



# IMPRESSIONS

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER • FOUNDED 1857 • FEBRUARY 2006

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## INFORMATION

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

## JUDITH CHRISMAN • PRESIDENT'S LETTER

# The Year-End Brings Many New Donations!

I hope the snow and cold of December did not dampen anyone's holiday spirits. We had good attendance at our exhibit in spite of the weather. The new year will start off with a new exhibit, East Delhi Bridge Legacy, which opens Wednesday, February 15. There are three Sunday programs left in the 2005-06 season and Ralph Beebe, program director, is already working on the 2006-07 season.

The end of the year brought several new donations. They include two books, one of which belonged to Anna Botsford Bach, found at the Anna Botsford Bach Home when it closed, a pair of net gloves from Nancy Thayer Ross, a Little Lord FaunLeroy suit from Anne Cleveland Kesling and Mary Cleveland, two albums of old Edison phonograph records from James Peters and six books relating to University of Michigan and Michigan history from Dr. Patricia Whitesell. In addition, the new year has already brought several more donations. Two programs and two handbills from musical events from the estate of Russell Bidlack and a handkerchief with a map of Ann Arbor from John Alden were donated by Susan Wineberg. Also a velvet coat was donated by Marie Panchuk and a framed baptismal certificate of Wilhelm Jedele from 1887 was donated by Barbara and John Stratman.



## ARTHUR POUND • EXCERPT FROM 1953 *IMPRESSIONS*

# “Campus Trails And Trials Of Fifty Years Ago”

In a 1953 issue of *Impressions*, Arthur Pound recalls his days at U-M. Here is an excerpt giving a glimpse of onetime downtown watering-holes.

Thoreau wrote that he had traveled extensively in Concord. Well, I did likewise in Ann Arbor, for walking was my favorite sport; spent most of every Sunday walking to Saline, Whitmore, Pittsfield Junction (the place that never grew up), just walking anywhere. The further west you traveled in Ann Arbor the more German the town became. A friend of mine from Jackson, who came from a German family there and

*Continued on page 7.*

DAVID KENNEDY • SPEAKER  
LAURA BIEN

# The Earhart Manor

The 70-odd visitors to Manor founder Harry Boyd Earhart's grandson David Kennedy's November 20 talk enjoyed his recollections about life on the estate.



A full house listened with interest to David Kennedy's talk.

Because the recording of the talk was defective, instead of a transcript *Impressions* is reprinting a 1997 *Ann Arbor Observer* portrait of the manor's history, which contains remarks by Kennedy and many others connected to the grounds. We hope you enjoy it.

Reprinted with permission by Grace Shackman. Originally published in the *Ann Arbor Observer*, June, 1997.

"Not too many in Ann Arbor lived such a life," says Molly Hunter Dobson of her great-aunt and great-uncle, Carrie and Harry Boyd Earhart. The Earharts' 400-acre estate along the Huron River included a small golf course for "H. B." to practice his swing, forty acres of woods where he went horseback riding, and formal gardens and a greenhouse where Carrie indulged her love of flowers. Today, most of the estate has disappeared, swallowed up by Concordia College and the Waldenwood subdivision. But the stone-walled mansion the Earharts built in 1936 still stands on Geddes Rd near US-23. Newly renovated [as of 1997] to serve as Concordia's administrative center, the mansion and adjoining gardens will reopen with public dedications on June 16 and 22 [1997].

Born in 1870, H. B. Earhart made his fortune in the gasoline business. He was the Detroit agent for the White Star Refinery Company, a faltering old company based in Buffalo, New York. Earhart bought the company in 1911 and moved its headquarters to Michigan—just as the automobile industry was taking off. Under his direction, White Star grew into a major enterprise, with a chain of gas stations and its own refinery in Oklahoma. Earhart eventually sold out to Socony Vacuum, later Mobil.

Four years into his retirement, at age sixty-six, Earhart decided to replace the farmhouse where his family had lived since 1920. Earhart's correspondence with his landscape consultants, the famous Olmstead firm of New York, reveals that Carrie Earhart had doubts about the project. Though she eventually went along with her husband's desire for a big house, she insisted that it be functional rather than gaudy or ostentatious. Their extended family would use every inch of it, from the basement pool room to the attic theater.

The mansion was designed by Detroit architects Smith, Hinchman, and Grylls, with input from the Olmstead firm. Its classic, simple proportions were enhanced with elegant details that included a slate roof, copper eaves and detailing, and a Pewabic ceramic fountain. Outwardly traditional, the house incorporated the latest in modern technology. Beneath the limestone exterior (hand-chiseled to simulate age), its structure was steel and concrete. It boasted what is believed to be the first residential air-conditioning unit outside of New



An elaborate shower features three rows of three showerheads each, plus an additional one overhead.

York City, showers with ten heads, and vented closets, with lights that went on when the door opened. There were bells everywhere—Carrie Earhart never had to go more than ten feet to summon a servant.

The Earharts and their four children moved to Ann Arbor in 1916. "I always understood that we did so because Mother liked small town living, and Ann Arbor at that time had a population of only about 28,000, not counting the university," daughter Elizabeth Earhart Kennedy explained in her 1990 memoir, *Once Upon a Family*.

The Earharts usually rented a house on Washtenaw Avenue. But within a year, they bought a historic dairy farm on Geddes Road known as "the Meadows." Before they could move in, World War I intervened. Feeling he should be closer to his business, H. B. moved his family back to Detroit for the duration. They used the farmhouse for vacations and getaway weekends until 1920, when they moved to Ann Arbor permanently.

By then, the three older children, Margaret, Louise, and Richard, had left for college. Elizabeth attended Ann Arbor High, but because the family lived so far in the country, she had to be driven each day by her mother's chauffeur. Embarrassed, she had him drop her off two blocks from school so she could arrive on foot like everyone else.

H.B. Earhart kept the farm active, but he did promptly tear down the old barns, which according to Kennedy's memoir, "were too near for mother's fastidious nose." He had them rebuilt on the other side of Geddes at the corner of what would soon be renamed Earhart Road.

While vacationing in North Carolina the first year they lived in the Meadows, Elizabeth fell in love with horseback riding. When they returned home, her father bought a pair of horses. Like his daughter, H.

B. Earhart enjoyed riding, and although Carrie Earhart did not share their enthusiasm, she contributed to their pleasure by having daffodils planted in the woods, which spread and naturalized. "She was to daffodils what Johnny Appleseed was to apples," says her grandson David Kennedy. Even today, residents of the Earhart subdivision tell of buying a home in the winter and being pleasantly surprised when the daffodils bloom in the spring.

H.B. and Carrie Earhart were both interested in gardening. They established a formal garden behind the house and built a greenhouse behind the garage. To superintend it all, they lured to Ann Arbor a prizewinning horticulturalist, James Reach. Born in Scotland, Reach was working on an estate near Philadelphia when the Earharts met him at a flower show in New York.

The late Alexander Grant began working as a gardener for the Earharts in 1929. In an interview before his death in January, Grant admitted that when he first came looking for work, he didn't know "a daffodil from an ice cream cone." But when Reach discovered that Grant had grown up near Edinburgh, his own birthplace, he hired him anyway.

Carrie Earhart was herself a serious gardener. She won prizes at national garden shows, served as president of the Michigan Federated Garden Club, and was cofounder of the Ann Arbor Garden Club. For two years in a row, she and Reach recreated part of the Meadows' garden on the stage of the Masonic Temple for the Ann Arbor Flower Show.

While the new house was being built, near the site of the old farmhouse, H. B. and Carrie went on a round-the-world cruise. Returning, they settled into their new home. H. B. filled the library with history books. On the walls of the library, the Earharts displayed their art collection, which included originals by Velazquez, Picasso, Millet, and Goya. Carrie enjoyed music, so the living room was dominated by a grand piano. She often hired members of the Detroit Symphony to perform for guests.

The house was decorated with treasures the Earharts had picked up on their travels. "They traveled more, and to more exotic places, than was then common," remembers great-niece Molly Dobson. Two huge oil portraits of the Earharts were displayed on the stairwell leading to the second floor. The portraits hung in Ann Arbor's YMCA for many years, commemorating the Earhart's funding of the Y's residential wing, and are now in the conference room of the Earhart Foundation. Upstairs, H. B. and Carrie each had a bedroom complete with dressing room and bathroom.

Two of the Earhart children, Richard and Elizabeth, lived on property adjoining their parents' estate. Richard farmed a piece of land just to the north known as "Greenhills" (The school of that name is now on part of the property, as well as Earhart Village Condominiums.) Elizabeth, married to lawyer James Kennedy, lived west of her parents in part of an orchard originally owned by Detroit Edison. The southern part of the orchard, running down to the river, was owned by H. B.'s nephew, Laurin Hunter.

Hunter, who worked for Earhart, had originally planned to build a house on his property and had even hired an architect. But one day in 1935, Earhart rode up on his horse while Hunter was working and offered to give him the old farmhouse if he would move it. Although Hunter's property was close enough to be seen from the Earharts', it took three months to move the house—the hardest parts were turning it at a ninety-degree angle and getting it over a ravine.

The Earharts enjoyed having family around and encouraged the younger generation to visit. A room in the basement was fitted up as a playroom, and the pool room—reached by a secret door in the library that looked like part of the bookcase—was a big draw.





Part of the bookcase swings in to reveal a hidden stairway.



The stairs leading down to the poolroom.

Grandson David Kennedy remembers having a lot of fun upstairs, too, in the attic theater, which included a stage at one end and a movie projection booth at the other. "We would play in the theater, just goof around," he recalls, "or watch family movies of kids hamming it—not Hollywood movies because there was no sound system."

Outdoors, they could swim, play tennis, or even golf. The area around the house was carefully landscaped. Grant recalled that the gardens included a peony-lined walk, a rose garden, a grape arbor, a gazebo, and a lily pond. Grape ivy hung along the back porch and espaliered apple trees were

cultivated along the wall to the east of the porch.

Carrie Earhart died in 1940 at age sixty-eight after a short illness. A private funeral was held in the home. Dobson remembers that the living room was filled with a great profusion of Easter lilies from her greenhouse and that Burnette Staebler, soloist at the First Presbyterian Church and a friend of the younger generation of Earharts, sang "I Know That My Redeemer Liveth." A front-page obituary talked of Carrie Earhart's many contributions to the community.

H.B. Earhart stayed on in the house after his wife died, keeping busy with his many interests and charities. With more time on his hands, he would frequent the greenhouse lounge, reading or talking to Grant, who had become the greenhouse manager after Carrie Earhart's death. Grant described Earhart at this time as a "tall, stately man, very upright, very deliberate in what he said, and what he said he meant. He wasn't a man who spent time gossiping, he was very serious."

When Earhart had visitors, he often brought them to the greenhouse. Over the years Grant recalled being introduced to many prominent citizens, including Henry Ford, society people, and a physicist from Stanford who was working on the atomic bomb. One day when Grant was edging the driveway, he heard sirens approaching. He looked up to see a police motorcade escorting then Michigan governor Kim Sigler, who was coming to visit Earhart.

Earhart was involved in many charity works as well. Although he was a member of the First Methodist Church, he took an interest in the nearby Dixboro Methodist Church, where he was friends with the minister, Loren Campbell. Campbell remembered that when the church needed an addition, Earhart offered to match the contributions made by the congregants.

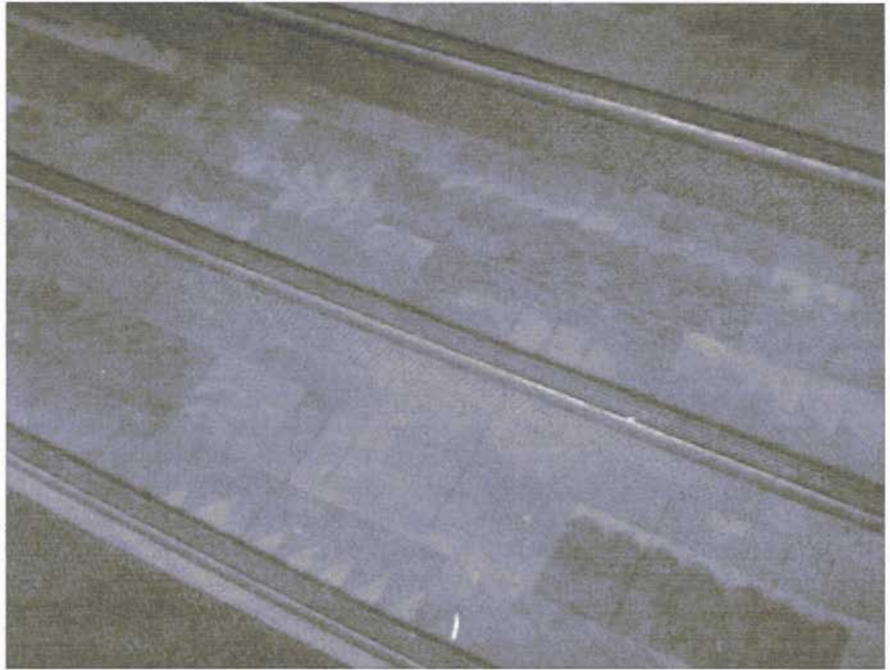


Although much of his charity was not publicly known, Earhart was very respected in the community. Campbell recalled in an interview before he died that when Earhart and his sister (Josephine Hunter, who lived with her son Laurin) came to church in Dixboro, there would be a buzz in the community as if a celebrity were visiting.

H. B. Earhart died in 1954 at age eighty-three after suffering a heart attack. He was buried beside his wife in Botsford Cemetery on Earhart Road. His obituary, like hers, was front-page news. Among other accomplishments, the obituary mentioned his support for industrial education and his role as a prime mover in the creation of the Huron-Clinton metropolitan Authority, which is responsible for the string of parks still enjoyed today. The Earhart Foundation, which he started in 1929, is still in existence, mainly funding educational projects. After Earhart's death, his son Richard ran the foundation; it is now headed by David Kennedy.

In the early 1960s, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod bought the land for Concordia College from Richard Earhart and the house from the Earhart Foundation. The campus, designed by architect Vincent Kling in a 1960's modern style, was dedicated in 1963.

Over the decades, Concordia has grown from a two-year college to a four-year college [and, now, a university] with an enrollment of 600 students. Now, thanks to a gift from Fred Schmidt of Jackson, who donated the money as a memorial to his father, the college has the resources to restore the Manor, the name it uses for the Earharts' house. "We don't have to tear down a lot to bring it back to its former glory," says Chris Purdy of Architects Four. Most of the design features, such as the Pewabic tiles in the bathrooms and the carved wood in the dining room, are still there. The room layout will remain the same except for the addition of an elevator, necessary to make the house handicapped accessible.



The attic theater's stage steps contain parquet made of tiny strips of wood.



The view from the attic theater looks out over rolling lawn leading to the river.

The downstairs rooms—the living room, dining room, and library—are being adapted for public uses such as meetings, receptions, or waiting rooms. H. B.'s bedroom will be the office of Concordia president James Koerschen, while Carrie Earhart's will be a conference room. The basement pool room will serve as another conference room. The third floor left pretty much as it was as a theater, provides a perfect meeting place for the Concordia Board of Regents.

Restoration of the gardens is being planned by HKP Landscape Architects. At first it looked like a simple project of putting in plants that

would have been used in the 1930s, but as more information surfaces from the Olmstead archive and from those who remember the gardens, a more authentic restoration is now possible.

Concordia plans to make the renovated Earhart Manor available to the community for events such as conferences, meetings, or weddings. "We're looking forward to giving it back to the community in Ann Arbor to use and enjoy," says Brian Heinemann, Concordia's vice-president for finance and operations, who is in charge of the project. "It'll be the front door to the college as it was the front door for the Meadows." The work on the house is scheduled to be completed in June. Public dedications are planned for the evenings of June 16 and 22 [1997], following church services.



One of two ceramic shields in the basement poolroom shows elaborate heraldic imagery.

ALICE CERNIGLIA

## About The East Delhi Bridge

*We invite you to visit our new exhibit, "The East Delhi Bridge Legacy," which will be on display February 15-June 7, 2006.*

The East Delhi Road Bridge crosses the Huron River in Scio Township and is situated in the midst of scenic, residential, and recreational landscapes. The original truss bridge at this site was built for horse and buggy traffic in the late 1800s / early 1900s. This bridge was restored after the great tornado of 1918.

### In A Good Place

This is one of those "through truss" bridges that are not only historic, but also has a very positive influence on its surrounding environment. This bridge is located in a very picturesque setting. There is a metropark right by this bridge, which offers some good views of the area. Ruins of the Delhi Mills are still visible, with some pretty water rapids in the river—a great place for kayakers. The area is wooded, and the bridge seems to fit right in with its rural turn of the 20th century appearance. The demolition of this bridge is now in question. The suggested replacement is a modern slab of concrete which will considerably change the aesthetics of the area.

### Historic Significance

With an intact plaque, this appears to be a good example of a Pratt truss which was built by the Wrought Iron Bridge Company of Canton, Ohio. This East Delhi bridge has the interesting distinction of being the survivor of a tornado in 1918. The bridge was heavily damaged by this tornado, which sent the trusses right into the river.

Truss bridges come in a variety of designs, shapes and sizes. They were built before standard plans for bridges were developed. This fact and the passage of time make each truss bridge unique. Nearly all truss bridges are historic based on their age alone. They have not gotten the exposure that wooden cover bridges have nor the funding for restoration. Their

municipal and governmental owners do not wish to preserve these historic structures and find many excuses for their demise. Despite their geometric complexity, truss bridges are a thing of the past.

The East Delhi Bridge underwent heavy repairs after 1918 and was put back in service. These repairs appear to be what was helping keep this bridge off the historic list. Yet, it is felt that the repairs were done so long ago that the repairs themselves are historic. The Michigan Department Of Transportation is conducting a new statewide historic bridge survey, and is supposed to update their site as well after the survey is complete. Perhaps this bridge will earn more credit at that point, if it is still around—truss bridges are becoming extremely rare. Any through truss bridge especially those built prior to 1920 are extremely historic and deserve to be restored. These bridges serve as a legacy and flavor of the past life of this county.

### History of the Bridge and Area

The current through truss at Delhi Mills replaced a wooden bridge at the same location. The truss bridge was built in 1888. There were actually once six locations along the Huron River that had both a mill and a metal truss bridge. The East Delhi Road Bridge, and Maple / Foster Road Bridge are the only two functioning truss bridges remaining. The Bell Road Bridge is still around, but it sits off of its abutments on the ground next to the river. The rest are completely gone. The visual grace and reference to the past that these bridges represent could stand alone in making a strong argument for their restoration.

### A Bridge At Risk

This bridge is in danger, because the Washtenaw County Road Commission wants to replace it with a two-lane slab of concrete that would have no aesthetic value, and would increase the speed of traffic in this scenic area. The resolution of this fight has yet to be determined. Changing the face of one of the most scenic and restful



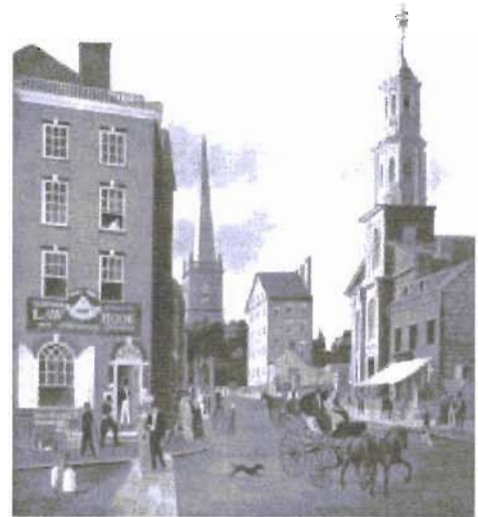
areas of this county would surely change how we choose to see the world. The legacy of this bridge and the past that it represents offers us additional choices in how Washtenaw County will visually look in the future. Will we be visionary enough to preserve the East Delhi Bridge and the grace and sense of place represented by the past or will we look forward to a more generic view of how we lived.

Putting this exhibition together was indeed a team effort. I would like to thank the following people for their help in this endeavor. Kathleen Timberlake and the Citizens for the East Delhi Bridge Conservancy, Aaron Berkholtz and the Washtenaw County Road Commission, Anne Freykes and Nancy Snyder of the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission; Tom Freeman and Faye Stoner of the County Parks and Recreation Department; Author Craig Holden; Scott Hedberg; Grace Shackman; Louisa Pieper; Amy Rosenberg; Lisa Klionsky; Wystan Stevens; and Judy Chrisman.


# “Campus Trails And Trials Of Fifty Years Ago”

*Continued from page 1.*

spoke German as a household language, had some family connections on the Ann Arbor West Side, so he knew his way around in that foreign country. Once in a while he would take a few of us to a little beer garden where the steins were immense and English was rarely heard. It was just a quiet, bowered haven in a backyard of an ordinary looking residence on a side street. Indoors, there was room for only a dozen; in fine weather the customers, mostly family parties, sat outside and harmonized. Students were not wanted, just tolerated, as long as we behaved ourselves. Mind you, this was no speakeasy; it had a legal license, just a quaint way of doing an honest business in an off corner.



I have mentioned Joe Parker's, which lives in song and story. Its big round tables carved with student names now decorate the Union cafeteria. Joe was a type I had become well acquainted with as a newspaper reporter in Pontiac—the solid, substantial saloonkeeper as public man who dominated politics and tried to keep his business respectable but profitable. Prohibition destroyed men of that type—they didn't know how to go underground and run speakeasies. The Orient, coupled with Joe's in the old song, had more spit and polish; also less trade. But the downtown beer emporium most to my liking was a quieter place than these famous places—Haas and Heibein's. Those wonderful Teutonic syllables have never been embalmed in college song as far as I know, perhaps because Haas and Heibein never went in for college atmosphere on their ground floor ordinary premises. Upstairs they had a room you could hire for special celebrations and there the raucous rah-rah was sometimes lifted; but downstairs in the bar you were supposed to make no more noise than the substantial business man who dropped in for a quencher, or double-decker corned beef sandwich on rye for a nickel, pickles and beans for free on a side counter and help yourself. On the side street Haas and Heibein had a family entrance separated from the bar by a curtain. Having no family at the time, I never used the family entrance, but I assure you the family room was most respectable, frequented mostly by German farmers and their wives and children on marketing day. No woman ever was seen in any barroom. That dire commonplace of today entered the social scene with prohibition.



*East Delhi Bridge*

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S  
NEW EXHIBITION & PROGRAM


**The East Delhi Bridge Legacy**  
**February 15 – June 7, 2006**

Sponsored by the East Delhi Bridge Conservancy

**The Museum on Main Street**  
**Open House – Saturday, February 25, 12 – 4 p.m.**

with a presentation by Vern Meiler of the Historic Bridge Park in Battle Creek  
and Aaron Berkholtz of the Washtenaw County Road Commission  
at 2 pm

**Historic Wrought Iron Truss Bridges**



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**WASHTENAW COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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**SUNDAY • 2 PM  
MARCH 19, 2006**

**“NAME ORIGINS OF LOCAL  
STREETS/ROADS”**

**SPEAKER • JEFF MORTIMER**

**UNIVERSITY COMMONS  
817 ASA GRAY • ANN ARBOR  
INFORMATION • 734.662.9092**

**WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY IMPRESSIONS**

**FEBRUARY 2006**

## Program Schedule 2005-2006

**Sunday, February 19, 2006 • 2 pm  
COBBLESTONE STRUCTURES  
OF WASHTENAW COUNTY**

Speaker: *Grace Shackman  
& Patricia Majher*

Location: Cobblestone Farm Barn,  
2781 Packard, Ann Arbor

**Sunday, March 19 • 2 pm  
NAME ORIGINS  
OF LOCAL STREETS/ROADS**

Speaker: *Jeff Mortimer*

Location: University Commons,  
817 Asa Gray, Ann Arbor

**Sunday, April 23 • 2 pm  
GSWC & WCHS STORY**

Speaker: *Marcia McCrary*

Location: Education Bldg, SJMH,  
Parking Lot 'P'

**Wednesday, May 2006 • 6 pm  
WCHS ANNUAL MEETING**

Potluck supper & election of  
officers

Location: *Location TBA*

***Suggestions appreciated***

Email: [wchs-500@ameritech.net](mailto:wchs-500@ameritech.net)

## Mission Statement

*The purpose of the Washtenaw County Historical Society is to foster interest in and to elucidate the history of Washtenaw County from the time of the original inhabitants to the present. Its mission shall be to carry out the mandate as stated through the preservation and presentation of artifacts and information by exhibit, assembly, and publication. And to teach, especially our youth, the facts, value and the uses of Washtenaw County history through exhibits in museums and classrooms, classes, tours to historical places, and other educational activities.*

