

Ypsilanti GLEANINGS

YHS Museum & Archives

Official publication of the Ypsilanti Historical Society, featuring historical articles and reminisces of the people and places in the Ypsilanti area.



SUMMER 2008

Highland Cemetery – The Gates

By Margaret Freeman

In 1880, the original Highland Cemetery entrance gates were flanked on either side by a large and a small house, each in the Swiss Chalet style, built at a cost of \$2500. The larger house was occupied by the caretaker, while the smaller one served as a tool house and office.

The Starkweather Chapel was completed in 1889 and the Quirk vault was dedicated in 1896. With these remarkable buildings in place, the need for a definite plan of landscape architecture was felt. Mr. Simmonds of Chicago was employed to design the grounds. It was decided to remove the buildings at the entrance and they were moved to the north where they now stand (*Ypsilanti Press*, June 30, 1936).

Shrubs and plants were started and the entrance was much beautified. The new entrance gates were the gift of Lois Voorhees Leetch, whose pioneer parents, James N. and Martha (Patty) Swarthout Voorhees had come to Panama Township (now Superior) in 1827.

The obituary of Mrs. Leetch from the *Ypsilantian-Press* on November 13, 1916 stated that her generosity and public spiritedness had made several things possible in Ypsilanti. These things included generous donations to the building funds of the G.A R. hall on Pearl Street and to the Masonic temple. As a lifelong member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, she also donated their impressive baptismal font.



Lois Leetch donated funds for construction of the Highland Cemetery entrance gates that were "...to be built and dedicated to the memory of her husband, the Honorable Andrew J. Leetch."

An agreement was written up and signed by the Highland Cemetery Association officers in May 1910, to accept a \$1,000 donation from Lois V. Leetch for the erection of the entrance gates. They were to be built and dedicated to the memory of her husband, the Honorable Andrew J. Leetch. This agreement was recorded in the Highland Cemetery Records Book and may be viewed at the Bentley Historical Library in Ann Arbor (Highland Cemetery Association records, 1863-1963 – Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan).

These Highland Cemetery Association records show that in the December of 1912
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From the President's Desk

By Alvin E. Rudisill

The supervision of renovation and maintenance projects continue to keep our board members busy. Projects currently underway include the installation of a "wheel chair lift" in the new entrance on the north side of the Museum, the addition of trees in the front lawn and shrubs along the north side of the Museum, the installation of edging and mulch around the perimeter of the Museum, repair of soffits and the installation of new gutters on both the Museum and Carriage House, and the renovation of the basement of the Carriage House which will become an extension of the first floor apartment.

A new shed has been installed on the property on the east side of the parking lot. This space will be used to store the lawn and garden equipment necessary for the upkeep of the property.

Our yard sale held on June 7th was a great success with just under \$2,500 profit made on the venture. Thanks to all those who donated items and to the many members who worked during the event to mark items and assist with sales.

Margaret "Peg" Porter has accepted the position of Chair of the YHS Membership Committee. I'm sure we will all be hearing from her as she plans and implements a campaign to attract new members.

We have two new interns working in the Museum and Archives. Pam German is the new intern in the Museum and Veronica Robinson is the new intern in the Archives. They are both enrolled in the graduate program in Historical Preservation at Eastern Michigan University.

Elections for positions on the YHS Board of Trustees will be held at our Fall Membership Meeting. If you, or anyone you know, is interested in serving on the Board please let me know and I will make sure you are considered by our Nomination Committee. We have many other positions in the Society that are filled by appointment of the Board.

Our Museum and Archive Advisory Boards continue to make improvements in our facilities and programs. We hope you will stop by regularly to visit and provide us with your input on how we can continually improve our services to the community. ■

The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "Ypsilanti Historical Society Home Page - Windows Internet Explorer". The address bar displays "http://ypsilanthistoricalsociety.org/". The website content includes a header with the society's name and address, a navigation menu, a "Welcome!" message, a "For Information about upcoming Society events, visit us on-line at:" link, and a "A Matter of Trust" section. The navigation menu lists: Home, Administrative, Archives, Collections, Contact Info, Donations, Event Schedule, Membership, Publications, Search Engines, Vets Project, Visiting, Volunteer, and Web Sites. The "A Matter of Trust" section describes a five-year campaign to raise \$400,000 for the purchase of the property at 220 North Huron Street. The footer includes contact information for the museum and archives, and technical support details for SBC America.



Cemetery Association records in the Bentley Historical Library show that in 1911, a fee of \$600 was paid to William Wilson, an Ann Arbor brick and stonemason who may have constructed the stone pillars for the gates.

Highland Cemetery – The Gates *continued from front page*

summary of cemetery expenses, Lois V. Leetch actually donated \$2,000 for the Highland Cemetery gates. An amount of \$1,553.83 was deducted from this, which probably indicates the cost of the gates. A balance of \$446.17 was listed.

The Cemetery records also show that in 1911, a fee of \$600 was paid to William Wilson. A William B. Wilson can be found in the 1910 census of Ann Arbor. His occupation was listed as a brick and stonemason. Perhaps he was the stonemason who constructed the fieldstone pillars of the cemetery gates. Fieldstone was readily available in the Ypsilanti area at this time according to Austin Norton.

No identifying markings were found on the wrought iron gates. No information as to date has been found to establish who designed or constructed them. The gates were probably forged locally, perhaps by a local blacksmith or foundry.

The impressive Highland Cemetery main carriage gates are constructed of decorative wrought iron, each being 10' high by 81"

wide. Each gate is secured in place to 16' high by 3 ½' square fieldstone pillars. Immediately adjacent on either side are similarly designed wrought iron pedestrian gates, each being 80" high by 51" wide. These side gates are secured to a smaller pair of fieldstone pillars.

The gates still stand today as an imposing memorial to the Honorable Andrew J. Leetch, husband of Lois Voorhees Leetch. A plaque is in place on the fieldstone pillar honoring this gift to the Highland Cem-

etry. The picture of Andrew J. and Lois Voorhees Leetch comes from an old family album of Frank and Margaret Freeman (author). Frank is a distant cousin of Lois Leetch. Their common ancestor is from the Swarthout Family. ■

Margaret Freeman is a family historian who belongs to the Genealogy Society of Washtenaw County and enjoys researching and sharing information about our ancestors.



The plaque located on the left pillar of the gate indicating they were constructed in 1912 through a gift from Lois Leetch.

The Ypsilanti Water Tower

By Alvin Rudisill

The stone water tower located at the highest point of elevation of the city on Summit Street has long been a symbol of our fair city. The tower was designed by William R. Coats as part of a city waterworks project and construction on the tower was completed in 1890. The tower has an 85-foot base made of Joliet limestone, is 147 feet tall, holds 250,000 gallons of water, and cost \$21,435.63 to build.

In 1988 the stone tower became a Registered Michigan Historic Site listed with the Bureau of History, Michigan Department of State. A large historic marker at the base of the tower reads:

Side One: "Day laborers constructed this water tower which was completed in 1890 at a cost of \$21,435.63. The tower and the city waterworks supplied 471 customers the first year. An ordinance passed on April 14, 1898, established a yearly rate schedule. Rates were based on the number of faucets in use, the type of business that customers operated and the livestock they owned. A residence with one tap was charged \$5.00; a private bathtub cost an additional \$2.00. Saloon keepers paid \$7.00 for one faucet, \$3.00 for each additional faucet and \$1.00 for each billiard

table. Each cow a person owned cost \$1.00. People who failed to pay their bill were subject to a \$50.00 fine and ninety days in the county jail. Until 1956 this structure was the only water tower in the Ypsilanti water system.

Side 2: "The Ypsilanti Water Tower was designed by William R. Coats and constructed as part of an elaborate city waterworks project that began in 1899. Located on the highest point in Ypsilanti, the tower was completed in 1890. It is 147 feet high and has an 85-foot base constructed of Joliet limestone. The substructure walls taper from a thickness of forty inches at the bottom to 24 inches at the top. The reservoir holds a 250,000-gallon steel tank. To protect themselves from injury, the builders made three stone crosses; one is visible over the west door. The Ypsilanti Community Utilities Authority has operated and maintained the structure since 1974. In 1975 this tower was designated by the American Water Works Association as an American Water Landmark. It was restored in 1976."

As a landmark and attractive physical feature, the Ypsilanti Water Tower continues to be a symbol of the city of Ypsilanti. A bust of Demetrius Ypsilanti is located at the base of the tower between Greek and U.S. flags along with the Michigan Bureau of History marker.

However, the shape of the tower and plaque indicating the year it was "erected" has also been a source of humor for comedians



Construction on the Ypsilanti Water Tower was completed in 1890.

and others over the years. In 2003 Cabinet Magazine conducted a world-wide contest to identify "The World's Most Phallic Building" and the Ypsilanti Water Tower was declared the winner.

As early as 1913 alternate proposals were made to change the shape of the "ill-proportioned wooden dome." One proposal presented on December 31, 1913 by the Olmsted Brothers suggested altering the form of the roof to make a "...much more agreeable object of this prominent and dominating structure." Their specific proposal was as follows:

"The water tower in Ypsilanti is an imposing shaft of stone but is now surmounted by an ill-proportioned wooden dome. It would be somewhat difficult to make this a well proportioned feature, as at best the column must be too short for so tall a top structure; but it would be possible, by removing the extra platform beneath the drum by corbelling out under the drum, and by altering the form of the roof, to make a much more agreeable object of this prominent and



Historic Marker at the Base of the Tower.



Bust of Demetrius Ypsilanti located at the Base of the Tower.

dominating structure. The accompanying sketch suggests one possible treatment, but is intended as a suggestion only, for this is a matter worthy of careful study by an architect of the best artistic judgment." ■

Alvin Rudisill is the President of the Ypsilanti Historical Society.

References

- "Report Upon Proposed Improvements - Ypsilanti, Michigan," Olmsted Brother, Landscape Architects, Brookline, Mass., page 89, December 31, 1913.
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- "The YCUA Stone Tower," (<http://ycua.org/stonetower.htm>).
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- "Ypsilanti Water Tower," (<http://www.michmarkers.com/startup.asp?startpage=L1591.htm>).

Right: Proposed change in the roof design submitted by the Olmsted Brothers in 1913.



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Cruising Down River Street

By Joe Butcko

(Note: This is a reprint of an article which appeared in the May 2008 Depot Town Rag)

My parents owned a four-acre truck farm at the site of the original Ford Starter & Generator plant in Ypsilanti. Ford bought the land from them for \$4,000, a fortune in the 1920s. My parents then built a home at 634 Harriet Street for \$2,000. The house still stands and is in very good condition. There were only four homes on Harriet Street at that time. My mother passed away in 1929; my father and the family of five boys moved to 214 East Forest Avenue, now the site of the Forest Avenue Baptist Church.

In 1932 there were only about six houses on the north side of Forest Avenue from River Street to Prospect. It was all farmland owned by the Peck family whose house and barns were on Forest Avenue about 150 yards east of River Street. The Peck farm was a working farm with horses, cows, etc. Parents would send their kids with a bucket to get milk. Mr. Peck would let us watch him milk the cows and, with a twist of his wrist, he would squirt us in the face with the milk. Today, he would be put in jail - the milk wasn't pasteurized. Among Peck's other enterprises, the City hired him to clear sidewalks with his horse pulling a wooden snowplow.

At Forest and River was the Swain home where remnants of a malt factory still stand. On the southwest corner was Maude Leslie's store that opened in 1936. At River and Holmes, during the Depression (1929-1940), Clow's Welding Shop was among the prosperous enterprises in town because few folks could afford new equipment; consequently, everything had to be repaired, especially farm tools like plows and cultivators. In 1953 I rented a 400 square foot garage attached to Clow's building. I started Crescive Die & Tool. When we sold it in 2000 it had grown to 400 thousand square feet with plants in Saline and Milan. We grew with the help of sons & grandsons, and it all started on Ypsilanti's River Street.



Joe Butcko takes time to reminisce about River Street and some of the surrounding areas.



A current picture of the home at 634 Harriet Street that Joe's parents built for \$2,000 in the early 1920s.



Joe Butcko, who is now 83, claims he is one of the youngest and smartest of the 35+ member Ypsilanti Morning Coffee Group.

At Forest and Norris was the Monroe Foundry. They made castings for machine tools, presses, lathes, and more. Later they made products for Craftsman Tools. Adjacent to the Foundry, John Lonsky started a machine shop. Monroe & Lonsky merged and became Central Specialty. After a few more transitions it became Motor Wheel, employing several hundred people. The

buildings are all gone now except the office building on Norris Street that is now the Corner Brewery.

Just west of Norris Street to the railroad tracks is Michigan Ladder Company, the oldest manufacturer in Ypsilanti - possibly in Washtenaw County. It is 110+ years old and remains in the same family. On River

at Cross Street is the large pre-Civil War building. I remember when O.E. Thompson manufactured toys, pull wagons, scooters, and farm implements like hand-held corn planters there.

Across the street is the home of the Miller Motors Hudson dealership now the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum. That building had housed Crown Fender who manufactured fenders for everything from bicycles, surreys, and autos. Before GM and Ford became gi-

ants, there were over 2000 automobile wannabees. In Michigan, every other blacksmith shop was trying to reinvent the auto - from gasoline to wood-burning engines - and they needed two things: investors and inventors. There was even an Anhut auto, related to Ypsilanti's Bill Anhut family.

Behind the Sidetrack was Rubin's Junkyard. There was a large barn and the entire yard was shielded by a high board fence. Just south *continued on page 8*



The Thompson Building at the corner of River and Cross Streets was once used to manufacture toys, pull wagons, scooters, and farm implements. It is currently being renovated.



This building on the corner of River and Cross Streets was formerly the home of Miller Motors Hudson Dealership and now houses the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum.

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Cruising Down River Street –
continued from page 7

of the railroad tracks is a brick building now housing the Ypsilanti Food Co-op. Before the turn of the 20th century this building housed a machine tool company. In 1965, I went to Springfield, Massachusetts to buy my first new punch press. In the lobby of the Perkins Press Company was a framed newspaper picture and story of the Perkins Company in that Ypsilanti building, telling how they started on River Street in Ypsilanti. They moved to Massachusetts about 1909.

Also in that building were two tool & die makers: Bill Britton and Cliff Simons. They started Universal Die Cast Company with one machine. They moved to a new building in Saline, bought several companies including Hoover Ball Company, and later became among the largest shareholders of Johnson Control, one of the largest auto parts manufacturers in the world.

At the south end, another building housed Striker Die & Tool Company. Ed Striker was the uncle of the boy whose body was found under the bridge that goes from Cross Street to Frog Island - Depot Town's still-unsolved mystery. At 112 North River, next to the Octagon House, a brick building housed the George L. Ennen Manufacturing Company. They made parts for the Hudson and Terraplane autos and built a new building on Emerick Street, alongside Striker's new building. The Ennen plant on River Street still stands. Among other things, it served as the Secretary of State's office, City Radiator, etc.

In the Lutheran parking lot was the Bloom Junk yard. At the end of River Street was the city's largest junkyard, later named Ypsilanti Iron & Metal. Junk yards were a viable part of the



Before the turn of the 20th century the building currently housing the Ypsilanti Food Coop was the home of a machine tool company.



At 112 North River Street, next to the Octagon House, a brick building housed the George L. Ennen Manufacturing Company.



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At the end of River Street was the city's largest junkyard, later named Ypsilanti Iron & Metal.



The property on East Michigan Avenue where Marsh Plating Corporation is located was once owned by Preston Tucker.

county, due to the many foundries that bought the metal from them. Also there were processors of rags and paper that would buy from them, process the material and sell to the mills.

East of the junkyard was a large lumberyard. It seemed a train was constantly going down the tracks on Lincoln Street, across Michigan Avenue to the lumber yard and beyond to the Ford Plant.

West of the junkyard was Motor State Products that developed and manufactured auto-

matic convertible tops for all the automobile companies. Prior to the automatic top, it was a two-person job to put a top up or down. They employed several hundred people, ran three shifts, and were the highest hourly-paying factory in the county.

At Park and Babbitt Street was the home of Preston Tucker. Behind the house was a large wooden barn about 100 feet long and 40 feet wide. Before World War II after the invasion of Poland, defense contracts were awarded to

continued on page 23



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“Let’s Play Two!” Patrick Dignan’s Twenty Years as Ypsi’s Baseball Coach

By Phil Barnes

Bob Moffett was a genius. Among other things, he hired Patrick Dignan as his head baseball coach in 1970-71 at Ypsilanti High School and that started a string of successes which is unparalleled in Washtenaw County. Bob became the full time Athletic Director that year and he turned the reins of the baseball team over to Patrick. Thus the dynasty

As a player, Patrick Dignan was quality all the way. He was All-State in football and basketball at St. Thomas High School. During his senior year the football team went undefeated and unscored upon. Patrick was the star halfback and he continued his career at Eastern Michigan from 1959 to 1963, frequently rushing for over 100 yards per

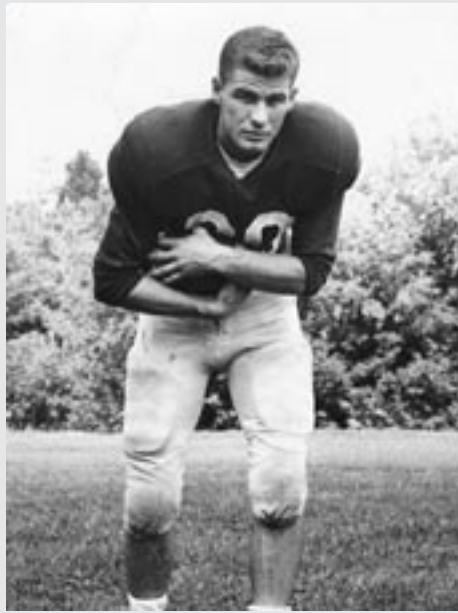
in baseball as an assistant he was selected to be the Head Baseball Coach in 1970-71. This was a brilliant move by Moffett.

Ypsilanti won the Michigan State Championship in 1986 beating Brother Rice six to five in the thrilling final game. Leading the way were Todd Kendricks, Eric Pederson, Matt Oestrike, John Noe, and John Terris.

Dignan faced many great coaches in his day. Among the best he named were Tom Noland for Lincoln Park; Jim Chronowski from Wayne Memorial; Bob Wright from Jackson; Frank Corej from Catholic Central; and Bob Topp from Kalamazoo Central. Other outstanding coaches in Washtenaw County were



Patrick Dignan – the high school years.



Patrick Dignan played halfback for Eastern Michigan University in 1963.



Pat and Patricia with son John.

began. The team lost one game that year, led by Steve Rhodin and Bob McSpadden. Bob Moffett himself had been an outstanding coach and before that a collegiate player at Michigan State Normal College. He was one of the best fastpitch third basemen ever to play in this area. He led Walker Hardware to a State Double A title by hitting two home runs in the four winning games. Now, however, he turned the Ypsilanti baseball fortunes over to Patrick Dignan who took the team on an unbelievable baseball journey.

game. Patrick also played baseball in college and started as a centerfielder for Bill Crouch, his baseball coach.

Patrick’s first job was as football, basketball and baseball coach at Memphis High School in Michigan. He also drove school bus and received \$3,700 per year for his toils in 1963-64. Ypsilanti was his next stop, as Dr. Paul Emrick hired him the next year to be the assistant football, baseball and junior high basketball coach. After his stint with Moffett

Wayne Welter from Chelsea; Ron Mercier from Milan; Rip Kinney from Ann Arbor; and Steve Robb from Milan.

Patrick named his all time best team from Ypsilanti. There were many top players in his program over the years, some of whom were drafted and played professional baseball. The first basemen were: Jim Horton, Steve Rhoden, Rob Sepanek, Jim Luckhardt and Pat Zurich. Middle infielders were: Bob McSpadden, Todd Irwin, Chuck Coker, Greg

White, Ron Palmer, John Noe, Greg White, Steve Kinney and Matt Oestrike. Third baseman were: Eric Pederson and Dave Rukkillla. Outfielders were: Jeff Washington, John Terris, Phil Campbell (who arguably is the best home run hitter with 35), John Dignan (who led the team in batting average and home runs for three years), Todd Hendricks, Ken Robinson (who went on to Michigan State and had an outstanding career). Catchers were: Aaron Metaj, Jim Nowling, Russ Kincaid and Jim Sepanek. Pitchers were: Horton, Rhodin, Hendricks, Noe, Irwin (who also played for MSU), Mark Denise, Bob Smith, Mark Jeppesen and Kevin Bara.

Dignan's all time opponent team is as follows: Pat Sheridan, Don Johnson, Jim Canfield and Bill Crews from Wayne; Bill Ashley from Belleville; Bob Korecky from Saline; Ted Grignon and Mike Betz from Edsel Ford; Tom Willette from Plymouth; and Roger Cole from Milan. All were drafted to play professional baseball.

Patrick had been recruited by Pin Ryan, legendary Coach then Athletic Director at Oakland Community College, to be the Head Baseball Coach prior to his accepting the Ypsi head job. Three years experience gave him the credentials to be hired by EMU as Assistant to Roger Coryell in 1991. A retirement from teaching and a move to Falls Church, Virginia took him out of coaching for a while, but upon the family's return he began a series of coaching vendettas which simply added up to helping others. When called upon he would accept a position of need in the area. Currently he is assisting an old friend, Brad Bush, a great Ypsi athlete, in football at Chelsea. Patrick always gave of himself to help any of his former athletics or coaches.

Patrick and his wife Patricia reside in Ypsilanti and have raised two children, Cassandra and John and have five grandchildren. ■

Phil Barnes was born in Detroit and received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees from EMU. He taught in the Ypsilanti schools from 1959 to 1963 and then served as an administrator in the Milan Public Schools from 1964 to 1994.



Pat with daughter Cassandra.



Patrick Dignan.



Assistant Coaches Joe McDermott and John Williams and Head Coach Patrick Dignan.

An Ypsi Kid was the Catalyst for the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

By Tom Dodd and James Mann

Ypsilantian Charles Moore Jr. went out in the world and made good. He left his mark on the world, a mark that can still be seen today. His parents were Charles and Adeline Moore who came to Ypsilanti in 1835. Moore purchased property from Abram Larzalere on February 2, 1837, and almost at once cleared the virgin forest from the site and began to build a house. That house still stands on the northwest corner of South Huron and Woodward at 118 South Huron where Charles and Adeline lived out their lives. Adeline died in 1868 and Charles died in 1870. Into this house five children were born, of whom only three would live into adulthood.

Charles, the only son, was born on October 20, 1855. He graduated from Harvard in 1878 and was class orator. He married Alice Williams Merriam and the couple visited Ypsilanti as part of their honeymoon. For about a year, starting in 1878, Moore was editor of the *Ypsilanti Commercial*, and his wife wrote a weekly column which she signed "Peripatetico" (I walk about). Charles made journalism his first career.



Charles Moore house built in 1837 at 118 South Huron Street.

From journalism, Moore entered politics and, in 1889, was secretary to U. S. Senator James McMillan who was Chairman of the Committee on the District of Columbia which was then under the authority of Congress. It was McMillan who campaigned for Detroit to buy Belle Isle in 1879. He and Moore then campaigned to house American artifacts in the national capital.

Senator McMillan contemplated a series of museums and other public buildings along the mall in Washington. The sudden death of Senator McMillan in 1902 might have caused the plans to be filed and forgotten but for Charles Moore Jr. Two months after the death of the Senator, Moore returned to Detroit to give a series of talks on "The City as a Work of Art," promoting the vision of McMillan for Washington as a center of the arts. Moore used the latest in visual technology to project stereopticon views of Washington, as well as drawings

and models to illustrate the improvements proposed by McMillan.

According to George Bulanda in the *HourDetroit* magazine, Moore "...made speeches to drum up support for the mall." The *Ypsilanti Daily Press* of June 13, 1941 noted that "Mr. Moore was responsible for the carrying out, beginning in the nineties, of the original plans of Pierre L'Enfant for the city of Washington and the program of new buildings for the government that have made the city so beautiful."

Charles Lang Freer, a Detroit businessman and art collector, attended two of the talks and was impressed. Freer and Moore discussed the possibility of locating Freer's collection on the mall in Washington. This was the start of a long series of talks, which resulted in the opening of the Freer Gallery at the Smithsonian in May of 1923. The Gallery includes works by American



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artist James McNeil Whistler, who was a friend of Freer.

At first, Smithsonian officials were not impressed with restrictions Freer placed on his private collection of art that prohibited lending, selling, or adding to the collection. Smithsonian delegates came to check out Freer's collection in Detroit and "were hardly bowled over," according to George Bulanda of the *HourDetroit* magazine. "They didn't realize what Freer had," said Linda Merrill, co-author of *Freer: A Legacy of Art*. "They recognized that the Whistler collection was valuable, but in those days people didn't know about Asian art." It was the influence of the kid from Ypsilanti that turned the opinion around when Moore petitioned President Theodore Roosevelt to "lean on" the Smithsonian. The Regents accepted Freer's gift in 1906 and the Freer Gallery of Art opened to the general public on the National Mall in 1923.

In 1915, Moore was appointed to the National Commission of Fine Arts, on which he was associated until his retirement in 1937. For nine years, 1918 to 1927, Moore was Chief of the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress. He died on September 25, 1942, at the age of eighty-seven.

On May 5, 2008 ABC's Good Morning America lead off their "Wonders of America" series with a feature on the National Mall. "No," said Diane Sawyer starting out the program, "not the shopping center in Minnesota; it's the National Mall that stretches from the U.S. Capital to the Washington Monument." Special guests that day were President and Mrs. Bush, "enjoying the view from their back yard." ■

Tom Dodd and James Mann are regular contributors to the Gleanings. Tom is the Editor of the Depot Town Rag and James is a local historian who has written several books on the history of Ypsilanti.



Buildings and Memorials in and around the National Mall include: the Washington Monument, the National Museum of American History, the National Museum of Natural History, the National Gallery of Art Sculpture Garden, the West Building of the National Gallery of Art, the East Building of the National Gallery of Art, the United States Capitol, the Ulysses S. Grant Memorial, the United States Botanical Gardens, the National Museum of the American Indian, the National Air and Space Museum, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Gardens, the Arts and Industries Building, the Smithsonian Institution Building ("The Castle"), the Freer Gallery of Art, the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, and the National Museum of African Art.

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The Daniel Quirk Jr. House and Gardens

By Alvin Rudisill

The house at 206 North Huron Street, now the home of Manchester and Associates law firm, was once owned by Julia and Daniel Quirk Jr., who purchased the property in 1908 from James and Edna Deubel for the sum of \$3,500. The property at that time ran all the way from Huron Street to the Huron River and Daniel Quirk Jr. maintained a garden that was the size of two tennis courts down the hill from the house.

Daniel Quirk Jr. was the son of Daniel Quirk Sr., founder of the Peninsular Paper Company and the National Bank of Ypsilanti. The house was just doors away from the homestead of the senior Quirk who resided at 200 North Huron Street at the corner of Cross and Huron Streets.

At that time the house had over 5,000 square feet of space and the Quirks devoted the entire third floor to living space for their four children. Nancy, one of their daughters, married G. Mennen “Soapy” Williams who would later become the Governor of Michigan. The wedding reception was held in the home. The event attracted a number of notable guests including Henry Ford.

Son, Daniel T. Quirk, would eventually take over the family paper business and served as mayor of Ypsilanti from 1947 to 1952. The Peninsular Paper Company used several different names over the years and closed its doors in 2001.

The house was originally built around 1860 by Delos Showerman, a local haberdasher, who had the house built in a “cubic Italianate style with a slate hip roof terminating in either a long-gone belvedere or Victorian cresting around its flat top.” In succession the house was the residence of Professor Griffith of the

continued on page 16



Top Row – L to R: Julia Quirk, Daniel T. Quirk, Nancy Williams Graham. Bottom Row – L to R: Alexander Buel (Red) Quirk, D. L. Quirk, Jr., Judy Krag.



The Quirk residence prior to the addition in 1927 of the extensive theatre arts and circus library.



View of the back of the Quirk residence from the gardens at the bottom the hill.



View of the gardens from the back of the Quirk residence.

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The Daniel Quirk Jr. House
and Gardens –
continued from page 14

Normal School, Colonel George W. Lee, Civil War officer and military construction supervisor in the building of Harper Hospital in Detroit, the Deubel brothers – founders of several flour mills along the Huron River, and then Daniel L. Quirk, Jr. A southern wing was added to the core building in 1897 and the library was added on the north side in 1927 to house Quirk's extensive theatre arts and circus library.

In 1936 the Quirk family donated the flood plain portion of their property (bottom of the hill to the river) to the City of Ypsilanti to use as an addition to Riverside Park. In 1955, the City bought the house and converted it for use as a municipal court.

According to records in the YHS Archives the property was originally "...a part of French Claim number six hundred and ninety one in the Village of Ypsilanti, Washtenaw County, State of Michigan" that was conveyed in 1811 by the United States to Romaine La Chambre. The same records indicate that in 1814 "Know all men by these presents that I, Romaine La Chambre, for and in consideration of one dollar of lawful money of the United States to me in hand paid, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, have granted, bargained, sold, conveyed, transferred and made over to Gabriel Godfroy, Sr., and by these presents do grant, bargain, sell, convey, transfer and net over to the said Gabriel Godfroy, his heirs and assigns forever, all my right, title and interest, claim, demand and pretensions whatsoever, to the within Patent and to have and to hold the said track of land described in said Patent unto the said Gabriel Godfroy, Sr., his heirs and assigns forever." The property then changed ownership several times before the house was built around 1860. ■

Alvin Rudisill is the President of the Ypsilanti Historical Society and serves as the Editor of the Gleanings.

Base Lake, Uncle Spen and "The City of Ypsilanti" Tugboat

By Margaret Porter

Note: This is a follow-up to the story that appeared in the 2008 Spring Issue of the Gleanings titled "The City of Ypsilanti Tugboat."

For many years there was an Ypsilanti summer colony on the north shore of Base Lake near Pinckney. Its "unofficial mayor" was Spen Davis, an Ypsilanti car dealer. He was also the owner and Captain of The City of Ypsilanti, a black and white tugboat. Spen and

immediately climbed the ladder to the top deck while the girls remained below. Spen would start the engines, then he'd jump down from the pilot house, grab one of the poles on board and push the boat away from the dock. Next he'd quickly climb back to his perch at the wheel, put her in reverse and we would slowly back out until we reached the drop off. He'd swing the tug around heading counter clockwise around the lake.



"The City of Ypsilanti" tugboat now resides on Portage Lake with owner Herb Blattenberger.

his boat were an important part of summers at "the lake."

Spen was a short, wiry man with a booming voice. Spen didn't simply speak, he shouted. Folks got used to Spen's bellow which was particularly useful when his big boat was loaded with a bunch of beach kids. At least every two weeks Spen would take us all for a ride around the lake.

We'd line up on the Davis dock and board in a more or less orderly fashion. The boys

We would all wave at the folks on shore and they would wave back. Sometimes Spen saluted them with a blast of the whistle. He'd reduce the speed as we circled the little cove where the river headed into Portage Lake. The water lilies would bob up and down as we passed. Then we'd head along the south shore where the cottages were larger, many of these were owned by Ann Arbor people. They might have more impressive summer places but they did not have a tugboat!

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The author of this article on "The City of Ypsilanti" tugboat with her mother Ruth Porter and Jim Budd (son of Clyde and Thora Budd).



The "Base Lake Gang" poses for a picture before going for a "Beach Parade" (circa 1950).

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How I Was Found in the YHS Archives

By George Ridenour

The scrapbooks in the back room of the YHS Archives include a 1936 version of Alfred E. Neuman. The photo is of a drawing from June 20, 1936 by one Charles P. Knapp. Under the photo is the caption "Sure I'm for the New Deal!" Presently, we know nothing about Mr. Knapp or this early version of Alfred. However, the current version of the "What Me Worry," Alfred Neuman that appears on the cover of Mad Magazine is well known.

Researching Wikipedia we were able to learn that the origins of Mr. Neuman are shrouded in mystery and may never be fully known. One thought is that he might have originally been used to depict someone with a disease or as an advertisement for "painless dentistry." A second theory is that his face (mug) was a caricature showing him to be a symbol of an "idiot."



Sketch from 1936 by Charles Knapp of Alfred Neuman.



Alfred Neuman as popularized by Mad Magazine.

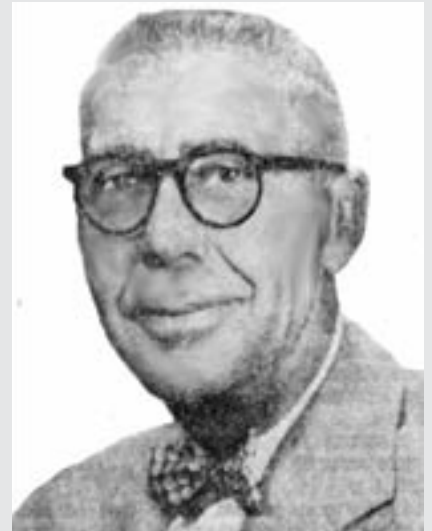
How did Alfred get his name? Again, this is shrouded in mystery. One story is that he was named after Alfred Newman the music arranger from the 1940s and 1950s. However, his name later appeared as "Alfred E. Neuman" and the logo of "What Me Worry" began to appear with the mug shot. Alfred has been, as well, used by politicians in local, state and presidential political campaigns. He has been used against rival political candidates implicating that "No one but an idiot like this would vote for this politician."

The face was used in November, 1954 by Mad Magazine and it has now graced 450 Mad Magazine covers in addition to their adoption of Alfred as their mascot.

Now, this 1936 sketch by Charles Knapp is a prized possession of the Ypsilanti Historical Society Archives. Perhaps we should adopt Alfred as the YHS Archives mascot so as we do research and debate history we too can say "What Me Worry?" ■

George Ridenour is one of the volunteer staff in the YHS Archives who assists visitors with their research efforts.

Base Lake, Uncle Spen and "The City of Ypsilanti" Tugboat – *continued from page 16*



Captain Spencer "Spen" Davis.

After we had circled the lake, Spen would head back towards the dock. The trick was to cut the engines at just the right spot so that the boat's forward momentum would carry us to the landing. Occasionally, this did not go as planned. Spen would jump overboard to push us up to the dock. If there was a visitor along who decided to help, we'd watch to see what happened. It wasn't unusual for the "helper" to jump over only to find they were beyond the drop off. Down they'd go only to bob up with a surprised look on their face. In the meantime Spen was yelling "arms and legs in." We were not permitted to disembark until the Captain had secured the boat and gave us the OK.

For those of us who spent our childhood summers at the lake in the late 1940s and 1950's, Spen and his big boat are imprinted in our memories. While the tug may now be docked at Portage Lake, it is only visiting there. Base Lake is its rightful place and Spen is its Captain...always. ■

Margaret "Peg" Porter is an Ypsilanti native who recently returned to Ypsilanti after living and working in Washington D.C.

Gabriel Godfroy Wasn't the First

By Karl Williams

Many Ypsilanti histories relate that Gabriel Godfroy and two other Frenchmen, Romaine La Chambre and Francois Pepin, established a trading post on the river Huron in 1811 at what became the site of Ypsilanti, and that they were the first Europeans in the area. There is more to the story than that.

The French established Quebec as their first permanent settlement in North America in 1608. There was a market for the furs that they could obtain in the new world and French traders rapidly moved into the Great Lakes region, soon followed by religious orders determined to promote the word of God and bring civilization to the Indians. In 1671 a permanent

settlement was established at St. Ignace at the Straits of Mackinac and in 1701 a permanent settlement established at Detroit. St. Ignace, established to convert the Indians, was soon the center of the Michigan fur trade in the north. Detroit was founded to keep the English from entering the upper Great Lakes, but another reason most certainly would have been to establish a permanent fur trading station in Lower Michigan. Beaver, at that time, was the pelt of choice and Michigan must have been a beaver's paradise. Not only were there numerous rivers and streams throughout Lower Michigan but some Indian tribes considered the beaver sacred and thus they were

not hunted. Of course, economics changed that. By the time of the French/Indian War (1755-1763), French fur traders had established semi-permanent stations throughout the Great Lakes region. Many French fur traders had taken to living with the Indians, having Indian wives and children. The first reference to the Ypsilanti location is a report of the route from Detroit to western Michigan and the Mississippi River by way of the Sauk Trail written c1772 by an English officer. In the report it is stated that 40 miles west of Detroit was the Huron River, Indian name Nandewine Sippy, at which six large cabins of "Puttawateamees" were located. The river is described as being about fifty feet wide and the water generally from one and a half to two feet deep, "the road being very bad in this place."

The Hugh Heward journal of 1790 is more informative. Heward was attempting to locate a little known water route from Lake Erie to Lake Michigan by way of the Huron and Grand Rivers. In his account he states that

"The first reference to the Ypsilanti location is a report of the route from Detroit to western Michigan and the Mississippi River by way of the Sauk Trail written c1772 by an English officer. In the report it is stated that 40 miles west of Detroit was the Huron River, Indian name Nandewine Sippy, at which six large cabins of "Puttawateamees" were located."

on April 1 he arrived at Sanscrainte's "village," described as a post that "seems to furnish good small peltrie". Heward was unable to initially find the correct stream to take him to the Grand River, and he had weather difficulties. On April 15 he had returned to Sanscrainte's and "by the assistance of Mr. Godfroy, who seemed very obliging, engaged an Indian with two horses" to return to his camp further up the Huron River with supplies. Sanscrainte's post was located on the present site of downtown Ypsilanti. This has been well established in James Woodruff's book, *Across Lower Michigan by Canoe, 1790*.

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Gabriel Godfroy Wasn't the First – *continued from page 19*

That a peltry, or fur trading post, was located at Ypsilanti early on makes a good deal of sense. Furs were transported in bales, and because of their bulk and weight, the transportation of choice was by water. Even small canoes could carry much more than a man, or for that matter a pack animal, of which there were few. Ypsilanti was the furthest point up the Huron River that transportation by larger vessels could be accomplished. And, if winter conditions necessitated movement by land, the Sauk Trail to Detroit and the trails following the Huron River to Lake Erie existed.

The Land Ordinance of 1785 required that before land could be acquired in the Old Northwest Territories, the Indian title had to be extinguished and the land surveyed. The Indian title was extinguished in southeast Michigan with the 1807 Treaty of Detroit, but a problem had arisen with the European residents currently occupying land in southeast Michigan, almost all of whom were of French extraction and who's family had been residing on the land for several generations.

It was in the interest of the United States government that these individuals remain and a system was established, known as Private Claims, also referred to as French Claims, which gave title to those individuals who could prove that they or their ancestors occupied the land on which they resided prior to 1796.

Initially claims were limited to one per person, not to exceed 640 acres, and few claims were approved. Later the requirements were relaxed, allowing more than one claim per person and taking into account land that had changed hands through purchase, although still no claim could exceed 640 acres. A deadline, later extended, was set of December 31, 1808.

As indicated in Heward's journal, Gabriel Godfroy was both aware and involved with the trading post established by Jean Baptiste Sanscrainte at Ypsilanti as early as 1790, and Godfroy, who was a man with connections and some wealth, quite likely purchased Sanscrainte's trading post at Ypsilanti in the

early 1800's. Godfroy spoke the local Indian language, as did Sanscrainte, and they were acquainted. In fact, on November 29, 1805 Gabriel Godfroy had submitted a private claim for land at the mouth of the Huron River on Lake Erie formerly owned by Jean Baptiste Sanscrainte.

On December 31, 1808 (at least that was the date of the claim) Gabriel Godfroy submitted to the Private Claim Commission the four claims of himself, his children, La Chambre, and Pepin, for land on the west side Huron River at what later became Ypsilanti. None of these claims exceeded 640 acres. Godfroy made these claims to protect the property that he had bought from Sanscrainte some time earlier. It was necessary for him to do this since there was no possibility of his having title to the land unless it was confirmed by the Private Claims Commission. The claims were approved in the names of the various claimants that Godfroy had submitted.

This was not the only incidence of Gabriel Godfroy submitting a Private Claim for land in southeast Michigan. Evidently over the years he had purchased quite a bit of property from French-Americans. In 1811 and 1812 he submitted claims to 19 parcels of land to the Private Claims Commission, most of which were on the River Raisin or the Lower Rouge River in the Dearborn area, and all of which were approved.

In 1814 he acquired the claim of Romaine La Chambre that he had submitted earlier, and in 1817 sold his own claim at Ypsilanti to Augustus B. Woodward. The other claims in Ypsilanti that Godfroy had submitted were disposed of after Benjamin Woodruff arrived in 1823 to establish Woodruff's Grove.

Only circumstantial evidence suggests that Gabriel Godfroy purchased the property of Sanscrainte sometime before 1808, but the journal of Hugh Heward gives evidence that Godfroy, and other Europeans, were familiar with the area much before 1811 and that the non-native habitation at Ypsilanti is a lot older than often stated. ■

Karl Williams is a graduate student in the Historical Preservation Program at Eastern Michigan University.

News From the Fletcher White Archives

By Gerry Pety

Katie Dallos, our intern for the past year, has graduated from EMU with a Master's Degree in Historic Preservation. In Katie's place is a new intern by the name of Veronica Robinson who is also pursuing a Master's Degree in Historical Preservation from Eastern Michigan University.

In addition to Veronica we have a number of other volunteer staff, that are skilled in specific areas of research, who are available to assist with research projects. James Mann, local Ypsilanti historian, volunteers from 2:00 to 5:00 pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Sunday can assist with all areas of research related to the City of Ypsilanti. James is the author of several of the local history books that have been written about our City. On Thursdays from 2:00 to 5:00 pm Marcia McCreary, a prominent member of the Washtenaw County Genealogical Society, is available to assist with finding and researching family genealogical records. On Saturdays from 2:00 to 5:00 pm George Ridenour is available to assist with Internet searches for all types of historical information. Please keep in mind that the Archives and Museum are open from 2:00 to 5:00 pm Tuesday through Sunday and our Archives staff is available to assist you with your historical research.

Several projects are underway in the Archives to improve access to historical records. We are updating our Map Collection with the assistance of Lyle McDermott. George Ridenour is in the process of setting up a Civil War Letter Collection. Veronica Robinson has been working on the Calendar Collection and the Military Veteran Collection. Marcia McCreary is working on refining and updating the Obituary Collection. Veronica has also been working to update the Archives' User Notebooks that are used by visitors to locate information.



Young actors in a play at Roosevelt School – c1935 (left to right) Scott Woods, Nancy Kerbyson, Marilyn Freatman and Larry Thomas.

We are seeking a number of items for our collections: pre-1900 City of Ypsilanti pictures, pre-1950 Ypsilanti City Directories, pictures of the Hi-Speed Gas Station at 39 East Michigan Avenue and of Meyer's Diner on the 300 block of West Michigan Avenue. All photographs will be scanned and the originals returned to you. Photographs are an important part of our archival collections. We recently received one showing the participants in a play at Roosevelt in c1935.

A special thanks to Ernie Griffin for allowing us to copy the scrapbook of information put together by an anonymous woman during World War II containing all of the obituaries, social gatherings, weddings, christenings and stories of the men and women in the armed services. We continually receive archival materials from members and others and we appreciate these additions to our collections.

The weather is warm, the Archives are fully staffed with qualified people – so what are you waiting for? Put on your walking shoes and come on down! ■

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Museum Advisory Board Report

By Virginia Davis-Brown

It looks like summer has finally arrived with all the activities that are going on and the YHS Museum is no different.

We have just finished our annual Art Exhibit which had over 25 artists participating. It was wonderful to see all the talent that we have in our area. We are planning to have another next year so if you are interested in exhibiting your pictures keep us in mind and more information will be coming out later.

Our next exhibit will be "Lost Ypsilanti." We will be featuring those people and places that contributed to the building of Ypsilanti for 185 years. Featured will be the pioneers and the obstacles that they were able to overcome. The exhibit will start July 20 and run through August 31. Hours will be Tuesday through Sunday from 2:00 to 5:00 pm. There will be an open house for the exhibit on July 27th. There will also be the Underground Railroad exhibit on display.

We have been privileged to have several school tours this spring. The teachers are doing a great job of teaching the children of the early days and the problems they encountered as they formed our city into what it is today.

With August coming up shortly we will be in need of more docents for the Heritage Festival. We will supply you with all the information that you need for the area you are covering. You can volunteer for just three hours and still have a lot of time to spend enjoying all the other activities going on. If you can help, call 734-484-0080 or 734-482-4990 for more information. The dates for the Heritage Festival are August 15, 16 and 17.

We were honored to have the Ypsilanti Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution present us with a new American Flag in a ceremony on June 14, Flag Day. We thank them for the gift.

If we are to keep the museum tours going, we are in need of docents on a regular basis. The only requirements are that you can volunteer three hours per month on a Thursday, Saturday or Sunday from 2:00 to 5:00 pm. You will be trained and assigned with someone who has been a docent for some time. If you are interested please call 734-484-0080 for more information. ■



DAR flag presentation participants (left to right): Elnora Crockett (DAR Chaplain Pro Tem), Virginia Davis-Brown (Chair – YHS Museum Advisory Board), Christine Warren (DAR Chapter Regent), and Alvin Rudisill (YHS President).

Cruising Down River Street –
continued from page 9

any industry that could qualify and Tucker had such an operation; he won a contract to develop a marine engine for the Higgins Boat Company's landing craft. It was to be developed in that building with 100 employees working two twelve-hour shifts,

Across the street on Babbitt was an all-metal 60' x 200' building housing the Tucker Machine Tool Company that remained in full operation until war's end in 1945. Then it was used to develop Tucker's car - until 1948 when he moved to Chicago to begin production of his ill-fated dream car.

Behind that was a large brick building fronting on Grove Street, the foundry of the

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“At River and Holmes, during the Depression (1929-1940), Clow's Welding Shop was among the prosperous enterprises in town because few folks could afford new equipment; consequently, everything had to be repaired, especially farm tools like plows and cultivators.”

seven days a week. I was one of the 100 employees comprised of toolmakers, engineers, machinists, motor mechanics, and office personnel. The chief engineer was Japanese and spoke little English. Included with the 100 employees were machine tools, lathes, milling machines, grinders, etc. We were so crowded the mice were hunch-backed. I was only in that building about seven months while Higgins' new building was being built in New Orleans. The entire crew went to the new plant to build engines that were designed and developed in a barn in Ypsilanti in early 1942.

American Radiator Company, a manufacturer of Whistler Steam Radiators for homes and offices. It whistled as it leaked steam. Tucker sold both this building and the metal building to Marsh Plating and it remains today. The city closed off the east portion of Babbitt Street so Marsh could expand. Marsh Plating has expanded from Michigan Avenue north to the railroad tracks. ■

Joe Butcko, a lifelong resident of Ypsilanti, is one of the best story tellers in the Ypsilanti Morning Coffee Group.

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Gary Moss, O.D.	Stark Funeral Home
Haab's Restaurant	Tim Hortons
Kimberly Rice Dentistry	Ypsilanti Food Coop
Keith Bruder Landscape, Incorporated	