

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.

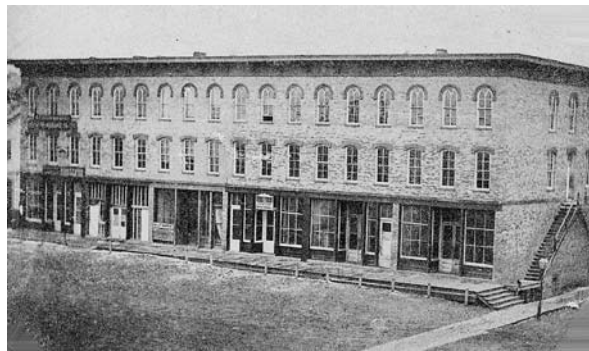


WINTER 2009

The Thompson Block – Then and Now!

By James Mann

The origin of the Thompson Block stretches back twenty years before its construction in the 1850s. It began in 1838 when Mark Norris, the founder of the Depot Town section of Ypsilanti, built the Western Hotel on the triangular piece of land across the street where the railroad depot stands today. "The building was of brick with stone facings," wrote Harvey C. Colburn in the Story of Ypsilanti, "and the enterprise was of considerable magnitude for the period. Shops occupied the ground floor two or three steps down from the walk and the hotel proper was above." The hotel opened in May of 1839, but was evidently not a financial success.



Mark Norris built what was initially known as the "Norris Block" in 1860 using stones from the demolished Western Hotel.



The shell of the Thompson Block building is now being supported by bracing until it can be determined if the façade can be saved.

In about 1860 the Michigan Central Railroad acquired the property to make room for the expansion of the railroad. Norris then demolished the Western Hotel and carried the bricks across the street for use in a new building. The building was originally known as the Norris Block in honor of its builder. The Peninsular Courier, an Ann Arbor newspaper, *continued on page 3*

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Seasons Greetings

Holiday Open House
December 27th - 6:00 to 9:00pm

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by the Ypsilanti Historical Society, 220 N.
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From the President's Desk

By Al Rudisill

It has been a busy time at the Ypsilanti Historical Society with Christmas decorations going up in the Museum and collections being refined and expanded in the Archives. Our volunteers do so much to make the history of Ypsilanti come to life.

One of our new efforts has been the development of a "crossword puzzle" focused on the on-line program titled "Historical Highlights of Ypsilanti, Michigan." The crossword puzzle can be downloaded from the home page of our website at www.ypsilantihistoricalsociety.org. At this time we are not providing answers to the puzzle but urge people to view the on-line program, also available on the home page, to check the accuracy of the finished puzzle.

Our next quarterly meeting is Sunday, December 6, from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. Featured will be the "Sweet Adelines," an outstanding local musical group that will send you home stomping your feet and humming a tune. Refreshments will be served following the meeting and entertainment.

Also coming on the 27th of December will be the Holiday Reception which will be held from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. A wide variety of entertainment is being planned for family members of all ages and our volunteers will have special holiday treats for all to enjoy.

We were extremely pleased to have the "Gleanings" chosen to receive the "Communications: Newsletters and Web Sites Award" from the Historical Society of Michigan. Peg Porter, Assistant Editor and I, accompanied by my wife Jan, traveled to the Mission Point Resort on Mackinac Island in October to accept the award on behalf of the Society. Thanks to all those who contribute to the success of this quarterly publication.

Veronica Robinson will be graduating from the graduate program in Historical Preservation at Eastern Michigan University in December of this year. Veronica's two-year internship in the YHS Archives and Museum will be over and she will be seeking a job related to her historical preservation credentials. Veronica has been an outstanding intern and has initiated many new programs and projects on behalf of our Society. She will be missed.

We are always looking for volunteers as docents for the Museum or research assistants for the Archives. Both the Museum and Archives are open from 2:00 to 5:00 pm from Tuesday through Sunday. If you are available during that time and are interested in helping us preserve the historical information and artifacts of the area, or educating the general public about our history, please give me a call at 734-476-6658. ■



Ypsilanti Historical Society

220 North Huron Street - Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Home
Administrative
Archives
Collections
Contact Info
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Welcome: The Ypsilanti Historical Museum is a museum of local history which is presented as an 1860 home. The Museum and Fletcher-White Archives are organized and operated by the Ypsilanti Historical Society. We are all volunteers and our membership is open to everyone, including non-city residents.

A Matter of Trust: The Ypsilanti Historical Society has initiated a five-year campaign to raise \$400,000. This amount will cover the cost of purchasing the property the City and completing the many deferred maintenance projects on the buildings and grounds. You may view a Power Point presentation related to the campaign by clicking your mouse on "A Matter of Trust" and then clicking on the first picture. The arrow at the top of the page will forward the program to the next slide.

To view on-line
programs click on the
links below:

Historical
Highlights
of
Ypsilanti

Markers
and
Statues

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The Thompson Block –
Then and Now!
continued from front page

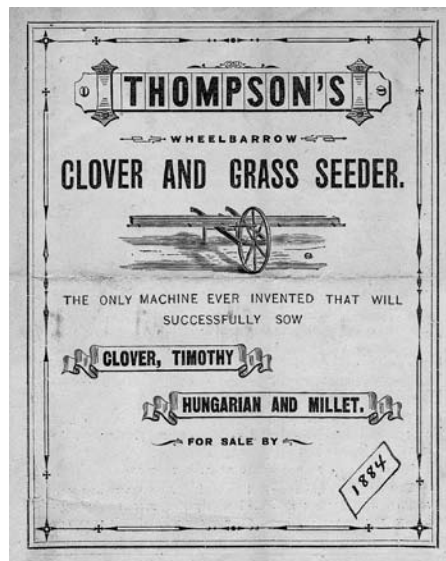
reported on August 13, 1861, “The Norris Block, Ypsilanti, is completed and several of the stories are being occupied. The upper stories are being well finished, and families are already occupying them.”

The new building, a three story Italianate structure, was planned for both retail and residential use. The ground floor was designed for six retail shops, each measuring 20 x 60 feet, and in 1889 an additional 20 x 40 feet was added to each bay. When built, the building had an ornamental frieze of wood that wrapped around the north, west and south facades. The frieze was not there for only aesthetic reasons, but to prevent damage from water running down the façade. The frieze has long since been removed, and damage, especially during cycles of freeze and thaw, has resulted.

Norris was an active member of the Underground Railroad and it was rumored that there were underground tunnels, used to smuggle escaping slaves, connecting the building to the Michigan Central Depot across the street.

With the outbreak of the Civil War in April of 1861, the federal government called for the recruitment of soldiers. The recruitment of soldiers created the need for a place to house them during training. The Norris Block was first used as a barracks by the Fourteenth Michigan Infantry Regiment in 1862. The *Peninsular Courier* and the *Ypsilanti Herald* reported on January 28, 1862, that “The regiment is stationed in a large brick building east of the depot. In the basement is the culinary arrangements. Each company cooks for itself. The boys have lots of fun. They have a debating society, and also hold dances in the upperstory where they “balance to your partner” in the genuine style, to the music of fiddle and bones.”

The Fourteenth Michigan Infantry Regiment, under the command of Robert F. Sinclair, was mustered into service at Ypsilanti on February 13, 1862, with an enrollment of nine hundred twenty-five officers and men. The Fourteenth Michigan left Ypsilanti on April 17, 1862,



An advertisement for a Thompson “Clover and Grass Seeder” from 1884.



O. E. THOMPSON,
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In 1869 Oliver E. Thompson purchased the building at 400-410 River Street and engaged in a wide variety of retail and manufacturing activities.



The Thompson Block around 1891. Note the bell on the roof of the building which was used to notify volunteer fire fighters of the location of a fire.

for St. Louis and joined the army of General Grant at Pittsburg Landing.

The building was again used as a barracks in 1863, by the Twenty-Seventh Michigan Infantry Regiment. It was forty years later in 1902 when the eighty surviving veterans of the Twenty-Seventh returned to Ypsilanti for a reunion. The *Ypsilantian* of October 30, 1902 noted, “It was an especial pleasure to revisit their old barracks in the Thompson Block, which is the only building used as a barracks in 1862 in Michigan that is still standing.” For many years after the Civil

War, the building was called “The Barracks.” It was only later that it became known as “The Thompson Block,” after a long occupancy by the Thompson family and their business interests.

“Going to the depot,” noted the *Ypsilanti Commercial* of May 29, 1869, “you notice unusual activity going on in the corner store of the Norris Block. The new proprietor, Mr. O. E. Thompson, will inform you, for he is always genial and social, that he has bought this property, and is going to renovate and
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Ypsilanti Christmas in the 1950s

By Peg Porter

There was a time, not so very long ago, when Ypsilantians could do all their Holiday shopping right downtown. After Thanksgiving, the family might pile into the station wagon and head to Detroit to visit Santa at J.L. Hudson's. But Santa also made local appearances in the lower level of Melencamp's, one of Ypsi's premier men's stores. Across Michigan Avenue, Shaefer Hardware's Toy Store was stuffed full of anything and everything a kid could want. There were cozy slippers for Grandma at Willoughby's and Moffett's. Mom would love a pretty sweater from Young's or Hartman's. If Dad insisted on practicality there were appliances large and small at the "Gas Company," or the many hardware stores.

"Christmas is best seen through a child's eye. It can be magical."

Downtown glittered and sparkled. Salvation Army members in full uniform sang or played Carols at their Red Kettles. Store windows were brightly lit, bedecked in red and green. A friend of mine remembers the little animated dolls in Seyfried's window. Garlands with colored lights stretched across the street, often causing havoc for drivers trying to read the traffic signals. If you are too young to remember what Christmas used to look like, think "It's A Wonderful Life." For that is the way it was.

With the restrictions of wartime lifted, this was a time to celebrate. Detroit Edison encouraged the use of electricity through the exchange of light bulbs and small appliance repair, both for free. At the holidays, there



The Don Porter House around 1950, winner of the Ypsi Jaycees lighting contest.



The Don Porter House in 1962 decorated for Christmas. The lantern in the forefront stood on the Olivet College campus and was a tribute to Ruth Porter's father, R. C. Young, who had paid his tuition bills by being a lamplighter.

were lights everywhere. In the early 1950s, the Jaycees sponsored a Holiday Home Decoration contest. To win this contest required ingenuity, creativity and a higher electric bill. There was a certain level of risk involved as well. Lights were strung across roof lines and Santas, sleighs, and reindeer were hauled up

ladders to perch on the roof. Some residents decorated the tall pines on their property. The Nissly home on Wallace had a tree that towered over their two-story house. It helped that they owned the Michigan Ladder Company. You need to remember this was before Home Depot and "pre-fab" decorations. The

majority of decorations were crafted by the homeowners. My father, Don Porter, loved Christmas. My mother, Ruth, was in charge of decorating the inside of the house except for putting up the tree, that was for Dad. But the exterior of the house was his. He spent hours down in his shop putting the various elements together. He gathered fresh greens and then just about two weeks before Christmas, for a frenzied few hours he put together his masterpiece usually finishing just as it got dark. We all gathered outside to watch the lights go on and hope a fuse didn't blow. Then we went in to a warm meal.

Dad won the Jaycee Award at least five years in a row before he officially withdrew from the competition. He continued to decorate and a parade of cars moved slowly by our house each evening to see what "Don Porter did this year."

His most elaborate window was not "showy." Instead he made individual "stained glass" designs for each window pane. Each piece

was put together using black construction paper and colored cellophane. Then one by one they were placed in the panes and secured. The lights inside the house made the window glow.

Christmas is best seen through a child's eye. It can be magical. When my brother was about six he began to question the existence of Santa Claus. I, then 12, took him aside and told him to listen very carefully just before he went to sleep. If he stayed quiet and really listened, he would hear the faint sound of reindeer hooves on the roof. The next morning he told excitedly, "I heard them. I really heard them." The magic of Christmas is not denied to adults who can let their inner child take over for awhile. If you listen, you too will hear reindeer, the jingle of bells, or even the crystalline sounds of angel voices. ■

Happy Holidays!

(Peg Porter is the Assistant Editor of the Gleanings and a regular article contributor.)



*Holidays at the
Historical Museum*

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**Sunday, December 27th
6:00 to 9:00pm**

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Austin George: Ypsilanti's "Normal" Guy

By Veronica Robinson

Austin George was a prominent figure in Ypsilanti's educational past. He was an excellent leader who, as a student, organized Company E of the 17th Michigan Infantry in the Civil War. He returned to Ypsilanti to teach at the Normal College, eventually taking the helm as Superintendent of the Ypsilanti Public Schools. Always civic-minded, he contributed his leadership skills to improving the educational experiences of Ypsilanti students.

Austin was born on June 15th, 1841 in Hillsdale County, Michigan – about 30 miles north of the Ohio border. At the age of 12, he lost his right arm in a flour mill accident. Undaunted by this unfortunate event, he turned enthusiastically to academic pursuits, attending grammar school and high school in Hillsdale County and then enrolling at the Michigan State Normal School in Ypsilanti in 1859, just as the civil war was threatening to divide the country. Like many of his fellow students, Austin was stirred by the political turmoil and desired to contribute to the war effort.

Before the end of the 1862 summer term at the Normal school, so many students desired to enlist that a suggestion was made to organize a full company comprised of Normal School students to join the Union forces. Unfortunately, the term ended before the school could organize enrollment for the company. Living in Ypsilanti at the time, Austin George then took it upon himself to complete the process by setting up a recruitment office in the Kinne & Smith bookstore on Congress Street (now Michigan Avenue). Austin wrote letters of recruitment to local boys and those all over the state. He was instrumental in facilitating the formation of the company.

When fully formed, the Normal Company was not made up entirely of Normal students; it also included students from Ypsilanti High School, as well as Jackson and Ann Arbor. Austin himself was not able to enlist due to the



A portrait of Austin George who worked tirelessly to improve Ypsilanti's educational system including both the Michigan State Normal School and Ypsilanti's Public Schools.



Austin's wife, Sarah Wadhams George, a former school teacher from Kalamazoo, became very involved in Ypsilanti's social life in the late 19th and early 20th century.



A recent photo of the George's former home, 111 North Normal Street, which now serves as apartments, appropriately housing several EMU students.

loss of his arm in his youth. He did, however, become the company clerk and postmaster and served on the front lines with the soldiers for four months, participating in the Battle of South Mountain and the Battle of Antietam, both in Maryland. Before the company left Michigan, Professor Sill of the Normal School

raised funds to purchase a sword and sash for the commander of the company and presented it to them in a ceremony at Hewitt Hall. Each member of the company received a small gift from one of the ladies of Ypsilanti. Austin received a pocket edition of the Testaments and Psalms with the name "Louise Loveridge"

written inside the cover. He recounts carrying the book with him through the Maryland Campaign and retained it as one of his treasures for many years. The company traveled to Detroit in August of 1862, was mustered in and assigned to the Michigan 17th Infantry as Company E. The Normal Company traveled from Michigan to Tennessee to Virginia and back to the Mississippi River during the course of the Civil War – by the end they had traveled over 2100 miles.

“Before the end of the 1862 summer term at the Normal school, so many students desired to enlist that a suggestion was made to organize a full company comprised of Normal School students to join the Union forces.”

Austin returned to the Normal School and graduated in 1863. He took a job as a high school principal in Kalamazoo, Michigan where he met his future wife, Sarah Wadhams, a grammar school teacher in the Kalamazoo school district. Austin and Sarah married in 1868 and returned to Ypsilanti in 1879 where Austin was hired by the Normal College as a professor of Literature and Rhetoric. They purchased a home at 111 North Normal Street built in the Second Empire style which was quite fashionable at the time.

Sarah joined the social life of Ypsilanti right away, becoming a member of the Ladies Literary Club, of which she became president in the later years of her life, and the developing

Congregational Church. She also involved herself with the Ypsilanti Home Association and the YWCA. Austin dove into his new career at the Normal College with the same enthusiasm as his wife. He is credited with having organized the student newspaper The Normal News and helped to establish the annual oratorical contest that soon became a feature event of life at the school. Austin soon was asked to take over the directorship of the Practice School at the Normal College and prepared a plan to organize the primary and grammar school with eight grades and a kindergarten. At his request, the name of the Practice school was changed to the Training School, as this institution is where the Normal school students trained to be teachers.

In the early 1890s, Austin was elected chairman of a committee to raise funds for the building of a gymnasium for the Normal College. He secured an appropriation of \$20,000 from the state government for this purpose and even gave the dedication address when it opened in 1894. By this time, Austin had left the Normal College to become the Superintendent of the Ypsilanti Public Schools. During his tenure as Superintendent, he was able to increase student enrollment at the Ypsilanti High School (known as the Union Seminary) by fifty percent. He worked for the Ypsilanti School system until his death in January of 1903. The 1903 edition of the Ypsi-Dixit, the Ypsilanti High School yearbook, summed up his legacy; “Professor George will be remembered in Ypsilanti as a public spirited citizen, one ready to do his full share of public work without regard to compensation, as a warm personal friend to a great number of people in the town; but he



The September 1888 edition of the Normal News, which Austin George helped to organize while a professor at the Michigan State Normal School.

will be remembered especially by those who during the years of his Superintendency went out from the schools bearing the impress of his high and manly character.” ■

(Note: George School in Ypsilanti was named after Austin George, and the Sarah George Scholarship is awarded annually by the Ladies Literary Club.)

(Veronica Robinson is a student in the graduate program in Historical Preservation at EMU and is serving as an Intern in the Ypsilanti Historical Society Museum.)

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The Orange Lantern

By James Mann

For many years, from the end of Prohibition until the year 2000, the Orange Lantern was a popular Ypsilanti landmark, even if it was just across the county line in Van Buren Township. Named for some light fixtures inside, the Orange Lantern drew its clientele from the factories, foundries and tool-and-die shops in the Ypsilanti area. At times the place was so crowded each patron who was coming in had to wait for someone to leave. This was a neighborhood bar, the kind of place where a guy stopped by for a beer while on the way home from the factory job. That may be why it was so popular for so long.

The Orange Lantern opened in 1933, just after the repeal of Prohibition. It was one of the first bars to be granted a liquor license. Then, the land around the Orange Lantern was soybean fields and maple sugar woods. Back then, the Orange Lantern was the last stop for liquor by the glass until Indiana.

During World War II liquor rationing for bars was set by the amount sold before the war, and, it is said, the Orange Lantern had the largest liquor ration in the state. Workers from the Willow Run Bomber plant, where the B-24 Liberator was built, enjoyed the friendly atmosphere of the place. The war years were the heydays of the place, when workers from the plant found it a convenient place to unwind. The regular clientele, it is said, included the woman who was the model for Rosie the Riveter.

The bar was run for years by Bill Eberts, and then for years after by his son, Dick Eberts and Bud Fahndrich, a nephew. Dick Eberts worked at the bar from the age of 18, with four years out for service in the army during the World War II. "It's my life," he told the Ann Arbor News for a story published on September 1, 1996. "It's meeting new people and experiencing different things."

Over time the number of customers declined, and no one had to wait for someone to leave before they could enter. Still, the regulars came and new ones stopped in. It was a place where everyone knew most everyone else. Dick Eberts died at the age of 83 on October 15, 1999. Fahndrich vowed to keep the Orange Lantern open, and did so for the rest of his life. He died in December of the same year. The doors of the Orange Lantern were closed and the lights turned out for the last time on February 4, 2000. The place is gone, and the memories are fading. ■

(James Mann is a local historian and author, a volunteer in the YHS Archives and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)



*The Orange Lantern neighborhood bar that opened in 1933 and closed in 2000
(Photo by Jim Rees).*



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I say “Nauplion,” you say “Ναύπλιων”

By Derek Spinei

Much like ancient Greece itself, Ypsilanti’s sister city status with Nauplion was established, lost, and later rediscovered. In early 1965, Ann Arbor adopted the first of its sister cities, Tübingen, Germany. This inspired the Ypsilanti Jaycees to petition the Ypsilanti City Council to find one of its own. Choosing a Greek city was an obvious decision based on

Jaycees vice-president, was sent to Nauplion to investigate its potential and he approved completely. Baker noticed that each city had seasonal population fluctuations, Nauplion having tourists and Ypsilanti having students. He shared the idea of the Ypsilanti Greek Theatre and it so excited those in Nauplion
continued on page 10



Ypsilanti City Councilman Timothy Dyer (right) and the mayor of Nauplion placing a wreath at the tomb of Demetrius Ypsilanti in 1966.

Ypsilanti’s name, but this was also an opportunity to promote the newly formed Ypsilanti Greek Theatre. With the conviction that there “must not be a mere pen pal’s relationship,” five Greek cities were nominated at a public meeting based on “cultural, industrial and historical similarities.”

Nauplion was chosen on the recommendation of Sophia Steriades, a University of Michigan student from Greece. In the fall of 1965, Royal Oak’s Howard Baker, a state



Nauplion is located about 60 miles southwest of the city of Athens on the coast of the Peloponnese peninsula.

Historic Depot Town



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I say “Nauplion,”
you say “Ναύπλιον” –
continued from page 9

that brochures for the performances were reprinted in the local newspaper. The National League of Cities, which sponsors international affiliations, approved of the Nauplion choice in January of 1966. The Jaycees then formed a Sister City Committee, chaired by attorney John Kirkendall, to see the process through. It was even suggested at that time that scholarships to Eastern Michigan University be made available to students from Nauplion. Their efforts in planning a sister city won the Ypsilanti Jaycees an award at the Michigan Jaycees Convention in May of that year.

In July, a lawyer from Nauplion, Elias Bezas, happened to be visiting a sick uncle in Toledo, Ohio. Serving as a liaison for the sister city, he only had time to visit Ypsilanti for one hour! He spoke no English but enjoyed watching a portion of an Ypsilanti Greek Theatre production. City Councilman Timothy J. Dyer visited Nauplion for three days in August, proclaiming that the city was “totally delightful” and “very anti-communist.” He presented Nauplion with a U.S. flag which had flown from the U.S. capitol, a state flag of Michigan which had flown from the capitol in Lansing, and the flag of Ypsilanti. Dyer noted that Nauplion’s biggest problems were inadequate hospital facilities and a short supply of water. The main industries included tomato paste canning and the entertaining of German tourists. It was not until November, 1966, that Nauplion was officially invited to become sister city to Ypsilanti at an estimated program cost of \$2,000 per year.

Nauplion is an ancient city about 60 miles Southwest of Athens. Situated on the coast of the Peloponnese peninsula, Nauplion looks out onto the Argolic Gulf and serves as the capital of the Argolis prefecture. With half the population of Ypsilanti, it boasts several museums, a historical society, and a branch of the University of Peloponnese. Its marble streets and tiled roofs have led some to call it the most beautiful city in Greece. Historically, Nauplion is notable for being the first capital of modern Greece from 1829 to 1834, after which the capital was moved to Athens. This designation was the choice of Demetrios Ypsilantis who was later entombed in front of the



Bourtzi is a fortress like castle perched on a tiny island just off the coast. It was completed in 1473 to protect the city from pirates and invaders from the sea.



The most prominent fortress is Palamidi and a climb of 999 stairs is required to reach its entrance. The fortress was built by the Venetians during their second occupation of the area (1686-1715).

city hall. Ioannis Kapodistrias, Greek’s first head of state after gaining independence from the Ottoman Empire, was assassinated on the steps of Nauplion’s Saint Spyridon church in 1831. Additionally, the city hall served as the first high school in all of Greece.

Always a military stronghold, Nauplion has three Venetian fortresses. Palamidi is the most prominent and requires a climb of 999 stairs to reach its entrance. Bourtzi is a castle perched on a tiny island just off the coast. Acronauplia is the remnants of the fortifica-

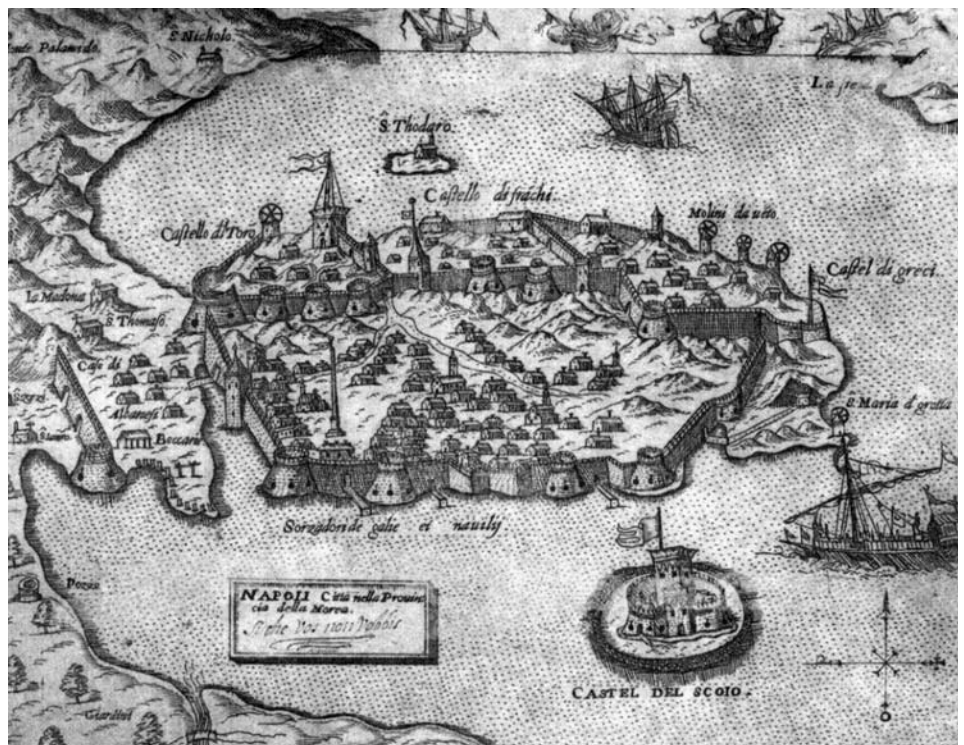
tions which used to enclose the entire city. As such a strategic locale, Nauplion has been occupied at different times by Franks, Byzantines, Venetians, Turks, and most recently Germans during World War II. This continual changing of hands has resulted in confusing naming and spelling irregularities. The Latin derivation has been alternately spelled Nauplion, Navplion, Nafplio, and Nauplia. Under Turkish rule it was called Mora Yenişehir and in Italian it was Napoli di Romania.

It is surprising that such an interesting place was seemingly forgotten about by Ypsilantians for quite some time. The 1967 coup d'état in Greece resulted in swift turnover of political officials losing Nauplion's sister city status in the shuffle. In Ypsilanti too there were several personnel changes in government and maintaining a sister city connection did not stay a priority. It was not until 1997 that the sister city status was reaffirmed. This time it was encouraged by the Rotary Clubs in both cities. The political leaders had always assumed the status was there but paperwork couldn't be found. Ypsilanti's City Council voted unanimously to reestablish ties with Nauplion and sent an eight member delegation on an eleven day "international goodwill mission" to Nauplion. Lead by Mayor Cheryl Farmer, the delegation presented Nauplion officials with a picture of the Demetrios Ypsilantis statue with U.S. and Greek flags flying side by side. This drew much attention from the Greek reporters who covered the events on national television. In return, the visitors received gifts of a video on the history of Nauplion, drawings of the ancient city, seals of the city and national fire department, a sterling silver amphora (two handled vase), and a sterling silver city pin.

Though Nauplion is our sister city, we must not forget Ypsilantis, Greece. When Howard Baker visited this village in 1965, he dismissed it as a sister city possibility because its population was only 100. Earlier that year, a New York City attorney named Leo E. Ypsilanti sent information about Ypsilantis to Mrs. Clara G. Owens who was serving as president of the Ypsilanti Greek Theatre. Leo had been notified of the village by Thomas Ypsilanti, a member of the Greek Congress. In his letter, Leo Ypsilanti claimed to have contact information for the mayor of Ypsilantis, Greece but this was never



The bell on top of the fortress Palamidi.



A Nauplion map from the 1570s.

divulged. Reportedly, General Demetrios Ypsilantis authorized the use of his name for the town after his victory over the Turks at the Battle of Petra in 1829, just 4 kilometers from Ypsilantis in the Central Greece prefecture of Boeotia (Voiotias).

It is hoped that communication and sharing of customs will continue between Ypsilanti

and Nauplion so that both cities may benefit from experiencing and learning each other's cultures. ■

(Derek Spinei is enrolled in the graduate program in Historical Preservation at Eastern Michigan University and is serving an internship in the YHS Archives.)

Childs Cemetery – A Peaceful Resting Place

By Brian Shelby

In October of 2004 I was searching for a lost dog on Tuttle Hill Road in Augusta Township where I do volunteer animal rescue. When I finally spotted him, he was running around an old damaged cemetery that had no markings as to its name. I later went to the Township Hall to inquire about these intriguing grounds, but the Township Clerk could find very little information on file. We did, however, discover that it was called Childs Cemetery (named after a local family), and that a young lady named Emily Cobb had written the Township a few years earlier to ask if anyone was going to do something about the sad condition of this historic site. Emily has ancestors buried there, so it bothered me that her letter had never been addressed by the Township Board.

I went to the next Board meeting, asked permission to restore the cemetery, and was unanimously appointed by the Board members to be the Childs Cemetery sexton. I began my research and landscape overhaul immediately. Upon closer inspection of the gravestones, the history buff in me was awestruck to discover that this all-but-forgotten, modest plot of ground contained the remains of soldiers from conflicts dating as far back as the Revolutionary War. Veterans from the Mexican-American War, Civil War, both World Wars, and the Korean War lay beneath my feet.

One of my first missions was to erect a flagpole and plaque to publicly honor, for the first time, these war veterans, as well as everyone else who rests there, many of whom still have family in the area. I also set a goal to have a dedication ceremony on Memorial Day of 2006. I ventured out to involve the community, and a community effort it did indeed become, allowing me to attain both goals and then some. I couldn't have improved Childs Cemetery, to the lovely restored state that it



The cemetery condition in 2004 with many stones buried or damaged.



Many gravestones had to be dug up, cleaned and repaired.

is today, without the help of so many people that I'm unable to name them all. I asked friends for hard labor, businesses for supplies, strangers for flowers, and you name it. No one turned me down.

Linda Francis, the manager of Augusta Woods Manufactured Home Community, put in countless hours of help, as did others from the Augusta Woods Association. Ross Medos, at the VFW Hall in Belleville, arranged for TAPS

to be played and a 21-gun salute made at the dedication. Nancy Davidson eloquently read a poem that Linda had found in her research. The Boy Scouts from Troup 793 in Belleville, headed by their troop leader, Doug Hudspeth, made two benches, cleaned the grounds, painted the fence, and helped with the dedication ceremony. Willis Baptist Church and its congregation officially blessed the cemetery for the first time in 150 years. Bob Williams used his heavy equipment to move dirt and



Later photo showing gravestones cleaned and repaired.



Many people attended the 2006 dedication of Childs Cemetery.



Emily Cobb raised the flag for the first time during the 2006 dedication.

raise headstones that had been pushed over by vandals. His wife, Kim, planted flowers, and they both put in hours of their time to help with the dedication. Martin Kailimai, owner of Hankansons Steel, made the star-shaped flag holders for the veterans' graves, and provided many other supplies. Troy McCarty, owner of the Willis Feed Mill, donated grass seed, fertilizer and his labor. He also had a sign made for the front gate that reads, "Childs Cemetery, a peaceful resting place." Shari and Mark Mellinger, owners of Arrow Awards in Willis, donated the beautiful dedication plaque. Pinters Green House on Judd Road donated flats of flowers. Ray Kidder and Jim McDonald helped tremendously with digging and other ground maintenance. Ron Mortiere and his daughter, Danielle, maintained the lawn, and Ron also helped with stone restoration. Bill and Wendy Tobler helped with research, picture taking and video recording. Dennis and Pat Messer provided many supplies and Pat's employer, Howe-Peter-son Funeral Home, donated an American flag.

Many of these people continue to this day to help with labor, supplies, and grounds maintenance. And to my delight, as I continue to randomly dig up the sod, I'm still apt to discover toppled gravestones that became buried with the centuries. When a name turns out to be another war veteran, I'm humbled, grateful to have been involved in this restoration, and inspired to continue my work here. By the way, the oldest grave I've found is dated 1834 and was marked only by a small cross and two copper pennies. ■

(Brian Shelby is retired and spends a great deal of volunteer time doing animal rescue and cemetery restoration.)



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A Man Lives as Long – As He is Remembered!

By Brian Shelby

After the township board granted approval for me to restore Childs Cemetery, I began my work right away. Probing with a five foot long steel rod, I would find a small section of buried headstone which I would then have to fully uncover by hand with a shovel and trowel. Most of the headstones were 2-3 feet below the surface. This was caused by repeated ground movement from seasonal changes, erosion, decomposition of leaves from the surrounding woods, and vandalism.

One of my most interesting discoveries occurred on March 31, 2005. It was then that I found the broken, large, white stone of Private Barlow Simonds (see photo). Upon carefully recovering the entire piece, which was two feet underground, I was amazed to see that he had died on March 31, 1865 – exactly 140 years earlier!

Wanting to learn all I could about this soldier, I sought the help of Marty Carr, a member of the Ypsilanti Historical Society. She was able to tell me that Simonds had served in the Civil War and been taken prisoner at Trevilian Station, Virginia while in the 7th Cavalry and fighting the Battle of the Wilderness in May of 1864, just a few weeks after he had enlisted.

Simonds was held at Andersonville prison camp, one of the most inhumane detention centers of its time, until his release in September after General William Tecumseh Sherman liberated the camp. Simonds returned to his home in Augusta to his wife, Mary, and fathered one child before dying at age 30. The cause of death isn't among his records, but it certainly may have resulted from his treatment at Andersonville.

I recently discovered that any soldier's grave marker can be replaced free of charge by the federal government. Since Simonds' stone isn't in the greatest shape, despite my best efforts, I've applied for its replacement. I may do the same for other such stones in Childs Cemetery as I strive to leave these historic grounds pristine and those buried there duly honored. ■

(Brian Shelby is retired and spends a great deal of volunteer time doing animal rescue and cemetery restoration.)



Private Barlow Simonds headstone was two feet underground when discovered.



Simonds headstone was dirty and broken.



Brian Shelby with Private Barlow Simonds headstone after it had been cleaned, repaired and reinstalled.

Louis Golczynski – The Rest of the Story

By George Ridenour

In the last issue of the Gleanings we ran a story titled “Uncle Louis Golczynski” which featured Golczynski’s work with home grown penicillin, while he was a teacher at Roosevelt High School. After the story ran I discovered an article in the June 9, 1961 issue of the Roosevelt High School newspaper called the “Rough Rider.”

“Biological Science Department Loses Veteran Louis Golczynski: During World War I Mr. Louis Golczynski quit high school and joined the army. After his service, he attended Ferris Institute, then primarily a high school, where he finished a three-year high school course in one year. He then received his college education at EMU and the University of Michigan.

In 1925 Mr. Golczynski came to Roosevelt. He has taught at RHS for 36 years – longer than any other member of the faculty.

For several years he served as Boy Scout leader of the RHS troop. He has sponsored various natural science and biology clubs. He also built and stocked an animal house on the campus. The “miniature zoo” was used by both EMU and RHS students.

Mr. Golczynski was cited by governmental agencies and organizations for his work with penicillin. His developments in the mass production of penicillin were later used by medicine and pharmaceutical houses in making penicillin.

Because of his willingness to fight for what he believed in, Mr. Golczynski was always appointed to the faculty salary committee to negotiate with EMU heads for higher salaries.

Mr. Thomas G. Darling, an RHS graduate, said that he got his start in enjoyment of agriculture from Mr. Golczynski. Mr. Darling is now the supervisor of the Atlantic Region of the U.S. Agricultural Research Service, Plant Quarantine Division, in New York City.

After his retirement, Mr. Golczynski will probably spend a lot of time at his cabin in northern Michigan. His other retirement plans are not definite, but he knows one thing that he won’t do. Upon returning from several weeks in Florida, Mr. Golczynski made this comment, “I don’t want to live in Florida.”

Louis Golczynski died at University Hospital in August of 1966, just five years after the above article about his retirement appeared in the “Rough Rider” and that’s “...the rest of the story!” ■

(George Ridenour is a volunteer in the YHS Archives and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)



Mr. Golczynski spent 36 years teaching at Roosevelt High School, more than any other faculty member, and retired in 1961.

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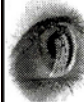
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Death at the Depot

By James Mann

Railroad crossings are dangerous places. One moment they are quiet and peaceful, and the next moment crossings are a blare of sound as tons of steel quickly pass by. Even when every safety device available is in use, a crossing is still dangerous. Not every safety device available at the time was in use at the Cross and River Streets crossing on the afternoon of Wednesday, September 29, 1909, when Andrew A. McAdoo and his mother began to cross the tracks. Had safety devices available at that time been installed at the crossing, they might not have died.

Up in the crossing guard tower at Cross and River Street was Henry C. Chase, whose duty it was to protect those who crossed the tracks there. Chase had been employed as gateman there by the Michigan Central Railroad for three years, and was seventy-eight years old. His shift was from 5:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., every day he worked. From the tower he could see as far as Park Street if the view was unobstructed. He depended on his sight and hearing to tell if a train was coming, as there was no electric contrivance to warn him of an approaching train. That morning there had been a wreck at the crossing, and in the afternoon a wrecking crew and engine had arrived at the crossing, so Chase could only see about two hundred feet.

That afternoon Andrew McAdoo, who was 45 years of age, was driving his carriage to the depot, so his 70 year old mother could take the train into Detroit to visit relatives

in Windsor. She had been in a terrible interurban accident at Smith's Switch on April 19, 1908, and had said afterward, she would never ride an electric car again.

Chase later said he first saw the coming train when it was 200 feet from the crossing. The train, he said, was moving at a speed of 45 miles per hour. When he first saw the carriage, he said, it was 20 feet from the gates. The horse was trotting until it reached the tracks, a good smart trot. *"I could have gotten the gate down before engine got there but the buggy was in the way. The gates just cleared the buggy; the horse was under the gate. They were nearly too where the gate is when they could see the train. The west bound track is 30 feet from the gate."*

"That same day the coroner impaneled a jury of six men to fix blame for the accident."

The train hit the hind quarters of the horse and the horse was thrown a distance of 90 feet up the track. *"The buggy and its occupants were caught by the cow catcher or fender, and rolled along the ground in front of the rapidly moving train for about forty feet, or until the engineer could bring the train to a standstill,"* reported The Ypsilanti Daily Press of Wednesday, September 29, 1909. *"A brakeman employed by the Michigan Central railroad was standing near the scene of the accident and fainted when the buggy rolled over the last time and revealed the crushed and mangled bodies of the aged woman and her son,"* continued the account.

"The entrails of the unfortunate couple were picked up by physicians for a distance of 30 feet along the track and great clots of blood were being smeared along the rails and ties." The mangled bodies were removed from the buggy, and taken into the baggage room of the depot, and there Mrs. McAdoo was placed on a stretcher. Mrs. McAdoo was still breathing, although her skull was crushed in several places and her ribs and bones were broken throughout her body. Physicians administered restoratives in the hope of keeping her alive, but she died about fifteen minutes later, without regaining consciousness.

The bodies were later removed to the undertaking parlors of Wallace & Clarke, and later taken to Kingston, Ontario for burial. That same day the coroner impaneled a jury of six men to fix blame for the accident. That evening the jury viewed the bodies and adjourned to await the call from the coroner.

At the meeting of the Ypsilanti City Council, on the evening of Monday, October 4, 1909, the council passed a resolution instructing the City Attorney to notify the Michigan Central Railroad that they were to notify all their engineers that the ordinance limiting the speed of trains to six miles an hour while in the city limits would be rigidly enforced. The ordinance had been passed by the council in 1882, but had never been enforced.

The coroner's jury heard evidence and testimony on Wednesday, October 13, 1909, and found the Michigan Central Railroad and the gatekeeper were to blame for the accident. ■

(James Mann is a local historian and author, and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)



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Hugh Davidson Muses about His Relative, Thomas Edison

By Hugh Davidson

Hugh Davidson is a local Augusta Township resident, who's great, great, grandmother and Thomas Edison's father, Sam, were siblings. They lived in Vienna, Ontario, Canada. Sam was a sea captain, businessman and member of the London Militia. He owned a stand of 330 foot tall pines which he used to make dandy tall masts for the British navy. The extra height enabled the ships to sail ten knots faster than other ships. He was in the furniture making business with Hugh Davidson's great, great, grandfather, James McDermind. Sam Edison was a political rebel and was convicted of treason because of his actions in the Papineau Rebellion, a much later and unsuccessful Canadian counterpart of the American Revolution. He fled to the United States and settled in Milan, Ohio. There he married Nancy Elliot, whom he had known in Canada, and Thomas was born in 1847. With the advent of railroads, Milan's prosperity declined so the Edison family moved to Port Huron, Michigan. The family maintained their ties in Canada and often visited their farms. Davidson's great grandmother, Hannah, complained that Al, as Thomas was called at the time, was odd and did not know how to play. Canada is proud of its ties to Edison and converted one of the Edison homes in Vienna into a delightful museum. Davidson's mother donated a handmade family chest to the museum where it is displayed in the dining room.

Thomas Edison started school in Port Huron. His teacher, Rev. Engler, declared him addled. He was always at the bottom of the class. His mother pulled him out of school and taught him how to read at home. She bought him many books. One of them, R.G. Parker's School of Natural Philosophy, explained how to perform chemistry experiments and launched him into the field of experimentation. He credits his home schooling by his mother for opening his mind to invention. At fifteen he worked on the train that went to Detroit. He had one of the earliest library cards (number 33) for the Detroit Free Library. He set up a science laboratory in a boxcar so he could be productive during the five hour layover in Detroit.

Thomas became a local hero at a young age. He learned Morse code and taught it to his sister. His sister was on a train headed for the Black River when Thomas heard a storm had washed out the Black River Bridge. He used the whistle on a Port Huron steam engine to send a Morse code message to his sister, Marion. She got the train stopped before it plunged into the Black River.

Thomas also saved his mother's life. She needed surgery in the middle of the night. He turned night into day by using a large mirror to reflect the light of many lamps so the doctor could operate. Sam, who sometimes thought Thomas was stupid, was forever indebted to Thomas for this ingenuity.



Thomas Edison arriving in Ypsilanti in the late 1920s (Left to Right: Arctis Bedell, Thomas Edison, Clara Ford, and Henry Ford).

Thomas Edison's life was full of inventions. He had 11,108 patents. He invented four different types of printing including the dictograph, the lowliest form of offset method with hand drawn or typed masters. The development of the x-ray was of greatest significance to the medical world. In 1877 he applied for a patent for the phonograph or sound writing. This was an entirely original idea, not developed from research started by other scientists. He invented the x-ray machine, which opened the medical field to modern day diagnostics. In 1869 he patented the telegraphic stock ticker and subsequently figured out how to transmit four messages simultaneously over the same wire. In the 1860's he worked with George Eastman to make a long film that would progress across the lens of a camera without breaking. Later he linked his motion picture camera to a phonograph to produce sound attached to the photograph. When he invented the light bulb, he tested at least 6,000 plant fibers to produce a long lasting filament. His longest lasting filament was made from carbonized cotton thread.

Edison was a man of infinite moods which got him through tough times in good stead. He refused to use any mind numbing substances such as tobacco, liquor or dope. He did not hire anyone who used these substances. He was a diabetic and when he was young his father took him by train to Mexico for a cure. He later was studied at the University of Guelph and broadened medical knowledge of diabetes.

When Edison died in 1931 his body was placed in his library in Menlo Park so mourners could pay their respects. People were lined up a block long and a block deep for one last look at this great man. ■

(Hugh Davison lives with his wife Nancy in Augusta Township.)

News from the Fletcher-White Archives

By Gerry Pety

I am constantly reminded of the truly talented people who volunteer their time and knowledge to have one of the finest historical archives in the State of Michigan. In addition to helping our guests and members to find information, our volunteers also write many of the stories you read in the Gleanings. Additionally, they are involved with in-house projects which fill their time when not helping you find what you desire here in the archives. They are multi-faceted both in their interests and talents.

Marcia McCrary, our superb genealogist, is presently involved in a large project to sort and catalog our vast collection of photographs. Presently, if you wanted to see if we had a picture of your uncle Festus, it would require a tremendous amount of your time and our time locating it. When completed sometime next year, we will be able to pinpoint which album, file or book that crazy rascal's picture is in. George Ridenour is doing research for our own version of "The Rest of the Story" which often ends up as a story featured in the "Gleanings." Jeff Davis is finding more and more obituaries and death cards

- sometimes I think he is inventing them! Lyle McDermott, James Mann and I are involved in a visual tribute to Ypsilanti's role in the winning of World War II which will end up as a summer exhibition right here in the Archives. Next year will be the 65th anniversary of the winning of World War II and we hope that many of the stories we are researching will end up in the "Gleanings." Last year we featured Buffalo Bill Cody, who has family in the Ypsilanti/Pittsfield area. It was very well received by visitors to the archives and I am hoping we can do at least as well this year. Laura Bien, our prolific writer/contributor of the "Dusty Diaries," featured on our website, is also supporting our WWII efforts with some research on how a Roosevelt-era proposed Ypsilanti Township glider-port evolved into a B-24 heavy bomber factory! There has to be a great story behind this! Keeping all of us from forgetting we have daily duties to perform, we have, Derek Spinei, our Graduate Assistant manning the help-desk. With this "bunch" how could you go wrong!

So make plans to visit the YHS Archives and to meet and visit with these fabulous people and partake of their unique talents. The YHS is truly fortunate!!!! ■

Special note: Gary Packard, archivist at the Plymouth Historical Society, sent to us information regarding the Ypsilanti Glider-Port. It is truly fascinating and part of the hidden history of this area. Thanks Gary, we will run with the story.

Museum Advisory Board Report

By Virginia Davis-Brown, Advisory Board Chair

This is a very busy time but we hope you will mark your calendar and take a few minutes out of your schedule, to relax and visit the Historical Museum and join in the celebrations. The candles are lighted and in the windows, inviting you in. The 12 foot Christmas tree is in the parlor just waiting for you to come in and see it. Every room has been decorated for the Holiday Season with many very special displays.

Plans have been underway for some time and are now complete for the Open House celebration on Sunday, December 6, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. The Sweet Adelines will be here to entertain this year.

December 27 will be the Holiday Reception with many types of entertainment planned. The hours will be from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. It will be a night for meeting friends, eating special food not on our diet, and enjoying the Holiday spirit. This is a great time to bring family and friends to the Museum and share our heritage.

Be sure to visit the Solarium as the Christmas Cactus has budded and hopefully will be in bloom by then. You also must see the seven foot Palm Tree (doesn't everyone have one?).



2010 will be here very soon and things for next year are in the planning stages. The Art Exhibit, giving our local artists a place to share their talents, will be in the spring. The all new Lost Ypsilanti Exhibit is scheduled for the summer and it will feature little known facts about people and places. If you have a little time on your hands this winter, you might want to start that quilt and have it ready for our Quilt Exhibit in the fall. Let us know if you get it done. If you have any questions please call 484-0080 and we will try to answer them.

Don't forget the gift shop may have some gifts that would help to fill those blanks on your lists.

Our Museum is open Tuesdays thru Sundays from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. There is no admission fee but we do accept donations. Just a reminder, the Museum will be closed December 24, 25, and 26, and also December 31 and January 1.

Your Museum Family wishes you a *WONDERFUL HOLIDAY SEASON AND A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR.* ■

Pumping Station

By Bill Nickels

During a recent tour of the Ypsilanti Ford Plant I discovered information about an old postcard that I bought many years ago. The postcard picture is titled "Pumping Station" and shows buildings that are part of the Ford plant. An 1890 bird's eye map shows that the "Pumping Station" as well as the "Water Works and Electric Light" facilities were located on the Ford site.

The cornerstone indicates that the construction of the "Pumping Station" dates from 1886. As pictured, the building with the Roman arch survived for 123 years, the last 77 years as part of the Ford plant power house. In order to improve the marketability of the complex, Ford will soon demolish the western half of the plant, including the 1886 structure. We will lose some history in exchange for an opportunity for redevelopment of the site. ■

(Bill Nickels is an active member of the Ypsilanti Historical Society and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)



Pumping Station, Ypsilanti, Mich.

The "Pumping Station" on the Ypsilanti Ford Plant site dates back to 1886.



Bill Nickels on a recent tour of the "Pumping Station" on the Ford site.



The cornerstone of the "Pumping Station."

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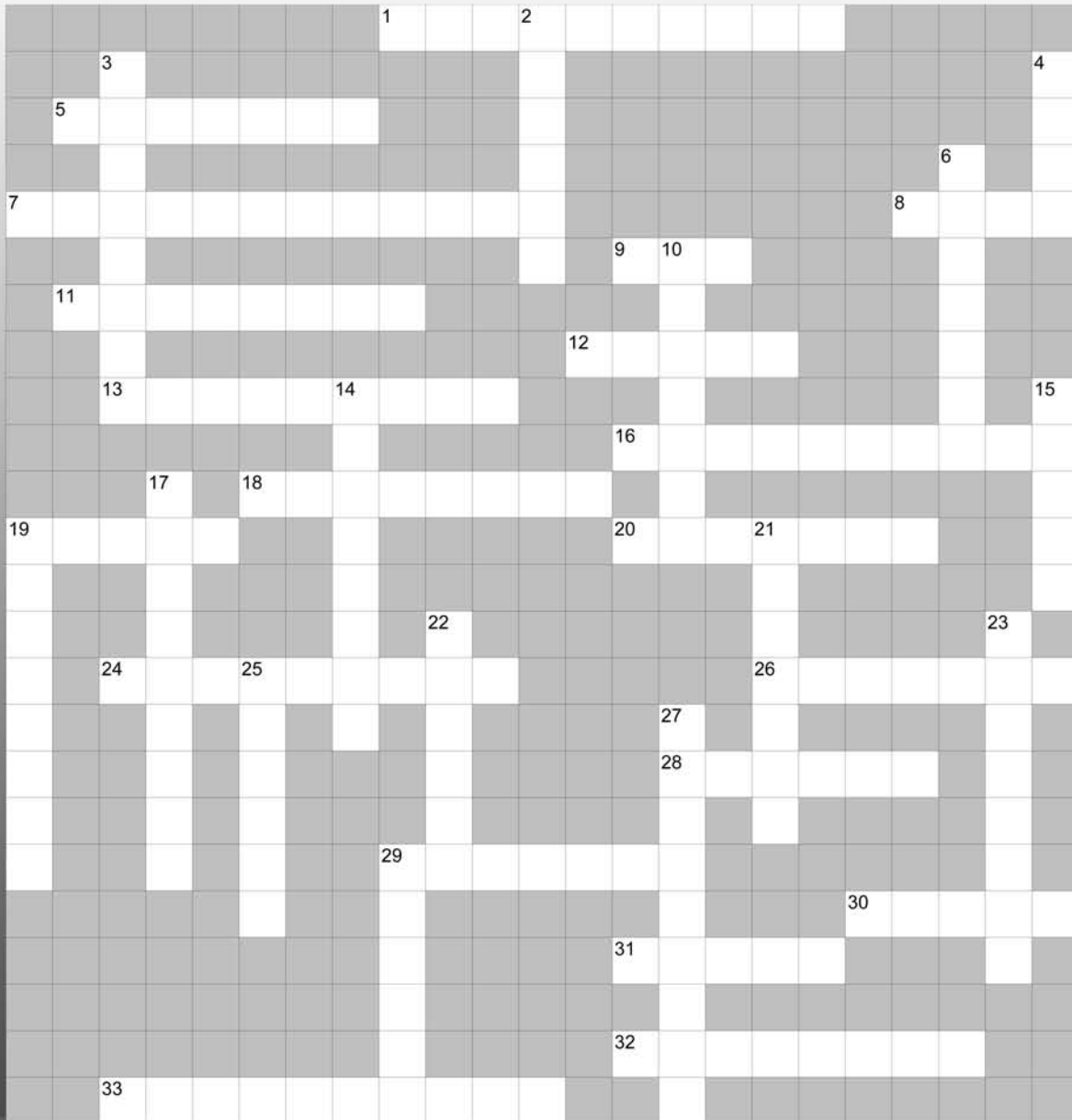


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“Ypsilanti History” Crossword Puzzle

This crossword puzzle is based on the web-based program titled “Historical Highlights of Ypsilanti.” The program can be accessed from the YHS web site at: ypsilantihistoricalsociety.org



<http://eclipsecrossword.com/>

Across

1. One of the two individuals who established "S & H Green Stamps" in Ypsilanti in 1896.
5. The name of the first licensed woman driver in Washtenaw County who lived on Grove Street in Ypsilanti.
7. In 1890 this individual gave her North Huron Street home to the Ladies Library Association.
8. The Ypsilanti ___ Furniture Company was established in Ypsilanti in 1901.
9. The name of the automobile produced in Ypsilanti between 1920 and 1922.
11. The home of the 27th Michigan Infantry during the Civil War later became known as the ___ Block.
12. In 1858 the new ___ School was dedicated, "...the finest school building of its kind in America."
13. Name of the territory in the 1787 ordinance passed by the Congress of the Confederation.
16. When the Ypsilanti site was first platted for a village in 1825, John Stewart wanted to call it ___.
18. In 1823, a group of settlers led by Benjamin ___ established a settlement east of the Huron River near what would later become the city of Ypsilanti.
19. In 1872, this individual patented a lubricating device for railroad and factory engines.
20. Individual who in 1809 built the trading post on the site where Ypsilanti was eventually located.
24. In 1901, this individual was appointed head of the Department of Geography at Michigan State Normal College and later served as the Chief Cartographer for the American Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference following World War I.
26. In 1819 this area was surveyed by Joseph ___.
28. The Michigan State ___ School was established by the Michigan Legislature in 1849 for the training of teachers.
29. The Peninsular Paper Plant constructed along the Huron River in 1867 supplied newsprint to the Chicago ___.
30. Individual responsible for building the large woolen mills in Ypsilanti in 1865 and the Peninsular Paper Company in 1867.
31. In 1884, this individual dug an 800 foot well that produced reddish brown water having an "...odor that sent strong men reeling."
32. This professor of mathematics from Michigan Normal College was known for his organization of band and drum and bugle corps in Ypsilanti.
33. Between 1898 and 1928 these electric ___ cars connected Detroit with almost every town within a 50 mile radius.

Down

2. This individual established a School of Penmanship in Ypsilanti in 1883.
3. In 1960 this individual and his brother James took over an ailing pizzeria in Ypsilanti.
4. The ___ Ypsilanti Plant was built in 1932 and produced parts for automobiles.
6. In 1838 the first train arrived in Ypsilanti from Detroit on the "___ Road."
10. In 1825 the territorial government commissioned a surveyor to lay out a road from Detroit to Chicago called the ___ Road.
14. The name of the judge who was so fascinated by the successes of General Ypsilanti that he wanted to name the new village after him.
15. The commercial district that developed at Cross and River Streets after the trains began arriving became known as "___ Town."
17. The Ypsilanti Hay Press Company also manufactured the ___ farm tractor.
19. In 1855 Helen ___ set up a practice as the first female doctor in Washtenaw County.
21. Young girls passed these out to passengers on the trains that stopped beside the Michigan Central Depot.
22. Completed in 1941, the Willow Run ___ Plant was the largest factory in the world under one roof.
23. In 1848 the Tecumseh Hotel was bought by the Baptist Church to use as a private school called "The Ypsilanti ___."
25. The individuals who filed land claims on the Ypsilanti site in 1811 were of ___ descent.
27. "Never a rip, never a tear, Ypsilanti ___."
29. This individual designed and built prototypes for his "___ Torpedo" automobile.

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Ypsilanti Historical Society **WALKING TOURS**

The following one-hour walking tours are available through the YHS Archives:

**Depot Town
Depot Town Ghost Tour
EMU Campus
Highland Cemetery
Highland Cemetery Ghost Tour
Michigan Avenue (downtown)
North Huron Street
South Huron Street**

Each tour is \$25 for up to five people and \$50 for six to ten people. The tours are given by James Mann, local historian.

734-217-8236, Tue - Sun, 2 to 5 pm

Jennings Receives “George F. Hixson” Award

On September 23, 2009, Gerald L. Jennings, was awarded the George F. Hixson Fellowship Award by the Kiwanis Club of Ypsilanti. Gerald is a longtime member of the Board of Trustees of the Ypsilanti Historical Society and contributes significantly to a wide variety of programs and projects of the Society. The following information about Gerald was printed in the brochure passed out at the award ceremony and is reproduced here with the permission of the Kiwanis Club.

The Kiwanis Club of Ypsilanti is honored to present Jerry Jennings with the George F. Hixson Fellowship Award for all the dedication and service he has given to the YHS and LHS Key Club, this Kiwanis District and this Kiwanis Club.

Jerry met his wife Mary at Ball State.

They have three children, Brent, Vicki and Pamela. Jerry holds the B.S. and M.A. degrees from Ball State and a Ph.D. from Michigan State University. Jerry joined EMU's Department of Business and Technology Education in 1963 and retired in 1998 receiving emeritus faculty status by the EMU Board of Regents.

Accomplishments:

- During his years at EMU Jerry served as undergraduate program coordinator and then graduate school coordinator.
- Jerry served on a number of professional education councils in the nation and presented technology education papers at state and national meetings. He served as editor of the American Council on Technology Teacher Education Yearbook and received special recognition from that council for his service to technology teacher education.
- EMU awarded Jerry the College of Technology Dean's Outstanding Faculty Member Award in 1987. He was also recognized by the Division of University Marketing and Student Affairs for his service to students.
- Jerry is an active community member. He has worked with numerous school districts on school improvement projects. He was a leader in the Boy Scouts of America, and an Ypsilanti Public School Board Trustee. He also served on the Board of Trustees of the Ypsilanti First United Methodist Church and as Chairman of the United Campus Ministries Board of Directors. Jerry is a member of the Ypsilanti Historical Society Board of Directors. He works on Habitat for Humanity construction projects. He teaches classes of middle school students about robotics at the Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum. Jerry has served as Faculty Fellow on the Sigma Phi Michigan Lambda Chapter Corporation Board at EMU.
- Jerry has been a vital member of the Kiwanis Club of Ypsilanti since he joined in 1998. The various positions he has held include President and Lt. Governor. Jerry helped establish Key Club in both Ypsilanti High School and Lincoln High School. He continues to be Advisor to both. Jerry continues to use his thorough knowledge of Kiwanis to advise the club. He is always one of the first to arrive and the last to leave. ■



The Jennings family at the award ceremony. From left to right: Mary (wife), Jerry, Vicki Salemi (daughter), Max (grandson) and Brent (son). Their daughter Pamela lives in Indianapolis and could not be present at the ceremony.

(Editor's Note: From time to time the Gleanings will highlight special recognition or awards presented to our officers and members, particularly for service to the community.)

“Gleanings” Receives State Award

The Historical Society of Michigan selected the Ypsilanti Historical Society “Gleanings” for their statewide award in the area of “Communications: Newsletters and Web Sites.” The award was presented to Al Rudisill (Editor) and Peg Porter (Assistant Editor) at the Society's annual conference held on Mackinac Island on October 2-4, 2009. The State History Awards are the highest recognition presented by the states' official historical society and oldest cultural organization, established in 1828. The “Gleanings” was nominated by George Ridenour, a regular contributor to the newsletter and a volunteer in the Ypsilanti Historical Society Archives.

Thirteen awards were presented at the conference in the following categories: Publications - University and Commercial Press; Publications - Private Printing; Media; Communications; Educational Programs; Restoration & Preservation; Distinguished Volunteer Service; Special Programs and Events; and Lifetime Achievement.

The first “Gleanings” was published in 1973 and features historical articles including the reminiscences of people and places in Ypsilanti and the surrounding area. The newsletter features articles and photographs documenting the history of the area and also includes advertisers and columns of current interest such as history based programs and web sites.

An index of all back issues of the Gleanings is posted on the “publications” section of the YHS web site at ypsilantihistoricalociety.org/publications.html and the Ann Arbor District Library has digitized all past issues and posted them on the Internet. They can be accessed and downloaded at ypsigleanings.aadl.org.

The Gleanings is published four times per year and is included with the \$10 annual membership fee.

The Thompson Block –
Then and Now!
continued from page 3

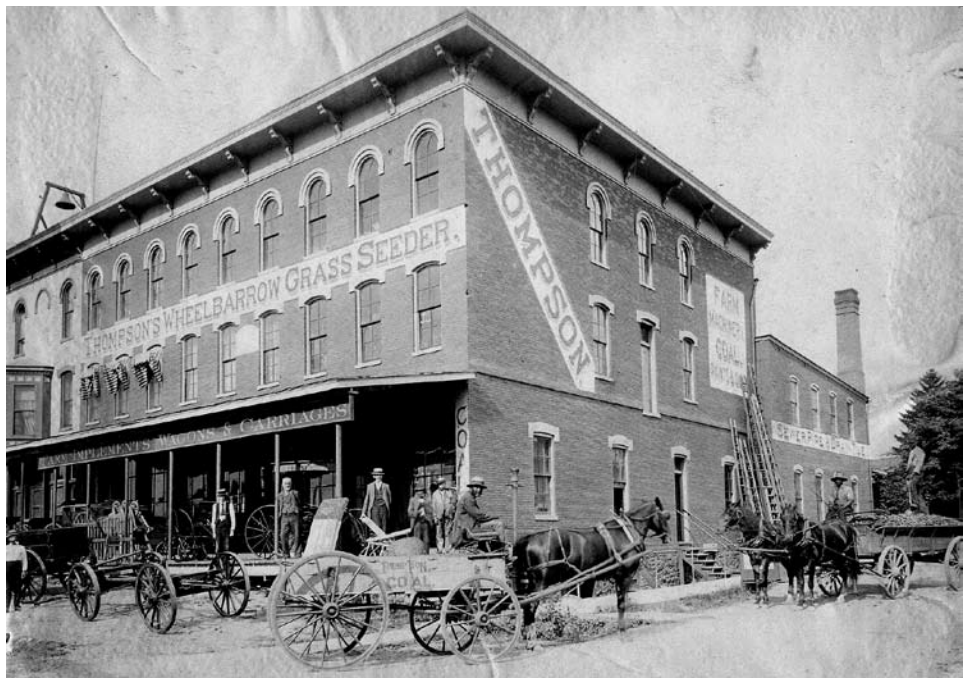
repair it right up to the handle. He means to make one of the completest paint shops in the state, using the first floor for a store connected with the business... If that corner don't shine in less than three months, the pride of the Depot, set us down as a false prophet."

Oliver E. Thompson, born in Ypsilanti in 1838, was the son of a pioneering family. In 1865 he began to manufacture wagons and in 1870, the year after he moved into the Norris Block, he began to make carriages. In 1871 he began to sell Jackson wagons made by Tomlinson & Webster. In 1873 he started selling agricultural implements, some of his own invention, that were manufactured in the Norris Block such as root cutters, grass seeders, and kraut and slaw cutters. Thompson and his sons Benjamin, Edward, and John were also active in the business of house, sign, and carriage painting, and sold other items such as swings, wall-paper and bicycles. In one year, Thompson and Sons sold more than two hundred bicycles.

By 1900, Thompson & Sons employed about fifty men. Although they owned the building, their business interests rarely occupied more than the three bays as the south end of the building. The bays at the north end of the building were rented out for the use of other businesses.

By the early 1890's, the city of Ypsilanti had established a second volunteer fire company, this one to serve the east side. It was called Hose House No. 2 and was housed in the Thompson Block at 408 North River. The company consisted of volunteer fire fighters, a hose wagon, and a horse. On the roof above the Hose House was a large bell, to be rung in case of fire. Since Ypsilanti had only a volunteer fire department until 1895, no one was permanently assigned to be at the building. When a fire was discovered, someone had to ring the bell to alert the volunteers. On the front of the Hose House was a sign explaining how to ring the bell, so the volunteers would know where the fire was. On many occasions, someone who was overcome with excitement would misread the instructions, incorrectly

continued on page 24



The Thompson sold a wide variety of products including carriages and wheelbarrow grass seeders.



O. E. Thompson and Sons letterhead from the 1890s.



The Thompson Block in c1905 when the emphasis on retail sales focused on bicycles.

The Thompson Block – Then and Now! *continued from page 23*

ring the bell, and send the volunteers to the wrong address.

In 1895, a professional fire department was established and the on duty fire fighters slept in quarters on the second floor. Hose House No. 2 remained in the Thompson Block until 1898, when the two city fire companies were incorporated into one and moved into the new fire house on Cross Street. The part of the building used by the fire company was then used by the city for storage into the 1950s.

Oliver E. Thompson died in 1910, and his sons took over the business. In 1916, Joseph H. Thompson, grandson of Oliver, opened what may have been the first Dodge dealership outside of Detroit in the north end of the building. He only operated at that location for a short time before moving the dealership across the street to the current location of the Automotive Heritage Museum.

The business interests of the Thompson family changed over the years as old markets closed and new markets opened. In 1918 they ended their retail sales operations and began to concentrate on manufacturing. In 1927 the Thompson family sold the O.E. Thompson and Sons business to C. J. Helm and Associates, out of Detroit, but the company continued to use the Thompson name. According to a newspaper advertisement in May of 1940, the company was still producing 68 different items and serving 1,000 customers from coast to coast.

The last of the business interests under the Thompson name ended in 1950 and the building was put up for sale. The building stood empty for over a year and then over the years business would come and go. As time passed major parts of the building were left to deteriorate. In recent years the building has been the subject of controversy and eventually ended up in court.

David Kircher bought the building in the late 1960s and for many years it was used as a warehouse. However, the building contin-



Note the Dodge Brothers Motor Cars dealership on the north end of the Thompson Block in a picture from c1916.



By c1929 the north end of the Thompson Block was used by the City of Ypsilanti as a City Storehouse.

ued to deteriorate and in 1996 a court order was issued that required David Kircher to make certain repairs to the building. Later, Kircher was declared guilty of demolishing the Thompson Block building by neglect. The city of Ypsilanti sued Kircher in 2002 to force him to make repairs to the building. The repairs were made by Barnes and Barnes and when Kircher failed to pay for the repairs, Robert Barnes was appointed receiver for the property. Then in 2005 a Washtenaw County judge appointed Stewart Beal as the successor receiver to repair the building. Beal Properties president, Stewart W. Beal, indicated later that Beal Properties paid Barnes & Barnes almost \$400,000 for

sole ownership of the property. According to the City of Ypsilanti Planning Office the title transfer to Stewart Beal for the Thompson Block occurred on May 16, 2006.

On the morning of September 23, 2009, a fire that began at 1:38 a.m. destroyed the interior of the entire south end of the building. Five fire departments responded to assist including Ypsilanti, Ann Arbor, Pittsfield, Superior and Ypsilanti Township. It took six hours to get the fire under control. The building's interior floors collapsed and fell down into the basement making the entire outside façade unstable. According to Beal, engineers have determined that the building's



In the early morning on September 23, 2009, the Thompson Block was engulfed in a fire that took five fire departments to douse.



An artist's rendering of the Thompson Block as it would appear after being renovated by Beal Properties.

façade can be saved and the shell has been shored up with bracing until new construction behind the façade can be completed.

According to a 1992 research report on the building by Craig Zehnder, "Architecturally, the building's historical significance is quite apparent. Built in the mid 18th century, the building is an excellent example of the typical downtown building block (here freestanding) with retail on the first floor and dwellings/storage on the upper floors. The masonry brick and wood beam construction was build using bricks from the Great Western Hotel that was torn down to make

room for the railroad tracks. The Italianate style with arched fenestration and intricate wooden frieze was particularly popular at that time and can be observed in the few remaining buildings in Ypsilanti from that time period. Its subsequent rehabilitation and preservation would be a great asset and historical resource for not only the citizens of Ypsilanti but also an excellent example of Midwestern architecture from the 1800's for the entire country." ■

James Mann is a local author and historian, regularly contributes articles to the Gleanings, and is a volunteer in the YHS Archives.

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New Acquisitions: Deubel Family Objects

By Kathryn Howard

Early in 2009 I received a phone call from Marilou (Deubel) Reinikka of Vancouver, Washington. Marilou is the great granddaughter of William and Sally Deubel of Ypsilanti. Later, I received a letter from Marilou offering to send the Deubel Family Bible (currently on display) and other written history about the family – now in the Fletcher-White Archives. The Deubel family was known for their flour mills along the Huron River in the area and lived on North Huron Street during the late 19th century. Early this fall, I again received a letter from Marilou stating she was sending an oil portrait of Hattie Deubel. In the letter she included information about the portrait and Hattie:

Hattie Deubel was the daughter of William and Sally Deubel. She died about the age of 14 from Pneumonia. The portrait was painted from a photograph after her death. My grandfather, Frank Deubel, sat for the painting of the face of the portrait since he and Hattie looked much alike. The mouth however, is Frank's which was a Cupid's bow shape; Hattie's was really much straighter and thinner according to my mother.

The Portrait was passed from one brother to another through the family. It seems that each time it went to another brother, that brother died soon after. This happened several times and when it was Frank's turn to have it, my grandmother wanted no part of it – she thought it had bad karma! Frank insisted and they hung it in their living room. Soon after, Frank died as the others had, all from massive cerebral strokes. Quite an interesting story! It remained on the Deubel family wall until my aunt died two years ago. Doris Jean Deubel had some restoration work done to the painting about five years ago. (Marilou Reinikka - 2009) ■

(Note: We plan to hang the Hattie Deubel portrait in the Victorian bedroom in the YHS museum; however, we need a gold colored frame in order to do so. The portrait is 2' 1" x 3' ¼". If you or someone you know has a frame of this size that you are willing to donate to the project, please contact Kathryn Howard at the museum - 734-482-4990).



Strange things happened to the Deubel brothers when the Hattie Deubel portrait was hung in their home. Was it coincidence?

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Fundraising Contribution/Pledge Agreement YHS – “A Matter of Trust”

The Internal Revenue Service has designated the Ypsilanti Historical Society an organization described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

AMOUNT OF CONTRIBUTION/PLEDGE: On this _____ day of _____, 20____,
I agree to contribute and/or pledge to the Ypsilanti Historical Society the sum of \$_____.

CONTRIBUTION CATEGORIES:

- Demetrius Ypsilanti Circle..... \$50,000 or more
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- _____ B. An immediate cash payment of \$_____ with annual cash payments of \$_____ in each succeeding year for a period of _____ years.
- _____ C. An immediate cash payment of \$_____ with the balance of \$_____ payable through my estate upon my death. I have consulted a lawyer and I understand the balance is an irrevocable pledge that my estate will be obligated to pay to the Ypsilanti Historical Society. This Deferred Pledge Agreement may also be satisfied in part or in full by payments made by me at my discretion during my lifetime.
- _____ D. I pledge that the total amount of my contribution to the Ypsilanti Historical Society will be payable through my estate upon my death. I have consulted a lawyer and I understand this is an irrevocable pledge that my estate will be obligated to pay to the Ypsilanti Historical Society. This Deferred Pledge Agreement may also be satisfied in part or in full by payments made by me at my discretion during my lifetime.
- _____ E. Transfer of “other assets” such as securities, other personal property or real estate interests. (*Note: The Society reserves the right to accept or reject gifts of other assets pending a due diligence review of the assets, their transferability and the appropriateness of acceptance of such other assets by the Society. This review will be conducted by legal counsel for the Society.*) Donor to provide description of assets being transferred.

EXECUTION: Executed this _____ day of _____, 20____.

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Witness: _____ Signature: _____ Donor City, State & Zip _____

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