

# Ypsilanti GLEANINGS

YHS Museum & Archives

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



SUMMER 2010

## Peckville

By Janice Anschuetz

One hundred years ago, anyone in town could point the way to Peckville, straight north on River Street, down two blocks from the train station. Today Peckville exists only in memories, a few scraps of paper and pictures at the Ypsilanti museum archives, an unused street and a few old homes and remnants of buildings.

In September, 1823, when present day Ypsilanti was woods, wilderness, swamps, bugs, wild animals and Indians, Joseph and Sophia Peck and two young sons, Egbert and Erwin, under two years of age, came here from New York on a sailing ship, with high hopes and ambition. They brought with them three head of cattle and a pregnant mare. The trip took longer than expected and a foal was born on board the ship. On the voyage, they had run out of food and water for the livestock and the foal was too weak to stand. The starving cattle had to be helped off the boat. The young family remained in Detroit until the animals were strong enough to travel. The next leg of the journey was by flat boat from Detroit to Snow's landing at Rawsonville, and then on though the wilderness to the pioneer settlement at Woodruff's Grove.

Joseph and Sophia built a log cabin and settled on a parcel of land from the middle of the river to what is now Prospect St., East Forest Avenue to what is now Holmes Road. In order to file claim to this land, Joseph had to leave his family and travel through dense woods to Detroit which had the nearest land office. His efforts were rewarded in June of 1825 when he received a parchment patent, signed by President John Quincy Adams. This 85 acre farm was bought for 10 shillings (about \$1.25) an acre. By 1836 Joseph and Sophia had replaced their first small cabin with a large farm house, which still stands today at 401 East Forest, and was lived in by their descendants for over 130 years.

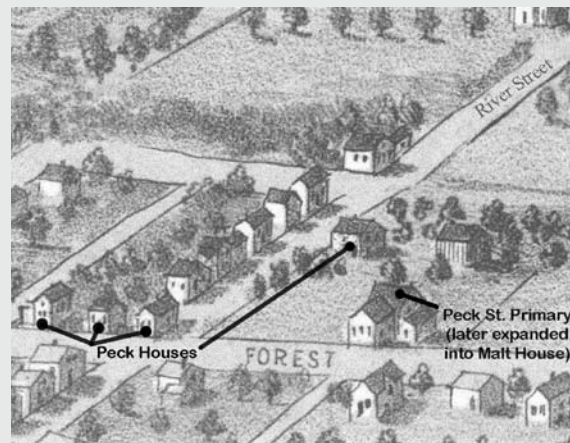
The pioneer spirit may have been in Joseph's genes. His direct ancestor William Peck came from England and was one of the founders, in 1638, of the Colony of New Haven, Connecticut. Joseph was born in East Hayden, Connecticut on August 5, 1790. He was one of the eleven children of Elisha and Olive Peck.

*continued on page 3*

*Right: In September of 1823 Sophia Peck came to this area with her husband and two young sons.*



*Below: This 1869 map of Ypsilanti shows the location of four of the Peck houses as well as the Peck Street Primary School which was at the time converted into a Malt House.*



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## Ypsilanti Historical Society

220 North Huron Street  
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197  
Tel: (734) 482-4990  
www.ypsilantihistoricalsociety.org

## Gleanings Staff

Editor \_\_\_\_\_ Al Rudisill  
Assistant Editor \_\_\_\_\_ Peg Porter  
Design & Layout \_\_\_\_\_ Keith Bretzius  
Advertising Director \_\_\_\_\_ Michael Newberry  
Finance Director \_\_\_\_\_ Karen Nickels  
Distribution \_\_\_\_\_ Michael Newberry  
If you have suggestions for articles or if  
you have questions contact Al Rudisill at  
734-476-6658 or al@rudisill.ws.

Ypsilanti Gleanings is published 4 times a year  
by the Ypsilanti Historical Society, 220 N.  
Huron St., Ypsilanti, MI 48197

# From the President's Desk

By Al Rudisill

Our next quarterly meeting is Sunday, September 12 from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. We hope you will join us for the meeting and program. Refreshments will be served following the meeting and entertainment.

We are very pleased to report that our annual yard sale was a great success. We took in almost \$2,500 from all the items that were donated by members and friends of the Ypsilanti Historical Society. Our sincere thanks to all the volunteers who spent time preparing for the sale and a special thanks to Bill and Karen Nickels who hosted the event in their yard. The sale also helps the community in additional ways. At the end, leftover household items were donated to the Center for Independent Living, leftover books were donated to the District Library, and the remaining leftover items were donated to the Ypsilanti Public Schools Foundation Resale Shop.

Two new maintenance efforts on the museum building are currently under way. The first project is to repair the front steps and front door entrance including the replacement of the limestone side walls and the limestone threshold under the door. This project will cost approximately \$8,000 and an anonymous donor has donated the funds to complete the project. The second project is to repair and

paint 43 windows and construct and install storm windows on these openings. This project will cost approximately \$300 per window or \$12,900 for the entire project. We are initiating a "Buy a Storm Window" program to raise the funds. Additional information about the program is included later in this issue of the Gleanings.

Our new expanded and resurfaced parking lot has relieved some of the parking issues we have had over the past several years. However, during the pouring of the cement we ended up with a cold joint which was caused by one of the cement trucks being late during the pour last fall. Three of the 10' x 10' squares will be repoured and the parking lines will be repainted. A sincere thanks to all of our members and friends who contributed their time and/or money for this major project.

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

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Administrative  
Archives  
Collections  
Contact Info  
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Visiting  
Volunteers

**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  
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Peckville –  
*continued from front page*

In his son Erwin's obituary, Joseph is given credit for being the first white man who bought a settlement in Ypsilanti. He was considered a very friendly man and while delivering the mail to Detroit, or going there to pick up supplies, he would often return with strangers interested in settling in Ypsi-

lanti, and offer them his hospitality. In *The Story of Ypsilanti*, Harvey C. Colburn writes, "The Peck home was a center of hospitality and a cordial welcome was given to all new settlers and travelers coming along. Soon this section was known as 'Peckville.'" Peck Street, which exists now as the second driveway north of East Forest, on River Street, led to an artesian well which supplied early settlers and travelers with fresh water.

*continued on page 22*



*Joseph and Sophia's home, built in 1836, still stands at 401 East Forest and was occupied by members of the Peck family for over 130 years. Cora and Dwight Peck were the last Pecks to live there.*



*The Peck Street Primary School was built in 1839 and in the 1860s was turned into a malt house and then in 1913 into a garage which is still in use today.*

  
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# A Tribute to the Unknown Dead

By Mabel Stadtmiller

*(This Memorial Day tribute was delivered by Mabel Stadtmiller in 1927. She was elected to the position of Ypsilanti City Treasurer in 1924 and served in that position for 33 years.)*

To me, a grand-daughter of a Union Veteran of the Civil War has been assigned on this Memorial Day, the privilege of paying tribute to the unknown dead. A tribute to those who pledged themselves in rank and file with the fallen heroes whose names we know, for the protection of the flag of our country. These comrades, though we cannot call their names, once stood shoulder to shoulder with all other heroes of the Civil War, on the bloody fields of battle, and guarded equally well the sacred bonds of statehood, and fought in unison for Liberty and the dear old flag.

We have come today as sons and daughters of our soldiers and sailors to do homage to a Nation's dead. By these sacred ceremonies we revive the memories of brave and loyal hearts who dared stand for the right, and did not fear to bare their breasts to a storm of steel in defense of human liberty, a united country, and the brotherhood of man.

In this silent camping ground under God's blue skies, their bodies may lie in decay, but we pledge ourselves to keep green the memories of their heroic service and unselfish sacrifice. Their names may not be recorded individually upon history's page, but their lofty spirits conceived, resolved, and maintained the integrity of an institution which, pray God, may live on forever in prosperity and peace.

The examples of these loved ones, these unknown dead, in fighting to banish the crime of slavery in our fair land, these examples, I say, inspired America to send two million of her sons under the Star Spangled Banner to battle for Liberty's cause on the war-torn fields of France and Flanders. Righteous victory attended our heroic soldiers and sailors, as they returned with our beloved banner resplendent with new honors, adding to imperishable glory won



*Mabel Stadtmiller was elected to the position of Ypsilanti City Treasurer in 1924 and served in that position for 33 years.*

by our fathers under Abraham Lincoln in the war for the Union.

No flag that floats today on earth, like the flag these unknown dead once saved, holds out so brave a hope for all mankind, or sheds such a radiant light upon the path of human life.

Let us entwine each thread of the glorious fabric of our country's flag around our hearts, and catching the spirit that breathes upon us from the battles and the victories of America's sons, let us resolve now and forever we will stand for the principles and institutions which this monument to our unknown dead today symbolizes. Let us make the high resolve that our American flag, as it came to us from the hands of these our fathers, unstained and unchanged, shall so wave over our graves.

*Cold in the dust this perished heart may lie, but the spirit that warmed it once can never die.*

And now this day, I place, in loving memory, the garden's and the woodland's choicest emblems of beauty as a tribute of love and respect to our unknown dead. ■

# Laura Bien and “Tales from the Ypsilanti Archives”

By *George Ridenour*

On April 24 Laura Bien, author, blog writer, archives assistant, poet, and researcher provided Archives visitors with a brief background related to her career in writing and signed copies of her new book “Tales from the Ypsilanti Archives.”

Ms. Bien indicated she has always had an interest in writing and at an early age began writing poetry. She attended the University of Michigan planning to pursue her interest in poetry and published a number of poems in a local U of M literary magazine.

After graduation she taught in Korea for two years and then returned to the United States and attended Eastern Michigan University graduating with a degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. Laura indicated she especially enjoyed working with and teaching others from multicultural backgrounds.

An advertisement in the Ann Arbor Observer caught her eye and brought a new career writing “The Calendar of Events” for that publication. The experience at the Observer taught her to:

- 1) be succinct and compress your thoughts;
- 2) be comprehensive – put together a “full picture in one sentence;”
- 3) write in a conversational manner – talk to your audience;
- 4) write in vivid language to catch the reader’s interest;
- 5) write blurbs as if you had only ten minutes to complete it; and
- 6) make sure your articles are no longer than approximately 1,000 words.

Laura gave the audience some background about finding and researching the short stories included in her book. For instance, she indicated that reading local school yearbooks gives a flavor of the time period and sometimes provides tips for stories. One example she gave was finding a reference to an outbreak of smallpox at EMU in a yearbook which resulted in her writing a story that described the impact of the outbreak in Ann Arbor and the surrounding area.



*Laura Bien, local author, poet, and researcher with a copy of her new book “Tales from the Ypsilanti Archives.”*

Another source for stories is reviewing old patent records. Many patents for inventions were applied for by Ypsilanti entrepreneurs and one story that she published was related to the patent of a “Toast Buttering Device” by Robert Dickenson in 1929.

Writings of former Ypsilanti historians are another potential source for stories. One story she developed was initially inspired by the writings of blind historian James Milton Barnes. Finding bits and pieces within other stories and writings often lead to the development of a unique new story.

In addition to writing books Laura now writes blogs for the Ypsilanti Historical Society and regularly writes articles for the AnnArborNews.com, the Ypsilanti Courier, the Chronicle and the Ann Arbor Journal. Her articles are focused on her love of history and local interests. Tom Dodd, local teacher, historian, and editor of the Depot Town Rag, describes Laura as “...one of the best writers in Washtenaw County.” That is quite a compliment coming from a respected teacher of journalism. ■

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



636 S. Mansfield Ave.  
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Tel: (734) 483-5811  
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# On the Banks of Sneak-a-Leak-Creek

By George Ridenour

As the days become warm, green colors the dead trees of winter, my jacket comes off, and my mind begins to wander. My heart becomes mellow. My car turns from LeForge Road to West Clark Road. I stop for a few minutes at 415 West Clark Road. My God how many changes have occurred since I lived there from age 5-18, before leaving for a tour of duty in the U.S. Army?

Memories of days and years that passed so very quickly flood my mind like motion pictures. Days of youth gone by. This time of year along the dusty road I remember the beauty of wild blood root, violets, asparagus, Queen Ann's lace, and purple or white lilac trees that filled the air with their sweet smells. Occasionally cars hummed by the front of our house and disappeared in the distance except in the time of "spring thaws" when they sometimes became stalled in axle deep mud. No, roads were not paved!

I remember the "question" from kids during school when they found out I lived on West Clark Road "... Oh, what is it like to live in the country?" The distance to the business center of Ypsilanti was only one and a half miles! Oh well, with only four nearby houses, a couple of farms and lots of vacant land I can see where they thought we were really "... out there?"

We even had our own baseball field! However, there was no back stop behind the catcher to stop missed balls and when a ball was hit into the corn field behind the outfield it was an automatic "home run." During the fall of the year our side yard was transformed from a garden into a football arena! I still have the bruises to prove it.

We had an acre of garden too! We grew our own food which Mom canned, and we used a root cellar! We grew everything, well before the current local produce movement. With ten mouths to feed we needed to cut costs and it gave Dad something for us kids to do



*Above: George Ridenour as he looked in his pre-teen years on West Clark Road.*

*Right: Sneak-a-Leak-Creek can still be seen through the rusted fence along side of West Clark Road.*



during the summer. I still remember carrying buckets of cow pies (yep, *nice fresh* cow pies) and scooping them into the dirt mounds where the cucumbers were planted. We had mighty big "cukes" all summer long!

Then there were the cows from the farm on LeForge Road that sometimes wandered down the lanes stretching all the way to Clark Road. We often played in the fields which surrounded the neighborhood being careful not to step in the cow pies. The cows loved that area. One time they even cornered me in a tree where I had to stay until my brother finally rescued me. I was the butt of jokes for weeks after that. The area included wild thistles with purple and yellow flowers, grass (which the cows helped mow!), trees, butterflies of all colors, birds of all kinds, frogs, turtles, and sledding sites for winter.

Through all this flowed this slow meandering "creek" which varied from ankle to shin deep. To this day I don't remember finding the source of the creek. I do remember it flowed under Clark Road and into the fields, down

past our house, and all the way to empty into the Huron River. It was a lifeline for nature, cows, and boys wanting adventure either in catching frogs, wading, maybe an occasional skinny dip, and ice skating rink (at the largest big enough for four people to skate *single file*). To us it was the best. Many a frog and butterfly were captured and studied. At night the darkened sky was lit with fireflies by the thousands and sounds of crickets and frogs filled the night air.

At our house I slept in a room with three brothers. In those days sharing a bed was common. I watched my four brothers grow, drive their first cars, complete school, marry, have children. Sometime later I would be an uncle to 22 nieces and nephews!

My mind comes into focus. I decide to try and look where I remembered the "headwater" for Sneak-a-Leak-Creek flowed. Today, there is housing, housing, and more housing. There are now over fifteen houses on West Clark Road. A patch of woods is where we

*continued on page 15*

# 126 North Huron Street – Gone but Not Forgotten

By James Mann

Beginning in 1913 the City of Ypsilanti acquired the land that is now Riverside Park piece by piece until it was one stretch of land running from Cross Street to Michigan Avenue. However, before the entire stretch of land was acquired it was necessary for the city to provide ways for people to enter the park without crossing private property. For this reason, one of the historic houses of the city was demolished to provide such an entrance. This entrance can still be seen, between the Ladies Library building at 130 North Huron and St. Luke's Church at 120 North Huron Street.

*"Agreement was reached today between B. F. Schumacher, receiver for the First National Bank, and representatives of the city for the purchase of the Wardle property on North Huron Street next to the Public Library as an entrance to Huron Park," reported The Ypsilanti Daily Press of Wednesday, June 26, 1935. "The city is purchasing the property," continued the account, "at a cost of \$1,975 and is selling the house to a wrecker from Flint for \$75. Wrecking of the house began this*

*morning under the supervision of Ernest M. Maddux, sanitary inspector."*

*"During the past year," noted the account, "Mr. Maddux has cleaned up the river bank from Edison Park (as the Michigan Avenue end was known) to the Public Library and has removed several dilapidated buildings to make the park a beauty spot."*

*The Ypsilanti Daily Press gave a history of the ownership of the property on Thursday, July 18, 1935, beginning with Romaine La Chambre, who was granted a patent by the United States on June 1, 1811. This was part of the original plat, French Claim 391. This became the property of Gabriel Godfroy and his wife Monique in 1824, then it belonged to Salmon Champion in April 18, 1829, then Charles W. Lane and his wife Wealthy Ann purchased the property in 1845. Isaac N. Conklin owned it in 1855, as did Cornelius Cornwell on April 6, 1868, and by his wife Eliza D. Cornwell on November 18, 1876. "Whether the house*  
*continued on page 11*



*Mrs. Harrison Fairchild shown in front of the house at 126 North Huron Street in 1908.*

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# The Chautauqua Movement – More of the Story

By Jack Minzey

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I greatly enjoyed the article about the Chautauqua Movement called “Enlightened Ypsilanti” by Derek Spinei which appeared in the Spring, 2010 issue of the **Ypsilanti Gleanings**. The story took me back to one of my personal experiences which is a story I have never told, and only a few people are aware that it happened.

In 1966, I was employed by John Porter, Associate Superintendent of Public Instruction in Michigan, as Supervisor of Higher Education for the State of Michigan. Among my job responsibilities was overseeing veterans programs at Michigan Colleges, creation of a higher education directory, monitoring of the private trade schools in Michigan and supervising the private colleges and universities in the state.

One of my functions was to check on institutions from outside the State of Michigan which were not legitimate operations and which would advertise false degrees and programs to our citizens. These groups would come to Michigan on weekends or for other short periods of time, often establish themselves in hotel rooms and promise people a degree for a limited amount of effort. The exchange was a nice sounding degree for a substantial amount of money. In many cases, they did not even come to the state, but allowed clients to obtain a degree through the mail. I was to check on the legitimacy of these operations and to turn violators over to the Attorney General for prosecution.

My main duty was to monitor Michigan Institutions of Higher Education to ascertain that they were operating within the limits of their state charter. The interesting fact about private higher education in Michigan is that each institution is given a charter under the corporate laws of the state, and they are bound by the mandates of that charter. In a few cases, such as the Detroit School of Music, the charter was broad based and actually permitted that institution to offer any and all degrees which they desired to give. For the vast number of institutions, however, they were limited in their programs and degrees by the wording of their

charters. It was my role to review all of these charters and to visit each of the private state institutions of higher education to assure that they were in compliance with their charter.

For the majority of instances, the review and visit were simply a formality and a public relations venture. After each visit, I would write a letter to the president and the trustees of each visited institution, congratulating them on their program and their institutions contribution to the people of the state of Michigan. On occasion, I did have institutions which wanted to expand or change their charter. In these cases, they were required to submit a proposal dealing with how they wanted their charter altered. This was reviewed by my staff and then a visitation was arranged. The visitation consisted of a three day visit by a group of recognized experts related to the proposed changes. The visitation committee would include curricula specialists, facility experts, administrators in higher education and library personnel. Following the visit, the visitation team would evaluate each aspect of the visit in writing and would submit their recommendation. This recommendation was then taken to the State Board of Education for approval. This entire process usually took at least a year to achieve.

During my tenure in this position, there were two occasions in which I discovered institutions which were violating their charter. One of these was Cleary College. Though absolutely unintentional, Cleary was awarding graduate degrees which had not been a part of their original charter. When this was called to the attention of the officials at Cleary, they immediately started the process to request a change in their charter. This was accomplished and approved by the State Board.

The other institution in violation was Bayview College. As Mr. Spinei points out in his article, the Chautauqua movement had found its way to the Bayview Colony in Petoskey, Michigan through the efforts of the Mayor of Ypsilanti, Mr. Watson Snyder. What appears to have happened is that after a few years of operation, there was a request by people who attended that Chautauqua for college credit. In order to achieve this, the leaders at Bayview asked Albion College, which had a Methodist affiliation, to grant credit from their institution. Albion College agreed, and it thus became possible to not only enjoy the programs at Bayview, but to get college credits for doing so.

Somewhere along the way, Albion College decided to no longer honor this affiliation. It is not clear when this happened, but for some reason, Albion withdrew from this arrangement. The leadership at Bayview then decided to create their own college and award their own college credits. They created Bayview College and somehow got it listed as a legitimate college in the Michigan Directory of Higher Education. They then created their own method of providing transcripts and for a number of years, functioned as a legal Michigan College, operating without a state charter.

When I visited them in 1967, they were made aware of the problem. Naturally, this was an issue of great concern since they had been operating in this fashion for a number of years. They were given the same options as were required under the law. They could prepare a proposal and go through an evaluation which could lead to a legitimate charter, or they could simply end the awarding of college credits. At that time, they opted to end their college designation.

It was unfortunate that their story had a negative ending. They had operated with the best of intentions and really had been unaware of the illegality of their actions. However, the procedure for organizing and operating a credit and degree granting institution in Michigan has assured the citizens of Michigan of the legitimacy of their degrees in this state and protected them from possible fraudulent operations of unprofessional and meaningless programs and degrees. ■

*(Jack Minzey is a retired administrator and professor from Eastern Michigan University and is a member of the YHS Endowment Fund Advisory Board.)*



# Cemeteries, Kaiser-Frazers, a Japanese Opera and More

By Maureen Kerwin



A photo from 1951 showing the first Henry J automobile sold in Ypsilanti. The vehicle was sold to Mellencamp's Clothing Store (located at 122 West Michigan Avenue from 1907 to 1984) by the Norris Motors Kaiser-Frazier dealership (334 East Michigan Avenue). Pictured are William D. Stevens and Collin F. Bonner, owners of Mellencamp's.



According to this photograph, the members of the Knights of Pythias civic organization were the Michigan State Champions in 1923. Pictured are Hart, Hand, McGraw, van DeWalker, Tripp, Shaibly, Elsworth, Warner, Smith, Geer, Millage, Tenny, Boutell, Burrell, Pierce, Hamond, and Williams.

Have you seen the Ypsilanti Historical Society's Digital Photo Archives? It is an online collection of approximately 400 digitized photographs documenting a wide range of subjects and time periods in Ypsilanti history. If you have browsed it before, the collection was nearly doubled this spring so there is more to see! You can access the collection through the YHS's website on the "Publications" page. Each image has a description, subject terms, and additional information attached to it. The collection can be searched or browsed by key words.

The Digital Photo Archives project started in 2000 and is a collaboration between the Ypsilanti Historical Society and the Digital Library Production Service at the University of Michigan. The photographs are selected from the archives, researched, scanned, and entered into a database by the YHS; the DLPS provides the web infrastructure that makes the collection accessible online.

The collection is very diverse. There are photographs from as early as the 1870s and as late as the 1990s; they are of cemeteries, churches, cars, people, parades, buildings, sports teams, and more. There is even a photograph of a Japanese opera production from circa 1900! Many of the photographs are related to the automobile industry such as the picture showing the first Henry J automobile sold in Ypsilanti to Mellencamp's Clothing Store.

Other photographs are related to the many civic organizations that have existed in Ypsilanti over the years. According to one photograph the Ypsilanti Knights of Pythias civic organization were "Michigan State Champions" in 1923. We are not certain what the competition involved but it may have involved costumes.

Whatever interests you about Ypsilanti history, there is certain to be something for you in this collection. If you have questions about the Digital Photo Archives project you may contact me (mkkerwin@gmail.com) or Al Rudisill (al@rudisill.ws). ■

(Maureen Kerwin is a student at the University of Michigan and served as an Intern in the YHS Archives working on the Photo Archive project.)

# Polio, Iron Lungs, Cereal, and K-Rations - The Life of Lamar Kishlar

By George Ridenour

In Ypsilanti on September 25, 1894 a boy named Lamar Morey Kishlar was born to one William Lamar Kishlar and wife Alice (Morey). His father was a storekeeper and mother was a housewife. He had one sister named Ellen. Lamar attended local Ypsilanti schools. He graduated in 1913 from Ypsilanti High School. His yearbook prophecy stated: *"Lamar, I hail as a great electrical engineer of the very near future. His course through the University will be crowned with glory"* Even his yearbook photo is captioned *"Business Manager with a business head."*

He registered for the draft on June 5, 1917 indicating that he lived on South Washington Street in Ypsilanti. He was single, medium height, with brown hair and brown eyes. He listed his occupation as a student at the University of Michigan. Lamar graduated from

the University of Michigan later in 1917. Upon graduation, having received a degree in Engineering, Lamar joined the Aviation Force of the United States Navy. This was at a time when Navy pilots flew wooden planes with cloth wings. He saw active service from 1917-1919 and was an instructor in Aviation Engineers School at Columbia and the Aviation School at Great Lakes. He, as well as his classmates, shot one of the first naval aviation training films. He went on to develop one of the first electric starters for aviation engines.

After a three year stint at another company he joined the Ralston Purina Company of St. Louis, Missouri in 1922. He now lived at 312 Planthurst Road in Webster Groves, Missouri. He eventually married Carolyn Nettleship and they had a son they named Lamar, Jr. He was assigned to the research and development area



*Lamar Kishlar was born in Ypsilanti in 1894 and later became well known for his work with cooking oils, soybeans and support equipment for the iron lung. He was named President of the American Oil Chemists' Society in 1943.*

and in 1934 became Manager of Research. He took a great deal of interest in soybeans and cottonseed processing.

Later, in 1941 he was awarded the professional degree in engineering from University of Michigan. He continued on with Ralston Purina until his retirement in January, 1960. Lamar was recognized as an inventor. One interesting patent application was for the "Process for Preparing Wheat Cereal." He had many other patents to his credit involving, soybeans, wheat cereal, batteries, and equipment for iron lungs.

Lamar was well known in the St. Louis area and gained national recognition and the deep thanks of a grateful American public for his many inventions. The following information is from: 1) The A.O.C.S. Journal, June, 1941 (Vol. 34); 2) Outtakes from the history of AOCS INFORM, November, 2009; 3) Ypsilanti Press (undated) Polio Victims Helped by Gadgets Invented by Former Ypsilantian; and 4) Ypsilanti Press, June, 1964 - obituary of Lamar Kishlar.

*Polio was a dreaded name and disease striking thousands in the United States. Some lived and recovered, others died, and others suffered (even today) the effects of this disease which ravaged our nation during the 1950's. Lamar suffered when his daughter-in-law and an unborn child*



*Kishlar rigged up a portable lung device that could be used in an ambulance when transporting patients.*

died from polio and complications. At age 25 his son Lamar Jr. was in August, 1952 stricken with paralytic polio and was placed in an iron lung. Quoting from the St. Louis Dispatch, December 30, 1960: "One night Bud's iron lung broke down. There was no one in St. Louis we could call to make the necessary repairs. It was a frantic time for me. My son's life was hanging in the balance. Finally, another iron lung was obtained, and I decided right there I would learn how to be a respirator technician."

"Mr. Kishlar studied textbooks on respirators and worked with spares from the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis. In no time he had built up a spare parts department in the basement of his home...and he was getting calls from hospitals and patients, referred by polio centers. He was rather busy as iron lungs were breaking down constantly. He even repaired motor controllers for iron lungs. When one of the patients was moved to his home Kishlar rigged up a series of automobile batteries in a portable frame for use in an ambulance from the hospital to a plane to Boston and again from the Boston airport in the ambulance to the patient's home."

"For his own son, he invented and built an unusual breathing device, which Bud used when he was out of his portable respirator. He used a commercial vacuum cleaner which was then pulled around on steel skids. He took the motor out and re-installed it upside down so it would push AIR OUT rather than pull it in and equipped it with filters. With flexible rubber tubing, taken from masks of coal miners, and plastic tubing he directed the air to Bud's bed. This was then attached to a cigarette holder

which was clamped to Bud's mouth."

"He made an aluminum frame in which he suspended an electric typewriter, which Bud used by means of a mouth stick to strike the keys. One of his most valuable tools was a mechanic's stethoscope, by which he listened to the bearings of a respirator to make sure they are properly lubricated." He was a member of the National Polio Foundation and did not charge for any of his services or calls. The foundation held the rights to the patents.

"Mr. Kishlar, working with cooking oils and with an interest in soybeans and other products is credited with being a co-originator of the infamous K-rations used in World War II. Although searching through the literature there are others who are credited with inventing these types of rations. Legend has it that K, the initial of his last name, was used to designate the rations."

One evening in June, 1964 he had driven his grandson and friends to a school affair. He turned the key in the car and asked "where shall we go for treats?" He slumped over and died. His funeral and burial were in Missouri. He was survived by his wife, his son Lamar Jr. and a 13 year old grandson named James B.

Although little known to many of us, a small bespectacled man, born in Ypsilanti, rose to the occasion and like the Biblical traveler stopped along the road of life and "made a difference." ■

*(George Ridenour is an historian, researcher and regular volunteer in the YHS Archives and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)*



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**126 North Huron Street –  
Gone but Not Forgotten –  
continued from page 7**

was built by Mr. Cornwell or by the Lanes or an earlier owner in not revealed by the abstract," noted *The Ypsilanti Daily Press*.

"Mrs. Jane T. Finley acquired the place February 10, 1883; she and her husband, Florus Finley, and their sons Mark and John are well-remembered Ypsilanti People," reported the account. The house was sold by Mrs. Finley to Harrison Fairchild and his wife Margaret on February 26, 1902. The property was

left to Margaret by her husband. Then on March 20, 1916, it was acquired by Waldo Wardle. After that, the house was the property of the banks. "In wrecking the house," the account noted, "the nails were found to be such as blacksmiths made in early times by hand. They were irregular in length and blunt at the ends." "The ultimate price of \$75 realized from this house," concluded the account, "is in strong contrast to the historical and architectural importance it once possessed." ■

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

# An Old Girl Comes Home

By Lyle McDermott

Near the end of 2009 I was scanning the listings of a large firearms auction that was going to be held in Marshall, Michigan. I was looking for antique Winchesters and Colt single action revolvers. Halfway through the list, an offering that I normally would not have much interest in jumped off the page. It was an 1850's cap and ball, half stock, "Plains Rifle" (long range hunting rifle). It was a black powder muzzle loader with a rifled 34" Heavy octagon barrel in .44 caliber with a buckhorn style open sight with eight adjustments for distance. It was marked B.D. Schofield - Ypsilanti in two locations; one on the top of the barrel (see photo) and one on the lock face in front of the hammer. That's when my research began...

The first step was finding the earliest Ypsilanti city directory in the archives collection at the Ypsilanti Historical Museum. The 1860-61 Directory lists only a Benjamin D. Schofield, 33 years old, residing on "the north side of East Cross Street/gunsmith. The 1860 US Census lists: Ward 4 Ypsilanti. In 1860 there wasn't home delivery of mail so house numbers were non-existent. It's possible his shop could have been on the North side of the street in Depot town with living quarters upstairs or a house up East Cross with a shop out back.

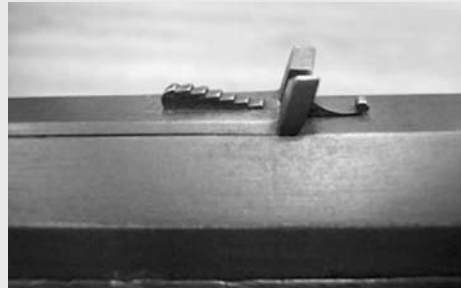
I was lucky enough at the auction to snag the "old girl" for a fair price when the man bidding against me quit just before I did. Thank goodness he did. It would have been difficult to let a gun made in Ypsilanti in the 1850's go to another bidder.

When I returned to the archives I proudly showed my colleagues my new find. I set about, after photographing the gun, to find out more about Benjamin David Schofield. I discovered that he was born in 1827 in Ohio, married one Sarah (Thayer) in 1848 in Ypsilanti. He lived and worked in Ypsilanti until sometime in early 1861 when he moved to Marshall, Michigan with his wife and three children.

Here the story starts getting very interesting. Information from the 1880 edition of *Michigan in the Civil War* by J. Robertson



*The Benjamin Schofield rifle is a black powder muzzle loader with a rifled 34" Heavy octagon barrel in .44 caliber.*



*The rifle has a buckhorn style open sight with eight adjustments for distance.*



*The B.D. Schofield - Ypsilanti markings are in two locations on the rifle, one on the top of the barrel and one on the lock face in front of the hammer.*

indicates that "... On August 21, 1861 Benjamin D. Schofield was mustered into Company "C" First Regiment of Berdan's Sharpshooters... Michigan was to raise three companies, of 100 men each, for the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment... In the selection of its membership it underwent a most severe test of marksmanship. The result of this test was the selection of a hundred of the best marksmen in Michigan. The company was armed with rifles chosen by each member respectively, being of various makes and sizes of the common hunting rifle in use in the west at the time.

The announcement circulated at the time, calling for enlistments, had one major requirement; "No man would be enlisted who could not put ten bullets in succession within five inches from the center at a distance of six hundred feet from rest or three hundred feet offhand (standing with no support)." The potential recruit was required to fire with his own open sight rifle, ten consecutive rounds, reloading as fast as possible, at two targets. A contestant missing the targets or averaging more than 5" from the center was disqualified.

Those men who passed the rigorous test were organized in Detroit and later nationalized in late September, 1861 in Washington, D. C. Company "C" was the 1st company of the 1st Regiment to be organized and first into combat. The 1st and 2nd Regiments of the U.S. Sharpshooters were known as Berdan's

Sharpshooters because Colonel Hirman Berdan (the country's best marksman for the previous fifteen years) received permission from congress to form these regiments. They were intended to be used as skirmish troops and act individually and in groups to disrupt enemy formations, and to eliminate artillery crews and officers. They were to be paid higher wages, wear a distinctive Green uniform, and be paid for their own weapons which they brought with them. They enlisted for three years and the only promise to be kept was the green uniforms! So much for government promises! (Today, the green uniform, which is very, very rare, would net a seller many thousands of dollars!) Company "C" was the first to be mustered out on August 20, 1864. Of the 101 men who originally enlisted only six were present at the final muster.

The Sharpshooters' first action was a two company (Company "C" and Company "E") skirmish at Lewisville, Virginia on the 27th of September 1861, against enemy foragers. From then on they claimed participation in 65 actions and battles, especially distinguishing themselves at South Mountain, Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. They were also at Little Roundtop with the boys from Maine.

After the War Benjamin Schofield returned to Marshall, Michigan and in 1870 lived northeast of Marshall. In 1880 he and his

wife were living in Handy, Livingston County, Michigan and that same year he and his wife moved to Fargo, Dakota Territory. In Fargo he opened a gun shop and sporting goods business. He joined the local GAR (Grand Army of the Republic, John F. Reynolds Lodge #5 for veterans of the Civil War). Benjamin died in Fargo in 1906. His son Charles stayed near Marshall, Michigan.

The gun is speculated to have traveled with him to qualify and then for the first few months of the Civil War. This gun meets all the qualifications to have been used by Benjamin for qualification and use until the breech loading Sharps

Rifles, specially made to Berdand's specifications, could be procured. Having firearms of different calibers made for a supply nightmare until an official firearm was issued.

It is probable this rifle was used personally by Benjamin for a number of years before the War. One son remained in the Marshall area after 1880 so the surfacing of this firearm in the Marshall area leaves the door open that the firearm belonged to and was used personally by Benjamin David Schofield.

Al Rudisill recently visited family members in *continued on page 26*

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mcomazzi@manchester-associates.com  
nmackmiller@manchester-associates.com



Research revealed that Benjamin Schofield is buried in Riverside Cemetery in Fargo, North Dakota.



Above: The search for Benjamin's grave at first resulted in finding only a "Schofield" family stone.

Top Right: After prodding several locations around the "Schofield" family stone, Benjamin's gravestone was located under four inches of sod.

Right: The gravestone for Benjamin's wife Sarah was also located nearby, also covered by four inches of sod.



# The First of August Celebration

By James Mann

August is the only month in which the United States does not have a holiday, an empty time between the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and Labor Day. This was not always the case, as for many years the African-American population of the nation celebrated the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation on August first. The celebration in Ypsilanti in 1886 may have been typical of the holiday. That year the first of August was celebrated on Monday, August second. The Michigan Mutual Benevolent Society and the Good Samaritans joined with the committee in charge to plan a gala day.

That morning visitors from neighboring towns arrived on every train, although not in any great numbers. Most of the visitors came from Ann Arbor and Jackson, with a few coming from Toledo. The procession formed at 10:00 am at the corner of Adams and Congress, now Michigan Avenue. The procession marched down Michigan Avenue and then up River Street to the railroad depot at Cross and River, meeting trains from both ways. The procession then formed on Cross Street and marched to Huron Street, then to Michigan Avenue, and then to the Fair Grounds, now Recreation Park, where the celebration was held.

*"The notable feature of the procession was the wagon of girls, each dressed in white, wearing the red, white and blue. The Goddess of Liberty sat at the pinnacle of the pyramid shaped wagon. Each wore the name of some state. The procession was headed by the Dexter Juvenile Band, who furnished the music for the occasion. The boys gave good satisfaction,"* noted the Ypsilanti Commercial of Friday, August 6, 1886.

On arrival at the Fair Grounds dinner was served. The program was opened with music and then a prayer was offered. Ypsilanti Mayor Cornwell delivered an address of welcome, which was followed with an address by Congressman Allen. *"His remarks were very appropriate for the occasion, giving a review of the manner in which the great sin of slavery was introduced and rooted out. He said that colored people are now a part and parcel of this great Republic, and as such should be protected in their rights,"* reported the Commercial.

An H. P. Jabobs of Natchez, Mississippi, who was a former slave, and had lived in Ypsilanti for some years, gave an address of some length. *"He spoke of the brave record of the colored people, showing that they were as brave as any*



*race of men 'that walked on two legs.' We hear a good deal about "how to solve the ...problem." I will tell you how: "let him alone." You will see him filling the highest positions in the U.S. Let him work that out himself."*

The celebration ended with a ball game and foot races. The ball game between Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti teams ended in quite a wrangle. *"Dissatisfaction with the umpire's decision caused it. The game was stopped,"* noted the account. Foot races were run, including the fifty yard race, and the 100 yard race. *"The other races failed to come off, there being no entries."* ■

*(James Mann is a local historian, storyteller and author. His books include "Ypsilanti: A History in Pictures," "City of Ypsilanti Fire Department 100 Years," and "Our Heritage: Down by the Depot in Ypsilanti," co-authored with Tom Dodd.)*

## News from the Fletcher-White Archives

By Gerry Pety

Where has the year gone! Seems like it was just April when we had a very nice book signing with our own Laura Bien. The program she gave turned out to be extremely interesting and informative as to how she finds all that interesting "stuff" we all see in her writings, yet we all miss. Now we know where she gets the stories that seem to elude amateur story tellers.

James Mann, our local historian, promises us his next book will be published soon and it will also be a "bestseller." Really, it should be in the Achieves and Museum bookstores this fall, just in time for inclusion on your holiday shopping list.

The YHS Museum and Archives received some real treasures recently when the EMU Archives turned over their Florence S. Babbitt Collection on permanent loan to the Society. Some of the artifacts in-

cluded in the collection are a brass whale oil lamp, sewing machine, brick oven shovel, copper bed warming pan, and framed mirror. As we explore this new collection on permanent loan from EMU, expect several future Gleanings articles based on its content.

I have a request for the YHS membership, our patrons, and anyone else reading this publication. We have received inquiries from a number of people who are trying to find pictures of Willow Run Village of Bomber Village to reconstruct the streetscape of the downtown section during and shortly after World War II. Presently, we have almost no pictures of the commercial district. There were several stores, a bowling alley, and a church. It has now been 50 years since most of the village was demolished for redevelopment and time is running out to capture these scarce images. We would love the opportunity to make digital copies of any photos you might have or preserve them should you wish to donate them to the YHS Archives. Please contact the archives for specific information. Help us to preserve an important part of Ypsilanti's past! ■

*(Gerry Pety is Director of the Fletcher-White Archives and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)*

# Scraps of History from the Scrap Heap

By Peter Fletcher

1. At the inauguration of President George H. W. Bush on January 20, 1989 why did the retired President of the French Chamber of Commerce become quite excited on meeting a young man from Ypsilanti?
2. Why was there a community chuckle when Eastern Michigan University named a new classroom building Pray-Harrod?
3. Under what circumstances did a current Ypsilanti Township Trustee meet President Gerald Ford when he visited this area during his brief tenure as our Chief Executive?
4. What were the Ypsilanti Braves called after the Ypsilanti High School Class of 1950 had five valedictorians?
5. What situation put into question the construction of the Key Bank building at 301 West Michigan Avenue?
6. Contrary to his customary "hands-off" policy, which two men did Governor William G. Milliken actively promote to become President of Eastern Michigan University?
7. What was the "Save the Tower" campaign all about among young male students at the Michigan State Normal College?
8. How did a young teenage boy from Ypsilanti named Cyril Tyler gain fleeting national fame?
9. Which local business had a connection with Playboy Magazine that horrified the proper old ladies of town?
10. How many of the items rationed or in short supply during World War II can you name?
11. Why is it that even though World War II ended on August 14, 1945 that no automobiles or appliances are labeled as 1945 models?
12. What is the most overlooked fact about Ypsilanti's significant role in World War II?
13. Who was the Ypsilanti business man who was cited for driving his car down the middle of the road and what was his novel but unsuccessful defense?
14. Who was the hero from World War II who in 1951 spoke on the steps of the Ypsilanti City Hall at 300 North Huron Street and what was the reason for him being there?
15. Who was the preacher that an Ypsilanti Grade School was named for that performed the wedding ceremony for a woman for whom another such school was named?
16. Who was the prominent local man whose 90<sup>th</sup> birthday was marked by 90 different Ypsilanti High School students walking to his nearby home each delivering a single red rose?
17. Name the small county schools that were combined with and absorbed by the Ypsilanti Public Schools.
18. Name the three bus lines that served Ypsilanti following the Interurban of the 1920's.
19. Why was Roosevelt High School established on the Michigan State Normal College campus?
20. With its Greek heritage how did Ypsilanti play a prominent role in pizza becoming popular in America?

*(Peter Fletcher is the President of the Credit Bureau of Ypsilanti and is widely known for his inspirational speeches.)*

Turn to page 26 of this issue to check your answers.

## On the Banks of Sneak-a-Leak-Creek – *continued from page 6*

had talks, and explored the attic of Gerald Everett. In the attic there were many papers, letters, and books. Gerald would tell us of relatives who studied Egyptian hieroglyphics and he gave me two letters from the early 1800's which I have today. One letter tells of how it is thought that as one travels south "it gets warmer and warmer." The Gerald Everett house is gone and a jungle of trees now invades the land where this home stood. Mr. Everett was a grand old man and often Mom would take him pies and holiday treats.

I drive down the road looking to find Sneak-a-Leak-Creek. Finally, after searching for some time with the sound of horns in the background, the wind rushing by, and avoiding countless speeding cars I see a place in the fence, pushed in, filled with branches and full of trash blown from the road. In a burst of reflected sunlight I see the slow meandering water of Sneak-a-Leak-Creek! I can only stare with disappointment and am overcome with disappointment that wells into a sigh. A jewel, a remembrance of days gone, boyhood adventures where the creek, fields, and Highland cemetery provided relief from problems at home, adventures, an appreciation of the beauty of nature, and even today a love of water (from showers to oceans).

When I was young I could be anyone, anywhere, and live free! I could hide in and smell the earthiness of cornfields (no one could see me) or lie beside wheat and eat the kernels. I could gather shafts of straw, mix dishwashing soap and blow bubbles. I could sit on hot summer days, when allowed, and share wash-tubs with the other kids pretending it was a pool. To escape the heat we would sit under the weeping willow tree in the front yard.

Ok, you are probably wondering how did the creek (which really had no name that we ever knew) get the name Sneak-a-Leak-Creek? Well, like all good stories "You Decide." Those fond memories filled with colors, smells, and adventures on the banks of "Sneak-a-Leak-Creek" will be with me forever. ■

*(George Ridenour is an historian, researcher and volunteer in the YHS Archives and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)*

## The Florence Babbitt Collection – *continued from back page*

and Nancy Lewis Smalley. In 1852 the Smalleys with their small daughter and son came to Ypsilanti and became neighbors of Doctor and Mrs. John Winthrop Babbitt who lived at 38 North River Street. Their son “Will” Babbitt, twelve years older than Florence was sometimes her “baby sitter.”

During the Civil War Mortimore Smalley enlisted in the Twenty Seventh Michigan Infantry and Florence’s younger brother Albertus, accompanied his father as a drummer boy. Albertus is said to have been Michigan’s youngest drummer boy. After the war, the Smalleys received six hundred acres of land near Caseville, Michigan from the government and moved to that area.

Florence Babbitt graduated from the Union School and attended the Ypsilanti Seminary.

In August of 1866 Florence married John Willard Babbitt (then a young lawyer and signing himself more formally J. Willard Babbitt). They were married in Port Huron but came to Ypsilanti to live and after a few years they bought what was known as “the oldest

house in Ypsilanti” and had the house moved to the southeast corner of South Huron and Race Streets (the house situated at 301 South Huron was demolished in 1935).

An article in the Ypsilanti Press of July 4, 1930 reveals quite a good deal about the house. “*The house itself is rich in Ypsilanti history, having been built by the Larzelere family in the Larzelere and Post addition. Back of the barn, which is now torn down, may still be seen the Old Indian Council tree about which the Indians use to gather before the house was built. The tree, now fallen, for many years was a landmark for Ypsilanti. Behind the house also is a large mulberry patch which was planted by the early owners of the house. They had planned to start a silk industry in Ypsilanti. The house, a twelve room structure, which has been in the Babbitt family for fifty-eight years, has been unoccupied for the last twenty-eight. Mrs. Babbitt, and inveterate collector of antiques, had during the last few decades stored many of her possessions in the building so that now it is a veritable museum full of surprises.*”

One of Mrs. Babbitt’s daughters, Nan Babbitt Church, said she always wondered if the additions made to the house were to accommodate the growing collections or the growing family of four daughters.

Of her mother, Mrs. Church also said, “... long before anyone ever thought of collecting anything American she was the bane of her family with her search for the interesting and beautiful being produced here. People thought of her not too bright and her family would groan when the phaeton would stop at the house and she would climb out with her paper wrapped bundles.”

Mrs. Babbitt became acquainted with thousands of attics and pantries in Michigan. She used to attend Art Loans which were held in the Old Detroit Art Gallery on Jefferson Avenue, and she finally convinced the curator that there was beauty in other things besides painting and statuary and wore down his resistance so that he gave her permission to put on an exhibit of fifty of her finest old plates. Everyone was surprisingly interested in this collection and it was then that Mr. Griffith, the curator, saw how sensible it would be for the Museum to have a room devoted to early American things. However, even though convinced he refused to act, saying “no time, no money,” but he told Mrs. Babbitt she could arrange the exhibit herself. Her answer was that she would furnish the articles if he but supply the room. As she was on very friendly terms with many of the old families of Detroit, she set about the task of getting them to part with their precious “keep-sakes”



*Above: This picture is in the YHS Archives and the writing on the back indicates it is a Babbitt Collection display at the Kent County Museum in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The date is unknown.*

*Right: The historical costume worn by Florence Babbitt in 1923 is now on display in the YHS Museum.*





for what was to be the American Wing of the Detroit Museum.

By 1901 her collections were enormous. She had in her possession approximately 3,000 pieces of old china, 1,500 trays, a bushel basket full of glass cup plates, furniture, old American and English silver, brasses, pewter, lamps, samplers, etc. But in that year of 1901 Judge Babbitt died, and it became necessary for her to earn her own way in life, so she made antiques her business as well as her hobby. Advertisements similar to the following appeared in local papers around the state: *"Ypsilantian, October 30, 1902 – Mrs Florence S. Babbitt has for sale a solid mahogany four-post bedstead, with tester, over one hundred years old. A genuine bargain."*

Florence Babbitt had always been interested in the career of Lewis Cass, territorial governor of Michigan from 1813 to 1831 and knew that he too, in his day may have been a "collector" and in fact had started, "A Society for the Preservation of Maps and Documents of Early Michigan" in 1828, and organization later to be known as "The Historical Society of Michigan." An off-shoot from this organization was the Michigan Pioneer and Michigan Historical Commission, which built up a collection of documents. Florence Babbitt approached the men who headed the Pioneer and Historical Commission and presented to them the idea of preserving the household arts of Michigan. To induce them to carry out this idea she offered 3,000 dishes at \$1.00 each.

*"When you consider that such articles included were Lowestoft helmets, pitchers, Toby jugs, etc. you can see she made a sacrifice to the idea that Michigan, her beloved state, should preserve these things. She was made official collector for the State Society and with gifts of lamps, brass, pewter and Bennington ware collections, the State Museum at Lansing was started."* So her daughter, Nan Babbitt Church has written.

Also according to a copy of another agreement, dated January 1906, she sold the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society 1,000 pieces of Pioneer pottery for \$2,500. In the files at the Ypsilanti Museum there is also an old invitation which reads: *"Mrs. Florence S. Babbitt invites the members of the Grand Chapter of O.E.S. of Michigan to visit the Museum of the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society*

*located in the Capital at Lansing, Tuesday afternoon from four to six October ninth, nineteen hundred six, where is on exhibition her collection of old china and other relics gathered from the Pioneers of Michigan."*

So great was Florence Babbitt's love of the past and joy of collecting she wanted to share this love with everybody. There is a perfectly charming story about her endeavor to instill in the very young this appreciation. It is best told as it was written for the Detroit Free Press on December 29, 1907: ***"Aged Woman Stood in Rain to Give Away Toys of Years Ago – Mrs. Florence S. Babbitt, whose collection of Child playthings is second to King Edward's, was Santa Claus at Ypsilanti. Christmas day has come and gone, and with it the street Santa Clauses, with their long flowing beards and their red robes; Santas whose figures are familiar to all those who live in the larger and to many who live in the smaller cities, but it remained for one woman to this year enact the role of the street Santa Claus and appear upon the streets of Ypsilanti and give presents to all children between the ages of five and eight who would hand her a slip of paper containing their names and ages. This woman was Mrs. Florence S. Babbitt, widow of the late Judge J. Willard Babbitt, and known throughout the United States as the greatest collector of children's toys over sixty years of age. Six hundred tiny parcels wrapped in red paper, white paper and blue paper and filling four bushel baskets, were distributed upon the streets, Mrs. Babbitt receiving only a slip of paper containing the recipient's name and age, and the child was made happy. Each parcel contained a tiny china toy, of a kind quite familiar to every family, which years ago was able to afford a mantel or clock shelf, for the toys distributed were imported into this country from England before the Civil War and would probably never have been distributed had it not been that Mrs. Babbitt is able to "smell a child's toy about five miles away," for it was upon one of her collecting expeditions that these toys were found and purchased for distribution among the children of her home city. The afternoons of two-days, December 23 and 24, were given to the distribution of these gifts, and from the hours of three to five each day Mrs. Babbitt stood in front of one of the local stores, braving nasty damp air and rain and the sloppy condition of the street with its half melted snow, to carry out her cherished wish. One hundred and twenty-eight gifts were disposed of the first hour of the 23<sup>rd</sup>, during which time a slow drizzling rain continued.***  
*continued on page 18*

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## The Florence Babbitt Collection – *continued from page 17*

Many grown folks appeared with the children in that hour, and not a few without. Those who appeared without hoped it would be a "nice day tomorrow, and we will send our Harold or Josephine down," while those who accompanied their children said it was "such a nasty day for our children to be out." Only a few thought of the disagreeable day it was for an elderly woman to stand in the rain, that she might distribute Christmas gifts to their children.

Over seven hundred items from her toy collection were given to the Kent County Museum in Grand Rapids...

It was only natural that when Henry Ford started collecting early in the nineteen hundreds that he contacted Mrs. Babbitt and came to her many times to consult with her. He bought many treasures from her, including the largest collection of old jewelry in this country. When he bought the house in which he was born and lived in as a boy he asked her to refurnish it. Mrs. Church has said, "It was rather a difficult task but to her an interesting one for he did not want beautiful pieces but replicas of the pieces he well remembered. I remember momma combed the country before she could find an old 'Jewett' stove like the one in the Ford kitchen."

By this time so great was Mrs. Babbitt's fame as an authority of early American scene that William A. Brady, well known theatrical producer, sought her out in 1913 to stage the scenes for the first production of *Little Women*.

She also aided the staff of the Chicago Art Institute in starting an American Wing. Housed there is the Florence S. Babbitt collection of colonial coverlets, to which the Detroit Journal in a June 1917 article paid its respects: "The famous collection of thirty woven coverlets, a species of domestic industrial handicraft of early days of the last century that was gathered from the many notable pioneer families in Michigan by Mrs. Florence S. Babbitt, the well known antiquarian collector of this city, has been purchased by Rev. Dr. Frank Gunsaulus, of Chicago, and presented to the Chicago Art Institute. The Chicago Institute may well exult in thus securing the finest collection of this kind of handicraft in

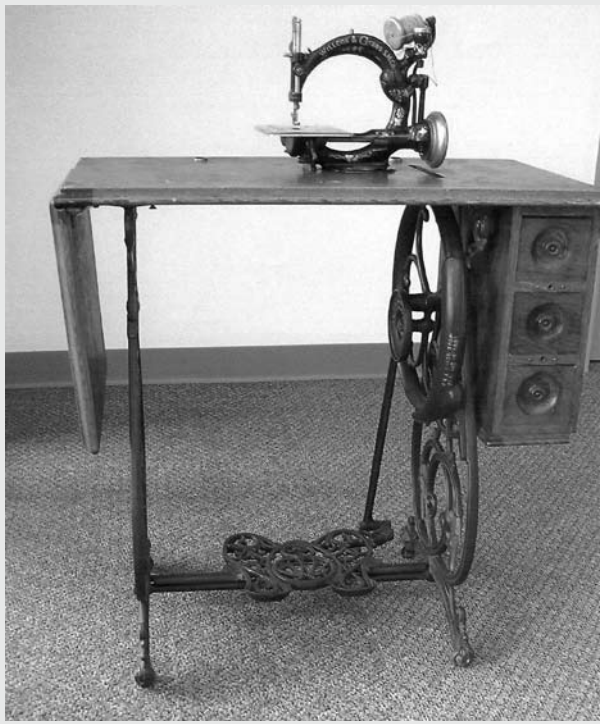
existence. The coverlets all have the date and name of their maker woven into them, and two, the Lafayette coverlet of 1824 and the Washington coverlet of 1831, are considered especially treasures by authorities on handicraft."

The Chicago Art Institute people certainly appreciated Florence Babbitt, and this is shown in the *Institute Newsletter* for October 14, 1922: "There is an old lady living in Ypsilanti, Michigan, who is continually on the look-out for rare pieces of porcelain and earthenware. She has a method of marketing her wares peculiarly her own. Under her skirt, which is full and voluminous, is a petticoat sewed full of pockets. Into these pockets rare articles of bric-a-brac are carried to market. One wonders what might happen if she struck the business side of a banana peel. Some time ago she appeared with two rare specimens of French poodles, about three inches high, made of black basalt. There are only five sets of these in existence. These were quickly snatched up and are now reposing with other objects of black basalt in the *Blanxius Collection*."

And this was not all she did, for her daughter has remembered other cities that were beneficiaries of her technical knowhow, "She also helped establish the antique wing of the museum at Toledo, Ohio and gave generously of her time and collections to Michigan towns that were brave enough and wise enough to start preserving the treasures of their people. Three Oaks, Michigan being one of them," wrote Mrs. Church.

Florence Babbitt became a buyer for the Chicago Art Institute with access into the homes of the very wealthy, either in her capacity as a cataloger or a buyer. In a letter to her daughter written from Chicago in 1923 she told of going one day to inspect the eminent Mrs. Potter Palmer's collection of china and glass. Another day she was invited to the McCormick home where, she reported, "I met twenty ladies all in *Colonial Costume*. . . I was the only one in 'citizen clothes.' After the luncheon we sat around in a circle and I began telling of their grandmother's china cabinets. . . I had expected to talk about thirty minutes, but talked about two hours for I took up each piece each lady had brought and not only told them who made them but also gave a little biographical sketch of each potter, which made it more interesting for them."

From the Cadillac News and Express, June 14, 1906 we learn of yet another Michigan museum which benefited from Mrs. Bab-



*Far Left: This unique pin cushion bird is part of the EMU Babbitt Collection that is now housed in the YHS Museum. It was donated by Phoebe Thompson Miller of Ypsilanti.*

*Left: This Willcox & Gibbs automatic noiseless sewing machine is part of the EMU Babbitt Collection now housed in the YHS Museum.*

bitt...: "A new feature in the historical museum, displayed on this occasion for the first time, is the Florence Babbitt Collection of antique dishes, which was placed last week in especially prepared cases, so far as space would permit, though the wholly inadequate quarters would not allow of the display of more than a moderate part of the collection. There are, all together, between thirteen hundred and fourteen hundred pieces, many of them very ancient patterns, rare and valuable and taken as a whole the collection has few equals in the country. (Note: here is what happened to the "blue and white" plate) The nucleus, the nest egg of the collection, was an old blue plate which Florence Smalley, for that was her maiden name, then ten years old, had admired while at tea with her parents at a neighbor's house, and which was given to her."

It is difficult to say just what this unusual woman did not collect. One of the special things about her collecting was the information she had on every object, its original owner and something about the person, each object carefully marked as to maker (if known), and all such records carefully kept. Her daughter said, "What made my mother different was her insistence and persistence that someday America would be given its proper place in the museums of the country."

As Miss Eileen M. Harrison of the Ypsilanti has written Wednesday January 30, 1963,

"One of the secrets of her success was that when she was on the trail of a particular antique nothing interfered with her getting it." This article has given us a humorous picture of Mrs. Babbitt on one of her collecting expeditions: "On one occasion she had gone to Detroit to find an old three legged iron pot. By the time she found one, she was extremely tired and sat down to wait for a street car. As old ladies will, she soon nodded off. In those days all elderly women looked more or less alike. Rich or poor, they usually wore dark colors and Mrs. Babbitt was no exception. There she sat, a tired old lady asleep in the sun, her hat a little askew. Suddenly she was awakened by an odd clink and discovered that a kindly passerby had dropped a coin into the kettle."

But so sad and so true is Eileen Harrison's conclusion, "She was nationally recognized through "The American Magazine" but like many...another who has carried a cause, her foresight was not fully appreciated in Ypsilanti and she was unsuccessful in her efforts to establish an historical museum here."

It is understood that early in nineteen hundred Florence Babbitt offered the City of Ypsilanti that part of her vast collection whose pieces came originally from homes in Ypsilanti City and Township but the city fathers were unable to find a location to display them. Regarding this, the following article from the city paper dated July 25, 1901 is interesting: "A part of

the collection of pioneer relics in use prior to the dedication of the Normal School at Ypsilanti in 1852 and gathered through the years of research by Mrs. Florence S. Babbitt, is now on view at Normal College. Mrs. Babbitt hopes to continue it in time to make a formal presentation to the school next year at the Normal's fiftieth anniversary."

Some of these articles were kept on display in cases in Old Pierce Hall, but many were packed away for lack of space. When the old building was torn down to make room for the new building over one hundred articles linked to the history of the City of Ypsilanti, Eastern Michigan University (The Old Normal) and nearby areas were found. Mrs. Eugene B. Elliott, wife of the former president of Eastern, found or was told of the boxes of valuable relics. Perhaps Mrs. Elliott thought, "What a shame not to display them some how," and being fortunate enough to have display space, had taken them to her home and opened her own miniature museum in her basement recreation room. The articles were displayed on specially built shelves and each item was marked with a card telling a little bit of its history. Mrs. Elliott got her information about the pieces from Mrs. Babbitt's original itemized list of articles. Since the Elliott's have left Ypsilanti the display has been moved to the rooms of the Home Economics Department in Welch *continued on page 20*

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## The Florence Babbitt Collection – *continued from page 19*

Hall. It is impossible because of space to show the complete collection all at once, so the display is changed monthly.

Mrs. Babbitt was a stickler for authenticity whenever possible. For instance, in 1923, when all Ypsilanti celebrated its centennial to publicize the city even more Mrs. Babbitt appeared in a period costume of the years between 1859-1861 (as close as she could get to the 'founding date'). The dress and all the accessories were all purchased in Ypsilanti. The material for the dress, a green merino cloth had been bought at Norris & Follet's Store in 1859. The French embroidered dickie and under sleeves were bought at F. K. Resford Store. The cap had been fashioned by a local milliner in 1861 and the earrings by Marvin Park's Jewelry Store. The handkerchief, ring and bouquet holder, pins, bracelets and cap pins were from S.H. Dodge's Jewelry Store, successor to Parks. The black lace shawl and hoops came from the Jerome G. Cross Store. The same costume was worn by Mrs. Babbitt at the Grand Army Encampment at Saginaw, Michigan, also by her at the National Grand Army Encampment at Columbus, Ohio. It was also worn at the fiftieth anniversary of the Order of the Eastern Star in Detroit, the Supreme White Shrine of Jerusalem at Grand Rapids and many other historical gatherings. It is interesting to know that the same dress was found in an old suit case and is still in good condition and was worn as recently as 1965 by a faculty wife for a program put on by the University Wives of Eastern Michigan University.

When Ypsilanti was struck by the disastrous cyclone in 1893 Mrs. Babbitt was right on hand, or at least she was the next day. She took many pictures of the damages. She sold these photographs for only twenty-five cents each, and so there may be quite a few homes in Ypsilanti that have pictorial records of the storm of 1893.

During her lifetime there seem to have been few people in Ypsilanti City and Township and for miles around who were not approached by Mrs. Babbitt and coaxed out of something of theirs for her collections. That this was true is borne out by this little poem

attributed to Atwood McAndrew, Sr. and first read at a local dinner which Mrs. Babbitt attended.

*There was an old woman named Babbitt  
Who gathered up dishes from habit  
She started the STAR  
Ran the whole G.A.R.  
If you have an old dish, she'll nab it*

Now just what else did this amazing woman do to occupy her time? For many the time consuming work of collecting and cataloging would be enough, but obviously Mrs. Babbitt was a real leader and had many causes in which she believed and for which she gave her time and energy.

Her obituary notice of November 4, 1929 listed a number of her varied activities: "She was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Charter Member of Ypsilanti Order of the Eastern Star – 119, honorary member of Grand Chapter O.E.S. in Michigan. She initiated the "Flag Service" at the Grand Chapter in 1902, which is used throughout the chapters in the United States. It was through her suggestion and efforts that a flag was placed in every O.E.S. Chapter room in churches. She was past President of the Carpenter Relief Corps, #65, and held every office in the Department of Women Relief Corp in Michigan. She was honorary member of the Daughters of War Veterans of '61, honorary member of Women's Study Club, charter member of the Ladies Literary Club, honorary member of the Supreme White Shrine of Jerusalem, Vice President of the Three-Quarters Century Club, member of the Michigan Historical Society and one of the pioneers of Historical and Antiques Collectors of Michigan. She was a life member of the Episcopal Church and of the Parish Aid Society.

During her presidency of the Carpenter Relief Corps of Ypsilanti the money was raised to build the base for the Civil War Memorial in Highland Cemetery, the statue given by Mrs. John Starkweather, and dedicated May 30, 1895. A newspaper reporter gave her full credit: "The beautiful \$5,000 soldiers monument in Ypsilanti is chiefly due to her efforts, which she kept up for years when everybody else had become weary and discouraged, managing excursions and promoting schemes of all sorts, until the necessary money was secured, not only for that but for assisting the soldiers monuments at Dexter and Chelsea. At Ypsilanti she induced the Michigan Central to dedicate a pretty trian-

gular plot of ground at the depot as "Cass Plot" and erected thereon a flagpole, and kept flying from its peak a fine flag during the whole of the Spanish War, as a tribute to our soldier boys and to General Cass, who was a patron saint in her father's political calendar (Like her father, she was a democrat).

Mrs. Babbitt was active in the 27<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry Auxiliary and served as President of the Auxiliary in 1902. It was while she was president of the Auxiliary that the 27<sup>th</sup> held its 40<sup>th</sup> reunion here in Ypsilanti in October of 1902. There is in downtown Ypsilanti a block of buildings known as the Thompson Block. During the Civil War these buildings were used as the barracks of the 27<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry, Mrs. Babbitt's fathers regiment. The following article from The Cleveland Leader of October 1901 tells a touching story of just how it happened that the 27<sup>th</sup> held its reunion in Ypsilanti: "*The twenty-seventh Michigan Regiment was stampeded Thursday morning by a daughter of the regiment. She selected the place of holding the next meeting and was elected President of the Regiment Association. The 27<sup>th</sup> Michigan was holding its reunion in a hall at 354 Ontario Street, and the meeting was proceeding slowly along the regular channels. A drum corps of veterans had just finished the opening selection when Mrs. Florence S. Babbitt of Ypsilanti, Michigan, walked in. Four years ago she was made a daughter of the regiment because her father and brother had gone out with that organization in 1861. As soon as she came in Thursday the music stopped and veterans arose to give her a salute. It happened that the next thing on the program was the selection of the place for holding next meeting. Flushing, Michigan, had been selected for this year's meeting, but arrangements had been changed to come to Cleveland, and some thought that Flushing ought to have the meeting place for next year. About that time Mrs. Babbitt arose and asked them to go to Ypsilanti. All of the places that had been mentioned immediately withdrew their claims, and with shouts of "Ypsilanti," the veterans arose to their feet and proclaimed that city as their choice. The next thing was the election of officers, in Ypsilanti, Mrs. Florence S. Babbitt was made President by acclamation. ■*

(The article continues with many other tributes to Mrs. Babbitt. A copy of the article was found with the Babbitt Collection on permanent loan to the YHS Museum from the Eastern Michigan University Archives. Author unknown.)

## "Buy a Storm Window" Program

The YHS Endowment Fund Advisory Board has initiated a program to repair, paint and install storm windows on 43 of the windows in the Museum at 220 North Huron Street.

The new storm windows will be custom made of wood, most with curved tops, to conform to the original architectural design of the building.

The Project will start immediately and is expected to be completed by October of this year.



The approximate cost per window for the repair of broken and cracked panes, painting of the windows inside and out, and the design, construction and installation of new storm windows is \$300. Therefore, we are seeking donations of \$300 from 43 supporters of the Ypsilanti Historical Society to cover the costs of this project.

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A permanent plaque will be placed in a prominent place in the YHS Museum with the names of each of the contributors to the "Buy a Storm Window" Program. Please indicate in the space below the exact wording you would like to have placed on the plaque.

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The Ypsilanti Historical Society has been identified as a 501(c)(3) organization by the Internal Revenue Service and contributions are tax deductible.

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YHS - 220 North Huron Street - Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Peckville –  
*continued from page 3*

Joseph became the first justice of the peace in this area and served on the first jury in Ann Arbor. He is also credited with building a mill around 1830. He must have been a thrifty person, as were his sons. In the museum archives are several torn off bits of paper with legal records on them such as receipts for the bricks and lumber that built the Peck Street Primary on his property and several other legal agreements written on what we would call scrap paper.

Knowing the importance of education, he built the Peck Street Primary in 1839 on what used to be Peck Street. The brick school house was sold to the 4<sup>th</sup> Ward School District in 1850 for \$40. At that time the school had 99 students. It soon became one of the first “graded” schools in the state. This was a revolutionary concept in education promoted by the Normal College (now Eastern Michigan University). In other words, students were assigned to grades as opposed to working out of a common skill book. In 1858-59, there were 139 pupils enrolled in the Peck Street Primary. This building was outgrown and replaced by the Fourth Ward School at Prospect and Oak Streets. The old Peck School was deeded to an English immigrant, George George, in 1866 and soon was converted into a malt house. The malt house was expanded and then torn down in 1912 and what is now the garage at the Swaine House is what remains of the Peck Street Primary. Several slates and slate pencils have been found in the drive, which was once Peck Street.

Joseph Peck died in Ypsilanti at the age of 59 on February 13, 1849 and was buried in the cemetery where Prospect Park is now and then his remains were removed to Highland Cemetery.

His wife Sophia Churchill Peck (on legal records in Washtenaw County she is “Sophia” but is named Sophara in an 1877 genealogical account of the family) was born in June, 1793 in Salsbury, Connecticut and died at the age of 84 in Ypsilanti, on September 30, 1876. Her mother was born in England and is said by the family to have nursed soldiers at Valley Forge. Her family contends that she is part of a branch of the family of Winston Churchill. She must have been a very impressive woman.

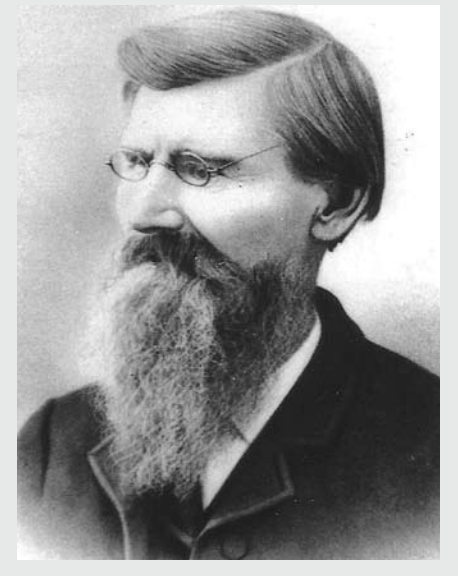
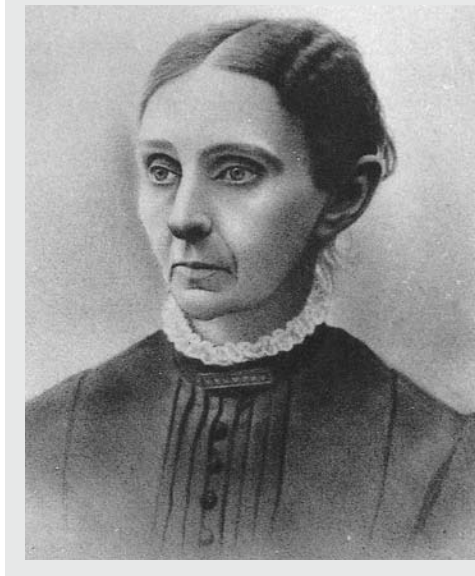
*Right: Slate and slate pencils found near Peck Street Primary that still work.*



*Middle: Reward of Merit presented to Florence Smalley Babbitt in 1857 at the Peckville School.*

*Bottom Right: Egbert, son of Joseph and Sophia, lived for awhile in the home at 59 East Forest with his wife Juliet Thayer Peck. Later, their children lived at 52 East Forest, in a home that was torn down about 30 years ago.*

*Bottom Left: Juliet Thayer Peck, wife of Egbert Peck.*



A family friend, Florence Babbitt, writes of her “my father always said that if Mrs. Peck had been a man she would have been President of the United States.” (This was written from the Hawkins Hotel in Ypsilanti, March 20, 1929.)

Joseph and Sophia built their log cabin at Peck and River Street, among the Indians and in the woods. It is possible that an old photo

shows the original home and barn behind the picture of the Swaine house taken in 1883. The old home there matches the description of where the original log cabin stood. When it was torn down, probably in the 1890s, the kitchen addition was moved and attached to the Swaine house where it stands today. An oft repeated family tale helps us picture what the wilderness of what would become Ypsilanti was like in the mid 1820's. Grandson

Dwight Peck relates this story in an interview given over 50 years ago and published in the Ypsilanti Press.

*“A large double log house was built for the family on an open sandy lot. Across from this open spot were dense woods. Near the house, in the opening, was a permanent camp of tents belonging to the Potawatomi. They were friendly with the pioneers and often were invited into the kitchen to share the newly baked bread, the fresh butter and the milk. However, the squaws did not care for the butter and wiped it off onto the bare floor. The floors were wide white wood and scrubbed until they shone. Being soft wood, the butter immediately stained it and Mr. Peck found an indignant housewife that evening. He calmed his wife and he, himself, scrubbed and sanded the floors until they were again spotless.*

*However, despite this, the relationships between the family and the Indians remained friendly and the squaws and children were always welcome. One day, a squaw came in with an exceedingly bright eyed and cute papoose. Mrs. Peck, with two small babies of her own, played with the tiny Indian and laughingly asked the squaw if she would swap babies. Quick as a flash, the Indian gathered up Erwin Peck and ran out the door. The father was immediately called and began the search for his son. He frantically went among the tents and through the woods. The day lengthened. Mrs. Peck found she was not too good at soothing a crying papoose. Finally after hours of searching, and inquiry, small Erwin was found, but it was a difficult matter making the squaw understand that the trade in children could not be permanent.”*

Over the years the young family prospered in their new, large home at 401 East Forest. The 10 room house was so large that horses could enter by the front door carrying logs for the large fireplace and then walk out the back door. Egbert, born October 31, 1822 and Erwin, born December 27, 1823 were soon joined by Elizabeth born in 1829, Joseph Herbert, born in 1831 and a sister named Lois. More Peck houses were built on East Forest Ave. to house this growing family but only three of these original homes remain today.

Erwin lived for awhile in the home at 59 East Forest. His brother Egbert, wife Juliet Thayer and their children lived at 52 East Forest, in a home that was torn down about 30 years ago.  
*continued on page 24*



*Left: Cora LaForge Peck and Dwight Peck, third generation Pecks, were the last Pecks to live in the 1836 home of Joseph and Sophia at 401 East Forest.*

*Middle: Peck house at 117 East Forest was lived in by Peck descendents for many years. It was moved to that location from the Hutchinson property when he bought the land there for his mansion.*

*Bottom: The house and barn that can be seen to the left of the Swaine house (101 East Forest) is believed to be the original home of Joseph and Sophia Peck. The kitchen section of the original house that can be seen is believed to have been later moved and attached to the Swaine House.*



Peckville –  
*continued from page 23*

The Peck home at 117 East Forest actually was moved there from across the street and a Peck family lived in that home for over 60 years. The large homestead built by Joseph and Sophia remains today at 401 East Forest. The kitchen of the Swaine house was once part of the early Peck home on River and Peck Street. Remnants of the Peck Street Primary were converted to a garage in 1912. Peck Street remains as a driveway. Dwight Street is named for Dwight Peck, who was the last remaining Peck, along with his wife, Cora LaForge Peck, to live in the home built by Sophia & Joseph.

Erwin and Egbert and some of their children continued to farm the land and various descendants, including Egbert's son Dwight, who was the last son to live in the family homestead, followed in their footsteps until the majority of the land was sold to a developer in the early 1920s. After World War II, the Prospect Park Subdivision was built on what once were fields, orchards and grazing land.

There are bits and pieces written about the Peck farm which help us to imagine life in Peckville in the 1900's. In the Michigan Argus of February 3, 1860 we read of a fire in Depot Town with some of the sparks flying as far as Peckville and starting one of Peck's barns on fire and destroying it.

Fellow farmer and friend William Lambie refers to E. C. Peck numerous times in his diaries. For example in 1880 *"Peck got 20 bushels of corn."* Another entry reads *"Went to E. C. Peck barn raising."* In 1883 he writes *"July 25 Frank and I went to E. C. Peck he promised to come and harvest,"* and then in 1890 *"Mrs. L. and I went to old friend E. C. Peck's funeral."*

The local paper in 1875 published a story which illustrates how important the Peck family and descendants have been to the history of Ypsilanti. On March 1, 1875, at a meeting of the Pioneer Society, *"it was proposed that the Pioneer residing longest in the County should carry the flag leading the procession to the Vestry of the Baptist Church in Ypsilanti. Quite a contest sprang up as to whom the honor belonged to. An old gentleman, Benjamin F. Knapp, who states he was at Woodruff's Grove*



*Photo shows the current kitchen portion of the Swaine house that is believed to have originally been a part of the Peck house.*

*in 1820 (there was no Woodruff's Grove until April 1823) claimed the right, but he was only on a Prospecting Tour and never a real resident of the County, and now living at Brownsville, Wayne City. Robert Geddes rightly has that honor... The only persons present at the dinner who had been in Washtenaw County over 50 years were Robert Geddes and E. C. Peck."*

E. C. Peck (Egbert) has left other reminders of his life in various papers in the museum archives. An interesting glimpse of farm life is a receipt for sheep and describes the transaction. On November 4, 1867 he gives A. B. Werner 50 sheep with the understanding that Werner is to keep the sheep for three years and deliver to him 100 pounds of wool each year, at his residence and at the end of three years Werner is to deliver 50 sheep, aged one to three years old to E. C. Peck. This seems to be a good business transaction for both men.

Joe Butcko published some of his memories of growing up on East Forest Avenue as a child in the 1930's in the summer edition, 2008 of the Gleanings. He describes the Peck farm as he remembers it.

*"In 1932, there were only about six houses on the north side of Forest Avenue from River Street to Prospect. It was all farmland owned by the Peck family whose house and barns were on Forest Avenue about 150 yards east of River Street. The Peck farm was a working farm with horses,*

*cows, etc. Parents would send their kids with a bucket to get milk. Mr. Peck would let us watch him milk the cows and, with a twist of his wrist, he would squirt us in the face with the milk. Today, he would be put in jail – the milk wasn't pasteurized. Among Peck's other enterprises, the city hired him to clear sidewalks with his horse pulling a wooden snowplow."*

Peckville may be gone but will never be forgotten. However, there are few people in Ypsilanti now who can "point the way to Peckville," where a log cabin and Indian tepees once stood, where children went to school carrying lunch pails and slates, where cattle, sheep, and horses grazed, and where there were fields of corn, apple orchards and sugar maples shading a dirt road. Now there are only houses and yards. However, the pioneer Peck family has left its legacy in establishing a farm from the wilderness, building one of the first schools and even starting the tradition of planting sugar maples down East Forest Avenue from Prospect to the river. Every morning when I go into my very old Peck kitchen, with the bubble glass window panes, or drive my car down Peck Street to the garage (once Peck Street Primary), I think of Joseph and Sophia and their courage, hard work, enterprise and hope. ■

*(Janice Anschuetz currently lives in the Swaine House that is located at 101 East Forest and is very interested in the history of the neighborhood.)*



# Museum Advisory Board Report

By Kathryn Howard

The Museum has been a very busy and lively place this spring and early summer. We started with the Art Exhibit from May 9-23. We had 32 artists exhibiting and 125 art pieces. Our artists came from Howell, Pinckney, Chelsea, Dexter, Ann Arbor, Manchester, Milan, Saline, Belleville and Ypsilanti. We were very proud to have such a large area participating. We added photography this year. This is the largest art exhibit we have had with a wonderful

group of advisory board members, docents and artists helping.

In the meantime, the Lost Ypsilanti Committee of Bob Southgate, Jack Livisay and Virginia Davis Brown are preparing for this exhibit to open on July 18. It will run through September 5. Their research topic this year has been Willow Run during World War II. It will concentrate on the effects Willow Run and World War II had on the community and the changes brought about in the Ypsilanti area. It should be very interesting so be sure to see it.

Currently on view is the Robert Southgate, Sr. photography exhibit. Mr. Southgate started his photography business after returning from World War II. We have his equipment, photographs of his family, and his other works. Also on display are many cameras from our own collection which take you through the history and advancement of photography.

Also on display at this time are Hummel plates and a silver service donated to the Museum by Maxe and Terri Obermeyer.

In the former meeting room (now music room) the Barnhill Band and Ypsilanti High School Drum and Bugle Corps are featured. Dr. Barnhill's clarinets are displayed. Also in the case are stringed instruments. All of the above have been restored by Robert Campbell. Jerry Jennings has installed lighting in the case so the items are more visible. You must see these along with the brass horns and other items.



In other areas, the bedroom now has a lovely antique chandelier, a gift from Kathryn Howard. Most of our museum rooms are now lighted by chandeliers. In the Milleman Parlor we have a beautiful antique mirror given by Andrea Schollaet. We have just received on permanent loan from the Eastern Michigan University Archives 132 eighteenth and nineteenth century artifacts from the Florence S. Babbitt Collection. This collection will be a wonderful addition to our displays as some of the items date back to 1791.

The Underground Railroad tours are now available. Call the Museum office at 734-482-4990 if you would like to schedule one. Also, 2011 calendars will be on sale during the Heritage Festival in August. We are in need of docents during the Heritage Festival from August 20-22. Our hours are from 2 to 6 p.m. on Friday, 12 to 6 p.m. on Saturday, and 12 to 4 p.m. on Sunday. The Quilt Show will be our next main event and is scheduled from September 26 to October 17.

Be sure to visit the Museum this summer to see all the changes being made to the displays. ■

*(Kathryn Howard is the Vice Chairperson of the YHS Museum Advisory Board.)*



*The Robert Southgate, Sr. photography exhibit is currently on display in the Museum. Mr. Southgate started his photography business in Ypsilanti after returning from World War II.*

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# We are Seeking: Lost Restaurants of Ypsilanti

By Peg Porter

It started when a friend and I happened to be reminiscing. We both remembered a restaurant in a house just off Packard. The red brick house still stands. Neither of us could remember its name or much else. But the fact that we both remembered such a place was reassuring. My friend, Judy, was visiting with another Ypsilantian who thought the house/restaurant on Packard was named The Gables. As a result, it occurred to us that there were a number of restaurants in Ypsilanti over the years. There were "special occasion" restaurants (e.g. Mothers Day), date restaurants, Italian and Greek restaurants. Some were very small while others featured linen table cloths and napkins.

Now, dear readers, we ask your assistance in identifying the Lost Restaurants of Ypsilanti. What dining establishments do you remember? Where were they? Did you have a particular favorite on the menu? When, approximately, did they close? Please share any special memories. Would the restaurant do well in today's Ypsilanti?

Running a restaurant is hard work and since eating out is more often a luxury than a necessity; the business is particularly vulnerable to changes in the economy. And yet, some of them live on in our memories. Please share your memories and stories. Let's hear from former wait staff, cooks and owners as well.

We will report back in an upcoming issue. Bon Appétit! ■

*(Send your recollections to Peg Porter, c/o Ypsilanti Historical Museum, or by email: [margaret.porter@comcast.net](mailto:margaret.porter@comcast.net). Mention "restaurant" in subject line. Responses requested by September 1, 2010.)*

## An Old Girl Comes Home – *continued from page 13*

Minnesota and North Dakota and planned to make a stop in Fargo, North Dakota. Since our research revealed that Benjamin Schofield was buried in Riverside Cemetery in Fargo we asked him to stop by the cemetery to see if he could locate the grave site. He indicated that at first he was only able to locate a "Schofield" family stone. However, after prodding several areas around the family stone he was able to locate the gravestone for Benjamin as well as his wife Sarah under four inches of sod.

Today, "the old girl" (as men used to call their guns during this period) has finally come home to Ypsilanti. We hope to have it ready for display in the Ypsilanti Historical Society museum later in 2010. Our research continues. ■

*(Lyle McDermott is a regular volunteer in the Ypsilanti Archives and regularly assists Archive visitors with research on local people and places. George Ridenour, Archives Assistant Director assisted with the research on this article.)*

## Answers for *Scraps of History from the Scrap Heap*

Questions can be found on page 15.

1. The Frenchman was a direct descendant of Cadillac, the founder of Detroit, and he was thrilled to meet folks who had recently visited the city and could tell him about it.
2. "Harold" Sponberg was the Eastern Michigan University President at the time and was about to exit under trying circumstances.
3. Stan Eldridge was selected by his East Middle School classmates to represent the School as a greeter for President Ford when he arrived at the Willow Run Airport for a visit to the area.
4. The Ypsilanti Brains.
5. James Warner, the President of the Ypsilanti Savings Bank, had provoked a major dispute with the Ypsilanti City Council and it was only after an anonymous peacemaker stepped in and calmed the waters that the deal was made.
6. John Porter and James Brickley.
7. Urban myth was that if any co-ed graduated from the College as a virgin the Tower would collapse.
8. He was a very talented boy soprano who then outgrew his talent.
9. Peninsular Paper Company produced the high quality paper needed for the daring centerfold pictures of comely lasses.
10. Food and gasoline were rationed while rubber tires, rubber bands, paper and paper clips were in short supply.
11. Most American businesses were caught unaware that the War was going to end so quickly after the dropping of the Atomic Bombs and therefore it took time to convert back to civilian production.
12. Very few people realize that a whole new plant and extensive new housing had to be quickly constructed to accommodate the war production facilities.
13. David Landy asserted that he paid taxes on both sides of the road and therefore he should be free to use both sides at the same time.
14. General Douglas MacArthur toured the country from west to east following his firing by President Truman.
15. The namesake of Estabrook School conducted the wedding of Azro Fletcher to Elizabeth Lambie who later had "Fletcher School" named after her.
16. Daniel Lace Quirk who lived at 300 North Huron Street.
17. Begole and Frains Lake.
18. Greyhound, Shortway and Blue Goose.
19. It was established as a teacher training facility.
20. Tom Monaghan started Dominos Pizza in Ypsilanti near the Eastern Michigan University campus and later expanded to more than 8,000 stores worldwide. ■

# Membership Application

*Ypsilanti Historical Society, Inc.*



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

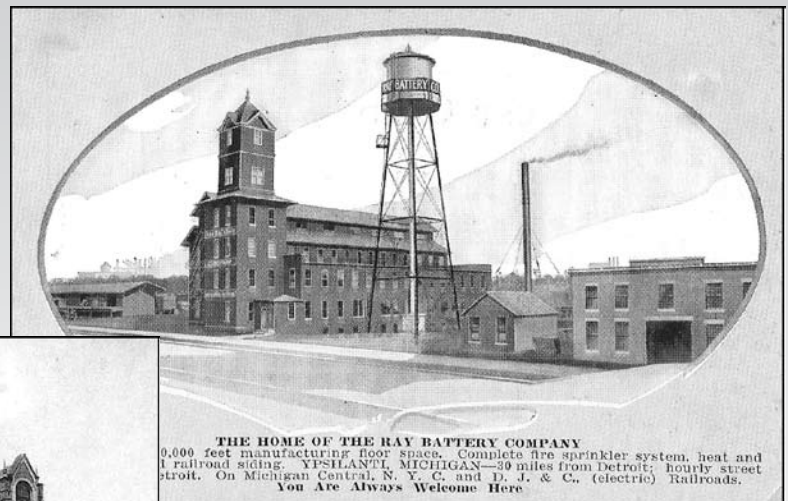
Type of Membership:		New	Renewal
Single	\$10.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family	\$15.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sustaining	\$25.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Business	\$75.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Life	\$200.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please make check payable to the  
Ypsilanti Historical Society and mail to:

**Ypsilanti Historical Society**  
220 North Huron Street  
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

From the YHS Archives

## Postcard Collection



*Top:* The Ray Battery Company operated for several years in the early 1920s out of the former Ypsilanti Wollen Mill building at 522 North Huron Street.

*Left:* The Woodruff School was built in 1901 and was named for the Hon. Charles Woodruff, who served as teacher and member of the Ypsilanti Board of Education for nearly 50 years.

## The Florence Babbitt Collection

*(The Eastern Michigan University Florence Babbitt Collection was recently transferred to the YHS Museum on permanent loan. The collection contains 132 items. Included with the Collection was the following biography of Florence Smalley Babbitt.)*

### Florence Smalley Babbitt – 1847-1929:

There is a rather charming story told of Florence Babbitt, Ypsilanti's best known "collector," which shows that even as a young girl she appreciated the old and interesting items. She and her parents were invited to a tea at a neighbor's home. Their hostess had just acquired a new set of white china and was proud of it. The adult guests were served on the new white china and the children on the older "second" set of blue and white china. One of the children complained, "I want to eat off the new." Whereupon, the story goes, little Florence clasped a piece of the blue and white china to her and said, "Oh, I love this old plate." When she went home her charmed hostess gave her the plate for her very own. That piece seems to have been part of Florence's plate collection.

To the majority of people in Ypsilanti the name Florence Smalley Babbitt means nothing; some few might say, "Oh, yes, I have heard of her, she collected "things," others might know of her name because they had heard of their parents or older relatives mention her. This short paper is presented in the hopes that more will learn of this remarkable woman and the great debt we Ypsilantians do owe to her.

Florence Lewis Smalley Babbitt was born in Friendship, Allegheny County, New York on March 19, 1847. She was the daughter of Mortimore  
*continued inside on page 16*



*Florence Babbitt wearing the historical costume she wore at the Ypsilanti centennial celebration in 1923. All the articles in the costume were bought in Ypsilanti between the years 1859-1861.*