

Impressions

NEWSLETTER WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Who Built My House?

The Fall colors were just beginning to show in time for the start of our monthly program series on Sunday, September 19th. As the afternoon sunlight streamed through the exquisite stained glass windows of Bethel United Church of Christ in Manchester, Brian Williams presented a fascinating program on post World War II kit houses.

We learned about the history and construction of prefabricated houses, including his own 1947 Peaseway home, and a unique architectural detail that identifies them.

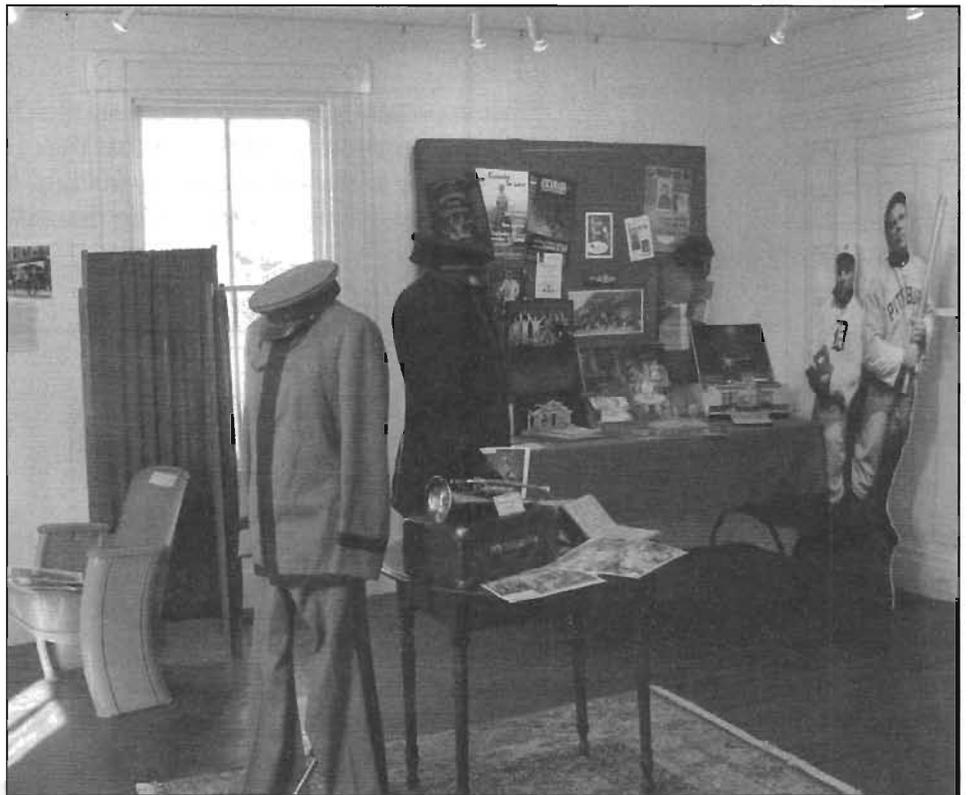
Many of these houses were built on concrete slabs, with the longer ends facing the street. This made them appear larger, added a front porch and increased the size of the backyard, a selling point for families.

When the housing inspector pointed out the stenciled joists on the home they were about to purchase, Brian and his wife Heidi were unsure about what that meant. (Continued on page 4)

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The Spotlight's on Chelsea!



The Museum on Main Street has a new exhibit showcasing Chelsea's industrial and cultural contributions to the region throughout the years. The exhibit is from The Chelsea Area Historical Society (CAHS) and runs through November 28.

"Our theme came from the idea that the city itself is transitioning from a once dominating industry community to one of the arts and other cultural pursuits" stated Janet Ogle-Mater, CAHS President.

Chelsea entertainment and arts are shown through the presentation of the Chelsea Comet Band, E. E. Shaver's photography, Joe Hale's Disney artistry, past theatre houses, and the Purple Rose Theatre Company. (Continued on page 3)

"We are honored to have the opportunity to uplift Chelsea's history and reveal its prominent industries and arts to others outside of Chelsea."

*Janet Ogle-Mater,
CAHS President*

Our mission is to educate and inspire our community to engage in the preservation and presentation of area history

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Impressions is published seven times a year September through May by the Washtenaw County Historical Society, a non profit 501(c)(3) organization.

The President's Letter

Fall brings the beginning of school, cooler weather, changing of the leaves and a general speeding up from summer's pace. The Society began our monthly Sunday lecture programs in September and have a newly opened exhibit at the Museum on Main Street.

But like other corporations, businesses and non-profits such as ourselves we also must turn to planning for the next calendar year. While the Strategic Plan guides us over a longer five year period, specific plans for the coming year are necessary.

While almost no one wants to spend time creating a budget, it really is the driving force for what can be accomplished in the coming year. As with every organization, financial resources set limits on what can be achieved. Additionally, a budget keeps an organization from borrowing resources from future periods for the current period.

Most importantly, as we continuously seek funding, the board of directors must assure our members and donors that their membership dues and contributions are carefully preserved and wisely utilized. Having a plan, including an annual budget, goes a long way to provide that assurance. Our process is underway.

LESLIE LOOMANS

October Updates

Beverly Willis is the new Washtenaw County Historical Society administrator and newsletter editor. She is a University of Michigan graduate and long-time Ann Arbor resident, working in graphic design and history related projects.

We want to hear your ideas and opinion about *Impressions*. If you have ideas for articles, stories you have written or would like to write, contact Beverly at the Museum on Main Street: 734- 662-9092 e-mail: wchs-1000@ameritech.net.

Check out the WCHS website If you are interested in local history, begin your search with our website. Thanks to the updates, uploads and design of board member Jan Tripp, you can view 1943-2009 issues of *Impressions* on-line and much more. www.WashtenawHistory.org

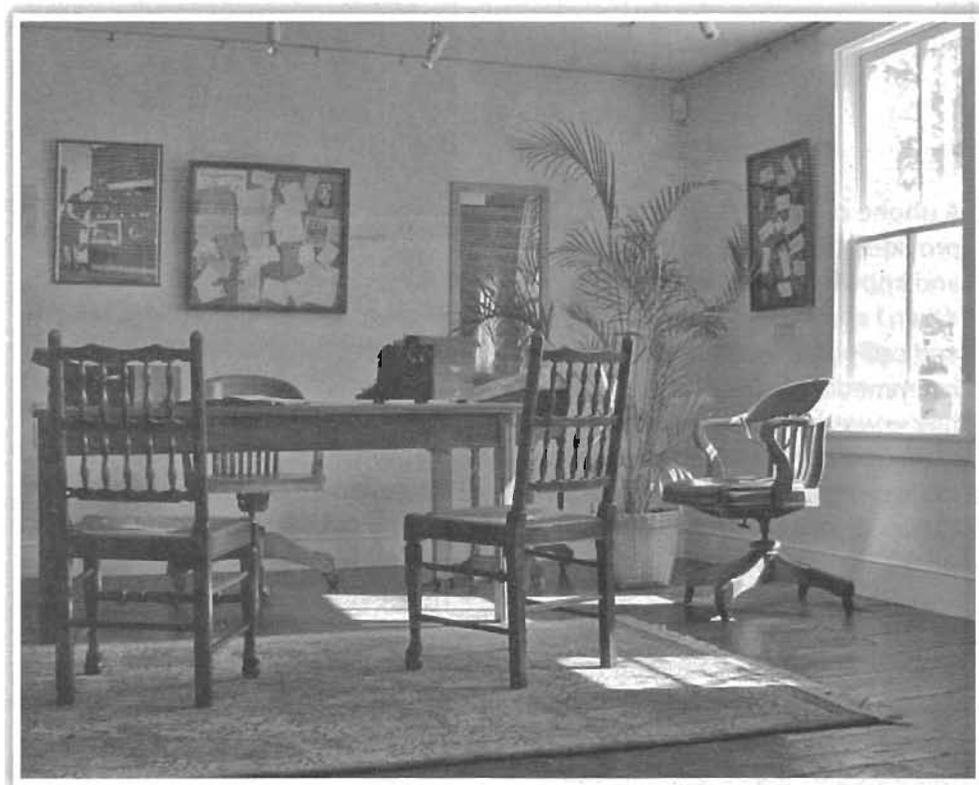


Washtenaw County Historical Society
P.O. Box 3336, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-3336
Phone: 734-662-9092
email: wchs-500@ameritech.net

Museum on Main Street
(at the corner of Beakes & E. Kingsley)
500 N. Main St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104-1027

Museum Hours
Saturday & Sunday, 12 noon – 4:00 p.m.
and by appointment

"Sharing the Recipe that is Chelsea"



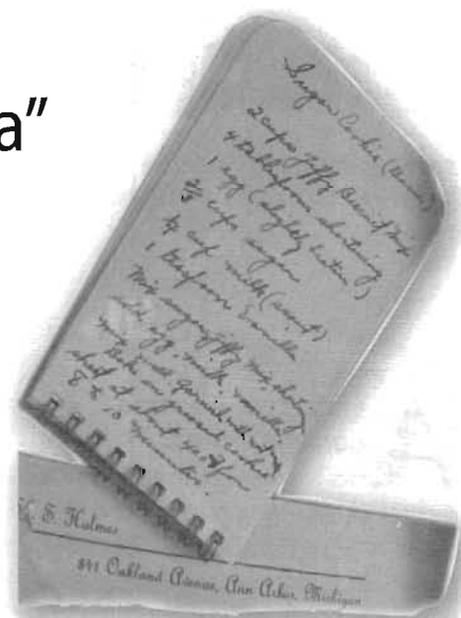
The Mabel Holmes collage, behind the desk of Howard Sumner Holmes, has her original handwritten recipes and more

The historic industries of Glazier Stove Works, Federal Screw Works, Portland and Four Mile Cement Plant, and Chelsea Milling Company (makers of Jiffy Mixes) are highlighted through individual displays.

Moving at 200 MPH! Howdy Holmes was born December 14, 1949 in Ann Arbor. After successfully competing in the world of motor sports for 20 years, he returned to "Jiffy" the family business in 1987. As a racecar driver, Howdy won championships, was the Formula Atlantic champion in 1978 and "Rookie of the Year" at the Indy 500 in 1979. Tom Diab, a former Chelsea Area Historical Society president, had acquired an old helmet and driving suit from Howdy Holmes. Diab marveled at the pock marks from tiny pebbles that bounced up from asphalt surfaces and struck the helmet, which was moving at 200 miles per hour. You can see it for yourself. That helmet and an authentic racing uniform he wore in competition, are part of this exhibit.

Holmes is currently the President of Chelsea Milling Company, the eighth-generation Holmes in the business of flour milling, the fourth generation in Chelsea, Michigan, and the third generation to market the company's Jiffy mixes, the first of which was created by his grandmother, Mabel White Holmes, in 1930. Today, "Jiffy" is the market-share leader in retail prepared baking mixes.

CAHS Museum Committee members served as special docents during the Opening offering their exceptional knowledge and insights into each display. There is much to discover about Chelsea in this exhibit, that will be on display through November 28, 2010. See page 2 for the museum's hours. ❖



The First Prepared Baking Mix was invented in Chelsea

Mabel Holmes wasn't even thinking about business models or marketplaces on the day in 1930 when she noticed that one of the neighborhood children, a boy being raised by a single father, was eating a sorry-looking homemade biscuit for lunch. Realizing that finding the time to make biscuits from scratch was a challenge for a single parent, especially for fathers, who rarely cooked in those days - Mabel decided to come up with a ready-to-make mix that would be "so simple, even a man can do it." The result was Jiffy, America's first prepared baking mix.

Source: www.jiffymix.com

Share your favorite JIFFY experience

If you have stories, pictures or memories of corn muffins, pancakes, biscuits, cakes and frosting, sugar cookies, brownies, pizza or pie crust... we'd love to hear from you! So would the family of Mabel Holmes. You can mail them to the Museum on Main Street
PO Box 3336
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106-3336

or email your Jiffy story to
WCHS-1000@ameritech.net

That's My House!

By Brian Williams, Associate Archivist
Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan

At first it was easier to find out who did NOT make the house. Research determined a small rectangular tag affixed to the rear of the house possibly held the answer, but weather, time, and many coats of paint had left it all but unreadable.

Armed with the knowledge that our house at 402 W. Hoover, was built in 1947, Sears was quickly eliminated as one of the potential manufacturers. Sears quit selling kit houses in 1940. Two pre-cut home manufacturers in nearby Bay City, Michigan: the Aladdin Company and Lewis Manufacturing; seemed like good possibilities, but a review of their catalogs and available floor plans did not reveal any good matches.

A conversation with neighbors across the street, revealed that they had moved into their home about the time ours was being built. They thought our house might have been built by Staebler & Son. The Staebler firm had branched out from coal and fuel sales into land development and construction in the postwar period, so it was a possibility.

I contacted Grace Shackman, who had coauthored an article about "Ann Arbor's Kit Houses" that appeared in the January 1991 *Ann Arbor Observer*. Shackman offered the valuable suggestion of contacting Ken Heining who had been a manager with Staebler starting in the 1940s.

A phone call to Mr. Heining provided the vital clue. His recall and knowledge was amazing. When I mentioned that the walls and ceilings were wood panels, he immediately concluded that the house was manufactured by either Gunnison or Pease. Both firms were pioneering a new form of prefabrication known as "stressed skin panels" using plywood.

Each company offered a variety of basic house plans ranging from \$6,000 to \$10,000 for fully built and equipped houses. *Pre-fabs on Parade*, published by the Housing Institute in 1948 for prospective buyers, contained floor plans and illustrations from 57 manufacturers of prefabricated homes. The page for Pease contained the exact floor plan of our house.

The Pease Woodwork Company was established in 1893 as a distributor of building materials in Cincinnati OH.

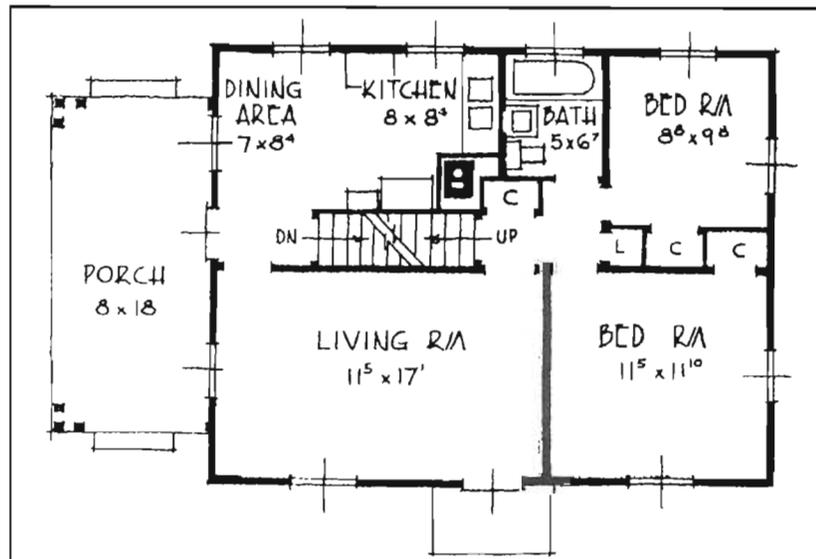


Brian Williams had fascinating details about Pease Kit Homes

Pease gradually expanded their line of products and advertised them more broadly. The Pease catalogs of the 1940s began to advertise "Pease-Fabricated Homes." The trademarked phrase touted the factory production and precision assembly that enabled a Pease House to "go up in a hurry."

The early Pease floor plans were flexible and were primarily Cape Cod and ranch styles based on a footprint of 30' by 24'. Homes ranged from four rooms with a bath to a two-story house with seven rooms and two baths. The basic plan featured the living room on the right-hand side of the house, but the plans could be reversed to offer the living room on the left-hand side. Plans were also offered with or without a basement.

(Continued on the next page)



Floor plan for the Pease Cape Cod (Prefabs on Parade, 1948)

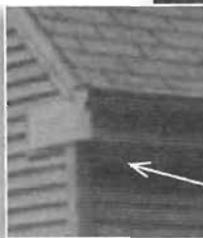
A trained crew could put a Pease house under roof in one day

Each home came with an illustrated manual and four sets of blueprints and details. The wood pieces were stenciled with identification to match the blueprints and manual. The directions advised laying the 4' x 8' panels around the outside of the building in the proper order (the plan for a 30' x 24' house involved 27 panels). Assembly could begin from any corner. The room-sized interior panels were to be installed just before the exterior panels to which they adjoined. The roof was trussed, with each truss a complete unit. A policy of Pease was to have one of their supervisors train each of their dealer's crews.

The homes were sold through dealers within a 300-mile radius of Cincinnati and shipped by rail only. It was the job of the Pease dealer to prepare the site and construct the foundation or basement, arrange for the plumbing and heating equipment as well as the interior finishes. Pease supplied a 66-inch white enameled steel kitchen sink cabinet with faucet, a utility unit, and three wall cabinets as well as a ventilating fan. For the bathroom, they supplied a white enameled medicine cabinet with a plate glass mirror. Screens for windows and doors were also included. The plumbing, heating, wiring, and painting could normally be completed in two to three weeks.

Pease only produced the four-room, one-bath Cape Cod Colonial house in 1946 and 1947. A finished staircase led to the second floor, which could be finished into an additional bedroom. A number of exterior additions such as dormers, porches, vestibules, and arcades could be added. Siding options included red cedar bevel siding, red cedar shingles, or asbestos shingles. Shutters were an optional extra. ❖

Cornice Returns Help Identify a Pease House



The cornice return is a notable way to identify a Pease house.



The return cornice is a key sign of a Pease house, pictured here at 402 W. Hoover Street

Three Pease Houses in a Row!

The Pease Cape Cods that began filling in empty lots on Ann Arbor's West Side and elsewhere could be built and fully equipped for between \$6,000 and \$7,000. The only other variable was the cost of the lot.

402 West Hoover is the middle of three identical Pease Cape Cods built in 1947. The first occupant was Oren W. Troup, a 23 year old married veteran originally from Elkhart, Indiana, who came to Ann Arbor where he secured employment with the U.S. Post Office. He was the founder of a private United States Postal Contractor, Oren W. Troup Inc., that is operational today.

The house immediately to the west, 407 Wilder Place, features the left-hand floor plan. Immediately to the east, 306 West Hoover features the 24-foot "narrow" side facing the street. At first glance, the appearance of all three houses is distinct enough to not immediately betray their shared prefabricated origins.

AFTER THE TALK: Brian answered several interesting questions and participants shared their own Pease materials and memories. Rev. David Bucholtz graciously greeted guests for refreshments. Susan Layher, Mary Sue Mucie and Lois Vitale gave insightful tours of the 100 year old church and the beautiful stained glass windows surrounding the sanctuary.



Membership

Membership to the Washtenaw County Historical Society is open to all individuals or organizations interested in preservation and sharing of our county's history. The Society does this through free public lectures, exhibits, the Museum on Main Street, *Impressions* (the Society's award-winning newsletter), and our website. The website is updated on a regular basis and is a great resource for any history projects, research or general information

When you join the Washtenaw County Historical Society, you'll receive seven issues of our informative newsletter, and advance notice of all six public lectures per year.

We hope you will renew your membership for 2011 and we appreciate your past, current and future support.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

- Individual: \$15
- Couple/family: \$25
- Patron: \$100
- Student/Senior (60+): \$10
- Senior Couple (one person 60+): \$19
- Library: \$25
- Business: \$50
- Business Patron: \$100
- Co-sponsor one issue of *Impressions*: \$500

Renew your membership through the mail: WCHS, PO Box 3336, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-3336 or online at www.WashtenawHistory.org or bring it by the Museum on Main Street when you come view the exhibit!

A Step Back in Time

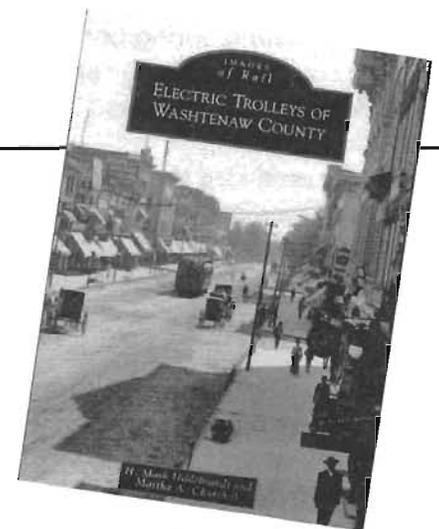
A Free Walking Tour of Historic Ann Arbor

This is a walking tour of the historical locations and people who have lived in Ann Arbor. The route starts at the Museum on Main Street and takes walkers to Kerrytown, UM Central Campus, Downtown Ann Arbor, the Old West Side, and Lowertown. This walking tour is rated 1+ due to hilly terrain on city sidewalks (on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being easiest). Download the free MP3 podcast from our website: www.WashtenawHistory.org

New Books in the Museum on Main Street Gift Shop

When you come to the Museum, look over our selection of Michigan history books and see what's new. You can also order them online from our website. This month's new books include:

- *Men, Wind, and Courage A Pioneer Aviation* story of O. E. Williams and His Associates, by Nancy Lynn Mess
- *The Huron River - Voices from the Watershed*, edited by John Knott and Keith Taylor
- *Images of America: Milan*, by Martha Churchill
- *Barefoot Boy*, by Ray Schairer
- *Riverwalks - Ann Arbor: Walking Loops Along the Huron River*, by Brenda Bentley
- *The Third Marked Tree, Paths Through the Wilderness* John Williams of Webster Township and His Descendants, by James Baldwin Parker and Osbert Oliver Williams.



Electric Trolleys of Washtenaw County

Electric streetcars and interurbans appeared in Washtenaw County in the 1890s. Evolved from horse-drawn streetcars, electric cars were ideal for public transportation. In western Washtenaw County, two interurban railways engaged in a struggle for survival. Occasionally the interurbans crashed into buildings or one another, with disastrous results. *Electric Trolleys of Washtenaw County* explains how electric mass transportation flourished starting in the 1890s, why it bloomed, and why it suddenly became extinct after only a few decades. Authors: H. Mark Hildebrandt of Ann Arbor and Martha A. Churchill from Milan.

The Washtenaw County Historical Consortium is a volunteer organization representing 27 museums, libraries, and historical attractions in and around Washtenaw County, Michigan. Member organizations can post their events directly to the online calendar and we will list as many as we can in our newsletter. For the most recent listings check out www.hvcn.org/info/wchs/consortium

History of the Big House

Sunday, October 17, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM

Junge Center, 333 E. Stadium Blvd., Ann Arbor
The Tour is limited to the first 30 members of the Washtenaw County Historical Society. Call 662-9092.

Hallow Harvest

Saturday, October 23, 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Get in the spirit with a costume parade for kids, house tours, and hands-on activities. Special appearance by George Fredrickson, noted author of children's books about rural life in the mid-20th century.

COBBLESTONE FARM, 2781 Packard Road
734-794-7120, www.CobblestoneFarm.org

Haunted Travels of Michigan

Saturday, October 30, 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Meet Kat Tedsen and Bev Rydel, authors of *Haunted Travels of Michigan, Vol. 2*, and other Highland Ghost Hunters. Get a signed copy of their latest book (we're in it!) **COBBLESTONE FARM**

Detroit Observatory Open House

Sunday, October 24, 2010, 1-4 p.m

Half-hour guided tours of this restored 19th-century observatory museum. Pull the rope and rotate the telescope dome! **THE DETROIT OBSERVATORY**, 1398 E. Ann Street (at Ann and Observatory), Ann Arbor, www.Bentley.umich.edu/observatory/

Kempf Museum Open House

October 24 & 31, 1:00 - 4:00 PM

Guided tours through the historic 1853 Greek Revival home of German-American musicians. **KEMPF HOUSE MUSEUM**, 312 S. Division St., Ann Arbor, 994-4898, www.KempfHouseMuseum.org

Historic Sharon Mill Tour

October 24, 1:00 - 4:00 PM

Celebrate the Harvest Season and learn how waterpower was converted to electricity in a Ford Village Industries mill. **SHARON MILL**, 5701 Sharon Hollow Rd., Sharon Twp. parks.ewashtenaw.org

Fall Harvest Celebration at Parker Mill

Sunday, October 17, 1:00 - 4:00 PM

Learn about traditional harvest activities, including cider making, and how the Parker family used waterpower to grind flour, and run other machines in this pioneer grist millparks. **PARKER MILL COUNTY PARK** is located 1/2 mile east of US-23 on the south side of Geddes Road. parks.ewashtenaw.org

Genealogy Lecture

Sunday, October 24, 2010, 1:30pm-4:30pm

Bringing Genealogy News, Podcasts, and More to You: How to Quickly Set Up a News Reader and Subscribe to 'Genie' News Feeds" by genealogist Grace Bliss Smith. Followed by talk by club member Caroln Griffin on "Artifact to Archives: the Story of Ypsilanti Gunsmith William Horace Worden." Genealogical Society of Washtenaw County. **ST. JOSEPH MERCY HOSPITAL EDUCATION CENTER AUDITORIUM**, 5305 Elliott Dr. (off E. Huron River Dr. at Clark Rd.). Use parking lot P and look for the club's signs. Free. 483-2799.

Fun, Tricks & Treats at the Cemetery

October 20, Beginning at 6:00 PM

Starting at the Civil War monument members of the Milan Area Historical Society will tell stories, hand out treats, and even stop at Joel Marbles family plot. **MARBLE PARK CEMETERY**, 520 W. Main, Milan, 734-439-4055, www.HistoricMilan.com

Fall Open House

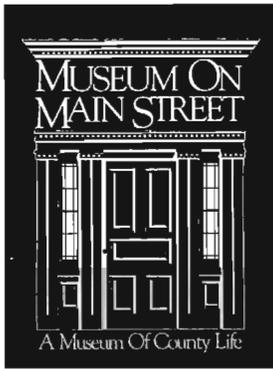
October 24, 2:00 PM

Come see farm animals, antique cars, demonstrations of soap making or apple bobbing and tour the historic house. **HACK HOUSE**, 775 County Rd, Milan, MI, 734-439-4055

Sugar in the Atlantic World

October 18, 2010 thru February 18, 2011

"Sugar in the Atlantic World: Trade and Taste 1657-1940." It tells the story of the sugar trade in the British West Indies and the growing taste for and use of sugar. **CLEMENTS LIBRARY**, UM, 909 S. University Ave., Ann Arbor, www.clements.umich.edu



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Women's Suffrage

A lecture by Zoe Behnke and Jeannine Delay
on women's struggle for the right to vote

Sunday, November 21, 2010

2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Glacier Hills Retirement Community,
Hanson Room 1200 Earhart Rd, Ann Arbor

The Washtenaw County Historical Society • www.WashtenawHistory.org

Save these 2011 dates! Upcoming WCHS Programs

Electric Trolleys of Washtenaw County

H. Mark Hildebrandt, retired pediatrician and life-long student of history, will talk about his latest book on the long-gone street cars that travelled between Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and environs. The book is available in our Gift Shop.

Sunday, February 20, 2011

2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Chelsea Retirement
Community
805 West Middle Street
Chelsea



Women in the Civil War

Jane Schultz presents a lecture on
Women in the Civil War

Sunday, March 20, 2011

Time: 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Ann Arbor District Library
343 S Fifth Ave, Ann Arbor

The Civil War

Tom Collier on the Civil War, a joint
meeting with the Genealogical
Society of Washtenaw County

Sunday, April 17, 2011

1:30 PM - 4:30 PM

St. Joseph Mercy Hospital,
Education Center Auditorium
5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti
Use Parking Lot "P"