



# IMPRESSIONS

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER • FOUNDED 1857

JUDITH CHRISMAN

## Judy's Letter

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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.

When I accepted the position of president in May 2004, I agreed to serve for one year and then was persuaded to serve another year. I have come to the end of my two years and have turned over my gavel to the newly elected president, Richard Galant. I can now go back to my basement hideaway to work among the artifacts. Thank you to all who helped me during my two years as president.

New donations continue to come in. Recent donations include a hat pin from Cedric Richner; three photographs from Robert Miller; a highchair and wide-carriage manual typewriter from Fay and Robert Greenough; a copy of a 1917 map of Ann Arbor from Fabian Beltran; three spoons, a cup and a mosaic tile from the Lincoln Hotel (all marked Ann Arbor) from Earnest Griffin; miscellaneous photographs and newspaper clippings pertaining to Ann Arbor history from Al Gallup; a quilt from Sandra Cole; a 1926 Washtenaw County Fair program from Susan Wineberg; an electric tabletop fan and a Kodak camera from Eugene and Agnes Hannahs; a report on the Frieze Building by Jeremiah Mason sent by Thomas Scott for the Friends of the Frieze. In addition there are several pending donations to be brought before the Board of Directors for approval.



Highchair donated by Fay and Robert Greenough.

Photo by Judy Chrisman

## WCHS Meeting

Sunday • September 17th • 2:00 PM

### LETITIA BYRD

will relate the history of the David Byrd Center  
at 3216 Lohr Road, Ann Arbor

*Followed by the dedication of an Historic Marker  
for the building at 3:30 PM*

APRIL TALK • JUDITH CHRISTMAS AND MARCIA McCRARY

# History Of WCHS & GSWC

*The April 2006 general meeting was a combined meeting of the Washtenaw County Historical Society and the Genealogical Society of Washtenaw County. The program began with a history of the historical society presented by Judy Chrisman.*

## Washtenaw County Historical Society

When I first started this project, I wondered how on earth I was going to fill a half-hour. Thanks to the research done by Ralph Beebe, who handed me an inch-thick folder of material, I had to decide how I could fit it all into a half-hour.

## Significant Dates

On December 17, 1857, 19 citizens of Ann Arbor called for "a county convention for the purpose of forming a County Historical Association" to be composed of anyone from the townships who cared to attend. The meeting was held at the Court House for the purpose of organizing a Washtenaw Historical Society. John Geddes became the chair of a committee consisting of one representative from each township plus the city of Ann Arbor. The committee was appointed to draw up a constitution "to awaken an interest in the towns." The group met again on January 13, 1858 to adopt the constitution and elect officers. The Honorable Munnis Kinney of Webster Township was elected president. The object (what today would be called a mission statement) was "to collect and preserve the history of the first settlement and growth of Washtenaw County, and to publish the same from time to time as shall be deemed advisable." No records of meetings beyond 1862 have been found to date. It appears the organization continued and that artifacts and archival material continued to be collected but the Civil War may have been the reason for the suspension of meetings.

In April 1873, the state legislature passed a resolution calling for the collecting and preserving of historical information relating to Michigan which resulted in the formation of the Historical Society of Michigan. This probably led Gen. Edward Clark, President of the Ann Arbor Pioneer & Historical Society to call for a meeting on Aug. 19, 1873 to reactivate the county society. A constitution and by-laws were adopted that same day and we became 'The Pioneer Society of the County Washtenaw.' Alpheus Felch, ex-governor of Michigan, former Justice of the Peace, former U.S. Senator and a UM law professor was elected president. The object stated this time was "to cultivate social relations, collect and preserve biographical sketches, statistics and historical facts and reminiscences, and to preserve and transmit the same to future generations." Members had to be a resident of the county for at least 20 years and dues were 25 cents a year.

In 1876 the Society was incorporated under state law, dues were to be no less than 25 cents and no more than \$3.00, members had to be "not less than 40 years of age, who had resided in the county 25 years." At a meeting in 1883, the Honorable E.P. Allen of Ypsilanti stated, "We are now living in the high noon of the last civilization the world will know until it is burned up, and I do not believe the progress of the fifty years to come will be equal to that of the past half century."



**Alpheus Felch, President of  
Historical Society in 1873.  
From Portrait  
and Biographical Album, 1891**

Meetings were held in various locations around the county—at first in alternate months, then quarterly and finally only annually and on special occasions such as the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Meetings were an all day affair with a business meeting in the morning, lunch prepared by the local ladies, and then reports and, if time, reminiscences of members. The Society necrologist, keeper of the death list, would read the list of members who had died since the previous annual meeting. The year 1879 was an especially bad year because, at the January 1880 meeting, necrologist Charles Chapin read a list of 72 names with a short bio for each. Some who died in that year were William Dancer, Thomas Peatt (his name will come up again later), the Honorable James Kingsley, Sylvester Noble (home was an underground railroad stop) and Calvin Fillmore, builder of Gordon Hall and brother of President Millard



Fillmore. It appears that no meetings were held after 1925.

In 1929, the third constitution was drawn up. A new constitution was necessary because the organizers discovered that the old charter had expired in 1906. By this time the pioneers were getting fewer and fewer. The age and residency requirements were dropped and the name was changed to Washtenaw Historical Society. It was felt that the word county limited the activities of the Society. The objects stated this time were "to foster interest in the history of the Washtenaw Area, and to assemble and preserve in permanent collections all materials relating to that history." In 1943, the dues were \$1.00 or one could get a lifetime membership for \$50. By 1947, the lifetime membership cost had dropped to \$25. There were 24 lifetime members in 1950.

Upon expiration of that charter, the Society reincorporated in 1955. When that charter expired in 1985, we were reincorporated in perpetuity as a non-profit organization and the name was changed to Washtenaw County Historical Society.

## Museum Sites

Through all of that time the Society never had a home. The need for a permanent site was first expressed in 1874 by William Gregory of Saline. In 1930, Dr. Carl Guthe, president of the Society, stated that "the development and fostering of community memory is the function of the WHS" and "the Society is making definite plans for securing an adequate home for the county's memory." Over the years, many locations were mentioned and some discussed at length.

In 1942, Marie Louise Douglass, daughter of Dr. Silas H. Douglass, bequeathed her home at 502 E. Huron along with real estate owned on E. Washington to the Regents of the University of Michigan "being it expressly provided, however, that it

be known as the Washtenaw Historical Museum" and "that the enterprise be conducted as a joint museum for the display of the property of the Washtenaw Historical Museum, under the supervision of the Regents of the University of Michigan, with such cooperation, between the groups as may be desirable to effectuate that purpose." The Society was not specifically mentioned but most interpreted the will to include the Society because many of her personal items were left to the Society. The Regents tentatively accepted the terms and the Society held a special meeting to discuss the proposal. It was felt that \$150,000 would be needed. Due to the war, most funds were going to the war effort and the Society decided they could not obtain the needed money so they declined. The committee noted that there were a number of other suitable residences in Ann Arbor that might be purchased or donated with an endowment for upkeep.

In 1955, the Society launched a drive to purchase Cobblestone Farm. They needed to raise \$40,000 but were unable to do so.

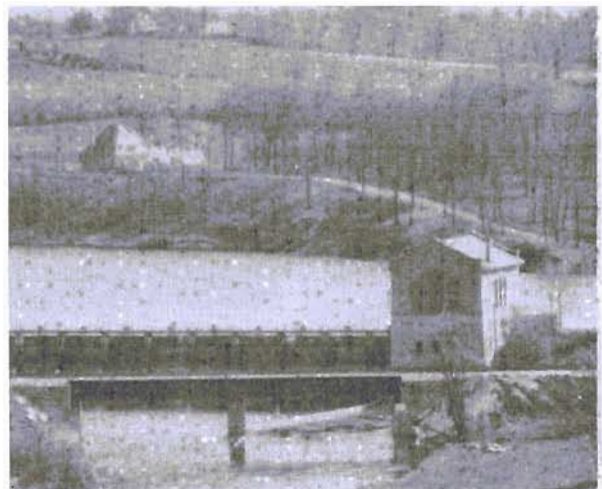
Other sites mentioned were Kempf House (too small), Danforth House at 303 E. Ann (demolished), one of the empty store fronts on Main St. Tuomy House was explored in 1967 (and again in 1996 and yet again in 2005). The fire house was considered but rejected due to lack of parking (sure doesn't seem to be a problem for the Hands-On Museum).

In 1974, Dave Pollack offered to purchase four acres of land on Fleming Creek from Fred Matthaei, Jr. which would include the grist mill and land to build a museum. The Society decided it would be too expensive. The spot, Parker Mill, is now run by the County Parks Commission.

One site that almost was successful was the Barton Dam Powerhouse. In 1977, the Society signed a lease for the Powerhouse and three acres of land. One problem was the access which was off Barton Shore Drive, a private road in Barton Hills. The city agreed to build a new access road off Whitmore Lake Rd. on land that it would purchase. The access problem, the dampness issue, and the inability to raise the money, not to mention the fact that the city decided to reclaim it to generate electricity, resulted in the loss of yet another potential site. We did hold an exhibit at the powerhouse as a fund raiser.

The final chapter in our search began in the late 1980s when the University decided to demolish a home at 1015 Wall St. for a parking lot. When Susan Wineberg heard about it, she wrote a letter to the university planner, Fred Mayer, explaining the significance of the house and asking if they would consider moving it.

In the 1830s the original lot on Wall Street was sold to Thomas Peatt by Anson Brown's widow and subsequently sold to Dan Kellogg and Ethan Warden. The rear section of the house was built in 1835 by Dorr, Dwight and Dan Kellogg. The front section was added in 1839 when Charles and his wife came from New York state.



**Barton dam and pumphouse**  
From the Bentley Historical Collection



**Charles Kellogg family**  
*Courtesy of David Oakley*

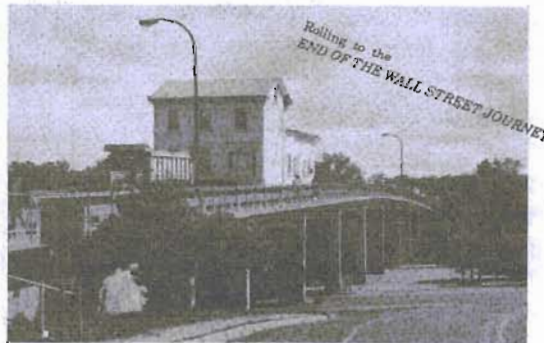
The University offered the house to the city which accepted, then decided six months later that they had no use for it. At that time, Thelma Graves, a board member, suggested to the society president, Karen O'Neal, that the Society try to acquire the house from the University. Through Karen O'Neal's determination, the support of the University, the city's agreement to lease the land and in spite of set-

backs, including a determination by the DNR that the soil was contaminated by the gas station previously on the site, the project became a reality. On Sunday, June 10, 1990, the Society's first home, the Museum on Main Street, rolled across the Broadway bridge and was set on cribbing, 133 years after John Geddes called for the formation of a society.

Once on the site, the real work began. Nine years of restoration! After restoration, a grand opening was held in May 1999. It was decided early on that it would be an exhibit museum with changing exhibits not a house museum because it would be a better use of our collection. The first exhibit 'In the Good Old Summertime' opened in the summer of 2000. Since 2000 we have held three to four exhibits each year including "Delivery Days" and "Weddings of Yore." Each year at Christmas time we have a holiday exhibit with a theme. In 2003, we featured toys and dollhouses. In 2004, the exhibit was 'A Taste of the Season' and featured the Bach china service.

Other groups have mounted exhibits at our facility. These include the Masons, Northfield and Pittsfield Township, Saline, a joint exhibit with the African American Museum featuring the story of the county's participation in the Underground Railroad combined with the quilts from our collection. Our museum director, Alice Cerniglia, was hired in January of 2004. One of her jobs is to mount exhibits which have included "Women's Work and Style 1837-1914", and "The Sewing Arts."

Work on the museum is never done. Last summer, Ed Rice, graduate of EMU Historic Preservation program and an instructor at Macomb Community College, worked through the hottest days with his helpers to repaint the fence and house. He had previously scraped and repainted the front door removing up to 17 layers of paint.



**House moving over the bridge**  
*Photo by John Rietz*

## Where Was Our 'Stuff' During Those 133 Years?

Papers and artifacts were collected from the beginning. One of the oldest items in the collection is a mortar and pestle identified as belonging to Ephram Smith, "a 'physicker' in the U.S. army during the entire war of revolution." Things have been stored in members' basements, in barns, in various city and county buildings. In 1879, the Society was given a room on the third floor of the Court House, moved to the basement in 1882 and then back to the third floor sometime after that. In 1916, most of the archives and paper goods were given to the Michigan Historical Collection housed in U. of M's Rackham building (later moved to the Bentley Historical Library) and some were sent to the State Museum in Lansing. The rest of the artifacts stayed in the Court House until 1924. In the 1940s, things were at the University Museums Building, then back on the upper floor of the Court House, then at Bach School and then at Fritz School on N. Maple. From the Fritz School, things went to the third floor of the City Hall Annex and next went to the Tuomy house barn and to Poole's barn on Scio Church Rd.

In 1975, nearly everything was moved to University storage facilities at Willow Run—not an ideal location but better than barns. They filled five rooms and eventually grew to seven rooms. When I first saw the collection in 1993, every room was piled floor to ceiling with boxes, furniture, paper goods that had been returned by the Bentley when they ran low on storage and who knew what. Collection chair, Nancy McKinney, and a small but dedicated group began to conduct an inventory to see what was there. (the previous inventory was done in 1975 when the things were moved there).

Not everything was in storage all the time. From time to time, artifacts were taken out of storage and small exhibits were set up in various locations which not only generated interest but more donations. Also, we have many items on loan all around the county—at Kempf House,



Cobblestone Farm, Hack House in Milan, the Dexter Area Historical Society, the Lucy Clark piano in the Stearns collection and also some items retained by the Bentley.

When the basement was dug for the Museum on Main St., the plans called for a height of nine feet to give us plenty of storage space. As a result of a donation by Doris Anna Bach, we were able to install state-of-the-art moveable storage shelves and our collection has finally found a permanent resting place. In addition, we have a wonderful climate controlled, accessible storage area at Sweepster on Zeeb Rd. for large items. Now our things are only a floor or, at most, five miles away as opposed to the 20 miles to Willow Run.



Basement storage shelves  
Photo by Judy Chrisman

**How Do We Reach Out To The Public**

Offsite exhibits are placed around the community. We have had two exhibits at University Hospital as part of the Gift of Arts series. In March I took a small exhibit of farms and farm tools to the first annual Project Grow Seed Swap. Next March, a part of the Women's Work and Style exhibit will be on display in

the Mallett Creek branch of the Ann Arbor District Library.

We have two loan boxes, "From Hats to Spats" and "Life Before Electricity" that are rented to teachers. Each contains artifacts, books, lessons and a teacher guide.

Our newsletter, *Washtenaw Impression*, is published seven times a year. The first *Impressions* came out in 1943 and were just a printout of the program from the meeting. Many of them were published by Lela Duff. In 1975, Alice Ziegler became the editor for the next 25 years and the first pictures were included. Susan Wineberg took over for the next five years. Our current editor is Laura Bien.

We have two "What's It?" games that can be taken to organizations, clubs, scouts, schools upon request. There is a version for children with 12 artifacts and an adult version with 20 artifacts. Participants are encouraged to look the items over and fill out a multiple-choice questionnaire. Then the answers are given with comments about each artifact. We have the adult version with us today. You are invited to look it over and I will give the answers after the break.

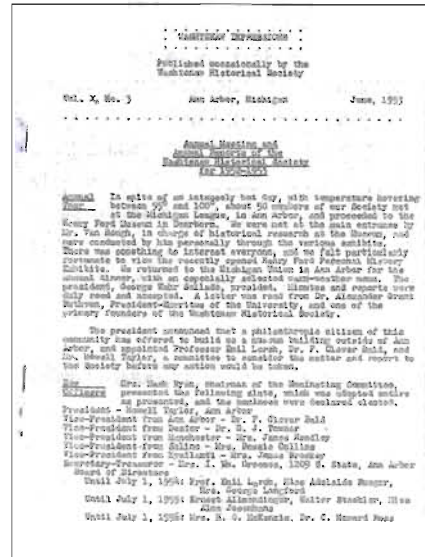
**Geneological Society Of Washtenaw County**

Marcia McCrary, President of the Geneological Society, then gave their history which began as a special interest group of the Historical Society. In the 1970s, Harold Jones and Ralph and Lydia Muncy were appointed by the Historical Society to revise the Historical Society Bylaws to add Bylaws for the Genealogy section. In 1974, Ralph and Lydia Muncy invited others to form a genealogy group which then joined the Michigan Genealogy Society in May and held the first election of officers in June. In 1976, Bylaws of the Genealogy section were proposed at a Historical Society board meeting but no action was taken. At the June 1977 Annual meeting of the Genealogy section, members voted to sever the connection with the Historical Society and become a separate Society and on Sept. 25 the Bylaws were adopted. The Historical Society acknowledged the withdrawal in June 1978.

Founding members of the Society include Leigh and Alloa Anderson, Doris Milliman, William and Polly Bender, Flora Burt, Ethelyn Morton, Ralph and Lydia Muncy, Harold Jones, Betty Knepper, Marguerite Lambert, Dorothy Ouradnik, Patricia Shaneyfelt, Kathryn Lohr, Margaret Sias, Richard L. Miller and James Wolf.

The mission of GSWC is to aid and assist members in *Geneological studies, to encourage collection and preservation of family and public records, to promote the exchange of Geneological information.* In keeping with that mission the Society holds informational meetings, classes and workshops, offers several publications such as the Directory of Cemeteries of Washtenaw County, and conducts cemetery readings.

In 1984, the library was moved to the LDS location at Hill and Tappan. In 2002, the library was moved to Huron Towers while the building at Hill and Tappan was renovated. The library moved back to Hill and Tappan in 2002. While the renovations included addition of an elevator to the building, it did not go to the basement where the library was located so a search for a new location was begun. In June 2004, the library moved to the new LDS building in Saline.



June 1953 Impressions,  
published occasionally by the  
Washtenaw Historical Society

The Society's monthly meetings have been held at St. Joseph Mercy Hospitals Education Center Auditorium since 2000.

Marcia told of the number of members and listed officers over the years. Her talk included pictures from cemetery readings and annual picnics and humorous sayings.

## Coming Exhibition

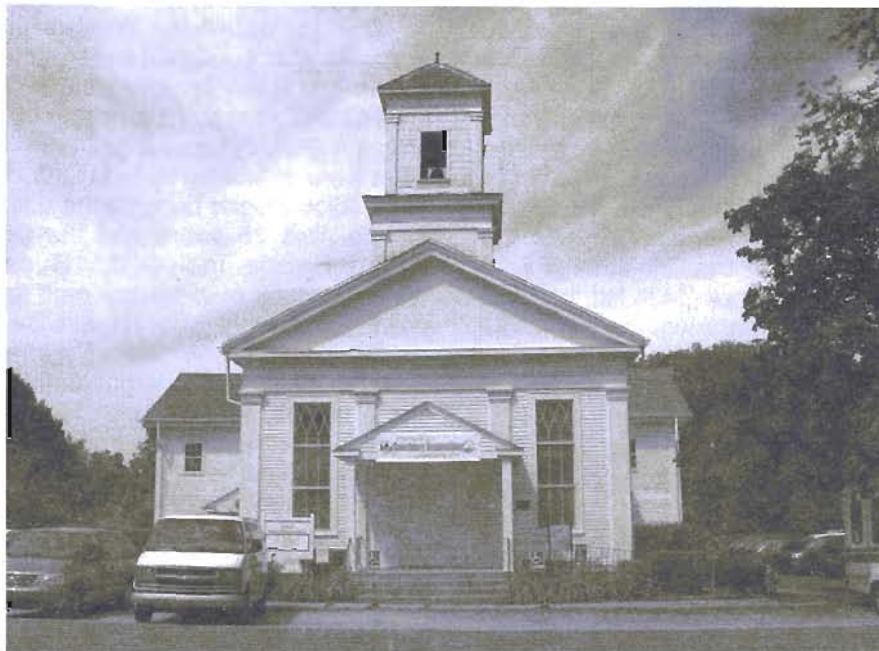
**100 Years of Psychiatry  
at the University of Michigan  
September 27, 2006  
to November 15, 2006**

In celebration of the Centennial of the University of Michigan's Department of Psychiatry, the Museum on Main Street will be hosting an exhibit on mental illness and its treatment from the Michigan perspective in the years covering 1906 to 2006. Major research in this area was done at this University in Washtenaw County. The exhibit will focus on depression and schizophrenia and how these illnesses have changed in diagnosis and treatment over the last hundred years. The exhibit, curated by Dr. Laura Hirshbein of the University of Michigan Department of Psychiatry will also focus on how psychiatry changed in its approach and practices over this time period.

Our Open House will be on Sunday, October 22 from 12 - 4 with an Informal talk by Dr. Hirshbein at 2 PM.

Hours Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday 12 - 4 PM and by appointment Phone: 734-662-9092, e-mail: wchs-500@ameritech.net

# May Annual Meeting And Potluck Supper



**Dixboro United Methodist Church**  
*Photo by Judy Chrisman*

On Sunday, May 23 the annual meeting was held at the Dixboro United Methodist Church. Tom Freeman led a tour of the church and meeting facilities and discussed the restoration work that is to be done. The construction of the church was authorized in 1857 using a design by Abraham Cooper of Ypsilanti. The church continued to grow with the community, adding an educational wing in 1951 and another one-story annex in 1969.

The tour was followed by "a thumbnail sketch of the Hamlet of Dixboro" by Dale Leslie, a native of Dixboro, who used the following short biographies and anecdotes to tell the story.

**"Canter Your Horses, Please..."** Bruce Avis lived at 5031 Warren Rd. at Dixboro Rd. His voice! It was something about the quality of his voice that showed enthusiasm, encouragement and instilled confidence. Any 4-H horseman or a member of the Fleming Creek Riding Club recognized the hearty and comfortable tones of Bruce Avis over the P.A. system at area horse shows and fairs. "Canter your horses, please. Canter your horses," he would instruct the riders in the ring. Bruce was a horse owner and he and wife Doris' two sons, Bruce E., Jr. and Charles W. (Chuckie) also raised show animals. A jovial, robust man, his voice now echoes in the heavens since he passed away in 1987 at the age of 73.

**"She was always in the picture"** Belle Carter (Mrs. Walter Carter) who lived at 7060 East Joy Rd. and later at her daughter's home 7110 Plymouth Rd. and **"Sure, I can extinguish the candle"** Nettie E. Gibb (Mrs. Emmett Gibb) who lived on Cherry Hill at Plymouth Rd. Belle & Nettie were born and died within a few weeks of each other: they were 93 at their passing in 1985. At first blush, these two long-time Superior Township residents would appear to have little in common. Belle Carter was petite, very modest, and lived most of her life on an area farm. Nettie Gibb was a full-size woman, an extrovert, and with her husband Emmett, served as proprietors of the Dixboro Store in the 1930s and '40s. The Gibbs lived next door to the store. (At one time, Emmett was referred to as the Mayor of Dixboro, a non-elected, anointed position.) Both women shared a love for their families and affection for the

Dixboro Methodist Church. In almost every 20<sup>th</sup>-century Dixboro photograph of a church project you can pick out Belle Carter at work in the background. Nettie loved to tell her story of the three-member family who struggled to blow out a candle. After the first two siblings awkwardly wrestled with the flame, the third family member contorted herself, stepped to the candle, took a deep breath and pinched the wick with her fingers! Nettie's one-person skit was repeated at church talent shows even though 90% of the audience knew the outcome.

**A Wedding Bell in the Belfry** Charles V. and Catherine Hagler lived at 3401 Berry Rd. "Ding, dong, ding dong" pealed the bell once again from the roof of the Dixboro Schoolhouse on the Village Green. It was July 21, 1984, and the community celebrated the 96-year-old school building's entry onto the State Register of Historic Places. The gift of a farm bell—a wedding present to Charles and Catherine Hagler almost 30 years prior—was mounted in the school belfry. Charles Hagler was the president of the Michigan Historical Commission and was instrumental in the school designation as an historic place. Tragically, within six months the Haglers would succumb to illness. The Dixboro United Methodist Church is a Michigan Historic Site and is listed in the National Registry of Historical Buildings and Places.

**"I have his handshake..."** Clinton J. Leslie lived at 5365 Church Rd. Clinton J. Leslie unassumedly attracted many friends. Why? Perhaps it was his strong work ethic or his quiet example of faith and obedience to his Creator. Clint and his wife, the former Leola Quackenbush, were active members of the Dixboro Church. They usually sat in the same pew each Sunday and Leola proudly sang the hymns of their faith. In the 1920s, the Leslies operated the Dixboro Store and later moved to a farm on Church Road. Clinton Leslie was an excellent house and barn painter, a talented carpenter (he helped build his two son's first homes) and a fervent player of the drums. In 1949, he supervised a host of volunteer workers who logged over 30,000 hours in building the fellowship hall addition to the Dixboro Church. When questioned whether the project Treasurer was bonded, he replied, "No, but I have his handshake." He was a true man of his work. Clinton Leslie passed away in 1974 at the age of 81.

**"He was a symbol of the community."** Glen A. Freeman lived at 5107 Church Rd. Glen Freeman was a tireless community servant, characterized by Carol, his wife of 57 years, as simply and sincerely "interested in the community." He had the broad shoulders of a community leader; he was unheralded but highly respected. Glen helped charter Boy Scout Troop 30 and later served as its Scoutmaster for over 60 years. He logged innumerable miles walking behind a lawn mower at the Oak Grove Cemetery and long evening hours in the freezing winter creating an open-air ice rink on the Village Green. The community was able to reciprocate in 1974 when it lobbied the Ann Arbor Public Schools to rename the Dixboro School the Glen A. Freeman School. "He was a symbol of the community," eulogized Dixboro pastor Rev. Charles Marble upon Glen's passing in 1989 at the age of 88. Glen was an active member of the Dixboro United Methodist Church. In his twilight, he stood on a bench at Scout camp and humbly said, "I'll come to camp with you boys for as long as you let me." Glen Freeman was a fixture in the hearts of the Dixboro community.

**Cletia E. (Cal) Edwards, Pastor, Dixboro Methodist Church, 1918-21** Mrs. Edwards wrote, "Our charge (also) included Free Church (Gottfredson at Plymouth Roads) and Northside Ann Arbor." Rev. Edwards drove a Model T Ford to his appointments and the rural route was hard on its thin tires. When the car's weight broke the frozen potholes, the sharp, icy edges would slice the tires. Another victim of Michigan's inescapable spring freeze and thaw. Mrs. Edwards recalls, "By the time Cal made it to Dixboro all four tires were riddled. At morning prayers they presented their problems to the Lord." In the mail at 11 am was a letter from a Masonic friend in Detroit. The writer said he had been thinking about Cal and his new work. And said, "I think I would like to help." So he went to the office of a mutual friend and after a short conversation said, "I have \$50 dollars to send to Cal, would you match it?" Out of the envelope dropped check for \$100.00. A farmer took Cal into Ann Arbor in his horse and buggy where he bought four new tires for his Model T

Ford. Cost: \$95.50. Mrs. Edwards writes, "We felt like Ezra and Nehemiah, that the good hand of my God was upon me. So we thanked the Lord and took courage."

**The Graf Zeppelin Over Dixboro** Children on the Dixboro School playground were awe struck by the foreign object they saw high in the sky. The mammoth Graf Zeppelin, the Trans-Atlantic German dirigible, flew over Dixboro enroute from Chicago to its U.S. home in Akron, Ohio. "Graf Zeppelin Passes Over Ann Arbor," read *The Ann Arbor Daily News* headline, October 26, 1933. "Flying at an elevation of less than 3,000 feet...the midday sun shining on its aluminum-coated fabric (it) passed over the heart of Ann Arbor at 11:45 this morning." It was also reported in the *Daily News* that "thousands of persons lined the streets for a glimpse of the ship that once flew around the world." "Dixboro was in the flight path, too," recalled teacher Ivan Parker. The memory of seeing the large airship would last a lifetime.

After the excellent potluck supper, the business meeting was held. Various members of the board gave short reports on the past year's activities. The slate of candidates presented by the nominating committee was elected unanimously. Our new president is Richard Galant who has been on the board for four years. We welcome new board members Larry Kestenbaum and Susan Nenadic.

## Looking For Holiday Lights

This year's holiday exhibition, December 2006 to mid-January 2007 will feature the history of Christmas lights. If you have holiday lights, candle lanterns or chimes, 1900 to 1960, that you would be willing to loan for the exhibit, please contact Museum Director, Alice Cerniglia, at 734-662-9092.



# In Memoriam

## In One Week's Span, Washtenaw County Lost Three Irreplaceable History Enthusiasts

**Marilou Warner** died on July 23. She served on the board of our Society during the 1980s and also served on Kempf House's board and was once president. It was Marilou that devised the name of our new museum: The Museum on Main Street (MoMS). She and her husband David moved to Athens, Georgia several years ago and, through the years, kept in touch with our events.

**Warren Hale** died July 29. Warren had a life-long love of history which he expressed in a weekly column, *Way Back When*, in the Milan newspaper for more than 30 years. Warren was one of the founders of the Milan Historical Society and through his efforts Hack House was saved to become a museum as was the Milan Fire Barn. He is survived by his wife, Dee, and four children.

**Patricia 'Sandy' Whitesell** died on July 30. She oversaw the restoration of the Detroit Observatory and wrote a book about the facility: *A Creation of His Own: Tappan's Detroit Observatory*. Following the award-winning restoration, Sandy was the inaugural Director and Curator, creating a museum within the Observatory and using the facility as a laboratory for university instruction in Museum Methods. She is survived by her husband, John Wolfe, her parents and three siblings.

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LISA KLIONSKY • CURRENT EXHIBIT THROUGH SEPTEMBER 10, 2006

## The Flapper Era And Modern Times: 1920s Washtenaw County

To understand the unbridled, exuberant times of the 1920s, consider the years leading up to what's known as the Jazz Age. In 1918, the Spanish influenza spread nationwide. By mid-October 1918, all public places in Washtenaw County where people would ordinarily gather were closed; the Michigan Union became a hospital; people wore masks if they went out; 115 people died of the flu in Ann Arbor. The first World War was just coming to an end in the fall of 1918 - men were starting to return home to an uncertain future, some finding that jobs they'd held before the war were no longer available to them.

By 1919, labor unrest took hold, with strikes in the steel, coal and railway industries, and other workplaces, though the economy appeared to improve. Prohibition against the liquor industry was ratified and would begin nationwide by January 1920. Americans disillusioned by President Woodrow Wilson's idealism and rigorous moral views longed for the "good old days" before the war. In 1921, Warren G. Harding became the next president - a weak leader with a corrupt administration.

As the 1920s unfolded, the economy boomed. It was the age of prosperity. Times were modern and better (or so it seemed until the 1929 crash). People reacted to the constraints of years just prior to the '20s by having a good time. They saw Clara Bow and Rudolph Valentino in the movies; they read about Lindbergh's 1927 trans-Atlantic flight; they heard Bing Crosby, Bessie Smith and Paul Whiteman on the radio; they went to baseball and football games. They drove more and more miles in their automobiles. Half the entire

U.S. population went to movies weekly. Speakeasies, where trusted customers could order a drink, opened nationwide, circumventing Prohibition.

In an increasingly youth-oriented 1920s society, young women dubbed "Flappers" pushed their boundaries well beyond previous generations. They wore shorter skirts; they danced, drank and smoked in public. They wanted to have fun, and to express their rights to make choices and to engage in material self-indulgence as consumers.

The 1920s proved a time of enormous growth in Washtenaw County. The county's population rose from 49,000 at the outset of the '20s to more than 65,000 by decade's end. And the county grew more diversified; the African American population in Ann Arbor grew by 62 percent.

The University of Michigan student population grew significantly - from around 6,200 in 1916 to an estimated 10,200 by the fall of 1926. The student population at what is today known as Eastern Michigan University rose from 2,800 pre-war to 4,000 in 1925.

As the area population grew, so, too, did businesses. The number of restaurants in Ann Arbor nearly doubled between 1920 and 1925. Retail and manufacturing business also grew considerably.

The 1920s saw major building growth. At U of M, landmarks including Michigan Stadium, Clements Library, Angell Hall, the Michigan League and the University of Michigan hospital complex were built during the decade. In Ann Arbor, the First National Building went up and in Ypsilanti, the Huron Hotel was built.

Around Ann Arbor, Angell, Jones and Mack schools were built during the 1920s; St. Thomas opened a new school facility; St. Joseph's Mercy Hospital, at its central Ann Arbor site, built a major addition in the 1920s.

And in everyday life in the 1920s, Washtenaw County residents found themselves enjoying more modern conveniences and appliances. And they were having more fun. They swam in the Huron River; they danced at Drake's Sandwich Shop; they saw movies at the Michigan Theater, the Wuerth Theater and



others; they enjoyed malts at the soda fountain; and some drank alcohol in speakeasies or in "Turkish coffeehouses."

This exhibition came together with the help of many people and institutions in the Washtenaw County community. We'd like to thank the following: Gail Dougherty, of Ann Arbor, who sparked the idea when she suggested displaying some of her aunt's dresses; Nina Rackham, of the Dexter Area Museum; Virginia Davis Brown, of the Ypsilanti Historical Museum and Archives; Tim Shannon, owner of Wilkinson's Luggage Shop; Dr. Wayne Colquitt, D.D.S.; Jeff Rowe, of the Michigan Union; Judy Chrisman, Roy Reynolds, Pauline Walters, Ann DeFreytas, Ralph Beebe — all Washtenaw County Historical Society board members — for their help and support. Lisa Klionsky, exhibit curator, and Alice Cerniglia, museum director, planned, researched and installed the exhibit.



**Flapper era dresses and beaded bags**

Dresses on loan from Gail Dougherty of Ann Arbor

*Photo by Judy Chrisman*



**Case contains items from Drakes's Sandwich Shop and other artifacts from WCHS collection**

Dress on loan from Dexter Area Historical Society

*Photo by Judy Chrisman*

## Donations For The Garden

**Patty Creal is watering the boxwoods in the museum garden. Three of the bushes replace those that did not survive the winter. They were donated by Nature's Garden Center, Saline along with three bags of mulch.**

**We wish to thank Steve Sclater – owner.  
Photo by Judith Chrisman**



## Wander Washtenaw Passport To History

We are again participating with the Washtenaw County Historical Consortium which is sponsoring a year-long project, Passport to History, designed to encourage people, especially schoolchildren, to visit the county's many wonderful historical attractions. The project runs from July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007. Participants pick up a passport and brochure at any participating site. The passport is signed by a tour guide at each site that is visited. Those who visit twelve or more places will receive a small gift after sending in the signed passport. Those that visit fifteen or more sites will be eligible for a drawing that will be held at Parker Mill on Huron River Day, Sunday, July 8, 2007. Three entries will be drawn and each of the three will receive a \$50 certificate valid at any participating museum shop. The Consortium is encouraging teachers and parents to use this project to help educate children of all ages about our rich heritage and help them become familiar with the county's wide variety of historical resources. Contact the WCHS Museum on Main Street – email: [wchs-500@ameritech.net](mailto:wchs-500@ameritech.net) or phone 734-662-9092, or any participating organization for information.

## Join Us At Our Sunday Programs

**WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

General Meetings: September 2006 – May 2007

**Sunday, 9/17/06 • 2:00 PM**  
**THE DAVID BYRD CENTER**  
D Byrd Bldg, 3216 Lohr Rd • Ann Arbor

**Sunday, 10/15/06 • 2:00 PM**  
**THE GERMAN CONNECTION**  
Glacier Hills Retirement Community

**Sunday, 11/19/06 • 2:00 PM**  
**ANN ARBOR HISTORY IN SLIDES**  
Ypsilanti District Library

**Sunday, 2/18/07 • 2:00 PM**  
**ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSES**  
Cobblestone Farm Barn  
2871 Packard

**Sunday, 3/18/07 • 2:00 PM**  
**CARNEGIE LIBRARY PROJECTS**  
Ann Arbor District Library

**Sunday, 4/15/07 • 2:00 PM**  
**DIXBORO UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
Dixboro United Methodist Church



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WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY *IMPRESSIONS*

MAY • SEPTEMBER 2006

## Upcoming Exhibitions

**The Flapper Era & Modern Times: 1920's Washtenaw County**  
June 28 • September 10, 2006

**100 Years of Psychiatry at U of Michigan**  
September 27 • November 15, 2006

**Christmas Lights, Ornaments & Trees**  
*1905-1910, 1910-1920, 1920-1930*  
December 2, 2006 • January 17, 2007

**One-Room School Houses**  
February 7 • May 30, 2007

**The Kitchen**  
June 16 • September 23, 2007

**Winter Holiday**  
October 17, 2007 • January 9, 2008



## 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.*