



WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

JUDGE CAMPBELL TO SHOW SLIDES AT WCHDC MEETING, WCHS, OTHERS INVITED

The Washtenaw County Historic District Commission has invited members of WCHS and other history groups in the county to meet with them at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, February 3, to get acquainted and see a slide talk about historic structures in the county.

Judge Ross Campbell will show the slides in County Building Room 117A just inside the rear parking lot door. Those attending may park in the lot.

Refreshments will be served. They would appreciate a call by January 27 from those planning to attend. Call Nancy Burkhalter, 994-3000 or Jay Snyder, 994-2435, days.

DAVE POLLOCK TO TEACH MICHIGAN HISTORY CLASS

David S. Pollock, a director and past-president of WCHS, will teach an eight-week evening class on Michigan history beginning Monday, February 8, at Huron High School through the Ann Arbor Continuing Education Department.

Pollock, assistant to the president of Washtenaw Community College for community relations, has previously taught the course several times at WCC and through U-M Extension.

Advance registration is not required. The class will be from 7-9 p.m. in Room 4205. The fee is \$20.

CHELSEA SOCIETY ELECTS JEAN STOREY PRESIDENT

Jean Storey is the new president of Chelsea Historical Society. Ben and Mary Lou Bower are co-vice presidents; Lynda Longe, secretary; and Angie Smith, treasurer.

Elected to the board were Katherine Eisele and Donald Dancer. Harold Jones is a life member of the board.

HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

Chelsea Historical Society — No January meeting. Potluck supper, 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, February 9, at the Methodist Church Educational Unit.

Dexter Historical Society — Board meeting, 8 p.m. Thursday, February 4, at museum.

Manchester Historical Society — Meet 8 p.m. third Monday at Emmanuel Church.

Milan Historical Society — 7:30 p.m. third Wednesday at Hack House. Election of officers in January.

Saline Historical Society — No meeting in January. Tentatively Meredith Bixby will tell history of the Bixby Marionettes and the old opera house at February 21st meeting. Call Wendy Blackie, president, at 429-9710 for time and place.

Webster Historical Society — 7:30 p.m. Monday, February 1, at home of Mrs. Gloria Brigham, 5199 Webster Church Road. Several members will discuss "Historical Research in Webster, Using Public Records." Visitors welcome.

In December the Society completed a survey of township cemeteries and has published an updated listing of all burials and family data as well as a listing of many township births and deaths from several other sources.

During its coming second year, it plans to move and restore a blacksmith-wagonmaker shop and has under study the establishment of a museum among other things.

Ypsilanti Historical Society — Annual meeting and election of officers January 17 at museum.

Valentine making party for children, 2-4 p.m. Sunday, February 7, at museum, 220 North Huron Street.

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'BLACKLISTING OF RAY FISHER' JANUARY TOPIC; DON PROCTOR TO SPEAK

The January and February programs have been switched, so please hold your old pictures until February.

Instead, think spring, come to the ballpark (Salvation Army) and hear all about "The Blacklisting of Ray Fisher From Major League Baseball."

Fisher, now 94 and still living in Ann Arbor, was U-M baseball coach from 1921-1958. Before that he played for the New York Yankees and Cincinnati Reds and was in the 1919 World Series.

Dr. Donald J. Proctor, professor of history at the U-M Dearborn Campus, will show slides and talk about Fisher's career and what he considers his unjust blacklisting at 8 p.m. Thursday, January 28, at the Salvation Army.

Dr. Proctor, who has been researching professional baseball, is the author of articles on Fisher in *Ann Arbor Scene* and *Baseball Research* magazines.

Sam Breck will copy old pictures for Society archives at the February 25th meeting.



SILENT FILM SOCIETY STARTED IN JANUARY

The Ann Arbor Silent Film Society, which plans monthly shows, was to hold its "World Premiere" at 3 p.m. Sunday January 17 in the East Ballroom at Weber's Inn.

Founder Arthur Stephan lined up six films made from 1903 ("The Great Train Robbery") to 1932 ("County Hospital" with Laurel and Hardy). The feature was to be "It" starring Clara Bow and the nearly forgotten William Austin.

Membership is open to all interested but only by mail to Stephan, P.O. Box 2794, Ann Arbor, MI 48106, with \$5 fee.

THEY REEL THE WAY GEORGE AND MARTHA USED TO

You missed it folks if you weren't there — Harold Jones, a distinguished WCHS director, tripping the light fantastic, your esteemed president, Mary Blaske do-si-do-ing the "foot gent", your gentle vice-president, Fran Couch, and several other good sports from the audience reeling the set with the Cobblestone Farm Country Dancers at the December WCHS meeting.

But lest you fear that everyone was caught up in the frivolity, let it be noted that our august city historian, Wylan Stevens maintained his dignity unscathed from the sidelines with the rest of the audience.

The dancers invited the audience to join in the last dance, in this case, "Sir Roger de Coverly", better known today in its modern version as the "Virginia Reel". It is reputed to have been George Washington's favorite dance.

Harold Jones will never believe this but the version done is a slower, more sedate version of the dance which today features a dizzying reel instead of the more dignified weaving in and out around the other dancers at a walk.

The Virginia Reel is a modern example of the old-fashioned contra dance in which the dancers are lined up in contrary or opposite lines facing each other instead of in the more familiar square which grew out of the contra dance via France.

The Virginia Reel, in which men line up on one side and women on the other, is a "proper" dance. In some contras, every other couple "cross over" or exchange places, mixing both men and women in the same line on either side. That's an "improper" dance.

And hold onto your hats, folks. Our great-great grandparents even did "promiscuous" dances, former director David Park Williams, founder of the Cobblestone Dancers, tells us. Those were not nude belly dances or anything of that kind. It was simply when a caller would mix



Photo Courtesy of David Park Williams

COBBLESTONE FARM COUNTRY DANCERS PERFORMING AT FARM

up the calls, one from this dance, one from that, in the same dance. If you thought something else it just goes to show you how word connotations can change over the years.

The dancers started off with two quadrilles or "squares" showing two versions of the "lancers". The first, the Saratoga Lancers, has five figures, and the Loomis Lancers, four. Modern western squares usually have three. The dancers call the Saratoga Lancers the "Slancers" because most of the figures are done in diagonal lines.

In introducing the first quadrille, Williams said, "There were many types of Lancers. In England they said "Laahncers", which is where the Lobster Quadrille came from in *Alice in Wonderland* — it's a take off.

"We don't throw our partners out to sea but we do line up and go forward and back and so forth. This dates from about the time *Alice in Wonderland* was published—1865. The Saratoga Lancers probably originated around the famous spa in New York state."

Williams called the Saratoga Lancers, then Robin Warner, the present director, called the Loomis Lancers.

The dance program and style

represented were shortly after the Civil War, Warner said. In the last half of the nineteenth century the Loomis Lancers was quite an American tradition. It is one of the "large family" of Lancers quadrilles.

From Revolutionary times in New England, French dancing masters went around teaching contras and quadrilles, and the number of French terms in quadrilles such as "chassez" is due to their influence.

Dances were then learned and performed without "calling", Warner says. Then came "prompters". Prompting later developed into "calling" every move.

During an intermission, Dr. John Henderson played the piano for carol singing. He was joined by Mrs. Blaske on the violin.

After intermission, the dancers lined up in contra lines and danced "Chorus Jig", "Lamplighter's Horn pipe", "Hull's Victory", "Lady Walpole's Reel", and finally "Sir Roger de Coverley" with partners from the audience.

Chorus Jig is a proper duple dance in which every other couple is "active". Lamplighter's Hornpipe is a triple in which one of every three couples is active and the dance steps involve two "inactive" couples with them. The actives pro-

gress down the contra set and at the end become "inactive". The "inactives" progress up the set and at the top become active.

Lady Walpole's Reel, an improper duple, has been called the married man's favorite because so little time is spent dancing with one's own partner.

Hull's Victory commemorates the victory of Captain Isaac Hull's ship Constitution (Old Ironsides) over the British frigate Guerriere on August 19, 1812. That victory sort of made up for Isaac's uncle, General William Hull's surrender of Detroit to the British three days earlier.

The Cobblestone Dancers grew out of a course Williams taught on 19th century country dancing at Art Worlds in Ann Arbor in 1977-78. Williams then arranged to affiliate with Cobblestone Farm, the former Ticknor-Campbell home on Packard Road in Ann Arbor now being restored as a farm museum.

Besides dancing there, the group has since danced at a number of places and events in southeastern Michigan from nursing homes to festivals and from Greenfield Village's Country Fair of Yesteryear to Cambridge Junction State Historic Park (Walker Tavern).

The dancers appear in costume. While the women can make long dresses, it was a little harder for men to find a costume until a local merchant who rents formal wear decided to clear his racks of some long black coats no longer in demand and send them to a second hand shop where Williams bought up the lot. So the group welcomes new members and can even outfit men in coats very inexpensively.

Dancing at the WCHS meeting were Marge Bruchac, Claire Chang, John Freeman, Peggy Prag, Art and Connie Solari, Don Theyken, Marie Waxman, Warner, Williams and Lawrence and Alice Ziegler. Musicians were Vinnie Tufo, fiddle, and Gregory Ross, guitar. Pianist Debby Low was unable to be there.



Sprechen Sie Swabian?

SCHOLAR SOUGHT SWABIAN SPEAKERS IN GERMANY, DIDN'T FIND ANY UNTIL HE GOT BACK TO WASHTENAW

Readers may recall that last spring, George Wieland of Ann Arbor who is looking into his Swabian German roots wanted to meet and talk with anyone in Washtenaw County who can still speak the old Swabian dialect or may have letters or other written materials in the dialect.

He still wants to and invites calls at 665-9618. But his appeal brought to light an interesting sidelight from our Chattanooga correspondent, Fred Bishop.

Bishop recalls a U-M student, John Gumpers, who visited his sister, Mrs. Sleator's family on Geddes Avenue in the 1950's when he was working on his Ph.D. in linguistics. He could speak several languages including Hindi and chose for his dissertation the Swabian dialect of German.

"Gumpers went to Germany to the district of Swabia to learn more about it and discovered it was practically extinct there due to the effects of two world wars and modern development."

He returned to Ann Arbor and spent considerable time and effort with Washtenaw people of Swabian descent. "He had an old car and some heavy recording equipment and he used to regale us at the Sleator household with tales of his experiences.

"The only people who still used the dialect were the old folks and they were delighted to have John come and record their conversations. Of course they plied him with all kinds of food and beer and sometimes he had difficulty getting home after a couple of visits in one evening."

Gumpers' conclusion was that perhaps the only people in the world who still could talk and understand Swabian dialect were the Germans of Washtenaw County, Bishop relates.

"Gumpers is now famous and on the faculty of the University of California at Berkeley. When he comes to Ann Arbor, he no longer

stays with friends; the University puts him up at Inglis House."

Bishop suggested Wieland might want to look at the Gumpers papers. Wieland has seen the microfilmed dissertation at the U-M Graduate Library and found it deals largely with technical linguistics aspects. He's still wondering if anyone in the county today uses or can understand Swabian dialect.

CONTRA DANCING REVIVED IN SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN

Contra dancing, demonstrated by the Cobblestone Farm Country Dancers at the December WCHS meeting, is enjoying a revival although it never completely died out in parts of New England.

The Cobblestone Dancers sponsor a public contra or country dance at 8 p.m. the third Saturday of each month at the "little bit of New England" Webster Community Hall at Webster Church and Farrell Roads about 12 miles north of Ann Arbor. Visitors are also welcome at the 6 p.m. practice there preceding the dance.

The U-M Folklore Society has a public dance at the Michigan Union at 8 p.m. the first Saturday of each month. Dances are also held in Detroit, at Michigan State University, and at Lovett Hall in Greenfield Village where Henry Ford revived old-time dancing in the 1920's.

MICHIGAN BEFORE WHITE MAN TO BE GSWC TOPIC

Two speakers will talk about Michigan Indians at the Genealogy Society of Washtenaw County meeting Sunday, January 24 at Washtenaw Community College.

Milton Charbaneau of Pinckney will discuss "Early Michigan Territory Before the White Man" and Steven Shoman, "Ottawa Indians," after the 2:30 p.m. business meeting. At 1 p.m. Ralph Muncy will teach a class on "Land Surveys."

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REPORTS OF HIS DEATH GREATLY EXAGGERATED

"The well known knife grinder that occasionally takes in Ann Arbor on his tour of the state (was claim(ed) to have been found dead in the river at Saginaw City where his body was recovered, and after an inquest, it was consigned to the pickling vat at the University.

"About that time the old man heard about it and paid Saginaw a visit. The witnesses that identified his body at the inquest were somewhat surprised, but have since concluded that his body was too earthy to be a ghost.

"The wrong man was dissected but the knife grinder claims all the honor of having donated his body to the services of science, and has the papers to prove it."

From *Ann Arbor Courier*, January 20, 1882, in Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Library, U-M.

MISS STEKETEE RESIGNS

Wilma D. Steketee, retired business manager of the Michigan League, who has been a member of the WCHS Board of Directors since June 1979, has resigned because she finds herself spending more time in Florida each year.

The board received the news with regret and thanks her for her service. Her term expires in June. A nominating committee is now working to fill vacancies.

PIONEER JOHN WILLIAMS: WAS HE OR WASN'T HE A PILLAR OF CHURCH?

While John Williams, first supervisor of Webster township may have been a pillar of the community, he was not even a member of nearby Webster Presbyterian Church (now Congregational) a reader, Margaret Sias, points out.

The story of his "astonishing" conversion to Universalism in 1835 as told by the Reverend Nathaniel Stacy was related in the December *Impressions* under the heading saying he was a pillar of another church. Stacy was a Universalist minister in Ann Arbor 1835-40. Dr. John C. Dann acquired his diaries and memoirs recently for Clements Library.

The apparent contradiction about Williams prompted further research. Williams had been a member of the Presbyterian Church back in Moravia, New York, and brought a letter of recommendation to Michigan according to his son, Jeremiah Day Williams, quoted in *Beakes' Past and Present of Washtenaw County* (1906).

Williams was about 46 when he came to Michigan in 1828. If he joined the church at age 16 as Fuller and Kellogg told Stacy, he already had 30 years in as a church member. Those two, who had known him back in New York, said he had been deacon and elder there.

While he is not listed as a member of Webster Church, the earliest records show him to have

been active in its formation, among other things serving as trustee and building committee member before resigning in May 1835 about the time he joined the Universalists.

His son makes no mention of Universalism, but says "Mr. Williams declined connecting himself with the newly organized (Webster) church on account of the Freemason element in Mr. Crossman (one of the founders). He called Freemasonry 'the unfruitful works of darkness' and grounded himself on the Scripture injunction 'have no fellowship therewith.' "

So he reportedly was a Presbyterian "pillar" in New York if not here.

His son gave much of the information on Webster for the county history in 1881, not John, as the editor mistakenly indicated. John died in 1843 at age 61 and was buried in a small family plot on his farm, not in the church cemetery.

JIM PARKER RE-ELECTED BY WEBSTER SOCIETY

James B. Parker has been re-elected president of Webster Township Historical Society for 1982.

Others elected were Jeffrey Vigue, vice-president; John Gardner, secretary; Mrs. Kathy Whitney, treasurer; and Robert Beaugrand, Gloria Brigham, and Paul Kleinschmidt, trustees.

WASHTENAW COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MEETING

8:00 p.m. THURSDAY
JANUARY 28, 1982

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