

*"If Only The Walls Could Talk"*

## "Charles Applegate - The Vision of a Village"

By Denny Esch, Historical Society  
President

The year was 1886 . . . Charles Applegate was appointed agent to the train station where the two railroads crossed, one mile south of Berne. Shortly after his appointment, he began to speculate the expansion of trade made possible by two railway intersections. Many businessmen from Berne were less convinced that a move would be good because the land was known as the "Tamarac Swamp" and was not worth anything. Applegate persuaded John Nitz, the farmer who owned the land south of "Berne Junction" (as it was known) to plat some land for growth of a town. This later became known as the Nitz and Applegate addition.

Not too much has been written about Charles Applegate. But for sure he was a man with a vision and determination. In 1887, at the site where the library now stands, he built the first store in the new village. I see no written history about the store but I would guess it was a general merchandise store that would meet the needs of the



An early view of Pigeon's Main Street, facing north, taken about 1897

people starting to travel into the area.

With the clearing of the marsh and the drainage of the swamp, by 1888 there were two main streets where the following business places were established: the Arlington hotel, John Diebel's planning mill, a harness shop and an undertaking and furniture store. Soon the name of the village became known as "Pigeon" taking on the name from the nearby river. Within the next ten years a post office was established as the population had grown

to over 300, several churches were built and seventeen buildings were moved from Berne to the new town of Pigeon. L. L. Carpenter Drug Store; Charles Czaplá, painter; Dennis Dierstein, barber; Robert Dundas, physician; Farmers Bank, Leipprandt Bros. general store and mill; John Liken, tinsmith; Paul Woodworth, lawyer; just to name a few. Soon the small, but rapidly growing community would petition to incorporate as a village, with the first village election being held December 1, 1902.

What I would give to be able to talk to Charles Applegate today. A man with such a great vision . . . a man who could see the future. Maybe someday soon I will stop at the depot and set at the old desk where train agent Applegate once sat. Maybe if I listen real hard, I can hear Applegate and John Nitz talking . . .

I can't help but to think, . . .  
"If only the walls could talk".

### PIGEON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

Denny Esch, President  
Clayton Esch, Vice President  
Duane Wurst, Secretary  
David Eichler, Treasurer

~: Trustees ~:

Randy Ovcken • Ardra Schaaf  
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.

## LOOTED!

### Cool Work Done by a Thief

*From Pigeon Progress*  
August 11, 1898

One of the boldest pieces of burglary ever perpetrated in our village was committed last night and the instigator relieved A. Hirshberg & Son of a good outfit of clothing from a good suit down to a pair of suspenders. The thief gained admittance through the back window

which was found open this morning. Goods in different parts of the store were disturbed and he apparently took his time and got just what he wanted. One hundred dollars was in the till and the till was left untouched. There is some reason to suspect that it was the work of a tramp as old clothes were found back of the store which would be quite appropriate for such a person.

# A History of Pigeon's Beginnings

by Florence Gwinn Schluchter

## THE PIGEON PROGRESS

Those first years were a real challenge! Subscribers were few and often difficult to sell to and when they bought they usually paid for their subscriptions with produce or firewood. In these days merchants made a practice of dealing by barter and Hirshberg's store located on the ground floor under the progress office had a vast pile of wood at the rear of the store. From that wood there arose the story, told by Mr.

Shaw himself, that he kept a spear and a rope in his office and that he would open the rear window, spear a chunk of Hirshberg's wood and

pull it into the Progress office.

The next spring Mr. Shaw moved into half of the John McLean building, sharing it with Al Pruner "The Chicago Barber". The rent was \$4.00 and payment was divided between the two.

Later, Mr. Shaw moved the Progress into what is now the office of the Pigeon Lumber Company.

In 1908 he moved his Progress into the upstairs of the Campbell Building where he remained until his sale to George V. Hartman in January of 1944. (Hartman sold to Walt Rummel in 1947 and he in turn to present owners.)

When George Shaw had been in Pigeon a short while, he met Miss Jessie Notter, the Milli-

ner, who later became Mrs. Shaw. Jessie sold her shop to Alice Decker. (Sturm).

## MUSIC

There were very likely music teachers before my time, but my first teacher was Miss Mae McComber. The McCombers lived in the small house on west side of Brush Street, next to the railroad. In order to take piano lessons I had to walk over three miles if I went by road to Arthur Whites, sometimes I cut across the fields.

Ida White was also taking lessons. She drove a bay light weight work horse named Bob, and I could ride with her to Pigeon.

See *HISTORY* on page 4

## Putting A Face To The Name

We love to look back at the early settlers of Pigeon. It's amazing to consider the struggles they went through to build the village that we love. But as we hear the names, we often wonder who were these people? There have been many businesses throughout the years. As times changed so did the needs of the community. Following is information on the first businesses and the first Village Council. It is nice when you can connect a face with the names, so we have included photographs of the first Village Council. *This info is from the Diamond Jubilee book.*

At the time of Pigeon's consolidation, Berne still had a population of 100 and the remaining businesses there were: G. V. Black General store; H. L. Domino hotel and grocer; H. L. Schroeder, planing mill and Wm. Schultz, Blacksmith.

The first village election on December 1st, 1902 proved a large voter turnout. There were 107 citizens registered and 102 votes polled. The following were elected: President Joseph Schluchter; Trustees

for short term, H. H. Gould. Louis Staubus, Harry Hirshberg; Trustees for long term, Albert Hartley, A. G. Kaumeyer and J. W. Leipprandt; Clerk, E. W. E. Bundscho; Treasurer, Charles Sting and Assessor, Warren Challis.

As an incorporated village, these are the businesses that appear in the 1904 Plat book:

Bundscho & Heasty - *dealers in heavy and shelf hardware, coal and wood stoves, kitchen utensils, tinware, paints, wire and nails.*

Diebel & Giese - *dealers in general merchandise and full gents' furnishing's.*

John Diebel - *Manufacturer and dealer in lumber.*

Farmers Bank of Pigeon, F. W. Merrick cashier. *A general banking business transacted and loans.*

Hotel Heasty, George S. Farrar, Prop. *First Class hotel, rates \$2.00 per day.*

Oto Frenzel - *Physician, calls promptly answered.*

H. H. Gould - *dealer in buggies, wagons, cream separators, farm implements.*

Albert Hartley - *manager of Pigeon planing mill, dealer in lumber & shingles.*

A. Hirshberg & Son - *retailers in General merchandise, cloaks, shoes, carpets, bazaar goods, building material, groceries and dry goods.*

A. G. Kaumeyer - *Physician and Surgeon. Calls promptly answered.*

Leipprandt Brothers - *dealers in general merchandise, grain and produce buyers and dealers, gents clothes and groceries.*

W. W. Loosemore - *meat market, dressed poultry, hogs etc.*

McElmurray and Elenbaum - *Proprietors of Arlington House. Rates \$1.00 to \$1.50 per day. We make a speciality of catering to the traveling trade. Livery in connection with hotel.*

John A. McLean - *dealer in general hardware. Tin shop. Eaves-troughing a speciality. Wind mills and machinery.*

George C. Powell - *dealer in fine wines, liquors and cigars. Fresh beer always on tap.*

George H. A. Shaw, publisher and editor of the Pigeon Progress.

*Published every Friday. Job printing neatly executed.*

Frank Sheufelt - *Livery sale and feed stable. First class turn out. Rates reasonable. Special attention to the traveling public*

Berne Cornet Band - *Charles Czapla leader.*

Albert Brittsmunu - *Railroad agent.*

Charles Czapla - *painter.*

John Diebel - *planing mill.*

Henry Eimcrs - *Constable.*

Daniel Fisher - *blacksmith.*

Gottlieb Gosser - *saloon.*

Stephen Hiuscr - *barber.*

Junction House - *Fred Raworth*

Herman Kleinschmidt - *Prop. of Arlington House.*

Herman & Albert Kleinschmidt General Store.

Liken & Bach - *Stave and Heading mill.*

John Link - *Tinsmith.*

George McNeal general store.

Charles Maier - *carpenter.*

Mrs. Conrad Pfaff - *dressmaker.*

John Plactzer - *shoemaker.*

George B. Winters - *meats.*

Albert Kleinschmidt postmaster.



Joseph Schluchter  
President



E.W.E. Bundscho  
Clerk



J. W. Leipprandt



A. G. Kaumeyer



Albert Hartley



H. H. Gould



Harry Hirshberg



Louis Staubus



# Pigeon Students Support Polio Fund Drive



Deann Spence, freshman at Pigeon High school and Neila Kerr, a kindergarten pupil, present the Pigeon students' polio fund contribution to Ernest Clabuesch, treasurer of the Huron County chapter of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, and to Arthur Luedtke, local fund campaign chairman. A total of \$110.72 was contributed by the students. During the past three years a total of 14 students of the Pigeon school have been affected by polio. While one of the cases have been fatal, a good many have been crippling.

Those affected during this three year period include Jim Schumacher and Carol Beck, freshmen at Central Michigan College of Education, Mt. Pleasant, and those still attending school at Pigeon are: Jim McCormick, 12th grade: Jean Kasserman and Carol Schrammske, 11th: Marcia Schrammske, 10th: Deann Spence, ninth: Jean Schrammske, eighth: Larry Swartzendruber and

Irene Schrammske, seventh: Patsy Harper, fifth: Alice Schrammske and Connie Gorleski, second, and Neila Kerr, Kindergarten.

Receipts to date in the March of Dimes campaign in Huron county total approximately \$6,000. Harold L. Muehler, county chairman, announced today.

This includes \$2,000 raised by Pigeon firemen: \$1,000 raised by Bad Axe firemen, and \$3,000 from birthday cards, he stated.

Direct solicitation by volunteer workers under direction of local chairmen has not been completed. It is hoped to end the campaign by Monday, February 15th, the county chairman said.

Mr. Muehler again urged persons to mail in birthday cards with their contributions, regardless of the amount, before the close of the drive.

*Article is from:  
The Pigeon Progress, April 23, 1954*

## 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 spring.

We are currently looking for aerial farm images from the past. We would like to do a showing of images of Pigeon Farms from years ago. We would copy your picture, and return it immediately to you. The copy would be enlarged for our display.

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



## A Kid Growing Up On Saginaw Bay “A Wrong Decision”

Part 8 in a series by Jim Leinbach

Those of us who have earned a little wisdom and who are devoted to the outdoors have come to believe in the phrase, “anything can happen.” This means, when away from the comfort and protection of home one must expect the unexpected and prepare oneself mentally and physically for abrupt change. This teenage kid who began his winter fishing day with high hopes and expectations had not anchored this logic into his young brain, yet. Failure to understand nature and man's puny attempts to survive on nature's terms often leads to human tragedy. This situation is where we find our young boy on a stormy, winter night out on the frozen waters of the bay. The wind's effect on the water currents, pressure cracks on ice flows, and zero visibility are perfect examples of, “anything can happen,” but our youth rarely contemplated such events. When the thin skim of ice that had formed over the pressure crack gave way under the boy's feet, he again found himself at the mercy of nature's wrath.

Down, down the kid went into the frigid water and terror swept from his brain through his entire body. Dressed in full winter gear the kid was like a boat anchor tossed overboard and full panic enveloped his mind. The water was two feet over one's head, and it wasn't until his boots touched the sand on the bottom did his survival instincts kick in for any positive action. Scrunching into almost a squat position with his heels under his butt, the kid, with

every single ounce of sixteen-year-old strength, planted the soles of his boots down and launched himself upward. Like a breaching Orca he broke through the icy surface just enough to jam his elbows onto the solid edge of the crack. Now, with a third of his body out of the water and using his elbows as legs, he attempted to “walk” himself out onto firm ice. Winter overalls and coats are buoyant for only seconds and the seconds for him had long past. His 140 pound body and another thirty pounds of saturated clothing made movement a Herculean effort. Slowly he inched forward using his arms 'till his lower torso was horizontal to the ice and with his boots out of the water., he gave a final pull and kick and was free.

The boy lay on the ice gasping and weeping while the wind blasted snow and sleet onto his prone body. After getting his wind back he pushed himself onto his knees and stood up. He had already begun to shiver. His eyes were filled with bright spots and sparkles as he swayed back and forth with his chest heaving and icy tears running down his cheeks. In shock and residual panic the kid's first mental response was to run, but to where? Where didn't matter to him, just anywhere but here in this blindness and horror. His overalls and coat were already freezing solid but he willed his legs to run which resulted in only a foot or so of movement. This freezing of the clothing into such limited mobility probably saved the boy from death, for his first tiny steps brought him directly in front of the pressure crack again and he shied away from it as he would a scorching flame.

Unbeknownst to the kid was the fact that he had emerged on the shore side of the pressure crack; however, he thought that he was still on the outer side of it and was contemplating an attempt to jump over it.

See “Wrong” on page 4

# History *From page 1*

A little later, Mrs. Jessie Shaw wanted piano lessons so she persuaded Miss Eleanor Biglow, of Cass City, to come by Pontiac, Oxford and Northern train to Pigeon and give lessons in Mrs. Shaw's Home, which was where the Clinic Parking lot is today. Walter Bedford was also one of Miss Biglow's pupils. She had quite a large class. My sister, Mrs. Vera Fox, and I took lessons from her during the summers.

I still have many copies of the music magazine she recommended. It was called "The Elude".

## PIGEON BASEBALL TEAM

1901 was the year the team was organized with Ed Bundscho as manager. Dr. Kaumeyer was the



pitcher, W. A. Schriber catcher, Jack Campbell first base; Frank Merrick, second base; Henry Schluchter, third base, George Powell, short stop, George Shaw, right field; Frank Holtzman, center field and Sol Schluchter played left field.

If my memory serves me correctly, they did not play many games.

The baseball team of Pigeon businessmen pictured above may contain some of the men who played with the original group, but their names are not known.

## Wrong *from page 3*

Taking a few tentative steps the boy slipped and fell. That fall placed his body relative to the shoreline and when he stood up that is the direction he started for. So, like the "Tin-Man" from the movie and still reeling from shock, the boy began a panic-driven shuffle off into the darkness. Of course, flow ice is not the same landscape as a skating rink. Traversing flow ice is like walking on the surface of Mars and often the kid fell down violently. At one point, after a particular smashing fall, he slammed face first onto the jagged ice slicing a neat, one-inch slash in his upper lip.

Now, no longer shivering but vibrating wildly from cold, up he would get and start out again into the blackness and driving snow.

After what seemed an eternity, the boy found himself on a more even surface but this change in terrain didn't register with him until he tripped and fell over some sort of solid object. With difficulty, he stood up and with frozen gloves touched what he first thought was his shanty but what turned out to be a wooden boat dock that had been dismantled and stacked onto the shore. Squinting through frozen eyelids he could see what appeared to be a black wall of some sort but in reality was the tree line on North Shore. With clothing now fully frozen and walking nearly impossible the kid struggled toward the trees with unimaginable relief. He had made it, he thought, but finding his old forty-one Ford in this blizzard was the next obstacle. Slogging through icy snow drifts he entered the wood line and began searching for any sign of the car. His hands and feet had become totally numb and frostbite was inevitable, but on he went until finally he rammed directly into the front end of his vehicle. The old heap was almost invisible being totally covered in an inch of ice and snow and it was only by God's Grace did he stumble into it. With frozen hands he grasped the door handle and after several wild lunges he was able to open the ice-encased door and lay his upper body on the front seat. "Oh, thank God, thank God," he mumbled.

Many of us have had the experience of trying to find car keys in a pocket with numb hands, let alone near fro-

zen ones like this kid had.

Separating frozen pockets and making fingers close on an object is a painful and frustrating effort, but after several attempts the boy was able to discern objects in his fingers and with intense concentration he managed to pull out his ignition keys and drop them onto the seat. Oh, but the fun was just beginning for this lad. Not only did he have to place the key in the ignition in the darkness with dead fingers, but he had to actually get into the car in a sitting position because the starter button was located on the floor. Again, with every ounce of strength he had, the kid writhed and wiggled his frozen form into position and, after dropping the keys several times onto the car floor, he managed to shove the key into the slot using his knuckles, turn it, and push a frozen foot down on what he thought was the starter. The Ford's starter groaned and lugged but finally, on what seemed its last turn, the flathead fired and the boy revived the icy engine into a loud roar. Feeling for the clutch he put the car into gear. As if bound in a strait jacket, the kid fought the steering wheel finally turning the car around in the narrow lane. Visibility was horrible and the old Ford's generator was bad so his headlights barely penetrated the driving snow, but on he went towards home, slipping and sliding and praying he wouldn't get stuck.

He had cheated death.....again.

Next: *Rescue in the Rush Lake quicksand.*

## GEM THEATRE

PIGEON

FRIDAY - SATURDAY  
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## We'd love to see you on our Team!

An individual or business can become a member by contracting 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)

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