

MUSEUM ON  
MAIN STREET



A Museum Of County Life

## WHAT'S INSIDE

Browsing Books  
 Holiday Memories  
 Membership News  
 New Storm Windows  
 President's Letter  
 Riding the Rails  
 Upcoming Events  
 Volunteers Needed  
 Way Back When

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The Washtenaw County Historical Society is a 501(C)(3) organization. Annual Dues, which are from January through December are:  
 Individual: \$15; Couple/Family: \$25; Student or Senior (60+) \$10; Senior Couple: \$19; Business/Association: \$50; Patron: \$100.

# IMPRESSIONS

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER • FOUNDED 1857

## New Exhibit Debuts at MoMS

*Use it or Lose it: Historic Preservation in Washtenaw County* opens Saturday, March 6, at the Museum on Main Street. It includes the fascinating history of preserved and lost buildings from around the county, characteristics of architectural styles, and tips on dating buildings. The exhibit, which runs through June 20, coincides with Historic Preservation Week and the annual meeting of the Michigan Preservation Network, to be held in Ann Arbor in May.

Sharon Mills in Sharon Township has seen various uses for nearly 150 years. Built as a gristmill\* in the 1850s by John Rice, it was converted into a plant for Henry Ford's Village Industries concept during the 1930s. After Ford Motor Company abandoned the concept in the 1940s, the property was sold to a couple who used it for their residence. The property was sold again to a long-time owner who lived in the mill and operated an antique business there with former Governor John Swainson. Eventually the owner's sons purchased the property and opened a winery. In 2000, the property was purchased by the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission and converted into a park, small museum and banquet facility. The property underwent significant rehabilitation and restoration back to its 1930s appearance, reflecting the Ford era.

One of the most significant artifacts preserved on the property is the 1930s hydroelectric generator, which supplied power to the Village Industry plant. Smaller artifacts in the museum include cigarette lighters from Ford's era, brochures from the winery and photographs from several owners.

Washtenaw County Parks is fortunate to have substantial documentation of the property. Descendants of former mill owners have donated photographs, a millstone and a desk from the milling era. Additionally, Ford Motor Company has significant photographic documentation of work done to convert the property into a manufacturing plant.

\*A gristmill or grist mill is a building in which grain is ground into flour, or the grinding mechanism itself. In many countries these are referred to as corn mills or flour mills. (Wikipedia)



Sharon Mills Gristmill is located at 5701 Sharon Hollow Road in Sharon Township. It is open for tours on select Sundays in summer and fall. For more information visit: [parks.ewashtenaw.org](http://parks.ewashtenaw.org).

**WASHTENAW  
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SOCIETY  
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**LESLIE LOOMANS****President's Letter**

It is a new year and although our strategic plan is not finished, the board has made very good progress with almost all of our objectives and has numerous goals in place. In most cases a committee or a specific board member champions each objective and its related goals and plans.

While all of our objectives rank pretty equally in importance, I wanted to mention in particular one that relates directly to the word "educate" in the WCHS Mission Statement. (See P. 6.) Our board member, Michelle McClellan, PhD, has taken responsibility for the plan's education objectives and goals. An outline of the objectives follows:

1. In three to five years Washtenaw County Historical Society (WCHS) will be an integral part of the museum studies program at the University of Michigan. (Students will visit the museum as part of their course work; WCHS will have one intern and two student projects per academic year.) A similar objective could be articulated for Eastern Michigan University's program in historic preservation.
2. In five years, WCHS will be an integral part of the teaching of history in Washtenaw County K-12 schools, with a clearly presented curriculum unit that is linked to curriculum standards for both elementary and high schools.

Corresponding goals set out initial steps this year to move toward meeting the objectives in three to five years.

In one sense our strategic plan will never be finished. Too many organizations have made the mistake of finishing a plan, putting it on the shelf and about five years later taking it off the shelf with little accomplished. To avoid that, our board will spend a portion of each meeting reviewing or revising our plan and annually, will measure our progress toward achieving goals and objectives.

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## Volunteers Needed for Scanning

Volunteers are needed at the Museum on Main Street to scan issues of *Impressions* published from 1943-1984. Minimal computer experience is required. Volunteers will receive a short training class. We would appreciate a commitment of one to two hours per week through the winter, during the days MoMS is open. Specific hours are flexible. Contact Jan Tripp, at 734-996-8079, or e-mail [Jan\\_Tripp@comcast.net](mailto:Jan_Tripp@comcast.net).

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## New Storm Windows are Up!!!

The new storm windows at the museum are installed and we anticipate that they will provide a good buffer against the winter winds and summer sun. We already feel the difference! The traffic sounds are muffled and it is much cozier.

We have received some 100 contributions from generous friends totaling nearly \$5,000 and we need \$2,000 more to meet our goal. It is not too late to add your help. Each gift is important and much appreciated.

Thank you for helping us with this project.

# Enjoying the Holidays at MoMS

A trip to the Museum on Main Street to see the annual holiday exhibit has become a mainstay of the holidays for many Michigan residents, particularly those in Washtenaw County. They came to experience the



festive atmosphere and to see the nearly

100 dolls provided for the exhibit by the Ann Arbor Doll Collectors, a dollhouse with all the trimmings and a model train set up by the Ann Arbor Model Railroad Club.



# Membership 2010

## What Does Your Mailing Label Tell You?

Enclosed in this newsletter is information about Washtenaw County Historical Society membership dues for January 1 through December 2010. To determine whether you need to renew, please refer to the label on the mailer section of the newsletter.

If the line above your name reads: 20xx / Member 20xx, this indicates the most recent years you were a donor and/or a member.

Dues from NEW members received after September are recorded as members for the next 15 months. For those of you who have sent in your dues for 2010 ahead of this mailing, we suggest and would appreciate it if you would pass on the remit envelope to a prospective new member or give a membership in WCHS to a friend or relative.

Like other volunteer organizations, we want to increase our membership and especially welcome younger folks who would enjoy carrying on the work and purpose of our Society.

## WAY BACK WHEN • FROM THE ZIEGLER FILES

# A Mini Museum at Lurie Terrace?

Lurie Terrace, at 600 West Huron, turned 45 this year and was featured on the Old West Side Homes Tour. A letter is in the Zeigler Files from Shata Ling, a woman who devoted her life to creating Lurie Terrace as an affordable group residence for active seniors, to Mrs. Groomes, Washtenaw County Historical Society secretary and former president. Ling and James Livingstone, an architect, worked together to make sure that every apartment had a wonderful view. When it opened in 1964, Lurie Terrace was a prototype of this type of housing and was named after Ling's mother, Anna Lurie, who her daughter believed had deteriorated due to the lack of senior services.

Ling's letter is dated 1962, just when her idea was taking shape. "You realize that Lurie Terrace will be built on one of the most historical sites in this area," she says, referring to the Lorin Mills Home, which later belonged to the Atwell and Rohde families.

Ling's letter went on to say that she and local historian Lela Duff were working on preserving some of the past and creating a time capsule. The time capsule was to be opened in 2062 and read by the governor of Michigan.

"My real dream for the Historical Society is to have one of the gathering rooms in the building where they can keep up a permanent exhibit...one month clothes, another toys of a by-gone era," she says in her letter. Ling suggested meeting with Mrs. Groomes to discuss a plan to have Lurie Terrace "span the centuries, and give older people a sense of history and the younger ones knowledge of how we achieved what we have." This never came about and the WCHS was forced to continue to look for places to exhibit its large collection of materials, until the Museum on Main Street opened in 1999.



The Loren Mills home, at 600 W. Huron, was demolished to make room for Lurie Terrace. An old photograph from the Rohde family shows the house in two of its guises. It was built almost exactly 100 years before it was demolished.

## Browsing A Sampling of Books for Sale in the Museum Gift Shop

**The Ann Arbor Railroad**  
By D.C. Jesse Burkhardt  
128 pages, \$16

**Electric Trolleys of  
Washtenaw County**  
By H. Mark Hilderandt &  
Martha A. Churchill  
128 pages, \$16

**Argomania: A Look at  
Argus Cameras and the  
Company that Made Them**  
By Henty J. Gambino  
222 pages, \$32

**View of a Universe: A  
Love Story of Ann Arbor at  
Middle Age**  
By Milo Ryan  
211 pages, \$8

**Lost Ann Arbor**  
Photos of buildings that have  
been demolished  
By Susan Cee Wineberg  
128 pages, \$16

**Our Heritage: Down by  
the Depot in Ypsilanti –  
Volume One**  
By Tom Dodd and James  
Thomas Mann  
174 pages, \$16

**Jewish Ann Arbor**  
By Richard and Ruth Adler  
128 pages, \$16

**Ann Arbor's First Lady:  
Events in the Life of Ann L.  
Allen**  
By Russell Bidlack  
118 pages, \$5

**Ann Arbor Observed  
Compilation of Ann Arbor  
Observer articles**  
By Grace Shackman  
271 pages, \$16

**The Indians of  
Washtenaw County,  
Michigan**  
68 pages, \$6

**Another Ann Arbor**  
By Carol Gibson and Lola M.  
Jones  
128 pages, \$16

**The Family of Geddes  
to the 21st Century**  
By Hannah Geddes Wright  
132 pages, \$20

## Riding the Rails on the A<sup>2</sup>RR



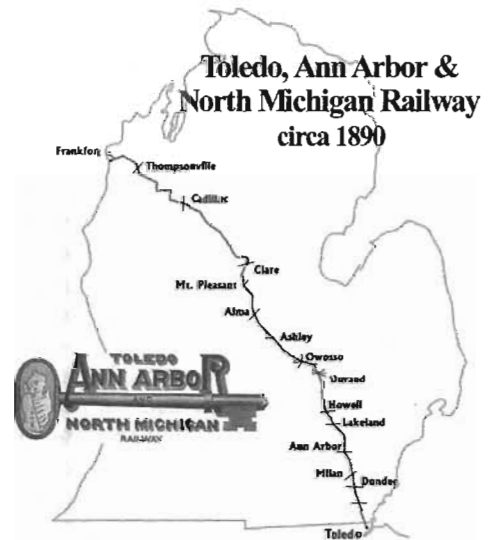
The original line to Owosso crossed the Grand Trunk at Lakeland, near where the Zukey Lake Tavern is now. A shorter, more direct, line from Ann Arbor to Lakeland was built later and the entire branch to South Lyon was removed. (C.F. Stoner Collection at the Bentley Historical Library)

Those lucky enough to attend the Washtenaw County Historical Society lecture on November 15 enjoyed a colorful and fascinating ride through the history of the Ann Arbor Railroad. Tour guides Dave Harrell and Don Maddock, from the Ann Arbor Railroad Technical and Historical Association, traced the history of the Ann Arbor Railroad from 1855 to the present day.

"It was first envisioned by the citizens of Ann Arbor as they felt the shipping prices charged by the Michigan Central Railroad, which had a monopoly on railroading at the time," said Harrell. "Their thinking was to head south, to the railroading hub of Toledo. Many conversations and agreements later, in November of 1869, the Toledo, Ann Arbor and Northern RR was organized. Efforts to secure right of way proceeded and grading for the ties and rails started in 1872."

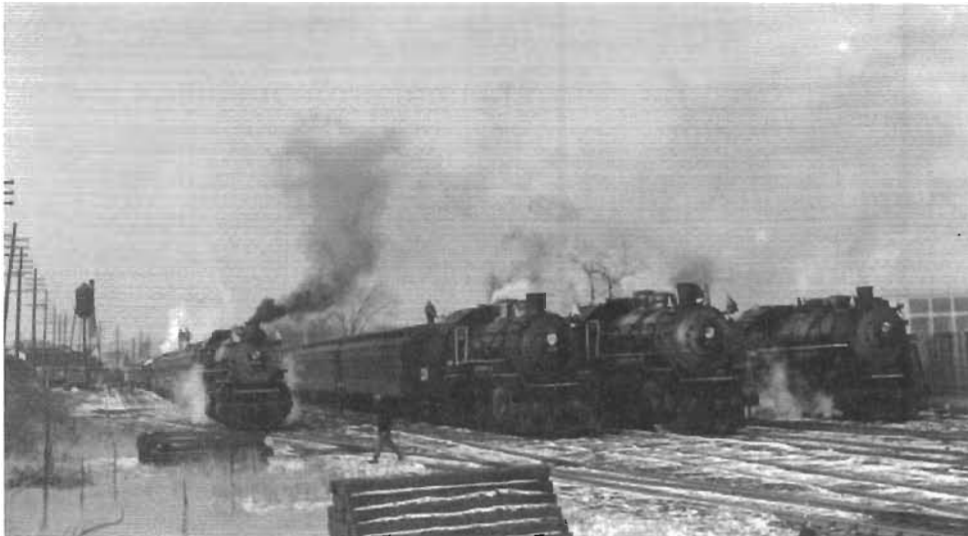
Harrell and Maddock continued the saga of the "Annie" (Ann Arbor Railroad) through its legal, corporate and financial struggles and changes in ownership, names and car colors. After declaring bankruptcy in 1973, the Annie became one of the seven northeastern railroads covered by the Railroad Revitalization and Regulatory Reform Act of 1976. The portion of the Ann Arbor Rail system that remains today, between Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Toledo, Ohio, was included in the final system plan that created Conrail.

"Ann Arbor still sees locomotives from the Ann Arbor Railroad, in either orange or in yellow and gray, every weekday, bringing freight from its interchange with the Great Lakes Central at Osmer and taking it south to Toledo for

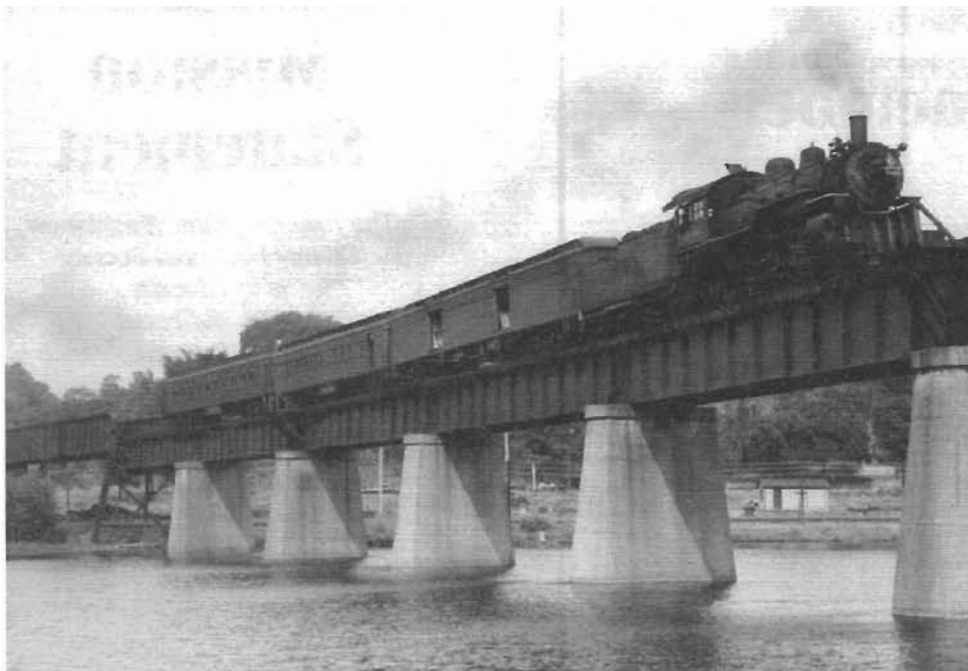


The Toledo, Ann Arbor & North Michigan Railway eventually extended beyond Owosso to Mount Pleasant and Clare and then northwest to Frankfort. It also had a spur to "South Frankfort, which later renamed itself Elberta. (Don Maddock)

interchange with all of the major railroads," said Harrell. "In addition, the Annie delivers an occasional car of lumber to the Fingerle site, and services the Ford Plant in Saline every day. The interchange between the Annie and what was formerly the Michigan Central, and now is Norfolk Southern, has been closed for many years, although the rail is still in place, buried under asphalt on north Main Street. There are no other customers near Ann Arbor, but there are some south of Dundee. The Annie also switches an almost new Jeep plant in Toledo, moving many carloads of automobiles each day for transfer to the major railroads in the area. That source of revenue keeps the Annie profitable."



The Ann Arbor RR began running "football specials" into AA in 1902 with a train from Owosso to Ann Arbor. The number of such trains expanded quickly and other railroads would also bring trains into Ferry Yard next to the football stadium. (Cook photo from the Allen County (Ohio) Museum)



The current bridge carrying trains over the Huron River is the third to be built. According to Harrell and Maddock, it is an unusual bridge that must climb in altitude while curving. The first bridge, built in 1880, was made of wood and did not allow for the increasing traffic. A new steel bridge was built in 1892, which collapsed under railcars in 1904. The current bridge was built later that year. (Cook photo from the Allen County (Ohio) Museum)

## Upcoming Events

### Kempf House Museum

**What:** Valentine Teas  
**When:** Saturday, Feb. 13; Sunday, Feb. 14  
**Details:** Reservations required, Members: \$20; Non-Members: \$25  
**Where:** Kempf House Museum, 312 South Division, Ann Arbor  
**Information:** 734-274-0528

### Saline Area Historical Society

**What:** Education Lecture; Electric Trolley and Old Maude Speaker, Martha Churchill  
**Details:** Free and open to the public  
**When:** Sunday, February 21, 2-3:30 pm  
**Where:** Saline District Library, Brecon Room 555 N. Maple Road, Saline, between Michigan Ave., and Woodland Drive  
**Information:** 734-944-0442

### Genealogical Society of Washtenaw County

**What:** Sourcing: Now How do I do That?  
 Speaker, Diane Oslund  
**Beginning Class:** Court Records  
**Speaker:** Bobbie Snow and Martha Churchill  
**When:** Sunday, February 28, 2010, 1:30 pm  
**Where:** St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center  
**Details:** Free and open to the public  
**Information:** <http://www.hvcn.org/info/gswc/>

### Cobblestone Farm Association

**What:** Annual Barn Dance  
**When:** Saturday, March 13, 2010, 7-10 pm  
**Where:** Cobblestone Farm Barn  
**Information:** 734-794-6230



**WASHTENAW COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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Sunday • 2 PM  
February 21, 2010

Art Work of Washtenaw County, 1893  
Speaker: Wytan Stevens and  
Kingsbury Marzolf

Ann Arbor District Library  
343 S. Fifth Avenue  
Ann Arbor, MI

Members & Guests Welcome

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY *IMPRESSIONS*

FEBRUARY 2010

## Make Note Dates to Remember

Sunday • March 21, 2010  
The Restoration of 1526 Pontiac Trail  
Ypsilanti District Library  
5577 Whittaker Road  
Ypsilanti, MI

Sunday • April 18, 2010  
Ninety Years – Lake Michigan Crossings  
Traverwood Library  
3333 Traverwood Dr.  
Ann Arbor, MI

May • 2010  
WCHS Annual Meeting  
Watch for details in future *Impressions*

## Mission Statement

*The mission of the Washtenaw  
County Historical Society  
is to educate  
and inspire our community  
to engage in the preservation  
and presentation of area history.*