

# Ypsilanti GLEANINGS

Official publication of the Ypsilanti Historical Society, featuring historical articles and reminisces of the people and places in the Ypsilanti area.



FALL 2010

## “Lost Restaurants” of Ypsilanti

By Peg Porter

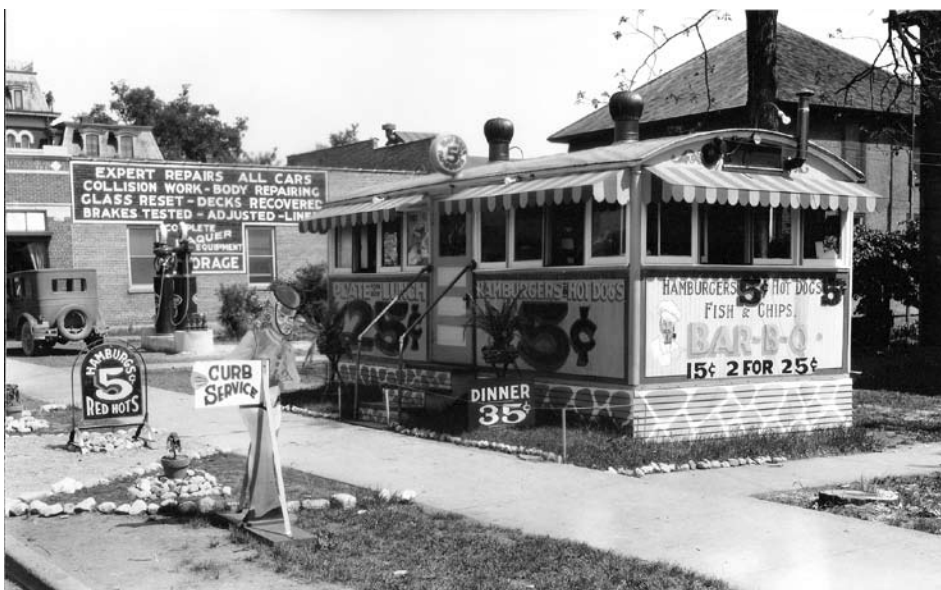
*Introduction: The summer issue of Gleanings included a call to our readers to share their memories of restaurants that had once been an important element of the town's social and business life. A number of readers responded including three who live in other parts of the country. In our research we found that close to 100 restaurants have opened and closed since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. We focused on those establishments that our readers mentioned. In addition we added several others that reflect Ypsilanti's social history.*

“Fast Food” arrived early in Ypsilanti. Familarly known as **Snappy Joe's**, this short order eatery opened its doors in 1932 on Pearl Street next door to the Weidman Ford Dealership. By 1954 it had relocated to 109 1/2 West Michigan, where it was housed in a narrow building (e.g. half a storefront). The interior contained a long counter with

stools and a kitchen behind. Popular with the downtown lunch time crowd, the menu consisted primarily of hamburgers, hot dogs, and soup. Often there would be a bean dish, such as chili, prepared ahead of time. Maxe Obermeyer recalls a line outside waiting for a stool to open up. Joe's Snappy Service would continue on Michigan Avenue until the early seventies.

Further east on Michigan Avenue, across the river, stood **Russell's Diner**, later known as **Averill's**. This diner offered curb service during the 1930's. (see picture). The diner was opened by the parents of the late Red Averill. After the Averill's separated, Red's mother moved the diner further east to the site of what is now The Bomber. Red Averill would go on in the restaurant business. He took over

*continued on page 3*



*Russell's Diner, later known as Averill's, offered curb service during the 1930's. It was later moved to the site of the current Bomber Restaurant.*

### In This Issue...

“Lost Restaurants” of Ypsilanti	1
Readers share their memories of restaurants that were once part of the town's business & social life.	
Dining in the Museum	6
The YHS Museum was recently the site of a gala dinner cooked by John Kirkendall.	
Marilyn Begole Chose Love	8
Marilyn Begole declined an invitation to go to New York and pursue a career in dancing.	
Reed Organ Donated to the Museum	9
A beautiful 1907 Ferrand reed organ was recently donated to the Museum.	
River Street Neighbor's Gossip and the Hutchinson Marriage	10
A story about the troubled marriage of Clara and Shelley Hutchinson.	
Back to the Future	16
The Ypsilanti Symphony Orchestra concert on October 3, 2010, will celebrate Ypsilanti's history through music.	
Book Review:	
Wicked Washtenaw County	17
James Mann new book includes strange tales of the grisly and unexplained.	
Portrait in the Library	18
J. Willard Babbitt is today all but forgotten but was one of the great men of Ypsilanti.	
Finding the Home of Benjamin Schofield	19
Michael Newberry describes the research he did to locate Benjamin Schofield's home.	
Plenty of Elbow Room	21
An article about how mid-century architecture is often overlooked and easily dismissed.	
The Ypsilanti Phantom Prowler	22
Between 1935 and 1940 there were 61 prowler incidents and 141 burglaries in Ypsilanti.	
Lamar Kishlar: Blondes Beware	23
Lamar Kishlar had a brilliant, inventive mind but may also have been somewhat of a comedian.	
Ida Bourgdoff Goes Missing	24
On the evening of October 28, 1905, a young 13 year old girl went missing in Ypsilanti.	
YHS Archives Postcard Collection	28
The collection includes photos and illustrations of the natural and built environment of Ypsilanti.	
Society Briefs:	
From the President's Desk	2
Society Board Members	2
Gleaning Sponsors	11
Museum Board Report	25
Fletcher White Archives	27
Membership Application	27

### *Board of Trustees:*

Maria Davis, Virginia Davis-Brown,  
Kathryn Howard, Gerald Jennings,  
Jackson Livisay, Karen Nickels,  
Maxe Obermeyer, John Pappas,  
Alvin Rudisill, Diane Schick,  
Robert Southgate

### *Museum Advisory Board:*

Virginia Davis-Brown,  
Kathleen Campbell, Marjorie Fahndrich,  
Kathryn Howard, Jackson Livisay,  
Fofie Pappas, Robert Southgate,  
Rita Sprague, Anne Stevenson-Less  
Nancy Wheeler

### *Archives Advisory Board:*

Kim Clarke, Maria Davis, John Pappas,  
Gerry Pety – ex officio, Hank Prebys,  
George Ridenour, Diane Schick,  
Jane Schmiedeke, Lisa Walters

### *Endowment Fund Advisory Board*

Kenneth Butman, Nat Edmunds,  
Peter Fletcher, Linda Hummel,  
Paul Kuwik, Karen Nickels,  
Maxe Obermeyer, Steve Pierce,  
Alvin Rudisill, John Salcau

### *Ypsilanti Historical Society*

220 North Huron Street  
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197  
Tel: (734) 482-4990  
[www.ypsilantihistoricalsociety.org](http://www.ypsilantihistoricalsociety.org)

### *Gleanings Staff*

Editor \_\_\_\_\_ Al Rudisill

Assistant Editor \_\_\_\_\_ Peg Porter

Design & Layout \_\_\_\_\_ Keith Bretzius

Advertising Director \_\_\_\_\_ Michael Newberry

Finance Director \_\_\_\_\_ Karen Nickels

Distribution \_\_\_\_\_ Michael Newberry

If you have suggestions for articles or if  
you have questions contact Al Rudisill at  
734-476-6658 or [al@rudisill.ws](mailto:al@rudisill.ws).

Ypsilanti Gleanings is published 4 times a year  
by the Ypsilanti Historical Society, 220 N.  
Huron St., Ypsilanti, MI 48197

## From the President's Desk

*By Alvin E. Rudisill*

Recently a visitor to the Museum related this story to my wife, Jan, who at the time was serving as a docent. The visitor was viewing our display of old cameras and indicated that a friend of hers had found an old Kodak Brownie camera in the attic along with military items from World War II. She discovered there was film in the camera and took it to be developed. To her surprise the clear photos revealed a detailed account of the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Jan said that one of the "perks" of being a docent is hearing the stories told by the many visitors that come to tour the Museum and Archives.

Our fall quarterly meeting was held on Sunday, October 12 and we had an excellent presentation by Randy Hotton on the importance of the Willow Run Bomber Plant during World War II. Our next quarterly meeting and the holiday open house is on Sunday, December 5th from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. We hope you will join us for the meeting and program. Refreshments will be served following the meeting and program.

We are very pleased to report that the "Storm Window Project" has been successfully completed. A total of 52 windows were repaired and painted and 52 storm windows were built and installed. We have received pledges and contributions for over \$15,000 which will cover the cost of the project plus the design and purchase of a "Storm Window Project" donor plaque for display in the Museum.

Another project currently underway is the repair of the front steps and entrance. The project involves replacing the limestone pad

under the front door and the limestone sides on the front steps and porch. The limestone sections have been removed and sent to a contractor who will use them for patterns to cut and shape the replacements. The project cost is \$8,650 which has been covered by a contribution from an anonymous donor.

We sincerely thank all those who have made contributions in support of the various projects undertaken over the past few months. The Museum and Archives are a local treasure and it is important that the property and artifacts are preserved for the use and enjoyment of future generations.

Thanks to everyone who contributes their time and money in support YHS projects but a special thank you this month to Board of Trustee member Jerry Jennings. Jerry supervises all the ongoing maintenance projects and completes many of his own. In the past couple of months he has removed a leaking roof vent, repaired and painted the ceiling in the living room, constructed several book shelves for the Archives, repaired and replaced a chandelier in one of the upstairs bedrooms, as well as other projects.

We are always looking for volunteers as docents for the Museum or research assistants for the Archives. Both the Museum and Archives are open from 2:00 to 5:00 pm from 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 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

Home  
Administrative  
Archives  
Collections  
Contact Info  
Donations  
Event Schedule  
Membership  
Publications

**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 operated by the Ypsilanti Historical Society. We are all volunteers and our membership is open to everyone, including non-city residents.

**A Matter of Trust:** The Ypsilanti Historical Society has initiated a five-year campaign to raise \$400,000. This amount will cover the cost of purchasing the property the City and completing the many deferred maintenance projects on the building and grounds. You may view a

To view on-line  
programs click on the  
links below:

Historical  
Highlights  
of  
Ypsilanti

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



**“Lost Restaurants” of Ypsilanti –**  
*continued from front page*

management of The Bomber, and then later opened three Big Boy Restaurants.

A note about the picture of the diner: the service station and garage next door was first the George Fosdick filling station, and then became the location of Thompson Autos. The ornate building in the background was the Worden House. The land where these buildings stood is now vacant and is part of the Water Street Project.

Not everyone wanted or needed to get their food in a hurry. Dining out was still considered a special occasion for most Ypsilantians. The “white tablecloth” restaurants were the best. When the Huron Hotel was completed in 1923 in time for the city’s centennial, the hotel restaurant, **The Huron: Ypsilanti’s Community Tavern**, opened with great fanfare on January 1, 1923. Harvey Colburn writes, “...on the afternoon and evening of that day three hundred guests gaily celebrated the occasion around its tables.” The restaurant flourished during the late 1920’s. A Christmas Dinner buffet featured a large selection including an Oyster Cocktail, a shrimp and crabmeat Newburgh, ham, turkey, and steak as well as five desserts with three kinds of pie. All of this for a cost of only \$1.50 per person.

Constantine Alex, a Greek immigrant, opened the **Avon Restaurant** in 1930 at 205 W. Michigan. The restaurant was named for the River Avon in England and was decorated in the Tudor style with dark oak, beamed ceilings and leaded glass. Architect Ralph Gerganoff worked with Alex on the design and décor. Alex chose to use red and white or blue and white checked damask tablecloths. Harold Goodsman described Alex in an Ann Arbor News article, as “...a genteel, personable, almost dapper man. He was very gracious.” Alex was known as “Connie” to his patrons. He quickly learned the names of regular customers and seated them at their favorite booth. My mother, Ruth Porter, shared her memories in the same 1997 News article. “Every Sunday, my husband and I would go to the movies and then go over to Connie’s for a bite to eat afterward. We had  
*continued on page 4*

**Christmas Dinner**  
**Sunday, December 25, 1927**

**Fruit Cocktail**  
**Celery**

**Oyster Cocktail**  
**Queen Olives**

**Chicken Broth, Noodles**  
**Shrimps and Crab Meat, a la Newburgh**  
**Boiled Capon, Oyster Sauce**  
**Baked Virginia Ham, Corn Muffin**  
**Roast Stuffed Vermont Turkey, Cranberry Sauce**  
**Broiled Tenderloin Steak, Mushrooms**

**Whipped Potatoes**

**Candied Yams**

**Brussel Sprouts**  
**Hot Rolls and Butter**

**Hearts of Iceberg and Tomato Salad, Thousand Island Dressing**

**English Plum Pudding, Hard Sauce**  
**Green Apple, Pumpkin, Hot Mince Pie**  
**Raspberry Mousse**  
**Walnut Sunday**  
**Special Brick Ice Cream with Cake**

**Coffee**

**Tea**  
**After Dinner Mints**

**Milk**

**\$1.50 per cover**

*The menu for the 1927 Christmas Buffet at the Huron Hotel. Quite a spread for \$1.50.*



*The Avon Restaurant, located at 205 W. Michigan, was named for the River Avon in England and was decorated in the Tudor style with dark oak, beamed ceilings and leaded glass.*



*Harold Goodsman described Constantine Alex in an Ann Arbor News article, as “...a genteel, personable, almost dapper man. He was very gracious.”*



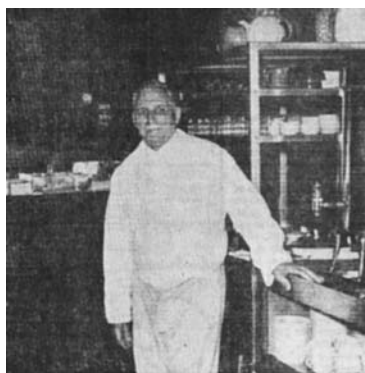
## "Lost Restaurants" of Ypsilanti – continued from page 3

*our own booth and Connie always knew what we wanted without us telling him."*

The Avon seated 100 and featured an extensive menu. The Avon Annex featured a shorter menu for breakfast and lunch time diners. Prior to World War II, the Avon also served Chinese (or rather Chinese American) food such as chop suey and chow mein. The war brought other changes to the restaurant. Gone were the male waiters who were replaced by waitresses. After 42 years in the business, Connie Alex retired in 1972. The Avon is still fondly remembered by Ypsilantians. Our own John Dawson recalls, *"It was an institution here in Ypsilanti. It was a nice place to eat. And it was a gathering place for local business people. The menu never changed. It was always the same. My favorite was breaded veal cutlets with mushroom sauce."*

The 1920s and 1930s saw a number of restaurants open in private homes. My grandparents, E. H. Porter and Ellen Craig Porter, owned and operated **The Blue Bird Tea Room** in their home at the corner of Brower (now College Place) and Washtenaw. Their path to the restaurant business was circuitous. Both of them were born in Canada, he in Nova Scotia and she in Ontario. My grandfather attended Guelph Agricultural Institute (now the University of Guelph) where he trained as a dairyman. He met my grandmother when he was working on an experimental farm owned by the Massey family, manufacturers of farm equipment and machinery. From 1907 until about 1917 he managed large dairy farms in Missouri and Michigan. The hard work with minimal help due in part to the World War caused my grandfather's health to decline. My grandparents then managed White Lodge on the Huron Chain of Lakes for a couple of summers. They met people from Ypsilanti at the Lodge who urged them to move to town and open a restaurant.

Their clientele included numerous Normal faculty as well as retired faculty members. Normal students served as waitresses for a meal and tips. My grandmother, an unusually kind and generous person, had a group of "distressed gentlewomen" who relied on her for food. Granny would tell them to pay



Avon has anniversary FRI JUN 19 1970

*Above: The 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Avon Restaurant was celebrated in 1970.*

*Right: This is a partial menu from the Avon Annex, which had a more casual atmosphere than the main dining room.*

*Below: E. H. Porter and Ellen Craig Porter owned and operated **The Blue Bird Tea Room** in their home at the corner of Brower (now College Place) and Washtenaw. The house still stands.*



### SANDWICHES

Peanut Butter .....	10c	Cold Beef or Pork .....	15c
Boiled Ham .....	10c	Fried Ham .....	15c
Egg .....	10c	Bacon .....	15c
Salami .....	10c	Tuna Fish .....	15c
Hamburger .....	10c	Dressed Egg .....	15c
Cheese .....	10c	Sardine .....	20c
Liverwurst .....	15c	Ham & Tomato .....	20c
Minced Ham .....	15c	Bacon & Egg .....	20c
Ham & Egg .....	20c	Denver .....	25c
Swiss Cheese, Imported .....	20c	Bacon & Tomato .....	20c

Toasted Sandwiches, 5c extra

Hot Beef or Pork Sandwich with Potatoes & Gravy .... 30c  
Coffee or Milk

### SALADS

Vegetable .....	40c
Chicken .....	50c
Salmon .....	40c
Tuna Fish .....	45c
Shrimp .....	45c

Rolls & Butter. Coffee or Tea

### DESSERTS

Assorted Pies, 10c—A la Mode	15c
Fruit Jello	10c
Ice Cream	10c
Pudding	10c
Choc. or Fruit Sundae	15c



Above: The interior of the Gondola Restaurant (#2) which was located on Washtenaw Avenue in c1960s.

Right: A menu from the Gondola. Note the "U.S. Choice Top Sirloin with Mushrooms" for \$3.25.

Football Menu	
Spaghetti with Meat Sauce.....	\$1.40
Spaghetti and Meat Balls.....	1.40
Spaghetti and Mushrooms.....	1.75
Ravioli and Meat Sauce.....	1.65
U. S. Choice Top Sirloin with Mushrooms.....	3.25
Choice T-Bone Steak.....	4.00
Gondola Club Steak Special With Cheese Dressing.....	2.50
Fried Chicken .....	2.25
Butterfly Shrimp .....	2.25

when they could. Not the best business decision perhaps, but certainly in keeping with her character.

Porter's was known for its good home cooking and Granny's marvelous desserts, often made with fruit. She did cobblers, pies, applesauce cake as well as the best oatmeal and raisin cookies around. The frosted molasses cookies ran a close second. The restaurant closed in the early 1940's; my grandfather died in 1944. A few years later, our grandmother returned to Canada to live with her remaining siblings.

**The Gondola** first opened in the 1930s in the basement of a home on Marion at Packard. It was first named LaGondola. The restaurant, owned by Laurino (Louie) Agosti served Italian food. Several of our readers remember going to the Gondola with their family when they were young. Pat Cleary recalled eating there with his parents and his sister, now Ann Cleary Kettles. Joe Lawrence said he and his Dad thought the restaurant was o.k., but his mother, Christine, "hated it."

The Gondola thrived, however. The business was purchased by the Simpson family in the 1950s. The business relocated to a new restaurant on Washtenaw at Cornell, keeping The Gondola on the west side of town and greatly expanding its seating capacity. By this time Ypsilanti had "gone wet" allowing the serving of liquor by the glass in addition to beer and wine. The new restaurant featured an extensive bar and expanded menu. Bill Simpson managed the operation. Mike Kabat, co-owner of Haab's, remembers going to The Gondola for a prom night dinner while he was in high school. In 1966 Bill

Simpson sold the restaurant to a group of Ypsilanti business and professional men who renamed it "The Wigwam." The Wigwam was relatively short-lived. Later, the building was demolished. A CITGO gas station now occupies the property.

Other restaurants were popular with families. **Evans White Gables**, located at 1004 West Michigan, was owned and run by Helen and Earl Evans. Pam Shepherd DeLaittre, Judy Morey, and I all remember eating there with our families. Mamie Schell Adair and her sister were waitresses at the Gables while they were in high school. She writes from Clearwater, Florida, "There were two dining rooms. The smaller contained one very long table which was filled each lunchtime by local business people who usually ate the "blue-plate special." A typical "blue plate" was meatloaf, corn and mashed potatoes and included a drink for the price of \$1.00. A piece of homemade cherry pie ala mode added 35 cents to the bill. The typical tip was 10 cents, which was earned by waitresses from the neighborhood and college students. It was their total pay, including a meal. On Sundays families dined in the big dining room....It was a busy restaurant." The building that housed Evans White Gables is now a Mexican restaurant.

While not within the city limits, a number of readers recalled **The Farm Cupboard**. This restaurant was a popular destination for Sunday dinner. Everyone would get in the car to take a drive through the countryside to Dixboro. Maxe Obermeyer especially recalls Easter Sunday when the lawn of the old farmhouse would be filled with families in their Easter best. The farmhouse opened



Todd & Shannon Asperger, Owners

Proud Home of the

**YPSILANTI MEN'S MORNING  
COFFEE CLUB**

8-9 am - Mon-Fri  
(come & be a part of the group)

**760 South Hewitt Road  
Ypsilanti, MI 48197**

Tel: (734) 480-2450

Fax: (734) 480-2452

## Manchester & Associates

--- Attorneys at Law ---

220 North Huron Street - Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Concentrating in

Real Estate, Business, Probate,  
Wills & Trusts, Domestic Relations,  
Immigration and related Litigation



Thomas C. Manchester  
Michael T. Manchester  
Mary E. Comazzi  
Nicole E. Mackmiller

Phone: 734-482-7012 - Fax: 734-485-4468

tmanchester@manchester-associates.com

mmanchester@manchester-associates.com

mcomazzi@manchester-associates.com

nmackmiller@manchester-associates.com



# Dining in the Museum

By John Kirkendall

On a summer evening in early July the Ypsilanti Historical Museum was the site of a gala dinner given to benefit Ypsilanti's historic Freight House. The brainchild of Nat Edmunds, the dinner was auctioned to the highest bidder at an event held at the Ypsilanti Fire Hall. The high bidders, at \$800 for a dinner for 8, were Pam Byrnes and Kent Brown. I was the chef for the occasion – and there were lots of talented and experienced people to help pull it together.

As guests entered the museum, they could not help but experience a sense of awe. The cellist, Dr. Robert Reed, known widely for his work with the Detroit Symphony and the Michigan Opera Theatre was playing in the living room next to the fireplace. In the dining room the formal table featured a bouquet of fresh cut, beguiling field flowers, befitting the museum. The flower arrangement was courtesy of Bonnie Penet, Co-Chair of the Friends of the Freight House (Nat Edmunds is the other co-chair.) The table itself was bountiful with sparkling crystal and gleaming Haviland – the china donated to the Museum by the estate of Judge Edward D. Deake – and polished to a fine gloss by Karen Nickels and Kathryn Howard in anticipation of the dinner. The kitchen was alive with aromas of the Beef Wellington and other culinary treasures awaiting the guests.

Meanwhile, Nat had discovered an area new to her behind the second dining room that housed a double sink – perfect to keep dishes, glasses and silver washed as they were used. Many were recycled for several uses during the dinner. She will likely have dishpan hands for some time! Her principal assistant was Dick Robb who dried and buffed as the dishes were recycled.

Our team of servers was exemplary. The team was orchestrated by Dr. Susan Gregory, Director of the Hotel and Restaurant Management Program at Eastern Michigan University. Our credo was Service, Silence and Safety. There was no unnecessary conversation among our team during the dinner and service was



*Pam Byrnes and Kent Brown with their guests enjoying one of the many courses of food served at the dinner in the dining room of the YHS Museum.*



*Servers joining Chef Kirkendall were: (left to right) Tom Tobias, retired teacher; Dick Robb, retired dentist and former EMU regent; Kirkendall; Jim Baker, retired box designer; and Bob Taylor, former firefighter.*

ever present without being obsequious. Pam herself mentioned she had never experienced such service.

Andrea Linn handled the “staging” of the plates. They looked magnificent, each course overshadowing the previous. In the meantime, I was in the kitchen trying to get the courses

out in order. (Andrea was also instrumental in the preparation of several other phases of the dinner.) Wines were paired with the various courses by Jerry Hayes and he arranged to have the wines as well as the champagne donated to the Freight House dinner. Jerry does catering for people and organizations around our community and his largess and expertise

was much appreciated. The delicate museum crystal was used as it was originally intended - much to the delight of the assembled dinner guests.

The evening went like clockwork. Thanks to our team. The director of the Museum, Al Rudisill, was on hand to make sure no need that arose was unmet. The servers were Dick Robb (former EMU Regent and dentist,) Jim Baker (who, along with Bonnie, was our photographer,) Bob Taylor (retired firefighter, who appeared with the fire extinguisher with great effect as the flaming dessert was ignited,) and Tom Tobias (retired school teacher.)

The menu for the dinner included:

- ***Appetizers:*** Amuse-Bouches and Champagne; Michigan Country Paté with buttered, toasted pain de mie rounds; Smoked Upper Peninsula Whitefish.
- ***First Course:*** Vegetable Crepe Gateau; fresh tomato sauce; Blanc de Blanc Lelanau Michigan wine.
- ***Second Course:*** Vichyssoise, a cup served with warm River Street French Bread with Basil Butter and Unsalted Butter.
- ***Between Courses:*** Minted Pineapple Lime Sorbet with Moravian Ginger Cookie served in Sesquicentennial shot glass (yours to keep).
- ***Entrée:*** Tenderloin of Chelsea Beef Wellington; Crisped Potato Baskets with Buttered Snow Peas; Upright Romaine with Maytag Bleu Cheese dipping sauce; Selection of Michigan Reds by Mawby Winery.
- ***Dessert:*** Genoise ice cream roll with Traverse City Cherries Jubilee.

The museum itself provided an elegant backdrop for a wonderful evening. The evening began with a professional tour led by Nancy Wheeler, a thoroughly knowledgeable docent dressed in period clothing. By the time the evening concluded, our out-of-town guests were totally impressed by, and enthusiastic about, an important historical resource available in and for our community and, in fact, a resource used by many others from distant locations.

I have a feeling we will be seeing these guests again. ■

*(John Kirkendall, retired judge and an active chef, prepared the feast that benefitted the Ypsilanti Freight House renovation.)*



*Dinner guests were entertained throughout the evening by cellist Dr. Robert Reed, widely known for his work with the Detroit Symphony and the Michigan Opera Theatre.*



*Pam Byrnes was the high bidder at \$800 for the "Dinner for eight in the YHS Museum Dining Room."*



*Al Rudisill, (right) YHS President, greeted the guests at the front door of the Museum and Nancy Wheeler, (left) provided a tour of the Museum and Archives.*



# Marilyn Begole Chose Love

By Phil Barnes

Broadway almost had a grip on her future but she backed out at the last minute and stayed home. At the urging of Dr. Hugh Norton and Professor Garnet Garrison of the University of Michigan Dance and Theater Department, Marilyn Begole had been asked to accept an opportunity to go to New York City to further her career in dance and theater. Marilyn declined, which was a decision that changed her life forever and also that of "the love of her life, Ellis Freatman. Ellis was an aspiring young attorney at the time and he had asked Marilyn to become his bride.

Little Marilyn arrived in Ypsilanti in 1930 with her parents Grace and Mack Begole. Memories of her early dance lessons prior to the age of five are vividly etched in her mind. Grace opened up a dance studio in Ypsilanti in 1934 and many of the little girls took lessons from her for twenty-five to fifty cents, which was a true bargain. The dance recitals at the Ypsilanti High School Auditorium were outstanding with up to 100 students performing. One of those girls was Lois Katon. Lois and Marilyn were best of friends and took dance instruction from Grace Begole and piano lessons from Margaret Breakey. Lois remembers how beautiful Marilyn was with her flowing curls and a big bow in the side of her hair. In describing her abilities she said "Marilyn was a lovely dancer, specializing in ballet and toe dancing. We were best of friends and stayed very close until high school." Marilyn went to Roosevelt High School and Lois went to Ypsilanti Central. They remained close and participated in Sunday School activities in the First Methodist Church and Girl Scout functions as well.

Marilyn's mother Grace decided to further her experience by enrolling her in the Denishawn Dancers in Detroit where she stood out as a top candidate for a future in dance. Her appearances were stunning and she continued to study under her Mother's soft hand. Dancers from Denishawn were appearing in New York once a month and Marilyn's work deserved an invitation to go

In 1950 while Marilyn was enrolled as a student in the Department of Speech at the University of Michigan she starred in three plays.



*"King Lear" by William Shakespeare. Marilyn played Cordelia, daughter to Lear.*



*"The School for Husbands" by Moliere. Marilyn played the Shepards.*



*"Caesar and Cleopatra" by George Bernard Shaw. Marilyn played Cleopatra.*

east. Her refusal to go led to more extensive opportunities locally. With her local career flourishing, the Ben Greet Players, a professional group, came forward and offered

Marilyn an opportunity to join them. She danced and acted in many performances at the Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre at the Uni-  
*continued on page 25*



# Reed Organ Donated to the YHS Museum

On August 7, 2010 the Ypsilanti Historical Society acquired a substantial furniture item that now occupies the space in the Library Room where the upright grand piano once stood. Local resident Roland Schaedig generously donated his antique parlor reed organ to be displayed as a static furniture item in the Dow House. Built on March 11, 1907 by the Ferrand Organ Company in Detroit, Michigan, this reed organ superbly suits the turn-of-the-century time-frame of the museum's interior appearance. Schaedig restored the interior works of the reed organ in 1972 and it remains fully functional. The upright grand piano previously owned by Mrs. Effie Stone-Warren was donated to the Stony Creek Methodist Church in Ypsilanti where it will receive loving care and congregational use for many years to come. ■



*The newly acquired reed organ was built on March 11, 1907 by the Ferrand Organ Company of Detroit, Michigan.*

## QUILT EXHIBIT

Featuring Historical, Traditional, Contemporary and Art Quilts



**September 26 – October 10, 2010**

**Tuesdays through Sundays, 2:00 to 5:00 p.m.**  
**Ypsilanti Historical Society Museum - 220 N. Huron Street**

**FARM BUREAU  
INSURANCE®**

Michigan's  
Insurance Company

**Auto - Home  
Life - Farm - Business  
Retirement Savings**



**Jefferson  
Bilsborrow**

**Serving the Greater  
Ypsilanti  
Community**

**Providing help with  
all your insurance needs!**

**734-487-9304**

**jefferson@fbinsmi.com**  
**www.jeffersoninsuranceoffice.com**

**1661 South Huron Street  
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197**

# River Street Neighbors' Gossip and the Hutchinson Marriage

By Janice Anschuetz

Before the days of radio and television, news was spread by way of front porch networks. This is how I heard of the troubled marriage of Clara and Shelley Hutchinson, who had once lived in the mansion across the street from my home. My next door neighbor, Frank Lidke, who was born on East Forest and died in his driveway there at a ripe old age, shared this story with me. He had heard it first as a young lad. He told me that Mrs. Lizzie Swaine, the woman who had built and lived in our home and who had a front row view of both the Hutchinson house and of other houses that became places of refuge for the Hutchinson children and their mother Clara, would give a blow by blow account of the current state of her neighbors' marriage to anyone passing by. Believe it or not, the neighbors were still gossiping about this troubled family when we moved into the Swaine House over forty years ago, which was more than sixty years after the Hutchinson family moved out. I was curious about the story that I was told, and when I researched it in the museum archives, I found it to be not only true, but even more spectacular than I had thought.

Everyone in Ypsilanti knows where the Hutchinson House is high on the hill at East Forest and North River Street. It was once considered the most extravagant home west of the Allegany Mountains, built with a trading stamp fortune amassed by Shelley Byron Hutchinson. Few people know, however, that directly across from this opulent thirty-room mansion is the tiny four room home where Clara Hutchinson, Shelly's wife, and her three children, lived before, during and after the the Hutchinson's divorced. There they lived, while the grand Richardsonian Revival house hulked directly across the street, a daily reminder of the servants, jewels, diamonds, swimming pool, and ballroom Clara and her children once enjoyed.

The life story of Shelley Byron Hutchinson would make a captivating novel or movie, but most people would have a hard time believing that it was true. It is the story of a man who made and lost a fortune in a little

*Right: James Hutchinson, grandfather of Shelly Hutchinson, arrived in Ypsilanti from New York State in 1835.*

*Below: Sometime after 1860, Shelley's grandparents, James and Elizabeth Hutchinson, left their log cabin on a farm in Superior Township and moved to this house at 227 North River Street in Ypsilanti.*



over a decade, and then lost his young family as well. Let me tell you at least part of this interesting tale. It starts with Shelley's ambitious grandparents.

Shelley's grandparents were among the first settlers in Ypsilanti, arriving here from New York State in 1835. James and Elizabeth Cronkhite Hutchinson were both born in New York State in 1797. They were married on Elizabeth's birthday, December 27, 1818. Like many other young couples of their time, they decided to seek their fortune in Michigan, where land was cheap, so they packed up their belongings and left for Michigan with two young sons, Daniel and Henry. A third

son, James Jr., was born in Lockport, New York during the long journey west. In 1822 the Erie Canal was being built, and James Sr. could not resist the high wages that were being paid and found work building it. This lengthened their trip to Michigan by thirteen years, and during that time all three of their daughters – Margaret, Cornelia and Caroline – were born.

The Hutchinson family finally completed their trip from New York and arrived in Ypsilanti in June, 1835, just ten years after the village was platted. The father, James Sr., and his three sons soon started a business as teamsters. James also bought and sold land. Within



a short time they purchased farmland west of the settlement in Superior Township. On July 8, 1839 Elizabeth gave birth to another son, Stephen Hutchinson, who married Loretta Jaycox on November 26, 1862. They eventually became the parents of Shelley Byron Hutchinson and three other children.

Shelley was born in a log cabin on a farm in Superior Township on October 19, 1864. Sometime after 1860, his grandparents, James and Elizabeth, left their farm and moved to 227 North River Street. It was a white frame house directly north of the red brick apartment building known as Cornwall House, and was torn down in 1968. The dwelling was near the home of Mark Norris, who is said to have been a good friend. James Hutchinson, Sr. died on November 14, 1874. Shortly before his death, his son Stephen and family moved from the log cabin to live with his parents on River Street. Stephen was the town constable and within a year he moved his family to a home at 509 River Street. They lived there from 1874 until 1894, and it was there that Shelley grew into a young man. The house was across the street from the once opulent Champlain mansion, which was located at River and Forest Street.

Shelley was considered by his neighbors a very bright and ambitious young man. He once even worked as a dance master, and more about his career can be found in his obituary, published in The Ypsilanti Press on July 17, 1961. There we read that *"His initial adventure in trading stamps started in Battle Creek, where he, his father and brother, Ernest, were in the retail shoe business in the 1880's. The idea showed great promise and headquarters were established in Jackson. The undertaking took on new life three years later when Hutchinson met Thomas and William Sperry. Premium stores sprung up in leading Michigan cities and contracts were negotiated with scores of merchants for distribution of the stamps. The stamps were given then, as now, to encourage sales, and customers saved them for premiums. The price paid by merchants for stamps allowed the S. and H. Company a generous profit. The promotion spread to other states, reaching from coast to coast. An uncle, Richard Bagley, and a cousin, Oran Todd, opened a premium store in Ypsilanti in 1894. Hutchinson's father and brother had a similar store in Ann Arbor."*

Shelley traveled a great deal to promote his new business, even going as far as Sydney, *continued on page 12*



*Shelley's childhood home at 509 River Street was just across the street from the once opulent Champlain mansion located on the lot where Shelley later built his own mansion.*

*From our local  
farms  
to your kitchen*



312 N. River  
Ypsilanti Michigan 48198  
734.483.1520

Hours  
9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Daily  
[www.ypsifoodcoop.org](http://www.ypsifoodcoop.org)

## Gleanings Sponsors

Thanks to the following sponsors  
for their support of the Gleanings.

Charles & Virginia Brown  
Fred & Marie Davis  
Midge Fahndrich  
Kathryn J. Howard  
Jack Livisay  
Joseph P. Mattimoe  
Bill & Karen Nickels  
Maxe & Terry Obermeyer  
John & Fofie Pappas  
Henry J. Prebys  
Al & Jan Rudisill  
Jane Schmiedeke  
Rita Sprague  
Nancy Wheeler



# HAAB'S RESTAURANT

**Supporting the  
Community for  
Over 70 Years**



18 West Michigan Avenue  
Ypsilanti, Michigan  
734-483-8200  
[www.HaabsRestaurant.com](http://www.HaabsRestaurant.com)



serving the famous  
**BOMBER BREAKFAST**

- 4 eggs
- 1½ pounds hash browns
- 1 pound breakfast meat
- Toast

**2006  
Small Business of the Year**  
Ypsilanti Chamber of Commerce

**Open Daily 6 am - 3 pm**  
306 East Michigan Ave. - Ypsilanti, MI  
(734) 482-0550

Johanna McCoy & John Sebestyen, Owners

## River Street Neighbors' Gossip and the Hutchinson Marriage – *continued from page 11*

Australia. While in California he was arrested over 20 times on false charges, pressed by a rival in an attempt to destroy his business. He also met and eventually married his wife, Clara Unsinger, who worked in his employment as a stenographer. She was the granddaughter of a deacon living in Ypsilanti. The Ypsilantian newspaper reported the marriage on April 27, 1899, and stated that the newlyweds would live in New York. They lived in Brooklyn and came to visit Ypsilanti with their daughter in 1901.

The young “trading stamp king” was interested in building a new home either in Ypsilanti or Detroit, where he planned to begin a newspaper. At this point he was described by one article as making so much money that he couldn’t shovel it fast enough. He asked for his father’s opinion about the two possible sites. Without hesitation, his father Stephen encouraged Shelley to build the home in Ypsilanti. Having grown up on River Street, with relatives, including his parents, still living there, he was familiar with the then deteriorating mansion built on what was considered the highest land in the city, overlooking the rest. This hill was once used by the Indians as a signal fire point, where messages from one band or tribe could be conveyed to another by way of smoke signals.

His father suggested that he purchase this site, and the Champlain home was divided into several parts, two of which were moved to High Street and became separate homes. Another dwelling at the site was moved to 117 East Forest, Peck family land, and became the home of Dwight and Cora Peck.

In an audio narrative, recorded in the 1960s, when she was over 80 years old, Jessie Swaine, Shelley’s lifelong friend and neighbor, states that building his mansion on the east side of Ypsilanti was a social mistake for the young millionaire. The east side of the river, at that time, was considered the neighborhood of the working class, while the west side was home to the wealthy and socially elite in town.

This issue is explored in a newspaper article in the Ypsilanti Daily Press, dated July 25, 1961.

*“When he built his mansion, which could not be equaled anywhere in the state... he put it in an area where he grew up. He had the same neighbors as before and apparently treated them no differently.... Local annals do not agree on why he did not go to the west side of the city. Some said he was unable to ‘break into’ Ypsilanti society. Others said that since people in ‘society’ did not accept him before he got the money they wouldn’t have a chance afterward. There are also stories of efforts of the then leading families to entice him. He turned them down, according to that version of the story.”*

Notes for a speech given to the Historical Society in Ypsilanti in the 1970s tell more about Shelley’s early life here. *“The youth (Shelley) went to the Union School here and it is presumed that his education was through the eighth grade as that was the custom at the time. In the 1894 city directory he is listed as a teacher and this may be the time at which he and a woman named Smith conducted dancing classes in the old Light Guard Hall. During the 1880s he and his brother Ernest were in the retail shoe business in Battle Creek. It was during this period that Shelley germinated the trade stamp idea. Headquarters were established in Jackson but the empire didn’t start building until three years later when he met Thomas and William Sperry... During the height of his success Shelley Hutchinson built the mansion and bought diamonds by the pocketful. These he delighted to wear and when he stood in the sun he literally sparkled. He and his wife rode about town in a fine phaeton with matched horses. The newly rich pair had the finest clothes and the stamp king wore a silk top hat. Memory of slights during his boyhood made him resist building his mansion on the west side of town and he made a point of maintaining his friendships in the old neighborhood. Thus, when the time came for the opening party in the 30 room house his champagne went to east siders, among them the merchants in the depot town area. He went abroad several times and brought back objects for the furnishing of the home. His old neighbors still expected and got the consideration of the old days.”*

The building of this home and the “rags to riches” life story were the topic of quite a few newspaper articles. Even though the mansion, which took two years to complete, was still unfinished, The Ann Arbor Courier-Register of May 14, 1902 reported on the “palatial home” of 37 year old Shelley and his wife. He made sure that the mansion was large enough



to accommodate not only Clara and his three children, but his parents, brothers and sister - his entire family. This may have been a mistake and it was said by newspaper accounts that he also used poor judgment in investing heavily in the newspaper field, where he envisioned a paper with nationwide circulation called the United States Daily. As a result of this he was involved in many lawsuits and he lost his control of the stamp business.

There was no question that Shelly loved to give people in town something to talk about. A former neighbor, A. A. Bedell, who lived at 325 Maple, remembers the late Shelley B. Hutchinson. He describes him in an undated Ypsilanti Daily Press article. *"Hutchinson was always immaculate in dress, dark haired and handsome. One day he stood in the Bedell shoe store in Depot Town and a shaft of sunlight struck all of his diamonds, a glittering array. He had half carat diamond rings in each cuff link and wore two diamond rings, one of three carats and one between seven and eight. His shirt stud had a three and a half carat stone."*

It seems that Shelley's dreams of a home, family and wealth did not last long. Shelley Hutchinson's family gave the neighbors more to talk about than diamonds and fine clothes. Even the Detroit News on July 31, 1906 ran an article entitled "S.B. Hutchinson Family of Ypsilanti in a Merry Row," with subtitles "Wife Withdraws with Children from Mansion on the Hill" and "Neighbors are Zealously Helping the Factions to Air the Trouble." This interesting article provides the same information that my neighbors told me 60 years after the Hutchinsons left River Street - and even more. We read: *"Whether all that gossip says is true or not, this mansion of cut field stone, with its broad verandas, its splendid ball room and billiard room, its acre or more of lawn sloping down a picturesque bluff - this palatial house is a home only for dissension. Family strife is at its high. Mrs. Hutchinson withdraws in anger ever and anon from it, taking with her the three small children of the couples and goes to sojourn with neighbors. The house is occupied and managed by Hutchinson's father, mother and sister. They have lived there since the house was built."*

The reporter then attempts to state the reasons for this strife under an article titled "Their Rival Claims." He writes that *"The wife takes the position that she has been forced out of her home. The father and sister declare that they wish*



*This is the view of the Hutchinson Mansion that Clara would have had from her tiny home on River Street.*



*Neighbors said this is the home at the Northwest corner of North River Street and East Forest Street where Clara and the children, and even Shelley's dog, spent their time rather than fight with the in-laws in the mansion.*

*she would return and assume the management. The husband has since gone south for his health. It is a fierce jangle, and the statement that it has got on his nerves can readily be credited."*

This reporter also involves the neighbors in his story: *"The gossips will tell the ready listener that the Hutchinsons never got into society here... what folly it was to build such a house in such a*  
*continued on page 14*

## GENE BUTMAN FORD SALES



**Ken Butman, Owner**

2105 Washtenaw Avenue  
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Tel: 734-482-8581  
Fax: 734-482-0653

## Historic Depot Town



**Linda French**  
Owner

56 East Cross Street  
Ypsilanti, MI 48198

Phone: (734) 483-1035  
Fax: (734) 483-1490  
ladyfrench@aol.com  
www.sidetrackbarandgrill.com

## River Street Neighbors' Gossip and the Hutchinson Marriage – *continued from page 13*

*place and then practically to shun 'society'. . . . The friends of the Hutchinsons are the friends that the town constable's family had in the early days. It didn't take them long to learn that internal war was waging in the 'mansion on the hill'."*

An example given to illustrate this is that Shelley is said to have invited a neighbor and old friend in to see the messy condition his wife left her room in when she went out to the theater with this neighbor the night before. "These neighbors in humbler circumstances seem to be ex-officio, and by common consent arbiters in the most intimate concerns of the Hutchinson ménage. The tales told by both sides of the house, the wife on one side and the father and sister on the other, would be comic if they did not bear an ominous warning for people who allow their neighbors to meddle with their private affairs. . . . Mrs. Hutchinson is now living at one of the neighbors, and though there is some effort to make out that she is penniless, she has at least something of value. She has her husband's diamonds – three valuable stones."

This story becomes even more interesting. Under the newspaper heading "No Oil for

the Troubled Waters," more is written about Shelley Hutchinson's diamonds. It seems that the winter before Shelley was very ill he entrusted Clara to take care of his diamonds. "When he recovered, he asked her to return them. She refused, saying that he had given them to her. It is related that Hutchinson took them from his wife's hiding place while she slept. He kept them under lock and key in a tin box in a roll top desk in his office in the house. Mrs. Hutchinson secured his key, and unlocked the office door. One of the desk drawers happened to be ajar. She got the box and cut it open with a can opener. The neighbors know all about these things, and much more of the same quality. There seems to be a dim perception creeping in that outside interference is responsible for a great part of the trouble."

The story continues: "These neighbors," said the sister in a helpless sort of way, "Why they've got his wife, and they've even got his dog. They feed the animal and he doesn't come home anymore." Then Shelley's father is quoted as saying, "She hates Retta (meaning that Clara hates Shelley's sister) but I don't know what for..." "One time she thought I was listening at the office door when she and Shelley were having a set-to," says Retta. "I wasn't, but she came out in the kitchen and pulled my hair." Another fight was when Clara locked the ball room and Retta used a key to open it.



*The small house at 629 North River Street, directly across from the Hutchinson mansion, that Shelley's wife Clara and their three children lived in before, during and after the divorce rather than live in the 30-room mansion.*



The reporter goes on to describe the two women: "Retta, blonde and plump, about 22 years old, is rather proud of the fact that the family once were 'poor people' and that she knows how to keep house and darn socks and things. Clara, the wife, only three or four years older than Retta is of the darker type, and apparently isn't much inclined to the details of housekeeping. The blonde is vivacious and perhaps mischievously provocative; the brunette is taciturn and tempestuous by turns. The husband seems to be as incapable of managing the two young women as he is of managing the neighbors."

At the time of the divorce, before and after it, Clara Hutchinson and children were living in a tiny home across from the mansion at 629 North River Street. Shelley sued his wife for divorce in 1909 and she filed a "cross bill." In the Ypsilanti Daily Press for January 14, 1910 it is reported that the divorce case was settled and that Mrs. Hutchinson was awarded custody of the three children, with \$9,000 cash to be paid over five years time, and his diamonds. We later learn that Clara left town and eventually remarried and had two more children, after selling Shelley's diamonds. The 3.35 carat stone was sold to a neighbor and others were sold to Square Deal Miller, a Detroit diamond merchant who got his start in Ypsilanti. The diamonds had been originally purchased by Shelley from Tiffany's in New York.

Shelley continued living his life in the hope that his broken dreams and wealth might be restored. He lived in the east, mainly in hotels, and even when he was 90 years old he was still trying to devise new get-rich schemes. In a newspaper interview from 1955 we read: "Shelley Hutchinson, 91, now lives in New York and visions a new promotion that will out-mode the present coupons, 'as automobiles have taken the place of carriages.' He talks of returning to Ypsilanti and the magnificent home which he built here in the 'gay nineties' -- a monument to the millions which trading stamps poured into his treasury. He tells the reporter about some of the happier times in the mansion and the first party given there, complete with an orchestra and champagne where couples strolled onto balconies outside the ballroom and were able to look over the quiet village of Ypsilanti. He states, 'Some of the people there were jealous of me because of the big house but they had no reason to be. I was good to everybody.'"

Shelley did return to Ypsilanti in July, 1961,



*Photo of Shelley Hutchinson that appeared with an article in a local newspaper in 1955 titled "Stamps Bring Fame to Local Man." Shelley was 91 at the time and the article indicated he was envisioning a new trading stamp enterprise.*

for burial after his death at the age of 97. He is buried in the family plot at Highland Cemetery, a few blocks north of the dream mansion on the hill, which was sold at public auction to the Ypsilanti Savings bank to satisfy an unpaid mortgage and back taxes in 1912.

I am sitting at my laptop writing this on the front porch of one of the "neighbors houses," the Swaine House, looking up at the mansion, and I can also look across River Street to the "neighbor's home" that Clara and the children would retreat to. I can also see the tiny house on River Street where they chose to take residence, rather than endure the strife in the mansion. In telling you this story from my own front porch at Forest and River, I am passing it on from the same place I first heard about it myself from neighbors gossiping over 40 years ago. ■

*(Janice Anschuetz currently lives in the Swaine House that is located at 101 East Forest and is very interested in the history of the neighborhood.)*

## Visit Us at Our New Office

After serving the Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti area for over 16 years, we have relocated our office to a new central location at 529 N. Hewitt Road between Packard Road and Washtenaw Avenue.

Stop by and visit. If we haven't met, we welcome new patients. We provide professional family dental care with an emphasis on prevention. If you are new to the area, please check out our website for a map and directions to our new location.



**Kimberly  
RICE**

DDS, PLC

**FAMILY  
DENTISTRY**



529 N. Hewitt Road, Ypsilanti, MI 48197  
734-434-3820

[www.kimberlyricedds.com](http://www.kimberlyricedds.com)  
[kimberly@kimberlyricedds.com](mailto:kimberly@kimberlyricedds.com)

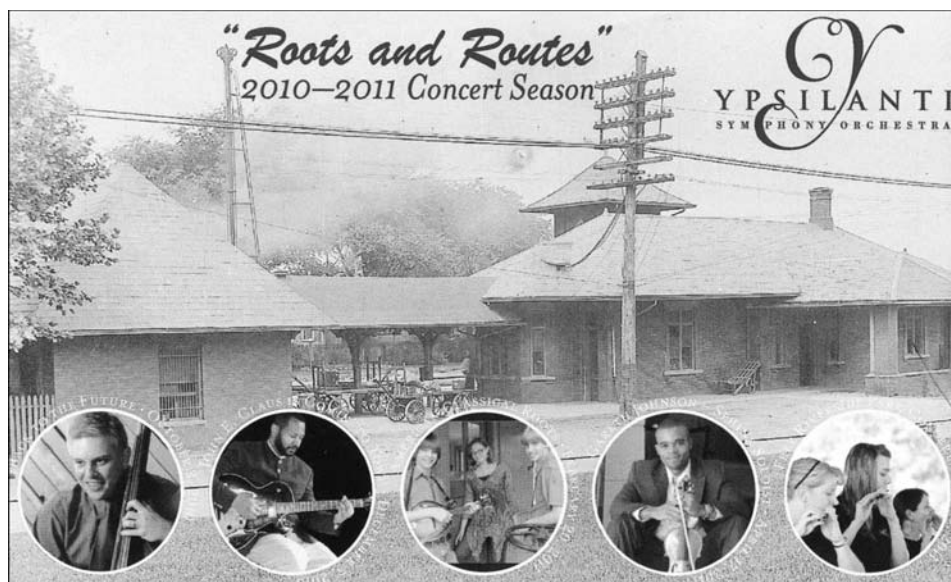
# Back to the Future: A Celebration of Ypsilanti's History through Music

By Maura Overland

Please join the Ypsilanti Symphony Orchestra on Sunday, October 3, 2010 for our season opener "Back to the Future" at Towsley auditorium on the campus of Washtenaw Community College beginning at 3:30 pm. Featuring the world premiere of the Ypsilanti Orchestral Jazz Suite composed for the YSO by renowned bassist and Ypsilanti resident, Paul Keller. This multimedia work honoring the history of Ypsilanti through music will be narrated by community leaders and include historic photographs from the archives of the Ypsilanti Historical Society and the Eastern Michigan University Archives.

Based on extensive research of Ypsilanti's musical past revealing historic concert programs, Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* was selected for the program because it was part of a 1928 concert performed by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra at Pease Auditorium on the campus of Eastern Michigan University. The first half of the concert will also feature several other traditional orchestral pieces selected by Adam Riccinto, YSO Founder and Music Director to illuminate certain themes and time periods in Ypsilanti's history. Works will include Smetana's *Vltava* (or *The Moldau* in German) originally written in celebration of the Vltava River as it runs through Bohemia and part of a series of six symphonic poems composed by Smetana entitled *Má vlast* (*The Motherland*). Riccinto selected this work because of our community's proximity to the Huron River and its influence on Ypsilanti's growth and development. Other pieces will include the work of John Philip Sousa and Aaron Copland.

The highlight of the concert will be the premiere of Paul Keller's Ypsilanti Orchestral Jazz Suite featuring five movements dedicated to Ypsilanti heritage. The titles of each



The advertising card for the 2010-2011 Concert Season for the Ypsilanti Symphony Orchestra featured a picture of the train station in Depot Town.

movement are:

- #1. **Woodruff's Grove** (the original name of the first 1823 settlement in the Ypsilanti area along the west side of the Huron River)
- #2. **Ypsilanti Underground** (dedicated to Ypsilanti's important connection to the Underground Railroad which helped southern slaves escape bondage)
- #3. **The Real McCoy** (an homage to Elijah McCoy: Ypsilanti resident and an important African/American inventor of automatic oil systems for locomotives as well as the folding ironing board)
- #4. **Willow Run and The Great Migration** (inspired by the World War II era and the northern migration of southerners seeking work in the auto factories retooled for wartime production)
- #5. **Downtown To Depot Town** (a tip of the hat to Michigan Ave. and Depot Town, Ypsilanti's vibrant cultural scene, the resilience of the community and the bright future of Ypsilanti).

Guest narrators include Paul Schreiber (Mayor of Ypsilanti), Dr. Susan Martin (President of Eastern Michigan University), Dr. James Hawkins (former Ypsilanti Public School Superintendent), Natalie Edmunds (Founder of the Ypsilanti Heritage Festival) and Linda Yohn (89.1 FM WEMU's jazz radio program director). Jerry Robbins, Conductor of the Ypsilanti Community Band will make a guest appearance during the concert and the Ypsilanti Community Choir will perform several

songs related to Ypsilanti's heritage including *The Ypsilanti Comic Song* and *Rosie The Riveter* during intermission.

A reception with appetizers and non-alcoholic beverages will take place in the lobby immediately following the concert. For tickets and more information please call 734/973-3300 and/or visit [www.ypsilantisymphony.org](http://www.ypsilantisymphony.org). ■

## 2011 Desk Calendars with photos of Ypsilanti Yesteryears



**\$10.00**

Available in the YHS  
**Museum & Archives**



# Book Review: Wicked Washtenaw County by James Thomas Mann

By George Ridenour

James Thomas Mann is well known around Ypsilanti as a writer, journalist, speaker, tour guide and historian. For years he has written a cornucopia of stories, featuring all manner of subjects, usually about Ypsilanti and the surrounding area.

His latest adventure, *Wicked Washtenaw County – Strange Tales of the Grisly and Unexplained*, takes the reader into the darker side of the county. He gives humorless tales of murder, mayhem and mystery that will make you, the reader, check that your windows are locked and your doors bolted.

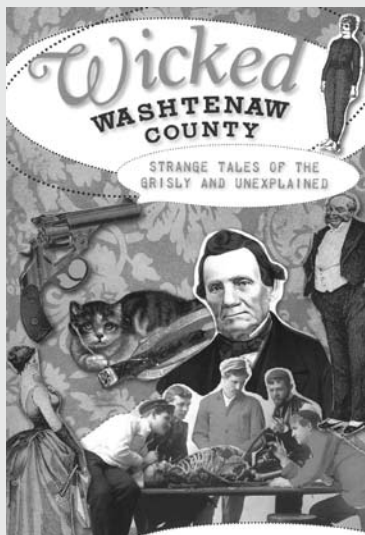
Through narrative and local news accounts, he gives us a glimpse into devilish deeds done by common folks and some better known figures of the time. In one of the stories, *shooting of Attorney Mahon*, we find indeed that murder is “no joke.”

The chapter on legends and tales of “*Body Snatching and the University of Michigan*” is certainly an eyebrow raiser. The Medical School at the University of Michigan did not have enough bodies for the anatomy classes being taught. Many a newly inhabited grave was opened, the body removed, and later the body was traced to the cold storage vaults of the Medical School. Graves in Michigan and Ohio, of the poor, sick, rich or disabled were producers of monies for those persons (monsters) who engaged and procured bodies and then sold them for profit.

The pages of *Wicked Washtenaw County* drip with blood, darkness, murder and suicide. There is a cry for the ever elusive lady justice who sometimes just turns or moves out of town and is forgotten like both the victims and criminals within these pages. As a recent reader told me, “*The book is disturbing and I loved it!*”

Now it's your turn. Copies are available in the YHS Archives located in the basement of the YHS Museum. Come on down and get your autographed copy. Here's hoping that you, too, don't end up in *Wicked Washtenaw – Part II*. ■

(George Ridenour is a volunteer in the YHS Archives and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)



The pages of James Mann's new book, *Wicked Washtenaw County*, drip with blood, darkness, murder and suicide.



James Mann spends many hours in the YHS Archives doing research for his many books, articles, speeches and tours.

PRINT ○ LASTING, TACTILE, MOBILE

HURON VALLEY

• PRINTING & IMAGING •

An  
award-winning  
graphic  
communications  
company offering  
marketing  
solutions  
and materials  
through  
creative design,  
printing,  
direct-mail and  
fulfillment  
services.



4557 Washtenaw  
Avenue  
Ann Arbor, MI 48108  
734/971-1700  
www.hvpi.com

# Portrait in the Library

By James Mann

The portrait of a distinguished looking gentleman looks down from the north wall of the museum library room. He appears to be presiding over whatever is happening between the Tiffany stained glass window and the organ. The portrait is hanging in honor the memory of J. Willard Babbitt, who is today all but forgotten. However, he was one of the great men of Ypsilanti.

Babbitt was born in Gorham, New York in 1836, the son of John Winthrop Babbitt and Philinda Walker Babbitt. The family moved to Ypsilanti in 1848, where the father was one of the city's leading physicians. The son studied law at Geneva, New York for one year in 1859, and later graduated from the university. "Going west, he opened an office in Omaha, with two young Ypsilantians, Caspar Yost and Richard Stuck, the former now manager of the Nebraska Telephone Company, as partners. In 1867 Judge Babbitt returned to Ypsilanti, and has since been in active practice here. Two younger men, D. C. Griffin and John P. Kirk, have attained legal distinction while associated with him in the profession," reported *The Evening News* (now the *Detroit News*) on Saturday, November 9, 1901. Judge Babbitt married Florence Smalley in 1868, and she achieved fame after his death for her collections. The couple had four children, all daughters.

"Judge Babbitt's attainments were such as to bring him a large practice, and his ability is attested in the fact that not only did litigants employ him, but members of the bar freely sought his advice. Endowed with an extraordinary stock of 'horse sense,' a retentive memory and rare judgment made him one of the ablest counselors in the state," noted *The Evening News*.

"The deceased," continued *The Evening News*, "was prominent in Democratic Party councils, and was twice honored by his party with office. Early in his home career he served two terms as prosecuting attorney, (1877-1878), and later occupied the position of judge of the probate for eight years. He was very fond of the game of whist, but would not permit himself to devote the time to it many of his associates did."

"Judge J. Willard Babbitt was one of the ablest men in this section of the state, and his reputation among the legal fraternity is by no means confined within the borders of Michigan. An authority in all matters wherein an exact knowledge of the law was required, he was called to very many of the knotty cases of the county, and was sought for friendly advice by his colleagues in scores of others in which his name did not appear. His mind was of rare makeup, and anything to which he gave his attention, whether it was a mental exercise, a form of recreation in which he greatly delighted, whist, the writing of poetry, or the study of a foreign language, he achieved much success. He was not a man of vaulting ambition, and while accepting the more desirable of the local honors did not make any serious attempt to become a public figure or, as those who knew him best, fairly hold, he would have become an important factor in state or even national politics." noted *The Ypsilanti Daily Argus* of Saturday, November 9, 1901.



*The portrait of Judge Babbitt, painted by Miss Lodeman, that hangs in the Library of the YHS Museum.*

Judge Babbitt died suddenly on the afternoon of Friday, November 8, 1901, of heart failure. He was 65 years of age at the time of his death; he had been a man of rugged health who appeared to be no more than 50 years of age. His passing was a great shock to the community, and many at first refused to believe the news at first. He is buried in Highland Cemetery. To honor the memory of Judge Babbitt, the family presented an oil painting of him to the office of the Probate Court. The work was unveiled on the afternoon of Friday, July 18, 1902, on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of his father. A large number of Ypsilanti attorneys and local members of the bar were also present.

"The portrait is the work of Miss Hilda Lodeman, the talented portrait painter, and it is pronounced by the few who have seen it one of her finest efforts. Miss Lodeman had nothing to guide her but a small photograph and she had known Judge Babbitt but slightly so could not fall back on memory, but in spite of these disadvantages she has produced a most excellent likeness, while the work, as is to be expected from Miss Lodeman, is of the finest character. In one corner of the frame of the picture is the coat of arms of the Willard family, from which Judge Babbitt was a descendant, on his mother's side," noted *The Ypsilanti Sentinel - Commercial* of Thursday, July 24, 1902.

Now the portrait is on display in the library of the Ypsilanti Historical Museum. Over the years the image has darkened, and Judge Babbitt appears to be sitting in shadows. There is damage to one part of the picture. The portrait is in need of restoration, but still, Judge Babbitt seems to be presiding over all that goes on before him. ■

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



# Finding the Home of Benjamin D. Schofield

By Michael Newberry

It is amazing how one discovery often leads to another. Such is the case of Benjamin Schofield's rifle, written about in the Summer 2010 Gleanings by Lyle McDermott. Oddly enough, at the same time Lyle was researching and writing his story on the Schofield rifle I was researching several Civil War era homes in the Historic East Side Neighborhood of Ypsilanti. That is when I happened across the home of Benjamin D. Schofield.

I, too, perused through the city directory of 1860 and noticed he was listed as having resided on "the north side of East Cross Street."

this method has changed little, if at all, over the years. The legal description and parcel/lot number of a house never changes unless there is a change in the boundary of the lot. Even if there is a change (i.e. someone purchased the empty lot next door and incorporated the two), it is duly noted in the legal property description and the lot numbers are still the same.

When I leafed through the 1860 property tax ledger for the 4<sup>th</sup> Ward of the City of Ypsilanti, I found Benjamin D. Schofield listed as having paid taxes for a piece of property with the



*The Schofield home at 333 E. Cross Street as it appears today.*

One valuable piece of information that the YHS Archives possesses are the property tax ledgers for the city dating back to 1860. This is Holy Grail for connecting the person with the residence. It is also a way to verifiably date a structure built after 1860. Because Schofield's house was built before 1860, there is no way to verify the actual construction date based upon tax records, but it was a way to find out which property parcel number was linked with the residence of Benjamin D. Schofield.

While house addresses were certainly non-existent in 1860 in Ypsilanti, one method of identifying properties was established, and

following legal description: OLD SID - 11 11-360-460-00 YP CITY 21E-37 LOT 460 M. NORRIS' ADDITION. Lot 460 of the M. Norris Addition still exists today, and I verified it through the city tax assessor's web site as 333 E. Cross Street, Ypsilanti, MI 48198.

333 E. Cross Street, present day:  
The obvious question that arises in the mind of the reader is, "While this is certainly the lot where Schofield's house was situated, is this really the actual house Schofield resided in?" This is where a more thorough look at the house itself becomes necessary. When  
*continued on page 20*

**Gary M. Moss, O.D.**

Doctor of Optometry

Serving Ypsilanti for 30 years!!!

## Eye Health

- ◆ Adult & Pediatric Comprehensive Eye Health Exams
- ◆ Blood pressure & glaucoma testing, Diabetic medical exams
- ◆ Treatment of common eye ailments
- ◆ Complete lab on premises
- ◆ One day emergency service in most cases

## Premium Products

- ◆ Designer/Fashion Frames & Sunglasses
- Latest contact lenses

## Location

- ◆ 1769 Washtenaw, Ypsilanti  
Between EMU & Gene Butman  
Ford Dealership  
IN COURTLAND SQUARE

**New Patients Welcome!**

Schedule an appointment today!



**734.483.2100**

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



DEB'S FAMOUS  
HOMEMADE CONEY DOG  
ALL DAY, EVERY DAY

**\$1**

**A Downtown Ypsi  
Institution Since  
1963**

**Spring & Summer Hours**

Mon-Tue: 6 am to 4 pm

Wed-Fri: 6 am to 7 pm

Sat: 7 am to 4 pm & Sun: 8 am to 4 pm

Carryout & Catering - 734-483-1727

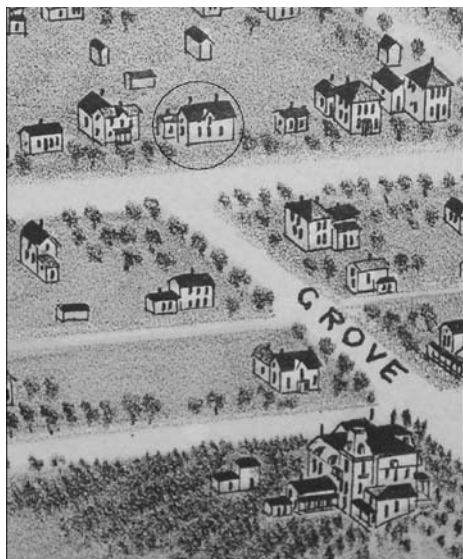
**228 West Michigan Avenue - Ypsilanti**

## Finding the Home of Benjamin D. Schofield – *continued from page 19*

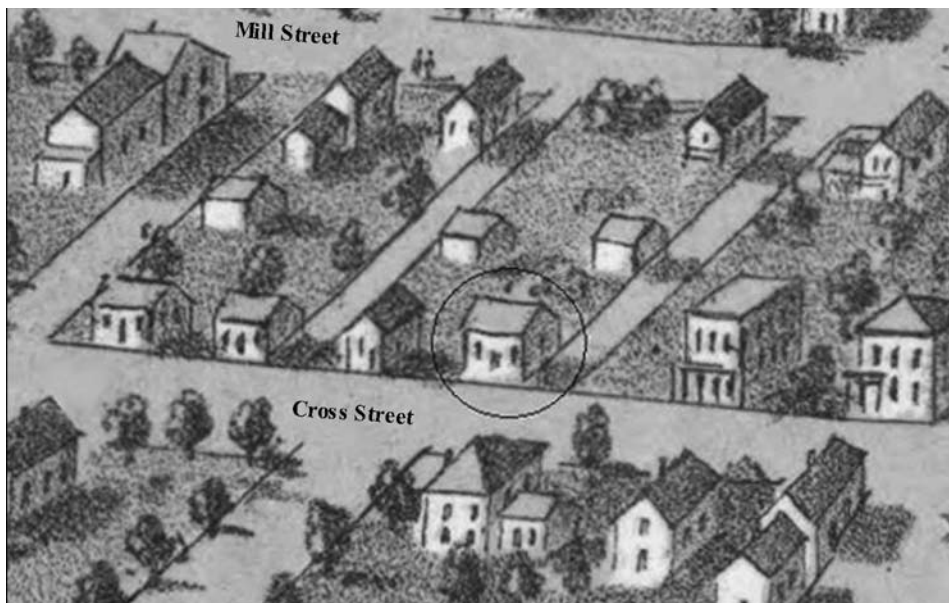
comparing the footprint of 333 E. Cross Street with the implied footprint of the artist's rendition in the c1865 Panoramic Map of Ypsilanti one will see that the two are very similar, but not exact. Both are one and a half story framed structures with an entrance centered on the south elevation of the house, flanked by two windows. Both houses are also located in the same space.

Next I examined the c1890 Panoramic Map of Ypsilanti, and the two structures look much more alike. In fact, they are nearly identical. Both have the summer kitchen addition on the northeast elevation of the house and both have the wall dormer on the south elevation. The panoramic map depicts two tall chimneys on the main structure and one on the kitchen addition. Today, the tall chimney on the kitchen addition still remains but the two other chimneys have been partially dismantled, lying in waiting in the attic space below. Other features that have been updated post 1890 are the partial enclosing of the west porch and the covered entryway around the front door where before there was none. Now take another look at the picture of 333 E. Cross Street. Can you see underneath the aluminum siding and newer alterations? Can you picture the home that Benjamin D. Schofield lived in?

For the skeptical reader, I took my research a bit further. I wanted to make sure that this



*The c1890 panoramic map of Ypsilanti showing the location of the Schofield House.*



*The c1865 panoramic map of Ypsilanti showing the location of the Schofield House.*

house was indeed the same one built prior to 1860. I was certain it had simply experienced a face lift in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in order to keep up with the fashion and aesthetics of the times. I went back to the property tax ledgers in the archives. There I located and recorded the property value of Lot 460 M. Norris' Addition in each tax ledger the archives possess between 1860 and 1891. The taxable value on the house had changed little if at all in the 31+ years of tax records I examined. This serves as an indicator that the same structure present in 1860 was the same present in 1890. It indicates no fires destroyed a previous structure so as to leave the lot vacant. It also indicates no new dwellings were erected on the site that could boost the property value substantially. On an interesting side note, the City of Ypsilanti has this house recorded as having been built in 1886. It is very common for the recorded year of construction for a house built before 1900 to be incorrect with the City records, but could this be the date of the face lift?

I made one final effort to verify the age of 333 E. Cross Street. I went to see it myself. Conveniently, the house had been for sale for some time, so viewing the interior was not a challenge. While the interior had been altered significantly to meet the requirements of its current use as a two-unit rental, several telltale signs of its age could be seen. Underneath the high-traffic carpet lay wide, tongue and groove, soft wood floors (most likely pine). Gas lines ran exposed up the plaster walls of the bedrooms on the second floor indicating

the house was likely constructed before the installation of gas lighting in residences on East Cross Street. Perhaps the most substantial evidence for the age of 333 E. Cross Street was the interior trim. Door and window casings and baseboards all resembled the form typically seen in modest midcentury homes and not later Victorian structures. Baseboards were plain and affixed to the wall prior to the plastering of the walls, causing the plaster to sit on top of the baseboard to create a flush finish between the two. This was a common practice in the first half of the nineteenth century. The door and window casings were also plain and matched the design and installation techniques of the baseboards. There was a fireplace mantle in the house as well that matched the simplified design and style typical of the baseboards, etc. - all exemplifying vernacular architecture of the mid nineteenth century.

I mentioned earlier that one discovery often leads to another. No period photographs have been found of the house (although I'm sure one could be found at the Bentley Historical Library), and the house currently does not reflect the glory that it once may have been. But just imagine the routes of exploration and discovery one could embark upon to continue this chapter of Benjamin D. Schofield, local gunsmith, and one of Michigan's top 100 marksmen. ■

*(Michael Newberry is enrolled in the graduate program in Historical Preservation at EMU and is serving an internship in the YHS Museum.)*



# Plenty of Elbow Room

By Derek Spinei

Mid-Century modern architecture is an often overlooked and easily dismissed era of design situated in the doldrums of “recent past” architecture - that time in which places are somewhere between “new” and “historic.”

Six South Washington Street is an example of just such a place. However, relating the circumstances of its inception proves to be a bit convoluted. According to the City of Ypsilanti 1951 Tax Assessment, 1951 was the year in which architect Ralph Stoyan Gerganoff's design for George P. Ballios'

“...the Elbow Room gained notoriety in 2008 when it was reported that several Hollywood actors working on local filming locations had been spending time at the bar.”

bar room was built at this address. Prior to that date, George's Grill is listed in the City Directories as having operated at the same address from 1945 to 1951. Records in the Washtenaw County Deeds Office show that Merl & Helen Hutton sold the property to Oliver A. Hankinson and S. Arnold & Nettie C. Wiard in 1951, each owning a half stake. On December 31, 1953 they sold it to Ballios and he opened the Bell Bar. Therefore, it must have been that Ballios had his establishment built before he owned the building. This bar remained in business until 1979, although Ballios had sold a land contract to Robert M. Hannewald of Grass Lake in 1973. 1980 saw the establishment's name change to Larry's Bar and it became Charlie's Bar in 1982. George Ballios died in 1978 and his wife Kalliroe finally sold the property to Hannewald in 1988 for \$50,000. The Elbow Room has operated at this location since 1986 and its current proprietor is Andrew S. Garris. In 1996, Hannewald sold this and adjoining properties to Maybee resident Martha J. Clifton (*née* Wall) for \$80,000. But she soon resold the tiny .05 acre property to its current owner Arthur Campbell in 1997 for \$45,000.

A prototypical “dive bar,” the Elbow Room gained notoriety in 2008 when it was reported



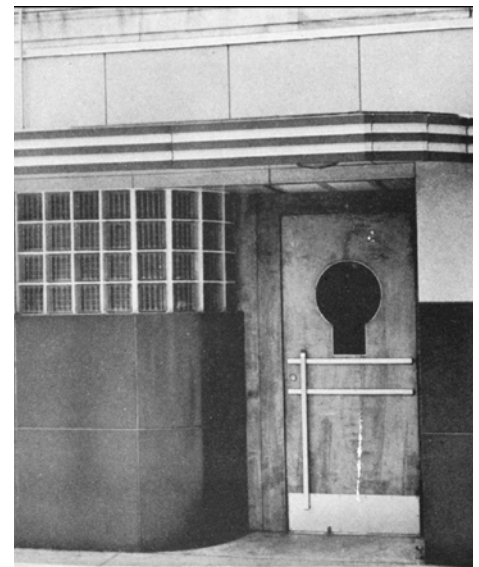
*A current photo of the bar designed by Architect Ralph Gerganoff in 1951 and built at 6 South Washington Street.*



*An undated photograph shows a vertically oriented neon “BAR” sign above the entrance which is no longer in place.*

that several Hollywood actors working on local filming locations had been spending time at the bar. Jimmy Fallon, Drew Barrymore, Ellen Page, Juliette Lewis and Alia Shawkat got their kicks singing karaoke and serving drinks from behind the bar.

The 1880 square foot property seems to have changed very little over time. Its commercial use has remained consistent and exterior modifications have been minor. From a black & white photo of the entrance from the time of construction, the door and surrounding wood appear unpainted. The door is now



*The shape of the keyhole door has changed from the original design and a mail slot has been added.*

red, surrounded by black painted wood. The shape of the keyhole window in the door has changed and a black mail slot was added between the two horizontal metal handles. It is unclear whether the original door has been replaced or just modified.

An undated photograph shows a vertically oriented neon “BAR” sign above the entrance. Of course the sign is no longer in place, but it is unclear whether it was original because our oldest photo does not show the building above ground level. The same is true for the decora-

# The Ypsilanti Phantom Prowler

By George Ridenour

Among the long forgotten menaces to public safety in Ypsilanti during the years 1935 thru 1940 was a series of serial burglaries! At the time the burglar was known as "The Phantom Prowler" or "The Prowler." He was so feared that many thought he might have murdered Richard Streicher in March of 1935. He was thought to be living in Ypsilanti or at least to be someone well known in the "neighborhoods" where the burglaries were committed. The problem with this theory is that the break-ins occurred all over Ypsilanti in both black and white neighborhoods.

Stories from the State Police files of 1935-40 and the Ypsilanti Press from that era provide a flavor of what the Phantom Prowler was all about, including what and who he targeted!

## *July 15, 1939 — State Police File:*

*"Home of Harry Bland, S. Huron & Stony Creek Road. Entered by cutting the screen and opening a window sometime during the night. \$12.00 taken from Bland's trousers, \$2.00 from Mrs. Bland's purse. Trousers were in bedroom where Mr. & Mrs. Bland were asleep and were found in the bathroom in the morning and the light was on. Thief left by the front door leaving it open. Bland found print of a small bare foot under window entered."*

## *March 15, 1940 — State Police File:*

*"An early morning prowler was \$2.00 richer today as the result of a 6:30 am forage in the Rollen Casselberry home, 132 Bell Street. He entered through a cellar window, went to the first and second floors, ransacked drawers and escaped with the money from Mr. Casselberry's trousers which were on the first floor. A young girl, 13 years old, who was asleep on the second floor, said she saw the burglar and described him as heavy set, six feet tall, wearing a mask and a gray cap."*

## *July 15, 1940 — Ypsilanti Press:*

*"Prowler Enters Ridenour Home: Home of Mr. & Mrs. Glenn Ridenour of 322 Miles Street was entered between 8:00 and 9:00 pm Saturday*

*evening the thief ransacking the buffet, and a writing desk, and escaping with \$5.00 found in a purse. The Ridenour's had been away during the evening and had left the children with a neighbor girl. She left the home for about an hour, leaving the doors unlocked. It was during that time that the thief entered."*

Statistics shown in the files of the Michigan State Police indicate the following crime statistics during the years 1935-1940 for the City of Ypsilanti:

- 61 Prowler Incidents
- 141 Burglaries
- 6 Purse Snatchings
- 4 Window Peepers

The Phantom Prowler was described by Officer R. Klavitter in an office report as follows:

**"Imaginary Description of the Phantom Prowler:** *After a lengthy investigation and from various contacts with victims of the phantom prowler I have arrived at the following description. He is a colored man, medium brown, about 22 years old, 5' 10" to 6' tall, weighing about 160 pounds, athletically built, a fast, smooth runner, wears a gray cap part of the time and operates bare handed. He usually works in a medium colored jacket and medium colored trousers. His footwear has been sneakers, tennis shoes, a Kresge composition sole and a hard heel pointed shoe size 9 or 10. He wore rubbers on some of his jobs last winter. I must add that he has worn a gray suit part of the time."*

Another description taken from an unknown Michigan State Police Officer that was published in the Ypsilanti Post: *"John Doe: age 21, 5' 11" tall, weighing 145-155. Light brown skin Negro with medium brown short, curly hair. Has athletic build and is a fast runner, quick action on his feet. Walks with a cat like glide of swiftness. Usually wears gray clothes and cap. Sometimes wears dark trousers and light colored shirt. Has been known to wear rough jacket or sweater. Voice low with pleasant, southern drawl. Slow spoken."*

The Phantom Prowler passed into the mists of Ypsilanti history after 1940 as is the case with many unsolved crimes. No one was ever arrested. No one was ever charged. He remains a phantom 65 to 70 years later. ■

*(George Ridenour is a volunteer in the YHS Archives and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)*

## Be careful out there. Big banks are lurking.

We believe a smaller, safer route to financial solutions is the better way to go. Which is where we come in. We've got all the products big banks offer, but served in a decidedly local-bank way. 734-485-9400 or [boaa.com](http://boaa.com). How can we help you?



Member FDIC



# Lamar Kishlar: Blondes Beware

By George Ridenour

In the last issue of the Gleanings I told the story of Lamar Kishlar from Ypsilanti who gained international fame for his work with iron lungs and other devices to medicate the effects of polio, and K-rations. Further information was discovered in the Friday, June 23, 1944 issue of the *Cass City Chronicle* which seems to indicate that in addition to having a brilliant, inventive mind Kishlar was also somewhat of a comedian.

## *New Ray Shows Up Peroxide Blondes – But A lot of Nice Things May Come Out of It.*

*“...Dr. Lamar Kishlar is a neat, bespectacled, mustached scientist. He was having a lot of fun with a new black ray of light that brings out the best in interior decorating and the worst in women.*

*Dr. Kishlar is the research manager of a livestock feed company which also dabbles in breakfast food (Ralston Purina). Dr. Kishlar dabbled in many things including how to make a peroxide blonde's hair turn green and false teeth show up as phonies with a little beam of light that you can't see. The black ray is a variation of the ultra-violet ray. Dr. Kishlar thinks that it is going to throw light on a number of things in the future. “One wave-length will produce a nice suntan, without inflaming the more tender areas.” explained Kishlar, “Another wavelength will tenderize any cut of beef. Still another will sterilize an ice-box, or if you want to go into it wholesale, an entire hospital.”*

*Kishlar's interest in his invisible ray is chiefly in its effect on food, but it includes its possibilities in interior decoration. People, fabrics, rubies and vitamins glow fluorescent under the ray. Any girl is a glow girl. “Take for instance a cocktail lounge.” said Kishlar, “A hidden ray will make carpets, tablecloths, napkins and cocktail glasses shine – but there will be only a discreet suggestion of actual illumination.*

*The female customers will shine no matter how dull. Their teeth, eyes, fingernails, rubies and diamonds will gleam. The girl with the sound teeth who drinks milk and gets plenty of calcium will look super-dentaled, but the girl whose teeth came from the dentist had better inquire about the lighting before entering the bar of tomorrow. False teeth look black under Kishlar's revealing little ray. Peroxide hair may turn a ghastly green under the ray. ■*

*(George Ridenour is a volunteer in the YHS Archives and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)*



*Lamar Kishlar was born in Ypsilanti in 1894 and later became well known for his work with cooking oils, soybeans and support equipment for the iron lung. He was named President of the American Oil Chemists' Society in 1943.*

## Plenty of Elbow Room – *continued from page 21*

tive vertical striping along the entire length of the façade between the shallow awning and the bottoms of the second story windows, and the red and white cornice half way between the second story windows and the top of the façade, mimicking the design of the awning. However this decoration was assuredly not original, as it would have covered the cornice above the first floor and the polychromatic brickwork above the cornice arranged in a horizontally oriented diamond pattern.

Remaining unchanged are the rounded wall of textured glass blocks immediately south of the entrance door and the large red square enamel panels beneath the row of windows. The awning with three red horizontal stripes now has the structural aid of metal chains embedded in the patterned brick in two places, supporting it from above. The window trim and mullions have been painted maroon. Second story windows facing north, over the single story section of the building, have been boarded up and painted maroon, as has the entire North elevation. The West elevation, the rear, is painted brown.

No images of the original interior are available, but the window valance and curtains visible in the original photograph are no longer in place. The current ceiling is painted black with large recessed squares painted red which contain cove lighting. The walls are also black. It is highly unlikely this was the original color scheme, but the ceiling itself may be original. There is also a distinct possibility that the bar and the refrigerator doors below the bar are original based on their handle design and styling. It is assumed that all other current furnishings have replaced the originals.

The Elbow Room stands as a great example of how “modern” architecture can be adapted for use today without the complete destruction or alteration of defined design features. It has survived long enough to be considered “kitsch” or “retro,” labels not entirely negative – and usually the ones used just before “historic” begins to take hold. ■

*(Derek Spinei is a student in the graduate program in Historical Preservation at EMU and is serving an internship in the YHS Archives.)*

# Ida Bourgdoff Goes Missing!

By James Mann

Ida Bourgdoff, a 13 year old girl in the care of the John Dawson family of Oakwood Street, went missing on the evening of Saturday, October 28, 1905. She had been in the care of the Dawson family since they had taken her in from the state school at Coldwater in July of 1904. Ida had no mother and her father failed to provide for her. For a time she stayed with her aunt, Mrs. Lewis Hartzell, of Vicksburg, and it was she who placed Ida in the school at Coldwater.

On the evening of Saturday, October 28, between 5:30 and 6:00 pm, Ida asked Mrs. Dawson if she had time to comb her hair before supper. Permission was granted and Ida went to her room. At this time she was wearing a faded dark blue skirt, an old dark waist and high black shoes. When Ida failed to appear at supper a search was made, and she was found to be missing. At first it was thought she had left in her working clothes, but it later developed she had appropriated a dress of Mrs. Dawsons and other clothing to match. She took with her a pocketbook containing \$10, which was all the money in the house.

*"Mr. Dawson, who was at the barn, noticed a young man, tall, smooth faced, without overcoat, sauntering past the house, but as it was nearly dark, paid little attention. A neighbor says the girl came out and spoke to this man, went back into the house, but did not notice what she did next,"* reported The Ann Arbor Daily Times of Tuesday, October 31, 1905. The man continued to walk down the street.

*"She is very much afraid of the dark and no hand to be out at night,"* noted The Ann Arbor Daily Argus of Monday, October 30, 1905. *"The girl is large for her age, has brown hair and is rather awkward."*

After leaving the house, Ida had made her way to Ann Arbor, where she went shopping. There she purchased a hat adorned with wings and feathers. From Ann Arbor she made her way to Detroit, where she engaged a room at a hotel and spent the night.

She left the hotel on Sunday, bought a newspaper, and spent her time perusing the news of the day.

*"Monday morning she started on another shopping tour. She purchased a \$2.50 doll, a remnant of silk and fancy shawl to dress it,"* reported The Ann Arbor Daily Argus of Tuesday, October 31, 1905. That evening she boarded the interurban for Ann Arbor, but her ticket was only for Ypsilanti. At Ypsilanti she tried to purchase a ticket for Ann Arbor. *"Her absurd appearance attracted attention and it was supposed she was crazy. An officer was sent for and she was taken to police headquarters, where after a session in the sweat box the officers declared she could tell more lies faster than anyone who had occupied that position in a long time,"* noted The Ypsilanti Daily Press of Tuesday, October 31, 1905.

*"When Officer Ryan took the girl in tow she presented an odd enough figure,"* continued The Ypsilanti Daily Press. *"The gown she wore was several sizes too large while her hat was old enough for a woman of 50. A white silk tie about her neck completed her appearance, although the manner of donning the dress was, if modish, decidedly new to Ypsilanti. The fact that she was not equipped with a belt and that the waist was outside instead of inside the skirt may have had something to do with her recherché appearance."*

Ida said the young man she had been seen talking to was the boy with the papers, and as far as could be learned she was telling the truth.

Her possessions, listed by The Ypsilanti Daily Press, at this time included the hat she had purchased, the doll, a white shawl, two and a half yards of silk for a waist, some ribbons, a pair of golf gloves, and a set of three handsome combs. Ida also had one nickel and a ticket to Ann Arbor.

*"Mr. Dawson said this morning to a Daily Press representative that the girl would be sent back to Coldwater or wherever the state agent decided, as it is entirely too expensive a luxury for him to keep her."* ■

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

*(Editors Note: Coldwater was primarily an institution for the mentally retarded. What makes this story sad is that it appears she was made an object of humor. People had very little understanding of various mental disabilities at that time.)*



636 S. Mansfield Ave.  
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Tel: (734) 483-5811  
Fax: (734) 483-9701



# Museum Advisory Board Report

By Kathryn Howard

With summer flying by, the Museum has been busy and interesting. We have had many out of country, national, state and local visitors. Representatives visited the Museum from Sweden, China, Greece and many other states within the United States.

The Babbitt Collection is now displayed throughout the Museum and has attracted a lot of attention. Some visitors have indicated they have seen Babbitt collections in other places such as Grand Rapids and Toledo.

Karen Nickels and Nancy Wheeler have set up a wonderful permanent exhibit on the Underground Railroad in the Ypsilanti Room. The Cleary College display is now located on the second floor of the Museum in the hallway.

Our most wonderful acquisition recently is a Ferrand 1907 reed organ that was manufactured in Detroit, Michigan. It is a beautifully restored organ given by local resident Mr. Roland Schaedig. We are so grateful and cannot thank him enough for this gift.

To add to our John Barnhill Collection, the family of James Keegan has donated his 1959 Ypsilanti High School Band uniform.

Local residents and visitors in Ypsilanti for high school and college reunions regularly express their thanks for the memories our displays bring back about their youth. The Lost Ypsilanti Display at this time seems to be the favorite for visitors who grew up in Ypsilanti.

Our next function will be the Quilt Exhibit that will run from September 26 to October 10. We welcome all quilters to register and display their wonderful talents at this annual program. If you



have exhibited before we ask for quilts that were not previously displayed. Also, if you wish to be a docent during the show, we would be grateful. Please contact Kathleen J. Campbell by telephone at (734) 483-5693 or by email at [kjcampbell@sbcbglobal.net](mailto:kjcampbell@sbcbglobal.net) or Rita Sprague at (734) 483-4600.

The weather was not kind during the Heritage Festival so our attendance was down compared to previous years. Those who came in the rain Saturday enjoyed their Museum tour and also our lacemakers, who braved working in the tent.

We are sorry to announce the closing of the Gift Shop due to the slow sale of gift items. We still have some pottery and everything is now on sale. Items have been marked off one-half or more from the original sale price. We will still be selling books at the lower level in the Archives. The local history books make wonderful gifts and Christmas is quickly approaching. Also, we will continue to sell the 2011 calendars with the wonderful views from Ypsilanti of yesteryears .in both the Museum and the Archives.

We welcome Anne Stevenson as a new member on the Museum Advisory Board. Anne served as the Chair of the 2009 Holiday Reception and is also a Docent in the Museum.

It is hard to believe how fast the Christmas Open House on December 5<sup>th</sup> and the Holiday Reception on December 29<sup>th</sup> are approaching.

Have a wonderful fall season. ■

*(Kathryn Howard is the Chair of the Museum Advisory Board.)*

Marilyn Begole Chose Love –  
*continued from page 8*



*A recent picture of Ellis and Marilyn (Begole) Freatman.*

versity of Michigan. Her career was now in the hands of Paul Hubbell, who headed the Ben Greet Players. She steadily rose to the top and was chosen to play the lead in several performances at the Lydia Mendelssohn Theater. It was her performances in these starring roles that led to the New York invitation which she refused preferring to stay at home and be close to Ellis Freatman. Marilyn's career was important to her but love won out.

After she received her Master's Degree in Theater Arts from the University of Michigan, Marilyn was interviewed for a job with the Milan Area Schools by the Superintendent, Mr. Drevdall. The position involved teaching drama at the High School and heading up the school plays. She was sold on the job after her interview with the Superintendent and produced two plays a year during her five years of teaching in Milan. Joan Cullip, one of Marilyn's students in Milan said, "Mrs. Freatman was a wonderful and well liked teacher and drama coach." Her work there is still fondly remembered by the many students who performed in the plays she directed.

Marilyn and Ellis now reside in Ypsilanti after raising their family. She and Ellis spend winter months in Florida and the rest of the year with friends and family in Ypsilanti. Ellis still says that Marilyn passed up a chance at the "big time" by not going to New York, but secretly he is very happy she didn't go! ■

*(Phil Barnes spent 30 years in the Milan school system as an administrator, 13 of those years as Athletic Director, and is a regular member of the Ypsilanti Morning Coffee Group.)*

## "Lost Restaurants" of Ypsilanti – *continued from page 5*

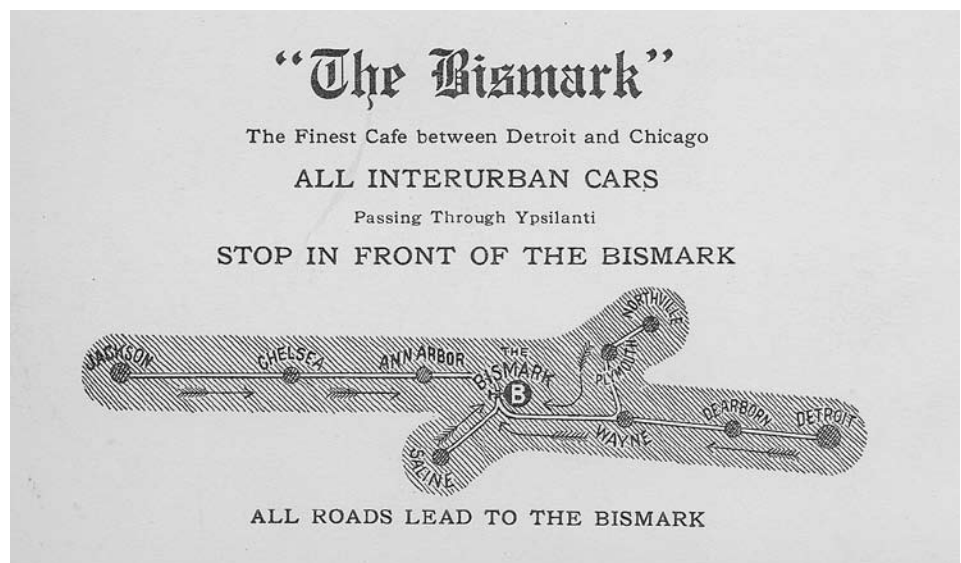
as a restaurant in the 1920s. It later changed ownership and became The Lord Fox. Just recently the restaurant has undergone renovation and is now Roger Monks.

Talk to local Boomers or their older brothers and sisters about restaurants and their first words will be **Casa Nova**. Owned by the Falsetta family, the first Casa Nova opened in what is now the third dining room of Haab's. The restaurant quickly became known throughout the area for its pizza. The Falsetta's moved across Michigan Avenue to a larger, new building. Don Porter, my brother, writes, *"This special place was our favorite restaurant. The pasta dishes were fantastic and the sauces were loaded with garlic and rich in flavor. However, the most delicious item on the menu was the antipasto salad with the homemade tomato-based dressing. During Tammy's (Eberle) first pregnancy she craved that dressing. So I would head to the restaurant and pick up some cartons to go. A few years ago, my nephew obtained the recipe for the special dressing. We made it and it was okay, but it tasted better when we had salad at a table for two at the Casa Nova."*

Sadly, family health problems resulted in the closing of Casa Nova in December, 1977. It lives on in the memories of many former customers who continue to rhapsodize about the pizza, and, of course, the antipasto salad.

Readers mentioned a number of other "lost restaurants" including **Marken's** just west of the Casa Nova on Michigan Avenue, first opened in 1944; **The Old Town Restaurant** in Depot Town, formerly **Turner's** that opened in 1941; **The Spaghetti Bender**, at 23 N. Washington; and **George's Huron Inn**, owned by the Beaudette family from the mid-1930s until 1984.

So, what about the "Survivors," those restaurants that have continued in business throughout the decades? For this article, we identify three, two of which were mentioned earlier: Haab's, The Bomber, and The Tower Inn. I talked with Mike Kabat of Haab's about why restaurants, including popular ones, close. He noted that very few restaurants survive beyond one generation. Why? The restaurant business



*The Bismark Café located at 14 North Washington Street provided service to people passing through Ypsilanti on Interurban Railroad Cars.*

is very hard work, long hours, and subject to increasing regulation. Staffing can be difficult as wages are relatively low. Ypsilanti is blessed with a University whose students fill many wait staff positions although the downside is frequent turnover. Mike discouraged his own children from going into the business. However, after a stint as a paralegal, his son Dave expressed an interest in joining his father and is now Junior Partner. "I failed," said Mike. Most Ypsilantians would disagree. ■

*Author's note: my thanks to everyone who contributed to this project. It required a lot of "digging." Special thanks to the Archives staff, Max Obermeyer, Joe Lawrence, Bill Nickels, Mike Kabat, Don Porter Jr. and Penny Schreiber.*

*Information, including pictures, is sparse especially about businesses. All people interested in local history are urged to look through their scrapbooks, their files or boxes and consider contributing information to the YHS Archives. Photographs can be reproduced and the original returned to its owner.*



# News from the Fletcher-White Archives

By Gerry Pety

Is it already that time of year? The leaves are turning all sorts of magnificent colors and the children and the college kids are heading back to classes...I guess it is! Well, things never slowed down at the Archives this summer. We are closing in on our most successful year any way you want to calculate it; the number of people who visited, sales of books, and most importantly, the number of researchers who came looking for their ancestors, home and/or business history, resource information for articles and/or books, or church and school records. Seems that we could even find where Uncle John and Aunt Sadie were buried. This is what our dedicated volunteers do to help people from all over the United States and Canada who are visiting the Archives. Thank goodness Lewis White had a vision some 80 years ago to find and save this information. Very sobering!

A special thanks for a book given by Marlene J. Ridenour to the Archives involving a trip along the Underground Railroad, with

the title, "I've Got a Home in Glory Land." It is a story of what it was like to traverse the trail of those who traveled the Underground Railroad. Also, thanks to the valued members and visitors who just come into the Archives and leave bits of information, pictures and artifacts that help to extend and preserve the history of Ypsilanti. Sometimes the new information we receive about our past is just amazing and inspires our own writers who research and write the stories that appear in the Gleanings.

We also had a special visitor to the Archives in the person of Ms. Satia Orange, daughter of A. P. Marshall. Marshall served as director of libraries, dean of academic services and professor of library science during his tenure at EMU, which ran from 1969-80. The Archives have over the years sought permission to acquire reprints of A. P. Marshall's books. Those of you who have waited all these years to get a copy of his most famous book, "Unconquered Souls" will not have to wait much longer. This book is the companion piece to Colburn's "History of Ypsilanti" and outlines the concurrent black history of this area. Satia has made provisions with Brown Chapel, AME for the publication profits to be used for 'seed' money to help people in this area. The book will therefore have a double benefit to our community. ■

*(Gerry Pety is the Director of the Fletcher-White Archives and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)*

## Membership Application

*Ypsilanti Historical Society, Inc.*



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Membership:		New	Renewal
Single	\$10.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family	\$15.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sustaining	\$25.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Business	\$75.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Life	\$200.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please make check payable to the  
Ypsilanti Historical Society and mail to:

**Ypsilanti Historical Society**  
220 North Huron Street  
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

*Ypsilanti Historical Society, Inc.*  
220 North Huron Street  
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Non-Profit Org  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Ypsilanti, Michigan  
Permit No. 399

From the YHS Archives

# Postcard Collection

*By Derek Spinei*

The collection of postcards in the Archives has recently been digitized. This collection provides illustrations and photographs of the natural and built environment of Ypsilanti and is a valuable and little-used resource for research. Especially well represented in the collection are the Huron River, Eastern Michigan University, and city parks, but there are also quite a few postcards displaying images of Cleary College, bridges, streetscapes, public schools and, of course, the water tower.

Physically, the most unique postcard is one made of floppy leather which is postmarked 1906. An inherent problem with postcards is that we can't necessarily glean from them the date they were printed, only when they were sent – and many of our postcards were never sent. Much of the other novelty souvenir postcard-type stationery we have does not lend itself to digitization because they feature multiple pull-out or fold-out images. ■

*(Derek Spinei is enrolled in the graduate program in Historical Preservation at EMU and is serving an internship in the YHS Archives.)*

*Country Club House and Golf Links, near Ypsilanti, Mich.*



*Above: The former Washtenaw Country Club at the time titled "Country Club and Golf Links, near Ypsilanti, Michigan."*

*Right: The log cabin constructed in Gilbert Park by the Kiwanis Club for the Ypsilanti Centennial in 1923.*



*Luna Lake in Prospect Park, Ypsilanti, Mi.*



*Willow Run Airport Terminal.*