

# Washtenaw Historical Society News

March - 1974



NEXT MEETING - 8:00 P. M., Thursday, April 28, 1974  
at Liberty Hall, Ann Arbor Federal Savings,  
Division Street at Liberty, Ann Arbor.  
Speaker: - Foster Fletcher. Subject: - Ypsilanti.

APRIL MEETING: April 25, 1974. Subject: - Railroading.

The newly organized genealogical section of the Society will meet Sunday, April 21, 1974 at 2:30 P. M. in Liberty Hall, Ann Arbor Federal, Division at Liberty. A project has already begun, namely, to reconstruct Washtenaw County history through the family histories of the first settlers in the County.

## LOCAL SOCIETY MEETINGS.

Ypsilanti: Watch papers for meeting notices.  
Ralph Muncy will speak under the auspices of the Ypsilanti Society on Sunday, March 31, at the Ypsilanti Historical Museum, 220 N. Huron St. His subject will be "Family History - for reflected glory, as a puzzler, or, as history personified."

Dexter: meetings are listed in the "Community Calendar" of the Ann Arbor News.

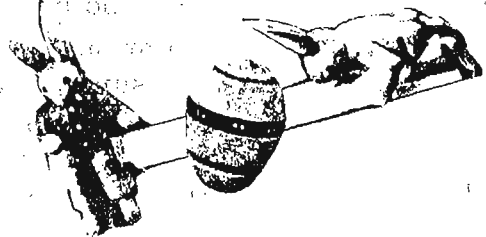
Milan: Kenneth Bauman, President. March 20, 7:30 P. M. at the Community Hall. Speaker: Jason King. Subject: Local History.

Saline: Mrs. Jack Merrill, President. April 4, 8:00 P. M. in the Cafeteria of the High School on Maple Road. A representative of the Michigan Bicentennial Commission will speak.

The next following meeting will be Thursday, April 6, 1974.

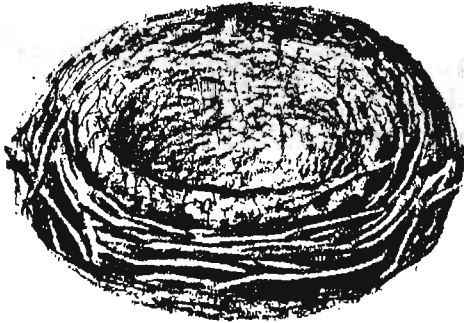
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-- THE EASTER BUNNY --



Years ago, Christine Haller lived alone in her house on Ashley Street near William Street in Ann Arbor. Her brother, Martin Haller occupied a home just to the east on Main Street. The back yards joined one another. Steps lead down from his yard to hers; and the Haller children with their cousins, the children of Katherine Haller Eberbach, clambered up and down these steps in their visits to this aunt.

The week before Easter was always a busy time for these children. They knew that they must prepare for the Easter Bunny if they were to enjoy her visit. No brightly decorated basket purchased in a store would the



Easter Bunny fill with Easter goodies. Instead, she must have nests made in a certain fashion and made by their own hands. Each year the older children supervised their younger brothers and sisters in this activity. They gathered in Uncle Martin's yard. Uncle Ottmar Eberbach provided piles of excelsior, probably packing material used in the shipping room of the chemical supply firm. From this stiff, scratchy material, they managed to twist and weave

real nests. They lined these with a soft, silky material which Uncle Martin brought from the furniture store.

There were a good many nests to make for there must be one for each of the Hallers, young and old, and all of the Eberbachs. Aunt Christine was a maiden lady and had no children but the Easter Bunny always visited her yard so she must be supplied with nests, enough for each of her nephews and nieces.

She would watch the nest building from her own yard and seemed to sense when fingers became weary. Up the steps she would come carrying a tray of cookies for the busy workers.

Each family had its own way of using the nests. Aunt Christine filled hers with all sorts of goodies as well as with brightly colored eggs and hid them in her yard. On Sunday morning, before going to Sunday School, the children gathered in her yard and hunted joyously until each had found his nest. For each one bore a name. The sight of all the goodies banished all thought of the pricked fingers and tired arms incurred in making the nests. As they grew older, these cousins came to realize how much they had meant to their maiden aunt.

For the Eberbach children, but especially for the Bunny, Easter must have been a busy day. They hunted and found their nests at home and at Aunt Christine's. After church and Sunday school they set off for a gala dinner at the beautiful country home of Grandfather Christian Eberbach. This brick house can still be seen on Woodlawn hemmed in by other houses. At the time of our story there were no nearby houses and the Eberbach house set far back from Packard (known at one time as South Ypsilanti Road) on a slight rise of land. The vast lawn, surrounded by an arbor vitae hedge, sloped to Packard in front, to Wells Street on one side and to open country on the other side. A lane, curving gracefully between the house and Packard Street, was bordered with tall Balsam Fir trees. The Easter Bunny must have found the trees and shrubbery an ideal spot to hide her eggs.

Dinner was barely over before Grandpa would remark: "Isn't it about time for the Easter Bunny to depart? Let's go out and see if we can see her." The children needed no urging and followed him eagerly with the grown-ups not far behind. No bunny was visible when they reached the porch but suddenly amid screams of joy from the children a huge white Easter Bunny could be seen dashing across the lane on through a field toward present day Granger Avenue. The Easter hunt was on!

Here the hunt was not for a nest but for a basket—your own special basket. Each year after the goodies found in it were enjoyed, each child made a visit to Grandfather and Grandmother to return the basket for safe keeping until the Easter Bunny's return another year.



The children's baskets were usually in quite obvious places but how the grown-ups had to hunt for theirs -- hidden in the most unexpected places, often down in one or another of the wells on the property. Such delights as the children found in their baskets! Cookies and candies so like those made by Grandmother that had the children paused to wonder they must have thought the bunny had borrowed her recipes. There were chocolate rabbits and fancy candy eggs as well as a few brightly colored real eggs. Most of the colored eggs were hidden elsewhere and as each person found his basket he started a search for more eggs. Many of the eggs were hidden in the trees. As the breeze moved the branches, one or another would spy a colored egg and the hired men would get it down with a long-handled fruit picker. When the hunt was over, the one with the most eggs would get a prize and the one who found none or had the least number of eggs was rewarded with a "booby" prize. Since the children could

always find their baskets more easily than their elders, it was often a grown-up who found the least.

Year after year the family gathered in this manner to share together a beautiful tradition and renew the bonds of love for one another.

Linda Eberbach who told this story added, "The eggs were dyed each year in special ceramic pots. I remember them well. They were a rather mustardy yellow on the outside and on the inside each bore the color of the dye used in it. They were never used for anything else and were kept for years on a shelf in the dry sink. (The dry sink is now the property of the Washtenaw Historical Society.)

"The baskets were made of a firm but not harsh grass like rope about the diameter of a pencil coiled to form a basket. The coils were joined one to another as some Indian baskets are. We used them year after year.

"It was Uncle Ernie, my fun-loving uncle who kept the rabbit in a cage, hidden in the shrubbery and would let it out at the right moment. We learned this when we no longer really believed in the Easter Bunny -- but do you know I still do!"

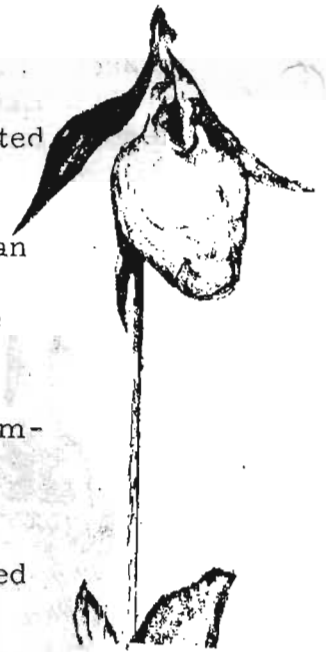


SEEN THROUGH AN OPEN CABIN DOOR

Through an error this meeting of the Milan Historical Society was listed as March 20 instead of February 20. We apologize—and do so with deep regret.

It was a beautiful program! Kenneth Bauman, President of the Milan Historical Society, presented a slide program on the wild flowers and ferns which a pioneer in the Milan area might have seen from his cabin door. He is a talented photographer. The color, even in deep woods, was excellent and he showed a wide variety of plants. He talked of where these flowers grew in years gone by as well as where they are to be found now. Mr. Bauman said the one place he found the most flowers was the Milan city dump! He also spoke of the many uses the pioneers found for plants, such as food, medicine, dyes, etc.

Milan meetings are held in one of the former Ford Mills now converted to a Community Building.

MARTHA WASHINGTON CURRANT POUNDCAKE

|                                       |                  |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| 5 C sifted flour                      | 2-3/4 C sugar    |
| 1-1/2 t baking powder                 | 6 eggs           |
| 1 t nutmeg                            | 1-1/2 t vanilla  |
| 1/2 t salt                            | 1 C milk         |
| 1-1/2 C butter or margarine, softened | 11/2 oz currants |

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Grease well and flour a 10" x 4" tube pan. Sift flour with baking powder, nutmeg, and salt. Set aside.
2. In a large bowl, with the electric mixer at high speed, beat butter with sugar 'til light and fluffy... about five minutes.
3. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add vanilla, continue beating until smooth and fluffy.
4. At low speed, beat in flour mixture (in fourths), alternating with milk (in thirds), beginning and ending with flour mixture; beat only until combined. Stir in currants.
5. Turn into prepared pan. Bake one hour and twenty minutes, or until cake tester inserted in center comes out clean.
6. Cool in pan on wire rack 15 minutes. Turn out of pan on rack, cool completely.
7. To serve, slice thinly. Makes about 30 servings.

Note: This is a cake that stores well and improves in standing. It is best when baked a day or two ahead. Serve it with Madeira for a real taste treat.

-- Mary Steffek

Mary served this cake at the January meeting to the enjoyment of everyone there.

## CRAFTS

Do you know how to quilt a quilt, cane a chair, spin a yarn (threadwise or wordwise), braid a rug, or perchance make butter?

There are many crafts, many people within our society who know something about one craft or another and some people who would like to acquire skill in one or another craft.

Would you like to be a member of a group to explore this matter? If you have knowledge or skill in a craft would you share it with others who would like to learn? If you would like to learn a craft others in such a group might find joy in sharing their skills with you.

Pioneer crafts grew out of necessity. They "made do" with what they had and from their efforts came some crafts which have lasted since earliest colonial days. We can learn much from what they did, more than that, we can have the satisfaction of becoming more creative individuals in our machine dominated society.

Interested? Call: L. Muncy -- 663-3761.

## ORAL HISTORY

What is Oral History? What methods are employed? How important is it in preserving the records of the past?

There are a number of people in the society already engaged in this movement. Would you like to join with them in learning about the techniques, aims, etc.?

If so, please contact: L. Muncy -- 663-3761 or E. Morton -- 662-2634.

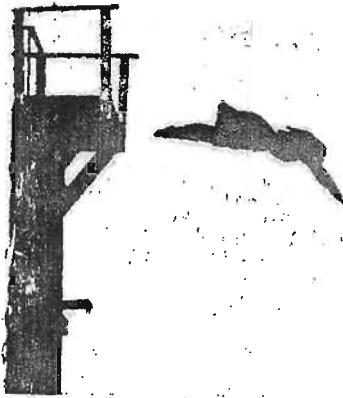
## RECOLLECTIONS

Do you have recollections such as those Linda Eberbach has shared with us? If you do would you write them down and send them to us? Or if you don't want to do that call us and we will come, listen to your story and then try to write it -- to suit you, of course. This is really what "Oral History" is about. This, too, is almost the only way we can preserve the peculiar flavor of life in days gone by -- the flavor which gives life in each age a quality like no other.

Too often stories are lost because an individual thinks his life is relatively unimportant. This is not true -- each life is important if we are to capture the pattern of the whole. Please help us to weave true tapestry of the years during which you have lived.

Call: E. Morton -- 662-2634 or L. Muncy -- 663-3761.





COME ON IN: - -

the NEXT MEETING of the  
GENEALOGICAL BRANCH of the  
WASHTENAW HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
will be Sunday, April 21 at 2:30 P. M. in  
LIBERTY HALL of Ann Arbor Federal,  
401 East Liberty, Ann Arbor.

Park in rear at Division and Washington and use rear entrance to building.

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How are WE coming with our plans to research the histories of the families  
of the first settlers of Washtenaw County?

How are YOU coming along the TRAILS of YOUR OWN FAMILY?

Can't trust or believe the family traditions?

Then come and hear how the descendant of a slave, Alex Haley,  
was able by means of family and tribal traditions to locate the tribe and  
family in Africa from which his family came.

LYDIA MUNCY will review "In Search of THE AFRICAN" as told  
by Mr. Haley in the February issue of American History Illustrated.

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It takes both the No Bobs and the Nabobs to make history.

Washtenaw Historical Society News

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