

# Ypsilanti GLEANINGS

Official publication of the Ypsilanti Historical Society, featuring articles and reminiscences of the people and places in the Ypsilanti area



SUMMER 2019

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



Amy Griffith, Janet Rich Platte, Stacy Erskine, and Marie Jones in "It's a Wonderful Life."

## Petie The Dog Turns 25

BY RICK KATON



The year 2019 is special for the theatre troupe PTD Productions. It marks their 25th year of continuous production of plays in our community. Ypsilanti has a long and distinguished theatre history. Daniel Lace Quirk made friends among traveling theatre companies during the mid- to later 1800's while he was doing business in the west—often, in St. Louis. His connections helped to ensure that shows leaving Detroit by train after extended runs would make stops in Ypsilanti during their "one nighter" tours.

He often made sure that they stopped at his home afterward for dinner. He later invested strongly when a new opera house was built in town. His son, Daniel Lace Quirk, Jr., helped to form a lo-

cal amateur troupe at the beginning of the "little theatre movement," in 1915. They turned a carriage barn behind the former Starkweather home at the foot of Washtenaw Avenue on Huron Street into a charming, small theatre that was written about in newspapers across the country. The Quirk family name lives on at Eastern Michigan University's home for speech and dramatic arts, the D. L. Quirk building.

The legendary Ypsilanti Players, Quirk's group, produced plays from 1915 until disbanding in 1931. The name was revived in the early 1950's, with sporadic productions occurring until about 1966 when it went dormant again. The



Sarah Heberlein, founding member of PTD.

*continued on page 4*

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## Ypsilanti Historical Society

220 North Huron Street  
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197

Museum: 734.482.4990

Archives: 734.217.8236

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

## GLEANINGS Staff

Editor ..... Al Rudisill  
Assistant Editors.....Peg Porter  
Fofie Pappas  
Design & Layout.....Pattie Harrington  
Advertising Director .....Sarah Reyes  
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If you have suggestions for articles  
or if you have questions, contact  
Al Rudisill at 734.476.6658 or  
[al@rudisill.ws](mailto:al@rudisill.ws).

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MI 48197

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK BY BILL NICKELS

On Sunday, June 9th, Haab's Restaurant again sponsored a fund raiser for the Ypsilanti Historical Society. As they have done in the past, 10% of the entire proceeds for the day were contributed to YHS!!! Some restaurants may offer 10% of the proceeds from identified members, no other restaurant has been found to be as generous as Haab's. In addition, Haab's has also volunteered to do presales for the June 25th Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation Historic Home Tour! They deserve support from the community. Their Happy Hour hors'd'ouvres and drink specials are one of the best.

EMU has been another supportive friend of YHS. For two five year contracts, we had an agreement with the President's Office to share in the cost of two graduate student interns from EMU's Historic Preservation program. One intern staffs the archives and works with visitors doing local history research. The second staffs the museum and does the paper work for YHS and is a docent for museum visitors. Because the operation of our archives and museum is a perfect fit for their coursework, their presence adds a sense of professionalism to our archives and museum. Our current mutually valuable contract



Lindsay Dascola has been selected as the new Graduate Assistant in the YHS Museum.



MUSEUM  
734 482-4990  
[yhs.museum@gmail.com](mailto:yhs.museum@gmail.com)

ARCHIVES  
734 217-8236  
[yhs.archives@gmail.com](mailto:yhs.archives@gmail.com)

220 North Huron Street | Ypsilanti, MI 48197





Claire Conzemius has been selected as the new Graduate Assistant in the YHS Archives.

expires on May 31st, 2020. We will be meeting with President James Smith in August to renew the contract. Even though EMU is presently experiencing a money crunch, we hope the long term value of the agreement is seen to exceed the modest cost.

Writer/author Barry Levine was the presenter at our March Quarterly Meeting. He told the audience the history of the Yankee Air Museum which is now the Michigan Aeronautical and Space Museum. While visiting the museum, he became intrigued with the many stories told in the museum and filed in the archives. The stories motivated him to contact the Michigan Historical Society about writing an article for their publication. He is finding it difficult to focus on one museum story with so many good ones to choose from.

Gregory Fournier, another friend of YHS, wrote *Terror In Ypsilanti*, a book about the 1969 Michigan Murders that led to the arrest and conviction of John Norman Collins. Ray Wolcheck of Fox 2 News is planning a special TV segment acknowledging the 50th Anniversary of the arrest and conviction of John Norman Collins. Somehow, Ray learned of Greg's book and our archives as his source of information. Ray and his TV cameras will visit our archives and inter-

view Greg on June 20th. Watch for Ray's special that evening or shortly after. Greg's book is for sale in our archives book store.

At an ice cream and cake reception near the end of April, we said "good bye" to our two EMU Graduate Assistants as they graduated with Master of Science in Historic Preservation degrees. Both have been with us for two years. Millie Latack has moved on to Warrenton, Virginia as a Historic Preservation Planner. Sarah Richards-Reyes is restricting her job search to our local area. Again from EMU's Historic Preservation program, we have two very capable replacements. Clair Conzemius has taken Millie's place in the Archives. Lindsay Dascola assumed Sarah's position in the museum.

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## Historic Depot Town



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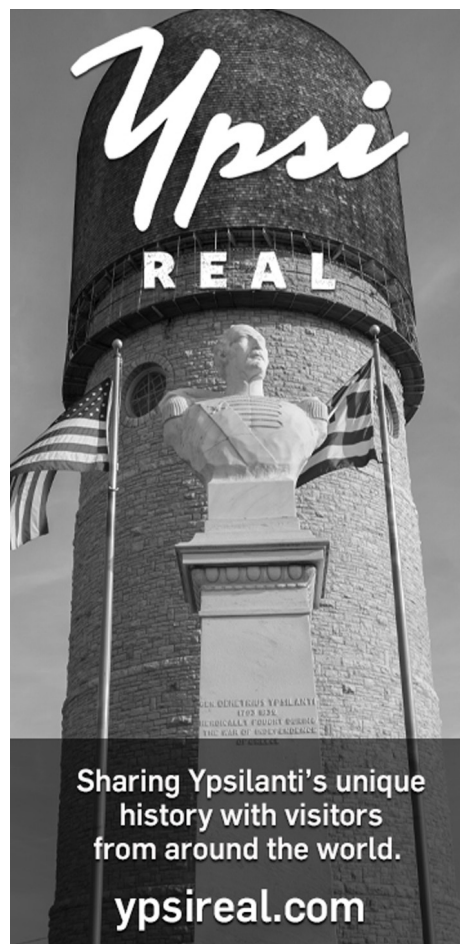
**56 East Cross Street  
Ypsilanti, MI 48198**

Phone: (734) 483-1035

Fax: (734) 483-1490

[ladyfrench@aol.com](mailto:ladyfrench@aol.com)

[www.sidetrackbarandgrill.com](http://www.sidetrackbarandgrill.com)

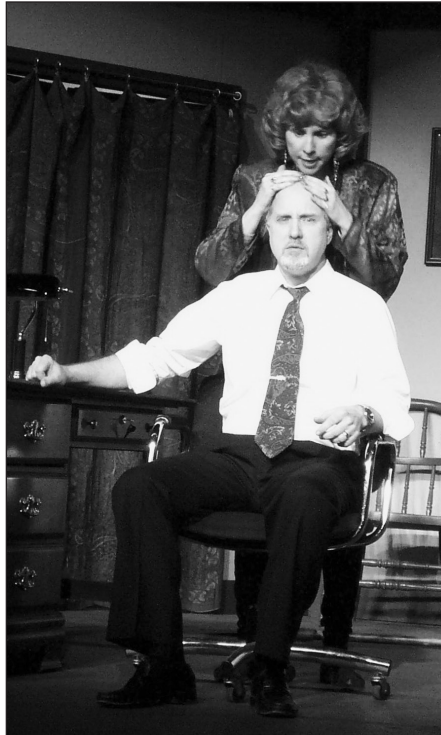


mid to late 1990's saw several more shows produced under the Ypsilanti Players name, with most hosted by the little theatre in St. Luke's Episcopal Church. Since then, another troupe has taken center stage in local production.

It all started in the Sidetrack bar in 1994. Three friends were having a drink with two academic friends, and they decided to form a company to produce a play. With any luck, they would have enough success to produce one more play, and then.... Well, they weren't thinking too far ahead at that point. David Chrzanowski, David Freund, and Sarah Heberlein were the friends. Christine Marshall, and George Larou were the academics—to the best of our recollection. They all set their minds on staging the play, "Wilhelm Reich in Hell." They were sponsored for \$500.

They recruited their cast and booked a stage—the old Performance Network Theatre in Ann Arbor, in a warehouse, with a pole sticking up in the middle of the stage. Dennis Platte and Ian Stein were in the cast. The first night, a rain-storm caused a leaking roof and fears of shorting out the lights. The show was delayed, and they had to offer refunds to any audience members who did not want to wait for the rain to blow over. They were finally able to begin, and the first play was performed. After three nights, they packed up and took the show to a little theatre in Detroit, where it was presented for one night. They had started calling themselves Luv(sic) Productions, but their next project was anybody's guess. In the fall, Christine Marshall and George Larou moved to Maine, and did not return.

Early in 1995, the Ypsilanti Downtown Development Association was looking for help from local artists to launch a center for the arts in the recently acquired Masonic Temple building on North Huron Street. Dennis Platte was involved. David Chrzanowski and David Freund came to Dennis with a proposal. They had seen the famous



Alice Fell, with Rick Katon in "Death Trap."

production of Sam Shepard's play, "True West" by the Steppenwolf Theatre Company in Chicago and wanted to produce it in Ypsilanti for the Heritage Festival. They decided that the proposed Riverside Arts Center would be a good place to stage the show. But first, they all joined the team that was working on a gala opening event for the center, which came to be called "All You Can Art.."

Preparing the building for the event was a daunting task. The basement had recently been used as a warehouse by Materials Unlimited, and it was not in good shape. The walls were damaged, it was dark, dirty and dusty, and it was a challenge to create the "nightclub, cabaret" atmosphere that the event was hoping to produce there. The Luv(sic) crew volunteered to help. After a session of hard painting work, made lighter by the consumption of numerous "adult beverages," Barry LaRue, one of the planners and coordinators for the event, came down to see their results. A member of the group apologized for the less than painstaking effort. "I'm afraid our paint job looks like it was done by the Little Rascals."

Barry replied, with disappointment, that it looked more like the work of Petie the dog.

At that moment, the Luv(sic) name changed to PTD Productions. The gala was a success, the Riverside Arts Center was launched, and that summer, PTD's "True West," the first production on the Riverside stage, was given during the Heritage Festival.

Six salvaged stage lights were hung from the ceiling and wired to a little dimmer panel backstage, operated by Sarah's father, Richard. Folding chairs were set up in the old meeting room that had been used as a bowling alley during the 1950's and 60's. Local builder/remodeler Les Church was recruited to help construct a set, and twelve tickets were sold on opening day. The two Davids played the leads. Janet Rich and Steve Myers were also featured. During the first performance, the lights overloaded their circuit and the breaker kicked off, plunging the stage into darkness. The problem was resolved, and the small audience was able to enjoy the rest of a well-crafted performance. Encouraged by their artistic (if not commercial) success, the group set about planning a third season.

In 1996, "The Lion in Winter" and "All My Sons" were produced in the spring and fall. Without competition from the Heritage Festival, attendance improved, and artistic standards were maintained. By the fall, David Chrzanowski, David Freund, and Sarah Heberlein had all decided to move to Chicago to seek employment as theatre professionals. Dennis Platte, Janet Rich, Steve Meyers, Les Church and Richard Heberlein decided to carry on under the PTD banner into 1997.

Their first production, "You Can't Take it With You," turned out to be a milestone for the group. Richard Heberlein was cast for his second stage role (ever) marking his increasing participation. Marie Jones, who had interrupted her youthful university theatre studies for marriage and family, years



before, returned to the stage in a key role. Ian Stein played a featured role, and Ken MacGregor, recently of the Ypsilanti Players at the time, was cast. Michelle Bennett and her brother Michael had roles. Rick Katon, a local enthusiast who had been a schoolboy actor in Ypsilanti many years before, returned to the stage in a small role. Dennis directed, and Dennis, Janet, Les and Steve all appeared on stage. The show attracted fine audiences, and Petie had new life.

This group found so much enjoyment working together and spending time with each other that they formed the nucleus for an ongoing enterprise. Two additional shows were produced in 1997. In 1998 a full, four show season was staged. The group hung out at the Sidetrack bar after every rehearsal; and almost every Friday evening, into the mid-2000's, members met for dinner at Louie's Café, a local restaurant on Michigan Avenue. A non-profit, 501c3 corporation had been formed, with Dennis Platte serving as president, and monthly meetings began. A play reading committee was chosen yearly to select shows for the next season, and it continues to do so to this day. With that basic structure, twenty-five years, and more than ninety productions have gone by.

Lists and descriptions of our favorite shows would be too lengthy to print here. Please see our website for a complete production history. ([www.ptdproductions.com](http://www.ptdproductions.com)) From tense drama to joyful comedy, we have sampled a broad range of theatre art.

No one is paid for their efforts with PTD. It has been an entirely volunteer effort from the beginning. To make our work more accessible to the community, a "pay-what-you-can" Thursday policy was instituted, and remains today. Haab's restaurant sponsors a play ticket discount for diners who show Haab's receipts from the night they attend a performance. That has been valuable support from nearly the beginning of the troupe. Poet, retired EMU educator and faithful friend Larry Thomas has also become a pillar of support. And thankfully, the community comes to see our shows.

Many people have come and gone with the company over the years. Gradually, several of the early participants dropped out for other pursuits. Steve Meyers and

Les Church left to live in Vermont. Michael Bennett left after "*You Can't Take it With You*," but Michelle stayed for several years before moving on. Ian Stein took part for a few years, but also drifted off. Ken MacGregor left when his wife was accepted at a law school out of state. Dennis, Janet, Marie, and Rick have been active participants to the present. Other key members, sadly, have passed away, including original member Richard Heberlein, late in 2018. Before that, the passing of his daughter, founding member Sarah Heberlein, saddened us all. Richard and Sarah are survived by Richard's wife, Lynn. After a number of years devoted to her love of performing vocal music, she joined Richard as a PTD member and has offered many valuable contributions ever since.

Some people have played major roles for the troupe over long periods of time. Lois Kuznets-Dowling was one such person. First appearing as "*Wheezer*" in the play, "*Steel Magnolias*," her first line on stage with PTD was, "*I am in Hell!*" But Lois found herself among kindred spirits, and never looked back. She continued to act, and even began directing shows. Before long, her husband, Jim Dowling, an executive with a software company, was making appearances on stage as well. Lois and Jim took part in every aspect of production, and became very dear friends to everyone in the group. Each participated up to the time of their passing—Jim in 2014, and Lois in 2016. Lois helped initiate an important social activity of the group. In the early 2000's, Lois thought it might be a nice idea to rent a cottage on a nearby lake and have a PTD summer retreat. The first one was held on Portage Lake, near Pinckney. It was a memorably wonderful time for all. After at least one more retreat at the small cottage, Lois and Jim announced that they had purchased beachfront property nearby and were planning to build a cottage! A lovely, five-bedroom home with a

screened-in porch arose for the summer of 2005, and the group began a series of blissful, week-long stays each summer until the house was sold, after the 2013 retreat.

Among other major contributors, Brian Burchette stands out. Commuting from Monroe, Brian took part as an actor and director for a number of years with notable suc-



Rick Katon and Dennis Platte in "*The Sunshine Boys*."

cesses. His friends Valerie Merceica and Ilene Smith also became important members; Val as an actor, and Ilene as a director. They hosted and attended many PTD board meetings in their homes, and even arranged rehearsal space for several years in their local church. They also involved their families. When children and other young roles were needed on stage, the kids sometimes appeared, and performed well.

Tod Barker had a major role in *"All My Sons"* during season three. He returned to play a co-lead in the play, *"Bent"* several years later. After leaving to teach in Georgia for a number of years, Tod came back to rejoin the troupe again. He scored as a director with *"Present Laughter"* and *"Long Day's Journey into Night."* His lead role in *"The Foreigner"* was one of the most delightful comic roles this author has ever seen, on stage, screen or television. Tod is again teaching in the south, but he is well remembered for his work here.

Alice Fell, who earlier founded the local theatre troupe Orpheus Productions, came on board and first directed the play, *"The Octet Bridge Club."* The show was not only a success, but it brought a number of women into the troupe who would go on to play important roles. Jan Carpmann would continue to act and direct off and on until her recent departure for the east coast, and Amy Griffith gradually became a key actor, and active board member. Alice's partner, Paul Demyanovich, began recording our performances early in our history. His videos got better and better as the years went by! He has provided us with a priceless archive of our work that we all cherish, and his other contributions, including set work and friendship, are equally valued by the troupe. Alice has made many stage appearances, and just directed *"Morning's at Seven"* in May, 2019.

Pamela L. (Tia) Thomas joined the cast of *"Arsenic and Old Lace"* in 2002 as one of the kindly (and deadly) aunts, and is still active today. Over the years, she has worked her participation around her career in teaching and juvenile corrections, but always finds her way *"home"* to play another role when needed. Amy Griffith, a local realtor, also joined us in that era, and has been a stellar contributor to the troupe in many ways over many years, from lead and character roles to service on the board.

Adam Weakly has filled the role of *"genuine leading man"* a number of times for PTD. With rugged good looks; a deep, resonant voice; and a roguish charm on stage, his characters make you want to root for them. Frankly, we can't figure out why this fellow didn't go to Hollywood and give it a try. But don't get us wrong—we have been glad to have him on our stage! His expertise in technical theatre has made him a still more valuable member. His one-time colleague at Tobin's Lake Studios (now TLS Productions) was Brian Evelyn, who also played the occasional hero, and possessed similar backstage skills. The two remain PTD friends and

sometime contributors.

Eric Maurer was a valued, early member of PTD before expanding his real estate business and developing property across downtown Ypsilanti. He did some fine acting, and directed a standout production of the play, *"Buried Child,"* by Sam Shepard. He now exhibits painting as a fine artist.

Carl Ellison participated with PTD for a number of years. Some of us thought of him as our *"Jack Lemon type,"* a young, leading man with intelligence and the ability to play comedic and dramatic roles. He was an amazingly quick study, always appearing at the first rehearsal with his role entirely memorized. He played Felix Unger in *"The Odd Couple,"* and a memorable Sherlock Holmes, among other roles. He directed the very successful show, *"Laughter on the 23rd Floor,"* one of our best attended productions. Carl's partner, Pam Rickard, was also a participant with PTD for a number of years, including important roles on stage. She made another mark with her successful efforts to improve the *"branding"* of our company.

Long time PTD actor Mary Hopper continues to display amazing range on stage. She has played a toughened prison guard, a tender ingenue, and just about everything in between. Her versatility even applies to age, as she plays older or younger roles with ease. In addition to solving casting problems for directors, she has been a dedicated board member for much of her time with the troupe, and has helped on and off stage in many ways. She introduced her friend John Fredryk to PTD and he has become a board member, set builder, and trusted front-of-house worker.

Not all of our stars have been actors. Bob Wittesheim was



Lois Kuznets-Dowling and Jim Dowling in *"Auntie Mame."*





Janet Rich Platte in "The Night of January 16th."

a technical wizard who began helping us in the control booth. Aside from directing "*Born Yesterday*," Bob mostly did great things that came over the loudspeakers in support of shows. When Borders Books, his employer, went out of business, Bob signed up for training at the Specs Howard School of Broadcast Arts. He now has a career he loves as a sound technician for a studio in Chelsea, and he still helps PTD with his expertise.

Debbie Ederer began as a close friend and neighbor to the Heberleins. She started coming to set-building sessions, and gradually her role morphed into a wide range of support functions, even including appearances on stage. Debbie now enjoys the sunshine of Florida in her new home, but remains a dearly missed member of the troupe.

Judy Monaghan liked to sell tickets. She was with the troupe from the very early days in that humble role. She made several appearances on stage, acquitting herself with grace and dignity, but she really liked to sit in front and sell tickets. She did that for about fifteen years or more. Several years ago she passed away, and is missed by those of us who remember her.

Clara Trent contributed volunteer service for the first five years or more, helping with graphics, posters, and PTD's first web site.

Brad Halsey appeared at a casting call for "*The Odd Couple*," female version. He became one of "*the Spanish brothers*," and did a fine job in a small role. However, his service as a featured player, set builder, stage manager and front-of-house regular (along with his wife Ruth) have made "*the Bard*" very difficult to replace. Fortunately, he still contributes.

Jen Shanafelt and Ruth Boeder have been two other largely unsung heroes in recent years. Jen showed up for set building one day and took a shine to the group. We took a shine to her hard work and her friendly, cheerful attitude. She eventually added stage credits to her contributions. It was a sad day when she left for a new home in Florida, but she visits regularly. Ruth Boeder met our group through

Laura Bird. While completing a doctoral program in Library Science, Ruth contributed her organizing and researching skills to PTD, accomplishing things that few other members could match. She is pursuing her career now, and is missed.

Liz Greaves-Hoxsie began in the booth with PTD, as a volunteer light board operator. Her path took a different turn when she began to appear on stage. She took acting classes at a local studio and has not only become an accomplished actor, but a director and producer as well. She has even become skilled at publicity. Her husband Paul Hoxsie has also made wonderful contributions, as a set builder, volunteer technician, actor, board member and friend. Liz's connection to the studio has been vital to keeping PTD alive. She regularly invites actors she has met to read for parts and bring their skills to the troupe.

Joe York first appeared onstage in a small role in "*A Thousand Clowns*," but quickly took on bigger and bigger responsibilities; first as an actor, then directing, and increasingly, as a set designer and builder. He even wrote an original script that the company successfully produced, titled "*Soccer Moms and Reapers*," about drone operators during the Iraq war. He is simply a PTD legend.

Laura Bird has become an increasingly important member in the current decade. She previously was head of a college theatre program, before the school decided to devote more support to their sports programs and abandoned it.



Mary Hopper (left) in "The Miss Firecracker Contest."



Joe York, (left) Amy Griffith (middle) and Richard Heberlein (right) in "Hazing the Monkey."

She now teaches in the theatre department at Greenhills School in Ann Arbor. She brings tremendous skills and knowledge to share toward our efforts. She continues to direct wonderful and beautiful shows, and even appeared onstage recently in a delightful character role.

Marie Jones has contributed to PTD in so many ways. Her list of starring and featured roles is lengthy, and her backstage expertise has improved many productions. Marie has directed from time to time, and often employs her costuming skills for the benefit of the troupe. A talented painter, she has produced many back-drop effects for the stage. She finished her college theatre arts degree as a senior citizen, further certifying her expertise. She will always be a core member, central to the early and ongoing success of the troupe, but her favorite role is still "Nana" to her wonderful grandchildren.

Dennis Platte and Janet Rich were married on the Riverside stage in 2004. Dennis has served as president of PTD almost continuously since the beginning, along with his acting and directing triumphs. He has also designed and helped to build many sets. A graphic designer, he has produced or collaborated on nearly all of the troupe's printed material from the beginning; and with Janet, (and often, Marie; and lately, Laura) has dressed and finished countless sets, giving them the professional look that is a hallmark of PTD's work. Dennis and Janet are both veterans of the Eastern Michigan University theatre program, with Janet holding a Master of Fine Arts degree. Janet was cited one year by the Ann Arbor News as the area's outstanding female actor. She has also directed, produced, and performed many other duties for the troupe, and is a beloved member by all.

So many others have done special things or created special moments: Eli Church, Darcy McConnell, Sarah Burcon,

Randy Fitzpatrick, Wendy Ascioine-Juska, Jessica Murkowski Eroh, Chris Starkey, Emily Caffery, Kim Endahl, David Andrews, Cindy Franklin...to name a tiny sample.

Recently, PTD has been joined by newer members who have quickly made roles for themselves. Natalie Aguirre, a local attorney, began as a friend of a participant and started volunteering for small jobs in support of a play. Soon, she was asking to be trained as a producer! Natalie quickly grasped the importance of all of the aspects of production and began managing shows. She has become an invaluable member and wonderful friend, always performing needed tasks cheerfully and selflessly. Josh Warn was introduced to the group by his daughter, who then left for graduate school on the east coast. He has been a valuable workman on set building, and now has branched out as an actor, board member and amiable friend. Wyatt Woodside is a younger Ypsilantian who has recently become a bright light for us on stage in dramatic and comedic roles. Among many others too numerous to name, these recent arrivals personify the qualities that make PTD the kind of worthwhile organization that can sustain itself continuously for twenty-five years and is still a joy to belong to today!

*(In addition to his involvement in PTD Rick Katon is a board member and museum docent for the Ypsilanti Historical Society and lifelong resident of Ypsilanti.)*



## Tradition.

Gene Butman Ford is a company that believes in tradition. For the past 60 years we have sold and serviced some of the best vehicles on the road, Ford Motor Company vehicles. We are proud to represent a company that has a rich tradition in our community. Our Ypsilanti community is what sustains our family owned and operated business. The Butmans would like to thank our customers and our community for keeping our traditions alive. Customer service, loyalty, honesty and empathy are values our team hold close to their hearts and give each day to our customer.



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# Recent Museum & Archive Acquisitions

The museum and archives receive donated items on a regular basis to add to our collections. It is through these donations that we have a furnished museum and an archive full of research material.

Number	Date Received	Name of Donor	Disposition Date and Initials
HSA-2019-01	12/20/2018	Russ Kenyon	Prospect School Class photographs from 1962/63, 1962/63, & 1964/65; Lakeview 1907 Class photograph
HSA-2019-02	01/08/2019	Nancy Taylor	25th Annual Heritage Festival Invitation; First United Methodist Church print; EMU 1988 Huron football poster
HSA-2019-03	01/10/2019	Clifford Larkins & Larry Thomas	EMU Aurora editorial staff poster; Zach Harris designed event posters; Hopkins-Thomas family photographs
HSA-2019-04	01/08/2019	Jane Schmiedeke	Home Tour & Garden Tour pamphlets and invitations
HSA-2019-05	01/11/2019	Lawrence & Jane Darling	Ypsi Dixits; Riverside Study Club Rosters; 1860 Tuttle Hill school administrative
HSA-2019-06	10/21/2018	VIRGINIA DAVIS-BROWN	Alice Johnson genealogical information & newspaper articles and obituaries pertaining to the DAR
HSA-2019-07	09/14/2018	Earnest Griffin	Thomas R. Forsyth Scrapbook, Ypsilanti High School class photos, commencement pamphlets, & articles, & Misc. Photographs
HSA-2019-08	01/17/2019	Tom Warner	RHS Class of 1953 Photograph, RHS yearbook 1953 "The Highlight", & Ypsilanti Area Sesquicentennial Book
HSA-2019-09		FOUND IN COLLECTION	All artifacts found within in the archives in 2019 without an associated accession
HSA-2019-10	02/05/2019	Steven James Seiler	"The Rise of Faygo 1907-1987" by Steven James Seiler
HSA-2019-11	02/06/2019	Michael W. McCloy	1959 Emmanuel Lutheran Church program
HSA-2019-12	02/20/2019	Robert Fairson	1935 ACME Newspaper Photograph of Richard Streicher Jr. home
HSA-2019-13	10/10/2018	Carol McClure	Armed Forces service cards and photos for Harley Jack McClure
HSA-2019-14	04/02/2019	Randal Baier	"The Ypsilanti High School Bands in Concert 1977-78" Vinyl Recording
HSA-2019-15	03/28/2019	Russ Kenyon	Negative slides, magnifying viewer machine
HSA-2019-16	04/24/2019	Virginia Davis-Brown	Cemetery Readings/Indexes of Burials for Soop, Manchester, Harwood, Dixborough, Denton, Childs, Raleighville, Mooreville, Webster, Highland, Scio, Udell, Spencer
HSA-2019-17	03/15/19	Randal Baier	"The 7 Seas Sing Along With Dee" published by the 7 Seas Business at 1435 E. Michigan Avenue in Ypsilanti
HSA-2019-18	04/27/2019	Mary Burns, Betty J. Whiteside	Photo of Coca Cola Teamsters with their wagons
HSA-2019-19	05/07/2019	Barry Conklin	Washtenaw Civil Defense Plans
HSA-2019-20	05/08/2019	Mark Oppat	Photo Album of Restoration of Home at 8660 Ford Road (ca1960)
HSA-2019-21	04/18/19	Tom Warner	5 Copies of Aug 11th 1951, Ypsilanti Daily Press
HSA-2019-22	06/09/19	J. E. Terrall, Kathleen J. Terrall Campbell	Two Brothers go to War Book written by J. E. Terrall



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# Florence Lizzie Swaine: A Remarkable Woman who lived on River Street

BY JANICE ANSCHUETZ

Florence Lizzie Swaine about five years old.

If you are a dedicated reader of The Gleanings you will know the name Florence Lizzie Swaine. In fact, she was a real “ghost writer” in the Winter, 2018 issue through the publication of her written interview of her neighbor Mr. Dwight Peck. Her diaries and experiences have also been included in past Gleanings articles with her interesting and detailed account of a motor trip in 1915 and a train trip out west where she climbed Pike’s Peak in a high necked, long sleeve shirt and ankle length skirt complete with petticoats. I thought that you might want to know more about her life in Ypsilanti. I base this article on an obituary found in the Ypsilanti Historical Archives, family letters and other documents.

Although I never met her, Florence and I share many items and interests. I sleep in her Victorian bed, use her dresser, own her dolls and enjoy her home and garden since we have lived in her family home for 50 years. We are the only other family to have ever lived in the house since it was built by Florence’s father for his family. During these 50 years, Swaine family items have been given to us including her beautiful childhood dolls, complete with tea set, dresser and clothes. We are also custodians of Swaine family items such as a very interesting family genealogical record which includes pictures and narratives, some written by Florence. Like me, she was a genealogist and historian and enjoyed researching and writing about her ancestors and history. So, let me share what I have learned about this remarkable woman.

Florence Lizzie Swaine was born April 6, 1875 in the brand-new Victorian Italianate home at 101 East Forest Avenue.

Both of her parents, Frederick and Lizzie George Swaine, were immigrants from Kent, England, knew each other in England and were second cousins. Frederick was from a long line of maltsters and his father and grandfather were licensed to brew for the royal family including King George III and Queen Victoria. He was orphaned at the age of one and was made a ward of his uncle. He grew up in Lympne Castle in England. My family and I now are in possession of the record book that his uncle kept of Frederick’s inheritance and expenses, such as for his education and even his report cards as well as his degree from Kings College in London. Like his guardian, Frederick kept detailed records which a family friend gave to us.

We know that he came to American and to Michigan after graduation with a considerable amount of money to invest. He purchased the malt house from his brother-in-law and soon built the beautiful home on East Forest Avenue which cost over \$25,000.

Florence’s mother’s parents, George and Cary Eaton George, came to America in search of free education for their numerous children. They made sure that their daughter Lizzie attended Michigan Normal School (now Eastern Michigan University) where she qualified as a teacher. When Frederick decided to make Ypsilanti his home he brought many of the items he had inherited, and Florence’s home was not only beautiful but filled with priceless silver, furniture and even a Roman plaque found on the grounds

of Lympne Castle. In his obituary, Frederick Swaine was called “the father of classical music in Michigan” by Frederic Pease, his friend and head of the musical department at the Normal School, due to his introduction of classical mu-



Florence Lizzie Swaine about two or three years old.



sic to Ypsilanti and the state of Michigan. He was also one of the founders of the popular Gilbert and Sullivan Society and often performed in their productions at the Ypsilanti Opera House. Frederick also had an interest in politics and held a “gold dollar rally” complete with a torch light parade and Teddy Roosevelt as guest of honor. As you might imagine, Florence grew up with parents who provided her with not only love, but love of music and literature and culture.

Florence was soon joined by other siblings: a sister, Jessie Cary, and brother’s John and Frederick. Sadly, both boys died before the age of four. Their two Wallington-family cousins lived across River Street, their George-family cousins a few blocks south on River Street, and their George-family grandparents resided about a block away on Oak Street. After George George’s death, their grandmother came to live with them, and when Aunt Patsy Wallington died, one of their cousins lived and grew up with them. The Ypsilanti Historical Society archives inherited the Swaine family photo album with numerous pictures reflecting Florence’s happy times growing up. The photo album includes a picture of her and her sister and brother with wax dolls brought by their father from Germany in 1882, Florence and other children in a pony cart, on a bicycle, playing with a kitten, out on a carriage ride, boating on the nearby Huron River with friends, having a snowball fight with teenage girlfriends, and so forth. Still another album is filled with beautiful Victorian calling cards, Valentine cards, poems written with affection to her by her father and grandfather and even riddles which her grandmother told her.

Florence’s obituary, written by someone who knew her, states *“She enjoyed a happy childhood in the home in which she had been born. As a little girl she had a tendency to be withdrawn and serious – broken by the special hours of companionship with her father. He must have been*



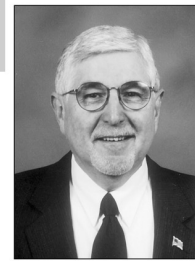
Florence Lizzie Swaine with the family dog.

*an exceptional person, for she always spoke of him in an extra special way.”*

Florence attended local grade and high schools and afterwards in about 1895 accompanied her father on an extensive trip back to England to visit friends and relatives there. She obtained her teaching credentials from the Michigan Normal College in 1887, a few months after her father died suddenly at the age of only 47 years old. We read in Florence’s obituary, “After the father’s death, the mother, Jessie and Florence spent 14 months in Europe and England. During their stay in Germany, Florence availed herself of the chance to study the methods of Froebel (founder of the kindergarten system as we know it today.) They lived near the famous school in Berlin where his ideas were being tested and it was a golden opportunity to see them in action.”

Florence then began her lifelong teaching career, first teaching in nearby Wayne, then at Prospect School in Ypsilanti and lastly teaching in Detroit Public Schools until her retirement in 1931. She was quite an adventurous woman for her day and you can read her detailed accounts of several of her travels in The Gleanings. She went with friends on an amazing road trip in the summer of 1915 and drove to

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places such as Philadelphia, Washington D.C., and Atlantic City covering 1635 miles of rough and muddy dirt roads in less than two weeks!

Another fascinating summer adventure is well documented by Florence and can be found in the Ypsilanti Historical Society archives written in her neat handwriting on lined paper and published in the Winter, 2010 issue of the Gleanings. As a young woman in her 20s, she went on a train trip ending up in Colorado and climbed Pike's Peak over a two-day period in the dark of night complete with Victorian dress of long sleeves and high collared blouse, petticoats and ankle length skirt! The essay not only describes her day-to-day travels, but lists her expenses, the history of the areas visited and her impressions. She states in this 13-page document, "Of course we could not leave Colorado until we had been to the summit of the world renowned Pike's Peak. There is nothing I enjoy more than mountain climbing, and money being an object with us, we were courageous enough to attempt this climb of 9 miles up 7518 feet to an altitude of 14,147 feet. We started in the afternoon and rested until dark at the Half-Way House; then we climbed on-on-on all night. It was monotonous, but we were a jolly party and full of adventure. It was quite romantic to eat our lunch in the dead of night by the side of a camp fire on the lovely mountain with the lightning and thunder below us, the lights of cities beneath, the lights of heaven above. We grew very tired and the hard climb seemed endless. I thought of poor Christian's hard journey to the celestial city. We reached the top at two p.m. and rested until the glorious sunset. We descended the burro trail, going through Crystal Park. We were like witches in appearance when we reached home, and the remark greeted us on all sides as we walked through the streets: '

*"They have been to the Peak."* We answered *"Pike's Peak or bust."*

Besides her teaching profession, Florence, like her mother and sister Jessie, enjoyed studying history, playing bridge, reading, gardening, and spending time with friends. The unidentified person who wrote her obituary states: *"One could not spend a short time with Florence without learning some history, knowledge or interesting facts on current events. She had a keen mind and used it well. Her memory of the past was phenomenal. The interesting facts that could be acquired from Florence on such subjects as silver, dishes, jewelry, furniture, locations and people could fill volumes. She was a student of history, as well as religion and social trends. She was an ardent follower of the teachings of Mary Baker Eddy and she delved deep into the history of*



Florence Lizzie Swaine seated with brother and sister Jessie holding wax dolls their father brought them from Germany in 1882. Their brother died a few months later.



Florence Lizzie Swaine about 17 years old, possible a high school graduation photo.

*the Bible – pursuing, for instance, a profound study into the lost tribes of Israel."*

In 1937, Florence, her sister and two cousins motored through the continent and the British Isles. During this trip, she visited relatives, did genealogical research, took pictures, and made post card albums of places visited, which are now in the Ypsilanti Historical museum archives. My family is now in possession of a very thick book documenting her research and photographs of family homes, graves, and so forth. Florence visited Lympne Castle in Romney Marsh, Kent, England where her father spent his childhood and took many pictures of it.

As she grew older, Florence's sight was dimin-





Florence seated left front with her sister Jessie standing right back row on their trip to England in 1937.

ished. Her friend credits her positive attitude and gumption. *"Her last days were spent in the ancestral home – and in spite of approaching blindness and the infirmities of age, the place was always a mecca for friends and relatives. To have had the privilege of dining in their home is to be transferred into a different and wonderful atmosphere of true English hospitality and customs. It is rare indeed the conventions that are carried on as they are at the Swaines...There were many and varied facets of her personality – like her love of gardens and gardening. Instead of crumbling under failing sight, it seemed to spur her on to greater effort before darkness should overtake her."*

Florence died at the age of 85, leaving her younger sister, Jessie, to live alone in the large family home. She had been a long standing member of the Ypsilanti Ladies Literary Society and the First Church of Christ Scientist.

After Jessie's death in 1968 in the

same bed and in the same bedroom she had been born in, my husband and I purchased the Swaine House and anything left in it. We daily use their dough table and kitchen table, we sleep in Florence's bed, and use her dresser. The family sideboard, 1875 piano, desk, wardrobe, grandmother's rocking chair, and other furniture are still part of the household. We have restored the home's interior, gingerbread and crown trim and replicated the wooden fence so it seems that much of the Swaine family still lives on at the North East corner of River and Forest and the many family letters, cards, receipts, writings, riddles, and Valentine's Day Cards give us a picture of the life that they enjoyed here.

And yes, like many others who lived on River Street, Florence rests in peace here at Highland Cemetery surrounded by her loving family. I hope that you have enjoyed meeting this remarkable woman who lived before electricity, modern plumbing and central heating, automobiles, airplanes,

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Florence far right with her sister Jessie across from her (with tie) during a boating trip on the Huron River.

her life with a certain gumption and sense of adventure, self-direction, and determination.

*Sources:*

Among the Rocky Mountains in Colorado By Florence Lizzie Swaine (c1905)

<https://www.ypsilantihistoricalso-society.org/publications/winter2010.pdf#page=16>

*Ypsilanti Gleanings Winter 2010*

Pages 16,17,21

An Automobile Trip - 1915-Style By Janice Anschuetz

<https://www.ypsilantihistoricalso-society.org/publications/spring2011.pdf#page=8>

*Ypsilanti Gleanings Spring 2011  
Pages 8,9,20,21*

*(Jan Anschuetz is a local historian and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)*



Florence on the right on the climb of Pike's Peak in the dark!



# Eugene Stewart Gilmore:

## Ypsilanti Resident Who Became President of the American Hospital Association

BY ROBERT ANSCHUETZ

In 1965, lifelong Ypsilanti resident Jessie Swaine, who was 86 years old at the time, was asked to recall interesting aspects of her life in an interview conducted by local historians Phoebe Miller and Shirley Pile. Miss Swaine lived her entire life at the corner of Forest Avenue and River Street, which is the house where I grew up. My parents purchased the Swaine house in 1970 two years after Miss Swaine died in 1968. The four-hour interview with Miss Swaine was captured on a set of four cassette tapes that are now located in the YHS archives. In the interview, Miss Swaine was asked about the Gilmore residence up the street from her. Miss Swaine's response was: *"Mrs. Gilmore has been dead a great many years. That was the Gilmore home up there. Eugene Gilmore...was a very bright man. He was president of most of the hospitals here in the United States. He had a very fine position."* That portion of Jessie Swaine's interview was very intriguing to me, so I sought out to verify her facts and find out more information about Eugene Gilmore.

I was able to find a short biography about Eugene Gilmore in a book published in the early 1900's called *"Past and Present of Washtenaw County"*, by Samuel Willard Beakes. This excellent resource has been scanned and is available electronically on [books.google.com](http://books.google.com) and has also been reprinted and is available on [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com). I was able to find out information about the Gilmore family residences from various Ypsilanti city directories and United States Census reports. I was also able to collect some additional information about the Gilmore family on [Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com) and [findagrave.com](http://findagrave.com). Some additional research led me to find articles about Eugene Gilmore in the pages of the *"Hospital Management"* periodical. Finally, the YHS Tom Dodd On-Line Photo Archives had a few pictures of Eugene Gilmore.

Eugene Gilmore was born in 1867 to his parents Addison Gilmore and Newbelia Elizabeth (Graves) Gilmore. Addison Gilmore was born in 1831 to his parents Asa Gilmore and Elizabeth (Dewey) Gilmore near Tecumseh, Michigan. Newbelia Graves was born in 1834 to her parents William Graves and Elizabeth (Donaldson) Graves in New York. The Graves family moved to Michigan, and shortly thereafter Addison Gilmore and Newbelia Graves met, courted, and were married.

Addison Gilmore was a broom and brush maker by trade. His busi-



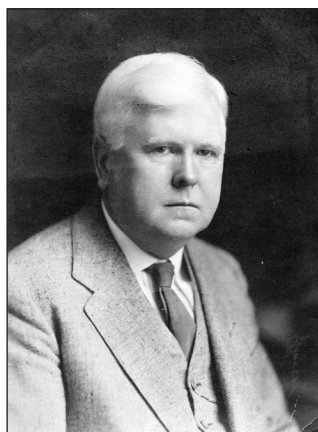
Eugene Gilmore posing in his Masonic uniform.

ness pursuits led the young Gilmore family to move to Minnesota. Addison and Newbelia Gilmore's family quickly grew to include six young children: William, Addie Bell, Charles, Eugene, Elizabeth, and Mabel. Two other children died at a young age.

Around 1870, the Gilmore family moved to Ypsilanti, Michigan, where Addison Gilmore established a business as a manufacturer of brooms and brushes. The family initially lived on Huron Street between Forest Avenue and Cross Street. After a few years, the family moved to River Street.

Addison Gilmore died in 1883 at the young age of fifty-one years old. His death left his widow Newbelia to care of their growing children, some of whom were moving on to start their own lives. In the 1892 Ypsilanti City Directory, Newbelia Gilmore was listed as living with her three daughters Addie, Elizabeth, and Mabel at 724 North River Street.

Newbelia Gilmore died in 1914. Both Addison and Newbelia Gilmore are buried in Tecumseh, Michigan, where each of their parents are also buried. The Gilmore's oldest son, William, died at a relatively young age. Charles became a mining engineer in Montana. The Gilmore girls all were mar-



Eugene Stewart Gilmore.

ried in adulthood. Addie Belle married H.C. Minor, Elizabeth married James Seymour, and Mabel married William Miley. We'll now focus on Eugene, the subject of this article, who excelled in business in both the railroad and hospital industries.

Eugene Stewart Gilmore graduated from Ypsilanti High School with the class of 1886. After graduation from high school, Eugene entered his business career as an employ-

ee in the Detroit general offices of the Michigan Central Railroad Company. He remained employed by the MCRR for four years. In 1890, Gilmore took a job as a clerk and cashier of the freight department of the Ann Arbor Railroad. Gilmore boarded at 71 East Ann Street in Ann Arbor, which was the home of Mary Mabry and her daughter Mae Banghart. In 1892, Gilmore married Mae, and soon after were expecting a baby boy to join their family. Tragically, Mae died two days following the birth of their son Earl Eugene Gilmore in 1893. The baby boy died three days later, was placed in his mother's arms, and they were buried together. Mae's tombstone at Forest Hill Cemetery in Ann Arbor has an epitaph that says "In her arms she took him with her." In 1895, Gilmore married his step-half-sister, Charlotte Clark. Charlotte shared the same mother as Eugene's first wife, Mae, though they had different fathers. Eugene and Charlotte had one daughter, Bertha Mae Gilmore, who was born in 1899.

Gilmore remained employed by the Ann Arbor railroad for six years. He then spent a year in the service of the Pere Marquette Railroad, after which he returned to the Ann Arbor Railroad and served as an agent with them for three additional years. In 1900, Gilmore learned of a vacancy in the superintendent position for the University of Michigan hospital, and he applied for the position. This was an audacious move by Gil-

more because he had no college degree and no prior hospital experience. In fact, he had only visited a hospital a couple times in his life to visit sick friends and relatives. Gilmore would later admit that it took some moxie by saying that in applying for the position "he had a nerve equal to that of a neurological convention." Against all odds, he was given the position of superintendent of the University of Michigan hospital. As an example of how ill prepared he was for the position, when he overheard two doctors talking about "bugs", he sought out the custodial crew and told them they had better get rid of the insect infestation in the hospital. Gilmore served as the superintendent of the University of Michigan hospital for nine years. The Gilmores lived at 811 East Ann Street in Ann Arbor.

In the time that Gilmore lived in Ann Arbor, he became very active in the community. He was a member of the Masonic lodge in Ann Arbor. He was also a member of other fraternal organizations including the Knights of the Maccabees, the Court of Honor, and the Woodmen of America. In 1901, Gilmore was elected to the Ann Arbor city council, and was later chosen as the president of the city council. For almost a decade, Gilmore was the president of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in Ann Arbor. Gilmore also served as a trustee of the Methodist church in Ann Arbor. Gilmore's social status in Ann Arbor is best summarized in "Past and Present of Washtenaw County" in the closing sentence: "He deserves mention with the leading residents of Ann Arbor, for in him are embraced an unabating energy, unswerving integrity and industry that never fails, and his co-operation has been a forceful factor in behalf of the political and moral status of the community."



The Gilmore Residence at 724 North River Street.

In 1908, Gilmore accepted a position of superintendent of Wesley Memorial Hospital in Chicago, a 275 bed Methodist hospital that was noted for the excellence of its medical and surgical facilities. Gilmore was a firm believer in two slogans, "The patients' welfare must be the first consideration," and "The patients will receive exactly the same kind of care that the nurses receive from the hospital management." Gilmore was especially diligent with the hospital's finances, as



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Gilmore Brooms and Brushes ad from the Ann Arbor City Directory of 1874-75.

there was never a budget deficit while he was superintendent.

In the next decade, Gilmore expanded his role at Wesley Memorial Hospital and became a trustee and a member of its executive committee. He also was a trustee of an all-girls high school called the Jennings Seminary, and was appointed as a trustee of Northwestern University. In 1918, he was given an honorary L.L.D. degree by a western university. In 1919, Gilmore was appointed to lead the newly formed Methodist Hospital Association. He was chosen for this position because of his reputation for being very efficient, his organizational experience, and his keen interest in the development of Methodist hospitals to ensure the success of the organization. In 1923, Gilmore was appointed to an even more important position as president of the American Hospital Association.

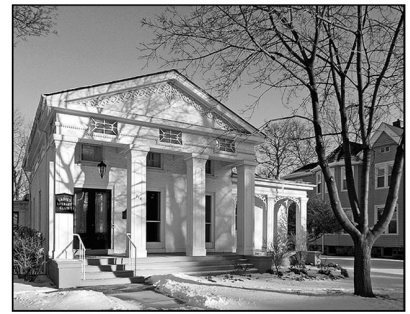
Gilmore died of a heart attack in 1931. His death was notable enough to warrant an article in the New York Times on September 13, 1931 with the headline "EUGENE S. GILMORE DROPS DEAD IN OFFICE; Superintendent of Wesley Hospital in Chicago - Former President of American Association." Eugene Gilmore was buried at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Ann Arbor.

So to wrap this up, let's do some quick fact checking Jessie Swaine's recollections of the Gilmore family that lived up the street from her. "Mrs. Gilmore has been dead a great many years." Verified - Mrs. Newbelia Gilmore died in 1914, 51 years prior to the 1965 interview. "That was the Gilmore home up there."

Verified - The Gilmores lived at 724 North River Street, 3 houses north of the Swaine house. "Eugene Gilmore...was a very bright man." Verified - Eugene Gilmore certainly was a bright man as evidenced by his leadership roles in both the railroad and hospital industries. "He was president of most of the hospitals here in the United States." Verified - Eugene Gilmore was President of the American Hospital Association, which was the umbrella organization for most of the hospitals in the United States. "He had a very fine position." Verified - Eugene Gilmore indeed had a very fine position as the President of the American Hospital Association.

Jessie Swaine certainly had all of her facts straight about the Gilmore family in her interview. By way of Miss Swaine's 50-year old recollections captured over 50 years ago, plus a Washtenaw County biography printed over 100 years ago, plus some searching with modern tools and technology, we now know the rest of Eugene Gilmore's story. This article fits in well with the *Gleanings* River Street Saga series written by my mother, Janice Anschuetz. It is really incredible to think of all of the prominent men and women who grew up or lived on River Street, including the Swaine family, Shelley Hutchinson, the George family, Walter Briggs, Walter Pitkin, the Norris family, the Follett family, Philo Ferrier, and more. We can now add Eugene Gilmore to the lore of Ypsilanti's River Street Saga.

(Robert Anschuetz grew up in Ypsilanti on River Street and is a regular contributor to the *Gleanings*.)



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# The Van Dusen Family of Ypsilanti

BY ROBERT ANSCHUETZ

Ypsilanti has been home to many prominent members of society, and many of these citizens have been covered in previous issues of the *Gleanings*. Sometimes, the prominence extends over several generations of the same family. In this article, we will explore Ypsilanti's Van Dusen family which includes a family member who became President of the S.S. Kresge Company.

The Van Dusen family, a family of wealth, prestige, and social status, are descendants of one of the earliest Dutch families to settle in Manhattan, New York. The family lineage includes presidents, presidential advisors, American war veterans and businessmen.

In the mid-1800's, a branch of the family traveled west to the state of Michigan. Dirck "Richard" and Elizabeth "Betsey" Van Deusen moved from Amenia, New York, and settled in Allegan County, Michigan. Their son, Silas (born October 1, 1807) and his wife, Hannah (Soule) (born February 2, 1814) after raising their two children in New York, followed his parents and also moved to Michigan. Silas was a traveling agent, selling such items as sewing machines, who also worked for a time at Meads Mill in Wayne County. Silas and Hannah are listed as living at Mill Street (later renamed Maple Street) in Ypsilanti early city directories.

Silas and Hannah Van Dusen had a son, Charles Theron Van Dusen, who was born on August 13, 1838 in Auburn, New York. They also had a daughter Mary L. Van Dusen, who was born on February 5, 1841 in New York state. Charles Theron Van Dusen enlisted in the Union Army in the Civil War in Rochester, New York. He was wounded several times and rose to the rank of Captain of Company "D."

Charles Theron wrote a detailed dia-



Charles Theron Van Dusen wrote a detailed diary about his experiences in the Civil War.

ry and letters to his family of his life and experiences in the Civil War. The entire annotated diary and letters to his family in Ypsilanti can be read at *The New York Times* website:

<https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/07/24/nyregion/20110724-van-dusen-civil-war-diary.html>

The diary opens on January 1, 1864, with the note, "Such are the fortunes of war." For more than a year, in the diary and letters to his family, Charles Theron Van Dusen faithfully chronicled life on the front lines: the confusion sown by rebel forces who wore Union overcoats; the "severe thrashing" that Gen. George Custer gave the "Rebs" outside Richmond, Va.; and "discouraging" instances of pillaging by Union soldiers. Charles was wounded in the wrist by a saber-wielding Confederate at Roods Hill, Virginia, on December 20, 1864. During the incident, he was also wounded in his face as he fell off his horse. The Confederate soldier who injured him fell also, shot by one of the Union soldiers who had seen the assault.

On April 3, 1865, Charles Theron Van Dusen was again injured, this time in his thigh only one week before Robert E. Lee's surrender on April 9<sup>th</sup>. On April 14<sup>th</sup>, President Abraham Lincoln was shot at Ford's theater and died the next day. On April 19<sup>th</sup>, while recovering at the Armory Square Hospital in Washington, D.C., Charles wrote a letter to his parents and sister, who were living in Ypsilanti. In the letter, he states: "You have of course heard of the terrible Calamity that has befallen the nation. The funeral procession is now passing from the White House to the Capitol. It is reported to be seven miles in length. I should have gone up & seen it, but as every hotel, store, etc. is closed, I thought I would not, as I should probably have had to stand up and that I cannot do quite yet."

After the war, Charles Theron Van Dusen moved to Detroit to be nearer his parents and sister and start a new life. Charles worked in Detroit as a tea, coffee, and spice salesman for Burr & Leonard. Charles met his future wife Jessie Mackay (born in Detroit on June 24, 1847) while ice skating at the Detroit Skating Rink. Charles and Jessie were married in Detroit on July 22, 1869.

Charles and Jessie Van Dusen had two children. Charles Beldon Van Dusen, known as "C.B.", was born in Detroit on January 28, 1871. Janet Young Van Dusen, known as "Nettie", was born a year later on June 14, 1872. Tragically, shortly after the birth of their two children, Charles Theron Van Dusen became extremely ill from a disease contracted in the Civil War. His doctor recommended that he travel to Mackinac Island to recover, but he only got worse there. He wished to return home, and on his return trip to Detroit, while gravely ill, his father Silas brought him to live his final days in their home at Mill Street in Ypsilanti. Charles Theron Van Dusen was buried at Highland Cemetery. His widow, Jessie, contin-



ued to live in Detroit, raising her two young children on her own. Jessie Van Dusen's life was not to be a long one, either, and she died on May 10, 1887 in Detroit, leaving a 16 year old son, Charles, and a 14 year old daughter, Mary. Jessie Van Dusen was buried next to her husband at Highland cemetery.

Young Charles Beldon Van Dusen had been working jobs in Detroit at age 14 after graduating 8<sup>th</sup> grade and he remained in Detroit supporting himself on his own. (More about the life of Charles Beldon Van Dusen will come later in this article). Meanwhile, Charles' younger sister Janet moved to Ypsilanti to live with her grandparents, Silas and Hannah, and her Aunt Mary. In 1890, Silas and Hannah, to accommodate a larger family, built a new two-story home at 329 Maple Street. Sadly, Silas Van Dusen died in Ypsilanti just three years later on March 26, 1893. He was buried at Highland Cemetery. Silas and Hannah had been married almost 60 years, as it was previously documented in the *Ypsilanti Courier* that they had hosted a large gathering of friends and relatives at their home on Maple Street to celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in October 1884.

Silas and Hannah's daughter, Mary L. Van Dusen was a music teacher and

continued to live in the home at 329 Maple Street. Mary's niece Janet moved back to Detroit and she married Homer Wyckoff in 1899. Homer and



Jessie Mackay Van Dusen, wife of Charles Theron Van Dusen.

Janet Wyckoff later moved to Chicago and Indianapolis, and had four girls: Margaret Soule (b. 1900), Eleanor (1903-1903), Ruth Lydia (b. 1904), and Helen Lowry (1906-1916). When Homer Wyckoff died in 1907, Janet moved back to Ypsilanti with her three living children to live with her widowed mother, Hannah, and her Aunt Mary. Janet's profession was a teacher. Hannah died in Ypsilanti on August 9, 1908 and is buried at Highland Cemetery.

In the decade following Janet's return to Ypsilanti, Janet's brother Charles Belden Van Dusen worked his way up to Vice President of the S.S. Kresge Corporation. In his position of prominence with one of the largest retail stores in the country, Charles desired to build a nicer home for his aunt, sister, and nieces. In 1917, he moved



The Van Dusen Residence at 329 Maple Street in Ypsilanti.



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Charles Belden Van Dusen rose to the position of President of the S.S. Kresge Corporation in 1925.

the existing Van Dusen home from 329 Maple Street to 314 E. Forest Ave. In its place, he built a larger contemporary one-story house which is still standing at 329 Maple Street.

In 1923, Janet Van Dusen Wyckoff married dairy farmer John Gault and they continued living in the house at 329 Maple Street in Ypsilanti with her Aunt Mary. Mary L. Van Dusen died in 1931, leaving John and Janet Gault in the house. Janet died November 5, 1950 and is buried at Highland Cemetery.

Now, we will continue the story of Silas and Hannah Van Dusen's grandson Charles Belden Van Dusen.

After being orphaned in Detroit at age 16, Charles Belden Van Dusen needed to earn his own livelihood. For a few months after finishing his 8<sup>th</sup> grade education in Detroit, Charles worked as a newsboy, then as a telegraph messenger for the Bankers & Merchants Telegraph Company. His first full-time job paid him \$175 a year for a six 11-hour day week. In July, 1885, he started working in the Detroit-based wholesale dry goods firm of Allan Shelden & Company. He remained with the firm until the business closed on January 1, 1891. Charles Belden Van Dusen was then hired by the Detroit-based wholesale operation of Edson Moore & Compa-

ny, and remained with them for fourteen years. On July 1, 1895, Charles Belden Van Dusen married Minnie Thornton Buick, who was known as "Daisy." Minnie was born on July 6, 1869 in Detroit. The couple lived in Detroit and had four sons; David Lowry (b. 1896); Charles Theron (b. 1897); Bruce Buick (b. 1901); and William Douglas (b. 1908).

Based on his twenty years of experience in the dry-goods wholesale business, Charles Belden Van Dusen was hired by Sebastian Spering (S.S.) Kresge in December, 1904, to work for the firm of Kresge & Wilson. S.S. Kresge recognized that his company was outgrowing its capacity to develop sufficient executive talent, which led to him reaching out to Charles. At the time, the entire front office force of Kresge consisted of one combination bookkeeper/stenographer. Charles was hired to be a clerk for a number of five and ten cent stores. Each time the company needed help opening new stores in other states, Charles relocated. In 1912, when the S. S. Kresge Company was organized, Charles Belden Van Dusen was elected to the Board of Directors and was made Secretary and Treasurer of the company. He served in that capacity until 1914, when he became Vice President and General Manager of the S.S. Kresge Company. He rose to the position of President of the S.S. Kresge Corporation in 1925, and he remained in that position until he retired in 1938. Of course, S.S. Kresge was the precursor to the Kmart Corporation which is now rolled under the Sears corporate umbrella.

In spite of his limited Detroit grammar school education, Charles Belden Van Dusen was awarded an honorary Master of Science degree by the College of the City of Detroit (now Wayne State University). Charles Belden Van Dusen was a 33<sup>rd</sup> degree Mason and he raised funds to build the Detroit Masonic Temple. He was also a member of the Detroit Athletic Club, Detroit Boat Club, De-

troit Golf Club, Cross Country Riding Club, Bloomfield Hills Country Club, Ingleside Club, Detroit Automobile Club, Masonic Country Club, and Detroit Rotary Club. During his lifetime he gave hundreds of thousands of dollars to church and charity. Charles Belden Van Dusen was one of the prominent Detroit businessmen who lent public support for the Ambassador Bridge connecting Detroit to Windsor. In 1947, the Westminster Presbyterian Church of Detroit raised \$300,000 for a new church and Charles matched the gift. Charles and Minnie Van Dusen helped endow a professorship in American history at Berea College in Kentucky in 1953. That same year, they donated a \$300,000 dining hall at Michigan's Alma College.

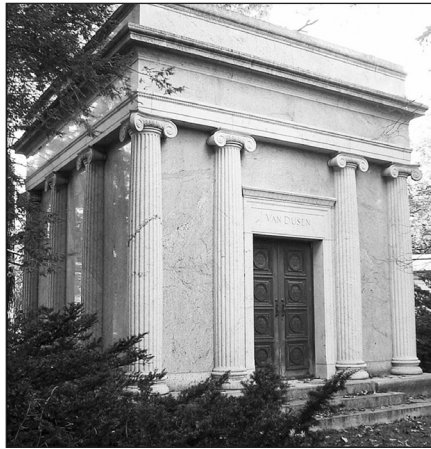
In 1922, Charles and Minnie Van Dusen built a beautiful mansion at 1830 Balmoral Street in Detroit's Palmer Woods neighborhood to raise their four children. The house was next to George Romney's mansion and down the street from the Fisher Mansion. The 10,395 square foot home was built with elegant details in raised walnut paneling, elaborately crafted ceilings, and exquisite fireplaces. The home had seven bedrooms, nine bathrooms, a large sun room, a ballroom, and a billiard room. The house was built of brick and stone in Baronial Tudor style with wood floors, Pewabic art tile floors, and stenciled ceiling beams in the formal dining room. The grounds included a two bedroom apartment over a detached heated garage.

Charles Belden Van Dusen died on August 16, 1958. He is buried in a magnificent neo-gothic mausoleum at Detroit's Woodlawn Cemetery. The mausoleum was designed in 1913 by notable Detroit architect George D. Mason, who was a mentor of the architect responsible for many Detroit landmarks, Albert Kahn. The Van Dusen mausoleum has fluted Ionic columns, and was constructed at a cost of \$2.5 million.



Charles and Minnie Van Dusen's children and grandchildren led successful lives in business and politics. Charles and Minnie's son Bruce worked at S.S. Kresge after graduating from the University of Michigan. Bruce's son, Richard Van Dusen, graduated from Harvard Law School and was elected to the Michigan House of Representatives. Richard Van Dusen also worked as a legal advisor to Michigan Governor George Romney. When George Romney was asked to serve as the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development under President Richard Nixon, Romney appointed Richard Van Dusen as undersecretary of HUD. Richard Van Dusen also served on the board of directors for the Kresge Foundation, which would have made his grandfather very proud. The Van Dusen legacy lives on today through their own charitable foundation.

So this concludes the story of the Van Dusen family, their connection to Ypsilanti, and the prominent family member who was the President of the S.S. Kresge Corporation. One cannot help but wonder about the treatment that the Van Dusen family received as they shopped at the local Kresge's located at 200 E. Michigan Ave. in Ypsilanti. *"Welcome Mrs. Van Dusen, is there anything that we can help you with today? Would your grand-*



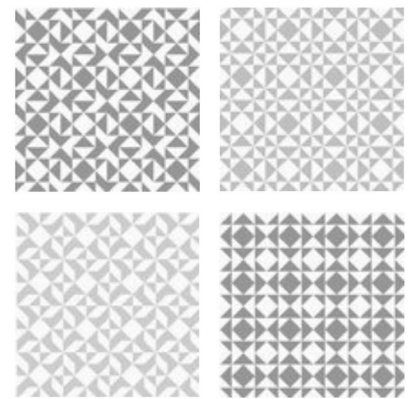
The Charles Belden Van Dusen Mausoleum at Woodlawn Cemetery in Detroit

*children like to choose any toy they would like from our toy aisle?"* It is also ironic to think that a few decades later, a K-Mart would occupy a spot at the Gault Village shopping center, tying together Janet Van Dusen Wyck-off Gault's brother's former company with her husband's family namesake shopping center. And if you would like to see the family residences on 329 Maple Street and 314 E. Forest Avenue, you can still do so today. Or you can take a walk through the Highland Cemetery and visit many of the Van Dusen family's eternal resting spots.

*(Robert Anschuetz grew up in Ypsilanti and is a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)*



The Charles and Minnie Van Dusen mansion at 1830 Balmoral Street in Detroit's Palmer Woods neighborhood was built in 1922.



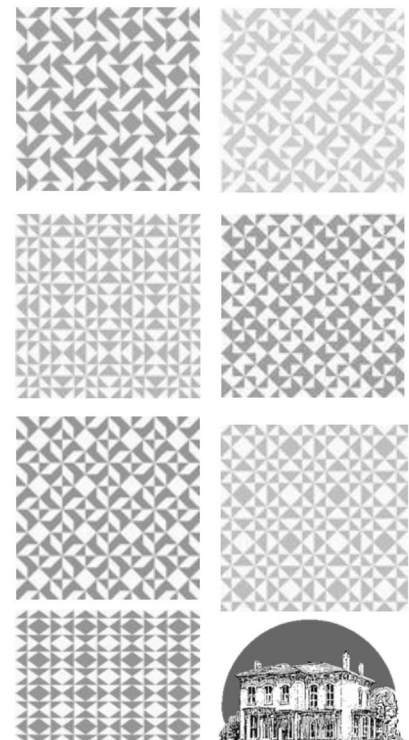
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# Mildred Everest Sues Charles McKenny

BY JAMES MANN

The Michigan State Board of Education met at Jackson, Michigan in June of 1914 after Mildred Everest filed a suit against Charles McKenny, President of Michigan State Normal College, now Eastern Michigan University, for \$25,000 for damages. Her claim was that she was the victim of slander resulting in her dismissal from the Normal College. As President McKenny was acting in his role as head of the College, it was decided that it was the duty of the state to defend him.

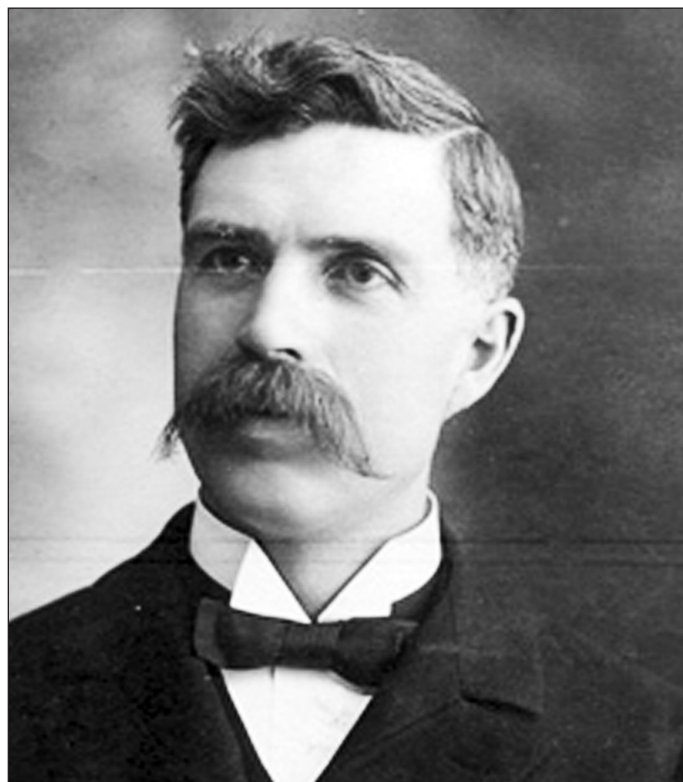
"Miss Everest," noted *The Daily Ypsilanti Press* of Tuesday, June 23, 1914, "...has been the plaintiff in several suits involving the same proposition and in one has recovered damages." After her dismissal from the Normal, she had been employed canvassing for a corset company. "She claims she is unable to secure a position to teach and is therefore made to resort to the work of canvassing for a living," reported "*The Daily Ypsilanti Press*" of Friday, October 2, 1914.

The origin of the case began in the latter part of 1912, when Mildred Everest was enrolled as a student at the Michigan State Normal College. At this time the College had no dormitories where students could stay. Students roomed at boarding houses in the City of Ypsilanti. Each house had to be approved by the administration of the College before students could live there. As a student, Mildred Everest roomed at 914 West Congress Street in Ypsilanti. During her stay there, she had problems with some of the other students who boarded there. The other students who boarded there said they had problems with her as well. As a result of these problems, Miss Everest was not permitted to enroll in the winter 1913 term of the school year.

The claim of Miss Everest was that during a meeting with the two sisters and their brother, who ran the boarding house, President McKenny said Miss Everest was "crazy" and that word of this caused the community to turn against her. For this reason, she said, she was unable to secure employment as a teacher.

Miss Everest had in 1912 filed lawsuits against two people for slander. One case had been dismissed by the court, and in the other, she had received \$400 in damages.

The case came to trial during the May, 1915, term of the Washtenaw County Circuit Court with Judge Kinne presiding. The first witness called on behalf of Miss Everest was a surprise, as it was President McKenny. On the Witness stand Charles McKenny said he was named president of the Michigan State Normal College in July of 1912. Mildred Everest entered the college in October of that year as a student. Her work in three studies was good, admitted Pres-



Charles McKenny was the 13th President of Michigan State Normal College and served from 1912 to 1933.

ident McKenny, as was shown by her report cards which were offered into evidence. She had failed a fourth topic, which she had dropped. She had not returned for the January 1913 term, after he had written her a note advising her not to return. "I never said that Miss Everest was crazy," said President McKenny.

He had written to her brother, W. H. Everest, an attorney in Grand Rapids, and suggested she was ill, and should be removed from the college. "When I said ill," said President McKenny, "I meant mentally ill: that her mental condition was abnormal at that time, meaning a 'little off.' The letter I wrote to Miss Everest was to the effect, that after investigation I had come to the opinion that she was temperamentally unfitted to teach, and advised her to undertake some other line of work, telling her we all had a right to engage in the work for which we were best fitted."

President McKenny was asked, "Had you not asserted to Miss Wes, Mrs. Parkinson and Jerome West that Miss Everest was crazy?" "What I said," answered President McKenny, "...was that she was in an abnormal frame of mind. That is primarily the reason I said she should not return to college." President McKenny said he based his opinion on the information he had received from Edwin Chapman, who was a roomer in the house. Chapman had told President McKenny that Miss Everest had outbursts of temper and used vulgar and profane language.

This was not the only evidence as three young women who were also roomers in the house had told him of similar behavior on the part of Miss Everest. These young women had, with tears in their eyes, asked President McKenny per-



mission to move to another house, because of their fear of Miss Everest. *"So far as I knew,"* said President McKenny, *"till then Miss Everest's demeanor had been all right. I never said she was crazy, I thought she was not in a normal mental condition. That conviction came after my information that she had used violent obscene and profane language. What Knowledge I had of her condition of mind, was what I had been told. I did not ask her to come to my office because I thought when I had written her brother, and had asked him to look into her case, I had fulfilled my duty."*

The next witness called was Miss Elizabeth West, the matron of the houses at 914 West Congress Street. She was described as a small white haired woman, who proved to be a willing witness. There was no trouble in drawing her testimony out, but trouble in stopping her. She was pleased her house had been on the approved list of the College for many years. *"Miss Everest came to me in September, 1912,"* she said, *"and continued there till August 1913. I did not turn her out when President McKenny advised me to. Why should I when I believed in her? During all that time I never saw anything out of the way in her, and never heard her swear or use vulgar language. I know everything that's going on in my house, and had she used this language I am sure I would have known. I have seen her in positions when I am sure she would have used profanity had she been in the habit of swearing. She certainly acted like a lady."*

*"One day President McKenny sent word for me to come to his office. I had callers at the hour appointed, and did not go. Later he called me over the telephone to ask why I had not come, and he said 'Miss West, don't you know you are going to lose all your roomers if Miss Everest stays?'"* I never heard it before, and I went right over to his office. It was

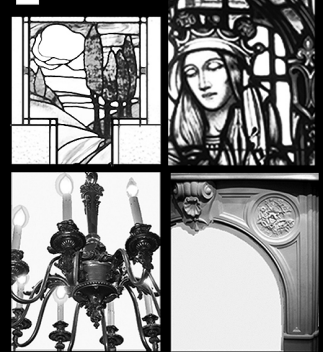
Dean Fuller that had sent me the message to come to his office before, and when a dean sends word to you you don't always pay attention to it, but a president sends you word to come you go immediately. I went, and right there in his office President McKenny said to me, *"Miss Everest is crazy, and all the students are afraid to stay in the house with her."* That's what he told me right there in his office. Then later my brother Jerome West and I went to his house to talk with him. But in his office, on December 4, 1912, he said to me, *"Miss Everest is crazy."* I said to him, *"That's a serious matter to say that,"* and he admitted it. He said that when she was alone in her room, she would rave and use profane language; that he had been told so and that on the Sunday before she had raved and swore when she was alone in the kitchen. I'm sure I never heard her. When I left that day he said to let her stay in my house, and say nothing, till her brother came and got her. The next day, December 9, I got a letter from the President saying that *"...the students were leaving my house, with his permission, because of conditions existing in my home, and that if proper conditions were brought about again, I would be put back on the approved list."*

Under cross-examination, Miss West had even more to say. *"This whole trouble started at a Halloween party I gave,"* said Miss West, *"I gave the party to sort of cement the friendship of all the young people in the house. I didn't know it then, but afterwards I learned that even then there was a conspiracy against Miss Everest, and between the Chapman's and the others in the house. It was going on on the sly, yes sir, on the sly, right under my nose - they never peeped a word to me about it. Miss Everest had a right to swear many times right along there, but she did not, no sir. This conspiracy started when Miss Everest made Mrs. Chapman stop playing the piano nights, when she wanted to study. First I knew of anything was when Presi-*

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dent McKenny told me of the awful charges laid against Miss Everest, and this trial is the outcome of that conspiracy. Those girls all stayed in my house till February, though President McKenny gave them permission to leave in December."

Under questioning Miss West admitted two of the girls rooming in the house at the time, told her they were in fear of Miss Everest and kept their rooms locked. She added she thought the girls were pretending. "Miss Everest always had a pleasant word for everybody," said Miss West. "I claim that this trouble all came through Mr. Chapman's influence over the girls in the house. Mr. Chapman wanted to get me to turn Miss Everest out, but I said 'No, she is in the hands of President McKenny, and it's his place to look after her and the other girls here. It's President McKenny's place to look after landladies too, and protect them.'"

Miss West was asked with whom she had talked of her conversation with President McKenny. She denied telling anyone of the conversation, except her brother Jerome. "Then," she was asked, "how did the story get all around your neighborhood?" "If I had a husband," she replied, "I'd have told him but I did not have a husband to talk the matter over with, and so I told my brother. He was all I told." Now Attorney Kirk asked, "Who told Miss Everest that the president had said she was crazy?" "I might have," she admitted after a moment of thought, "but I never told her for a long time afterwards. I never believed Miss Everest was crazy. What President McKenny said to me made no impression upon me. I hold President McKenny responsible for the entire gossip." At this the afternoon testimony ended.

The next morning Wednesday, May 19, 1915, President McKenny was recalled to the stand. He told the court that as the head of the college it was his duty to look after the students as parents would look after their own

children. When he learned of students making trouble in houses so that others could not study or that harmony could not prevail, then he had to take such action as was necessary. He told of investigating the case of Miss Everest, of writing to her brother and to schools where she had been before. After all this was completed he felt compelled to dismiss Miss Everest. President McKenny had presented Miss Everest with a letter to aid her in obtaining admission in another institution of higher learning should she desire.

Miss Everest took the stand and told the court, "It breaks me all up when people jeer at me and call me crazy," Because of the stories told of her, she said she was unable to hold employment. Even as the representative for a corset company she had failed to achieve success, on account of the unfriendly reception she received at the homes in the city.

Attorney Martin J. Cavanaugh moved for judgment for nonsuit in favor of President McKenny as his words complained of were not actionable in themselves and as President of the Normal College his words, if he had spoken such words, were privileged by reason of his being President of the Normal College when Miss Everest was a student there. "All courts should be open impartially to the poor as well as the rich," said Judge Kinne, "To the young as well as to the old, to the female as well as to the male. If they are not it is a mistake. But I cannot think that it was ever contemplated that the President of a college or university when in the honest, good faith he exercise the functions of such office and acts without malice should be subjected to the annoyance and vexation of a litigation in the courts. Undoubtedly mistakes may be made and errors may creep into the procedure, misunderstanding between students and their professors may arise and injustice may sometimes be done; but there are ample remedies, I think, provided within their own ju-

risdiction to correct these evils real or imaginary, and no one, I think should rush to the court thinking thereby that such relief is the proper panacea for all those difficulties. Some protection I think should be thrown around those who are thus placed at the head of our educational institutions."

"In the case here pending it would seem that the defendant, the President of the State Normal College, went to the limit in his aid and assistance to this plaintiff not only in suggesting to her the right to appeal from his ruling to the state board of education, but in according to her as just credentials as were possible for him to grant to her, but it seems that she preferred to drag him into court."

"This is an action of slander. The gist of an action of slander is malice either actual or presumed. It has seemed to me an extraordinary thing that such an action should have been brought against this defendant, as I have said before. He is the President of the state normal college and, from the evidence, the plaintiff is a former pupil of that school, and she brings this action against him for his conduct as such President."

"The evidence is undisputed that whatever the defendant did was done as a matter of discipline on his part, and was done by him as the chief executive of that school. In the law of slander there is such a thing as privileged communications. Now in a case like the present it is not absolutely privileged but is a qualified privilege." Judge Kinne explained the law of slander and privilege communications at length.

"In communications which are conditionally privileged, like the one here, if the party acts in good faith and without malice there is no liability. In the case before us there is no doubt in my mind but that the defendant acted in good faith, believing that statements to be true, and I do not think there is any evidence of



malice. It is not a question whether his action was wise or best, it was human, and all that the law can demand is that his conduct should be in perfect good faith and without malice."

Judge Kinne concluded his opinion by saying, "I think this suit, together with other litigation of the plaintiff shows fairly well that the defendant made no mistake in his action with respect to the plaintiff and I direct that the verdict be returned for the defendant."

Miss Everest began weeping when Judge Kinne referred to her past actions, and had to be removed from the courtroom until she had regained her composure. Attorneys for Mildred Everest said they would appeal the decision to the Michigan State Supreme Court. This they did and the court heard the case on January 17, 1917. The court announced its decision of April 9, 1917. The court reviewed the testimony of the case and found in favor of President McKenny. "In the instant case," noted the court

in its opinion, "we have a defendant who is at the head of a great institution of learning, who is expected, and whose duty it is, so far as he is able, to look after the students attending the school, and to look after their environment. He has relations too, with the keepers of the rooming houses in which these students find temporary homes. If the defendant, after receiving the communications mentioned from four out of the six roomers at the house of Elizabeth West and Mrs. Parkinson, had not conferred with those ladies, he would have been derelict in his duty. The occasion was privileged. A careful reading of the voluminous record does not disclose any evidence from which a legitimate inference of actual malice can be drawn, nor does it disclose a lack of good faith."

"The judgment is affirmed," concluded the court, "with defendant responsible for costs."

(James Mann is a local historian, a volunteer in the YHS Archives, and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)



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# Hi-Speed

BY GERRY PETY

Some 10 to 12 years ago a promotional photo was contributed to the YHS Archives, I believe by a Mr. Tom Crocker from Ypsilanti Township. This photo was of a new type of modern gas station the likes of which had never been seen here in Ypsilanti. It was a clean and bright, white brick building sitting prominently on the main drag to downtown Ypsilanti, right where River Street intersects with East Michigan Avenue. It was built in 1938 right next to the original site of Millers Dairy Store and Packers Grocery. Mr. Davis of Ypsilanti was the first proprietor of this commercial Art Deco service station. (*Much later, the site of the Hi Speed Gas Station would be a new, larger version of Miller's Ice Cream and eventually a Kentucky Fried Chicken Store.*)

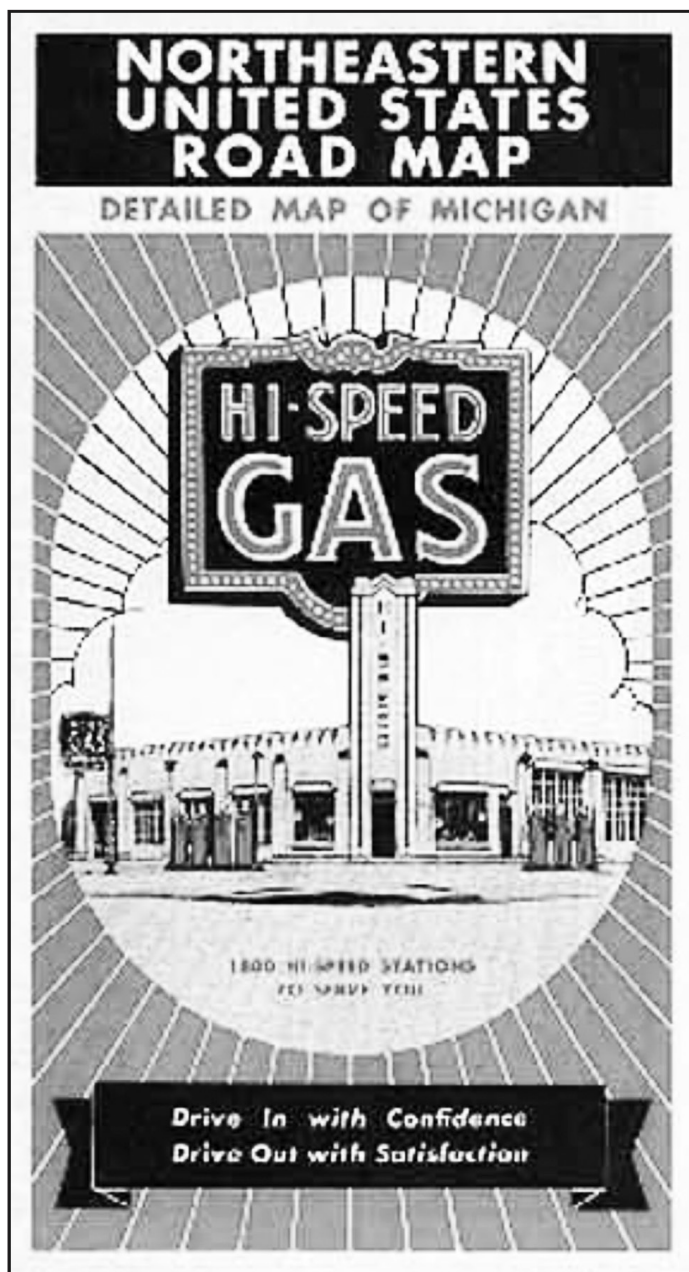
Over the last 15 years I have viewed many photos of early gasoline/service stations right here in Ypsilanti, from those uniquely designed stations of Ralph Gerganoff, an Ypsilanti architect of note; but most of the stations were designed by corporate bureaucrats whose concern was to get gasoline into the paying customers tank with the least amount of trouble: efficient, low cost, and speedy conveyance of a very dangerous product. Gasoline was, in fact, was a *very dangerous* commodity back then. Gas dispensing methods developed from pouring gas directly into cars using oil cans filled from a 55 gallon barrel on sidewalks, such as occurred in front of the hardware store on North Huron street and Congress Street (pre 1915), right up to hand pumps and electricity driven pumping methods. It is amazing to me how many people were not immolated by early twentieth century gas dispensing techniques. These early filling stations were very dangerous places, in deed!

What a picture it paints in one's mind about the dangers of the handling of gas in sometimes such cavalier fashion. Gasoline before the 1930's, and even before the 1940's, still had a very low 'flash point' and was very dangerous, compared to gasoline of today which while easy to ignite, is nothing compared to the extremely low octane of the period. Gas did not just burn, and expand in the engine to propel the automobile, it literally exploded under the lower compression engines of the day. Sometimes just putting a small flame or spark right on the gas-soaked ground would explode with extreme violence! The stuff was, to say the least, very unpredictable. Movie comedians of the 1920s to 1950s, Laurel and Hardy, used this very explosive nature of gasoline in many of their early short subject films when their car would be blown to bits because of the explosive gasoline!

What brought this to my attention was that



Hi Speed Victory Club Badge.



Typical Hi Speed Service Station.

the picture shows what appears to be the latest Wayne Company, Computer Gas pumps; they were a new type of gas pump that mechanically calculated total gas purchase, based on the number of gallons times the stated gas price shown on the pump face, all calculated to the last cent. And yes, it even had the little sight glass with a spinning impeller right above the 'total purchase' to prove to the purchaser that gas was actually flowing into the car's gas tank - and also the '*ding*' at every gallon interval. These are some of the things which you do not see or hear anymore as you gas up your own car. Back then, the gas attendant was doing all of the work of cleaning the car's windshield, checking your cars oil, tires and pumping your gas! I personally remember a station where I had my gas tank filled back in the 1960's; Roger was the gas attendant of a Sunoco station where I used to buy gas. He in his company provided uni-

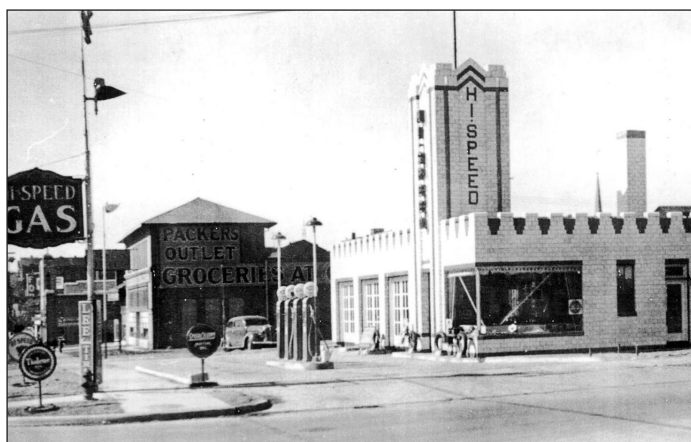




A Wayne, Computer pump c1940.

form would come out to the driver's window and ask, "Gerry, how much gas do you want? Fill her up, Roger, I would say!" He would then set the auto pump mechanism and go about checking all of these things I just mentioned, while I sat in my car smelling the sweet gas fumes - they smelled soooo good back then when the gasoline was infused with Lead Tetra Ethyl, a lead additive used to increase the octane level from regular to High Test or premium grade. The Romans learned two millennia ago that you could use pulverized lead to sweeten wine that was somewhat flat and sour. Well, lead also beaten down to the atomic level would do the same thing for gasoline and increase the smoothness of the burn in higher compression engines. This was accomplished by retarding the burn rate of the gasoline to raise the flash point. (Word of warning: if you should somehow invent a time machine and want to go back to the late 1930's or early 1940's to get some of that 17.9 cent/gallon gas for your car-- DON'T DO IT. Pre 1950's gasoline still had not risen on the true, octane scale to what modern cars need - what you would save on fuel you would need to spend on major repairs to your car, as octane ratings were insufficiently low, with inflated octane numbers, compared to today's conservative octane ratings!)

The Hi Speed Gas Company was the marketing arm of the Hickock Oil Company of Toledo, Ohio and started in 1917.



A typical Hi Speed gas station in the 1950s.

In the early 1950's the company was completely bought out by the Pure Oil Co and that was the end of the Hi Speed brand. There were some 1,800 stations all over eastern Michigan and out to the East coast. They gave away lots of green depression glass and road maps. Hi Speed was especially known for its Victory Club, where they gave out to the kids of the drivers, badges and picture cards, much like baseball cards, with the arms, aircraft, ships and other military armaments used during the war! McDonald's would use this very marketing scheme to win over the younger children and teenagers to become the largest purveyors of hamburger in the US! Either you win over the children or you lose the war over where the family eats out. In this



Typical U033 HI-SPEED VICTORY CLUB "War Album Series" card front.

case, dear ole dad had to buy HI Speed gasoline to get these valuable premiums.

When Hi Speed built new stations from the ground up, like the one at 41 East Michigan Avenue. They were equipped with the most modern, up to date, auto service equipment including hydraulic lifts rather than mechanical ones, and equipment needed to repair, and or replace, tires. Along with all of this they had their own Hi Speed chemicals to add to your car, all housed in these modernistic, high tower designs and with multiple service bays to keep Ypsilantians on the move into the future.

*For the nostalgia seeker of HI Speed Gas Stations search the following websites:*

- (1) <http://www.oldgas.com/shoptalk/ubb/Forum4/HTML/000760.html>
- (2) <http://www.skytamer.com/UO33.html>
- (3) [www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com) (put 'HI Speed Victory Club' in the search bar)

*(Gerry Pety is the Director of the YHS Archives.)*

# A New Police Headquarters?

BY JAMES MANN

The construction of the Bomber Plant at Willow Run in 1941 presented the city of Ypsilanti with some problems, such as the need for a new police headquarters. The old headquarters, then at 56 North Huron Street, was inadequate for the expected upturn in population the bomber plant would attract. In the old building officers had to crowd into quarters on the second floor, or assemble on the stairs leading to the cramped first floor desk room. Not the best of conditions for the daily briefing. *"The basement in the present station is also inadequate for housing the 20 officers for instructional purposes,"* noted *"The Ypsilanti Daily Press"* of Thursday, April 2, 1942.

Another problem for the police was parking, *"Automobiles of the police department are now parked on N. Huron Steet in front of the station and many times it is difficult for officers to find parking spaces for the vehicles near the station. The time taken for walking to the station after parking cars and taken for walking from the station to the cars is considered wasted time,"* the account reported. The solution to the problem, of course, was for the city to build a new police headquarters, on city owned property in a central location. Such a proposal was under consideration. *"In the basement of the suggested two story building, quarters will be provided for assembly and training rooms. Here officers will gather to receive instructions from their chief and to train in methods which will better law enforcement in*



The old Police Headquarters in 1941 was located at 56 North Huron Street in Ypsilanti.



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the city." The basement would also include photographic space, property rooms and sanitary equipment. There would also be a garage with space for four cars.

Plans for the first floor included a room for issuing licenses, a detective's room, and office for the chief and the police desk and jail. *"The jail will be in the rear of the building and the other rooms will be conveniently located near the police desk at the front of the structure. Suggested plans include a justice court department on the second floor and women's detention quarters. Much time is now lost between the police station, 56 N. Huron St., and the city hall which houses the justice court, 204 N. Huron St. Officers must come each morning from the station bringing complaint sheets, valuables of prisoners and other necessary data then go to the basement of the city hall where prisoners are quartered or to the upper floors in the city hall where women and young people are housed. Officers and their prisoners must then ascend or descend to second floor where the justice court is established."*

*"In the proposed building the jail, women's detention quarters and justice court would be conveniently located so that the loss in time is considerably lessened."* All the citizens of Ypsilanti had to do to secure such a building was to approve a \$36,000 bond issue at the general elec-



In 1941 the City Hall at 204 North Huron Street housed the Justice Court.

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tion of Monday, April 6, 1942. Voters did not approve the bond issue, so the proposed building was never built. Instead, the police moved into an existing building at the corner of Ferris and Washington Streets. This was formerly the Bonisteel property, which had been converted into a modern, well-arranged office space.

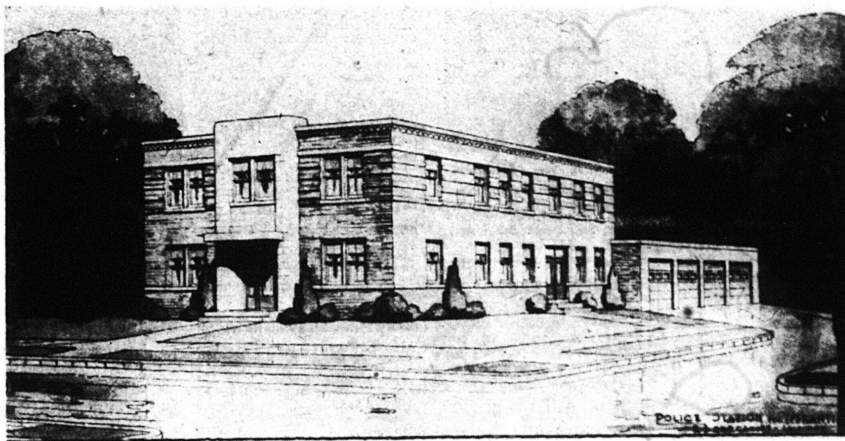
*"The main office opening," reported "The Ypsilanti Daily Press" of Wednesday, September 9, 1942, "is from either Ferris St. or Washington St. and on the west and south sides is a brown counter equipped with adequate drawer space which harmonizes with the other fixtures. New equipment includes a larger PBR switchboard, a radio receiver*

*set, and a public address system."*

The main floor had the license bureau, a space for taking fingerprints, an office for the chief and an office for the secretary. On the second floor was a large assembly room, as well as an office for a detective and a meter room. *"The interior is painted in buff with brown woodwork, and the floors have been newly finished. New fluorescent lighting fixtures have been installed."* Still, the officers must have wished for the proposed modern building that had been suggested.

*(James Mann is a local historian, a volunteer in the YHS Archives, and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)*

Proposed Police Headquarters For Ypsilanti



Above is architect's drawing of the proposed police and court building on which taxpayers will cast ballots Monday. The building, if approved, will house the municipal court on the second floor where women's detention quarters will also be provided. A bureau for issuance of driver's licenses, a detectives' quarters, office for the chief

of police, complaint desk, assembly room and training quarters for police officers, photographic room and garage will be housed in the same building. It is planned to erect the structure on city owned, centrally located property.

Proposed Police Headquarters for Ypsilanti which was not approved in 1942.

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