



# WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

## KAREN'S COLUMN

### COMPLETED ROUGH ELECTRICAL WORK BRIGHT SPOT; BIDDING ON INTERIOR WALL REPAIR DISAPPOINTING

I was hoping to write in this space this month that we had received many bids for our interior Museum restoration work, and that one of the bids was very low, and that, by now a contractor was busily at work carefully restoring the doors, floors, windows, ceilings and walls.

Unfortunately, such is not the case!

There seemed to be a lot of interest in this job. About 15 sets of plans were distributed and studied. A walk-through was held at the house so the work in question could be viewed. We hoped for several good bids.

It is true that right now everyone involved in the construction industry in Washtenaw County is extremely busy. Still, we felt we would get some competitive bids.

Unfortunately, we received only one bid. It was about three times over our budget. After consulting with the Michigan Department of State, through which the grant money will come, we met with our "high" and only bidder, P.R.S. Contracting, Inc.

The contractor and Paul Darling, our architect from Quinn Evans/Architects, came up with a different approach that may be less costly than the process

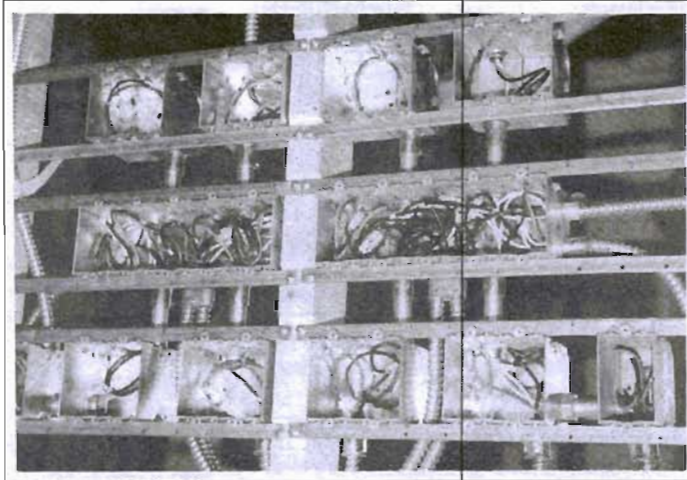


Photo by Karen O'Neal

Some of the complex electrical wiring to be hidden in Museum walls.

originally specified.

Our goal is to save as much of the original plaster as possible, if it is firmly attached to the lath. There are areas, however, where it is cracked and crumbling and must be removed and patched.

We are not looking for a perfectly smooth plaster finish. In fact, part of the story of the house will be to show what is original and what replaced.

One bright spot I can report is that the rough electrical work has been completed and inspected. Again we express our grateful thanks to Tom Stanton of Modern Electric. Without his leadership and help we would not yet be ready to even think about patching the walls.

Karen O'Neal, 665-2242

## WCHS READING BOOK OF OLD ANN ARBOR PHOTOS TO SELL AT BRIARWOOD HISTORY LANE EXHIBIT

The Washtenaw County Historical Society and Ypsilanti Historical Society have been invited to do a History Lane exhibit again this holiday season at Briarwood Mall.

We plan to staff the exhibit the hours the mall is open, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Additionally, the Society is working to publish and have for sale a revision of two *Old Ann Arbor Town* books published in the 1970s and '80s by Ann Arbor Federal (now

Great Lakes National Bank).

Our book, *Ann Arbor Revisited*, will incorporate some of the images from the original books and will add many new photos. Volunteers doing the research are Judy Chrisman, Ina Hanel, Marjorie Reade, Grace Shackman and Pauline Walters. Consultants are Susan Wineberg, Tom Nanzig and Louisa Pieper.

Hazel Proctor, who prepared the *Old* (continued on page 5)

## 'TOLEDO: MICHIGAN OR OHIO?' TOLEDOAN'S TOPIC OCTOBER 19

Fred Folger, a fourth generation native Toledoan whose hobby is teaching local history, will present a slide show on Toledo: Michigan or Ohio?" at the WCHS meeting Sunday, October 19, 1997.

It will be at 2 p.m. at the Bentley Historical Library, 1150 Beal, on the University of Michigan North Campus.

If the title didn't give it away, he will talk about the comedy of errors that took place in settling Michigan's southern boundary.

He served as chairman of the Toledo Sesquicentennial Commission in 1987. He teaches continuing education courses in local history at the University of Toledo and Lourdes College in Sylvania, Ohio.

In his day job he has taught junior high social studies in Toledo schools for 31 years.

## PATRICIA AUSTIN RESIGNS AFTER 19 YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE

Patricia Austin, who was president of the Washtenaw County Historical Society for five of the last 19 years and gave uncounted hours in that and other roles to promote the Society, has resigned from the Board of Directors to pursue other interests.

She served as president 1982-84, 1987-88 and 1993-95. Her first office with the Society was treasurer, 1978-80. In most of the intervening years she has served as a director or immediate past-president as well as on several committees including collections, by-laws, fund raising and endowment, not to mention her expert advice as parliamentarian.

On a long list of WCHS projects she was deeply involved in, probably forgotten or unknown to some of us, was the dirty job of cleaning and moving artifacts out of Barton Powerhouse when the Society vacated it in 1983.

Also notable was the Society's gala 125th birthday celebration in November 1982 and a couple of Century of Fashion Shows at Cobblestone Farm in 1983 and 1984, showing mainly clothing from the WCHS collection.

The list goes on. She will be greatly missed.

# RESTORATIONIST TELLS WHAT IS ANTIQUE? HOW CAN YOU TELL IF IT'S GENUINE?

An antique is:

- a) some thing like grandma has in the attic
- b) 100 or more years old
- c) only something made by hand before the industrial revolution when there were machines to do it.

Answer: any of the above to some folks or other, Cathy Andrews of Andrews Restoration told the WCHS September audience gathered at her workshop in Saline.

"There is actually a legal definition that evolved out of importing--if it's over 100 years old you don't have to pay duty on it, so as a rule of thumb, 100 years seems to be the most consistent number used but that is not a hard and fast rule.

"If you appreciate old furniture you can kind of make up your own definition. I should add, however, there are some antique purists who think anything made after there were machines to help the process can't possibly be considered an antique.

"I think that goes a little too far. Even when everything was done by hand, in Thomas Chippendale's shop in London, for example, he didn't make much furniture--his staff did.

"Generally, one or two men would work on carving, someone else would cut all the dovetails for drawers so there was a sort of mechanization, in a sense, throughout furniture history. That's why I shy away from limiting antiques to before machinery.

"This coming week I am giving a presentation at Kempf House in Ann Arbor on reproduction furniture which pretty much dates from the turn of the century up to about 1940. Most of it has spent a long time just being old stuff.

"Yet if you think of antiques as 100 years old a lot of it is going to be antique in the not too distant future."

She chose 12 chairs representative of as many important furniture styles from one of her favorite books, the Field Guide to American Antique Furniture by Joseph T. Butler, illustrated by Ray Skibinski, to show style characteristics.

First was a 17th century Pilgrim chair (1620-1700) and second, a William and Mary style (1700-1725).

"A lot of 17th century furniture is very square and massive. With William and Mary you see a lot of frilly stuff with 'S' and 'C' curves.

"Queen Anne (1725-1755) and Chippendale (1755-1790) have a lot in com-



Photo by Karen O'Neal

Cathy Andrews shows audience around her furniture restoration shop.

mon because of the cabriole legs, but period Queen Anne chairs are very delicate and Chippendale chairs are usually massive and hearty.

"If you compare the Chippendale to the Federal style (1790-1820), most of the Federal style was very light colored with very slender lines, in fact, very delicate. It's difficult imagining someone using them day after day and then, they having survived so long.

"Right now, people coming to the shop want their furniture light because right now light colors are the taste for furniture.

"It won't be very long before taste swings back to dark color furniture. Then they'll be coming to me with furniture they had stripped light and want it dark like grandma had it.

"A lot of different nomenclature goes with furniture. There's no one right name. It's a waste of energy to argue. Everyone has their reasons and most make sense.

"The 17th century Pilgrim chair may be called Brewster because apparently one of the fellows from the Mayflower had this chair. It is also called Jacobean from James I, King of England at the time.

"In the 17th century woodworking for homes was divided into two sub-specialties. The Pilgrim chair would have been made by a turner. All parts except the plank seat would have been turned on a lathe.

"The massive wainscoting chairs made with big planks of wood would have been made by joiners. The most common woods were oak and pine.

"In the William and Mary period (1700-1725), named for the English monarchs of the time, we begin to see caning in backs and seats. Cane was obtained from the Orient.

"In the 1700s there weren't many pieces of furniture in the average house. In colonial times the commonest seating piece would have been a stool. The master of the house or the wealthiest man in town may have had a chair.

"When they were trying to colonize a new world they had very simple furnishings. There were not many tables. They would have some chests to store things in, but not with drawers. Some chests were basically hacked out of logs.

"As we move along we begin to see more forms develop and chairs become more common. By the time of Queen Anne style, immediately preceding the American Revolution, the most common material was walnut but walnut stocks were beginning to run out in England. At that point Santo Domingo mahogany was found in Cuba. It's a fabulous wood to work with.

"Now there is no more Santo Domingo mahogany. That's why mahogany furniture made today looks different than that made 200 years ago.

"In Queen Anne style there are some concessions to human need, primarily the splat at center back would have been dished a little so it conformed more to your back. Earlier chairs were pretty straight up and down, not meant for comfort.

"A lot of Chinese and Japanese chairs from that time or before look like they have traces of Queen Anne style but it wasn't Queen Anne influencing the Oriental, it was China influencing Queen Anne.

"Queen Anne is probably one of the most identifiable styles by the cabriole leg and foot. Some Queen Anne chairs had ball and claw feet like Chippendale--they were transitional, made as the style was changing.

"One thing to look for--the splat on the Queen Anne was solid. Typically on Chippendale it is pierced.

"The Chippendale chair shows about the height of the carver's art. If you look at those ball and claw feet and even the carvings that go into the back, it's astonishing how wood can be made to look like ribbons.

"There were quite a number of regional

variations in America. There weren't many large cities, communication between them was slow and tedious so each region tended to have slight variations on the style.

"Some claws are practically upright, others at an angle. Sometimes the wood is actually pierced between ball and claw so that just four or five touch points take the entire weight. It takes an incredible amount of skill to carve that out of solid wood.

"There are people who make their living studying the differences between different ball and claw feet because there are so many. You can identify chairs right down to the shop and in some cases the carver.

"Mahogany was the primary wood for most Chippendale.

"I have the Windsor chair (1755-current) tucked in here. It can be considered somewhat of a country form although they were used in many places. Ben Franklin sat in a Windsor chair while debating the Declaration of Independence.

"It's a very common and very popular chair style. There are very provincial pieces, rough to look at, the proportions aren't great. There are also high quality ones that are beautiful objects.

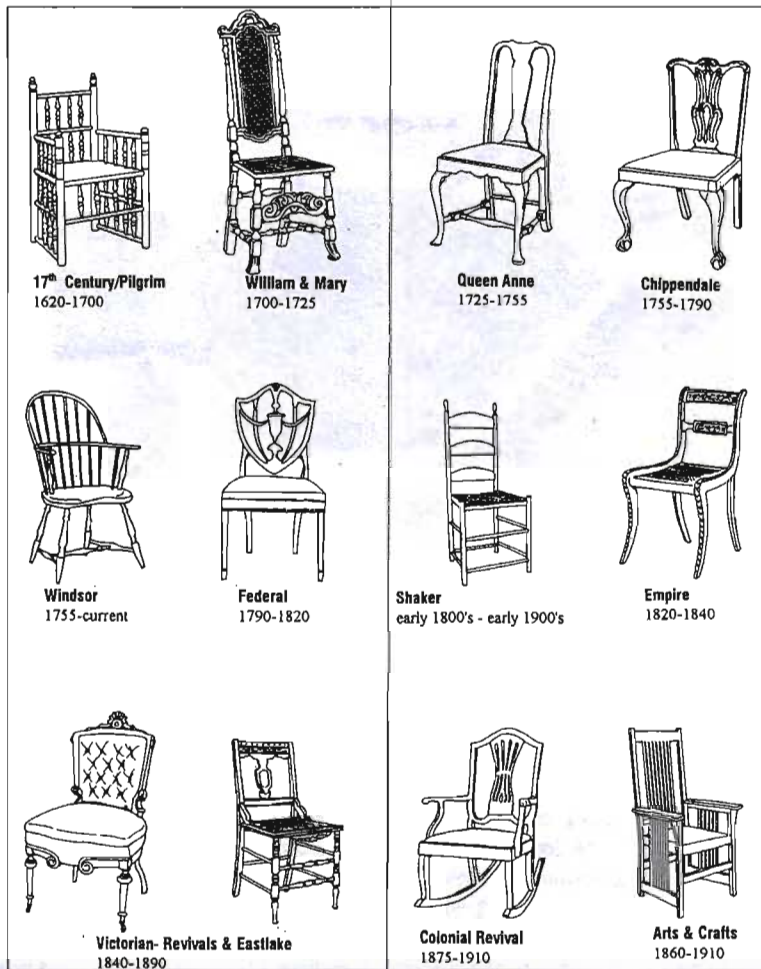
"This is another area that is intensely studied. In fact, one of the leading experts just came out with a book about Windsor chairs. She has it down to a fine art--who made it, where it came from, what valley in central Pennsylvania, what town, what maker.

"Most stories about where the name Windsor came from are pretty apocryphal. There are stories in England about the king stopping at an inn before a storm. He sat in the chair (they were very comfortable) and commissioned 50 of them. It was near Windsor so they called it a Windsor chair.

"Probably it was because Windsor was a big exporter and importer.

"There were in England men called *bodgers* who would go into the woods and make the chairs there because typically you make them mostly of green wood.

"There are many stories. In popular publications about Windsor chairs you



will usually see reference to one of the stories ending 'but no one knows if this is true.'

"A lot of people don't know that Windsor chairs were often painted originally, with good reason--they were often made from a variety of wood, maple for spindles, often yew or ash for the bent pieces, seats of pine, elm or poplar.

"They would look like an atrocious crazy quilt just stained. Green was a common color, also black. A company now makes a green paint very close to the old green.

"As a rule of thumb, a Windsor chair apparently made of all one wood is probably modern. I wouldn't rule out that someone somewhere made a Windsor chair of all one wood but generally they used the wood most suited to what they wanted the part to do.

"When I think of Federal furniture I think of two things--one is lightness and grace, the other geometry because you will find a lot of geometric shapes, generally carried out on sideboards and side tables, usually in a veneer.

"Typically there will be diamond shapes, squares and rectangles. Shields were quite common.

"Federal or Early American Style furniture developed after we declared our independence. The eagle motif shows up a lot, usually in marquetry, typically an oval on the back of a chair or skirt of a table.

"A lot of satinwood was used, also mahogany. Satinwood, imported to this country, was light in color.

"Next I have Shaker furniture (early 1800s-early 1900s). The Shakers actually arrived in America in the late 1700s. They were still a bit persecuted which was, of course, why they left England in the first place.

"They were trying to get established so their priorities were getting food on the table and getting through another day.

"It was 20 to 30 years after they arrived here that they began to develop their own furniture styles. They brought furniture of the old world with them so you often find a mixture of furniture if the community you visit is one of the older ones.

"In fact, the first few years they made their own furniture you might see contemporary influences. Once established, with some economic stability, they really began to develop their own styles.

"The Shaker style chair illustrated is a classic--you can recognize it a mile away. There are many variations, of course.

"The style is not uncommon but the proportions are very light because they have used the wood in the best possible manner to make the strongest possible joints. The craftsmanship is second to none.

"Eventually they made chairs for public sale so there is lots of it out there.

"Shaker-style is an important American style although not a style in the usual sense.

"Federal and Empire furniture get lumped under what is called Classical or Neo-classical style. This was a time when there was a lot of interest in architecture and history. Archeological digs were going on. People were learning about the glories of Greece.

"It was not uncommon for people of any affluence to go on a grand tour and see the ruins of Rome and Greece. A lot of designers and architects were influ-

enced by this.

"Examples from the Roman tradition were somewhat adapted to modern use. On other furniture of that time you see 'C' and 'S' curves. The scale is typically fairly massive, mahogany is used a lot, also veneers.

"People who had money to do commission work in this fabulous new style were also busy building large houses. A lot of period Empire style pieces are just too big for modern houses.

"If you like Empire style and have rooms that can handle it, there are a lot of period pieces available at comparatively reasonable prices though not inexpensive.

"When Empire style was beginning to wane you see a lot of mechanization of the manufacture of furniture. The industrial revolution was just beginning to take off.

"A lot of the tools used in manufacturing furniture took over work done by apprentices. Initially with mechanization you weren't getting shoddy work so much as you were getting furniture made faster.

"In the time it took to make a chair by hand you could manufacture a whole living room set. So, all of a sudden, furniture was more affordable because all the drudgery work of sawing and planing it down was taken over by machines.

"Machine made furniture is not in itself a bad thing, especially when you consider that a lot of the machines depended heavily on the skill of the operator.

"Especially at the beginning of the industrial revolution there were excellently trained cabinetmakers whose skill with machines allowed them to turn out fine quality furniture.

"Machine made furniture really came into its own in the Victorian period. There were dozens of styles and sub-styles. I just picked out a couple.

"A lot of Victorian pieces were mixes of styles with many doodads tacked on. The second example is an Eastlake chair. It is still somewhat pretentious but compared to what was going on it is very simple.

"The decoration on Eastlake chairs is actually incised rather than applied. It has simple lines, a little more geometric as compared to the doodads that went with a lot of the revival styles.

"There was a Rococo Revival, Renaissance Revival, Gothic Revival. Even

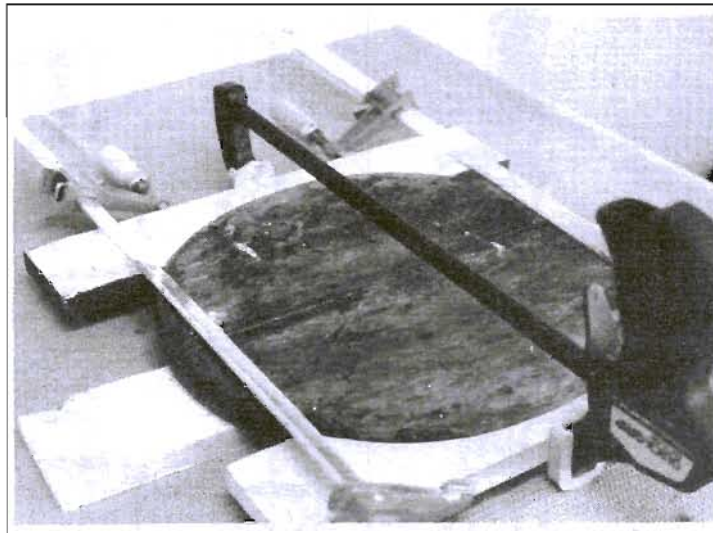


Photo by Cathy Andrews

Piece being reglued at Andrews Restoration shop.

though Kempf House itself is Greek Revival some of the rooms have elements associated with Egyptian Revival.

"There was so much interest in all these historical periods that a lot of bits and pieces got put together.

"A lot of the manufacturing was still somewhat regionalized. Even though the folks in Grand Rapids could hook up to the railroads and ship all over the country there weren't furniture stores in all the small cities. There weren't many mail order catalogs or strip malls.

### OLD-FASHIONED SAWYER'S JOB--IT WAS THE PITS

It was a lot of work to saw a board out of a tree. You've got one guy standing on a platform above and one guy at the other end of a straight saw in the pit," Cathy Andrews said.

"You know the saying 'it's the pits'--well the pit sawyer who's down below with all the sawdust falling on him is what they are talking about.

"It's not unusual to find old tables that are a single board wide and leaves that are each a single board.

"I got a contemporary Queen Anne table in the shop. You couldn't tell from the top but from the underside you could see there was no board wider than two inches.

"That has advantages--the table is not likely to warp over time but if you are looking for an old piece nobody would ever do that. Why bother?

"A Shaker sister came up with the idea of the circular saw ca. 1830s which got sawyers out of the pits.

"Instead there were exhibitions all over the place so people could find out what was in style and available. When the country celebrated its centennial in 1876 there was a big exposition in Philadelphia

"People were showing what was popular at the time--Rococo Revival and Renaissance Revival. There wasn't much Colonial Revival there but they had an exhibit showing colonial life.

"People toured that building with all the pride people were feeling about the country being 100 years old and all of a sudden everyone was interested in anything colonial.

"That's when you begin to see old spinning wheels taken apart and made into chairs and side tables and that's when you see the Colonial Revival chair I've got here.

"With its pierced splat it is actually somewhat Chippendale-esque, the shape of the back is a little bit Federal esque but there weren't rocking chairs when Mr. Chippendale was working so it is immediately concluded it is a piece of the style but not of the period.

"The first rocking chairs were regular chairs with runners made for them. They were called carpet cutters because the narrow runners with sharp edges would wear through the carpet.

"In response to so many things being machine made and machine made things being gussied up with unrelated things slapped on them, the Arts and Crafts movement came about.

"It flourished in this country from 1890-1910 but you can see traces of it in England in the 1860s.

"You see a lot of straight lines in it. That is where 'form following function' began. Joiner methods are showcased--you see a lot of tenons and dovetails. Most Arts and Crafts furniture was made of oak.

"As with all things when Arts and Crafts became popular, factories picked it up even though that was missing the point.

"A lot of reproduction furniture is very well made. There are pieces based on original pieces. The Baker Company in Grand Rapids measured old forms very closely and turned out modern reproductions.

"As the old pieces become scarcer and some of the reproductions themselves get enough age on them, compared to the particle board and wall paper stuff

that is coming out of factories now, a lot of stuff from the turn of the century begins to look pretty good.

Cathy then gave tips on how to identify authentic antiques.

"Regardless of the sub-set of antiques we are talking about, the more you know about what the originals were like, the easier it is to spot a fake."

She told of a couple on the Antiques Road Show on Public Television who thought they had a Tiffany glass vase. The proportions were wrong, the glass was too thick and the color not quite right.

When Cathy was in school she bought a little Windsor chair for \$5 to be her first learning chair.

"I thought it was exquisitely beautiful. The more I learned about Windsor chairs, the more I appreciated that reproduction. While it is a nice side chair for a bedroom, I know now that anyone looking for an original wouldn't give it a second glance.

Her list of quick checks begins with the squint test. "Step back and see if the proportions are right. Step closer. Are the details right?

"I had a secretary-bookcase in Chippendale style come in. I knew it was a reproduction immediately. It would had to have been a foot taller. The glass was not cut out small panes but one large piece with applied fretwork. Nobody had sheets of glass that big at the time.

"There is lots of reproduction Chippendale in oak but in originals oak doesn't go with the style.

"I had a customer who bought a rocking chair in Massachusetts. She knew it wasn't 17th century but she loved it. I turned it upside down and there was a label from a Murphy Chair Company in Michigan.

"Look down on or in line with beading or other detail. If done by hand it would be a little wobbly.

"Stripping is my last alternative if there is no other thing I can do, because original finish commands premium price.

"A segment of the Antiques Road Show on Public Television told about a man who was very proud of his refinished antique Queen Anne highboy worth \$15,000. If he had left it alone it would have been worth \$100,000.

"If you buy an old piece that has some character, let it be what it is. I can show you a mahogany what-not shelf in my portfolio that might have been painted dark brown--I could 't see a bit of grain.

"I cleaned off the gunk that was on it and the original finish was there. It came from a mansion. It probably had 100

## NEW 'OLD' CHAIR FOOLS EXPERTS

Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan which has one of the best collections of antique furniture in the United States also has one of the best known fakes, Cathy Andrews said. The story is told in *Fake, Fraud or Genuine?* by Myrna Kaye.

A man insulted by a curator went out of his way over a two or three year period to make a chair with old-fashioned methods except he drilled the holes with a modern bit so he really could prove it was modern made, Cathy related.

"He painted it, stripped the paint, banged it up, smoked it, did all sorts of things to it.

Henry Ford Museum bought it as authentic and had it on the cover of a brochure until they found out it was fake. It is now used as a teaching piece.

years of coal dust, was probably waxed once a month instead of once every three years. There was probably a cigar smoker in the family and probably gas lights in the house at one point.

"Leaving the original finish intact doesn't mean it has to look horrible. The what-not is beautiful now. There are lots of things you can do to arrest deterioration in a piece.

"Another clue of age--wood shrinks unevenly. A piece of wood 24 inches long 100 years from now will be 24 inches long but a piece 24 inches wide (across the grain) will be 23 and 3/4 or 7/8 inches.

"The classic example is the little round table that is no longer perfectly round."

She uses mostly shellac and lacquer finishes in her shop because they can essentially be reactivated. Varnish can't. A paste wax finish gives you a chance to wipe up spills without harm.

"Signs of age, when mimicked, are often overdone. I'm going to try to make this bench I built look old but not overdo it. You would expect wear along the front edge or in the seat but not even all over. Think of how the piece was used.

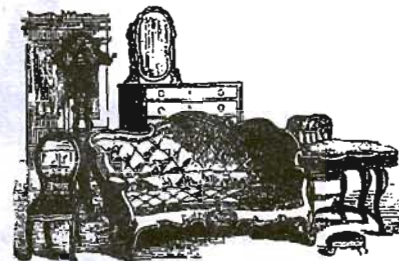
"Typically wider boards were used in old pieces. Older dovetails are generally narrower, wider spacing generally means older. Evenly spaced dovetails are signs of mass manufacturing.

"If you have a case piece like a chest on chest, do the dovetails match top and

bottom? Usually one person would have made dovetails on both. If they don't match it's probably a 'married' piece.

"That can be a perfectly acceptable alternative if you are looking for old and the two seem to work together. They may have been put together 200 years ago, five years ago or a month ago but you should know what you are getting.

"There are lots of good things out there but some things are misrepresented."



## WCHS READING BOOK...

(continued from page 1)

Ann Arbor Town books and past WCHS president, is donating the services of Proctor Publications to prepare the manuscript for printing.

It will cost about \$9,000 to print 2,000 copies. Those funds have been donated by Briarwood Management and the Ann Arbor News. All profits will go to the Museum Building Fund.

At History Lane the Ann Arbor News will help staff the exhibit and will offer a choice of either our new book or one by the Ypsilanti Society as a premium to new subscribers.

In this newsletter you will find a volunteer schedule for History Lane. Please consider volunteering at least once during the holiday season. Please choose a time and send in the form.

## 'WHAT'S IT?' GAME, LOAN BOX OFFERED BY WCHS

WCHS offers traveling exhibits of small artifacts, set up as a humorous "What Is It?" game to schools for children and another for adults. They are available free for classes and meetings. Arlene took the game to Emerson School's third grade class in September.

Loan boxes, "Life Before Electricity," and a new one, "Hats to Spats" are available to teachers for \$15 rental charge. Information: Arlene Schmid, 665-8773.

Photo courtesy  
of Susan Wineberg

Chelsea State Bank celebrated its centennial last summer and WCHS President Susan Wineberg was there to present one of our anniversary certificates to them. John Mann, bank president, accepted it. Village manager Jack Myers is at left.



### ARTIFACTS TO DONATE?

Anyone wishing to donate an artifact to WCHS may contact Judy Chrisman, collections chair, at 769-7859 or by mail, 1809 Dexter Ave., Ann Arbor, MI 48103.

### NOVEMBER PROGRAM

Marianne Behler will talk about: "Preservation of Family Photographs, Documents and Memories."

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### GENEALOGY SOCIETY PLANS WORKSHOP NOVEMBER 8

The Genealogical Society of Washtenaw County will sponsor an all-day workshop featuring nationally recognized instructor and lecturer Desmond Walls Allen on Saturday, November 8, 1997.

It will be held in the Morris Lawrence Building at Washtenaw Community College, Ann Arbor. Three sessions will include Creative Problem Solving, 20th Century Research: Getting the Most from Death Certificates and Map Resources for Genealogists.

Information: GSWC, PO Box 7155, Ann Arbor, MI 48107-7155 or phone Marcia McCrary, (313) 483-2799 or e-mail bertallen@provide.net.

### WCHS HAS 39% OF POINTS NEEDED FOR MEMORY BOOK

WCHS now has 7,820 Bill Knapp's Restaurant points, 39% of the 20,000 needed for a memory book to record names of donors to our Museum on Main Street.

Anyone who eats at Knapp's may request a yellow points slip from the cashier each time. One point is given for each dollar spent. Please give or send to: Alice Ziegler, 537 Riverview Dr., Ann Arbor, MI 48104.

### HOW TO JOIN

Send name, address and phone number with check or money order payable to WCHS Membership, c/o Patty Creal, Treasurer, P.O. Box 3336, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-3336.

Annual dues are individual, \$15; couple/family, \$25; student or senior (60+), \$10; senior couple, \$19; business/association, \$50; patron, \$100. Information: 662-9092.

### CERTIFICATES OFFERED

Hand-lettered certificates, framed if desired, are offered free of charge, by WCHS to organizations, businesses, churches, schools etc., for milestone anniversaries. Information: 663-8826.

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**WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
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