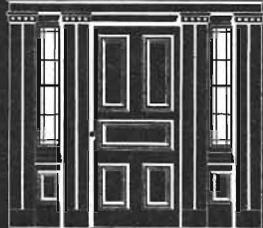


MUSEUM ON  
MAIN STREET



A Museum Of County Life

## WHAT'S INSIDE

An Old House Restored

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Way Back When

*Impressions* is published seven times a year, from September to May

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[www.WashtenawHistory.org](http://www.WashtenawHistory.org)

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

## Take a Stroll Through History

In conjunction with the current exhibition, *Use it or Lose it: Historic Preservation in Washtenaw County*, WCHS and Washtenaw Wanderers will be holding a 10K walk on Sunday, May 16. WCHS members Susan Nenadic and Grace Shackman designed the walk, which features 36 historic sites in Ann Arbor. "We will cross our fingers for a beautiful spring day, but history happens - rain or shine," says Nenadic.

The Washtenaw Wanderers Volkssporting (Walking) Club has been hosting organized walking events in Washtenaw County and Southeast Michigan since 2005. These events are free, family-friendly, non-competitive and open to all members of the general public, regardless of age or ability.

"The Washtenaw Wanderers are excited to collaborate with the Washtenaw County Historical Society in offering the May 16 event," says Stefan Szumko of the Wanderers. "The walk starts any time between the hours of 10am-1pm, with free parking available at the Ann/Ashley Parking Structure. Maps will be available at the museum plus a narrative (downloadable to your personal listening device) of the historical locations and people who have lived in this town. The route takes walkers to Kerrytown, UM Central Campus, Downtown Ann Arbor, the Old West Side, and Lowertown.

In addition to the 10K walk there will be a shortened 5 K version especially suitable for families with children. The short version will cover the Old Fourth Ward, Kerrytown and Lowertown. For more information, visit [www.ava.org](http://www.ava.org), or [www.washtenaw-wanderers.blogspot.com](http://www.washtenaw-wanderers.blogspot.com)

***Use it or Lose it: Historic Preservation in Washtenaw County*** continues until June 20. It includes stories, photos and items from lost, threatened and preserved buildings throughout the county. Most of the churches, homes, schools, farms and businesses date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century edifices, such as the Ann Arbor home designed by Frank L. Wright, are included because of their unique historic value. The museum is open Saturdays and Sundays and by appointment. Call 734-662-9092.



Cub Scout Pack # 160 from Thurston Elementary School visits MoMS

**WASHTENAW  
COUNTY  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY  
LEADERSHIP**
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**LESLIE LOOMANS****President's Letter**

As a not-for-profit organization matures, board members yearn for the day when paid staff can take over some workload. Our board members currently do the vast majority of the work of running the Society and operating the Museum on Main Street, with several undertaking multiple tasks. We are fortunate to have at least a handful of volunteers who handle certain tasks but could use many more volunteers to serve on committees along with board members. Opportunities are available with the education, membership, fundraising, exhibits, publications, and publicity/communications committees, just to name a few. With more volunteers and paid staff in place board members could devote themselves more fully to those tasks intended for boards, such as executing the mission, planning, development, oversight, etc.

Recently five members of our board met for a morning and simply listed tasks and organized them in three columns: 1) those we now pay for such as snow removal, external painting, docenting, etc.; 2) those performed by board members and volunteers such as membership, exhibits, collections, investment oversight, lawn mowing, etc.; 3) those we wish were being performed such as grant writing, research, volunteer coordination, etc. Paid staff could perform tasks from column 3, relieve board members of some tasks in column 2 and perhaps even perform some column 1 tasks, which would reduce expense and help fund the staff position.

The board has established an objective of having 1.5 paid staff positions within three to five years with a goal of one part-time position yet this year. Obviously ongoing funding for these positions will depend on our Society's ability to grow membership and investments, maintain existing fundraising and attract new sources of fundraising.



## Spring Arrives at MoMS

The garden at the Museum on Main is showing promising signs of a glorious spring and summer to come. While the roots, seeds and bulbs have been taking the winter off, the Society's garden committee has been planning for the garden's growth and reminiscing about its history.

The original concept for the garden was designed by Peter Pollack in 1991. It was Scott Kunst who researched plants of the house's era and identified plants growing at its former location at 1015 Wall Street. A purple lilac and rose bush were saved from the Wall Street location and are thriving next to the front porch and on the south side of the Museum on Main.

Currently snow drops and crocus are blooming and a very fragrant quince holding forth by the back porch will blossom in May. Be sure to look for the heirloom daffodils. As the temperatures heat up, look around the garden for such surprises as snapdragons, columbine, lavender, clematis, dianthus, phlox and oriental poppies. Don't forget to notice the space between the sidewalk and the streets commonly called the "extension." There you will find colorful ground covers and low growing flowering plants.

Garden committee members and volunteers are Ann Defreytas, Sue Kosky, Judy Chrisman, Lillian Ferguson, Mary and Wayne Florida, Patty Creal and Greg DeFreytas. This "hands on" group appreciates additional help, information and donations from members as well as anyone else who might be interested in getting "down and dirty."

# House Restoration Reveals Local History

For Patrick McCauley, the WCHS March 21<sup>st</sup> speaker, working on old houses is second nature. His parents own a house-painting business and Patrick painted and was involved in their renovation projects from the time he was 10 years old. After graduating from the University of Michigan in 2000, he continued to work as a house painter while renovating his own residences – three since 2001. In 2006, McCauley bought the house at 1526 Pontiac Trail and with his future wife, Andrea, and older brother, Marcus, began to work on it.



1526 Pontiac Trail today

"The rumor was that the house was moved in 1946, the year the City of Ann Arbor Assessors Office had listed for 'year built,'" said McCauley. "We knew the house was a lot older than that and was most likely built before the Civil War. Years of deferred maintenance as well as its age had taken a toll on the structure. The front and side porches were rotted and sinking, and the wiring was old and unsafe. The kitchen was very dated, complete with 1960's green and gold Formica on the walls, and much of the plaster was beginning to cave in."

Additional problems included a termite infestation in the basement and a floor plan that made it necessary to walk through the bathroom to get to the staircase leading upstairs. All of this might have scared away the average homebuyer, laughed McCauley, adding that since he and Andrea were looking for an old house with lots of character and historic details intact, it was the perfect house for them.

Through photos and commentary, McCauley described for the audience the stages in the renovation. The first was to decide which of the historic details to save and which to change. He explained that any house as old as this one has many layers of historical change.

## The Renovation of 1526 Pontiac Trail

"Some of the details are worth preserving while others, because of the quality of the workmanship or the appropriateness of the changes within the context of what the house originally looked like, are not," explained McCauley. The first decision was to remove the cedar shingles on the outside of the house to expose the original clapboards. Although the shingles dated to the 1920s or 1930s, making them historic features, they were poorly done. The original clapboards, in great shape since they had been covered for 70 to 80 years, were underneath the shingles. This part of the renovation revealed interesting clues as to how the house had changed over the years.

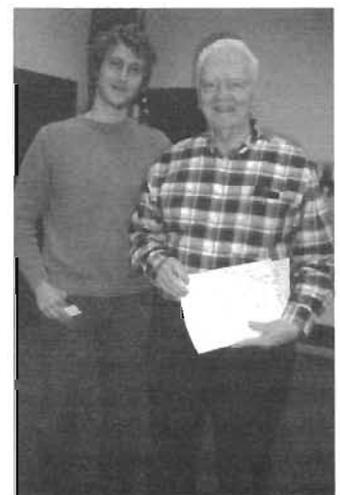
"The kitchen wing was moved from the north side of the house to the east side of the house," said McCauley. "And the positions of the front door and the front lower window were moved as well. All of this appeared to have happened when the shingles were put on the house."



The second resident of McCauley's house was Charles H. Richmond.

McCauley moved into the house in February of 2007, after six months of demolition, plumbing, painting, wiring, patching and sanding to make it livable. Andrea moved in that July and on November 7, 2009, Patrick and Andrea were married in their new home.

While finishing up the renovation work, McCauley began devoting his time to examining deed books, local histories, wills, genealogies, tax records and the Internet to construct the stories of the people who



Patrick McCauley, left, discusses his lecture with WCHS VP Ralph P. Beebe.

had once lived in the house.

Among local historians who helped him in his research, McCauley credits WCHS board member Susan Wineberg, who shared with him her knowledge and collection of historical documents. To learn the date the house was built, McCauley used dendro-chronology, the study of tree rings.

A University of Tennessee team compared undated white oak sub-flooring samples to a known white oak chronology from a tree at Cranbrook Academy in Bloomfield Hills. They learned that the samples germinated in 1720, 1725, 1727 and 1738, and all four samples were cut down in 1845. Since it was common practice in the early- to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, to use wood milled within a year of being cut down, the house was dated at 1845. McCauley added that 1526 Pontiac Trail might be the first house in Washtenaw County and one of the first private residences in the state to be dated in this way.

**Who Lived at 1526 Pontiac Trail?**

McCauley’s detective work has led to the documentation of fascinating details about the people who lived in the house before he and Andrea moved in. He also learned much of the “who, what, where and when” related to the construction details.



Old kitchen wing



Kitchen Wing in back today

The builder and first residents of the house were Jonathan Lund and his wife Almy (Richmond) Lund. They had purchased 28 acres of land between Pontiac Trail and Traver Road for \$2,000 in 1845. McCauley described the house the Lunds built as timber-framed, with massive oak posts and beams, and oak studs and braces – a type of construction known as “braced frame.” He said the corner posts on the interior of the house are its most striking construction feature.

“A remnant of Colonial Era building techniques, exposed corner posts are only found in some of Ann Arbor’s earliest buildings,” said McCauley. “By the 1830s and 40s, corner posts were almost always hidden in timber-framed buildings, usually by building at least one wall that met each post as thick as the post itself. While these building methods would have been obsolete in most stylish homes and city residences built in 1845, it appears that more traditional building techniques continued to be used.”

The Lund family lived in the house for only two years before building a larger Greek revival home at the south end of the property. This house, at 1324 Pontiac Trail, is considered one of the finest historic houses in Ann Arbor.

The next residents of McCauley’s house were Charles H. Richmond, his wife Amy White Howland Richmond, her brother, Philip Henry Howland and a boarder, David Ransom, who was a farmer. Charles and Amy had come from their home in New Bedford, Mass, to help Almy Lund after Jonathan’s death. While McCauley was renovating the house, he discovered the initial P.H.H. on a board that was nailed up to a level off a floor joist in the basement. After doing the historical research, McCauley surmised that these were the initials of Philip Henry Howland. The Richmonds made many of the changes to the house, possibly in 1861, said McCauley.

Charles Richmond prospered in Ann Arbor and according to McCauley, was the most prominent person to live in the house. He was the president of First National Bank of Ann Arbor and was a Washtenaw County delegate to the State of Michigan’s Second Constitu-

tional Convention. In 1880 he served as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in Cincinnati and in 1882, was elected to the Michigan State Senate from Washtenaw County’s 4<sup>th</sup> District. Among other interests, Richmond served on the Committee of Religious and Benevolent Societies and was chairman of the State Prison Committee. He also helped organize the Golden Rule Lodge and



Johann George and Catherina Spathelf

Commandary Knights Templar, which were Masonic organizations. In one of his last public duties, Richmond was appointed commissioner from Michigan to the Chicago Worlds Fair.

The Lunds, Richmonds and Howlands left Pontiac Trail in 1863, when Almy Lund sold the farm and its two houses to Eliza Black for \$6,500. She and her husband, Alfred H. Partridge, mayor of Ann Arbor from 1869 to 1870, did more to change the 28 acres than anybody, according to McCauley.

She began by having the land platted for a subdivision in 1866. The subdivision contained six blocks with a total of 87 lots. In 1867, the land was annexed from Ann Arbor Township, becoming Eliza Partridge's Addition in the City of Ann Arbor. The streets of Plum (now John A. Woods St.), Pear, Apple and Peach were named for the fruit trees growing on the property. The first lots were sold in 1867, most for \$100. An exception was Lot 5 of Block 2, which Partridge sold to George Spathelf in 1869 for \$1,000. This is the lot where 1526 Pontiac Trail stands today.

"Evidence suggests that some buildings on Eliza Partridge's Addition existed before the first sale of the lots, and may have been moved from the Lund Farm by the Partridges between 1866 and 1869," explained McCauley. "This includes the 1845 Lund-Spathelf house at 1526 Pontiac Trail. The 1866 Panoramic Map of the City of Ann Arbor does not show any buildings on the land that became Eliza Partridge's Addition, but shows five outbuildings directly behind the 1847 Lund House at 1324 Pontiac Trail. The 1869 S. Pettibone Map of the same area shows only two outbuildings directly behind the 1847 Lund House and a total of nine lots in Eliza Partridge's Addition containing buildings."

McCauley pointed out that four of these nine buildings existed on their lots before their initial sale by Eliza Partridge. Except for finding Philip H. Howland's initials in the basement, what happened to three of the five outbuildings behind the 1847 Lund House in the period between 1866 and 1869 would be a complete mystery. The initials established a connection between Howland and the Lund family and pointed to the fact that at least one of the three missing buildings was 1526 Pontiac Trail and that Eliza Partridge had them moved between 1866 and 1869 to increase the value of the lots.

George and Catherine Spathelf lived in the house from 1869 to 1908. They were followed by Alfred J. Cook, a carpenter, and his wife, Elizabeth, who lived in the house from 1908 to 1916. Henry Z. Petrie owned the house from 1916 to



Revealing initials in basement

1979, longer than any of the previous owners, and made many changes. After the death of Henry Petrie, his son and daughter-in-law, Harold and Ida Marie Petrie, rented the house out. The last of these tenants were Burton and Thelma Crawford, who lived in the house from 1953 to 2006. In 1979, they purchased it for \$10,000. They made many changes that included concrete work, a new kitchen, and new

windows. Burton Crawford died in 1993 and Thelma continued to live on Pontiac Trail for the next 12 years by herself, with her children helping to maintain the house and its grounds. When it was no longer possible for her to live on her own, Thelma sold the house to McCauley. At age 94, she currently lives with her son Robert on the east side of Ann Arbor.

"Other than perhaps Charles H. Richmond, nobody politically powerful, extremely wealthy or particularly famous lived in the Lund-Spathelf House at 1526 Pontiac Trail," said McCauley in concluding his talk. "Fifteen Twenty Six Pontiac Trail very much represents a typical house built in early to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Michigan, and the stories of the people that lived in the house are very typical of the people who lived in Michigan from the 1840s through the present.

Every year, people tear down houses similar to the Lund-Spathelf House, in age, history, architecture and condition. Despite the interest of many in historic preservation, this trend does not look like it will end anytime soon. Much is lost when these "common" yet historic houses are torn down. Not only does the community lose a piece of its history and part of the character of its built environment, it also loses the stories and the context of the lives of the everyday people that lived in them."



Removing the shingles

# Off the Shelf

## Good Reading: 'Down by the Depot in Ypsilanti'

A mixture of factual history and barroom humor, this first volume by Tom Dodd and James Thomas Mann offers tidbits from the *Depot Town Rag*, *The Ann Arbor Daily Times*, *The Ypsilantian* and other area news sources including observations from those who lived or witnessed the history of this intriguing part of Washtenaw County.

You can find it all in "Down by the Depot in Ypsilanti." Want to know about bars and grills then and now? It's there. Or the 10 stages of intoxication? It's there, too. How about gambling on horses? An article on Warren Lewis and his Horse Exchange tells the story. Hotels in Ypsilanti through the years contribute their colorful histories. Trains, cars, gardens, the freight house and farmers' market, antique shops, architecture and personalities are contained in this fascinating and entertaining publication available at the Museum on Main Street for \$25.

From this delightful source of facts and fun one can even learn to interpret the whistle signals of the trains that pass through the area. And for your further edification of strange facts to use at parties and business meetings there is a list of 372 documented spellings of "Ypsilanti" that have found their way through the Ypsilanti Post office.

# Way Back When

## Houses of Steel

To meet the post World War II demand for quick and inexpensive housing, Carl Gunnard Strandlund accepted a federal loan, adapted the Curtis Wright airplane factory in Columbus, Ohio, to his specifications, and began manufacturing houses made entirely of enameled steel. Some 2,500 of these "Lustron" houses were built across the United States, with seven in Washtenaw County.



An Ann Arbor Lustron house

Neil Staebler, an Ann Arbor car dealer, heard of the houses while working in Washington for the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) and considered the design worthy of establishing a franchise in his home town. He planned to erect and sell 10 houses. The 3,300 parts (weighing 10 tons) for the first house arrived by truck from Columbus, Ohio, on April 5, 1949.

### Lustron House Details:

Price .....	\$7 to \$9,000
Bedrooms .....	2
Bathrooms .....	1
Sq. Ft. ....	1,000
Foundation .....	Concrete slab
Windows .....	Aluminum frames
Construction .....	Porcelain-coated panels (double walls)
Roof .....	Overlapping enameled steel plates embossed to resemble Spanish tiles
Heating .....	Radiant heat/forced air
Exterior .....	Beige, gold, green, or cream, all trimmed in white
Misc. ....	Kitchen appliance that washed both dishes and clothes
Building Time .....	Three local carpenters were able to erect a Lustron home in less than a week.

By June, 36 Ann Arbor property owners signed a petition complaining about the steel structures and presented it to Mayor Cecil Creal and members of the Ann Arbor City Council. The petition cited that the buildings did not meet Ann Arbor codes. However after inspection by the city building inspector, the announcement was made that the Lustron house "fulfilled all the city building code requirements," with the exception of the provisions on the thickness of the roof metal, which had been waived by the board of appeals. Not giving up, the petitioners waged war against the houses until November, when the city council passed an ordinance giving the final OK to existing and proposed Lustron houses.

In the meantime, Carl Gunnard Strandlund was running into difficulties. He was unable to manufacture houses in large enough quantities to offset his initial

costs and there were problems with franchisers and accusations of illegal payoffs to key Washington players. In 1950 the loans were called in, foreclosure followed and the company's assets were auctioned off.

*Information courtesy of Mary Oliver and Grace Shackman*



Transporting Lustron materials

## People of Northfield Township Continue to Care For St. Pat's

In 1837, the Catholic families of Northfield Township built a frame church to replace a log structure built in 1831. The current brick structure that houses Old St. Patrick's Church cost parishioners \$10,000, with the corner stone laid in 1877. The church suffered heavy damage from the "great cyclone" of 1917. The roof was blown away. But repairs were made, the church was rebuilt and in the 1920s it was remodeled and painted and its infrastructure updated. A funnel cloud descended on the church in 1980 and once again the roof and steeple were damaged. And once again the church was repaired and restored and stands today as a symbol of the strength of the people of Northfield Township.



St. Pat's Church

## 1526 Pontiac Trail Photo Album



LEFT: New bathroom with added hallway. CENTER: Added hallway. RIGHT: Original bathroom.



## Upcoming Events

### Genealogical Society of Washtenaw County

The Genealogical Society of Washtenaw County meets monthly, September through May, usually the 4th Sunday of the month, at 1:30 p.m. Meetings are open to all. We welcome visitors and newcomers. A short business meeting will precede a talk given by an invited speaker. Following the talk will be a small social break with refreshments and next will be an informal class. For information, visit

[www.hvcn.org/info/gswc/](http://www.hvcn.org/info/gswc/)

**April 25, 2010:** Digging Your Canadian Roots-Kathryn Lake

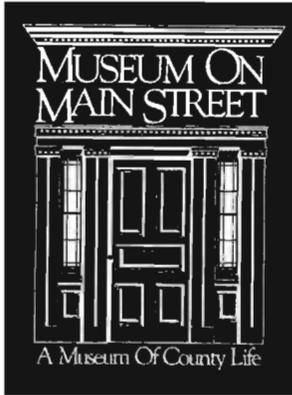
**Class:** How to Do Cemetery Readings-Rob and Cyndy Steward  
**May 23, 2010:** Genealogy and Murder-Virginia Hutcheson

**Class:** No Dumb Questions in Genealogy-Panel

### Kempf House Museum

Noon Lecture Series  
**Wednesday, April 22, Noon to 1 pm**  
Keith Matz, a self-described "advanced amateur enthusiast" will share his striking digital photos of the Galapagos Islands and Quito, Ecuador. Admission: \$2 (\$1 for members)

For information, call 734-994-4898



**WASHTENAW COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106-3336

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**ANNUAL MEETING**

**Wednesday • May 19, 2010**

**6:00 p.m. at the Kiwanis Center**

**200 S. First St., AA**

**Public parking across 1st Street**

**Pot luck supper**

**Election of 2010-11 officers**

**Bring a dish for eight to pass**

**Beverages and dinner ware supplied**

# Slate Nominated for 2010-11

**Officers ..... (2010-2011)**

- President ..... Leslie Loomans
- Vice President ..... Karen Jania
- Treasurer ..... Patricia Creal
- Recording Secretary ..... Judith Chrisman
- Corresponding Secretary ..... Pauline Walters

**Endowment Committee ..... (two-year term)**

David LaMoreaux

**Directors ..... (2010-2013)**

- Ralph Beebe
- Tom Freeman
- Joanne Nesbit
- Jan Tripp

## 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.*

## Correction

The *Way Back When* article in the March issue of *Impressions* incorrectly listed Gertrude E Woodard's death as 1906. The correct date of her death is 1966.