

"If Only The Walls Could Talk"

"Discover, Collect and Preserve the History of the Pigeon Community"



by Denny Esch
Pigeon Historical Society
President

A couple months after that first organizational meeting (September 7, 1976) of the *Historical Society for the Village of Pigeon*, the new by-laws were written and soon adopted. History tells us that Mrs. Eleanora Eicher, Mrs. Paul Leipprandt and Mrs. Dryden Haist were appointed to serve on that committee. From what I can find in our files, new by-laws were adopted ten years later (March 31, 1986) when the name was changed to the *Pigeon Historical Society* and the Depot was leased from the Village of Pigeon. The bylaws have had amendments three times since and have always been little trivia things such as the cost of dues, day and time of meetings or some wording change in one of the Articles of the Constitution needed

**Depot Museum Celebrates 30 Years!
Historical Society Celebrates 40 Years**

Sunday, July 24

**OPEN HOUSE
& ICE CREAM SOCIAL**

**At Depot and Farmer's Market
Open House: 10-3
Ice Cream Social: 11 - 2**

There are only a handful of the 44 Charter members of the Historical Society living today, but they will always be remembered as being a major part of this organization and its history. Let us not forget the many others in our community today who at one time or another has supported this organization. We, the current members say, "Thank you for your part in helping to discover, collect and preserve the history of the Pigeon Community."

During the SummerFest this year, take some time to stop by the Depot Museum and the Woelke Historical Research Center. It's a great place to spend some time for everyone. History of the depot tells us that four and five trains stopped daily, bringing hundreds of people to town to shop. Think how busy that small depot must have been with all the people coming and going. The fun they had and the stories that must have been told. When visiting the depot this summer . . . take a moment and look around . . . think about what it must have been like to travel and shop here . . .

to be updated for the times. One thing that has never changed in the last forty years is the purpose of the Historical Society.

Article II – The purpose of the society shall be to discover, collect and preserve the material which may help to establish or illustrate the history of the Pigeon Community and surrounding region, as well as provide accessibility to the collected material for all who wish to examine or study it. The Society will also disseminate historical information to promote interest in the history of the Pigeon Community.

"If Only the Wall Could Talk".

PIGEON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 523 • Pigeon, Michigan 48755
989-453-3242

Denny Esch, President
Ardra Schaaf, Vice President
Duane Wurst, Secretary
David Eichler, Treasurer

~: Trustees ~:

Randy Ovcen • Jim Leinbach
Jean Sturm • Clarence Swartzendruber

Regular Meetings:

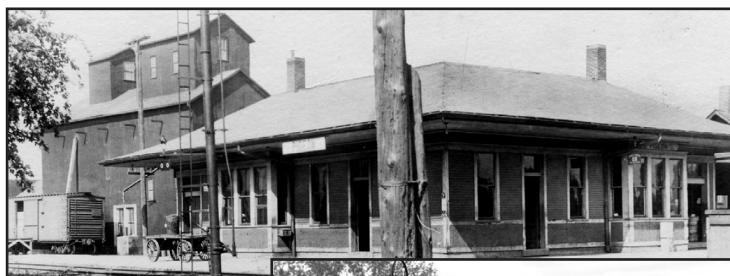
Second Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m.

Board Meetings

Fourth Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m.

Meeting Location

Woelke Historical Research Center.



...**Then**

Pigeon Depot
as it was in 1921.

Now...

Pigeon Depot
as it looks today.



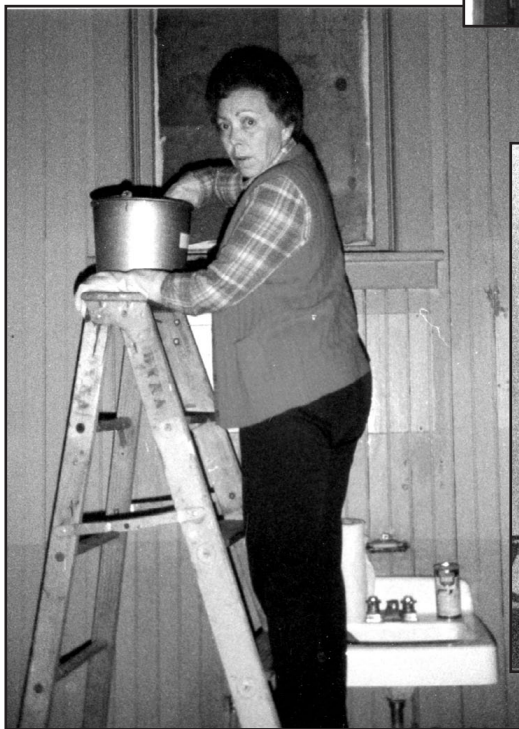
The Making Of A Museum Takes People! And Hard Work!



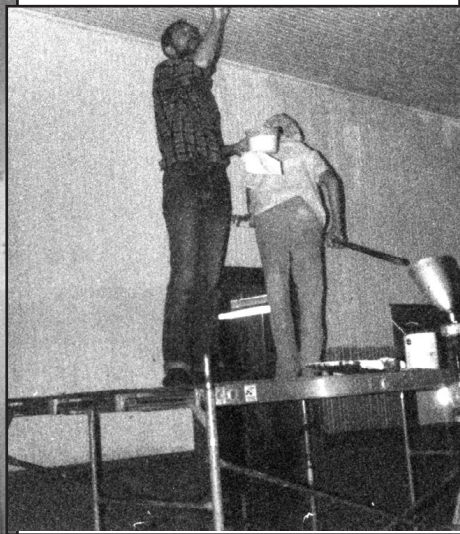
Above: John Jantzi installing floor joists for new floor - September 1986.



Above: Leatha Murdoch painting depot interior - September 1986.



Above: Marie Leipprandt painting the bathroom - September 1986.



Above: Butch Robinson and Leatha Murdoch painting the interior of the Pigeon Depot Museum September 1986.



Above: Florence Bergman painting the woodwork in the Pigeon Depot Museum September 1986.



Above: Mabel Swartzendruber painting the Depot Museum - September 1986.

In 1986 the task of taking the old Pigeon Depot and preserving it for future generations fell on the shoulders of a group of dedicated Pigeon Historical Society members. Many of these individuals have passed, but they will be remembered by everyone who enters and enjoys the Pigeon Depot Museum.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS SOCIETY shall be to discover, collect and preserve any material which may help to establish or illustrate the history of the Pigeon Community and surrounding region, as well as provide accessibility to the collected material for all who wish to examine or study it. The Society will also disseminate historical information to promote interest in the history of the Pigeon Community.

Vacant depot to house new Pigeon museum?

Pigeon Progress Advance
August 14, 1985

With thousands of dollars in funding, a good deal of elbow grease, some cooperative thinking and a little luck, Pigeon might get a permanent historical museum - and utilize the vacant railroad depot in the center of town.

About 20 members of the Pigeon Historical Society asked Village Council to help them turn the village-owned depot into a year-round museum to replace its past location in the former First United Methodist Church parsonage on E. Michigan Ave., scheduled to be demolished this week.

Speaking for the Historical Society, Eugene Hamilton noted Bad Axe has a museum, Elkton is considering one and Pigeon's downtown could be bolstered by filling the present unoccupied building, purchased several years ago for \$18,000 from the C&O and Grand Trunk Railroads.

"The town was founded around the depot, and that's a sort of history in itself," Hamilton said. He said electricity, running water and floors would be needed, and he group agreed to bring nine nominations" to Council for re-activating the Historical Society to work toward raising funds for the project.

Village President Norris Diebel said Council will welcome any proposals to help finance such a use. "We've wanted to do something like this for years with the depot," he said. He said a finished museum could be a reality by the 1986 Farmers' Festival, if planning and work begin immediately.

Historical Society representative Marie Leipprandt said "Butch" Robinson; is willing to present fund-raising organ concerts, and others are interested in similar donations. v

Mrs. Leipprandt and Ruth Hamilton have been named to head the initial historical group. About \$2200 exists in village funds for the group, which has been inactive in re-

cent years. -

Volunteers will, inspect the building and will work with Building Inspector Neil Libka to determine safety and public-access needs for the structure.

By village ordinance, the Pigeon Historical Society will include nine members, each with three-year terms, as appointed by the Village President. Any person 15 years of age and older who is or at one time was a village resident may be appointed, Diebel said.

Mrs. Leipprandt said the Historical Society was organized in 1977 and moved its donated and loaned displays into the former parsonage in 1978. More than 900 persons toured the building in a recent year, primarily during the Farmers' Festival.

The depot building was constructed at the former rail cross-roads about the turn of the century. The village has maintained only its exterior, until a valid use or purchaser of the structure was presented to it.

Pigeon's Pride Shows In Historical Museum

Pigeon Progress Advance, July 22, 1987

By SALLY RUMMEL

The entire Pigeon community can be proud of the restoration and refurbishing of the former Pigeon Depot, now housing the Pigeon Historical Museum, which will be formally dedicated this Thursday (tomorrow) at 2 p.m. "It has definitely been a community effort," says Marie Leipprandt, president of the Historical Society.

Only in a town like Pigeon could such a huge project have been undertaken and so successfully completed.

"The hours that have been spent... the dollars donated... 'Pigeon can always be counted on to come through,'" adds Leipprandt, with a definite showing of pride.

WIDE-RANGE: Now the 100-year-old depot is more than just a landmark.

It is housing a museum that contains as farm and ag. display, Dr. Perry Fritz's dental office, an old-fashioned kitchen, a Victorian parlor, a variety of German and antique Bibles and railroad artifacts.

Some school memorabilia from the Pigeon Schools is also on display,

as are vintage clothes, an authentic bedroom and a reed organ once owned by the parents of the late Pigeon historian, Florence Gwinn Schluter.

UNIQUE HISTORY: The train depot building itself represents the reason Pigeon was established and became a town for this area, according to a written report on the history of the community, compiled by the Pigeon Historical Society.

Until the late 1880s, the community of Berne, located one mile north of Pigeon, was the business and social center of the area. The north-south railroad that passed through Berne - originally the Pontiac, Oxford and Northern - insured that the town was bustling with activity, from churches, to schools, from streets to businesses.

The town of Berne boomed, because of the jobs brought to the town through the railroad, which also provided transportation and supplies to the community.

When the east-west railway came from Sebewaing to the Quarry in 1884, residents of the day decided it should not go through "the Tamarac Swamp," located one mile south of Berne, but would cross the P. O. & N. at Berne.

See Historical Museum on page 4

Family Photos Part Of Community's Heritage

The Pigeon Historical Society has a large collection of historical postcards and photographs. Many of these images have been enlarged, and are on display in the Depot Museum and the Arthur J. Woelke Historical Research Center. We are always on the look-out for other pictures that are not in our collection. It is true that a picture is worth a thousand words, and we are in search of those images.

If you have family photographs which show something that you would consider of interest to the community, please contact a board member. We will be holding scanning events again this summer.

We are always looking for old photographs, negatives or slides. If you have any old boxes or albums of pictures, don't throw them away until we are given the opportunity to view them for potential inclusion into our collection.

Call the museum at: 989-453-3242, Duane Wurst at 989-545-5240, or any board member for more information.



She Served Pigeon Well

The Pigeon Historical Society works and runs better because of people like Marie Leipprandt. Co-founders, Dryden and Joann Haist, started the society in 1968. Marie was an active member and supporter of numerous community activities, including the Historical Society. Elected President, Dryden, asked Marie to take over as president in 1986. The Haists were moving away. The first meetings were held in the Pigeon Library. For 4-5 years, starting in 1978, they met at the parsonage on Michigan Avenue, next to the First United Methodist Church.

When Marie started as a member the yearly dues were five dollars. Later as president, Marie and fellow member, Eleanor Eicher, wrote the Pigeon Historical Society's Constitution and By-Laws.

Marie stated that Dryden, as Pigeon Councilman, had turned over the Depot to the Society. It was rough at first because the floor was made of sand. The businessmen of Pigeon donated enough money to put in a new floor. Many nights were spent cleaning the interior where Pigeon had stored the Christmas Decorations. Now, as you enter the Depot



At grand opening of Pigeon Depot - June 21, 1987. From left to right, Grandpa Hugo Leipprandt, Aunt Lillina Leipprandt and Marie Leipprandt visiting the museum.

Museum, there is a small office where coal had once been received through the window. Edna Swartzendruber had been on a ladder cleaning this area, Marie recalled. Everything needed painting, and some of the glass cases

were purchased from businesses in Pigeon.

The railroad ties were taken from the track toward Caseville and used as part of the landscaping of the Depot. Many fund raisers were held to help pay for the improvements. The throws or large lap blanket featuring Pigeon Churches were their most popular item over the years.

While Marie was president, the storage shed was added behind the Depot Museum. Marie's favorite museum artifacts are family photos and the old machines. Marie once used the hair curling machine like the one the depot has on exhibit, and got burnt on the back of her head.

She enjoyed the closeness of the group in the beginning when everyone seemed to know each other. When Marie stepped down, after 27 years, Edna Diebel took over as president.

Marie would like to encourage everyone to visit the Depot Museum, The Art Woelke Research Center, or the Farmer's Market, located in downtown Pigeon. Come and view all the wonderful artifacts on display, and pick up one of the many souvenir items for sale.

Historical Museum

Continued from Page 3

Then, plans were changed. The Saginaw, Tuscola and Huron Railroad was indeed built right through that Tamarac Swamp and the crossing, now the center of Pigeon, was named Berne Junction.

By 1888 that location was known as Pigeon, and the village was incorporated in 1903 -- as Berne began fading away. The depot building itself one of Pigeon's oldest structures -- was constructed between 1888 and 1900, histories show.

BOOM TOWN: Pigeon began to boom once the railroad junction was completed, and the town filled with homes and businesses. As many as nine daily stops were made along both rail lines, later the P. O. & N. and Pere Marquette.

The power of railroads at that time in influencing the growth of communities was tremendous, and the train depot which served both railroads, was the hub of activity.

CHANGES CAME: But when new modes of transportation re-

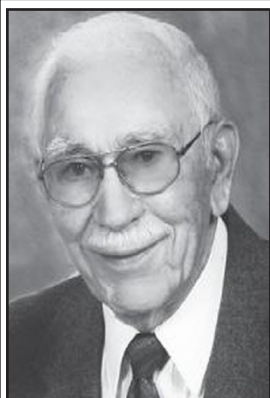
placed the railroads as prime movers of people, freight, and mail, local railroad importance dwindled.

The last passenger train service stopped about the time World War II began, and many stations were phased out as teletype machines ... and later computers ... carried the messages formerly done in each town. And, the P. O. & N.'s successor, Grand Trunk Railway, closed its north-south track through Berne and Pigeon, ending service July 1, 1983.

FIRST MUSEUM: By 1975, the depot was closed and abandoned, to be purchased about eight years later by the Village of Pigeon.

In 1976, the Pigeon Historical Society was organized, housing its museum in the old parsonage of the First United Methodist Church on E. Michigan Ave. Grand opening took place just prior, to Pigeon's Diamond Jubilee celebration, in 1978.

When that rented location was torn down about 1984, members sought a building to house its artifacts, and the Village and Historical Society negotiated for the use of the former train depot. The groups reached an agreement to secure the depot on a 100-year lease, beginning in March, 1986.



Did You Know?

Art Priebe was the last Grand Trunk Railroad Agent at the Pigeon Depot. He spoke at the 1987 dedication of the Pigeon Depot Museum.

We'd love to see you on our Team!

An individual or business can become a member by contacting any active member or by sending your tax deductible cash or check to Pigeon Historical Society, 59 S. Main St. / P. O. Box 523, Pigeon, MI 48755. Dues are renewed at the annual meeting each year.

Individual Membership: \$10.00 (active member with voting privileges)

Life Membership: \$120.00 (active voting member with lifetime privileges)

Supporting Membership: \$15.00 (non-active supporting member)

Business Membership: \$20.00 or more (contributing member non-voting)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Everyone is welcome to attend our meetings. Be our guest and become a member!