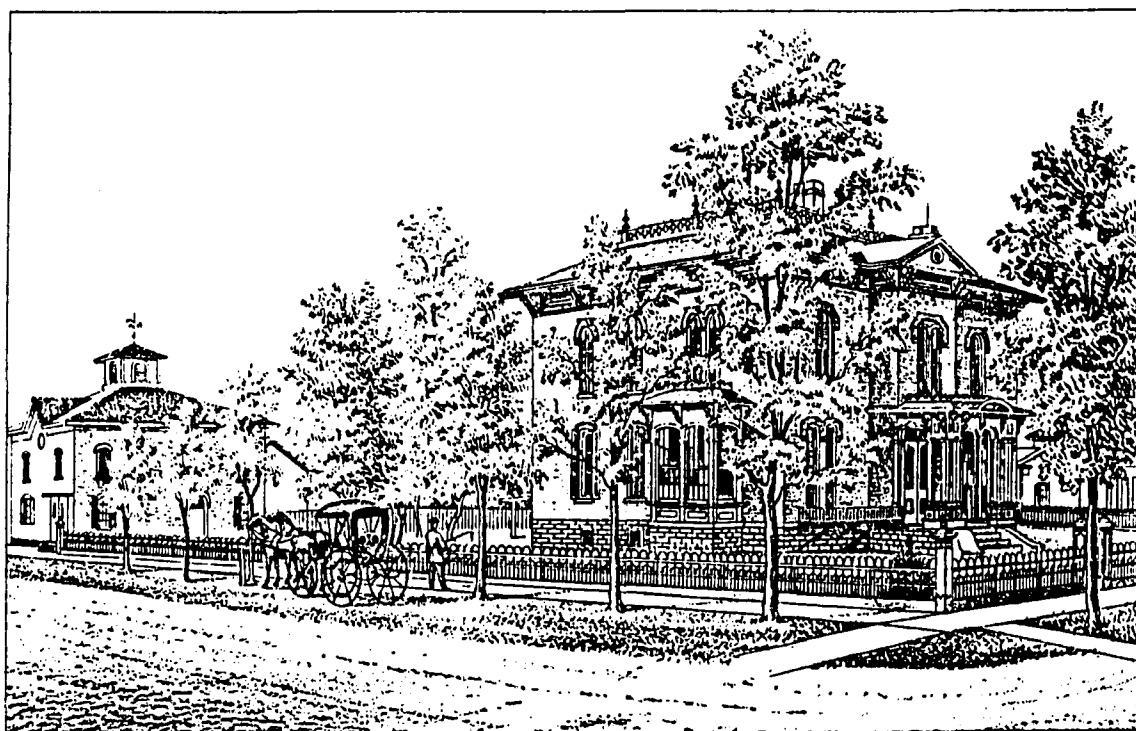


**Figure 15**  
**Residence of George I. Crossette**  
 (Source: Everts, History of St. Joseph County, facing 113.)

Photographers were abundant in St. Joseph County. During 1857 one drugstore advertised "to Daguerrean artists--we keep constantly on hand all kinds of Daguerrean stock, plates, cases, and chemicals." Twelve photographers who served the area were frequently mentioned in the press. They were located in most of the cities of the county: Three Rivers, Constantine, Sturgis, Mendon, and White Pigeon. Images of all types were available: ambrotypes, daguerreotypes, pealtypes, life-sized photographs, photos colored in oil, watercolor, and india ink, photos on patent leather, and medley photographs. Prices ranged from a bargain dozen for \$.25 to \$40 for life-size photographs.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 1 January 1857, 2 April 1857, 18 January 1866, 20 October 1870.

Three area photographers traveled the area with their "cars," providing photographic services. George Conn had a daguerrean gallery in Three Rivers and advertised the benefits of his mammoth skylight for picture taking. He also brought his car to Constantine in 1858 to "accommodate all who wished good likenesses . . . Ambrotypes in cases for \$1 . . . or on leather for \$.50." R. S. McKibben was reported "always on hand at his car, and [claimed] a share of public patronage." In 1866 Mr. Hogaboom brought his "Daguerrean Car to town and located on Water Street, ready to supply customers with good ambrotypes and photos." The diagram in Figure 16 is of a photographic gallery wagon patented in 1892 and approximates these roving studios of the times, providing a dressing room and studio, as well as a darkroom for processing.<sup>9</sup>

Sturgis Art Gallery owner and photographer E. P. Huylar was credited as a "master artist," standing at the "head of his profession" with more than seventeen years previous experience in New York City. Huylar entered photographs at county and state fairs, winning numerous premiums from both. At the 1865 state fair, in Adrian, Huylar took first place in five photographic categories, over competitors from Chicago, Detroit, Kalamazoo, Adrian, and Hillsdale, among others. J. , photographer in White Pigeon and Kalamazoo, was also quite experienced, with years of experience in England as well as this country. He won premiums for both photography and oil painting at fairs. At least eight of these professional photographers exhibited

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 4 December 1855, 4 March 1858, 9 April 1857, 16 August 1866.

and competed with their wares at county fairs throughout the period of this study.<sup>10</sup>

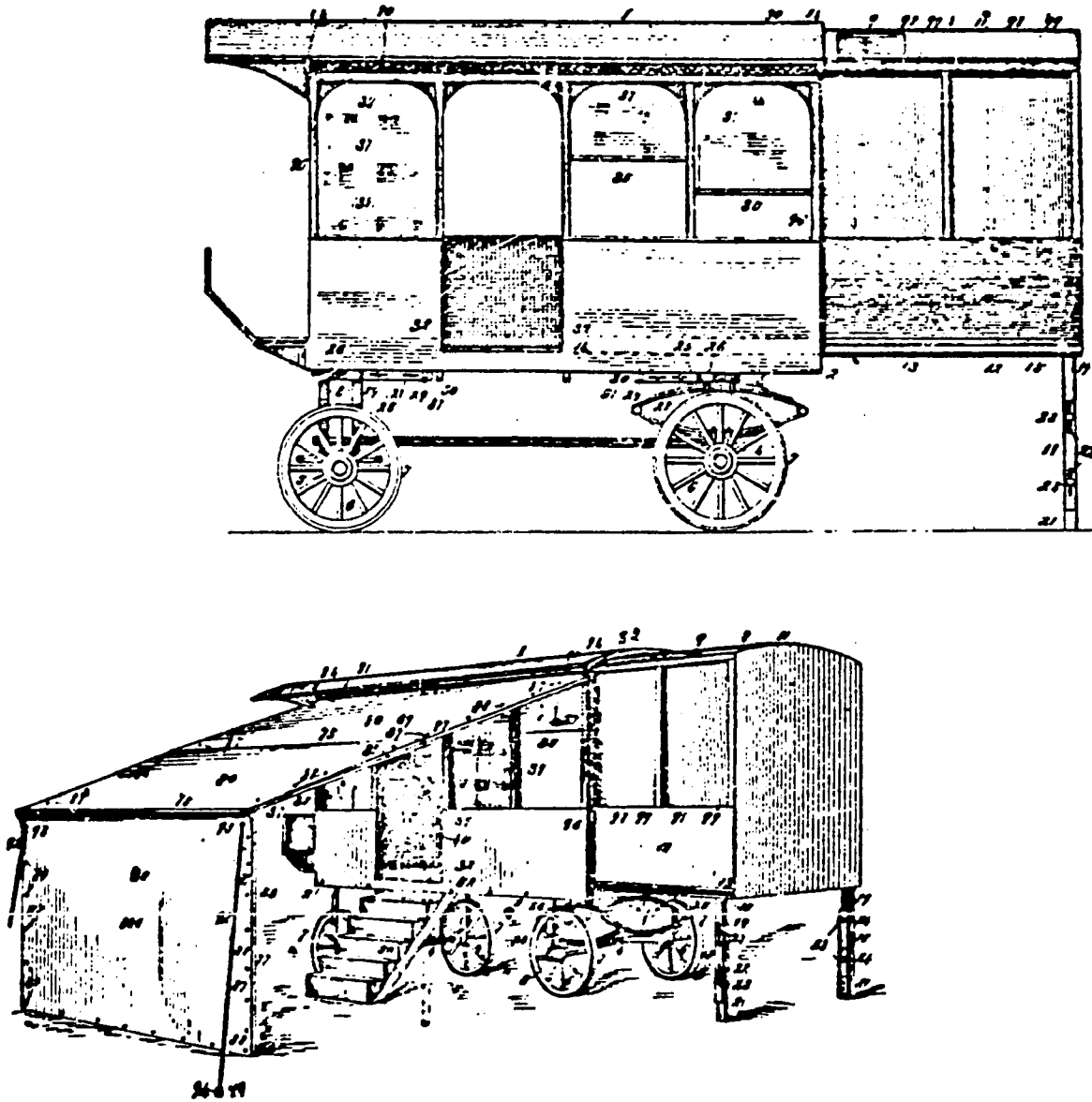


**Figure 16**  
**Photograph Gallery Wagon**  
 (Source: U. S. Patent No. 467,423, 1892)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 21 December 1865, 25 January 1866, 8 February 1866, 5 October 1865, 11 March 1871, 4 May 1871.

In 1870 a new photographer began business with an introductory special: "Pictures taken at 25 cents a dozen." A photographic war (similar to the gasoline wars of present day) ensued in Constantine between Mr. Webster and N. C. Skinner, with each attempting to outdo the other in newspaper exchanges regarding cost and quality. This seemed to wind down with Webster focusing on his " . . . first-class ambrotypes . . . not the cheap kind, but good ones . . . while a good picture is very valuable, there is nothing more worthless than a poor one." He added an appeal to the ladies: "Remember that no picture is perfect unless position, toilet, and drapery are so arranged as to give a pleasing effect. And the ladies know that no one but a lady can do it . . . such an invaluable assistant may be found at Webster's Photographic Rooms." A lady "photographic artist," Miss Bulls, of Menden, announced the closing of her business in 1872, and other notice of her did not appear in the Mercury.<sup>11</sup>

### **Painters and Lessons**

One professional painter was identified through this research. Mr. Dudley, of Three Rivers, was a portrait and landscape artist. The Mercury noted that there were very few portrait artists left in this business compared with former times, since the "photographer [had] taken the place of the artist of the pencil and brush." Dudley painted a life-sized portrait of a deceased child of the Barnard family of Constantine. The portrait was made available for public inspection at the family residence. J. Z. Dudley entered a landscape painting in the 1861 county fair, and in 1870 he received a premium for his portrait

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 20 October 1870, 21 October 1870, 10 November 1870, 13 January 1872.

in oil in the "Fine Arts Category." Perhaps this is the same Justin Z. Dudley who was listed in the Grand Rapids City Directory as an artist in 1876.<sup>12</sup>

Another in the painting business was Mrs. E. R. Pierce, who offered painting lessons from her residence in Constantine during 1855, 1856, and 1857. Her December advertisement in the Mercury noted: "Crayon Painting - Grecian Oil Painting. Taught in a few days, in connection with pastel painting." By October of the next year, the Mercury reported that Mrs. Pierce had "recently returned from Pennsylvania [and] was prepared again to give instructions in the beautiful art of pastel painting with black or colored crayons . . ."



**Crayon Painting.**  
 MRS. E. R. PIERCE  
 Having recently returned from Pennsylvania, is prepared again to give instructions in the beautiful art of Pastel Painting (with Black or Colored Crayons) at her residence in Constantine. Persons desiring to become acquainted with this beautiful art can have a chance at low prices, and can ornament their own parlors and have the satisfaction of knowing it to be done by their own hands.

**Figure 17**  
**Crayon Painting Advertisement**  
 (Source: Constantine Weekly Mercury, 4 September 1856.)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 3 August 1871, 3 October 1861, 6 October 1870; Arthur Hopkin Gibson, Artists of Early Michigan: A Biographical Dictionary of Artists Native to or Active in Michigan, 1701-1900 (Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1975) 92.

Her winning a premium for monochromatic paintings at the Sixth Annual St. Joseph County Fair, in 1856, undoubtedly brought community attention to her capabilities as a painter.<sup>13</sup>

In January 1872 the Ladies Library Association, in Three Rivers, debuted a painting of Yosemite Valley, just completed by a local physician and artist, Dr. L. S. Stevens. Dr. Stevens' work had also been discussed in the Detroit Daily Post, which declared the good doctor "one of the few whom the connoisseurs pronounce a true artist." Stevens had gone to Yosemite the previous June and had made sketches during his trip. "Since that time the spare hours of a laborious professional life had been given to this picture." A description of the painting was provided:

The point of observation is where the Coulterview Trail reaches the bed of the valley, near the base of El Capitan, and the view is looking north. On the left are the three brothers or Pompompasus, on the right and further away are the cathedral spires; while in the background are South, or Half Dome, and North Dome. In the foreground winds the Merced River, while on either side of its banks, the forest on the right stretching way to the base of the cathedral rocks. In this foreground, forest is worked in detail every plant, shrub and tree that grows in the valley, making a perfect wreath in form and color of foliage. Overhead is the deep-blue sky, which all who have visited the valley will remember as one of its charms. The picture is 36" x 48" . . . <sup>14</sup>

The Detroit Post article was reprinted in the Three Rivers Reporter, along with a reminder of the Ladies Library Association event. The editor suggested that this "beautiful and glowing

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<sup>13</sup> Constantine Weekly Mercury 18 December 1855, 9 October 1856; Transactions, 1856, 663-780.

<sup>14</sup> Three Rivers (Michigan) Reporter 27 January 1872.



transcript of the Almighty's hand should hang" in a public place in Three Rivers.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Music Business**

Two music stores supplied the area with instruments and music as well. Mr. E. A. Jones, of Sturgis, was often referred to as the local "Music Man." Throughout the period, Mr. Jones sold pianos, melodeons, and sewing machines within the region. He carried Steinways and other brands "as cheap as could be had in Chicago, or any other city." In 1867 one of his Steinways sold for \$800. In 1871 Jones was lauded by the Mercury for selling five pianos within thirty days. Miller's music store was opened in 1872, advertising pianos as well as Mason & Hamlin organs.<sup>16</sup>

A choice assortment of sheet music was always available at Gladding's store. J. P. Gladding was a bookseller, stationer, and dealer in clocks, watches, and jewelry. He made certain he had contemporary music and was especially careful to handle the work of local composer C. P. Hubbard as soon as it was published. "Pound Lilly Scottish," "Ida Waltz," "White Eagle Grand March," and "Song of Autumn" were announced and acclaimed in the Mercury just as soon as they were available at Gladding's:

Just Published. Professor C. F. Hubbard of our village, as author and composer of music, has gained so much distinction in the profession, has again favored the musical world with several new pieces which we feel well assured will rank far above the ordinary productions of the day. "Song of Autumn" - [the] words are full of soul and sentiment which have been caught by the musical genius of Prof. H. and given in pure and expressive notes of the music;

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 13 January 1872.

<sup>16</sup> Constantine Weekly Mercury 30 March 1865, 23 March 1871, 30 March 1865, 7 March 1867, 23 March 1871; Three Rivers Reporter 17 February 1870.

"White Eagle Grand March" is regarded by our connoisseurs as one of his masterpieces and stamps him as a harmonist of the highest order. These pieces should have a place in the musical collections of all. For sale by Gladding.<sup>17</sup>

Charles Hubbard was a professor of military and quadrille music as well as a composer. He also taught several instruments, including violin, flute, and piano, and wrote and arranged music for bands as well. His card often appeared in the business directory, page one, of the Mercury.<sup>18</sup>

A CARD: C. F. Hubbard - piano forte, melodeon, flute &c. Books and instruments furnished to order. Pianos and Melodeons tuned satisfactory upon arrangement. Music written and arranged for bands as usual. June 11/64<sup>19</sup>

There were several other teachers of music as well. Mrs. Marvin, of Constantine, taught piano forte, organ, melodeon, and vocal music. Miss Hall had been an established teacher in Three Rivers for some time by 1857 and was "meeting with abundant success and winning unfaded laurels as a music teacher." Her work was praised by a correspondence from that city published in the Mercury: "We would say to all who wish to see their children skilled in this soul-refining and spirit-elevating science--submit them to the care of this truly accomplished teacher. You will never regret it, for she cannot be excelled." Another local musician returned to town in 1870 from a season's tour with Stows Northwestern Circus. Driesbach (his first name was never used) was "happy to meet with his old friends and patrons and also furnish them with music and instruction upon

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<sup>17</sup> Constantine Weekly Mercury 5 October 1865, 18 October 1866.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 February 1866, 15 February 1866, 4 October 1866.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 October 1865.

favorable terms.” He provided musical instruction and played in a dance band, Rosebrook & Driesbach's, which gave social hops and cotillion parties throughout 1870 and 1871.<sup>20</sup>

### **Bands**

Both dance bands and community bands were prevalent across St. Joseph County. In Three Rivers, Constantine, and Centerville, brass bands were reported throughout the period of this study. In addition, several dance and quadrille bands provided music for regular public dances, which were held primarily during the winter season. Three dance bands predominated the area: the pioneer band of Hull and Arnold, the Constantine Quadrille Band, and Rosebrook & Driesbach's Quadrille Band.

Hull and Arnold's Quadrille was organized in 1837 by violin player John Hull and clarinetist Daniel Arnold. Hull and Arnold's Band continued well into the 1880s playing all over southern Michigan and northern Indiana--"from Monroe to La Porte, and from Grand Rapids and Lansing to Fort Wayne." Throughout the years four other Arnold men joined the band, adding cornets and bass to the group. Hull and Arnold's Quadrille Band played for school exhibitions and public events as well as all types of dancing party halls across St. Joseph County. The band's reputation for good music was as strong as John Hull's reputation as an "excellent director of terpsichorean assemblies . . . [he] does command the most decorous and courteous behavior in the hall while the festivities are in progress, under penalty of suspension of the music." Having Hull and Arnold's Band at an event was a sure

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 15 February 1866, 19 March 1857, 3 January 1870.

signal for a successful dancing party. They provided music for special parties, such as the Masonic ball, a Grand Inauguration Festival in 1857, and the New Year's ball in 1864. The Christmas Eve ball, dedicating the new Davis & Jenks Brick Block, in 1866, brought 90 couples together for dancing and celebration. They often sponsored their own dances and in 1866 offered a series of quadrille dances during the winter.<sup>21</sup>

In 1871 John Hull and Daniel Arnold were honored by the Old Settlers Association of Branch County as a part of their effort to recognize the "earliest settlers yet living. Messrs. Hull & Arnold, although not among the early settlers of Branch, were, we believe, the pioneer Quadrille Band, who played cotillion music for the gay young people of that county thirty years ago." Forty "Memorial Canes" were created for this award. They were made of cherry wood from Branch County's first white settlers' "inhabitation." Two canes, one each, were presented to Messrs. Hull and Arnold.<sup>22</sup>

The Constantine Quadrille Band made it's debut at a dancing party and oyster supper in January of 1867. This band was composed of some of the "highest musical talent in the country." Throughout 1866 and 1867 they played regularly at Washington Hall, in Centerville. Rosebrook & Driesbach's Band appeared on the scene in 1870 and were active, especially in White Pigeon, through the winter season of 1872. Wilsey's Quadrille Band played "their delicious strains" at

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 19 February 1857, 26 February 1857, 15 December 1864, 30 August 1866, 27 December 1866.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 9 February 1871.

Kelsey's Hall, in Three Rivers, in 1870 and were encouraged by the press to return.<sup>23</sup>

### **Brass Bands Were Common in the Communities**

The brass bands in St. Joseph County were based in Three Rivers, Centerville, Constantine, and Sturgis. The Three Rivers Brass Band was reported as having participated in the Fourth of July celebration in 1865. They also played at a large political meeting in Coldwater, along with bands from White Pigeon, Vandalia, Three Rivers, Centerville, Colon, and Kalamazoo. The Centerville Brass Band played at the St. Joseph County Fair in 1856. Charles Hubbard, Constantine composer and professor of music, worked as an instructor with this band in 1857. Their performances were highly acclaimed, with credit going to Hubbard as well as the musicians involved. A Sturgis Cornet Band, of twelve pieces, was organized in 1870 and continued at least into 1877. The Constantine Band, or Constantine Orchestra Band, competed at the county fair in 1861 and won \$15 in premiums, receiving "best band status on both the second and third days of the fair." In 1866 they played for several ladies' church festivals, and in 1871 they played at the school exhibition with the Hull & Arnold's Band. This group may have been an enlarged version of the Constantine Quadrille Band.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 17 January 1867; Three Rivers Reporter 24 February 1870.

<sup>24</sup> Constantine Weekly Mercury 4 July 1856, 2 October 1856, 9 April 1857, 30 April 1857, 3 October 1861, 9 August 1866, 30 August 1866, 13 September 1866, 26 January 1871. Transactions 1856, 763-780; Everts, History of St. Joseph County, 78.

### **Crossette's Silver Cornet Band**

In the spring of 1871, musician and grocery merchant F. M. Crossette organized a band "from fragments of other bands, many of the members having previously achieved meritorious distinction as expert performers."



**Figure 18**  
**Crossette's Constantine Band**

Crossette's Constantine Band in front of the Constantine Mineral House, n.d. L to R: Jay Kline, George Brown, Will Clemens, Henry Rogers, Bd. Clemens, Joe Raudman, Charles Clemens, Oscar Hortrauft, George Harris-Drum Major, Henry Drake, Henry Freeman, Oscar Young, Frank Crossette-Director, John Davey, Louis Coffenberry, Sam Kelly, Will Simmons, Will Wagner, Henry Leutz (boy by fence post.) (Source: Dorothy and Josephine Harvey Collection, Western Michigan University, Archives & Regional History Collections.)

Everts History of St. Joseph County notes that a music critic of the times acknowledged Crossette as a long-experienced band leader, who at sixteen years of age had been leader of "one of the first bands in

Vermont." He and his band had accompanied the 2nd Vermont Infantry and received "meritorious distinction."<sup>25</sup>

Crossette's Cornet Band included sixteen instruments, "every one in the hands of an accomplished artist." Instruments included cornets, clarinets, trombones, bass, drums, cymbals, and a piccolo. With financial subscription support from the business community and others, "first class" new instruments were purchased, and by July 1877, the new band was able to rehearse using them. One of their first public performances was at the Harvest Home Festival, in White Pigeon, in late July or early August. Then, Crossette's Silver Cornet Band "initiated a new entertainment of our people in a series of open-air concerts at the village park." When Professor J. H. Hahn returned home to Constantine after two years of musical experiences in Germany, Crossette's Band provided "the fountainhead of musical art" with a welcoming serenade. Hahn "reciprocated in kind, giving his entertainers some exceedingly beautiful pieces on the piano." Crossette's Band also serenaded George Crossette, Esq., at his new residence.<sup>26</sup>

Plans for a bandstand for open-air concerts were announced in September of 1871. The building was described as "16 feet in diameter, 18 feet high, with an octagon roof and finished in a tasty style." About this same time, with the financial support of two local businessmen--H. N. Coffinberry, a lawyer, and George B. Schultz--Crossette's Cornet Band traveled by train to Three Rivers to participate in a celebration there. They were warmly received and

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<sup>25</sup> Everts, History of St. Joseph County, 123-4.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*; Constantine Weekly Mercury 15 June 1871, 6 July 1871, 3 August 1871, 24 August 1871, 7 September 1871.

honored by the Three Rivers community.<sup>27</sup> The Mercury reprinted an article from the Three Rivers Reporter, so that the home crowd could take pride in their band's achievement:

Crossette's Cornet Band. The Constantine Silver Cornet Band paid our village a visit last week on the occasion of the reunion held here of the 28th Michigan Infantry . . . We do not often run off ecstasies of enthusiasm, but in this case must say it cannot possibly be overdrawn to place these performances in point of refinement of musical taste, sentiment and expression . . . It is no local bias nor bewilderment to set up this cornet band as equal to them in all things save only their number, their harmonious numbers cannot be surpassed. . . It is not a puvy of praise, but an enthusiasm of satisfaction expressed by all listeners that our county possesses such talent so well trained by some master artist and so persistently brought up to so high a standard of executive skill. Three Rivers Reporter 9/16/71 <sup>28</sup>

Crossette's Cornet Band performed frequently, throughout the county and beyond. They played at the state fair, in Grand Rapids, in 1873. That same year, at the Knights Templar State encampment, they "carried off the palm" in a competition with 31 other Michigan bands. They played frequently at the county fair as well. In 1874 Crossette's Band was selected to "attend the Governor of Michigan at the laying of the cornerstone of the statehouse . . . and won many warm economiums [sic] from the press for their gallant bearing in the march and most exquisite melody at the grandstand."<sup>29</sup>

### **Home Entertainment**

Gatherings and productions of hometown talent provided these communities with opportunities to enjoy entertainment, learn, and have fun with fellow music lovers. Traveling professors and hometown

<sup>27</sup> Constantine Weekly Mercury 14 September 1871.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 September 1871.

<sup>29</sup> Everts, History of St. Joseph County, 123-4.



talent as well gathered citizens together for these adventures in learning and performance. With a reputation placing him "among the most distinguished professors of music in the West," Professor Mills came to Constantine in 1856 to work with the community on a musical performance. The Flower Queen was by Professor Root, "one of the most distinguished American composers." This original cantata included the option of "many new and singular musical combinations." The performance, put on by Professor Mills and 35 of Constantine's "young misses and young ladies," was such a success that it was held over for a second evening of performance. In 1866, ten years later, another home talent concert was arranged and conducted by Professor F. M. Crossette, local musician, band leader, and teacher. Held at the Masonic Hall in Constantine, this concert was planned to benefit the poor. Some irritation was expressed in the Mercury about businesses selling tickets without a lottery ticket dealer's license. Evidently, a citizen wrote to the Internal Revenue Service about it.<sup>30</sup>

School exhibitions at term's end not only provided relief from testing for the students but also gave parents and others an opportunity to learn about their schools and to be entertained. Programs included speaking exercises, orations, music, and tableaux. Sometimes a small admittance fee was charged to benefit the school, and the proceeds were used for the purchase of library books, scientific apparatus, an organ, or melodeon. For the January exhibition in 1871, the entire community was invited to attend and

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<sup>30</sup> Constantine Weekly Mercury 11 September 1856, 18 September 1856, 22 February 1866, 8 March 1866, 19 April 1866.

## THE BEAUTIFUL AND INIMITABLE CANTATA

## THE FLOWER QUEEN,

BY PROF. G. F. ROOT,

Of the Normal Musical Institute, N. Y., will be performed  
under the direction of

W. S. MILLS,

BY ADAPT

35 Misses and Young Ladies of Constantine,

AT MASONIC HALL,

Friday Evening, September 19th, 1856.

## PROGRAMME.

## PART I.

1. Grand Chorus of Flowers.  
"We are the flowers that come at the voice of Spring."
2. Song by the Recluse.  
"Here will I rest within this mossy cell."
3. Semi-Chorus of Flowers. (Concealed.)  
"Rest thee here, O, calmly rest."
4. Recitative, by the Recluse.  
"Lost, lost in wonder, and with rapture filled."
5. Duet, (Rose and Lily.)  
"Wouldst thou know what sounds are stealing?"
6. Song, by the Recluse.  
"O gentle peace, with thy returning ray."
7. Grand Chorus of Flowers.  
"Who shall be Queen of the Flowers?"
8. Solo, (Crocus) and Chorus.  
"I am the first of all the flowers."
9. Solo, (Dahlia.)  
"Peace, false pretender, dost presume."
10. Duet, (Hilliotrope & Mignonette) and chorus  
"Thy not in beauty alone we may find."
11. Solo, (Japonica) and Chorus.  
"Prized by the beautiful and great."
12. Solo, (Sunflower) and Chorus.  
"Make way ye silly praters all for me."
13. Chorus of Flowers.  
"Say, where is our favorite Lily?"
14. Duet (Violet and Lily.)  
"Sister flowerets we are here."
15. Solo (Rose) and Chorus.  
"The balmy odors which we bear."
16. Recitative (Tulip.)  
"Lo, twilight's shadow's."
17. Semi-Chorus (Poppies.)  
"Breathe we now our charmed fragrance."
18. Chorus.  
"What is this our senses strangely drawing?"
19. Chorus of Flowers.  
"Come, come quickly away."
20. Hymn to Night, Semi-Chorus (Concealed.)  
"Fold, O night, thy veil around us."

## PART II.

21. Chorus (Morning Song.)  
"Good Morning, arise the blush of morning light."
22. Recitative and Song.  
"Softly, dear friends, you've quite forgotten me."
23. Solo (Dandelion.)  
"I will, I will, yes I will go."
24. Solo (Touch-me-not.)  
"Touch me not, let me alone."
25. Semi-Chorus.  
"We love you all with true sincerity."
26. Semi-Chorus (All the Aspirants.)  
"Tell us who our Queen shall be."
27. Song (Recluse.)  
"Tis hard to choose."
28. Chorus of Flowers.  
"Prepare we for the festive scene."
29. Chorus of Heather Bells.  
"We come from the hill side, we come from the vale."
30. Full Chorus (Coronation March.)  
"We come from the palace, in splendor arrayed."
31. Semi-Chorus.  
"Receive thy crown, O, chief of flowers."
32. Semi-Chorus.  
"On thy brow the crown we place."
33. Song (Rose.)  
"Filled with gratitude and love."
34. Chorus of Flowers.  
"We go to fulfil our glad mission to earth."
35. Duet (Rose and Recluse.)  
"I bless the hand that kindly led."
36. Full Chorus.  
"Long live our beauteous Queen."

Admittance 25 Cents. Children, accompanied by some one who will be responsible for their conduct, will pay half price at the door. Tickets for sale at GLADDING'S Book Store, and at the door. Doors open at 7 o'clock.

## GRAND CHORUS OF FLOWERS

Precisely at eight o'clock.



Figure 19  
The Flower Queen Programme  
(Constantine Weekly Mercury 13 September 1856.)

was assured of a "well lighted and well warmed hall . . . and the opportunity of sitting in a pleasant room while working for a public good." Among the exercises, the play Lady of Lyons was critiqued as "well adapted for the purpose of bringing out the skill in personating character, passion, motives, and instincts of those designated to produce the several parts . . . parts were thoroughly committed and excellently declaimed; services of a prompter were quite unnecessary."<sup>31</sup>

### **Lyceums and Literary Societies**

Self-education and personal advancement were the purposes of many of the library and literary societies that sprang up all across the country at this time. Ladies' groups, gentlemen's groups, and community societies met regularly to expand their knowledge and to socialize. Society activity was most common during the winter season, when less work was done outside, for these were primarily rural communities. Village libraries and lecture or lyceum series were often products of such organizations.

"It is time again for Lyceums and Literary societies. Who is among us who will take the initial step for some organization of the kind?" The editor's plea, from the November 27, 1856 Mercury, was not taken up in any organized way by the community, for just a few lectures were reported in the paper between then and March of 1858. Mr. McCall and his wife provided a course of instructive lectures on physiology to citizens in White Pigeon, Sturgis, Constantine, and Three

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 30 March 1865, 19 April 1866, 12 January 1871, 26 January 1871; Three Rivers Reporter 9 March 1870.

Rivers. Mrs. McCall lectured to the ladies separately on some topics. During the winter of 1857 Dr. Pratt spoke to groups in White Pigeon, Three Rivers, and Centerville on the subject of African colonization. Illustrated lectures on Bible history, astronomy, and temperance were provided in the spring of 1857 by Mr. J. M. Fuller. Numerous paintings were included in the illustrations he used. The Bible history discussion was accompanied by 46 views, and diagrams were used for the lecture on astronomy.<sup>32</sup>

During the winter season in 1864, the Masonic Lodge, of Centerville, took up the challenge and provided a series of free lectures every Tuesday evening, as entertainment for the community. The purpose of this series of programs was to:

. . . embrace the range of moral, scientific, and philosophical topics, [and] ought to be largely patronized by our citizens, as our village has no other facility or provision for intellectual entertainment, and our citizens and ladies, but sustaining and promoting this laudable enterprise . . . might contribute largely to winning young men from the grog shops to hear discussions upon moral and physical science . . . Expected subjects: geology, practical economy, international policy, philosophy of commercial exchanges, the philosophy of human government, besides subjects of metaphysical nature.<sup>33</sup>

### **The Constantine Lecture Association**

By the winter season of 1866, the Constantine Lecture Association had been organized with this stated objective: "to advance the feeling and interest in our citizens in subjects of a scientific and literary character, an interest and subject which has hitherto been too much neglected in Constantine." The Mercury also commented on the

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<sup>32</sup> Constantine Weekly Mercury 27 November 1856, 2 April 1857, 5 February 1857, 13 June 1857.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 December 1864.

quality and “high character” of the gentlemen organizers, assuring that this “will be a sufficient guarantee to the public that December 1866 their laudable purpose will be faithfully carried into execution.” Within a month the organization announced a course of eight lectures, to begin as soon as their new hall was ready. The lecture committee was in contact with notable speakers of the times and listed the possibilities to include “John B. Gough, Miss Anna E. Dickinson, Fred Douglass, Henry Ward Beecher, Horace Greenly, Petroleum V. Nasby, and others.” Dr. E. O. Haven, holder of the “highest literary position in the state,” of the University of Michigan, was announced to open the course of eight lectures. The series was to be held in the new brick block of Davis & Jenks, and December 5 was projected as the opening date for the series. By the following issue of the Mercury, the opening lecturer was changed. Professor E. B. Farfield, of Hillsdale College, was to initiate the series with a lecture entitled “Thirty-Three Days in Rome.” The society issued season tickets at \$3.50, which provided attendance for a gentleman and lady to each lecture given. For one person, tickets were \$2. Single lecture tickets were priced at \$.30 to \$.50. Tickets were available at several local businesses and from the treasurer of the society.<sup>34</sup>

The December 6th issue of the Mercury included the Constantine Lecture Association poster, Figure 20, as a supplement:

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 18 October 1866, 14 November 1866, 22 November 1866.

**SUPPLEMENT TO THE WEEKLY MERCURY.**

**THE CONSTANTINE  
Lecture Association**

Has secured the following Lecturers:

**Dr. E. B. Fairfield, Hillsdale College;**

Dec. 5th. Subject, "Thirty-three Days in Rome."

**George W. Bungay, Esq.;**

Dec. 13. Subject, "Work and Play."

**Dr. E. O. Haven, Pres. Mich. University;**

Dec. 20. Subject, "The School, the Pulpit, and the Press."

**Rev. Robert Collyer;**

January 4. Subject, "Inside Track."

**Rev. R. M. Hatfield;**

January —. Subject, "Continuous Youth; or, Long Life Without Old Age."

**Gen. Carl Schurz, Hon. Horace Greeley,**

**Lieut. Gov. Wm. Bross.**

Season Tickets, Gentleman and Lady, - - - 3.50

" " One Person, - - - 2.00

Ticket for one Lecture, according to Lecturer, 30 to 50 Cents.  
Can be had at the store of Franklin Wells, Fonda & Redfearn,  
Henry & Clark, T. C. Langley, J. P. Gladding, at the Postoffice,  
and of D. M. Harvey.

**Figure 20**

**The Constantine Lecture Association Schedule**

(Constantine Weekly Mercury, 6 December 1866.)

The Mercury continued to notice and report fully on the progress of the series. From December 1866 through February 1867, the Constantine Lecture Association presented at least nine lectures to the community. George Bungay had to postpone his scheduled second lecture and wound up the season with the final lecture in mid-February. His talk, "The American Society: Work & Play," entertained the audience for a couple of hours, and the Mercury noted that his topic "was treated in an able and eloquent manner, eliciting frequent bursts of applause for his happy illustrations and hints." The society announced that they hoped he could return the next season, which was quite probable, since his brother lived in Constantine and was possibly a member of the association.<sup>35</sup>

President Havens, of the University of Michigan, lectured on "The School, The Pulpit and the Press" for the second lecture. The Reverend Robert Collyer, of Chicago, gave the third presentation to the largest crowd thus far, lecturing in a "beautiful and poetic way . . . the superintendent of the university regulated the 'running time' of all his rational creatures by the same invariable rule." Professor Fairfield returned in January with the topic "A Winter in Italy," which was called more entertaining than his first. Another Hillsdale College professor, R. Dunn, presented a series describing his travels in the Holy Land.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 2 March 1865, 7 February 1867, 21 February 1867, 14 February 1867, 28 February 1867.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 20 December 1866, 12 January 1867, 24 January 1867, 31 January 1867, 7 February 1867.

### Other Lecture Societies in the County

The Constantine Lecture Association was not reported in the press from October 1870 through March 1872. Literary societies, however, were noted at this time in Mendon and Three Rivers. A "healthy literary society in Mendon" was reported by the Three Rivers Reporter in 1870. The January 6th issue reported that the Literary Society of Mendon was meeting every Monday. George Yapel lectured there in January. The next lecture, "Sherman's March to the Sea," was postponed until February 8. Another program in March included a lecture by a reverend from Kalamazoo, and music was provided by the local choir. The collection went to benefit the Methodist church library. Several other lectures were reported during the season. The paper also noted a conflict within the society concerning the loan of money from the treasury. The board voted to make a loan, at 10 percent, and the treasurer was against it.<sup>37</sup>

The Parkville Literary Society was reported as "steadily enlarging and increasing in interest." The Honorable Dallas Boudeman, of Kalamazoo, delivered a lecture on the "American Statesman." He was accompanied in the entertainment by his wife, who read a poem. Area poet Will Carleton read his poems for the society in March 1870. Carleton gave public readings periodically throughout the area. By the second half of the nineteenth century, he had gained nationwide notariety. The subject of his poetry centered on rural and farming life. Will Carleton lived and wrote in Hillsdale, Michigan; he also wrote regularly for the Detroit Weekly Tribune.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Three Rivers Reporter 10 February 1873, 23 March 1870, 24 February 1860.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 March 1870; Constantine Weekly Mercury 19 October 1871; 30 November 1871.



Constantine evidently had a township library, but no notice of it appeared in the press during this time. Then, between April and October of 1871, an effort was mounted to gather the township library collection back together. Books had for some time been lent out with little effort to retrieve them. Less than 250 volumes remained from a collection of over 700. A "convenient room" was secured where "all people of the township" would have access to the collection. In November, the reestablished township library opened from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. on the first and third Saturdays of each month.<sup>39</sup>

The Ladies Library Association, which exhibited Dr. Steven's new painting to the community in January of 1872, had their own rooms in the Cases Block, in Three Rivers. Evidence of regular meetings, as well as entertainments and suppers provided by the society, was suggested by the Three Rivers Reporter.<sup>40</sup>

### **Touring Entertainments**

Professional entertainments from beyond the southwestern Michigan area appeared a few times each year. Violinist Alf Howard performed at White Pigeon in 1857. In preparation for his coming, the Mercury reprinted an article from the Niles Republican on his "brilliant . . . extraordinary performance" at the Congregational church in Niles:

The house was filled; seldom have we seen more enthusiasm manifested by an audience . . . He played the most difficult pieces with freedom, while the case of his shifts, and his finished execution in harmonies, astonished and delighted the auditorium.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Constantine Weekly Mercury 27 April 1871; 9 November 1871.

<sup>40</sup> Three Rivers Reporter 13 January 1872, 27 January 1872.

<sup>41</sup> Constantine Weekly Mercury 17 September 1857.

In 1866 the Detroit Antheneum Company came to Constantine with a company of 45 ladies and gentlemen. The Antheneum was noted to be a "regularly organized and permanent theater company of Detroit," managed by G. A. Hough, an "eminent comedian, scholar, and gentleman." The troupe brought their own pavilion and presented Uncle Tom's Cabin and The Hidden Hand on consecutive nights in early June. In 1867 the Mendelssohns Troupe performed at Washington Hall, in Constantine. The Mercury praised the show and reprinted an article from the Jackson Daily Citizen, which noted the talent and taste of the performance and the enjoyment experienced by the Jackson community: ". . . many pieces were loudly encored . . . the soprano reaches high D with ease,--a wonderful note."<sup>42</sup>

In November of 1871 it was announced that Messrs. Pixley and Grannis, The Amphions, would present two grand concerts of vocal and instrumental music, for the benefit of the Presbyterian church society of White Pigeon. Their programs included "sacred, patriotic, sentimental, and humorous songs." The Peak Family, Swiss Bell Ringers, gave an entertainment in Constantine in April of 1872. The Mercury noted that they "have heretofore entertained our people and always with utmost unbonded satisfaction." The same group appeared at Kelsey's Hall, in Three Rivers, in January 1872.<sup>43</sup>

Miscellaneous lecturers appeared in the communities of St. Joseph County throughout the period of this study. Several appeared to be traveling reverends, spreading the word about "the good life" or

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 31 May 1866, 7 June 1866, 14 February 1867.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 19 November 1871, 20 April 1871; Three Rivers Reporter 20 January 1872.

talking on temperance issues. The circus and other menagerie shows toured in the area as well.

### **The St. Joseph County Agricultural Society**

In November 1849 at least 21 citizens gathered at the courthouse in Centerville with the purpose of organizing a county agricultural society. A constitution was adopted. Nine of those present were appointed as officers and board members to guide the organization until the first annual meeting the next spring. Membership was set at \$1, with a provision for life membership at \$10. Along with these 9 board members, 12 other citizens signed the constitution and became the founding members of the St. Joseph County Agricultural Society. This group was undoubtedly influenced by the success of their neighbors to the north--annual fairs had been held since 1846 in Kalamazoo County. Since 1843 the Michigan Farmer had reported on and encouraged agricultural societies and fair activities.<sup>44</sup>

In an open letter to the farmers of St. Joseph County, "a farmer" encouraged all citizens, as well as the farmers, to attend the first annual meeting of the agricultural society on the second Tuesday of April, 1850. He "hoped that the farmers [would] not neglect to embrace that opportunity of testifying their deep devotion to, and high interest in, the noblest employment of man, that of developing the hidden resources of the soil, and unfolding treasures of labor and industry." The election of officers for the coming year and an address was planned for the meeting. A committee to draft bylaws was

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<sup>44</sup> Everts, History of St. Joseph County, 40-41; Transactions, 1850, 161-189.

designated at the meeting. By the June meeting of the society, a code of bylaws to govern the exhibitions of the association was adopted.

It took almost two years from the time of organization for the St. Joseph Agricultural Society to hold their first fair. On Wednesday, October 22, 1851, citizens gathered in Centerville for the festivities and competitions. Premiums totaling \$93 were awarded across these categories: four covering livestock, farms and buildings, grain and produce, and home products, such as butter, cheese, stockings, and mittens. A miscellaneous category was provided for items not covered by the defined classes. Joseph Williams, of Constantine, a member of the society, gave a practical address on "how to farm lands properly, and to best advantage." At the annual meeting in 1851, the membership fee was reduced from \$1 to \$.50, making membership even more accessible to the citizens of the area. Eleven standing committees were appointed, which approximated the number of premium categories in their focus. In addition, one committee dealt with entomology (a branch of zoology dealing with insects) and another with the improvement of marshlands and the introduction of grasses.<sup>45</sup>

During 1852 the competitive categories were consolidated from 11 to 8 divisions. The annual address at the fair was delivered to the "largest assemblage of people ever before convened in the county." After the address \$140 was awarded in premiums.<sup>46</sup>

By 1854 the society had included "Domestic Manufactures" as a category of premiums to be awarded at the fair. Rules and regulations

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<sup>45</sup> (Centerville, Michigan) Western Chronicle 30 March 1850; Transactions, 1852, 425-441; Everts, History of St. Joseph County, 40-41.

<sup>46</sup> Everts, History of St. Joseph County, 40-41.

defined participation. Exhibitors intending to compete for premiums had to become members. Animals or items submitted had to be exhibited by the owner or his agents and had to be owned in the county. Farm implements, as well as domestic manufactures of any kind, had to have been manufactured within the county and had to be the product of the exhibitor. Premiums were not awarded for items not worthy, even if they were the only items entered in a category.

Also in 1854 the society purchased a little over 17 acres of land. This "show ground" adjoined the village of Centerville. The land cost \$50 per acre, totaling \$866.56, and the society was able to raise \$1,200 by subscription. An initial frame building, 80' x 30', was built for an exhibition hall.<sup>47</sup> Noting the success of the society, Cyrus Foreman, recording secretary, in a letter to the state agricultural society, proclaimed that:

. . . the society, at the end of the third annual fair, has become sufficiently satisfied of the utility, and (prompted by the existing agricultural enterprise) convinced of the practicability of rendering it a permanent institution in our county, to purchase a large show ground and erect costly buildings, although the society is yet comparatively in its infancy.<sup>48</sup>

The St. Joseph County Agricultural Society began in 1855 with \$153.67 in its treasury. During that year a building committee was kept busy arranging for the completion of buildings and grounds. The 5th annual fair grew to a two-day affair, on October 10 and 11. Entries for competition totaled 321: 3 farms competed; 136 were entered in livestock (cattle topping the list with 58 animals entered, 54 of which were horses); farm and garden produce and fruit totaled 60 entries;

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<sup>47</sup> Transactions, 1852, 425-441, 1854, 673-692, 1855, 815-823.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 1854, 673-692.

21 mechanical works were entered; 65 home products included fancy work, cloth, thread, and knitting; 4 entered the plowing competition; and 32 items were entered in the miscellaneous category.<sup>49</sup>

The decision to locate the fairgrounds at Centerville caused some concern from citizens of other communities in the county. The drop in participation for the 1856 fair was attributed to the competition for the grounds. A drop in items entered reflected the “wounds of disappointment not yet healed.” In addition, the season was “very unfavorable,” and the “board of supervisors curtailed the agricultural tax to the lowest possible degree - reducing the amount available for premiums.” These combined factors affected citizen participation. The Centerville Brass Band was added to the festivities and played after the delivery of the annual address and before the awards were announced. In preparing for the annual meeting of 1856, an article in the Mercury acknowledged that “our agricultural grounds are second to none in the state,” and asked that “jealousies [be] set aside in the best interests of the society.” The editor encouraged the attendance of “those finding fault with the management of the society.” There was a good turnout for this meeting. Many “practical farmers were present, and there was evident determination to sustain the society.” In February the press provided extensive coverage on page one, which announced the 7th annual fair, to be held on October 7 and 8. The rules and regulations for membership and participation and the “best premium list offered since its organization, notwithstanding the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 1855 815-823.

embarrassing financial condition of the society," were also on page one.<sup>50</sup>

The 1858 fair was also poorly attended, showing "a decrease of interest in part of the people of the county." In addition, editorial criticism in the press suggested a change in one "evil in the rules and regulations concerning the appointment of new judges." The current practice was for judges to meet the morning of the first day, prior to performing their review of the competing stock and articles. Judge vacancies were then filled on the spot. It was suggested that obtaining a commitment from the appointed judges beforehand would ensure better judges as well as the trust of the citizens. Again, in 1859, a lack of interest in the society was shown by "just a few" being present at the annual meeting. Perhaps to booster interest and participation, the board decided to hold the fair for three days. The Mercury editor commented, "We trust the officers of the society will spare no pains to make the approaching fair what it should be, a benefit and county encouragement to home industry."<sup>51</sup>

The fair board added to the premium list in 1861. A ladies' riding match and band music were added as competitive activities. Everts History of St. Joseph County reported that the 1863 fair was the "best one that had been held." Professor Tenney, of Williams College in Massachusetts, was the orator, and he returned the next year as well. An auction sale was added to the 1864 fair for the "sale of premium stock and also of such other stock that may be in attendance for that purpose." The weather that year was "cold, rainy,

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 1856, 763-780; Constantine Weekly Mercury 13 March 1857, 19 March 1857, 21 February 1857.

<sup>51</sup> Western Chronicle 7 October 1858, 24 March 1859.

windy, and muddy"; even so, in a county whose population was reported in 1860 as 21,111, attendance on the last day was estimated at 10,000. Area wool growers were invited to the annual meeting in December, and the prospect of holding a sheep shearing festival was discussed.<sup>52</sup>

The 15th annual fair, in 1865, had the largest attendance ever before received and enabled the society to make improvements and repairs on the grounds and buildings. The articles on exhibition, on the other hand, were "acknowledged to be the slimmest show the society had had for years."<sup>53</sup>

The society had a sheepshearing festival for the first time in the spring of 1865. Its purpose, the "encouragement of breeders and importers of fine wool sheep," evidently met a need, and its success encouraged a second festival, in 1866. In addition to the focus on sheep, this second festival included a grand trotting match as well, and a brass band was engaged to provide music.<sup>54</sup>

The annual fair continued to be a three-day event, with the first day for making entries and the second a time for the judging committees. A large number of small vendor stands and games of chance appeared for the first time in 1870 at the 20th St. Joseph County Fair. The opening of the railroad to Centerville made it easier to reach the fairgrounds, and a large crowd was expected. The Weekly Mercury noted that "we anticipate a larger gathering of people than were ever before assembled upon any occasion in the county." Almost

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<sup>52</sup> Constantine Weekly Mercury 3 October 1861, 29 September 1864, 3 April 1864, 1 December 1864; Turner's, Gazetteer identifies this population figure as "aggregate population," 27.

<sup>53</sup> Constantine Weekly Mercury 5 October 1865.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 April 1866; Everts, History of St. Joseph County 40-1.



900 entries of livestock and home products were submitted for premium competition this year--almost 200 more than in 1869. Both entries and attendance provided evidence of a renewed and growing interest in the county fair. Drizzling rain on the third day "kept thousands at home who had made every preparation to go to the fair on the last day." Though not as financially successful as had been hoped, the fair was otherwise declared a "great success."<sup>55</sup>

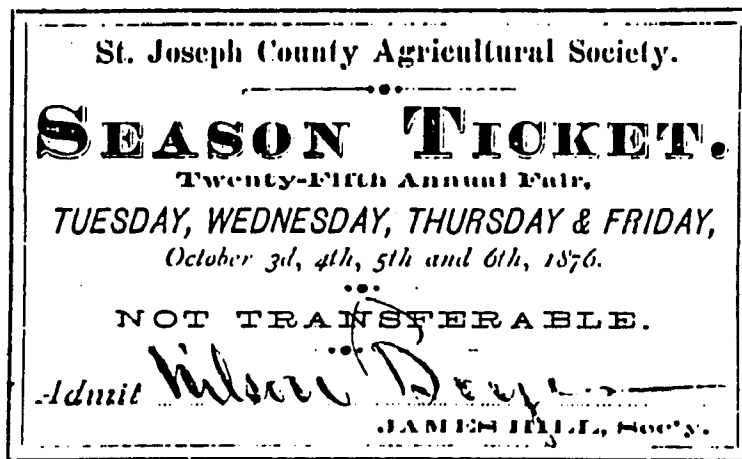


**Figure 21**

**Season Ticket, Twenty-Fifth Fair, 1876**

(Source: Western Michigan University, Archives & Regional History Collections)

In the May 25th issue of the Mercury, the St. Joseph Agricultural Society announced the 1871 fair. The entire front page of the paper was consumed with the details. The order of proceedings continued to follow the old tradition. The first day was set aside for entries and arrangement of the items for exhibition and competition. On the second day judge vacancies were filled and the judging committees

<sup>55</sup> Constantine Weekly Mercury 4 October 1870, 22 September 1870, 6 October 1870.

examined entries in each of the classes. Horse races started on the second day and continued into the third day. The 38 competitive premium classes included a "Ladies' Driving Match" this year. A sweepstakes premium was set aside for the member of the society exhibiting the "best and greatest variety of stock and articles of various kinds." Categories included livestock, mechanical and cultivating implements, dairy and household articles, vehicles, mechanical arts (painting specimens, furniture, shoes, and harnesses), domestic manufactures, needle and ornamental work, fine arts, household and dairy products, fruit, vegetables and grain, and field crops.<sup>56</sup>

### **Arts at the Fairs**

For the first St. Joseph County Agricultural Fair, in 1851, 35 premiums were announced, in ten categories, but none included fancy work or drawings. Nonetheless, entries were submitted for consideration, and the executive committee awarded \$10.75 (of the \$93 in premiums) for miscellaneous articles that included seven quilts, a coverlet and a tidy, stockings, and carriages. The carriages, all by the same maker, were awarded \$3. Three quilts received \$1 each; one coverlet and five other quilts received \$.75 each; and stockings and a tidy were each awarded \$.50. For the next ten years, there were annual changes in the titles and descriptions of the competitive categories that accommodated creative and ornamental work. "Domestic Manufactures" was added as a category and then divided to accommodate different kinds of work. "Fancy Work" and

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 24 April 1871.

"Ornamental Work" were used, as were "Thread and Knitting" to further define the types of items to be addressed by a particular category. By 1863 "Fine Arts" appeared as a competitive class at the fair. However, no matter what the categories were called, creative work, ornamental work, and artworks were entered into the fair. If there was not a category clearly appropriate to the work, it was entered anyway, under "Miscellaneous."<sup>57</sup>

For the second annual fair, in 1852, classes for competition jumped from 10 categories to 12. "Domestic Manufactures" was added, along with a "Best Farms" category. Two classes competed for the top number of premiums awarded. In both "Cattle" and "Domestic Manufactures," 16 premiums each were awarded to competitors. "Domestic Manufactures" did not include foodstuffs, which were accommodated elsewhere. Premiums here included awards for carpet, patchwork, yardage, a work basket, a pin cushion, needlework, lamp mats, embroidery, a rag carpet, a woolen shawl, and miscellaneous small articles of clothing.<sup>58</sup>

No fair was held in 1853, but in 1854 the executive committee divided "Domestic Manufactures" into three classes. The first was for blankets, yardage, carpets (which included hearth rugs), and clothing. "Class II" was for boots, slippers and lasts, overcoats, dress coats, vests, and hats. "Class III" included furniture, buggies and carriages, barrels, tubs, and cooking stoves. Two new categories were included to accommodate the creative work. "Paintings, Drawings, and

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<sup>57</sup> Transactions, 1852 425-441; Constantine Weekly Mercury 20 November 1856, 11 October 1860, 3 October 1861, 8 October 1863; Western Chronicle 20 May 1858, 19 May 1859.

<sup>58</sup> Transactions, 1852, 425-441.

Daguerreotypes" were defined to include animal paintings in oil and watercolor, cattle drawings, and daguerreotypes. The category of "Needle, Shell, and Wax Work" included ornamental needlework, ottoman covers, flowers, worsted work, quilts, lamp mats, ornamental shell and wax work, and fancy collars. Four premiums were awarded in the category of "Paintings, Drawings, &c." One was for a daguerreotype and two were for pictures, both by Harriet Steele -- one monochromatic picture and a polychromatic painting, and one for a pencil drawing.<sup>59</sup>

S. C. Coffinberry, the chairman of the judging committee for "Paintings, Drawings, &c." was very active in the cultural activities of the community. Coffinberry was an attorney, and later a judge in Constantine, who was "known for his flowing chirography" (handwriting/penmanship). He had previously aided the agricultural society with the drafting of its constitution and bylaws. Coffinberry served as a judge for arts areas frequently throughout his lifetime (1854, 1859, 1864, 1871). He was a painter himself and entered his paintings in the fairs. Through his patronage, in 1870, photographic copies of one of his award-winning paintings were made available to the citizens of Constantine. In addition to his visual-arts activities, Coffinberry lectured in the community and was also supportive of the Constantine Band. He probably assisted with their purchase of new band instruments in 1871, and his financial contribution allowed the band to travel by train to Three Rivers for a big reunion and performance there.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 1854, 673-692.

<sup>60</sup> Everts, History of St. Joseph County, 32, 39; Dave Tinder, "Photographers Winning Premiums at Michigan State and County Fairs," Working notebook includes fair dates,

Harriet Steele, winner of two premium awards for her pictures, was the judging committee chair for the newly formed "Needle, Shell, and Wax Work" category. Items awarded premiums by this committee included a crochet basket, patch quilt, wax flowers, lamp mats, and a down comforter. Thomas Silliman received a premium for a lamp mat. It is probable that he was the maker, for the rules and regulations of the fair noted that work "must be the production of the exhibitor, under penalty of expulsion from the organization." Creative and ornamental work was also probably seen in the "Domestic Manufactures" category, for hearth rugs were exhibited there, as well as coverlets, needlework, and work baskets.<sup>61</sup>

By the fifth fair, in 1855, there were 16 categories for competition. Cattle and horses received the most entries, 58 and 54 respectively. Fruit came next, with 25 entries. The two new creative categories, "Fancy Work" and "Thread & Knitting," were close thirds, with 23 and 19 entries submitted. A total of 316 entries were reported in all categories. Premiums were awarded in "Fancy Work" for paper and wax flowers, a hair wreath, and leather work on a picture frame and trimmed on a book case. S. C. Coffinberry received a "Best" and a "Second Best" for his oil paintings. Premiums awarded in the category of "Thread & Knitting" were for yarns, rag carpet, quilts, and an embroidered apron. Discretionary premiums were awarded for ornamental and fancy work, such as an embroidery on flannel, as well as a bedstead, a work stand, and tin and copper

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locations, premium information and other related items with source citations. Dearborn, Collection of the Researcher. Constantine Weekly Mercury 1870, (month and date unclear.)

<sup>61</sup> Transactions, 1854, 673-692.

furniture for a cook stove. "Home Products" was also a new category this year, but this consisted of foodstuffs: honey, bread, cheese, butter, etc.<sup>62</sup>

Categories changed again for the 1856 fair. "Domestic Manufactures" included carpet, hearth rugs, yardage, and small clothing. "Ornamental Needle Work" was a new category which provided for an expanded listing of quilts, embroidery, worsted work, hair and leather work, and lamp mats. Ambrotypes, paintings, and pencilings were included here as well. Gentlemen were more apparent than ever before, winning premiums for a leather work box, ambrotypes, and water painting [sic]. The ladies received premiums for quilts, embroidery on a cape in silk, and French embroidery. Other winners included ottomans and footstools, hair work, worsted work, pencilings, and monochromatic paintings. Under the "Domestic Manufactures" category, one hearth rug received a premium along with wool carpeting and rag carpeting.<sup>63</sup>

In 1857 the executive committee probably thought they had arrived at a final solution to the confusing terminology and categories when they combined "Class 22" and "Class 23" as "Fancy Work, Drawings, etc." The Mercury published the list of premiums to be awarded and the rules and regulations for the upcoming fair in May 1857. An increase was seen to 26 competitive categories. "Fancy Work, Drawings, etc." was defined to include needlework, ornamental work (shells, flowers, and wax), quilts, and lamp mats, as well as paintings in oil and watercolors and drawings. Eight paintings, by six

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 1855, 815-823.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 1856, 763-780; Constantine Weekly Mercury 20 November 1856.

individuals, received awards. These included a Grecian oil painting, monochromatic paintings, and an oil curtain. J. Cline received two awards for an oil painting and a Grecian oil painting. Miss Jennie Shellhouse's oil curtain and another oil painting received a "Best" and a "Second Best." Awards for monochromatic paintings went to Miss E. A. Roys and Carrie Stilson. Miss A. Platt received a "Best" for an oil painting, and Miss Stone received a "Best" for a painting, perhaps a watercolor. Professional photographers L. W. Shellhouse and George Conn received premiums for "Best" and "Second-Best" ambrotypes. Coffeepots and teapots in tin and copper work brought premiums for J. K. Briggs and George Mason, both of Constantine. Briggs had received premiums for his "tin and copper furniture" at the 1855 fair as well. In the "Fancy Work" area, piano and ottoman covers, embroidery, and a pin cushion received "Best" premiums. R. P. Hockridge received awards for a "stand spread, needle book, worsted cuffs, and embroidery." Miss Uptigrove received premiums for two picture frames, one in leather work and the other, silver-wrought work. Other items receiving premiums in the "Fancy Work" category included a quilt by Mary File and "plain and ornamental printing," by C. E. Simons. Mr. Simons was a local educator, who was president of the County Teachers Institute in 1857. In 1866 he gave a course of lectures to the community. The Mercury, in another section of the paper, acknowledged and congratulated the above-named Constantine citizens, who "were successful competitors for premiums at the fair."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Constantine Weekly Mercury 21 May, 1857, 5 November 1857.

For both the 1858 and 1859 fairs, "Class 22" and "Class 23" continued together, as "Fancy Work, Drawings, etc." In 1858 premiums were reported in the paper separately. In "Class 22," "Fancy Work," premiums were awarded for lamp mats, artificial flowers, wax flowers, and worsted work. Miss Uptigrove (winner in 1857 for her leather and silver picture frames) received a "Best" for her Grecian oil painting, and Miss E. C. White was recognized for her fancy box. "Class 23" was listed as "Discretionary Items," and premiums here included a mosaic shawl, a toilet cushion, and worsted flowers. The firm of Ballou & Armatage received premiums for card writing and penmanship. Mrs. H. M. Clipfell was awarded two premiums for her crayon painting and crystallized painting. Evidently, hair flowers were not defined to be a part of "Fancy Work, Drawings, etc.," when announced in the May newspapers. In "Class 27," "Miscellaneous," awards included a hair wreath by Miss Uptigrove and a box of hair flowers by Miss E. C. Millard. Mrs. George Talbot's fancy picture and toilet cushion also received premiums. Local bookbinder and taxidermist Aldolph Beersteecher won with his stuffed birds, and J.R. Power won for cottage monuments.<sup>65</sup>

Consistency was hard to achieve for this fair board, and creative categories changed again in 1860 and 1861. "Class 5," in 1860, brought all the creative activities together in one grand category: "Domestic Manufactures, Needle and Pencil Work." Premiums were awarded across a large span of items, including quilts and coverlets, needlework, Grecian oil painting, crayon drawing, crystallized grasses,

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<sup>65</sup> Western Chronicle 14 October 1858.



wax flowers, zephyr flowers, and a leather picture frame. For the 11th fair, in 1861, categories were broken apart again. "Class 4," "Mechanic Arts," included boots and shoes as well as specimens of graining. "Domestic Manufactures," "Class 5," included some foodstuffs as well as ornamental and needlework. "Ambrotypes and Photographs & Dentistry," "Class 6," was newly introduced, providing for exhibits of collections as well as individual works. This year, again, a "Miscellaneous" category provided the arena for a great deal of the art and fancy work. Premiums were awarded for a feather bouquet and wreath, worsted flowers, a pine cone basket, and oil paintings, as well as specimens of job printing, peppermint oil, and cigars.<sup>66</sup> The Mercury reported:

Fine display in Floral Department. There was a fine display, and tastefully arranged. Of paintings, drawings, ambrotypes and photographs, there were very fine samples on exhibition. Other items included worked hearth rugs, quilts, crayon drawings, pencil sketch, oil landscape painting by J. Z. Dudley, and pencil drawing by Cintha Harwood . . . domestic manufactures included ornamental needle work, fancy glass box and drawings, as well as food stuffs.<sup>67</sup>

Justin ("J. Z.") Dudley was a portrait and landscape painter living in Three Rivers. By 1876 he had moved to Grand Rapids, where he was listed in the city directory as an artist.

In 1863 the fair board introduced "Fine Arts" as "Class 31" and awarded premiums for oil paintings, pencil sketches, and an exhibit of engravings. "Class 25," "Domestic Manufactures," included needle, crochet, and ornamental work. Premiums were awarded for white and pieced quilts, a counterpane, tatting, and ornamental work in wax,

<sup>66</sup> Constantine Weekly Mercury 11 October 1860, Three Rivers Reporter 4 October 1861.

<sup>67</sup> Constantine Weekly Mercury 3 October 1861.

hair, and cones. Blankets, yard goods, cashmere material, carpeting, and yarn received premiums. A farmer's wreath and a toilet cushion were awarded premiums under the "Domestic Manufactures" classification.<sup>68</sup>

The "Fine Arts" class remained in 1864, and "Needle, Crochet, and Ornamental Work" was added to more accurately describe items to be considered. The large number of premiums awarded were to several people who were probably gentlemen, not a typical entrant for this category. Both first- and second-place premiums for tatting were received by Frank E. Clapp, and a second-place premium for shell work was received by C. T. Fulkerson. N. A. Kidd received the "Best" premium for a hearth rug. Ladies infrequently used just their initials; names recorded in this way were typically gentlemen's. Other premiums were awarded for quilts: one white quilt, one embroidered, and one pieced. Leather work, hair, shell, and cone work, as well as an agricultural wreath, received awards. Paintings and both crayon and pencil drawings received awards in the "Fine Arts" class.<sup>69</sup>

Three groupings of artworks received premiums--two exhibitions and one collection. The premium for the best exhibition of engravings was awarded to Mrs. A. Clapp. She was active in fairs as both exhibitor and judge. In 1858 she had served on the committee for discretionary items and won a premium for her toilet cushion as well. An exhibition of ambrotypes and photographs was entered by J. A. Edmiston, a Constantine photographer.<sup>70</sup> The week prior to the publishing of the

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 8 October 1863.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 20 October 1864.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

premiums awarded, the Mercury announced the success of one of their own:

First Premium. J. A. Edmiston, of this village, was awarded the first Premium for the best collection of Ambrotypes and Photographs. He did not show a fourth the number of pictures exhibited by some of his competitors, but the quality--beauty of tone and finish--more than made up for the lack of numbers. Edmiston is skillful in his art, and has a just appreciation of all the requisites of a good picture.<sup>71</sup>

Because of the difference in terminology, J. H. Barton's "collection of engravings" was probably not his own work but engravings that he owned and chose to share with the community through the fair exhibition. Art and ornamental work were also acknowledged through the premiums awarded for "Class 33," "Miscellaneous Articles." Miss Mary Dickinson received a premium for her Oriental painting. Miss R. G. Moore took three premiums for her ornamental work: a moss work lamp mat, a shell box, and a silk lamp mat.<sup>72</sup>

S. C. Coffinberry was again the chair for the fine arts judging committee. Under his direction, the committee made some suggestions regarding the differences between works of art and works of skill, suggesting that changes made in the treatment of these items would enhance respect for the works as well as increase the potential for more works to be submitted at future fairs. (This committee report follows on the next page.)

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 13 October 1864.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 13 October 1864, 20 October 1864.

### Fine Arts Committee Report

Your Committee respectfully beg leave to suggest the following hints:

1st: That in awarding premiums in Class No. 32 [Fine Arts], the Executive Committee of the Society have not properly discriminated between works of art and works of skill; art creates - skill executes - art is rewarded a small premium, skill a large one. An Oil Painting requiring genius to create, skill, patience and consuming labor to execute, receives a premium of \$3, while Photographs, requiring only [skill] are rewarded a premium of \$5.

2nd: Your Committee are of the opinion that Dentistry is a science and not properly classed with the Fine Arts, and that to encourage genius, art should be assigned a department where it should not be obliged to compete with science, and the Mechanical Arts. Until such is the case, valuable paintings and sculptures will not decorate your Fairs, the premiums being so inadequate to the expense of bringing them to your halls and then only to compete for small premiums with other departments. All which is respectfully submitted.

S. C. Coffinberry, Chairman<sup>73</sup>

The committee's recommendations had some impact. For the next fair, in 1865, the premium for the best oil painting went up, from \$3.00 to \$5.00, and for best photo, the premium went down to \$2.00. Dentistry, however, remained a part of the "Fine Arts" class during both 1865 and 1866, though no premiums were awarded for it. "Fine Arts" premiums were awarded to Miss Charlotte White for her "Best" and "Second-Best" crayon drawings, to Miss Lou Millard for an oil painting, and to Bell Gardner and R. A. Eaton for pencil sketches. Miss White had won several premiums in 1858 for her artificial flowers and a fancy box. In 1854 Eaton had served as a judge for the "Paintings, Drawings, and Daguerreotypes" class. Sturgis photographer E. P. Huylar took all the ambrotype and photographic

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 13 October 1864.

premiums this year. Under the "Miscellaneous" class, Huylar also took premiums for photos in india ink and on porcelain. Three other artworks were awarded premiums in this class. Miss White took another premium for a painting, this time an Oriental painting, and Mrs. Anna Williams received one for her colored lithograph. This Anna Williams may have been the same who was one of the area's first of the "colored race." Everts History of St. Joseph County reported an Annie Williams as one of two servants who came to the area with William L. Hirst in 1832. A sculpture by William A. Kent also received a premium. A stone picture frame, and worsted frame received awards in the "Miscellaneous" class, as did a quilt, a specimen of braiding, and a dried wreath of flowers.<sup>74</sup>

Though the 15th annual fair was acknowledged to be the "slimmest show had for years" in terms of the variety of articles, the Mercury applauded the quality of the items on exhibit in its report to the community:

. . . very fine things . . . the show of photographic specimens by Mr. Huylar of Sturgis would have done credit to any fair in the U. S.; the number of pictures were large, and embraced nearly all styles from plain ambrotype to the largest sized photographs, elaborately worked up and finished in oil and india ink. There were several samples of miniatures on porcelain, a new achievement in photography, and the most delicate and perfect likeness yet produced.

. . . a good show of shell work, cone work, fancy picture frames . . . crayon and pencil drawings . . .<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Constantine Weekly Mercury 9 August, 1865, 17 August 1865; 5 October 1865; Everts, History of St. Joseph County.. Reference to Mrs. Williams as one of the "colored race" reflects the language of the period.

<sup>75</sup> Constantine Weekly Mercury 5 October 1865.

In the same issue of the Mercury, several St. Joseph County residents were noted as being among premium winners at the state fair, held at Adrian, September 19-22. E. P. Huyler took several prizes for his photography. Two Three Rivers citizens were represented. O. W. Richardson received premiums for a watercolor drawing and a lithograph, J. H. Pizel for a stitching horse. An agricultural wreath by Mrs. Anna Williams, of Constantine not only won a premium, but was sold at the fair for \$125!<sup>76</sup>

For the 1866 fair there were 37 classes, and for the first time "Music" was added as a category. The Centerville Brass Band had played at the fair in 1855, and bands had probably performed at the fair since then, but this was the first time bands competed at the fair. Twenty-five dollars was set aside for the best brass band, and \$15.00 for the next best. In addition, there was a "fine display of musical instruments exhibited by E. A. Jones, from Sturgis, which elicited the praise of all who witnessed their excellence . . . especially the piano made by Steiff of Baltimore."<sup>77</sup>

With one exception W. Reiterman, of Sturgis, took all of the ambrotype and photography awards this year. He received premiums for both types of work in the "Fine Arts" and "Miscellaneous" classes. Mrs. I. Klady was the exception, receiving a premium for her photographic medley in the "Miscellaneous" class. Other "Fine Arts" premiums went to Miss Hattie Star for her pencil sketch and to Mrs. L. T. Hull for a medley picture. The best exhibit of steel engravings went to Mrs. J. Reiff. In "Class 27," "Needle, Crochet and Ornamental

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 4 October 1866.

Work," pieced quilts, a white quilt, and a white counterpane received premiums as did cotton and silk embroidery. Ornamental work made of cones, hair, shells, and wax also received premiums. Toilet cushions and watchcases were included, along with lamp mats and hearth rugs. The Mercury noted that of "domestic manufactures, there was a good supply . . . quality and quantity credible to alike to the industry and skill of the ladies of the county."<sup>78</sup>

By 1870 entries grew to almost 900 animals and items. The fair, . . . evidence of the skill and good taste by our mechanics and artists . . . was the most successful ever held in the county. The Department of Domestic Manufactures and Industries was full to overflowing. A great variety of beautiful flowers and house plants. A good exhibit of paintings, pencil sketches and photographic work--Hodges, of White Pigeon, had probably the best samples of photographic work ever on exhibit at a fair in the county.<sup>79</sup>

The "Best" portrait oil painting was awarded to J. Z. Dudley, of Three Rivers and John Hodges received "Second Best" for a portrait oil painting. Hodges was a professional photographer in both White Pigeon and Kalamazoo and was also known to be a painter. Miss Bell Dryer won "Best" landscape oil painting, and Miss Lucy Sterling took "Best" and "Second Best" for her pencil sketches. In "Needle, Crochet, and Ornamental Work" specimens of wax work and shell work won premiums along with a worked hearth rug, a watchcase, a toilet cushion, quilts, and assorted other needlework.<sup>80</sup>

By 1871 premiums for exhibitions of dentistry continued to be listed in the "Fine Arts" class, but premiums for dentistry had not been awarded for some time. Along with the rules and regulations for

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 6 October 1870.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

the fair, a new requirement appeared in the "Fine Arts," "Needlework," and "Domestic Manufactures" classes: Items had to be ". . . produced in the county within the last year." In the judging committee for the "Fine Arts" class, S. C. Coffinberry appeared again, along with his wife, another couple, and J. A. Russell. Russell may have been the same "first doctor of dental surgery" to practice in Centerville discussed in History of St. Joseph County.<sup>81</sup>

For the 1871 fair the Mercury bragged that entries ran to 1,050, "exceeding over 100, the number of any previous year, and about half the number entered at the state fair." Of this number, at least 150 entries were in the creative and ornamental areas: "Fine Arts" had 10 entries, "Domestic Manufactures" 36, and "Needle, Crochet, and Ornamental Work" received 114 entries. Included in the "Needle Crochet, and Ornamental Work" class, along with the items submitted by individuals, were 12 items entered by the Ladies' Industrial Society. Premiums for ambrotypes and photographs this year were shared by A. J. Webster, a photographer from Constantine, and W. H. Mills, perhaps an amateur photographer and perhaps the Professor Mills who was a music teacher in Constantine. Mrs. James Hill's landscape oil painting, F. M. Gooden's portrait painting in oils, and a pencil sketch of Montie Warren's also received premiums.<sup>82</sup>

Between 1874 and 1883 several spring fairs were held by the St. Joseph Agricultural Society. Competitions were also part of these

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 20 October 1864, 20 October 1866, 5 October 1865, 9 August 1866, 4 October 1866, 25 May 1871, 12 October 1872, 25 May 1871; Everts, History of St. Joseph County, 102.

<sup>82</sup> St. Joseph County Agricultural Society, "Fair Entries," 1871-1877, 1882-1885, 1887-1890, plus 2 undated volumes. Western Michigan University, (Kalamazoo, Michigan) Archives & Regional History Collections; Constantine Weekly Mercury 12 October 1871.



fairs, and several of them continued the classes of "Fine Arts," "Needle, Crochet, and Ornamental Work," and "Domestic Manufactures." The spring fair of 1874 included 33 classes, plus a sale of livestock. "Needle, Crochet, & Ornamental Work" brought in 88 entries from almost 50 individuals. The "Fine Arts" class included 13 entries from 7 people. For the spring fair of 1876, the "Fine Arts" class drew 6 entries; for the spring fair of 1882, "Fine Arts" entries jumped to 55 entries and included architectural drawings and marine paintings.<sup>83</sup>

### Summary

Throughout the period of this study, the St. Joseph County Agricultural Society, with its annual fairs, provided a community-based avenue for citizens interested and involved in creating two-dimensional artworks and other creative and ornamental works. The exhibition offered the opportunity to display individual works to the community at large. Both the exhibition and the competition for premiums offered the possibility for recognition and acknowledgment of individual achievement. Informal training was another result of the fair experience. Through exposure to the works of others, amateur artists and interested citizens gained an awareness of different approaches and techniques. This broadened their own experiences in the arts and provided the incentive to try new ideas and methods. The county fair also gave area residents with seemingly no interests in

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<sup>83</sup> St. Joseph County Agricultural Society, "Fair Entries."

the arts the chance to see a variety of creative works and, perhaps, to be encouraged to try something of their own.

This case study looks into the St. Joseph County community during the 1850s, 1860s, and early 1870s, with particular attention to the community cultural activities is focused on three eighteen-month periods within these decades. Table 7, page 170, illustrates this time line and highlights the focused periods for the cultural life of the community.

Throughout the time of this investigation, the annual county fair offered the primary avenue at the community level for citizen involvement and exposure in the visual arts. Few other opportunities existed. Mrs. E. R. Pierce taught crayon painting, Grecian oil painting, and pastel painting from her home during at least 1855, 1856, and 1857. She exhibited her work at the fair, and she won a premium at the 1856 county fair. Through the Constantine Weekly Mercury, St. Joseph County residents were made aware of two local artists. Justin Z. Dudley, of Three Rivers, was a professional painter, specializing in portraits and landscapes. Dudley as well participated in the county fair experience. Local physician Dr. L. S. Stevens was an amateur painter of considerable reputation. In 1872 the Detroit Daily Post discussed a new work at length and proclaimed him a "true artist." That year in Three Rivers, the Ladies Library Association included a showing of this work, of the Yosemite Valley, at one of their public events.<sup>84</sup>

In contrast to the lack of opportunities in the visual arts, St. Joseph County residents had opportunities to participate in musical,

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<sup>84</sup> Constantine Weekly Mercury 18 December 1855, 9 October 1856, 3 August 1871, 3 October 1861, 6 October 1870; Transactions, 1856, 663-780; Three Rivers Reporter 27 January 1872, 13 January 1872.

dramatic, and literary activities through community organizations established for these purposes. Musical opportunities were the most prevalent, with organized bands existing in many of the county's cities and music teachers offering vocal and instrumental instruction. Lyceum and literary societies existed throughout the county, providing lecture series, debates and opportunities for exchange and self-advancement. Home talent productions grew from these organizations. Classes, and religious societies linked local musicians and amateur talent in providing entertainment and opportunities for involvements in the musical and dramatic arts.

It is evident that the inclusion of the arts at the fair was deliberate. Creative articles were apparent from the first fair, in 1851, even though there was not a distinct category for their inclusion at that time. Throughout the next ten years, items included in the creative categories, as well as the titles of these categories, underwent changes until the classes of "Domestic Manufactures," "Painting, Drawing, and Daguerreotypes," and "Needle, Shell, and Wax Work," came to represent the range of artistic work at the fair.

In 1863 further evidence of attention to aesthetic issues was expressed by the "Fine Arts Committee." Confusion in the judging process resulted in specific recommendations for changes in the organization of the creative categories and the premiums awarded, so as to distinguish between "works of art and works of skill." The committee felt that attention to this issue was necessary to adequately recognize the importance of the creative process, and would in turn bring more legitimate works of art to the fair. These

recommendations, and the changes they brought, provide further evidence of the serious attention given to creative works at the fairs.<sup>85</sup>

Several other issues in regard to the role of the fair as a community arts organization should be noted. Similar to our contemporary community arts organizations, the county agricultural society was, by definition, a democratic organization seeking to engage the entire community. There is no evidence with the St. Joseph Agricultural Society of any effort to exclude anyone by profession, class, or race. With an overwhelmingly white population there is some evidence to suggest that Anna Williams who was recognized for her work at the St. Joseph County Fair and the Michigan State Fair, may have been Annie Williams, one of two "colored servants" who came to the area with a family who relocated to Constantine.<sup>86</sup>

Both two, and three-dimensional creative works were included in the arts opportunities at the St. Joseph County Fairs. The vast majority of the three-dimensional works was with needle, shell and waxwork items. These included feather and hair flowers and hair wreaths. The only sculpture noted in this research was entered into the 1865 St. Joseph County Fair by Mr. William Kent, who received a premium for his work.

Local bands were part of the annual fairs as well, at first for entertainment and later with the establishment of competitions for "best band." In addition to the competitive displays, local business

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<sup>85</sup> Constantine Weekly Mercury 13 October 1864, 17 August 1865, 17 August 1865, 9 August 1866.

<sup>86</sup> The Statistics of Michigan, 1860 and 1870, indicate that a small portion of the population was other than white. The 1860 census reported of 21,111 in the population, 45 were "colored"; by 1870, in a population of 25,160, 74 "black" and 9 "indians" were counted as residents of St. Joseph County.

establishments involved in the arts displayed their merchandise at the fair. Musical instruments of all kinds were on exhibit, along with displays of photographs and chromo pictures.

Evidence of this investigation into the cultural life of St. Joseph County supports a recognition of the county agricultural society and its fairs in their role as a community arts agency. The county fairs functioned for the visual arts, as the musical and literary organizations functioned for the performing and literary arts. Together, these cultural organizations provided St. Joseph County residents with community-based access to the full spectrum of arts.

**Table 7**  
**Overview Progress**  
**Annual Fairs--St. Joseph County Agricultural Society**

| <u>County</u><br><u>Population</u> | <u>Occupied Farms</u> | <u>Year</u> | <u>Fair</u> | <u>Days</u> | <u>Entries</u> | <u>Premiums</u><br><u>Awarded</u>               | <u>Receipts</u> | <u>Attendance</u> |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
|                                    |                       | 1849        |             |             |                | -- Organized St. Joseph Agricultural Society -- |                 |                   |
| <u>12,000</u>                      |                       | 1850        |             |             |                |                                                 |                 |                   |
| 1,354                              |                       | 1851        | 1st         |             |                | \$ 93.00                                        |                 |                   |
|                                    |                       | 1852        | 2nd         |             |                | 140.00                                          |                 |                   |
|                                    |                       | 1853        |             |             |                | -- no fair held --                              |                 |                   |
|                                    |                       | 1854        | 3rd         |             |                | -- purchased fairgrounds from George Talbot -   |                 |                   |
|                                    |                       | 1855        | 4th         | 2           | 321            |                                                 |                 |                   |
|                                    |                       | 1856        | 6th         | 2           | 285            |                                                 |                 |                   |
|                                    |                       | 1858        | 8th         | 2           |                |                                                 |                 | "poor"            |
| <u>19,362</u>                      |                       | 1860        | 10th        | 3           |                | 555.00                                          |                 |                   |
| 2,233                              |                       | 1864        | 14th        |             |                |                                                 |                 | 10,000*           |
|                                    |                       | 1865        | 15th        |             |                |                                                 |                 | "largest ever"    |
|                                    |                       | 1869        | 19th        |             | 700 +          | 1,032.50                                        |                 |                   |
| <u>23,645</u>                      |                       | 1870        | 20th        |             | 900            | 1,116.50                                        |                 | **                |
| 2,204                              |                       | 1871        | 21st        |             | 1,050          | 1,092.45                                        |                 |                   |
|                                    |                       | 1872        | 22nd        |             | 843            | 1,036.00                                        |                 |                   |
|                                    |                       | 1873        | 23rd        |             |                |                                                 |                 |                   |
|                                    |                       | 1876        | 26th        |             |                |                                                 | \$3,000.00      |                   |

## Notes:

1854 - Raised about \$1,200 by subscription

\* 1864 - Estimated attendance on last day of 1864 fair

\*\*1870 - Opened railroad to Centerville, anticipated larger crowd than ever before

1870 - Small vendor stands first appeared on the grounds

(Sources: Everts, History, 40-1; Transactions, 1852, 425-441; 1854, 673-92, 1855, 815-823; 1856, 763-780; Constantine Weekly Mercury, 7 October 1858, 3 October 1864, 1 December 1864, 5 October 1865, 6 October 1870, "Fair Entries," St. Joseph County Ledger Books, 1876; Statistics of the State of Michigan Compiled for the [1850, 1860, 1870] U. S. Census, 1850 323-329, 1860 310-123, 1870 274-279.)

OUTLINE MAP  
 IONIA  
 COUNTY  
 MICHIGAN

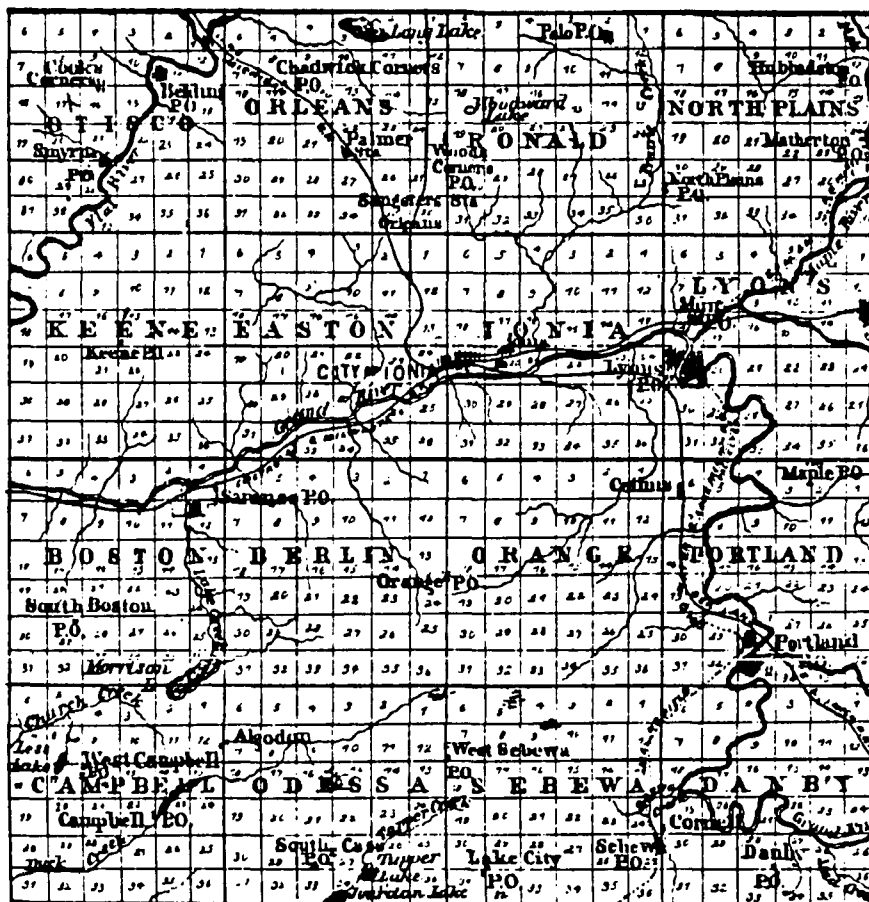


**Figure 22**  
**Ionia County Map, 1881**  
 (Source: Schenck, History of Ionia and Montcalm Counties, 1881.)

## Chapter 5 **IONIA COUNTY**

Centrally located, in the southern portion of Michigan's lower peninsula, Ionia County was first settled in 1832 by a group of 63 pioneers from New York. This was to become the city of Ionia, and by 1834 there were a sawmill and a grocery as well as a schoolmaster, who taught from his own home. In 1836, a few miles to the east, Lucius Lyon brought in a "small army of carpenters and builders" to construct his village of Lyons. He chose a site where the Grand River fell eight feet within one-half mile, to take advantage of the water power. Within two years Lyons "boasted the first bridge over the Grand River between Grand Haven and Jackson." After some competition between the two communities, Ionia was named the county seat, when Ionia County was officially organized in 1837. At the time Ionia had one flour mill, three sawmills, a post office, and a physician. Lyons' founder, Lucius Lyon, also tried to get the Detroit and Milwaukee Railroad to come through Lyons, but in 1856 the railroad located their line and station at Muir, one mile north. Travel by steamboat between Ionia and Grand Rapids also occurred daily by this time. By the Civil War, Lyons was Ionia County's second largest community.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Roger L. Rosentreter, "Michigan's 83 Counties: Ionia County," Michigan History Magazine, November/December, 1983, 8-11; James Sutherland, State of Michigan



Ionia County is in the midst of some of Michigan's richest agricultural land. As early as 1839 an effort was made to "export" wheat crops down the river to Grand Haven. This, however, was more costly than shipping items between Grand Haven and New York.<sup>2</sup> Between 1850 and 1870 the number of farms in the county increased more than five times, while the population increased more than three times:

**Table 8**  
**Occupied Farms and Population in Ionia County**

(Source: Statistics of Michigan 1850, 323-329; 1860, 310-317; 1870 274-280, lviii-lxi.)

|                | <u>1850</u> | <u>1860</u> | <u>1870</u> |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Occupied farms | 613         | 2,027       | 3,168       |
| Population     | 847         | 14,651      | 24,195      |

By 1870 the village of Portland had become second to Ionia in population, and Lyons was fifth in the county. The 1870 census reported the following populations for Ionia County villages:

**Table 9**  
**Population for Ionia County Villages**

(Source: Sutherland, State of Michigan Gazetteer, "appendix chart.")

|          |       |             |     |
|----------|-------|-------------|-----|
| Ionia    | 2,494 | Lyons       | 706 |
| Portland | 1,060 | Hubbardston | 531 |
| Muir     | 843   | Pewamo      | 302 |
| Saranac  | 724   |             |     |

Agriculture continued to be a primary activity of Ionia County residents. In 1863 the county's agricultural output included 160,000

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Gazetteer and Business Directory for 1856-1857. (Detroit, H. Huntington Lee & Co., 1856), 113.

<sup>2</sup> Rosentreter, "Ionia County," 8-11.

bushels of corn and 215,000 bushels of wheat; over 600,000 pounds of pork were marketed as well. After the Civil War agriculture continued to expand. With this intensity of agricultural interests, it was natural that the Ionia County Agricultural Society would be among the earliest societies organized in the state.<sup>3</sup>

### **Access to the Community**

Information on the community life and community organizations discussed in this case study was taken from the weekly reportings of the Ionia Sentinel (henceforth to be referred to as the Sentinel). During the period of this study, the Sentinel was the predominant press of the county. Schenck's History of Ionia and Montcalm Counties stated that the Sentinel had a wide circulation and was "prominent as the leading Republican newspaper of the county."<sup>4</sup> It covered county-wide business and activities of the other communities as well as the city of Ionia. The Sentinel was begun in 1866 by Captain John C. Taylor and Captain Thomas G. Stevenson, previously of the 21st Infantry, and they continued as proprietors and editors into the 1880s. In 1867 these gentlemen were fortunate to be able to purchase a large portion of the office materials of the Ionia Gazette (which had existed between 1849 and 1867), when its publisher, Mr. E. R. Powell, moved to Montcalm County and began publishing the Montcalm Herald.

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<sup>3</sup> Rosentreter, "Ionia County," 8-11.

<sup>4</sup> John S. Schenck, History of Ionia and Montcalm Counties with Illustrations & Biographical Sketches of their Prominent Men and Pioneers. (Philadelphia, D. W. Ensign & Co. 1881).

Unfortunately, Ionia County newspapers between 1850 and 1866 are not available, in any format, from that vicinity or from the major research and university collections in Michigan, or from the Wisconsin Historical Society collection. With access to the direct reporting of the community cultural life or the agricultural societies' development unavailable, information on the development of the Ionia County Agricultural Society and its early fairs has been taken from various county histories.

### **Cultural Life and Community Arts in Ionia County**

Business-related arts in the community included photographic studios, galleries, and music stores. Musicians associated with the stores, as well as home teachers, provided music lessons to a variety of students in the area. Two primary photographers were active in Ionia during the period of this study. Both advertised regularly and by the names of their businesses connected themselves strongly to the arts: G. W. Clark's Fine Art Gallery and H. W. Boozer's Emporium of Art. Dave Tinder, researcher of early Michigan photographers and collector of their photographs, suggests a basis for this early association of photography and art: "Many of the first generation daguerreotypists had previously been painters of miniature portraits, economically driven from one trade into the other. This would

account for the high artistic levels of early photography, which deteriorated as these trained artists left the field.”<sup>5</sup>

Mr. H. W. Boozer, of H. W. Boozer's Emporium of Art, kept a regular supply of “exquisitely beautiful colored photographs, superbly finished in watercolor and india ink,” coming from New York to supply Ionia citizens. In July of 1866, the Sentinel noted that the shipment just received included “real GEMS of art. Among them we notice Peter Cooper, the celebrated founder of Cooper's Institute.” Later in the fall Boozer offered a series of “beautiful photos representing caribou hunting in Canada.” Different size copies were available at varying prices. His work within the community was also noted in the news. After several failed attempts, Boozer was successful in obtaining a portrait of the new schoolhouse, shown in Figure 23.

The Sentinel reported:

A Fine Picture. After several unsatisfactory attempts to secure photographic views of the Union Schoolhouse, the enterprising artist, Mr. H. W. Boozer, has finally succeeded in obtaining splendid negatives by means of an elevated platform from which he obtained a view undisturbed by the thick growth of small oaks which obscured the view from the ground . . . Mr. B. has different views and different sizes on exhibition and for sale. \$.35 - \$1.50 <sup>6</sup>

Mr. Boozer was on the spot at many other community events. He captured the shenanigans at one home talent performance when, at the intermission of Mr. Baroth's Grand Holiday Concert, “. . . Dan Rice's Great Show . . . made a grand entree from the regions below . . . Col. Dan Rice, in full uniform . . . accompanied by the Tin Band and the horses taking at run around the central position occupied by the wild

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<sup>5</sup> Dave Tinder, “Personal Correspondence,” August 1991.

<sup>6</sup> Ionia (Michigan) Sentinel 14 July 1866, 25 September 1866, 27 November 1866.

beastesses [sic] . . . a wonderfully trained elephant." Mr. Baroth and his pupils presented their annual entertainment, which started off normally, but then at intermission became a spoof on Dan Rice's "rampage" through the state. Boozer's series of photographs that



IONIA UNION SCHOOL BUILDING.

**Figure 23**

**H. W. Boozer's Ionia Union School Building, 1866**

(Source: The private collection of David V. Tinder.)

chronicled this event were a treat to behold and undoubtedly were popular in the Ionia community when they were offered later that month. The Sentinel proclaimed:

We are under obligations to Mr. H. W. Boozer for a series of photographs representing "Gideon's Band" as they appeared when, performing the farce of Dan Rice's Great Show, at the late entertainment of Mr. Baroth . . . they are a gay looking set of

boys. Every lady ought to have one to put in her album. Their beauty surpasses description, but we will make no comparisons in this respect for fear of exciting the ill will of some who are vain about their good looks.<sup>7</sup>

In 1869 Boozer moved to Grand Rapids, where he had a “new and peculiar arrangement of admitting light” that allowed him to obtain “pictures of perfect natural shades, doing away with the inky and bleached spots noticed in most photographs.” It is possible that he had rooms in both Ionia and Grand Rapids during part of this time, as the Grand Rapids City Directory and the Michigan State Gazetteer indicate that he was a photographer and portrait artist in Grand Rapids between 1860 and 1893.<sup>8</sup>

G. W. Clark used “Artist” after his name. His business, which provided “photography in all its branches,” was the Fine Art Gallery and Emporium of Art. In January of 1868 he “fitted a new suite of rooms second to none in the West” and informed the citizens of the area that he was open again and “feelin confident of given satisfaction. New cabinet-size photos will receive particular attention.” Clark did photographs, ambrotypes, and enlarged pictures and “finished in watercolor, oil, or india ink.” He also did pictures on porcelain and on watch dials.<sup>9</sup>

C. F. Flanders was involved in the Ionia Art Gallery in 1872 and sold his interest to T. Bauslaugh in the summer of 1873. This is thought to have been a photography gallery, as both Flanders and Bauslaugh entered and won premiums for photographs (including

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 3 January 1868, 10 January 1868.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 16 January 1869; Gibson, Artists of Early Michigan, 57.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 21 August 1866, 3 January 1868, 24 April 1868.

colored photographs) at county fairs. Flanders contributed a large collection of pictures from his art gallery for the 1872 fair which included works in watercolor, oil, and india ink, as well as photographs. He was called a "first-class artist" by the Sentinel, praise occasionally bestowed upon photographers of the times. It is not known if these artworks were colored photographs or truly a variety of artworks. Also, because of the similarity in business names, the Ionia Art Gallery could be the same Fine Art Gallery previously run by G. W. Clark.<sup>10</sup>

### **Music Stores and Music Opportunities**

In 1868 two music stores graced the downtown of Ionia. Tucker and Baroth handled fine instruments from several manufacturers, carried music, and gave music lessons on the premises. Mr. Baroth, previously mentioned, was a musician who conducted at least annual public programs for the citizens of Ionia. In the spring of 1868 "The Music Men," as they were sometimes called by the press, moved into new rooms on the ground floor of Brown's new brick block. The editors' of the Sentinel made note of the move and invited the public to:

. . . step in and see how cozy they are . . . there are few more pleasant or handy things to have around the house than a piano; none that you are more constantly reminded of, especially if there are two or three pupils practicing, each three or four hours per day thereon.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 27 September 1872, 25 October 1872, 11 July 1872.

From the editors' comment, it sounds like the Sentinel staff could hear the lessons, hour after hour!<sup>11</sup>

## Just Received !

At the Music Business of Tucker & Baroth,  
a fine and well selected stock of

**Pianos, Organs & Melodeons,**  
which they will sell very cheap for the next 60 days--  
All wishing to purchase a good instrument cheap,  
would do well to give us a call.

- • Rooms in Union Block, Ionia

**TUCKER & BAROTH**

### Figure 24

#### **Tucker and Baroth Advertisement**

(Fascimile of advertisement. Source: Ionia County Sentinel, 28 April 1868.)

Mr. Baroth also advertised an advanced instruction covering all branches of music, especially to those who "intend to prepare themselves for teachers." His fee was \$20 for a term of 20 half-hour lessons. He requested payment of \$10 in advance and added: "Beginners need not apply."<sup>12</sup>

Also in the spring of 1868, Messrs. Merriman and Van Ness opened a new music store. They were known to have a large number of the most popular instruments on hand as well as the latest sheet music. They carried pianos, organs, melodeons, guitars, and violins, as well as other smaller instruments. A daughter, or sister, Miss P. L. Merriman, who was "an accomplished musician herself," was on hand

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 29 May 1868, 26 June, 1868.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 2 October 1868.



to give lessons and assist customers with instruments. Miss Merriman received \$10 per quarter for her lessons.<sup>13</sup>

By 1874 the P.O. News Room of Messrs. Smith and Lowe handled new sheet music along with their stock of stationery, books, and fancy articles. They advertised to "always keep a good supply of the latest and best sheet music." All of these businesses were listed among the exhibitors at the annual county fair.<sup>14</sup>

Musical instruction was also available from several "home teachers" as well as from musical professors who traveled the area. Mrs. Dexter advertised instruction in music, painting, and penmanship, at reasonable terms. Miss Celia Rice, who had recently moved to Ionia from Owosso, offered "instruction on piano, melodeon, and 'through bass'" at moderate terms in 1868. Also new to the area, Mrs. F. M. McQuestion, formerly of Hamilton, C.W.(Canada West), offered lessons on the piano forte at her residence for 24 lessons at \$14. In 1875 Miss Edith E. Hall, a "competent and thorough teacher of vocal and instrumental music," was looking for students, and Mrs. B. E. Terrill started a class in vocal music at the Presbyterian church. The Sentinel added, "Mrs. T is one of our worthy and most estimable citizens and has had a large experience in teaching both vocal and instrumental music."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 5 June 1868.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 9 October, 1874.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 9 October 1868, 19 June 1868, 16 October 1868, 12 February 1875.

### **Traveling Teachers for Musical Training**

Even with the local teachers and the range of opportunities for musical training in Ionia, there was still a need that traveling music professors filled for the local residents. In 1868 Professor W. C. Webster, of Detroit, came to Ionia and organized some classes in music. Webster had just completed "a long and successful engagement in St. Johns," and the Sentinel acknowledged his reputation and "bid him welcome in the good case in which he is engaged." In the next year Professor F. H. Pease came to Ionia in January to organize a musical convention for early in February. The stated purpose was to awaken "a general interest upon this subject among the lovers of music." Several choir leaders from area churches gathered names of interested citizens: "50 active scholars are wanted, and as many more as can be desired." Pease was a professor from the State Normal School, at Ypsilanti, and traveled on a regular basis offering opportunities of this type. A musical convention announcement, and concert broadside giving evidence of Professor Pease's activity in Galesburg and Climax Prairie (Kalamazoo County) are shown in Figure 25, Figure 26, and Figure 27. Courses were held daily for a one- to two-week period, with a public concert as a finale. The small individual fee included course texts as well.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 19 June 1868,

## Musical Convention.

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*F. H. PEASE, of the Michigan State Normal School, has been engaged to conduct a convention at Climax Prairie, commencing December 28, 1868. And also one at Galesburg, commencing January 4, 1869, continuing one week each.*

*The singers of these places having thus secured the services of one of the most accomplished musicians and finest leaders in the West, cordially invite the lovers of music generally to come and join with them in securing the pleasure and profit which is to be derived from the instruction given at these conventions.*

*Three sessions will be held daily, in which a thorough course of instruction will be given, such as is adapted to the wants of those in attendance.*

*At Galesburg the morning session will be especially devoted to that class of singers who have had but little practice in singing.*

*The text books used--"Songs of the Temple" and "New Coronet" will be furnished free of charge. The convention will meet at each place on Monday evening to organize.*

| TICKETS TO EITHER CONVENTION. |        | TICKETS GOOD FOR BOTH CONVENTIONS. |        |
|-------------------------------|--------|------------------------------------|--------|
| Gentlemen,                    | \$1 50 | Gentlemen,                         | \$2 00 |
| Ladies,                       | 1 00   | Ladies,                            | 1 50   |

*Persons from abroad wishing to secure boarding places during their attendance at the convention will do well to send their names in advance to*

**C. E. HODGMAN, Climax,  
F. HODGMAN, Galesburg, Mich.**

**Figure 25**

### Musical Convention Announcement, 1869

(Source: Francis Hodgman Collection, Western Michigan University, Archives & Regional History Collections.)

# GRAND CONCERT.

THE GALESBURGH  
MUSICAL UNION!  
WILL GIVE A

# CONCERT!

OF VOCAL AND  
INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC!!

Under the Direction of

# F. H. PEASE

of the Michigan State Normal School, on

FRIDAY EVE., MARCH 16, 1866,

at the

# Congregational Church

TICKETS, 40 cents. Children under 12 years of age, 25 cents

DOORS open at 6 1-2 o'clock. Concert to commence at 7 1-2 o'clock.

**F. HODGMAN, Sec'y.**

Figure 26

## Broadside for 1866 Concert

(Source: Francis Hodgman Collection,

Western Michigan University, Archives & Regional History Collections.)

The Galesburgh Musical Institute,

Conducted by

**PROF. F. H. PEASE,**

Will Close its Sessions with two

# CONCERTS,

AT THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,

FRIDAY AND SATURDAY EVENINGS,

JAN. 2d. and 3d., 1874.

The Class will be assisted on Friday Evening, by

**Mrs. Eva McAllister,**

The well known Artist of

**BATTLE CREEK,**

And on Saturday Evening, by

**Mrs. LIZZIE T. BEEBE,**

THE FAVORITE VOCALIST OF

**JACKSON.**

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Single Tickets, 35 cts.

Tickets good for both Concerts, 50 cts.

Children, 25 cts.

For Both Concerts, 40 cts.

*Doors open at Six; Concert commences at 7-30.*

**TICKETS FOR SALE AT THE POST OFFICE.**

## Figure 27

### Broadside for 1874 Musical Institute Concert

(Source: Francis Hodgman Collection,  
Western Michigan University, Archives & Regional History Collections.)

In January of 1874 Professor Henry Gordon, of Wayne, came to Ionia to organize classes in vocal music. Within five months, Gordon had moved his family and settled in Ionia. "Musical Matters," a letter to the editors of the Sentinel, provides a colorful description of this accomplishment and the community's appreciation of Mr. Gordon's abilities. (See Appendix D.) Initially, a group of citizens led by J. W. Ewing, principal of the Ionia schools, sought Mr. Gordon for the "purpose of organizing and conducting schools for musical instruction." Initially, a group of 123 persons indicated their interest in joining these first music classes. By the end of the month, Gordon was giving instruction to three classes, numbering over 250 individuals.

Within the next year Professor Gordon provided music instruction in the schools and to the adults in the vicinity. During summer vacation he offered children's classes as well, "teaching them to sing by note." Gordon also traveled to Lowell to give classes and organize concerts. Regular class concerts and the term-end school exhibitions gave evidence of the accomplishments of Gordon and his students. In January several citizens organized a quartet club "for musical practice," perhaps in response to increasing music opportunities in Ionia. Gordon issued an advance circular in March, suggesting the organization of a musical institute for the following July. His classes provided public entertainment throughout the year, and Gordon

himself was always willing to lend his efforts and his voice to a needed cause.<sup>17</sup>

### **Music in the Schools**

Even before Professor Gordon came to Ionia, music was a part of the year-end school exhibitions. Since the school principal had led the effort to secure a music teacher, it can be assumed that music had not been an established, regular part of the school curriculum. In 1875, however, music was listed as a part of the year-end examinations for students at all levels, primary through high school. Graduation exercises included performances from the school choir as well. At meetings of the Union Teachers Association (which included Greenville and Ionia schools), Professor Gordon and the school choir provided performances within the program and Gordon delivered comments on music to the teachers.<sup>18</sup>

### **A Significant Musical Event**

In 1868, prior to Professor Gordon's arrival in the 1870s, a musical event changed the lives of the Ionia residents, especially members of the Presbyterian church. After a long subscription effort, this congregation and other community friends who were "lovers of good music" obtained the \$1,700 necessary to initiate an order for a long-desired pipe organ. In June the firm of E. G. Hawk, of Boston

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 9 January 1874, 23 January 1874, 6 February 1874, 20 March 1874, 1 May 1874, 19 June 1874, 11 September 1874, 23 October 1874, 13 November 1874, 17 March 1875.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 15 August 1863, 19 June 1874, 3 July 1874, 29 January 1875.

("who had the best reputation of any in the country"), was contracted to provide the Ionia organ. This instrument had "17 stops, which give it great variety, while the number of its pipes, 195, give it a volume of sound equal to the capacity of the church." By November preparations had been made to receive the organ: "A platform has been erected at the front of the church, extending across the church and eight feet wide for the organ and choir." A holiday organ concert/exhibition was presented for the community at large. Professor Pease came from Ypsilanti (perhaps for the first time) to conduct the vocal choir. He was assisted by Mrs. J. C. Wenham, a well-known vocalist from Grand Rapids, and Mr. Joseph Mills, of Lansing. An "eminent organist," Mr. Ryder, from Boston, Massachusetts, came to "test the powers of the new instrument."

Mr. Ryder's performance upon the organ, 'Representation of a Tempest at Sea,' elicited the admiration of all present. The transition from the dead calm in which the ship lay, and the occasional distant thunder signaling the violence of the storm which soon after broke upon the ship with all its gathered fury, produced an electrical effect . . .

The total cost to the church for the organ and all the improvements to accommodate it exceeded \$3,000.<sup>19</sup>

### **Visual Art Business and Instruction Opportunities**

There is no indication through the Sentinel that the galleries of Boozer and Clark provided other than photographic specimens. The opportunity to observe visual art or other decorative works was quite

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 27 December 1868, 12 June 1868, 27 November 1868, 27 December 1868.



rare throughout this period. A few artists from outside the area brought their work to Ionia for exhibits that led to sales or commissioned work. In the summer of 1863, the Sentinel noted to the citizens of Ionia an exhibition at Union Hall of "architectural, artistic and scenic views" along with a large night telescope for viewing. In the winter of that year, Mrs. C. Lassing Jennings, of Detroit, exhibited a painting at Smith and Lowe's bookstore. Perhaps she was visiting friends or relatives for Thanksgiving. Her "fine painting" was a copy of a work by marine artist Edward Moran, which showed a view of Cape Ann from Gloucester Point, Massachusetts at sunset. The Sentinel urged that "all our readers who have any interest in art matters should not fail to take a look at the exquisite painting." Oscar F. Winser, of Hubbardston, brother of the deceased Governor Moses Winser, presented a "fine portrait" of the Governor to the Michigan State Library, but mention of the artist was not made.<sup>20</sup>

E. S. Glover, from Chicago, sketched and prepared a lithograph of Ionia, which he subscribed to the citizenry for \$3. His colored print showed: ". . . in the foreground the prairie, as in summer, with hay laden wagons, trees in foliage, and the bright waters of the Grand River. The view is represented as taken from mid-air, and shows accurately not only all the buildings, but the streets." While the rendering of the hills was criticized because of the inaccuracy of their representation, the Sentinel editors felt anyone would "hardly avoid being pleased with the picture" and desire to possess a copy. At about the same time, another artist, J. Colby, was canvassing the county

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 18 July 1863, 14 November 1863, 21 November 1863.

selling companion steel engravings--The Heroic Death and The Able Brave and True. Mr. Colby's work had been taken from original photographs and printed on 19" x 24" paper, for a low price of \$1.50.<sup>21</sup>

An india ink portrait of Reverend I. Everett was exhibited at the Festival of the Ladies of the Christian Church, in July 1868. The portrait was presented by and, presumably was the artwork of Mr. S. C. Cornell. Cornell advertised himself as the only artist in northern Michigan who worked in India ink.

### YES!

S. C. CORNELL has located his studio with G. W. CLARK'S Photographic rooms where he will devote his whole time and attention to copying from the smallest locket pictures to life size, and

#### *Finishing in India Ink and Colors!*

As an Artist, Mr. Cornell is not surpassed in the State, and is the only one in Northern Michigan who works in India Ink. Now is time for [all] who have lost friends in the army to get good pictures of them. You can get them cheaper than ever before and if not satisfactory are not obliged to accept them. Samples of faces familiar to all will be kept constantly on hand for inspection. Remember the place -- with G. W. Clark, adjoining Union Block, Ionia Mich.

S. C. CORNELL

### **Figure 28**

#### **S. C. Cornell - India Ink Artist**

(Fascimile of advertisement. Source: Ionia Sentinel 24 April 1868.)

Earlier in the year he had established his studio next to the Fine Art Gallery of photographer G. W. Clark and advertised that he would "devote his whole time and attention to copying from the smallest

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 1 May 1868, 22 May 1868.

locket picture to life size . . .” Cornell's portrait raised \$40 at the festival for the ladies' activities. He was also secretary for the Ionia Cornet Band.<sup>22</sup>

Throughout 1866 the Crosby Opera House Art Association, of Chicago, advertised their subscription program in the Sentinel. Winners of the drawings received portraits and other engravings as prizes, as well as the chance to be included for another \$6,000 prize drawing.<sup>23</sup>

In the fall of 1873, Mrs. Geer, an “artist of established reputation in Detroit,” visited Ionia for several days to take orders. Examples of her work were available for viewing at the Baily House. According to the editors of the Sentinel, she showed “remarkable talent and skill as a portrait painter.”<sup>24</sup>

Only two ads relating to drawing and painting services were noticed throughout the time period of this research, both occurring in 1868. Both ladies also offered instruction in music, and were previously noted. In addition, Mrs. Dexter taught painting and penmanship, at the corner of Main Street and Bridge Street. “Music! Crayon Portraits!!” was the heading for Mrs. McQuestion's advertisement. It is not certain from her ad if she taught portraiture as well as music, but she did crayon portraits, “enlarged to any size desired from small album pictures, ambrotypes, etc.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 21 February 1868, 10 July 1868.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 23 October 1866, 30 October 1866, 4 December 1866.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 5 September 1873.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 9 October 1868, 16 October 1868.

### **Art in the Schools**

Within the schools artwork was almost certainly participated in by at least the youngest scholars, but it was neither a part of the course work nor a subject that was tested at the year-end "information examinations." Sentinel editors, in their comments of July 3, 1874, took the opportunity to point out the children's drawings as a source of community pride:

Union School Pride in Schools. One of the most pleasing features of the primary and intermediate departments is in the plan of crayon drawings on the blackboards, which serve to interest the pupils and have developed a surprising degree of artistic talent in some of the younger scholars. Some of the drawings on the board were really very faithful representations of animals, flowers and landscape scenery, etc., and it hardly seemed possible that they were the work of such small boys and girls. Experienced teachers from other places who have seen these drawings have expressed great surprise and admiration.<sup>26</sup>

### **Community Cultural Organizations**

Community-based cultural organizations were spread across Ionia County and included bands, glee clubs, and literary associations which provided lectures and libraries. All these groups provided their communities and others with entertainment, especially throughout the winter months. Bands were the most prevalent. Many of the villages and townships across Ionia County had bands. The Ionia Cornet Band is discussed in more detail later. The Portland Brass Band and the Portland Glee Club entertained at a "basket picnic" in 1866. The Howe Band, of Keene, participated in a Sunday school celebration in August of 1866 where 1,200-2,000 persons attended. A

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 3 July 1874.

grand procession, where “flags fluttered in the breeze and martial music served to stir the ardor of days gone by,” included the band and 50 teams. The Muir Cornet Band played for Fourth of July celebrations in 1868 and 1874. For another Fourth, the German Cornet Band, of Westphalia, was secured. By 1865 the 14 members of the Pewamo Cornet Band were able to pay a salary to their leader, W. M. Dreskell. This band had been organized three years earlier.<sup>27</sup>

### **The Ionia Cornet Band**

The Ionia Cornet Band was probably the largest and longest-standing band organization of the area. During the spring of 1866, this band underwent a “reconstruction.” New instruments were purchased and two rehearsals a week were initiated. C. H. Axtell was chosen leader. Axtell had, for the prior three years, “handled the regimental band of the 6th Calvary, which as a brigade band was often seen dashing to the front with Custer at its head.” Axtell also “drilled” the Saranac Cornet Band, which he had helped to organize.<sup>28</sup>

The Sentinel editors acknowledged the band members as the “very best musical talent from the area.” Immediately, they began to advertise in almost every issue of the newspaper, and probably in papers of other cities as well: “looking for positions,” “. . . ready to receive propositions from any part of the state to play,” “. . . music for all occasions . . . at reasonable prices . . .” After volunteering to play for the Presbyterian Ladies Festival, a “real” job came up to play

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 14 August 1866, 28 August 1866, 7 September 1863.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 1 May 1866, 20 September 1863.

for the Fourth of July celebration at Holly. The band publicly thanked the ladies' society and "Mrs. F. Hall for her liberal assistance in freeing the organization," and they performed at Holly. Between July and October 1868 their ads offered their services for "music furnished for political meetings, during the campaign, at reasonable prices." At one such event they marched down Main Street in a parade, accompanied by over 550 others. Throughout 1866, 1868, 1873-75, and 1878, the Ionia Cornet Band provided music for numerous community events, ranging from church functions and political events to private parties and regular school exhibitions. Other excursions outside of Ionia included jobs at Holly, Greenville, Stanton, and Lowell.<sup>29</sup>

In November of 1873 the Sentinel proclaimed: "Our brass band is 'born again' . . . [they] merged the old band into a new one," with both new horns and uniforms. This time C. Axtell was elected president. The Ionia Cornet Band, in addition to producing good music with its 14 pieces, appeared to be a well-structured organization. They were reported on in the newspaper. Ads and "business cards" signed by the band secretary frequently appeared in the Sentinel, as did thanks for hospitality and donations extended to the band. In one letter to the editors of the Sentinel, "The Boys" referred to having a constitution and bylaws which directed their activities.<sup>30</sup>

In 1874 the band pledged to play weekly if the citizens would "build them a stand." That spring, the postmaster led the effort and

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 1 May 1866, 15 May 1866, 5 June 1866, 19 June 1866, 26 June 1866, 10 July 1866, 25 July 1868, 2 October 1868, 29 November 1874, 10 July 1874, 5 March 1865, 12 March 1875.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 5 June 1874, 10 July 1874.

obtained 200 to 300 individual subscriptions. In July a public exchange in the Sentinel between "Pro Bono Publico" and "The Boys," hasten the building of the shell. "Pro Bono Publico" complimented the excellent band but questioned that it's selfishness in confining "their melodies and notes within the four walls of the unromantic Engine House? . . . citizens [have] a right to expect considerable musical benevolence from our band. An occasional open-air concert is certainly the least they should do for us." "The Boys" responded with a lively and spirited letter. (The complete letter is provided in Appendix E.)<sup>31</sup>

. . . It is no choice of our own that on these beautiful and favorable evenings we are compelled to occupy the Engine room like a lot of squealing porkers, blowing and perspiring, instead of giving occasional open-air concerts which his symphonic soul doth crave. These concerts are just what we want to give; yet, while the spirit is willing the flesh is weak. 'Tisn't a pleasant thought, nor an agreeable experience that we must needs blow our brains out concerting in open air, and at the same time be obliged to avail ourselves of the seats which are offered by the surrounding picket fences, sidewalks knobby with half driven nails, and dewy grass plats . . .

. . . Will Pro Bono Publico do some good for the public and see to it that a good bandstand is erected at once. We think that inasmuch as we give valuable time to this purpose of sustaining a band, that it is no more than fair that our citizens should make us a stand, and thereby enable us to escape the censure of such public benefactors as Pro Bono Public.<sup>32</sup>

The band shell was built and is shown next to the County Jail.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 7 September 1874, 3 July 1874.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 10 July 1874.

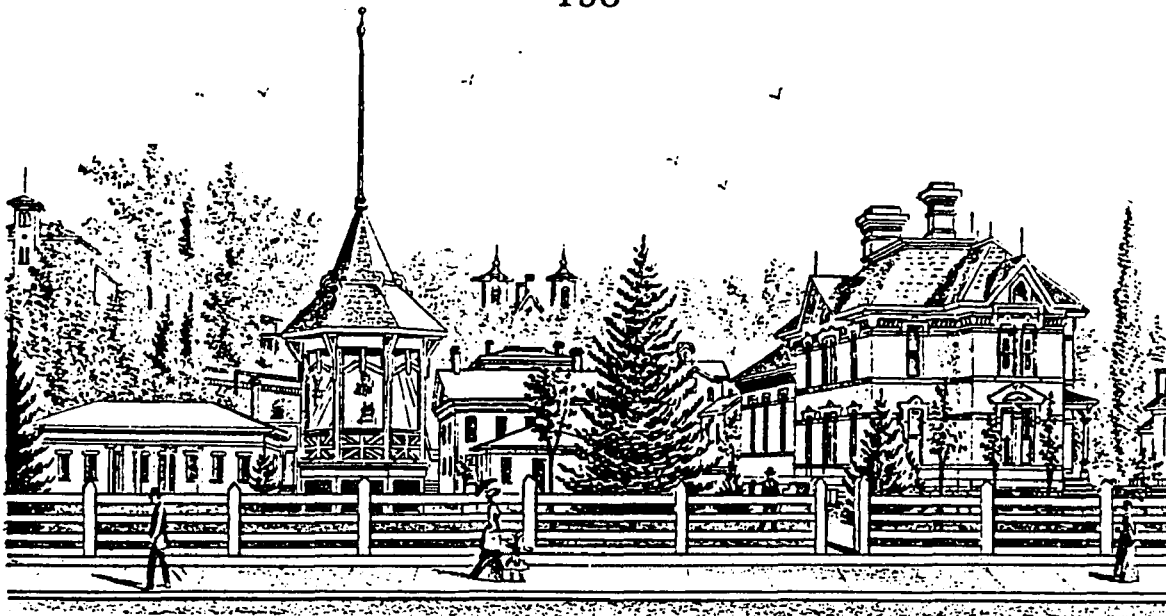


**Figure 29**  
**Ionia's New Band Shell**

(Source: Schenck, History of Ionia County, Opposite Ionia Chapter page.)

The Ionia Cornet Band made news and spread goodwill by serenading public and community figures alike. A serenade was performed for the Mayor and Miss Marion Hall, who had just returned home to Ionia after two years of music study in Germany. Then, on New Year's Day, 1875, the band serenaded the entire town.

. . . not to be behind the customs of the times . . . [the Cornet Band] gave our citizens a complimentary serenade in the streets and at the band stand. 'Thunder in the winter,' would not have surprised us more nor have pleased us more as 'dat' for it was rather frigid at the time of the year, and day, and the music of horns like that of bells, sounds capitally in frosty weather. Asst. Superintendent O. N. Hinkle and J. B. Foley, Station Agent, were 'blowed' up in the friskiest manner. The Sherman House was also attacked. That two hundred pounder of a host, Starkey, as usual, punished the uproar promptly by smoking the boys, and then rushing them up into a pleasant room filled with the choicest viands of the season. There the ladies took charge of the lunatics and served them.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Ionia Sentinel, 8 January 1875.



In March 1875, through an arrangement with a band in neighboring Kent County, the Lowell Cornet Band visited Ionia, giving an entertainment as a benefit for the Ionia Band. The Sentinel editors reminded and encouraged all in the support of their band:

They have labored assiduously to become proficient performers, and have succeeded so well as to become the source of considerable pleasure by their appearance on many public occasions, and in giving open-air concerts and serenades, and we hope the appreciation of our people will be shown by an immense attendance at the hall tonight.

As the Lowell Amateur Minstrels, Lowell's Cornet Band gave, a "performance that was repleat throughout with everything that was calculated to tickle a person's risibilities, and by the marked attention and many bursts of applause given by the delighted audience, we judge that it [did] so to a great degree." Talent was very appreciated, whether it was homegrown or from the surrounding areas. The "Lowell boys gave as good satisfaction as any professional minstrel company that has passed through this city." The Sentinel editors went on to hope that if Ionia ever obtained an opera hall, this group would come back again.<sup>34</sup>

### **Home Talent**

In addition to public performances of the bands and those highlighting the accomplishments of the music classes of Professor Webster and Professor Pease, home talent productions were annual treats for the Ionia community. Dramatic and musical activities

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 5 March 1875, 12 March 1875, 19 March 1875.

provided a vehicle for church festivals and benefits alike. All three of Ionia's musical leaders, Messrs. Axtell, Baroth, and Gordon, directed large-scale musical and dramatic events. In addition, the term- and year-end exercises of the schools brought the community out to witness the growth and accomplishments of its young scholars. These public programs almost always contained both musical and dramatic offerings.

Three church society festivals were reported in 1866, with at least two of them featuring tableaux as a focal point of the entertainment. At the Disciples Festival music was also furnished by the glee club, but the size of the crowd made it "impossible to hear with sufficient distinction." This problem was evidently remedied, for the next month, at the same location, the festival of the Presbyterian Society presented tableaux on a stage which had been built at one end of the hall. The tableaux, thought an "interesting feature" by the editors, were described in the Sentinel:

. . . first scene Paganism, second, Christianity, third Faith, and one of the finest in the series, next was War . . . presented by a multitudinous collection of dead, dying, weeping, groaning and terror-struck figures . . . closing with Peace, represented by figures engaged in industrial and useful pursuits, a happy band of children in the attitude of dancing around the Maypole.

Both the glee club and the Ionia Cornet Band added to the entertainment presented, and Mr. Axtell, leader of the band, was presented a token of appreciation "of the divine power of music." The ladies' society made about \$300 at this festival.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 3 July 1866, 10 July 1866.

Many of the home talent productions were presented in the winter months, as were the literary society activities. People were less occupied by farming chores and outside work, and these community entertainments and activities offered a break from the bleak weather and indoor isolation. Musician and teacher Mr. Baroth, although he did not want beginners in his class of future music teachers, did teach the young people of the area and did present annual "Grand Concerts" of his students each December. These "Grand Concerts" became community events, ". . . anticipated almost as certain and nearly as welcome as Christmas itself . . . those who have attended Mr. Baroth's previous entertainments of this kind will not likely miss the opportunity of enjoying a rare musical treat." The 1868 concert began seriously in a "hall beautifully decorated, in front of forest scenery . . . on a stage adorned with evergreens and an arc of blazing tapers." The program, part one, progressed with several duets, a piano solo by local vocalist Marion Hall, and a violin solo by Master Wolfe, when it was surprisingly interrupted with a riotous farce on "Dan Rice's Great Show." This performance was the event area photographer H. W. Boozer caught in a series of pictures, and later offered for sale to the community. Baroth showed his wit and showmanship, and provided the Ionia crowd with a wonderfully entertaining year-end celebration. Just after the new year, another home talent performance was presented at Union Hall by the Sunday school choir and was "a success in the manner of its rendering and the size of the audience." Miss Montgomery had worked with the

children to train for the performance, which brought in \$64 which almost covered the expenses.<sup>36</sup>

In the spring the Sentinel reported that a Mr. Herrick had been turned down when he inquired about coming to the city to present Esther, the Beautiful Queen. Perhaps Herrick was another traveling teacher offering a music class which would result in this production. Preparations were already under way by Ionia's Arion Glee Club to present the Cantata of the Pilgrim Fathers. By February 1868 the glee club, also directed by Mr. Baroth, was working on its production of Pilgrim Fathers. The opening had been scheduled for April 29. In mid-April, the editors viewed a rehearsal and found the music "certainly beautiful." They reported that Mr. Baroth and the club had been training for the prior six months, indicating a starting date as early as October. An artist from Detroit, Mr. Michael, had been engaged to design and paint the scenery, and the club was also making new, "complete costumes. Barring a few defects in the arrangement of the scenery, and the inappropriate mode of consigning the remains to a watery grave in the funeral scene, the production was proclaimed to fully equal the anticipation of the community . . ."<sup>37</sup>

The Cantata of the Pilgrim Fathers was successful. A full description of the scenes appeared in the Sentinel along with mention of the citizens playing the various roles. Mr. Axtell, the Cornet Band leader, performed the character of the Captain, and Miss Marion Hall and Master Wolfe entertained between the parts with instrumental

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 18 December 1866, 3 January 1869.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 1 May 1868.

selections on the piano and violin. “. . . taken in all, our citizens have never before had an opportunity of witnessing any entertainment produced by home talent so honorable to the place and participants than this.” The Cantata of the Pilgrim Fathers ran a second night, and that performance was “better than the first.”<sup>38</sup>

Home talent productions such as this were not reported in the press again until the end of the year, when an oyster supper and entertainment were offered at a New Year's festival by the St. John's Episcopal Church. Several tableaux were included as entertainment. “The Guardian Angel . . . a living figure representing an oil painting was so wonderfully true to the intention that one could hardly be persuaded that it was really a thing of life . . . They were produced several times in answer to the demands of the delighted spectators who seemed to be unable to view them as long as they wished.” Then, in March, the young ladies of the village gave a benefit for the Young Men's Christian Association, which despite unfavorable weather, was well attended by the community.<sup>39</sup>

In May another elaborate entertainment was staged at the Union House and included almost every dramatic form possible. Vocal music included a quintet club, a solo with chorus by the club, and duets. Declamations and orations were taken from Napoleon Bonaparte and A. B. Morse, and a “plea for injured innocence” from the celebrated case of Bardell vs. Pickwicks. “Photographer” and “Babes in the Woods” were presented in small scenes, and tableaux of “The Artists' Studio”

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 21 February 1868, 17 April 1868, 24 April 1868, 1 May 1868, 8 May 1868.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 25 December 1868, 8 January 1869, 27 February 1869, 13 March 1869.

and "The Men-del-son Club" demonstrated "the sense that actions speak louder than word[s]." Though Professor Baroth was not mentioned in the Sentinel's reporting, it is possible that he had a role in this extravaganza. This entertainment closed with a burlesque as well: the "Celebrated Can'd Tater of the Pilgrim Grandfathers."

. . . in which the power of song was rendered more effective by the inspiration of the artist. The beautiful waterscape with the sun setting behind the western hills (on the shore) was a vivid and lifelike picture of the New England Coast in the 17th century and the ascent of the sailor to the masthead was a forcible illustration of 'doing things' in that age of the world. The harmony of the parts and the adaptation of the music to the scenes and characters could not but be appreciated; and when at the conclusion of the mournful and pathetic refrain, amid the tempest tossed billows, the scene made visible by flashing lighting and vocal by the reverberating thunder, the body of the dead was 'thumped' to the bottom with a startling celerity, it was a hit that struck the house and brought it down.

The Sentinel proclaimed the program a success and described the burlesque as "fairly done."<sup>40</sup>

During 1873 and 1874 another Ionia musician joined the ranks of Messrs. Axtell, Baroth, and Gordon in the eyes of the press and the community. Miss Ionia Bell Reynolds, a native of Ionia, had already "achieved national reputation as a vocalist of exquisite merit." She gave two concerts at Ionia's Union Hall, assisted by Charles H. Thompson, of London, England, and several leading Detroit vocalists. Miss Reynolds was apparently known widely in Michigan. The Grand Rapids Eagle referred to her as "Michigan's sweet singer." The Sentinel noticed her performances around the region and reported on her acceptance of a position, singing at the Presbyterian church, of

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 22 May 1869.

Grand Rapids, where she “received a larger salary than is paid by any other church in Michigan, \$1,000.” She continued to give concerts “in all the cities and towns of west Michigan,” until in September of 1874, she became Mrs. Lewis Brown and settled in Marshall.<sup>41</sup>

The New Year’s Eve entertainment in 1875 was presented by the Sabbath School of the Presbyterian church and directed by C. H. Axtell, the band leader. With only two weeks’ preparation, he brought 50 children together in a lovely program for the community. The Sentinel praised Axtell and the children, “nearly all whom . . . had received but little if any previous musical training, and had never taken part in public exhibition.”<sup>42</sup>

All of these productions, although including a variety of art forms, were based primarily in the musical arena, and all were directed by musicians of the community or the traveling musical professors. In 1874 a dramatic club was formed in Lyons, a community approximately ten miles to the east of Ionia. In February their first “home drama” was Handy Andy, which they also performed in Hutchinson, at the opera hall. In June the Sentinel noted the club’s increased reputation: “They have recently played twice at Muir for charitable purposes, to the great satisfaction of all who attended.” In February of 1875 the Lyons Dramatic Association prepared for another entertainment. These activities must have encouraged Ionia citizens, because on February 12 the newspaper reported that an “effort is being made to organize a dramatic club, which if successful, we

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 17 October 1873, 24 October 1873, 31 October 1873, 2 January 1874, 23 January 1874, 27 February 1874, 11 September 1874.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 3 January 1875.

believe, would be a source of pleasure and benefit to our village." The Lyons club appeared in Ionia for a performance, and the press noted that they were already preparing their next production for May.<sup>43</sup>

### **Literary Societies Across the County**

Dramatic activities also had an outlet in the numerous literary organizations that existed throughout the county. Some of these activities included debating, recitations, and orations. Even several of the smallest villages had associations which brought citizens together regularly. These literary societies provided their members with opportunities for self-improvement and the satisfaction of doing something for the community as well. Public lecture series and debates gave citizens winter activities that fed their minds and brought them together socially. It was often these organizations that provided the first libraries. Of the four case study counties, Ionia had the greatest number of active literary organizations. Its proximity to Grand Rapids gave these citizens an increased exposure to the cultural life and opportunities of larger cities. With the waterways and railroads, Ionia had access to traveling lecturers and entertainments which the other counties of Grand Traverse, Ontonagon, and even St. Joseph did not.

Three organizations were the most prevalent: two societies in Ionia--the Young Men's Association and the YMCA--and the Ronald Literary Association. Seven others across the county were also active during the period of this study, some more successful than others. In

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 20 February 1874, 14 February 1874, 5 June 1874, 5 February 1875, 12 February 1875, 12 March 1875, 26 March 1875.



1868 the Smyrna Lyceum Society built a hall with the Baptist Society, and then through a disagreement lost it to the other organization. That same year Hubbardston, in the extreme northeast corner of the county, had an organization concerned with library and scientific matters. The Hubbardston Literary Association met once each month during the winter with the purpose of providing lectures at each meeting. This group, in turn, organized a debating club that met weekly for discussions. A course of lectures which benefitted the Saranac Congregational Church provided five programs in March of 1874. This series closed with a concert by the Saranac Glee Club. After several years of unsuccessful efforts, a group in Portland was able to obtain enough subscriptions to hold a successful course of five lectures in 1875. In March of 1875 the Pewamo Lyceum had been organized for four years. They met every other week throughout the winter in the local schoolhouse.<sup>44</sup>

### **Two "Young Men's" Organizations**

Ionia's Young Men's Association (YMA) provided a course of lectures, ranging from three or four to six, each winter season from 1866 to 1869. In November of 1866 they invited a "general audience" to their weekly meetings, with a special reminder that the "ladies particularly are invited." Their activities this year included debates as

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 14 January 1868, 11 December 1868, 27 December 1868, 27 February 1874, 15 January 1875, 5 March 1875.

well as a series of four lectures. One letter and discussions reported in the Sentinel concerned the question, "Why exclude ladies?"<sup>45</sup>

The YMA was a structured organization with a board of directors and the typical range of officers as well as a librarian. They had their own hall, but whether it was their own building or rooms in another facility is not known. Standing committees reported for the 1868-69 season were arrangements, lectures, library, finance, and real estate, reinforcing the thought that they had both the care of a collection of books and a physical space, if not a building, to be concerned about. The course of lectures was expanded to six for the 1868-1869 season, and they were almost successful in announcing the entire schedule in advance. The Sentinel editors had suggested this improvement at the end of the 1867-68 season.

| <u>Speaker</u>    | <u>Topic</u>      | <u>Date</u>      |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Josh Billings     | "Milk"            | 11/25/68         |
| Moses Coit Tyler  | "Castles"         | 12/17/68         |
| John B. Gough     | "Temperance"      | 1/29/69          |
| Anna E. Dickinson | "Fair Play"       | 2/?/69           |
| Henry Vincent     | "Oliver Cromwell" | 3/?/69           |
| Fredrick Douglass | "Wm. the Silent"  | 3/?/69 or 4/?/69 |

**Figure 30**

**1868-1869 Course of Lectures, Young Men's Association**

(Source: Ionia (Michigan) Sentinel 13 November 1868, 20 November 1868, 18 December 1868, 16 January 1869, 30 January 1868, 6 February 1869, 20 February 1869, 6 March 1868, 16 January 1869.)

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 1 March 1866, 11 September 1866, 30 October 1866, 6 November 1866, 13 November 1866, 2 November 1866, 27 November 1866, 11 December 1866.

Season tickets were issued for the six lectures at \$2 each, and the YMA seemed surprised to sell over 200 tickets immediately. This provided them with "a basis of operations and [assurances of] fair audiences to all the lectures." Josh Billings provided a humorous and entertaining opening lecture. John Gough attracted over 1,000 people, and Miss Dickinson was admired as "one of the few fearless women of America." The Sentinel editors noted that Frederick Douglass disappointed the audience, being not "as eloquent as his well-known antislavery and political speeches" were known to be.<sup>46</sup>

The last reporting of the YMA occurred in a long article discussing their meetings and lecture series in the September 25, 1869, Sentinel. Their activities were no longer being reported in the early 1870s. Beginning in March of 1868, a new Young Men's Reading Association was acknowledged by the editors. Area young men met to discuss the formation of a reading association, in order to provide an alternative to that which was "afforded [by] our numerous drinking saloons." They proposed opening reading rooms, with popular periodicals, that would furnish a pleasant and more profitable resort than the "billiard and drinking saloons." By June it was called the YMCA, Young Men's Christian Association. They were officially organized, with a constitution and bylaws, and had their own rooms. Over 80 names were listed as members in July of 1868. In 1873 their lecture course was comprised of five programs, with season tickets at \$1, or single admissions for \$.20-\$.25 at the door. Several of the

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 13 November 1868, 30 January 1869, 20 February 1869, 3 April 1869.

speakers were from within the state: Professor Eastbrook, of Ypsilanti; Dr. Angell, President of the State "U"; and Reverend A. T. Pierson, of Detroit. The last lecture offered in the spring of 1874 included music furnished by Professor Gordon as a part of the program.<sup>47</sup>

In the spring of 1874, the YMCA, together with the "ladies of the temperance alliance," took on another project, that of securing a public library. The Sentinel editors acknowledged the failure of past efforts in Ionia, confessing "sorrow, when we see smaller towns about us setting better examples it would seem that our citizens ought to encourage any and every effort that may be put forth for the establishment of such an institution in our city." The "ladies" called upon the citizens for subscriptions to support the beginning collection, and the editors urged everyone to give "substantial assistance" towards this project.<sup>48</sup>

### **A Township Literary Society**

In Ronald Township, on the northern edge of Ionia County, the Ronald Literary Association and Mutual Literary Society was active at least between 1866 and 1875. As indicated by their name, the Ronald organization was intended to serve the entire township, whose population in 1870 was 1,354 (compared to Ionia Township's of 4,148). Activities of the Ronald Literary Association were more varied than the two Ionia groups discussed. In addition to lectures provided

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 27 March 1868, 10 July 1868, 27 November 1868, 19 December 1873, 26 December 1873, 19 June 1874.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 29 May 1874.

by area and mid-Michigan speakers, Ronald members delivered papers, addresses, orations, essays, declamations, and recitations as a regular part of their exercises. Women were active participants as well, contributing essays and papers along with the men. Most meetings also included musical entertainments as part of the program. Music was provided by the members themselves or the glee clubs and church choirs of Palo, Ronald, and Ionia. Ionia's Henry Gordon often participated individually or with his students, and Grand Rapids musicians entertained as well. Fine sleighing conditions would bring cutters and other sleighs from all over the township and from Ionia as well. Until 1874 meetings were held at the Baptist church, in Palo, close to the north edge of the county, and the newspaper repeatedly noted the packed or overflowing crowds. The attendance can be estimated at between 100 and 150, for Schenck's history notes this Baptist congregation in 1880 as 130, and the church would have more than accommodated that number.<sup>49</sup>

In 1874 the Ronald Literary Association was able to have built a new hall at South Ronald. Contributions from Ionia and other towns helped to raise the \$1,300 for the new hall. This was believed to be the only building "built by a society outside of a city or village in the state for this purpose." The Lansing Republican took notice and reported on this "Prosperous Educational Institute . . . one of the most flourishing societies of its kind in Michigan." The new hall was 30' x 48', a white, one-story building, "surmounted with a cupola." The

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<sup>49</sup> J. E. Scripps and R. L. Polk, Michigan State Gazetteer and Business Directory for 1873, (Detroit, Tribune Book & Job Printers, 1873), 30-32; Schenck, History of Ionia, 345.

interior had a stage with small dressing rooms at either side. Cabinets contained a collection of historical relics, specimens of minerals and animals which had been sent by resident Joseph Steere over the previous three years. Steere had been traveling to collect items for Michigan State University.<sup>50</sup>

The new Lyceum Hall was dedicated on November 7 at the first meeting of the season. Music, recitation of papers, selected readings, and music by Professor Henry Gordon and the Palo Brass Band were scheduled for the dedicatory ceremony. Later in the month the Ronald Literary Society gave an oyster supper for Thanksgiving. Proceeds from \$.50 fees were used for "seating the hall." The Ronald Literary Society met weekly during the season and continued their varied programs.<sup>51</sup>

### **Literary Societies in the Schools**

Literary club activity was also apparent within the schools. Two student literary societies were reported at the Ionia Union School during the 1868 and 1874 school years. The former, the Ionia Students Literary Society, was active between November and April, giving special public exhibitions in November, February, and April. In March they published "a neat, little three column sheet . . . devoted to the interest of home literary talent . . . " Their public exhibitions included "music, declamation, essays, recitations, dialogues, burlesques, tableaux, etc. . . . " Receipts of \$100 were brought in at

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<sup>50</sup> Ionia Sentinel, 6 November 1874.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 20 November 1874.

the March exhibition and used to enhance the Union School Library. Sentinel editors applauded the program and the society for awakening "a deeper and more general interest in the growth and improvement of our educational interests and . . . a healthy rivalry among the students." The Sentinel summarized the program for those who were not in attendance:

At this program Lee Hutchins, a miniature orator of 12 delivered one of Webster's famous speeches . . . C. W. Binguet's delineations of the hard shell Baptist preacher and Negro character were excellent . . . Mr. Wilson was to have essayed on the horse, but owing to a characterization which appeared a few days previous, changed his tactics and gave a lecture on natural history, accompanied by pictorial illustrations representing the two different species of the animal kingdom to which his defamers belonged; and describing their different characteristics. It was received with immense applause and the originators of the cariatuure acknowledged themselves handsomely beaten in the joking business . . . Tableaux were mainly comical productions excepting one statuary which was a most striking and beautiful representation . . . evening entertainment closed with music by the Orpheus Glee Club, burlesquing, in a capital manner the fashionable operatic singing of the present . . .<sup>52</sup>

In 1875 the Philomathean Society had been active at the high school for three years. At their third annual meeting, in February, exercises included orations, essays, papers, and vocal and instrumental music. An original poem by Professor Todd was billed as the special attraction. Printed in its entirety in the Sentinel, "The Origin of the Earth" occupied nearly three entire columns on page 3. Funds raised from this program were to help "cancel the debt from the purchase of Chamber's Encyclopedia for the use of the school."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 13 March, 1868, 27 March 1868.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 12 June 1874, 19 February 1875, 26 February 1875.

### Touring Entertainments

Many more dances and balls were reported in the St. Joseph County and Grand Traverse Region case studies than were found in Ionia County during this period. Few dances were held each year. When they were, they often marked holidays or special events, such as a "Harvest Dance" or the completion of a refurbished home or hall. In 1868 a masked ball was held with costumes for rent from the Carter Theatrical Troupe, of Grand Rapids. In 1869 "colored citizens from far and near gathered here to attend a ball." During the Hubbardston Fair, in 1874, a special building was erected for dancing throughout fair week. In addition to their own cultural activities, the citizens of Ionia County benefitted from an abundance of traveling entertainments stopping for performances between Grand Rapids and Lansing. These may have reduced the need for organized social gatherings and dances.<sup>54</sup>

Several Michigan theatrical companies toured to Ionia County. The Detroit Atheneum Company presented The Hidden Hand and Uncle Tom's Cabin to large audiences in 1866. In 1868 both Carter's Theatrical Company, from Grand Rapids, and Stevenson's Atheneum Company, of Detroit, brought their troupes to Ionia for performances. When Mrs. Carrie Carter, star of the Carter Company, died in May of 1868, the Sentinel included the notice for its readers.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 10 January 1868, 11 December 1866, 7 August 1866, 30 January 1869, 16 September 1874. "Colored" reflects the terminology of the times. Today, African American would be both the common and acceptable language.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 10 July 1866, 3 January 1868, 6 March 1868, 17 July 1868, 24 July 1868.



During 1868 at least one major entertainment was presented to the citizens of Ionia in nine of the twelve months. There were no tours in the area, but Professor Baroth's production, the Cantata of the Pilgrim Fathers, opened at the end of the month. Harvest time - August and September - also was absent of major entertainments, as was November. Besides Carter company and Stevenson's troupe, previously mentioned, entertainments included Swiss Bell Ringers, vocalists of the Peak and Berger families, the Original Skiff & Gaylord's Minstrels, the Champion Triple Clog Dancers, the Fakir of Vishnu, and Blake's Dramatic Troupe. During June Adam Forepaugh's Circus, the "most extensive show that has yet visited this place," played at Lyons, Ionia, and Lowell. The California Minstrels went "busted on account of financial embarrassments" and failed to appear, though they were scheduled to appear in July.<sup>56</sup>

Throughout the period of this study, numerous performers and curiosities entertained the Ionia community. These included several circuses, such as Stow's Shows and Buckley's Hippodrome (which included a racetrack), and classic Grecian and Roman "Olympic Festivals" as well. The Siamese twins brought their two children and other rare curiosities. As a benefit for the cornet band, James Barton was engaged to present "the renowned war allegory, The Union Spy." Musical groups included Happy Cal's Minstrels, The Alleghenians, and the Aptimates Concert Group. Troupes included the Healy and Cohan's Hiberniana (which represented Ireland's scenery and

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 3 January 1868, 6 March 1868, 13 March 1868, 8 May 1868, 8 May 1866, 26 June 1868, 3 July 1868, 19 June 1868, 17 July 1868, 24 July 1868, 2 October 1868, 11 December 1868.

characters), May Fisk's Combination, Florance's Combination, and the McKean-Campbell Combination. The variety of entertainments included circus, comedy, drama, and music, and ranged from Monsieur AJAX, the India-Rubber man and contortionist, to Michigan violinist Z. T. Wolohon, who had just returned from Europe, "where he has been under instruction of the masters of the old country."<sup>57</sup>

The frequent and varied touring entertainments provided a broad range of cultural experiences to the citizens of Ionia and its neighboring towns and villages. In addition, the musical and literary community-based organizations brought people together for social interaction and provided a means of adding to personal knowledge. These community arts organizations served the communities as well, not only through performances and entertainments, but through the lecture series and the efforts to establish a library. Community organizations did not exist for the visual arts. Schools did not provide classes, and only one instructor was noticed who offered lessons in drawing or painting. The opportunity to see artworks of others on exhibit was quite rare at this time. With the establishment of the county fair, Ionia County residents interested in the arts had this opportunity.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 5 September 1873, 14 September 1874, 27 November 1866, 13 September 1873, 26 September 1873, 25 September 1874, 20 November 1874, 15 May 1874, 21 November 1873, 18 December 1874, 5 March 1875.

## **The Ionia County Agricultural Society**

Interest in forming an agricultural society for Ionia County may have begun as early as 1852, for a letter from Horace F. Baker was included in the section for county society reports, in the 1852 Transactions of the State Agricultural Society. Mr. Baker did not speak about an organization but praised the fertility of the soil and the variety of timber found in the vicinity. Because of the soil's fertility, Baker called Ionia County the "Garden" of the Grand River Valley. Horace Baker was among the 85 county residents who paid \$.50 to become charter members when the Ionia County Agricultural Society was formed, sometime in 1853. Three women were also among these first members. This was unusual as membership was usually held by the man. Mrs. Bell was there, along with her husband, but Mrs. Smith's and Mrs. M. Hearsey's husbands were not among those listed by Schenck in his History of Ionia and Montcalm Counties. The constitution declared the society's objective as "the promotion of agriculture, horticulture, household and mechanical arts in the county of Ionia." Their first fair was held in a small enclosure in the early autumn of that same year. Only 40 entries were recorded, and \$20 in premiums was paid out.<sup>58</sup>

The second fair was held in Ionia in mid-October 1854. The number of entries increased dramatically. Eight categories for competition received 151 entries. Five of the categories were for livestock; the other three were "Grains," "Domestic Manufactures,"

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<sup>58</sup> Transactions, 1852, 231-33

and "Miscellaneous." Premiums paid this year increased as well, to about \$75. The board of directors elected for the coming year was comprised of vice presidents from each of the 16 Ionia County townships. The group elected Alonzo Sessions as president. Sessions, who was an area banker and farmer, continued his involvement as an officer in the society throughout the next ten years, between 1856 and 1859, when he was a state legislator. Other members included prominent farmers, the county's first lawyer, and a reverend. Over one-third of these board members were later elected to state government, representing the citizens of Ionia County.<sup>59</sup>

The 1855 and 1856 fairs were reported to be "about the same as in 1854," but in 1857 the fair was moved to the village of Lyons, still centrally located in the county, but east of Ionia by about twelve miles. Lyons was the second most populated city in the county at this time. Receipts from the 1857 fair totaled \$147.60, and \$157 was awarded in premiums to successful exhibitors. In 1858 the society received \$100 from the county treasurer, in accordance with an 1849 provision of the state legislature which had authorized county boards of supervisors to levy an annual tax. It is not known why it took three years for the Ionia Society to receive the funds, but amounts from \$100 to \$300 were received annually for several years from then on.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 1854, 546-8; Schenck, History of Ionia County, 128.

<sup>60</sup> Schenck, History of Ionia County, 128-30.

### **The First Grounds**

No fair was held in 1858. Then, in February 1859, three prominent Ionia businessmen "in behalf of the citizens of Ionia village, offered to enclose and prepare in a suitable manner grounds containing five acres for the use of the society." Their proposition was accepted, and the fair was back in Ionia that September. This fair brought in 168 entries. The society paid \$257.34 in premiums and took in receipts of \$323.89.<sup>61</sup>

The men who brought the fair back to Ionia were interested and involved in the future of the city and the region. Frederick Hall had been a member of the state legislature, elected in 1849. He then became involved "extensively in land speculation" and later engaged in banking. In 1873 Hall was elected Ionia's first mayor. Hampton Rich was a notary public at this time and became involved in government as well. He was elected to the Michigan State Senate in 1866. Osmond Tower had been in the carpentry business and was also involved in establishing the area's first foundry. Senator Tower was elected in 1858 and continued for a second term.<sup>62</sup>

In 1860 the society sought land for their first permanent fairgrounds. In March ten acres, on the south side of the Grand River, near Ionia, were purchased from John E. Morrison, at \$30 per acre. The 7th, 8th, and 9th fairs were held on the new grounds, but during the remaining years of the Civil War (1862-64), no fairs were held. The Ionia County Agricultural Society resumed its fairs in 1865. The

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 154, 173-4, 120-1, 147, 160-2.

10th fair, in 1866, was held on October 3 and 4, the same days that the new Excelsior Society held their first fair at Cooks Corners, in the northwestern corner of the county. This problem in scheduling apparently hurt the attendance at the Ionia fair and caused concerns with both boards. Ionia's secretary used the Sentinel to state that he did not know how it had happened, since the Ionia Society had published their dates as early as April 14. The Excelsior fair, being a new fair, drew the attention of the residents; over 3,000 attended. The Excelsior Society and the Central Fair Association, also active in the county, will be discussed later.<sup>63</sup>

The premium list was published in the Sentinel in August 1866 for the upcoming 10th Annual Ionia County Fair. Competitive categories increased to 12, as compared to the 8 at the 2nd fair in 1853. "Livestock" (four categories); "Dairy Products"; "Grains, Roots & Vegetables"; "Fruits, Flowers and Plants"; "Manufactures & Implements"; "Domestic Manufactures"; "Engravings, Photographs, Etc.;" and "Discretionary." "Domestic Manufactures" was divided into two classes, the first being for bed coverings, yardage of cloth, and carpet. The second class was for needlework and thread or yarn. New bylaws had been adopted for the fair, and they were included in the Sentinel coverage:

Article 1. None but members of the society and members of their families under 21 shall be permitted to compete for premiums.

Article 2. All animals and all articles unless raised or manufactured by the exhibitor . . . shall have been kept or owned for at least 30 days previous to the Annual Fair.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 128-30; Ionia Sentinel, 4 September, 1866, 28 August 1866, 4 September 1868, 25 September 1866, 9 October 1866.

Article 3. No person or persons are entitled to compete for a premium on any article of a domestic manufacture unless the same shall have been manufactured by said competitor.

Article 4. No person shall act as one of a committee in awarding premiums where he or she is directly or indirectly interested in such award.

Article 5. Any officer, committee man or member making false return or willfully violating any articles to aid or secure themselves shall be reprimanded and expelled.<sup>64</sup>

These revised bylaws reinforced the original purpose of the society--promoting a broad range of products produced "in the county of Ionia"--and assured an impartial judging of the animals and items entered into competition. Receipts from this year's fair totaled \$385, more than covering the \$209.25 paid for the premiums awarded. Premiums ranged from \$3 to \$.25; \$2 was the award for "Best" in most categories other than for stallions and yoke steers, for which premiums were \$3. The statement of the society's finances was also included in the paper. Interesting items include \$14 to Susan Morrison, for making the tent which was probably used for Floral Hall. Thread for the tent totaled \$2.40. Other than the premiums, printing was the largest expense, \$30, which represents the combined Taylor & Stevenson bill and the bill for tags. (Taylor and Stevenson, publishers of the Sentinel, probably also offered job printing.) Labor for attending the gate for several days, two days of work, and two night watches, for four men, came to \$20. The society went forward with almost \$40 more than they had in their treasury the year before.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ionia Sentinel, 28 August 1866.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 23 October 1866.

**Expanding the Fair**

1868 was a busy year for the Ionia County Agricultural Society. They needed more space for their grounds and approved the purchase of a new plot of land at their annual meeting in January. Erastus Yeomans, a long-time society participant and supporter, was willing to wait until the current grounds were sold for his total payment. The old grounds, 10 acres, sold in May, and by June the deal was made and the society gained possession of Yeomans' 25 acres. The new fairgrounds were located on the north side of the Grand River, "fringing the road crossing the west bridge," and were convenient to Ionia. The old grounds sold for \$740; the new fairgrounds cost \$130 per acre; the total price reported in Schenck's History of Ionia and Montcalm Counties was \$2,400. The society also initiated a new life membership ticket for \$10 as a way of generating additional income to support the cost of the new grounds.<sup>66</sup>

In April the businessmen of the county were solicited for advertisements to go in the annual booklet containing the premiums to be awarded at the fair. One thousand copies were issued with, every other page for advertising, a wonderful "opportunity to bring business before the people of the county." In May the premiums were printed in the paper, and the Sentinel editors expressed their approval of the agricultural society's upcoming plans, noting that the premium list "hows a liberal policy on the part of the directors." They gave their approval of the present management of the society, who had shown

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 3 January 1868, 15 May 1868, 17 January 1868, 23 October 1868; Schenck, History of Ionia County, 123-30.



"an increased interest in and prosperity for the society." The booklet was issued across the county in early June. Along with the advertising, it encouraged Ionia County citizens to start preparing for the fair to be held October 7, 8, and 9. The booklet contained the list of premiums to be awarded, rules and regulations of the fair, the constitution of the county society, and a list of the officers of the society.<sup>67</sup>

The premium categories had undergone a dramatic change by the 1868 fair. There had been 8 categories in 1853 and 12 categories in 1866. These had been simple, rather straightforward listings. For the 10th fair, in 1866, "Domestic Manufactures" was divided into two sections. The premium listing for the 12th fair, in 1868, offered 7 "Divisions" ( I - VII), each with from 1 to 11 "Classes" dividing them. The first 3 divisions covered the range of livestock: "Cattle," "Horses and Sheep," "Swine and Poultry." The classes separated breeds and indicated purposes of animals, as well as included other animals in the third division. "Division D" - "Farm Implements" and "Division G" - "Female Equestrian" were the only two divisions that were not further separated into classes. "Domestic Manufactures," "Division E," was divided into 8 classes:

|     |                         |      |                           |
|-----|-------------------------|------|---------------------------|
| I   | Butter, Cheese, etc.    | II   | Homemade                  |
| II  | Carriages and Furniture | IV   | Harness, Boots, and Shoes |
| V   | Needlework              | VI   | Shell and Fancy Work      |
| VII | Paintings and Drawings  | VIII | Miscellaneous             |

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<sup>67</sup> Ionia Sentinel, 24 April 1864, 8 May 1868, 15 May 1868, 19 June 1868.

"Division F" - "Crops" covered the 4 classes of "Fruits," "Vegetables," "Grains," and "Flowers". The range of premiums offered went from \$10 to \$.50 to the award of a diploma. The top awards of \$10 and \$6 went to "Best" stallion in 2 classes. Larger livestock, in general, ranged from these top fees down to \$1 for "Second Best". "Carriages and Furniture" ranged from \$5 to \$3; "Farm Implements" ranged from \$3 to \$1, or a diploma. "Needlework," "Shell and Fancy Work," and "Paintings and Drawings" received the same awards of \$1 for "Best" in a category, although the "Best" collection of needlework took a \$3 prize and a diploma. "Vegetables," "Grains," and "Flowers" received the smallest amount in prizes: \$1 and \$.50.<sup>68</sup>

Sentinel editors announced the fair in their October 2nd issue. An unusually long article indicated that acceptance and participation of this annual event were not as widespread as many would have liked. Although they cautioned no one to "indulge in contemptuous remarks upon the exhibition, who has done nothing to contribute to its success," the editors also commented on the "benefits of these exhibitions":

. . . If all the intelligent and fore-handed farmers of this county would take hold of this matter, we could have a Fair that would be an honor to the county, a pleasure to all attendants and a source of pride to exhibitors. The comparison of products, the observations of cultivators, the exhibition of improved stock and the opportunity for canvassing the merits of different agricultural implements, and other labor-saving machines and manufactured articles, should afford the greatest profit possible for the time expended; and the pleasure of social intercourse and recreation should make it chief among the holidays for the whole community of all ages and both sexes.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 23 October 1868.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 2 October 1868.

Because of “unpropitious weather” on the first day of the fair, the directors extended the time for receiving entries into the second day, moving the “second day’s program to Friday, and the last day on Saturday.” Attendance on the second and last days was large, and the fair receipts were about \$725, compared to \$490 taken in the year before. This figure did not include the life memberships, initiated in January by the society. Ninety had been sold, bringing an additional \$900 into the treasury. This was very helpful, for at the board of directors meeting at the end of October, some of the expenses for preparing the new grounds were detailed. Over \$2,100 had been expended for fencing supplies, a builder, and “fitting up” the new grounds. It was worth it, for the new grounds and efforts brought an “increased interest from the citizens.” The Sentinel editors agreed, declaring the fair the “best exhibition yet presented by the society.” However, they were still not satisfied, noting that the exhibition “yet does not approach what it should be as an exhibit of the resources of the county.”<sup>70</sup>

By the next fair, in 1869, the Ionia County Agricultural Society had erected a “fine Floral Hall.” This area typically contained many of the domestic manufactures, as well as the flowers and plants from which it got its name. Floral Hall, always popular at the fairs, had been a tent in 1868. The new building certainly contributed to interest and attention: “. . . the exhibition of this department . . . contributes more than any other to the general pleasure” of those at the fair. Unlike the previous year, the weather cooperated, and by the end of

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 9 October, 1868, 23 October 1868, 30 October 1868.

the first day, there were 700 entries, 500 more than at the same time the previous year. The attendance soared to almost 4,000, and receipts increased by almost \$400 from 1868, reaching \$1,100.<sup>71</sup>

The early years of the 1870s saw the fair increase in popularity and financial success. Both attendance and entries continued to rise. The 14th annual fair, in 1870, brought out the "largest number of people ever to visit the fair." Entries increased by one-third in 1870, and by 1873 they reached "about 1,500" items and livestock competing for premiums. Receipts grew steadily as well: \$1,400 in 1870 and \$1,600 in 1872. In 1872 additional stalls were built for livestock, and the Sentinel credited the society's administration with the successes, noting that in addition to the purchase of the grounds and erection of numerous buildings, "entries and receipts had doubled" during the present administration. The same officers had been in charge since 1870, and they continued into 1874 with one change--a new president. (The retiring president remained active on the board.)<sup>72</sup>

During this period the society appeared to refine the premium categories and organization. The 23 categories of 1870 were again presented in a straightforward listing. Only the larger livestock had subgroupings. By 1872 the order reverted to the 1866 organization, with major divisions and subgroupings. Figure 31 offers four years of categories and arrangements for comparison purposes. In 1872 and 1873 were very similar. In 1872 they were divided into major

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 16 October 1869, 23 October 1868.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 1 October 1870, 3 October 1873, 4 October 1872; Schenck, History of Ionia County, 130.

| 1870 Premium Categories | 1872 Premium Categories   | 1873 Premium Categories     | 1874 Premium Categories     |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| [Horses]                | Class and Lot #           | Division and Class #        | Division & Class #          |
| [Cattle]                | A Cattle                  | A Cattle                    | A Cattle classes 1-9        |
| Fine Wool Sheep-3       | lots 1-9                  | classes 1-10                | B Horses classes 10-20      |
| Swine -3                | B Horses                  | B Horses                    | C Sheep & Swine             |
| Poultry                 | lots 10-16                | classes 11-17 1/2           | classes 21-24               |
| Farm Implements         | C Sheep                   | C Sheep                     | D Poultry class 25          |
| Domestic Manufactures   | lots 17-22                | classes 18-20               | E Implements of Husbandry   |
| Carriages               | D Farm Impliments         | 21 Swine                    | classes 26-27               |
| Cabinet Ware            | 23 Farm Impliments,       | 22 Poultry                  | F Furniture, Miscellaneous, |
| Harness, Boots & Shoes  | -Foreign Manuf.           | D Implements of Husbandry   | Woodwork, Harness & Boots   |
| Butter, Bread & Etc.    | 24 Farm Implements, Other | 23 Farm Implements          | classes 28-30               |
| Domestic Woolen Goods   | (including doors,         | 24 Wagons Carriages &       | G Miscellaneous             |
| Domestic Needle Work    | moldings, etc.)           | Sleighs                     | 31 Butter & Cheese          |
| Paintings & Drawings    | 25 Wagons, Carriages,     | 25                          | 32 Household Products       |
| Fruit                   | Sleighs                   | 26 Misc & Ornamental Work   | 33 Canned & Pickled Fruit   |
| Vegetables              | 26 Cabinet Ware           | in Wood & Iron              | 34 Fruits                   |
| Grains & Seeds          | - made in County          | E                           | 35 Vegetables               |
| Flowers                 | E                         | 28 Dairy & Household        | H Domestic Fine Arts        |
| Desc                    | 28 Dairy & Household      | Produce                     | 36 Domestics                |
| Sewing Machine          | Products                  | 29 Canned & Pickled Fruit   | 37 Needle & Artificial Work |
| Canned Fruit            | 29 Canned & Pickled Fruit | 30 Fruit                    | 38 Paintings, Drawings &    |
| Esquestarian            | 30 Fruit                  | 31 Grains & Seeds           | Photographs                 |
| Musical Instruments     | 31 Grain & Seeds          | 32 Vegetables               | 39 Flowers                  |
|                         | F                         | F                           | 40 Sewing Machines and      |
|                         | 33 Domestic Woolen Goods  | 33 [woven goods]            | Musical Instruments         |
|                         | 34 Domestic Needlework    | 34 Needle & Artificial Work | 41 Esquestrianism           |
|                         | 35 Paintings & Drawings   | 35 Paintihng & Drawing      |                             |
|                         | 36 Flowers                | 36 Flowers                  |                             |
|                         | 37 Musical Instruments    |                             |                             |

**Figure 31**  
**Comparison of Premium Categories, 1870 - 1874**  
(Sources: Ionia Sentinel, 1 October 1870, 11 October 1872, 10 October 1873, 16 October 1874.)

"Classes," comprised "Lots." In 1873 the "Classes and Lots" changed to "Divisions and Classes." This structure continued into 1874, with a further refining of the arrangement and placement of the subgroupings. Divisions increased in number from six to nine, and overall categories for competition increased from 36 to 41. Items were further defined, but the premiums offered for competition continued to cover the broad range of "agriculture, horticulture, household and mechanical arts" that the original constitution had identified as the objective of the society.<sup>73</sup>

### **Cooperation With Other Organizations**

In 1874 the Ionia County Agricultural Society aligned itself with two other organizations, expanding its own capabilities and opportunities within the county as a whole. At the annual meeting in January, the benefits of forming a grange was addressed. The Sentinel's reporting suggests that by the end of that day, three granges had been organized--at Orange, Ronald, and Woodward. (Schenck's History of Ionia and Montcalm Counties notes that Woodward's Grange had been organized the previous year, in 1873.) By the next Wednesday, 11 granges had sprung up in Ionia County. In May the Sentinel reported that 16 granges gathered at Odd Fellows Hall, in Ionia, to organize a County Council of Husbandry. Granges served the rural family in numerous ways benefitting their business as well as their social lives. They organized cooperative grocery stores and

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<sup>73</sup> Ionia (Michigan) Sentinel, 1 October 1870, 11 October 1872, 10 October 1873, 16 October 1874.

coordinated group buying and selling, which aided both family and farmer. Social gatherings and educational opportunities were also supported and held in their halls. Before the bookmobile, some of the earliest traveling libraries in Michigan went from the Michigan State Library to grange halls in wooden crates that stacked like bookshelves. Many community festivals and local dramatic presentations took place in the meeting rooms and stages of these halls.<sup>74</sup>

In addition, the Ionia County Agricultural Society became partners with the Driving Park Association. This allowed for combining grounds and sharing the responsibility for buildings and maintenance to the advantage of both organizations. In February a special committee of the agricultural society investigated securing additional land to the north and west. As part of a cooperative arrangement, the park association leased ten acres adjoining the fair grounds on the west from Erastus Yeomans. They sought to secure "capital stock of \$5,000 and fit up the grounds in a first-class style." By the end of March, "nearly half of the amount" had been pledged. At the April meeting of the agricultural society, Mr. Rich, president of the park association, presented the official proposal, which showed the benefits to both organizations. The combined grounds was 36 acres. When the park association's lease for the 10 acres expired, the agricultural society agreed to purchase the acreage, making the enlarged grounds permanent. A committee was assigned to "enter into a contract of mutual occupancy." A building plan was undertaken which involved moving the fence that separated the two grounds.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 2 January 1874, 1 May 1874.

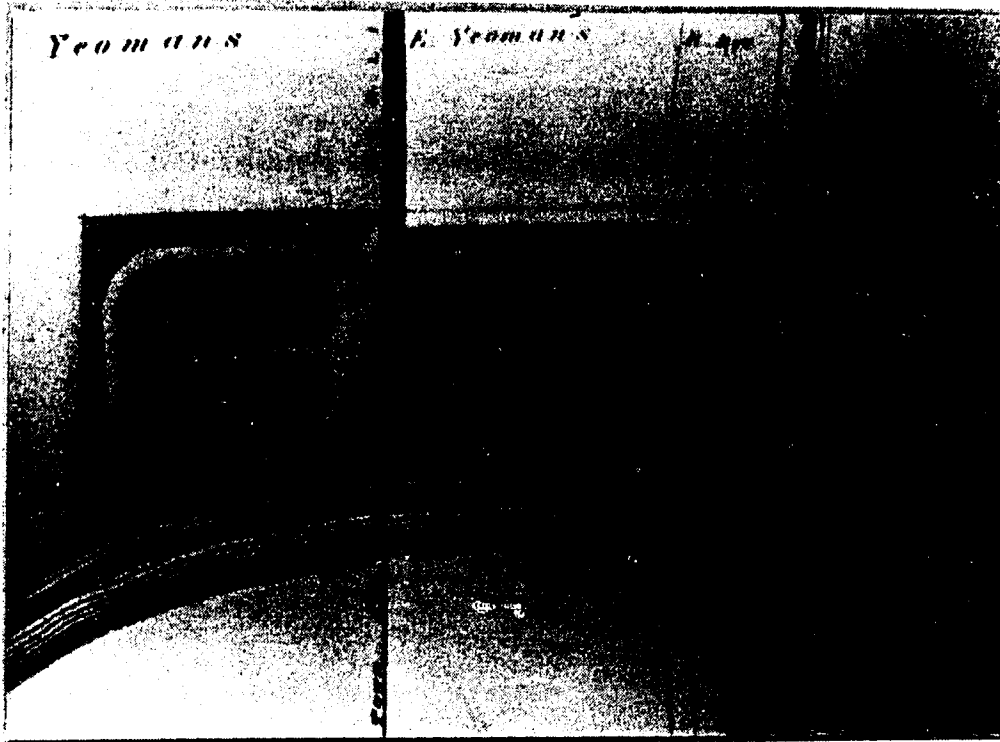


**Figure 32**  
**Combined Grounds:**  
**Driving Park Association and the Ionia County Agricultural Society**  
 Source: Beers, Atlas of Ionia County, Michigan, "Ionia," 1875.

The land was then fenced on the north and west sides, "leaving the grounds open to the river and making a single enclosure of both." Stumps, underbrush, and logs were cleared from the area, and a combined poultry and vegetable hall was erected. "Fitting up the grounds" meant that "\$300 had been expended thus far in improvements":

116 1/2 rods of fence - built at \$1.25 per rod = \$143.31  
 lumber and nails about \$40  
 clearing, etc. = about \$100 or more



The association also hired Mr. Baxter and his wife, at \$40 per month, to "reside upon the grounds, and improve the same, and he and his wife to attend the gate."<sup>75</sup>

During this same time period, a special committee of the agricultural society had been looking into the possibility of moving the grandstand about twenty feet. This idea was scrapped in June, when the executive committee approved the building of "a new grandstand of sufficient capacity to accommodate visitors. . . . [and to] contain underneath a dining hall."<sup>76</sup>

The 1874 fair was also expanded to a four-day fair, September 22-25. On June 5, 1874, the Sentinel issued a special one-page supplement on the upcoming 18th annual fair. R. Hudson & Son, a clothing store, supported the supplement with a full-page ad on the reverse side. Rules of the fair and rules for committees and for livestock were included, as well as the listing of premium categories. The expanded grounds and new buildings were certainly an attraction to the community, as 8,000 were reported in attendance, although the number of entries was only about the same as the previous year's (about 1,500). Floral Hall allowed more room for the decorative arts because of the "new building for vegetables and fruit," a change from the intended purpose of displaying poultry and vegetables. President John English had died while holding office in the spring, and the board passed a resolution to honor him with a dome of flowers during

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 20 February 1874, 27 March 1874, 3 April 1874, 4 May 1874, 15 May 1874; Schenck 130.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 3 April, 1874, 26 June 1874.

the fair. The Sentinel applauded their tribute: the "floral cone at the center of Floral Hall was the finest display in this line ever made."<sup>77</sup>

An impressive \$2,418 was taken in receipts, but this did not accommodate the financial outlay the society had been making to secure the expanded grounds and improvements. The society was still in debt \$1,200 for the grounds. In each of the previous three years, between \$600 and \$1,000 had been expended on improvements. Through the Sentinel it was suggested that premium winners might contribute back to the society any premiums won "for the future welfare of the society." They added, "none but free will offerings are sought." The Ionia County Agricultural Society was successful in bringing forward a balance of \$123.72 into their new year.<sup>78</sup>

Receipts from their fairs continued to increase, providing evidence of strong growth into the 1880s. Table 10, at the end of this chapter, provides an overview chart which gathers together data regarding entries, premiums paid, receipts, and attendance. In 1879 the society purchased the tract of land previously leased by the Driving Park Association. These two organizations continued their cooperative venture of facilities and grounds into the next decade, adding more buildings as well as acres to their joint grounds.<sup>79</sup>

### **Other Agricultural Societies in Ionia County**

During this same period of time, two other agricultural societies were active in Ionia County. The Central Fair Association was a

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 5 June 1874, 25 September 1874, 2 October 1874.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 2 October 1874, 3 January 1875.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 3 January 1875, 23 September 1880; Schenck, History of Ionia County, 130.

regional organization, serving the four counties of Ionia, Clinton, Gratiot, and Montcalm. Its grounds were located at Hubbardston, in the extreme northeastern corner of Ionia County, central to the four counties it served. From 1871 on they were reported as holding popular, four-day fairs. The Ionia Sentinel reported very little about these fairs, probably being partial to their, very local, Ionia County Fair.<sup>80</sup>

The Excelsior Agricultural Society, of Otisco, was incorporated in 1866, and from that time forward held annual fall fairs on its grounds, at Cooks Corners. They may have formalized an organization from the existing Otisco Wool Growers Association. In an 1868 article the Sentinel clarified that the two were the same organization. The wool growers had held at least one previous sheepshearing festival. Schenck's History of Ionia and Montcalm Counties reports annual fairs continuing into the 1880s. Cooks Corners is in the opposite corner of the county from Hubbardston, at the extreme northwest corner, in Otisco Township. This society, however, served more than the interests of just Otisco Township. The 1866 trustees of this association represented nine townships of three counties. From the northeastern corner of Kent County, representatives came from Grattan, Oakfield, and Spencer townships. Individuals from the townships of Montcalm, Sidney, Eureka, and Fair Plains represented

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<sup>80</sup> Schenck, History of Ionia County, 274; Ionia Sentinel, 2 October 1874, 9 October 1874.

the southwestern corner of Montcalm County; Otsice and Orleans Townships were located in the northwest corner of Ionia County.<sup>81</sup>

It was the Excelsior Society that held its first fair on the same days of the Ionia County Fair, October 3 and 4, 1866. Regulations which governed their first fair in June of 1866 closely paralleled those of the Ionia Society's, with the exception that "animals, articles entered for competition must be owned by persons . . . within the towns . . . or manufactured within the towns in the last year." The Excelsior Society announced 13 numbered categories for competition for its first fair. These included "Livestock" (five), "Fruit," "Vegetables & Grains," "Dairy & Domestic Cookery," "Household Articles" (two), "Mechanical" (two), and a "Plowing Match." Separate classes for "Household Articles" and "Mechanical" accommodated articles "manufactured within the limits of the society" and articles of "foreign manufacture." In these classes the premium awards were 50 percent of those awarded the locally made items. The population of Otisco Township was only between 1,300 and 1,500 at this time; nonetheless, their first fair attracted between 3,000 and 4,000 people from all over Ionia County and Kent County.<sup>82</sup>

The Excelsior Society had quarterly meetings in 1868 and in the spring of that year held their 4th Annual Sheep Shearing Festival, which offered premiums for competitions as well. Fairs and sheepshearing festivals were noted in the Sentinel in 1869, 1872, and 1874. Annual fairs, at least, continued until 1881. At that time the

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<sup>81</sup> Schenck, History of Ionia County, 135, frontpiece map of Ionia and Montcalm Counties.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*; 3 July 1866.

Excelsior Society had 17 acres of leased land, with the buildings and “improvements thereon being owned by” them.<sup>83</sup>

### **Arts at the Fairs**

At the second fair of the Ionia County Agricultural Society in 1854, 73 premiums were awarded in nine categories. Twenty-one premiums were awarded for “Domestic Manufactures”; this was the largest number awarded in any category. (Horses came second, with 16 premiums.) “Domestic Manufactures” accommodated the broad range of household, ornamental, and artwork from yardage, rolls of carpeting, and lamp mats, to needlework of all kinds and landscape drawing. In addition, premium awards honored pieced quilts, woolen coverlets, wax fruit, and a worsted hat.<sup>84</sup>

In 1866 two fairs vied for the attention of Ionia County residents. Occurring on the same days, competitive categories of both the Ionia County Agricultural Society and the Excelsior Agricultural Society covered the entire range of agricultural, horticultural, household, and mechanical pursuits. For the first fair of the Excelsior Society, “Household Articles” was the category which encompassed carpets, needlework, decorative works in wax, beads, and feathers, photography, drawings, and paintings. At the 10th annual Ionia County Fair, three different categories existed to accommodate this type of

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<sup>83</sup> Ionia Sentinel, 27 March 1868, 1 May 1868; Schenck, History of Ionia County, 288-9.

<sup>84</sup> Transactions, 1854, 545-8.

entry. Two classes for "Domestic Manufactures" separated quilts, coverlets, yardage, and carpeting from the decorative needlework, including crochet and knitted items. "Class 11," "Engravings, Photographs, Etc.," encompassed those things, as well as paintings, drawings, wax fruit, and flowers. At both fairs at least half of the judges for these areas were wives of directors of the respective societies. The three classes at the Ionia fair were judged by the same committee. J. B. Hutchins, who was the only gentleman on either committee, was elected president of the Ionia County Agricultural Society for the following year.<sup>85</sup>

In September, just before the local fairs, the Sentinel reprinted a notice from the Detroit Tribune which credited the work of a young area artist who was competing at the Michigan State Fair, in Adrian. "Belinda A. Melius, of Hubbardston, Ionia County, a self-taught artist, exhibits a very beautiful piece of pen drawing. It represents an eagle with a scroll, and for fineness of execution will challenge comparison with the works of professionals." Her work and Mrs. P. T. Clemens' colored photographs impressed the editors of the Sentinel as well. Interest in the Ionia fair was small this year, probably because of the competing Excelsior fair. Other than recognizing a few special items in the Sentinel, the editors felt they could not "praise [the exhibition] as we should like . . . the special needlework and embroidery did not serve to impress one with a very flattering opinion of the good taste." Ionia fair premiums were awarded for several quilts--one, a patchwork

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<sup>85</sup> Ionia Sentinel, 3 July 1866, 28 August 1866, 3 July 1866, 28 August 1866, 23 October 1866.

by a girl five years of age. S. C. Cornell, local India ink artist, received awards for his photographs, probably his coloring work, and penmanship. Mrs. Clemens received a premium for her "best exhibition of photos." The use of the terminology "exhibition" sometimes referred to showing one's own collection of the work of others. Mrs. Clemens' exhibition might have been her own photographs, or her work at coloring them, or perhaps her own collection of others' photography. Ornamental penmanship by a Grand Rapids professor was noted as "very fine and worthy of special commendation," even though he could not compete, as he was not a resident of the county. Miss L. A. Milius, of Hubbardston, was awarded a special premium of a book and \$1 for her ornamental penmanship. (This was probably Belinda A. Melius, discussed above, but a typographical error in the Sentinel.) Discretionary premiums were awarded for four wreaths, two of hair work and two seed wreaths, as well as for artificial flowers and a floral rug.<sup>86</sup>

The Excelsior Society that year attracted between 3,000 and 4,000 people to their fair, at Cooks Corners. Along with the audience, the "exhibition of articles of domestic manufacture was also very large. . . comprised with many specimens of skillful labor guided by cultivated taste." Several items were singled out for comment by the editors:

Among the ornamental articles were two shell frames, the work of Mrs. Calvin Jackson, of Otisco, which would have attracted attention and been the objects of praise at any of the State Fairs . . . the larger one 4 or 5 feet in length, and of proportionate breadth, divided into compartments suitable for the framing of a

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 25 September 1866, 9 October 1866, 23 October 1866.

series of pictures. The work of both was beautiful in design and, to our eyes, faultless in execution. Near them was a beautiful cone case containing a wreath of wax flowers, which was a fine specimen of the tasteful handiwork of Mrs. D. C. Spaulding. Mrs. Belle Stoughton, Otisco, a young lady of about 14 years, exhibited some fine pencilings, "The Capitol of Ohio" and "Tom Wilson's Cabin," which were objects of general admiration. [There were a] number of photographic views of Lookout Mountain scenery, combining natural beauty with the interest in . . . camp life in the late war exhibited by Surgeon J. Avery.

The editors felt that the new society had done a very credible job with their first fair, but noted that "the exhibit on the grounds hardly equalled that in the hall," referring in part to the ornamental work exhibited in Floral Hall. The work of two of the ladies that had caught the editors' eyes won premiums: Mrs. Jackson's shell work frames and Miss Stoughton's pencil drawings. Two wreaths also won premiums, a hair wreath by Miss Cemares and Miss Ranney's agricultural wreath. Other awards went to three other ladies, for rag carpets, cotton and worsted bed quilts, and tissue flowers.<sup>87</sup>

In 1868 there were still three categories for creative work. They were structured within "Division E," "Domestic Manufactures." Items were grouped under the titles of: "Class V Needlework," "Class VI Shell and Fancy Work," and "Class VIII Paintings and Drawings." The other classes of "Domestic Manufactures" included butter, cheese, carriages, furniture, harnesses, shoes, and miscellaneous. The tent which housed Floral Hall was "insufficient in its size" as well as in the protection it afforded to the "articles of value on exhibition." The hope was that a new building could replace the tent very soon, as "this department . . . contributes more than any other to the general

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 9 October 1866, 30 October 1866.



pleasure" of the fair. The businesses of Merriam and VanNess and G.W. Tuckers displayed pianos, organs, and other instruments at the hall, and these "were quite useful in furnishing music for the entertainment of the crowd." Items displayed for competition included several that drew the attention of visiting editors of the Sentinel:

The only exhibition of photographs was by G. W. Clark of this village, who had a good collection and some very fine specimens, both plain, and colored in oil by S. C. Cornell.

A fine drawing, "Dream of Youth," was exhibited by Mrs. E. A. Bates.

. . . some good specimens of penciling were shown by Clarence Charles, Ionia, aged 16 years, embracing two large floral pictures, and a number of small cards with drawings and lettering.

S. M. Lester, Ionia, shows three large pen drawings of animals, which demonstrated superior skill in handling the pen, but no remarkable artistic talent . . . some small cards and pen writing were well done.

The Sentinel report also noted "a large number of rag carpets, log cabin quilts, embroidered dresses, and similar articles" as well as millinery in the display at Floral Hall. When the premium awards were reported in the newspaper, "Class 6" had changed from "Shell and Fancy Work" to "Ornamental Shell Work." Premiums went to four different ladies for a bead basket, hair wreath, wax flowers, and feather flowers. Many of the awards in the "Paintings and Drawings" class included a diploma as well as the cash prize of \$1. India ink artist S. C. Cornell received awards for paintings in watercolors and india ink. These may have included his work coloring photographs, as was described in the Sentinel report. Young Clarence Charles' pencil

drawings, also described in the newspaper, received a diploma and premium award for his case of one crayon and two pencil drawings. A specimen of marble painting brought a premium to Mrs. A. Wilson, and W. S. Bates received the award for a monochromatic painting. In the "Miscellaneous" class, a diploma was awarded to S. M. Lester for the best pen drawing.<sup>88</sup>

By the next year the Ionia County Agricultural Association was successful in erecting their new Floral Hall. By the end of the first day of the fair, over 700 articles had been entered into competition. In its October 9th issue, the Sentinel attempted to list them all. Creative items included seventeen collections of needlework; ingrain carpet, rag carpeting, and yardage; tinware and silverware; quilts, picture frames, and fancy brackets; penmanship, pencil drawings, crayon pictures and paintings; feather wreaths; and other fancy work. In the "Domestic Needlework" class, premiums were awarded for both a plain and a silk patchwork quilt, a log cabin quilt, an embroidered canvas tidy, tatting, a beadwork pin cushion, hair wreaths and flowers, feather flowers, an agricultural wreath, ornamental steel wire wall, card baskets, a ticked dress, and an embroidered ruff. "Painting and Drawing" premiums were awarded for a chromo picture, a crayon drawing, and colored photographs in both watercolor and india ink. "Discretionary" premiums went for a "show of silverware, a melodeon, and organ."<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 23 October 1868.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 2 October 1869, 9 October 1869, 16 October 1869.



### Figure 33

#### H. W. Boozer's Photographs of Ionia.

Carte de Visite photographs: "Runs--Fire--Ionia--1865," and a birds-eye-view of Ionia, c1868. Boozer exhibited and competed at Ionia County Fairs. (Courtesy of David V. Tinder, Dearborn, Michigan.)

In 1866 the category of "Engravings, Photographs, Etc." included drawings and paintings as well. From 1868 until 1874 the name of the category for these types of items was "Paintings and Drawings." Items of the photographic arts were considered part of this category, as they were listed under this class when the premium lists were published prior to fair time. Photographs were entered and won awards during these years in the "Paintings and Drawings" class. In 1874 photography was added to the class title, making it "Paintings, Drawings, and Photographs." Figure 34 shows the progression in the creative categories throughout this time. The biggest change occurred between 1866 and 1868, when ornamental work, such as wax fruit, hair wreaths, leather work, etc., was moved from "Engravings, Photographs, and Paintings" and placed in "Shell and Fancy Work." This classification changed names several times but maintained its content, that of fancy needlework and specialty works from found objects, leathers, and yarns. The groupings and, in general, the types of items were relatively consistent from 1868 forward, although the class names did change somewhat.<sup>90</sup>

In 1870 judges for the creative classes included a few wives of society board members. H. A. Cornell acted as a judge in addition to his responsibilities as superintendent of the "Domestics" division, with which he continued for three years. Two of the judges were educators: Miss Cadwell was a teacher in the Intermediate Department, and Miss Thayer was an assistant principal. Several of

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 23 August 1866, 23 October 1866, 8 May 1868, 23 October 1868, 9 October 1869, 1 October 1870, 11 October 1872, 10 October 1873, 16 October 1874.

| 1866                                                                                                                                 | 1868                                                                                                                                                                                | 1870                                                                                          | 1872                            | 1873                                                                                                                                       | 1874                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| <u>Domestic Manufactures</u>                                                                                                         | <u>Needle Work</u>                                                                                                                                                                  | <u>Domestic Woolen Goods</u>                                                                  | <u>Domestic Woolen Goods</u>    | <u>Class not named</u><br>(woven goods, coverlets & carpets)                                                                               | <u>Domestic Fine Arts</u>                    |
| 1. quilts, coverlets, blankets, yaradage, rag & domestic carpet                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                     | rag carpet, yardage in wool, flannel, cotton; hearth rug, socks                               |                                 |                                                                                                                                            |                                              |
| 2 needlework - embroidery, crochet & knitted, fancywork                                                                              | <u>Shell and Fancy Work</u><br>hair, wax, leather, mosaic, cone work, & artificial flowers                                                                                          | <u>Domestic Needlework</u><br>embroidery, crochet & knitting<br>hair, feather, worsted quilts | <u>Domestic Needle Work</u>     | <u>Needle and Artificial Work</u> --darning, embroidery, crochet, knitting rag mats, rugs, spreads, clothing<br>feather, shell, moss, work | <u>Needle &amp; Artificial Work</u>          |
| <u>Engravings, Photographs, Etc.</u>                                                                                                 | <u>Paintings &amp; Drawings</u><br>paintings in oil & water color, oriental paintings, monochromatic paintings, ambrotypes, photographs, crayon drawings, assortment of curiosities | <u>Paintings &amp; Drawings</u><br>paintings, photographs, ambrotypes, drawings               | <u>Paintings &amp; Drawings</u> | <u>Paintings &amp; Drawings</u>                                                                                                            | <u>Paintings, Drawings &amp; Photography</u> |
| ambrotypes, photographs, engravings, oil paintings, water color paintings, pencil drawings, grecian paintings, wax fruit and flowers |                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                               |                                 |                                                                                                                                            |                                              |

**Figure 34**  
**Creative Arts Categories - Progression and Change**  
 (Source: Ionia Sentinel, 1 October 1870, 11 October 1872, 10 October 1873, 16 October 1874.)

the judges were active in these fields themselves. Mrs. J. C. Dexter, a judge for "Domestic Woolen Goods," took three premiums for her drawing and painting. She had won premiums in 1866 as well for oil paintings and wax fruit. In the "Paintings and Drawings" class, her landscape took the "Best" painting award. She also won for a fruit still life and a monochromatic drawing. She and Miss Dorenburgh, another judge, took premiums for their oil paintings in later years as well. Miss Mathews, a judge for the "Paintings and Drawings" class, was probably one of two sisters, Kate and May, who were both painters and needleworkers. Both exhibited and won many premiums at the Excelsior fairs between 1870 and 1874. The category in which the largest number of premiums was awarded at the Ionia fair was the "Domestic Needlework" class. Forty-six premiums were awarded for embroidery, quilts, feather wreaths, hair work, spreads, lamp mats, worsted flowers, rugs, a watch case, decorated clothing, worsted wreaths, and matched toilet sets. Awards were also given for children's work on quilts: blocks from a girl, 9 years of age also a boy 9 years of age, and a patchwork quilt from a girl of 12. In the "Paintings and Drawings" class, in addition to Mrs. Dexter's three awards, a painting on glass brought William H. Allen an award, and A. A. Knight received an award for his oil chromo. Three photographers, W. L. Bailey, N. D. Haley, and G.W. Clark, took awards for their photographs (plain and colored) and ambrotypes. Bailey took three awards; the other two each received two. One of Clark's premiums may have been for a painting, for the award was for "Best Watercolor." Some ornamental bowls and spoons, made by John Broad from twisted

and knotted oak roots, were noted as "most deserving of praise" in the Sentinel but did not receive a premium. In the "Cabinet Ware" class, several creative items were acknowledged with awards. A. A. Knight, winner for his oil crayon work, also received an award for picture frames. Fred Graff took four premiums for his work, which included a sewing box, picture frames, and brackets. A 12-year-old, Lewis Worden, also received an award for brackets; two other premiums were awarded for ottoman stools.<sup>91</sup>

In 1872 the Sentinel editors promoted the fair as well as citizen involvement in it, encouraging "everyone of every craft and calling . . . especially the ladies" to come out for the fair. The next year brought a similar plea, and along with it was an indication of the importance placed on Floral Hall, the ladies' efforts, and the creative work to the fair as a whole:

A Word to the People of Ionia County. As the time is rapidly approaching for the 17th Annual Fair of the Ionia County Agricultural Society, we have thought it best to call to the attention of the farmers, their wives and daughters, the horticulturist and gardener, the artisan and artist, in fact to all who are raising, making or keeping anything worth seeing, to bring it to the fair. . . . Upon the ladies, in a measure, depends the success of the fair, and upon them rests the responsibility of making Floral Hall beautiful and attractive. Pictures, drawings, flowers, of all kinds, curious specimens, works of art, etc., are all needed to fill up and ornament the hall.

In 1872 and 1873 there was an increase in entries and in awards; more than 60 premiums were awarded in creative classes each year. Collections were exhibited and also won premiums in 1872--Mrs. C. J. Griffing's collection of oil painting portraits that were life sized and J.

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 1 October 1870.

D. Bestler's collection of chromos in oil and watercolors of fruit and flowers. C. F. Flanders, "a first-class artist," brought pictures from his art gallery, which included watercolors, oils, india ink, and photographs. He won premiums for pictures in watercolor and india ink as well as for a collection of photographs. All of his work may have been photographs, the previous being colored in those mediums. Fred Graff and A. A. Knight both "exhibited a fine collection of oil chromos" as well. Kate Mathews won again for her collection of original oil paintings, which included landscapes and fruit pieces; the Second premium for an "original collection" went to Ellen Gibbs. Mrs. William Bates, who had also won in 1870, took a premium for her monochromatic picture. Three pen drawings were awarded: William E. Kidd and C. Wooldridge took the first and second premiums, and Ann Wooldridge received a discretionary award for her work. Mrs. N. E. Smith's case of stuffed birds also received a discretionary premium in the "Paintings and Drawings" class.<sup>92</sup>

At the 1873 fair the Floral Hall was very attractive, due partly to the "fine collection of paintings, engravings, chromos, etc." J. H. Van Ness was the only exhibitor of musical instruments this year, with a number of organs and a piano in the hall. The Knights Templar organization, accompanied by the Ionia Cornet Band, gave an exhibition on the grounds during the fair and went through drill exercises. A large crowd "witnessed with considerable interest . . . many of whom had never seen them in parade." The poster illustrated

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 13 September 1872, 19 September 1873, 18 October 1872, 27 September 1872.



Supplement to the "SENTINEL."

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# THE ANNUAL FAIR OF THE IONIA COUNTY AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY!

Will be held on the Society grounds at Ionia, on  
**Wednesday, Thursday & Friday,**  
**September 24th, 25th and 26th.**

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ANNUAL ADDRESS BY  
**Rev. T. F. Hildreth.**

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**SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS:**  
**Knights Templar Parade!**

The Third day Ionia Cornet Band will be in attendance!

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**TROTTING.**

Citizens Purse to all \$200. County Horses \$100.

Arrangements have been made to have some of the best trotting stock in the State present, and this is to be a very attractive feature of the fair.

The society have expended nearly 1000 dollars in fitting up the grounds. Stalls are fitted up sufficient to accommodate 100 head of cattle, and covered sheds for a large number of horses, also, excellent stalls for horses. The stalls and pens will be provided with straw and hay free of charge. A good many entries have already been made, and this the SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL FAIR promises to be the most successful as well as the most attractive exhibition ever given by the society.

J. H. ENGLISH, Pres.                      W. D. ARNOLD, Sec'y.

Figure 35

Poster: The Annual Fair -- 1873

(Source: Ionia County Sentinel 19 September 1873.)

in Figure 35 was published in a supplement to the Sentinel and noted this special attraction as well as other particulars on the fair.<sup>93</sup>

About 1,500 entries were submitted into the competition for 1873. One of the judges of "Class 34," "Needle and Artificial Work," was Miss Kate Mathews, who had won many awards for her oil paintings and wax work in 1870 and 1872. This class awarded a total of 57 premiums: for quilts, white spreads, many items of embroidery, a zephyr wreath, a feather wreath, cone work, a moss house, small items of clothing, parlor brackets, sofa and toilet cushions, needle cushions, tidies, lamp mats, and a scrap bag. Ingrain carpet, rag carpeting, and coverlets also received premiums. The Portland Woolen Mills took a premium for the best collection of woven goods. In the "Paintings and Drawings" class, Miss May Goodrich received a first premium for three of her oil paintings, a portrait, a landscape, and something described only as an oil picture. Miss L. M. Beal received a first premium for a "picture." Miss Beal served as a judge for the "Needle and Artificial Work" class. In previous years she had received premiums for her needlework, wax work, and decorative moss work. "Second Best" was received by Miss M. E. Gibbs for three paintings. She had been awarded for her paintings in 1872 as well. She also received awards for her patchwork and a scrap bag in the "Needle and Artificial Work" class this year. The Grecian paintings of Miss May Mathews received a second-place award. This was also

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 3 October 1873, 19 September 1873.

probably the same Miss Mathews who entered numerous drawings and paintings at the 1870 Ionia County Fair.<sup>94</sup>

In 1874 the two other fairs were noted in the Sentinel. There was no art department in the display of the central fair, at Hubbardston. At the Excelsior fair, "aside from the races, Floral Hall was the chief center of attraction." Creative items of note to the editors were discussed in the Sentinel. Quilts included two of the log cabin variety, a woolen quilt, one of patchwork, and a calico quilt. There was a willow basket of wax fruit from Miss Ella Flannagan, "which enticed the taste and attracted the attention of everyone." Mrs. R. R. Cook "contributed to the display [with] a rare collection of baskets and a hat made in the latest style of hemlock bark."<sup>95</sup>

In the creative categories for the 18th annual fair of the Ionia County Agricultural Society, photography was added to the title for one class, making it "Paintings, Drawings and Photography." Photography, however, had been included within this class in the past. Fourteen premiums were awarded in this class, more than had been given in recent years. The top premium of \$4 went to Mrs. G. W. French for her oil painting of an animal. She also won a top premium of \$3 for another oil painting. Kate Mathews, a familiar name, also took an award for her oil painting. Miss Nemina L. Freeman received a premium of \$3 for her medley picture. Mrs. Melvina Bush took second. Photographers T. Bauslaugh, George Clark, and George W. White received photography awards. Bauslaugh and Clark took first

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 10 October 1873.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 9 October 1874.

and second, respectively, for photographs, and G.W. White took a first for his ambrotype. Another photographer, Milo Hiler, exhibited a collection of outdoor photographs and stereoscopic views. Hiler was from Lowell and probably did business in Ionia County as well. Miss L. M. Beal received an award for her moss work. She had exhibited two cases of hair work, bouquets, moss work, and wax work flowers, which "all showed skill and taste." It is curious that she received the award in this class instead of "Needle and Artificial Work." A large number of discretionary premiums were awarded in this class. Miss Mathews received one for another of her works, an oil painting of fruit. William Keys, who also won in 1873, received an award for his oil painting, as did Mrs. N. M. Darenburgh. A painting on velvet brought a discretionary premium to Mrs. L. Armstrong, and Mrs. A .V. Powilson won with her steel engraving.<sup>96</sup>

### Summary

This investigation of Ionia County covers three decades: the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s. The bulk of information for the early 1850s was taken from the "Ionia County Reports," in the Transactions of the State Agricultural Society, and from Schenck's History of Ionia and Montcalm Counties. No newspapers from this period were available for review from local sources or the major research libraries of the state, nor were they located through OCLC searching. Focus years for the other two decades were 1868 and 1874.

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 16 October 1874.

Ionia County residents had more opportunities for entertainment than the other counties represented in this research. A wide array of performing groups, artists, and other entertainments which toured the state stopped in Ionia County. Its location, central to road, rail, and water traffic routes, and its proximity to the major population center of Grand Rapids offer some explanation for this. Evidence of two dramatic groups from Grand Rapids touring to Ionia was seen.

Ionia also had a strong community arts commitment. There were more locally based arts organizations there than in the other case study counties. Music was of much importance to residents of the city of Ionia. Several traveling music professors brought classes or "conventions" to the area. In 1868 members of the Presbyterian church, along with many other community supporters successfully raised enough funds through a subscription effort to purchase a pipe organ. The holiday concert noting the precious instrument's arrival included several organists, a vocal choir, and many from the community. Responding to the persistent efforts of a citizen committee in 1874, Professor Henry Gordon, of Wayne, relocated to Ionia to provide musical education to area young people. He worked with the schools, offered private lessons (in and outside of Ionia County), and worked with some of the home talent productions. Bands from within the county and from neighboring communities were active and popular during this time period. In 1874, after some spirited public debate in the press between the Ionia Cornet Band and "Pro Bono Publico," the Ionia community supported the building of a band shell for public performances. The next year, the Lowell Cornet

Band traveled to Ionia and performed for a fund-raiser for the Ionia band. Major musical programs provided the opportunity for serious musical training and expression for community residents.

Additionally, farcical turns in the concerts provided the Ionia audience with lighthearted entertainment and an excellent opportunity for editorializing on entertainment in general and on recent community happenings as well. Besides the several professional musicians in the community, there were several home music teachers who provided both instrumental and vocal lessons.

Literary societies were active with the young people as well as the adults. School-based societies in the late 1860s and between 1873 and 1875 engaged and prepared young people as they learned about oration, dialogue, and recitation. Adult societies offered lecture series and entertainments as well as worked toward the provision of library books for the community at large. Unusual in its focus as a township society, the Ronald Literary Society drew participation from other cities in the county. They were successful in building their own hall, which housed a large meeting room, a stage, and dressing rooms.

Ionia County residents also enjoyed more opportunities in the visual or two-dimensional arts than did the residents of the other case study counties. Several opportunities for exposure to paintings were provided by artists from the outside. As early as 1863 an exhibition at the Union Hall, in Ionia, was announced to include "architectural, artistic, and scenic views" along with a large night telescope. No other information was available to identify the types of work included in this showing. That same year Mrs. C. Lassing Jennings, of Detroit,

exhibited her copy of a marine painting in an Ionia bookstore. In 1868 two traveling artists came to Ionia County with work they sold through subscription. One, a Chicago artist, had done a colored lithograph of Ionia, and while the rendering of the Ionia hills was criticized, the Sentinel editors felt it was still worth the \$3 price. The other subscription was for companion steel engravings by . Portrait painting was represented as well. The Sentinel reported on Ex-Governor Moses Winser's brother donating a portrait of the governor to the state library, in Lansing. A portrait painter from Detroit, Mrs. Greer, visited with samples of her work. They were exhibited to those interested at the Baily House, in Ionia. Another portrait, by local india ink artist S. C. Cornell, was featured at a church festival and brought the society \$40 in their fund-raiser. Another local artist did crayon portraits in her home, from likenesses provided to her. Mrs. McQuestion also exhibited at the county fair. Only one home teacher was noticed in the visual arts: Mrs. Dexter offered instruction in both painting and penmanship.<sup>97</sup>

These examples provided some exposure to the visual arts; however in comparison to musical or literary opportunities within the community, these instances were few. It was not until 1853 that the citizens of Ionia County gained a community-based organization which allowed for exposure to and participation in creative and two dimensional visual arts mediums. With the new Ionia County Agricultural Society, came a community-based organization that included domestic manufactures within its area of concern. Arts and

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 18 July 1863.

creative articles were part of this concern. Records from the second fair show that ornamental needlework, quilts, wax fruit, and landscape drawing were included at the fair. Besides the Ionia County Fair, the Excelsior Agricultural Society held fairs in Ionia County; both fairs included ornamental work and creative articles in their competitive categories.

As early as 1866 the importance placed on this creative work was illustrated in one press account, which noted, in regard to the ornamental work exhibited at Floral Hall, that "the exhibit on the grounds hardly equalled that in the hall." Pride in the accomplishments of local artists was expressed in newspaper reporting over and over again by references to and descriptions of individual works.<sup>98</sup>

Agricultural society board members in this county (more than in the other counties) seemed to struggle with finding accurate category titles and groupings for the items covered in the creative categories. "Paintings, Drawings and [later] Photography," was used relatively consistently for those items. However, the separating of utilitarian types of needlework and strictly decorative works such as hair, wax, and shell works, was harder for this society to come to grips with.

Other issues surfaceing through the Ionia County Fairs related to artistic and aesthetic concerns. The inclusion of collections at the fair provided the opportunity to show off work individually owned. Collections made their appearance in Ionia in the 1870s. Collections were sometimes, but not always, the work of the individual who

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 9 October 1866.



entered them. Sometimes these collections competed for premiums, but most often they were provided solely for the enjoyment of the viewer and the pride of the owner. Collections observed at the Ionia County Fairs included photographs, life-sized oil paintings, and collections of chromos. Merchants also exhibited collections of their wares. In the visual arts areas, these included local photographers' works (in addition to those which they entered into competition), chromos, and other pictures.

Original work began to be acknowledged as well. The designation of "original work" separated paintings or drawings from works done by individuals but copied from another artist's work, and chromos, which were mass-produced work. In 1872 the announcement of premium awards included an indication as to whether the work was an original painting. For example, Kate Mathews received a first place for her "original oil paintings that included landscapes and fruit pieces."<sup>99</sup>

In the absence of any other community organization dealing with the visual arts, the Ionia County Fair provided an avenue for the exposure of a broad range of visual arts to county residents. Citizens engaged in making art and decorating a variety of utilitarian objects with artistic expressions of their own found in these annual fairs opportunities to show off their own works and to observe the works of others. Through viewing an assortment of creative works and the awarding of premiums, Ionia's annual fairs established and reflected the cultural tastes and standards of the community.

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 18 October 1872.

**Table 10**  
**Overview Progress**  
**Annual Fairs--Ionia County Agricultural Society**

| County Population | Occupied Farms | Year | Fair  | Days | Entries                               | Premiums<br>Awarded                    | Receipts  | Attendance |
|-------------------|----------------|------|-------|------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| <u>6,847</u>      |                | 1850 |       |      |                                       |                                        |           |            |
| 6,13              |                | 1853 | 1st   |      | 40                                    | \$ 20                                  |           |            |
|                   |                | 1854 | 2nd   | 2    | 151                                   | 75                                     |           |            |
|                   |                | 1855 | 3rd   | 2    | entries "about the same" as last year |                                        |           |            |
|                   |                | 1857 | 5th   | 3    | "same"                                | 157                                    | \$ 147.60 |            |
|                   |                | 1858 |       |      | -- no fair held --                    |                                        |           |            |
|                   |                | 1859 | 6th   |      | 161                                   | 257.34                                 | 323.89    |            |
| <u>14,651</u>     |                | 1860 | 7th   |      |                                       |                                        |           |            |
| 2,027             |                | 1862 | --    | 1863 | --                                    | 1864 -- no fairs held during war years |           |            |
|                   |                | 1866 | 10th  | 2    |                                       | 209.25                                 |           | *          |
|                   |                | 1867 | 11th  |      |                                       |                                        | 409.00    |            |
|                   |                | 1868 | 12th  | 3    | 200 (end 1st day)                     |                                        | 725.00    |            |
|                   |                | 1869 | 13th  | 3    | 700 (end 1st day)                     |                                        | 1,100.00  | 4,000      |
| <u>24,195</u>     |                | 1870 | 14th  | 3    |                                       |                                        |           |            |
| 3,168             |                | 1871 | 15th  | 3    |                                       |                                        | 1,400.00  |            |
|                   |                | 1872 | 16th  | 3    |                                       |                                        | 1,600.00  |            |
|                   |                | 1874 | 18th  | 4    | 1,500                                 | 1,000.00+                              | 2,418.00  | 8,000      |
|                   |                | 1875 | 195th |      |                                       | 1,107.25                               | 3,062.52  |            |
|                   |                | 1876 |       |      |                                       |                                        | 2,429.15  |            |
|                   |                | 1877 |       |      |                                       |                                        | 3,307.19  |            |
|                   |                | 1878 |       |      |                                       |                                        | 4,661.84  |            |
|                   |                | 1879 |       |      |                                       |                                        | 1,991.57  |            |
|                   |                | 1880 |       |      |                                       |                                        | 5,324.39  |            |

## Notes:

1859 - New grounds in Ionia

1860 - Permanent fairgrounds in Ionia, 10 acres

\* 1866 - Excelsior Society's first Fair -- 3-400 attended on the first day

1868 - Sold old grounds, purchased 20 acres for new grounds

Life membership tickets brought in over \$900 (90 at \$10) in addition to receipts.

1874 - Park Association leased adjoining land, both organizations occupied common grounds until 1879, when Ionia County Agricultural Society purchased the Park Association land.

Sources: Schenck, History of Ionia, 128-130; Transactions, 1853, 545-548; Ionia Sentinel, 23 October 1866, 23 October 1868, 25 September 1866, 2 October 1868, 16 October 1869, 4 September 1869, 14 September 1870, 4 October 1872, 2 October 1874, 10 October 1870; Statistics of the State of Michigan Compiled for the [1850, 1860, 1870] U. S. Census, 1850 323-329, 1860 310-123, 1870 274-279 and viii-lxi.

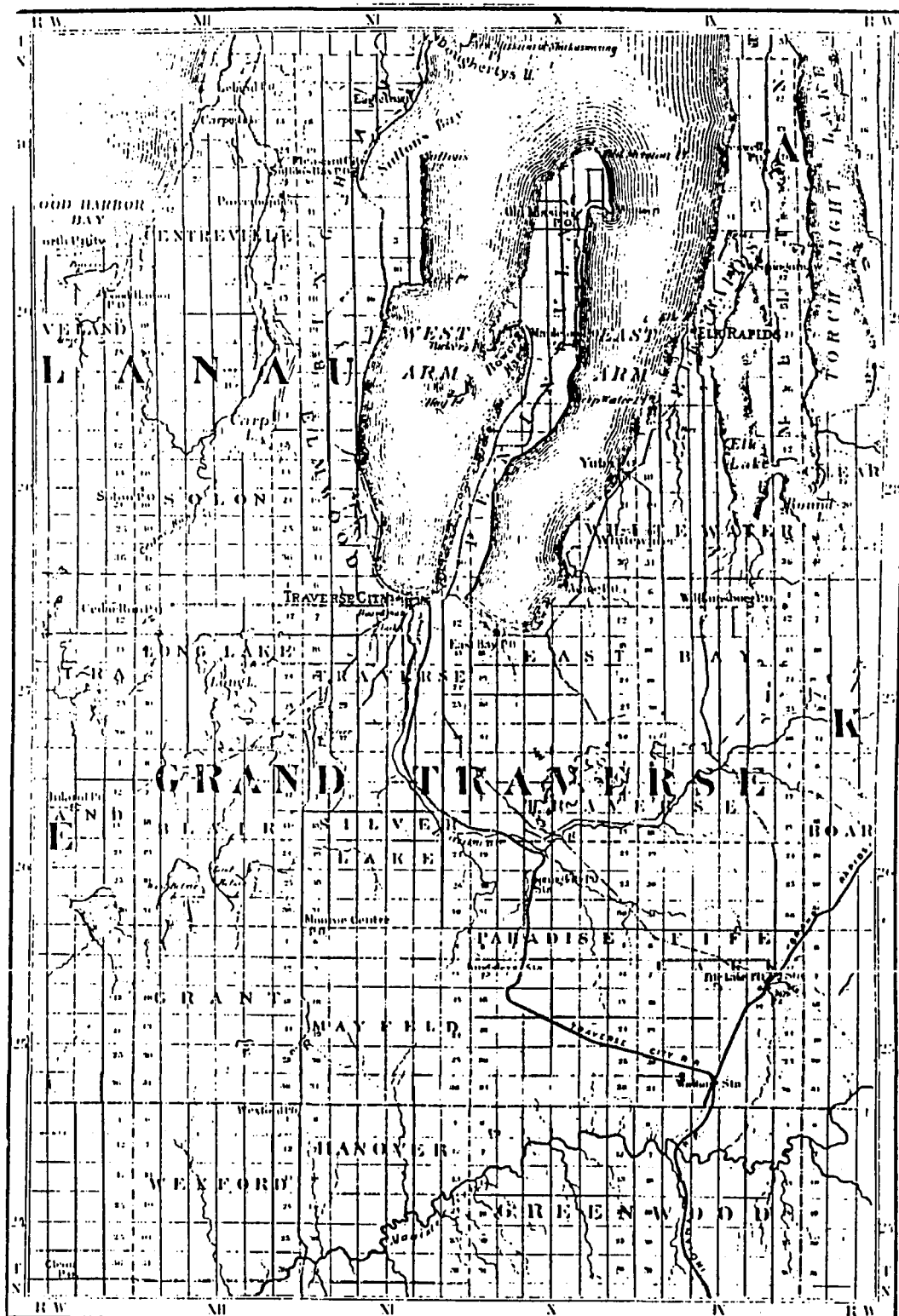


**Figure 36**  
**Grand Traverse Region, 1873**  
 (Source: *Atlas of the State of Michigan*, 1873.)

## **Chapter 6**

# **GRAND TRAVERSE REGION**

### **The Northern Lower Peninsula -- the Upper Lower**

From the moment of my entrance into the Grand Traverse Bay, I was deeply impressed as never before with the natural beauty of the scenery that everywhere met my view. I was puzzled to understand the reason for the contrast in the condition of things which I had left and those that now met my sight. For weeks previous to my leaving, the fields, and even the forests, had been denuded of all their verdure, and were as cheerless as in midwinter's gloom, while here, forests, field and flowers were in their highest perfection of beauty and freshness. I began to query with myself whether by some mistake I had not gone south instead of north. From that moment I adopted the Grand Traverse Region as my future home, and after a residence of nearly a quarter of a century, I reaffirm my choice. For beauty of scenery, salubrity of atmosphere, transparent purity of water and productiveness of soil, it is among God's best gifts to man.

These are the impressions of Reverend S. Steele, as he and his family came to the Traverse Bay Region in October 1859.<sup>1</sup>

### **Michilimackinac**

Michilimackinac was the name General Lewis Cass chose for the northwestern part of Michigan in 1840, when he organized it as a county. Most of this area was initially in unorganized districts, which were given Indian names. One such district, Omeena, was enlarged,

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<sup>1</sup>H. R. Page, History and description of the Grand Traverse Region, ( Chicago, H.R. Page & Co., 884) 11-12

realigned, and structured as a separate county by the Michigan Legislature in 1851. Omeena became Grand Traverse County. The present day counties of Antrim, Kalkaska, Missaukee, Wexford, Manistee, and Leelanau were included with Grand Traverse for judicial and municipal purposes. These areas were referred to in the press and in histories as counties and frequently as townships. Between 1851 and 1876 the county boundaries in this region were shaped and reshaped until they reached their present configuration. Until counties were formalized, and established by the legislature, they were attached to existing counties for legal purposes. The maps shown in Figure 37 illustrate this progression.<sup>2</sup>

An impression of the growth and organization of the region is offered in an 1867 letter to the editor of the Grand Traverse Herald: This " . . . territory now contains 3 organized counties and 2 still unorganized ones . . . Benzie is attached to Grand Traverse and Kalkaska to Antrim; 27 organized townships exist now, while only 7 existed 9 years ago [in 1858]."<sup>3</sup>

Because of this legal and managerial arrangement (undeveloped counties looking to others), it was natural for the region's agricultural society activity to also become a "union," or cooperative, effort. The first agricultural fair of this region was staged in unorganized Benzie

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<sup>2</sup> Bay Land and People: A Short History of the Grand Traverse Bay Region for Later Elementary Students. Prepared by a class in Writing Michigan Local History, conducted in Grand Traverse County by Field Services Division, Central Michigan college, 1949, 47-8. Richard W. Welch, County Evolution in Michigan, 1790-1897, (Lansing, Michigan Department of Education, State Library Services, 1972) 28-34.

<sup>3</sup> Grand Traverse Herald, 20 December 1867.

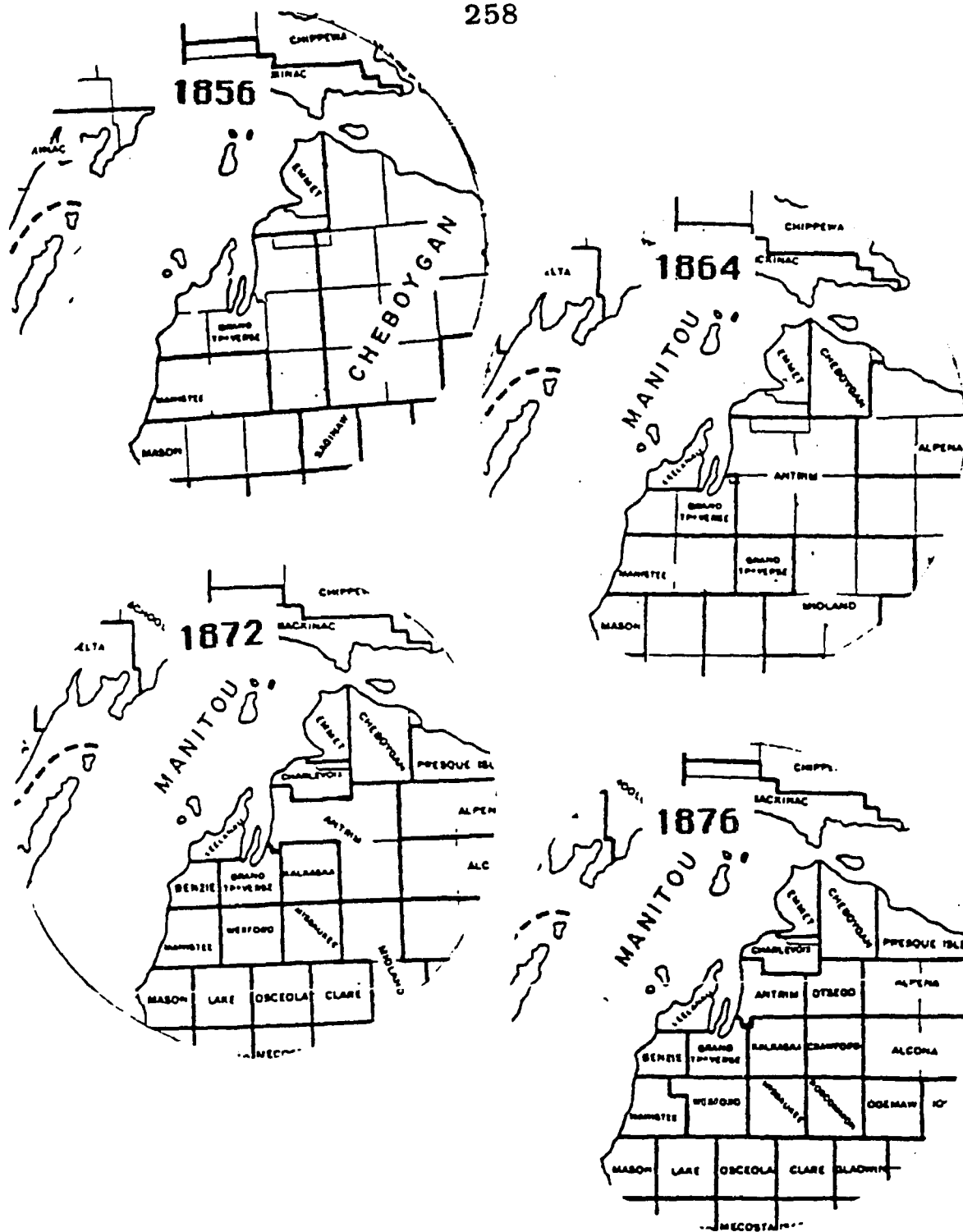


**Figure 37**  
**County Evolution in the Grand Traverse Region**  
 (Welch. County Evolution in Michigan 1790-1897, 28-33)

County on October 8, 1864, at Benzonia. The Benzie County Agricultural Society, however, was not formed until several years later.<sup>4</sup>

In 1868 the Grand Traverse Union Agricultural Society was formed to include, in addition to Grand Traverse County, Leelanau, Antrim, and Emmet.

The "Union" society actually covered the majority of the Grand Traverse Region, as shown by the maps in Figure 37. The first "Union Fair" was held in October of 1868, the same year in which Leelanau County also organized a society and presented its first fair.<sup>5</sup>

Census figures for the mid- to late 1800s provide another insight into the rapid growth of the Grand Traverse Region. Census figures for 1850, 1860, and 1870 include the number of occupied farms in each county in the region. The number of occupied farms was used as a factor in selecting counties to study for this research. In all of the 21 counties set aside in this region, not a single occupied farm was noted in the 1850 census. Prior to 1850 the area north of the Muskegon River was a vast wilderness. Only one post office existed, in what is today known as Old Mission. The area was not accessible, because of dense forest. The only access, as Reverend Steele noted, was over water. Understandably, this area was settled much later than the southern portion of the state. By comparison, all 20 counties of Region 1 had numerous occupied farms in 1850, ranging from hundreds to thousands. Region 2, while much less settled than

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 28 October 1864.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 4 September 1868.

Region 1, had seven out of its twenty-seven counties with from 200 to 1,400 occupied farms each. By the 1860 census, however, four counties in the Grand Traverse Region reported occupied farms. Cheboygan listed 30, Emmet 55, Leelanau 54, and Grand Traverse topped the list with 70. Ten years later, the Statistics of Michigan, 1870 reflected an even more significant jump, with Grand Traverse County topping the list with 620 occupied farms. Seven counties in this region then reported more than 100 occupied farms each. (See Table 3, page 11, in the Methodologies Chapter for comparative charts for this region.)<sup>6</sup>

### **Cultural Life in the Community**

"Traverse City is today, well, to put it mildly, not--Chicago. Traverse City, that is for its size, is the liveliest, pluckiest, most enterprising and go-ahead little town to be found between Eastport, Maine, and the Golden Gate of San Francisco Bay." With these words, Mrs. M. E. C. Bates, home editor of the Traverse City Herald (Herald) and a founding member of the Ladies Library Association, opened her speech at the dedication of the Ladies Library Association's new hall, in December 1878.<sup>7</sup>

The Herald was founded by Morgan Bates in 1858. The first issue appeared on November 3 of that year. Each week the Herald was a

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<sup>6</sup> William s. Anderson, Old Settlers of the Grand Traverse Region , (Traverse City, Michigan, 1913c) 15; Statistics of Michigan, 1850; 1860; 1870.

<sup>7</sup> Herald., 12 December 1878.



vocal presence not only on the politics of the region but also in “increasing awareness of this region, its resources, advantages, and attractions, and drawing to it the immigration that otherwise would have passed on to more remote regions.” Besides the news and the opinions of its editors, the Herald offered the citizenry of the region access to light reading and some literature through its regular front-page features of “Poetry” and “Miscellaneous Reading.” Other than the regular listing of business cards, the entirety of page one was only rarely devoted to news of any kind. Exceptions to this were listings of the premiums awarded at the Union Fair, and sometimes other county fairs, and the printing of an occasional public address. These included addresses of the agricultural society, a minister's Thanksgiving address, and the dedication address for the new building of the Ladies Library Association. National and international news was covered on page two. Page three provided the focus for local and regional items--opinions, county business, events, and personal tidbits. The rest was for advertising, which was primarily regional, but did include ads for equipment and services from the outside world: New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago.<sup>8</sup>

“Poetry” included pieces by local residents. In February 1859 “A Vision,” by Elk Rapids Reverend D. R. Latham, became the first original poem from the region published in the Herald. This was followed over the next years by poems from neighbors and farmers, as well as some of the leading civic and cultural leaders of the time,

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<sup>8</sup> Dr. M. L. Leach, A History of the Grand Traverse Region, (Mt. Pleasant (Michigan), Central Michigan University Press, 19xx, Facsimile Reprint. 1883), 158, 159.

including Judge Ramsdale and Mrs. M. E. C. Bates, associate editor for the Herald and charter member of the Ladies Library Association.

Titles often suggested the influence of the challenging and beautiful countryside: "The Ice! The Ice!," "Grand Traverse Forest," "Beneath My Trees," "Legend of Grand Traverse Bay." "Miscellaneous Reading" was mostly essays or short stories. At times a serialized story appeared. Brief clips of humorous anecdotes were often included. This section, as well as "Tidbits" was inserted among the national news, and included cultural and entertainment information. Items such as Dan Rice's retirement at a farewell performance in Pittsburgh, the folklore of southern Negroes, Professor Huxley's theory on the importance of children drawing at home, and descriptions of the lectures and eloquence of Miss Anna E. Dickinson added to the knowledge of the citizenry; and the reporting on Barnum's fat lady breaking down a cab in Toronto entertained them. The Herald published opinions and contents of popular periodicals. "Monthlys" became a regular feature, as did the encouragement and organization of "clubbing," where a number of subscriptions were made available at a reduced rate to an organizations wishing to share them.<sup>9</sup>

### **Business Arts**

Business-related arts of the region can be grouped by commercial business enterprises, music, and art instruction, as well as professional bands for entertainment. Architect J. W. Hilton was

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<sup>9</sup> Page, History of Grand Traverse Region 10, 12; Leach, A History of the Grand Traverse Region, 71; Herald, 25 march 1869, 8 November 1867; Anderson, Old Settlers of the Grand Traverse Region, 71.

publicly acknowledged for the artistic quality of his renderings. Hilton was the architect for the new Ladies Library Association Building and was heavily involved outside the Grand Traverse area as well. During 1877 he designed new buildings for the burnt district in Cadillac. In photography, A. McManus opened a new photographic gallery in 1868, and the McManus brothers improved it in 1872. The firm, and A. McManus individually, exhibited and won premiums at the fairs as well as recorded city life and its development. Mr. Bancroft was a photographer who regularly traveled to the region for business. A description of the village of Frankfort, published in the Herald, noted a photographic artist with the business listing of the community. L. W. Hubbel became the county agent for Mason & Hamlin cabinet organs and other musical instruments. Thomas Jennings advertised as one of the best grainers in town. The Herald drew attention to the fine graining on Mr. Broadfoot's new home and credited Jennings with it. The area "bookseller, newsdealer, and stationer" was S. C. Fuller who's establishment provided reading materials for the community and advertised to supply "township libraries at low rates."<sup>10</sup>

A traveling artist representing the Idea Picture Company, of Niles, came to Traverse for several days in 1875 "taking orders for pictures from numbers of our citizens." Editor Leach was impressed with their samples. "The specimens he carries with him show that the artists who executed them are masters of their art. Should the work he

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<sup>10</sup> Herald, 21 November 1878, 22 November 1877, 22 May 1868, 28 November 1872, 22 February 1869, 25 March 1869, 5 November 1868, 4 October 1877, 20 June 1868.

brings our citizens equal the expectations raised by these specimens, he may expect larger orders at his next visit.”<sup>11</sup>

C. Harden's East End Picture Store was, according to the editor of the Herald, “the only exclusively art store in Northern Michigan . . . and should receive the encouragement of all.” Harden contributed pictures, cromos, and other decorative items for fairs, banquets, and balls. He provided assistance in hanging them as well. Another retail firm, the Miller Store, which dealt in drugs, medicines, and toilet articles, provided an unusual cultural service to the community. E. E. Miller maintained in his store almost a museum of Indian work. Miller's store was the “headquarters for hundreds of Indian curios and works of various kinds, such as baskets and hundreds of artistic articles made of birch bark . . . He exhibits an Indian cradle, a most ingeniously constructed affair, that upon unquestionable authority is shown to be over 100 years old.” Certainly, this collection attracted attention, both in business and with tourists, but Miller's commitment ran much deeper. He was born, reared, and educated among the Ottawas and Chippewas, and he spoke their languages fluently. As a child, Miller and his brothers were the only white students at Dougherty's Mission School. (His brother Henry was the first white child born in Grand Traverse County, at Old Mission, in 1847.) The Indian tribes took these boys “as part of their own people, giving each Indian names, with a ceremony.” “Sha-win-e-ge-sick” was E. E. Miller's name. He bought directly from the Indians and kept his

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 22 April 1875.

displays current. Both he and his wife exhibited Indian artifacts and artistry at the fairs.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the community bands, which will be discussed later, two bands advertised throughout this period to provide music and entertainment for social events. Mae's Traverse City Quadrille Band, led by C. C. Maes, reorganized in 1877 and was "prepared to attend to all calls for music at parties, socials, dances, anywhere in the Grand Traverse Region, and at a reasonable rate." Tillotson's String Band advertised in 1878. Both bands provided music for dances, socials, and community events.<sup>13</sup>

Very few teachers for the arts advertised during this time. A Young Ladies School began advertising in the Herald in 1868. The school was located in the Herald building, and Editor Leach took a personal interest, pointing out the advertisement to his readers and commenting:

Miss Hazen, a thorough and accomplished scholar and teacher, will open a school for young ladies on the 7th of September . . . intent of the proprietor to make this a first-class school, and thus obviate the necessity of sending the girls of this region 'outside' for their education."

Miss Hazen was a graduate of Oberlin College, in Ohio. (Oberlin was one of the first universities to admit women and also had one of the first music programs at the college level.) Two months later Leach reminded the citizenry of the opportunity and noted: "This school offers facilities which the young ladies of this region have not

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 6 December 1877, Sprague, History of Grand Traverse and Leelanau Counties, 471-78.

<sup>13</sup> Herald., 18 November 1877.

heretofore enjoyed, and which are not often obtainable in the new portions of the country. It should be liberally patronized." Fall term began on September 7; Tuition was \$6 per term. For an additional fee, music, French, and drawing could be added. At the end of the fall term, "on account of ill health, Miss Hazen [was] compelled to relinquish the charge of the Young Ladies School." Miss H. M. Dougherty continued the "work so well begun." (Dougherty may have previously been one of the first teachers at the Old Mission School.) Winter term began on December 7. The tuition remained \$6 for the thirteen-week term. Music instruction was an additional \$10 per twenty-four week term; the use of an instrument was \$2. more.<sup>14</sup>

Two others advertised as providing classes teaching in the arts. Miss Ludlow, credited with having many years of experience, organized a class in oil painting during the summer of 1868. Instruction in music was advertised by Miss A. C. Goodale, who gave instruction on piano or organ for \$4.10 per quarter (24 lessons). Use of the instrument was \$2 extra. Miss Goodale could be reached at Mrs. Pratt's Millinery Store.<sup>15</sup>

### **Arts Organizations of the Region**

Musical organizations and literary groups were the predominant community-based cultural organizations reported throughout the Grand Traverse Region. In addition to the brief appearance of visual

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 21 July 1868, 19 November 1868, 11 September 1868, 19 November 1868.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 21 July 1868, 15 November 1877.

art classes at the Young Ladies School and Miss Ludlow's oil painting class, the fairs provided the only opportunities for individuals with visual arts talents or interest to show their work and to be exposed to the approaches and techniques of others.

Several villages and townships had choirs. Vocal music activity was recorded in Benzonia, Mayfield, and Long Lake, as well as in Traverse City. Traverse City had its own glee club as well as a band. The glee club performed both with the band and on their own at social events or lectures for entertainment. Long Lake had a glee club which performed with the Long Lake Band. These glee clubs may have been part of a larger temperance organization glee club, for they had some of the same participants. Members included J. M. Benjamin and Mrs. Benjamin, George Bailey, and Miss Addie Goin. The Old Mission Musical Society gave concerts at the schoolhouse under the direction of Mr. Haines. In November 1871 Mr. Haines "gave up an entire week of his time to do the drilling and practice for an audience that . . . fairly outdid itself with breathless attention." The chorus of the Musical Union of Benzonia performed at the Benzie Fair in 1870, and the Mayfield Choir provided music at the Fourth of July celebration in 1878.<sup>16</sup>

Community bands were by far the most prominent musical feature of the landscape. Traverse City, Frankfort, Benzonia, Williamsburg, Elk Rapids, Long Lake, and Pine Lake all supported bands. Bands played on the squares for the public, serenaded individual community

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 18 September 1868, 24 December 1868, 27 June 1878, 31 October 1868, 27 June 1878.

members, and provided entertainment and dancing music for many events. They added to the festive occasions of lectures, political rallies, and club meetings and were a part of special excursion trips on Lake Michigan. Bands also performed for teachers institutes, school exhibitions, and Sabbath school programs. Bands played at the fairs as part of the parade, during annual meetings, and generally, for entertainment on the grounds. Sometimes they were hired and sometimes they provided the service. Fairs brought bands together from various communities to compete for the designation of "Best Band." The Bands also traveled to other townships and villages for performances.

The Traverse City Band was alternately referred to as the "Brass Band," the "Cornet Band," or just the "Band." Reference was also made to the Traverse City String Band; this band may have been an offshoot of the Traverse City Band or a reference to one of the dance bands of the region. In 1878 the Traverse community supported a "bandstand being built on the courthouse square, just west of the jail lot." For the success of the band during 1878, the Grand Traverse Herald commended the leader, Mr. A. Bond, for his direction of a "steady faithful and hard practice on the part of all the members. The Band has become one of the permanent institutions of the town, and well deserves the hearty support and encouragement of our citizens."<sup>17</sup>

Other bands were active, and they almost always included the fair in their performances. The Frankfort, Benzonia, and Traverse City

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 6 March 1868, 4 July 1868, 25 July 1878, 2 January 1879.



bands were all at the 1872 Union Fair. The Williamsburg Band played at the 7th Union Fair and impressed the editor by not charging for their services. A new band, the Elk Rapids Band, and the Traverse City Band played at the 1877 Union Fair. The Pine Lake Band was mentioned as having played at the Bartletts Mills celebration for the Fourth of July. The Long Lake String Band included John Newhouse on violin, George Newhouse playing triangle, John Bourasaw playing bones, Mr. Deverney on tambourine, and Miss Emma Fillmore playing organ. George Newhouse also danced a jig. This group was associated with the Long Lake Jolly Boat Crew, which was a family-based temperance organization, providing entertainment as well as information.<sup>18</sup>

Literary clubs or societies were reported often throughout the period of this study in many areas of the Grand Traverse Region. According to editorial comment, "flourishing" organizations existed in Benzonia, Bingham (of Leelanau County), Frankfort, and Long Lake, as well as in Traverse City. The Bingham group was reported as holding "regular meetings every Saturday evening at Porter School. Once in four weeks an exhibition was given." This gave Herald editor Thomas T. Bates the opportunity to brag about the involvement of the entire region:

We are glad to note these indications of the interest taken in literary pursuits by our farmers. We believe it is true that in no section of the state are the farmers, as a class, more intelligent than here, and nowhere is there a deeper interest taken in the education of the young.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 10 October 1872, 10 October 1874, 18 October 1877, 27 June 1878.

These groups often provided the first libraries that were available to the entire community. Exhibitions of the societies offered a public forum for discussions of topical and literary merit as well as an opportunities for entertainment. Lectures were presented for the membership and community at large. It was not often easy to determine the sponsorship of a lecture from the announcement or the reporting. It was not until 1878 that one of these organizations had its own facility. Previous to that meetings and programs were held throughout the region in various public halls.<sup>19</sup>

Two Traverse City literary organizations emerged as prominent in this region--the Ladies Library Association and the YMCA, whose primary missions appeared to be the provision of a library and offering lectures to the community. These organizations shared rooms in the late 1860s. Ultimately, their cooperation enabled the Ladies Library Association to build a facility which provided both with organizational headquarters, space for a public library, several rental office spaces, and a public hall as well.

The history of the Ladies Library Association (LLA) is summarized in the address of Mrs. M.E.C. Bates at the building dedication. Mrs. Bates had been a founding member and was currently associate editor of the Grand Traverse Herald, handling the "Home Department" of the paper. The LLA began July 23, 1869, with "8 ladies to talk over the matter . . . in the heated air . . . [with] dusty floor and benches of an almost deserted hall . . . we merely said, 'Let there be a Ladies Library Association, and there was.'" By their first report, made to the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 21 February 1878.

community on October 1, 1869, 79 volumes made up the library, 54 of which had been donated. The first public entertainment took place in the new year. Miss Mary Clark, of Ann Arbor, gave a free lecture sponsored by the LLA.

[In addition] on this occasion there were freely dispensed to the eager populace of Traverse City, a large and well selected assortment of needle books and sofa pillows and pin cushions and pen wipers and lamp mats and tidies and rag babies, and many other useful articles too numerous to mention, interspersed with chicken pie and frosted cake and coffee and also oysters.

By the close of the evening, the society's funds had been replenished to the amount of \$70." Total income the next year reached \$230, of which \$140 was spent on books for the library. The total number of books in the library by the end of the year reached 329. In 1871 the society incorporated, and with this new capability to buy, sell, and hold property, purchased two lots in the fall of the year.<sup>20</sup>

Besides community service and lecture series, the LLA engaged in annual events designed to increase their funds. In 1871 the event of the year was an "afghan fair--we didn't call it a lottery because that didn't sound well. The centerpiece was a brilliant carriage afghan, radiant in hue and fine in texture--by the same token you can see it any day as it goes between Judge Ramsdell's fruit farm and town." The afghan and a large variety of other fancy articles brought the society \$190. Another event took shape when the LLA was given a big squash, weighing over 100 pounds, which had taken first prize at the agricultural fair. They put on a squash pie social that earned them

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 12 December 1878.

\$400. Another year, after an afternoon of old-fashioned quilting and tea, a general gathering of friends of the association convened where Mrs. L. O. Sayler contributed "a valuable oil painting which netted the society nearly \$60." The Ladies Library Association mounted their first series of lectures were mounted during 1871-72. In the mid-1870s the Honorable Perry Hanna purchased the two lots owned by the LLA in exchange for another lot and \$500 to make up the difference.

Because of their similar purposes, discussion with the YMCA organization concerning their rental of space and the use of the LLA library led to greater cooperation between these organizations. In 1878 the contract was let for the building of the new hall. Local architect Mr. J. W. Hilton designed the building and the total cost was announced as \$1,940. "The Ladies Library Association now takes its place among the acknowledged and permanent institutions of the town and is in a situation to enlarge its field of labor and extend its influence for good."<sup>21</sup>

The reading rooms opened to the public December 1 and were "open every weekday evening during the winter months at least, and supplied a variety of choice reading matter, secular and religious, writing materials, maps, charts . . ." The first lecture was held at the new hall on December 19. Both public and religious schools held their term closing exhibitions in the new Library Hall, one in the afternoon and one in the evening of the same day: "music, chorus, dialogues, duets, quartets, dramas . . . essays" were offered by both groups.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 19 February 1874, 21 February 1878, 21 November 1878

Crowds at "both the afternoon and evening school exhibitions are proof of the deep interest the people of Traverse City take in their schools." The opening reception "was a very pleasant success . . . the only exercises was a reading of a historical sketch . . . [and] frequent music by the band." Although there remained a debt of about \$600, no effort to raise the money was initiated by the ladies. The Herald reported that the "ball started rolling by one of the gentlemen present and they taking it into their own hands raised \$215 in a few minutes." By the next week the Herald announced that more had been contributed to the Ladies Library Hall debt. The first promenade concert and dance held at the hall proved the "hall nicely adapted to dancing with the floor smooth and large enough to accommodate 18 or 20 sets."<sup>22</sup>

As a part of their cooperation with the LLA, the YMCA managed the public reading room and sponsored lectures for the community. Some years there were sporadic lectures; other years, like the winter of 1878, they provided a short course of lectures throughout the winter. In March 1879 the Herald noticed:

till further notice, reading rooms will be open day and evening . . . located centrally, nicely furnished, and supplied with leading daily and weekly newspapers, and in addition to these, the town library is kept in the rooms. A cordial invitation is extended to all. . . . farmers and their families are particularly invited, and will find it a pleasant place to spend an hour or two.

Lectures specifically attributed to the YMCA group included Dr. W. W. King of Chicago, who provided two lectures: "Century of Experiment"

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 21 November 1878, 19 December 1878, 2 January 1879.

and "An Hour with the Poets." Abbey Sage Richardson, from her just-completed course of twelve lectures in Chicago, spoke on the subject of English literature. Because of the popularity of Miss Richardson's talk, one more lecture was added on English ballads and songwriters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Membership in this society was \$1. The YMCA periodically announced new additions to their reading rooms such as the November 1878 notice in the Herald: "Adam's new historical chart will prove quite an attraction to increase membership."<sup>23</sup>

### **Other Arts and Entertainments**

Lectures were a very frequent occurrence in the Grand Traverse Region, especially during the winter months. It was not clear, either through the reporting or the ads in the Herald who the sponsoring group was, or if there was a sponsoring group. Reverends of the area were common lecturers, covering a wide range of topics outside of their religious charge. For example, Reverend J. W. Reid lectured on poetry and fiction, and used accompanying readings to illustrate his discussion. This was to benefit the Methodist Sunday school. His talks were reported in Elk Rapids, Old Mission, and Traverse City during December of 1868 and February of 1869. Reverend J. B. Walker, of Benzonia, lectured to a Farmer's Club on improvement of breeds of cattle. Topics such as the "New Michigan Constitution" and the "Financial Legislation of the Country" were included.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 13 March 1879, 8 November 1877, 21 November 1878.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 24 December 1868, 4 February 1869, 11 February 1869, 22 October 1868.

Temperance lectures and entertainments increased across this region. In January of 1869 Reverend Thompson, of Leland, "drew a fearful, but lifelike picture of the downward course of the inebriate from the first drink to the final ruin." Temperance lecturers often came from outside of Michigan. Mrs. D.A. Beal, secretary of the Wisconsin State Temperance Alliance, conducted a gospel temperance musical in 1878, and Mrs. Annie Wittenmeyer, vice president of the National Women's Temperance Union, spoke to a full house, even though it was a "wild stormy night," in October of 1878. The Long Lake Jolly Boat Crew appeared to be a temperance-based, family organization which sponsored picnics and evenings of family entertainment surrounding the temperance message. The Long Lake Glee Club and Long Lake String Band (previously mentioned) were present at these gatherings, which included dramatic skits and poetry in addition to the music. The Long Lake Jolly Boat Crew regularly elected officers which included a captain and first mate. The Herald noted that "this association has done good work and made some homes more pleasant. In its short career as a union club, the Jolly Boat Crew has attractions of social, musical, instructive, and business character." <sup>25</sup>

Two young people's organizations provided involvement for students as well as entertainment for the community. In 1868 the Amateur Dramatic Company organized for the purpose of "furnishing a few evenings of entertainment during the winter." Later, in 1878, the Sour's School District, in Whitewater, organized a debating club with

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 17 October 1878, 13 February 1869.

meetings held every Thursday evening at the school. The Herald encouraged other "such organizations in every district of the county."<sup>26</sup>

A variety of balls, dances, and parties were popular across the region. The Campbell House sponsored a number of popular dances and dinners with the Traverse City Quadrille Band. On the eve of his retirement from management, Mr. Campbell gave a Grand Masquerade Ball for which he imported costumes. More than 170 attended the dinner, and 73 dancing numbers were sold. Grange balls were given and the revenue raised was applied to the purchase of grounds and the erection of a Grange Hall. On the Fourth of July in 1878, the Herald noted that a special run for the Clara Bell would provide transportation to the various celebrations, including a dance at Frank Lew's house that evening. The Promenade Concert, a part of the Library Hall's opening festivities on December 31, had music provided by the Traverse City Brass and String Bands, alternating with dancing.<sup>27</sup>

Entertainments other than those which have been discussed were few and far between during this time, and were provided by people of the area. Professor Salie, who may have been a local educator, gave two exhibitions on magic arts in June 1868. A New Year's Eve concert of vocal and instrumental music was provided to the community at Leach's Hall in 1868. C. W. Day, Esq., assisted by Lizzie, Emma, Bell, and Georgie Silverman, provided "a very choice selection of operas, glees, ballads, duets, choruses, etc., etc." Editor Dewitt C. Leach

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 7 February 1878.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 30 January 1870, 13 February 1879, 16 May 1878, 6 June 1878, 27 June 1878, 26 December 1878.



noted that "Mr. Day's musical abilities are well known to our citizens, and we are assured that the Misses Silverman are well qualified for the part they are to take. We are always glad to see home merit and home efforts appreciated and rewarded." Another resident, Mr. S. C.

Darrow, of Elmwood Township in Leland County, provided calcium light and lantern shows in 1877. In January 1879 he entertained with "recently added lanterns by which he is able to give dissolving views. Farmers and their families particularly are invited and will find it a pleasant place to spend an hour or two."<sup>28</sup>

Touring entertainments and performances rarely came to the Grand Traverse Region. The Blind Harmonians came for two concerts in 1868. Professor F. Hansley, a magician and ventriloquist, described to have "no equal . . . in the United States," returned to Traverse City in June of 1878. The Herald reported that he had previously entertained more than 1,000 persons in Chicago and would "make his hand talk at Campbell's Hall." Susan B. Anthony lectured under the auspices of the YMCA, at Library Hall, in March of 1879. The Herald exclaimed that her "power as a speaker was proven by the fact that she held her large audience for two hours and a half with little or no abatement of their interest, even towards the close. Miss Anthony is as bright and sharp as a Damascus blade!"<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 5 June 1868, 24 December 1868, 13 March 1879.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 7 August 1868, 13 March 1879.

## **Agricultural Society Formation, Growth, and Activity**

We call attention to the interesting proceedings of the first agricultural fair in Benzonia--indeed the first one held in this region of the country--which will be found in our columns today. This is but the acorn which will produce the mighty oak.

The inhabitants of Benzie County, desiring to compare products and to profit by each other's experience and observation, had an amateur fair at Benzonia on the 8th . . . the day was blustering and unpropitious; the products, for the most part, were a first crop from grounds imperfectly worked . . . The fair has been a benefit to our community in many respects. We understand the peculiarities of our soil and the modes of cultivation, much better than before, and we have learned from the results of our efforts . .

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With these editorial comments, on October 28, 1864, Morgan Bates, founder and publisher of the Grand Traverse Herald, applauded the tentative beginnings of the county fair and agricultural society efforts in the Grand Traverse Region. The Grand Traverse Herald and its long succession of editors provided a continuing strong voice of encouragement to agricultural fairs and societies in the region.<sup>31</sup>

In 1865 Benzonia hosted another agricultural fair, and although there were no premiums, "except in name," 220 items were entered in competition. No fair was reported for 1866, but the Benzie County Fair came back again in 1867. The regional spirit of cooperation was obvious:

Benzie County is yet attached to Grand Traverse County, therefore the citizens in making arrangements for a county fair thought it perfectly proper to invite the inhabitants of all Traverse Bay country, thus giving the settlers in the country a chance of

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<sup>30</sup> Herald, 23 October 1864

<sup>31</sup> Page, History of the Grand Traverse Region, 35.

becoming better acquainted with each other . . . [The preparations increased]. . . working four whole days they [the committee] fitted the grounds and buildings up in a style that reflected great credit on the decorators.

The participation grew as well--289 products were submitted for competition in 1867.<sup>32</sup>

Items entered at the first fairs represented a broad range of agricultural, business, and domestic labors: animals, field crops, garden vegetables, boots, a boot sign, bricks, axe handles, fruits, sugar, molasses, dairy products, cookery, shrubs, flowers, poultry, picture frames, vases, fancy boxes, lamp mats, toys, and millinery work, to name a few. The first cheese made in the county was exhibited in 1864. "Mrs. Steele has made 10 cheeses from 2 cows this summer." One reviewing committee report even acknowledged the good job on "one soldier's orphan child, two-and-one-half years old, reared from infancy--a promising boy--by Mrs. J.B. Walker." The pumpkin pie for which Mrs. Judson took the first premium in 1865 was actually an apple pie! According to Editor Bates, however, the "imitation was so good that it reminded one of the remark of a father in regard to the skill of his son in painting. Said he: 'He can grain oak more naturaler than oak itself.'" Fancy and ornamental works were apparent in these first fairs with entries such as hair wreaths and stem flowers, lamp mats, bed quilts and coverlets (Miss Lewis submitted a log cabin pattern in 1867), bead baskets, tatting, French embroidery,

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<sup>32</sup> Herald, 8 November 1867.

embroidered lace, and a card basket. It was not all women's work; Dr. Mac entered his fancy bracket at the 1867 fair.<sup>33</sup>

In December of 1867 Morgan Bates sold the Traverse City Herald to the Honorable Dewitt C. Leach (for \$4,000). Editor Leach continued the strong editorial support of fairs and agricultural societies of the region. In 1869 Leach noted that five-sixths of all the readers of the Herald engaged in farming. In 1876 the paper passed into the hands of Thomas T. Bates, grandnephew of Morgan Bates, who, with his wife, Mrs. M E. C. Bates, as associate editor, likewise continued the newspaper's editorial support for fairs and agricultural societies of the region.<sup>34</sup>

Though Benzie had had the first fair, the Herald reports that a January 1868 meeting of the citizens of Leelanau County resulted in the organization of the region's first agricultural and horticultural society. Previously published accounts of the 1865 agricultural fair for Benzie County acknowledge J. B. Walker as president and H. Chapin as secretary, but do not report the organization of a formal society. Later, in August 1865, the Herald printed the premium list for the Benzie Fair and noted that it was "from the Pioneer Society of Northwestern Michigan. May it live for many generations and accomplish a vast amount of good."<sup>35</sup>

In January of 1868 the Leelanau Society announced their officers. In June the Herald reported that the Benzie County Agricultural

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 10 November 1865, 23 October 1864, 2 October 1864, 17 November 1865, 28 October 1864, 10 November 1865, 18 November 1867.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 23 September 1869; Wait, Old Settlers of the Grand Traverse Region, 71.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 17 January 1868, 10 November 1865, 28 August 1868.

Society had elected officers for the year and had set the dates of October 7 and 8 for their annual fair.<sup>36</sup>

### **The Creation of an Agricultural "Union"**

Traverse City Herald editor DeWitt Leach took the opportunity, in June and July of 1868, to encourage the formation of a Grand Traverse society:

[We] . . . wish to see farmers avail themselves of all practical means for advancing their interests and developing the county . . . To convert the dense forest into productive fields is no boy's play and requires strong hands and brave hearts. . . . Is this region valuable for fruit growing? An agricultural society can do more than any other agency towards settling that question in accordance with the facts . . . looking to our own interest and advancement and prosperity of the county in which we have voluntarily made our homes, let us meet on the 8th inst., and organize an Agricultural Society.<sup>37</sup>

On page one of the Herald declared the meeting:

"complete success; about forty have united with the society and the number should be increased to at least 300 before the Annual Fair in October. . . . We want a society that will be a credit to us. We want a fair that will be a credit to the country. We can have it if we will."

The entire front page of the paper was devoted to the news. Both the constitution and listing of premiums for the first fair were included. The object of the society was "to promote the improvement of agriculture and its kindred arts throughout the Grand Traverse Region and be auxiliary to the Michigan State Agricultural Society." To ensure representation throughout the area, the constitution designated that

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 17 January 1868, 19 June 1868.

<sup>37</sup> Herald, 3 July 1868.

vice presidents must come from the surrounding area as well as Grand Traverse County: three from Leelanau, two from Antrim, and one from Emmet counties. An annual fair was held "between the 2nd Monday in September and the 4th Monday of October . . . giving 60 days' notice." Officers and an executive committee were stipulated. The president "shall deliver or cause to be delivered an address before the society at each annual fair . . . and the Executive Committee would direct money appropriations . . . and make necessary preparations for the annual fair." The executive committee was also responsible for determining the place of the annual meeting and the fair.<sup>38</sup>

A large portion of the constitution dealt with the premiums to be offered at the fair. Products had to be raised in the Grand Traverse Region and could only be offered for competition by members and their families. There were exceptions however: "Agricultural implements manufactured out of said region shall be entitled to premiums, provided that such implements manufactured in the said Grand Traverse Region shall not be thereby excluded from premiums if worthy." The "ladies, for domestic manufactures and for floral and horticultural productions," was another exception. Membership was extended to any person of the region through the payment of a \$1.00 fee and included all members of the family.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 17 July 1868.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

### **Regional Representation**

Morgan Bates, a previous owner/publisher and editor of the Herald, became the first chairman of the Grand Traverse Union Agricultural Society in 1868. Current Editor Leach was also elected to the board along with 14 others, representing Leelanau, Antrim, Emmet, and Grand Traverse counties. These gentlemen were the leading farmers, businessmen, and civic leaders of the region. Many had or would go on to hold elected office, from township to state governmental levels. Leelanau County was represented by its agricultural society president, A. B. Dunlap, and another Leelanau farmer and fruit grower. Six businessmen and farmers represented Grand Traverse County. Four represented Antrim County and one represented Emmet County. It is interesting to note that none of the board members of the Benzie County Agricultural Society were included in this group. The Benzie County area was still attached to the Grand Traverse County at this time but was officially organized the next year, in 1869.<sup>40</sup>

In August of 1878, after nine years of annual exhibitions, the Herald reported that the Union Society had "done much toward removing the isolation peculiarly felt by many farmers and families living in remote neighborhoods . . . and has made agriculture, with them, and others more profitable by infusing a higher degree of intelligence into their business."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Herald, 17, July 1868; Sprague, History of Grand Traverse and Leelanau Counties, 323-4, 784, 708, 718-9; Roger L. Rosentreter, "Michigan's 83 Counties: Benzie," Michigan History (Magazine), November/December, 1879, 8-9.

<sup>41</sup> Herald, 22 August 1878.

### **First Union Fair**

Wednesday and Thursday, October 14 and 15, 1868, were set for the first fair of the new Union Society. "Pleasant grounds," on the shores of Bordman Lake, at Traverse, were selected for the fair. The site was within a half mile of the center of town. The executive committee prepared and fenced the grounds and put up sheds to accommodate the activities. The annual address, by the Honorable A. B. Dunlap, was delivered on the grounds at 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday. Dunlap had been a pioneer farmer, coming to the region in 1862, and was currently president of the Leelanau County Agricultural Society. Several other addresses were given at Leach's Hall, the first night of the fair, including one by Reverend James B. Walker, D. D., of Benzonia.<sup>42</sup>

In other regions of this study, special railroad arrangements for additional trains and reduced fares accompanied the planning for the fair. In the Grand Traverse Bay area: "Arrangements have been made with the General Paine and Ella Burrows [steamers on the bay], by which persons can come from any point on the Bay, and return, for one dollar; and all articles intended for exhibition will be carried at proportionately low rates." In addition, a local merchant, Mr. Hannah, of Hannah, Lay & Co., "generously furnished several accomodious free busses to convey people to the grounds."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 7 August 1868; Sprague, History of Grand Traverse and Leelanau Counties, 803; Herald, 22 October 1868.

<sup>43</sup> Herald, 4 October 1868, 22 October 1868.



By publishing the premium list earlier, on August 7, the citizenry had two full months to prepare for the fair. Listed were 16 categories for competition, which included a plowing match, six groupings for livestock (bulls and working oxen, other cattle, horses, sheep, swine, and poultry), and three for food products (butter, cheese, sugar and honey, grains and grasses, fruit, and vegetables). Two categories for equipment included plows, harrows and cultivators, and "mechanical productions," ranging from wagons and threshing machines to stump machines and seed sowers. The "Fine Arts and Floral Department" were together; in addition, "\$10.00 would be awarded by this committee for specimens of 'Fancy and Needlework.'" Household products included coverlets, yard goods, carpeting, and some clothing.

Premiums awarded ranged from \$.50 to \$5.00. For each category there was a range which accommodated best, second best, and sometimes third best. Large livestock were awarded the top money: \$5.00 for best horse; \$3.00 for cattle, bulls and working oxen. Fruits were next with \$3.00 for the best collection and then \$.50 to \$1.00 to for next best. The best in the "Grains, Grasses and Vegetables" category paid \$2.00, then down to \$.50. Premiums in "Fine Arts and Floral Department" and "Mechanical Productions"(equipment) ranged from \$.50 to \$2.00. The small animals were lower, with the best of sheep and swine awarding only \$1.00. "Household Products" and "Poultry" received the smallest best price of \$.50.<sup>44</sup>

Early in October a call was published in the Herald:

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 7 August 1868.

Farmers of Grand Traverse Region, the fate of the Society is in your hands. If this first Fair is a success, your society will go prosperously forward. If it is a failure, the future success is uncertain . . . Come one, come all. Let every person bring something to add to the interest of the occasion. If you do not wish to enter articles for premiums, at any rate bring them along and let us see them.<sup>45</sup>

And then, on November, 22, 1868:

Our Agricultural Fair--the 1st annual fair of the Grand Traverse Union Agricultural Society . . . Never before did so many people of the Grand Traverse Region meet together, and never before was any community better satisfied with its first effort . . . a perfect chart of weather . . . the gathering was very large for a sparsely settled region . . .<sup>46</sup>

### **Benzie and Leelanau Societies**

During this same period both the Benzie Society and the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of Leelanau were also doing business: meeting, electing officers, and making plans for their respective fairs. The Benzie Fair of 1868 was called their "2nd Annual Fair," even though Benzie had prior fairs in 1864 and 1865. This provides further support to the belief that some type of an organization existed prior to the Leelanau Society. (In 1869 the Herald reported that 1869 was, in fact, the seventh fair, but Benzie had been organized as a society for only three years.)<sup>47</sup>

The Benzie society continued their cooperative tradition, inviting:

all friends of the society to be present . . . not only those living in Benzie County, but all the adjoining counties and say that the premiums will be given to all alike according to the merits of the

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 4 October 1868.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 22 November 1868.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 7 October 1869.

articles exhibited. It is desirable that all should exert themselves to make the Fair a success, that this as the pioneer society of the Traverse Bay County, should take the lead of all others.

The "2nd Annual Fair" was held Wednesday and Thursday, October 7 and 8, 1868, in Benzonia. The reports of the awarding committees were scheduled for the afternoon of the second day. On the first evening, at 6:30, a meeting was set to hear the "reports of the Vice Presidents representing the Homestead and Agricultural Products in their respective townships." Premiums from \$.05 to \$5.00 were available in the competition. By signing the constitution and paying \$.50, family tickets were available. A single admission was \$.15. A total of 237 entries were received for this fair. In conjunction with the fair, on the evening of the first day, Reverend J. B. Walker, of Benzonia, lectured before the Farmer's Club, at Leach's Hall, on the improvement of breeds of cattle. The Herald reported that he included a humorous poem on agriculture and domestic matters within his remarks.<sup>48</sup>

In 1868, George Smith was elected to fill a vacancy in the presidency for the Leelanau County Agricultural Society. Smith was on the board of the Grand Traverse Union Society at the time. The Leelanau Fair was set for Leland on October 20 and 21. At the fair, newly elected President Smith delivered a lecture to a large audience on the general subjects of agriculture, horticulture, and the particular advantages of the Grand Traverse Region. Smith was reelected as president for 1869. Premiums awarded were printed in the Herald,

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 1 October 1868, 22 October 1868.

and “nearly all who drew premiums donated the same to the treasury of the society” in further support of the activities.<sup>49</sup>

Premiums awarded from both the Leland and Benzie fairs were published in the Herald. These fairs listed a smaller number of competitive categories than did the Union Society, but the same broad range of agricultural and domestic activities was covered. Neither Benzie nor Leelanau had a distinct category for the arts or decorative works. Leelanau's “Class 8” focused on domestic products, like yard goods, quilts, counterpanes, and rag carpeting, but also included fancy needlework, photography, penmanship, and flowers in its descriptions.<sup>50</sup>

### **The Union Society's Growth**

Throughout the next ten years, the Grand Traverse Union Agricultural Society grew and increased its activities. Both receipts and items entered generally increased throughout this period. In 1869 the Union Society leased grounds for five years and took steps to legally incorporate by revising the constitution and bylaws and submitting them to the Michigan State Agricultural Society. As is noted in Table 11, 1870 was not quite up to the tradition. The Herald reported that the total entries of 247 was “less than last year . . . with 1/3 of the exhibition areas empty . . . The departments of household manufactures and fine arts are woefully deficient!” By 1872 the counties of the Grand Traverse Region looked almost as they do today.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 22 October 1868, 4 September 1868, 5 November 1868.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 28 August, 1868, 4 September 1868.

The Union Society "embraces the counties of Emmet, Charlevoix, Antrim, Kalkaska, Missaukee, Wexford, Benzie, Leelanau, and Grand Traverse."<sup>51</sup>

**Table 11**  
**The Union Society's Growth**

(Sources: Herald, 14, October 1868, 3 October 1870, 10 October 1872, 10 March 1874, 11 October 1877, 1 November 1877.)

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Receipts</u>  | <u>Articles Exhibited</u> |
|-------------|------------------|---------------------------|
| 1868        |                  | 251                       |
| 1869        | \$307.43         | 307                       |
| 1870        | 284.40           | 247                       |
| 1872        | 578.09           | 300                       |
| 1877        | 273.08 (partial) | 500+                      |

In 1873 the region was successful in attracting the State Pomological Society to hold its October exhibition of fruits in conjunction with the Fifth Annual Grand Traverse Union Fair. Collections of fruits from all portions of the state were included in the exhibitions and competitions. The region as a whole, and Traverse City in particular, began an effort to put on a huge show. The Herald reported the news and encouraged the farmers and citizenry of the region:

[September 11, 1873] 100 of the best agriculturalists and agricultural writers of the state will be here, and bring with them the products of their orchards and gardens to be placed side by side on exhibition with ours . . . this ought to, and we hope will stimulate every farmer in the Grand Traverse Region to see that

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 14 October 1869, 28 October 1869, 18 February 1869, 18 March 1869, 3 October 1870, 15 August 1872.

every meritorious production of his neighborhood is properly represented at the fair.<sup>52</sup>

[September 25, 1873] . . . the largest group of visitors . . . would be coming to the region . . . our fairs hitherto have been attended by very few persons from abroad . . . Our mechanics and artisans will of course see to it that their . . . several trades are appropriately represented. The products of their handicraft always attract notice and excite interest. . . . Ladies will certainly see to it that their industry is properly represented . . . Floral Hall is being greatly improved by the erection of fruit shelves through the center of the building, the insertion of skylights in the roof and other ways . . . <sup>53</sup>

The combined venture was a great success. More articles were exhibited than ever before. In the "Department of Fine Arts," sewing machines and musical instruments were new features added to the exhibition. The "Largest and Best Collection of Pictures" ever to be exhibited was housed in the renovated Floral Hall. People of the Grand Traverse Region took the premium for the best collection of fruit and second best for the five orchards presented in exhibition. A special premium was initiated for the best local notice of the coming fair. The Herald began a new kind of coverage through "Fair Notes . . . from the pen of a lady friend who has an eye for nice and beautiful things." Perhaps this is where Mrs. M. E. C. Bates began her newspaper career. She was appointed Associate Editor by the next editor of the Herald, Dewitt Leach, for the new "Home Department" of the paper in February 1878. She was a good choice because of her long-standing involvement in the Ladies Library Association. She had been a founding member and active participant from its inception in 1869. "Fair Notes" provided lengthy, conversational descriptions and

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 11 September 1873.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 25 September 1873.

opinions of fair activities with an emphasis on Floral Hall, home products, and the range of artwork at the fair. This new flavor in the reporting provided regular readers and visitors alike with an enhanced view of the activities:

Looking down and through the hall from the stand near the door, the scene was interesting and picturesque, to say the least. The center tiers presented the appearance of a huge mound entirely covered with tempting and richly colored fruit of every variety, while along the sides the gay scarfs, quilts, spreads, &c, added to the festive scene, and the shifting crowd below complemented it.

The collaboration was a success for the community, the fair, and the region:

never before has there been such a display in Northern Michigan . . . Fruit is the great feature of the show. It eclipses all departments . . . but the October sun has done well its work. Such coloring is only the work of the Master's pencil. There is no mistake about the paint on these apples, peaches, plums, grapes and flowers . . . <sup>54</sup>

In 1876 something new was added to the Grand Traverse Union Fair. A special "Centennial Department" was created "to help us know how our good old forefathers lived." The superintendent of the department was the Herald's editor, Morgan Bates, who made several pleas for the submission of materials for the exhibit. Old furniture, dishes, cooking utensils, books, ornaments, needlework, Indian relics, minerals, and other items were exhibited.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 11 September 1873, 25 September 1873, 11 October 1873, 12 December 1868, 11 October 1873,

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 12 August 1876.

1877 was a year for changes. The Union Fair was held in Elk Rapids in 1877. Local businessmen “spared no labor or expense in fitting up the new grounds and buildings. A large building and adjoining grounds were used . . . extending from the main street to the river.” A fence was built which entirely surrounded the new grounds except on the river side. Expenses published from this fair indicate that \$63.60 was spent to bring the Elk Rapids Band to the fair and to provide dinner for the Traverse City Band. “250 mammoth posters were printed for \$15, shared by two area newspapers, the Eagle and Herald. The Grand Traverse District Grange sponsored an informal meeting on the evening of the second day “to bring together farmers of different sections . . . and discuss any topic of interest to them . . . merits and demerits of different agricultural implements on exhibition or in use, on the farms of those in attendance.” Familiar figures Will W. Tracey, O. E. Clark, and J. G. Ramsdell, of the “Committee on Agriculture,” organized this opportunity. In another new venture, the Floral Hall, was opened every night, an apparent first for evening activities: “the rooms nicely lighted and warmed and the band furnishes good music and the time passes very pleasantly.” Because of unfavorable weather, the society kept the fair open one more day. In the spring of 1877 came the biggest change of all. The Union Society began discussing the advantages of pursuing a county society. A new phase in the agricultural traditions of the Grand Traverse Region was beginning.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 11 October 1877, 18 October 1877, 1 November 1877, 10 October 1878.



### **Other Fairs of the Grand Traverse Region**

During this same time period, both Benzie and Leelanau societies continued their fair activity. Benzie County was the most active, holding at least six fairs in Benzonia (in 1869, 1870, 1871, 1872, 1873, and 1878). Leelanau County had three more fairs identified through this research, evidently organized by different organizations. The Leelanau fairs were held in Leland, Northport, and Maple City. At times they were called the "county fair" and others the "township fair." The 1870 fair was reported as Leelanau's third fair. Then, two fairs were held in the late 1870s, with the 1878 fair noted as the third of the Farmers Enterprise Association of Leelanau County. Perhaps these were different organizations. This Leelanau Society located its grounds at Maple City in 1877 when five acres of grounds were donated to the society.<sup>57</sup>

A few other societies were active across the region. The Herald reported in October 1869 that the citizens of Manistee County had met and formed an agricultural society. In 1871 the people of Elk Rapids and vicinity "resolved to hold an informal Agricultural Exhibition . . . no admission fees and no premiums paid, but all persons who can do so are invited to bring forward for exhibition, farm and household products, and whatever will add to the interest of the occasion." Wexford County fairs were reported in 1875 and 1877.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 23 September 1878, 27 October 1877.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 14 September 1871, 7 October 1875, 21 October 1877.

### **Change from a "Union" to a "County" Agricultural Society**

For several years a Grand Traverse County Agricultural Association had been talked of, "but owing to the unwillingness of our people to interfere with the Union Society, the organization of a county society has been delayed until this time." The annual meeting of the Union Society in May of 1878, "embracing as it did, several counties in the Grand Traverse Region, . . . found it covered too much territory to unite in successful annual exhibitions." The executive committee decided not to hold another Union Fair until 1880, in order to give the several other counties an opportunity to organize their own societies. The Grand Traverse County Agricultural Society was organized on the spot. Forty acres of land were made available from the Bryant estate, at \$6 per acre. Conveniently located, "directly on a new line cut out of the East Bay Road," and only 1-1/4 miles from the Herald Building, the new fairgrounds included seven acres, which were "cleared and fenced." An "Improvement Committee" was appointed to take charge of completing the purchase and "clearing, fencing and erection of necessary buildings." A plan to work on membership through "popular subscription" was undertaken, and a committee was appointed to serve this function. Fifty-one dollars was subscribed in a few minutes at the meeting. Again, the Herald was there with a challenge on behalf of the agricultural society:

our farmers are awake and earnest in this matter. They have always worked well for the Union Society, but this is still better calculated to interest them in its success for it is a strictly home matter . . . a popular subscription to place the society on a firm financial footing is an excellent one. It is very desirable that we open the gates next fall free from debt

. . . There is not a farmer in the county who cannot afford to give one dollar, while there are a good many who can give from two to five. All lift together, and the good work is done.<sup>59</sup>

Preparations for the first Grand Traverse County Fair were under way. The dates were announced in early August. No cash premiums were awarded, but "diplomas, premium cards, agricultural papers, rural books, seeds or grains" were used as substitutes.

This fair is now our own, it is no longer a Union matter; Grand Traverse County must take all the responsibility. It rests with our own farmers to make it a success. It is desirable that all farmers of the county take hold in earnest and begin now to get ready for the October meeting. Nothing advertises so well a county as a good fair.<sup>60</sup>

Rules and regulations followed the statement of general principles in the Herald. Membership included family admissions. Single tickets were \$.25, with children under eight years of age free. All members held voting privileges and the right to hold office and enter items for competitions. Articles for competition were left on the grounds during the fair. A police force was provided to protect the animals and property; ample supplies of hay, straw, and water were available on the grounds. Reviewing committees were required to make their reports before 8:00 a.m. on the last day. Animals could not compete for more than one prize in any class or division, and no premiums were awarded to items which were not worthy (even if there was only one item in the category). Agricultural products exhibited for competition were restricted to those grown and raised by the exhibitor.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 26 September 1878, 30 May 1878.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 3 August 1878.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 22 August 1878.

President H. D. Campbell personally supervised the work on the new fairgrounds to accommodate the October fair. Erected on the grounds were a windmill tower, for water, and five "substantial and permanent buildings:" Main Hall, 40' x 104', with 1,200 feet of shelf and table room for displays; Agricultural Hall, 26' x 100' with 186 feet of three-foot-wide tables; two livestock sheds, each 26' x 100', with ten double (8' x 10') and 30 single (4' x 10') stalls, with wide central alleys and mangers or feed boxes; and the office, which was located directly on the main road near the principal exit. Restaurant accommodations were handled on the grounds by R. A. Campbell and Mr. E. Connie; in addition, there was a candy stand. Busses were arranged to run from town to the grounds at a low rate. The first day there were some concerns. The second day, all fears vanished: "2,000 people were on the grounds in the afternoon . . . third day, at least equal to the second."<sup>62</sup>

At a business meeting during the fair officers were elected. The executive committee included representation from the various towns in the county: Traverse City, Peninsula, East Bay, Whitewater, Fife Lake, Mayfield, Grant, Blair, Long Lake, and Paradise. Income from the fair totaled \$592.02. Gate receipts were \$485.82, farm licenses \$47, and bus receipts \$59.20. Fair expenses totaled \$180.31, leaving a balance of \$411.71. Total entries for premium consideration was 469, very close to the 500 plus from the last Union Fair. The Grand Traverse County Fair had arrived!<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 26 September 1878, 10 October 1878.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 10 October 1878

## **The Arts at the Fairs**

### **Categories: At First Fairs of the Region**

There was not a separate category for the arts at the first fairs of the region. For Benzie's first amateur fair, in Benzonia, on October 8, 1864, organizers declared their purpose: "desiring to compare products and to profit by each other's experience and observation." This purpose stood for all items and categories, from grains to hair flowers. The "Committee on Flowers" reported on a number of objects of ornamental or decorative work that had been entered. The included hair flowers, lamp mats, and a fancy glove box. By their second fair, in 1865, the Benzie organization had a "Fancy Articles" category. This reviewing committee awarded premiums for an ornamental picture frame, artificial flowers (both in arrangement and stem flowers separately), lamp mats, and millinery. The Benzie fair organizers made an extra effort to invite the inhabitants of the whole Traverse Bay Region for their third fair in 1867; entries increased to 289. Fancy and ornamental work entered increased as well, and prizes were expanded to include a first, second, and third in several areas: (general) quilts, log cabin quilts, and lamp mats. In addition, "Bests" were awarded for a hair wreath, bead basket, tatting collars, and a card basket. French embroidery, embroidered lace, and a show box cover received premiums as well, and a gentleman, Dr. Mac, was awarded a "Best" for his fancy bracket.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 28 October 1864, 10 October 1865, 8 November 1867.

Up to this time the judges for these fancy and ornamental articles were the ladies of the community. For the 1868 Benzie fair, the judges for a category for "best articles of domestic manufacture in the county" included George Douglas, of Frankfort. In addition, Mrs. C. T. Hopkins was a judge; her husband was on the Benzie fair board. Mrs. Voorhies was also on this committee. Later, in 1876, Mrs. Voorhies would win second for pencil drawing and first for special scrollwork at the regional Union Fair. Premiums awarded for domestic manufacture included "best" and "second-best" quilts, counterpane, fancy needlework, and fancy worsted work. Rag carpeting also received an award. Gerard Verfurth, board secretary for the Leelanau County Agricultural and Historical Society, entered his work and took a "best" for penmanship. For Benzie's 1869 fair a slightly redefined "Class 7" grouped "wax work, artificial flowers, fancy needlework, knitting, and penmanship." Miss Holbrook won for her quilt, which attracted the attention of the Herald's editor: "among the fancy articles we noticed a centerpiece for a quilt containing 3,096 pieces!"<sup>65</sup>

The first drawings did not appear at Benzie fairs until 1871. These were included with the "Home Manufactures Department." (By this time the first Grand Traverse Union Agricultural Society had held several fairs with a "Fine Arts and Floral Department.") Miss Lizzie Carrier received "best" drawing, while Mr. E. K. Erwin took "best" for a display of drawings. "Home Manufactures" was expanded to two classes. The first, which included the drawings above, also included

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 28 August, 1868, 5 October 1868, 5 November 1868, 7 October 1869.

fancy and ornamental work. Awards were presented for quilts, coverlets, and displays of needlework, hair work, and worsted work. There was also a "best" rug class. Boots, shoes, yokes, bows, farming implements, cabinets, and small mechanistic appliances such as churns or fanning mills were divided into the second "Home Manufactures Department."<sup>66</sup>

Band music was added as a premium class for the first time in 1871. Figure 38 shows the advertisement announcing \$100.00 in premiums for the band competition which was based on the performance of four pieces executed by one band. The Frankfort Cornet Band took the first premium, and the Benzonia Cornet Band was awarded "second best."<sup>67</sup>

Leelanau organized and had its first fair in 1868, at the same time the Union Society began. The Leelanau fair, like the Benzie fair, did not have a separate category for fancy work or arts. "Class 8" included yardage, quilts, counterpanes, rag carpeting, fancy needlework, specimens of photography, and penmanship, as well as collections of flowers and bouquets. At the 1869 fair the Misses Dougherty entered several "very fine" oil paintings. Henrietta and Netty Dougherty were among the first female teachers of the region, teaching first at their father's school on Old Mission Point. Henrietta had taken over the Young Ladies School when their founding teacher became ill. Included at the end of the premium listing in the Herald was a committee note:

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 26 October 1871.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 26 October 1871.

"a very fine and convenient quilting frame was exhibited by William Keys Sr., which attracted considerable attention from the ladies."<sup>68</sup>

**THE FOURTH ANNUAL FAIR**  
of the  
**Grand Traverse Union Agricultural Society**

will be held at Traverse City, on Wednesday and  
Thursday, the 2d and 3d of October, 1872

This Society embraces the counties of  
Emmet, Charlevoix, Antrim, Kalkaska, Missaukee,  
Wexford Benzie, Leelanau and Grand Traverse

The Fair Grounds will be greatly improved and a new  
and spacious Hall erected, in which to exhibit articles  
entered for premiums. A premium of \$100 is offered to  
the county that shall make the best and choicest exhibition  
so far as quality is concerned. And another premium of  
\$100 is offered to the Brass or Silver Cornet Band that  
shall furnish the best music. Several Bands will be in  
attendance all through the Fair, and will keep plenty of the  
best music going.

The farmers and all others interested throughout the  
whole Grand Traverse Region are invited to enter as many  
articles as possible. Every provision will be made for the  
safety of articles, and plenty of hay provided for stock  
without expense to the owner, etc.

PERRY HANNAH, President  
R. HATCH, Secretary

**Figure 38**  
**Fourth Annual Fair Announcement**  
(Fascimile, Grand Traverse Herald, 15 August 1872.)

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 21 October 1869.



**Grand Traverse Union Fair, 1868-1877**

**1868:** The first fair of the Grand Traverse Union Agricultural Society in 1868 included a "Fine Arts and Floral Department." Items in this department included photography, penmanship, engravings, crayon sketches, watercolors, oils, collections of flowers, and bouquets. "Best" and "Second-Best" premiums for most items were offered. In August, when the premiums listing was published in the Herald, 13 ladies from the region were listed as the review committee. No other category had more than four or five judges. Mrs. A. B. Dunlap was the wife of the president of the Union board, and Mrs. Flower's husband was also on that board. Mrs. Mebert was married to William Mebert, president of the Leelanau County Agricultural and Horticultural Society. Editor Dewitt Leach's daughter, Mina, was a committee member. Both Miss Leach and Mrs. J. G. Ramsdell were known to be painters in the community; Mrs. Ramsdell was also a quilter. By the time the fair came, this committee was reduced to a workable number, and many of the early planning committee entered works in the competition.<sup>69</sup>

In the "Fine Arts and Floral Department," "Bests" were awarded in watercolor painting and oil painting. Best specimens of penmanship and pencilling were acknowledged as well. So many oil paintings were entered that the range of awards was extended from "Best" to "Second-Best," and on, to include six places of premiums awarded. Mrs. J. G. Ramsdell took the first premium. In pencilling,

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 7 August 1868, 22 October 1868.

Mrs. Hitchcock took first and William Holdsworth took second. Mr. Holdsworth had been educated in private boarding schools and an academy in London as a draftsman. Sprague's history of the Grand Traverse Region noted: "At his pleasant home in Traverse City, he had samples of the work done by him when he was a student that are simply wonderful . . . in the use of the pen he was especially gifted." In the "Fancy and Ornamental Work Department," two gentlemen took first premiums. James K. Gunton, a board member, received a "Best" for his hanging alum basket, and Dr. C. W. Andrews took prizes for an embroidered scarf and a basket of wax fruit. We can assume that these gentlemen did produce the items they entered. The constitution and rules for these societies indicated that items competing for premiums must have been produced by the competitor, and in most cases within the specific geographical region. Premium winners in the "Fancy and Ornamental Work Department" included two wreaths, one of shells and sea mosses and one of hair. Other prizes were awarded to a basket of moss and cones, a zephyr mat, perforated work in the shape of a cross, and a tatting collar. More practical items included an ottoman and cover, tidies, and an embroidered shoe case.<sup>70</sup>

**1869:** Covering the second annual fair of the Grand Traverse Union Agricultural Society, the Herald noted that oil paintings of "Miss Nettie M. Dougherty, Mrs. Ramsdell, and Willie Holdsworth attracted the attention of all admirers of fine paintings. Some of them are said,

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 22 October 1868.

by judges of oil paintings, to be very finely executed." The Herald mentioned other works that drew attention: hair flowers, picture frames of shell and cone, wax flowers, and a fairy castle. Mrs. Gibbs' drawings also caught the editor's attention. "Beautiful quilts" had been entered by many and eight were recognized. Mrs. Gibbs' drawings and Mrs. Lardee's raised wool work, bead work, and fancy baskets were also commented upon. A new type of entry, works of japanning on wool and watercolor on velvet, were submitted by Mrs. George McDowell. Miss Dougherty and Mrs. Ramsdell's oil paintings were both awarded "Best," and Willie Holdsworth received a second for his work. Willie's father, William, had won the second premium for pencilling in 1868. Young Willie later became a professor of art in the Michigan State Agricultural College, at Lansing, after graduating from that institution with a master of arts and also from Cornell University.<sup>71</sup>

In addition to the items submitted in competition for the premium awards, things were also submitted for exhibition. Generally, these were from the business committee, such as agricultural implements, silverware, and jewelry. As time went on, individuals offered things for exhibit from their own collection, to share with the fair audience. These often brought an international flavor to the fairs. At the first Union Fair, the board president Dunlap and Mrs. Dunlap exhibited a case of curiosities, mostly from Greece, but also including items from other foreign countries. At the second fair in 1869, an interesting fabric was exhibited but not entered into the competition.

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<sup>71</sup> Sprague, History of Grand Traverse and Leelanau Counties, 665-7.

Cloth made from the bark of trees by natives of the Sandwich Islands provided an international item of interest for the community. Music was added to the second Union Fair when the Traverse City Brass Band provided entertainment on the evening of October 6.<sup>72</sup>

**1870:** Entries for the third fair in 1870 did not meet expectations. In fact, the "Departments of Household Manufacture and Fine Arts were woefully deficient," according to the Herald. The "Fine Arts and Floral Department" was separated into two distinct areas this year. No premiums were awarded for paintings or drawings, but pottery appeared for the first time, and Robert Kruch was awarded a discretionary premium of \$2 for his work. Other "Fine Arts" premiums were awarded for an agricultural wreath, a hair wreath, and wax flowers.<sup>73</sup>

In 1870 the Union Agricultural Society offered a premium of \$100 for any "Brass or Silver Cornet Band that shall furnish the best music. Several bands will be in attendance all through the fair, and will keep plenty of the best music going." The premium appeared to go to the Frankfort Band, "for a very pleasant serenade given the second evening of the fair." The Benzonia and Traverse City Bands were also acknowledged for the "excellent music" they presented. Articles which attracted the particular attention of the editor included a collection of photographs from J. B. Smith's gallery, a fine collection of wax works, beautiful coverlets, and tasty and beautiful quilts.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Herald, 7 August, 1868, 14 October 1869.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 3 October 1870.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 15 August 1872, 10 October 1872.

For the Herald

**COME TO THE FAIR**

Attention, now, good people, pray!  
 A word or two I'd like to say  
 About the great Grand Traverse Fair,  
 For which of course you'll all prepare.  
 But lest by chance you should forget  
 Or miss the time through some neglect.  
 I'll tell you first the time and place  
 Plain as the nose upon your face.  
 (By that I only mean to say  
 That I will make it plain as day.)  
 So that you'll surely find the way  
 From every point around the Bay;  
 And other points both far and near.  
 For Traverse City you must steer,  
 And when you reach that place, why there  
 You are all ready for the fair.  
 Pray do not come alone, my friend,  
 Or you'll regret it ere the end;  
 For everybody and his wife  
 And all the children big as life,  
 Will come. And you'll have chance to greet  
 The friends you do not often meet,  
 And they'll be glad to see you all.  
 So come along, both great and small,  
 For I am sure to such a show  
 We cannot very often go.  
 Though Barnum does go round and blow  
 He can't come up to us, you know.

**Figure 39**

**Poem: Come to the Fair**

(Continued. Source: Herald 2 October 1873)

(Come to the Fair, continued)

What if he has some cunning spes?  
 They cannot beat Grand Traverse grapes!  
 And elephants with trunks are fine,  
 But not as useful quite, as swine.  
 At least I know down in New York  
 They are not used much to make pork.  
 As for Grecian-bended kangaroos,  
 I own I'd rather see a goose  
 All nice and fat and stuffed to roast,--  
 This pleases you and me the most;--  
 For if you're not a hardened sinner  
 You'll wish you had one for your dinner.  
 They had a fair not long ago  
 Down at Grand Rapids, as you know;  
 Of course 'twas thought a grand affair  
 And many people went off there  
 To see what'er was up for show;  
 From turnips down to new style hoe.  
 And there amid that vast display  
 Of fruit from every place, they say  
 We took the premium on peaches!  
 Now surley this a lesson teaches;--  
 That we can have as fine a fair  
 Nor go from home to find it. There!  
 So bring from orchard, farm and field  
 The best the ground this year doth yield.  
 Bring from the work shop fruit of labor,  
 Come yourself and bring your neighbor.

**Figure 39** (continued)  
**Poem: Come to the Fair**

(Come to the Fair, continued)

Bring on your squashes, plums, potatoes,  
 Your biggest pumpkins and tomatoes.  
 Bring ducks and chickens, turkeys, geese--  
 Bring anything you know will please.  
 Great cabbage-heads, and grapes and flowers--  
 The works of art and leisure hours--  
 Pictures, paintings, patch work, fruits,  
 Carpets, stoves and patent boots,  
 Cultivators, pigs and calves--  
 Never do a thing by halves.  
 Apples, peaches, plums and pears,--  
 Really there is fun at fairs.  
 John, you bring your patent bars,  
 And Manda fetch the pickle jars,  
 Miss Jones, I think I heard it said,  
 Will bring her nice salt-rising bread,  
 I really think 'twill stand the test  
 Though Mrs. Brown likes yeast bread best.  
 Miss R. the premium deserves  
 For those delicious plum preserves.  
 October is the month, you know  
 For this prodigious union show,  
 Eighth, 9th and 10th they say.  
 Be sure and come prepared to stay  
 We all will have a jolly time--  
 And here I'll end my simple rhyme

**Figure 39** (continued)  
**Poem: Come to the Fair**

**1873:** Because of the combined exhibition with the State Pomological Society, plans for the Fifth Union Fair, in 1873, included a "Department of Fine Arts and Needle and Fancy Work," which was intended to "be far more extensive and attractive than ever before." Come to the Fair, a long poem, inviting the community with its personal references, and promoting the fair and everything fair, appeared in the Herald on opening day. This poem is included on the following page, Figure 39. Plans included the presence of sewing machines and musical instruments, which were new features of the exhibit area. The "Fine Arts" area was expanded in specific ways, separating landscapes, portraits, and other paintings as well as separating by type of paintings. A "Best and Largest Collection of Pictures" headed the listing of categories for premiums. In addition, premiums were designated for

original landscape painting in oil, copy in oil; original portrait in oil; painting other than landscape and portrait; original painting in watercolor, copy painting in watercolor; pencil drawing original, crayon sketch, specimen of photography, specimen of penmanship; collection of miscellaneous photographs; and specimen of ornamental work with either autumnal leaves, moss, wax cones, or shells.

The judging committee for the "Fine Arts Department" included two area painters, Mrs. L. O. Saylor, also active with the Ladies Library Association, and Mrs. C. P. Avery, who may have been the painter who won a premium for watercolors in 1868.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 11 September 1873.



Because the fair was also being covered by a guest editor in "Fair Notes . . . from the Pen of a Lady Friend," there was much more detail in the reporting of household and arts areas this year. Emma Leach entered the only oil painting for competition. The Herald reported it "well worth the premium awarded." In addition, "a very fine collection of paintings in oil, both original and copied, by Mrs. Judge Ramsdell and Mrs. L. O. Saylor," were exhibited, "which if entered in competition would have made the masters sharp competitors." These ladies were a part of the judging committee and probably excluded themselves from actual competition. Miss Ellen Boyde also exhibited work, "a fine original painting which shows fine taste in the young artist."<sup>76</sup>

In the photography area, the McManus brothers had "some fine specimens of photography on exhibition, and a portrait of Mr. McManus, painted in oil, by himself, struck us as very lifelike." These local photographers won the "Best Portrait in Oil" and the "Best Collection of Photographs." Willie Holdsworth appeared again, receiving two premiums for his work.

One drawing by William Holdsworth, Jr., is worthy of special notice . . . called "The Pioneers of Traverse City" . . . has in each corner a portrait of one of the most predominant of the early settlers, viz: Perry Hannah, Governor Bates, Cuyler Germaine and Dr. Goodale. There is a view of Traverse in primitive times-- woods, wigwams, and "the noble red man" squatting around his camp fire. Then another scene of Traverse in our days and the improvements that have been made by the no less noble white man.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 16 October 1873.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 11 October 1873.

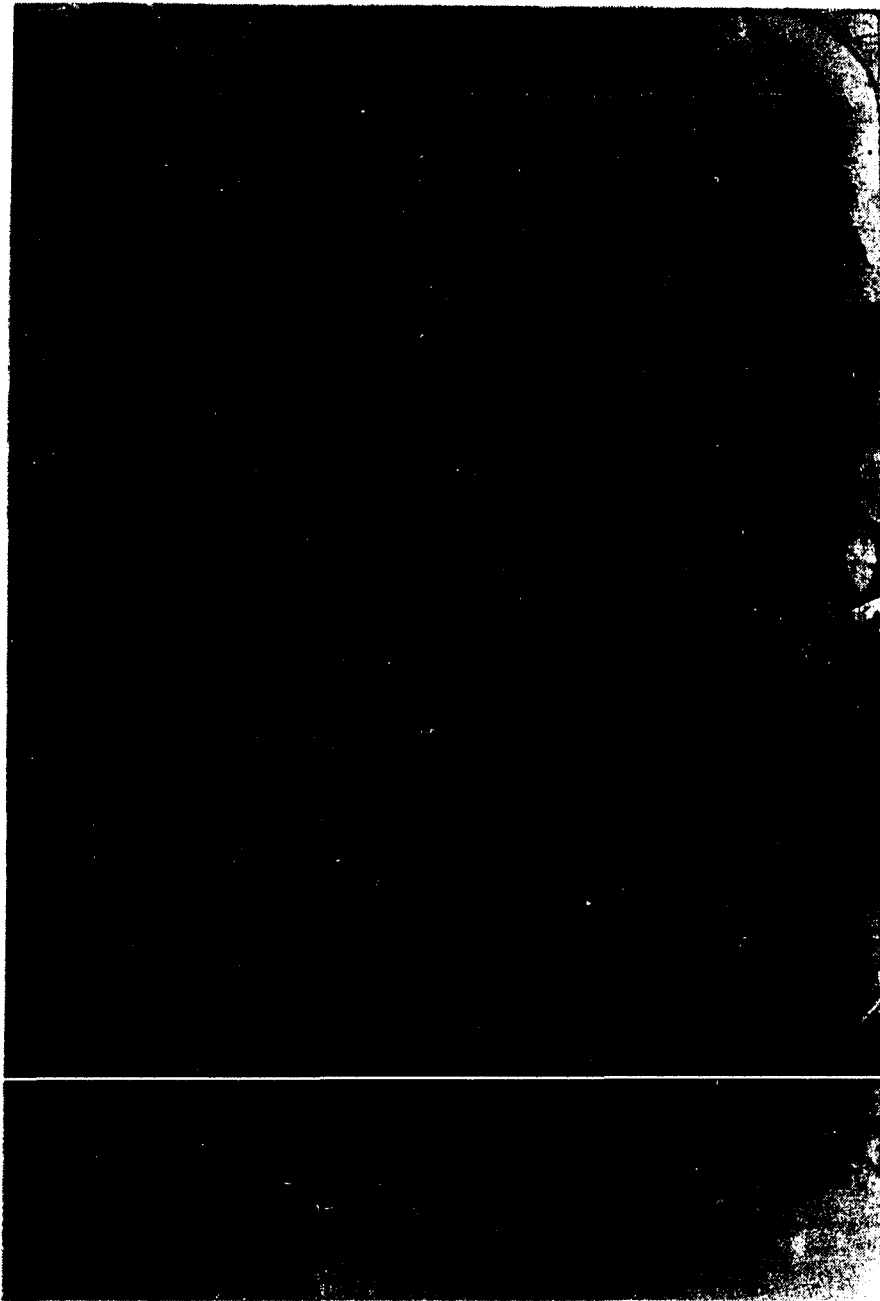


**Figure 40**

**Pioneers of Traverse City**

(From the Collection of the Conn Foster Museum, traverse City, Michigan.)

Concerning The Pioneers of Traverse City, Editor Leach felt the desire to add our own words of commendation and approval of Willie Holdsworth's drawing . . . considering the limited opportunities the young artist has enjoyed, we think the Pioneers is a very credible work, and endorse the favorable notice which the committee gave of Miss Ellen Boyd's painting. It is a pleasure as well as a duty to encourage the young.<sup>78</sup>

**1874:** A separate "Department of Fine Arts" continued through the rest of the Union Fairs and was retained in the categories for the First Grand Traverse County Agricultural Fair when it began in 1878. The new reporting of the fair, through "Fair Notes . . . from the Pen of a Lady Friend" continued for the 1874 Union Fair. In her comments, this guest editor acknowledged the distinction which should have been made between chromos, which were mass-produced pictures, and original works and suggested a change for the future: "On pictures . . . passing over the chromos, we will notice briefly and as correctly as we can the original pictures . . . it is suggested, and with good reason, that next year the home talent have a place by itself, thus making it easier to make note of original pictures." Art works entered this year increased in number. Works by several familiar painters were entered. Miss Mary Goodrich, Miss Emma Leach, Mrs. Sayler, Mrs. Ashton, Mrs. Ramsdell, and J. W. Simpson vied for premiums. Drawings, spatter work, and a large card of pencil monograms were included in the arts competition. "Fair Notes . . . from the Pen of a Lady Friend" commented on a wreath of flowers made from seeds: "It is wonderful what pretty things people will make out of the oddest

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 16 October 1873.

materials . . . about as pretty a thing, being so simple, was a wreath of flowers done in perforated work on cardboard belonging to A. P. Gray." A Modoc Indian basket, made from sea grass, was placed on exhibit by J. W. Simpson. The Williamsburg Band provided music for this fair and made no charge for their services.<sup>79</sup>

**1875:** For the 1875 Union Fair, several special premiums were initiated which related to the broad spectrum of the arts. E. S. Sprague, local historian and founder/editor of the Traverse Bay Eagle, sponsored these and offered a one-year subscription to the Eagle as a premium. The best specimen of "Carriage Painting and Varnishing" was judged by local businessmen B. J. Morgan, Milton Spence, and John Denahy. For the "best specimen of graining, representing not less than four kinds of wood," judges were J. E. Greilick (also the 1876 superintendent for music), H. H. Noble, and J. K. Gunton, who was a farmer in addition to running the Gunton House. L. Sabin, a house, sign, and ornamental painter by profession, won the graining competition.<sup>80</sup>

Again this year comments from a guest editor provided more descriptive information about the arts at the fair. "Fair Notes . . . from the Pen of a Lady Friend" described paintings at the fair:<sup>81</sup>

Miss Mary Goodrich contributed two large pictures; one was a fruit piece, exquisitely colored; the other, one of those landscapes which are always so pleasant to look at, combining water, sky and

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 10 October 1874.

<sup>80</sup> Sprague, History of Grand Traverse and Leelanau Counties, 708; Herald, 16 September 1875, 21 October 1875.

<sup>81</sup> Descriptions and details of paintings reported in the Herald are used to illustrate the types of works at the fairs. This attention is not intended to signify any greater worth on paintings than any other of the other creative works at the fairs.

woodland in one lovely scene. Both paintings were beautiful and received much attention.

Mrs. J. G. Ramsdell's paintings of Traverse City and the Bay as seen from Mt. Ramsdell, has the two-fold attraction of being the picture of a scene lovely in itself and one with which we are familiar. We see the town, as it lies curled around the head of the bay--the bay itself, with well-known boats plying on it--and the woods in all the glory of their autumn coloring.

Miss Emma Leach contributed an autumn scene, which is beautiful as a dream of Indian summer: the placid water reflecting the blue of the sky--the blazing trees that crowd to the water's edge as if to see themselves--the solitary boatman who seems in a trance, and the purple haze over all, gives one the impressions that a perfect day in autumn does.

Mrs. Wadsworth contributed a painting by Miss Nettie Dougherty, of some point at New Mission. The scene in itself is simple--just the sweep of the bay round a point of woodland, and yet it is singularly pleasing. You could almost wish you were lying there in the shade of the trees and looking out upon the bay.<sup>82</sup>

Other artworks entered for competition included a basket of leaves, ferns, and crystallized grasses; pencil drawings; a "very pretty ornamental stand decorated with shells and cones by Miss Addie Brockway, only 12 years old"; and a stuffed owl. Unusual items this year included two large wreaths of worsted flowers and a "bouquet of leather leaves and flowers . . . was unique and rich looking." This editor noted that the "wax works were remarkably lovely" and included a wreath and a basket of wax flowers, as well as "one basket of wax fruit . . . so true to nature that it looked almost good enough to eat . . . entered by Lora Vinton, and was the work of a little crippled girl."<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Herald 14 October 1875.

<sup>83</sup> The use of "crippled" reflects the terminology of the period, and is not intended to demean individuals with handicapping conditions. *Ibid.*, 11 October 1875.

Paintings of Miss Emma Leach and Miss Goodrich and a watercolor by Mrs. Munger won awards. Premiums for ornamental work, pencil drawing, and penmanship were also awarded in the "Fine Arts Category." A new judging configuration appeared this year, with Mr. and Mrs. L. Roberts and Dr. and Mrs. Keeland on the "Fine Arts Committee." Lorin Roberts was a member of the YMCA board. Both Mrs. Roberts and Mrs. Keeland were involved with the Ladies Library Association. <sup>84</sup>

**1876:** For the Eighth Annual Union Fair, a new "Committee on Music" was formed. This committee was comprised of H. E. Steward, O.E. Clark, and W. W. Tracy. Clark was a Garfield Township farmer and justice of the peace. Professor William Tracy was probably an educator. He was on the Union and County Agricultural Society boards from 1876 through 1878. No musical activity was reported in the paper for this fair. <sup>85</sup>

A special hall was set aside at this fair to celebrate the Centennial. The editor of the Herald managed this event and gathered items from all areas to "help us know how our good old forefathers lived." A bed quilt made from Sandwich Islands cloth attracted attention - perhaps the same cloth exhibited at the 1869 fair.<sup>86</sup>

There were only a few entries in the "Art Department." One special item, which received attention in the newspaper, was a feather wreath, by Mrs. Crouter, of Charlevoix "the choicest specimen in this

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Page, History of the Grand Traverse Area, 94; Herald 17 August 1876.

<sup>86</sup> Herald, 17 August 1876.

department . . . which elicited loud expressions of admiration by all who saw it." Mrs Crouter also had the best pencil drawings. A cross in splatter work, some silver leaf work, scroll work in pencil, and other pencil drawings were noted as works entered. Fancy work entered included embroidery, wax flowers, and artificial wreaths.<sup>87</sup>

**1877:** The Ninth Grand Traverse Union Fair was moved to Elk Rapids. Floral Hall was "thrown open every evening with rooms nicely lighted and warmed, and the band furnished good music. . . . The Fine Arts were not largely represented, the best being that of ornamental work in wood carvings, mottoes, etc." Quilts entered, however, were "innumerable, and all very fine. One was composed of 6,000 pieces--think of that." Other items in the "Fine Arts" category which attracted attention included two elegant wreaths, one feather and one hair wreath; a wax wreath and flowers; and hand-wrought lace. Premiums were awarded to a copy of a pencil drawing and photography. The "Art Department" this year included a fine collection of curiosities, "a ship by Hi Robinson, completely rigged--a wonderful piece of work; and another [ship, exhibited with it] made of yarn and twine by a sailor while at sea. . . . Also, Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Archibald contributed a quantity of Japanese work, very quaint and beautiful, such as cabinets, work baskets, plates, boxes, fans, etc. . . . there was besides, a showcase filled with old and rare curiosities, old china and books."<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 5 October 1876.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 11 October 1877, 18 October 1877.

Both the Elk Rapids and the Traverse City bands participated in the 1877 Union Fair. Though the Elk Rapids Band was a new band, "we needed to be told so to know it . . . most excellent music it was." The Traverse City Band was "on the grounds for a few hours, and it is not necessary for us to say they did themselves credit--they always do that under any circumstances." Expenses listed for the fair included \$3.60 for dinner for the Traverse City Band and a payment of \$60 for the Elk Rapids Band.<sup>89</sup>

### **A New Association: A County Society**

October 2, 3, and 4 of 1878 were the dates of the first fair of the new county-based society. Executive superintendents were appointed for the first time for "Art and Domestic Work." S. A. Garder had the job. He had been on the 1876 and 1877 Union Society boards and the first board of county society. J. E. Grielick and A. Bond were appointed executive superintendents for music. A. Bond was the director of the Traverse City Band. Neither of these gentlemen was on the new fair board.<sup>90</sup>

Taking the best from the old patterns, the departments of "Household Products," "Ornamental Needle and Worsted Work," and "Fine Arts" were maintained and enhanced. The "Household Products Department" added a category for the "largest collection of articles manufactured by any one family," offering a large chromo as the premium. "Ornamental Needle and Worsted Work" and "Fine Arts"

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 18 October 1877, 1 November 1877.

<sup>90</sup> Page, History of the Grand Traverse Area, 89; Sprague, History of Grand Traverse and Leelanau Counties, 801-2; Herald, 22 August 1878.



remained very similar to the Union Fair categories. "Division K," "Ornamental Needle and Worsted Work," included "embroidered slippers, cotton crochet, knitted tidy, lace, silk embroidery, carriage afghan, worsted toilet cushions, ottoman covers, worsted lamp mats, scarfs, hair and wax flowers, and wax fruit." The "Fine Arts Department" included "original landscape in oil, and a copy of a landscape in oil; portrait in oil; painting other than landscape and portrait painting; painting in watercolor - original and copy; original pencil drawing and copy; crayon sketch; photography; penmanship specimen; ornamental work with autumn leaves, moss, wax, cones, or shells."<sup>91</sup>

The Herald reported that for "'Needle and Fancywork' there was, we think, the best display ever made at any of our fairs." Mrs. E. E. Miller, Mrs. J. A. Perry, and Mrs. E. L. Sprague had each collections of great merit consisting of embroidered footstools, tidies, lamp mats, rugs, footrests, letter and paper holders, hair and hair pin receivers, pillow shams, etc." An unusual entry was offered by John Broadfoot (builder of wagons and carriages), who "exhibited a Masonic regalia which was a fine specimen of embroidery in a gold lace . . . close beside was an antiquated regalia of the finest work by some good brother whose bones must have been dust by this many a long day, marked 100 years old." Mr. Broadfoot won a premium for his "specimen of lace embroidery in the shape of a Masonic apron and

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 22 August 1878.

collar." Mrs. R. A. Campbell's "curious medley engraving" caught the attention of the Herald as well as the judges, for it won a premium.<sup>92</sup>

The "Fine Arts Committee" was made up of Mrs. T. T. Bates, associate editor, with her husband of Traverse; Mrs. Clara C. Goodrich, music teacher and painter; and Mrs. Edwards. An unusual piece of sculpture, the first noted in this research, was submitted to the "Fine Arts" competition by Charles Kroupa, of Peninsula. After the Civil War, Kroupa's feet were "crippled," and he spent alot of his time carving. The piece he submitted to the fair competition was described by the Herald editor as "a crucifixion and figure almost life size, which though a ghastly object to look upon, showed much native genius in its execution." Mr. Kroupa received the premium for best statuary, even though statuary had not appeared in the listing of items for the "Fine Arts Department." Other than this, the Herald noted, "the arts were but little represented," with wax works, a feather wreath, several drawings, a crayon sketch, and a medley engraving taking premiums.<sup>93</sup>

Two local businessmen added to the exhibition. Mr. Harnded, of the East End Picture Store, "contributed much to the decoration of the hall . . . showing fine pictures on each side of the main passage its entire length, [and] . . . displayed shells, ornamental Indian work, and picture frames." The Ladies Library Hall architect, Mr. J. W. Hilton, "had an excellent display of building plans, for the artistic execution of which he is so well noted." The Traverse City Band was a "leading

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 10 October 1878.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. Albert Kroupa, Sr. "Handwritten statement re. life-sized crucifix which his father, Charles Kroupa, carved." Collection of the Grand Traverse Pioneer and Historical Society Archives. (Traverse City, MI), N.D.

attraction on the grounds . . . the band which furnished music on the second and third day, and fully sustained the high name it has won."

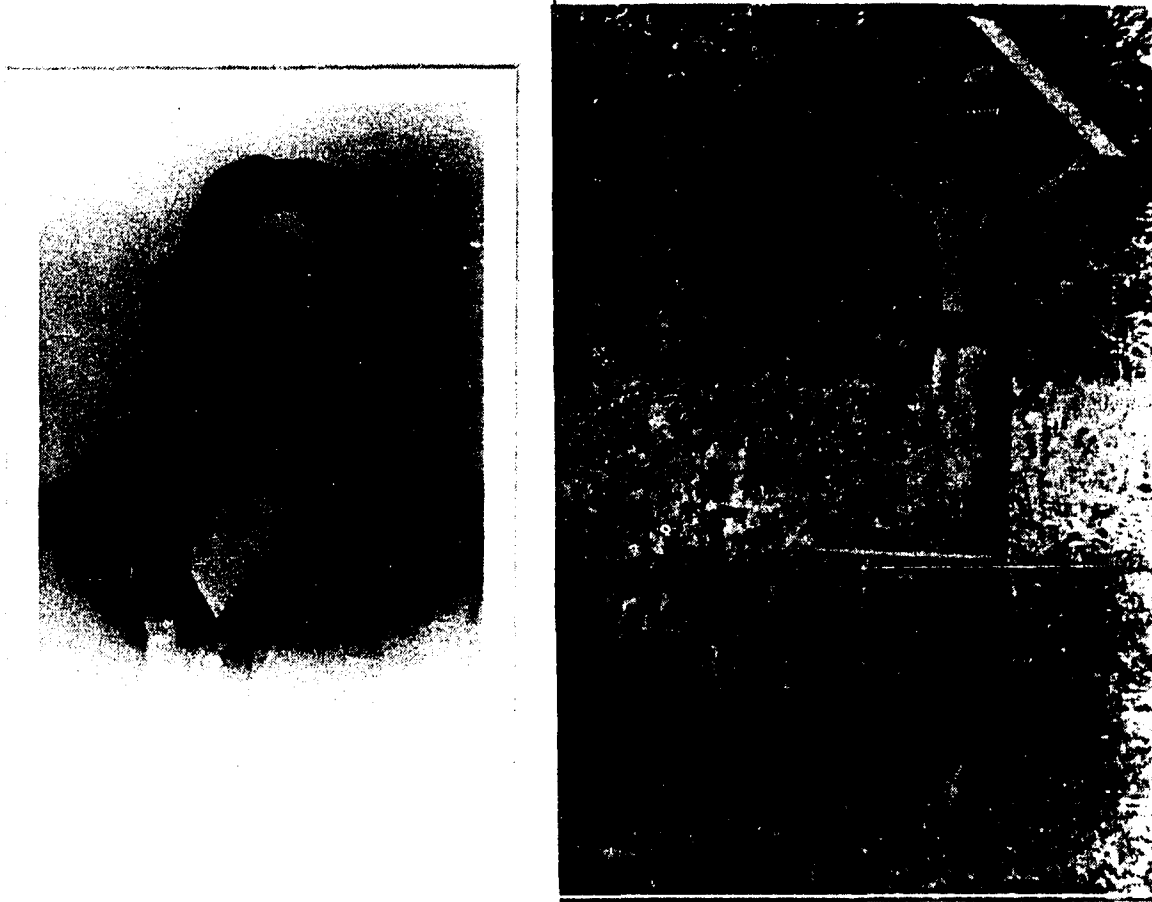


**Figure 41**

**Charles Kroupa and Crucifix**

(Source: The Grand Traverse Pioneer and Historical Society Archives,  
Traverse City, Michigan.)

The Traverse City Cornet Band and the Traverse City String Band gave entertainments at Gunton House in conjunction with the fair. Over 250 people attended: "67 numbers were sold for dancing. A fitting celebration for the completion of a new fair and another phase in the agricultural and community life of the Grand Traverse Region."<sup>94</sup>



SHERMAN & HUNTER

**Figure 42**

**Grand Traverse Regional Fair Grounds, 1908.**

(Source: Traverse Area District Library, Traverse City, Michigan.)

### **Summary**

Until the mid-1870s Grand Traverse County was made up of nine of today's counties. Established by the legislature in 1851, Grand Traverse County acted legally on behalf of the greater bay region until the separate counties of Antrim, Kalkaska, Missaukee, Wexford,

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<sup>94</sup> The use of "Indian" reflects the language of the times, which today would be Native American. Ibid.

Manistee, and Leelanau were officially recognized and established. Focus years for the study of this region were 1868 and 1878.

As has been seen in the other case studies, opportunities in the visual arts were infrequent. There were no professional portrait or landscape artists noted in the region. Miss Ludlow, a local resident with "many years experience," offered a class in oil painting in 1868, and the Young Ladies School, which opened the same year, provided drawing lessons to students for a fee in addition to their tuition. In 1875, the Idea Picture Company, of Niles, came to Traverse City for several days to show their work and take orders for pictures. Miller's Store, a Traverse City drug store, provided a unique opportunity for the community. Proprietor E. E. Miller, who grew up with the "Indians" of the area, made it a point to carry and display hundreds of artistic articles made by them. C. Harden's East End Picture Store was promoted as "the only exclusively Art store in Northern Michigan." Harden's handled cromos and possibly photographs. Several area photographers were active in the area as well.<sup>95</sup>

Musical and literary organizations existed across this region with community bands, and small literary, and debate organizations active in many of the towns. Musical unions, choirs and glee clubs were noted in Benzonia, Mayfield, Traverse City and Long Lake. Seven area communities had active bands, many performed at the fairs of the region. Likewise, six literary societies were noted across the region. The Ladies Library Association, and the YMCA of Traverse City worked

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<sup>95</sup> Herald 21 July 1868, 11 February 1869, 22 April 1875, 6 December 1877; Sprague, History of Grand Traverse and Leelanau Counties, 471-78.

cooperatively, sharing space and providing a reading room to the community. This linkage continued after the Ladies Library Association had their own facility built. This new community hall provided their own offices, the YMCA's rooms, a reading room and a public meeting room.

Several different fairs and agricultural societies operated in the Grand Traverse Region during the period of this case study. Benzie held an amateur fair in 1864, five years before the county was officially organized by the legislature in 1869. The Benzie fairs continued into the early 1870s, and encouraged participation from the entire region. In 1868 the Grand Traverse Union Agricultural Society formed and held their first fair. The "Union" society fairs, which continued until 1877, included the entire Bay Area. Leelanau County also held several fairs during this period. In 1877 the "Union" society decided to cease holding fairs in order to encourage each of the counties of the region to organize societies and hold their own fairs. Thus the Grand Traverse County Agricultural Society came into existence in 1878 and held its fair that same year.

Although there was no special art category for the first amateur fair at Benzie in 1864, creative work was entered into competition. The "Committee on Flowers &c." discussed hair flowers, lamp mats, and a fancy glove box in their judging report. By the second Benzie fair a category, "Fancy Articles" appeared, that included creative work. The 1871, the Benzie fair had a class for band music--"for the best four pieces executed by one band." At the early Leelanau fairs oil paintings were entered into competitions. For the Union societies

first fair in 1868, the board of trustees established a “Fine Arts & Floral Department” which included photography, penmanship, engraving, crayon sketches, watercolor and oil painting, and flowers. The “Fine Arts & Floral Department remained throughout the “Union” fairs, and continued when the Grand Traverse County Agricultural Society took over the role in 1873.<sup>96</sup>

Because the Grand Traverse Herald added a guest editor at fair time, and later established the post of “Home Editor,” there was more descriptive reporting about the creative work than was seen in the other case studies. These journalists also brought up aesthetic issues surrounding the arts at the fairs. The agricultural society was encouraged to establish a separate section for “home talent,” and the importance of distinguishing between original art and mass produced cromos was discussed. She also seemed to influence the addition of designations that separated original work and copy work.

There were several known painters and quilters in the region, and they both entered their works into fair competitions and acted as judges for the various creative categories. Willie Holdsworth, who as a young man won premiums for his drawings on stone, went on to become professor of art at Michigan State Agricultural College. The first sculpture found in this study was a lifesize crucifix, carved by Charles Kroupa. Kroupa had returned from the Civil War with “crippled” feet and from then-on spent much of his time woodcarving.

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<sup>96</sup> Herald 28 October 1864, 10 October 1865, 26 October 1861, 21 October 1869, 7 August 1868.

The Grand Traverse Region reflects many of the trends discovered in the other county case studies. The competition and exhibition at area fairs provided one of the few avenues for citizen exposure and participation in the visual arts. The arts and creative categories at the fairs drew support and attention from a representative cross section of area citizens. Aesthetic issues emerged to influence and educate the community because the arts were included at the fairs. With the agricultural societies providing opportunities for arts at the fairs, and the musical, dramatic, and literary organizations meeting other cultural needs, the citizens of the Grand Traverse area had opportunities across the visual, performing and literary arts within their own communities.



**Table 12**  
**Overview Progress**  
**Annual Fairs--Grand Traverse Region Agricultural Societies**

| County<br>Population<br>Occupied Farms | Year | Fair                               | Days | Entries              | Premiums<br>Awarded  | Receipts | Attendance |
|----------------------------------------|------|------------------------------------|------|----------------------|----------------------|----------|------------|
| <u>950</u><br>70                       | 1860 |                                    |      |                      |                      |          |            |
|                                        | 1865 |                                    |      | (220 at Benzie fair) |                      |          |            |
|                                        | 1867 |                                    |      | (289 at Benzie fair) |                      |          |            |
|                                        | 1868 |                                    | 2    | 251 first Union fair |                      |          |            |
|                                        |      |                                    |      | (237 at Benzie fair) |                      |          |            |
|                                        | 1869 | 2nd                                | 2    | 307                  |                      | \$307.43 | *          |
|                                        |      | 1870                               | 3rd  | 2                    | 247                  | 284.40   |            |
|                                        | 1871 |                                    |      |                      | -- no fair held--    |          |            |
|                                        | 1872 | 4th                                | 2    | 300                  |                      | 578.09   |            |
|                                        | 1873 | 5th                                | 3    |                      |                      |          | 3-5,000    |
| <u>3,322</u><br>620                    | 1877 | 9th                                |      | 500+                 |                      |          |            |
|                                        | 1878 | * First Grand Traverse County Fair |      |                      |                      |          |            |
|                                        |      |                                    | 3    | 469                  | -- no cash awards -- |          | 2,000**    |
|                                        |      |                                    |      | (400 at Benzie fair) |                      |          |            |

## Notes:

- 1868 and 1869 - entries (251, 306) represent individuals entering multiple items
- \*1869 - "Never before did so many people of the Grand Traverse Region meet together"
- "5/6 of readers engaged in farming" per Grand Traverse Herald
- 1878 - No cash awards given for premiums--diplomas, cards, agricultural papers, rural books,  
 seeds, and grains awarded for premiums
- 40 acres of grounds purchased
- \*\* -- "2,000 attendance on the afternoon of the 3rd day"

Sources: Grand Traverse Herald, 10 November 1865, 8 November 1867, 8 October 1868, 14 October 1869, 22 October 1868, 14 October 1869, 23 September 1869, 3 October 1870, 15 August 1872, 10 October 1872, 11 September 1873, 11 October 1873, 10 March 1874, 11 October 1877, 10 October 1878, 3 October 1878, 8 August 1878, 26 September 1878, 10 October 1878.

## Chapter 7 ONTONAGON COUNTY

Ontonagon County sits on the northern shore of the western Upper Peninsula of Michigan, west of the Keweenaw Peninsula. The community of the same name sits at the mouth of the Ontonagon River and was made the county seat in 1843. Before this time only Indians and fur trappers called this northern land home. Knowledge of the existence of copper drew explorers into the region very quickly.<sup>1</sup> After the potato famine of 1845 and 1846, Irish people went to Ontonagon County. A few years later the German revolution of 1848 brought German immigrants to the area, and Cornish people, typically miners, were also attracted to the mining activity.<sup>2</sup> Barely 400 residents were counted in the 1850 census of Ontonagon County. Very quickly, the 46 dwellings there could not hold the people who went north looking for copper.<sup>3</sup>

Ontonagon, called "Boston in the wilderness," perhaps because of the large investment of Eastern dollars, was considered to be the "largest and most prosperous town on Lake Superior" in the decade between 1850 and 1860. The erection of a sawmill helped to met the

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<sup>1</sup> Roger L. Rosentreter, "Michigan's 83 Counties: Ontonagon County," Michigan History (Magazine), March/April 1981, 9. "Indians" reflects the vocabulary of the times. Today Native American would be used.

<sup>2</sup> James K. Jamison, This Ontonagon County: The Story of An American Frontier, ((Ontonagon (Michigan) Herald Co., 1948), 231.

<sup>3</sup> Transactions 1850, Appendix chart: "Statistics of the State of Michigan Compiled from the Census of the U.S. for the year 1850."

need for increased buildings, and quickly, the log homes were replaced by frame buildings. A brick building was erected on the public square for county offices. A fire company was organized and had erected a two-story hall so that court could be held in the upper story.<sup>4</sup> Within a one-year time period, Ontonagon added 103 frame buildings to accommodate the people who were arriving on board every ship.<sup>5</sup> In 1854 a frame structure five stories high, 110 feet deep, and 80 feet long was built as a hotel to serve the region. The Bigelow House was billed as the "largest hotel north of Detroit." Its basement contained a newspaper office, clothing store, billiard room, and bar as well as offices for the county clerk and the justice of the peace.<sup>6</sup> The Bigelow House became the center for business and entertainment for the region.

By 1860 Ontonagon County had grown more than ten times, to 4,575 residents. The number of families in the county had increased as well, from 46 to 684.<sup>7</sup> The 1860 census reported 72 "occupied farms" in Ontonagon County, more than any other county of the Upper Peninsula. (See Table 3, page 11.) The copper boom was short lived, for by the mid-1860s many of Ontonagon County's 25 mines failed. The mines had employed over 1,000 people in 1864, but within six years this number dropped below 400. In 1856 the area had

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 128, 135.

<sup>5</sup> Rosentreter, "Michigan's 83 Counties: Ontonagon County," 10.

<sup>6</sup> Lightning up the Past: Historical Stories, Ontonagon County, (Ontonagon (Michigan), [1967]); (Ontonagon, Michigan) Lake Superior Miner 23 July 1864.

<sup>7</sup> Statistics of the State of Michigan: Compiled from the Census of 1860, (Lansing (Michigan), J. A. Kerr, 1861) 221; Statistics of the State of Michigan: Compiled from the Census of 1870, (Lansing (Michigan), 1871) 106.

produced 50 percent of Michigan's copper, but by 1880 production accommodated only 2 percent of Michigan's needs.<sup>8</sup>

The 1856-57 State of Michigan Gazetteer and Business Directory listed 39 professional and tradespeople in the city of Ontonagon. Population in the county was much smaller than the other case study areas:

**Table 13**  
**Population Statistics: Ontonagon County**  
 (Statistics, 1850, appendix; Statistics, 1860, 221;  
Michigan State Gazetteer, 1873, pp.30-32.)

|                  | <u>1850s</u>                                | <u>1860s</u>                        | <u>1870s</u> |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>County</b>    | 385<br>5 colored<br>(15 mulatto & 7 Indian) | 4,575<br>29 colored                 | 2,845        |
|                  | 46 families<br>46 dwelling houses           | 684 families<br>684 dwelling houses |              |
| <b>Townships</b> |                                             |                                     |              |
| Rockland         |                                             | 2,861<br>2 colored                  |              |
| Ontonagon        |                                             | 1,192<br>29 colored                 |              |
| <b>City</b>      |                                             |                                     |              |
| Rockland         |                                             |                                     | 1,479        |
| Ontonagon        |                                             |                                     | 739          |
| Greenland        |                                             |                                     | 548          |

The centers of population were the communities of Ontonagon, on the coast, and Rockland and Greenland, located within ten miles inland. The Lake Superior Miner (Miner) served the area and was the newspaper used as the source for much of the information reported in

<sup>8</sup> Rosentreter, "Michigan's 83 Counties: Ontonagon County," 10.

to the newspapers used in the other case study research. It was published weekly and was generally comprised of four pages. The first page included a directory to the community. There were separate columns for the "Mining Directory," "Business Cards," "Hotels and Foundries," and "Medical." The remainder of page one was filled with miscellaneous small items but rarely any national news. Every issue included a poem on page one as well. Page two was set aside for "Mining Matters" (reports of and from the various local mines). Advertisements new to the paper were also included here. Local items were covered in two to three columns on page three, with ads continuing on to page four. Thomas J. Lasier, editor and publisher of the Miner, was a vocal presence on community matters, including the formation and importance of the county agricultural society. For this case study issues of the Miner from five months of the 1856-57 winter and from September 1867 through April 1870 were read.<sup>9</sup>

At the organizing meeting for the Ontonagon Agricultural Society, on December 21, 1867, one speaker proclaimed that the "Peninsula State [had never been] so good." Four reasons were cited: the minerals, the timber, the harbor, and that "it has been tested and most emphatically demonstrated that agricultural pursuits are not to be laughed at." Many could not imagine that productive farms or a cultural life could exist in this remote northern region of Michigan. Some might argue, compared to the opportunities of the more populated southern communities and the possibilities of the rich

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<sup>9</sup> (Ontonagon)Lake Superior Miner, 28 March 1868; Michigan Newspapers on Microfilm, (Library of Michigan, Lansing, 1986), 52.

southern Michigan prairie land, neither did exist. The people of Ontonagon County, however, might have disagreed for both the farms and their cultural lives offered diversity and provided “food” for their souls and their tables.<sup>10</sup>

### **A Cultural Life in Ontonagon County**

One of the earliest ventures of new migrants to this Lake Superior village was the establishment of a music society. The History of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan notes that W. S. S. Walbank and Bruno Jehnig led the way and organized the Philharmonic Society in 1858. The Miner reported on meetings, serenades, and musical performances earlier than that. Summer performances were provided for the community in 1856. Throughout the winter the Philharmonic Society held regular meetings and practices, and offered concerts as well. The Bigelow House proprietor gave “free use of his illuminated hall,” and a local printer contributed the program. Regular meetings of the society continued through September 8, on Tuesday evenings at Jaebing’s Saloon. Reporting of continuing activities of this organization did not appear in the newspapers reviewed a decade later, from 1868 through 1870.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Miner, 21 December 1867.

<sup>11</sup> History of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Containing a Full Account of its Early Settlement: its growth, development and resources . . ., (Chicago, Western Historical Co., 1883) 538; Lake Superior Miner (Ontonagon, Michigan,) 13 December 1856, 24 January 1857, 14 February 1857, 25 April 1857.

The Philharmonic Society appears to have been one of the only sources of musical activity available to community residents. No area bands, music stores, music lessons, or art lessons were reported in the Minor. A "glee club" provided community performances in the late 1860s, but wheather this was a formally organized group, such as the Philharmonic Society was not determined. In 1869 the school report of the neighboring community of Rockland included notice of the purchase of a "beautiful organ," which cost \$170..<sup>12</sup>

References to artworks or an art gallery appeared only twice throughout the reading for the Ontonagon case study. In 1856, under the headline "Works of Art," the Miner's editor reported on a work done by an area resident which he had the "pleasure to inspect:"

. . . a pretty representation of a snug little country seat, which is laid out and built up admirably, on a platform of circa 2 feet square. The house, barn, shed, summer-house and well house are in the best proportion and correspondence of style. They are most minutely executed, from the window sash, curtains and clapboards to the shingles on the roof, from the bucket and its rope on the well, to the chicken roost under the shed. The fencing, gravel walks, tying-posts, gates, the fountain before the house, the little brook for the geese, and all comforts and necessaries are there. The summer house is hidden under the shade of willows, the garden decorated with trees, the vines are climbing up on each side of the front door. The flower garden is blooming in front of the house, and on the background are growing delicious vegetables, peas, onions, beets and cabbage that would make a Dutchman's mouth water. The scene is enlivened with animals from the chicken up to the horse. All of this is home manufacture and has been a past time of the skillful hands of Mrs. E. H. Jones, formerly Miss Weller, who has fortified all this after her own design. The scene is fully calculated to lead the mind on poetical strains to a pleasant country stroll.

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<sup>12</sup> Lake Superior Minor, 6 February 1869, 19 November 1867, 26 June 1869, 28 August 1869, 1 January 1870.

The second article, in 1869, was entitled "Extensive Art Gallery." The new, unabridged Webster's Dictionary "is an extensive art gallery, containing over 3,000 engravings." Awareness of and access to artworks at one of the most northern borders of Michigan were scarce. No active photographers or photography businesses were noted in the newspapers.<sup>13</sup>

### **Lecture and Literary Activity**

During the 1856-1857 winter season, the Ontonagon Young Men's Society (OYMS) met each Friday for lectures, essays, and debates. The OYMS was listed weekly in the Miner along with several other civic groups, including the Philharmonic Society. Lectures brought in crowds from the surrounding area. Topics included: the connections between the scripture and the natural sciences, British power in the East Indies, and genius and its triumphs. In February 1857, the society considered turning its attention to expanding the library and reading room. About this same time the Miner indicated that "some measures be taken for increasing the town library." It was so heavily used in the winter that the shelves were almost empty. "About 160 persons have been readers." The OYMS, like the Philharmonic Society, was not reported on ten years later, during 1868--69. The Oddfellows also offered a series of public lectures on "Oddfellowship" during the winter of 1857.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 14 February 1857, 11 December 1869.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 27 December 1856, 24 January 1857, 7 February 1857, 14 February 1857, 21 February 1857, 5 March 1857, 12 March 1857, 21 March 1857, 11 April, 1857, 25 April 1857.



The Ontonagon Library was a part of the school district in 1867. Public hours were every Friday, from 3 to 5 p.m. Towards the end of the summer term of 1869, the Union School issued a public call for the return of books, so that the library could be reorganized. By August the library opened again with almost 200 new books for children and intermediate readers. Reports on the library were included with the annual school district reports carried in the Miner.<sup>15</sup>

Throughout the winter season of 1869-1870, a Home Debating Society was active in the Ontonagon community. Weekly meetings held at Fireman's Hall provided a forum for "spirited and interesting" discussions on many issues of the times:

- Are railroads more effective agents to open a country than wagon roads?
- Should Chinese immigration be encouraged?
- Was the war of the British Revolution as productive of the greater good as the war of the Rebellion?
- Can more information be obtained from traveling than by reading?
- Are land grants to railroads ruinous to the country?
- The pros and cons of women's suffrage

Periodically, local residents addressed this organization as well, but no organized lecture series was observed. In December of 1867 the Miner tried to stir up some interest in an offer made by Miss Anna E. Dickinson to give lectures in exchange for payment in stocks from any

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

of the area copper mines. "Won't some of our mining men spare a few shares and secure Miss Anna for a course of lectures?" It did not happen.<sup>16</sup>

### **Home Talent Entertainments**

Between the communities of Rockland and Ontonagon, a couple home talent entertainments occurred each year during 1868, 1869, and 1870. The distance of approximately ten miles did not deter citizens from travel during the winter. Whether the event was in one place or another, evidence of participation from both communities was found. Dog trains were frequently used for travel to these and other events.

A thin board [was used] about a foot wide and eight feet long, curled up at the front end with a varying number of dogs hitched in single line. A shoe was fixed on the train which the ladies [were wrapped in] . . . a ride of 15 or 20 miles thus could be accomplished in a day. . . . Some of as fine ladies as there are anywhere were found on these parties. It was the only change in the dull monotony of the long weather.<sup>17</sup>

In early February 1868 the Miner reported that a relief association in Rockland had appointed committees for the organization of a "public entertainment, consisting of tableaux and music." The next week, in a lengthy letter to the editor, "Robert," an Ontonagon citizen, praised the work of the "benevolent society" but thought "a concert would be much better . . . [since men in the community] do

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 4 December 1869, 18 December 1869, 1 January 1870, 8 January 1870, 15 January 1870, 22 January 1870, 7 December 1867.

<sup>17</sup> Jamison, This Ontonagon Country, 130-1.

not understand tableaux, whereas all can appreciate good music." He went on to elaborate:

In the first place tableaux, to be effective, must be well rendered, and it cannot be expected that persons unused to such things, will be perfect. In the second place there is not a hall in the town fit for the purpose and in the third place, they are more expensive when well gotten up. So on the whole we think they would do better with a concert.

The ladies of the Rockland Relief Association announced their "Grand Tableaux and Concert Entertainment" for Good Templar's Hall, in Rockland, on Friday, March 13; admission was \$.25. A description of this event was not included in the Miner for "lack of space," but it was noted that "The entertainment was a perfect success, the house being jammed. The tableaux were well performed and the variations of various pieces of music well executed." Receipts totaled \$150, suggesting that over 600 people attended.<sup>18</sup>

A holiday concert and tableaux entertainment were offered by the citizens of Rockland the week before Christmas. This time the event was given to "assist in paying for a new melodeon purchased for the High School." The program was comprised of vocal and instrumental music and charades. Again, in the spring, a public entertainment benefited the Episcopal Sunday school. "Several loads" from Ontonagon attended the event. Singing was one of the main features and involved the audience as well as a local choir. Duets and solos were included, and several tableaux were offered.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 22 February 1868, 29 February 1868, 7 March 1868, 21 March 1868

The most credible was "Father, Come Home." The song was well sung by Miss Hoyt, and at the close of each verse the curtain was raised, disclosing a tableaux corresponding to the sentiment of the verse. Miss Minnie Rogers, if she did not succeed in bringing her cruel parent home, brought tears to the eyes of the audience.

The reviewer felt the charades and dialogues were "well taken, but they were too long, keeping the audience sitting on seats without backs to them, until 12 o'clock." The performance was such a success that they repeated it the next week so that more could attend.<sup>19</sup>

All this activity in neighboring Rockland must have encouraged the citizens of Ontonagon, for in April a concert and charade were given at the Bigelow House, in Ontonagon, for the benefit of the area Sunday schools. The program included duets and solos, ballads and comic songs, and charades. The Miner proclaimed: "Our home talent is worthy of cultivation." Two programs from the Ontonagon Sunday Schools' entertainments of 1869 and 1870 are included on the following pages. These show the continuing participation of many in the community.

The week before Christmas in 1869 the home talent of Rockland gave another "grand performance to benefit the Methodist Sunday school. Songs, choruses, colloquies, and farces were part of the program. The Miner acknowledged that "the members of the glee club have in times past fully proved their ability to make successful entertainments." A glee club was present, performing in both Rockland and Ontonagon. At the end of June 1869, when the Miner editor asked, "Do our citizens intend to commemorate the day?"

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 19 December 1868, 26 December 1868.

THE ENTERTAINMENT.—The following is  
the programme presented last evening at the

## ENTERTAINMENT

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE  
ONTONAGON SUNDAY SCHOOLS,

### PROGRAMME

#### PART FIRST.

Chorus of Fire—Sacred . . . . . COMPANY  
I See Her Still in My Dreams—Duet  
Mrs. MERCER & MISS VAN SCHAIK.  
Elsie Gathers Flowers in Heaven  
Misses MORRIS & ADDIE DICKENS & A.  
MRS. . . . .  
The Old Sexton—Song . . . . . MR. PARNELL.  
Columbia's Call—Song with Chorus  
Misses VAN SCHAIK, CUTLER & WARD.  
In the Twilight—Duet  
Mrs. MERCER & MISS VAN SCHAIK.  
Comic Song . . . . . MR. J. G. HAMLIN.  
Speed Away—Ballad . . . . . Misses DICKENS  
The Shining Angel—Sacred . . . . . COMPANY.  
The Run Maniac—Recitation J. G. HAMLIN.  
National Anthem . . . . . COMPANY  
—Intermission of Ten Minutes.

#### PART SECOND.

##### CHARADE—W—L.

Mr. Cyrus Goodwin, a wealthy bachelor,  
T. J. Lasier  
Septimus Goodwin, a young man of fashion  
W. Coulter  
Mr. Mansfield, a young editor, J. G. Hamlin  
Mr. Watson, a young author, D. G. Cash  
Mrs. Marey, a fashionable widow, Mrs. Adams  
Clara Marey, her daughter, Mrs. Hamlin  
John, a negro, J. A. Crozer

#### PART THIRD.

##### CHARADE—D—N.

Mrs. Miller, a grandmother, Miss A. Cash  
Miss Mary Miller, } fashionable Mrs. Mercer  
Miss Ida Miller, } y'n'g ladies Miss Ellis  
Belle Davenport, a niece, Mrs. Adams  
Mr. Smyth, a great dandy, A. Meade  
Mr. Clayton, a lit'rary man, D. G. Cash  
Ebenezer Jenkins, D. G. Cash

#### PART FOURTH.

##### CHARADE—M—E.

Jones, a young collegian, A. Meade  
Miss Prim, an elderly maiden, Miss A. Cash  
Miss Weasel, do do Mrs. Hamlin  
Susan, parlor maid, Mrs. Mercer  
Adolphus, "fast" boy, J. A. Crozer  
Amelia, in love with Adolphus, Miss Ellis

Figure 43  
Entertainment Programme of 1869  
(Lake Superior Miner, 3 April 1869)

**ENTERTAINMENT**  
 FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE  
 OCTAGON SUNDAY SCHOOLS,  
 MARCH 23, 1870.

**Programme.**

"My Beautiful Home" COMPANY.  
 Instrumental—Polka  
 MRS. VAN SCHAICK & MRS. WELCH  
 & JACHNIG.  
 Father Come Home MRS. DICKENS.

**Charade C---e.**

Mr. Heath THOS. J. LASIER.  
 Mrs. Heath MRS. E. WARD.  
 Miss Minnie Heath MISS EMMA MITCHELL.  
 Harry Harcourt MASTER G. COPPLAND  
 Isabella Harcourt MISS A. ELLIS.  
 Albert Amory ARTH. JACHNIG.  
 James WILLIAM COULTER.

Shun The Broad Road  
 MRS. M. WARD & VAN SCHAICK.  
 Christ our Lord is Risen To-Day  
 LIZZIE VAN SCHAICK (4 years of age).  
 Tableaux—Faith Hope and Charity.  
 MRS. ELLIS & MOYLE & VAN SCHAICK.  
 Poor Old Slave MR. JAMES WELCH.

**Farce---The Fashionable Ball.**

Capt. Slim MR. A. MEADS.  
 Toney, his servant " J. LEVINE.  
 Member of Press J. M. CAMPBELL.  
 Pops, a stage struck youth W. COULTER.

Macbeth T. J. LASIER.  
 Irishman JAMES SONNERS.  
 Richard III. W. P. CASH.  
 Mass JAMES WELCH.  
 Claude A. JACHNIG.  
 India CHARLES PARKER.  
 Lady Macbeth MISS A. ELLIS.  
 Pauline MRS. ELLA MITCHELL.  
 Liza MISS D. ELLIS.  
 Dutch Woman MISS S. VAN SCHAICK.

Instrumental—Harper's Wallis  
 MISS MOLLIE DICKENS & MRS. WELCH  
 & JACHNIG.  
 Ring the Bell, Watchman MRS. MOLLIE  
 & ANNE DICKENS & MRS. WELCH &  
 JACHNIG.  
 Song that We Never Forget  
 MISS EMMA SCHNEIDER.  
 "I Fight mit Seeger"—Comic Song  
 MR. JAMES WELCH.

**Charade P---m**

Mr. Stanley W. P. CASH.  
 Peter Stanley, a very hungry boy  
 JAMES SONNERS.  
 Mrs. Stanley MISS E. WARD.  
 Miss Stanley, very fashionable  
 MISS A. ELLIS.  
 Miss Emma Joy MISS D. ELLIS.  
 Miss Mary Makepeace  
 MISS S. VAN SCHAICK.  
 Old Man, Lemm MISS ELLA MITCHELL.

Figure 44  
 Entertainment Programme of 1870  
 (Lake Superior Miner, 12 February 1870)

He suggested the Glee Club of Ontonagon could offer some music. The next February, the glee club was credited with assisting with music at the regular anniversary exercises of the Rockland Methodist Episcopal Sunday school. The general public was also invited to this program. In addition to the music, "select concert readings" were given by a high school class.<sup>20</sup>

### **Social Life in Early Ontonagon County**

James K. Jamison, in This Ontonagon County: The Story of An American Frontier, notes that the "social life of the early times climaxed with the Washington's Birthday Ball, at the Bigelow House. By 1865 these annual events had been going on for several years. The ball of 1865 raised "the unbelievable sum of \$6,017.43" for the soldiers' benefit. People came from as far away as Eagle River and Eagle Harbor, on the Kweenaw Peninsula, over one hundred miles on snowshoes. Several social balls and dances occurred throughout 1868, 1869, and 1870. In February 1868 a ball was held at the German Musical Hall, in Rockland, to benefit the Reverend Father. To commemorate the passage of an 1869 tariff bill, a "Grand Ball" was organized by "the most important businessmen in the county." This was a regional affair, held at "Jeffrey's Halfway House, 22 miles this side of Houghton." The group in attendance from Ontonagon labeled it "a grand affair" after they returned at 7 p.m. the following day. Proprietors of the gristmill, came upon the idea of having a social ball

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 26 June 1869, 4 December 1869, 11 December 1869, 12 December 1870, 19 February 1870.

to raise the funds needed to complete construction of their new mill. Though the ball was not a success in purpose, raising only \$125, it must have been a social success, because proprietor Barry indicated he might try again. Ontonagon residents often traveled to Rockland for dance socials and events. Washington's birthday, St. Patrick's Day, and New Year's were reasons to hold balls or socials.<sup>21</sup>

This research uncovered evidence of only three touring entertainments which came to Ontonagon County during this time. In January of 1858 Heckler's Brass Band, from Cleveland, appeared in the county. In 1869 an itinerant traveling theatrical troupe, E. B. Brown & Company, "bound for the head of the lake," arrived on the "Atlantic." According to a fellow passenger, they had been persuaded to give a performance while on board. Their intention was to "travel throughout the country" with performances. No further reporting of their tour was found. About that same time the steamer "Meteor" was announced to be making a pleasure trip for the summer season. The "Meteor" started from Detroit August 14, and arrived in Ontonagon about the 18th. Passengers were entertained by a "band of music" while they continued on to "Bayfield, then to Grand Portage and Pigeon River, North Shore, [and] then to the head of the lake giving passengers the opportunity of visiting the growing cities of Lake Superior" before returning to Ontonagon.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Jamison, This Ontonagon County, 133-4; Miner, 15 February 1868, 13 January 1869, 30 January 1869, 20 February 1869, 4 September 1869, 18 September 1869, 26 December 1869, 12 February 1870, 19 March 1870.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 January 1858, 3 July 1869, 10 July 1869, 24 July 1869.



## **An Agricultural Society for Ontonagon County**

Interest in securing a gristmill for Ontonagon County evolved into interest in an agricultural society for the area. In September 1867 citizens from Rockland, Ontonagon, Greenland, and Algonquin townships met on the question of a gristmill. Determined to have their own mill, rather than purchasing flour and other ground grains and having them transported across the lake, this group organized a stock company and designated that "1,000 shares at \$5 per share" be raised in order to build the mill. The question of "whether steam or water powered . . . was resolved that steam be employed in preference to water."<sup>23</sup>

Two weeks later editor Thomas J. Lasier used the Miner to suggest that the next move should be the creation of an agricultural society for the county:

There is another matter which follows closely upon these scarcities and that is the formation of an Agricultural Society in Ontonagon County. The importance of this movement is apparent to all, and yet it will not be out of place for us to refer to some of the chief reasons. In the first place, we want an incentive that shall urge our farmers to place land under cultivation. We say incentive because if you can organize an Agricultural society . . . an Agricultural fair will follow. Premiums will be offered for the finest wheat, the best corn, &c., this will be an incentive to move them on.

Second, we need something that will call out our farming community--some object for which they should meet none better can be offered than an organization of the kind. Have them come together and discuss the great problem of wheat and corn growing in this Upper Peninsula--the best kind of grains to plant,

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 14 September 1867.

& thirdly, the formation of such a society will tend to bring into the county mowing, reaping and thrashing machines. In fact, all of the latest and most improved methods.

These are but a few of the many reasons that come to us on the subject. Let some of the energy that has been displayed in perfecting arrangements for the erection of a mill, now be expanded in establishing this association. Will not someone propose a method for the accomplishing of this great and important affair?<sup>24</sup>

Again in November, Editor Lasier wrote on the importance of an agricultural society for the county, calling it the "foundation stone upon which the structure will be reared, which is to make a successful country." This article compared Ontonagon County with California, which with a successful mining country, also had "assumed its position as an agricultural field from the beginning." Lasier stated that "agriculture is the opener up of every new country." and would act to draw foreigners to the area. "If we can fill these lands with the sturdy farmer, the determined foreigner, trade and traffic will again be witnessed."<sup>25</sup>

By December planning was under way. During the last two weeks of December 1867, county citizens held meetings and formally organized the Ontonagon County Agricultural Society. At the first meeting several speeches were made, the "Articles of Association" were presented by the committee that had been writing them, and the articles were approved. By the next meeting one week later, by laws had been prepared, and these were adopted. Twelve directors were chosen to lead the new agricultural society.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 14 September 1867, 28 September 1867.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 2 November 1867.

<sup>26</sup> Miner, 21 December 1867, 28 December 1867.

News spread. The March 18, 1868 issue of the Miner contained a letter from a New York correspondent which offered some historical perspective on an agricultural society for Ontonagon County, along with some new information. A long letter from F. A. Artault, "an old pioneer of Ontonagon County," congratulated the citizens on the establishment of the new society. His letter spoke of the history of the area and the short-sighted focus of the early mining leaders who were unwilling to be concerned with anything else. In the mid-1850s Artault had been the first man "of the county [to] advocate the importance of an Emigration and Agricultural Society, but at that time, the agents of the mines, instead of patronizing the importance of men of family, were only willing to give work to single men." He decried, "They have neglected the agricultural interests, the fisheries, the fur trapping, the maple sugar crop, the lumber and timber trade, &c." He felt that if they had not, the area would have been more settled and self-sustaining by 1868. Artault went on to suggest that the society "issue as soon as possible to the eastern men interested in their county a circular explaining the importance of sustaining the agricultural efforts of the population." Artault also sent along the prospectus for a new stump machine in which he knew the society would be interested.<sup>27</sup>

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Directors of the new Ontonagon County Agricultural Society included area pioneers who were prominent farmers and businessmen. These men were: George C. Jones, Edward Sales, William W. Spalding, James E. Hoyt, Samuel F. Peck, Frederick Beck, John Cane, Joseph Vogtlin, Henry H. Pennock, Thomas J. Lasier, Lathrop Johnson, and William Harris. Miner, 28 December 1867.

<sup>27</sup> Miner, 18 April 1868.

The new agricultural society held regular monthly meetings throughout 1868. The Miner reported on the business of the society at least twice each month. The work of erecting the gristmill continued as a concern of the society, but other issues occupied the meetings and involved special committees. Identifying the “best and most economical stump machine” was one concern, along with organizing the first county-wide fair. Speeches given at meetings were often paraphrased in the Miner. In February, the Miner added a new column “devoted to the interests of agriculture.” Reports from the State Agricultural Society were included here, along with general tips on agricultural approaches and equipment.<sup>28</sup>

At their February meeting the society discussed holding an annual fair and appointed a committee to arrange the list of premiums. Three hundred dollars was appropriated for premiums. The fair was set for October 20 and 21, in Ontonagon. The listing of “Premiums” was published by the Miner, May 16, September 26, and October 10. The first premium list published was broken down into nine “Divisions,” but by October the list had been reorganized and was divided into seven classes:

- |                                |                                   |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Livestock                   | 2. Farm Products                  |
| 3. Garden Products             | 4. Fruit and Flowers              |
| 5. Manufactured Articles       | 6. Needlework, Painting & Drawing |
| 7. Miscellaneous <sup>29</sup> |                                   |

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 1 February 1868, 15 February 1868, 22 February 1868, 7 March 1868, 14 March 1868, 23 March 1868.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 1 February 1868, 16 May 1868, 26 September 1868, 3 October 1868, 10 October 1868.

### **The First Fair: "A Perfect Success!"**

Editor Lasier praised the day:

Thus has been inaugurated a movement in the interest of that which we have always contended was the surest and most certain mode of attaining a lasting prosperity to the county agriculture. This was, we believe the first fair of the kind ever held on the Lake Superior, or in the Northern tier of counties. A new era has dawned, and we can well believe that under that era, most magnificent results will be attained. . . . Nothing but surprise was expressed on all hands that a Fair could be held in Ontonagon with such perfect success.<sup>30</sup>

In a county whose total population dropped from 4,585 to 2,845 between 1860 and 1870, nearly 1,000 items were entered into the First Annual Ontonagon County Fair in October 1868. The first address before the Society was delivered by William W. Spaulding to a large audience at the Presbyterian Church. Spaulding applauded the efforts demonstrated by the fair and said:

We meet today, men of all parties, with their wives and families, and laying aside all partisan feelings . . . [to] compare notes, and each strive to do something to promote the object we all have in our view--our own happiness and the prosperity of our country.

He went on to review the history of Ontonagon County and concluded by stating that "agriculture, although recognized as the basis of a nation's prosperity, has been ignored by our nation's historians."<sup>31</sup>

Promptly after the fair, the executive committee gathered a barrellful of worthwhile specimens and sent them to the editor of the Portage Lake Gazette with their reporting of the successful fair and an "invitation to [the editor and citizens of Houghton County to be] at

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 24 October 1868.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid..

Ontonagon the first Tuesday of October 1869, and we will show them what is Fair." Ontonagon farmers had shown beyond any question that the northern soil, previously presumed to be sterile by many, was quite fertile. As the success of this first northern fair spread, "State official reports recognized Ontonagon as the center of northern agriculture."<sup>32</sup>

The opening of the completed gristmill in February 1869 was another success for the Ontonagon County Agricultural Society. That effort might have worn them down, for further reporting on society activities did not appear in the Miner until August. Again, it was Editor Lasier (also a member of the executive committee of the agricultural society) who reminded and encouraged citizens about the fair. On August 7 and, again, on September 18, the Miner included long articles.

[The time] is rapidly approaching and it is of the upmost importance that a movement be made immediately toward appointing proper committees and making such arrangements as are necessary.  
When shall we hold a meeting?

Lasier enumerated the benefits of the "cattle show and fair":

The social effect of an annual gathering of this kind upon the people of the different towns of the county will surely be beneficial . . .

It will stimulate a spirit of inquiry and investigation into the best modes of farming. It will lead to a comparison of different varieties of seed and aid in selecting the best, a question only to be solved by careful investigation . . . The farmers of this county owe it to each other to bring together samples of their farm products for their own encouragement.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 14 November, 1868; Jamison, This Ontonagon Country, 244-6.

The display at our Fair last year did much to assure and encourage all interested in demonstrating the agricultural capacity of our soil and climate. We were all surprised at the array of farm products, which would compare favorably with those of long-settled communities, grown under more genial skies. The benefits to this community in thus showing that the inhabitants can live and sustain themselves from the soil, cannot be overestimated.<sup>33</sup>

Lasier was successful, for by the end of September the society had met established committees, and on October 2 the announcement of the second annual county fair and the premiums to be awarded covered most of a page in the Miner. Fair dates were set for October 12 and 13. The same seven premium categories were used. The Miner continued with its encouragement for participation from all the citizenry of the county. The second fair of the society, "like its predecessor, was a great success, [and] we consider the society now on a permanent basis." Entries were down from the first year and the weather was bad, but attendance was good. At the second annual meeting the society voted to hold the next fair at Rockland, to "give our friends on the range a chance to spread themselves . . ." The executive committee also decided to seek the financial aid provided to the society by county taxation and began work on the appropriate papers and affidavits.<sup>34</sup>

The third annual fair was held at Rockland on October 11 and 12, and was a "creditable display." The county fair came back to Ontonagon for 1871 and 1872.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Miner, 20 February 1869, 27 February 1869, 3 March 1869, 7 August 1869, 18 September 1869.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 25 September 1869, 2 October 1869, 9 October 1869, 23 October 1869.

<sup>35</sup> History of the Upper Peninsula, 516.

In his This Ontonagon Country: the Story of an American Frontier, James Jamison reconstructs the scene of an early Ontonagon fair:

There would be the cool, sharp nights and warm, sunny days of early autumn. Buckboards, wagons and carriages would come down over the Rockland and Greenland roads, loaded with families. These roads would be lanes hedged by foliage turned brilliant by the autumn, and the drivers would watch carefully for the bad spots. There would be the hearty greetings of acquaintances not seen for a year though only a few miles separate.

These people made their own fair. There were no outside entertainers. Their women were to store surplus small news of the community for long winter uses as they stored surplus vegetables and fruits from their summer gardens. Everywhere would be evidences of the proud knowledge that they were helping build a country where soil and climate were proving to be fertile and kindly. It would be a place for genuine and unaffected friendliness. The young people would have a dance at night. When late afternoon hinted the chill of evening, men hitched horses to wagons while mothers herded tired children for the long ride home. They would still be a little excited as they departed the town and their talk would run fast and brightly. Then finally the moon would show and only the creaking of the wagon broke the silence in which children slept while their parents lived with their own thoughts of the long making of permanent homes in the Ontonagon Country.<sup>36</sup>

### **Arts at the Fairs**

"Needlework, Painting and Drawing" was one of seven classes of items developed by the "Committee on Premiums" for the first fair of the Ontonagon Agricultural Society, in 1868. On May 16, 1868, when the first announcement appeared in the Miner, "Division G," the

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<sup>36</sup> Jamison, This Ontonagon Country, 244.



needlework and creative category, included: “. . . patched quilt, white quilt, rag carpet [of] 10 yards plus, sox, tidy, worsted work, worked slippers, lamp mats, floor mats, worked collar, sofa cushion, crochet work, ornamental needlework, sewing by hand, sewing by machine.”

It was stipulated that items had to be designated as work by machine or work by hand. By October a reorganization in the categories of premiums had occurred and the arts had been officially included. “Class 6,” “Needlework, Painting and Drawing” listed the following premiums to be awarded:

- Best specimen of oil or water painting
- Best specimen of drawing
- Best patch work quilt
- Best specimen of ornamental needlework
- Best specimen of hand sewing:  
pair wool socks, moccasins, floor mat<sup>37</sup>

At the fair in October, 42 premiums, of both money and diplomas, were awarded in this class. The winners were 27 ladies of Ontonagon County. With the exception of photography, a broad range of ornamental and creative work received premiums. Three paintings and one drawing took awards. Two oil paintings, entitled Tell's Chapel and Lake George, were both done by [Miss] Libbie Harris. The third was an Oriental painting by Mrs. J. S. Cultler. “Cluster pencil drawings” received a diploma for Gussie Ellis. Items of feather work, seed work, and cone work brought four premiums to Miss Libby Moyle, who won with an agricultural wreath made of one hundred varieties of seeds, a feather bouquet, an item of cone work, and a

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<sup>37</sup> Miner, 16 May 1868, 3 October 1868.

specimen of white braiding. The variety of worsted work included a scarf, a tidy, a lamp mat, and an afghan. Two worsted canvases took premiums as did suspenders of worsted ornamental work. Two picture frames appeared on the premium list, one of worsted work and one decorated with leather work. A watchcase, pincushions, an infant's basket, embroidery (on flannel and in cotton work), and a rag mat also received awards. Two "cardboard" crosses, probably perforated embroidery work, took premiums along with various items of wearing apparel. One worsted hood was ornamented with beadwork. An "infant's basket" also received a premium. Eight quilts received awards; one was a child's crib quilt, and another was described as a "silk and worsted patchwork." Two of these quilts were entered by relatives on behalf of "Grandma Beasler," who had made them when she was 74 and 78 years of age. The judging committee for this class noted that "their department was fully and ably represented, proving satisfactorily that the ladies are possessed of exquisite taste and that they had most laudable objects in view. in presenting articles for this class."<sup>38</sup>

In "Class 5," "Manufactured Articles," two other items received awards which should be noted here. James Anthony's willow basket and H. R. Hadrick's silver napkin ring, made from native silver, both received premiums.<sup>39</sup>

"Needlework, Painting and Drawing" remained as the class for creative work and needlework at the Second Annual Ontonagon County

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 24 October 1868.,

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

Fair. Three of the five individuals on the judging committee for this class were women who had won premiums for their work at the first fair. Miss Libbie Harris was the oil painter; Miss Agnes Cash had won for her worsted work lamp mat; and Miss Augusta Ellis might have been the Gussie Ellis who received a premium for her cluster pencil drawings.<sup>40</sup>

In his call to the community, Editor Lasier included the ladies along with the mechanics and farmers as he encouraged citizen involvement and reminded everyone about the upcoming fair:

The ladies do much towards rendering the Fairs attractive, and we confidently expect they will do their share toward the approaching one. Let them come from all parts of the county, and bring some article for exhibition, a rag carpet, embroidery, lamp mat, tidy or anything that is nice, good or useful.<sup>41</sup>

The reporting on the second fair indicated that many fewer items were been entered than the "nearly 1,000" entered at the first fair. This was apparent in the "Needlework, Painting and Drawing" class, where only ten premiums were awarded to as many ladies of the county. Again, no premiums were given for photography, and paintings received no premiums this year. Premiums were awarded for a drawing, a quilt, ornamental needlework and two cardboard crosses. Crochet work, hand sewing, a floor mat, and two rag carpets also received premiums. The Miner's coverage included the following comment on this class:

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 2 October 1869.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 9 October 1869.

[The] ladies department was well represented and several beautiful samples of handiwork were exhibited. All were done well and undoubtedly sent the best they had and we know that in many cases the committees had to use very nice discriminations to decide in favor of the different articles.<sup>42</sup>

## **Summary**

Patterns similar to the other three case studies have been found in Ontonagon County in the late 1850s and 1860s. Situated at the northern edge of Michigan, far removed from any centers of population, community-based cultural organizations provided county residents with ways of involvement and entertainments in musical and literary areas. A lecture series, a library, a musical society, and a glee club created a community-based cultural experience for these north woods residents.

The directors of the Ontonagon County Agricultural Society participated as well with their annual fairs. At the first fair drawing, painting and needlework were included in the competition for premiums. It was at the fair that county residents had an opportunity to see a collection of art and creative works exhibited and to include their own work. If there had been an Ontonagon County Fair in 1857, when Mrs. E. H. Jones completed her model of that "snug little country seat" of houses, outbuildings, trees, a brook, flower garden, and fountain, she probably would have entered it at the fair.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

## **PART III**

## **CONCLUSION**

## **Chapter 8**

# **CONCLUSION**

Based upon the findings presented in the preceding four case studies, it is evident that these county fairs served their constituencies as community arts organizations of their day. Long before today's community arts agencies, these, democratic, community-based societies embraced all the people and a broad range of creative expression as a part of their annual, educational, recreational and celebratory events.

Today's community arts agencies reflect the unique interests and meet the special needs of the people in the locales they serve. The National Association of Local Arts Agencies (NALLA), in its publications, has identified common goals and activities shared by successful local community arts agencies. In light of modern contemporary views of the roles and functions of these agencies, this study has utilized these goals as a lens through which to reevaluate several early Michigan county fairs of the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s. These common goals include:

- Improving quality--recognizing the importance of quality when dealing with the arts. This does not necessarily mean the setting of standards, but the process of a continual seeking of quality.

- Equalizing access--recognizing the importance of extending access and enjoyment of the arts into all areas of the community.
- Preserving cultural pluralism--the importance of recognizing, nurturing, and exposing the community to a broad range of cultural traditions and creative efforts.
- Extending the definition of the arts--including other cultural expressions and recognizing folk and traditional crafts and skills as legitimate creative endeavors.
- Working to create a nurturing environment for artists and other arts agencies and organizations.
- Seeing the agency as important to the community as a whole, through planning for a cultural future and through the recognition of cultural history.<sup>1</sup>

While these goals address the current contemporary scene, in both language and, in some cases, concept, this study reveals their relevance to the early county fair experience as well. The similarity of purpose is quite remarkable, considering the passage of one hundred, plus years in time between the first few decades of the county fairs in Michigan and today. Revisited with this awareness of the 1990s contemporary community arts organization, the early county fair served as a community arts agency of its day.

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<sup>1</sup> Yuen. Community Vision, 1-2.; Arts for America, 1-3.

### **Seeking Quality in the Arts**

The county fairs of this study sought and encouraged quality in the arts through their activities. The discovery and recognition of quality was the predominant reason for competitions at the fairs. In the arts and home manufactures, as well as the agricultural categories, the acknowledgement of "best" rewarded the work of individuals, inspired others and contributed to community aesthetic pursuits. In this way, the county fairs encouraged the active participation of citizens in building a better life for the community, and the arts were a part of this definition of a better life.

Premiums were awarded for meritorious work only. Bylaws, fair rules, and judging instructions indicated that if there was only one item entered and that item was not worthy, then no premium would be awarded. Judging committees were provided with the opportunity of awarding discretionary premiums to acknowledge deserving works over and above the stated award categories and/or in addition to these categories. Actual practice verified this. From the first fairs forward there were ongoing efforts by judging committees and division superintendents to seek accurate descriptive titles for creative categories and to group comparable items together. This continuous search for appropriate configuration of titles and categories suggests a serious effort to represent and include a broad range of creative efforts which existed within the community.

Several aesthetic issues emerged to address the conscious quest of quality in the creative articles and activities of these county fairs. In St. Joseph County a fine arts judging committee recommended



changes in both the structure of the competitive categories and in the premiums awarded in order to separate "works of art and works of skill." At the foundation of their concerns was the imposed comparison of paintings and photographs and paintings and dentistry products within one competitive category. This committee felt the need to recognize the complexity inherent in works of art. They felt creative process, as well as a high level of skill necessary for successful execution vs technical skill alone, was required in photography or dentistry. They also recommended the higher premium award should go to painting and not to photography.

The differences between original work and copy work was another aesthetic issue. By the early 1870s, in the Grand Traverse Region, designations between original work and copies developed. In the Grand Traverse Herald's, "Notes from a Lady," a guest editor provided extensive coverage of the creative work at the fairs. She discussed the importance of original works in several different ways. First of all, she acknowledged, there was a difference between chromos, which were mass-produced pictures, and original works of area artists. She recommended that a separate place be provided in the exhibit area for "home talent." In descriptions of paintings and drawings, she carefully noted which were original works and which were copies. Premium awards for painting and drawing began to distinguish between original works and copies. The distinction of "original" work was also noted in premiums awarded at the 1872 Ionia County Fair.

These county agricultural societies also sought to recognize the items of high merit was through the selection of judges with experience and knowledge in the areas they were judging. While judging committees often included county agricultural society members and their families, they also included community members with known involvement in the painting, needlework, or ornamental works that were judging. A comparison of the premium winners and listing of judges often showed that individuals winning premiums in one category--for a hair wreath or quilt, for example--were listed as judges for the painting/drawing category, and vice versa. Also, winners one year would appear the next year as judges. Local educators and others involved in cultural activities within the community were also designated as judges. Women teachers, who had more opportunity through their own education for training in the arts, were also found among the judges. One Ionia woman, recently returned from two years of music training in Germany, was announced to be a judge in a creative category within a few months of her return. In St. Joseph County, the father of a band leader served as the superintendent for "Floral Hall."

### **Access To All**

The county fair brought a true cross section of the community together. Just as this nation was founded on the premise of the relevance and importance of all the people, these early agricultural societies aimed to serve and represent the entire community. Walt Whitman, in his 1855 "Preface" to Leaves of Grass points to the "genius of the United States" as not best shown by its leaders, "but

always most in the common people." To Whitman the "greatest poet [and perhaps the greatest artist,] is the equable man." This founding principal of our country was referenced by President George Bush in his "State of the Union Address" when he noted that this country had always proceeded from the premise that "a people will do great things, if only you will set them free."<sup>2</sup>

These annual fairs were designed to include all people and all activities of the community--from agriculture, to horticulture, and domestic manufactures to the merchants, bankers, and educators who interacted with the farmer. The Ionia County Agricultural Society's "call" was typical, inviting "everyone of every craft and calling--especially the ladies."<sup>3</sup> While the societies were membership organizations, an annual fee of \$.50 or \$1.00 was not limiting to the population at large. In addition, the fee provided a family membership, which included wives and children (under a specified age).

Competition at the fair was open to any member of the agricultural society. This was not a hurried process but a broad, inclusive one. All entries were considered and were eligible for premiums. All ages competed and won premiums. Press reports often acknowledged the work of the very young or the very old. The talent of one 90-year-old quilt maker was lauded, acknowledging that younger quilters could learn a lot from her. In some cases, specific premiums were set aside for children of various ages, e.g., quilt

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<sup>2</sup> Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass, "Preface," (New York, Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1940) 294, 297; George Bush, "State of the Union Address," 28, January 1992.

<sup>3</sup> Ionia Sentinel, 13 September 1872.

squares by a boy of 9 or a girl of 12. All classes within the community participated in the annual fairs by entering items for competition. In the communities studied, these included farmers, bankers, editors, judges, wives, and children. In St. Joseph County evidence was found to suggest that one of "two colored servants" in the area exhibited and received recognition at both county and state fairs. Though not significant in number, the works of handicapped individuals also were noted in this research. Examples include a blind girl and a "crippled" child whose works were entered into competition on their behalf by others. Charles Kroupa, premium winner for his near lifesize crucifix, spent much of his time carving after returning from the Civil War with "crippled" feet.

The arts and creative works at the fairs were accessible to the whole community; these included items and processes which were easily within the reach of even the most economically deprived in the community. Oil paints and canvases were not necessary precursors to participation at the fair. The guest editor of the Grand Traverse Herald addressed this issue and praised the resourcefulness of some of the artists. "It is wonderful what pretty things people will make out of the oddest materials."<sup>4</sup> Her examples included a design of flowers done in perforated work on cardboard and a wreath of flowers made from seeds. The inclusion of needlework and crazy quilts, as well as lamp mats and oil paintings, offered opportunities to everyone in the community to participate. Besides making something to take to the fair, participation also involved going to the fair and walking through

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<sup>4</sup> Grand Traverse Herald, 10 October 1874.

Floral Hall to view the exhibits and being awed by the creative energies of one's neighbors. This was the closest to a museum or gallery experience that the majority of these citizens would ever have.

### **Attention to Other Cultures**

Before the terminology, "cultural pluralism" was in use in this country, the exhibitions of the early county fairs included items and artifacts from other lands or representative of other cultures. There was no recognized effort to exclude any type of people or things from the fairs. There is evidence of the showcasing of the arts of other cultures and of a "colored" woman winning premiums for her creative work. The county agricultural societies, through their fairs, sought to represent the people, activities, and interests of their county. Because of this, community members who had traveled abroad, or who possessed treasures from other lands handed down within their own families, brought them to the fair. The county fair provided an opportunity to do this. There were not numerous examples of items exhibited from other lands, but the inclusion of these items gave many citizens opportunities that otherwise might never have come their way.

Most of the items of other cultures singled out for discussion in the press occurred in the Grand Traverse Region. This is due to the fact that entries in the home arts and creative categories were handled in much greater detail beginning in 1873, when an anonymous guest editor paid particular attention to these items in her fair column "Fair Notes . . . from the Pen of a Lady." This type of

attention continued on a broader plane when Mrs. M. E. C. Bates joined her editor husband as associate editor in 1876 and inaugurated the "Home Department" for the Herald.

Cloth made by the natives of the Sandwich Islands from the bark of trees was shown at the Grand Traverse Fair in 1869. This unusual cloth was commented upon in the press. Years later a quilt, perhaps made from this very cloth, was entered into competition at the fair. A quantity of Oriental work was shown by two ladies at the 1877 Grand Traverse Union Fair. This work was reported as ". . . very quaint and beautiful . . . [the items included] cabinets, work baskets, plates, boxes, fans . . . and a showcase filled with old and rare curiosities."<sup>5</sup> At the first Grand Traverse Union Fair, agricultural society president Dunlap and his wife exhibited a case of items from other countries, primarily Greece.

Native American artifacts and artworks were also exhibited at the fairs. The Millers, who in their Traverse City drugstore kept a large display of "Indian" artifacts and art objects, regularly displayed this work at the fair. In other instances, a "Modoc Indian basket" made from sea grass was exhibited at the Grand Traverse Union Fair, and the East End Picture Store included "Indian" artifacts along with shells and chromos in their merchant displays.

### **A Broad Definition of the Arts**

Today's scholarship recognizes that all levels in a culture have meaning. Cultural relativism was indeed practiced by the early

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 8 October 1877.

county agricultural societies. These county fairs acknowledged a broad range of creative works in their competitive categories. The arts at the fairs included ornamented clothing, needlework of all kinds, and decorated utilitarian objects such as quilts, hearth rugs, parlor brackets, and lamp mats. Purely ornamental works included a vast array of boxes, frames, wreaths, and flowers made from natural objects. Hair, grasses, shells, moss, seeds, and wax provided raw materials for exquisite ornamental and decorative items which graced the homes of many within the community. "Fine arts" were showcased at the fairs. These included drawings, paintings, and etchings. Pottery and sculpture or statuary made an appearance at the fairs, but to a much smaller degree. Photography was most often included in the fine arts categories as well. When entered items seemed not to fit into an existing category, they were not excluded but were considered in the "Miscellaneous Class."

Though not directly addressed in this research, the competitive categories of the fairs included the community artisan. The skills and artistry involved in sign and carriage painting, graining and marbling, fine woodwork, cabinetry, and copper and tin work were recognized and exhibited for the community to see and admire. There also was room for items not fitting any of the defined classes or categories. In 1877 "a ship model . . . completely rigged was [exhibited along side] another ship which had been made of yarn and twine, by a sailor while at sea"<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 18 October 1877.

Technical skills alone were not the measure of worth. Aesthetic considerations, such as form, design, color, composition, and balance, complemented the necessity of technical expertise as the judging committees evaluated and selected the items which would be deemed "best" within the categories. Community standards were both shaped and expressed through the process of selecting items for premium awards in the creative categories.

### **Nurturing Artists and Agencies**

The continuous inclusion of the arts at the county fairs told everyone in the community that the arts were an essential part of life. This recognition of the arts acknowledged their existence in the community and indicated that creative pursuits were valued. In each case study the section of the fair where the creative and ornamental works were displayed was a key component of the entire fair. Whether it was a tent, the county courthouse, or a separate building, "Floral Hall" was second only to the races in popularity. A building for "Floral Hall" was often the second permanent facility erected when a society gained its own grounds.

The agricultural society utilized citizens who were personally involved in and supportive of the arts as members of judging committees. Known for their own work in quilting, making agricultural or feather wreaths, or painting, etc., judges were often those who had exhibited and won premiums at previous fairs. Individuals from the broader arts community participated as well. In one instance, in Ionia, Marion Hall agreed to serve on the judging



committee for "Paintings, Drawings and Photographs" within a few months of her return from two years of musical study in Germany. Another example from the Grand Traverse Region occurred when George Crossette, father of the leader of the brass band, served as superintendent for "Floral Hall" and as a judge in the creative classes.

Area bands performed at most of the county fairs. They participated in a parade or provided a demonstration of their marching and musical abilities in separate events, such as concerts just before or after the announcement of premium awards, accompaniments at "Floral Hall" for the enjoyment of those viewing the works there, or evening dances. Later, when the competitive categories included band music, several bands from the region or county entertained fairgoers while vying for the top award.

In addition to the countywide recognition that individual winners received, "home teachers" and local merchants gained community exposure by displaying their products or services at the fair. Besides entering their best work in competitions, area photographers often exhibited collections of their work which featured community leaders and events. Photographic histories suggest that photographers often set up tents or took their cars to the fairs as well. Music stores and dealers entertained fair crowds with displays of musical instruments.

### **Promoting the Cultural History and Planning the Cultural Future**

These early county agricultural societies viewed themselves as leading their communities towards the future. Their annual fairs

provided the method, through an informal educational process. Creative activities of the fairs had a significant impact upon the

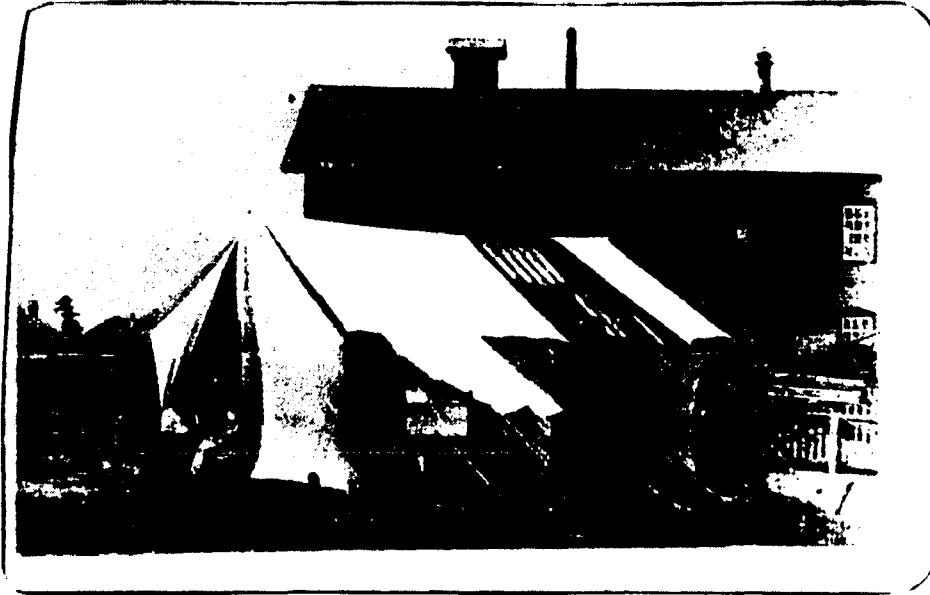


**Figure 45**  
**Mc Manus Brothers Photography Tent**  
 (Carte de Viste, Traverse City Photographers tent gallery.  
 c1875, 1880. Source: Courtesy of David D. Tinder)

cultural life of the communities they served. The annual fair provided the vehicle by which the accomplishments of individuals across a wide range of creative talents were acknowledged and encouraged, and thus benefitted the welfare of the community as a whole in both practical and aesthetic ways. The inclusion of creative arts and activities at the fairs was an acknowledgement of their value to the community at large, and it encouraged continuing individual participation in the arts.

Valued items from the past were exhibited at the county fairs represented in this study. In 1878, at the Grand Traverse County Fair, John Broadfoot entered a Masonic robe of his own making and

exhibited along with it an old robe, an "antiquated regalia of the finest work . . . marked 100 years old."<sup>7</sup> In another instance a lady exhibited a hair comb that was 50 years old. In 1876, the Grand Traverse Union Agricultural Society established a special "Centennial Department" for the purpose of ". . . help[ing] us know how our good old forefathers lived." The editor of the Herald was the superintendent of this department, and throughout many issues of the paper he encouraged everyone to contribute anything related to the exhibition: "old furniture, dishes, cooking utensils, books ornaments, needlework Indian relics, minerals, heirlooms . . . "<sup>8</sup>

In these ways, county fairs provided a bridge between the accomplishments of the past and the continuing process of development for the present and future. Even today the fair remains a cultural experience, bridging the past and present, and providing avenues for creative expression and encouragement within our contemporary communities.

### **Parallels Between the Past and Present**

In many ways the activities of these early county fairs parallel the contemporary work of today's community arts agencies. The fairs identified individuals working in creative ways and brought their work to the attention of the community at large. By their inclusion at the fairs, creative activities were shown to have value. The awarding of premiums provided acknowledgment of successful accomplishment

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 10 October 1878.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 17 August 1876.

for the creators and offered the general citizen an indication of quality within the range of community efforts.



**Figure 46**  
**Exhibits in Grange Hall "At the Fair", Barryton, Michigan**  
 Photo by F. R. Lyon, October 1-2, 1909  
 (Source: Courtesy David V. Tinder.)

For individuals interested in the arts, exhibitions provided opportunities to see new works and to become acquainted with processes and techniques which they were not familiar. Through observation, and most probably discussion, an informal educational process was at work providing avenues to learn new ways of working in the arts. For individuals interested but not already engaged in creative pursuits, the variety of creative works shown at the fairs may have encouraged them to try something on their own. For the majority of citizens, the exhibition and display areas might have been

comparable to a contemporary museum or gallery, providing a vast assortment of items for the enjoyment or curiosity of the viewer. These societies, through their county fairs, were major community agencies/vehicles which provided exposure of and opportunities for participation in arts and creative activities to all persons within the communities that they served.

### **Future Exploration**

The absence of data and resources surrounding these early agricultural societies and their fairs is quite surprising. Reports from county societies are included as a part of the annual Transactions of the [Michigan] State Agricultural Society between 1849 and 1860. The county reports during this first decade include letters, committee reports, and the constitution and bylaws, as well as initial premium lists, winners, judging committee reports and even texts of addresses made to the societies. After this period, the Transactions only acknowledge the receipt of reports from the county societies. Reports are not included, probably because of the increasing numbers of societies in Michigan and the space it would have incurred. County society reports were required to be submitted to the State agricultural society. These early records however have not been retained in the collections of the Michigan Department of Agriculture, the Library of Michigan or the Michigan State Archives. From the experience of this researcher, it is also rare for county governmental agencies, local or regional libraries and archives to have retained these early records.

The agricultural societies themselves have often not maintained their own records for a variety of reasons. Many of the societies existing today have not been continuous, since these early times, as the same organization. Until very recently societies have been volunteer run (many still are,) coming together primarily to produce an annual fair. The priority of organizing and implementing the fair supersedes the effort necessary to document and organize a record of their past. County histories, appearing in the mid to late 1870s, often included a small section on the early agricultural societies. This reporting identifies the date of organization, the individuals responsible for maintaining the society as officers and trustees, and the accomplishments of various years. These activities include the amount of gate receipts or premiums paid, the purchase or addition of grounds or building.

As discovered in this study, the newspapers of the day provides a first hand record of the time, both in the effort to organize these county societies and in describing their fairs. This community based reporting points the researcher to another layer of resources which should be used for systematically extracting information of the county agricultural societies and their impact on the lives of those who participated in them--the people who were involved. From the community leaders who shaped the fairs, to the community members who participated, treasures relating to these experiences most certainly exist withinin homes in every county in Michigan. Personal tales and reminiscences will be revealed through private letters, papers and journals, and in the photographs and treasured family

heirlooms which have been handed down from generation to generation. References to the fairs and their impact on individual lives will not be easily found with the aides of an index or table of contents, but will be intertwined in the lives of individuals. It is highly recommended that the memories of our oldest citizens should be tapped through oral history techniques, capturing the tales and memories which are still available to us.

This exploratory study of four Michigan county fairs provides a platform for future investigations of the arts at fairs and the fair in its role as an early community arts organization. Studies of other Michigan counties will add evidence to this inquiry. These early fairs provide the folklorist and student of popular culture with an annual event which gathered a broad range of creative works representative of individual involvement in the creative process. There is a clear need for the undertaking of a systematic effort to collect and preserve these early fair records.

This research focused on the more remote and rural areas of the state. However, questions also arise concerning the role of fairs in metropolitan areas ,where exposure and sophistication in the arts existed on another level. Were the arts at the fairs in these more densely populated areas different than those found in more rural regions of the state? Were other community arts agencies influenced by the arts activities of the county fairs? Judith Barter, in her introduction to Currents of Expansion: Paintings in the Midwest, 1820-1940, states that in St. Louis, the success of the annual Agricultural and Mechanical Association's fairs of the mid-1840s and

their growing attention to fine arts later influenced the establishment of the Western Academy of Arts, in 1859.<sup>9</sup> Was this type of influence at work in Michigan? Michigan's state fairs, for all but one of the first fourteen years (1849-1862), were held in the Detroit area. Were there connections between the arts at the fairs--the organizers and artists involved-- and the development of Detroit's early arts institutions?

The relationship of the fair to the artist is also of interest. Did the opportunity for competition and informal education offered by these fairs provide those who became acknowledged as "artists" with significant opportunities as they learned and established their careers? Fairs are acknowledged as a place of exhibition in biographical statements of artists. Most of the exhibition catalogs consulted in this research included artists with records of exhibiting at fairs. It would be interesting to discover, especially for artists who were not located in larger population centers, if the exposure and opportunities provided by these early fairs contributed to their continuation and advancement in the arts.

In discussing the patterns of the agricultural fair in America, Fred Kniffen has addressed the physical lay out of the fairs as well as the different activities they encompassed. He feels that, beginning in the 1870s, the educational focus of the early fairs began to diminish, other agencies and amusements/entertainments became incorporated into fair activities.<sup>10</sup> As has been noted in this study, community bands

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<sup>9</sup> Barter & Springer, Currents of Expansion, 17.

<sup>10</sup> Kniffen, "The Pattern," 272-3.



were quite active at the early fairs. In later periods were other community arts organizations or community based arts, such as dance and drama, included at fair time as well? And later, when entertainments brought into the fair became major competitors for attention and attendance with livestock and grain, how did these entertainments relate with the arts of the community or the arts of the nation?

The agricultural fair heretofore has been studied primarily for its role as an agricultural agency. I hope that this study, which reevaluates the early role of the fair as a community arts agency, will inspire other investigations of this grassroots organization which continues today to provide information, entertainment, and awareness between rural and urban citizens across the country.

## **APPENDICES**

## **Appendix A**

### **Museum & Historical Society Survey**

Sixty-seven surveys were sent to museums and historical societies with collections to identify items with direct connections to county fairs as well as representative examples of the kinds of things which were entered for competition as arts at the fairs. Forty-one institutions returned the survey, most with photocopies and descriptions of items which they own.

Visits were made to four of these institutions for further research into their collections. Special thanks are extended to to the following agencies and their curators who willingly shared their time and opened their collections.

Hillsdale County Historical Society House/Museum  
Michigan State University Museum  
Michigan State Historical Museum  
Public Museum of Grand Rapids

Summary information resulting from the survey is reported below. A copy of the survey itself follows.

- **Institutions with holdings that include creative work of the types that were exhibited at the fairs of this period.**

Alamo Township Museum  
Albion Historical Society  
Blair Historical Farm  
Center for Cultural & Natural History  
Charlton Park, Hastings  
Crocker House Museum  
Detroit Historical Museum  
East Jordon Portside Art & Historical Museum  
Hillsdale County Historical Society House & Museum  
Historical Society of Battle Creek  
Holland Historical Trust

Houghton County Historical Society  
 Inlay City Historical Museum  
 Kalamazoo Public Museum  
 Kalkaska County Historical Society  
 Leelanau Historical Museum, (Leland)  
 Marquette County Historical Society  
 Michigan Historical Museum (Lansing)  
 Michigan State University Museum (East Lansing)  
 Michigan Women's Historical Center (Lansing)  
 Milford Historical Society  
 Morton House Museum, (Benton Harbor)  
 Muskegon County Museum  
 Northville Historical Society  
 Oakland County Historical Society (Pontiac)  
 Paine-Gillam-Scott Museum (St. Johns)  
 Plymouth Historical Museum  
 Public Museum of Grand Rapids  
 Southwestern Michigan College  
 Tri Cities Historical Society, Grand Haven Area Historical Society  
 Troy Museum & Historical Village  
 Van Buren County Historical Society, Hartford  
 Wyandotte Museum  
 Ypsilanti Historical Society Museum & Archives

**Item/s which were exhibited or won a premium at fairs/**

- Detroit Historical Museum  
several items from State Fairs, but not from County Fairs
- Leelanau Historical Museum
  - Bonnet, babies**, 1909. Ecrú cotton embroidered w/linen thread  
- 2nd premium, Leelanau Co. Fair, Suttons Bay, 1909
  - Cuffs** w/ broderie anglais, 1909. Cotton embroidery;  
- 2nd premium Leelanau County Fair.
  - Mirror**, 1901. Circular beveled glass mirror in Oak frame  
suspended from a pair of oxen horns mounted on a  
circular oak base covered with red velvet. Blue ribbon  
winner at 1st fair held in Suttons Bay.  
Made by Laro P. Bolme in 1901
- Kalkaska County Historical Society  
original Howe sewing machine, won bronze medal in 1867
- Marquette County Historical Society  
a photograph
- Michigan State University Museum (East Lansing)  
quilt with ribbon  
2 small locomotives, (est. size: 18"H x 3' long) 1871,  
with diploma

- Southwestern Michigan College  
Round Oak Stoves, Becwith & Lee Grain Drills, Warner, Morlan  
and Byers Grain Drills

### **Photographs (steroviews, etc)**

- Albion Historical Society - yes  
picture - Pottawatomie Indians at Calhoun Co. Fair, c 1910
- East Jordon Portside Art & Historical Museum  
ribbons won by peninsula Grange
- Leelanau Historical Museum  
3 postcards c. 1910
- Holland Historical Trust  
photo of horseracing at Holland Co. Fair, no dates
- Kalkaska County Historical Society  
pictures of county fairs, 1905 & 1912  
pictures of carnivals at fair times, early 1900's
- Michigan Women's Historical Center  
photo-Indian Women at the Eaton Co. Fair, with baskets c. 1900
- Northeast Oakland Historical Society  
photo of Oxford Street Fair
- Milford Historical Society  
crowd at fair observing equipment (no date possibly turn of  
century)  
other pictures (from c1940s)
- Northville Historical Society  
photographs from Wayne County Fairs in 20th century
- Oakland County Historical Society  
2 postcards (poor quality) which may be of the fairs, dates  
unknown
- Paine-Gillam-Scott Museum (St. Johns)  
post card photo-horseracing: "Clinton Co. Fair Society, in 1865,  
purchased 30 acres of land . . . last fair held in 1932  
8/10 photo "Community Cannine Center, St. Johns Michigan,  
4th Prize Winners at Detroit, 1918--first 4-H club in  
Clinton Co.
- Plymouth Historical Museum  
baseball team at Plymouth old fairground in front of old grand  
stand "60 years ago"  
post card of entry at Plymouth Fair Association, 5 girls
- Troy Museum & Historical Village  
possibly, these are stored at another location

**posters**

## •Hillsdale County Historical Society House &amp; Museum

**original posters:**

1893 - young woman (Gypsy type clothing)

1897

1899 2 oxen &amp; farmer

\* **original art** at Fair Publishing House, Norwalk Ohio

1906 - dark haired girl

1907 - blond girl

1909-2 children peaking over fence

(cc on 1982 premium list)

1910

## •Milford Historical Society

2 Bristol board signs

(14x44" "Milford Fair August. 7-10) no date

**premiums**

## •Albion Historical Society

Premium List Albion Fair, 1898

## •Crocker House Museum

1858 Romeo 9th Annual Fair, Rules &amp; Awards Pamphlet

## •East Jordan Portside Art &amp; Historical Museum

ribbons for pies, jellies, canned fruit, cattle &amp; sheep (1940s)

## •Hillsdale County Historical Society House/Museum

diploma, 1871 for Brick Making Machine

ribbons - 2 from 1924, 3 from 1925, 1 from 1926

## •Holland Historical Trust

trophy, 1898, Holland Fair, silver cup awarded in bicycle race

## •Imlay City Historical Museum

Michigan Showmens Association State Award, 1975

Presidents Trophy by Michigan Showmens Association to

Eastern Michigan Fair, 1967

## •Milford Historical Society

Premium Books: Oakland Co. Fair, 1939 "Day and Night", and  
1938, also from 56th, 57th fairs (no date)

Premium Book from 36th Annual Milford Fair, 1916

## •Muskegon County Museum

3rd Annual fair, Muskegon County Fair Association, Premium  
List, 1897 (partial list)

## •Northville Historical Society

premium books from Wayne County Fairs - 20th century

## •Plymouth Historical Museum

premium list, Plymouth Fair Association, 1890 and 1895

- Public Museum of Grand Rapids  
award by State Agricultural Society for excellence in wood turning
- Southwestern Michigan College  
Cass County Fair premium lists for: 4th-1908, 5th-1909, 6th-1910  
Dowagiac Union Fair, 1st annual premium list, 1879  
(included Cass, Berrien, Van Buren and St. Joseph Counties)
- Troy Museum & Historical Village  
ribbons won by Wattles Family at State & County fairs for cattle
- Wyandotte Museum  
10 ribbons, poultry & pet stock: 1912, 1914, 1915, 1916, 1919, 1923

#### **other information**

- Albion Historical Society  
souvenir brass badge, Albion Fair 1897  
1948 token, Calhoun Co. Fair, Centennial Token, 1848-1948  
A History of Entertainment and Its Environs in Albion by Frank Passic, Curator of Local History (1 1/2 pgs on Albion Fair & Driving Park, open between 1893 & WWI)
- Charlton Park, Hastings  
ID pass to a Chicago Dairy Show  
M.A.C. Badges (3)  
Fair Pass to Barry Co. Agricultural Society  
souvenir of West MI State Fair, Grand Rapids, 1905  
Button for MI State Fair, Grand Rapids, 1899  
Button for MI State Fair, Grand Rapids, 1909  
Tag (paper) w/button in center for admission, West MI State Fair, 1908
- Hillsdale County Historical Society House/Museum  
return checks & privilege ticket from 1915  
colored advertisement, blotter, 1922, 1929  
Hillsdale County Fairgrounds - framed  
**"bird's-eye" etching of grounds**  
Hillsdale Fair souvenir paddle - carved and dated
- Holland Historical Trust  
Official Ottawa Col. Records on Ottawa Co Fair & Papers of member of Ottawa Co. Fair Commission (no dates)
- Kalamazoo Public Museum - currently centering part of the permanent exhibit around the first several county fairs of Kalamazoo County
- Michigan State University Museum (East Lansing)  
quilt (log cabin pattern) made from fair ribbons

- Milford Historical Society
  - ledger book of fair records exists within the community
  - family ticket, Milford Fair Association, 29th exhibition, 1909
  - 2 envelopes w graphics/pictures: 1914, 1915
- Oakland County Historical Society
  - Moses Wisner's papers (past governor) indicates he donated \$ for prizes for fairs
  - Birds Eye Litho of Pontiac shows fair grounds**
- Paine-Gillam-Scott Museum (St. Johns)
  - banner: 1876 County Fair (Clinton) Celebration Centennial, felt w/painted design
- Plymouth Historical Museum
  - Plymouth Fair Association, certificate of shares of capital stock, 1885
  - certificate verifying the filing of articles of association for Plymouth Fair Association, 1885
- Public Museum of Grand Rapids
  - button commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Michigan State Fair
  - button, c1900, Michigan State Fair
  - (dog powered treadmill butter churn --"the type of thing at fairs")
- Van Buren County Historical Society, Hartford
  - paraphernalia of locally well-known clown who performed at county fair for many years; a local celebrity



### **Museum Letter Text**

I am investigating the early county fair in Michigan as a community arts organization. Kurt Dewhurst, Director of the MSU Museum, is my major professor. He has suggested your museum as a potential source of information.

I am hoping to locate items in Michigan museum collections (or examples of the types of things) which were exhibited or won premiums at county fairs before 1900. Would you share information about any such items in your collections? Enclosed is a checklist and stamped envelop for your convenience. My interest includes domestic arts, traditional arts and decorative fancy work as well as fine art items. I am also interested in photographs, postcards, posters, or premiums related to county fairs in Michigan. Naturally, your museum will be credited for any materials cited in the dissertation.

Your effort is most appreciated. I would appreciate receiving your response by June 1st. A brief summary of my project is included for your information. Any ideas or resources you might suggest are very welcome. Thank you!

## Museum Survey Text

Museum: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Please note items which exist in your collection. Notes about exceptional items or unusual information would be appreciated.

### Checklist

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> agricultural wreaths<br><input type="checkbox"/> ambrotypes<br><input type="checkbox"/> bead work<br>(ladies bags, pin cushions...)<br><input type="checkbox"/> bowls & spoons<br>of knotted roots or wood<br><input type="checkbox"/> chromos penciling<br><input type="checkbox"/> drawings (crayon, pencil...)<br><input type="checkbox"/> fancy brackets parlor brackets<br><input type="checkbox"/> feather work<br><input type="checkbox"/> flax flowers<br><input type="checkbox"/> frostwork pictures<br><input type="checkbox"/> hair work<br><input type="checkbox"/> housewife<br><input type="checkbox"/> graining<br><input type="checkbox"/> leather work<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> ingrain carpet<br><input type="checkbox"/> medley pictures | <input type="checkbox"/> monochromatic drawing<br><input type="checkbox"/> moss work<br><input type="checkbox"/> ornamental penmanship<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> paper cutouts<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> paintings (oil, watercolor)<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> quilts<br><input type="checkbox"/> sculpture, statuary<br><input type="checkbox"/> scrap bags<br><input type="checkbox"/> shell work<br><input type="checkbox"/> splattering<br><input type="checkbox"/> steel wire hall & card baskets<br><input type="checkbox"/> window shades (painted,<br>stenciled...)<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> wax work<br><input type="checkbox"/> other: |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

### **Questions**

- Is there anything in your collection you know of that was exhibited or won a premium at a fair?
- Are any of your items of these types of things, outstanding examples? Which ones?
- May I have permission to photograph items?
- Is the maker or creator of these items known--or other information about them in your records?

Return in self addressed/stamped envelop. Thanks!

## Appendix B

### County Agricultural Society Survey

Forty-two surveys were sent to county fair associations most likely to have originated before 1900. Sixteen responded. Follow up correspondence and/or visits were made to gain further information. The following county fair offices were visited:

Hillsdale County Fair  
Kalamazoo County Fair  
Midland County Fair  
St. Joseph County Fair

Summary information resulting from the survey is reported below. A copy of the survey itself follows.

• **When did your County Society and Fair begin?**

Allegan County - originated in 1852; in our 139th year running  
Berrien County - 1945 for Berrien Co. Youth Fair  
Branch County - over 90 years ago  
Chippewa County - 1906  
Eastern Michigan Fair (Eaton County) - early 1880's  
Genesee County - book: Genesee County Fair Since 1850: A Historical Account by Stan Perkins  
Hillsdale County - 1896  
Ingham County - 1854  
Midland County - 1866 - first fair  
Northwestern Michigan (Traverse City) 1907;  
We are not a county fair, but a fair run by an association.  
Oceana County - 1871?  
Co assoc organized 1870; first fair 1872...  
Ottawa County - 1960  
Shiawassee County - 1852

- **Is there a Written history or summary  
(if so, may I please have a copy)?**

Berrien County - brochure: History Through the Years  
 Chippewa County - 2 page history: "The First Stalwart Fair" cc.  
 Eastern Michigan Fair - no, just a list of officers  
 Ingham County - 5 page history  
 Midland County - video on history with old pictures  
     (Board member researched in archives, old newspapers,  
     etc...; includes old photographs)  
 Northwestern - no  
 Oceana County - 4 pgs hand written notes.

- **Does your society still have early records  
(minutes, bylaws, fair entries, treasury ledgers, etc.)?  
Please indicate type and time period.**

Allegan County - not available  
 Berrien County - from 1945 - present  
 Branch County - some I don't know how far back  
 Chippewa County - Fair book, 1922  
 Eastern Michigan Fair - no, stolen back in the early 70's  
 Hillsdale County - original minute books,  
     1850 to present (some missing around the 1880s)  
 Northwestern - earliest records are possibly 1950  
 Oceana County - old secretaries book starting 1880

- **Photographs:-representing art and/or women's work at the fairs  
--exhibits, sewing clubs, marching bands?**

Oceana County - nothing before 1900

- **other old and interesting photographs?**

Branch County - building in 1937 at the present site  
 Eastern Michigan Fair - There are several photographs of the  
     fairgrounds at the Borland Road Elementary School on the  
     hallway wall back in the early 1900's.

- **Do you have posters from early fairs?**

Hillsdale County -  
     1891 & cc on 1978 premium book cover  
     - lady holding flowers

1892 & cc on 1976 premium book cover  
 - child, girl  
 1894 & cc on 1990 premium book cover  
 - 2 children reaching up for apples  
 1895 & cc on postcard, young girl, blue hat  
 1896 & cc on postcard, young girl w/ red hat  
 1909 & cc on 1981 premium list, boy w/ overalls & basket

• **Do you have diplomas, premiums, ribbons, etc from early fairs?**

Chippewa County - yes

Branch County - no

Midland County : premium books: 1877, 1881, 1882, 1884,  
 1885, 1888, 1889, 1890, 1892, 1896, 1898, 1895, 1813,

Shiawassee County -

Reprinted Premium Books from 1869 and 1871

1857 premium list framed and on the office wall

• **Are you aware of other local agencies having items or other memorabilia from your fairs?**

Allegan County - Allegan Historical Society, Allegan Public Library

Branch County - some

Chippewa County - The Evening News, Sault Ste Marie MI

Eastern Michigan Fair - Imlay City Historical Museum and  
 Borland Road Elementary School

Hillsdale County - Hillsdale Co. Historical Society House/Museum  
 has 8 posters and other items (see Museum Survey)

Oceana County - small account in an old history of Oceana County  
 International Assoc of Fairs and Expositions

**County Agricultural Society Letter Text**

I am doing research for my dissertation on the arts activities of early Michigan County Fairs. Do you have old records, photos, posters or other memorabilia which would help to tell the story of the arts at the fair? My main interest is the arts at the fair before 1900. I am also interested in uncovering interesting stories and related fair information into the early 1900's.

Information from the history of your fair would be most welcome. Would you please complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it before July 1st? A stamped envelop is included for your convenience. Also included is a description of my project for your review.

Thank you so much for your help.

## **County Agricultural Society Survey Text**

Fair:

Contact:

Phone:

- When did your County Society and Fair begin?
- Is there a written history or summary (if so, may I please have a copy)?
- Does your society still have the early records (minutes, bylaws, fair entries, treasury ledgers, etc.)? Please indicate type and time period.
- Photographs: Do you have old photographs representing art and/or women's work at the fair, e.g. exhibits, sewing clubs, marching bands ...?

Other old and interesting photographs?

- Do you have posters from early fairs? (Brief descriptions & dates please.)
- Do you have diplomas, premiums, ribbons, etc., from early fairs?
- Are you aware of other local agencies having items or other memorabilia from your fairs?
- Other ideas -- comments.

Return in self add/stamped envelop. Thanks!



## **Appendix C**

### **Other Items Located**

The following lists other items related to county fair or county agricultural society activity in Michigan discovered throughout this research.

**•Collection of David V. Tinder, researcher/collector of pre 1900 Michigan Photographs, Dearborn, Michigan.**

100 plus postcards on fairs --selected descriptions:

Indian Village at Calhoun Fair and Marshall Fair  
 Cheboygan Co. Fair, Wolverine - exhibit with pillows & art work  
 framed & taxidermy cat  
 Elsie Fair, 1911, Woman's race  
 Pottawattami Indians at fairs photos by J. H. Little  
 women's group with baskets  
 3-4 groups of Indians, 1914  
 baby in sling  
 Alma Fair 1912 - outside closeline exhibit with quilts, hats, etc.  
 Camden Michigan - large group; tents behind; one woman waving  
 Kalkaska Co. Fair, Bandstand, 1910  
 Lake Co. Fair, Baldwin Michigan "Art Hall" 1910, crowd shot  
 towards backs  
 Barryton Grange Hall, Fair 1909  
 Magnet Theatre Marrinettes  
 Lake City Michigan Fair, 1910 - tree w/ couple leaning against tree  
 (backs  
 Lake City Michigan, children along a fence 1911  
 Grandstand Ogimaw Co. Fair, West Branch, women's band  
 birds eye view - round tent w/crowds, clear shot  
 Oceana Co. Fruit display  
 Midway Caro Fair, 1916

## Other Photographs

Colbrun Family at Lunch at Floral Hall, 1878

- stereo view, Allegan Fair

Indians on exhibit - dancing on platform, one central figure w/  
drum, stereoview

Mrs. Shellhouse - stereoviews of crystal grasses arrangement

Fair, Lyon - Exhibits in Grange Hall, 1909

post card in album - womans exhibit of quilts & clothes

post card showing business men's picnic at Bawbeese Park, August  
25, 1909, with message:

"Franks cousin and her husband and two kids are coming to  
keep house and do the shores while we are away. At the  
Hillsdale Fair I got five premiums - 4 on tattings pieces and one  
of a knit cape. I have me a new coat, a long one. It is gray with  
black cuffs and collar. My hat is built to match."

## Other Items

- poster: 1890 "Novel Entertainment at the Fair Grounds,  
Three Rivers, MI . . . electric light at the fair grounds  
. . . races . . . also the BATTLE OF GETTYSBURGH CO  
exhibit their Great Painting . . . music by Cornet  
Bands attending the Band Tournament  
original at WMU Archives,  
Three Rivers Library Collection
- season ticket, 25th Annual St. Joseph County Agricultural  
Society,  
original at WMU Archives
- poster: Ingham County Agricultural Society, 17th annual fair,  
2 originals at the Library of Michigan
- poem, "Farm Festivals," by Wil Carleton, Michigan poet.  
Includes a portion descriptive of a tour of an early  
fair...Floral Hall, Merchants displays, women's work,  
art work, etc...
- History, St. Joseph Co. Grange Fair Association, included in  
newsletter publication by Lyons Clubs of area. County  
association rebuilt grandstand in 1935 from materials  
dismantled from Chicago World's Fair. . .

## **Appendix D**

### **Musical Matters**

Page one, center

Ionia Sentinel 1 May 1874

#### **Musical Matters**

Editors Sentinel:--

Some three months ago, through the instrumentality of Prof. Ewing and other lovers of the "Divine Art," the services of Prof. Henry Gordon, formerly of Wayne County were secured in Ionia, for the purpose of organizing and conducting schools for musical instruction. At that time, it will be remembered, by the most obtuse of our citizens, there existed, in our other wise go-ahead community, as complete an apathy toward musical matters as the 19th century has had the misfortune to witness, outside the regions of the Howling Dervishes of Egypt. Work was inaugurated and pushed with energy, and resulted in so complete a revolution in sentiment and so large an attendance at his classes as to greatly surprise and gratify the friends of the enterprise. Nearly 225 names were signed upon the role, but however considerable numbers dropped off as the term progressed, which reduced the maximum attendance to about 125. I regret to say, and Prof.

Gordon regrets the fact, that a few who attended and roared with commendable tenacity and lustiness until near the end, at last "shoved off their mortal soil," so to speak, just in the nick of time to forget to pay their tuition. Absent mindedness in hard times is a home-made virtue and mighty handy with some geniuses. As a close observer and a regular attendant to the familiarly called "Singing School," I wish to express my sentiments touching the prof. and his abilities. He came among us with the highest recommendations as a singer, a teacher and a gentleman. In his brief residence among us he has fully sustained his reputation. On various occasions our citizens have listened with delight to the exhibition of his vocal powers, and all attest with generous candor, that no sweeter or more effective singer has ever visited Ionia. As a teacher he is none the less eminent. The conviction at once impresses itself upon the mind of the pupil that he is under the instruction of a thorough master of the art. Whatever principles he lays down and whatever matters of musical fact or theory he says is right are unreservedly accepted as true. His manner of imparting instruction is unostentatious, yet perfectly clear and convincing. His method of teaching is consistent with the latest recommendations from highest authorities. The classes have been sustained with interest, and on the whole have made satisfactory progress in voice culture and the "science of the thing." Many fine voices among the ladies have been partially developed and give promise of more than ordinary merit. Several gentlemen also, who formerly unconsciously brayed like their long

eared brethren, have had their sensibilities waxed upon until they can sing all the notes in several octaves with considerable, though not altogether reliable melody. But casting aside this "fun with the boys," it can be truthfully said that Prof. Gordon has done more effective work and good for our city than any of his predecessors. The last meeting of the term was held on Tuesday night, on which occasion a rousing vote of thanks was tendered the Prof. for his valuable services in conducting the school. During the evening nearly fifty names were enrolled as members of a new term of eighteen lessons, which will commence next week. The tuition is remarkably small and with so favorable an opportunity presenting itself to the public to receive first class instructions, this term should be as prosperous in numbers and talent as the last. It is to be hoped that the Prof. will be warmly sustained in his work. He has, with his family, made Ionia his permanent residence, and is ready at all times to give lessons in vocal and instrumental music.

Quarter Rest.

## **Appendix E**

### **Ionian Band - to - Pro Bono Publico**

Ionian Sentinel 10 July 1874

EDITORS SENTINEL:

The boys' hereby lift their hats to Rev. Mr. Barker and Pro Bono Publico, in recognition of, and gratitude for their encouraging compliments, which have recently appeared in the SENTINEL. While we are doing our level best to maintain a credible band in our city, it certainly is very pleasing to receive such expressions of satisfaction and appreciation as they bestow upon us.

With this simple acknowledgement of our gratitude we should conclude our remarks, and scratch down our autographs, were it not for the strong imputation, on the part of Pro Bono Publico, in his article of last week, that 'the boys' are a sort of herd of 'musical hogs,' who with characteristic selfishness, choose to retire to their sty in the Engine House, and with closed doors and battered windows; blow forth sweet feasts of harmonious sounds, and like certain snakes with their young, wallow'em down, just for our own diversion and amusement.

Pro Bono don't put it in a proper light before the Public, for which he speaks so valiantly. It is no choice of our own that on these beautiful and favorable evenings we are compelled to occupy the Engine room like a lot of squealing porkers, blowing and perspiring instead of giving 'occasional open air concerts' which his symphonic soul doth crave. These concerts are just what we want to give; yet, while the spirit is willing the flesh is weak. 'Tisn't a pleasant thought, nor an agreeable experience, that we must needs blow our brains out concerting in open air, and at the same time be obliged to avail ourselves of the seats which are offered by the surrounding picket fences, sidewalks knobby with half driven nails, and dewy grass plats. Such sittings would be against the constitution and by-laws of the boys, and moreover wearing out their trousers. Viewing things from this standpoint we are unable to see how we can "accomplish great good in a cheap and agreeable manner to ourselves." While we are compelled to acknowledge that the 'moral influence of music is not to be overestimated," and that in all probabilities our performances would do great good in drawing naughty small boys from their accustomed foraging expeditions after green apples, and cause the "old folks" for a time to forget that they are unromantic and suspicious, thereby giving those grateful lovers a chance, yet, we are afraid (viewing the case from the above mentioned situation) that our own morals would suffer proportionately to the good rendered. Pro Bono is probably one of that class who is willing and anxious that 'the boys' should come

out and furnish delicious enjoyment if they or some one else will be to the expense therefor he probably is related to that good old Christian who once stated that he had been a church member twenty five years, and it had only cost him twenty five cents. If there are any more Pro Bonos in this City, let them cease their useless suggestions and desires concerning getting a good thing unless they help pay for it. If they want open air concerts let them crack open their coconut wallets and give 'the boys' a lift of a dime or two. Let them prepare a suitable band stand on the public square

"Neath the shade  
Of the monument there,"

and the boys will be found willing and anxious to elevate the morals of the community sky-high, if exceeding great wind and blowing will accomplish it. Or if that is too much to do, let them invite us around and furnish a chair of two with something refreshing and we'll be there. All we ask for a comfortable place to play and we will do our best to make the summer evenings pass away agreeably and cheaply.

Will Pro Bono Publico do some good for the public and see to it that a good band stand is erected at once. We think that inasmuch as we give valuable time to this purpose of sustaining a band, that it is no more than fair that our citizens should make us a stand, and thereby enable us to escape the censure of such public benefactors as Pro Bono Publico.

Quit blowing, lest ye be blowed. Do something for your country.

"The Boys"



## Appendix F

### Statewide Representation, Formation of State Agricultural Society

Source: Transactions of the Michigan State Agricultural Society  
with Reports of County Agricultural Societies, 1849

#### Michigan State Agricultural Society Officers

| <u>individual</u>   | <u>office</u>       | <u>county</u> |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Epaphroditus Ransom | President           | Kalamazoo     |
| J. C. Holmes        | Recording Secretary | Wayne         |
| John J. Adam        | Treasurer           | Lenawee       |
| Titus Dort          | Executive Committee | Wayne         |
| William H. Edgar    | Executive Committee | Kalamazoo     |
| Edward L. Fuller    | Executive Committee | Washtenaw     |
| Joseph Gibbons      | Executive Committee | Lenawee       |
| Townsend E. Gidley  | Executive Committee | Jackson       |
| Bela Hubbard        | Executive Committee | Wayne         |
| George Redfield     | Executive Committee | Cass          |
| Jeremiah Smith      | Executive Committee | Genessee      |
| John Thomas         | Executive Committee | Oakland       |
| Stephen Valentine   | Executive Committee | Calhoun       |

**Representatives from Michigan Counties**

| <u>county</u> | <u>vice president</u> | <u>corresponding secretary</u> |
|---------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Allegan       | A. J. Diedrick        | Abram Hoag                     |
| Barry         | Hiram Lewis           | Norman Deming                  |
| Berrien       | Samuel Street         | William H. Dougherty           |
| Branch        | Wales Adams           | Fredrick V. Smith              |
| Calhoun       | Campbell Waldo        | Oliver Comstock Jr.            |
| Cass          | Cyrus Bacon           | George B. Turner               |
| Chippewa      | Abel Bingham          | Stephen R. Wood                |
| Clinton       | Morris S. Allen       | Samuel M. Scott                |
| Eaton         | William Hammond       | Harvey Williams                |
| Genessee      | Benjamin Pierson      | James B. Walker                |
| Hillsdale     | Levi Baxter           | E. G. Dilla                    |
| Ingham        | John M. French        | Franklin LaRue                 |
| Ionia         | Rufus R. Cook         | George W. Germain              |
| Jackson       | Hiram Smith           | Ira C. Backus                  |
| Kalamazoo     | Andrew Y. Moore       | James Henry Jr.                |
| Kent          | Henry Hall            | John Ball                      |
| Lapeer        | James Turrill         | George C. Bidwell              |
| Lenawee       | Edward Smith          | Richard Kent                   |
| Livingston    | George Galloway       | N. G. Isbell                   |
| Makinac       | Michael Dousman       | Charles M. O'Malley            |
| Macomb        | Asahel Bailey         | John I. Traver                 |
| Monroe        | A. G. Bates           | E. G. Morton                   |
| Oakland       | Heman Castel          | William G. Stone               |
| Ottawa        | William C. Comfort    | Timothy Eastman                |
| Saginaw       | James G. Birney       | Hiram L. Miller                |
| St. Clair     | John Clark            | Duthan Northrop                |
| St. Joseph    | John S. Barry         | Calvin Bronson                 |
| Shiawassee    | Henry Hunt            | Joseph B. Bloss                |
| Van Buren     | Philotus Hayden       | Morgan L. Fitch                |
| Washtenaw     | John Loury            | James Kingsley                 |
| Wayne         | Jonathan Shearer      | B. G. Parker                   |

**APPENDIX F****OTHER FAIRS AND THE ARTS****Figure 47****Coulburn Family at Lunch in Floral Hall**

Allegan County Fair, c1878. Garriman & George Altwater, Photographers.  
(Courtesy: David V. Tinder, Dearborn, Michigan)

Evidence of arts and creative activities at early Michigan county fairs is present in the newspaper reporting of the times, the Michigan Farmer, beginning in 1843, and the Transactions of the Michigan State Agricultural Society which started in 1849. In 1843, during its

first year of publication, the Michigan Farmer encouraged county agricultural societies and noted or discussed county agricultural society and annual fair activity in Calhoun, Jackson, Livingston, Monroe, and Washtenaw Counties. Between 1849 and 1860, the Transactions printed lengthy reports from county agricultural societies. These included the constitution, bylaws, premium lists and winners, and judging committee reports. The local news papers, especially the county-seat newspapers, gave broad encouragement and coverage to county agricultural societies and their fairs. A sampling is included here.

### **Bay County**

In 1867 the Saginaw Enterprise reported on the 3rd Annual Bay County Fair where "paintings, photographs, ornamental lettering, farmers wreaths, moss work, bead baskets, jewelry, pencil drawings, watercolor paintings and specimens of dental work" were grouped together in "Class 23, Works of Art."<sup>1</sup>

### **Berrien County**

Berrien Counties first fair was held in 1850. The Niles Republican reported on the upcoming 8th Annual Fair in the 29, May 1858 issue and published the premium list for the fair. "The Floral Hall was of course the greatest center of attraction with two elegant tapestry needlework [ by Mrs. J. K. Cunningham of Niles] which by many were mistaken for oil paintings." Other creative items included

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<sup>1</sup> Saginaw Enterprise 3 October 1867, 10 October 1867, 17 October 1867.

drawings, artificial fruit, elegant jewelry, needle, shell, and hair work, and artificial flowers. Because of the “comprehensive nature” of the “grand display in the art department, Republican editor suggested that we “might want to change the name [of the fair] to the South West Michigan Fair.”<sup>2</sup>

By 1863, at the 18th Agricultural Fair, there was a “Paintings, Drawings, etc.,” class which included oil paintings, ambrotypes, pencil drawings, photography and architectural drawings. “Domestic Manufactures” included patchwork and wax flowers. “Needle & Shell Work” included bead work, feather flowers, bracelets, and hair work. These three categories continued into the later 1860s for creative and artistic work.<sup>3</sup>

Wayne Stiles, curator of the Fort St. Joseph Museum, City of Niles, reports that the fair grounds are clearly visible in a reprint of a 1865 birds-eye map in their collections.

### **Clinton County**

Clinton Counties first fair was held in the mid 1850s. The 12th fair was October 15-17, 1867. Arts and creative works received premiums. In 1869 premiums for creative works included water color and other paintings, photographs, quilts and ornate needlework. For several years beginning in 1870 the category for creative work was called “Flowers & Art [or Artist] Work.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Niles Republican 29 May 1858, 16 September 1858, 16 October 1858.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 24 September 1861, 10 October 1863, 8 October 1864, 7 October 1865, 20 October 1866.

<sup>4</sup> Clinton Independent 11 September 1867, 21 October 1867, 3 October 1869, 19 October 1867, 17 October 1872, 30 October 1873.

### **Genessee County**

The 7th annual Genessee County Fair was held in Flint on October 8 & 9, 1856. "Ornamental Needlework," "Fancy Work & Fine Arts," and "Works of Art" were categories for creative articles. In 1866, at the 17th Annual Fair a number of items received premiums in "Class XXVI, Works of Art." These included oil paintings, figure paintings and Grecian paintings; pencil drawings, ambrotypes and photography; and ornamental seed, shell, cone and wax works. "Finely executed" architectural designs and plans were exhibited but not entered for premium competition.<sup>5</sup>

### **Kalamazoo County**

The Kalamazoo County Agricultural Society held their first annual fair in October of 1846. Creative articles awarded premiums at the first fair were included in the "Household Products" category. Premiums awarded included specimens of castings, embroidery, needlework and a shawl. Local resident, B. Cooley received premiums for his portraits, "show[ing] that the fine arts are not neglected."<sup>6</sup>

### **Muskegon County**

At the Western Union Fair in Muskegon, September 10-13, 1876, "Division K" was for "Art & Science." The "Needle & Fancy Work" class included a variety of quilts, hair and wax works, and

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<sup>5</sup> Wolverine Citizen 11 October 1856, 25 October 1856, 6 October 1866.

<sup>6</sup> Kalamazoo Gazette 25 September 1846, 2 October 1846, 16 October 1846, 22 October 1846.

“embroidery worked pictures on canvas.” For the “Paintings” class, a long listing was included in the Premium list. This included paintings, photography, engravings, and drawings of many subjects and in many different mediums. Paintings included animal portraits, landscapes, bird, fruit, flower, and marine scenes. Etchings done from copper or steel plates, and wood cuts were also included. Architectural and mechanical drawings, and plans for a “dwelling [and] a schoolhouse” were requested. The “Paintings Committee” also provided the opportunity for single paintings and groups of oil paintings “by a person who is not an artist,” and a “collection of paintings by [a] dealer.” At the 1878 Muskegon County Fair the (Muskegon) News Reporter editor commented that the “fine paintings at the late county fair would be a credit to the professional artist.”<sup>7</sup>

### **St. Clair County**

St. Clair County Agricultural Society held their first fair in 1855. The 10th Annual St. Clair County Fair was held September 27-30, 1865. Creative categories were included in two divisions: “Domestic Manufactures” and “Miscellaneous. Classes were: “Homemade,” “Worsted & Other Work,” and “Paintings, Etc.” Miss Russell was noted as having “some very credible paintings” on exhibit at the fair.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Muskegon Chronicle 16 August 1878, 30 August 1878, 14 September 1878.

<sup>8</sup> Port Huron Press 4 October 1865; St. Clair Republican 27 September 1865, 4 October 1865.

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The Arts and Cultural Life

Geographical Resources

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