



# Romeo Perspective

Volume 1, Issue 1 2012

ROME0, MACOMB COUNTY, MICHIGAN

www.romeohistoricalsociety.org



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### RHS Board

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- Douglas Pritchard
- Stuart Walters
- Sean McManus
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## Michigan Statehood

### 175 in 2012!

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## RHS Curator Richard Beringer honored by Chamber.... An EMMA Award winner!

In December 2011 RHS President Sue Kane proudly presented Richard Beringer with the Greater Romeo Chamber 2012 Teaching and Mentoring award this year.

Beringer has volunteered thru the Romeo Historical Society for over 20 years teaching and educating the public of all ages about Romeo history and importance in Michigan. After his grade school teaching years, Richard just continued on relaying past events and their significance thru Historical Society displays, exhibits, archives, collections, talks, walking tours, hands on repairs, recordation, and just about every method of imparting knowledge we know of. He has a special affinity



Richard Beringer accepts his award from RHS President Sue Kane at Greystone. Photo courtesy of *The Romeo Observer*.

with children and makes Romeo's story live for them during the Civil War, Underground RR events, and early automotive periods.

His constant work to maintain, operate and curate the three museums keeps them the noteworthy institutions

they are. His writing and research are familiar to us thru *The Romeo Observer* weekly *Reminisce* columns recapturing Romeo times and happenings over 100 years ago.

The Chamber annual Extraordinary Membership Awards honor those who serve the community above and beyond the usual volunteerism. Richard Beringer deserves this award and the Romeo Historical Society board was very pleased their nomination was accepted.

Mr. Beringer received a commendation certificate and award plaque at the annual gala luncheon at Greystone Banquet Center on December 8 with many RHS members in attendance.

*Congratulations Richard!*

## Bancroft Stranahan House gets a Roof!

THANK YOU!

*The Bancroft Stranahan Museum has a new roof thanks to you as of Thursday January 26!*

It was cold, it was a little rainy, but no snow left a perfect day to replace the

Museum roof on Church Street and get it done!

Richard Beringer coordinated the roofing crew and secured the museum collections before work began. The attic squirrels were evacuated, the electrical system checked and fixed

and insulation was added too.

Now with the new roof, the RHS collections are secure again against inclement weather and water.

Have a look!

**Three local museums****Romeo Art & Archives Center**

290 N. Main Street.

( former state police building)

**Bancroft-Stranahan House**

132 Church St.

**Clyde Craig Blacksmith Shop**

301 N. Bailey St.

ALL IN WALKING DISTANCE  
DOWNTOWN!**RHS****RAAC meeting****Feb. 2, 7pm.****Photography,  
history and preservation****Kezar Librarian  
and archivist  
Stacie Narlock****Light refreshments!****Get out and see  
your friends  
this winter!****The President's Letter....****RHS 2011, A Year in Review**

The 2011 *Christmas Homes Tour* just this past December was our most successful to date! The popular event sold out in record time, as people from across the metro area came to see some of our community's most breathtaking homes in their full holiday splendor. We sold 300 tickets for the event, which will help us support our three museums for the upcoming year and marks a wonderful end to a very productive year for the Romeo Historical Society (RHS).

In 2011 we remembered the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Civil War* by hosting presentations about Harriet Tubman in January 2011 at Grey's Opera House and the accused Lincoln conspirator Samuel Mudd in May. We also teamed up with the Greater Washington Historical Society and local civil war historian Bill Grandstaff, to tell the stories of our local Civil War veterans at our annual *Romeo Cemetery Tour* last October.

Bancroft Museum Curator, Joan

Beringer, continued to create unique exhibits at the museum including our newly completed "Douglas Room," located on the second floor. She also hosted an in-depth presentation about local artist William Woodruff Gibbs, with the presentation still available for viewing at the Romeo Arts and Archives Center on Tuesdays from 7p.m. to 9 p.m. RHS owns several of Gibbs' work in our collections and Joan's tour



and presentation attracted some new members. We continue to research Gibbs, his work and where he lived in Romeo.

Last year was also busy for RHS Curator Richard Beringer, who hosted a talk about Romeo's Business Community in 1870, led us on Romeo walk-

ing Tours, and took us on an Architectural Tour. He also led Fall Walking Tours.

A Romeo Community Block Fund grant made it possible for us to repair the sewer line at the Bancroft Stranahan Museum, and we raised \$2,000 for its new roof, just in place in early 2013.

The Sixth Annual Victorian Festival in May included the Blacksmith Shop Hammer in, street vendors and entertainment in the Victorian traditions and Civil War reenactors camped in Village Park.

Mark your calendar for May 19th for the Victorian Festival this year too!

As we move forward in 2013, we will continue to offer unique opportunities to explore our history, preserve our heritage and celebrate the people and events that helped shape Romeo and its surrounding communities. Join us to add programs, and projects that interest you!

Your support makes it all possible! THANK YOU!

Please participate, and support the Society!

Sue Kane, *President*

*Happy New Year 2012!*

**Clyde Craig Blacksmith Shop, Curator Report**

Our Blacksmith Shop focus in 2011 resulted in some new improvements there you are sure to notice. The grounds are refreshed and fencing expanded and improved.

Metalworking at the Victorian Festival hammer-in is established as a regular feature now attracting more artisans and visitors. Over 400 grade school

students visited in May and June watching smithing demonstrations by Todd Jenema, Stuart Walters and Steve Alling. Our shop now has four blacksmiths. They produce some beautiful home décor items!

With a wider lawn area we also expanded to include lumbering history on the grounds.

Our Blacksmith Shop ar-

chives are also organized filling three cabinet drawers and include a rare old photo of the shop donated by Tim and Gloria Billo.

Clyde Craig would certainly be proud of his old workshop and how it continues to educate and showcase hands on craftsmanship! Be sure to visit!

—Richard Beringer

# Mellon House..quite a long history... quite a large house

The mansion stands at 124 West Gates...

1824 Jonathan Blinn took up 80 acres of Indian Land under a deed of parchment, from the government, signed by President Monroe. He sold it to Gideon Gates for \$260 a few days later.

1855 Purchased by John Thompson.

1855-1862 a red house, with unpainted barns and orchards, was built on the property at some point during this time. Later, the house was divided and moved to Turner Street in 1863 making them the first homes on Turner Street.

1862 Senator Harvey Mellon purchased the land.

1863 Mellon built a new home on the property.

1895 Mellon's sister, Mrs. Henry Stephens II of Detroit, enlarged the home and used it as a summer cottage.

1927 Mrs. H.D.



(Christine) Pennington purchased the home and changed its name to Paton Hall and opened a girls school. Also known as the Pennington School for Girls, it was open for several years.

1936 The Pennington School for Girls closed.

1940-1943 Paton Hall was now the Wehenkel Convalescent Home, according to listing in the Romeo Directory.

1950 The home was converted to the Sammond (Simon) Lodge Sanatorium, with Richard and Elizabeth Sammond listed in the 1953-1954 Romeo Village Directory.

1980s The home was converted in to an office building.

2000 Governor George W. Bush stood on the porch, during a Labor Day Presidential campaign rally.

2011 The building continues to used as an office building.

Time Line by Sue Kane. More at the RAAC!

The 2011 RHS Village Heritage series ornament is almost sold out!

A few left!

\$20.00 each

**MACOMB CO. HISTORICAL ALLIANCE MEETING**

**April 28**

**9a.m.-4p.m.**

**Richmond**

**One day forum of all that is historic in Macomb County!**

**RHS will be represented and you are welcome to join us!**



## Highlights from the Past...

### 175 years ago..

**On January 26, 1837 Michigan became a state.**

### 100 years ago...

Annual election of directors of both of our banking institutions next Tuesday.

The Pastime Club has issued invitations for a social hop to be given at Marble

Hall on Friday evening

Stafford & Brodie implement dealers, will occupy the brick building corner of East Lafayette and South Bailey.

A liberal fall of the beautiful on Saturday and Sunday, and the drop in temperature that followed, has made fair sleighing in the village and vicinity.

George Robertson has re-

cently installed in his planing mill, a *chain mortise*, a machine that is not only a great labor-saving invention, but does the work in better shape than any other way yet devised.

Suggested that the vacant lot in the village be flooded for a skating ring for the little folk.

*The Romeo Observer*

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ADDRESS LABEL

Romeohistoricalsociety.org

**Preserve our Heritage!**



**EVERY TUESDAY NIGHT**

**7:00 P.M. - 9:00 P.M.**

**Archives and House  
Museums are OPEN!**

**Except when schools close  
for bad weather!**

**Send suggestions,  
ideas and photos!**

**Email addresses....**

We need your email address to add to our membership files! Please, please send us a message with your email address to info@romeohistoricalsociety.org or make sure you write it on your membership renewal.

**Thank you!**

**Thanks to our newsletter editor and RHS reporter, Janine Saputo!**



2012 program plans... we are busy!

*Save this page!*

**Thurs. Feb 2** - Membership meeting at RAAC, 7pm. **Photography, history and preserving Your Family Photos.** A how to from professional archivist Stacie Narlock. Stacie has worked at the Walter Reuther Library at WSU, a Detroit research institution with many of the area's noteworthy collections including *The Detroit News* photographs. Come and learn!

**Sat. Feb 11** - Bancroft Stranahan Museum open for *Romeo Romantic Days & Chocolate Festival*. Show your Valentine and all your friends the ultimate in Victorian wedding finery and more. 11am-4pm.

**Tues. Feb 21** - First Victorian Festival 2012 Committee meeting at the RAAC for the upcoming annual Victorian blowout set for May 19. We need your help! 7 pm to 9pm.



**7th Annual**

**Victorian Festival**

**Saturday May 19!**

**Romeo Historical Society**

**Board Meetings—1st. Quarter 2012**

Thursday February 16, 7pm

Thursday March 15, 7pm

RAAC. Refreshments!