

YPSILANTI GLEANINGS

PAST SCENES and OLD TIMES

YPSILANTI HISTORICAL SOCIETY PUBLICATION

MAY 1999



Ypsilanti Historical Museum
~ 220 N. Huron Street ~

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President's Report

We have been in contact with the City Administration and have received permission to proceed with the basement remodeling. To date we have not received figures from our contractor but hope to begin in the fall. We have been contacted by Theo Zacharatos who wishes to conduct a fund drive among United States Greeks to dedicate the basement meeting room as a permanent memorial to General Demetrios Ypsilanti. He believes that the fund for the entire basement project can be raised among his fellow Greeks. We await the specifics.

See you all at the July Picnic.

William P. Edmunds
President, Ypsilanti Historical Society



MAY 1999



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ARCHIVES IS OPEN MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY FROM
9:00 A.M. UNTIL 12:00 NOON

MUSEUM IS OPEN THURSDAY, SATURDAY, SUNDAY
2:00-4:00 P.M.

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COVER DESIGN AND TABLE OF CONTENTS MEY BE
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OFFICE OF THE YPSILANTI HISTORICAL SOCIETY
AT 220 NORTH HURON STREET, YPSILANTI MICHIGAN 48197

THE MUSEUM IS OWNED BY THE PEOPLE OF YPSILANTI AND
OPERATED IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST BY THE PEOPLE OF THE
YPSILANTI HISTORICAL SOCIETY. A NON-PROFIT GROUP OF
PUBLIC SPIRITED VOLUNTEERS.

City Historians Report 1998

Any special activity in the city is reflected in the requests for material in the Archives, such as the Heritage Festival, the House Tour, Class Reunions, etc. We are fortunate to have the Ypsilanti High School year books as those from Roosevelt School and from E.M.U. for reference.

There have been researchers not only from many places in Michigan but also from the following states, Ohio, Kansas, Wisconsin, Florida, Virginia, Minnesota, New Hampshire and California. Also we have had correspondence with people in many other areas of the country. Besides many requests for Genealogy are requested for information on such topics as Willow Run, Depot Town, the Underground Railroad, the Library and theaters, to name a few. A variety of requests makes work in the Archives interesting and challenging.

A TV program for children, entitled "Around the World on a Heartbeat which is about Ypsilanti is being written by a student and AP Marshall. James Mann, who comes to the Archives each week is working on the project regarding the City's History.

The Ypsilanti Courier usually prints a picture that is a copy of one found at the Museum. Our collection of pictures has been enlarged this year due to the donation of some excellent photographs of local structures that were done by Catherine Newcomb.

Mary Liskow is continuing with the Oral History subject that was so capably done by Eileen Harrison.

Maria Schiede worked in the Archives Department for several months getting some of the material on the Internet. This project was made possible by a grant obtained and directed by the Ypsilanti District Library.

There are two queries on which I am continually searching this year. The first one is to substantiate the project "Rosie The Riveter" was so named by the Actor, Walter Pidgeon when he visited the Bomber Plant during World War II.

The second query is regarding a man by the name of Vickery (no first name listed) who, according to family records fought in the Revolutionary War and was buried in an old cemetery in Ypsilanti where Prospect Park is located. No first name is given there, either. With the information that has been found, so far I feel that further knowledge will be forthcoming from the National Archives.

This year I have given a talk on the Church's early history to a group at the Presbyterian Church, a talk on the Archives to a local Sorority that met at the Museum and am scheduled to relate the organization's history to the Woman's Study Club.

I attended a meeting in Adrian that was conducted by the Museum of Michigan. It included a report of the work done on the survey of Stained Glass Windows in the state. We were also privileged to visit several churches to see the windows and to hear about them.

This Historian is a member of the following organizations: The Genealogical Society of Washtenaw county; The Friends of the Bentley Library. The State, County and Local Historical Societies. The Wayne Historical Society, The Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation, The Historical Society of Milan, Ohio.

Another successful year has ended.

Doris Milliman
City Historian
1998

HAWKINS HOUSE

The Hawkins House is becoming known more and more every day as a hotel first class in all of its appointments. Proprietor E. Jones in the short time he has been in Ypsilanti has fully demonstrated the fact that he knows how to run a hotel, and by the way, no class of citizens give so much character to the enterprising aspect of a city as does the hotel keeper who aims to conduct a first-class house. He is the man above others who proves a benefactor, for he gives tone to a city and creates for its favorable repute over a wide stretch of territory, and imbues the local atmosphere with a spirit of thrift and push. His hotel brings to the city, strangers who otherwise would not visit it.

Such a hotel keeper is a prominent figure in all deliberation and his house is the center of many public functions. For these reasons he is entitled to the loyal support and co-operation of citizens. His expenditure of money in betterment's should be repaid by a local pride to turn over to him every social event possible. Mr. Jones is giving Ypsi one of the best hotelries that the city has ever had the honor to contain. The commercial Traveler who stops at Ypsilanti cannot help but go away with favorable impressions of the city or the excellent entertainment at the Hawkins House goes a good ways in creating that impression. The traveling public judge a town by its hotels everytime.



“ Look what we found in Grandma’s Trunk”, is the theme of two of the showcases in the Ypsilanti Room.

The title was taken from a project, undertaken by the Ypsilanti Public Schools in the ‘70’s, to help the students in the district understand what life was like in the 1800’s.

A trunk was sent from school to school containing a variety of objects from the past. It was “hands on” and the students had the opportunity to see, first hand, why an iron was referred to as a “sad iron”, why men’s heads always looked as though rigor mortis had set in from their necks up, why it took so long for a lady to get dressed and put on her shoes and what a “snuff box” looked like.

The toys that children found amusing in those by-gone years occupy the second case. When the trunk was circulating the students had the opportunity to try them out. They were, indeed, a far cry from the computer games of today!

A third showcase follows the theme of,” Life in the 1800s”. Pictures of buildings, events, and the way of life back then are on display.

These showcases should be of interest to young and old alike. How many of you remember the trunk, that building, that toy or game?

Stop in and take a short visit back in time to early Ypsilanti!

Joan Carpenter

SENTINEL 6/28/1899

CHERRYHILL

Under the auspices of the C.H. ball club the drama "Uncle Josh" will be presented here Friday and Saturday evenings this week June 30 and July 1.

James H. Hanford has been engaged to teach the school here for this coming term. The hiring of Mr. Hanford is no experiment as he taught five successive terms here and gave the best of satisfaction. He has worn for a number of years a gold watch chain presented him by his pupils at the close of the fifth year.

The annual meeting will be held at the school house on Monday evening, July 10. Ed J. Gunn closed his school at Springwells last Friday and Miss Maggie Gunn did likewise at Emery.

The P.O. Department informs the Postmaster here that owing to a pressure of business in getting the Sat route for operation July 1st, they have not had time to investigate protests against the change in the schedule of carrying the mail but will do so at the earliest opportunity. In the meantime the schedule will be changed and mail will start from Ypsi July 1st.

Miss Ada Bentley is visiting at Williamston.

"IT SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY"

YPSILANTI COMMERCIAL JUNE 30, 1899

MR. & MRS THEO MEAD AND FAMILY OF THAYER, KAN. ARE VISITING MRS. MEAD'S SISTER, MRS. E. W. RAPPLE.

THE REV. WM. GARDAM WILL PREACH ON SUNDAY MORNING NEXT ON "THE CHURCH'S VET, WHAT TO DO TO FILL IT, WHAT TO DO WHEN IT IS OVER FILLED". SERVICES IN ST LUKE'S SUNDAY NEXT, MORNING PRAYER 9 A.M. LITANY-HOLY COMMUNION, SERMON, 10:30 A.M. SUNDAY SCHOOL 12:00, EVENING PRAYER, 5P.M.

CITY ATTORNEY, E. W. GREEN WENT TO PONTIAC ON MONDAY, WHAT, SO SOON? WE HAVE HEARD OF YOUNG ATTORNEYS STARVING AND CITY ATTORNEYS BEING DRIVEN TO DRINK, BUT THIS IS THE FIRST CASE OF COMMITMENT THAT HAS EVER CAME TO OUR NOTICE.

PROF. AND MRS. C.T. MCFARLANE AND MOTHER, MRS. JAY WORDEN, WERE EXPECTED TO ARRIVE IN NEW YORK YESTERDAY FROM THEIR TRIP ABROAD. PROF. AND MRS. MCFARLANE HAVE BEEN SPENDING THE PAST YEAR IN THE OLD COUNTRY, AND WERE A FEW MONTHS AGO JOINED BY MRS. WORDEN, LATER, ARRIVED IN TOWN THIS MORNING.

THE FIRST 4TH OF JULY CELEBRATION, IN YPSILANTI, WAS IN 1824, THERE WERE SEVENTY-NINE PERSONS PRESENT. AT THE TWENTY-FIFTH CELEBRATION, 1849, OF THE SEVENTY-NINE, ONLY FIFTEEN WERE PRESENT. AT THE FIFTIETH CELEBRATION IN 1874, THERE WERE BUT TWO PERSONS. THEY WERE ALPHA WASHTENAW BRYAN AND HIS MOTHER.

THOSE YPSILANTIANS WHO ATTENDED THE MEETING OF THE MICHIGAN LADIES' WHIST ASSOCIATION AT PORT HURON WERE MR. & MRS C.W. ROGERS, MR. & MRS. GEORGE WALTERHOUSE, MRS. ETTA B. SPENCER, MISS ANNA TOWNER AND BERT COOK. THEY ALL MADE CREDITABLE SCORES AND REPORT A MOST ENJOYABLE TIME.

THE YPSILANTI COMMERCIAL'S PRESS GAVE BIRTH TO TWINS THIS WEEK IN THE SHAPE OF A DOUBLE NUMBER. IT WAS A WARM NUMBER AND ITS FATHER, MUNRO SHOULD FEEL PROUD OF HIS HANDIWORK. IF THE CROWD HERE ON THE 4TH IS NOT A BIG ONE IT WON'T BE THE FAULT OF THE YPSILANTI PAPERS. THE YPSILANTI COMMERCIAL AND THE SENTINEL HAVE DONATED AT LEAST \$200.00 WORTH OF FREE ADVERTISING.

BULLETIN OF THE NEW CHAPEL, FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FOR NEXT SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP AT 10:30, WITH SERMON ON "THE CHURCH AND DIAMOND JUBILEE," POPULAR EVENING SERVICE AT 7:30, WITH A SHORT SERMON. SUNDAY SCHOOL 12NOON, Y.P.S.C.E. 6:15, TOPIC OF EVENING SERVICE "ON THE UP-GRADE". THE PEOPLE'S SERVICE WEDNESDAY EVENING FROM 7:30 TO 8:30. SEATS FREE AND ALL WELCOME.

Jack M. Wiltse Recollection of Willow Run January 1999

My first memories of Willow Run was Camp Legion a produce farm established by Henry Ford to give young boys a place to spend their summer in some type of productive endeavor. The Martha Mary Chapel was the church where these young boys attended worship. This chapel became a very prestigious place to be married. When the construction of the Willow Run Bomber plant started the chapel was moved to Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan.

In the early 1940's the Willow Run Bomber Plant was started. Henry Ford had accepted the challenge to build airplanes much in the same manner as auto production. This would not only facilitate faster production but interchangeable parts. This type of airplane manufacturing was unheard of at the time. The Bomber Plant was to be the largest factory under one roof in the world and it was until they built the Dodge Plant in Chicago where eventually Preston Tucker tried to build his car. I was impressed that the Bomber Plant had to be built in sections for the purpose of expansion and contraction and the floors were made out of wood blocks. During Sunday drives with my parents we would go down Ecorse Road to check the progress of the plant. It seemed like the continuous flow of cement trucks through Ypsilanti was the most impressive to me about the plant construction.

At the same time the plant was being built several roads were under construction to facilitate traffic flow in and out of the plant. The divided highway that went west from the plant ended at Michigan Avenue at the West Side of Ypsilanti. I also recall these special highways had no reinforced steel in them so they were very thick cement. Many of these roads are still in use today with very little maintenance.

My brother, Norris G. Wiltse, Jr., worked on the first bomber built at Willow Run before he went into the Air Force. One night at Ernie's, a malt shop on the north east corner of Michigan Avenue and Adams Street in Ypsilanti, my brother was telling a group about how the hydraulic lines were being bent over the foreman's knee until they fit where they were suppose to go. One of the group spoke up and said it was not right and he was with the FBI and that situation would be investigated. From that point on I always wondered how many government people they had in the area just listening.

There was such an influx of people from the south to work building bombers Willow Run Village was built. This village provided everything: theaters, recreation halls, stores, gas stations, barber shops, the works. The flat top apartments were built first. These units had coal stoves for cooking and a side arm heater for hot water. A small circular coal furnace in the middle of the unit was used for heat. The walls in these units were paper-thin. Most units had a kitchen unit you entered from the front door and the attached living room area had the back door. The bathroom and bedroom were at one end of the apartment and matched these areas of the next door apartment. There was a small open closet opposite the bathroom. There were four of these units in each building. In the front yard of each unit was a good-sized coal box and beside it were the garbage cans. Usually two buildings

were in a group and they angled off the street to form a triangular parking area in front of the units. Later peaked roof units were built which were much nicer; they had hard wood floors.

The dorms were large two story buildings with small cubicle rooms. The dorms had both male and female residents, which was almost unheard of at the time. Often times these rooms were shared by people on different shifts so when one occupant worked the other slept. The saying was that most of these beds never got cold.

Ford paid the workers at the plant with cash. The plant worked three shifts. People had more money than things to buy because of the shortages of the war and government rationing of everything from gasoline, several types of food to shoes. Because of all this money the recreational areas of Willow Run Village, which I already mentioned, were crowded with workers looking for something to do twenty-four hours a day. These places were so busy it is a wonder the cement sidewalks didn't wear through from people walking on them. The busiest recreation area of the village is where Willow Run High School now stands.

I remember well that all the lady workers had to wear a special uniform. The uniforms were dark blue and consisted of slacks and a jacket worn with a blouse. They had to wear a baseball type cap which had a fine net attached to hold their hair. Once in a while you would see a worker wearing a pretty contrasting hankie to give the outfit a little femininity. Even the little midgets that worked in the wings of the airplanes had to wear these outfits.

My mother, Hazel C. Wiltse, a true housewife, went to work everyday in her uniform to help the war effort. Everybody car-pooled and my mother rode to work everyday in a green 1940 Hudson sedan driven by Ruth Krause who lived next door to us. We lived at 603 Washtenaw Avenue in Ypsilanti and it was five blocks from the High School. My father, Norris, was principal of Ypsilanti High School and each noon the kids and dad would walk the five blocks and prepare lunch during our noon hour. Macaroni and tomatoes got to be very boring. The evening meal was usually prepared by my father because he would get home sooner than my mother would. I guess this was all OK when you consider the pay envelope, with the cash, my mother brought home each week from her job as a file clerk at the great Bomber Plant.

The merchants of Ypsilanti were happy to have the trade of the Bomber Plant employees because all they had was money to spend and would buy almost anything because of this excess money, the businessmen all prospered. The USO was always packed with servicemen, they spent money too. The USO was located in the building on the north side of Michigan Avenue just west of the Huron River where Materials Unlimited is located today. These servicemen came from the Army camp located on the East Side of Willow Run Airport on Beck Road. The local belles of the area would prepare shows and go out to the camp to entertain the troops. My wife, Mar Lou Miller Wiltse, was one of those belles and did her Rosie The Riveter dance for the boys. Also located at this military station was a German Prisoner of War Camp. I knew the camp was there but it never made a big impression on me.

My memories of the actual B24 Bombers were the constant sound of the planes revving up the engines on the ground day and night. The sounds of these

planes could be heard all over the community. Of course the B24's were in the sky all the time. If you saw a vapor trail way up in the sky people said it was Charles Lindbergh testing one of the planes. I understand testing the B24 was Lindbergh's job. The most dramatic incident I can remember is when the older brother of my classmate Paul Tower called his mother to say he would be bringing his B24 from England to California and he would pass over the family house and wiggle his wings to let her know it was him. The Tower family lived across from the Water Tower on the south side of Washtenaw Avenue. The plane was to go over late in the afternoon and needless to say Paul and all his buddies were there waiting. The B24 came as scheduled and we heard it flying in low from the east, all of the sudden it appeared flying on the south side of the Water Tower lower than the black roof on the tower, the plane clipped the leaves out of the tops of the trees and shortly was gone. I guess Pilot Tower figured we might miss him if he only wiggled his wings. To this day I am impressed with the freedom of expression and the piloting skills of that event.

While I was in the Navy things at Willow Run changed. My next recall was the plant was used to build twin-boom flying boxcars and Kaiser Frazer was getting ready to build cars. Both my wife and I worked for Kaiser-Frazer. Mar Lou was in Export Billing up on the L balcony on the north side of the plant. I had three different summer jobs while attending college, the front end merry-go-round on the balcony on the south side of the plant, window cleanup on the body assembly line and bicycle messenger for the Administration Building which took me all over the plant. My brother, Norris Jr., the one that worked on the first B24 worked for the Kaiser-Frazer Service Department and went on to Toledo, Ohio with Kaiser-Frazer Jeep to become Service Manager of the whole operation.

During the boom time of Kaiser-Frazer I would go with my friend, Dick McElroy to pick up Kaiser-Frazer cars out of the storage lot. These cars would be lined up single file row upon row, hundreds and hundreds of cars. The first car in each line would have the keys under the left front fender and the rest of the cars in line would have the keys in the ignition. Move the first car and the rest of the line was available to anyone. I always felt this was a poor system but I guess it never caused any problems. Dick's mother was a pilot and ferried B24's to England during the war, she made several trips. Dick's father was in the Air Force. Dick and his sister Sherrill were pretty independent during this time and took care of themselves. They were not the only family that had to change their life style during the war.

My next impression is the Hydra-matic Plant in Livonia burned and the plant was moved to Willow Run after many modifications were made to accommodate a new production. The Willow Run situation today is the Hydramatic Plant, the commercial Willow Run Airport and the Yankee Air Force and all of these fifty years from now will once again be interesting history.

NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVES:

THINGS ARE HAPPENING IN THE ARCHIVES HOWEVER, I AM NOT SURE WHY OR HOW. THE LADIES ARE A BUZZ WITH THE PLANS FOR THE HERITAGE FESTIVAL. IT WILL BE RETURNING TO A HOME TOWN ATMOSPHERE. WHICH IS GREAT AS IT IS SAID "FOR THE PEOPLE AND BY THE PEOPLE". JOAN CARPENTER, THAT TAKES CARE OF THE DISPLAYS IN THE YPSILANTI ROOM IS OUR CHAIRPERSON FOR THE FESTIVAL SO YOU CAN BE ASSURED THINGS WILL ROLL ALONG WELL.

MANY OF OUR MEMBERS HAVE PAID THEIR DUES, HOWEVER THERE ARE A FEW THAT HAVE NOT. OUR \$5.00 FOR INDIVIDUALS AND \$10.00 FOR FAMILIES IS A GOOD DEAL. AS EVERYONE KNOWS POSTAGE HAS RAISED AND IT COSTS .37 CENTS TO SEND OUT THE GLEANINGS, AND IF ONE MOVES AND DOES NOT LET US KNOW IT COSTS THE SAME AMOUNT TO BE RETURNED TO US. WELL ON TO BETTER THINGS. THE ANNUAL DINNER HAS BEEN SET FOR OCTOBER 17TH AT 5:00 P.M. AT THE METHODIST OF YPSILANTI, WASHINGTON STREET AND WASHTENAW. ROAST BEEF AND ALL THE TRIMMINGS, DESSERT AND BEVERAGE, I BELIEVE THE PRICE WILL BE \$10.00. NO TIPPING ALLOWED SO DO MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS EARLY THIS IS OUR ONE MONEY MAKING PROJECT FOR THE YEAR. MARK YOUR CALENDAR AND IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A CALENDAR, LET ME KNOW AND I WILL SEE THAT YOU GET ONE, FOR FREE. ANOTHER BARGAIN.

THINGS ARE GOING WELL IN THE ARCHIVES, DORIS AND I ARE KEEPING VERY BUSY. I GUESS THAT WILL TAKE CARE OF MY NEWS FOR TODAY.

AN ERROR IN THE CALENDAR ABOUT THE DATE OF THE TRASH AND TREASURE SALE, IT IS THE 12TH OF JUNE, A SATURDAY 9:00 UNTIL NOON. IF YOU HAVE ANY TREASURES YOU WOULD LIKE TO GIVE, PLEASE LET US KNOW AND WE WILL BE GLAD TO HAVE THEM. WE HAVE STARTED TO COLLECT ARTICLES ALREADY. YOU PERSHAPS DON'T HAVE ANY PLACE TO STORE THEM BUT WE DO. SO START CLEANING OUT YOUR BASEMENTS, STORE ROOMS. WE WILL BE GRATEFUL. NO CLOTHING.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION RENEWAL

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

TELEPHONE: _____

PLEASE MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO :

YPSILANTI HISTORICAL SOCIETY
220 NORTH HURON STREET
YPSILANTI, MICHIGAN 48197

WOULD YOU ENJOY WORKING AT THE MUSEUM?

YPSILANTI HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

IF YOU HAVE NOT SENT IN YOUR DUES, THEY ARE DUE JANUARY 1,1999, WE WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR SENDING THEM SOON. WE ARE TRYING TO KEEP FROM RAISING THE DUES AND WITH POSTAGE GOING UP THIS MAKES IT A LITTLE DIFFICULT. IT COSTS APPROXIMATELY \$55.00 TO SEND OUR GLEANING OUT AND WE TRY TO DO THIS QUARTERLY, PLUS ANY OTHER MAILING WE DO DURING THE YEAR. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS PLEASE CALL US.

THANK YOU