

# Ypsilanti GLEANINGS

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



SUMMER 2009

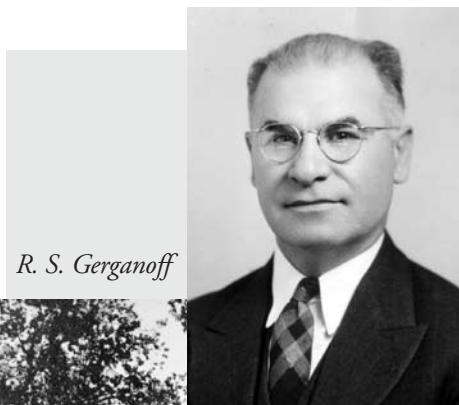
## R.S. Gerganoff: An Architect for the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

By Peg Porter

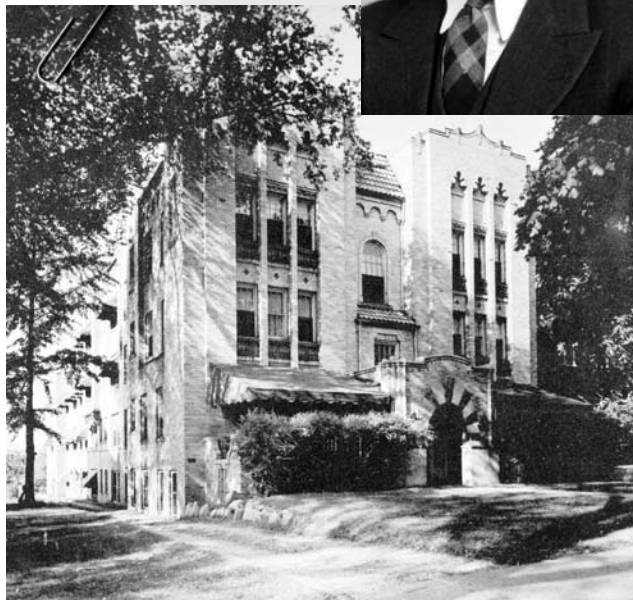
When Ralph S. Gerganoff (gerGANoff) died in 1966, The Ypsilanti Press editorialized that his passing was evidence that the "Horatio Alger Club" was shrinking. His life was the stuff of Horatio Alger's stories, young men starting life with nothing and through hard work achieving wealth and respect.

He was born Rashko Stoyan Gerganoff January 19, 1887 in Kereka, Bulgaria. His father was a builder and self-taught architect. After he finished secondary school and became adept at cabinet making, he immigrated to the United States in October, 1905 with the proverbial five dollars in his pocket. After his arrival in Boston, he made his way to Madison, Illinois where a cousin lived. He worked for awhile as a cabinet maker in Illinois where he fixed his sights on studying architecture at the University of Michigan. However he did not have the required high school diploma nor was his English good enough to succeed in college. In 1907 he moved to Fredonia, New York where he earned his diploma and improved his English.

He enrolled at the University of Michigan in 1910, attending school part-time while working a number of jobs. In 1915 he was



R. S. Gerganoff



*Apartment Building at 809 Kingsley Avenue in Ann Arbor — note the Middle Eastern influence and the use of tile both for the roof and decorative accents. The building is on the National Register of Historic Places.*

a full-time student although he continued to support himself by waiting tables, repairing shoes and as an upholsterer. In 1917 he received a Bachelor's degree in architecture; three years later he passed the State Board examination. Another significant event oc-

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# From the President's Desk

*By Alvin E. Rudisill*

This has been a busy season with plans underway to expand and resurface the parking lot and conduct a fundraising effort to cover the costs. We are waiting final approval from the City of Ypsilanti for the engineering plans and expect the project to be completed later this month. Our fundraising effort has been very successful to date with over \$17,000 in donations from members and friends of the YHS Museum and Archives.

Our sincere thanks to Karen and Bill Nickels for hosting our annual yard sale and to the many volunteers, who moved items to the site, priced and displayed the items, and assisted on sale day. Also, our sincere thanks to Larry Doe for the use of the 20 x 30 foot tent used to display some of the larger items in the sale. I am pleased to report that we had sales of over \$5,000 which includes income from some office furniture items that were donated and sold prior to the yard sale. The Nickels have agreed to host the sale again next year and we plan to collect and store items throughout the year to include in the next sale. If, at any time during the year, you have items to donate please give me a call at 734-476-6658 and we will arrange to pick them up.

We are expanding our "on-line" programming and hope you will visit our web site and review some of new programs available. First, we have posted a program titled "His-

torical Highlights of Ypsilanti, Michigan" which covers highlights of our history back to the early French Claims. The second program that is under development is "Historical Markers and Statues" of Ypsilanti. This program, when completed, will include stories and pictures of the many markers and statues that have been placed throughout our city. The third "on-line" program that has been added is a "blog" by Laura Bien which highlights items related to the history of Ypsilanti and allows for comments by viewers. Thanks to Laura for initiating this on-line activity. Other programs under consideration are "The Highland Cemetery" and "Architectural Highlights of Ypsilanti."

Make sure you visit the Museum between July 19 and September 7 to visit the Lost Ypsilanti Exhibit. This year the exhibit will focus on the influence that Henry Ford had on the Ypsilanti area.

We are always looking for volunteers as docents for the Museum or research assistants for the Archives. Both the Museum and Archives are open from 2:00 to 5:00 pm from Tuesday through Sunday. If you are available during that time and are interested in helping us preserve the historical information and artifacts of the area, or educating the general public about our history, please give me a call at 734-476-6658. ■



## Ypsilanti Historical Society

220 North Huron Street - Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Home  
Administrative  
Archives  
Collections  
Contact Info  
Donations  
Event Schedule  
Membership  
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**Welcome:** The Ypsilanti Historical Museum is a museum of local history which is presented as an 1860 home. The Museum and Fletcher-White Archives are organized and operated by the Ypsilanti Historical Society. We are all volunteers and our membership is open to everyone, including non-city residents.

**A Matter of Trust:** The Ypsilanti Historical Society has initiated a five-year campaign to raise \$400,000. This amount will cover the cost of purchasing the property the City and completing the many deferred maintenance projects on the buildings and grounds. You may view a Power Point presentation related to the campaign by clicking your mouse on "A Matter of Trust" and then clicking on the first picture. The arrow at the top of the page will forward the program to the next slide.

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

Historical  
Highlights  
of  
Ypsilanti

Markers  
and  
Statues

*For Information about upcoming Society events, visit us on-line at:*  
[www.ypsilantihistoricalsociety.org](http://www.ypsilantihistoricalsociety.org)



R.S. Gerganoff:  
*continued from front page*

curred in 1920, he became an American citizen. The name he took was Ralph Stephens Gerganoff. He used the English version of his middle name, Stoyan, and added an "s." He did business under the name R.S. Gerganoff, rarely using his full name.

He first worked for the architectural firm of Donaldson and Meier in Detroit. In 1925, he established his own firm in Ypsilanti. The following year he designed and built the Counselor Apartments at the corner of Washtenaw and Huron. Apartment buildings were a relatively new type of housing in Washtenaw County in the 1920's. Previously, single people lived in rooming houses, or if they had money, hotels. Some homeowners were beginning to convert unused space into apartments while shop owners often lived above the store. However, buildings designed specifically as apartments or flats were rare. There was a market for this type of home, and it included R. S. Gerganoff, a bachelor. Wisely, he recognized this need and responded. During this period he also designed and built 809 Kingsley in Ann Arbor. This apartment building is on the National Register of Historic Places.

St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Ann Arbor was one of his first commissions. It was the first of a number of churches or houses of worship Gerganoff designed. St. Clement Eastern Orthodox Church in Dearborn is one of his best known designs. Also in the 1920s he drew up plans for the Wolverine Building which was completed in 1927. In 1929 the Washtenaw Country Club was completed just in time for the Stock Market Crash of the same year. The Club was threatened with bankruptcy although it managed to survive.

The Depression deepened, construction slowed and Gerganoff, like others, struggled to keep his practice alive. In 1933, he sold the Counselor Apartments to the Haab Brothers and used some of the proceeds to take an extended visit to his homeland, Bulgaria. He visited family and toured a number of his father's projects. When he returned to Ypsilanti he designed the City  
*continued on page 20*

*The Wolverine Building in Ann Arbor was built in 1927 and is known as the Ypsi-Ann Building.*

*Gerganoff designed the Rackham School on the EMU campus that houses the Special Education program.*



*Estabrook School on Cross Street in Ypsilanti opened in 1949-1950.*

# Our Gal Rosie!

By Michelle Kirwan-Woods

With her sleeves rolled up and a kerchief on her head, the iconic *Rosie the Riveter* was perhaps our most memorable pin up gal from World War II. Although several women portrayed or were the inspiration for *Rosie* – including Geraldine Hoff Doyle of Ann Arbor, MI and Rosalind P. Walters of New York – one in particular became synonymous with the wartime image, and she was discovered right here in Ypsilanti!

WWII would change the face of America in many different ways. Perhaps the most substantial change was the role of women in the work force. With millions of men enlisting to join the war effort, many American women were forced to set their domestic responsibilities aside and hit the assembly line in places like Ypsilanti's Willow Run Aircraft Factory. Rose Will Monroe was one of these women.

Widowed with two children, Rose came from Kentucky to Michigan during World War II and began work at the Willow Run Aircraft factory. Like many women of the era, Rose worked driving rivets to complete B24 bombers for what was then the US Army Air Forces. Propaganda to promote the war effort was wildly popular during WWII, and Rose happened to be in the right place at the right time. During a visit to the Willow Run factory, actor Walter Pigeon discovered Rose and chose her to be featured in a film to help promote war bonds. Pigeon's film was one of many propaganda films created to show between features at movie theaters, encouraging Americans to support the war effort. Throughout the duration of the war, *Rosie the Riveter* became a popular character; not only to symbolize women who worked in manufacturing plants, but also as a campaign to encourage women to participate in the effort to support the American armed forces. During the war, the Willow Run plant had 42,000 workers, 1/3 of them were women. The *Rosie the Riveter* movement reputedly increased the number of working women 57% between 1940 and 1944.

The *Rosie* crusade would continue through the mid 1940s until the war came to an end

*A picture of Rose Monroe, a real-life Rosie the Riveter in the 1940s.*



*The patriotic World War II poster of the fictional Rosie representing the female workforce during the war.*

in 1945. With enlisted men coming home, women were expected to return to their previous duties. It was anticipated that married women with children would stay home, while single women were forced out of their factory jobs and took positions such as store clerks and secretaries. Although some would view this as discouraging, the aftermath of WWII would bring about a nondiscrimination clause in regard to gender in the contract between Ford Motor Company and the UAW. This did not change the overall attitude about women in the workforce over night, but the events of WWII undeniably set into motion how women are perceived in the workplace even today.

Ypsilanti's Rose Monroe went on to hold many different jobs, including that of a

taxi driver and a beauty shop operator. She eventually settled in Clarkesville, Indiana and started a construction company specializing in building luxury homes called Rose Builders. Rose earned her pilots license after retirement and was the only female member of the local aeronautics club. She lived to see 13 grandchildren and died at the age of 77 in the late 1990s.

The destruction, mortality, and loss of innocence left behind by war are inevitable; yet it is with infinite wisdom a new dawn is always certain. Although the days of *Rosie the Riveter*, *Wendy the Welder* and war bonds are behind us, the "We Can Do It!" movement of WW2 will forever define the women of its time. The accomplishments and sacrifice from

*continued on page 24*



# The Cannon Caper in Prospect Park

By Harold Britton

Growing up in Ypsilanti near Prospect Park during the years 1940 thru 1947 meant baseball every morning and euchre in the old pavilion every afternoon. There were lots of kids around to play baseball, football, tennis and cards including the Wagner twins – Bob and Dick, the Webers – Norbert, Duane and Ernie, Jack Lameroux, Jim and Joe Siedle, the Helmer brothers, Dick Roberts, Bob Chadwick, and many, many more.

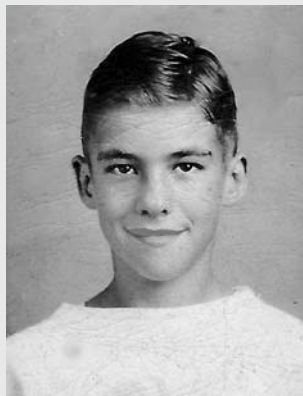
One day in 1941 someone shouted “Let’s shoot Britton out of the cannon.” That must have sounded like fun to the gang that was around that day because they lifted me up (about 40 pounds at that time) and placed me feet first in the cannon. They had to push and shove but they managed to get me in with only my hands and arms sticking out of the barrel. Then they all grabbed my arms and tried to make me come flying out just like in the movies. Whoops, a small problem, they pulled and pulled but I was stuck in the cannon and wouldn’t budge.

Bob Wagner shouted, “Someone run and tell Harold’s mother that he is stuck in the cannon.” My mother came over and was about to call the fire department when she changed her mind and told the kids to stay put and she would be right back. She came back shortly with a can of Spry (like Crisco). She rubbed what she could on the inside of the cannon, it was a tight squeeze, and told the four boys that were left (all the rest had gone home thinking they would be in trouble) to grab my arms and pull hard in the count of three. Yes folks, it was just like “lift-off.” I shot out of the cannon and hit the cement pad ending up with a bloody nose and cuts on my arms and legs, but I survived.

Today I go by that cannon in Prospect Park and it seems like only yesterday that I achieved “lift-off.” It is hard to believe that the cannon caper in Prospect Park occurred over 68 years ago. ■

(Harold is a regular in the Ypsilanti Morning Coffee Club and claims that he is the only member of the Club that has been canonized.) (Editor’s Note: If you would like to learn more about the cannon in Prospect Park go to [www.ypsilantihistoricalsociety.org/markers/marker9.html](http://www.ypsilantihistoricalsociety.org/markers/marker9.html).)

*At the time of the “cannon caper” in Prospect Park Harold Britton weighted about 40 pounds.*



*The cannon in Prospect Park was placed there on October 13, 1902, by the Carpenter Post, G.A.R.*

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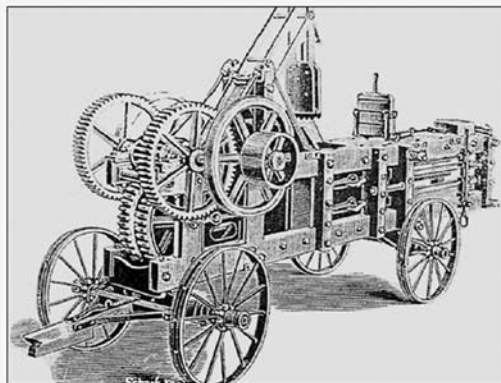
# YHS Goes Online

By Laura Bien

The Ypsilanti Historical Society now offers a range of online resources you can use for research, exploration, or just for fun. On the right side of the YHS home page ([ypsilantihistoricalsociety.org](http://ypsilantihistoricalsociety.org)) you can see links to three new features.

## The Ypsilanti Hay Press

START PROGRAM OVER



- The presses came in several sizes, and the length of the bales could be regulated by the operator.
- The presses were belt-powered with wood or steel frames.

*Top right: One of the sixty-four pages of the online program titled "Historical Highlights of Ypsilanti, Michigan."*

*Left: One of the pages being developed for the "Historical Markers and Statues" program that is available online.*

*Bottom right: The "Dusty Diary" blog allows visitors to comment on stories and become actively involved in the program.*

BACK

START PROGRAM OVER

Page 7

CONTINUE

### Chicago Road Plaque

(Intersection of Michigan Avenue and Ballard Streets)



Granite, which was procured with much difficulty from a few miles west of Ann Arbor. Black Synite is the hardest of all granite, and rare. At the time, there were only two other pieces of the kind in the area.

The Congress of the United States appropriated in 1825, \$3,000 for the survey of a road from Detroit to Chicago. The survey was conducted by Orange Risdon, who followed the Sulk Trail. This, at a time when the Territory of Michigan was a wilderness, with only a few scattered settlements clearing the land for farming; such as the one at Woodruff's Grove, just south of present day Ypsilanti. A further \$20,000 was appropriated in 1827 for the construction of the road. Over time this road became the major highway connecting Detroit and Chicago.

The road was known by many names, as each community it passed through chose its own way to identify it. In Ypsilanti, the road was named Congress Street. Then in 1914, the citizens of Ypsilanti voted to rename the road Michigan Avenue. That same year the Federation of Women's Clubs, assisted by its component clubs, the Ladies Literary Club, the Woman's Club, The Women's Study Club and the Ypsilanti Chapter of the Daughter's of the American Revolution, sponsored the erection of a historic marker at the point of Michigan Ave. Ballard Street and Congress Street. The marker is a two and a half ton boulder of Black Synite

## Historical Highlights of Ypsilanti

This program is a timeline of salient events in Ypsilanti's 186-year-old history. A table of contents lists the pages in alphabetical order and allows you to choose the page you'd like to see. Or you can start at the first page, which discusses the Northwest Ordinance, and retrace Ypsilanti's history by moving through each successive page (look for the "CONTINUE" link at the bottom of each page). Major industries, notable people, and outstanding architecture are all featured. Historical Highlights is a good resource for teachers or anyone looking for a concise summation of major Ypsilanti events. There's

## DUSTY DIARY

...AN EXPLORATION OF THE YPSILANTI ARCHIVES

FRIDAY, JUNE 12, 2009

### When the New Television in Ypsilanti was...Analog



NBC  
8:00 Quiz Kids (pictured; originally a radio show)

As analog TV disappears forever today, some among us can remember when it was the hot new thing. You could get a beautiful 1950 Philco or RCA, with a big 12 and 1/2 inch screen, over at Shaefer's for \$240--\$2,050 in today's money. Black and white only.

In 1950, just one of every eleven Ypsilanti homes had a TV. Programs were broadcast for only a few evening hours. Prime time was the only time. Here were your choices according to the September 22, 1950 edition of the Ypsilanti Daily Press:



### LINKS & EMAIL

Historical Highlights of Ypsilanti, Michigan: Slideshow  
Ypsilanti Archives, Museum, & Historical Society  
[dustydiary \(at\) gmail \(dot\) com](mailto:dustydiary(at)gmail(dot)com)

### RECENT COMMENTS

On Jun 13 Siani commented on **pecks gully forgotten ypsilanti garbage**: "You know, if anyone is interested in poking around down there my husband and I found a path down..."

On Jun 13 Dusty D commented on **humor**



even a racy (by 19<sup>th</sup>-century standards) photo of the famous Ypsilanti Underwear Lady.

### *Markers and Statues*

This program is still under development, and when completed, will offer an in-depth look at markers that you may have seen around town but never had time to investigate. Ranging from the Spanish War Memorial to the cannon in Prospect Park, each page offers images and several paragraphs of information. You can learn which rare type of rock forms the Old Chicago Road marker at the intersection of Ballard, Congress, and Michigan Avenue, or see the home of Michigan's first superintendent of education, John D. Pierce. There's also a page about the hated Detroit-Saline toll road, which angered local farmers so much they created their own road, bypassing the toll gate - which an irate local resident later smashed with an ax.

### *Dusty Diary*

This program is an active blog that serializes two Ypsilanti women's diaries and explores a range of local history topics. It also offers interactive comments where you may leave your own thoughts and information. Featuring many beautiful photos from the Archives, the blog has recently discussed the occupations of black Ypsilantians in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the 25 major industries in 1901 Ypsilanti, and a forgotten city dump from long ago. You can also find profiles of area homes, such as 211 North Huron, complete with a photo tour of the interior. Check it out and add to the ongoing discussion!

**In the works** is a fourth new feature that highlights the many significant and beau-



*One of the online programs in the planning stages is "Historical Highland Cemetery" which will feature many of the beautiful statues and gravestones in that setting.*

tiful statues and gravestones in Highland Cemetery. It includes a virtual photo tour and map. You can explore the resting places of some of Ypsilanti's history-makers and see beautiful examples of the carved stone art

adorning many graves. Stay tuned for this new online resource! ■

*(Laura Bien is a volunteer in the YHS Archives and writes and manages the "Dusty Diary" blog described above.)*

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# Wolverine Grill

By Jeff Davis

After losing everything in the great depression in the 1930's John Batsakis left Chicago (where he had owned a candy store) and came to Michigan, first to Detroit and then to Ypsilanti. Born in Greece in 1899 John came to the United States as a young boy. When he arrived in Ypsilanti in the early 1930's John bought the White Palace restaurant in 1932, which was located where the Honda car dealership is now on Michigan Avenue. After selling the White Palace in 1938 John got a job at the Wolverine at 228 West Michigan Avenue and by the end of the year he was the new owner. John owned and ran the Wolverine until 1963 when he sold it to his nephew Greg Batianis who came to the U.S. from Greece in 1956. John continued to keep his upstairs apartment and six days a week came in and worked the counter nine hours a day. He did this for the next 20 plus years and never asked for pay. John once stated, "For me, it's not work. I love this business; it's a pleasure for me just to be here meeting all my friends." Sadly John passed away in 1986.

Greg continued to run the business and during his time there he hired a waitress in 1979 named Deloris Emerson. In 1995 a newspaper article was written about Deloris stating that she puts in 57 hours a week and intends to stick around for many years to come. Well, 14 years later Deloris has stuck around, just like John, serving the customers that she loves. She says "customer service is the name of the game" and she has been proving that for the past 30 years.

When you first walk into the Wolverine Grill and look up on the wall behind the counter you will see the 127 pound, 85 inch long hammerhead shark that Greg caught in Florida back in 1972. Now the Wolverine Grill is owned by Greg's daughter Debbie Cromer who bought the restaurant in 2008. Debbie's dad Greg is doing the same thing that John did after retirement. Greg still comes in early every morning and helps get everything ready for the day ahead. Even Debbie's children Nick & Mallory have worked at the Wolverine Grill. Waiting on customers alongside Deloris is Debbie's sister Juanita. The Wolverine Grill is only the 2nd restaurant in Ypsilanti to go non-smoking. So next time you are downtown looking for somewhere to eat, stop in at the Wolverine Grill and check them out. The food is great and everyone who works there treats you like family. ■

*(Jeff Davis is a volunteer at the YHS Archives and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)*



*John Batsakis in 1984 at 85 years of age. He was still counting change, squeezing lemons and scooping ice cream at The Wolverine Restaurant.*



*Greg Batianis and Deloris Emerson in 1993 on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wolverine Grill. At that time Deloris had been a waitress at the Wolverine for 15 years.*



*The Wolverine Grill in the 1980s.*



# Radio in Ypsilanti

By James Mann

Radio, television and the Internet are taken for granted, as each has become part of our daily lives. Now it is hard to imagine a time when there was no news or music carried on the airwaves, when we could see programs on a screen, or send a message and view Web

mother's living room as he experimented with wireless and telegraph. Later the experiments were carried out in a small wooden shack behind the house at 17 North Adams Street.

Beginning in 1906, Chapin, with Clifford Boatwright, Lee Augustus, Henry Gilmore, and later, Ernest Goodwin, worked on their hobby of wireless transmission. They were known as the "Owl Club" because the five would stay up all night to tinker and experiment with their hobby. Chapin carried out his first experiments with discarded dry cells saved



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pages. Yet, just one hundred years ago, the ability to do this was just being developed. A handful of pioneers, working alone, made these modern wonders possible. In Ypsilanti the pioneers were a small group of young men who were known as the "Owl Club."

The history of radio in Ypsilanti began with the clutter which Howard Chapin left in his

for him by Professor Elmer A. Lyman, who was one of the few men in Ypsilanti to own an automobile at that time. Additional dry cells were provided by Ed Dolson, who operated a bicycle shop on Washington Street and also did automobile repair work. Chapin and Gilmore carried on the first wireless communication in Ypsilanti from their homes in 1906.

*continued on page 10*



*The site of Chapin's garage at 17 N. Adams is now occupied by EMU's College of Business.*

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## Radio in Ypsilanti *continued from page 9*

"Their feat was of great interest to Ypsilanti," noted *The Ypsilanti Daily Press* of Saturday, October 13, 1934. "It was not long until their accomplishments advanced and communication was conducted with an amateur operator in Ann Arbor. The Augustus, Boatwright, and Goodwin boys became interested and, because wireless was in its experimental stage, the quintet were drawn together by a bond which attracted few others at that time."

"Fascination with the work carried on by the Owl Club in the small Chapin garage attracted many Ypsilantians to the building at special occasions before radio became a household word. In 1924, election returns were received over the radio in the Chapin building and given to interested Ypsilanti voters, while on several other occasions it was filled with eager listeners. Wives of the men provided the spectators with lunches at times," noted the account. In this small building behind the Chapin house, Ernest Goodwin built the transmitter that started radio station WJBK. The station began in 1924 above the Diamond Art jewelry store at 108 West Michigan Avenue, between Huron and Washington Streets. Goodwin received his first license to broadcast in 1925.

On November 11, 1928, Goodwin received permission from the radio commission to operate permanently with increased power and wavelength.

The first announcer for the station was Harold Augustus. At first, the station was



*108 West Michigan was Ypsilanti's narrowest store front, now a portion of the Ypsilanti Convention & Visitors' Bureau.*

only open for three hours, but Augustus was kept busy. "There were no disc jockeys at that time and all the entertainment on the station was live and donated. Putting a program together was somewhat ticklish because, being unpaid, the performers didn't

feel too obligated to show up at the proper time or, in some instances, to come at all. Then Augustus had to perform himself (off the cuff), with impromptu commendations on whatever came to mind. He usually used the *Ypsilanti Daily Press* to provide a



*Chapin and Gilmore carried on the first wireless communications in Ypsilanti from their homes in 1906.*



*Early radio announcers had to perform "off the cuff" with impromptu conversation about whatever came to mind.*



*A radio announcer had to be a "Jack of all trades" and stayed on the air for hours at a time.*



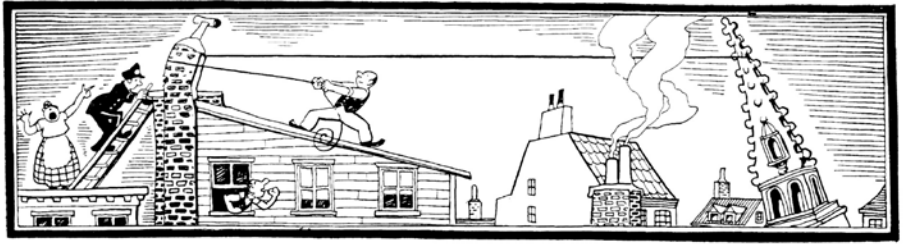
newscast,” reported *The Ypsilanti Press* on March 30, 1964.

“On one occasion the late James Hart, who was noted for the carrying power of his voice, stepped into the role of broadcaster and was to be introduced as a fisticuff artist, one Bo Montana,” noted the account. “‘Bo!’ he bel-lowed, and then the magnificent presentation went ‘PFFT!’” “The announcer’s false teeth had flipped out.”

Kirk Knight began in 1928 a 47-year career in broadcasting at WJBK radio in Ypsilanti. It started with a game of tennis. He and a classmate at the Michigan State Normal College, now Eastern Michigan University, were playing singles, but their game was continually interrupted by the pair on the next court. Knight suggested they play doubles and got to talking to one of the other players, who was the chief engineer at WJBK. The man told Knight that an announcer at WJBK who had a stuttering problem, was not being paid and wanted some time off. He asked Knight if he would fill in for the announcer. Knight did, and was hired full-time when the announcer quit. “I remember we were on the top floor of the six-story Huron Hotel, Ypsilanti’s tallest building. We had 50 watts of power that carried us to the other side of Ann Arbor,” recalled Knight in 1973.

The broadcast tower was on the roof of the Huron Hotel, and sometimes became clogged during storms, and he and the engineer would flip a coin to see who would go up to the roof and rattle the tower to shake the ice off.

“There was a local bootlegger who liked Ted Lewis records,” recalled Knight. “Every time I played one, he sent a bottle of liquor to the studio, which I promptly hid. The records also were a cue to the bootleggers that he was home and open for business.”



*A cartoon by Herb Roth (1887-1953), popular satirist for the New York World in the 1920s jazz age.*



*Above: A cartoon of the early radio period by F. G. Cooper, freelance designer and illustrator in New York City in 1904. Cooper also did spot drawings for the Life magazine editorial page which he dubbed “cartoonettes.”*

*Left; There are still plenty of Antennae atop the former Huron Hotel.*

Ernest Goodwin, who founded the station, was found dead in his garage at 803 Congress Street, on the morning of December 4, 1928. He had been at the station the night before when he assisted in the broadcasting of a program from the Normal College. Sometime after the broadcast he had gone home and set to work on his car in the garage. “Neighbors saw a light in the garage about 5 o’clock this morning but thought nothing of it as Mr. Goodwin was accustomed to work long hours during the night on his radio. However, attending physicians stated he had been dead but a short time when discovered, as the body was not rigid as it would have been had he been dead

several hours. Mrs. Goodwin was too ill to be questioned as to whether he had been in the house during the night,” reported *The Ypsilanti Daily Press* of December 4, 1928.

The station was sold in 1930 to James Hopkins, who moved WJBK to Detroit. The surviving members of the Owl Club continued to tinker at their hobby in Howard Chapin’s garage for many years. ■

*(James is a local historian who has authored a number of books on Ypsilanti history. He is a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)*



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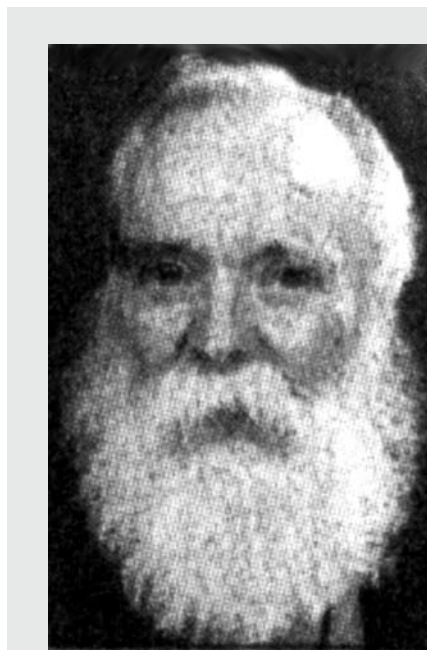
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# The Chick Inn Drive-In

By Derek Spinei

Classic food served with a heaping side of nostalgia has kept one Ypsilanti Township drive-in restaurant from driving off into the sunset. The Chick Inn at 501 Holmes Road first opened in April of 1953 in a small building which previously housed a soda fountain. Founders Jim and Charlotte Allen were employed at the Willow Run Kaiser-Frazer plant at the time, but Jim was a baker by trade. He had been looking for a place to start a bakery when he found the site at the corner of North Prospect just begging to be transformed into a drive-in. The Allens set up shop and could soon afford to raze and replace the original structure with the current one in 1955.

Business was booming through the '60s, so much so that a time limit of 30 minutes had to be imposed on parked customers, and an employee was required to pace the lot to monitor and enforce the flow of traffic. What made the Chick Inn so popular 56 years ago is the same reason it is popular today – the food. Ordered through an intercom and quickly brought out by a carhop, the food requires some tough decision-making on the part of patrons. The Hammy Sammy (ham



*Jim and Charlotte Allen were the original founders of the Chick Inn in 1954.*

and cheese sandwich) competes with foot long hot dogs and cheese steak hoagies for popularity, but nothing compares to the Paul Bunyan. While it does not cost the same 25 cents it did in 1953, this massive hamburger accompanied by a famous peanut butter banana milk shake continues to be a must-have for anyone cruising town on a Saturday evening.

The Allen family continued to operate the Chick Inn for 50 years. Jim Allen retired in 1990 but Charlotte continued with the help of their daughter Debbie until 1997 when rumors began circulating that the establishment might close. Fortunately, the Allens' son Mark and his wife Patti took over the business, making several improvements and upgrades to the property while keeping the

*continued on page 22*



*At a time when most drive-ins have long since been put out of business by fast food chains or banned by local ordinances, the Chick Inn lives on.*



# Our First Bicentennial

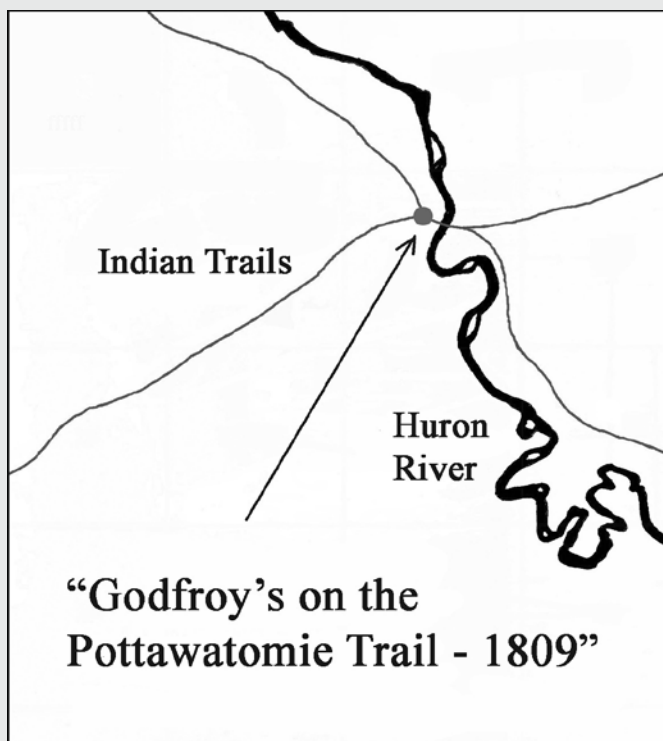
By Jeff Davis

As we begin 2009 it is time to celebrate the bicentennial of the original founding of what is now Ypsilanti. But a few mysteries have remained over the centuries. First of all, which Gabriel Godfroy built the trading post on this site in 1809? There were three generations of Godfroys named Gabriel. The first, Jacques Gabriel (called Gabriel because his father was also named Jacques), was born on November 10, 1758 in Detroit. He first came to this area as a guide and trader with the Native Americans in 1790, as mentioned in the journal of Hugh Heward. The entry for Thursday April 15, 1790 reads "...and by the assistance of Mr. Godfroy, who seemed very obliging, engaged an indian with two horses to go with me in the morning." In 1809 this Godfroy was co-owner of a tannery and trading house in Detroit. In 1803 he ran a ferryboat that crossed the Huron River near Detroit. By 1805 he had become a Freemason in Detroit. By trade he was a fur trader and later an assessor of Detroit. In 1809 he poled his way up river from Detroit with a distant relative Francois Pepin, who was born in 1790 and Romaine La Chambre, who was born around 1785. An artist drawing of our founder is in a 1905 souvenir book which the Archives has a few copies of in its new library collection. He passed away in 1833. This was the Gabriel Godfroy that founded the trading post and the first mystery has been solved.

The next Gabriel was his son. He was born on July 3, 1783 in Detroit. Between 1797 and 1808 he worked with his father at "Godfroy and Beaugrand" in Detroit. He had 20 siblings and 14 children. He married Elizabeth Ann May on April 27, 1808, and their first child Gabriel (III) was born on December 25, 1808.

The next mystery concerns how long the trading post stood. It was located where the transformers are behind the Edison Building on North Huron. It was a log structure built in 1809 with a fence around it. According to "The Story of Ypsilanti" book by Harvey Colburn it had "a cellar." It burned down around 1815 but was rebuilt and was doing well until the Native Americans lost control of the land in September of 1819 and slowly started to move west. Through the help of Virginia Davis-Brown it was determined that the post was still standing as of May 31, 1825, because Louis White listed it as being the polling place on that date. This information is listed on the obituary card of John Thayer in the Archives obituary collection.

The post was abandoned around 1823-1824 and then burned down a final time between June, 1825 and 1829. In 1829, Godfroy came through again and saw that the post was gone. It is said that he took a piece of burned wood with him to what is now Mendon, Michigan in St. Joseph County where he set up another trading post along with one of his brothers, Pierre. A portrait of Gabriel (III) was discovered by George Ridenour, which is in the Godfroy family file in the Archives family collection. Our founder also



*Godfroy's trading post was the first non Native American structure in the Michigan Territory west of Detroit.*



*An artist drawing of Gabriel Godfroy from a 1905 Ypsilanti Souvenir Book.*



*A portrait of Gabriel Godfroy III is located in the Godfroy family file in the YHS Archives.*

owned trading posts in Mendon, Detroit and Monroe. He was a Colonel in the Battle of Raisin River in Monroe during the War of 1812, in which he burned down his own barn to prevent the British from using it as a hideout. He was taken prisoner during the war but was released. He was appointed Colonel by the then General and future U.S. President William Henry Harrison.

The last mystery of Gabriel Godfroy is the location of his grave. In 1806 he helped plot out St. Anne Cemetery at the corner of  
*continued on page 22*

# The Pioneer Life of Roccena Norris

By Veronica Robinson

When I first started working as a Graduate Assistant at the Ypsilanti Historical Society in 2008, I had the opportunity to transcribe a handwritten speech detailing the life of an early Ypsilanti pioneer – Mrs. Roccena Norris. The speech was given by her granddaughter, Maria Norris at the 1878 annual meeting of the State Pioneer Society, three years after Roccena's death. Roccena's story illuminates some of the interesting and very human experiences being a pioneer first in New York and then later, her travels to the territory of Michigan.

Roccena was born in 1798, the eldest child of James Vaill and Helena Compton and grew up on the banks of the Delaware River in New York. According to her granddaughter's speech, some of Roccena's earliest memories are of her school across the river to which she traveled in a canoe. Although in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century a girl's schooling consisted mainly of learning to sew and mark samplers, Roccena was taught to read by her favorite uncle. She recalled stealing away at times to read *Don Quixote* before she was even 10 years old. This emphasis on education in her early youth certainly had an impact on her later life as she was involved in education in all of her communities.

Roccena's father died when she was young in 1813. Her mother found it difficult to provide for all of her children as work for women was very scarce in this period, so her family moved down the river to live with her mother's sister in a large cottage. Urged by her visiting sister-in-law – "Aunt Burt," as she was called – Roccena's mother decided to move



west in hopes that she could better provide for her children there. In 1814, Roccena and her aunt took a trip west to "spy out" land for her family; Roccena was only 15 at the time. They stayed at the home of Roccena's relatives in Allegheny County while they looked for land. Roccena recalls when she had free time she would visit the wigwams of the nearby Native Americans.

By early 1815, Roccena's mother and the rest of her family joined her in Pike, New York where they built a log house within two days of their arrival. Soon after, Roccena set up

the first school in their part of town in a little plank schoolhouse. During the summers Roccena taught school in Pike and in the winters she taught in outlying districts. 1816 was a hard year for New York. There was severe frost and freezing even in the summer months and food was scarce. While teaching school, Roccena boarded with other families in the area and many times her students sent her peas and potatoes in return for her teaching services. Roccena's family moved back east to Moscow, NY to be near old friends in 1818, Roccena only went as far as Covington, NY where she continued to teach and board with

*Right: A portrait of Roccena Norris that hangs in the formal parlor in the Ypsilanti Historical Museum.*

*Below: The Norris House at 213 River Street in Ypsilanti.*





families. She had as many as 40 pupils ranging from age 6 to age 20. While in Covington Roccena renewed an acquaintance with Mark Norris. He would often accompany her to her mother's house, seven miles away in Moscow.

In January of 1820 Mark and Roccena were married. Their wedding took place at her mother's house during a fierce snow storm that lasted a full two days. By the third day, Roccena and her new husband moved into their newly

*continued on page 25*

*Pioneer Life of Mrs. R. B. Norris  
By her gr. dau. Maria N. Norris  
Read at Annual meeting of State  
Pioneer Society, Feb 7, 1878.*

*at request of Pres. of State Pioneer  
Soc I took some wher. to prepare this  
sketch of my deceased mother Mrs. R. B.  
Norris a Pioneer of N. York & Eastern  
Michigan*

*The constant pressure of professional  
engagement have deprived me of the  
pleasure of doing this honor to the  
memory of her to whom I owe  
all that I have in me of good, &  
all that I have been able to  
accomplish since in the yrs.  
that have passed since I first  
left the hearthstone of the  
"Old House by the River."*

*My dau, however has undertaken  
that my promise shall be kept  
with no other help than a half  
century's family correspondence  
& her own recollection of the  
closing yrs. of her gr. mother's life.  
has prepared this paper*

*Mr. Rapier Feb 4, 1878  
Lyman D. Norris.*

*I have been requested  
to write a biographical sketch  
of my gr. mother Roccena B.  
Norris of Ypsilanti.*

*The first page of the handwritten speech by Roccena's granddaughter, Maria.*

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# Ghost Hunting in the Museum

By James Mann

One dark and overcast morning, more years ago than I wish to tell, I was working alone in the Archives, which was then located where the Gift Shop is now. As I worked, I felt a need to get up and use the restroom. Getting up from my seat, I went to the restroom, closed the door and turned on the light, which turned on the ventilation fan. As I stood there, minding my own business, I heard what sounded like a woman singing. I could almost make out the words to the song. I finished what I was doing, turned off the light, which turned off the ventilation fan, and the singing stopped. I stood in the hall, and said to myself: "No wonder so many people believe in ghosts." I decided I was done for the day, and left the building.

The house that is the home to the Ypsilanti Historical Museum is said to be haunted. The ghost is said to be that of Minerva Dow, as she was the one person known to have died in the house; but there may be others as well. As it turns out, research has shown that Minerva was not the only one to die in the house.

This year three paranormal investigation societies have carried out investigations at the museum. As part of the agreement with each society, the Ypsilanti Historical Society requested that members of the Historical Society be present to observe, to make sure nothing harmful happens to the museum or the society, and that each paranormal society submit a report of their findings to the YHS Archives. The three paranormal societies,



*Above: James Mann, local historian, came to the conclusion that there may well be some type of paranormal activity in the Museum.*

*Right: K-2 Detector – a device used to measure the level of electromagnetic energy present.*



each working independently of the others, agreed to the terms. I was the only person who observed all three groups. Here is my report on what happened.

## *First, a history of the house that is now the YHS Museum*

The house, which is in the Italianate style, was built in 1860 by Asa Dow, a business partner of Daniel Lace Quirk. Dow was elected president of the then newly organized First National Bank of Ypsilanti on December 15, 1863. He was also an incorporator and the first president of the Ypsilanti Woolen

Manufacturing Company. Dow did not stay long in Ypsilanti, as his wife Minerva died in 1864, and she is the second person buried in Highland Cemetery.

The local newspaper reported on March 17, 1865 that Asa Dow had sold the house and household goods to Aaron Goodrich for \$14,000. Dow returned to Chicago, where he lived for the rest of his life. Goodrich and his wife Julia moved into the house on North Huron, and stayed there for ten years. He had come to Ypsilanti to manage the Follett House Hotel in what is now the Depot Town section of the city. In 1866 Goodrich became a salesman for the Batchelder & Company



Monument Works, a local firm which furnished cemetery monuments throughout Southern Michigan.

The Goodrich family clearly took pride in their home, as noted by The Ypsilanti Commercial on May 13, 1865. "Messrs A. H. Goodrich and D. L. Quirk are enclosing their residences on Huron Street with a new fence that is indeed a credit to our city. It is mainly of wood but molded and sanded to imitate iron. It has elegant iron gateposts and is bolted with iron clamps to large square stone posts sunk three feet into the ground. For durability, it cannot be surpassed and we have seen nothing so tasty. We are told its cost was \$30.00 per rod."

The Goodrich family stayed in the house until 1879, when they moved to Saline to open the Goodrich House. The house was sold to Lambert Barnes and his wife Jane. Lambert Barnes was superintendent and later president of the Peninsular Paper Company, and Vice-President of the First National Bank of Ypsilanti. He served as mayor of Ypsilanti from 1875 to 1879. Barnes died suddenly in Detroit where he had gone to have an ulcerated tooth treated on June 30, 1887. His widow remained in the house until 1893. Members of the Barnes family continued to live in the house into the 1920's.

A Robert Barnes died in the house on Wednesday, January 12, 1921 at the age of 51, reported The Daily Ypsilanti Press of Thursday, January 13, 1921, "after an illness of eighteen months with heart trouble." Services were held at the house.

A Herbert H. Smith, who is listed in the City Directory for 1922, lived in the house with the Barnes family that year. That was the year the house was sold to Laverne Ross, who began the process of converting the house into apartments. Smith and his wife Ella are listed in the next directory, 1924, as living alone in the house. Smith is known to have left Ypsilanti in about 1927. He died in Dearborn on January 11, 1961.

The next directory, 1926, lists only an Eliza D. Cornwell as living in the house. The directory further notes, that she is the widow of Cornelius. The directory for 1927 lists Eliza Cornwell as living in the house, but now she

has been joined by Lydia Jones, the Dean of Women at the Michigan State Normal College, now Eastern Michigan University, Margaret Esther Ballew, Professor of English at the Normal College and Frederick Alexander, the Director of the Department of Music at the Normal College. As the new people moved in, Eliza Cornwell died on November 22, 1927 at the age of 89. The funeral services were held at the home with interment at Highland Cemetery.

Lydia Jones moved out of the house in about 1930, as she is listed in the 1931 directory as residing at 222 North Huron. Remaining at the house were Margaret Ballew and Frederick Alexander. Frederick Alexander is known to have lived in one of the apartments on the first floor of the house. Alexander, who never married, was considered by the co-eds of the college to be the second handsomest man on campus. He lived in the house until he retired in 1941, when he moved first to Santa Fe, New Mexico and later to Lemon Grove, California. There he died on October 14, 1955. The Alexander Music Building at Eastern Michigan University is named in his honor.

Margaret Ester Ballew joined the faculty of Eastern in 1923 as Assistant Professor of English. She was described in a letter as a "young woman, 35 years of, who is 5 feet 6 inches tall, and weighs 120 pounds." The letter to Normal College President Charles McKenny noted she was "of excellent qualities, and in character, she is above reproach in every way." She remained in the house until about 1940, but stayed on the faculty of Eastern until 1949. She died on August 4, 1987 at the Claremont Manor in Claremont, California just one month short of her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

A number of tenants lived in the house over the years, some for a short time, including students, and some for the long term. The City Directories for 1941, 1942 and 1943, list a Christopher Brien as living in the house with his wife Emily. Then the directories for 1945, 1948, 1951, 1954, 1955, 1957 and 1958 list Bessie Bien, widow of Christopher as living in the house. No information has been found concerning the death of Christopher. The house was converted to the museum in 1972.

*continued on page 18*

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## Ghost Hunting in the Museum *continued from page 17*

### *First Paranormal Society*

The first paranormal society was scheduled to carry out its investigation of the house on a Friday night at the end of January. This group was a student organization of Eastern Michigan University, recently recognized by the university. I arrived at the house before the building was closed, so to be on hand when the others arrived. Alone in the house, I decided to do a "walk through" of the house, to make sure all was well. There was no need to do this, but it gave me something to do while I waited for the others to arrive.

I began the walk through at the front door of the museum, and went into the front parlor. As I passed into the next room, I heard a tingling sound from the glass lamp on the piano. I carried out the rest of the walk through, looking forward to the arrival of Bill and Karen Nickels, who were the other observers for the evening. As soon as I could, I had Bill retrace my steps from the front parlor to the next room. We concluded that the weight of the piano, plus my weight, had affected the floor, and caused the lamp to shake, which caused the sound I had heard.

The members of the paranormal society arrived, and began the process of setting up their teams. We were informed that we would have to stay in the Archives in the basement of the house, as the investigators had to account for the position of everyone in the house should anything happen. For this reason, Bill, Karen and I spent a pleasant time in the archives, reading, talking and snacking on the treats Karen had provided. From time to time, we heard the teams move from one position to another, but little else. The society had planned to conduct their research from 6:00 P.M. to midnight, but ended the investigation early. We were told the teams had recorded some sounds that needed to be studied. A report from the paranormal society was promised, but has yet to appear.

### *Second Paranormal Society*

The South Lyon Areas Paranormal Society (S.L.A.P.S.) arrived at the house on the evening of Friday, March 28, 2009. The members set up in the Archives in the base-

ment of the house. Present to observe were Al Rudisill, President of the Historical Society, his wife Jan, and myself. This time the observers were allowed to accompany the members of the paranormal society as they carried out their research. The members made their way through the house, holding their equipment and flashlights. The K-2 detectors showed high levels of electromagnetic fields in the basement of the building. Electromagnetic fields, each paranormal society reported, can cause headaches, nausea, hallucinations and paranoia.

Jan Rudisill and I followed the members of the society as they walked up the stairs from the Archives to the first floor. There, in one of the parlors, Jennifer Redfern, President of the Society, tried to communicate with the ghosts. Holding her K-2 detector in one hand, she asked the ghosts questions. The K-2 detector has several lights in a row, the number of lights glowing showing the level of energy present. To answer a question the ghost could make the lights glow once for no, twice for yes. There was no response at this time.

Later some of the members of the society and I were in the second floor Dress Room, where the dress of Florence Babbitt, which she wore as part of the city centennial celebration in 1923, is on a mannequin. As I was telling the story of Florence Babbitt and her role in the history of the city, we heard a strange noise, like a knock, from another room on the second floor. We were the only people on the second floor at that time. The investigation was concluded at one in the morning.

### *Third Paranormal Society*

The Huron River Paranormal Society is a student group from Eastern Michigan University, but is not affiliated with the university. This is a society of students who wish to carry out investigations of the paranormal on their own. The first members of the society arrived at the museum at about 6:00 P. M. on Friday, April 3, 2009. This group arrived with an electromagnetic field detector, a K-2 detector, one infrared thermometer, two video cameras and a digital audio recorder. This society did not use flashlights during its investigation, but allowed the eyes to adapt to the darkness of the museum.

*continued on page 23*



# Ypsilanti's Checkered Past

By Laura Bien

After its reign as an underwear manufacturer, and before its rise as a builder of WW II bombers, Ypsilanti enjoyed a regional renown as a powerhouse in . . . checkers?

"This evening at 7 o'clock in the Daily Press office," reported the October 24, 1930 Ypsilanti Daily Press, "the official opening of the 1930-31 checker season occurs. Five checker players from the western half of Washtenaw County will meet an equal number of Ypsilanti players in a special challenge match for the unofficial championship of Washtenaw County." Linchpinned by the previous year's champion, the formidable Dr. T. W. Paton, the Ypsi quintet also featured J. R. Zimmerman, "...reputed to be the best checker player in Ypsilanti," said the Press. The group included George Allward, Russel Sweet, and Clare Hewens, all high scorers in the previous year's citywide tournament. Hewens also served as the club's bookkeeper, an office whose title indicated its gravity: Checker Manager.

As these select five players drawn from the 15-member Ypsi checker club awaited their match, the club's citywide round-robin tournament began. From October 28 to December 31, each club member played two games against every other member, "one game with the black checkers, and one game with the white checkers," specified the Press. Competitors met every Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. in the basement of the old Masonic Hall, now the Riverside Arts Center.

As the round robin tournament progressed, the team of five vied for the county championship by facing off against Ann Arbor's elite University Checker Club. Drawing upon the U-M's ocean of intellect, the UCC prepared to crush the humbler city's team - which competed that day without its best player, Dr. Paton.

Ypsilanti triumphed, scoring 55 to the UCC's 45. That did not please some Ann Arbor players. "Immediately after the score was determined, the Ann Arbor team entered a challenge for a return match to be played at the Michigan Union in Ann Arbor," reported the October 25 Press. Gracious in victory, the Ypsi team accepted, traveling to Ann Arbor on November 14. Despite the UCC's home board advantage, its team lost again, 67 to 77. "Undaunted by two defeats," the Saturday Press gallantly reported, "the University team will play the local team another challenge match in Ypsilanti some time within the next month." But an even bigger match lay just ahead.



*In the 1930s Ypsilanti Checker Club was the pride of the City.*

The following Wednesday, the Ypsi team squared off against a crack squad selected from the state's largest city, when they hosted the Detroit Edison Checker Club. The locals triumphed again "by the decisive score of 91 to 45," crowed the November 20 Press. Enthusiastic new members joined the club, swelling its ranks. Despite privation and hardship in that Depression winter, the scrappy little checker club made itself a source of city pride. ■

*(Laura Bien is a volunteer in the YHS Archives, manages the YHS blog - the "Daily Diary," and is a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)*



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R.S. Gerganoff:  
*continued from page 3*

Printing building on Cross Street. During the mid-thirties he began a number of projects for Michigan State Normal College, now EMU. These included the Rackham School that housed the Special Education program. This became a model for facilities educating children with disabilities, prior to the advent of mainstreaming. In addition he designed the King, Goodison, Brown, Munson, Jones, and Goddard residence halls, as well as the "new" Pierce Hall that replaced the original building.

He brought his nephews Stoyan (Steve) and Zdravka (Zack) to Michigan from war-ravaged Bulgaria in 1947. He put "the boys" as he referred to them through the University of Michigan where they too earned Bachelor's degrees in architecture. Steve would join his uncle's practice while Zack established his own firm. Zack, however, was lured away by local politics. He served Superior Township in a number of offices including County Supervisor. Gerganoff's relationship with his "boys" was interesting. He could be both a father figure and a Dutch Uncle. Zack the more extroverted of the two wanted his independence. Steve was more reserved, like his Uncle, and developed both a professional and family balance in his dealings with Uncle Ralph.

The late 1930's, 1940's and 1950's were a busy and productive time. The Ypsilanti Public Schools undertook a large construction program to cope with the baby boom. Gerganoff served as the architect for most of the buildings. It was during this period that my father, Don Porter, worked closely with Gerganoff. My dad was the Business Manager for the schools and a large part of his portfolio was oversight of all construction projects. The two men worked well together. In most respects they were exact opposites. Ralph was a generation older than Dad. On the other hand, Dad was at least a head taller. Ralph was short, stocky and swarthy. Dad was tall, fair skinned and blue-eyed. Ralph was a university trained architect, while my father was a self-taught designer and builder who was never happier than when he had a project to build. They bonded over their shared love of building and buildings. My dad could make Ralph laugh, while Ralph shared



*Chappelle School dedication in 1954. R.S. Gerganoff is directly to the left of the Chappelle portrait. Mrs Chappelle, widow of the late superintendent is directly to the right of the portrait.*



*West Junior High School on Mansfield in Ypsilanti was dedicated in 1959. Gerganoff used lots of windows in school buildings to maximize natural light.*



*Beyer Hospital in Ypsilanti. Note the house to the right that was the original hospital.*



his knowledge of architecture. They were an “odd couple” but together they produced a large number of schools in a remarkably short period of time including Estabrook, Chapelle, George, West Middle School, additions to the original High School, Adams, Harriet as well as a new school and administration building on Forest Avenue.

During the same time, Gerganoff was designing businesses and office buildings in both Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor. Among his accomplishments were Motor State, Davis Motor Cars, and Sovey’s Greenhouse. He also drew the plans for Beyer Hospital, the Huron Hotel, and the Washtenaw County Courthouse.

Less known are the homes he designed. He used a number of architectural styles when designing residences, Tudor, Colonial and Contemporary are a few examples. The classic white colonial built for the Butlers (now the Edmunds home) was featured in an earlier issue of Gleanings. His clients included the George Handys (publishers of the Ypsilanti Press), the Fred Arnets, and the Kenneth Fergusons. On Cross Street, the Fox Home is another example of his work. Perhaps his finest home was the house he designed for himself overlooking the Huron River. He bought three acres of land in the late 1930’s but the actual construction began later. His home at 1330 Huron River Drive resembles the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. It is not a large building with only a single story on the street side. However it is built against a bluff with the lower level providing impressive views of the river. Inside there is wood paneling and stone. He, like Wright, utilized built-ins to minimize the clutter of furniture and keep the eye focused on the natural world outside.

Not long after his house was completed, he surprised much of Ypsilanti by getting married. His new wife was Mary Louise Pace, a lovely fair skinned, auburn haired younger woman from Indiana. Mary Lou was a good partner for Ralph. She was a gracious hostess and an attentive wife. She worried that he worked too hard (which he did) but finally accepted the fact that he could not change. She expanded Gerganoff’s role in local charity work. One of the first functions she organized was a coffee on behalf of the March of Dimes.

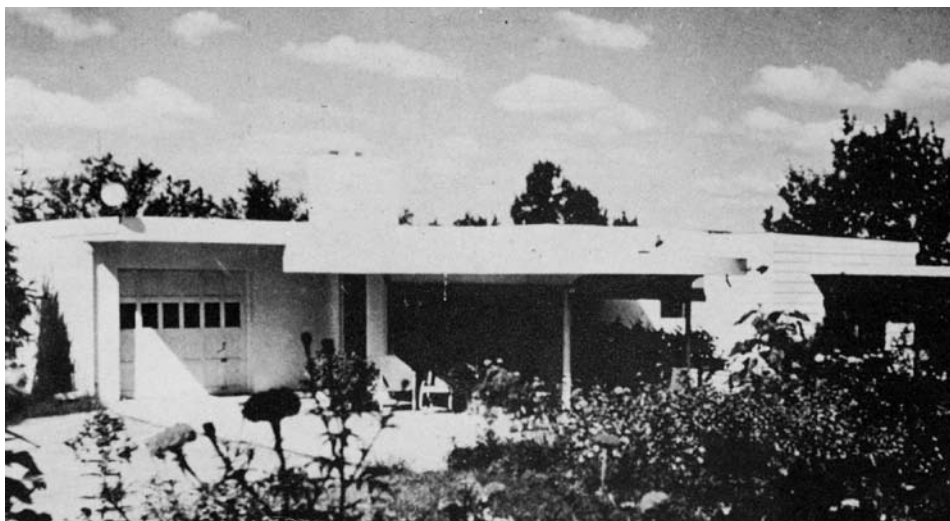
*continued on page 25*



*The classical colonial house located at 119 West Cross Street in Ypsilanti.*



*The Ferguson House located at 921 Woods Drive in Ypsilanti features a sandstone exterior, slate roof and casement windows.*



*Gerganoff’s home on 1330 Huron River Drive in Ypsilanti makes maximum use of the site.*

## The Chick Inn Drive-In *continued from page 12*



*I'm going to get me a Hammy Sammy, yeah!*

original character intact. The Chick Inn finally left the Allens' hands in 2003 when it was sold to a former automotive engineer, Kevin Lim, who is currently replacing the badly faded menu signs.

At a time when most drive-ins have long since been put out of business by fast food chains or banned by local ordinances (a result of late night noise and littering), the Chick Inn lives on because of its bargain prices, sentimentally loyal locals, great atmosphere for car lovers to show off their pampered rides, and the novelty of year-round curb service.

In 1999 the Chick Inn was honored by the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation with a historic marker, a result of its retained vintage appearance featuring distinctive rooster graph-

ics, neon signage, and rotating "TIME TO EAT" clock below which is their quaintly illuminated alphanumeric telephone number, HU3-3639, just as it has always been. The drive-in has been further honored by being included as an official member of the Motor-Cities National Heritage Area as defined by the U.S. National Parks Service.

The drive-in's reputation has also reached outside of Ypsilanti. In 1983 the restaurant was featured in a promotional film for the Dodge Daytona. In 1990 a Detroit rock band, The Gories, even recorded a devotional song to the drive-in aptly titled "Chick-Inn" – an excerpt from which follows:

*Well there's a place I go every Saturday  
It's up in Ypsilanti and it's here to stay  
The Chick-Inn  
Wooo yeah! Yeah! Yeah!  
The Chick-Inn  
Now I'm going there baby  
It's 'cause I'm feeling so hungry  
I'm gonna get me a Hammy Sammy, yeah!  
Wooo with that secret sauce  
On a Paul Bunyan roll, babe it's really boss  
The Chick-Inn, wooo hooo, the Chick-Inn  
Well I'm going there baby, can't miss it alright  
It's got a chicken on the sign and a neon hotdog  
Wooo, yeah! Hammy Sammy, strawberry banana milkshake  
Wooo, yeah! and you can get it in chocolate too...  
C-H-I-C-K-I-N  
Yeah!  
C-H-I-C-K-I-N  
Wooo!  
Chick-Inn  
Alright!*

were destroyed in a fire. After searching the records of nearly 200 cemeteries this is the most likely site of Gabriel Godfroy's final resting place.

The trading post "Godfroy's on the Pottawatomie Trail," as it was known, was the first non Native American structure in the Michigan Territory west of Detroit. As to the title of this article "Our First Bicentennial" it wasn't until April of 1823 when Benjamin Woodruff started the first settlement in the location of what is now

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While its' founding proprietors have passed on, the Chick Inn remains a destination for all occasions, from casual first dates to weddings and wedding anniversaries. It serves as a lasting memorial to the days when drive-ins outnumbered "drive-thrus" and kids slid from car to car to talk to their friends rather than typing in front of a computer screen. ■

*(Derek Spinei is a student in the graduate program in Historical Preservation at Eastern Michigan University and is serving as an intern in the YHS Archives.)*

## Our First Bicentennial *continued from page 13*

Jefferson and Griswold in Detroit. For his payment he received a free grave. St. Anne Cemetery closed in 1827 and was moved to St. Antoine Street Cemetery also in Detroit. Gabriel Godfroy died in 1833 and was likely buried here. This cemetery closed in 1858 and the remains were moved to Mount Elliott Cemetery in Detroit minus the headstones. In 1865 Mount Elliott's records

the area of Ford Lake. But that celebration won't take place until July 4, 2023 when we dig up the time capsule in front of the Demetrius Ypsilanti monument by the water tower, which was buried there in July of 1973. But that is an entirely different story. Until then, happy 200th birthday "Godfroy's Trading Post on the Pottawatomie Trail."

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



## Ghost Hunting in the Museum *continued from page 18*

The first members to arrive carried out pre-readings which showed the building to have high electromagnetic fields in the basement where the Archives are located. The readings were very high in the basement storage area. The investigation began at 8:00 p.m. when Chad and I entered the first floor restroom, where I had heard the sound of a woman singing years before. As Chad and I stood in the restroom, with the light on and the ventilation fan running, two other members of the society, Anna and Ashley, went to the other floors of the museum. As Chad and I stood in the restroom, Anna and Ashley were on the other floors singing. Chad and I could not hear the singing of Anna and Ashley over the ventilation fan.

Later, Chad, another member of the society and I were in the second floor Dress Room, where the dress of Florence Babbitt is on display. Chad tried to communicate with the ghosts by asking them to make a knocking sound in response to questions, once for no and twice for yes. To illustrate what he meant, Chad got down on his hands and knees in the hallway, and, as he explained, knocked once on the floor for yes, and twice on the floor for no. At once his cell phone went off. It was Anna calling from the basement to say they could hear footsteps on the first floor. Chad told Anna what he had been doing, and knocked on the floor again so Anna could compare the sounds. The "footsteps" were the sound of Chad knocking on the floor.

Sitting on the couch in the Dress Room, I watched as Chad got back on his feet and returned to the room. Once again the members of the society tried to communicate with the ghosts. As they tried, I began to feel cold on the right side of my face and down the right arm. The paranormal investigators each placed their hands in the space beside my head and noted the air was colder there than in the rest of the room. There was no draft or open window which could explain the occurrence.

Later we were in the basement Archives, in the reading room section, when holding a K-2 Detector, an effort was again made to

communicate with the ghosts. The ghosts were asked to signal by means of the K-2. In an effort to learn the name of the ghost, someone began to recite the letters of the alphabet. The lights of the K-2 flared at the letter B. No further information was forthcoming.

Late in the evening we were sitting around the table in the research section of the Archives. Chad held the K-2 in one hand and tried to communicate with the ghosts. Once again the lights of the K-2 Detector flared at the letter B. Questions were asked, but there was no response. Then I felt another cold spot, again on the right side of my face and down the right arm. A K-2 Detector was placed in the space beside my head, and all the lights flared. As the K-2 Detector was raised toward the ceiling, all but the first light indicating background went out. At this time Anna was using a video camera to record the session. As she did the green light on the K-2 Detector appeared to be covered by a red light. All the lights in the museum were turned off, and there was no apparent source for this red light. The red light is clearly visible on the video, but could not be seen by any of us in the room, except through the camera viewfinder.

Two members of the society were walking through the first floor kitchen area and noted the lights on the K-2 flare. They asked the ghost if it would like to talk with them, again using the K-2, once for yes and twice for no. The K-2 flared twice, so the two left the room. I for one was very happy when midnight arrived and it was time to call it a night. For the first time I had come to feel there might be some truth to the idea that paranormal activity existed in the house.

### *Conclusions*

Each of the two paranormal societies who turned in reports concluded there was some paranormal activity in the museum. The Huron Valley Paranormal Society and the South Lyon Area Paranormal Society concluded that the spirit or spirits intend no harm to anyone. The Ypsilanti Historical Society takes no official position on the question of whether or not there is paranormal activity in the Museum, but welcomed each group doing the investigations. ■

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

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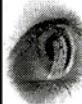
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# Museum Advisory Board Report

By Virginia Davis-Brown, Chair

Summer is almost here and we are looking forward to some new and exciting exhibits. We hope that you were able to visit the Art Exhibit. There are so many talented people in our area and the artists were willing to share their pictures with us for two weeks.

We were honored to have Boy Scout Troup 290 from the Emanuel Lutheran Church present us with a 48 star flag on June 14, Flag Day. It was a very impressive ceremony with several boys and their leaders taking part. We thank them very much.

A few weeks ago we received a large collection of military uniforms and hats from the estate of Martin Omen. After they have been identified and cataloged we will be putting some on display.

On June 17 we honored our docents with a luncheon. Our docents do a wonderful job taking care of our guests and sharing the history



of Ypsilanti. We are always in need of more docents and it only involves three hours per month. In July we will start looking for docents to help us over the Heritage Festival weekend. It involves a two to three hour commitment. We provide each docent with all the information needed. If you are interested, please contact me at 734-484-0080 or 734-482-4990.

The Lost Ypsilanti Exhibit will begin on July 19 and run through Labor Day. This year the theme is "Henry Ford and His Influence on the Ypsilanti Area." It is hard to believe that he has influenced this area since the early 1900s.

*Please come and visit us at the Museum. ■*

## Membership Report

By Peg Porter, YHS Membership Chair

During the months of March, April and May, 24 new memberships were added to the YHS roles. Our total for new members during the Membership Drive now stands at 61. Since our goal is 80 new members by the end of August, we are *very close* to meeting it.

One suggestion, let's make certain that every volunteer is a member. Certainly all those who give their time to the Society should hold full membership and be entitled to all that membership entails.

Many thanks to all those who have recruited new members or given gift memberships, you are key to this effort. A list of all new members will appear in the fall newsletter.

## Our Gal Rosie!

*continued from page 4*

what some say to be the greatest generation is nothing short of extraordinary. Unknown to these women at the time, their patriotic contributions would impact not only the WWII age, but also future generations of women for many years to come.

Some may argue that *Rosie the Riveter* was nothing more than a fictional war time character, but her persona was actually quite real. *Rosies* were Mothers, Grandmothers, Aunts, and sisters. Although many years have passed since the attack on Pearl Harbor and the days of Nazi Germany, our journey through time marches on relentlessly, with the sole intent of leaving its mark. Those of us alive today are living proof that *Rosie* was real; as we are the generation that she sends. Deep down I think there's a little *Rosie the Riveter* in all of us. ■

*(Michelle Kirwan-Woods grew up in Ypsilanti and still recalls many childhood memories about the people and places in her neighborhood.)*



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## The Pioneer Life of Roccena *continued from page 15*

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built home in Covington. After three months Roccena's mother, grandmother and sister came to live with them at Roccena's request. This movement also necessitated a two-room addition to their house. Mark and Roccena's finances expanded as Mark became a successful businessman and by 1824 they lived in what was described as a "modest mansion."

In 1827 Mark traveled to Michigan to scout property for a home and business and upon finding some suitable property in Ypsilanti, he closed his business in New York. The move to Michigan was difficult as Roccena would be leaving all of her friends and family in New York – including her ill mother in the care of her brothers and sisters – not knowing if she would ever see them again. In June of 1828, Roccena, Mark and their two children set out for the Michigan Territory. They took a stage coach to Buffalo, NY where they booked passage on a steamer to Detroit. The journey on Lake Erie lasted four days and three nights in cramped and uncomfortable quarters. The Norris family found Detroit as a scattered village, such as it was in the 1820s. The roads were so rough that they were nearly impassable and they were forced to leave most of their belongings in storage in Detroit and send for them later when they could be shipped by boat up the Huron River.

Roccena and her family left Detroit in a group of travelers with a two-wheeled gig and a wagon, that was made for better roads, that was owned by a merchant traveling to Ann Arbor. Several in the party were on foot, so after a slow ten miles they all lodged at the Johnson Tavern for the night. The accommodations were so small that they slept three to a bed that night. The next morning they got an early start and traveled six more miles to the home of Mr. Starkweather, where they had a late breakfast and cleaned the mud from their shoes. When the party finally reached Ypsilanti a near-wilderness lay before them. Roccena related the scene in her own words: "...No house in sight, just a board shanty with a wreath of smoky vapor creeping out of a clump of hazel bushes on the banks of the Huron. Wearied soiled and worn, not a soul to greet me whose face I had ever seen before except my family, it was little wonder that I leaned my head forward on the stump and burst into tears." She quickly recovered though, and urged her family forward to their new home so her children could be fed and rest. The Norris family sat down to their first meal in Ypsilanti at the home of a neighbor on June 16<sup>th</sup> 1828. Quickly after, Roccena insisted on seeing the house that had been engaged for them and begin setting up their new life. Since most of their belongings were stored in Detroit, her neighbor, Mrs. Perry, lent them bedding and kitchenware. It took nearly two weeks for their luggage to reach them by boat from Detroit.

The Norris' new house consisted of two rooms and a pantry on the first floor and two rooms above. Mr. Arden Ballard operated the front of the house as a store. It was not long before Roccena began operating a school out of one of the rooms in the home as well. As Mark's business continued to expand, the family moved into a new frame house. In 1833 they moved into a brick house on River Street (now 213.) Roccena's mother came to live with them – a joy as when Roccena left New York she feared she would not see her mother again.

Roccena and Mark became active and respected community members in Ypsilanti. Roccena continued her involvement in and support of education. In a letter to her sister-in-law she commented that the state of the Ypsilanti schools was in "flourishing condition." Roccena and Mark also encouraged their children when it came to their education, enrolling their daughter Elvira in the Michigan State Normal School (now Eastern Michigan University) and their son at the University of Michigan. As a child and pioneer in New York, Roccena developed an industrious spirit and love of learning. These skills helped her to adapt and ultimately flourish as one of Ypsilanti's earliest pioneers. ■

*(Veronica Robinson is in the graduate program in Historical Preservation at Eastern Michigan University and is working as an Intern in the YHS Museum.)*

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## R.S. Gerganoff: *continued from page 21*

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This event was held in their home and became a much sought after invitation by the ladies of Ypsilanti.

Gerganoff's two major interests in addition to architecture were travel and photography. He traveled extensively, often to areas that were infrequently visited by casual travelers. He recorded his travels on film, both still and movies. As I recall, many of the scenes included buildings and gardens. As a child I became a sort of "honorary niece." He sent me handkerchiefs and postcards from each of his visits. I kept these treasures for a long time. Eventually, they were lost probably during a move.

In November, 1966, he was at the office the day after Thanksgiving. He complained of an upset stomach and collapsed on the way to his car. His nephew Steve drove him to the old St. Joe's in Ann Arbor where he died that night during an operation to repair an aneurysm. He would have been 80 years old on his next birthday.

Over the last ten years, Gerganoff has been "rediscovered" by architectural enthusiasts who are impressed by the variety of styles he mastered as well as the details he utilized in most of his buildings. More than one person has noted, with surprise, that Ann Arbor's most prolific architect lived in Ypsilanti. Unfortunately not many Ypsilantians know much about the man or his work. He was not a self-promoter and generally played his

role from the background. His drawings and papers were left to the Bentley library while the YHS archives contain some examples of his work. For those who are interested in architecture and the history of Ypsilanti, R.S. Gerganoff is a man worth getting to know.

(Additional Information Sources: The Ypsilanti Press, The Ann Arbor News, An Article by Alek Juskevics in the June, 2003, Ann Arbor Observer, United States Government Naturalization Records, Photographs and Drawings by R.S. Gerganoff - YHS Archives) ■

*(Peg Porter is the Chair of the YHS Membership Committee, the Associate Editor of the Gleanings, and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)*

# News from the Fletcher White Archives

By Gerry Pety

The students are all gone now, unlearning all of the things they supposedly learned in two semesters of school. The hurried pace of life is starting to quiet down and for the next several months the living will be easy. Maybe it's time to use this quiet time to come down to the Ypsilanti Historical Museum and Archives, view the summer exhibits, and check out the archives to look up that long lost relative or the bit of history that has been bugging you for years.

While the general pace of life has slowed, we at the archives have been going through about 100,000 envelopes from the soon to be defunct Ann Arbor News. These were a systematized collection of news items they inherited from the Ypsilanti Press back in the 1990s. These resources comprise information that was

saved for reporters to facilitate their becoming "instant experts" on a variety of subjects from about 1972 to 1994. We in turn have been integrating these news stories into the appropriate collections within the Archives.

We would like to thank the following people who have contributed photographs and histories. Mrs. Kluck who let us copy photos from the original Kluck's Drive-In, which was originally an A&W and quite a bit smaller than now. In fact, it was TINY! Mr. Greg Batianis contributed photos of the Wolverine Restaurant in downtown Ypsilanti, which has been serving great food since 1938. Finally, Mrs. Betty Rood contributed some very interesting and old photos of St. Luke's Episcopal Church, for our church collection. Thank you all! ■

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



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Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Type of Membership		New	Renewal
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Family	\$15.00	[ ]	[ ]
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Business	\$75.00	[ ]	[ ]
Life	\$200.00	[ ]	[ ]

Please make check payable to the  
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**Ypsilanti Historical Society**  
220 North Huron Street  
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

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