

# WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS



## HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

**Chelsea Historical Society** — 8 p.m. Monday, November 14, in McKune Library. Oral History tapes will be played.

**Dexter Historical Society** — Christmas bazaar 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, December 3 at the museum, 3443 Inverness. Sale of baked goods, Williamsburg-style greens arrangements, other items planned. The museum will have a special display and the museum gift shop will be open. Gift shop items include handmade mortar and pestle and a "Dancing Dan" toy which may be ordered.

**Milan Historical Society** — 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, November 16, at Milan Community House.

**Manchester Historical Society** — 8 p.m. Monday, November 28, at United Church of Christ Educational Building.

**Salem Historical Society** — Christmas bazaar December 3 and 4 at Salem Township Hall. Hours 10-6 Saturday and noon to 6 p.m. Sunday. Bake sale, arts and crafts, Santa, fish pond and raffle planned. They will also rent booths to artists and craftsmen.

**Saline Historical Society** — Robert Schweitzer who teaches courses in the decorative arts at the U-M will give a slide talk at 8:30 p.m. Tuesday, November 15, in the Saline High School library. His topic will be "The American Folk Arts from 1600-1850."



## ANGELA WELCH NAMED MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

Mrs. Lyndon (Angela) Welch has been appointed membership chairman of WCHS for 1977-78 by President Thomas F. Lacy. She succeeds Rosemary Whelan.

## PRESTON W. SLOSSON WILL SPEAK NOVEMBER 17; 'HOW TO GET ELECTED PRESIDENT' IS TOPIC

Ever had a secret desire to be President of the United States? Or do you have a son, daughter or grandchild you would like to see preside in the Oval Office? If so, the November WCHS meeting is made to order for you.

Professor-Emeritus Preston W. Slosson will speak (perhaps a little tongue-in-cheek) on "How To Get Elected President."

The retired U-M history pro-

## ALLOA ANDERSON'S COOKY BOOK AVAILABLE NOW FOR CHRISTMAS BAKING

Alloa Anderson, wife of WCHS Vice-President Leigh Anderson, has just published her international collection of mouth-watering Christmas cooky recipes. Traditional holiday plum and rice puddings are included.

The 22-page booklet includes English, German, Polish and American favorites and a good measure of Swedish, Norwegian and Danish recipes from her husband's Scandinavian heritage.

She eschews mixers, freezers, bleached flour and margarine in most cases. Mixing by hand or with a "Dover" egg beater and using unbleached flour and butter is more authentic, she believes. She also thinks that "a frozen cooky doesn't ever take the place of one that has been kept only cold."

Some of the recipes, which play an important part in traditional Christmas eve smorgasbords at the Andersons, are accompanied with intriguing details, such as the story of springerles.

The book is for sale at \$3.50 from Mrs. Anderson. To obtain a copy readers may call her at 663-2128.

Professor, author, lecturer and radio political commentator promises his talk will be an analysis of how the American electorate acts and reacts. It will be at 8 p.m. Thursday, November 17, in Liberty Hall, Liberty and Division Streets, Ann Arbor.

Please note: the meeting is a week early to avoid conflict with Thanksgiving Day.

## HAROLD JONES TO SPEAK ABOUT CEMETERY PROJECT

Harold Jones will speak on "Compiling Cemetery Records" at the next meeting of the Genealogical Group at 2:30 p.m. Sunday, December 4, at Washtenaw Community College. Help session at 1 p.m.

Please note that the meeting was postponed a week to avoid conflict with Thanksgiving weekend. The speaker is working on a cemetery directory for Washtenaw County.

## GRANTS COMMITTEE NEEDS VOLUNTEERS CAN YOU HELP?

Robert Reiff, chairman of the finance and grants committee, needs a few volunteers to work with him in reviewing potential grants and putting together proposals for grants for our proposed new museum. If you are willing to give it a try please telephone him at Ann Arbor Federal, 769-8300, or leave a message for him.

## CHRISTMAS PARTY DEC. 18

WCHS will hold its Christmas party from 4-6 p.m. Sunday, December 18, at the Ypsilanti Historical Society museum at 220 N. Huron Street in Ypsilanti.

# THE HENRY FORD I KNEW

By Dr. Frank Fitt

It happens that by sheer chance of circumstances I met and saw much of Henry Ford in the last dozen or so years of his life.

In the closing days of 1930 I came to Grosse Pointe to assume the pastorate of the Grosse Pointe Memorial Church. Previously I had spent nearly 13 years in a Presbyterian pastorate at Highland Park, a suburb just north of Chicago.

At that time our two children were quite young. Mrs. Fitt and I sometime before had purchased a cottage in the Colorado Rockies. There my wife and children spent the entire summer while I joined them for my vacation in August. For much of the summer I lived alone.

One morning after breakfast I was reading on the porch of the manse when a dear old neighbor on his usual stroll called out from the sidewalk, "Hey, parson, where are you taking dinner tonight? Can you dine with us?" I said I would be glad to come.

"Fine," he said. "See you at seven o'clock."

It was all so informal that I was not sure that I should wear my tuxedo but I decided to play safe."

As I strolled down the half-block, no one else was in sight. As I neared the home a limousine drew up in front of it and out stepped Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford.

There was no mistaking him—the lithe, graceful figure, the fine tailoring of his tuxedo, the quick keen gaze, the marked resemblance to Cardinal Mercier. Mrs. Ford was a little brown wren of a woman with a humorous facial expression and dancing eyes which took in everything quickly. There was no mistaking their devotion to each other.

I still have vivid memories of the dinner. There were about a dozen couples around the table. I was seated where I could observe Henry Ford closely. I noticed that

he contented himself with a very small amount of food as I had heard. I also had heard he was a very convinced teetotaler and I watched him when he raised his wine glass as a matter of politeness. All he did was to moisten his lips.

He took part in the conversation, showed that he was not without humor, never became excited or heated then or in any of our many future meetings, was always ready to listen and altogether revealed himself as a man of deep refinement.

After dinner we men adjourned for a time to smoke and chat together, Henry Ford abstaining from the cigars as a non-smoker. The subject of Russia came up—I don't remember what crisis it was. I remember Mr. Ford's comment:

"They need some Britons over there to teach them how to organize." Then as a sort of after-thought and in the most casual tone without any thought of the effect on the rest of us he said, "That is what I told the King of England."

I think we all pricked up our ears at this point. I said, "Mr. Ford, tell us about your meeting with the king."

"Oh," he said, "Mrs. Ford and I happened to be over in England and we were invited to a garden party where we met the king."

"What did the king say when you told him that Russia needed some Britons to teach them how to organize?"

"He just laughed."

"It was among the older group in Grosse Pointe, their contemporaries, that Mr. and Mrs. Ford found their chief, but not the only avenue, of their social life. Every now and then when we dined at certain homes Mrs. Fitt and I would find that Mr. and Mrs. Ford were present as fellow guests.



Usually the party was about a dozen or so and the pattern I have described at my first meeting with them was followed. Both of them were always the same, calm, friendly, always ready to take part in the general conversation, never in a hurry to leave.

When she was with a small group of women friends some of them told me, Mrs. Ford on occasion would reduce them to helpless laughter with her ability as a mimic. She was never malicious in her portrayal, but of course, she and her husband not infrequently found themselves in situations which found portrayal later in her own humor.

My first visit to Fairlane, his home in Dearborn, came about during Mrs. Fitt's four-year term as president of the board of the Detroit Metropolitan YWCA. Mrs. Ford was a most generous supporter of that work and we were invited to lunch with Mr. Ford and herself, just the four of us.

The home was approached by a long private driveway through woods and then one came suddenly to the landscaped grounds and home. I had expected something on the order of the huge mansions of England. Instead the home was a modest residence, far less pretentious than some of the homes I knew well in Grosse Pointe.

No couple could have made us feel more at ease. I marvelled that a man still in control of his company as Mr. Ford then was could seem so carefree and unhurried.

My chief memory is an amusing one. I knew a very skillful butler, a Scotchman, who had been passed around from one family to another in Grosse Pointe. His nemesis was strong drink and after a time his employer would have to let him go. As is true of almost all butlers he was a most distinguished looking man, but inevitably his nose took on over the years the hues of a rainbow. Then he disappeared.

To my astonishment he was the

butler who took care of us at that luncheon and my astonishment was intensified when I noticed that in that teetotaling home the usual nasal glow was receding. I remember that he and I exchanged a wink as he probably noted my surprise. The day came years later when I took his funeral.

One unforgettable memory was attending the celebration of the Fords' fiftieth wedding anniversary in 1937. It was an evening reception at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Edsel Ford at the northern end of Grosse Pointe.

Carpenters had built on a commodious temporary room to the Edsel Ford home to accommodate the three hundred or so men and women who attended, most of them known to me.

The most remarkable feature of the evening was that Birney Smith, the official introducer, was not there. (Smith is a Negro, now in his 90's, a devout Episcopalian, now living in retirement at Brighton with whom I keep in touch as a longtime friend.) For forty years or more he was the official introducer at receptions, inquiring your name and mentioning it to those who were receiving as you reached them.

The miracle was that the four Fords, Henry and his wife, Edsel and his wife, called everyone by name as they came along. Henry Ford was then 74.

Very definite precautions were taken against uninvited interlopers for it was not unknown for complete strangers to turn up and partake freely of the refreshments. At the entrance lodge each car was stopped and the passengers courteously identified in a matter of moments. Later inside I looked around for possible guards or detectives and saw none. A short time later I saw Mr. Ford somewhere else and congratulated him on the neighborliness of the occasion and the absence of any professional watchers.

He smiled slightly and all he said was, "They were there."

It was earlier on New Year's Eve in 1935 that I had Henry Ford



—Courtesy, Ford Archives, Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, Mich.

### Henry Ford I and Mrs. Ford, dancing at Greenfield Village.

all to myself for two or three hours. It so happened that I had in the congregation at Grosse Pointe the champion lady dry and the champion lady wet of Michigan. By that time the eighteenth amendment had been repealed.

The lady dry kept on witnessing to her faith by hiring the main floor of the Masonic Temple in Detroit for a New Year's Eve dance to which hundreds of young people were invited. No liquor was served.

We chaperons were seated in boxes around the dance floor and our hostess had put Mr. Ford and myself as the sole occupants of one.

F.D.R. and his New Deal were the chief topics everywhere and I decided to find out Henry Ford's opinions as tactfully as I could. In all his opinions, Henry Ford spoke in concentrated form such as we use in a telegram. He really needed an interpreter.

A perfect illustration is found in his statement to a reporter at the time he won his case against the Chicago Tribune in 1916 that "history is more or less bunk." This statement has unfortunately found its way into Bartlett (Familiar Quotations). The man who

spent many millions creating Greenfield Village certainly had a deep respect for certain periods of American history. What he meant, I am quite sure, is that we should not allow ourselves to be influenced too much by historical precedent.

In our conversation that night at the Masonic Temple dance, Ford was calm and used the same telegraphic phrasing, the capsule form of a long process of thought. We did not mention Franklin Delano Roosevelt by name, but it was clear to me that Mr. Ford felt sure that in the election later that year the American people would have too much good judgment to vote back the president to the White House. He was wrong of course.

The general opinion of Mr. Ford's judgment of the New Deal which I formed was that he considered it was releasing forces into the American scene which in time might prove uncontrollable and conceivably fatal to our democratic tradition.

Over forty years have passed since that interview. There can be no question of certain benefits originating through the New Deal,

but surely we are painfully aware of certain dangers too — fearful abuses of our welfare system and long term deficit financing.

For many winters Mr. and Mrs. Ford entertained their friends at occasional square dances at Greenfield Village in Dearborn on Friday evenings. We could seldom attend since I did much of my pastoral calling then when the men were home in the evening. On the few occasions when we could attend we were sure to meet some visiting celebrity, usually a distinguished foreigner. I remember meeting a Hohenzollern, a grandson of the Kaiser on his wedding trip in this country. (He had served an apprenticeship at the Ford Company once.) His bride was a Romanoff related to the late czar, one of the most beautiful young women I have ever seen.

Mr. Ford was a graceful dancer and obviously enjoyed himself as the fiddler he brought from New England played. No one smoked out of respect for Mr. Ford and no liquor was available. At ten o'clock promptly cocoa and sandwiches were served and soon all had started home.

It was inevitable that a man gifted with such originality as Henry Ford should be misunderstood at times. When he said he didn't believe in charity, he was referring again in his telegraphic way to indiscriminate charity. He believed in charity that counted.

In addition to the large foundation which is his legacy to mankind today he was most generous during his lifetime.

Among the large cities in this country Detroit pioneered the United Foundation concept, all the "begs" in one "ask it." Year after year in strict confidence he had an understanding that he could be counted on to make sure that Detroit would go over the top. That ended with his death.

In 1916 he took over the hospital that bears his name and ran it in his own way. The manager of the hospital was a parishioner of mine. The deficit on that



Courtesy, Professor David L. Lewis

#### Former Ford cabin at exclusive Huron Mountain Club.

hospital each year was about a half million dollars and Ford paid it.

He had extraordinary ways of helping people. One of my parishioners at Grosse Pointe spent his whole life as a teacher of German and French. He had those three Ford grandsons as students. Every second year he would return to Europe and travel in France and Germany, perfecting his knowledge. Every time he landed he was met by a chauffeur and Ford car that carried him around wherever he wanted to go.

During World War II one of the young men in our church was invalided home after being seriously wounded. In telling me about it he said, "You know my life was saved by that fully equipped ambulance that brought me back from the front lines. It was wonderful of our church to give such a gift. You can't imagine what it meant to me as they carried me in to read in big letters on its side that it was given by the Grosse Pointe Memorial Church."

I had no knowledge of any such gift, but I later found out what I suspected was true, that in complete privacy Henry Ford had donated about a dozen such costly ambulances in the names of certain institutions in the Detroit area. In the years when Mr. Ford was still living I kept coming across many cases where individu-

als and institutions had been assisted by him.

On Saturday, August 24, 1946, six months before his death, I saw Henry Ford for the last time. Hints had reached me earlier that he had suddenly become somewhat senile. Not long after his retirement when his grandson took over the company, Henry Ford purchased a cottage at the Huron Mountain Club, west of Marquette, where a colony of about seventy-five families, mainly from Grosse Pointe and Lake Forest spent their summer vacations.

Mrs. Fitt and I had motored up there from Northport Point where we were vacationing for a wedding I was to perform. Mrs. Ford sent word she hoped we would lunch with them on the day of the wedding and we did. The minute I saw him I realized the reports of senility were true. While he made an occasional comment she did most of the talking. It was fundamentally a very sad occasion. That great man—senile.

He died the following spring. He was 84. You remember that we had floods then. The Rouge River was flooded and his home was in darkness. They had to have candlelight.

A great many lives of Henry Ford have been written, both before and after his death. I have read a number of them. One of

the most unfortunate of them was written, I regret to say, by a gentleman of the cloth. He was associated with Mr. Ford for about five years and then they parted.

I knew this man, respected him, had admiration for his ability, but someone has said, "Deliver me from an enemy who writes a book about me." It is most unfortunate because he interprets Henry Ford as a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. In all the times that I myself had dealings with Mr. Ford I never found anything that suggested a



Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde division, absolutely never.

Perhaps the best comment on the book was made by Henry Ford himself. There was a woman in my parish who knew Mr. Ford well enough to ask him if he had read the book, and if he had what he thought about it.

Later she told me about his perfect answer. He said, "I think that so-and-so reveals more about himself in the book than he does about me."

The study of Henry Ford which



I think comes closest to hitting the bull's-eye was written by a reporter named W. C. Richards who took a year off from *The Detroit Free Press* and went about with Henry Ford day after day. He gives story after story about him, and lets the reader form his own conclusion. It is called *The Last Billionaire*.

If I had my druthers and could meet one hundred great Americans of history, beginning with Lincoln, I certainly would include Henry Ford.



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

### ON EXPLORING A NEGLECTED AREA OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH: THIS TOUR TAKES TEMPERATE TOUCH TO GET ALL THE WAY BACK TO JOE'S

There is a subject of historic interest and significance that to the best of my knowledge has been overlooked or avoided by local historians but merits our attention. Over the years I have done some research on the matter, and perhaps there are others of you who have also done work in this area but have failed to keep records of your findings.

It is a subject that must be approached with care and in a purely scientific manner or it can soon get out of hand. I am referring to one of the earliest evidences of civilization in any area . . . the bar, the tavern, the saloon. We are fortunate to have some classic examples of these early taverns still in operation in outlying areas and each has a wealth of memorabilia and nostalgia.

For those of you who would like to do some research on the subject, here is a tour you might take as a beginning.

First stop would be the "Old Shack" by the railroad track at 422 Wabash in Milan. It is adjacent to the Ann Arbor and the Norfolk, and Western Railroad tracks. It will bring back fond memories of parties at which you gathered around the piano and sang "Little old shack by the railroad track, the roof was so

slanty, etc." It is one I have stopped at after pheasant hunts on hot, dry October days. As far as I could determine—I interviewed the owner—it dates back just to the ending of prohibition, but still has accumulated an interesting history and memorabilia and should be included in any tavern study.

To get the full flavor and feeling of each tavern and the attention of the owner you will want to try the liquid specialty of the house whether it is a hunter's cocktail or a rare ale or beer. But pace yourself. You have five taverns to cover and I would suggest using the wine tasters method if you are to go the distance . . . enjoy the aroma and the flavor but swallow little.

Next tour stop would be the Bridgewater Tavern at 8452 Boettner Road in Bridgewater. Take the back road out of Milan to Saline. It's a picturesque drive with several beautiful old farm houses to view. At Saline follow the main street west out of town and turn off on Austin Road which will take you directly through downtown Bridgewater and by the tavern. Harriet and I researched this one, one sunny afternoon last spring. It is a typical country tavern with bar, pool table, assorted small tables and a coyote skin tacked on one wall. The building was original-

ly a bank, and the stone over the front door still carries the Bridgewater Bank name. I recommend sitting at the bar. Ask the bartender to draw one or two as the case may be, and you will find he or she will open up and you will learn about the people and background of Bridgewater. The tavern caters to the German families in the area and features German dishes including a great sauerkraut and knockwurst lunch (not available every day . . . call to find out when).

Proceed on Austin Road to Manchester. The last part of the drive follows the Raisin River and is particularly nice. In Manchester, stop at the Black Sheep tavern and restaurant. This is a golden oldie that dates back to 1873. You could spend hours looking at the many antique items displayed throughout the bar and dining areas . . . the stained glass windows, the cast iron stoves, the nickelodeon, etc. The Black Sheep serves excellent food and on Friday and Saturday nights has a buffet and sing along.

Next take M-52 out of Manchester to Chelsea. Here you should visit Seitz's Tavern. It was originally McNamara's Bar and dates back before the turn of the century. One customer recalls going there as a boy in 1900 to get a pail of beer for his father,

always by way of the back door.

In 1916 George M. Seitz purchased McNamara's and renamed it Seitz's. It has remained in the family ever since and is presently managed by J. Raymond Seitz. George M. was a deeply religious man and closed the tavern on Sunday, a policy which is observed today. He did, however, go fishing every Sunday, so there is some question of priorities here. During prohibition, the bar became a card room and soft drinks were served. The original cherry and mahogany front and back bar from McNamara's is still being used. There are mounted deer heads and guns on the walls and paintings done by relatives and members of the Seitz family. Candy and cigar cases are both the original. The old four bladed ceiling fan is still operable. The original cash register, brass spittoons, and tin trays can be seen on request.

Next stop is the Inverness Tavern on North Territorial Road across from the Inverness Golf Club. Take M-52 north out of Chelsea and turn right when you come to North Territorial Road. The tavern is just two or three miles down the road. Inverness Inn and Tavern dates back to 1907 and was recently written up in an issue of the Detroit Free Press. The original building that served as a stage stop has been added onto many times. The log cabin room with its

great fireplace made of very large stones is particularly interesting.

Harriet, Emily and I recently researched this one. We had lunch in the little log cabin wing. A moose head looks down on you from one wall. Harriet had a BLT and Chablis, Emily a hot dog, which was generously splashed with mustard and heaped with green pepper relish and onion chunks, and chablis. I had the Kielbasa Sandwich, again splashed with mustard and heaped with horseradish and onion chunks which I put out with a bottle of McSorley's Cream Ale. They also have Koehler, a Pennsylvania beer, on tap.

From Inverness Tavern follow North Territorial Road to the expressway (23) and if you can, back to Ann Arbor. For a last bit of nostalgia stop at the old Peter's Hotel at the corner of Ann and Fourth Avenue. If you look in the show window where the corner door used to be you will be able to see the word Joe in script in mosaic tile in the floor. This was Joe Parker's Catalpa Inn (Joe's from the song "I want to go back to Michigan, etc.).

This is but a partial listing. There are many more out there, but at least it is a beginning. Should any of you stumble onto a historic tavern you think I may have overlooked, I would be pleased to hear about it.

The society? Alive and well. We displayed the model of the proposed museum for the Barton Power House site at our last monthly meeting. David Osler has done a superb job, and those of you who have not yet seen the model have something to look forward to.

Thomas F. Lacy

### TOUGH ON THE HOGS

A farmer had been selling a friend in the city a dressed hog at Thanksgiving time each year. Last fall the hog was not up to standard, and his friend mentioned the fact to the farmer.

"I know it," the farmer admitted. "But I'll tell you how it happens. My wife looks after the hogs, and whenever feeding time comes she calls them by hammering on an old tin basin. This summer two of my neighbors bought Ford cars, and now every time they pass the house the hogs think they are being called for feeding, and the poor things nearly run themselves to death."

### EVEN UNTO DEATH

Now we hear of one of us who wants his Ford buried with him when he dies. Says he has never been in a hole yet where it did not get him out.

From "Ford Smiles: All the Best Current Jokes About a Rattling Good Car," by Carleton B. Case, Shrewsbury Publishing Co., Chicago, 1917.

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Washtenaw  
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**THURSDAY**  
8:00 P.M.  
LIBERTY HALL  
ANN ARBOR FEDERAL SAVINGS  
LIBERTY AT DIVISION  
NOVEMBER 17, 1977