

# Ypsilanti GLEANINGS

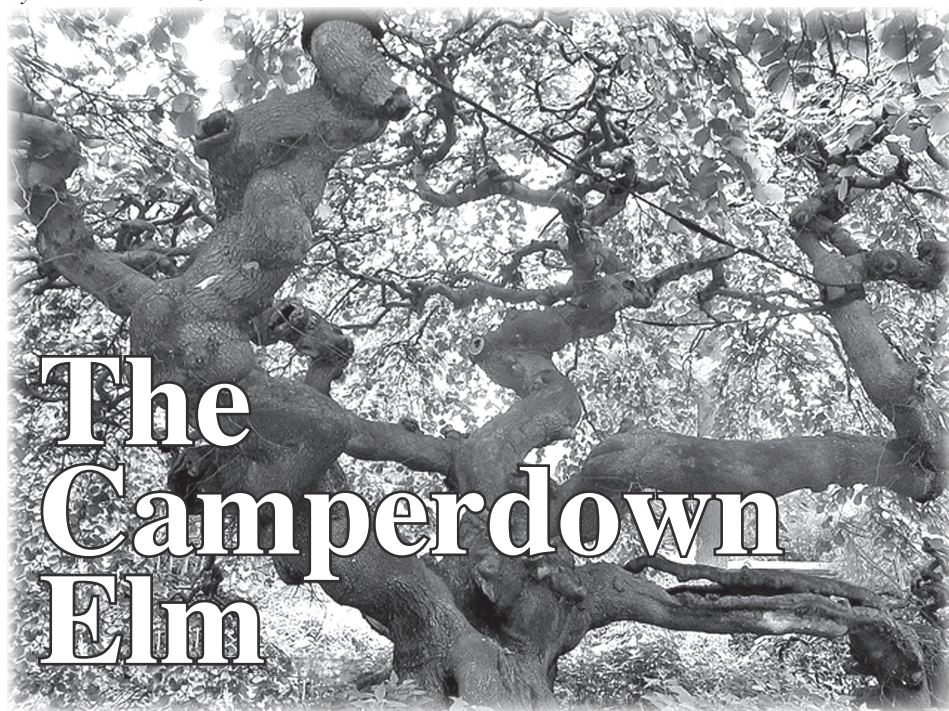
Official publication of the Ypsilanti Historical Society, featuring  
articles and reminiscences of the people and places in the Ypsilanti area



WINTER 2012

## Ypsilanti's Natural Crowning Jewel

By Janice Anschuetz



# The Camperdown Elm

*The Camperdown Elm in Prospect Park in Brooklyn, New York was planted in 1897*

With the advent of a tree farm on the Water Street property this year, and the recent audit of city trees, it is fitting to talk about one of the most beautiful and elegant trees that once were plentiful in Ypsilanti—"ulmus glabra Camperdownii," or the Camperdown Elm. With its distinctive form and elegance, the Camperdown Elm served as the crowning jewel of many Victorian homes or gardens, and could also be seen among the hills and woodlands of Highland Cemetery. Unfortunately, most of these trees have now died of old age. A few, however, can still be seen, and perhaps this article will inspire some residents to plant new Camperdown Elms that can be admired and cherished by future generations.

The special appeal of the Camperdown Elm derives largely from its unusual anatomy: the tree's abundant canopy consists not of normal elm branches and leaves, but

of a grafted crown composed of root-like branches and oval leaves. For a brief period in the spring, the canopy is colored by a lush blossoming of paper-thin chartreuse flowers.

Every living Camperdown Elm is in a way a direct descendant of the first Camperdown Elm, which was created around 1840 in Scotland. It seems that the head forester at the time, a David Taylor by name, noticed an unusual branch growing along the forest grounds on the estate of the Earl of Camperdown, which was located in Dundee, Scotland. The discovery inspired the earl's gardener to cut off the top of a common Wych Elm tree and create a variant of it by grafting a piece of the branch to the trunk. Like all Wych Elms, the new creation maintained the Latin genus/species botanical name of *ulmus glabra*, in which *ulmus* refers [continued on page 3]

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# **From the President's Desk**

*By Alvin E. Rudisill*

Our major maintenance efforts over the past several weeks have been dedicated to: 1) the repair and painting of the front porches and storm door on the outside of the Museum; 2) the repair and painting of the inside steps to the basement and the second floor; and 3) the total stripping, renovation and painting of the storage closet on the second floor off the Craft Room. Our sincere thanks to all those involved in these efforts and to the volunteers who moved artifacts around so the repairs could be completed.

Our September membership meeting and program on the "Norton Family in Ypsilanti" and the dedication of the "Norton Family Solarium" resulted in a record turnout for the session. Fifty-five members attended the meeting including several members of the Norton family. If you have not yet had the opportunity to visit the solarium, viewed the new name plaque and Norton family pictures, and picked up a copy of the special issue of the GLEANINGS detailing 150 years of the Norton family in Ypsilanti, please do so in the near future.

All of us were saddened by the recent death of Peter Fletcher. He has been a long-time supporter and benefactor of the Society, served as our president in 1990 to 1992, and most recently was an active member of our Endowment Fund Advisory Board. His father, Foster Fletcher, was instrumental in establishing the Society and served as the Ypsilanti City Historian and director of the Museum and Archives for many years.

One of our major efforts continues to be raising the funds needed to pay off the balance owed the City of Ypsilanti for the purchase of the property at 220 North Huron Street. We are still approximately \$30,000 short of our \$125,000 goal and our Endowment Fund Advisory Board will be planning and implementing fundraising programs over the next few months to close out this effort. Our thanks to all those who have made significant contributions in support of the YHS Museum and Archives over the past few years. We receive many complements about the progress made since purchasing the property from the City. This progress would not have been possible without the many individuals who have devoted their time and effort and/or made financial contributions in support of our many improvement projects.

If you are not currently on our email listserv please call the Museum at 734-482-4990 and have your name added. We are using the *listserv* only for program notifications. Your email address will not be shared with others. Also, please check the Event Schedule on our web site for upcoming special programs and displays.

We are looking for volunteers as docents for the Museum or research assistants for the Archives. Both the Museum and Archives are open from 2 to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. If you are available during that time and are interested in helping us preserve the historical information and artifacts of the area, or in educating the general public about our history, please give me a call at 734-476-6658.

**Ypsilanti Historical Society**  
**220 North Huron Street - Ypsilanti, MI 48197**  
<http://ypsilantihistoricasociety.org/>

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### **Welcome!**

The Ypsilanti Historical Museum is a museum of local history which is presented as an 1860 home. The Museum and Fletcher-White Archives are organized and open to all volunteers and our members.

### **A Matter of Trust**

*For information about upcoming Society events, visit us online at:*  
[www.ypsilantihistoricasociety.org](http://www.ypsilantihistoricasociety.org)



## The Camperdown Elm

[continued from page one]

to a “deciduous tree” and *glabra* means “smooth” – denoting the quality of the leaf surfaces. The Camperdown Elm variant took on the added reference *Camperdownii*, and is known formally as *ulmus glabra Camperdownii*. From the initial grafting, it produced a luxurious canopy of root-like branches and smooth-surfaced leaves that looked as if it grew naturally out of the top of the severed tree trunk. Even today, every Camperdown Elm must be individually created, using a descendant piece of the unusual branch found on the Camperdown estate. No Camperdown Elm can grow directly from seed.

In Ypsilanti during the nineteenth century, the unusual make-up and appearance of the Camperdown Elm satisfied the Victorian passion for curiosities, and copies of the tree were featured in a variety of public places. They served as memorial icons at Highland Cemetery. They could be seen, as well, at botanical gardens, such as the one at the Hutchinson mansion on the southeast corner of North River and East Forest, and at public parks, such as Recreation Park, where a withered and



**Above:** *Camperdown Elm (August 1990) at the Swaine House in Ypsilanti on the corner of North River and East Forest*

**Right:** *Camperdown Elm in winter when the root-like branches are exposed*

dying vestige of the trees remains to this day. Two Camperdown Elms also graced the campus of Eastern Michigan University, standing outside King Hall until they died about ten years ago. They were elegant legacies of a stately mansion once located there, owned by Samuel Post, a prominent



## Ypsilanti Historical Society

# CALENDAR

**November 22**

**Thanksgiving Day**  
Museum & Archives Closed



**December 9**

**Christmas**  
**Open House**  
Noon to 5 p.m.

**December 25**

**Christmas**  
**Day**  
Museum &  
Archives  
Closed



**January 1 (2013)**  
**New Years Day**  
Museum & Archives Closed

politician and Ypsilanti businessman in the mid-1800s. The Post home was torn down and replaced in 1939 by the King Hall dormitory for women – which was itself renovated in 1971 to house the music and special education departments, and is currently home to the EMU Women’s Center, the Office of the Dean of Students, and several other university functions.

Our own family home, the Swaine House, at North River and East Forest, was also graced for many years by a Camperdown Elm on our front lawn. We loved the tree, and our neighbors and passersby were enthralled by it, giving it nicknames like “the umbrella tree” or “the upside-down tree.” Both were accurate descriptions. The tree’s root-like branches twisted and turned in an amazing way. And, with its weeping-type canopy and dense leaf cover, it could indeed serve as an umbrella to provide protection from rain and sun. The tree also definitely looked upside-down. Every Camperdown Elm displays a conspicuous graft line, with a different type of bark above and below it. [next page]



## The Camperdown Elm

[continued from page 3]

### GENE BUTMAN FORD SALES



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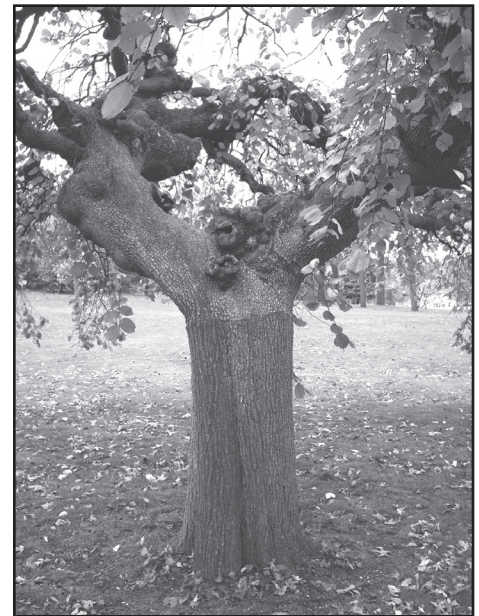
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*The graft line is clearly visible on the Camperdown Elm in Recreation Park*

Like most Camperdown Elms in Ypsilanti, our own died a slow and painful death in old age, despite the treatment we had arborists give it. The ones at Highland Cemetery are also gone, and this may well be the last year for the spindly and deformed specimen at Recreation Park on Congress. Nevertheless, several of the trees can still be found in town. There is one on High Street at Grove, and a magnificent one I like to visit on Hamilton Street, north of Cross. The one at the Hutchinson mansion on North River and East Forest also seems to be thriving. I might add that, in travels with my husband, I have seen an abundance of Camperdown Elms on Mackinac Island, and others in places as far away as China and Great Britain.

Any Ypsilanti residents who may be interested in planting their own Camperdown Elm can take heart in the fact that the tree is hardy and survives our Michigan winters well. Still, it should be noted that Camperdown Elms must be



*The Camperdown Elm at the Hutchinson mansion on North River Street*

given a great deal of water in periods of summer drought, and also be sprayed often for leaf miner - which is the reason I myself don't wish to plant another one. Those who are willing to provide the necessary maintenance, however, will find a great reward in the tree's distinctive beauty and style. A number of current YouTube videos offer a wonderful introduction to this marvelous tree. (You'll find them by simply googling "Camperdown Elm YouTube videos.") If you find yourself in a buying mood, Camperdown Elms can be purchased through several suppliers that advertise on the web, and I have even seen them for sale on eBay.

*[Janice Anschuetz is a local history buff and a regular contributor to the GLEANINGS.]*

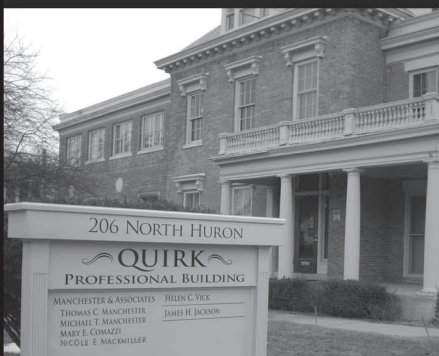
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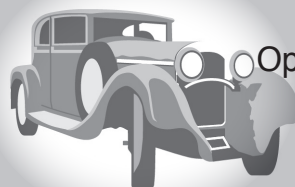
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# Climbing the Camperdown Elm as Children

By Robert and Eric Anshuetz

One of the advantages of growing up in an old house is that there are lots of mature trees on the property—trees over 100 years of age. The Anshuetz property on the corner of Forest Avenue and River Street had several large sugar maples once evenly spaced down both streets that framed the property. These trees were tapped for maple syrup in the 1980s, and produced buckets full of sap that boiled down to a few gallons of syrup. The Anshuetz family was also fortunate to have backyard “woods” lining the driveway leading back to their garage that had formerly been a school house and a malt house. In these woods, there are mostly more sugar maples, but also box elders, elms, mulberries, and walnut trees, plus a very old and large apple tree. In the front of the house, they had two very interesting and prominent trees—a Camperdown Elm which no longer survives, and a Japanese Maple which still exists to this day.

These trees played an important role for the five Anshuetz children who grew up in the Swaine-Anshuetz house. Twins Robert and Eric Anshuetz moved to the house when they were four years old and lived there all the way through college. In the years before computer games and VCR tapes, the twins spent a lot of time playing outside and constructed

“...a bird’s eye view...”

several tree houses in the maples and box elders near the back driveway. The tree houses weren’t elaborate—nor were they too high off the ground—but they were fun places to spend time after school and on the weekends. These tree houses would be torn down after only a couple weeks—or often they just fell apart.

The Anshuetz children got bird’s eye views of their yard by climbing high up in the many trees in the yard. The sugar maples that lined the street had branches that were too high and out of reach, so they rarely climbed them. Their favorite tree to climb was the Camperdown Elm in the front yard, which regrettably died of old age and had to be cut down around the year 2000. The Camperdown Elm is a grafted tree where the branches of a Camperdown Elm are



*The Camperdown Elm at the Anshuetz home died a slow death and had to be reduced to stumps*

grafted to the severed trunk of a Wych Elm at a very young age. The leaves grow from the grafted branches and form a gnarled canopy distinctive of this variety of tree. The Anshuetz’ Camperdown Elm had a distinct ring near the top where it had been grafted. Above this ring were three primary branches. These three branches became designated sitting spots for Eric, Robert, and their friends. Each one of the children took command of one of the three primary branches and sat in the “saddle” bend of them. They would sit up there for hours on end. It was easy to climb the tree, because there was a big knot that could be grabbed like a saddle-horn that was just within reach of their hands. They would

then pull themselves up and each would shimmy over to their designated positions in the tree. Sometimes, they would climb far out on the branches to where it would almost be at the snapping point.

In the backyard woods, their favorite tree to climb was the heritage variety apple tree. The apple tree was very old, and several of its branches were rotten and had to be sawed off periodically. This was a very tall apple tree, reaching a height of 50 feet or so. Every other year or so, the apple tree produced lots of apples. In the fall, the apples were all over the ground by the garage, and the Anshuetz children would often throw them over the house or hit them with baseball bats and watch them splatter. During the autumn, there used to be a great smell of apples in the backyard

when they dropped from the tree. The Anshuetz family never really ate many of the apples because they had little worm holes in most of them. On the apple tree in their backyard, there was one horizontal branch that stuck out from the tree that several neighborhood children all climbed on. When they got a little older, the children would climb higher vertically into the tree. The Anshuetz children nailed “steps” into the apple tree to make it up to that lowest horizontal branch, because it was too high to reach by hand.

One very large elm tree that once dominated these backyard woods succumbed to Dutch Elm disease in the early 1970s, but several of its sapling relatives grew to large trees and survive to this day. Meeting the same fate as the large elm and the Camperdown Elm, several other trees on the Anshuetz property are no longer around. The apple tree succumbed to old age and had to be cut down around 1990. Several 100-year-old sugar maples declined over the years and in 2011 had to be removed. Several small fruit trees planted by the Anshuetz family were removed over the years as well. Fortunately, several sugar maples along Forest Avenue and River Street are still standing, along with several maples, elms, and walnut trees which are still thriving in the backyard woods. The very beautiful Japanese Maple still frames the front entrance of the house.

*[Robert and Eric Anshuetz grew up on the northeast corner of North River Street and Forest Avenue.]*

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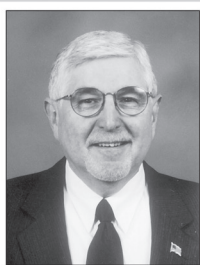
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## Museum Advisory Board Report

*By Kathryn Howard, Chair-Museum Advisory Board*

It was a very busy fall at the Museum and our Holiday Season is going to be the same. Our first activity for the Holiday Season is our Open House on December 9th. This year we have been asked to be on the Meals on Wheels Holiday Home Tour, which is a benefit for the Meals on Wheels organization. On December 8th, in the evening, we will be open from 6 to 8 p.m. for the Candlelight Home Tour and will again host the Home Tour from Noon to 4:30 p.m. on December 9th. Therefore, since the YHS annual Open House will be from Noon to 4:30 p.m. on December 9th our docents will be doing double duty during that time. We are very grateful we can do this for such a worthy cause. There will be special music and refreshments at both events. Music will be performed by "Harmony 4 Fun" on Saturday evening and by "The Arbor Consorts" on Sunday afternoon.



*Silver tea services are now on display in the library*

After a wonderful Quilt Exhibit and our War of 1812 exhibits we have some very interesting new exhibits for you. In the kitchen showcase, we have all of our china tea pots displayed. We have some very special ones for you. In the dining room in the glass top exhibit table we have Nancy Wheeler's collection of individual salts. These tiny crystal salts are just beautiful to see. There are a total of fifty or more. The Museum's lovely 19th and 20th century tea services are also on display. In the Starkweather Library some of our ink wells and pens are there with other writing materials. One of the ink wells is from the old Cleary College. Also on display is an

example of how they used to seal letters with wax. We are planning on some indoor activities for the winter including sessions on how various artifacts were made. More information will be coming.

Upstairs off the Craft Room, Jerry Jennings has made a wonderful clothes closet and Karen Nickels and Virginia Davis-Brown have it full of our wonderful clothes collection. We're very proud of it. Thank you Jerry, Karen and Virginia.

Most of you have probably heard by now that Peter Fletcher passed away. A loyal family to us. Peter and Foster, Peter's father, were very generous to our Museum for display and improvement. The antique chandeliers in the Milliman Room and Front Hall are in memory of Peter's mother Mary.

We are open all winter from 2 to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. Please drop in and say hello. We are not all Snow Birds. Have a wonderful Holiday Season and winter!



*Our Christmas tree will be one of the features at our Holiday Open House on December 9th*



# Dedication of Civil War Memorial Marker

By Michael E. Van Wasshnova



**Above:**  
Ladies and gentlemen of the  
17<sup>th</sup> Michigan Re-enactment unit

**Left:**  
Camp 427 of Dearborn in front of the  
Ypsilanti High School paintings

On Saturday, September 22, 2012, at 10 a.m., several area residents witnessed the dedication of Ypsilanti's latest historical marker. The marker was installed in front of the Thompson building that, during the Civil War, was used as barracks for soldiers on their way to the front. Members of the 17<sup>th</sup> Michigan Re-enactment Unit had worked hard to have the marker installed. These men and women re-enact many of the battles that the original 17<sup>th</sup> Michigan fought during the war. Members of the 17<sup>th</sup> in attendance were; Capt. Doug Nosbisch, Gary Pritchard, Gerald Turlo and John Delcamp. The women of the 17<sup>th</sup> were represented by Lynn Kalil, Sofia Malynowskiy, Sally Nosbisch and Sandi Pritchard. The men were dressed in their period uniforms, the women in period dresses.

Also in attendance were three Camps of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW). The Camps involved were Gilluly-Kingsley Camp 120 from Howell, Carpenter/Welch Camp 180 of Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti and Sergeant John Cosbey Camp 427 from Dearborn. Members of the SUVCW promote the motto: "Keeping green the memory of the Grand Army of the Republic." The one member of Camp 120 in attendance was Commander Bill Dixon. Members of Camp 180 were; Commander William Eaton, Dan Benfield, Dave Speer and Michael Van Wasshnova. Members of Camp 427 were; Commander Rick Danes, Jack Underwood, Ed Binkley, Dave Curtis, Rick Bower, John Reed, Jerry Jacobs, Allen Treppa and Gary Pritchard.

The ceremonies were held under partly cloudy skies with a stiff wind blowing. Introductions of the principal participants were given by Captain Doug Nosbisch. Gary Pritchard told of his work in getting the marker installed and the history of the 17<sup>th</sup> Michigan Company E., also known as the Normal Company. It was named the Normal Company due to the large number of Normal College (now Eastern Michigan University) graduates and students of the college. The company fought in many of the major battles of the war.

## Ypsilanti's newest marker has the following inscription:

### *The Barracks*

*When the Civil War began in 1861, this corner site housed a commercial building called the Norris Block. Its location across the street from the railroad station made it an ideal place for short-term lodging for enlistees waiting to be sent off to battle, and locals soon dubbed it "The Barracks." The Ypsilanti Light Guard, a local militia company that became Company H, First Michigan Infantry, stayed here in the spring of 1861. They mustered in Detroit on May 1 and arrived in Washington, D.C., on May 16. Recruits for the Fourteenth Michigan Infantry, including 129 men from Washtenaw County, spent six months here from September 1861 to February 1862 while the regiment's ranks were filled. The Fourteenth first saw action as part of the siege of Corinth, Mississippi.*

### *Ypsilanti in the Civil War*

*More than 4,000 soldiers from Washtenaw County served during the Civil War. Hundreds bivouacked here, in the Norris Block, before mustering into service. More than thirty men who were students or graduates of the Michigan State Normal School (now Eastern Michigan University) joined Company E of the Seventeenth Michigan Infantry in 1862. Their first action was at South Mountain in Maryland. In December 1863, the First Michigan Colored Infantry stopped here as part of its state-wide recruiting drive. In 1902 veterans of the Twenty-Seventh Michigan Infantry held their reunion here. Since the 1880s this site has been known as the Thompson Block and has had a variety of commercial uses.*

Pritchard also described some of the people and organizations who helped the 17<sup>th</sup> in their dream of having a historical marker realized in Ypsilanti commemorating the veterans of the Civil War. These people were William Christen, Ted J. Ligibel PhD., Eastern Michigan University; Connie Locker, city history contact for the city of Ypsilanti; The Beal Group for doing the work of installing the marker; Matt Van Acker of the State of Michigan; the City of Ypsilanti; Jack Dempsey of the Civil War 150<sup>th</sup> Commission and Glen Anderson, State Representative.

Commander Eaton of SUVCW Camp 180 was asked to speak a few words for the dedication. *[continued overleaf]*

## Dedication of Civil War Marker *[continued from page 7]*



**Left:**  
*Camp 180 from  
Ann Arbor/  
Ypsilanti in front  
of the marker*

**Below left:**  
*Rifle salute by  
17<sup>th</sup> Michigan  
Re-enactment  
members*

**Below:**  
*Commander  
William  
Eaton reading  
dedication speech*



John Delcamp, a Son of Ypsilanti and member of the 17<sup>th</sup>, spoke about the portraits that had been painted on the wall of the building by art students from Ypsilanti High School. There are three portraits of citizens of Ypsilanti on the murals that were instrumental in the war effort. John also read a poem that was written at the war's end that was very emotional.

The unveiling of the marker was performed by Gary Pritchard and John Dempsey. Following the unveiling, a prayer was read by Capt. Nosbisch, and then a wreath was laid at the marker by Lynn Kalil representing the Ladies of the 17<sup>th</sup>.

Many folks in the area were not prepared for the next event—a rifle salute followed by taps. The rifle salute was performed by members of Company E of the 17<sup>th</sup> Michigan Re-enactors. Taps was performed by another of their members.

A pot-luck dinner was offered to the participants at John Delcamp's house after the ceremonies.

*[Michael E. Van Wasshova participated in the marker dedication ceremonies as a member of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) Camp 180 of Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti.]*



## Over 3500 State Historical Sites in Michigan 20 in Ypsilanti:

### Ballard House

125 N. Huron

### Brinkerhoff-Becker House

601 W. Forest

### Civil War Barracks

River @ Cross

### Cleary College (info site)

2170 Washtenaw

### William M. Davis House

(Ladies' Lit)

218 N. Washington info site)

### Eastern Michigan College

College Place @ Forest

### First Baptist Church

1110 W. Cross

### First Methodist Episcopal Church

209 Washtenaw

### First Presbyterian Church

300 N. Washington

### Hutchinson House

600 N. River

### Elijah McCoy

(commemorative site)

229 W. Michigan

### MCRR Freighthouse

435 Market Place

### Michigan Interurbans (info site)

E. Michigan & N. Park

### Prospect Park

Prospect @ E. Cross

### Science & Manual Training Bldg.

(Scherzer Hall)

Putnam @ W. Forest

### Starkweather Hall

901 W. Forest

### Willow Run Bomber Plant

Tyler/Hudson @ US 12

### Ypsilanti Area

(Ypsilanti Historical Society

Museum) 220 N. Huron

### Ypsilanti Historic District

Approximately 200 properties

### Ypsilanti Water Works Stand Pipe

(water tower) Cross @ Summit



# Peter B. Fletcher

By Alvin Rudisill

**T**he Ypsilanti Historical Society lost a great friend and benefactor with the passing of Peter Bacon Fletcher on September 29, 2012. Peter served as the President of the Society from 1990 to 1992 and was currently providing leadership as a member of the YHS Endowment Fund Advisory Board.

Fletcher was born at Beyer Hospital in Ypsilanti on February 29, 1932. Although he was 80 years old at the time of his death, he was only able to celebrate 20 birthdays because February 29<sup>th</sup> appears on our calendars every four years. Peter always had fun explaining this phenomenon and told people to “conserve your pity and bestow it upon those who truly need it when you consider the circumstances of those of us born on February 29<sup>th</sup>.”

Peter was educated in the Ypsilanti Public Schools, maintained an all “A” average, and was valedictorian of his class. In high school he received an American Legion Citizenship Award and a Certificate of Merit from the Michigan High School Forensic Association. Following high school he was awarded a Regents’ Scholarship at the University of Michigan and majored in Political Science. He earned academic honors all four years and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, Phi Kappa Phi and Pi Sigma Alpha. He graduated in 1954 and for two years was employed by the Frigidaire Division of General Motors in Detroit and Dayton, Ohio.

In 1957 he returned to Ypsilanti and joined the staff of the Ypsilanti Credit Bureau that was founded by his father, Foster Fletcher, in 1924. Peter took over the ownership of the Bureau in 1969.

Over the years Peter held numerous political offices within Michigan and in the Republican Party. In 1975 he was named National GOP Committee Member and in 1976 he served as Gerald Ford’s Michigan Campaign Manager during the presidential campaign.

In 1972 Fletcher was appointed Chairman of the Michigan State Highway Commission. In this position he controlled a budget of \$5 billion and a work force of 4,300. Although he is well known for his many statewide contributions in this position, he will always be remembered for putting the fictitious towns of “Beat OSU” and “GoBlu” on the official highway map for the State of Michigan.

Some of the many other positions held by Fletcher include: Trustee on the Board of Michigan State University, Ypsilanti Representative on the People’s Community Hospital Board, Treasurer and Board member of the Ypsilanti Players, Director of the Chamber of Commerce, Chair of the Chamber Citizens Advisory Committee on Urban Renewal, Director of the Rotary Club of Ypsilanti, Chair of the Ypsilanti Area Washtenaw County Cancer Crusade, Director of the Ypsilanti Community Chest, Director of the National Bank of Ann Arbor, Board Chairman for the First Methodist Church, Chair of the Washtenaw County Republican Committee, and many others too numerous to mention.

Fletcher launched the “Fletcher Forum,” a group that now meets each Saturday morning at the VFW Hall on Michigan Avenue. The event draws city and county officials, attorneys, activists and others interested in local, state and national politics. The discussions are spirited but attendees walk out smiling and often meet after the sessions for breakfast.

In 1995, Peter discussed with Jack Miller the history of some of the vehicles and dealership records that were part of Miller’s Hudson dealership. Peter told Jack, “We have to save this history!” Peter then talked to his longtime friend Paul W. Skip Ungrodt about starting an auto museum. In a matter of days, Peter, Skip and Jack met at the Sidetrack for lunch and shortly after a museum telling the automotive history of Ypsilanti was



*The YHS lost a great friend and benefactor with the passing of Peter Bacon Fletcher*


born. The next day, Peter told Jack to obtain the best price on the building next to the Hudson dealership and bind the deal with no more than \$500. In less than a week, the building at 112 E. Cross Street along with the Hudson dealership building would become the Ypsilanti Automotive Museum.

The Museum opened to the public at the 1995 Heritage Festival and featured Peter’s 1972 Rolls Royce, 1976 Cadillac, and 1979 Lincoln (1710 actual miles). Skip contributed his 1980 Avanti II and Jack added several of his Hudson automobiles. Peter often said “People do not realize America’s love affair with automobiles.” He was the founding chairman of the museum’s non-profit board and provided leadership until he passed away.

Peter’s father, Foster Fletcher, helped found the Ypsilanti Historical Society in 1960 and served as the City Historian from 1963 to 1985. Foster Fletcher’s hard work at collecting, cataloging and preserving historical information and artifacts laid the foundation for the YHS Museum and Archives. The Fletcher/White Archives is named in his honor as a recognition of those efforts.

Peter Fletcher was an avid reader and historical buff and impressed all those who knew him with his gift of language and oratorical skills. He will be missed by all those who had the pleasure and privilege of knowing him.


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Aficionados of early advertising history will find a treasury of Ypsilanti examples in the files of the Fletcher-White Archives at the Ypsilanti Historical Society.

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# The Union School Buildings

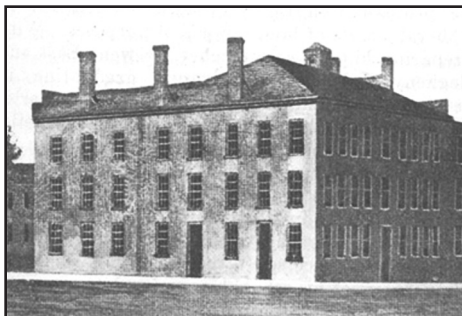
By James Mann

Today Cross Street Village, senior housing, stands at 210 West Cross Street. This building is still known to many as Old Ypsi High. For many years this building was the high school. The use of this building, for senior housing, is the first time since 1844, that a building on this site has been used for purposes other than education.

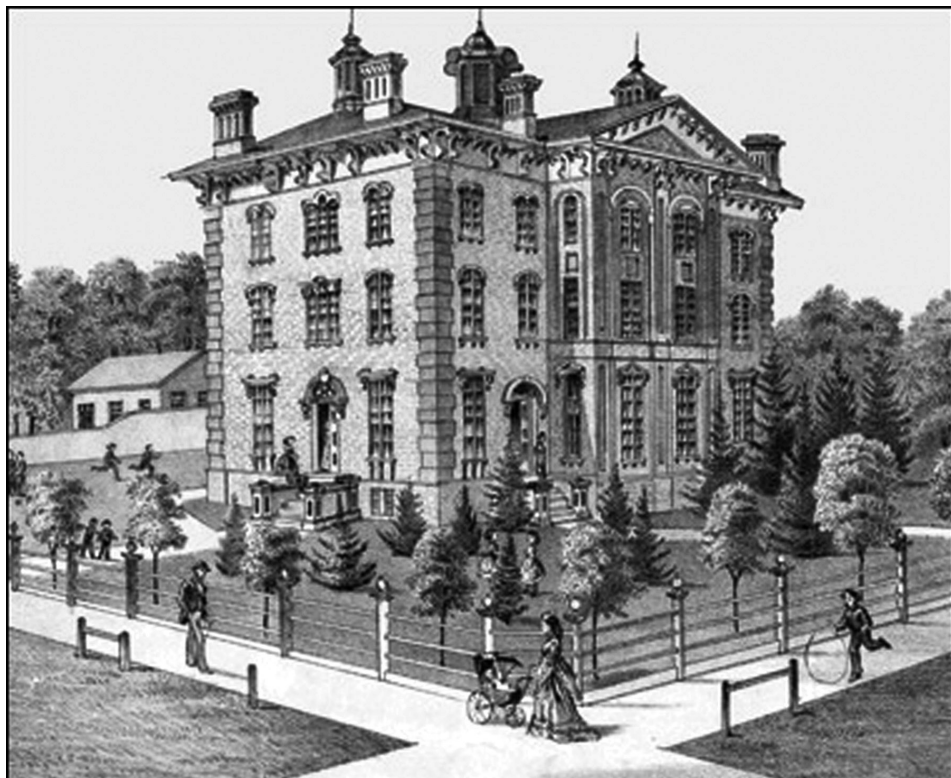
When someone talks of the history of the buildings that have stood on this site, the result is likely to be confusion, for this is the story of not one building, but of four. Of the four buildings that have occupied this site, two have been completely destroyed by fire, while the third was damaged by fire and rebuilt. The last building was later demolished to make room for the west wing of Old Ypsi High, the fourth building.

All of these buildings were used as schools, and were a major reason for Ypsilanti having a reputation for excellence in education for many years. The first of these buildings, however, was the result of a business folly.

During the 1830s, a railroad was proposed linking Tecumseh to Ypsilanti, where it would connect with the Michigan Central. To house the patrons of the railroad, a hotel was built at Ypsilanti called the Tecumseh Hotel. The railroad was never built, so there were no patrons, and the hotel failed. Charles Woodruff, who was running an academic school in Ypsilanti, moved his school into a portion of the hotel in 1844. The school, he wrote, was "at an awful distance from the thickly built portion of the village."



Charles Woodruff, who was running an academic school in Ypsilanti, moved his school into a portion of the Tecumseh Hotel in 1844



On August 17, 1858, the new Union School was dedicated. *The New England Journal of Education* said: "It's the finest school building of its kind in America"

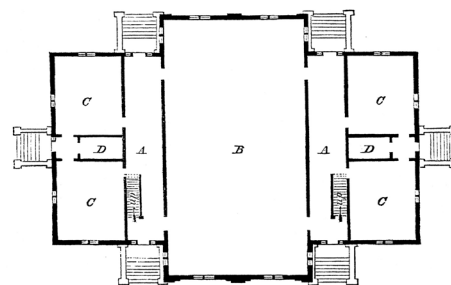
Woodruff continued the school at that location until 1848, when the building was purchased by a company headed by the Reverend L.H. Moore, pastor of the Baptist Church. After the sale, Woodruff went into the newspaper business, as editor of *The Sentinel*. The Rev. Moore began operating a private school in the building, called The Ypsilanti Seminary, designed to provide students with a liberal education.

That same year it was found that the old White School House on North Washington Street was inadequate. At the annual meeting of School District Number Four, \$1,000 was appropriated for the erection of a new building. This attracted the attention of contractors, and there was much talk of a new school house. Instead, the board purchased the Tecumseh Hotel building from the Rev. Moore, for \$2,400. Changes were made to the building during the summer of 1849, better adapting it for use as a school. The school opened in October of that year.

"The Seminary Building," wrote Harvey Colburn, in *The Story of Ypsilanti*, "was a

plain three-story brick edifice built close to the sidewalk and in the form of an 'L.' The longer arm extended westward from the corner and the shorter northward. The roof was surmounted by a cupola with a bell. Attached to the west wing was a two-story frame building, originally used as a dwelling."

First Story Plan -- Union School



- A - Halls
- B - Chapel, or Hall for general exercises
- C - Primary Rooms
- D - Clothes Rooms

This may have been the first "graded school" in Michigan and, because of the moderate tuition, it attracted students from outside the Ypsilanti school district. The terms *union school* [continued overleaf]



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## The Union School Buildings

[continued from page 10]

and *graded school* are interchangeable. The upper floors of the school were used as dormitories for the out-of-town students, called the “foreign students.”

Soon the rooms were filled to capacity while more students were seeking admission. To make room for more students, an addition was added in 1854. This three story brick addition ran north on Washington St. for about 60 feet. The first and part of the second floor of the addition were finished as class and school rooms, while the rest of the second floor and all of the third were used as dormitories. These rooms were soon filled, and the school was prosperous beyond all expectation. Then disaster struck.

On the morning of Sunday, March 29, 1857, the building was found to be on fire. In spite of heroic efforts with every means available, the building was soon nothing but ruins. Several of the teachers and many of the students suddenly found themselves homeless. Fortunately, the school had closed the previous Friday, for the nine-day spring vacation.

“As the inhabitants gathered around the ashes,” noted *The Michigan Journal of Education* of October, 1858, “some of the children wept, and the purses of the rich shuddered a little, but all consoled themselves with ‘Well, we will have a better school now.’ At once arrangements were made for temporary locations for classes, until a new building could be built. “A plan for a building was presented,” reported *The Michigan Journal of Education*, “by Jordan & Anderson which so well pleased all, that it was adopted by unanimous vote of the District.”

The new building, built on the site of the old, was dedicated August 17, 1858. The architects were Jordan & Anderson of Detroit, and the builders were McDuff & Mitchell, who were also of Detroit.

“The entire structure,” noted Colburn,” was architecturally satisfying and even beautiful.”

“This edifice stands in the center of a beautiful square in the central part of the city of Ypsilanti,” reported *The American*

*Journal of Education*, “one of the most attractive healthy and flourishing towns in the State of Michigan. The building has a transept of 120 feet and a depth through the transept of 95 feet, and through the end compartments of 68 feet.” The building was in the Italianate style of architecture, and had a height of 59 feet. “The quoins in the corners,” noted *The American Journal of Education*, “the window and door caps and stills, the cornice, the architrave moldings, belt courses, &c, are finished in imitation of brown free stone—the remainder being of hand-pressed brick.”

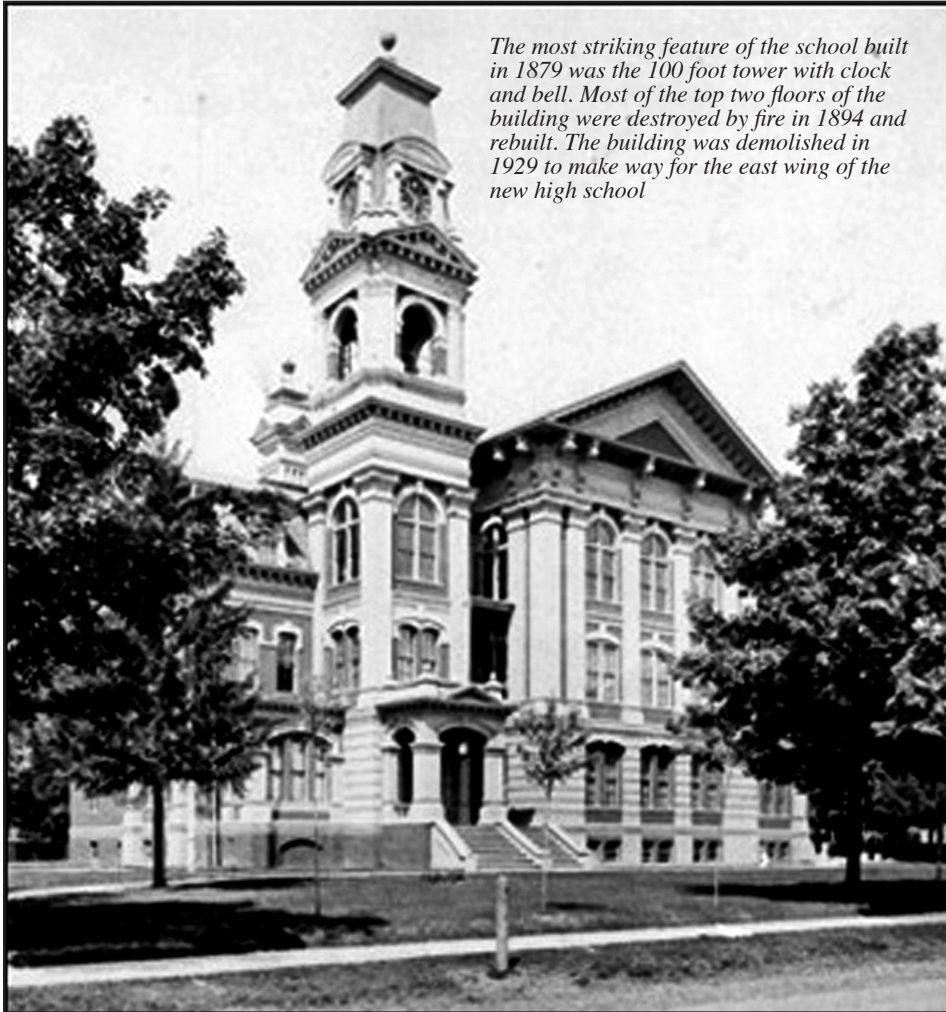
*The American Journal of Education* published a print, plans and description of the building. This was republished in the *Michigan Journal of Education* in October of 1858, and later used in other publications.

The first floor of the building was 6 feet above the lot, “leaving a lofty basement story under which was the heating apparatus, storage and fuel rooms.” The first floor was 20 feet high, and, the center of the building had a large room, or chapel, 90 by 45 feet, used for commencement and other public exercises. It was then the usual practice to place assembly rooms on the highest floor of a building, possibly because of interior load bearing walls limiting space. It was considered an advantage to have the chapel on the first floor. “This in infinitely more convenient and safe, than it is to require an entire congregation at commencement or other exercises, to climb up to the top of a high building. It is also more desirable, as the infant children can be taken into the room on all occasions, without danger to them, which in ordinary cases, tutors are afraid to do.”

The chapel had no columns or pillars to block the view of the stage. Fears were expressed in 1866 that the building was unsafe. Inspection found the building to be structurally sound. Even so, four pillars were placed in the chapel.

The first floor had two corridors one of each side of the chapel, each 12 feet wide and running from the front to the rear of the building. The first floor had four primary rooms, two on each side of the building. Between each of the primary rooms was an entrance in the center of each side of the building. Each of the entrances opened to a clothes room.





*The most striking feature of the school built in 1879 was the 100 foot tower with clock and bell. Most of the top two floors of the building were destroyed by fire in 1894 and rebuilt. The building was demolished in 1929 to make way for the east wing of the new high school*

The building had four more entrances to the first floor, two at the front and two at the rear, opening into the corridors on each side of the chapel. A total number of six entrances allowed the younger children to enter and leave the building separate from the older children. The number of entrances also allowed for the separation of the students by sex, as it was then considered best to keep the boys and the girls apart as much as possible. The interior arrangement of the rooms allowed the boys and girls to come together when necessary, and to separate again when returning to their classrooms without confusion or inconvenience. This structure stood until 1877 when it was destroyed by fire.

By August of 1878 the School Board and Building Committee had closed a contract for building the new school on the site of the old, with Spitzly & Bro. of Detroit. The Ypsilanti Commercial of August 10, 1878 reported, "The masons began laying the foundation of the new Union school on Wednesday. The building will be enclosed

before winter." The building was ready for use at the beginning of the school year of 1879.

The new three story building was different from the old one. The most striking difference was the one-hundred-foot high tower with clock and bell. For many years this was the only town clock the city had, with the bell striking the hour with remarkable accuracy. A challenge for the boys, although it was strictly forbidden, was to sneak into the bell room, and be there when it tolled the hour. The sound was deafening, but every boy was expected to do it at least once before graduating.

Another change from the previous building was the placement of the chapel on the third floor, instead of on the ground floor. Light for the chapel was provided by a skylight in the roof. Some would come to see the skylight as the building's fatal flaw.

A two story addition, measuring 23 by 23 feet 8 inches, was added to the north wing of the building in 1893. "The sewer from

it," reported *The Ypsilanti Commercial* of August 18, 1893, "passes under the whole length of the main building and thence diagonally to the south-east corner of the grounds, connecting at the Cross and Washington street manhole." When digging the ditch for the sewer, workers uncovered the ruins of the old Seminary building that had burned in 1858.

Students had just taken their seats and settled in for an afternoon of study, on Thursday, May 3, 1893, when a terrible crash was heard from the chapel on the third floor. The sound frightened everyone in the building. Those in charge of the building quickly went up to the third floor to investigate. They found the entire ceiling of the chapel in flames. Outside the building, flames were seen leaping in sheets thirty feet high, from a spot on the roof north-west of the tower and near the chapel skylight. It was the sound of part of the ceiling falling into the chapel that had frightened everyone. The building was ordered evacuated, and was soon empty of the 600 students and teachers. A few students suffered minor injuries, when they jumped from windows on the second floor.

Fire fighters were soon on the scene plying the flames with water from their hoses, but pressure from the mains was inadequate for the streams of water to reach the fire. To fight the fire, fire fighters had to wait until the fire had burned down low enough to be within reach of their hoses. It did not help, when the hoses busted three times. Some of those present, said the fire fighters could have made good use of a ladder.

At 2 p.m. the bell in the clock tower tolled the hour for the last time, as soon after the tower caught fire. Then, with one or two last clangs, the bell fell by stages to just above the main entrance, the landings having prevented a terrible cash.

At 2:45 p.m. the Ann Arbor Hose Company received a request for assistance and, with hose, hose wagon, and three men, for a total load of 4,000 pounds, covered the distance in 28 minutes. They had a stream of water playing on the fire within two minutes of their arrival. The team of horses, the grays, showed the effect of the hard run, being covered in foam. "The horses," reported *The Ypsilanti Commercial*, "were skillfully and carefully cared for and soon seemed none the worse for their [continued overleaf]

## The Union School Buildings

[continued from page 13]

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record-breaking run." The fire was brought under control by 4 p.m. and fire fighters continued fighting the fire until a hard rain fell that night.

"The most plausible theory of the cause of the fire," reported *The Washtenaw Evening Times*, of Friday, May 5, 1894, "is that the prismatic shaped skylight on the roof and the plain one which lights the chapel below made possible a concentration of rays of the sun, that body being at the time about in its zenith, upon some cobweb hanging from the lower skylight and this set fire to those minute things which by nature's aid could result in disaster." A more likely cause, said others, was a combination of boys and cigarettes.

Less than an hour after the discovery of the fire, even before the flames were under control, the Superintendent and several members of the school board were making arrangements for space to be used as temporary classrooms so classes could continue. The day after the fire, the school board traveled to Northville, to see if they could get school seats

Unlike the previous two buildings, this building was not a total loss. The walls of the building appeared undamaged and could be reused. Then the west wall fell, carrying two rooms with it, after the insurance was adjusted.

The third floor was a total loss, as was most of the second, but for two rooms that were not too badly burned. "The north wing," reported *The Washtenaw Evening Times* of May 4, 1894, "was the least damaged and could be put in shape at a moderate cost."

The first floor seemed to have suffered little damage, and the library, for the most part, was saved. "The bell and clock," reported *The Ypsilantian* of May 4, 1894, "are a total wreck, the former being cracked so as to be of no value except old metal. The cost of the clock was \$1,500, and was an excellent timer."

Insurance companies paid an award of \$16,589.91 on the building and \$5,250 on the furniture and fixtures for a total of \$21,839.91.

It was decided that the new building would be built along the plans of the old one, but with some modifications. "The first change," noted *The Ypsilantian* of January

10, 1895, "a teacher would observe is the quieting of the building. This is secured by thoroughly deadening of the floors, a thing that was not well done when the building was first erected."

The first floor was little damaged by the fire, so remained much as before. The greatest change was found on the second and third floors. The former winding stairways were replaced so as to have a platform landing between the second and third floors. "The stairs and the second and third stories are beautifully finished in natural oak," reported *The Ypsilanti Commercial* of December 26, 1894, "except two rooms on the second floor which were not burned, and in these the woodwork is being grained in imitation of oak. The stair was is no longer lighted by a skylight as was the old, but the light for the second floor is borrowed from the school rooms on either side by means of double winders. It was this skylight which came so near making the old building a death-trap. By adding some new windows and lengthening others two of the rooms on the third floor are greatly improved. On each side of the building, and on each floor, are large pipes connected directly with the city water works. At the end of each is a long hose and nozzle, so that in case of fire at any point of the building, one needs only to turn a valve and water will flow."

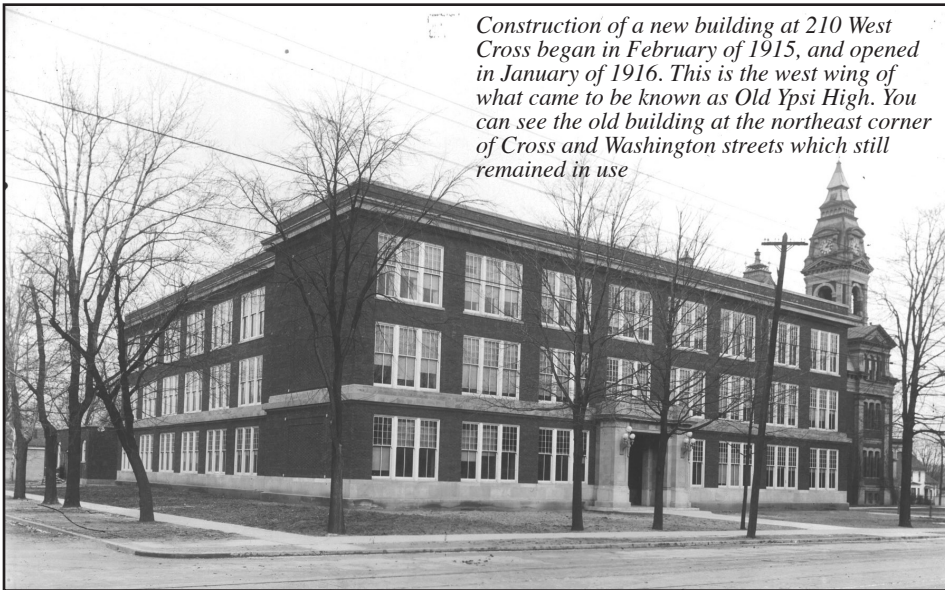
As with the old building, this one had a tall tower with a clock and bell. The dials on the face of the clock were 6 feet across, and illuminated after dark by electricity. The bell weighed 2,660 pounds, and had a tone that was said to be clear and musical.

The new building was dedicated on the evening of Tuesday, February 5, 1895.

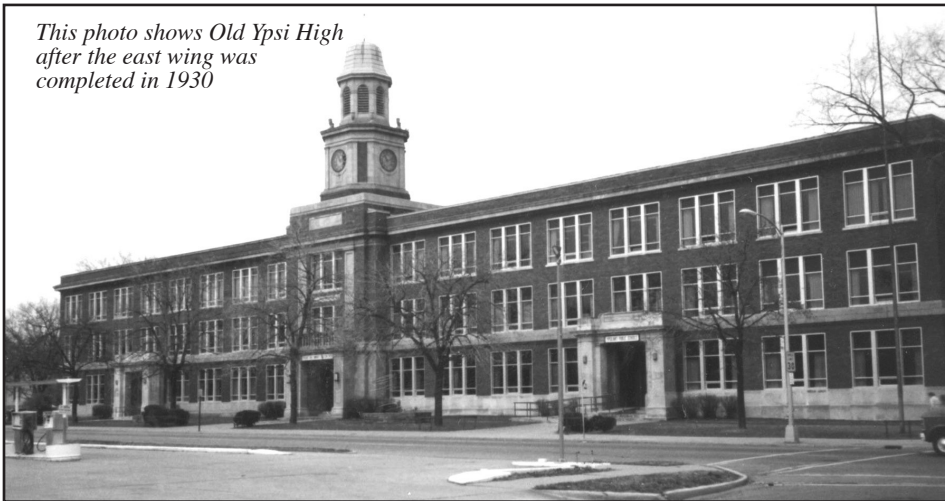
In spite of the history of the site, it was purely by chance that the fire house was built in 1898 across the street from the building. As it happened, it was, for once, good luck for the building. At 3:50 a.m. of Tuesday, August 16, 1904, the flagpole on the clock tower was struck by lightning. Firefighters in the firehouse saw the lighting splinter the flag pole. At 4:10 a.m. they saw the building was on fire. They rushed across the street, to put out the flames.

Damage to the building was slight, mostly caused by water to rooms in the tower. The walls of these rooms had to be replastered. The clock in the tower was completely





*Construction of a new building at 210 West Cross began in February of 1915, and opened in January of 1916. This is the west wing of what came to be known as Old Ypsi High. You can see the old building at the northeast corner of Cross and Washington streets which still remained in use*



*This photo shows Old Ypsi High after the east wing was completed in 1930*

destroyed, but the flames did not damage the belfry enough to harm the bell. The cost of the damage was placed at between \$3,000 to \$5,000. The tower was rebuilt exactly as before.

The name of the building was changed early in 1900, from Union Seminary to High School, although many continued to refer to the old building as The Seminary.

Early in the 20th century it became apparent that the building was overcrowded and lacking in modern facilities. Plans for a new school building were drawn up as early as 1911. After two bond issues were rejected by voters, \$110,000 for school construction was passed in 1914. The amount was increased by \$12,000 in March of 1915.

Construction of the new building at 210 West Cross began in February of 1915, and opened in January of 1916. This is the west wing of what came to be known as Old

Ypsi High. The old building at the northeast corner of Cross and Washington streets remained in use. The gymnasium was built just north of the old building in 1925. The old building was finally demolished in 1929, to make room for what is now the east wing of Old Ypsi High.

At the center of the building, where the two wings come together, is the main entrance. Above the main entrance is the clock and bell tower. In the tower is the bell from the old Central High School building, installed in 1930, as construction was nearing completion. The bell remained in use until the graduation of the last senior class in 1972.

From hotel, to school, to senior housing, in a sense the site has come full circle.

*[James Mann is a local author and historian, a regular contributor to the GLEANINGS, and a volunteer in the YHS Archives.]*

## ***Be True to Your School***

Test your knowledge about Ypsilanti schools, their histories, and why this was known as “the town where education and commerce meet.” *By Peg Porter*

1. What was the name of the first school built on the west side?
2. What local schools were used for student teaching in the 1940s through the 1960s?
3. What ground-breaking social/educational program originated in Ypsilanti?
4. Who was the Michigan Band director who got his start in the Ypsilanti Public Schools?
5. Which elementary schools changed names?
6. Who were the Rough Riders?
7. What was the name of the first high school established in Ypsilanti?
8. When were the first junior high schools opened?
9. Other than gender, how did females entering the Normal in its early years differ from the males?
10. What was the name of the April fool's special issue published by Roosevelt High School?
11. What positions did Norris Wiltse and Leonard Menzi hold?
12. Which school marching band wore kilts?
13. How did Ypsi High students refer to Roosevelt High School?
14. Who were the Sinkopatens?
15. What object was regularly “stolen” by Roosevelt High students?
16. Patrick Cleary established a school in Ypsilanti to offer instruction in what skill?
17. Which institution of higher education accepted women first, the University of Michigan or Michigan State Normal College?
18. Who was Mark Jefferson and why is there a building named for him at EMU?
19. What year did St. John's High School close?
20. When and where was the first kindergarten opened in Ypsilanti?

*(Answers can be found on page 22)*

*(Peg Porter is the Assistant Editor of the GLEANINGS and a regular contributor of articles published in the newsletter.)*

# Frankie Ford Finds t or Ypsi/Ford vs. Oakla

*Historical fiction based on actual mid-century*



**Left:**  
*Local lore has it that the Ford family rented this house on Ford Boulevard to be near the Ford factory*

**Below:**  
*1937 Ford Tudor*



**F**rankie hurried home from school on Friday to get the lawn mowed as quickly as possible. Dad said this would be a “boys’ night out,” an excursion unlike anything they had ever done before. Big Frankie worked at the Ypsi Ford plant and Little Frankie, 12, could count on one hand the men-only excursions they had shared: pheasant hunting, a Tiger baseball game, and a trip to the Auto Show at Detroit’s Convention Hall. Other family events had four Fords in attendance: Frankie, Dad, Mom and little sister Ellie.

Frankie was Franklin Roosevelt Ford and that was probably the least of his problems. He may have been “Little Frankie,” but was not “Junior.” Francis Robert Ford was called Frank or Big Frankie. Frankie and Eleanor were named for the White House occupants and, although no one in the Ford family was related to the famous Henry, it was a good name to drop when you “worked to Ford’s.” Some said that Henry Ford was not compatible with Franklin Roosevelt, but Frankie did not understand what that was all about.

The Frank Ford family often referred to their “Ford Family of Fine Cars.” Frank had been driving his 1937 Ford Tudor since before the war and was sure that, when he

turned it in on a new one at war’s end, he would recoup his original seven hundred dollar investment.

A continual family rift was over the fact that Ypsi was a “Ford Town” and all Big Frankie’s siblings worked for General Motors. The contrast always gave his Oakland County brothers something to argue about.

Now, Frankie’s dad had announced he was taking his son up to Pontiac to see the famed “GM Parade of Progress.” Perhaps this enthusiastic public relations promotion of General Motors’ might help to ameliorate future family squabbles. “The Future” was certainly the theme for the day.

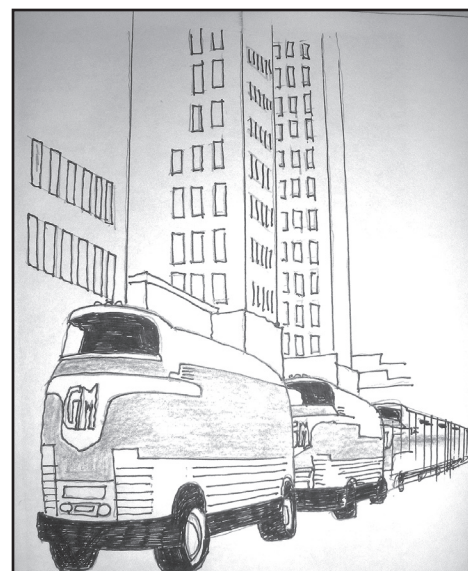
## The passing parade:

Frankie carefully guided the lawnmower while ruminating on facts he had gleaned from newspaper stories and, in particular, a well-worn copy of *Popular Mechanics* magazine. GM’s “Parade” had started long before Frankie’s birth. By the time Pearl Harbor was attacked, more than 12 million people had seen it. The “Parade” was warehoused during the war and was now rehabilitated and on the road again. Company loyalties and family rivalry notwithstanding, Frankie’s Dad was eager to see the “Parade” for the first time since rumors

hinted it might not continue much longer.

The traveling exhibition of technology was the brainchild of Charles F. Kettering. “Boss Ket” pulled in famed auto designer Harley Earl to add visual hyperbole to his inventions of the commercial electric self-starter, Ethyl gasoline, the diesel-electrical locomotive, and more auto exotica. “You’ve got to be modernistic” seemed to be the theme of his techno-Chautauqua-on-wheels as it snaked its way across the country for nearly twenty years and both Frank Fords were eager to get on board.

Now in its third exhibition format, the 1936 “Parade” had included nine GMC and Chevrolet tractor-trailers hauling gear, tents, power generators, lamps, booths, and additional exhibits. The caravan used a stretched, air-conditioned 1936 Chevy “command car” serving as a mobile office and general field headquarters. All six GM lines—Chevrolet, Pontiac, Oldsmobile, Buick, LaSalle, and Cadillac—had models in the display and were traded in every 2000 miles at local dealerships along the way.



*1953 Parade of Progress rolls past GM’s world headquarters in Detroit*



# The FUTURE

and/GM

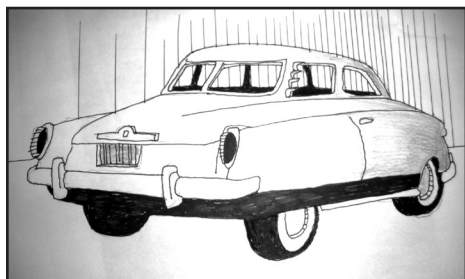
events by Tom Dodd

Although Big Frankie would never admit it, GM's big PR project greatly overshadowed and drew more fans than the annual Christmas exhibit at the Ford Rotunda in Dearborn.

## Post-war cars identified:

Finished with his mowing, Frankie listened for Big Frankie's arrival from the factory on Ford Lake. He could hear the old Ford coming from a block away and knew dad would be on edge about the evening's plans. They were going to Oakland County to stand in the heart of "enemy territory." Frankie knew this would be difficult for dad, and wondered if there might be other motivations at foot. "You know your dad will want to talk about how the new Fords are better than what's made up in Pontiac," Mom said. "Try not to get them going on that." Most of Little Frankie's uncles started out working in Pontiac's Oakland Auto plant right out of—or in place of—high school, and they knew that Big Frankie was a "Ford Guy" from Ypsi.

"Big Frankie works to Ford's," they would say in their charming never-been-much-for-school regional accents. Still, they shared one bit of automobile culture as a family trait; they loved to sit on the front porch and watch the new cars drive by. Every car had it's own distinct styling and personality. "Desoto!" uncle Russell would shout. "Frazer!, ah, maybe a Kaiser," pondered uncle Charlie. "Hudson and Packard!" uncle Allan hollered, as he spotted two big sedans humming down Prospect Street together. "Here comes the new Pontiac! Ain't she a beauty?" someone would proffer, and there was great agreement among



'50s Studebaker Champion's rear windshield. The car's front design was more "rocket-like"

those in attendance that this GM sedan was the most gorgeous thing on four wheels. "I don't know what they're thinking in the front office," someone would suggest. "Why would anyone ever want to trade in a car like that? It's perfect just the way it is. You'd want to keep it forever."

"I wonder who's the genius that decided to paint that big zig-zag on the side of the Olds Ninety-Eight?" he would rant. "It looks like it's going backwards! Don't those college boys know anything about streamlining?"

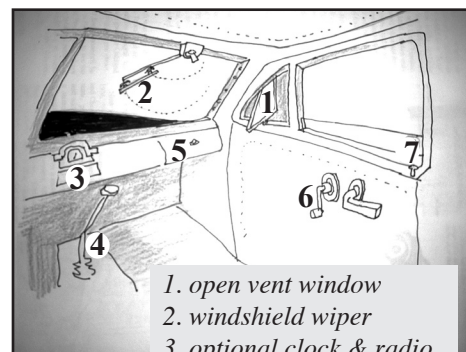
No one, of course, liked the radical design of the recent Studebakers. "You can't tell if they're coming or going," they said. And the whole family would shake their heads and scowl at this non-GM creation.

Big Frankie would stifle himself on this special day just to keep peace in the family. Uncle Charlie had sent two tickets to the GM "Parade of Progress" to be displayed in the employee parking lot of the Pontiac Motor factory. Little Frankie knew the family get-together was far less important to him than seeing "Futurama," but he would try hard to fake familial enthusiasm once they got to Uncle Charlie's.

## Getting gassed up along the old Indian trail:

Big Frankie pulled into the gravel driveway and started issuing orders: "You put Mom's big lunch box in the back seat while I wash up and change my clothes. We're going up Pontiac Trail and I just hope we have enough gas for the trip." As Frankie packed, he realized he wouldn't be sitting in back with little Ellie this time. There would not be any admonishment to "sit back in your seat or I'll give you a swat!" For this trip, Frankie got to sit in Mom's seat next to the driver. There would be no charges of "He's sitting on my side" or "He's crossing the line in the middle of the seat" on this trip. Frankie only wondered if he would be called upon to light Dad's cigarettes for him en route.

"Now, don't you be makin' a lot of side trips or unscheduled stops," Mom warned Big Frankie as he squeezed himself into the driver's seat. "I want you boys back home and in bed at a decent hour," she warned. "No, Mother," he said, with an exasperated look. Frank was thinking of having to stop for repairs along the way. They might need a new fan belt, but Frank was sure they had



1937 Ford  
Tudor  
interior  
amenities:

1. open vent window
2. windshield wiper
3. optional clock & radio
4. gear shift
5. compartment for gloves
6. window crank
7. door handle
8. door lock

enough gas for the trip. "We should be back well before bedtime."

The two Franks opened all the car windows and the hood-mounted vent for more fresh air on this late-summer's drive. Dad even put out his cigarette so they could angle the front vent windows and have the wind blow in their faces. This had to be even better than riding in a convertible, they concluded.

The Ford family knew the filling stations along this route too well. Dad avoided the one in downtown South Lyon that had too many tractors parked around the pumps, so Wixom's Pure station was their next chance where they could get a bottle of Nesbitt's Orange pop to share.



Harvey Segnitz's Nondenominational  
Filling Station in Walled Lake

The next possible stop was Harvey Segnitz's Nondenominational Gas Company in downtown Walled Lake. Harvey had his own gas hauler, making him a true independent operator. Sure, sometimes Harvey didn't have ANY gas, but the price seemed to make it worth the risk of running dry.

At the end of Pontiac Trail at Orchard Lake Road was George Rea's Standard Service, but Big Frankie had not [continued overleaf]

## Frankie Ford's Future

[continued from page 17]



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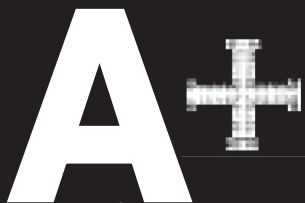
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stopped there since they prohibited his smoking at the gas pumps. The dirt in front of Rae's had absorbed so much gas and oil over the years that it was an incendiary bomb just waiting to be ignited. Frank said he didn't need to be treated like a child; he had been lighting up since he was twelve and he knew how to do it right. Frank was a self-made man, having learned to smoke all by himself.

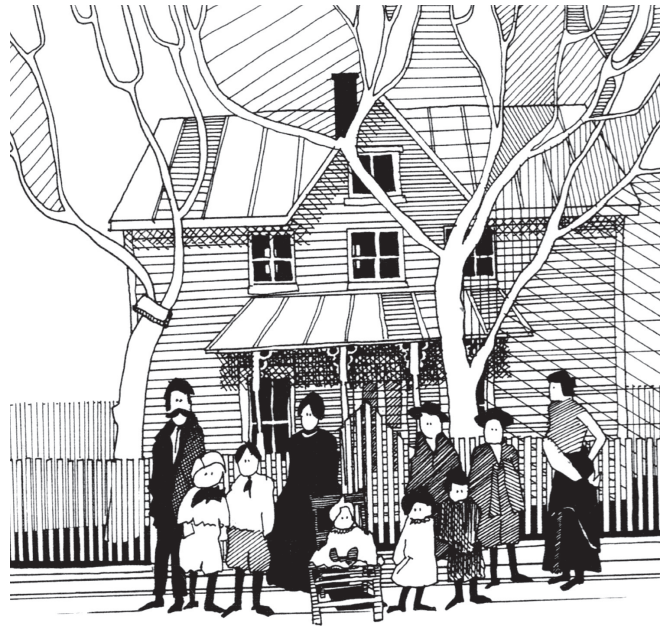
Their last possible stop was just after Keego Harbor at the edge of the industrial metropolis. Cities Service had opened an ultra-modern all-service filling station on what was formerly the parking lot next to the Elks' Temple, the site of the former Elk's Carnival where most local teens saw their first almost-naked lady in the notorious burlesque tent. In an effort toward modernization, the sawdust and weeds were replaced by four rows of electric gas pumps, covered with a single roof of fluorescent lights illuminating the entire space as bright as mid-day. This modern gas was more expensive and Big Frankie stopped here only if his gauge was touching "empty."

Big Frankie breezed past them all and turned left at Saginaw Street to head north on the Dixie Highway. "If we went the other way," Big Frankie said, "we could go all the way to Florida. Boy, what would your mom think of that, huh?" But we would have to find new filling stations, Frankie thought.

### Chief Pontiac's territory:

The next turn was onto Baldwin and, after just a few blocks, Little Frankie could see the smokestacks of the Pontiac plant. There it was: GM's "Parade of Progress," just like he had seen on the cover of *Popular Mechanics*.

Frankie's dad drove right past the main entry, sticking his arm out the window to signal a right turn onto Uncle Charlie's As-



*From the family album, 1920 - when we were still Mennonites  
Left to right: Grandpa Ford, Uncle Russell, Uncle Clare,  
Grandma Yoder Ford, Aunt Roxie, Aunt Vera, Francis (Big Frankie),  
Uncle Freddie, Uncle Alan, Great-Aunt Mary Yoder  
who was never married or anything*

cot street. "We'll have to park at Charlie's house," Big Frankie warned. "Otherwise we might get 'keyed'." Little Frankie knew the tradition. The talk in Ypsi was, if you didn't drive the kind of car you were helping to build, your 'foreign' model could get scratched by car keys the full length of the sheet metal from front to back.

Uncle Charlie, Aunt Roxie, and Cousin Jimmy were waiting on their front porch. Uncle Charlie got the tickets because he worked at Pontiac Motor and that was particularly puzzling to Little Frankie, since he always seemed so unhappy in his work. Big Frankie's older brother had been a tool and die maker for more than twenty years and he constantly complained about the company's management. If he wasn't happy about a shift change, he was mad about the changeover schedule. And, if employee policy wasn't the focus of his rage against the company, he was always ready to criticize the designers who decided which way to divide the two-tone paint jobs that year.

Little Frankie declined to respond to the usual "you're getting as tall as your daddy—they won't be calling you 'Little Frankie' much longer." The only thing Little Frankie wanted to see was the "Futurliners" that were parked in the big lot at the end of the street.



At long last, the family moved to the sidewalk and started toward the plant. Little Frankie and Cousin Jimmy were at the front of the parade and the first to see the GM exhibit.

### Monster trucks congregate:

From outside the exhibition grounds, the noble “Futurliners” resembled a herd of mechanical bison grazing on asphalt. Frankie was in love!

Long red, white, and silver banners waved from tall poles installed along the chain link fence guiding a steadily moving crowd toward the entrance. Even at that distance, Frankie could see that GM’s college boys had not parked the “Futurliners” side-by-side as seen in previews but had formed a large semi-circle of ten of the big trucks opening to the front of the assembly plant. The self-contained exhibits opened toward the factory and the telescoping tent truck was lost somewhere inside the Aer-O-Dome tent it had morphed into. Frankie wondered about the twelfth “Futurliner” described in press releases but figured it was either off on an errand or he might have counted wrong.

The “Futurliners” did not disappoint. The white-graveled grounds were spotlessly clean, and the afternoon sun was casting a golden glow on the big silver “GM” plaques. This was a magical day even if your name was “Ford.” New exhibits in this third iteration of the GM “Parade” included jet propulsion, the atmosphere, the atom, stereophonic sound, and metal-powder forming, along with rehabilitated exhibits from previous years. There were many aluminum, chrome, and glass mechanical presentations to be seen.

With all the attention given to the exhibits folding out of the futuristic haulers, Frankie found his attention drawn mostly to the haulers themselves. For one thing, they were bigger and brighter than he had expected from the magazine photos.

GM Truck and Fisher Coach and Body had built twelve of these models in 1940, then overhauled them in 1953. They stood 11 feet, 7 inches high and were 8 feet wide. From his seat in the top, the driver must have blinked more than once when approaching an overpass. Each unit weighed 30,000 pounds and carried 90 gallons of gasoline, with a top speed of 40 miles per hour. No mention was made of gas mileage.



*Aer-O-Dome tent show with “Futurliners” rampart*

But Frankie didn’t care for any of those statistics. It was the exterior design that fascinated him. “Why, you could live in that thing,” he would later tell his buddies back in Ypsi. “Just cut a few portholes into the side and you’d have the coolest wheels around. And the driver’s seat is way up on top, right in the middle. There are two passenger seats behind it.” All the questions he harbored from the magazine story were now answered by his in-person examination.

The entry doors were hidden in the front corners next to the headlights, he discovered. And there were four wheels in front and four in back - all with the biggest white-wall tires he had ever seen. Frankie paced off the length of one of the “liners” and figured he had gotten his money’s worth out of those free tickets to the future.

### The Big Talk:

On the way home, Frankie was beginning to nod off to sleep when he felt the Ford pull over to the side of the road near New Hudson. Frankie wondered if this might be the car-trouble they had worried about. Big Frankie turned to his sleepy son with a serious expression and said, “Frankie, I just want take this time for us to have a little conversation between father and son.”

Oh, oh, thought Frankie. This must be The Big Talk he had heard about from his buddies in the neighborhood. “Son,” Big Frankie said, “I’ve been giving this a lot of thought lately, and I just want you to know what I think is best for your future...” Little Frankie stared through the windshield with

a look of equally serious consternation. “Sure, Dad? What is it?” “Frankie,” Dad said, “I want you to consider going into ENGINEERING.”

### Where are they now?

Sixty years later, Frankie saw a forlorn “Futurliner” #10 rusting away behind the Auburn/Cord/Duesenberg Museum in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Since then, it has been sold and moved back to Michigan. The restoration took place in Zeeland, Michigan over six years and thousands of working-hours. Wyrick Co., along with Montana Paints, matched the original colors and provided the paint and supplies to get the vehicle back into its finest original form. Today, “Futurliner” #10 can be seen traveling to car shows all around the country.

When GM shut down their “Parade” in 1956, two “Futurliners” went to the Michigan State Police to be [continued overleaf]



*A thoroughly modern 1953 GM “Futurliner”*

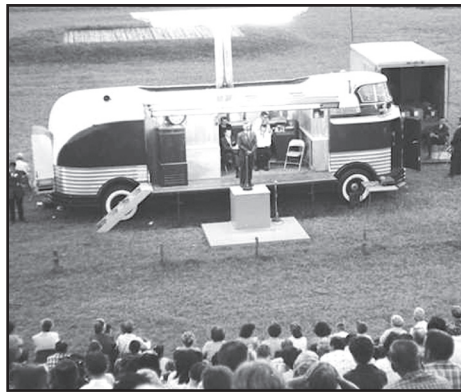
## Frankie Ford's Future

[continued from page 19]

called "Safetyliners." One was purchased by Oral Roberts for his evangelical crusades and is now suspected to be in Central or South America.



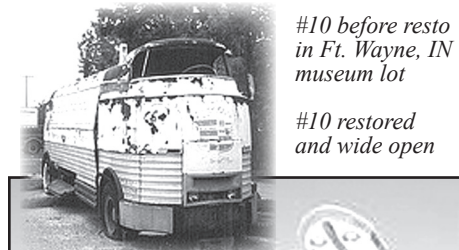
MSP's "Safetyliners"



Oral Roberts' "Cathedraliner"

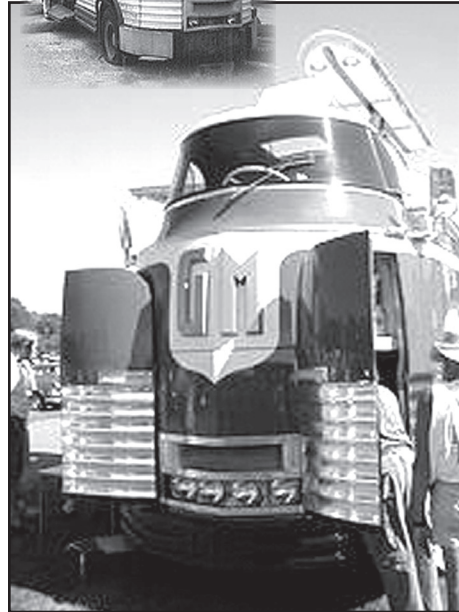
According to auto historians, nine "Futurliners" have been found and documented with history. Of the 12, one was wrecked (considered totaled) during the 1956 parade

year and was not replaced. "Futurliner" #11 sold for a record US \$4 million (plus premium) in January 2006 at a Barrett-Jackson auction in Arizona. Too large to ship, it was driven to its new home in Chandler.



#10 before resto  
in Ft. Wayne, IN  
museum lot

#10 restored  
and wide open



"Futurliner" #10 is believed to be the most accurately restored of all of the originals.

In the summer of 2008, "Futurliner" #8 was delivered to its new home in Sweden where the new owner plans to restore it over a 10-year period. It's the first and only "Futurliner" in Europe.

Of the other six known surviving "Futurliners," one is used as a motor home and another in advertising. Two "liners" are in process of restoration in Maine and California. Another in California is for sale in original condition. Two are diagnosed as beyond restoration and in storage. There are still two "Futurliners" unaccounted for.

Big Frankie is gone now but, if he could see his son's drawings of the "Futurliners," he'd probably be quite proud of his son, the cartoonist. Little Frankie never became an engineer.

*[Tom Dodd is a frequent contributor to the GLEANINGS. He grew up in Oakland County, but now lives in Ypsilanti and drives Fords. All the aunts and uncles in the story are real; most of the "Frankies" were Oakland County cousins and some of them became engineers.]*

## GM 1953 press release

*(To be read in the stentorian tones  
of radio announcer Lowell Thomas)*

General Motors' Parade of Progress is on the road again dramatizing the vital role of science in American life ... "presenting," as Harlow H. Curtice, president of General Motors put it, "a picture of America on the move toward better lives for all of us."

The new and exciting 1953 version of the Parade is an ultra-modern presentation, high-lighting the enormous progress the country has made in recent years. Visitors, for example, will hear the scratchy reception of the radio of 1925 as compared to modern high-fidelity microwave transmission - will watch a tiny jet plane swoosh across the stage and take a fanciful flight into outer space.

Most of the Parade's exhibits are contained in the 12 "Futurliners." These special, 33-foot long, streamlined coaches have 16-foot side panels that open to form stages and exhibit areas. The Futurliners contain some two dozen major exhibits. They range from a demonstration that covers refrigeration and insulation, to "Power for the Air Age," the jet engine story.

The Parade's stage show is presented in the aluminum and canvas Aerodome. Here is presented a show of achievements in such fields as electronics, aviation and chemistry. And it's all free - no admission charge.

A crew of about 60 men, mostly young college graduates, operates the Parade. The men not only are lecturers and showmen; they also drive the vehicles, put up the tents and do the other necessary jobs.

The history of the Parade goes back to 1936. Sparked by GM's famed scientist, Charles F. Kettering, the Parade took to the road in Miami, FL, and from then until Pearl Harbor in 1941, it played before more than 12-1/2 million people in 251 cities. It is planned to keep the new Parade rolling across the U.S. almost continuously all year long.

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# I Might Have Played in the NBA!

By Fred Thomas

As a junior high school student I had never heard of the NBA which officially formed August 3, 1949 when the Basketball Association of America (BAA) and the National Basketball League (NBL) merged, creating the National Basketball Association (NBA). Had I known its members would go on to become millionaires, perhaps I'd have begun improving my hoop skills at a young age. But, at thirteen, what young man was thinking about his future? Life was coming at us head on, and we lived it for the moment!

At any rate, The Ypsilanti Parks and Recreation Department sponsored a ten week basketball program for junior high school boys. Interest in the 1953-1954 leagues drew participants from Ypsilanti High, Roosevelt, and St. John's schools.

We were the Rough Riders, named after the Roosevelt mascot. The nine other teams in the eighth grade circuit were the Cool Cats, Dragnets, Drifters, Eagles, Greyhounds, Lions, Globe Trotters, St. John's and Warriors. The monikers chosen obviously favored strong animals, followed by TV programs of the time. There was a popular rhythm and blues singing group at the time called The Drifters. The Globe Trotters were a national basketball exhibition team. Perhaps the names were borrowed from those groups. Cool Cats spoke for itself.

Games were played Saturday afternoons in the Ypsilanti High School gymnasium at 421 North Washington Street. I looked forward to the weekly competitions. We lived on East Cross Street and the mile-and-a-half walk to the games went by quickly.

Our fledgling team was fortunate to have an encouraging coach. Robert Boyd was a student at Michigan State Normal College doing his practice teaching at Roosevelt as a gym teacher. He also played end on the MSNC football team. Thank goodness he volunteered his time with us.

In addition, half our players came with extensive prior experience. I was not

one of them and would likely not have participated. However, my best friend, who became the captain, encouraged me to take part. It seemed like a good idea as we went most places together anyway. In retrospect, I would have missed a memorable time had I not participated.

When the nine weekly games were over the Rough Riders (9-0) were in first place. The Dragnets (8-1) swept second place, St. John's (7-2) captured third, Eagles (6-3) swooped down in fourth, Greyhounds (5-4) raced into fifth, Lions (3-5) roared to sixth, Cool Cats (3-6) danced around seventh, while Globe Trotters (1-8) and Warriors (1-8) were tied for eighth.

## We were the Rough Riders

In non-league completion we defeated Roosevelt's top seventh grade team and an eighth grade team from Ann Arbor's University High. Our only loss was at the hands of a quintet representing Lincoln High (26-24).

Following the presentation of the winners' trophy and patches, everyone gathered at the home of Ken Ross where we celebrated our victories and took photos.

When the city parks and rec program concluded, so did my organized basketball days. Thus my personal competence never advanced significantly. Other than playing in gym class I didn't spend much time on the courts. However, I enjoyed seeing other team members play on the high school teams and excel at the sport.

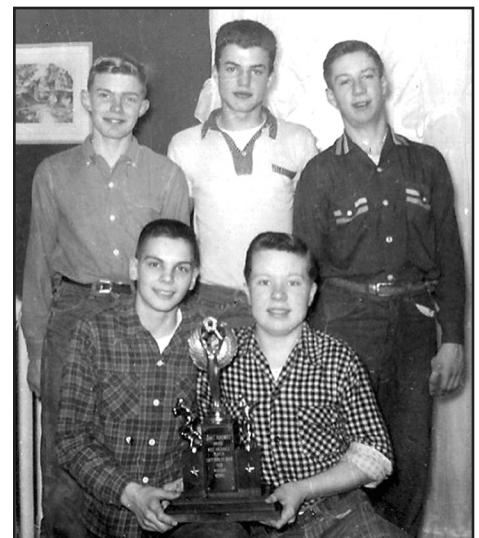
These days I sometimes get depressed when I see big-buck NBA players, and wonder whether or not I might have been one had I stuck with the game!!!!

Of course, I'll never know the answer. So I console myself that it is still worth a million to dust off the fading snapshots and think about those exciting teenage times.

*[Fred Thomas moved to Ypsilanti in 1948, graduated from Roosevelt in 1958, and then from Eastern Michigan University in 1965. He currently lives in Phoenix, Arizona.]*



*The Ypsilanti Parks and Recreation Department sponsored a ten week basketball program for junior high school boys*



*Members of the first string: (top row – left to right) Art Dykman, Bob Kidd (Captain) and Ken Ross. (bottom row – left to right) Jim Blodgett, and Lee Judson. Their skills made the difference when the going got tough*



*Other members of the team: (top row – left to right) Larry Hoffman, David Waters and Fred Thomas. (bottom row – left to right) Alan Moore, and Robert Arrick. Members not pictured are Dewey Barich, Gary Barnes, and Reggie Herndon*



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## ***Be True to Your School - Answer Sheet*** (for test on page 15)

1. Estabrook in 1949; Joseph Estabrook was the head of the Normal from 1871 to 1880.
2. Roosevelt (on campus) and Lincoln.
3. Head Start – developed and tested in Perry School; participants were tracked over time.
4. George Cavender who succeeded William Rivelli.
5. Prospect became Adams; Harriet became Perry; and Central became Kingston. Adams and Kingston were Ypsilanti educators. Dr. Lawrence Perry was a local dentist and member of the Ypsilanti School Board.
6. Roosevelt athletic teams and the school newspaper.
7. The Seminary.
8. 1959, East and West Junior High schools later to be renamed Middle Schools.
9. They were younger; females could be admitted at 16 while males had to be 18.
10. The Grapefruit.
11. High School principal – Ypsi High (Wiltse) and Roosevelt (Menzi).
12. Ypsilanti High School Drum and Bugle Corps.
13. “Snob Hill” – in the mistaken belief that it was a rich kid’s school. In fact, the school population was carefully managed to reflect the area’s population. Many standardized tests were developed using Roosevelt students. In order for these tests to provide accurate results, the test populations had to be similar to the school populations that would later use these tests.
14. The synchronized swimming team at Roosevelt was one of the first and best in southeastern Michigan.
15. The bust of Teddy Roosevelt displayed in the Roosevelt Library. While “on leave” Teddy attended athletic events and was guest of honor at student parties.
16. Penmanship. The school quickly added a number of other business classes.
17. Michigan State Normal College admitted women since its inception. The first woman was admitted to the University of Michigan in 1866 to study Greek.
18. Mark Jefferson was a geographer who did some of the first geographic studies and maps of South America and served as Chief Cartographer for the U. S. delegation to the Paris Peace Talks following World War I. Jefferson could have secured a post in the most prestigious universities but stayed at the Normal believing that training teachers in geography was crucial to the success of pupils throughout the country.
19. 1970.
20. The first kindergarten in Ypsilanti opened in 1888 at the Normal Training School. The concept of creating learning environments for very young children originated in Germany.



# A Taste of Beekeeping History

By Roger Sutherland

Did you know that Michigan used to be the center of honey bee queen rearing in this country? That more clover honey was produced in the Thumb than anywhere else? That the Michigan Beekeepers' Association is the oldest continuous bee association in the country? That much of the early honey bee research was done at Michigan State University? That Michigan, which continually ranks in the top ten honey-producing states, has played a major role in beekeeping history?

Beekeeping is perhaps the oldest form of agriculture in the United States and the world. In the mid to late 1700s, the early pioneers and Native Americans in the Ypsilanti area and Southeastern Michigan began to notice the arrival of a new kind of insect, one that was different from other bees and insects. This new arrival made nests in cavities of trees or buildings. It stored quantities of honey and wintered over in large numbers. Each spring the colonies swarmed and filled the air creating a loud noise. Native Americans referred to these new arrivals as the "Lazy white man's flies." Conventional wisdom at that time was that these insects signaled the impending arrival of large numbers of white men and their families.

Scientifically the new arrival would be named *Apis mellifera* or honey bee to differentiate it from the bumble bee or any other native bee. It is thought that *Apis mellifera* originated in the Middle East or Northern Africa, the only one of the four known honey bee species to make nests in cavities. The other three species make exposed wax comb nests readily exploited by mammals (including man), birds, and insects.

In areas where there were large mature trees, honey bees made nests in hollow tree cavities. Beekeepers would locate these trees, cut openings into the nest, remove the honey and maintain the nest. To establish legal ownership of the nest, their initials were carved into the tree; this was a common practice up through the late 1700s in the Michigan Territory and throughout the United States.



*Beekeeping is perhaps the oldest form of agriculture in the United States and the world*

When maintaining these hives in trees away from home became less desirable, beekeepers would cut the trees down and transport the logs containing hives to their homes. These hives became known as a "log gum hives." In areas where grains such as wheat and rye were raised, beekeepers would make straw rope and weave it into a basket-shaped hives called skeps.

Honey was useful to mankind in many ways. It was the only sweetening used until granulated sugar and maple syrup became available in the early 1600s. It served not only as a food, but also as a medicine and a preservative. Some beekeepers added water to liquid honey and allowed it to ferment to produce a wine called mead, probably the first wine known to mankind. In the middle ages, honey wine was served as a ceremonial wine at weddings. It was common practice to give the new bride and groom enough mead to last until the next full moon to insure a happy marriage and healthy offspring. The name given to this period was the "honeymoon." Beeswax, the empty cells in which honey is stored, had a number of important uses: candles, sealant for canned goods, cosmetics and other uses too numerous to address here.

After the arrival and establishment of honey bees in Virginia and Massachusetts, bees began to move westward after swarming each year; it is estimated that they moved about 50 miles a year. The first documented



*Beekeepers would locate bee nests in hollow tree cavities, cut openings into the nest and remove the honey*

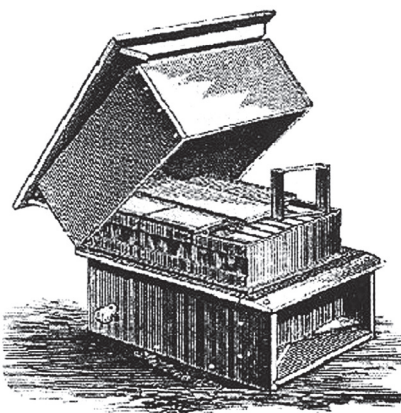
honey bee swarm in Southeast Michigan was reported in 1776. When Michigan homesteaders began clearing the forest for cultivation, bee trees could be maintained on location, split open for removal of the honey and bees, or cut apart and transported to a place where other such nests had been established—an apiary.

*[continued overleaf]*

In the late 1700s and throughout the 1800s, many scientific experiments were conducted to learn more about honey bee biology. Observations made in 1792 by Francois Huber, who was blind, and his servant determined that queen bees were developed from worker bees, that the queen (not king) ruled the hive, and that the cause of swarming was overcrowding. In 1851, Reverend Lorenzo Langstroth developed the 10 frame movable frame hive which essentially did away with the skep and revolutionized the beekeeping industry. The interior dimensions of the hive were based on the principle of "bee space." Langstroth realized that bees leave open a space of 5/16", build extra wax comb in spaces over 3/8" and deposit propolis (a gummy substance from plants) in spaces of 1/4" or less. Rev. Langstroth became known as the "Father of Modern Beekeeping."

For the commercial beekeeper, who has hundreds of hives to move, his hives are trucked to Florida in the fall to pollinate the citrus crop. Then in January, these hives are moved to California for pollination of the almonds, a period of about two weeks, before returning to Florida. As spring approaches, there are pollination contracts to fulfill in Georgia, Tennessee, and other southern states before moving northward along the east coast, finally ending up in the blueberry fields in Maine. This practice is very stressful to the bees themselves and often results in unhealthy bees.

Black bears have become a problem to Michigan beekeepers especially in the northern part of the state. While the bear has a bad reputation for destroying many colonies in Michigan as well as in other states, the bear and honey have had a long positive relationship in marketing honey and this is how it came about: It all started in Canada in 1914 when Harry Colebourn, a veterinarian from Winnipeg, was drafted into the Canadian Expeditionary Force in charge of the Calvary horses being sent to France to fight in World War I. When he arrived in White River, a mother black bear had been killed leaving twin cubs. Harry Colebourn purchased one of the cubs and took it with him on the train headed for Val Cartier, Quebec. When they sailed to England, the cub, now named Winnipeg (or Winnie), became a tamed, welcome pet aboard ship. In England, the bear slept in



*In 1851, Reverend Lorenzo Langstroth developed the 10 frame movable frame hive which revolutionized the beekeeping industry*

the soldier's tent and was taught tricks and loved by all.

Soon Captain Colebourn received orders to be shipped to France. Knowing that Winnie could not accompany him, he made arrangements with the London Zoo to look after the bear until he returned from France. Winnie immediately became a favorite attraction for everyone. She would allow children to ride on her back and would eat from their hands.

Two of the zoo visitors, A.A. Milne and his son Christopher Robin, were especially taken by Winnie. Christopher added the name Pooh to the bear's name and even had a birthday party at the zoo with friends and Winnie as well. A.A. Milne started to write stories about a lovable honey-loving bear in a book called *Winnie-the-Pooh*.

Harry Colebourn decided to leave the bear at the zoo when he went back to Canada. Winnie died in May 1934 when she was twenty years old. By now millions of children had read about Winnie-the-Pooh and her adventures with Christopher Robin and the other animals in the story.

Since 1966, my wife and I have been keeping bees in Superior Township. During those 46 years we have witnessed major changes in maintaining viable hives. For the first 20 years our winter colony losses were 10-15%. Colonies were strong early each spring and honey production averaged 100+ pounds per hive. Mated queens could last 3 to 5 years before replacement; now queens last only 1 or 2 months.

Since 1985, there has been one new problem after another affecting our colonies. Winter

colony losses now average 30 -50% and colonies that do survive are often very weak in the spring. Honey yields are now in the range of 60-70 pounds per hive and in some years no honey can be removed because 60 to 90 pounds of honey must be left in the hive for the bees to consume over the winter.

The list of causes related to bee health and survival is too long to detail and new threats seem to arise each year without the removal of past problems. Problems since 1985 include: two parasitic mites which have built up immunity to the medications being used for control; the use of new pesticides used in agriculture that affect the health of the honey bee; colony collapse disease; and a fungus disease called Nosema.

Northern states like Michigan often have long cold winters which greatly stress honey bees. After the long and cold winter of 2010-11, colony losses were more than 50% in Southeastern Michigan. While the mild winter of 2011-12 favored winter survival, the early warm Michigan spring caused blossoming in March of apple, peach and pear trees as well as locust and basswood, blossoms that were frozen in April. As a result, there was no supply of nectar for bees when it was needed to produce honey.

Making matters worse has been the drought of this summer which has dramatically reduced nectar secretion in flowers. To make up for the loss of nectar, beekeepers must feed their bees sugar syrup which will make them less likely to consume their winter honey stores. We can only hope that our bees survive the winter of 2012-13.

In spite of all the problems, we still enjoy working with honey bees and continue to learn more about this fascinating insect. One of our greatest joys is sharing honey bee information with others.

*[Roger Sutherland active in the local honey bee program and is a supporter of honey bee restoration efforts.]*



*Pooh Bear in the "Hunny Pot"*

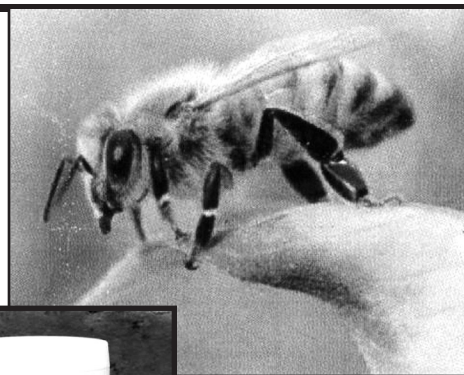


# The “Buzz” about Bees or “Beeing” Aware in Ypsilanti

By George Ridenour



*Bee Alley behind the Ypsilanti Food Co-op on River Street*



**Above:**  
*Honeybees fly from one to seven miles from the hives. They need water and ideally a variety of flowers to pollinate*

**Left:**  
*Raw, unfiltered honey from Ypsilanti, Michigan*



**H**aving had the pleasure of talking with Jerry Sutherland and reviewing his article in this issue of the GLEANINGS titled “A Taste of Beekeeping History” I decided that we all should learn more about our local history with bees. I then read and expanded on a July 9, 2012 article that appeared in the [Ann Arbor.com](http://AnnArbor.com) written by Janet Miller, freelance reporter titled: “Bee Aware: Ypsilanti Food Co-op supports The Local Honey Project as a way to stem the decline of honeybees.”

Talking with Lisa Bashert, a beekeeper, and manager of The Local Honey Project for the Ypsilanti Food Co-op was an eye-opening experience. Lisa single handedly captured a giant swarm of honeybees (estimated at 20,000) which was moving through and had landed in Depot Town. Of course she endured a few stings in starting the local hives. There are now three locations: The Farm at St. Joe's, Ypsilanti Food Co-op, and Growing Hope on Michigan Avenue in Ypsilanti. Eventually, with organic management and careful “farming,” it is expected that the Ypsilanti hives will produce stronger and more productive bees and hives.

Honeybees fly from one to seven miles from the hives. They need water and ideally a variety of flowers to pollinate. One of the major issues concerning honey bees is

colony collapse disorder (CCD). This is a phenomenon where worker bees from a beehive colony abruptly disappear. This has been noted in Ypsilanti, throughout the United States and worldwide. In 2010-2011, 65% of the hives in Michigan were lost; from 2011 to the present 21% of the hives in Michigan were lost. In Ypsilanti in 2010 80% of the hives were lost; in 2011 40% of the hives were lost, however, in 2012, 20% or less have been lost.

There are several potential causes for these losses: 1) Stress of bees due to drought and weather conditions; 2) Pesticides; 3) Monocrops (i.e. limiting the varieties of crops being produced such as fields of tomatoes instead of corn, tomatoes, cucumbers, etc. - honeybees love a variety of nectars and pollen.); 4) Exposure to other types of bees who try and take over and intermingle with local bees; and 5) Commercial apiaries.

Supermarket “honey”: Many bees are being fed “sugar water.” Much of the honey in supermarkets is from sugar water which is heated, blended and filtered. Natural, organic, raw honey is the best and is used for many purposes such as for a new “therapy” known as apitherapy. Included in this new therapy is the use of honey to inoculate people against pollen allergies and the use of honey to treat wounds since

honey is an anti-bacterial that kills germs and promotes healing. Also, bee venom is being used as an anti-inflammatory for arthritis (yes, the patient is stung under the care of a therapist).

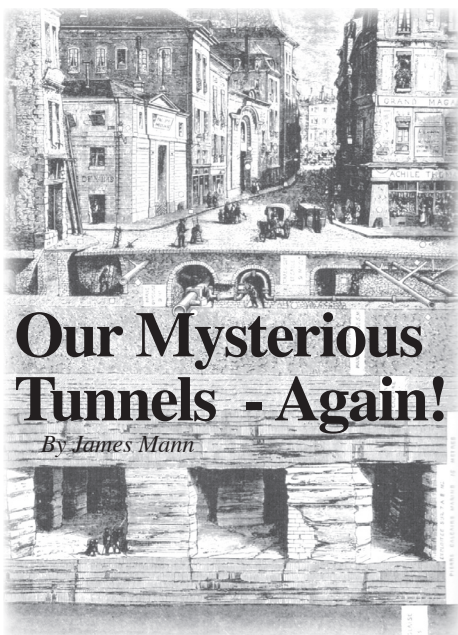
Ms. Bashert was behind the City of Ypsilanti adopting an ordinance that allows homeowners to keep up to two hives in their backyards. This was enacted in 2009 by the Ypsilanti City Council after a neighbor of Ms. Bashert complained about her hives.

Finally, the goal of the Local Honey Project is to grow stronger hives, provide locally produced organic honey, help stem the loss of honeybees by producing a resilient native Michigan bee; train an army of new beekeepers and educate the public about the importance of honeybees in the food system. The Local Honey Project will produce queens (most hives have a single queen and about 20% have two queens) and start local hives. For Ypsilanti Food Co-op information, beekeeping information, and Local Honey Project information contact Ms. Lisa Bashert at (734) 483-1520 (Ypsilanti Food Co-op).

Now you know the buzz!

*[George Ridenour is a member of the YHS Archives Advisory Board, a volunteer in the Archives and a regular contributor to the GLEANINGS.]*





## Our Mysterious Tunnels - Again!

By James Mann

Every now and then, someone finds a trace of the network of tunnels under the Depot Town section of the city and running throughout the east side. These tunnels have been the cause of speculation from the earliest days of the community. Some believe the tunnels were used during the days before the American Civil War, as part of the Underground Railroad, to hide runaway slaves. Openings to the tunnels were found along the banks of the Huron River. One such opening was near Cross Street and Frog Island. The existence of the opening to this tunnel was known for many years, but by 1923 had become overgrown by bushes. That year some boys rediscovered the opening and started to explore the tunnel. At first, they only went in just a few feet, but then a few decided to go in as far as they could.

"The tunnel is not high enough to permit even the boys to stand upright. It is lined with cobblestones, cemented together, both to walls and floor. A little stream of water trickles along, running into the river, but the stream is not of sufficient size to make it impossible to follow the tunnel. Rubber boots were found a great addition to the explorer's equipment, however," reported *The Daily Ypsilanti Press* of March 24, 1923. "With their flashlights," the account continued, "the boys followed the tunnel until they were under the Michigan Central depot, they judged. Stopping, they thought they heard footsteps and, fearing they might have entered some bootleggers' den, they

beat a hasty retreat and have never dared to explore the tunnel any farther."

The boys noted indentations along the tunnel on the right and left, which may have been branch tunnels, but these were not explored. Whenever the subject of the tunnels was discussed, someone talked of a mysterious gate blocking the tunnel which was securely locked. The explorers said they did not go far enough to find this gate and did not know of anyone who ever saw it. Yet someone would always bring up the subject of the gate, made of iron and rusted with age.

Supporting the belief the tunnels were part of the Underground Railroad, it was recalled, that years before, workers excavating on Maple Street found an underground room, with cement walls and tunnels extending to the east and west. This room, which was found in September of 1889, was divided into chambers. "The story as the boys have figured it out is that the slaves entered the tunnel at the river. Guarding the big room is the iron gate, and a similar one is believed to have been placed at the other end side of the room. The slaves were kept in the room until it was safe for them to leave their underground hiding place under cover of night. They left the tunnel on either Prospect or Forest Ave. and continued on their northward journey until they reached Canada."

The tunnels, it was noted, would be an ideal place for some enterprising bootlegger to set up a still and set about producing moonshine by the barrel. Such a bootlegger would certainly be ready to put to an end any little boys who wandered into his hiding place. On the afternoon of Sunday, March 25, 1923, Raymond H. Niblock and Carl Clow, two grown men, entered the tunnel at the entrance by the river and explored it as far as they could go. "There are two branches to the 'tunnel,' one extending off toward Maple Street, and the other following the railroad pretty closely, to Park Street, where it becomes so small that the men could not go farther. The Maple Street branch has broken down and filled in, so if there is any room beyond, it is now inaccessible," noted *The Daily Ypsilanti Press* of Monday, March 26, 1923. "The tunnel," the account continues, "is between three and four feet high, with stone slabs on top, a wooden floor beneath made of heavy



One opening to the tunnels is under the walkway from Cross Street to Frog Island



The opening is approximately three feet high and has a partially closed hinged cover

planks, and solid, old-fashioned stone walls. A little stream of water runs through it into the river." The men concluded, if there was a bootlegger with a still in the tunnel, he must have been very small.

The tunnel was, in fact, constructed by the Michigan Central Railroad in about 1837, to solve a drainage problem. The tunnel was used to drain off surface water to keep the tracks from flooding. The underground room at Maple was in fact a cistern for a fountain on the Follett property, which was between Oak and Maple Streets. "To obtain pressure for it," wrote Eileen Harrison for *The Ypsilanti Press* of July 12, 1962, "a huge cistern was built at the top of the hill and a windmill was used to keep it pumped full, re-circulating the water after it was sprayed through the fountain." The cistern was divided into chambers, as a single room would not have been able to support the top. The walls of the rooms kept the cistern from falling in on itself.

Ypsilanti was a major stop on the Underground Railroad but the tunnels were probably not part of that story.

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



## Background check:

# Our French Connection

memory bank is still growing *By Tom Dodd with special thanks to Mike Van Wasshnova*

Information has been arriving since the publication of the article titled “Have No Fear! J.B. Sanscrainte was here!” in the Fall 2012 GLEANINGS about Jean Baptiste Sanscrainte, the French fur trader who operated a peltry at the site of today’s Ypsilanti as early as 1790. Our editors were skeptical of the story to the point of sub-heading it “A lighthearted look at our history...” Some even questioned the French phrases in the story, but found the same English-to-French dictionary for verification.

Hugh Heward’s 1790 report had uncovered information indicating Sanscrainte owned a successful peltry on the Huron River @ Sauk Trail. Further information reveals he later sold that enterprise to Gabriel Godfroy around 1803. Sanscrainte was overlooked in local history and Godfroy mistakenly received credit for being the first European settler in what would become Ypsilanti.

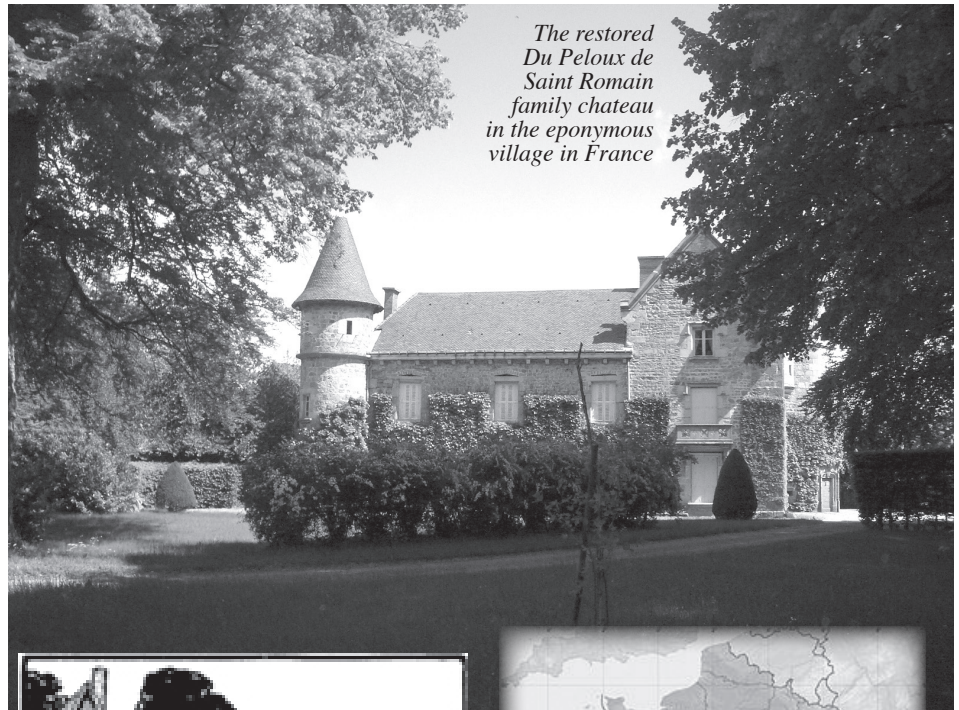
GLEANINGS’ 2012 Fall issue equated translations of the original trader’s “without fear” nickname with “No Fear” decals on the back windows of contemporary pickup trucks indicating the driver is not afraid of falling off his sky-high running board. If it worked for the early French trader, they must have figured it might work for them. Some readers surmised this was too breezy an approach to history.



## Digging deeper:

Ypsilantian Michael Van Wasshnova, a history buff and member of the Monroe County Historical Society, relayed our “Sanscrainte” story to his compatriots in Monroe who said, “Certainly! Sanscrainte was a promotional alias Jean Baptiste had adopted to further his trading in the American wilderness.” **His real name, they reveal, was actually Jean Baptiste Saint Romain.** It seems the GLEANINGS point of view was “spot on.”

There are still Godfroys and Sanscraintes in Monroe—even a Godfroy Street—but no Saint Romains. Still, the Monroe histo-



*Noted for its thatched roofs (“la chaume”), the village is known as Saint-Romain-Lachalm*



*Saint-Romain-Lachalm in the Haute-Loire department in south-central France*

rians know their stuff when it comes to local history and their roles up to the War of 1812 and beyond.

But what about J.B. “No Fear” Saint Romain and the rest of his family in the days of the Louies?

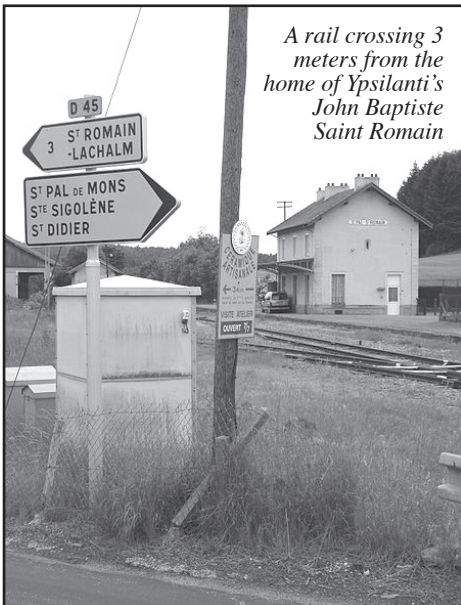
**The rest of the story:** Saint-Romain-Lachalm is a commune (municipality or village) in the Haute-Loire department (level of government) in south-central France. The folks who live in that neighborhood are called the Sans Roumis. The commune’s name comes from a visit by Saint Romain, combined with Lachalm referring to the abundance of thatched roofs (“la chaume”, thatched roof).

Until the arrival of the aristocratic Du Peloux family, St-Romain-Lachalm was a joint lordship (jointly owned). Notable monuments include the church, a private chateau [top of page] and the roadside cross. The patron saint’s festival is usually the first weekend in August. It’s their version of the Ypsilanti Heritage Festival. In 2007 the population of Saint-Romain-Lachalm was 995 and there were 515 homes consisting of 365 main residences, 117 second or occasional homes and 33 vacant homes.

Jean Baptiste Saint Romain “Sanscrainte” was among the Saint Romain clan in that village and had family members known far beyond his fur trade in the American wilderness. *[continued overleaf]*

## Our French Connection

[continued from page 23]



*A rail crossing 3 meters from the home of Ypsilanti's John Baptiste Saint Romain*

The noble Du Peloux de Saint Romain family are the counts of Saint-Romain-Lachalm. They came from the Vivarais and St-Romain-Lachalm was part of the dowry of Aymar de Curnieu in 1418. They re-

stored the chateau in 1603 and added an octagonal tower. When the French Revolution came, Count Charles du Peloux and his son were condemned to death for the simple fact of being of noble lineage. They were finally pardoned, thanks to numerous witnesses attesting that they were sympathetic to republican principles (they were supporters of Lafayette.) The Du Peloux family has supplied the town with its mayors for hundreds of years but there is no mention of Jean Baptiste's personal accomplishments in New France other than his family's residence there.

Although there are no Sanscraintes on the books in Ypsilanti, several are still found living along the banks of the River Raisin in Monroe—the only Michigan municipality founded before Ypsilanti. The research continues.

*[Tom Dodd designs the pages of GLEANINGS for the Ypsilanti Historical Society.]*

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# Ypsilanti's "King of Hamburgers"

By George Ridenour



*Roy's Squeeze Inn on Michigan Avenue in Ypsilanti*

In 1937 Patrick McDonald opened "The Airdrome" in California which was moved to a new location in 1940 and renamed "McDonald's Famous Barbecue." Keith J. Kramer and Matthew Burns opened "Insta-Burger King" in 1953 in Florida and two years later it was renamed "Burger King." However, Ypsilanti had its own "king of hamburgers" who, in 1952, bought Reas' Drive Inn in Ypsilanti and later started a number of other hamburger operations.

In 1932 a young Roy Tillman would eat his first hamburger, or as he later put it in an interview... "his 6 to 8 hamburgers," in a dingy diner in Mobile, Alabama and he was "hooked for life." During an interview published in the *Ypsilanti Daily Press*, December 11, 1988, Roy revealed that his lifetime hobbies were... "hamburgers, barbecuing, and fishing." Roy Tillman became known to one and all for over forty years as Roy of Roy's Squeeze Inn fame. He had somewhere in the neighborhood of twelve hamburger joints over a 56-year period. Roy arrived in Ypsilanti in 1952 and remained a resident until his death here on December 31, 1995.

Tillman bought his first hamburger stand in Louisville, Mississippi in 1932 for \$35. It was in the heart of the Great Depression and the stand brought in \$15 to \$25 per week, which was good money at the time. He started other hamburger stands including one in Ashland, Alabama in an old trolley car. When he arrived in Ypsilanti in 1952 Roy briefly worked in an auto plant and then bought Reas' Drive Inn at

Michigan Avenue and Harris Road. That purchase was followed by Roy's Squeeze Inn, Roy's Big One, Dukes, Roy's Krystal Kastle (in Ypsilanti and Tecumseh), Roy's Barbeque and Hamburgers (Milan) and Roy's (Monroe).

Roy and his wife Kelsie had two sons, Fred and Mike, who started and ran more "squeeze inns" in Plymouth and Garden City. Mike was seriously wounded in Vietnam and Roy and Kelsie closed their shops and spent most of the next two years in Chicago where Mike was recuperating at Great Lakes Hospital. After Mike recovered the Tillmans returned to Ypsilanti and the restaurant business. Fred later owned and operated 35 McDonald's Restaurants in Arkansas, Tennessee and Mississippi.

Washtenaw County Commissioner Dillard Roy Craiger was quoted as saying "It's always fun to go to his place because he was always yellin' and goin' on at the waitresses. He's always the same ol' Roy every time you see him. He gives the customers their money's worth...He cares about people. He has a loud mouth, always yellin' but a heart as big as Texas." In addition to being successful in business, Tillman was widely known for providing help for customers and other individuals in need, for his generosity in providing food for charity events and for feeding the Ypsilanti poor.

Two of the Roy's Squeeze Inns remain in Ypsilanti, one on Michigan Avenue and the other at the Round Tree Shopping Center on Ellsworth Road. Roy's wife Kelsie indicated the hamburger joint on Michigan



*Kelsie and Roy Tillman*

Avenue was aptly named "...Because of the small parking lot, they had to squeeze the cars in."

Tillman left quite a legacy for a poor boy from Mississippi. When he was laid to rest he left behind his spouse, Kelsie, his son Fred, four grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren, one sister and many nieces and nephews (Obituary – *Ypsilanti Daily Press* 12-31-1995).

The name Roy's—aka Roy's Squeeze Inn—lives on in the minds, hearts, and taste buds of all those who knew him or at least frequented his hamburger stands. I'll bet he even opened a hamburger stand in Heaven when he arrived up there.

(NOTE: In order to research this story properly, the author visited the Roy's Squeeze Inns in Ypsilanti several times to verify the quality of the hamburgers, and ...mmmm are they ever good.)



*Roy and Kelsie's grave at Highland Cemetery*

*[George Ridenour is a regular contributor to the GLEANINGS and serves as the research specialist in the YHS Archives.]*

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## Can You Identify The Woman In This Portrait?

This portrait was painted in 1966 by artist Gian Cassone and is in storage in the Ypsilanti Historical Society Museum. However, we are unable to locate any information on this item regarding the donor or who the subject is in the portrait. If you have any information please contact Al Rudisill at al@rudisill.ws.

**Our annual heads-up to collectors:** Photos without labels, names, or dates will not be saved by our progeny. Keep them out of the landfill and put "Aunt Bessie's" name on the back of her high school graduation picture. Maybe even the date?



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The solarium, which is located on the South side of the Museum, was named for the Norton family at the membership meeting of the Ypsilanti Historical Society on September 9<sup>th</sup>. The Norton family first arrived in Ypsilanti in 1864 when Austin and Sarah Norton moved here from Sharon Springs, New York. The family is fortunate to have the diaries written by Sarah Norton starting in 1864 and continuing until her death in 1906.

The program for the membership meeting covered 150 years of the Norton family in Ypsilanti including the family flower business that was started in 1892 on Lowell Street, on land now owned by Eastern Michigan University. Bill Nickels presented the program which was followed by the dedication of the "Norton Family Solarium." Many members of the family attended the program and dedication. The Norton family members and those attending the program were escorted by David Thomson, bagpiper, from the Education Center in the Archives through the front entrance of the Museum and into the solarium for the presentation.

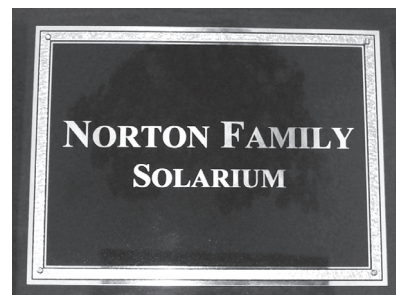
The "Norton Family Solarium" has a new name plaque along with a series of pictures of the Norton family. Also available in the solarium are copies of a special issue of the Gleanings titled "150 Years of the Norton Family and Businesses in Ypsilanti" that visitors may take to read about this remarkable family. Next time you visit the Museum make sure you visit the newly dedicated "Norton Family Solarium."

## Solarium Named for Norton Family



*Above: The "Norton Family Solarium" contains plants that were common in this area during the late 1800s.*

*Left: David Thomson led the Norton family and other visitors up the stairs, outside and in the front door of the Museum to the dedication of the solarium*



*The series of Norton family pictures posted on the wall of the solarium*



*Austin and Dorothy Norton and other members of the Norton family who attended the dedication of the solarium*



# Ypsilanti GLEANINGS

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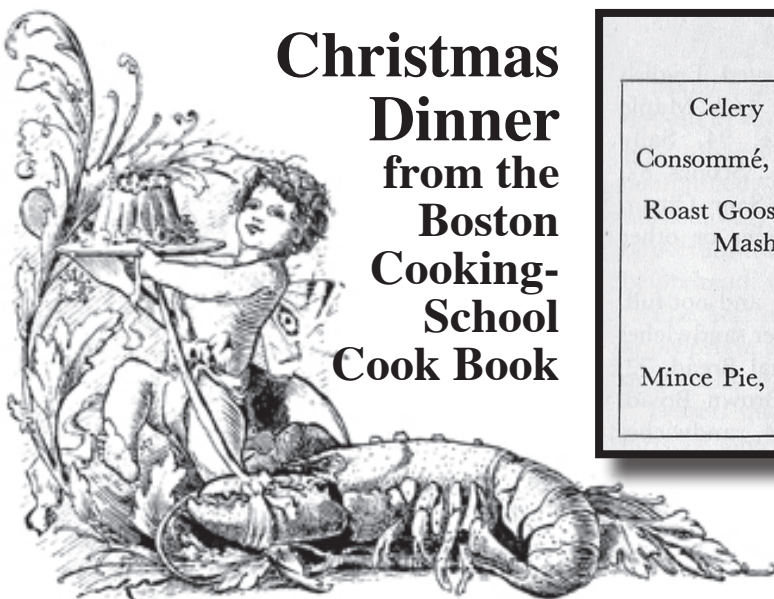
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### CHRISTMAS DINNER

Celery	Oysters on the Half Shell, 154	Olives
		
Consommé, 180, <i>or</i> Essence of Tomato, 198	Melba Toast, 162	
		
Roast Goose, 388, Celery Stuffing, 210, <i>or</i> Little Roast Pig, 321		
Mashed Potatoes, 409	Onions in Cream, 448	
Green Beans, 426		
		
Waldorf Salad, 485		
		
Mince Pie, 613, <i>or</i> Plum Pudding, 531, Hard and Liquid Sauce		
Black Coffee. 39		

*(originally published in 1896)*  
Those aren't prices after the menu items;  
they refer to the page numbers in the Cook Book.