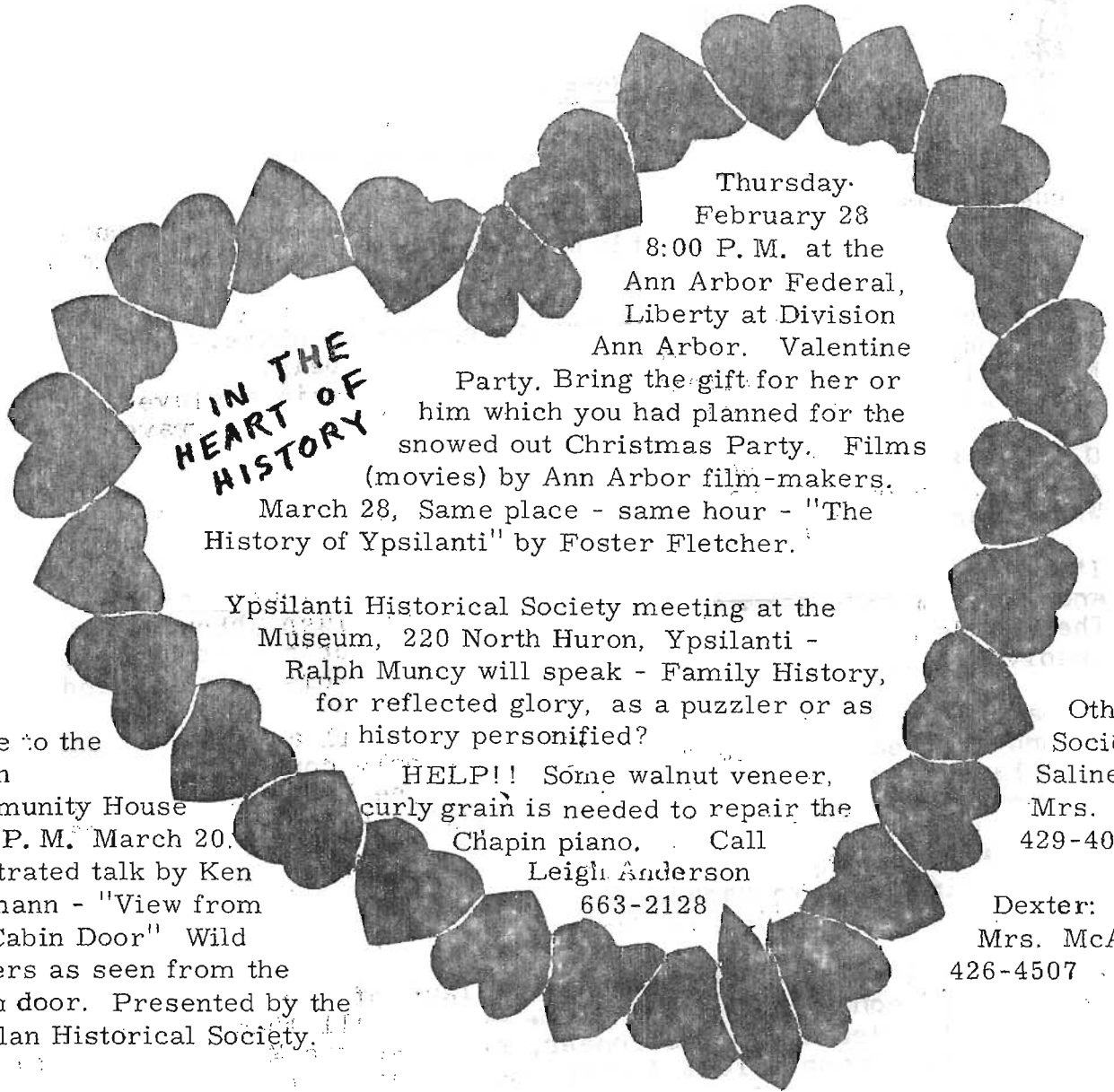


Washtenaw Historical Society News

February, 1974



IN THE
HEART OF
HISTORY

Thursday-
February 28
8:00 P. M. at the
Ann Arbor Federal,
Liberty at Division
Ann Arbor. Valentine

Party. Bring the gift for her or
him which you had planned for the
snowed out Christmas Party. Films
(movies) by Ann Arbor film-makers.
March 28, Same place - same hour - "The
History of Ypsilanti" by Foster Fletcher.

Ypsilanti Historical Society meeting at the
Museum, 220 North Huron, Ypsilanti -
Ralph Muncy will speak - Family History,
for reflected glory, as a puzzler or as
history personified?

Come to the
Milan
Community House
7:30 P. M. March 20.
Illustrated talk by Ken
Baumann - "View from
the Cabin Door" Wild
flowers as seen from the
cabin door. Presented by the
Milan Historical Society.

HELP!! Some walnut veneer,
curly grain is needed to repair the
Chapin piano. Call
Leigh Anderson
663-2128

Other
Societies
Saline: tel.
Mrs. Merrill
429-4015

Dexter: tel.
Mrs. McAllister
426-4507

HELP AGAIN!! The editors of the Washtenaw Historical News are anxious to bring, to their readers, pertinent and perhaps little known information concerning living in the past in Washtenaw County, particularly as it bears on present day life. Therefore, we urge our members to search their memories and attics, and those of friends and families, for documents, family records, anecdotes, experiences, occupations and biographies and to put them into published form, with pictures where possible. These may be printed in the Newsletter and, also, preserved among our historical papers. Much valuable material has been lost and is now being lost which should be preserved.



This issue presents two selections which were written before the Civil War. They remind us, as we observe "Black History Week of the social problems which the Civil War did not resolve. The first is a song by a slave who was fleeing to Canada. The second is a letter written in verse which tells of the impressions of a Northerner on a visit to the South in 1846.



Song of the Fugitive

by George N. Allen, 1854

This song was discovered in Corning Collection of Sheet Music at Clement's Library, University of Michigan. It is being published with the consent of the Library

"I'm on my way to Canada a freeman's rights to share,-
The cruel wrongs of slavery I can no longer bear.
My heart is crushed within me, so while I remain a slave
I am resolved to strike the blow for freedom or the grave.

O Great Father, do thou pity me,
And help me on to Canada
Where panting slave is free.

I've served my Master all my days without the least reward,
And now I'm forced to flee away to shun the lash abhorred.
The hounds are braying on my tracks; my Master's just behind,
Resolved that he will bring me back and fast his fetters bind.

I heard that Queen Victoria has pledged us all a home
Beyond the reach of slavery, if we will only come.
So I have fled this weary way, my guide the bright North Star,
And now, thank God, I speed the day in the Underground Railcar.

O, Old Master, why come after me?
I'm whizzing fast to Canada
Where the panting slave is free.

I now embark for yonder shore, sweet land of liberty;
My vessel soon will bear me o'er, and I shall then be free.
No more I'll dread the auctioneer, nor fear the Master's frowns;
No more I'll tremble lest I hear the baying of the hounds.

O Old Master, 'tis vain to follow me;
I'm just in sight of Canada
Where the panting slave is free.

Yes! I am safe in Canada-my soul and body free,
My blood and tears no more shall drench thy soil, O Tennessee!
Yet how can I suppress the tear that's starting from my eye
To think my friends and kindred dear as slaves must live and die?

O dear friends, haste and follow me,
For I am safe in Canada
Where the panting slave is free."



A Yankee's Impressions
of the South
James Hoyt-1846

This letter, in verse form, was found among family papers which belong to Mrs. Hudson T. Morton. It was written by her great, great uncle, James Hoyt, February 3, 1846, from Alabama to Mercy Merinda Hoyt (Mrs. Joseph Rawson, of Bridgewater, Michigan.)

"Dear Sister: Since I started forth to find this Southern region,
The prose epistles I've sent North would count almost a legion.
I now essay a higher flight, and if it be not ill done,
I dare to hope that what I write will come quite up to Milton.

This patriarchal land, I find, has some peculiar notions,
As wide from those of Yankee land as half a dozen oceans.
And some there are, upon my word, to which I ask attention,
The queerest that you ever heard, a few of which I'll mention.

My Northern tongue has had to change, for language here is new, too,
They say, when I pronounce it strange, "We don't talk here like you do."
"It looks like it would rain," they say, as negro nurses taught them-
This is the way that slaves repay the sons whose fathers bought them.

They say, "Sun's up," as well as "down", - in this they're doubtless right,
They call it "evening", after noon, and after supper, "night".
"I've got a heap," the child exclaims, when counting o'er his trifles,
And school-bred youngsters say the same, "a heap" of hounds or rifles.

A nebble stone is called a "rock", by learned man and peasant,
A ditch becomes a "canyon" wide, thus named by all folk present.
A brook's a "branch", a chair a "char", and horrid as it seems,
My Christian name I often hear distorted into "Jeems".

Whene'er a school boy can't recite his lesson when he's called,
Or trying, fails to say it right, they say of him, "He's stalled."
And "sort o'" is a current phrase. They say, "It's sort o' cold,"
"My wife's been sort o' sick," some say; "Your horse looks sort o' old."

A shilling here is called a "bit"; a dime is called the same,
A sixpence here's a "picayune", a cent is but a name.
The Pennsylvanians talk as strange, so learned I on my trips;
A shilling there a "levy" is; A sixpence is a "six".

They "dump" their carts to empty them, and if you want to go much,
To any place, the coachman says, "I'll haul you there for so much."
And says the truth, for through the mud, and creeks that have no bridges
You're hauled along three miles an hour, the usual speed of stages.

I sometimes tell the Southerners that to my Yankee ear,
This new and barbarous talk of theirs does sound a "kind o'" queer.
For I shall say "a kind o'" still, in spite of Southern fashion;
I learned it when a boy, nor will I yield to innovation.

I would not positively call our Northern wits the brightest,
But rather guess that after all we Yankees are the rightest.
We'll now take leave of dialect and turn to education,
On which I have no doubt you'll like a little information.

You know there are two kinds of folks distinguished by their faces;
Some say they're both of Adam's stock; some say they are two races.
This point I briefly must discuss before I pass to others.
Man was defined by Plato thus, "A biped without feathers."

Now grant this old philosopher a really wise and true man,
I cannot see for life of me, why all men are not human.
If human, I might argue next, though not of Plato's school,
According to a scripture text, they have a living soul.

And such a soul, we might suppose, has need of some instruction,
As being made for higher ends than to be sold at auction.
But 'tis not so, logicians say, at this end of the nation,
Affirming 'tis a fallacy, a false interpretation.

So leaving this, I pass to state what I at first did mention,
The subject's one to which of late I've given some attention.
The first point-when a child is born, respects its true complexion,
This sometimes is from colour known, but mostly from connection.

If it can clearly be made out that someone owns his mother,
He's black beyond the slightest doubt, and gives no further trouble.
But if of genuine Saxon blood, that never wore a fetter,
He's white. Whatever hue he bears, makes not the slightest matter.

And now "Young Master", he is trained for fame and domination,
And "Little Miss" is left loose reined to fancy, will, and fashion.
They early must be taught their rank, 'tis learned without a tutor,
And mother oft is pained to think she can't control her daughter.

And Master Dick soon rules the yard. The little darkies fear him,
And hide the toys they most regard whenever they come near him.
A youth high-spirited is he, as "Little Master" should be,
And trained by rules of chivalry- What boy is there but would be?

At six or seven this sturdy lad first learns the key to knowledge,
And pushes on with railroad speed, from A-B-C to college.
For this he's fitted at fifteen, and Miss is fit to marry,
A full grown maid who plays and sings, and dances like a fairy.

For all things hastily mature beneath a southern sun,
Youth's rapid growth is ended here, when North it's just begun.
At nineteen, college days are past, and our young bachelor-
Of arts, I mean, makes rapid haste through books of legal lore.

Within a year, perhaps in less, as is the Southern manner,
He's at the bar, and in a race for office, wealth and honor.
Or if a wealthy planter's son, more fond of ease or station,
He gets a wife and settles down upon his own plantation.

Now education we'll discuss, and take a view of manners,-
A few things they could learn of us, and thereby be the gainers.
Yet there's a frank and friendly tone, an often generous air,
That makes the stranger feel at home, and easy anywhere.

You ride up to the planter's door, Himself comes out to meet you,
And you are scarcely in before his wife and daughter greet you.
The planter's house is made of logs, 'tis neither large nor little,
It has a chimney at each end, a wide hall in the middle.

Shake hands with all. Here's Master John, with face so fair and ruddy,
And blooming Miss, and smiling Tom, and little Sis and Buddy.
Your hat and cloak are laid aside upon the corner table,
And Jack is sent to loose your horse, and take him to the stable.

You take the sofa or a chair, according to your mind;
Before you is a blazing fire; an open door behind.
Now sit and chat till dinner time - Perchance it's long a-cooking,
Ne'er mind. At last from kitchen brought, 'twill come all hot and smoking.

And now into the dining room the hostess bids you enter.
Zounds! Did you e'er gaze upon the table of a planter?
You well may wish good appetite to see such goodly fare,-
Here lies a turkey plump and fat,-a ponderous ham lies there.

Hash, venison, and sausages along the middle space,
Yams, turnips, rice and radishes, each in its proper place.
And hominy, the large and small,- the small like hasty pudding,
The large, which is not made of meal, is boiled corn plump and budding.

Corn bread, much loved by Southerners, of kinds full half a dozen,
Or biscuits if you these prefer, all glowing from the oven.
The Mistress sits at yonder end, the Master he sits here,
The children sit along between; the slaves stand in the rear.

The Master carves the turkey up, the Mistress cuts the bacon,
The slaves come round with coffee cups, not doubting that you'll take one.
The carving done, all plates are filled, and knives and forks in motion,
But our officious waiters still, - so great is their devotion-

Pass round and round from plate to plate, their ready will to show forth,
And bring you this and bring you that, 'Tis "Won't you have?" and so forth;
No matter though you've oft declined, 'tis offered o'er and o'er,
For who knows but you've changed your mind since it came round before?

At last the dishes are removed and then the dessert comes.
But first with salver and a brush, the cloth is cleaned of crumbs.
Behold a platter steaming hot from kitchen brought by Cato,
Puddings, pies, no matter what, 'tis made of sweet potato.

Perhaps a custard gingered o'er, or clabber duly sweetened,
A rare dish this, though in the North the swine are on it fattened,
Or fritters or molasses pie, or dumplings made with peaches,
All made precisely by the rule which Mrs. Leslie teaches.

Now dinner's o'er and going out the hall again you enter,
This hall at ends is ne'er enclosed in summer or in winter.
Here stands the wooden water pail, a fount for every sipper,
A bucket large without a bail, a gourd shell for a dipper.

If empty, there's a darky near, "You, Jim, go fetch some water,"
Jim goes and brings it on his head, without a spill or spatter,
Now look out to the yard behind, -you see a "heap o' cabins,"
Log huts where negroes quite resigned, live merry as the robins.

Around you in an ample yard the trees are tall and wavy,
It has no grass, is smooth and hard, for summer dews are heavy.
The slaves are toiling in the fields, some singing and some grunting,
But Master and his sons and dogs will spend the day in hunting.

Adieu then to the planter's home; we'll ride back to the village,
And leave the hunters still to roam, and negroes to their tillage.

Of patriarchal matters yet I've somewhat more to say,
They shake hands always when they meet, bow, say "Howdy" on the street,
Then shake hands when they go away. The mother, daughter, son and sire
Will walk between you and the fire without a thought or scruple.

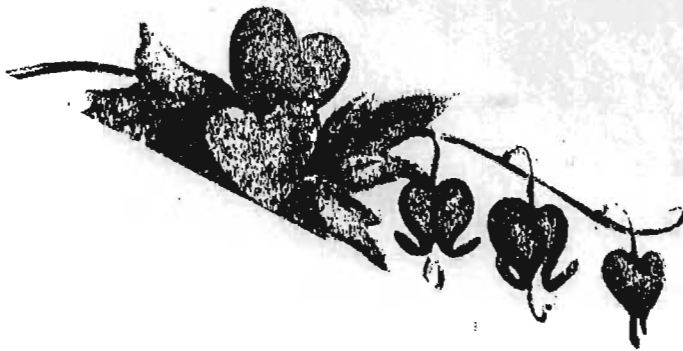
Young ladies all are taught to play piano or guitar,
And spend their lives right merrily, from labor free and care;
Yet learn they manners in their youth- they're ladies quite at ten,
And boys, in feeling and in truth, at twelve are gentlemen.

The "sense of honor" governs them, at home, abroad, at school,
The rod belongs on meaner backs, -they spurn each servile rule.
Our planter and his older sons have each their riding horses;
Our mothers scarcely know their babes, but give them up to nurses.

Our cooks know only when 'tis set what will be on the table,
And since the slave's a thievish race, will pilfer when they're able,
The storeroom or the pantry sure must have a key to lock it,
And Mistress, to have all secure, keeps this in her own pocket.

Full oft along the public road you meet a market wagon, -
Three spans of mules before the load, with Sambo on the back one;
Thus riding on up hill and down he whistles time away,
And jogs along to market town full twenty miles a day.

The country boy at early hour starts for the village school,
In truth he cannot walk so far, nor rides he on a mule.
Yet has he his own little steed, a right brave little pony,
A gentle beast of gentle breed, and nimble as a coney.



A negro brings him to the door, and ties him by the bridle.
 The saddle bags are filled with corn, and laid across the saddle.
 Then speedily young Master mounts, and rides into the town,
 He ties the pony to the fence, the saddle bags takes down,

And pulling from one end his books, from other end the grain,
 He lays them safe behind the fence, till he rides home again.
 Now Master may go to his tasks, and pony at the gate,
 May eat until his corn is gone, then stand and meditate.

And here shall end my tedious tale, though I have scarce begun it.
 I little thought I should so soon to such a length have spun it.
 My rhyme is simple as you see, as is my simple story,
 But read and think it writ for thee, and not for praise or glory.

I wish I was this little sheet, or could be folded in it,
 So I with this your hand might grasp, though but for one short minute.
 Yet do I send my better part, propitious fortune speed it,
 The pure affections of my heart, to you and all who read it.

I love the South, the sunny South, where skies are warm and friendly,
 Where o'er life's frail and tender strings the soft winds breathe so kindly;
 Yet love I more my native North where bond men never sigh,
 Where freedom's sun shines glorious, though from a frosty sky.

Give me again health's ruddy hue, strong nerve and playful lung,
 That care not though rough winds do blow my native hills among.
 I'd sooner seek the frozen zone where endless winter reigns,
 Than bask beneath a southern sun, 'mid fellow men in chains."



An attractive, informative and readable book on the history of Ann Arbor has been published through the good offices of our member, Franklyn Everett, by the Ann Arbor Instrument Works, 1200 rosewood Street, Ann Arbor. This may be purchased at several Ann Arbor book stores and from Mr. Everett. The text was written by Virginia Ryan, Betty Springfield, Coleman Jewett and Leonard Hoag, teachers of Carpenter School and of the Ann Arbor Public Schools. It is illustrated with drawings by Joan Beaver which add much to its interest. It is hoped that there will be other books of this nature which will be published in the future.





A narrow bridge led to the door, and the man by the bridge...
The saddle was filled with corn and laid across the saddle...
Then the young man rode into the town...
He tied the pony to the fence, the saddle bags down...
And when he saw the man, from other side the fence...
He lay down behind the fence, till the rider came again...
How much to go to his tasks, and pony at the gate...
My heart will his corn in sack, and stand and wait...
And then the man... I have seen some...
A little thought, a good reason to such a length have man...
My horse is... as in my single story...
But read and think it writ for thee, and not for praise or glory...
I wish I was a little speed, to could be led in...
So I wish your hand mine... though but for one short minute...
Yet I could send my better... to wish you speed...
The good affection... to you and all who read...

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