

Ypsilanti GLEANINGS

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



SPRING 2015

The Force Behind the ★ Yankee Air ★ MUSEUM

BY PHIL BARNES

*(Dennis Norton – The Ypsilanti Kid who Grew Up to
Lead the Effort to Raise 5.2 Million Dollars that Enabled
the Yankee Air Museum to Fly Again.)*

Dennis Norton, son of Austin and Dorothy Norton, along with his sister Cindy, grew up on Ypsilanti's east side at 735 Lowell Street, next to Norton's Flower Shop. Dennis attended kindergarten through second grade at the old Ypsilanti High School, third through sixth grade at Central on Forest Avenue, entered the new West Junior High School as the first class in the Fall of 1959, and then graduated from Ypsilanti High School in 1965. He had a non-stop approach to everything, academics as well as athletics. While attending Ypsi High, he was one of the key performers on the swim team. His personal best was 23.7 for 50 yards. He, along with Roger Buxton, Doug Peterson and George Sayre, set a school record in the 200 freestyle relay. They were very proud of the accomplishment of breaking this long standing record.

As a youngster Dennis and his Dad, Austin, spent many hours at Willow Run Airport watching aircraft take off and land. Flying aircraft became



Dennis and his sister Cindy grew up on Ypsilanti's east side at 735 Lowell Street, next to Norton's Flower Shop.

a hobby later on. Dennis earned his pilot's license in 1966 and eventually became an instructor teaching new students and current pilots the intricacies of flying. In 1970 Dennis graduated from Eastern Michigan University with a Major in History. While a college student, Dennis worked at Motor Wheel and that experience convinced Dennis that factory work was not for him. He then joined his father, Austin, working in the family business, Norton's Flowers, which had expanded and moved to the Washtenaw Avenue site. Dennis also became involved in the Jaycees and worked on many projects.

Dennis Norton is well known for his boundless energy and enthusiasm and has been known as a "bulldog"



Dennis at the controls of the B-17 owned by the Yankee Air Force. Dennis also serves as the President of the Michigan Aerospace Foundation.

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From the PRESIDENT'S DESK

BY ALVIN E. RUDISILL

We will be installing the remaining named bricks along the front sidewalk in the next few weeks when the weather warms up. We can still sell 13 more 4 x 8 bricks so if you would like to be included in our final order call 734-482-4990 between 2:00 and 5:00 pm Monday through Friday to place your order with Ashley Turner, our Graduate Intern. A photo of the repaired front sidewalk is included in the brick ad in this issue of the Gleanings.

The "Closet Art Program" has been initiated and hanging art pieces have been placed on four walls in Beezy's Café on North Washington Street. YHS members and friends have been asked to check in their closets to find hanging art pieces that they are no longer using and to consider donating these items to the Society. Donors receive a donation letter verifying the donation of the item(s) to a 501(c)(3) organization. Laura Bien and James Mann are coordinating the program for the Society.

The Intern Contract that the Ypsilanti Historical Society has with the Graduate Program in Historical Preservation at Eastern Michigan University has been extended for another five years. The program provides two Interns, one for the Museum and one for the Archives, for twenty hours per week and fifty-two weeks per year. Ashley Turner, our current graduate intern in the YHS Museum, will be graduating this spring so we will be interviewing candidates to fill that position starting in May. Ashley will be missed as she has provided exceptional leadership in all areas of responsibility.

The "Annual Home Tour" sponsored by the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation is scheduled for June 28, 2015 from noon to 5:00 pm. The historic home tour is a major fund raiser for the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation and funds previously raised were recently provided to the Towner House Foundation to purchase the Towner House at 303 N. Huron Street. Home Tour locations this year will be 206 N. Huron Street, 209 N. Huron Street, 222 N. Huron Street, 303 N. Huron Street, 514 Fairview Circle, 1266 Huron River Drive and 309 N. Grove Street.



Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation

38th Annual Historic

HOME TOUR

June 28, 2015 | noon-5pm

Ypsilanti
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
220 North Huron Street
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Contact Information

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yhs.museum@gmail.com

Archives: 734-217-8236
yhs.archives@gmail.com

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.

Archives | Collections | Donations | Event Schedule | Membership | Publications | Volunteer

by his close friends. When his mother, Dorothy, was asked about his motivation for the establishment of the Willow Run Yankee Air Museum, Dorothy replied, "When Dennis gets an idea, even as a teenager, he has had a fierce determination to see that idea through to completion." It's a well known story that in 1981 with his enthusiasm for flying and for preserving aircraft history, the Yankee Air Museum was born. Dennis was the founder and became its first president. Unfortunately, in October of 2004 the museum burned to the ground. However, Yankee staff and volunteers were able to rebuild and in 2010 the new Yankee Air Museum was dedicated. The Michigan Aerospace Foundation was founded to make plans for expansion with Dennis as the President. He has owned a number of planes, including a 1947 French bi-plane, a STAMPE. Through the years he has enjoyed flying the museum planes, the C-47, B-25 and the pride of the Yankee fleet, the B-17.

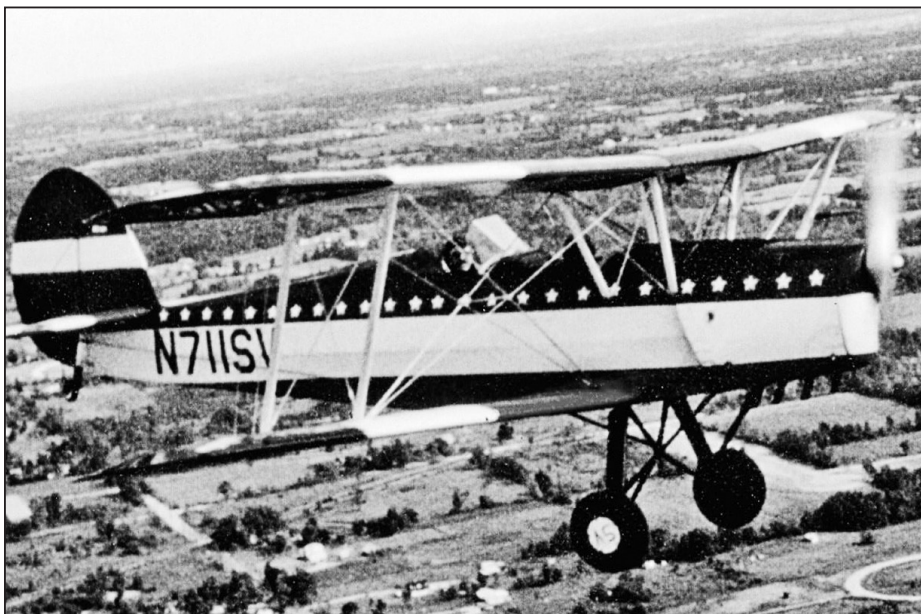


The section of the Willow Run Bomber Plant that was recently purchased by the Yankee Air Museum.

This all led to an idea to secure part of the Willow Run Bomber plant. In 2011 the question of "where would the B-17 be stored?" was posed. Dennis called Bob Lutz and found that the Bomber Plant was not owned by GM anymore. GM had gone bankrupt in 2010 and the Bomber (B-24) plant was turned over to the RACER trust. In 2011, Dennis contacted the RACER Trust. Ray Hunter, who flew rescue helicopter missions in Vietnam, and Dennis then spearheaded an effort to gain control of at

least part of the remaining buildings including a hangar capable of parking the Yankee Air Force B-17 and additional space to expand the Yankee Air Museum. In 2012, a Letter of Intent was signed for one year. Energies were stepped up by Dennis and the foundation to collect funds and 5.2 Million Dollars was raised.

This was the thrust Dennis needed and soon after, in 2013, a purchase agreement was signed and the funds



Dennis at the controls of his 1947 STAMPE with son David in the front seat (1985).



Last Chance!

Buy your named
brick now for
placement along
the front sidewalk
of the Museum
next spring.

\$100 - 4" x 8"

\$250 - 8" x 8"



Call: 734-482-4990

generated by Dennis Norton were secured from the donors. Finally, on October 30, 2014, the purchase was closed and the Yankee Air Museum now owns 144,000 square feet of the historic Willow Run Bomber Plant, saving the last small piece from demolition. Only four Willow Run B-24s still exist out of almost 9,000 that were built. None of the Willow Run B-24s still fly, and only two B-24s that were built in California still fly.

A highlight of the Bomber Plant effort was a reunion of all the "Rosies" and under the new brand the emergence of women in the workforce during the war will be emphasized. In 2014, Twenty-one of the original "Rosie the Riveters" gathered to join in a successful effort to set a World's Record for the most Rosies gathered in one place. "Rosie" was named for Rosie Monroe of Kentucky when in 1943 Walter Pigeon showed up at the plant to assist in filming a War Bond Special, and Rosie was selected to help. Vickie Croston, Rosie Monroe's daughter from Texas was pleased to be able to attend the 2014 reunion and help set the World Record.

The new effort will expand the mission of the Museum, change its name from the Yankee Air Museum to the National Museum of Aviation and Technology, and launch a new fund-raising campaign to raise an additional 8.2 million to renovate the space and overhaul the museum



Dennis with Ray Hunter on November 7, 2014 when they received an award for "Deals of the Year" by the Ann Arbor News. in recognition of the October 30, 2014 purchase and saving from demolition of the last remaining piece of the old Willow Run Bomber Plant.

exhibits. Under the new expanded mission an effort will be made to emphasize the history of the 5-million-square-foot plant that served as the Arsenal of Democracy during World War II and produced 8,685 B-24 Bombers.

Another focus of the new mission of the Museum is to advance science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education with hands-on learning stations.

Plans have been drawn up to include space needed for all the aircraft the Yankee Air Museum owns, expand the aerospace museum which would be comparable to the one at Dayton and Selfridge, and provide a meeting and convention facility that will seat up to 1,000 people, the largest in the area. The next big event will be the Air Show at the Yankee Air Museum on August 29 and 30, 2015 that will include flying demonstrations by the US Navy "Blue Angels."

Dennis currently lives in Dexter with his wife Carol. One daughter and four granddaughters live in Gaylord, one son and two grandsons live in Dexter and one daughter lives on Portage Lake.

Dennis remains very proud of the success of his efforts and the efforts of the many volunteers who worked to secure pledges for funds. However, he reminds the public that 8.5 million dollars remains to be raised. Call Dennis at 734-971-2750 to pledge or donate to the project.

(Phil Barnes is a frequent contributor to The Gleanings and served on the U.S.S. Philippine Sea (CV47) in the Korean War.)

Dennis in 2013 with the "Rosie the Riveter" re-enactors.



One of the promotional signs being used for fundraising for the preservation and renovation of part of the Willow Run Bomber Plant for use by the Yankee Air Museum.

MUSEUM ENTRANCE AND VISITORS CENTER

An entrance to the new museum with an orientation area and visitor amenities.

SPONSORSHIP: **RESERVED**

BOOKSTORE AND GIFT SHOP

An attractive and inviting bookshop for visitors, located near museum admissions desk.

SPONSORSHIP: **AVAILABLE**

AUDITORIUM

A major dedicated space — with 200 seats — for the museum's educational and other programming, with full audio visual capabilities as well as the capacity to support science demonstrations.

SPONSORSHIP: **AVAILABLE**

CLASSROOMS

Three attractive classrooms with a capacity of 40 persons each to support museum programming. Movable walls also make it possible to use these areas as a single 120-person room.

SPONSORSHIP: **AVAILABLE**

STAFF AND VOLUNTEER FACILITIES

Offices and a small conference room to accommodate the work of museum staff and volunteers.

SPONSORSHIP: **AVAILABLE**



WHEN THE YANKEE AIR MUSEUM MOVES INTO THE HISTORIC WILLOW RUN BOMBER PLANT, IT WILL BECOME THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AVIATION AND TECHNOLOGY.

STORY GROUP A THE ARSENAL OF DEMOCRACY STORIES

This Story Group tells the amazing Willow Run story, and uses it to explain the larger American Arsenal of Democracy that produced both the equipment needed to win World War II and lasting social change in America.

3 Women Answer the Call

The story of how women entered the workforce to win a war, and ended-up changing America forever.

SPONSORSHIP: **AVAILABLE**

1 THE MIRACLE OF WILLOW RUN

SPONSORSHIP: **AVAILABLE**

How Americans from all walks of life came to together at Willow Run to build the bombers needed to win World War II.

1a

Acquisition and Display of
THE B-24 Liberator Bomber

SPONSORSHIP: **AVAILABLE**

SPECIAL FOCUS EXHIBIT
Funds the acquisition and restoration of an example of the type of aircraft built at Willow Run as the capstone of "The Miracle of Willow Run."

2 HOW DETROIT SAVED THE WORLD

World War II was won because of America's tremendous production effort — an effort centered in Detroit.

SPONSORSHIP: **AVAILABLE**

STORY GROUP B OUR AVIATION HERITAGE

This Story Group explores American aviation from its earliest days through World War II, the Golden Age of air travel that followed, the Cold War, and space exploration.

4 "That thing will never fly!"

How the American spirit of innovation, experimentation, and determination lead the way in the development of early 20th-century flight technology and aviation commerce.

SPONSORSHIP: **AVAILABLE**

5 THE ROARING '50s

FALLOUT SHELTER

A walk through one of America's most amazing decades, the 1950s, and showcasing the promise, the developments, and nuclear fears of this new and amazing post-war era.

SPONSORSHIP: **AVAILABLE**

6 SPACE: THE FUTURE IS YOU.

The excitement and experience of space flight, space discovery, and space technology — past, present, and future.

SPONSORSHIP: **AVAILABLE**

SPECIAL FOCUS EXHIBIT
The Boeing B-52 remains a mainstay of America's nuclear deterrent force, and has helped assure the longest period of sustained peace between major powers in recorded history. Restoration and installation sponsorship available.

5a BOEING B-52D The Cold War Workhorse

IMAGE REVEALING

ON-SITE DISPLAY

SPONSORSHIP: **AVAILABLE**

PHOTO: BOEING

STORY GROUP C THE EXCITEMENT OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

This story group uses the excitement of aviation to inspire children and youth to explore education and career opportunities in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

7 Exploration Station!

An ever-changing area of exhibits on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics subjects. The emphasis here will be on "hands on" learning experiences for visitors of all ages.

SPONSORSHIP: **AVAILABLE**

ROBERTSON EDUCATION CENTER

SPECIAL FOCUS EXHIBIT
A restored school house, one of the original buildings here at Willow Run that is used in Museum programming.

Sponsored by

DAVID & ANDREA ROBERTSON

7a

HIGH SPY: Every Day Espionage

"Eyes in the sky" have been an important part of military intelligence from the Civil War onward and also an increasingly important part of the civilian economy in recent years. This exhibit traces the evolution of manned and unmanned aircraft engaged in observation and remote sensing from the 1950s through the present day.

SPONSORSHIP: **AVAILABLE**

9 POWER!

With enough power, you can make a barn door fly. But, with too little power, even the best aircraft remains earth-bound. This exhibit traces the evolution of aircraft propulsion from early gasoline engines through rockets, and on to modern jets.

SPONSORSHIP: **AVAILABLE**

10 GENERATION GREEN

Green energy: The what, how, who, and why behind alternate energy technology in the aerospace industry and elsewhere in American industry.

SPONSORSHIP: **AVAILABLE**

GATEWAY TO THE FLYABLE HISTORIC AIRCRAFT EXPERIENCE



This area will contain exhibits on the Museum's flyable historic aircraft and a World War II-style pilot "ready room" providing a gateway to the flyable historic aircraft experience.



WACO YMF-5C



B-25



C-47



B-17

SPONSORSHIP: **AVAILABLE**

PRESERVATION VAULTS

Two secure storage areas with independent climate control for the storage and preservation of artifacts that are not currently on exhibit.

SPONSORSHIP: **AVAILABLE**

PRESERVATION STUDIO

A well-equipped work room for the preservation of artifacts and the preparation of exhibits.

SPONSORSHIP: **AVAILABLE**

AIRCRAFT RESTORATION CENTER

A dedicated work area with its own entrance for the restoration of aircraft and other large artifacts.

SPONSORSHIP: **AVAILABLE**

Some of the proposed themes, storylines, exhibits, and facilities for the new National Museum of Aviation and Technology.

Memphis Belle vs. Hot Stuff:

How History Came to Celebrate the Wrong WWII Airplane

BY SCOTT ORR

The Daily Courier — November 16, 2014

(reprinted with the permission of

The Daily Courier – Prescott, Arizona)



ERAU Professor William Waldock spoke Wednesday on the strange circumstance that caused history to celebrate the Memphis Belle instead of Hot Stuff, the bomber that actually first flew 25 missions in World War II.

If you've seen the 1990 film "Memphis Belle," you know the story of the B-17 and her trusty crew, the first heavy bomber of World War II to complete 25 missions and return home.

It's a stirring tale and the movie included an all-star cast.

Only problem, it isn't true.

Memphis Belle was not the first to complete the required number of missions. In fact, she may have been the third.

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University Professor William Waldock, an accident investigator and "aviation archaeologist," has studied the history and explained why that myth has persisted Wednesday night at ERAU's Davis Learning Center as part of the school's Aviation History series.

Once an aircrew wrapped up 25 missions, the War Department, predecessor to the Department of Defense, would bring the bomber

home and have the plane and crew do a nationwide promotional tour to sell war bonds to fund the war effort, Waldock said.

But Memphis Belle was beaten to the punch by another B-17, six days earlier.

It was named "Hell's Angels," Waldock said, and "there was a little bit of concern about promoting 'Hell's Angels' and trying to promote the war bonds with it."

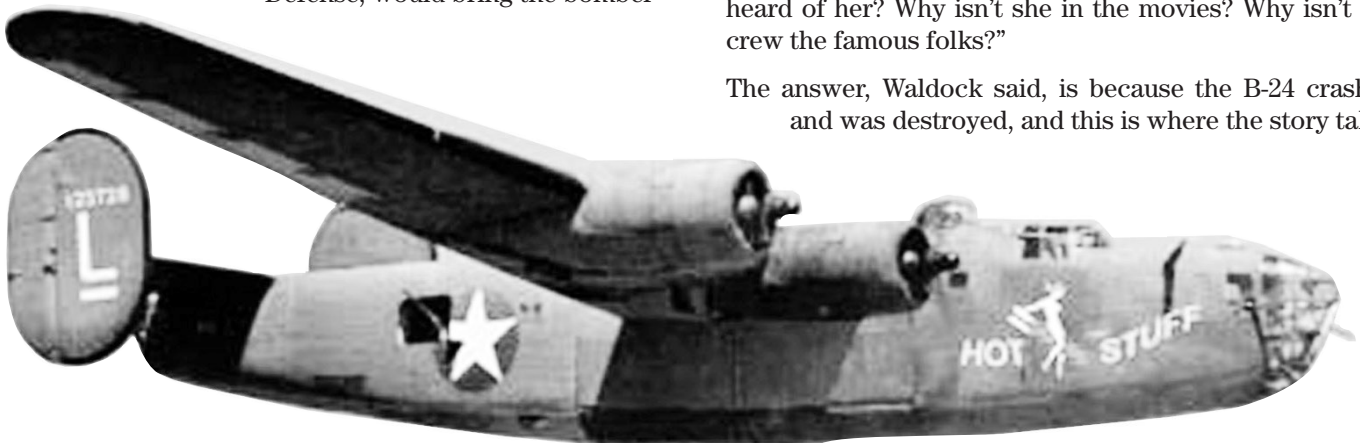
That airplane is listed in some publications as the first to complete 25 missions.

"But that's not right, either," Waldock said.

The very first was a B-24 named "Hot Stuff," he said.

"Hot Stuff flew her 25th mission on the 7th of February, 1943. It's well-documented. That was three-and-a-half months before Memphis Belle," he said. "So how come we haven't heard of her? Why isn't she in the movies? Why isn't the crew the famous folks?"

The answer, Waldock said, is because the B-24 crashed and was destroyed, and this is where the story takes



The B-24 named "Hot Stuff" that actually was the first bomber in World War II to complete 25 missions.



The World War II crew of the B-24 Bomber "Hot Stuff."

a strange turn.

Hot Stuff was set to return to the U.S. on May 3, 1943. But first, the plane was set for an "Inspection tour" of Iceland with a VIP aboard: Lt. Gen. Frank Andrews, the commander of the U.S. forces in the European Theater.

Andrews, an experienced, instrument-rated pilot, bumped the normal co-pilot off the plane and flew in his place.

Also aboard were Andrews staff and four clergymen, who bumped five other crewmen.

"There are plenty of anecdotal sources that say the real purpose of General Andrews' travel was that he was going back to Washington, D.C. to be blessed by Congress and the president, awarded his fourth star, and formally named Supreme Allied Commander of Europe," Waldock said.

But he doesn't make it. The plane skipped a scheduled stop at which the crew would have learned the weather at their destination in Iceland was miserable, with zero visibility. And the aircraft's radio was apparently not working.

Because the B-24's commander was a captain and

the co-pilot was a three-star general, it's likely that Andrews was making the decision, Waldock said.

The plane made it to their destination airfield, but couldn't land, and headed for another airfield. It, too, was socked in, so Andrews decided to turn back to the original field.

The plane climbed to 900 feet, and, slightly off course, Hot Stuff crashed into a 1,100-foot mountain. Fourteen of the 15 people aboard were killed.

U.S. officials, hoping to divert attention from the crash and death of a high-ranking military official, decided to promote Memphis Belle as the first airplane to complete 25 missions and sent the crew on the promotional tour, Waldock

said.

After Andrews' death, Dwight D. Eisenhower was named Supreme Allied Commander, and went on to become president.

In 1948, the base for the president's airplane was named after Andrews.



The B-24 "Hot Stuff" flew her 25th mission on 7 February, 1943, three-and-a-half months before Memphis Belle. The bomber crashed in Iceland 3 May, 1943. Capt. Robert H. Shannon (pilot) had completed his tour and was flying home. Lt. Gen. Frank Andrews had taken the place of the co-pilot when it crashed in terrible weather conditions.



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*The Towner House
is said to be the
oldest house on its
original foundation in
Ypsilanti*

The Towner House:

A Diamond in the Rough

BY JAMES MANN

The streetscape of North Huron between Michigan Avenue and Cross Street is an almost complete textbook of the architectural styles of Michigan from the 19th and early 20th Centuries. Here are examples of Italianate Ville, Italianate, Second Empire, Queen Ann, Georgian Revival and Neo Gothic. Each facility restored to former glory, outstanding examples of historic preservation. It is hard to believe these gems suffered years, if not decades, of neglect and abuse. By the 1970's a number of people in the City were ready to see each and every one of these buildings demolished. Now, each is a source of pride for the city. There is, however, one diamond in the rough to be found. This is the Towner House at 303 North Huron, on the corner with Emmet Street.

The Towner House is said to be the oldest house on its original foundation in Ypsilanti. The crossbeams in the basement are tree limbs, with the bark still on. The house is in the Greek Revival style of architecture, the first used in Michigan, after the log cabin.

The style was made popular in America by builder guides, such as *The American Builder's Companion* by Asher Benjamin, *The Builder's Assistant* by John Haviland and *Beauties of Modern Architecture* by Minaril Lafever. Guides included plates showing examples of the style, as well as plans and instructions on how to build them. The professional architect was far in the future.

The site on which the Towner House stands was deeded to Marcus Lane and Arden H. Ballard on February 4, 1836, for a consideration of \$181.37. Ballard and his wife quit their claim

to the deed in April of 1837, for a consideration of \$500. The rise in price on a property is usually the result of an improvement to the site, such as the construction of a house. Lane was one of the first attorneys in Washtenaw County. He was a delegate for Washtenaw County at the State Constitutional Convention in 1836. Ballard was a builder and it was he who built what is now the Ladies Literary Club House on North Washington Street and the original section of the Ballard-Breakey House on North Huron. Each was built in the Greek Revival style.



The Towner House at 303 North Huron Street.

In most accounts of the Towner House, Lane is credited with the construction of the house. The date the house was built is not known, but accounts place it in about 1837. It is likely, that Lane partnered with Ballard to build the house in 1836, and once work was completed, Lane paid Ballard his fee.

"From the standpoint of architectural history," wrote Kevin J. McDonough, in a paper dated February 7, 1982, *"the Towner House is a rarity. It may possibly be the only house of post and beam barn type construction*



The original log beams with the bark still intact in the basement of the Towner House.

remaining in either Ypsilanti or Washtenaw County. Its' vernacular Greek Revival style, Gothic Revival porch, Michigan basement and haphazard additions make it a unique testament to the pioneer era of early Michigan. Because it stands on its' original site and foundation it is an important link in the physical evolution of the historic environment in which it is located. Its historical significance in this respect is unquestionable"

*"The low pitched gable roof with a broken pediment and entablature serving as a base are evidence of its Greek Revival style," notes a paper prepared by **Preservation Eastern**. "Adding to the significance of the house are several six-over-six double sash windows. Some of these have their original glass. Later additions to the house include an Egyptian Revival doorway and a Gothic Revival porch, demonstrating the evolution of taste and style in Ypsilanti."*

On April 4, 1840, Marcus Lane died and left his estate to his wife. As executor of the estate, he had named John Geddes. On March 2, 1842 Geddes presided over the sale of the property to the brother of Marcus, Charles. Then on April 19, 1842 Charles and his wife sold the site to William Field

for \$400. The property was returned to Charles one year later for a mortgage of \$400.

"What occurred in the next five years is not totally clear," wrote McDonough in his history of the Towner House, "but the property was presented by Mr. Field to John S. Worden by Warranty Deed for a consideration of \$675. Two months later Mr. Worden sold the property for a profit of \$25. The new owner was Lewis Morey and his wife Olive who sold the property on March 6, 1851 for a consideration of \$900."

The new owner was Nancy Spencer Towner, the widow of Ephraim Towner. Her late husband Ephraim is said to have arrived in Ypsilanti in 1835, with eight children by his first wife Anna. She had died giving birth to Norman on November 3, 1816. At Ypsilanti, Ephraim married Nancy, who had several children of her own, including Jeanette.

On May 16, 1854 Norman married Jeanette. They were step brother and step sister. For a time the couple lived in Chicago but then returned to Ypsilanti. The date of their return is uncertain, but it was most likely in the 1850's. The two lived in the house on North Huron Street, after the death of Nancy. The date of her death is not recorded.

The couple had five children. The first child was Caroline, born August 18, 1856. The second child was Guy Carlton Towner, who was born on August 24, 1858. He died at the age of six, on November 17, 1864. The next was Anna Hinsdale Towner, born on December 18, 1860. Tracy Lay Towner was born on March 2, 1864. Laura Magill Towner, the fifth child, was born on January 18, 1866. She graduated from the Michigan State Normal College, with a degree in the Scientific Course. Laura died in 1884, at the age of eighteen. Their father, Norman, died at the age of 79, on October 1, 1895, of an "attack of inflammation of the bowels." Jeanette

died on July 11, 1920, in the house on North Huron, and there the funeral service was held.

*"Mrs. Towner was a member of St. Luke's church and of the Parish Aid and Home Association and for many years was actively engaged in church work," noted her obituary, published in **The Ypsilanti Daily Press** of July 13, 1920. "The last years of her life were spent rather quietly, a sprained ankle in October rendering her unable to go about freely thereafter. She was doubtless the oldest inhabitant of Ypsilanti, making her home in this city and her life has spanned the development of Ypsilanti from a small village to its present standing as a prosperous small city."*

"A most hospitable atmosphere has always pervaded Mrs. Towner's home. Her nearest friends visited her constantly and there are many who considered her their best and most esteemed friend," continued the obituary. "Gracious and loving and sympathetic she embraced an entire neighborhood in her affection." She is buried in Highland Cemetery." The three surviving children lived most of their lives in Ypsilanti in the house on North Huron Street. None of the three married.

Tracy Towner graduated with the law class of the University of Michigan in June of 1888. He joined with Captain E. P. Allen in the practice of law in 1888. After the death of Captain Allen, he continued the practice alone. Their office was in the Ypsilanti Savings Bank Building, now City Hall. Tracy Towner was mayor of Ypsilanti from 1910 to 1912.

*"He was one of the most active members of the Goodfellows Organization, and every year, despite rain, snow or sleet, he could be found on Michigan Avenue, selling papers to provide Christmas cheer for needy residents of the city," noted **The Daily Ypsilanti Press** of Thursday, October 14, 1943. He died October 14,*

1943, at the age of 79.

"Anna was attending grammar school in Ypsilanti in 1873," wrote Mary Anderson, in a paper dated February, 1983, "and graduated from Michigan State Normal College in Ypsilanti with an English-Latin Course in 1880 at the age of twenty. In 1885 and 1888-89 she was listed as teaching in the Central Building of Ypsilanti Union School." She made a career as a teacher, and died at the age of 89, on August 7, 1949.

The last of the children was Caroline, who died at the age of 95, on April 4, 1951. *"Miss Towner taught voice for many years at the Conservatory under Prof. Frederic Pease; taught in the Fifth Ward School; studied at the Julliard School of Music and the Louvre Conservatory in Paris, France. She was able to speak fluently in several languages,"* reported her obituary.

After the death of Tracy Towner the property passed into the care of St. Luke's Episcopal Church at 120 North Huron Street. The sisters continued to live in the house until their deaths.

In 1951 the house was purchased by Gerald Stewart and his wife, Mary. The couple, with their daughter Susan, lived in the house until 1968. During the years of the Towner occupancy of the house, an addition had been added to the rear of the house. The daughter, Susan Stewart Schoeder, later wrote of these additions, *"consisting of a nice dining*

room with leaded windows, a garden without and a trellis with wisterian vine. Beside the dining room was a smaller room with additional two steps reaching to the stairway, and a cellar door entrance. Behind these two rooms was a kitchen with iron sink and wooden cupboards. The only counter space was a kitchen table. A small porch was in an el behind the dining room and beside the kitchen. Behind the kitchen was a sort of storage room. A separate one car garage had been added behind all this with a lovely grape vine on a fence beside the driveway."

She noted the house was surrounded by lovely old elm trees, but these succumbed to Dutch Elm disease in the 1950's. The house, she noted, was a very pleasant place to live. *"My mother furnished it with lovely, appropriate antiques. Indeed several of them were from the Towners, however recovered and refurbished. Despite the very basic kitchen, there were lovely meals prepared for serving in the dining room and on warmer days on the side porch. I remember the grapes dripping their juice into a metal dishpan to make lovely tasty jelly."*

The property was purchased by the First Presbyterian Church for \$61,741.78 on July 17, 1972. This was for future development of church facilities. According to some sources, the church planned to use the site for the expansion of the church parking lot, and others claim it was

for the memorial garden. The Session voted unanimously on June 10, 1974, *"to tear down the Huron Street property unless the Historical Society is interested in retaining and removing it."*

The intention of the church to demolish the Towner House created a controversy that would continue for years. The Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation was founded to preserve the historic houses and building of the city. The saving of the Towner House was a major goal of the Foundation. The church leased the house to the Heritage Foundation for \$1.00 per year. The Foundation in turn sublet the house to Gary Decker, who paid \$100 a month. This money went to the upkeep of the property. Decker lived in the house for six years, working to renovate it. It was during these years the house was painted a dark green color. In 1981 the Foundation requested a lease of more than one year. The request was turned down by the church.

A new group, The Friends of the Towner House Children's Museum signed a lease for ten years with the church on August 2, 1982. Under the terms of the lease the committee overseeing the museum agreed to maintain the house, pay all bills, provide adequate insurance and complete specific improvements on the house. Completed improvements included: Stripping off the old roof, installation of new shingles on the roof, replacing and repairing unsound wood in the roof, replac-



The Towner House showing the additions that were added over the years to the original structure.



All of the additions were removed and a new roof was added as part of a consent agreement between the City and the Presbyterian Church in 1999.

ing existing flashing, installing new basement stairs and handrail and reset bathroom stool. The Heritage Foundation donated \$1,800 in 1983, for the installation of a new furnace.

Students from the Ypsilanti Public Schools visited the house to learn what life was like in a 19th century home. The home, turned museum, was the site of activities for children during the Heritage Festivals during the 1980's. Teachers from the public schools volunteered their time, to teach 19th century crafts. The Children's Museum sought a \$36,000

State of Michigan Equity Grant for the restoration of the house. The grant required a long term lease with the church. The request was turned down.

A lawsuit was filed between the City of Ypsilanti and the Presbyterian Church. The court ordered a mediated settlement of the dispute. A compromise was reached which called for demolition of the additions, replacing the roof and a group of citizens were chosen to oversee the house. This group was named the Towner House Foundation. On December 31, 2014,

the Towner House was purchased from the First Presbyterian Church by the Towner House Foundation.

The Foundation is working with the Eastern Michigan University Preservation Department to come up with plans to rehabilitate the structure.

A new chapter in the history of the Towner House is about to begin. Stay tuned for further developments.

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



Restore the Towner House **BRICK***by***BRICK**

Note: Bricks will be placed along the front and back walks of the Towner House

**Happy Birthday
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(4" x 8" Brick example)

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Towner House Foundation Officer Signature Date
John Harrington, President

Brick by Brick Project proceeds are designated to restore the Towner House



Kathrine Howard's beautiful milk glass is on display in the Library.

Museum Advisory Board Report

BY NANCY WHEELER, BOARD CHAIR

We have had a busy winter! Remember how you hated to clean at home but found that washing dishes at a friend's home was fun? On January 22 and 29, volunteers dusted, swept, scrubbed, vacuumed, polished, cleaned, washed, refolded, rearranged, and brushed the museum to a sparkling state. A huge "Thank You" to the 15 that participated.

Our new exhibits are Kathryn Howard's beautiful milk glass and Bill Nickels' c. 1930, '40's, '50's toy soldiers in the Library. (Someone asked Bill how he kept the soldiers so long. Bill said "You just put them in a box in the attic and grow older!") We rearranged and updated three cases in the Dining Room and three in the Kitchen. In the upstairs hall, a dozen cards of our buttons are displayed. Don't miss the Toy Room. Four "children" are dressed and ready for spring!

Lincoln Schools' Second and Third Graders will tour in April.

Welcome to New Docents, Betty Johnston and Louise Nagel. We still need guides for the weekends. If you have three hours once a month, call us at 734-482-4990.

Save May 9, 2:00 to 4:00, for our second High Tea. Again we will have a great selection of sweet and savory treats. Reservations are due by May 1. Call 734-484-0080, \$5 donation required. Hats and gloves are optional. We will have a few to loan for the party. Last year's event was highly successful. Thank you Virginia.



Four "children" are dressed and ready for spring in the Toy Room!

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A Tale of Two River Street Men:



Artist's drawing of the Lyman Decatur Norris house on River Street from a 1857 map.

Justus and Lyman Decatur Norris

BY JANICE ANSCHUETZ

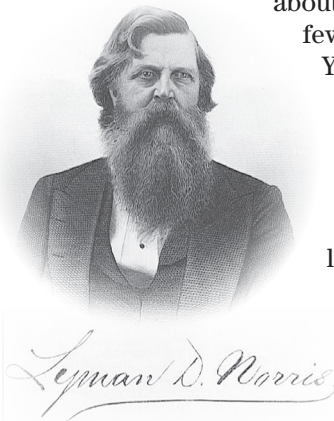
February is Black History month and in this installment of The River Street Saga I am providing a perplexing and moving segment, a tale of two men related by blood but very different in their beliefs about slavery. In The River Street Saga articles previously published in *The Gleanings*, I have written

about people who have lived on the few short blocks of River Street in Ypsilanti and who have left a legacy in Ypsilanti. One of the men in this segment left his mark not only within Ypsilanti, but with his oratory skills and genius in interpreting the law, may have left his mark on the history of the United States and caused a domino effect leading to the bloody Civil War. Even though we have no record of Justus Norris living on River Street, he was the manager of The Western Hotel which was

located at River and Cross Streets. His nephew, Lyman Decatur Norris, grew up in a mansion on River Street and later built his own fine home at River and Forest.

Justus Norris: Justus Norris was born in Deweysbury, Vermont on March 25, 1802. In October, 1829 he married 19 year old Mary Ann Kinne, from Waterford, Vermont. Justus earned his living as a teacher. After the death of his father in 1831, he traveled with his wife to join his brother, Mark Norris, in the frontier town of Ypsilanti. Their family increased in size with the birth of Helen Cassandra Norris who was born in 1831, Roccena Bellinda Norris, born in 1835 and Willard Kinne Norris, born in 1841.

Justus was a man known for living his religion and attempting to do what he believed was right. He was so passionate in his beliefs that slavery was wrong that he left the Methodist Church, where he was a leader and board member, to join a Wesleyan group, which was formed in 1841 and was vocal in their opposition to slavery. In that same year, Washtenaw County held an antislavery county convention in Ann Arbor. Sister Ma-



A photo of Lyman Decatur Norris produced by the Williams Brothers Studio in New York.



ROCCENA NORRIS



MARK NORRIS



LYMAN NORRIS

These original portraits are permanently displayed in the formal parlor at the Ypsilanti Historical Museum.

ria Hayda, in her book *The Urban Dimension and the Midwestern Frontier, A Study of Democracy at Ypsilanti, Michigan: 1825-1858*, writes “Under Justus Norris, the convention adopted a resolution that ‘Slavery is a political as well as moral evil,’ and it was concluded that the logical resort was to political pressures and action. The convention elected Norris and S.W. Patchin as party leaders.”

Justus’ occupation is listed in the family record as “merchant, hotel keeper, and farmer.” Indeed, when his brother Mark Norris built and opened The Western Hotel on River Street in 1839, he became the manager. The building was considered an elegant hotel with shops on the first floor and rooms above.

Justus was well known in the community as being opposed to slavery and held the first meeting of the Liberty Party in Washtenaw County in the Western Hotel in 1842.

Justus’ political and moral positions regarding slavery were not popular in the growing village of Ypsilanti. Being against slavery was a controversial issue in the frontier town of Ypsilanti and even the abolitionist newspaper, *Signal of Liberty*, published in Ann Arbor, reflected that “some of our neighbors accuse us of being worse than horse thieves” because of their assistance and aid in helping escaped slaves and in their policies promoting changes in the law. The Liberty Party believed that the constitution of the United States actually encouraged slavery. At this first meeting, it was resolved that a Liberty Party should be organized and meet regularly. Justus Norris and five other men were elected to “organize a Liberty party, and let our influence be felt at the ballot box, in the full belief that our cause will be triumphant.” The men ran a slate of candidates in the next election in Washtenaw County and Justus put his name on the ballot for sheriff and received 14 votes.

*“Under Justus Norris,
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The convention elected
Norris and S.W. Patchin
as party leaders.”*

What were the beliefs of the rest of the Norris family regarding slavery? It has long been rumored that Mark and Roccena Norris were abolitionists and in some way part of the underground railroad. There is no question that their daughter Elviria’s husband Benjamin and his father Nathan Follett, both founders of Depot Town and business partners with Mark Norris, were abolitionists, providing money and even direct aid to free blacks. Benjamin’s parents inherited slaves and a plantation and freed the slaves, sold the plantation, and moved to a free state bringing with them former slaves who wanted to travel with them and work as paid servants. Mark Norris’ views can be read in letters he wrote stating that he was deeply concerned that the issue of slavery would destroy the union.

Alas, this outspoken abolitionist’s life ended suddenly and tragically when on February 11, 1845 he was killed by the bursting of a cylinder in a threshing machine. He was remembered by his family in a book published in 1899

about the Norris family as being “a strong anti-slavery man, a firm advocate of temperance, a warm-hearted devoted Christian, a member of the Methodist Episcopal church.”

His widow lived until 1888 after marrying a man by the name of Liberty P. Beach in 1856 and residing in both Medina and Ann Arbor. His daughter Helen married John S. Estabrook and named her oldest son Justus after her father. They lived in Lansing, Michigan where her husband was Assistant Secretary of the Agricultural College. Son Willard also named his oldest son Justus and owned a farm in Vermontville, Michigan.

Justus’ daughter Roccena lived in Ypsilanti and was a talented artist. The Ypsilanti Historical Museum houses several of her pastel-colored water colors reflecting beautiful and peaceful vistas, perhaps inspired by her father’s dreams that all men are equal and the world should live in harmony.

Lyman Decatur Norris: Lyman Decatur Norris, whose family called him Decatur, was born in Covington, New York on May 4, 1823. He is the only son of Mark and Roccena Vail Norris. At the age of three he made the difficult and arduous journey with his parents and older sister Elviria to the wilderness which would later be named Ypsilanti. His parents soon became involved in creating a civilized and pleasant town and earning a small fortune in the process. A snippet about this adventurous young boy can be found in the book *The History of Washtenaw County*, published in 1881. This little narration gives us a picture of the community of Ypsilanti in the year it occurred, 1833.

“In the summer of 1833, the son of one of the early settlers, Lyman Decatur Norris, wandered from his home (author’s note – the Norris family was then living in the first frame house on the east side of the river, some believe it is the home now next to and north of the train depot) in search of berries, and lost himself

in the recesses of the land. Not returning at the time when hunger generally prompts a boy to seek his house, the parents were much troubled, yet waited a few minutes before consulting the neighbors. These were minutes of terrible anxiety. At length the villagers learned of the little fellow's loss: they speculated as to his whereabouts; indeed one old lady wondered whether it was a massasauga (rattlesnake) or bear which eloped with him. Many good citizens credited the mill dam with his reception; others stated definitely that the temperance lecturer from Detroit was a kidnapper. The wildest theories prevailed. Every one was bewildered - not every one - Mr. Campion, one of the early store-keepers of the village kept actually below zero (sic.) on the subject. His coolness and reticence were so complexing that many men returned from a fruitless search, asked him if he knew where the boy was. "What boy?" "A boy lost, and you come to ask Campion! Did you search for him?" "We did! We did!" replied a chorus of voices. "Where?" "Down by the mills, in the mill dam and along the river, round the town, down as far as the corner, and every place; but we cannot find him". "Well, said Campion, "I guess you're the **** set of fools ever came in here. Remember this; and if you want to find the boy, go where no **** boy ever went before, where no

**** boy ever thought of going, and there you'll find the little cuss." That crowd of searchers went forth to find the cause of all this trouble, acted precisely on Campion's directions, and found the youth sleeping beneath the kettles in the old ashery, a few hundred feet north of Cross Street."

Decatur grew up as a wealthy and privileged child in a home at 213 North River Street. The nine bedrooms were often full of esteemed visitors. Both his mother and father were busy and involved in helping to form a civilization out of a wilderness. Roccena and Mark Norris helped to organize and build a school, church, bank, businesses, a library and social institutions to aid the poor. Decatur was taught in the school his mother ran in their home until he was ten years old. He was then sent to Marshall, Michigan where he attended a boarding school called The Marshall School, which was a Presbyterian preparatory school. He had a classical education stressing Latin, the humanities and science. He was a talented and hard working student and by September, 1841, at the age of 18, he enrolled at the University of Michigan at the new Ann Arbor campus. For the first three weeks he was the only student at the University of Michigan and had four professors all to himself. He continued with a classical education and added the study

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of the Greek language. His academic skills and diligence impressed his instructors and they encouraged him to transfer to Yale College where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in 1845.

His many letters, now in the Bentley Library at the University of Michigan, tell us that Decatur had considered other careers, including a military one at West Point, journalism, or farming, but the final decision was to pursue a career in law. He studied at the Detroit law offices of Alexander F. Fraser, and was admitted to the Michigan Bar in 1847. Despite his father's objections that he would be living too far from the family, Decatur moved to St. Louis, Missouri in 1848 to set up a law practice.

Decatur and his father Mark Norris also disagreed on politics. In a letter dated August 20, 1848, he explained why he had joined the Democratic Party as opposed to his father's Whig loyalty. Among the reasons he cited was that the Democratic Party was a party "opposing faction, abolitionism and nativism." His father wrote back in a letter of September 10, 1848 "I firmly believe that unless Whig principles prevail and triumph the men are now living who will see this Glorious Union dissolved and become a faction of contending elements, North against the South, South against the North." Mark's words were a prophecy of events to follow, perhaps spurred on by his son's involvement in the Dred Scott case, discussed later in this article. Little did Mark know that his own Norris Block (now called the Thompson Block) at the corner of River Street and Cross would soon house those very northern soldiers fighting their southern brothers.

To leave politics aside for a moment and continue with the life story of Lyman Decatur Norris, it seems that he was gaining a reputation as a thorough and diligent attorney in the new territory of



The statement that resulted from the Dred Scott decision by the U. S. Supreme Court.

Missouri. In 1851 he continued his law education by studying Civil Law in Heidelberg, Germany. He found this necessary because many of his law cases involved both French and Spanish land claims which were made prior to the Louisiana Purchase. When he returned to St. Louis, his life changed from that of a mere attorney. He became the political editor and then half owner of a newspaper, *The St. Louis Daily*. In the book *Lineage and Biographies of the Norris Family in America 1640-1892*, written by Leonard Allison Morrison, he explains that Decatur "while editor gave an able editorial on the public and congressional life, record and speeches of Franklin Pierce, then a candidate for the presidency and unknown in the west. More than 25,000 copies of

this number were afterward printed, and the article was copied in all the democratic journals in the Mississippi valley, and had a strong influence in promoting the success of the Democratic Party."

Perhaps the most significant event of Decatur's life began when he returned to St. Louis and joined the law firm handling the Dred Scott case. We can learn more about this case in the words of Lyman Decatur Norris both in a brief narrative he wrote which was republished in the January, 2009 edition of *The Gleanings* and in a letter to his mother, which he wrote March 31, 1852. Decatur was assigned this case, which had been with his law firm for a number of years. The story begins with Dred Scott being born into slavery in Virginia. Dred was sold to a Dr. Emerson and traveled with him to the free state of Illinois. After Emerson's death, his daughter inherited Dred and when she moved to a plantation near St. Louis she allowed Dred to work for wages and she would take a portion of them.

Dred soon became aware that he could sue his owner for his freedom based on fourteen other cases which had been won in Missouri courts by former slaves who had lived for a period of time in a free state. In fact, he had lived in Illinois when he had been owned by Dr. Emerson. Dred Scott won his freedom in a Missouri court but his owner appealed the case and hired Lyman Decatur Norris to take it to a higher court, which he did. At this time, Dred Scott worked for Decatur for wages, which were shared with his "owner" under supervision of the sheriff. The case finally went to the Supreme Court of the United States, argued by Decatur. Not only did he win the case and Dred was returned to slavery but the other 14 cases, where former slaves had been given their freedom were overturned as well. The Supreme Court decision was based on



Harriet & Dred Scott

the premise that the Constitution did not recognize black slaves as men and therefore they could not sue. The statement "Am I Not a Man?" - heard even to this day, came from this ruling. Black and white men alike were shocked by this decision and the ranks of abolitionists grew in number and fervor.

Those opposed to slavery became more and more vocal and those that supported it grew in confidence that the laws of the nation, indeed the constitution on which it was based, were on their side and they felt justified in owning slaves.

Lyman Decatur Norris, a River Street boy from Ypsilanti, for a retainer fee of fifty cents helped change the course of history in 1852. How did he explain this to his family who were noted for their liberal beliefs? In his own words, this is the letter that he wrote to his mother Roccena, who lived on River Street in Ypsilanti.

March 31 1852 from St. Louis:
I must not forget to tell you of my "Slave Case." The opinion in which I sent you some days since. For the last 15 years there had been growing up in our State (Missouri) Supreme Court a succession of decisions under the Ordinance of '84 Missouri Compromise Act of 1820 and in some cases even the Constitution of Illinois another neighboring free State in the highest degree favorable to freedom. The amount of which were that a permitted residence of a slave for two or three days even, upon free soil worked his freedom in Missouri. Under their decisions, some fourteen in number, "Dred Scott" who has been my servant for two years, in 1846 tried for his freedom having been taken by his master in '36 to Ft. Snelling in Rock

Lyman Decatur
 Norris, a River
 Street boy from
 Ypsilanti, for a
 retainer fee of fifty
 cents helped change
 the course of history
 in 1852.

Island. The case had lingered so long it became chronic. Dred's nose had been kept to the grindstone by his lawyers, who worked but little and made him pay well.

The defense had passed through several lawyers hands and finally was turned over to me, as a hopeless case by the older lawyers. For 50 cents as a retained case of success \$400.00.

On full investigation argued it twice before the old Bench of Justice.

I won it you can see from the Opinion - Previous to arguing it the last time, my faith in the correctness of the legal principals I maintained all the while increasing. I told Dred I should beat him and proposed to him that I would buy him and his family for \$400 of his Master which I could easily have done, as he had no hopes of winning the case - and then Dred must make an agreement to pay me \$100. a year, take care of my room etc. until it was paid (little over two years) and he would be free - but he was certain of winning and thought it would be a waste of money and he is now a slave for life - hard is it not? Notwithstanding I had tried to do my duty as a sworn attorney. I thought so too, but my sympathies were all thrown away. Before the decision Dred and his wife had to work day and night to live, he wore old clothes and always had a thin, anxious, worn look that belongs to a poor free negro. I hardly even knew him to laugh and have often times thought of recommending him to start for Canada and get out of a slave state and away from trouble.

The moment the matter was settled and his Master took charge of him again, gave him a house, clothed

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him warmer and fed, he was another man, his face shines with fat and contentment – you can hear his loud guffaw a mile, and nothing does him more good than to sit on a Box in the sun and abuse “poor white folks”-Perhaps you say poor fellow he don’t know any better. Yes, I admit he is in a poor state of existence but that is not his fault or his Masters – There he must remain, a happy and contented slave, than a poor squalid, disturbed free negro but I must stop somewhere.

Goodbye, love to all, Dc

The State Historical Society of Missouri explains this complicated case on their web site: “On March 6, 1857, Dred Scott finally received a decision about his suit for freedom. Chief Justice Roger B. Taney ruled that Scott, because of his race, was not a citizen of the United States. He had no right to bring suit in a federal court. He had never been free while living in “free states,” and the Congress had no authority to prohibit slavery. The entire Scott family was to remain enslaved.”

Dred Scott was given his freedom in 1857 by his owner who had married a man opposed to slavery. His ownership and that of his family was transferred to Taylor Blow for the sum of \$750. Dred worked as a porter at a hotel and his wife took in laundry to support themselves, yet Dred died in dire poverty of tuberculosis in 1858. The Missouri State Historical Society article concludes, “Though Dred Scott did not win his freedom via the courts, his valiant fight made possible by the assistance of friends and abolitionists, pushed America toward a bloody civil

war that would eventually abolish the practice of slavery in this country.”

In 1854, prior to this decision, and no longer on the case, Lyman Decatur Norris returned to Ypsilanti in order to be with his ill father, Mark, and help his brother in law, Benjamin Follett, handle the various business affairs of his parents. It was a life-changing year for him as he went into law practice with an office in Depot Town and the same year, on November 22, 1854, he married Lucy Alsop Whittelsey of Middletown, Connecticut.

According to the late Ypsilanti historian Foster Fletcher, Mark and Lucy lived in a beautiful large home on River Street, which was located on the spot that the Hutchinson mansion now stands at the South East corner of River and Forest Streets – one of the highest points in the area. It was only a block from his sister, Elvira, and brother in law, Benjamin Follett’s estate which covered the River Street block between Oak and Maple Streets. The Norris family was all together again on River Street.

Decatur and Lucy Norris were blessed with three children: Maria Whittelsey, Mark, and Lucy (who died in infancy). Sister Maria Hayda in her book contends “*The marriage was uncongenial and apparently not a happy one, for after the death of Mark Norris, (in 1862) his wife Lucy stayed with her widowed mother in New England, keeping with her the child Maria, and apparently seldom returning to Michigan.*” She cites the source for this information were letters exchanged between Decatur and Lucy. However, through letters available at the Ypsilanti Historical Museum archives, we know that Maria spent a great deal of time with her grandmother Roccena Norris and frequently traveled with her to visit friends or new cities. Furthermore, Maria authored a detailed and extensive biography and tribute to her grandmother Roccena Norris, which she presented orally in 1878 and it can be found published in *The State Pioneer Society* book of 1878.

After the death of his father in 1862, and perhaps when his wife moved out of state, Decatur went back to his



The Lyman Decatur Norris home at 21 Prospect Street, NE in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

childhood home at 213 River Street to live with his mother. Records show that Lyman Decatur and Lucy Norris sold their home, another home they owned at the corner of Forest and River Street, as well as lots on the site in 1866. Sister Maria Hayda tells us that "Decatur Norris between the years 1854 and 1871 again attempted, as he had after his graduation from Yale, to fit into the Ypsilanti field of opportunity either in law or in business. However, he was unsuited to the latter, and opportunity for advancement in the legal profession in the town was limited."

He did involve himself in politics and represented Washtenaw County in 1867 in the Michigan Constitutional Convention. In 1869 Decatur was given an honorary masters degree from The University of Michigan. In the same year he was elected chair of the state senate with a margin of over 200 votes. Morrison tells us of Decatur's interesting campaign style. Decatur "introduced the practice of joint discussions...The opponents traveled together and were each others guests in their respective towns." This led to a warm and lifelong friendship between the two men. While in the senate he was on the judiciary and education committees and also chairman of the geological survey. According to his obituary in the newspaper, *The Ypsilantian* of January 11, 1894, "He was instrumental in getting an appropriation of \$8,000 for surveying the Upper Peninsula, a project that led directly to the development of that rich portion of the state. The geological reports which he supervised proved to be of inestimable value."



The Lyman Decatur Norris Tombstone in Highland Cemetery.

Perhaps Decatur was encouraged by his niece Alice's talented husband, Edward Uhl to join with him as a partner in his growing law firm in Grand Rapids. The law firm was a notable one and Decatur was considered one of the leading lawyers of railroad law in the nation. In 1883 his son, Mark Norris, who had become a lawyer after graduating from the University of Michigan, joined the firm and his daughter Ma-

ria, who had become a doctor, graduating from college in Montreal and medical school in Boston, lived with her father in their elegant home at 21 Prospect Street, NE in Grand Rapids. Decatur's success in life continued when he was appointed a regent at The University of Michigan in 1883.

Decatur died at his home in Grand Rapids on January 11, 1894 of "heart trouble." In *The Ypsilantian* obituary he is "remembered by all not only as a successful lawyer and prominent politician but as a straight-forward, honest man with marked affection for his aged father..." Lyman Decatur Norris now resides in Highland Cemetery on River Street, along with the rest of his talented and ambitious family who have helped shape Ypsilanti. But it can be also said of this man that his ability as an attorney may have changed the direction of an entire nation and inspired the cry, heard still today "AM I NOT A MAN?"

(Janice Anschuetz is a long time member of the Ypsilanti Historical Society and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)

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YPSILANTI NOMADS

An embroidery of the Ypsilanti Nomads car club.

BY FRED THOMAS

Harold Foster, a local policeman, started the Ypsilanti Nomads in 1953. They met at a double-bay Shell gas station on the northwest corner of Michigan Avenue and Denton Road, about six miles east of Ypsilanti. When I joined in the spring of 1957 the Ypsilanti police station at South Washington and Perrin Street served as their meeting place. At the time both the Ypsilanti Police Department and the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Department sponsored the club. Harold Foster was still the advisor. The Nomads' ages ranged from 16 to 25.

Some of the members were Dick Albertson, James Arnold, Dewey Barich, Leon Chapman, John Coleman, Pat Cook, Larry Dennis, David Eaton, Orval Forbes, Melvin Foster, Don Gimson, Marvin Hayes, Clyde Hoover, Egbert House, Bill Kessick, James Lambert, David Meldrum, Jack Miller, Ted Mull, Leigh Moore, Thomas Newton, Cecil Rollins, Richard Towler, Jack Washburn, and me. I joined at sixteen and stayed in a little over a year. I enjoyed attending meetings and participating in club sponsored activities. Two events in particular stand out in my memory. One was a Nomad organized reliability run that a friend and I teamed up for, and won. The other was the 1957 City of Ypsilanti Fourth of July Parade.

The Nomads' club car was a chopped, channeled and stripped Model A. Its power came from the 312 cubic inch Thunderbird engine. The coupe competed at Detroit Dragway and at the Michigan Hot Rod Association's drag strip in New Baltimore.

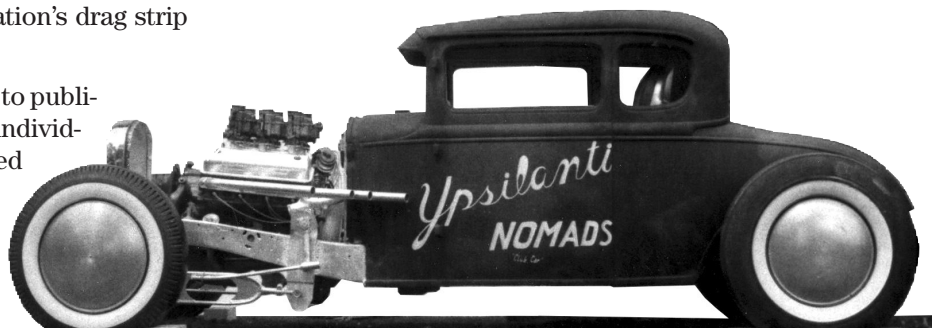
The parade gave the group an opportunity to publicize themselves locally. In addition to the individual volunteer cars, the coupe also traveled the procession route. It was transported on a truck donated by Moorman's, a local lumber company. Their warehouse parking lot also served as an assembly point for participating cars before they continued to their assigned parade loca-

tions. Don Gimson's '57 Plymouth and Marvin Hayes's '56 Ford escorted the coupe display along the parade route.

It had been mentioned at a mid-June meeting that the club was looking for additional cars to represent the Nomads in the upcoming parade. Larry Dennis, who was about my age and drove a white 1932 Ford, volunteered and invited me to ride along. Boy, I couldn't wait to roll down the crowded route in his little deuce coupe. A few weeks before the parade Larry decided to channel the car. This was done by lowering the body down over the frame. The floorboards had to be removed and reinstalled.

The Fourth of July arrived and Larry hadn't been able to get the coupe's floorboards welded in yet, so he bolted the bench seat directly to the frame. I arrived at his home early, only to find him making final preparations. He soon cranked up the V-8 motor and we took off for the west side of town. As we traveled city streets, pavement raced by beneath the open chassis. Exhaust made its way into the cramped interior. The sound of rumbling mufflers added to the excitement and further pumped our adrenalin as we rolled along, passersby pointing at us, a couple of young guys eager to take part in the festivities. It never dawned on us to think about the dangers of toxic fumes.

Arriving at the parade staging area, we took our assigned place with the other Nomad cars. Jack Miller's 1957 Ram-



The Nomads' club car was this chopped, channeled and stripped Model A.



Don Gimson's '57 Plymouth and Marvin Hayes's '56 Ford prepare to escort the Ypsilanti Nomad's coupe display along the parade route.

bler Rebel assumed the lead position in the Nomad contingent. Straight from the dealership a Rebel would do 0-60 mph in as little as 7.2 seconds. The 255 horsepower V-8 left many non-believers at the line. It didn't look like a hot rod, but it was.

In second position was Don Gimson in his 1957 Plymouth convertible. Like many youthful members Don was always cleaning his car. The photo shows Don and a friend doing last minute polishing. The coupe on the Moorman truck was next, followed by Marvin Hayes in his '56 Ford convert. We were last.

Promptly at 10:00 a.m. multiple bands struck up a resounding march and the procession moved forward, following a route to Michigan Avenue and directly east through downtown. Larry's deuce idled along due to the measured forward progress of the band units. Hot air and exhaust gases continued to invade the car. People awed at the unusual little automobile and Larry grinned ear to ear. He was so proud of the channeled coupe.

We had only gone a couple blocks before things turned ugly. Steam began to rise around the radiator fill cap. The temperature needle inched toward hot. Larry accelerated the hopped up mill, hoping to circulate the coolant more and lower the temperature. This was to no avail. Vapors continued to rise in front of the engine.

It wasn't long before the parade had

an unexpected delay that stopped all forward motion. Larry turned the car off thinking it might cool down during the pause. Without notification the cars in front started going again. Larry hit the starter button, only to be met by a moaning sound as the motor slowly turned over. And, it turned. And, it turned. The starter let out one last protesting groan and the revolving crankshaft came to a dead halt.

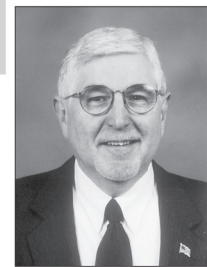
But, we weren't finished yet. We sprang out and began to push the powerless vehicle. As the coupe picked up speed, Larry jumped in and put the car in gear. The engine sputtered, but failed to ignite as the car slowed to an involuntary stop. Not giving up, we repeated the entire process again. And again! And, again! After the fourth attempt failed, we were directed to push our ride off to the side so as not to hinder the parade's progress. Wanting to give it one more try we reluctantly followed orders and pushed it out of the way at the next corner.

Meanwhile, the remaining Nomad representatives continued without us. The powerless hot rod found a resting place at the curb. We left it there and ran on ahead, wanting to see the club cars pass along the route. After they passed Larry and I walked back to his car discussing how great the Nomads looked, as we made our way through the dispersing crowd.

Returning to the lifeless coupe, Lar-

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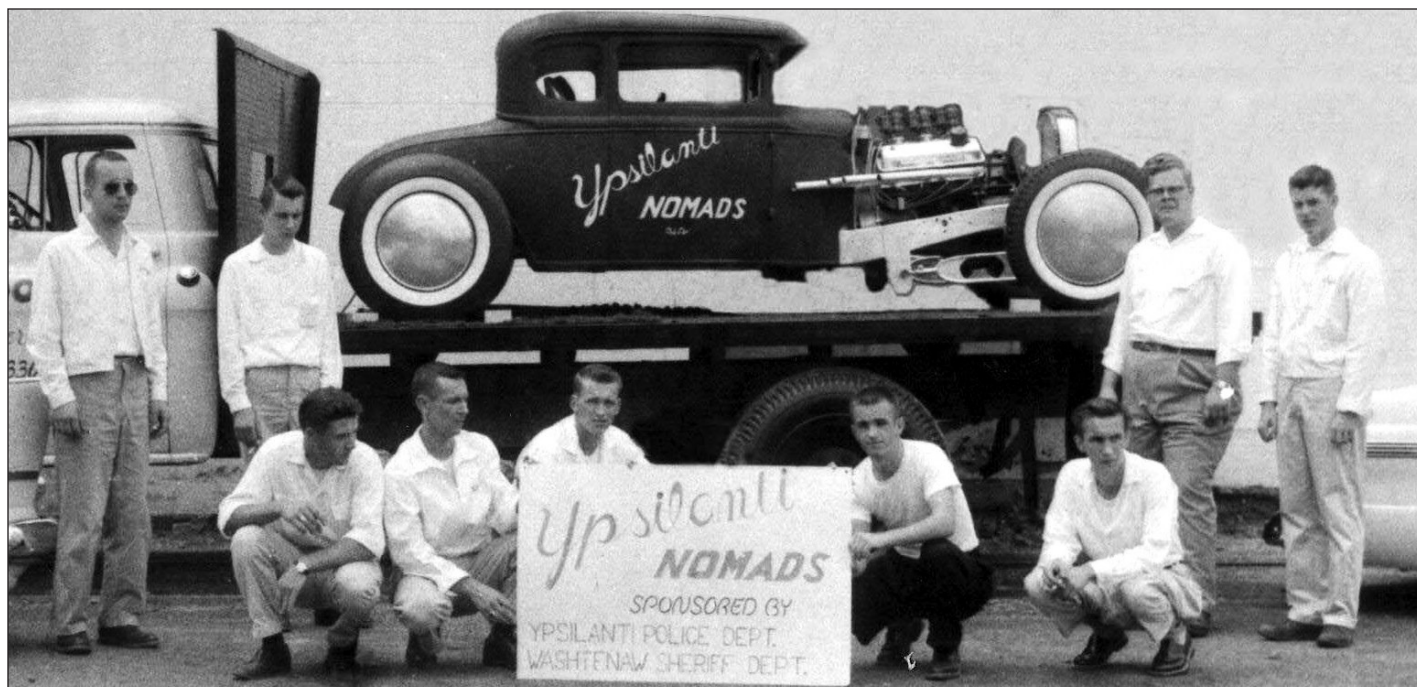
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The Volunteers in this picture are: (standing - l to r) Dewey Barich, Marvin Hayes, James Lambert, and Leigh Moore. (kneeling - l to r) unidentified, Bill Kessick, unidentified, Don Gimson, and Mel Foster.



Larry Dennis, drove a white 1932 Ford similar to the one in this photo.



Jack Miller's 1957 Rambler Rebel assumed the lead position in the Nomad contingent.

ry inserted the key and hit the starter. Without hesitation the engine purred. I immediately opened the door and hopped in. Away we went, making our way on side streets to avoid again being stopped unnecessarily. Reaching his house Larry slowed down, with no intention of coming to a complete standstill. He throttled the accelerator and depressed the clutch in an attempt to not stall. I jumped out as he rolled past my Ford which was parked in front of his house. Then he hit the gas for one last blast of fuel to carry the albino deuce up the inclined driveway and into the family garage. Luckily we had left the door open as we departed for the parade.

The Nomads disbanded in 1962 as the once intense interest in the organization dwindled.

(Fred Thomas grew up and lived in the Ypsilanti area from 1948 to 1998 and is a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)



In second position was Don Gimson in his 1957 Plymouth convertible. Like many youthful members Don was always cleaning his car. Here he and a friend are doing last minute polishing.

Ypsilanti History Trivia Quiz

BY LISA WALTERS

1. Who was the first postmaster of the new settlement of Ypsilanti, before it was even called Ypsilanti?
2. What was the name of the first white man born in Washtenaw County?
3. Who was the first person to die in Washtenaw County?
4. Who was the Territorial Delegate in Congress in 1825?
5. Who proposed the name "Ypsilanti" in 1825?
6. Who was Ypsilanti's first store-keeper?
7. The first school in Ypsi was on the west bank of the Huron River, north of Michigan Avenue.
How did children from the east side get to and from the school?
8. What was the name of Ypsilanti's first newspaper?
9. Where was the first village cemetery located?
10. What store was founded by George McElcheran and Thomas McAndrew?
11. What product claimed, in the late 1880s that it could successfully treat 32 diseases, including cancer, sore eyes, and bee stings?
12. In what Ypsilanti building could be found portraits of Longfellow, Shakespeare, Tennyson, Byron—and Frederic Pease?

Answers found on page 34

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History of Adult Education in Michigan

BY JACK D. MINZEY

Prior to 1960, adult education was a rather simple program in Michigan. Students under the age of 21 could enroll in the regular school program and earn their diploma. There was an alternate program called the General Education Development diploma (GED), but this program had little credibility and was not generally valuable as a requirement for employment. In the late 1960's, Don Butcher and Clyde LeTarte were hired in the Michigan Department of Education. Both of them had previously been associated with the Mott Intern Program. Dr. Butcher was the representative to the program from Northern Michigan University. Clyde LeTarte was a former community school director from Muskegon who was one of the interns, chosen as one of the 50 interns from a total of over 2,000 applicants. Dr. Butcher went on to be president of several universities, and Dr. LeTarte was a dean at Eastern Michigan followed by roles as President of Jackson Community College and a member of the Michigan Legislature.

These two men shared the same educational philosophy. They were concerned that there was no high school completion opportunity for the hundreds of thousands of people in the State of Michigan who did not have a high school diploma. And they felt that such a program should be provided at public expense. They wrote the rules and regulations for a more progressive plan for adults and were able to have it passed by the Michigan Legislature. Under their plan, any adult, over 18 years of age, could enroll in a special high school completion program run by their local school district.

They were well aware that educators and their administrators and boards of education did not generally perceive adult education as their prerogative. Most public school people have a philosophy that education is for students between the ages of 5 and 18, if the age of five occurs on or before the first day of December. Under normal conditions, public schools would not take on the additional task of high school completion for adults. However, the new law had provisions which made it very attractive to school superintendents and boards of education even if not to their faculty.

Under the new law, classes for adults would be offered at times which did not conflict with the regular school schedule. The same classes as required by the state for regular graduation would also be offered to adults. These classes would be taught by certified teachers, and in order to

graduate, students would need to earn the same number of Carnegie Units as required for the regular program.

The attractive part of the program for school superintendents was that for every four classes taken, the school district would receive credit for reimbursement from the state for one full time student (FTE). Since the classes would be taught by teachers who received far less pay and who received no fringe benefits, the cost for such a program would be minimal. In addition, buildings, equipment, teaching stations and even some custodial service would not be an extra cost. School districts now were reimbursed for students who represented a huge profit for the school district.

But there was one more advantage which most people did not see or understand. The school formula for state reimbursement made these programs even more lucrative. Reimbursement to school districts was based on a formula in which the number of students was divided into the state equalized evaluation of the community. The

size of the product became the number which determined the number of dollars which the district received for each student. Obviously, the greater the number of students, the lower the product, and the lower that number, the more money would be received from the state for all students. Superintendents and business managers quickly saw that with an adult education program, they would not only receive money for the additional adults, but they would also receive extra money for every student in their district. This was a bonanza, and practically all of the more than 7,000 state

school districts took advantage of this program.

There were some very positive and unexpected things that happened because of this program. School districts now started to use their surplus monies in some unique ways. Many of them hired community school directors who not only ran adult education, but added literacy classes, extra programs, over and above the school day, for regular school students, and vocational, social and recreational programs for other adults in their communities. The result was that not only were the adults without diplomas served, but children got extra programs which were not available in the past, and community members became much more supportive of their schools because they now received some services for their investment.

Then came a circumstance which was to prove the downfall of this very successful program. Dominic Jacobetti, a

They were concerned that there was no high school completion opportunity for the hundreds of thousands of people in the State of Michigan who did not have a high school diploma.

powerful legislature from the Upper Peninsula, was made aware that there were students in his district who had high school diplomas, but needed financial assistance for particular job training. The actual case presented was that some of the women in his area wanted to become beauticians, but did not have the means to pay for such training. Representative Jacobetti used his influence to amend the adult education law. Under the new law, students with high school diplomas, but in need of further vocational training, could also be reimbursed in programs offered by the schools if the classes led to a future vocational need.

This opened the door for some very liberal interpretations as to what is a needed vocational experience. Most school districts interpreted it in a very professional manner. However, there were a few that saw the opportunity to be more creative, and so programs that may not have been technically illegal, but certainly unethical, were developed. In one district, for example, the community school director offered senior citizens the opportunity to go to Tiger baseball games. He then gave all of the participants a high school credit for doing so and turned their names in for reimbursement by the state. In another district, it was decided that a good source for enrollments was in a senior citizen high rise. Unfortunately, enrollments were not closely monitored, and when the state auditor came to check these enrollments, they found deaf mutes enrolled in music classes, blind people in art classes and people enrolled who were deceased.

The most grievous of the violators had an even more devious plan. In that district, they devised a plan which included involvement with a state institution of higher education. With the cooperation of university officials, they created non college credit courses for college students. These classes covered such topics as remedial math, remedial reading, remedial

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science, how to study, etc. They were able to get student enrollments by offering certain incentives. Enrollments for the state were counted on the number of students in attendance on the fourth Friday in September. To encourage such attendance, various incentives were offered, including such things as free pizza offered on the day of official enrollment. There is no record as to how successful or what the duration of these classes were. The obvious question is why would college level students, who have already met academic standards and testing for admission, need such courses.

In any event, the courses were very successful as far as the financial return for the local school district. It was reported that these enrollments resulted in over four million dollars a year in extra revenue, and there are no statistical data to indicate how much more money was available as a result of the state reimbursement formula.

This misuse of money went on for ten years. There were efforts to end such activity. Letters, phone calls and personal contacts were made to the superintendent, the Provost and the Michigan Department of Education,

all to no avail. The main concern of other superintendents and community school directors was that these activities would eventually end this very special program for all school districts.

These predictions came to pass. In 1991, John Engler was elected governor of the State of Michigan. One of his early actions was to address this issue. He could have rewritten some of the rules and regulations and created stricter enforcement of the entire adult education program. Instead, he solved the problem by eliminating all reimbursement related to adult education except for the actual, documented costs of the program itself. This eliminated the full student reimbursement, the money earned from the uniqueness of the formula, and all the community education programs.

There were a few districts that continued their programs on the basis that they now philosophically supported the concept of adult education. For most districts, however, they reverted back to the old philosophy that "education is for kids" and the programs disappeared. The biggest losers were the adults who needed a high school diploma as a minimum requirement for most jobs in the state. And as a corollary of that, Michigan now had a less trained work force than when the adult education program was active.

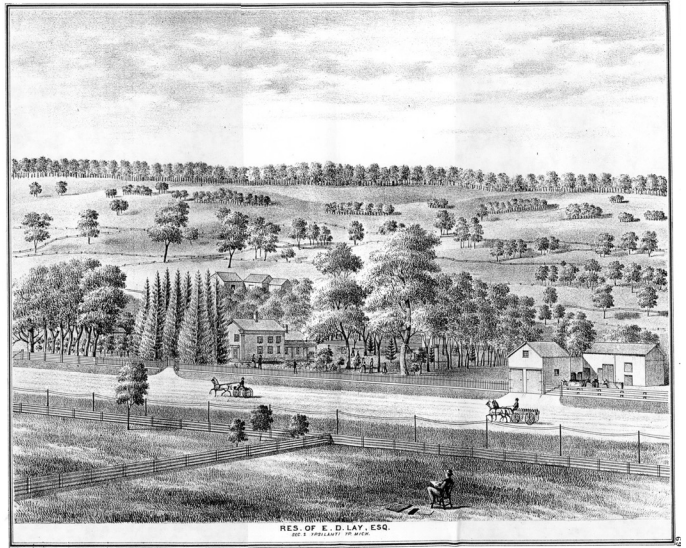
This is a story which is not widely known. For many people, it was a story of little interest. For the education community, it was not perceived as a major loss. Instead, the teacher's union made political gains from the whole experience by advertising widely that the Republican Governor had eliminated large sums of money from the public schools and that this was further proof that he did not support public education.

(Jack Minzey is a retired professor and administrator from Eastern Michigan University and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)

The Lay House

BY PEG PORTER

In August of 1965, one of the grandest Ypsilanti area homes was scheduled for demolition. The house was also one of the oldest. It was constructed when Michigan was still a Territory. Based on a mortgage date and information about the owner, it is estimated that the house was built by Ezra D. Lay in 1833, making it older than the Ladies Literary Clubhouse which was constructed about 10 years later. The original location of the house was Section 2, Ypsilanti Township, Michigan which later became 1701 East Michigan Avenue, Ypsilanti Township.



The Ezra D. Lay house was built in 1833 in Section 2 of Ypsilanti Township which later became 1701 East Michigan Avenue, Ypsilanti Township.



Ezra D. Lay arrived in the Michigan Territory in 1832 where he purchased 160 acres of land on what was then known as the Ypsilanti Plain.

Emil Lorch, Dean of the School of Architecture, University of Michigan, described this house as an important example of Greek Revival Architecture much as he identified the now Ladies Literary Clubhouse. One wonders if the same builder is responsible for both houses.

The house was owned by Ezra D. Lay, born in 1807, Saybrook, Connecticut. While he was still a child, Ezra's family moved to New York where he was educated and learned the cooper's (barrel making) trade. He arrived in the Michigan Territory in 1832 where

he purchased 160 acres of land on what was then known as the Ypsilanti Plain. He had brought with him apples, pears, peaches, plums, cherries and grapes. In addition to the fruit he transported shrubbery. He added a greenhouse to his property, the first in Michigan.

His brother, Z.K. Lay, also came from New York. The two brothers planted 25,000 fruit trees on the acreage Ezra purchased. As a result, the History of Washtenaw County cites the Lay operation as the first business in the Michigan Territory. With his business established and his home under construction, Ezra married Malinda Kinne of Monroe County, New York. The couple had three children, two boys and a girl. The youngest son never married, lived at home and helped care for his parents as they got older. Ezra Lay was active in local and state affairs. He was the President of the Pioneer Society of Washtenaw County where he encouraged the compilation of the early history of the area. He also served as a Representative in the State Legislature. In later years, Lay became a general farmer. He died at home on April 28, 1890. His funeral was conducted at his residence.

During the following years the house became run down. Then in 1916, Charles Vapor purchased the house for use as summer residence. Vapor was a Detroit attorney and

part-owner of a large produce concern and importer of vegetables and foodstuffs. He did much to restore the house to its previous state. He also removed all the old flooring, replacing it with oak floors throughout. He and his wife entertained regularly and lavishly. Vapor created a wine cellar and personally selected the wine for their many dinner parties. Vapor enjoyed treating his guests to out-of-season fruits. He hung large bunches of bananas in the basement to ripen.

As part of their improvements, however, they had covered up four fireplaces. They modernized the kitchen installing one of the first dishwashers and two electric stoves. Vapor converted part of the back wing into a garage. During the Vapor's ownership, the house had five main bedrooms, including the master with a dressing room, three sleeping rooms for maids and a bathroom. On the main level there was, in addition to the kitchen, a drawing room, dining room, library and breakfast room. There was a laundry and two additional bathrooms.

Sometime in the late 1920's or early 1930's the Vapors no longer owned the house. It seems probable that the Great Depression played a part in this change. The next owners of record, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Howard of Belleville, may have been responsible for turning some of the rooms into apartments. The Howards discovered a brick wall inside the wooden exterior. They also noted "ADZ" markings on the beams indicating the use of hand-hewn timber. Mrs. Howard recalled that a workman told her the house had been a "blind pig" during the Depression. Whether this is true and whether the Vapors were involved would make for an interesting research project.

Flash forward to the summer of 1965. Now the owners were Don Porter, my father, and Clyde Budd. They had been looking for property zoned for commercial use on East Michigan or Washtenaw. I told my father that I thought Washtenaw would be a better investment. Pretty bold of his twenty-something year old daughter who had no experience in real estate. He replied that there was

little property available and it was very expensive. So they opted for the East Michigan site which came fairly cheaply as the new owners would be responsible for demolishing the house. They had no desire for demolition as it is very expensive and were anxious that the house be preserved. They had to act quickly to save the structure. It was first offered to the Ypsilanti Historical Society. The asking price was \$1.00. The newly formed Society had no funds nor had it property on which to locate the house. The offer was declined. However, Charles Hagler and his wife, both avid local historians and preservationists made an offer on the house. It was accepted. They then went through a number of challenges in moving a house this size and of this age.

Charles Hagler was President of the Detroit Historical Commission and Vice President of the Michigan Historical Society. His wife, Katherine, was curator of furniture at the Henry Ford Museum. It was fortunate that buyers were found with the resources, interest and knowledge to undertake this major restoration.

For transporting purposes the house was divided into two sections. The destination was 3401 Berry Road in Superior Township. All obstacles were overcome and the house was moved. The Haglers renovated it to "its glory days." Thus, a happy ending for the structure. Not so for the property.

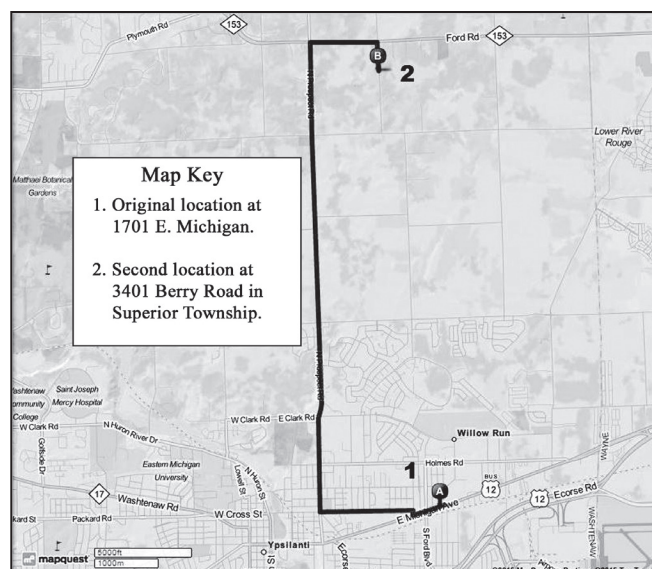
Finding a buyer proved to be difficult. With the building of I-94 most of the traffic that had traveled Michigan Avenue to Detroit now moved to the Expressway. Finally a man who wanted to locate a used car lot on East Michigan approached the sellers. He did not have sufficient funds to make a down payment. The sellers and buyer settled on a Land Contract, an often risky move. The sellers maintained title to the property while the buyer made regular payments toward the agreed upon

price.

At first things seemed to be going well and then there were missed payments. The buyer was given a second and then a third chance to repay what he owed. Eventually the buyer filed for bankruptcy. Clyde Budd, my father's business partner became very ill and died in November, 1973. My father's attorney failed to file paperwork in the bankruptcy proceeding thereby leaving him without an opportunity to recoup any of funds in the contract. It was a stressful time for our family, especially for my father. The "East Michigan property" represented failure due to misplaced trust.

Looking back, the investment was a poor one. On the other hand, the house was saved from demolition. As a result I see my father as having had an important role in preserving a building that was, and is, historically significant.

(Primary sources: The Ypsilanti Press, August 9, 1965; Eileen Harrison, Old Pioneer Home Facing Removal After Colorful Past; History of Washtenaw County; U.S. Census; Gleanings, October, 1979; and personal



Map showing the two locations for the Ezra D. Lay house.



In 1965 the Lay house was divided into two sections and moved to 3401 Berry Road in Superior Township.

recollections and notes.)

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



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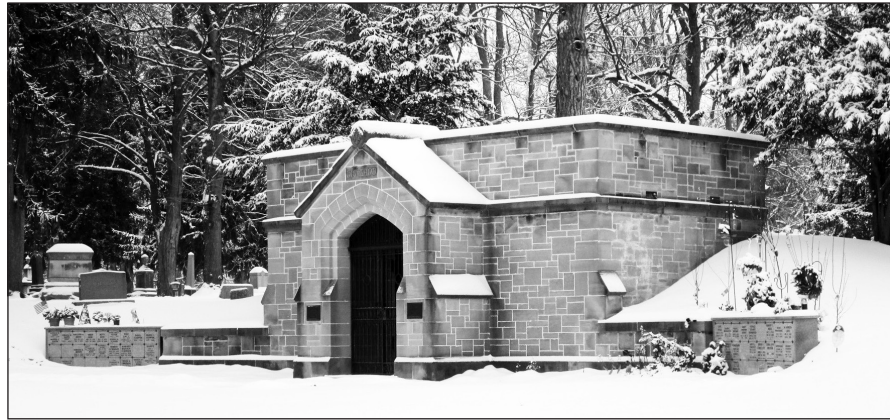


Gerald Glencer, D.V.M.

Peter Kunoff, D.V.M.

Waiting Room to the City of the Dead: *The Receiving Vault at Highland Cemetery*

BY JAMES MANN



The Receiving Vault at Highland Cemetery.

When one passes through the main gates of Highland Cemetery on River Street, straight ahead is the Starkweather Chapel. To the right is what appears to be a door in the side of a hill. This is the Receiving Vault of Highland. A receiving vault was needed by every cemetery, as a place to store the remains of those who had died until burial.

Highland most likely had a receiving vault from the day it was dedicated in 1864, but the record of this is incomplete. There is a small room at the rear of Starkweather Chapel, which may have been a receiving vault. The number of remains it could hold was about three.

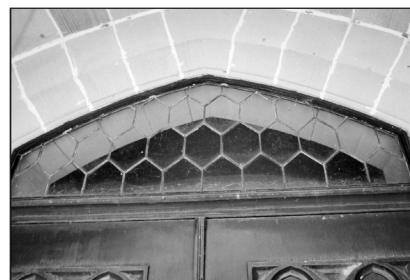
The receiving vault was needed during the cold months of winter, when the ground was frozen and graves could not be dug. Caskets would be stacked on the ground behind Starkweather Chapel until spring. Sometimes there would be four or as many as six caskets on the ground. The caskets would remain outside from December and sometimes as late as March.

Another reason for the receiving vault was to prevent the bodies of the recently deceased from being stolen. For many years medical schools, including the University of Michigan, had trouble finding enough bodies for their anatomy classes. To fill the need, the schools purchased bodies from grave robbers, who entered cemeteries at night to dig up the bodies and sell them to the schools. The receiving vault was one way to keep the remains safe.

The receiving vault at Highland was a gift from Daniel L. Quirk, and was presented in September of 1906. *"The need of such a building has long been felt by the trustees of the association, but they were unable to see their way clear to its erection. The generosity of Mr. Quirk is appreciated very much by all interested in Ypsilanti's beautiful City of the Dead. The erection of such a building will add very much to the appearance of the grounds as well as furnishing a temporary place for the remains of loved ones,"* noted *The Ypsilanti Daily Press* of February 16, 1906.



The Receiving Vault has steel doors to prevent grave robbers from stealing the bodies.



The leaded glass windows above the entrance door to the Receiving Vault.

The architects for the receiving vault were Donaldson and Meier of Detroit. The builder was Batchelder and Wasmund, who were also of Detroit. *"The plan shows a very pleasing exterior, the massive appearance of the building being relieved by an ornate bronze door of the vestibule, through which can be seen the highly ornamental door leading into the lobby,"* noted the report.

The vault is roughly 15 by 29 feet, with a lobby of 9 by 11 feet. The vault was made from grayish white, canyon sandstone. *"The interior of the building contains twenty-four crypts, the doors and entire fronts of which are of polished marble with bronze fittings,"* reported *The Ypsilanti Daily Press* of Saturday, September 15, 1906.

The dedication of the receiving vault was held on Sunday, September 16, 1906, with between 500 and 600 people attending. The day was an ideal one, noted *The Ypsilanti Daily Press*, Monday, September 17, 1906. The dedica-

tion was held on the north lawn of Starkweather Chapel, at 4:00 pm. The program opened with a quartet, under the direction of Prof. Pease, singing, "O God, Our Help in Ages Past."

This was followed by a reading of Psalm 121, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help," by the Rev William Gardam. The Rev. Gardam then read Psalm 145, "I will magnify Thee, O Lord, my King: and I will praise Thy name forever and ever." This was followed by a prayer, and an address by Prof. Strong. As part of his address, Prof. Strong expressed gratitude to Daniel Quirk for the receiving vault. Once the address was concluded, the quartet sang "Our Father's God to Thee."

Daniel Quirk then presented the keys to the vault to Charles King, President of the Highland Cemetery Association. The Doxology was sung by all present, and the program concluded with the Benediction by the Rev. Eugene Allen. "The massive doors of the vault were thrown open for the afternoon and the crowd spent several hours after the program in viewing the interior of the magnificent structure."

Over the years since the dedication, the equipment used to dig graves has improved, so burials can take place



The 9 x 11 foot lobby in the Receiving Vault.



The crypts along each side of the Receiving Vault.

even after the ground has frozen. The receiving vault was used only in the most severe weather, otherwise it stood empty and unused. Then in 1994 the receiving vault was turned into a mausoleum. On each side of the vault, are now spaces for the urns of those who have been cremated.

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



On each side of the Receiving Vault are spaces for urns of those who have been cremated.

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Summit Street Cemetery

BY GEORGE RIDENOUR

In the early part of the past century Mrs. P.R. Cleary of Cleary College wondered why and how the children of the neighborhood were finding bones and bringing them home! They were finding them on the corner of Summit and Michigan Avenue. Were they animal or human remains? Indian burial mounds. Take them back and rebury them!

Even today most people have no knowledge of there being a cemetery at that location. Through the years most of the land has been paved or housing erected on the site of the old cemetery.

Over the years questions have been raised by researchers and neighbors over the cemetery. How many people were buried there? Were they moved and if so what was done with the remains? Are there still remains at the location?

Judge Larzelere gifted the original site to the village of Ypsilanti in 1830. Charles Chapman in his 1881 book *History of Washtenaw County: West Cemetery was the first cemetery for the village of Ypsilanti. It was a rude burial place and was used from 1830-1847 and was to be the resting place for 150-250 persons.* When it was later proposed that the remains should be moved shouts of indignation and horror were directed towards those even suggesting such a sacrilege.

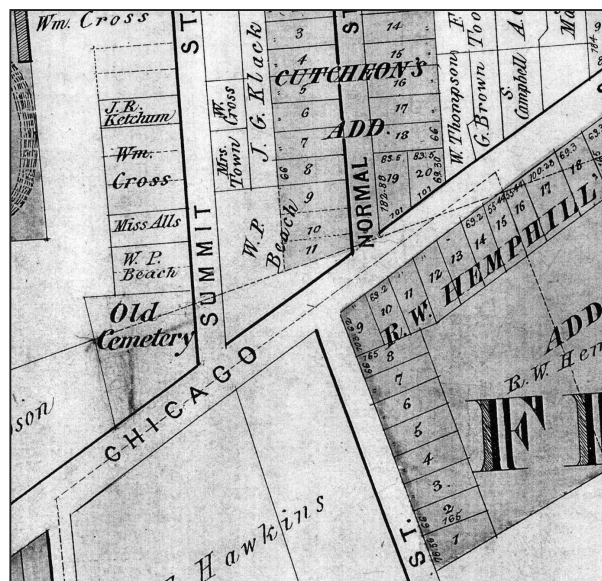
As early as 1858 Mark Norris had proposed closing both Summit and Prospect cemeteries. However, it was not until July, 1864 that Highland Cemetery was dedicated. The first two interments were Elias Norton and Minerva Dow (wife of banker Asa Dow). Both of whom died in July, 1864

The *Ypsilanti Commercial* of July 7, 1866, page 3, reported that: "The Cemetery Commission referred the petition of one W. M. Cross and others to vacate the West cemetery. Resolved: That the duty of this city and its citizens to the dead will be best preformed by vacating the cemetery on Summit Steet and the same shall be vacated as soon as proper arrangements can be made for the tile of the land, and the city attorney give notice all persons interested. Approved."

On February 6, 1871 a resolution was passed by common council requesting the mayor ask the state legislature pass an act permitting the city to vacate West Cemetery. This

was reported in the *Ypsilanti Commercial* of March 11, 1871.

The State of Michigan legislature entered the debate in 1871. The legislation passed... "authorized the common council of Ypsilanti to vacate the cemetery known as West Cemetery.... and to remove bodies therein buries. PROVIDED THAT NO REMOVAL OF THE BODIES SHALL BE MADE BETWEEN THE FIRST DAY OF July AND THE FIRST DAY OF October (??) Approved March 31, 1871.



Old Cemetery alongside Chicago and Summit Streets.

May 15, 1871 common council was presented a resolution for the following actions: "The city attorney is hereby requested to prepare and present a draft ordinance for the removal of the West Cemetery on the corner of Michigan Avenue and Summit street(s)."

May 29, 1871 Summit Street cemetery was: "Declared vacated and abandoned for burial purposes and notice is given to all persons with friends buried in Summit cemetery that they have 30 days to remove the bodies to their chosen location. The Cemetery Commission is to proceed with removal to Highland Cemetery at city expense." \$175 was allotted for the lots at Highland Cemetery and

this was done in January, 1872.

September 18, 1871 the marshal was to remove all remains "left" in West Cemetery to Highland Cemetery.

December 18, 1871 a deed from Highland cemetery, Number 319, was received and reported to common council.

According to Tina at Highland Cemetery, the remains were moved by one man, one horse, one shovel, and one body at a time.

We do have the records of those who died in Ypsilanti between 1830 and 1847. These records are from tombstone observations done between 1937-1942 at Highland by our archives namesake Louis S. White, who served as City Historian for many years. However a Summit registry still remains ELUSIVE.

(POST SCRIPT: Gerry, YHS Archivist, Lyle, research volunteer and Kelly our EMU intern continue researching the cemetery. If you have or find information about persons who were buried at Summit Street Cemetery or facts surrounding the removal of remains please call Kelly at the Ypsilanti Historical Society Archives (734)217-8236.)

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



Match the Ypsilanti Owner/Salesman with the Dealership

BY JACK MILLER

Some sales people later became dealership owners and some dealerships moved to other existing or new locations

____ John Aldridge
____ Ray Augustus
____ Joe Blauvelt
____ Harold Beadle
____ Floyd Brady
____ Sam Bass
____ Eugene Butman
____ Ken Butman
____ Paul Chapman, Jr.
____ Ralph Chapman
____ Virgil Christman
____ Jim Chumbley
____ Joe Coats
____ Carmen Coleman
____ Spencer Davis
____ *David E. Davis, Jr.
____ C. James Davis
____ Clifford Dickey
____ Edwin Doran
____ Paul Dorsten
____ Dave Finley
____ Hubert 'Red' Foley
____ Lee Haviland
____ David Hazelwood
____ Michael Ichesco
____ Sam Lambdin
____ Pete Lincoln

____ Ed Lyke
____ Wayne Hackett
____ Lois Michaud
____ Rene Michaud
____ Carl Miller
____ Ron Norris
____ Tom Payne
____ Albert Peck
____ Joe Rocha
____ Carl Schultz
____ Myron Serbay
____ Ray Serbay
____ Joseph M. Sesi, Sr.
____ Joe Sesi, Jr.
____ Joseph Sinkule
____ Cal Smith
____ Robert Silva
____ Herbert Teachout
____ Cecil Thomas
____ David Walls
____ Melvin Walls
____ Allen Wiedman
____ Jack Webb
____ Bernie Vercruysse

Ypsilanti Dealerships

A - Campus AMC	N - Davis Desoto Plymouth
B - Sesi Lincoln Mercury	O - Finley Webb Chevrolet
C - E.G. Wiedman Ford	P - City Motors Nash
D - Gene Butman Ford	Q - Davis Sports Cars
E - Serbay Chrysler Plymouth	R - Teachout Motor Sales
F - Cecil's Auto Sales	S - Lyke Auto Exchange
G - Hudson Sales & Service	T - V & F Auto Sales
H - Paul C. Chapman & Son	U - Ypsi Body Shop
I - Vincent Chevrolet	V - Deluxe Motors
J - Norris Motors K-F	W - Alan Chapel Inc.
K - Ron & Sam Buick	X - Obermeyer Oldsmobile
L - Doran Chevrolet	Y - Jim Chumbley Chevrolet
M - European Cars Ypsilanti	

Answers on page 34

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The King and Meyer Saloon Controversy

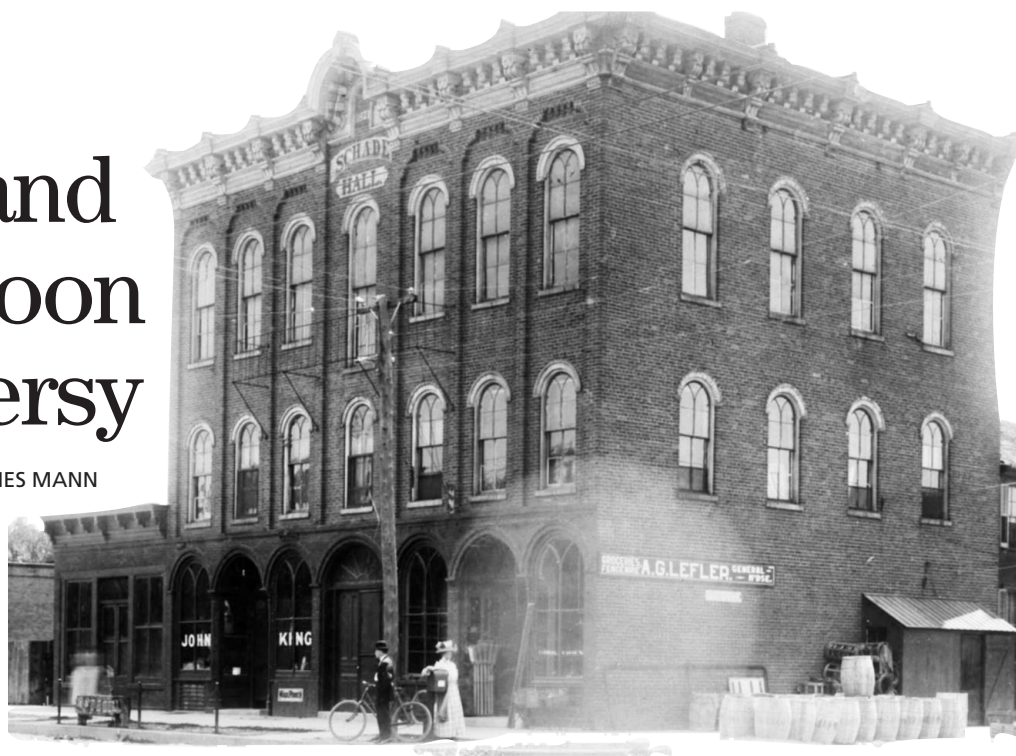
BY JAMES MANN

As part of the regular business of the Ypsilanti City Council at their meeting on Monday, April 19, 1915, petitioners for liquor licenses were considered. Two petitions caused the most discussion. The concern was that the two saloons, the King and Meyer, were within three hundred feet of Woodruff school on East Michigan Avenue. Under state law, no saloon or bar could be within three hundred feet of a school or church, unless all property owners within three hundred feet of the proposed saloon gave their consent.

"When the request for a license was presented it was accompanied by a document which furnished something of a surprise. It was a paper saying that all the people whose names were affixed were in agreement that a saloon should be conducted in the former Meyer place. The first signature was William Dusbiber and a little way down the list was the signature of H. E. Lutjen, formerly pastor of the Lutheran church," reported The Daily Ypsilanti Press of Tuesday, April 20, 1915. Among those who had signed the consent, was Katharine Meyer, the widow of Joseph Meyer.

"Ald. Lathers held that this was of no account," continued the account, "unless it were accompanied by an affidavit to the effect that these were all of the property owners within 300 feet of the saloon. Ald. Bursha promptly met the demand by presenting from his pocket the affidavit. It was sworn to in due form and there was little left to do but to grant the petition. On the same ground the license for the King place was renewed under the name of William Bursha, alderman in the fifth ward, and Erwin Clark."

These were not new establishments, as the two saloons



The King Saloon in the Schade Block at 304 East Michigan Avenue was closed in May of 1913.

*"He was kind
hearted and well liked
and a host of friends have
a good word to say for
'Joe,' as he was
familiarily called,"
recalled his obituary.*

had been in operation for some years. Now the two were under new ownership. The King Saloon, previously under the management of a John King, had been at 304 East Michigan Avenue, in the Schade Block, for at least thirty years. John King had ended the business by May of 1913. After that, the site was vacant.

The saloon of Joseph Meyer, at 309 East Michigan, was in a building constructed in about 1888 by George Thumm. Here, for a time, he operated a saloon. *"It had a fancy walnut bar and mirror as was the custom in the past century,"* wrote Eileen Harrison for *The Ypsilanti Press* of Tuesday, July 24, 1962. *"There had been card tables at which the loser was expected to treat every third hand."* By 1892 Thumm had sold the building to Meyer, who continued the business of running a saloon.

Joseph Meyer would continue in the saloon business, until his death at age 66, on February 22, 1915. *"He was kind hearted and well liked and a host of friends have a good word to say for 'Joe,' as he was familiarily called,"* recalled his obituary. After the death of Joseph Meyer, the family had continued to run the saloon, as it closed the estate. Petitioners for the Meyer Saloon were Matthew Sinkule, son in law of Joseph Meyer, and Lewis Moore, who had been employed as a bartender at the Meyer Saloon.

All seemed well, until it was learned, that the law under which the licenses were granted, had been reversed by the

Michigan State Supreme Court. In the case of *People vs. Schnelder*, found in Volume 170 of Michigan Reports, page 153, and handed down in 1912, read: *"The consent of all property owners within 300 feet of a proposed new saloon or bar will not excuse the establishment of such a saloon or bar within 300 feet of the front door of a church or school."*

"According to this decision," explained *The Daily Ypsilanti Press* of Thursday, April 22, 1915, *"it will be illegal to open a saloon in the former King place and the man who makes the venture, even though he may have been granted a license, will do so in violation of the law and will be subject to arrest. Whether the saloon will be opened anyway and whether an arrest would follow is of course an entirely different question."*

When Ypsilanti Chief of Police Charles Cain was asked if he would close a saloon opened illegally, he said, *"I would if I felt like it."* He added that if anyone wanted it closed, *"let them get a warrant."*

The question was placed before Washtenaw County Prosecuting Attorney Lehman for an opinion. He met with attorneys for Ald. Bursha and Irwin Clark, to whom the license for the King place was granted. From them he received assurance that as the opening would be illegal, no attempt to open it would be made.

"Rumor is current today," noted *The Daily Ypsilanti*

Press of Saturday, April 24, 1915, *"that an injunction was served on the owner of the building, Mrs. Smith, forbidding her renting the building for saloon purposes, but Prosecuting Attorney Lehman says the story is unfounded since such procedure would be entirely unnecessary."*

The question of whether the Meyer place could continue to do business, under new management, was still to be settled. *"The question as to whether the death of the man to whom the license was issued ends the life of a saloon within 300 feet of a school or church is still open in the minds of many, but evidence seems to be against the possibility of the saloon continuing,"* reported the account. For this reason, Lehman referred the question to the State Attorney General.

Lehman received his answer on Friday, April 30, 1915, in a letter from Michigan Attorney General Grant Fellows. The letter was published in *The Daily Ypsilanti Press* that same day. *"The inquiry contained in your communication would seem to be answered in the opinion rendered in the case of Rohde vs. Wayne Circuit judge 163 Michigan 690 in which case it was contended that in as much as the realtors sought to operate a saloon in a residence district without gaining the consent of the people therein as provided in section 37 of the Warner-Crampton law, that this fact alone was sufficient ground upon which to reject his application for a license, notwithstanding the location had been used for saloon purposes for sev-*



The Lewis B. Moore saloon operated at 309 East Michigan from 1916 to 1920, when it was the John F. Maegle variety store. In the 1930's, the building became the Thorne Tire Store, which continued in operation on the site until 1962.



In July of 1962 the Thorne Tire Store building was demolished to make way for a Burger Chef drive-in restaurant.

eral years prior to the application of the relator. The court held that if in fact, for several years prior to the date at which relator could have been licensed to operate a saloon, a saloon had been conducted in this particular building that the restrictions contained in section 37 of act 291 of the public acts of 1909 did not apply. This would seem to be true in the case you refer to, providing that the saloon was being operated in this building at the time the Warner-Crampton law took effect and continuously since that date."

"If however," concluded Attorney General Fellows, "during any period of this time since the Warner-Crampton law went into effect and after the death of the party formerly operating the saloon the building was not used for saloon purposes then it would be deemed to be a new bar or

saloon and would come under the provisions of said section 37."

In other words, the Meyer saloon could reopen under new management. The Lewis B. Moore saloon did operate at 309 East Michigan from 1916 to 1920, when it was the John F. Maegle variety store. In the 1930's, the building became the Thorne Tire Store, which continued in operation on the site until 1962. In July of that year, the building was demolished to make way for a Burger Chef drive-in restaurant. "Holes in the floor through which pipes reached to barrels in the basement were still there when the building was torn down," wrote Eileen Harrison. Today, the site of 309 East Michigan is occupied by Luca's Cony Island.

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

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Answers:

Car Salesman Quiz

Ray Augustus – C / D	Ron Norris – J / X / K
Joe Blauvelt – X / V	Tom Payne – M
Harold Beadle – H	Albert Peck – C / D
Floyd Brady – H	Joe Rocha – B
Sam Bass – B	Carl Schultz – W / B
Eugene Butman -- D	Myron Serbay – E
Ken Butman – D	Ray Serbay – E
Paul Chapman, Jr. – H	Joseph M. Sesi, Sr. – W / B
Ralph Chapman – H	Joe Sesi, Jr. -- B
Virgil Christman – U / R	Cal Smith – I / Y / O
Jim Chumbley – I / Y	Bob Silva – A
Joe Coats – E	Herbert Teachout – U / R
Carmen Coleman – L / I	Cecil Thomas – F
Spencer Davis – N / U / R	David Walls – H
*David E. Davis, Jr. – M	Melvin Walls – B
C. James Davis – Q	Allen Wiedman – C / D
Clifford Dickey – D	Jack Webb – D / O
Edwin Doran – L	Bernie Vercruysse – T
Paul Dorsten – E	
Dave Finley – O	*David E. Davis, Jr. sold and raced
Hubert 'Red' Foley – T	Porsche sports cars at European
Lee Haviland – P	Cars Ypsilanti for owner Tom Payne
Dave Hazelwood – I	before entering the automotive
/ Y / O	magazine editing and publishing
Michael Ichesco – E	business both "Car & Driver" and
Sam Lambdin – J / X / K	"Automobile" magazines at Ann
Pete Lincoln – I	Arbor. He was known as the "Dean"
Ed Lyke -- B / S	of the automotive writers.
Wayne Hackett – P	
Rene Michaud – A	QUESTIONS about dealerships
Lois Michaud – A	email:
Carl Miller – G	hudsondealer@gmail.com

Answers: Trivia Quiz!

1. Benjamin Woodruff.
2. Alpha Washtenaw Bryan.
3. Walter Oakman, a young immigrant from Ireland, in 1824.
4. Father Gabriel Richard, Roman Catholic priest and vice-president of U of M.
5. Judge Augustus Woodward.
6. Jonathan G. Morton, a native of Massachusetts. His store, a log building, was located on the northwest corner of Huron and Pearl Streets.
7. The teacher, Olive Gorton, rowed them across morning and night.
8. The Ypsilanti Republican, edited by John Wallace, was published from 1837-38.
9. At the corner of Michigan Ave. and Summit Street. The second was laid out on the site of Prospect Park. Highland Cemetery opened in 1864.
10. Mack and Mack.
11. Owen Mineral Water.
12. The Ypsilanti Opera House - on the ceiling.

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