

View Lincoln document at historical society social

A document signed by President Lincoln naming an Oakland County pioneer to a sensitive Civil War post will be displayed for the first time by the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society on Sunday, Aug. 4.

The occasion is the Society's 27th annual ice cream social to be held from 1-5 p.m., at its headquarters, 405 Oakland Avenue in Pontiac.

The certificate, dated Feb. 3, 1862, announces the appointment of Thomas J. Drake of Pontiac as an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court for the Territory of Utah. The document was given to the society over 60 years ago by Lillian Drake Avery, a grandniece of Judge Drake and longtime member of the historical organization.

Society President Gretchen Adler said the appointment certificate has been kept in a bank safe deposit box for some time. "It has been a secret for so long, only a few members know of its existence," she said.

Because of the public's great interest in Lincoln and the Civil War, Adler said the society has now agreed to display the document, although briefly.

Judge Drake held the federal assignment for nearly eight years in the face of stern opposition from the Mormon Church and its charismatic leader Brigham Young, who directed the faithful to settle around Great Salt Lake in 1847. Young clashed frequently with Drake and other presidential appointees in the 1860s over management of the courts and the Mormon desire for statehood. Although Young asked Lincoln to recall Drake, the president never filtered in his support for the judge and his strict interpretation of the law in the Utah Territory during the Civil War. Lincoln's administration felt Utah's location astride the overland mail route, emigrant trails, and fragile telegraph lines to the West Coast to be strategically vital to the Union's interests.

Born in Scipio, New York, in 1797 the son of a Revolutionary War veteran, Drake came to Pontiac in the early 1820s when

the town consisted of a few log cabins. He began to practice law in 1826 and was elected the county's first prosecuting attorney two years later. In the 1830s, Drake joined the Whig political party and for the next 20 years was prominent in its ranks. He was elected to the Michigan Senate in 1834 to represent a district which then

extended from Eight Mile on the south to Lake Superior on the north, encompassing two-thirds of the eventual state.

In 1840, Drake was one of the Whig presidential electors on the occasion of Michigan's first participation in a national presidential election. Sixteen years later, he was again a presidential elector, this time for the new Repub-

lican party and its candidate, John C. Fremont. Drake is also said to have been a member of the Oakland County delegation at the formation of the Republican party in Jackson, Michigan, on July 6, 1854. A silk flag, embroidered with a tree and the message "Hearts of Oak of Oakland," which was carried by that delegation, was found among the

Drake's effects after his death in 1875.

Poor health forced Drake to resign his judicial office in Utah two months before the expiration of his second term. He returned to private life and his home on the northeast corner of Lawrence and Williams streets in Pontiac. There, he began to write of his early travels and experiences in

Michigan. In 1871-72, he prepared a brief history of Oakland County, which was subsequently published by the Michigan Pioneer Society in 1903. Shortly before his death, Drake became the catalyst for the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society, which today owns several of his manuscripts.



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Sheriff offers web site for information



The re-election campaign of John F. Nichols took a turn into cyberspace this week as the incumbent sheriff unveiled a World Wide Web Site.

Nichols, 77, said the web site will enable voters to review his record, to learn more about ongoing programs within the sheriff's department and to offer their thoughts and opinions.

Nichols, who is in a five-year primary race, unveiled his high tech innovation during a press conference Tuesday at his campaign headquarters at 4147 Orchard Lake Road in West Bloomfield.

Nichols' 54-year career in law enforcement includes about three decades with the Detroit Police Department — including the top leadership position as commissioner — and a tenure as chief of police in Farmington Hills.

Nichols, who is seeking his fourth, 4-year term, is considered the favorite in Tuesday's primary election. His Republican opponents are Gerard L. Corlin of Oakland Township, William A. Goodfellow of Pontiac, Paul A. Molin of Farmington Hills and Michael L. Odette of Clarkston.

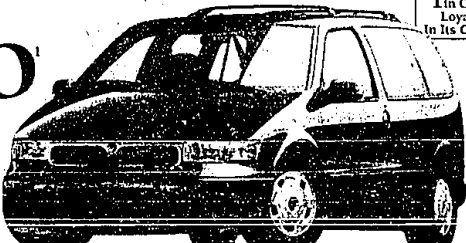
The winner will run the victor of the Democratic primary between Michigan State Police Commander Matt Hogan and Waterford Township police officer Scott Gordon.

Nichols said he is the first sheriff in Michigan to establish a web site which he expects will make him more accessible to voters. Voters will be able to interact, Nichols said.

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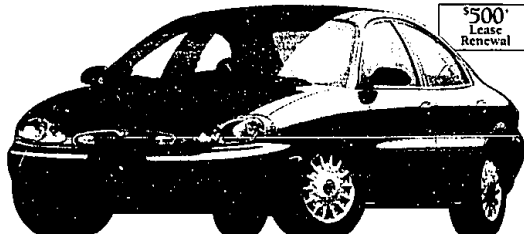


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