

Washtenaw Historical Society News

April 1974

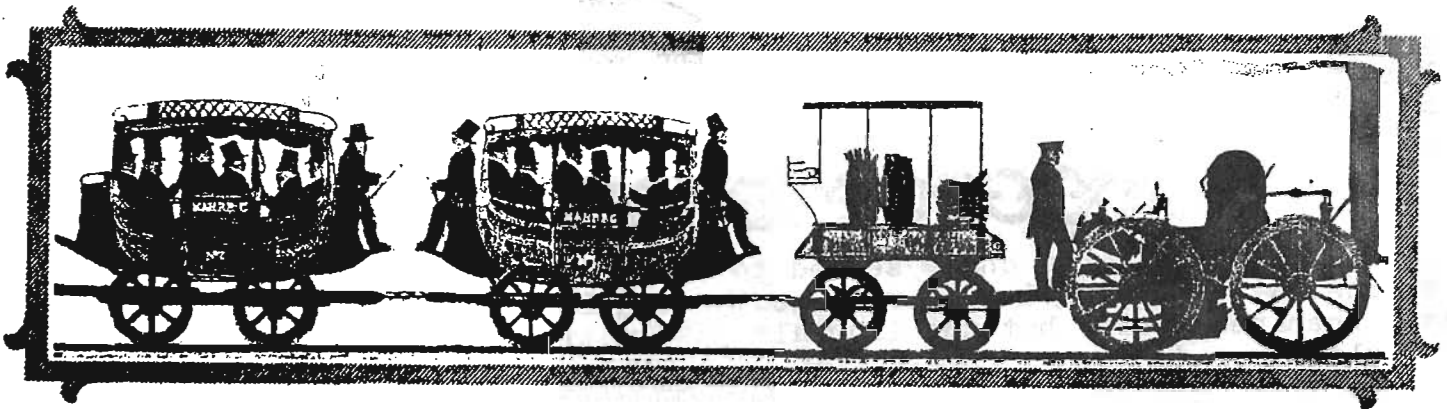
COMING OPPORTUNITIES

Washtenaw Historical Society,

April 25, 8:00 P. M. Ann Arbor Federal Savings, Liberty Hall,
Division at Liberty Streets, Ann Arbor.
Cleland B. Wyllie, Railroad Historian,
"Railroading in Ann Arbor."

May 23, 8:00 P. M. Tentatively planned at the Ypsilanti Museum,
220 N. Huron Street, Ypsilanti.
Foster Fletcher, Ypsilanti City Historian,
"Ypsilanti"

May 10, 10:00 -4:00 P.M. Dexter Spring House Tour.
Friends of the Dexter Library present seven homes and
St. James Episcopal Church in keeping with Dexter's sesqui-
centennial. Tickets are \$2.50 on sale on day of tour.
and earlier at Dexter Library, Merkel Furniture, Chelsea;
Early American Shop, Plymouth; Delux Draper, Ann Arbor;
From Heaven to Seven Shop, Lamppost Plaza; Happiness House,
Westgate; The Nutshell, Pinckney.
All houses except #7 also open 6:00 to 8:00. Luncheon, \$2.00



Contribute to the Ann Arbor Sesquicentennial Booklet!

Ann Arbor Federal Savings is planning a new pictorial booklet of Ann Arbor. This will be in addition to the booklets by Ann Arbor Federal of Chelsea, Dexter and Ypsilanti. A pictorial booklet of Manchester will be ready soon.

If you have pictures of "old Ann Arbor," please contact Mrs. Hazel Proctor at Ann Arbor Federal Savings or telephone her at 769-8300.

Dexter Craft Fair.

If you did not attend the Pioneer Craft Fair held April 6 by the Dexter Historical Society, you missed a fine affair. Held in the Dexter High School gym there was ample space for both the exhibits and parking for the visitors,



Many crafts were exhibited, -at least the 35 they advertised. Among them we can mention but a few. The children seemed attracted to the woman making butter. Perhaps the samples of home-made bread spread with the newly made butter was the attraction. Nearby was a lady painting china, and next to her examples of the paper craft, quilling.



Various types of woodcraft were demonstrated. On stage-and next to it were some fine quilts-with beautiful quilting, as well as interesting examples of patch work and embroidered tops not yet quilted. The lace-maker's booth was very interesting, and the women manning it were helpful in answering questions about both the exhibit and other kinds of lace making.



The woman caning a chair seemed to know her craft well. Alongside a demonstration of weaving a rush seat was going on. The material used was a prepared fiber, but the lady also had native rush and showed how it could be used.

Everyone seemed eager to answer questions. If the luncheon served was as delicious as the baked goods for sale at the entrance, it must have been a fine meal. We hope the Fair was as profitable as it was pleasant!



One of the responsibilities of the Washtenaw Historical Society is to bring to the attention of its community the ways in which our resources may be best used, beautified and preserved so that succeeding generations may point with pride to our achievements. It is with this purpose in mind that we bring to you an example of a failure to implement well-designed plans which resulted in the deterioration of one of our public thoroughfares. Anne Hinshaw Wing writes this account with the fervent hope that what may yet be preserved in a beautiful condition will not be allowed to deteriorate.



Will Faith Move Mountains? - Anne Hinshaw Wing.

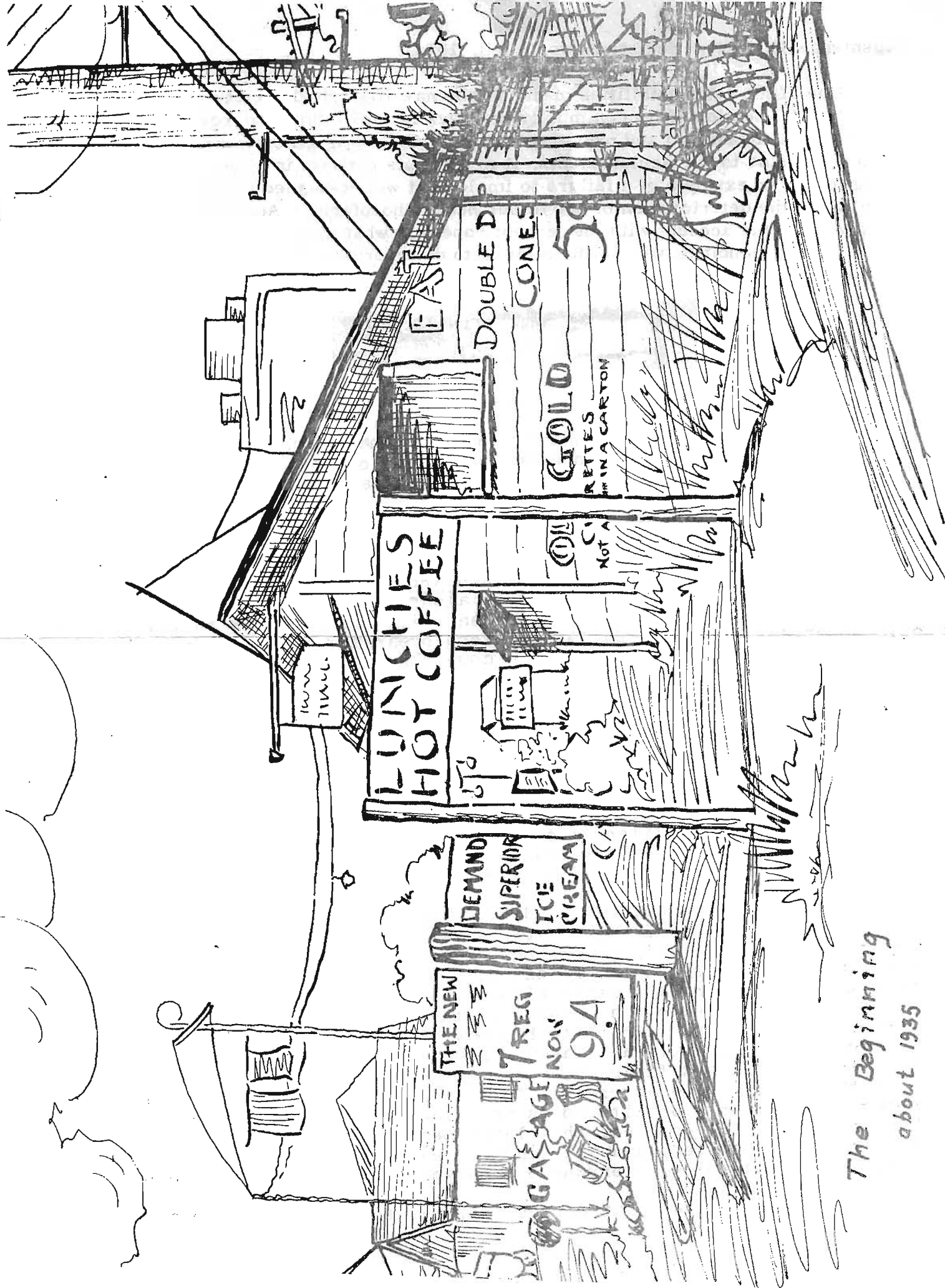
When I was still young enough to think that with faith I could move mountains, I tried very hard to save the beauty of the Washtenaw Road. But I found the mountain too firmly set in its ways.

The nine-mile stretch of the Washtenaw Road between Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti was then just beginning to be spoiled by billboards and the clutter of roadside business. The president of the Ypsilanti Garden Club, Miss Goddard, wanted to work with the Ann Arbor Garden Club to plant flowering trees, shade trees and shrubs along the way, and to prevent the road from being spoiled. It was then still rural enough so that people sometimes hiked the distance before breakfast just for the fun of it. A two-lane concrete pavement ran down the middle of an eighty-foot right of way that passed between farmland and just a few business places along with the County Home and Infirmary. But at a certain intersection which I believe is now Washtenaw Road at Carpenter Road, deterioration had already set in. Recalling its former beauty, garden club members and others longed to prevent the sort of uglification that had ruined other city approaches.

In the end I passed from the chairmanship of the Ann Arbor Garden Club's Conservation committee to the chairmanship of the Washtenaw Roadside Council, a joint committee that included many far more influential citizens than I from both Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti.

Honestly, my friends, we tried, everyone of us. Landowners were almost all willing to dedicate a strip some twenty feet wide along the right of way to the planting, only one writing on our questionnaire, "Don't want no scrubbery on my roadside!" We found we could do nothing without the blessing of the state highway department, so letters went back and forth, and we held a banquet at the Michigan Union in honor of Murray D. Van Waggoner, then state highway commissioner. He seemed all enthusiasm, and apparently all was in order. But nothing had been done many months after I had finished, with much effort, a landscape plan made at the scale of a quarter-inch to the foot of the whole nine miles, allowing for contours, utility poles and lines, ditches, permanent trees, buildings, etc. I pencilled, then later penned in on tracing-cloth, maples, oaks, crabapples, and all kinds of beautiful trees and shrubs, and enthusiasm was voiced everywhere throughout the county for the project.

This was during the great depression, and thousands of people were



The Beginning
about 1935

working for the various alphabet agencies of the federal government. After waiting a long time for something to turn up, I took a job in Detroit helping to plan the landscaping of a federal housing project. Two council members, Alice and Jessie Bourquin, who were also students of landscape design along with me, also worked on the project. But we had absolute faith that the Washtenaw Road would be made beautiful through our efforts and those of other citizens. Then the Bourquin twins went to Lansing to work for the state, Alice taking a landscape designing job with the state highway department. And I left to get married, expecting that the work would go forward in my absence from Ann Arbor.

Except for short visits I did not return for the next twenty years or so. Then when we finally came back here to live, I was asleep in the back seat of the car when I was awakened by my husband's saying, "Well, we are almost home so you'd better wake up and look around you." I opened my eyes and asked where we were. He said, and I'll never forget it, "On the Washtenaw Road between Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti!" I gasped, "Oh, No!" But he said, "Oh yes! Yes! Yes!"

Well, folks, you can imagine how I felt. The kind of mess that we all had hoped would never appear on the Washtenaw Road to match the clutter we had hoped to get rid of (see sketch) had spread irretrievably up and down our once beautiful entrance to the city of Ann Arbor and its companion city, Ypsilanti. I was told that a very few landowners had refused to cooperate and the state had said it must be all or none. The state highway department had the whole say, and that was that.

I was not the only one who had spent countless hours making that never-used plan. As a state highway department employee, Alice Bourquin was required to do it all over again according to the ideas of the department, and she produced a very fine new plan for the nine miles. But the best laid plans of mice and men, as we all know, gang aft agley, and all you have to do is to drive from Ann Arbor to Ypsilanti to find out how far agley they can go.

Commercial developments and stately city entrances do not mix well. Traffic is tangled by many driveway openings, and the scenery is ravished. The first impression made upon visitors to the city is important to any city's reputation. And Washtenaw Road used to be beautiful without any additional planting just because of its farmscapes, its shade trees and its native shrubs, vines, and wildflowers.

The ecology movement has inspired many people, and most importantly the younger generation in whose hands the future lies. I am proud of their accomplishments in recent years and hope that they and those who come after them will be able to save some of the beauty of Washtenaw County that still remains.

Perhaps they can save the beauty and dignity of the Plymouth Road, Huron Parkway, Huron River Drive, what is left of South State and South Main Roads, and any other thus far little commercialized highways leading into our cities. I feel sure that the members of the Washtenaw Historical Society will lend the help that is necessary to further such endeavors, and insure their success.

Washtenaw Historical Society
Ethelyn S. Morton
2708 Brockman Blvd.
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104

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