

Ypsilanti GLEANINGS

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



SUMMER 2006

Ypsilanti, Basketball's Gateway to the West

By Dr. Erik Pedersen, Eastern Michigan University

Introduction

People from the Ypsilanti, Michigan area probably know that Elijah McCoy, son of a former slave, invented in his Ypsilanti workshop an automatic lubricating device for engines. The assurance of authenticity for this device led to the phrase "The Real McCoy." Most Ypsilantians also know that a "car crazy kid" by the name of Preston Tucker designed and built the Tucker Car which inspired the movie "Tucker: The Man and His Dream." Graduates from the Eastern Michigan University College of Education know that the Michigan Normal School was the first teacher training school established west of the Allegheny Mountains. Not as many may know that the Ypsilanti Union Underwear Company was famous for its product line of long underwear. However, it is almost certain that very few people know the role Ypsilanti played in helping to promote the game of Basketball.

How Ypsilanti became involved with helping James Naismith introduce his game to areas of the country other than the East Coast is an interesting story. Just as interesting are the accounts of the first set of rules, equipment used, and the players. Before elaborating on Ypsilanti's role in promoting basketball, readers might find

that information about the early evolution of the game to be interesting as well.

Background

It is hard for us to imagine today that in the 1890's there was a lack of indoor games or activities for people to play during the winter months. Formal gymnastics and calisthenics were about the only kinds of exercise available at the time.



Figure 1 - The "Tenth Hour" 1897 M.S.N.C. men's basketball team.

Students considered these pursuits to be very boring. Attempts to adapt outdoor games such as rugby, lacrosse, soccer, or football to an indoor setting failed miserably. Challenged by Luther Gulick, department head at Springfield College, Springfield Mass., to come up with a new indoor activity, James Naismith invented the game of basketball.

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From the President's Desk

By Alvin E. Rudisill

The Museum and Archives have been very busy the past few weeks. Last week more than 400 visitors toured the Museum and the number of visitors who do research in the Archives is increasing each month.

We are still in the process of negotiating with the City of Ypsilanti to purchase the museum and archives property at 220-224 North Huron Street. The purchase of the property by the Society would enable us to expend funds on deferred maintenance to the buildings and property. Any such agreement would include a "Right of Reversion" clause so that if the Society stopped using the property as a museum or archives the City would have the right to buy back the property at the same price it was sold to the Society. We are all interested in preserving the historical artifacts and written records of the people and places in Ypsilanti and the surrounding area and the transfer of ownership of the property to the Society seems to be a win-win situation for both the Society

and the City. We hope these negotiations will result in a successful agreement.

A proposal was made to Eastern Michigan University to assign two graduate interns from the Historical Preservation Program to the Society. I am pleased to report that EMU President Fallon has approved the proposal and beginning July 1 we will have two twenty hour per week interns working in the Museum and Archives. This will allow us to make significant progress on our collection and preservation efforts. In addition, we are discussing the possibility of increasing the number of hours the Museum and Archives will be open each week. It may be possible to increase the number of open hours of both facilities from nine hours per week to as much as twenty-eight hours per week by using a combination of interns and volunteer docents.

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Ypsilanti, Basketball's Gateway to the West - *continued from front page*

The game of basketball that Naismith and his students from Springfield College brought to Ypsilanti in 1894 was quite different from the game of basketball we are familiar with today.

Naismith's original rules for the game of basketball were formulated in December of 1891. The first game was played on December 21st of that year with nine players on a side (Mechinkoff, p.275). The eighteen students were enrolled in a physical education methods course. Although only one basket was scored during the entire period, the game was enthusiastically accepted by everyone in the class.

How the Game Developed

The original thirteen rules for basketball were formalized in 1892. The game borrowed from lacrosse, rugby football, "duck on the rock," and soccer. The thirteen rules were formulated around four fundamental features:

1. no running with the ball;
2. no tackling or rough body contact;
3. a horizontal goal above players' heads
4. freedom of any player to obtain the ball and score at any time (Web Site #2).

Points were earned by shooting a soccer ball into a peach basket. The basket was placed ten feet off of the floor. That height was determined by a worker at the college who tacked the baskets to a lower railing of the gymnasium balcony (Twobbly p.112). The height of the basket has remained the same all these years. Every time a goal was scored someone had to climb up a ladder and retrieve the ball. Iron hoops (Figure 2) and a hammock-style basket were introduced in 1894. However, someone still needed to retrieve the ball. A few years later someone attached a string to the bottom of the net which when pulled flipped the ball out of the net (See Figures 3 & 4 – Web Site #1). It wasn't until 1906 before the innovation of an open ended net put an end to manually retrieving the ball from the basket (Web Site # 2). These nets also helped officials



Figure 2 - Iron basketball hoop from 1897.

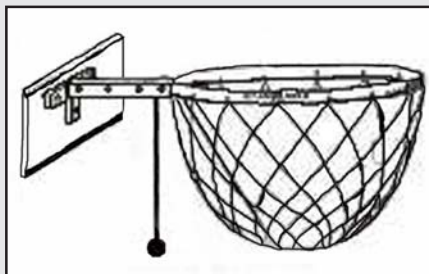


Figure 3 - Indoor hammock style basketball hoop 1896.



Figure 5 - Basketball from the early 1900s.

determine if the ball had actually gone through the rim. A leather covered ball was introduced in 1894 (See Figure 5). By 1897 each basket counted 2 points and each free throw was worth one point (Crego, p.206).

The gymnasium at Springfield College was small, 35' x 50'. But Naismith wanted to accommodate everyone in his class. So, two teams of nine players each were established for the first game. Each team was divided into three forwards, three centers, and three guards. See Figure 1 and notice that positions are written on players shirts. It is interesting to note that Naismith and a colleague at

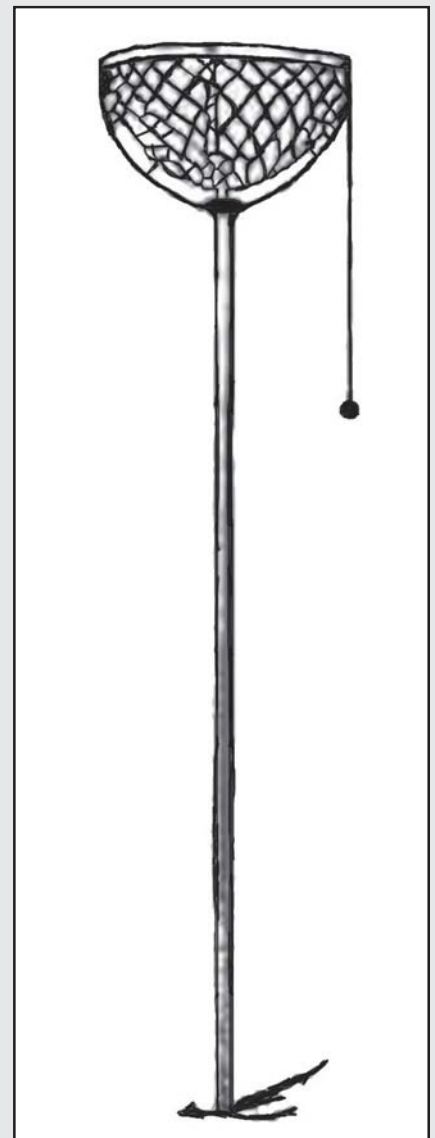


Figure 4 - Outdoor hammock style basketball hoop 1896.

Springfield College, Amos Alanzo Stagg, captained the two nine man teams (Swanson, p.173). Initially there was no limit to the number of people who could play in a basketball game. Some historians report that more than 50 people at a time played in some early games (Draper, p.57). Others indicate that the number of players varied depending upon the size of the court. However, by 1900 the five player standard was adopted through the country (Mechinkoff, p.276).

Backboards were not introduced to the game until 1896. Backboards pre-
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A Love Story - *Joe and Catherine Sesi*

By Ronald J. Mammoser

Catherine and Marie, her older sister, were excited about the pending arrival of a new sibling. They lived in Brantford, Ontario, Canada, and soon their family would increase in size with the birth of a new brother or sister. Times were good for these two happy girls, but they were oblivious to the troubles that were brewing in Europe, culminating in World War I. As so often happens, however, events do not always work out as planned. Their brother was born, but the delivery had been difficult. Unable to withstand the trauma, their mother passed away shortly after the birth. Their father kept the family together, and the two young girls helped all they could. But, again, tragedy struck when their father succumbed to the flu that had struck the country after the Great War.

Without any relatives able to take in the youngsters, they were placed in a Catholic orphanage in the area which was run by a religious order of nuns. The three siblings lived there for a period of time until a Mr. and Mrs. Rettinger visited with the intention of adopting. The Rettingers had intended to adopt a single child who would enjoy living with them on their farm. The nuns, however, persuaded them that the right thing to do would be to adopt Catherine and her two siblings, and that is what they did.

Joy was once again in the lives of the children. They were together as a family with a mother and a father, living on a farm, and going to school. Then, disaster struck again. While working the farm, Mr. Rettinger was severely injured and died. Mrs. Rettinger thought about returning the children to the orphanage, but the nuns convinced her that it would be best for the children if they could remain together with her.

During that time, and a half world away, a young man had completed his high school education at the American Missionary Dutch Reform School. The school was located in Basra, Iraq, and had as its headmaster Dr. John Van Ess who had left Hope College in Holland, Michigan, to run the school. The young man was Joseph M. Sesi, and while he was happy that he had completed his high school education, he wanted a greater education and more opportunities than were available in Iraq. He had heard Dr. Van Ess talk about life in America, and Joe convinced his father that the right thing for him to do was to go to that new land. Joe's father was convinced, and a ship ticket was purchased for Joe and his cousin. They were given a small amount of money for traveling, and off they went – not to America, but to Mexico where they had acquaintances who could get them into the United States. The trip was not as easy as the two young men had anticipated. Joe and his cousin were only part way to the Port City when they were set upon by thieves who stole all their money. Luckily, the captain of the ship looked after them and saw that they were fed during the trip which lasted several weeks before arriving in Veracruz, Mexico.



Joe and Catherine Sesi.

Joe worked in Mexico for a time before making his way to the United States. He continued his journey toward Detroit where he had been anticipating working in the growing automobile industry. He arrived in Detroit in 1923 but was unsuccessful in obtaining work in the auto industry. He did, however, find work as a delivery boy for a grocery store. Thus began a career in the grocery business that covered over twenty years, culminating with his opening of the New Center Market, the most progressive supermarket in the area. The store was the forerunner of today's supermarkets. It had a large meat counter, fresh vegetables, ample grocery aisles, a liquor department, and a new innovation, frozen foods, which were developed by Clarence Birdseye. Because of the high quality cuts of meat and gourmet food available at the market, the more affluent families in the Detroit area made the New Center Market their store of choice.

During that time Catherine had moved to Detroit and obtained a position as housekeeper for the Burns family who lived in the New Center area. One of her responsibilities was shopping for the family and, of course, the New Center Market just happened to be the place. Many times Catherine had noticed Joe in church on Sunday mornings and recognized him as the proprietor of the store. She knew nothing about him and just assumed that he was married to a woman who worked in the store and who acted like she was in charge. In those days, the owner of a grocery store personally knew all of his major customers because of extending credit and delivering groceries to their homes.

Joe's magnetic personality allowed him the opportunity to become friends with many of the movers and shakers in Detroit – the closest being Alan Chapel who had an office in the Fisher Building. Alan's wife was a niece of Mrs. Henry Ford, and through the Chapels, Joe became acquainted with the Henry Fords.

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The Ypsilanti High School Girls Drum & Bugle Corps 1935-1978

By Lois Hopp Katon

The Ypsilanti High School Girls Drum & Bugle Corps had a proud history from 1935 until 1978. It was believed to be the first all-girl organization of its kind in the State of Michigan, perhaps in the country, and was known as "The Pride of Ypsilanti" for forty-three years.

Professor John F. Barnhill of Michigan State Normal College, now Eastern Michigan University, offered time on his day off to help organize a Boys Band in mid-year of 1925. He did not allow girls in the band because he did not believe in girls wearing pants, but because of the interest of about a dozen young ladies to play musical instruments, he agreed to lend his patient guidance to these ambitious girls the following year. By 1927 it became apparent that it was too difficult to teach this handful of girls to play the various band instruments, so plans were made to form a girls drum and bugle corps.

In the winter of 1935, Professor Barnhill and Principal Norris Wiltse screened 75

eager applicants from ninth to twelfth grades and selected 32 girls for the first marching group. High priority was given to scholarship, leadership, attractiveness and school service. They learned to play drums and bugles, and Miss Martha Wolter, secretary to School Superintendent, Ernest Chappelle, agreed to be the First Drum Majorette and Corps Advisor. Among the first girls to be chosen for the DBC was Dorothy Morhous (Hutchinson).

The girls practiced each Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 8:00 am, and agreed to drill during vacations. On March 25, 1936, the new Drum & Bugle Corps made its first appearance on the street in navy blue skirts and white blouses. They played two songs, "I'm in the Army Now" and "The Hunting Song" as they performed precision drills. In April of that year a benefit program to provide new uniforms for the YHS Boys Band netted over \$1,000 surplus, so they donated the money to the Girls Drum & Bugle Corps to purchase



Martha Wolter (First Drum Majorette and Corps Advisor) with John Barnhill (Corps Director).

attractive uniforms. The ladies of St. Lukes Auxiliary Guild took on the job of sewing the new outfits.

On Memorial Day in 1936 the girls make their first appearance in the new white uniforms consisting of a mid-calf poplin skirt with gold braid down the side; worn with a white long-sleeve blouse and tam cap with a band of gold braid. They had a purple and gold banner to carry with the flag, and stepped out at a smart pace.

On July 4, 1936, the YHS Girls Drum and Bugle Corps "stole the show" as they led the Centennial Parade. They played three pieces and performed precision drills. It was later told by charter member, Dorothy Morhous Hutchinson, that Mr. Barnhill was so proud of his girls that he often took the entire group to Gaudy's Chocolate Shop to treat them to a soda. After the death of his wife that year he seemed to put all his energy into music: The Normal College Band, Ypsi High Boys Band, Girls Drum & Bugle Corps, and the Community Band. He was truly a dedicated man!

In the fall of 1936, the Corps played at YHS football games and led the Harvest
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1936 - The Corps performed in their white uniforms in Jackson, Michigan.

The Ypsilanti High School Girls Drum & Bugle Corps 1935-1975 - *continued from page 5*

Day's Parade. Among those selected to replace graduating seniors this year were Ruth Fleuelling (Deake), Mary Esther Ross (Miller) and Marjorie Backus. In April of 1937, the DBC led Girl Scouts for the Annual Tree Planting Ceremony, and thrilled crowds at the Prospect Park Band Concert with precision drills. After leading the Kids Parade on July 3, and dazzling viewers at the 4th of July Parade, the Corps disbanded for the summer. In the fall of 1937, the girls were honored to lead the Hudson's Thanksgiving Day Parade in Detroit. Then on December 7, they led the Welcoming Parade for Santa Claus and the street lighting ceremony for the Christmas Season.

On January 12, 1938, John F. Barnhill ordered new Scotch kiltie uniforms to be worn by the Corps. The \$1,400 cost was paid for by donations and special projects. Among many events scheduled were: A UofM Band Concert at Pease Auditorium with Prof. William D. Revelli conducting, Ypsi Board of Commerce Uniform Fund, Dance at Masonic Temple, Policeman's Ball at the Armory and car washes and card games. Ypsilanti business men met at the Huron Hotel to pledge support from Kiwanis, Rotary, American Legion, Junior Chamber of Commerce, City of Ypsilanti, Teachers Club and Ypsilanti High School. The Ladies Literary Club, Business and Professional Women, and Women's Study Club also offered support. The Girls Drum & Bugle Corps proudly showed off their beautiful, new uniforms in the 4th of July Parade.

The exclusive all-girl organization quickly became known as "The Pride of Ypsilanti" and attracted wide attention and received tremendous applause at the Michigan State Fair on Sept 9, 1938. On October 11, they paraded in Ann Arbor at the District Convention of Kiwanis and led the Pep Rally Parade for the first YHS football game of the season.

The final debt of \$400 for the new uniforms was paid from the receipts at a U-

M Band Concert at Pease Auditorium in January of 1939. In April of that same year Marjorie Backus gave a benefit dance recital to buy new pearlized drums for the Corps. She continued the benefits for several years thereafter.

The DBC led the Annual Clean-Up, Paint-up and Fix-up Parade on May 3rd of 1939 and the Corps won the first prize of \$40 at the "Eagles State Convention Parade" in Ann Arbor on June 26. The July 4th parade ended the season.

The usual round of football games, pep rallies, homecomings, and the Harvest, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Memorial Day and July 4th parades marked the calendar of performances each year for the well-acclaimed kilted lassies who led every parade with loud applause from the crowds.

In April of 1941, I was chosen to replace a girl who moved to California to live with an aunt after her mother died. I was given her uniform and a place as the first one in the first row to play tenor drum. It was a thrill as I was the only girl in my class to march in the Corps before the sophomore year.

May 19, 1941, was a sad day in Ypsilanti when beloved Professor John F. Barnhill suffered a paralytic stroke and died at the age of 64. He shared a good part of his life directing, teaching, and drilling his outstanding bands. The Normal College Band, Ypsi Hi Boys Band, Girls Drum & Bugle Corps, and the Ypsi Community Band all attended his funeral in uniform, at the Congregational Church in Ypsilanti. This was the first time that I marched with the Corps.

Mr. Leland Randall was hired as the new Band and Orchestra Director of Ypsi High and assumed duties of training new recruits of the Girls Drum & Bugle Corps. Martha Wolter continued her duties as Drum Majorette and Advisor. Among the graduating seniors was Dorothy Rice (Norton).

In 1943, I was elected President of the Corps and designed the emblem (a musical lyre with the letters DBC) adorning a pocket of the new red sweaters to be worn



Ruth Fleuelling (Deake), Dorothy Morhous (Hutchinson) and Olive Dieterle (Fashbaugh) in their new Scotch Brodie plaid uniforms in 1938.



Maxine Lutz (Forbes) in her Corps uniform in 1944



Lois Hopp (Katon) in 1945 and her daughter Cheri in 1966.

with the skirts, shoes, socks and white spats during school hours when we marched for parades and football games in the afternoon.

During World War II the DBC marched in war bond rallies, and scrap metal and paper drives. In April, 1944, they were the featured attraction at the Pantlind Hotel in Grand Rapids as guests of the American Legion Post 282 at their annual convention.

1945 was the 10th anniversary of the kilted Corps. I was a freshman at Michigan State Normal College. On November 3, the 37 members of the Girls Drum & Bugle Corps broke a Michigan tradition and performed for a Michigan/Minnesota football crowd at halftime. The highly publicized Corps formed a B-24 airplane marching down the field with the majorette as propellor and special smoke effects from the rear of the plane. The crowd roared with applause as the Corps delighted them with a pinwheel formation. My sister was a member of the Corps and I was asked to be a substitute for a member who was ill.

On November 10, at the largest football crowd of the season, the DRC led the Ypsilanti Goodfellows Parade to welcome

home service men and women at the game between Ypsilanti and Howell. Barbara Warner was crowned "Queen of Ypsilanti" and honored at halftime ceremonies in front of a huge "V" formed by the Drum & Bugle Corps. In 1946 the Kiwanis Club financed a trip to Chicago to march at the 32nd Annual Convention. The Corps appeared at famous Soldiers Field and was the only organization of its kind to perform before the 10,000 delegates from all sections of the United States, Canada, Alaska and Hawaii.

In September of 1947, the DBC led the Torchlight Parade for the Kaiser-Frazer Festival on the occasion of its 100,000th car rolling off the assembly line. Kaiser-Frazer occupied the former B-24 Bomber Plant where airplanes were mass-produced during World War II. An ice cream social was held on the American Legion Home lawn on June 19 to raise funds to replace worn out uniforms of the DBC. The Scottish Kiltie uniforms had been used since 1938 and were worn by over 250 girls during that time. The all-girl organization, "The Pride of Ypsilanti," brought a lump to your throat and a tear to the eye of parade watchers as precision marching was demonstrated and intricate drills performed.

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A Love Story - Joe and Catherine Sesi - *continued from page 4*

What a year 1945 was! Joe knew Mr. Burns well, both as a customer and from church. So when the Burns family went away in March for a couple of months, he asked Joe if he would see that the family got to church on Sundays. Not only did Joe see that they got to church, but he began stopping by the home to see Catherine. By the time the Mr. and Mrs. Burns returned, a romance had blossomed.

Joe had boarded for over seventeen years with Mr. and Mrs. Publow, considering them his parents in the United States. During that time he would bring a certain lady whom he had been dating to meet Mrs. Publow. After each visit Joe asked what her opinion of the young lady was, and each time she would say, "She is not the lady for you, Joe." In the spring of 1945, however, he took Catherine to the home, and Mrs. Publow eagerly responded, "That is the lady for you, Joe," confirming his decision to ask Catherine to be his wife.

The wedding was planned for August 14, 1945, at the Blessed Sacrament Cathedral. Mrs. Burns insisted that the reception be held at their home which bordered the Detroit Country Club. Joe was to furnish the food and beverages, which naturally came from the New Center Market.

As the newly married couple emerged from the church that morning of August 14, suddenly church bells rang out across the entire city. Horns began blowing, and people were shouting. Japan had notified General MacArthur its intent to surrender. Joe and Catherine, however, thought the excitement was because of them, especially when the procession followed them to the Burns home. Thus, what had been planned as a small backyard reception, turned into a party that required several additional trips to the store for more provisions.

The newly married couple settled into a rented apartment in Detroit. Almost immediately, Henry Ford I, offered Joe an opportunity to manufacture transmission parts for Ford Motor Company which was going back into the automobile busi-



Dollar bills signed by Joe Sesi.

ness since the war was over. He seized the opportunity, sold the grocery store, and purchased a home near Willow run Airport. Along with Alan Chapel, they began Ypsilanti Industries. Alan's health, however, was failing, and in 1947, when Ford established the Lincoln Mercury Division, Joe was offered one of the initial distributorships. He seized the opportunity and took over both businesses which were located at 20 East Michigan Avenue.

The years moved on, and the loving relationship between a couple who, as young persons, started out with almost nothing, continued to grow. Along with hard work and dedication, Joe and Catherine built a relationship with generations of people, a city, a country and a church. In 1965, the Lincoln Mercury Dealership was moved to 950 East Michigan Avenue, where it grew to be one of the premier dealerships in the United States, winning many awards and serving a multitude of happy customers.

In the early sixties, Joe prepared the way for his brother and his family to come to the United States. Although Joe and Catherine had no children of their own, by assisting his brother and his family immigrate to the United States, over time they acquired numerous nieces and nephews, most of whom worked or still work for the Sesi dealership. Joseph Sesi Junior, the oldest of the nephews, started out working in
continued on page 12

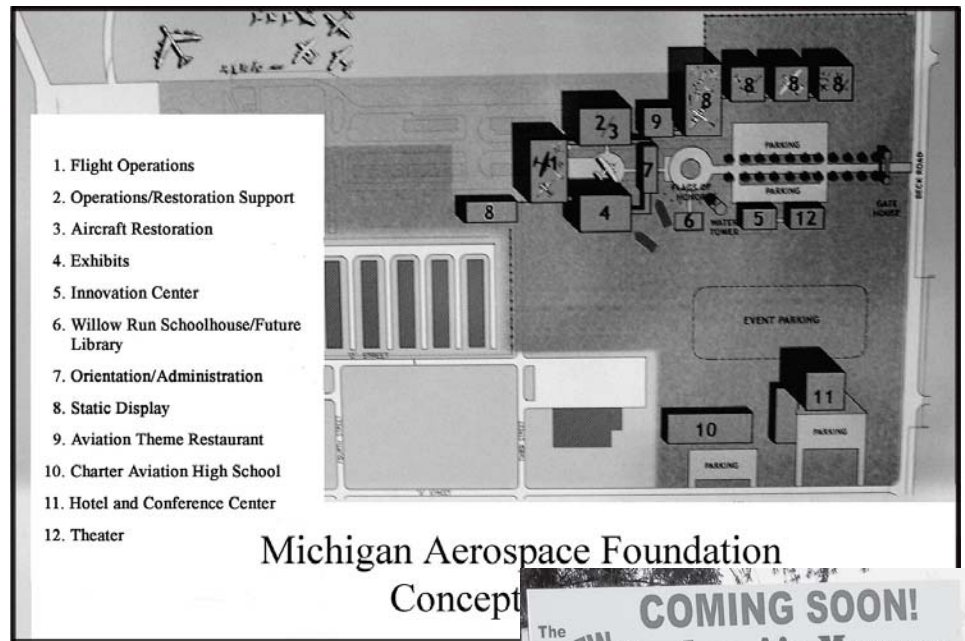
Yankee Air Museum Celebrates 25 years; 1981-2006

By Dave Steiner

Honoring Aviation History and its Participants through a Living, Flying Museum

When the historic Yankee Air Museum Hangar burned to the ground in a spectacular fire October 9, 2004 probably not many people thought the museum would be around to celebrate its 25th year. But those were people outside the organization. Within the Yankee Air Museum, the volunteers who make it happen had little if any doubt that the museum would continue. Not only would we make it to 25 years, but the museum would someday be rebuilt; bigger and better than ever. In fact the conflagration only accelerated plans that were already being formulated for a bigger and better museum complex and campus on the northeast corner of historic Willow Run Airport.

Building on a foundation of volunteer hours and tremendous determination, the Yankee Air Museum is very alive and well, thank you. Oh, we've not done it alone. There has been plenty of support and encouragement from most organizations and museums within and outside the aviation community and the public in general. If you've been part of that effort, we give you our heartfelt thanks. If you'd like to support us, we certainly welcome you. One of the best ways to do that is to join Yankee Air Museum, and make yourself part of the *force* that helps make it happen. A membership application may be downloaded from our web site at www.yankeeairmuseum.org, you may email us at membership@yankeeairmuseum.org or call us at (734)



Above: Layout of the Air Museum complex.

Right: New sign on A Street off Beck Road.



483-4030. We also encourage you to volunteer, there's always something to do.

The Michigan Aerospace Foundation, headed by Dennis Norton, Yankee founder and member #1 has been instrumental in helping formulate plans and major fund raising efforts for the new museum complex. MAF is a separate entity formed several years prior to the fire to raise major funds for the Yankee Air Museum complex. For more information go to www.michigan aerospace.org

Although Yankee may be best known for the operation of four historic warbird aircraft (B-17, B-25, C-47 and AT-19 Stinson) and currently they are the heart of the museum, Yankee is certainly not just about flying aircraft. Volunteers are involved in a wide variety of projects/events from artifact restoration and cataloging, to movie nights and educational outreach programs. The long term plan is to build a multi-function museum complex that will be a destination location for visitors to southeast Michigan. A sign showing the plans for the new museum

complex has recently be erected on A Street, off Beck Rd on the way into the old Hangar site.

In June, Yankee Air Museum volunteers disassembled and moved a Quonset hut donated by Van Buren Schools to Willow Run Airport. Eventually it will be used near the old Hangar site to facilitate visitor reception and store supplies and tools for the crews restoring and maintaining the static aircraft in the airpark. This hut is a historic structure itself, having originally been used at the Army Air Force base that was part of the Willow Run "Arsenal of Democracy" complex. Many of the aircraft in the airpark are on loan from the National Museum of the United States Air Force, and Yankee is charged with maintaining them.

Another Yankee project that will be happening this summer is moving the historic Ford Willow Run School from the southwest to the northeast side of the airport. That building will be the first in the new museum complex. Once authentically re-

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Yankee Air Museum Celebrates 25 years: 1981-2006 - *continued from page 9*

stored, it will house the new museum library. The library that burned in the old Hangar was often used by scholars and researchers as it had an extensive collection of reference materials. Its loss was just one tragedy of the fire. Yet not even two years after the fire, more than 1000 new or replacement items have been cataloged by Yankee volunteers to at least partially restock the library.

If you or anyone you know has knowledge about either of these two buildings, please contact the museum so we may give them as accurate a history and restoration as possible.

One very popular Yankee "member only" benefit, is to buy a ticket to fly on our historic C-47 Skytrain cargo plane and go on a Yankee excursion. The C-47 is the military variant of the Douglas DC-3, perhaps the greatest aircraft ever. This plane is largely maintained by professional Yankee volunteers (except for major engine overhauls) and is flown exclusively by volunteer Yankee pilots who are high-time military and/or professional civilian pilots. It flies members to destinations of interest from Willow Run Airport. Some of the places members



C-47 taking on fuel at Pelston.

will be enjoying trips to this summer are; Mackinac Island, Air Force Museum (Dayton), Sault Saint Marie, Kalamazoo Air Zoo, Oshkosh Air Show, Washington, DC. Past trips included a flight to Kentucky to see *Glacier Girl*, the P-38 that was recovered from beneath the Greenland icecap. The C-47 is also often featured as part of Yankee movie night, when it is open for tours. This past winter, Yankee volunteers attended a fabric class taught by knowledgeable and experienced Yankee members to recover the left aileron of this first Yankee aircraft, christened the *Yankee Doodle Dandy*.



"Yankee Lady" nose are image.

Yankee planes, particularly the B17 four engine heavy-bomber, are booked for air shows most weekends in the summer. For now, as we have no museum or hangar as such, appearance fees and rides in the airplanes are our primary source of income. The public may purchase a flight experience (FLEX) ride for \$425 in this historic and beautifully restored aircraft. These are offered at air shows, and also Wednesday evenings at hangar two on the southwest side of Willow Run airport. The *Flying Fortress* last flying season had more than one thousand people climb aboard for these rides that last about forty-five minutes. The *Yankee Warrior* B-25 twin engine bomber, a very rare model that actually saw combat in WWII, also offers FLEX rides at air shows and Wednesday evenings. To take a ride on one of these aircraft call the museum at (734) 483-4030 or b17flights@yankeeamuseum.org, or b25flights@yankeeamuseum.org.

The *Yankee Lady* (the name given our B-17) was in the Toronto area June 5-8, where it was used in the filming of *Closing the Ring*, starring Shirley MacLaine and Christopher Plummer, directed by Oscar-winner Sir Richard Attenborough. This film is a WWII drama/romance. Yankee volunteer crew members were there to handle the plane, including all the flying sequences. This isn't the first time this aircraft has been in the movies however. Under previous ownership and with a different paint job it was in the

1970 Pearl Harbor film, *Tora! Tora! Tora!* It was also in the movie *The High and the Mighty*.

Yankee also operates a classic AT-19 Stinson four seater, made in Wayne, MI in 1943. A contest to christen this aircraft with a Yankee name was just completed. Now known as the *Yankee Friend Ship*, it is flown to local events to promote Yankee Air Museum; members only may ride in this aircraft.

Yankee Air Museum has been working closely with Eastern Michigan University, cooperatively making use of its resources, including utilizing student projects, closely overseen by professors and teachers to assist Yankee Air Museum in reaching new plateaus of service and professionalism to its members and the public. Museum Curator, Gayle Roberts, an EMU grad works closely with the EMU museum program faculty, staff and students to restore and preserve artifacts donated to Yankee Air Museum.

"Yankee is certainly not just about flying aircraft...the long term plan is to build a multi-function museum complex that will be a destination location for visitors to southeast Michigan."

Yankee has plenty of things happening for you to attend or become a member and get involved in to help us grow. We hope you heard about and attended our Memorial Day observance at the Yankee airpark. If not, below is a list of upcoming events for your enjoyment, and to show your support for Yankee Air Museum. There is also an air show appearance list on the Yankee web site, www.yankeeairmuseum.org. Other upcoming events are also listed on the web site.

AuSable Adventure Rally June 23-25 – all three of the "heavy metal" Yankee aircraft have been invited to and will appear at this Grayling area event to benefit the Michigan National Guard families' emergency fund. Find out more on the web www.ausableadventurerally.com

Thunder over Michigan 2006 - Yankee's biggest event of the year is the first weekend in August. The Yankee Air Museum Thunder over Michigan event has become one of the most talked about in aviation circles as the place to see classic warbirds. It is an event with international implications, and warbird fans from all over the world come to see this show, certainly the greatest warbird event in the mid-west. Last year airshow coordinators Kevin Walsh, Mike Luther and Debbie Stewart gathered eight of the thirteen flyable B-17's *in the world* for this event. Not that many "Forts" had flown together since shortly after WWII, and it was the buzz of the aviation community. That show, held less than ten months after the October, 2004 fire was a testament to the true spirit of Yankee Air Museum volunteers, and evidence of the great support the museum has seen by members of the warbird community. Many of the aircraft at that show attended on their own nickel, because they knew we needed their help. We can't thank them enough.

The Yankee **Thunder over Michigan** event this August 5-6 promises to be another one not to be missed. The theme this year is Battle of Britain so there will be many British/Canadian RAF/RCAF aircraft on the ramp. That means Spitfires and Hurricanes, and one of the only two flying Lancaster four-engine heavy-bombers in the world. Skyraiders of the Vietnam era will also be featured. And there will be United States Air Force demo teams and heritage flights.

Thunder this summer will include a ground "battle" featuring authentic military vehicles, including tanks, making it one of the largest such re-enactments in the mid-west. Another highlight of their appearance will be the **THUNDER RUN!** This will see an escorted convoy of
continued on page 12



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Yankee Air Museum Celebrates 25 years: 1981-2006 - *continued from page 11*

these vehicles arrive in downtown Belleville about 7:00 pm Friday evening August 4th. This will be FREE and a chance to see these historic vehicles in action and up close. Arrive early. Tanks TAKE the right of way. For more information about Thunder over Michigan 2006, call the museum or go to our web site, www.yankeeairmuseum.org and click on Thunder over Michigan.

Yankee Movie nights – we invite you to attend our monthly movie night this July



*The biggest event of the year –
“Thunder Over Michigan.”*



*2006 marks the 25th Anniversary of the
Yankee Air Museum.*

15th, held on Saturday evening, these usually include aircraft tours and/or re-enactors and free pop and popcorn. See more on the web site event listing. Come on over to the hangar and see what's happening. The museum store is open during these events as well as normal business hours.

GOLF WAR scramble fundraiser – on September 6th, the fourth annual GOLF WAR fund-raiser scramble will be held. This event is for plane crazy golfers of any skill level, or lack thereof. Door and event prizes are handed out, including gift certificates for the museum store. The winning team members in this non-handicapped event get a taste of immortality as their names are stamped into a Dog Tag that is affixed to a special Iron Bag GOLF WAR trophy made with steel from the old Hangar. The grand door prize for this event is a ride in the B-17. How many golf outings do you play in where you have a chance to have your name drawn for a B-17 ride? Call the museum, or visit the web site for more information about the GOLF WAR.

Hearts to Yankee Auction – this dinner/auction benefit is held in February, the first Saturday after Valentine's Day. Come and bid on the many unique aviation and non-aviation items to help raise money for the new Yankee Air Museum.

Polishing Party in April – this past April more than 200 Bomber Buffers showed up to polish the planes in preparation for the flying season. This annual event lets you get up-close-and-personal with these planes like no other event you can attend at any other museum. Make no mistake. Yankee is not your brand X aviation museum.

Spaghetti Dinner in April – also in April is our Italian Bistro Spaghetti dinner to raise money for the museum.

There's a lot happening at Yankee Air Museum. We invite you to join and/or support us and become part of the action, the fun and this extraordinary keep 'em flying museum. ■

A Love Story - Joe and Catherine Sesi - *continued from page 8*

the Service Department at the age of sixteen. He graduated from Eastern Michigan University and worked his way up to General Manager of the Lincoln Mercury Dealership. He eventually purchased the dealership from his Uncle Joe, and today owns dealerships in Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor that handle several additional makes of automobiles.

The patriotic fervor, community involvement, and generosity of Joe and Catherine Sesi are legendary in the Ypsilanti/Ann Arbor area. Whenever a religious, school, or civic organization needed help promoting a meaningful activity, the Sesi's became actively involved. Many times people would hear Joe say, "America is God's gift to the world!" and that, "Things happened by the grace of God." Those were not just words, but the practiced philosophy of a couple who loved each other and all people with whom they came into contact.

Over and over, people continue to tell stories about being in places like California or Alaska and when someone noticed their "Sesi" license plate frame, they would say, "We used to live in Ypsilanti. How are Joe and Catherine?" Hundreds, if not thousands of children, have dollar bills that were signed by Joe who would say to them, "Save this dollar, and you will always have good fortune."

A quotation from their 50th Wedding Anniversary booklet says it all:

"Catherine and Joe have impressed their friends and loved ones with their charm, faithfulness, dedication and humility. They have touched their community with gestures of humanity, involvement and generosity. Above all, Catherine and Joe are a symbol of love and dedication. They share a devotion which draws its strength from a faith in God and a belief in America."

And that is the faith that keeps Catherine going. Joe passed away in February 1999 at the age of ninety-two, and if you happen to have one of those dollar bills, continue to hold onto it, for surely, *"good fortune will be with you."* ■

The 50's: Rec Sports Were Prime Time

By Phil Barnes

The Bouncing of balls at Ypsi High or the smack of a softball hitting the catcher's glove at Recreation Park; those were the sounds of top flight basketball and fast-pitch softball in the 50's. Crowds were always drawn to these games. It was a happening for the people of Ypsilanti and they let the players know when a bonehead play was made. Also, there were plenty of cheers heard when classy plays were made.

The heydays of John Bass, Bud Corwin, and Bob Moffett are still talked about by old-timers who remember the heated fast pitch softball contests at Recreation Park. One night in the middle of a hot summer, Bass and Corwin hooked up in a pitcher's duel

which went into the 14th inning. Walker Hardware, Corwin's team, managed to score a cheap run to take a 1-0 lead. Thorne Tire, Bass's team, then loaded the bases with nobody out. Things looked dismal for the Walker team. But Corwin was not to be denied. He proceeded to strike out the side to win the game.

However, things didn't always turn out rosy for Walker's team. Buddy Johnson, as good a hitter as there was in the Inter-City League, cranked a long home run against Corwin to win another extra-inning game against Corwin with Bass as the winner for Thorne Tire. Corwin was certainly an exceptional pitcher who ranks with the best of all time in the State. Walker Hardware rode the left arm of Corwin to win the AA Championship of the State of Michigan in

1956. Bob Moffett, a great infielder who had played at Michigan Normal and was one of the best hitters to play the game in Ypsilanti, hit two 2-run homers to win games in a 4 game sweep of the tourney. Billy Sparrow and Lee Corwin alternated at the catcher and second base positions. Both were cut of the same mold with rifle arms, solid, but seldom long ball hitting, and smart base running. Artie Herbst was a solid infielder who could play the corners and come up with a key hit. Glenn Rowe was a farm boy who, when he connected, hit the ball out of sight. He won a game in the Wyandotte Chemical Tournament with one of those long blasts against Bonnie



Walker Hardware, 1956 Michigan AA Champs: (L to R – 1st Row) Bob Moffett, Coach Glenn (Unknown), Bud Corwin, Artie Herbst and Lee Corwin. (L to R – 2nd Row) Bill Sparrow, George Plante, Glenn Rowe, (Unknown), Lou Toth, Don Brooks and Phil Barnes.

Jones, a premier pitcher in Detroit. George Plante did a fine job at short stop and pitched an occasional game. Lou Toth played 1st base and cracked the long ball occasionally. Phil Barnes had a gun from the outfield, adding to the defense, and could also catch and play 1st. This was a versatile ball club with excellent defense and if they got ahead by one run it was usually lights out for the opponent. Corwin would usually strike out about 17 of the 21 outs. The bleachers were usually full with fans hanging on the fences. They were vocal and spirited. What else was there to do on a hot summer night? Very little entertainment was available on TV, and of course there were no movies to rent and the Internet did not exist. The ball park was the gathering place and Recreation
continued on page 14

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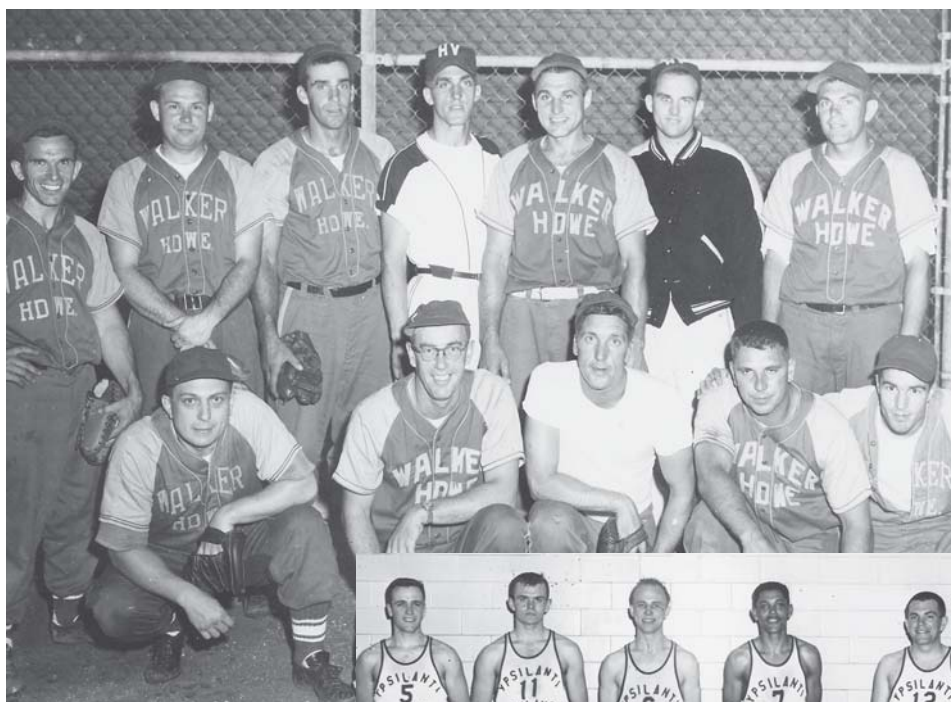
The 50's: Rec Sports Were Prime Time -*continued* from page 13

ation Park was the center of attention in Ypsilanti.

Let's not forget the umpires who toiled every night for a few dollars a game. Harold Britton was among the best, and could be found every night on the main fast pitch softball diamond at the park. For the most part Harold called the plate and was skillful in his arbitoring of balls and strikes. Pitchers threw an estimated 105 miles per hour which made the Umpires' job very difficult. Britton was highly respected by the players in the league.

In 1953 an All-Star tournament was conceived to include Ypsilanti, Plymouth and Garden City. It brought together many of the great players from Washtenaw and Wayne Counties. John Bass led the way for Ypsi as a pitcher and hitter and Gabby Street pitched and starred for Plymouth. Garden City's top player was Udge Piscopink, legendary third baseman and hitter. The concept only lasted one year, but crowds were large and vocal.

Winter brought about basketball, and some of the best ball in the State was played at Ypsi High. Players were recruited from Michigan Normal (later Eastern Michigan College and Eastern Michigan University) after their eligibility expired or if they were ineligible due to grades, or just couldn't make the varsity team. Other players were residents of the community who just walked on, such as Wendall True, a 6' 9" power forward who was an integral part of the Hessenaurs' team of 1959. With a front line of True, John Bass, and Glenn Roe, a local resident and a ferocious rebounder, and guards like Dunc McIntyre, a starter from Plymouth High, Ed Mirer, an EMU athlete, and Art Carpenter, a local resident, Hessenaurs was able to beat Killens Gravel for the Inter-City Championship. Bass usually led the way with his fabulous hook shot which produced key points at critical moments. Bass had starred for Ypsi High in the 40's. Stub Close was a speedy guard whose wife



Hessenaurs Discounts, 1959 Inter-city Champs: (L to R – 1st Row) Wendell True, Glenn Roe, John Bass and Stub Close (L to R – 2nd Row) Duncan McIntyre, Art Carpenter, Recreation Director Bud Abbott, John Hessenaurs, Coach Phil Barnes, Wayne Spencer and Ed Mirer.



Ypsilanti Ambulance, City Champs – 1958: (L to R – 1st Row) Coleman Jewett, Carl Purcell, Bob Sullivan, Wayne Spencer and Brad Henson. (L to R – 2nd Row) Frank Manley, Jim Johnson, Jerry Birnbaum, John Bass and Coach Phil Barnes.

taught with Coach Phil Barnes at Erickson. He asked to play and was a welcome addition. Reserve Wayne Spencer was an EMU student.

The Ypsilanti Ambulance team of 1958 was formed due to the generosity of Mr. Roy Milligan, the owner who sponsored the team. Once again John Bass was the key player, and usually high point man. The front line of Jerry Birnbaum, who played at Saginaw and was an EMU student, along with Frank Manley, formerly of Michigan Normal and a jump shot artist, Jim Johnson and Brad Henson gave the Ypsi team the edge almost every game. Backcourt players were Coleman Jewett who had also played for Michigan Normal. Jewett was an excellent defensive player and had a deadly shot from the perimeter.

Carl Pursell (of U. S. Congressional fame) had started at Plymouth High and was a Michigan Normal student who was a lefty with good skills and knew the game. Bob Sullivan played guard and was an outstanding hustler. He was a resident of the community and an employee of EMU. Wayne Spencer and Coach Phil Barnes filled out the roster and provided valuable minutes.

Not to be forgotten, Joe Kersey refereed many of the key games. Joe was also a solid third baseman for the Thorne Tire softball club. Many more memories are frequently discussed by old-time players when they gather. Those were the days of competition for the right to be called CHAMPION and will never be forgotten. ■

Sidetrack Bar and Grill

By Tom Dodd

Not a bar joke - this is serious:

A guy walks into a bar and says, "What the heck happened to this place?" as he orders a "Bud." The owner, an attractive blonde woman in a black pants suit, leans across the bar and whispers closely, "When did you get out of prison?" They both laugh - and the friendly patron tells Linda French that, indeed, the bar at the crux of Cross, River and the railroad tracks was his favorite hangout - before he went to "the slammer." "That still happens here," says French, who has owned the Sidetrack Bar and Grill since 1980.

There may be only *half* a million stories in our Naked City but, when they are told over a glass of beer, they can become as lurid and ripe as any Mickey Spillane mystery-thriller. Stories and jokes at old railroad bars may be slightly more lurid than those told at posh cocktail lounges

or slightly earthier sportsman's bars.

Linda French's dad, Aubrey French, owned the Alibi Bar across the street when she was growing up in Northville. "At fifteen, I had my driver's license learning permit and would get a ride down to Ypsi so I could drive my dad's car. But I wasn't allowed in the Alibi, so I just sat in the parking lot and blew the car horn until he came out to give me the keys."

Today, Linda French's daughter Jessica, comes home from Kalamazoo College to assist at her mom's bar. Graduating with a major in Political Science, she grew up among more contemporary railroaders beginning a third generation of Ypsilanti tavern-keepers.

Linda French can name four bar names back to 1850 at her location. In 1979-80, she named her place for its unique location alongside the main railroad line from Detroit to Chicago. Garrison Keillor's fictional "Sidetrack Tap" on National Public Radio came after that. Even with all the railroad signage hanging on the Sidetrack's interior walls, local legend says Ypsilantians are too cool to applaud for



Linda French, owner of the "Sidetrack."

passing trains as they do at Ann Arbor's posh Gandy Dancer restaurant along those same tracks. "We pretend we don't notice," agree most locals. "Anyone clapping hysterically must be a tourist from Ann Arbor."

Shortly into French's long list of upgrades that included the kitchen, the Sidetrack was named by *GQ Magazine* to their "Top 20 Burgers in the Country" list, a claim of national recognition not previously enjoyed by Skid Row dives. "We've enjoyed such success down here," say today's Depot Towners, "that we are considering changing the name to "Skid Drive."

CENTRAL BAR: Before the Sidetrack incarnation, the tavern at 56 East Cross Street was called the Central Bar, named for the New York Central Railroad line that preceded Conrail/Amtrak. The Pennsylvania Railroad took over the line briefly and became "Penn Central", but the bar patrons didn't follow railroad finance too carefully. No one seemed to notice the change. This tavern was just "The Central" for its denizens who were lined up to get in at 7:00 a.m. "Smokey" was the owner/bartender then and he and his wife still stop by to follow the upscale changes in their old joint.

Betty Wood, who passed away just a year ago, was a part-time bartender at The *continued on page 16*



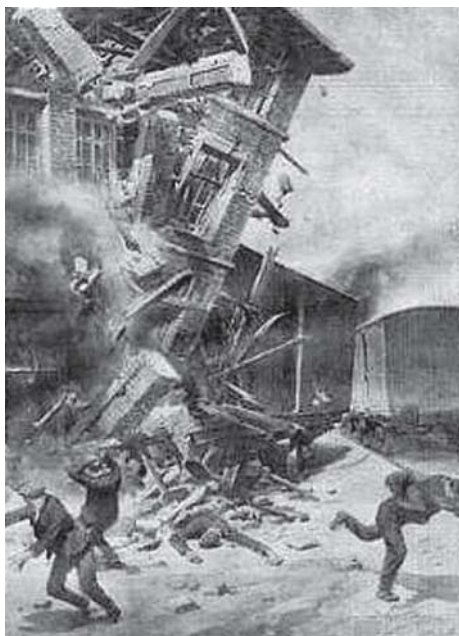
Old photo showing oblique angle of east end of "Masonic Block."

Sidetrack Bar and Grill - *continued from page 15*

Central and many remember her mellow contralto voice that belted out sentimental songs from behind the bar. When the Fraternal Order of Eagles moved from Depot Town to their new digs in Ypsilanti Township, Wood moved her talents there, but said the neighborhood at the depot was still her “home base.”

CHRISTO’S BAR: The Christo family owned the bar in 1949 and photos of those enthusiastic Greeks are featured on today’s menu. “Some people return here from that time and cry when they see their pictures,” says French. Sentimental stories flow easily with an afternoon beer and burger. Some things never change.

MAX’S: Tales still circulate about the colorful days of Max’s, an old-time railroad tavern whose name reaches into the nineteenth century. It was a popular place for railroad workers who often sipped Peppermint Schnapps, hoping to convince their railroad bosses that they had just stopped



Wreck as art: *Depot Town’s 1926 train wreck made international news in an artist’s conception, in a Milan, Italy newspaper. Without cameras on the scene for that early morning event, the artist took some liberties to describe the catastrophe. No injuries were reported in either Milan or Ypsilanti papers!*



Old photo showing end of “Sidetrack” after train wreck.

in to brush their teeth and gargle.

BLUE LAWS MOVE THE FRONT DOOR: “I think this would be a good time for a beer,” said President Roosevelt when hearing of the repeal of Prohibition. On December 5th, 1933, the requisite two-thirds of states ratified the 21st amendment, marking the end of Prohibition nationwide. The state of Michigan then instituted specific controls for the sale and consumption of alcohol. That’s when this bar started using what is today’s front door on Cross Street. “The earlier front door was on River Street,” says French, “but that was inside the Five-Hundred-Feet-From-A-Church Rule, so they moved the entry to comply with the law.”

In later years, when French developed the back door and patios around the east and south sides of her retro-railroad tavern, the distance was no longer a problem. “The church burned down just before that,” she explains, “...and I was away on vacation at the time!”

THE GREAT TRAIN WRECK: Stories proliferate about what happened to the building on the corner when it was hit by a derailed train in 1926. The first of two spectacular train wrecks in Ypsi left the community with stories to tell for the next hundred years. Old post cards show how the front façade of the eastern-most

end of the “Masonic Block” was built at an oblique angle from the rest of the storefronts that now stretch from the Sidetrack to Ninde Street. The original building adjusted to the railroad right-of-way when the line was extended to Ann Arbor and The Western Frontier.

“Ypsilantians are too cool to applaud for passing trains as they do at Ann Arbor’s posh Gandy Dancer restaurant along those same tracks. “We pretend we don’t notice,” agree most locals. “Anyone clapping hysterically must be a tourist from Ann Arbor.”

According to a 1926 edition of the *Ypsilanti Commercial*: “Eastbound train jumps tracks and demolishes the three-cornered Candy Store building next to the beer garden.” This, the first major railroad accident recorded at Ypsilanti, occurred before business hours one morning some time between October and December. A second train wreck, in 1939, took down much of what was left of the MCRR depot across the street.

When French’s crew was installing the fence around their first patio, they solved

yet another neighborhood mystery. "When they cleaned up after the train wreck, they just dumped the whole wrecked building debris into the basement," she exclaims. "We had a terrible time digging the foundation for our fence." And French had an even more terrible time trying to prove who owned the property that was once part of her building, destroyed, and then part of a bankrupt railroad. Today, it's just a pleasant *al fresco* dining space.

"GOOD OLD DAYS" RUMORS UNFOUNDED: Older patrons say they can remember a small elevator at the rear of the original bar that took patrons upstairs for "special favors of gambling and prostitution," but recent remodeling has shown no evidence to substantiate such an innovation. Neither has remodeling uncovered evidence of second and third floor hallways that "stretched the length of the block" when the block was "a hotel." Recent restoration projects show all the second floors in the Masonic Block had apartments with

stairways to the shops below. Masonry firewalls completely separate three sections of the block-long building without penetration. The third floor at the far end of the block was the original Masonic Temple. Sidetrack's second and third floors held high-ceilinged apartments that face both River and Cross Streets. Exterior walls above the northeast patio show the plaster, wallpaper, and stair rails of the wrecked Candy Store from 1926.

FRENCHIE'S JOINS THE RETRO MIX: In 2001, Linda French added Frenchie's at 58 East Cross, another front-to-back bar with tables and booths to be served by the remodeled and enlarged kitchen - a new space catering to private parties and meetings. "There was a doorway we never used that was covered up by the wrap-around of the earlier Depot Exchange antique store," she says. "When we got it open, we were surprised to find another stairway to the upstairs apartments, and a 1890s Brunswick pool



Interior view of the "Sidetrack."

table turned on its side for storage."

LINDA'S BIG BUST: Such tales add to the mythical quality of a traditional railroad saloon. There are plenty of memories like French's testimony of The Big Bust in her first days at the Sidetrack: "There was a real police raid one night," she remembers. "The cops had a report about an illegal gun possession and raided the place. They checked all the customers' IDs and found they had a warrant for everyone in the place - except the bartender, Steve Gross, and me!" They cleaned the place out; it was part of a great new tradition down at the depot.

Things are quieter - but busy - at today's Sidetrack Bar & Grill. A business-suited executive chats quietly on his cell phone near the fireplace and a gang of Red Hat Ladies vies for the table at the front window. They may be sanitized, but they have stories to tell too. ■

*"A guy walks into a bar and says,
"What the heck happened to this place?"*



Current view of the "Sidetrack" showing patio areas.

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Stark Funeral Service/ Moore Memorial Chapel

108 Years in Ypsilanti

Jay E. Moore was born in 1865 when the country was still embroiled in the Civil War. In 1897 when Mr. Moore was 33 he opened a furniture store at 14 South Washington and the following year added "undertaking" to the services he provided. Two years later he purchased a store from D. C. Bachelor and moved this operation to 22 North Washington Street. During this time embalming was done in the home and funerals were held either in homes or churches. Moore's business flourished, partly due to his reputation as "an undertaker." During these years Moore often rented a funeral coach and four horses from local livery stable owner William Schaffer. Schaffer's son Lynn and Moore soon became an established team in helping local families with funeral arrangements.

"Stark's community involvement and his standing in the profession assisted the organization in becoming the foremost funeral service in eastern Washtenaw County."

Lynn Schaffer married Mr. Moore's niece, Madeline, and joined him in business in 1916 and was made a full partner in 1919. Lynn later became manager of Moore's firm. In 1930 the business had become too large to fit under one roof and Moore purchased the former St. Luke's Episcopal Church rectory at the corner of Washington and Ferris streets which had been previously owned by J. H. Wortley. He built an addition, remodeled the house for a funeral home, and the business was renamed the J. E. Moore Home for Funerals.

Mr. Moore was a leader in the community, was well-liked, and had a reputation for being honest and compassionate. He was active in both the furniture and funeral operations until the time of his death in 1952 at age 88. After Mr. Moore's death the furniture business at 22 North Washington Street was discontinued. Lynn and Madeline Schaffer lived on the premises until Moore's death, inherited the business and property, and continued to operate the funeral home in the Moore tradition.

In late 1955, after Lynn Schaffer suffered a heart attack, he called in his three best funeral directors, Richard M. Wagner, William F. Jording and Paul Block, and told them they would inherit the business in equal shares upon his death. Lynn Schaffer died in 1956, and three weeks later, his widow Madeline, died in her sleep. Wagner had become a member of




Jay E. Moore.



Lynn Schaffer.

the Moore Memorial Chapel staff in 1947 while attending Ypsilanti High School and served as an apprentice while earning his degree in Mortuary Science from Wayne State University. Wagner became licensed in 1951 and served as staff director until 1956 when he became owner.

Six months after Schaffer's death, Block sold his interest in what was then called the Moore Funeral Home, Inc., to Wagner and Jording, who carried on the business for the next seven years. In 1963, Jording ended his ownership and Wagner agreed to share full partnership with a local resident and experienced funeral director, Leonard K. Stark. Stark was born during the depression and was raised on a southeastern Michigan farm. He attended Thorne School and Roosevelt High School in Ypsilanti. High school tests revealed Stark's strong interest in three careers: doctor, clergyman, and funeral director. With encouragement from his uncle, a funeral director, Stark worked his way through college and completed three years as a premedical chemistry major at Eastern Michigan University. He then transferred to Wayne



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Richard M. Wagner in the 1950s.

1898 - Jay E. Moore was in the furniture business as well as the funeral business.

State University where he received his degree in Mortuary Science in 1955. In 1950 Stark served an apprenticeship at the Geer Funeral Home in Ypsilanti, and was employed by the Stevens and Bush Funeral Home on North Hamilton Street from 1957 to 1963 when he joined Richard Wagner as a partner.

In the next twenty years Stark and Wagner worked together to improve the firm. The building was remodeled in 1964, and six years later a major addition more than doubled the facilities. The name was changed to reflect current ownership yet maintain the Moore tradition. Starting in 1978 Leonard Stark shared ownership in Michigan funeral homes in Milan, Tecumseh, Clinton, Britton, Deerfield and Petersburg. Wagner retired as a partner in 1983. In 1986 the firm's name was changed to Stark Funeral Service Moore Memorial Chapel, Inc.

Stark's community involvement and his standing in the profession assisted the organization in becoming the foremost funeral service in eastern Washtenaw County. In 1963 the firm took care of 23 percent of funeral arrangements in the area; in 1998 it took care of more than 85 percent. Leonard Stark always preferred to play down his extensive involvement, contributions, and honors from community groups, charities, and professional organizations. Nevertheless, he served as chairman or president of 17 community organizations and participated in many more. In 1967 Stark Funeral Service was invited to join the 950 firms in 14 countries that belonged to the National Selected Morticians.

During those years Stark's young sons literally grew up in the business. Both independently followed similar paths and entered the business. Rodney K Stark, born in 1953, went to Ypsilanti High School, Eastern Michigan University, and Wayne State University, graduating in mortuary science in 1978.

Bradley W. Stark, the youngest of the four Stark children, was born in 1959, attended Ypsilanti High School and Washtenaw Community College, and graduated with a degree in mortuary science from Wayne State University in 1982. Brad has been employed with the firm since 1977, when he was still a student at Ypsilanti High School.

Both sons, Brad and Rodney, partnered with their father until Len retired in 1989. Ed and Mary Ochalek, who were partnered with the Starks in the Ochalek-Stark Funeral Service in Milan, became partners in Ypsilanti as well following Len's Retirement. Rodney Starks retired as a partner in 1993 and is currently practicing the art of mortuary science in New Hampshire. Brad Stark and Ed and Mary Ochalek currently own and operate both the Stark Funeral Service Moore Memorial Chapel in Ypsilanti and the Ochalek-Stark Funeral Service in Milan. ■

(Note: Much of the information in this article is from "Washtenaw County – an Illustrated History" which was written by Ruth Bordin in 1988. Other information is from newspaper articles and material provided by Brad Stark.)



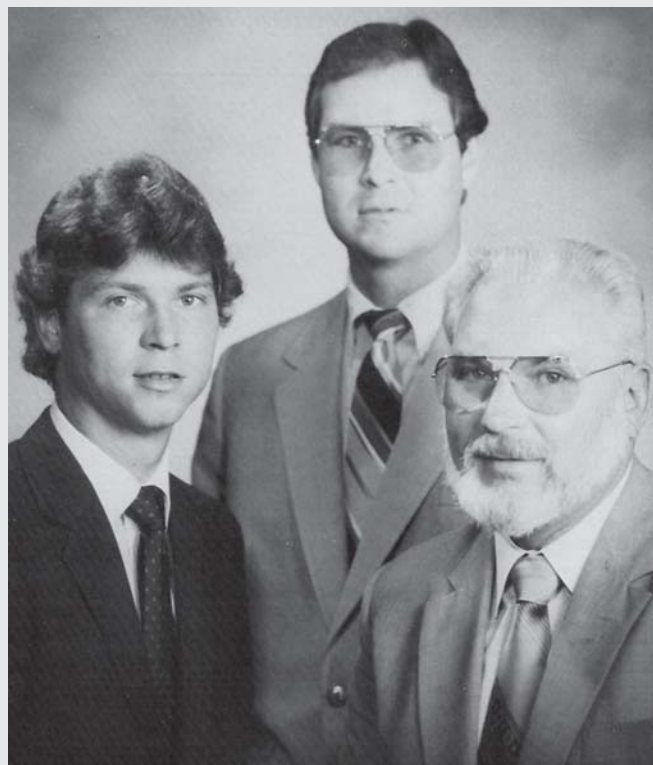
*(left to right) Bradley W. Stark,
Mary M. Ochalek and Edward S. Ochalek.*

Heritage of a Name

*J.E. Moore and Company - 1898-1930
J.E. Moore Home for Funerals - 1930-1956
Moore Funeral Home, Inc. - 1956-1970
Wagner-Stark/Moore Memorial Chapel, Inc. - 1970-1986
Stark Funeral Service/Moore Memorial Chapel, Inc. - 1986-2006*



The business has had five different names since it was established in 1898.



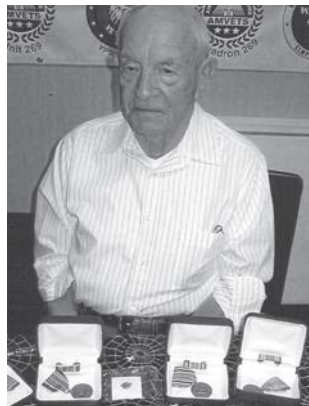
The Stark family (left to right: Bradley, Rodney and Leonard) has held ownership in the business since 1963.

Veterans History Project

By Bill Vollano

The U.S. Congress established the Veterans History Project in October of 2002. The project relies on volunteers to collect and preserve stories of wartime service. **The primary focus is on first-hand accounts of U.S. Veterans from the following 20th Century wars:** World War I (1914-1920), World War II (1939-1946), Korean War (1950-1955), Vietnam War (1961-1975), Persian Gulf War (1990-1995) and the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts (2001-present). In addition, those U.S. citizen civilians who were actively involved in supporting war efforts (such as war industry workers, USO workers, flight instructors, medical volunteers, etc.) are also invited to share their valuable stories. All histories become a part of the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress. Here are excerpts from the stories of three local veterans.

Gene Johnson: When The War broke out, Seaman Gene Johnson was on the USS West Virginia at Pearl Harbor. He describes a very hectic day, including his escape off the sinking West Virginia. After the smoke cleared, Gene volunteered to go aboard the USS Lexington, which was sunk during a battle in the Coral Sea. Having survived two sinkings, Gene was then transferred to be a part of the landing force at North Africa. Unfortunately, his ship was torpedoed and left "dead in the water". After two sinkings and one near sinking, Gene was transferred to the Transportation division where he remained and served throughout North Africa and Italy.



Leonard Schmidt: Luck was also with Leonard Schmidt of Ypsilanti. Leonard was a paratrooper and was involved in many major battles in Europe. He felt he had a guardian angel with him. Once during an attack on his machine gun position, he turned to get some ammo. His partner was shot and died immediately. If he hadn't turned, he would have been killed. In Holland, he was the middle man in a



three-man rifle group. The men on each side of him were shot and killed. During the Battle of the Bulge, Leonard was severely wounded. The surgeon at the evacuation hospital decided that the only way to save Leonard was to cut off his leg. An aide at the hospital was a classmate of Leonard's in High school. The aide pleaded with the surgeon to try to save Leonard's leg. It took nearly a year of hospitalizations but he still has his leg. "Weather gets to it, but I still have it." Leonard has never seen or made contact with that classmate since.

Charlie Krieger: Charlie Krieger, another Ypsilanti resident, tells the story of his first jump which turned out to be more exciting than he had anticipated. Charlie was a gunner on an H17. They were shot up pretty badly. The pilot directed everyone to jump. Charlie remembered that he was told not to pull the parachute cord until he was about 10,000 feet or else the lack of oxygen could kill him. When he figured it was safe, he pulled the cord, but nothing happened. He didn't panic because, "they told me that if it didn't work, I could return the chute for a new one". He tried several things and finally got the chute to open, but he ended up in a tree about 15 feet off of the ground. When he released the chute and fell to the ground, German farmers were waiting for him with pitch forks. He was then carried off to prison.



Not all the stories are this dramatic, but all are important to preserve. Locally, the Ypsilanti Rotary Club got involved in 2004 at the invitation of the History Department of Eastern Michigan University. Shortly after, the Ypsilanti District Library joined the effort as a partner. It was at this time that the Rotary Club developed a proposal that the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation funded. That original grant, plus a grant from the Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries, and support from the Foundation for American Veterans, enabled the Rotary to use its limited funds to purchase supplies and needed equipment for this project. None of the funds were used to pay any individual for his or her time or expenses. All funds were used to buy equipment that continues to be used in the Veteran's History Project.

Although all veterans are being interviewed, the focus now is on WWII veterans because of the nearly 17 million who served, only 4 million are still alive and are dying at a rate of 1,000 per day.

Just as important to this project are the individuals who are willing to give of their time to interview these veterans. Rotary will train interviewers and provide them with the supplies and equipment for recording histories. Any person interested in learning more about the project can contact Bill Vollano via email at wmjv@sbcglobal.net or by telephone at 734-973-2536. ■

News from the Fletcher-White Archives

By Gerry Pety

As the summer of 2006 approaches I have two interns, one from Eastern Michigan and one from Emory University in Georgia. Both are in history and/or preservation studies with their respective schools. This summer, it is hoped, will be a learning experience for all of us at the Archives in addition to getting organized for the summer rush of researchers from all over America and Canada. I am glad to have these two students as we really have needed the extra brains and hands to accomplish what we need to do.

Maxe Obermeyer has been cleaning out his closets and has given us a panoply of really cool items that we did not have. Maxe donated an inaugural pamphlet from the Heritage Festival. Also included in the many items he donated were some great photo postcards of buildings that once graced the MSN campus at the turn of the century. Maxe, if you are reading this, you can't have any of it back!

Mr. Gary Stewart has given us some very interesting artifacts relating to the 1923 Ypsilanti Centennial, namely some glass drink coasters in blue and purple and some yearbooks from Michigan State Normal. Thank You!

Sorry about the lateness of our maps that were to be printed by now, but we are really trying to get these done in the most professional fashion we can and Ms. Rossina Tammany, of EMU's Archives, has done some wonderful work cleaning up the map scans. I finally have these scans and it is now with John Harrington at Standard Printing. John, a member of YHS, has been helping us in the technical aspects of the project and his company will be producing the smaller version of the map. Thanks John!

Again, I am asking our members if they have any pre-1930 Ypsilanti phone books and/or city directories. These are of extreme importance as they contain information about the people of Ypsilanti; where they lived, worked, and where they did their day to day business. I have heard real horror stories about people just discarding these important resources. If you have any such items please contact me, Gerry Pety at 572 0437 as we could really use these resources.

So put on your "bestest" sneakers and come on down! ■

Report from the Museum Advisory Board

By Virginia Davis-Brown

The year is going by so fast it is hard to believe that it is already half over. Our Art Show was certainly a success with over 100 pieces of art on exhibit. There were oils, acrylics, water colors and even some combinations by artist from Ypsilanti and the surrounding areas. The Historical Society said "Thank You" to our docents, for all their devoted service, with a luncheon in June. There were 31 in attendance and some with over 20 years service.

July 16 will be the Open House for the 2006 "Lost Ypsilanti Speaks" exhibit with 18 new sites. If you missed our exhibit last year you will still be able to see it, as it will also be on display on the second floor. That will make a total of 34 sites of the past and present. It is a history of the site, what it was and what it is today.

When you visit the next time you will see that the museum looks brighter and a number of changes have been made. We have just finished doing our deep cleaning. The chandeliers sparkle and the furniture shines.



It seems August is a long way off but it will be here before we know it and so will the Heritage Festival. We will be in need of extra docents for the 3 days. It will take 60 docents to take care of the hours we are open. If you could volunteer for 3 hours we will provide the information that you would need. If you can help, please call me at 484-0080. It is your Museum so why not come and help out and see what fun it can be.

Plans are in the beginning stages for the Quilt Exhibit which will start the last of September. Last year we had 125 quilts and anticipate about the same this year. If you have any quilts you would like to display please call me so we can get the information to you. They do not have to be old ones they can be new.

Our tour count has been up this year. In the last few days of school we had over 400 people come through. Here are our dates for future events: July 16 - Lost Ypsilanti Speaks; August 18, 19 & 20 - Heritage Festival; September 28 - Quilt Exhibit.

Thank you for your continuing support. ■

The Ypsilanti High School Girls Drum & Bugle Corps 1935-1975 - *continued from page 7*

On May 12, 1948, the girls rode by Greyhound bus to Chicago to participate in the Phythian Regional Rally. All Knights of Phythias Lodges in Michigan, Kentucky, Ohio and Ontario were represented. The Corps was now composed of 39 members had been a marching and maneuvering favorite from its beginning in 1935. The girls learned the Highland Fling and exhibited its intricate dance steps several times to the wild applause of viewers. Four bagpipes were purchased for the Corps to add authenticity to the unique and colorful group. Plans for new uniforms were underway, but samples from England and Canada had yet to be selected. Marlene Moffett (Britton) was one of the graduates this year.

In the fall of 1949, the DBC led the "shortest parade in history" to announce Fire Prevention Week. The procession consisted of the DBC, 2 Fire trucks, and the Ypsilanti High School Boys Band. By March of 1950, the Drum & Bugle Corps new uniform campaign was in full swing. Sponsors pledged included the Junior Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis Club, Jimmy Hunt Dance Studio, Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Ypsilanti Teachers Club, J. LaRue and Lawrence Arnet, JCC's Auxiliary, Estabrook School PTA, and O. A. Hankinson. At the March meeting of American Legion Post 282, the Legion offered to pay for the remaining 13 uniforms.

The Lions Club invited the DBC to an expense-paid three day trip to Chicago beginning on April 16, to be a prominent part of their International Convention. Chartered buses were provided by Ford Motor Company.

In 1950, the beautiful, long-awaited kiltie uniforms with "RED" jackets arrived from Scotland through Canada. Their first sparkling appearance was September 15, at the first home football game for YHS. Don Gridley of Hiawatha Card Company in Ypsilanti had Moyer Studios assemble the Corps in front of the Washtenaw Country Club to take a color picture for a new postcard, to be produced for stores and businesses in the area.

The Corps was hosted during the year by the Kaiser-Frazer Corporation, the Kiwanis Club and the D.A.R., and participated in the E.M.U. homecoming parade and other Ypsilanti parades. They were featured at the Holland Tulip Festival in May, traveling in courtesy cars donated by Kaiser-Frazer. In January of 1951, the DBC surprised the Ypsilanti School Board by giving a \$1,120 check in payment of loans to the uniform fund. This money was raised from the efforts of Student Council at car washes, bake sales, dime dances and other special events.

On July 28, a farewell party was held for Director George Cavender who accepted a position at the University of Michigan. His new duties consisted of conducting the UofM world famous marching band and
continued on page 23



1948 - The Corps in the Scotch kilt uniforms with white jackets.



2006 - Ypsilanti Automotive Events

June 8 - September 14:
Depot Town Cruise Nights
(Thursday Evenings)
Depot Town, Ypsilanti

June 30 & July 1 & 2:
Michigan Camero Fest
Riverside Park, Ypsilanti

July 8:
Autorama (part of ElvisFest)
Riverside Park, Ypsilanti

July 14:
Rolling Sculpture Car Show
Main Street, Ann Arbor

August 19-20:
Car Show - Ypsi Heritage Fes.
Ypsilanti, Michigan

August 18-20:
'65 Mustang Raffle
Benefits Auto Museum

August 26:
Antique Fire Truck Muster
Riverside Park, Ypsilanti

October 7:
Antique Truck Society Meet
Riverside Park, Ypsilanti

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the Symphony and Varsity Bands, as well as teaching in the music department. The Girls Drum & Bugle Corps won State honors and national recognition during the five years he was Director.

The April highlight in 1953 was at Metro Airport, when the YHS Girls Drum & Bugle Corps, "The Pride of Ypsilanti," was invited to greet President Richard M. Nixon and Senator Homer Ferguson upon their arrival in Michigan. Among the graduating seniors this year was Ada Minges Kisor.

In 1954, Miss Martha Wolter was honored for her 21 years as secretary to the Superintendent of Schools and Board of Education. She had begun her duties in 1931 after graduation from Ypsilanti High School. When the Girls Drum and Bugle Corps was formed in 1935, she became the 1st drum majorette, and was the leader until 1947 when she relinquished her ostrich feather bonnet to a student. She continued as advisor, leading booster and counselor. Martha was best described as "having the complete faith, friendship and admiration of everyone who knew her."

The DBC led the Annual Christmas Religious Parade while forming a CHRISTMAS TREE and playing "Oh Christmas Tree" and formed a CHURCH while playing "O Come All Ye Faithful" while they were marching.

The girls practiced each morning at 8:00 am and each evening at Frog Island to perfect their skills, formations and precision marching. They skillfully danced the Highland Fling and Sword Dance at homecoming to thrill the Ypsilanti crowds. Each girl took pride as a member of this exclusive group, and it was always sad at the end of a year to say goodbye to members. Karen Benson (Nickels) was a graduate in 1957.

Allan Townsend, a former trombonist with Big Bands of the 40s, was the new Director of the Corps in 1958 and Miss Martha Wolter became the bride of J. Walter Daschner. In 1960 identical twins, Sandra and Susan Palmer were the first second generation members to march in the Drum & Bugle Corps. Their mother,

Vera Beck Palmer, was a member from 1938-41.

March 21, 1961, marked the 25th Anniversary of the Drum & Bugle Corps. As the Corps celebrated its birthday, fellow Ypsilantians believed it was one of the unique all-girl organizations in the entire country. It was said that the Scottish Plaid Uniforms were as much a trademark of Ypsi as the Water Tower. Other communities have had girl bands, but none achieved the prestige of the Ypsilanti group. Professor John Barnhill saw that the group contained only the best, and belonging was one of the highest honors attainable to YHS girls. The rules were strict and the Corps marched only with full ranks and spotless uniforms. Girls had to maintain a B- average, exhibit quality leadership and good citizenship. With these regulations, the city sent the Corps anywhere and knew each member would conduct herself so as to reflect honor to the city and the school she represented. The original Corps in 1935 had 32 members and, after 25 years, the 41 members continued to be a great public relations instrument for the city of Ypsilanti.

On October 5, 1962, at Briggs Field, American Legion Post 282 presented the Corps with a new 50-star flag for the color guards to display. This was one of countless times a civic organization had honored the Corps. In 1962 the DBC was chosen as guests at the U-M Army football game in Michigan Stadium, Michigan Week Festival-Sturgis, Hamtramck Christmas Parade, Holland Tulip Festival, and a spectacular Detroit Lions Halftime Show on National TV. Our daughter, Cheri, was a member of the Corps that time, and we were chaperones at the game. The Scottish lassies have paraded in city, state, and country celebrations to honor our city and school. To be a member of the DBC was the most prestigious honor given to Ypsi High girls.

In 1964 they appeared a 3rd time at a Lions football game on national TV, and drew loud applause and cheers when they danced the Highland Fling and Sword Dance. Again Roger and I were chaperones at the event and nearly froze in sub-

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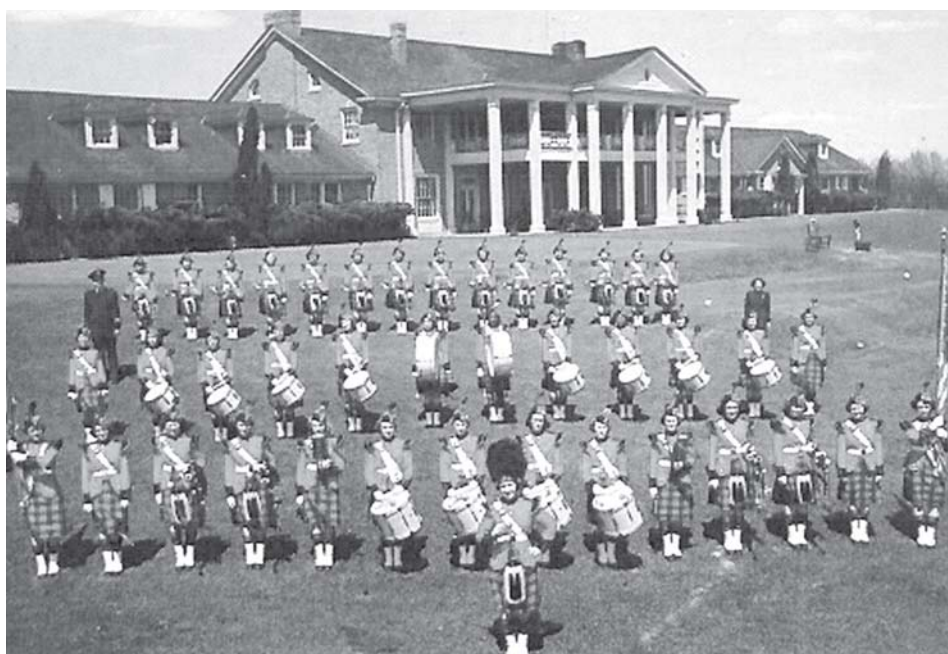
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The Ypsilanti High School Girls Drum & Bugle Corps 1935-1975 - *continued from page 23*

zero weather. The Memorial Day and July 4th parades closed the marching season for 1964.

Besides 1965 football, E.M.U. Homecoming, Kiwanis Charity Game, and the Wayne Fall Festival, the DBC marched in the Hudson Thanksgiving Day Parade in Detroit, on national TV, and Tulip Time in Holland in spring. Cheri was a '66 graduate.

They led all parades and festivals in 1967-68, and marched at Shadford Field football game half-time shows. A social event was a "Fun Night" with the YHS Band as guests, and a senior banquet and pajama party at the drum majorette's home. The colorful Corps traveled to Jackson to perform and went to Benton Harbor in 1968-69, along with their trip to the Holland Tulip Festival and all other parades in Ypsilanti and surrounding towns. The YHS Girls Drum & Bugle Corps, "The Pride of Ypsilanti" for 35 years, was nearly cut from the budget in 1971 when two millage requests failed. Because it was temporarily disbanded, the Corps did not march in the July 4th parade for the first time in the history of the acclaimed group. A second tragedy hit on July 25,



The Girls Drum & Bugle Corps on the lawn of the Washtenaw Country Club in 1950.

when beloved Martha Wolter Daschner, the first majorette, and long-time advisor to the Corps, was killed in an auto accident in Canada. The people in Ypsilanti and many former DBC Corps members were shocked and saddened by the news of Martha's untimely death and many attended her funeral.

By the fall of 1971, after strong protests from parents, local citizens, and Ypsilanti service organizations, the DBC was rein-

stated with the understanding that they would be a self-supporting group. Long time fans remembered the dazzling Scottish uniforms, polished brass buttons and sparkling white spats of the DBC Corps. Unfortunately, the glamorous uniforms of the past had now seen almost 25 years of wear.

Mrs. Barbara Weiss took over the leadership of the group and began to teach new songs and intricate formations. By February of 1972, a drive was underway to replace the rotting uniforms. Costs would be about \$12,000 since the Brodie Tartan outfits were imported from Scotland, and each uniform contained about 12 yards of cloth. The goal was to raise money and have new Scottish kilts by the fall of 1973 when the new Ypsilanti High School opened.

In mid-March, 19 new girls were welcomed into the Corps and began to practice instruments and learn to keep in step while marching. A spaghetti dinner and rummage sale raised \$500 for the new uniforms and \$1,000 was received from the estate of the late Martha Daschner. A Tag Day was held in the spring, and the DBC marched in Sturgis in the Michigan Week Parade. The girls won first place in the Detroit St. Patrick's Parade in March and performed at a Scottish festival at Alma College in May. Charlene Britton was a graduating senior at YHS.

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1960 - Vera Beck (Palmer) with twin daughters Sandra and Susan.



This merged photo shows Dorothy Rice (Norton), as she looked in 1942, with her daughter Cindy as she looked in 1966.

Passport to History

Consortium Program
Encourages Visits to Area
Historical Attractions

By Patricia Majher, Special Writer

How do you encourage people to appreciate all the different historical attractions in the county? If you're the Washtenaw County Historical Consortium, you take a page out of the airlines' book and develop your own "frequent flyer" program.

Called "Passport to History," the consortium's program rewards individuals who visit at least a dozen of its 30 sites—including museums, historic buildings, and libraries—with a small

gift. "Those who visit 15 sites will additionally be entered in a special drawing for a \$50 gift certificate redeemable at any of our gift shops," explained Louisa Pieper, consortium spokesperson.

Getting a passport is a cinch; you can pick one up at any consortium site starting on June 15. At that visit, you will also receive a combination map/brochure describing the participating institutions.

"Getting a passport is a cinch; you can pick one up at any consortium site starting on June 15."

The passport contains lines to be signed and dated by a tour guide or desk staff sometime between July 1, 2006 and July

2, 2007. Passports must contain 12 signatures to be eligible for a prize. Any passport with 15 signatures will be eligible for the gift certificate drawing to be held July 8, 2007 at Parker Mill County Park during the Huron River Day celebration. "We will draw three names at that time," noted Pieper. "Winners need not be present to claim a prize."

There is no age limit for participating in the Passport to History program. In fact, says, Pieper, "Teachers and parents are encouraged to use this program to help educate children of all ages about our county's rich heritage and wide variety of historical resources."

(Note: If you would like more information about this program or would like to pick up a "passport" stop by the Ypsilanti Historical Museum or any other participating site.) ■

The Ypsilanti High School Girls Drum & Bugle Corps 1935-1975 - continued from page 24

In 1972, Christine Edmunds was selected as Drum Majorette. Mrs. Nan O'Hara announced in March that \$10,000 was raised and the new uniforms were to arrive by the Sesquicentennial Celebration in July. The generosity of Ypsilanti townspeople and civic organizations was greatly appreciated and three organizations designated "golden patrons," pledged \$1,000 each for the purchase of five complete uniforms.

In 1973 my niece, Lauri Hopp served as Assistant Majorette. The DBC continued to dazzle crowds in the new uniforms, leading all Ypsilanti and EMU parades. Since the Corps was still self-supporting, it had several ongoing money-making projects. Tag Day, spaghetti dinners and car washes were held to raise money for out-of-town trips.

The Drum & Bugle Corps Scottish lassies thrilled crowds as they danced the Highland Fling and Sword Dance at YHS and

EMU Homecoming and Band Days. A citrus fruit sale helped defray costs of flags for the additional flag corps, new uniforms, instrument repair and other expenses. The Drum & Bugle Corps entered the Great Lakes Drum Corps Association in the spring, and it was the first time the 56-member Corps performed in the summer competition in the 40-year history of the DBC. Mrs. Barbara Weiss said they practiced many hours to master the unique marching style described as a glide step. "Nothing moves from the waist up, at least that is the theory," she stated.

Brenda Kisor was selected as new Majorette in 1976. Again the DBC led the Ypsilanti and surrounding area parades. Sadly 1977-78 was the last year "The Pride of Ypsilanti" marched and performed as the Ypsilanti High School Girls Drum & Bugle Corps. Class sizes had increased and more competition developed between sports, band and the "Golden Garrison International Drum Corps Group" in which both girls and boys were eligible. There was pressure on the girls in the Drum & Bugle Corps as some compared it to a sorority, which was illegal in high school.

The Girls Drum and Bugle Corps was not an elective, but a type of Honor Society where girls were chosen on the basis of scholarship, leadership, attractiveness and service to school. Only 15-20 girls were chosen each year to replace graduating seniors, and the number was small compared to the hundreds of students now in each class. Also, the Corps was self-supporting and transportation costs increased as well as the costs for upkeep of uniforms, supplies, and maintenance of instruments.

After 43 glorious years as "The Pride of Ypsilanti," the DBC Highland Lassies disbanded. As the only all-girl drum and bugle corps in the state, or perhaps in the country, it became famous for the many years it thrilled home and away crowds. As flags passed and our Scottish Corps marched by in perfect precision, it brought tears to the eyes and lumps to the throats of Ypsilanti townspeople, and especially former members of the Corps. In 1979, a proud Ypsilanti tradition ended, but to those of us who remember it well, the Ypsilanti High School Girls Drum & Bugle Corps will live on in our hearts forever! ■

Ypsilanti, Basketball's Gateway to the West - *continued from page 3*

vented fans in the balcony from interfering with the game. Before, fans could help direct a ball into the basket for their team or deflect a ball away for the opposition. Once backboards were installed, players started using the backboard to bank balls into the goal. By 1909 glass backboards were developed so that those seated behind a goal could still follow the action. The early years of basketball also saw the court

"The original thirteen rules for basketball were formalized in 1892. The game borrowed from lacrosse, rugby football, "duck on the rock," and soccer."

surrounded by wire cages. There are several accounts as to why this was done. Because basketball was often played on dance floors and in social halls, wire cages were placed around the court to protect spectators. Another account indicates that the wire cages prevented spectators from throwing objects onto the playing area. A third version indicates that a wire cage allowed the game to be played continuously by preventing the ball from going out of bounds. Whatever the reason, to this day basketball players are still referred to as "cagers" (Twombly, p.115). One historian notes that players were very glad when the wire cages were removed. Players received many scrapes and cuts from these wire enclosures.

The Ypsilanti Connection

In a 1980 interview Ruth Boughner, a professor at Eastern Michigan Normal College from 1920 to 1952, recalled Wilber Bowen's accounts of James Naismith's visit. As mentioned above, Naismith originated the game of basketball in 1891. Until 1894 the game had been played primarily on the East Coast. The popularity of basketball grew rapidly

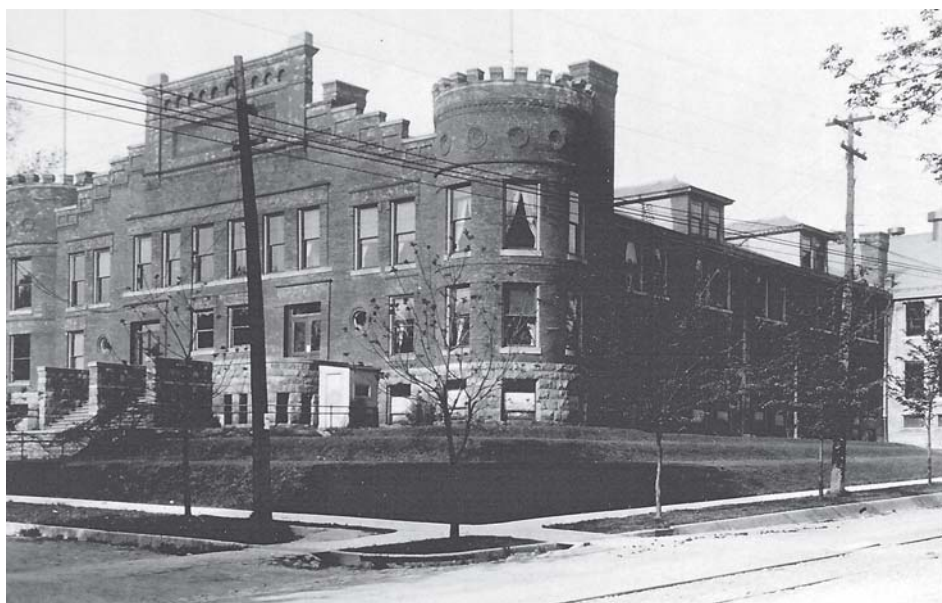


Figure 6 - M.S.N.C. Physical Education Building.

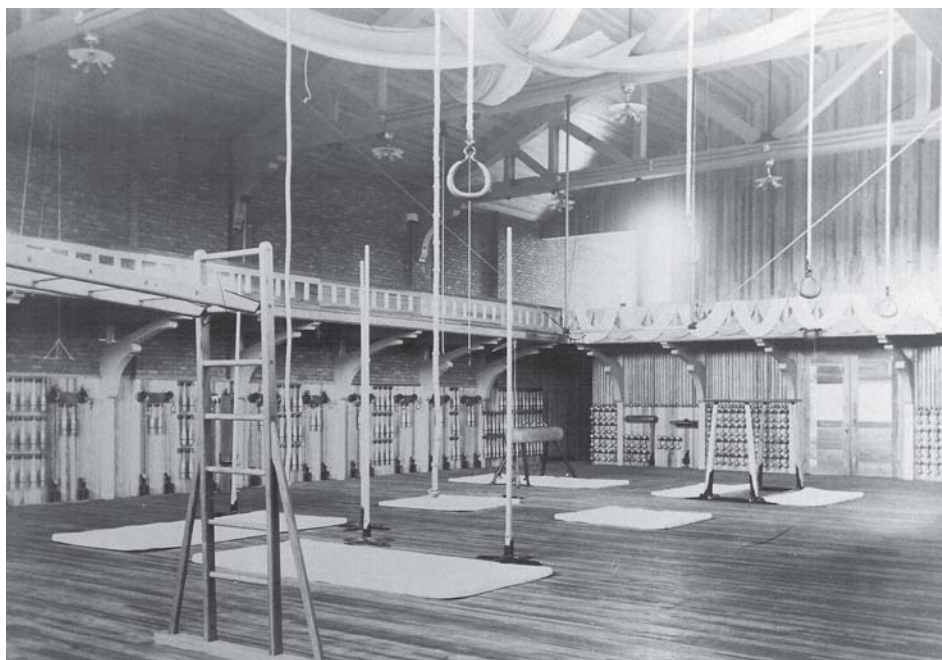


Figure 7 - New gymnasium with dedication banners.

in the east and Naismith was looking for ways to introduce basketball to other areas of the country. He thought a tour of several Mid-West states would be an effective way to do this.

In 1894 the Michigan State Normal College in Ypsilanti had started a new major in physical education. Wilber Bowen was appointed chairman of that program. Bowen had met Naismith through their involvement with the American Association for the Advancement of Physical Education in the late

1880's and early 1890's. To meet the needs of a new major program the college had also completed construction of a new gymnasium in April of 1894. Bowen was looking for ideas to help with the dedication ceremony of the new gymnasium and recognition of the new major program. Consequently, arrangements were made to have the first basketball game played west of the Allegheny Mountains on May 18th, 1894 in Ypsilanti, Michigan.

The new gymnasium was located imme-



Figure 8. 1907 M.S.N.C women's basketball team.



Figure 9. Air pump from the 1890s.

diately east of the water tower between Cross Street and Michigan Avenue (See Figure 6). The gym was divided into two sections. The south side was used for women's classes while the north half was used by the men. It was in the north half that the demonstration took place. A photo of the new gymnasium with dedication banners at the end of the gym and the ceiling is presented in Figure 7. Notice that no basket had been set-up at the time of the dedication. Boughner mentioned that the game of basketball was so new to the area that baskets had not yet been installed. Basketball backboards and rims are a standard part of any gymnasium today. According to Boughner, Naismith continued his tour the following day with a demonstration in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

Where Naismith went from Mt. Pleasant is not known. We do know that basketball games and tournaments were held in cities and towns all the way to the West Coast as early as 1897 and in China by 1898 (Mechinkoff p.276). Some feel it reached other countries before some parts

of the United States. The Y.M.C.A Training School at Springfield was an international one, with students from all over the world. After completing their training, students would return home with the knowledge of how to play basketball (Web Site #2).

Women's Basketball

Growth of women's basketball closely paralleled that of the men's game. Versions of women's basketball rules were developed as early as 1892 to 1894. In 1892 Senda Berenson Abbott, a physical education instructor at Smith College in Northampton, Mass., introduced basketball to women at the school. Men's basketball was considered too physically demanding for women. Consequently Berenson made significant changes to the game. Modifications included the following changes: 1) The court was divided into three equal sections and players could not move from one section to another; 2) women were prohibited from snatching or batting the ball from other players' hands; and 3) limiting the number of players to not fewer than six or more than nine on a side (Swanson, p 176). It was felt that these rules developed teamwork and encouraged combination plays. A photo of the 1904 Eastern Michigan Normal College Women's Team is presented in Figure 8.

The Air Pump

One artifact, which has survived from the old Normal School Gymnasium, is an air pump once used by Wilber Bowen to inflate basketballs and footballs (See Figure 9). The method used for inflating a ball in the late 1800's and early 1900's was very different than the technique we use today. No air needles, needle holes in the ball, or air compressors were available then. Air bladders, inserted inside a leather cover, had an appendage similar to that of a balloon. To inflate a ball an individual had to either blow up the bladder or use an air pump such as the one shown in Figure 9. When using the air pump the appendage was slipped over (and secured) to the nose of the cone with one hand. The other hand gripped the pump handle and forced air into the bladder using a pumping motion. Once

the bladder was filled, the air tube (appendage) was rolled up and placed under a leather tongue and secured tightly with laces. This process is exactly the same as lacing up a shoe.

The Officials Uniform

Another contribution related to basketball with an Ypsilanti – Eastern Michigan Normal College connection is the standard officials uniform. In the summer 2005 issue of *Ypsilanti Gleanings*, mention was made of the Lloyd Olds innovation of the zebra striped shirt used by officials. The striped shirt was Olds' way of distinguishing officials from the players. That innovation is still being used by officials in basketball, football, soccer, and several other sports. ■

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