

Ypsilanti GLEANINGS

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



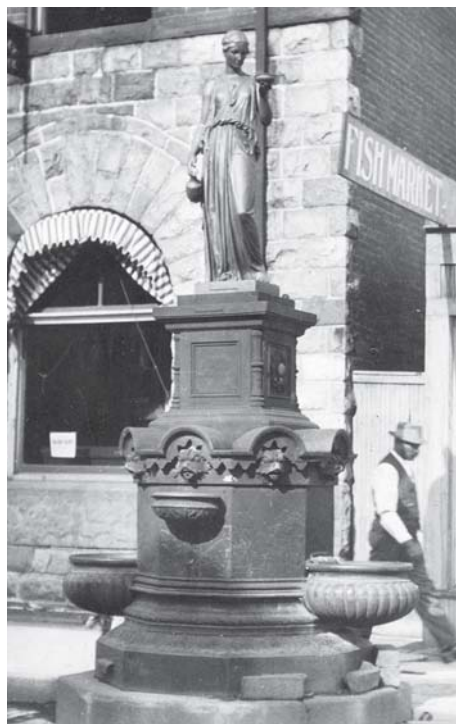
WINTER 2005

Lost Ypsilanti Speaks - The Starkweather Fountain

Mary Ann Newberry was born into the prominent Newberry family of Detroit. Her father, Elihu Newberry, was a merchant and farmer. Her brother John was a famous member of Congress, and her uncle Walter L. Newberry was a Chicago merchant, banker and land speculator.

She married John Starkweather in 1839, and the couple later moved to a farm near Ypsilanti. John Starkweather did well in the local real estate market, and the two moved into the Italianate house at 303 North Huron in 1875. It was there that John Starkweather died in 1883. The following year, Mrs. Starkweather inherited a small fortune from her uncle. Because she had no children she used her inheritance to make contributions to local charities and churches. Over the remaining years she gave the Ypsilanti community major gifts including the following: the Hebe fountain on South Huron Street, the Starkweather Memorial Chapel at Highland Cemetery, Starkweather Hall on the campus of Eastern Michigan University, and in 1890 she gave her North Huron Street home to the Ladies Library Association.

It was in 1889, when the Ypsilanti water mains were installed that Mrs. Starkweather gave a very unique fountain to the City of Ypsilanti. It was made of bronze and sat on a granite foundation with a height of 12 ¼ feet above the curb. On the North and South sides of the fountain were drinking bowls for horses, on the East and West faces were bowls for people, and at the bottom on the four corners were bowls for dogs. At the top of the fountain was the figure of Hebe, the God-



The Starkweather fountain in the late 1890s when it stood in front of the Ypsilanti Savings Bank (now City Hall) on South Huron Street.

dess of Youth and Cup Bearer to the Gods. The fountain was the work of the J.L. Mott Iron Works of New York. The original cost of the fountain was \$750.

In April of 1932 the fountain was dismantled because of some problems and by that time there were more modern means available for getting a drink. The City of Ypsilanti had planned to place the statue in the park behind the Ladies Library. However, it was placed in storage for
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From the President's Desk

By Alvin E. Rudisill

The Annual Membership Meeting of the Ypsilanti Historical Society will be held on Sunday, December 4, 2005 at 1:30 pm. We will be voting on new Board of Trustee members who have been identified by our Nominating Committee (Steve Pierce – Chair, Marcia Phillips, and Karen Nickels). The meeting will be short so bring your friends and enjoy refreshments and the Christmas decorations in the Museum.

Thanks to Bill Nickels who is in the process of repairing the front porch on the Museum. Bill is replacing several of the balusters and the entire porch railing has been sanded and repainted. The hedge in front of the porch has been trimmed so our refurbished porch can be seen from the sidewalk and street.

This issue of the Gleanings contains our second article on the history of churches in Ypsilanti. Thanks to David Thayer we have included the history of the First Baptist Church. The Spring 2006 issue of the Gleanings will include an article on the history of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church. We would like to include the history of other Ypsilanti churches in the 2006 Summer, Fall and Winter issues of the Gleanings so if you are the historian of your church please contact me about a possible article.

We have two new displays in the Museum. The display on antique mini-lamps

is featured in an article in this issue of the Gleanings. Another new display is on military uniforms used in World War II. We appreciate very much all the efforts by Virginia Davis-Brown, Chair of the Museum Advisory Board, and the many volunteers who work with her to develop and set up the Museum displays.

We are trying to cover part of the costs of publishing the Ypsilanti Gleanings with the sale of advertising, sponsorships and business memberships. A new category of support is "sponsor." Sponsorship of a single issue of the Gleanings is \$20.00. Sponsor names are listed on the back page of the Gleanings along with advertisers and YHS business members. If you like the "new look" and would like to support our efforts please consider being a sponsor for a future issue.

We are looking for authors interested in publishing in the Gleanings. We have several topics that need to be researched or we will consider other articles of interest to potential authors. Please contact me if you are interested in publishing in the Gleanings.

Bill and Karen Nickels have again volunteered to host the annual YHS Yard Sale. The event is scheduled for June 3, 2006. Donated items can be dropped off at the Museum. If you need to have items picked up please call me at 734-484-3023. ■



Ypsilanti Historical Museum and Archives

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[click here for a map](#)

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 by the Ypsilanti Historical Society which operates the museum for the city of Ypsilanti. We are all volunteers and our membership is open to everyone, including non-city residents.

2005 Schedule of Events

Jan 11	Joint Meeting - All Boards
Feb 10	Board of Trustees Meeting
Feb 20	Quarterly Membership Meeting & Valentine Tea
Mar 11	Archives, Museum & Endowment Fund Advisory Board Meetings
Mar 31-Apr 17	Art Show
Apr 14	Board of Trustees Meeting

*For Information about upcoming
Society events, visit us on-line at:*

www.ypsilantihistoricalsociety.org

Lucy Osband – the Forgotten Lady

By Dr. Erik J. Pedersen

While doing research for this article I was impressed and amazed with how much influence certain individuals can have on a community. Just as amazing is how quickly we can forget about these individuals and their contributions with the passing of time. William and Lucy Osband were two people who had a significant impact on the Ypsilanti community during the late 1800's. One written account, found in the Ypsilanti Historical Society Archives, referred to the Osbands as "...two citizens who influenced the life of this part of the country for half a century."

"Her primary motivation came from the conviction that physical exercise was important to the health and welfare of the students she cared so much about."

William and Lucy Osband were involved in many community activities. William, in particular, was a member of several civic organizations and was often elected to leadership positions in those groups. Lucy was an early member of the Ladies Literary Club and twice served as the organization's president. However, the primary reason this couple had such an influence on the Ypsilanti community was the fact that William was the editor and proprietor of *The Ypsilantian*, the local paper. Archival resources referred to *The Ypsilantian* as a paper of "high literary quality and that the articles reflected a wide range of interests" (Ypsilanti Archives). Another source indicated that it was "outspoken and fearless." *The Ypsilantian* was considered as lively reading, and people of the community regarded it as their own.

Lucy Osband wrote most of the editorials. She also wrote a column called "Ypsi Dixits." Lucy had a keen sense of humor

and the "Ypsi Dixits" gave her an opportunity to express her insight and knowledge on a variety of topics. (Ypsilanti Archives) To reflect on all of the accomplishments and contributions this couple gave to the City of Ypsilanti would require more space than could be provided in this article. Since my initial interest in doing this research was centered on Lucy Osband, this article will focus on her career as a professor at the Michigan State Normal School and the influence she had in starting the Physical Education Department.

Introduction

Wilber Bowen, Lloyd Olds, Fanny Cheever Burton, Ruth Boughner, and Augusta Harris are names from the past that are frequently mentioned when referring to the history of the Physical Education Department at Eastern Michigan University. All of these persons were important and all deserve recognition. However, one name that frequently appears in archival records has received virtually no recognition. This person arrived on the Michigan State Normal College Campus in the 1880's and promoted "Physical Culture" before anyone else. Without her influence, Wilber Bowen would very likely have remained in the Normal College Math Department, the Physical Education facility completed in 1894 would never have been built, and the Physical Culture Department established in 1894 would never have been realized.

Why haven't the contributions of such an influential and dynamic individual been recognized? Why has the name of Lucy Aldrich Osband all but remained anonymous whenever the history of Physical Education at the Michigan State Normal School been discussed? The purpose of this article is to recognize this "Forgotten Lady" and highlight her role in the establishment of one of the nation's first Physical Education preparation programs.



Lucy Osband.

Lucy Aldrich was born in a log farmhouse in Arcadia, New York. She came from a strong Quaker and Puritan family background. Very early in her childhood, Lucy began suffering from poor health. Throughout her life she was weak and frail. Several times during her teaching career, she needed to take long leaves of absence to recover from the stress related to her teaching responsibilities. Because of ill-health, Lucy was not always able to attend school. Consequently, her parents, who were both teachers, supervised most of her education at home. They insisted on good study habits and expected Lucy to recite every lesson perfectly. Lucy later attributed her conviction for thorough and accurate work to her parents.

Despite poor health and a home education, Lucy Aldrich became an outstanding teacher and scholar. During her teaching career, she taught courses in calculus, analytical geometry, literature, modern language, botany, physiology, and "Swedish Drill." Her college studies and professional background were primarily in the natural sciences. Botany was her major area of interest. She eventually became head of the Natural Science Department at Michigan State Normal College. It is unusual and remarkable that someone with such serious health problems and extensive academic background would support and promote physical activity.

At the age of sixteen, Lucy Aldrich entered the Newark Union School. She
continued on page 4

Lucy Osband – the Forgotten Lady *continued from page 3*

was the only girl in a class of thirteen. Because Lucy was a girl, there was no guarantee that employment would be available upon graduation. However, the quality of her academic efforts was recognized and at the age of nineteen she was able to obtain a teaching position at Phelps High School in New York. Within a year she was appointed Preceptress of Walworth Academy. Miss Aldrich remained in this position for two years. Soon the efforts of teaching once again affected her health. She needed a better climate to ease her lung problems. In a letter to Fredrich B. McKay, a member of the Eastern Michigan College Faculty, Lucy Osband's daughter indicated that her mother suffered from "incipient T.B." at that time in her life. (M. Osband 1944).

Lucy Aldrich became principal of the Sylvan Villa Seminary, a young ladies school in Standardsville, Virginia. Judging from several historical accounts, it was during this period of her life that Lucy Aldrich was introduced to outdoor activities and the benefits of physical exercise. One account indicated that "...Here she learned the lessons taught by the foothills of the Blue Ridge, and often joined par-

ties of excursionists to the natural places of the state. Altogether it was an out-of-door life for the mind as well as the body." (Aurora, 1894, p26).

After two years in Virginia, Lucy Aldrich returned to New York and entered Genesee College in Lima, New York. Genesee was only the second college in the country which did not discriminate against women in its admission requirements. Lucy did so well in her studies that she earned the distinction of being class valedictorian. In the same graduating class was William M. Osband whom Lucy married two months after graduation.

The Move to Michigan

After graduation and their marriage, William and Lucy Osband taught at the Gouverneur Wesleyan Seminary in New York. In 1864 and 1865, they both accepted positions at Albert University in Belleville, Ontario, Canada. They arrived in Michigan when William became the principal of Northville Union School. After three years, they purchased a home in Ypsilanti. The birth of their only child, Marna and homemaking duties kept Lucy temporarily out of the classroom. However, when William accepted a position at Olivet College, Lucy was coerced into teaching Greek. Within one year, Albion College offered both William and Lucy department head positions. He took over the Natural Sci-

ence Department and she became head of the Modern Language Department. Lucy also served as the university Preceptress. After six years at Albion, William and Lucy returned to their home in Ypsilanti.

Lucy Osband's interest in the natural sciences increased when she taught in Virginia. Her travels in the south and east familiarized her with the plants from those regions. Marine Life also fascinated her. With these interests and background, she became an instructor in the Natural Science Department at Michigan State Normal College in 1883. When a chairmanship in that department was established in 1884, she was hired to fill it. The accomplishments of Lucy Osband in the Natural Sciences are too numerous to describe in this article. Attention will focus instead on an area for which she also accomplished a great deal and received very little recognition - Physical Education.

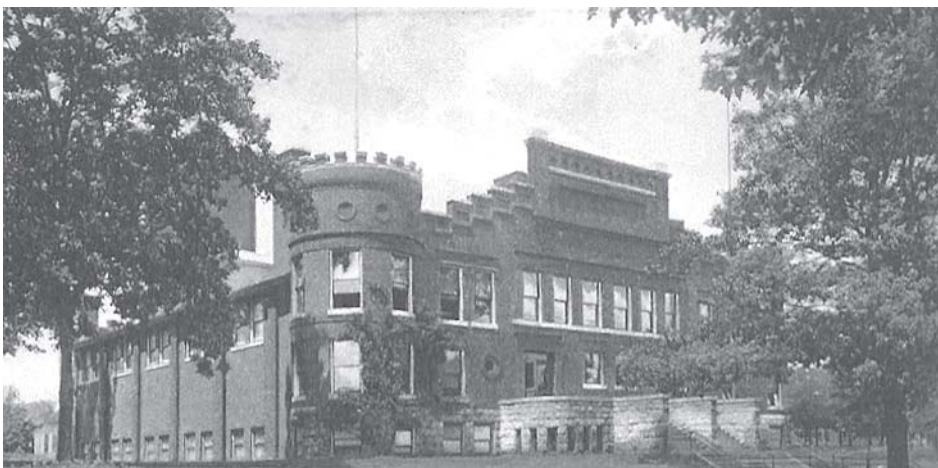
Lucy's Interest in Physical Culture

Immediately upon arriving at the Normal School, Lucy Osband started teaching classes in "Swedish Work." These classes were taught in addition to her responsibilities in the Natural Science Department. She received no extra pay for teaching "Swedish Work," only the satisfaction of knowing that exercise was contributing to the health and welfare of the students. Lucy would take her physiology classes into the University Chapel, stand students in the aisles, and lead them in "Swedish Routine Movements" with dumbbells and Indian Clubs. (M. Osband 1944). Eventually she was given a basement room in the Old Main building, where her program included military marching, wands, pulley weights, and "Swedish Apparatus." The former campus gymnasium had burned down in 1873 so there wasn't an appropriate place to hold Physical Culture classes. Lucy Osband would eventually change that.

The two photographs shown were probably taken from the new Physiology and Hygiene Course developed by Lucy Osband in 1886-1887. The new course



Women's Physiology Class in the Old Main Building – 1880s.



1894 – Gymnasium.

included “practical work” in the application of the physiological laws of gymnastics. These sessions were held on a weekly basis in the basement of the Old Main Building.

Lucy Osband persuaded many others to join her physical culture classes. Normal School instructors from other disciplines were “fair game.” Two of her recruits, Wilber Bowen and Carolyn Crawford, made significant contributions to the field of Physical Education. Wilber Bowen was an instructor in the Normal College Math Department. Lucy convinced him that physical education was a growing discipline and that he should consider pursuing a career in that area. He agreed! While teaching math, he studied physiology at the University of Michigan. He also began teaching physical culture classes at the Normal School in 1888. Bowen eventually became the first Physical Culture Department Chairman. Bowen wrote eleven books and published many research articles. He was recognized as a leader in the field for over forty years and is referred to as the “Father of Physical Education in the State of Michigan.”

Lucy Osband’s daughter Marna, recalls “...at the Normal School, besides building up the Natural Science Department, her mother established out of her physiology classes, the Department of Physical Education.” (M. Osband 1944). Lloyd Olds, in an article titled “A Brief History of the Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Athletic Department” noted that Lucy Osband “arranged for additional classes on

the theory and practice of Physical Culture.” (Olds N-D). This course was first offered at the Normal School in 1888 and was one of the first teacher training courses in Physical Culture at any college or university in the country.

The New Gymnasium

One achievement for which Lucy Osband received some recognition was the construction of a new physical education facility which was completed in 1894. “How a Wily Woman Got a Gym for E.M.U.” is how Ralph Chapman described Lucy Osband’s approach for obtaining funds to build a new physical education facility. (Chapman 1977). Lucy’s approach provides an interesting and insightful story.

The Normal College had been without a “Physical Culture” facility since the first gymnasium was destroyed by fire in 1873. Due to the lack of a Physical Education facility, Wilber Bowen left the Normal College in 1891 to teach at the University of Nebraska. Lucy Osband convinced Professor Sill, Normal School Principal, that a new gymnasium was necessary. However, convincing the State Board of Education was another matter. The State Board, in the early 1890’s, did not think favorably about “Physical Culture.” The timing and approach for requesting funds had to be just right!

The opportunity for a formal appeal presented itself during a visit to the Normal College by the State Board of Education.

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Lucy Osband – the Forgotten Lady *continued from page 5*

Professor Sill appointed two professors to speak on behalf of the building. “Mrs. Osband knew enough about legislators to know that speeches would have no effect. So she prepared a dozen exceptionally skilled girls to put on a sample of what the actual class work was.” (M. Osband 1994). However, Professor Sill refused to allow the girls to perform. He did not like anything unusual and felt too much confusion would result in clearing the stage. Another Normal School professor trained some boys to clear the stage in just two minutes. Principal Sill still refused. “Then for one of the few times in her life, Mrs. Osband resorted to a ‘woman’s weapon,’ she cried. Sill relented.” (M. Osband 1944).

As was expected, the speeches proved to be ineffective. Members of the state legislature told how they got exercise by cutting wood. “The affair fell flat until a dozen pretty girls, graded as to height, came on stage. At their superb military marching, the legislators pricked up their ears and showed interest. The Indian club drill had them stirred and the dumbbell drill made them enthusiastic. “Later Principal Sill and the State Board president came to Mrs. Osband and “told her that her girls had almost surely won the building.” (M. Osband 1944). They were right - \$20,000

was appropriated by the state legislature, and the citizens of Ypsilanti donated a building site on West Cross Street. The new gymnasium was dedicated on May 18, 1894. It served the university for 71 years until the Joseph E. Warner Gymnasium was completed in 1965.

Once funds for the building had been obtained, plans for the building needed to be developed. Lucy Osband contacted Dr. Dudley Sargent at Harvard University and Dr. Luther Gulick at Springfield College. They provided many ideas for the building. Gulick even sent detailed plans of the building he designed for Springfield College. Lucy Osband indicated that many of Gulick’s suggestions “...were used in the planning of our building.” (M. Osband 1944).

It was still to be decided who would head the new Department of Physical Culture. Lucy Osband recommended to Professor Sill that Wilber Bowen be appointed to lead the new department. She also recommended that Carolyn Crawford, who studied under Luther Gulick, be his assistant and direct the Women’s Program. Bowen was recruited back from Nebraska. However, Fanny Cheever Burton was hired to head the Women’s Program.

Conclusions

From every account and description Lucy Osband was an outstanding teacher. Consequently, it would be appropriate in closing to share with you a portion of Lucy

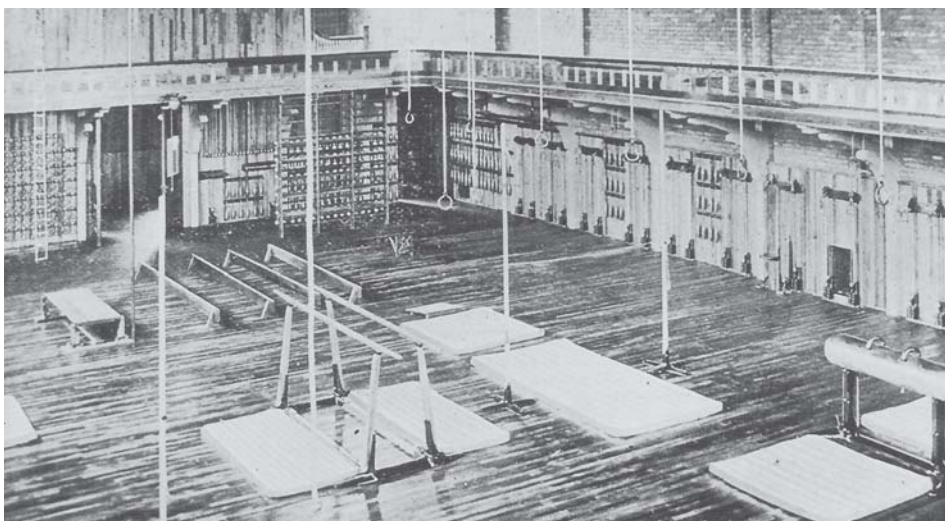
Osband’s philosophy on preparing teachers. This passage is taken from a presentation she made at a Michigan State Teachers Conference on December 27, 1877. The title of her address was “The Relation of our Teachers to the Moral and Religious Culture of the Future.” The essence of this message is just as appropriate today as it was over 100 years ago.

“History is a record of struggle, but the moral sense of mankind discriminates between those who strive for their own salvation and those who labor for the welfare of others. From the outset then, we shall consider the teachers words not so much with reference to the present as to the future; not as an end, but as a means to the end. The need of the times is not for qualified instructors only; we want men and women of honest purpose, of strong moral fiber, and unyielding principles, of cultured brain and ardent soul.”

Lucy Osband was Chairman of the Physical Science Department from 1884 until her retirement in 1895. This was her primary responsibility and she made many significant contributions to that department and the field of botany. However, she also taught classes in “Swedish Work,” trained and recruited teachers in “Physical Culture,” developed professional courses, obtained funds for a new gymnasium, and helped recruit faculty to head a new department. She did it all without extra pay, released time or recognition. Her primary motivation came from the conviction that physical exercise was important to the health and welfare of the students she cared so much about. She was truly an amazing woman!

Despite having physical problems most of her life, Lucy Osband lived to be 76 years old. She was a strong advocate of physical exercise and the benefits she obtained from being physically active probably added years and quality to her life. Selected passages from her memorial reflect her struggles with poor health and the impressions she made in spite of those problems:

- “Hampered by frail health, she was a wonderful example of the triumph of
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1894 – Inside Gymnasium.

Preston Thomas Tucker

By Mark Boone

The history of Ypsilanti, Michigan is chocked full of interesting characters. From inventor, Elijah "the Real" McCoy, to the co-founder of S and H Green Stamps concept, we've fostered inventive sorts that have impacted the course of American and even world history. Toss in Iggy Pop, the "godfather" of what became known as punk rock and I think you can tell that Ypsilantians have been as diverse in our contributions as we are in our many varied life styles.

One man who lived many years in our fair city took the concept of the American Dream seriously. Had it not been for Federal government harassment and the subsequent negative media coverage that ensued, he may have altered the course of Automotive history. This man was Preston Thomas Tucker.

Tucker was born in 1903 in Capac, Michigan and was fascinated by cars from the age of 7, when he saw his first automobile. During the years prior to his move to 110 North Park Street in Ypsilanti, Preston worked as an office boy for Cadillac, a car salesman, ran a brewery, and was a Lincoln Park police officer. In his biography, *The Indomitable Tin Goose*, written by Charles Pearson in 1960, Tucker's mother, Lucille Holmes, recalled her son's interest in joining the police force was fueled by the Harley Davidson motor cycles and fleet of fast police cars as much as it was by an interest in law enforcement.

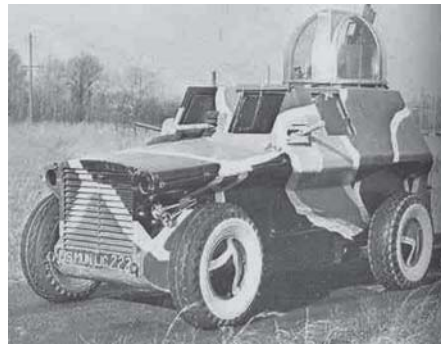
Despite this motherly observation, Preston performed his crime stopping duties well, and there are documented cases of his heroics during the Prohibition Era when Lincoln Park was a haven of mob booze runners from Canada. Tucker was head over heels crazy about speed and had a love of the Indianapolis 500. He formed a friendship and, in 1935, a business partnership with Harry Miller, who for many years was the leading automotive engine designer in the world and

who's engines powered cars that won many of the 500s.

Meanwhile, Preston's mom, Mrs. Holmes had moved to Ypsilanti and set up a company called Ypsilanti Machine which had a facility that backed up to the house on North Park Street. The plant faced North Grove Street and in 1959 became the birthplace of Marsh Plating, one of our cities leading employ-



June 19, 1947. Preston Tucker with his dream machine.



Tucker's Combat Car. The US Military failed to see the advantage of 117 mph but they liked the Machine Gun Turret.

ers and current owner of the Tucker house. There were also several barn style buildings behind the Tucker home and they were used as design and test annexes for Ypsilanti Machine.

A 1941 city directory lists Preston Tucker as sales manager for Ypsilanti Machine. Ypsilanti Machine performed contract work for the US Military and as WW II raged Tucker and his team worked to develop an armored Combat Car with a top speed in excess of 100 mph and a patented revolutionary design for a machine gun turret. The US military saw no advantage to the speed of the car but was very impressed with the tur-

rets and contracted Ypsilanti Machine to produce them. Shortly thereafter, the Federal government, in what may have foreshadowed future government problems, confiscated Tucker's patents and royalty rights.

Shortly thereafter, Tucker uprooted and moved his family and crew to New Orleans to form a company with ship builder, Andrew Higgins. The plan was to produce machine gun turrets and engines for the PT Boats that Higgins was building for the military, but power struggles and similar personalities between Preston and Mr Higgins caused some fallings out and that venture lasted only a year. Preston Tucker, his family and many of his staff returned to Ypsilanti.

Cars were Preston's love and even during the turret and New Orleans years he had it in his mind to combine his vision, his colleague's skills and his ability to sell "ice boxes to Eskimos" to launch an automobile company that would offer an automobile faster, safer and with more curb appeal than America had ever seen. World War II was finally over and the combination of a robust economy, troops coming back along with the public clamoring for something different in the family sedan, made the timing perfect.

The concept for the Tucker Torpedo was being born, right in our own backyard. A few years back, long time Ypsilanti resident Nick Stamos shared a memory of when, as a kid, he and Johnny Tucker, the youngest of Preston and Vera's 5 children, were sneaking a peak at some futuristic renderings of a car right out of a Buck Rogers movie. A number of renderings were done and even some scale models while Tucker tried to find investors at the local Masonic Lodge, which is the building currently housing The Riverside Arts Center. Some meetings were also held at the Detroit Athletic Club but things weren't quite gelling yet.

A magazine article appeared in PIC magazine in late 1945 with drawings and talk about Tucker's Torpedo On Wheels and the public clamored for more. The wheels were in motion but Detroit wasn't the area to compete with the Big 3 it seemed.

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First Baptist Church of Ypsilanti

By David B. Thayer

The building in which a congregation worships is not the church. Our forefathers were speaking more correctly when they spoke of the building as the "meeting house." This left the word, church, to mean the people, the membership, the congregation.

In 1825 Moses Clark, a "Hardshell Baptist," is reported to have preached the first sermon in Ypsilanti. Before there was any formal organization, occasional services were conducted by three pioneers of the Baptist Sect, Boothe, Powell, and Loomis. M.E.D. Trowbridge in her book, "History of the Baptists in Michigan," constituted the First Baptist Church of Ypsilanti in 1828. She says, "A church was organized between Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor in 1828."

In 1836, the first formal organization of a Baptist Church was effected under the leadership of Elder J.S. Twiss of Ann Arbor along with sixteen members. They met in a brick schoolhouse located behind Woodruff School - now known as the New Beginnings Academy on East Michigan Avenue at Park Street. By 1839 the membership was 75. They purchased a brick church at 110 North River Street from the Methodists. The Methodists had used the building until the floor collapsed during a revival. The building was repaired and used until 1847 when the Baptists moved to the chapel in the Seminary Building on the site where the Ypsilanti High School was later located on the northwest corner of Cross and Washington Streets. The building on River Street was later occupied by the Charles A. Delano Plumbing and Heating Company and by the automobile license bureau.

In 1846 a new church was erected on the southwest corner of Cross and Wash-

ington Streets. The moving of the church from its humble beginning on River Street to the completion of the new building on Washington Street showed a real dedication to the service of Christ. There was only a fifty-six year period of time during which they built two churches. The new church was of wood structure and dedicated June 17, 1847. During this year the ladies formed a Benevolent Society with the minister's wife as the first President. On December 23, 1849, the new church was destroyed by fire. Rebuilding began soon and the dedication of the second structure was on September 4, 1850. In 1855, the ladies' organization became known as the Baptist Aid Society.

In 1881, the building was removed and a foundation was laid for a new church of brick. The cornerstone was laid July 24, 1882, and the new edifice was dedicated on January 30, 1884 at a cost of \$30,000. This Gothic structure had

stained glass windows and a ninety-six foot spire. The congregation met in this new house of worship under the leadership of nine ministers. In 1895 a Young People's Society was organized with 102 members. The men of the church organized a Brotherhood in 1907.

The Reverend William Shaw came to the First Baptist Church in January, 1925, as a young, ambitious and dedicated minister. The building located on the corner of Washington and Cross Street served as the house of worship for the Baptists until the morning of Friday, February 19, 1937, when the church burned beyond any possible use. The church was across the street from the city fire department. The fire is believed to have started in the basement and burned for a considerable time before a passerby stopped at the fire department to make them aware of the fire.

A congregational meeting was held on the evening of February 20, 1937, at the par-



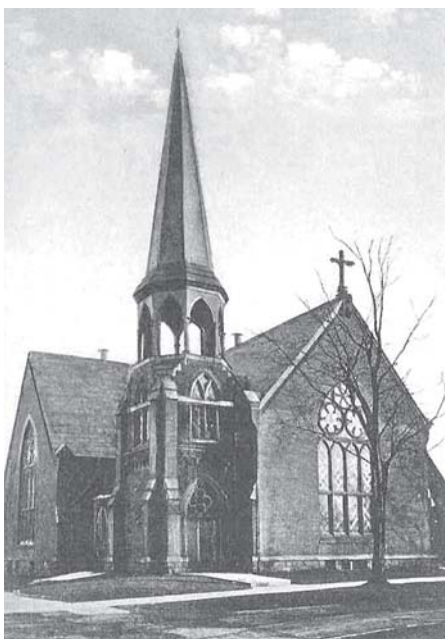
1938 – First Baptist church built in 1938 with an educational wing added in 1955.



1836 – This small brick school house was the meeting place of the first Baptist congregation formed in Ypsilanti.



1847 – The chapel in the Seminary Building, the predecessor of the Ypsilanti High School, was used by the Baptists before they build their first church.



1884 – The First Baptist church built on the corner of Cross and Washington was used until 1937 when it was destroyed by fire.

sonage located at 207 N. Washington Street. The first problem discussed was where the church should meet until a building could be provided. Real Christian concern was shown in the city for the Baptists. Many places for meetings were offered, such as the Masonic Temple, Cleary College, Moore Funeral Home, and nearly every church in the city. It was decided to accept the offer of the Presbyterians, and a program was planned so that the two churches could carry on their programs by alternating services. It was decided not to rebuild on the same site. The property was sold and the Geer Funeral Home was built there, now known as the Janowiak Funeral Home.

Plans for rebuilding started immediately and on Labor Day, 1937, members loaded and hauled 83,000 salvaged bricks from the old church to the new location at 1110 West Cross Street. Every conceivable idea was used to raise money for financing the building. They had tag-day sales, bake sales, dinners, old newspaper collections and many other schemes for raising money. Less than one third of the value of the burned church was covered by insurance, but with that money, the

land at 1110 West Cross Street was purchased for the site of the new and now current First Baptist Church of Ypsilanti. The site was chosen after studying maps of church membership, as well as looking at the direction in which the city of Ypsilanti was growing. The Normal Park neighborhood was developing, and this residential area with wide-open green spaces provided an open atmosphere that the previous location did not.

The new church was dedicated October 13, 1938. The mortgage was burned November 22, 1940. Historical reminders from the previous church are located throughout the 1938 structure. Salvaged bricks literally formed the walls of the new structure, while other items salvaged are more decorative in nature. Pews in the balcony were preserved from the burned Gothic structure. The 1882 cornerstone is embedded in a stairwell wall. A soot-covered beam is now used as a fireplace mantle in the basement. A marble top buffet was recovered, as was the hymnal and attendance registry. The picture of Christ at the front of the sanctuary was also an item that was not destroyed by the 1937 fire, and has become a focal point of the church as well.

The interior appearance of the current church, adorned yet simple, followed a movement in the non-liturgical churches

of the early 10th century. The belief was that a church should be significant unto itself and not resemble other structures, symbolizing the significance religion should play in life. In order to prevent exhibitionism on the part of the choir or worship leaders, the seats for the choir and clergy located in the chancel are divided by a central aisle, with the choir in two sections facing each other and not the congregation. This allows the congregation to direct their worship and praise to the altar, located in the center of the aisle, and not to the people conducting the service. Also significant is the unobstructed central aisle that leads to the altar. The lack of an obstructing bar symbolizes the Christian way to God - unobstructed and open to all.

In the mid-1950s, an educational unit addition to the west of the original structure was added. This three story wing cost \$100,000. An office and preschool wing was added in 1970 to complete the present structure.

During the forty years that Rev. William Shaw served as pastor, 1925 - 1965, he was instrumental in starting the Willow Run Community Baptist Church, now known as the Immanuel Baptist Church at 1565 East Forest Avenue in the Willow Run area. He also helped to start the *continued on page 10*



First Baptist church with a classroom and office complex added in 1970.

First Baptist Church of Ypsilanti *continued from front page 9*

Grove Road Baptist Church. This church later merged with the First Baptist Church and the property sold to a church of another denomination. Financial help and moral support were given to struggling new churches in Rawsonville, Saline, and Chilson Hills in Ann Arbor, along with the Metropolitan Baptist Church here in Ypsilanti. The church has also had an outreach program for many years with college students at Michigan State Normal College now known as Eastern Michigan University.

It is noted that during 74 years, 1925-1999, only three ministers served as pastors. Following the forty year pastorate of Rev. Shaw were: Rev. William Bingham served as pastor from 1965 to 1980, and helped to establish the Meals on Wheels program, with the office located at the

rear of the current church building; Rev. Vivan Martindale served as pastor from 1981 to 1999; and Rev. Randy Johnson started his pastorate in 2001 and continues as the current pastor.

For almost thirty years, the church has presented the Living Nativity for three evenings at Christmas time. The church continues its service of ministry with the Interfaith Hospitality Network, mission trips, Christmas baskets, social concern fund and monthly offerings to support local organizations. ■

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"First Baptist Church of Ypsilanti," (undated – about 1978), Miss Nina A. Wilson



1850 – First Baptist church (left), located on the corner of Cross and Washington Streets, was built in 1850 and used until 1981.

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Phyllis Diller's Time in Ypsilanti

By Tom Dodd

Phyllis Ada Driver was born on July 17, 1917, the daughter of an insurance man, in Lima, Ohio and is widely credited as the first woman to successfully pursue a career in stand-up comedy, even though she went on to reach new plateaus as an actress, author and concert pianist, as well as pursuing a wide range of humanitarian interests. Starting out on a track to become a concert pianist, Phyllis Driver attended Chicago's Sherwood Music Conservatory. Her goofy sense of humor at Northwestern University and her 1939 elopement with first husband Sherwood Diller ("Fang") put a temporary end to her musical career. Some say she got her start in Ypsilanti; some say otherwise.

A few Ypsilanti folks remember this outrageous comedian from long before she achieved stardom. During WW II Diller's husband was hired to work at the Willow Run Bomber Plant and they rented an upstairs apartment from Thorvald Marsh at 215 1/2 Oakwood in Ypsilanti. Here are some first-person testimonials.

- "Cleaning your house while your kids are still growing is like shoveling the

walk before it stops snowing," Diller has noted, and apparently that ethic was evident even then. Thor Marsh's son Bob remembers how Diller's stacks of garbage bags on the outside stairway would collect from the bottom step to the top step before their tenants would put them out for the weekly pick-up. "Housework can't kill you, but why take a chance?" she has said in her comedy acts.

- "We saw her years later at Baker's Keyboard Lounge in Detroit," recalls Bob Marsh. "When I re-introduced myself from our ringside table, she went on to weave her whole act that night around her experiences in Ypsilanti. She told how I was the neighborhood bully who always chased her son, Peter, around the block. Not only was that a fiction, but she elaborated hilariously on having a crush on Ed Dykman, the grocer at the Handy Store on Sheridan Street."
- There are undocumented tales still circulating about Diller's performing at the local Laundromat, but no real record exists of her material in such a venue. Barbara Weiss and Virginia Abdo recall that Diller sang in the choir at the Presbyterian Church, "but that was before our time," Weiss says.

After her days in Ypsilanti, Diller worked for the advertising department of a California department store, followed by a job writing for an Oakland radio station. Her



Phyllis Diller at the 2004 Beverly Hills special screening of MGM's De-Lovely. Photo: Lester Cohen, WireImage.com.

ability to make people laugh at community functions prompted her (with her husband's encouragement) to get started on a career in comedy. Her philosophy apparently worked: "Whatever you may look like," Diller has said, "marry a man your own age! As your beauty fades, so will his eyesight." That marriage did not last, but the humor did.

Phyllis Diller went on to study acting and scrutinized the techniques of her favorite male comedians, finally making her nightclub debut in 1955 at San Francisco's Purple Onion in a precursor to today's comedy workshops. Biographer Hal Erickson notes that eighty-nine additional weeks at the Purple Onion enabled Diller to hone her skills to perfection; her first comedy record album appeared in 1959, with numerous TV and stage appearances quickly following suit. Diller developed an outrageous comedy persona, complete with grotesque wigs, garish costumes and her trademark cackling laugh. Though always a favorite with live audiences, Diller was never quite able to sustain her appeal on film, says Erickson. Her 1966 TV series "The Pruitts of Southampton" was unsuccessful, as was her only starring features film, "Did You Hear the One about the Traveling Saleslady?" (1968). She fared somewhat better as a supporting actress in several Bob Hope comedy films in the late 1960s (Hope was a longtime Diller fan).

continued on page 12

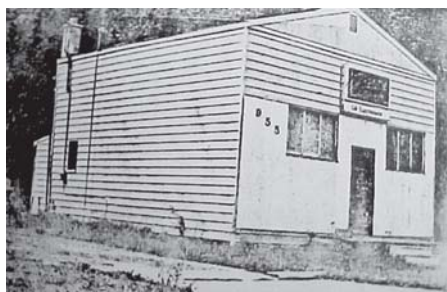


The Dillers rented the upstairs apartment at 215 Oakwood

Phyllis Diller's Time in Ypsilanti

continued from front page 11

In the last two decades, Phyllis Diller has periodically altered her public personality, "improving" her plain but distinctive facial features with plastic surgery, concentrating more time on piano concerts and less on stand-up comedy and confining her TV appearances to Home Shopping programs and "psychic hotline" infotainment half-hours. Perhaps Phyllis Diller's "funny hausfrau" throne has been usurped by younger talents, but one must not forget that Diller was the one who stuck her neck out first, blazing the trail for the many Roseannes and Brett Butlers who followed. [Hal Erickson]. "I know all that Mother, but what have you done (for me) lately?"



The Handy Store on Sheridan Street, now replaced by a house.

Since her Ypsilanti days, Phyllis Diller has appeared as a piano soloist with 100 symphony orchestras across the country, including performances in Dallas, Denver, Annapolis, Houston, Baltimore, Rochester, Pittsburgh, Detroit and Cincinnati. Diller has launched several new facets of her kaleidoscopic career: her own chili, PHYLLIS DILLER' ORIGINAL RECIPE; A line of LA VIE beauty products and PHYLLIS DILLER CREATIONS, jewelry. She did all this after rearing five children. "We spend the first twelve months of our children's lives teaching them to walk and talk," Diller has said, "and the next twelve telling them to sit down and shut up."

Phyllis Diller has been acknowledged and honored by many organizations for her patriotic, philanthropic and humani-



Baker's Keyboard Lounge in 1962. Left to right: Margaret Marsh, Robert Marsh, Phyllis Diller, Mildred Fletcher, Thorvald Marsh.

tarian endeavors, including: the "Minutemen Award" from the U.S. Treasury Department; "Distinguished Service Citation" from the Ladies Auxiliary of VFW; "Humanitarian Award" from the AMC Cancer Research Center and the "USO Liberty Bell Award". Phyllis Diller is an Ambassador for CHILDHELP USA (Living Legacy Award, 1989). She was recently honored by the American Academy of Cosmetic Surgery for having the courage to publicly bring plastic surgery "out of the closet." Diller continues to give and grow and the Women's Inter-

national Center recognized her in 1990 with their Living Legacy Award.

Diller remembered Ypsilanti after all that success in show business. "She made a contribution to the Save Pease Auditorium campaign a few years ago," recalls Barbara Weiss. With all that success since Ypsilanti, Diller may still adhere to her original sentiment: "I want my children to have all the things I couldn't afford. Then I want to move in with them." But they probably won't be moving back to Oakwood Street in Ypsilanti. ■

Ypsilanti Historical Society Museum & Archive Hours

The Museum, located at 220 North Huron Street, is owned by the City of Ypsilanti and is operated and maintained by volunteer workers in the public interest of the Ypsilanti Historical Society. The Museum and Archives are open to the public at no charge.

Museum Hours:

Thursday ____ 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm
Saturday ____ 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm
Sunday ____ 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Archives Hours:

Monday ____ 9:00 am - 12:00 noon
Wednesday 9:00 am - 12:00 noon
Sunday ____ 12:00 noon - 3:00 pm

Note: The Museum is closed during the month of January

The Campbells - Jewels and Insurance!

By Bill Nickels

Betty Campbell was born in the original Beyer Hospital which sat just north of the present Bortz building on South Prospect. Her friend Peter Fletcher was born at Beyer at the same time and Betty jokes with Peter that they shared a crib together. Betty's business life started at the age of 14 1/2 at McClellan's Dollar Store on North Washington while she was a student at Ypsilanti High School. She worked for William Hilbert who now lives in Ann Arbor and loves to stop and talk with employees from earlier days. When she was 17, her typing teacher got her a job with Earl Freeman who ran a real estate and insurance agency in the small Tudor cottage across the street from the Ace Hardware store at 120 Pearl Street. While she was employed, Earl took in his son-in-law Herbert Bunting as a partner in 1950. In 1955, the business moved to 103 W. Michigan (two doors west of Huron Street on the south side of the street) and merged with Ross Bower Insurance. When Ross' son Robert joined the business, it became known as Bower Freeman Bunting & Bower Insurance.

Jim Campbell was born in Cross Village and his family moved to Harbor Springs when he was very young. When World War II broke out in 1941, he joined the navy. He served four years on the USS Saint Louis in the Pacific. His ship was torpedoed once and he saw action at the Battle of Leyte Gulf, Guadalcanal, and Okinawa. After he was discharged as Pharmacist Mate First Class, Jim returned to Harbor Springs and took advantage of a Veteran Administration program sponsored by Western Michigan University at Pine Lake. He graduated from Western Michigan's watchmaker school and is a licensed horologist (watchmaker). Jim met Ypsilanti jewelers Abe Green and Cyrus C. Jenks at Pine Lake's placement center.

His cousins invited Jim to Ann Arbor and C. C. Jenks offered Jim a job at his North Huron shop in 1947. They became partners in 1948. The Jewelry Shop moved from North Huron to 103 West Michigan and later moved to 107 West Michigan in 1955. This last move was to a fish market that required ex-



C.C. Jenks Jewelry Store on North Huron Street.

traordinary effort to make the store front smell like a jewelry shop. In 1960, Cyrus C. Jenks became ill and "walked in one day and he handed me the keys. I earned half of the business while working for him and I did not know it," Jim recalled.

When Betty and the insurance agency moved to 103 W. Michigan and Jim with the C. C. Jenks & Campbell Jewelers moved to 107 W. Michigan, the stage was set! Business was good at the insurance agency requiring lots of ink refills. Betty purchased the refills from Jim making round trips from 103 to 107. These trips led to their marriage on Au-

gust 4, 1974. In 1978, Jim bought 107 West Michigan and he remodeled it completely to include a second floor home for he and Betty. Jim was the first business proprietor to live downtown near his business.

The sale of a special order \$15,000 diamond ring was Jim's largest transaction while in the jewelry business. He said "I did a lot of watch repair, now we throw our battery watches away when they don't work. There were five jewelry stores in downtown Ypsi, and we all survived." One day during lunch, two men entered the back door of Jim's jewelry store. One

went to the diamond case and the second tied Jim's hands. His employees were ordered to stand against the wall while they cleared the display cases. The robbers were never apprehended. His front windows were broken five times during "snatch and run" robberies. Diamonds, watches, and women's jewelry were Jim's biggest volume items.

The most unusual insurance policy written by Betty was a liability policy for transporting an antique locomotive from Van Buren Township to Manchester, Michigan. The most unusual claim she paid was for raccoons wrecking the inte-

continued on page 14

The Campbells - Jewels and Insurance! *continued from page 13*

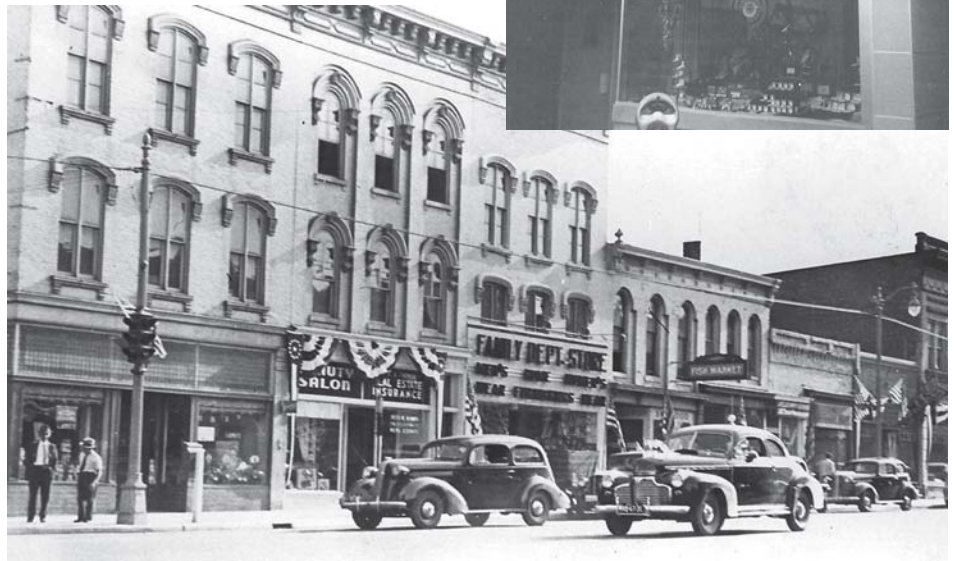
rior of a house. The claim was paid because raccoons belong to the bear family and not the squirrel family. Damage done by squirrels is not covered by most home owner policies. Freeman Bunting insurance had about 2500 clients, most of them local. Betty enjoyed writing policies for many kinds of businesses as well as personal accounts. Because of the contacts her agency made, Betty said "Freeman & Bunting was known as the second Chamber of Commerce."

When the present Key Bank Building opened in 1975, Herb Bunting wanted a suite address, so the insurance agency signed a ten year lease. The rent increased dramatically when the eleventh year started and Herb decided it was time to sell the agency. Betty expressed an interest in buying the agency and Herb agreed as long as Carol Warner, another agency employee, would be her partner. Carol and Betty ran the agency together until Carol was tragically killed in a car accident at the corner of Hewitt and Ellsworth Roads in 1988. Betty bought Carol's interest and she became sole owner of Freeman Bunting Insurance Agency. Herb Bunting once sold policies provided by 17 different companies. Betty wanted to have just one provider of insurance policies and convinced Herb to reduce the number of providers to 5. As owner of the business, she reduced the number to one, the Westfield Insurance Company.

Jim acknowledges the Ypsilanti Jaycees for teaching him how to meet the public, run meetings, and operate a business. He joined the Jaycees when he was 26 and stayed "until they kicked me out due to my age," says Jim. In 1982, he was co-founder of the Central Business Community, a committee of the Ypsilanti Area Chamber of Commerce. Jim served as its treasurer and Betty served as editor of its monthly newsletter. Jim was appointed by the Ypsilanti City Council to the Downtown Development Authority

Right: Campbell's Jewelry operated in downtown Ypsilanti for 42 years and closed in 1988.

Below: 103 and 107 West Michigan Avenue in 1942.



when it was first formed and served for 20 years. City Council also appointed Jim to the Ypsilanti Police and Fire Pension Board which led to another 17 years of service. From the beginning, both Jim and Betty were Ypsilanti Heritage Festival main stays. They spent their entire weekend working as cashiers in the gambling tent when it was sponsored by the Central Business Community. A 1986 Certificate of Appreciation acknowledged their efforts.

After operating Campbell's Jewelers in downtown Ypsilanti for 42 years, Jim decided to retire and made it official on September 30, 1988. Now sole owner of Freeman Bunting Insurance Agency, Betty took the opportunity to move the agency from the Key Bank Building to Jim's store front at 107 West Michigan. Jim teases Betty by saying she kicked him out of his business locations twice, the first time when he was at 103 West Michigan and the last when she "forced" him to retire by taking over 107 West Michigan. While remodeling the jewelry store to make it ready for Betty, Jim fell from a ladder as he cleaned an arch that was covered with more than 100 years of

paint and mortar. The fall broke his neck and he was cut by a power saw he was using at the time. Stitches, a neck brace, and time led to a complete recovery.

Betty and Jim with Betty's sister Mary Lou Linke and Maggie Sell continued Freeman Bunting Inc. at 107 West Michigan until Betty and Jim (Jim for a second time) decided to retire together in 2005. The agency was sold to Cam Innes Thayer of Innes Insurance agency in Ann Arbor. The Freeman Bunting name will continue with Mary Lou as office manager and both Mary Lou and Maggie as licensed agents. Kris Reuter, new to the agency, is attending classes to become a licensed agent.

In addition to the Heritage Festival, Betty and Jim have volunteered for the Festival of Lights, Gilbert Residence Board, the Ypsilanti Historical Society, sponsored Meals on Wheels, Ypsilanti Community Choir, and the Ypsilanti Community Band. Ypsilanti City Council appointed her to the Ypsilanti Board of Ethics when it was first formed. Their volunteer time also extends to the First
continued on page 16

Antique Mini-Lamps on Display at Museum

By Joy Anne Shulke

Antique mini-lamps will be on display at the Museum through the Christmas holidays. Irene Jameson has loaned approximately 60 lamps to be displayed from her original collection of about 300 lamps. Mrs. Jameson and her deceased husband, Paul, accumulated the lamps over 40 years. He was a Michigan Bell repairman who was originally interested in glass items, especially paper weights. These interests lead to mini-lamps. After his retirement, he became an expert in the repair of spinning wheels. The assemblage is unique in Michigan because there aren't many mini-lamp collectors in this state. Usually, the Jameson's had to travel to Ohio, Pennsylvania or New York to find the lamps.



Some of the antique mini-lamps on display in the Museum.

Glass was not manufactured on a large scale in Michigan. That is because manufacturers needed natural gas as a heat source to make glass. Each glass company specialized in their own glass pattern and colors. The most desirable are made of colored milk glass. Most lamps found today are about 75 years old, although there are some that are over 100 years old. They come in different colors, heights of chimneys, different shaped burners and bases. Finding a complete lamp is difficult. Approximately 20% did not have their bases and 40% are missing their shades. And they may have the brass collar missing.

Mrs. Jameson shared a little of her knowledge about the lamps. Mini-lamps were used somewhat like we use night lights today. They also were called "sparking" lamps since, when the lamp went out, the gentleman was expected to go home. In the 1930s and '40s they were sold as "perfume lamps" because scented oil could be in the base so that, as the lamp burned, the room took on a lovely aroma. As we talked, she pointed to one of the museum's mini-lamps on a shelf in the kitchen. She said it probably was sold in a dime store and is missing its shade.

The Jameson's collected "everything". She became interested in the mini-lamps because they were pretty. She uses them as decoration in her home, at dinner parties, and when the electricity goes out. She mentioned an orange one, which alone to her is ugly. But in the fall it fits in perfectly with the decorations on her mantle.

The Jameson's collected other items beside the lamps. She has begun down-sizing the various collections. She has passed on her favorite mini-lamps to her children and grandchildren. The museum is proud and lucky that she is willing to share them with us and the public. Please avail yourself of this opportunity to enjoy these lovely little lamps from the past. ■

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The Campbells - Jewels and Insurance! *continued from page 14*

Baptist Church on West Cross. When the Ypsilanti Police Department offered its first Citizens' Police Academy, both Jim and Betty attended and graduated with perfect attendance.

Betty earned the Athena Award, presented by the Women's Council of the Ypsilanti Area Chamber of Commerce, in 1997. This award is presented all over the country and recognizes an Individual who has contributed most to women's business success in a community. Both Jim and Betty say they do what they do to make Ypsilanti a better place.

Traveling is their favorite retirement pastime. They have cruised with Princess, Norwegian, and Holland America cruise lines. Betty and Jim were on the Pittsfield Senior Center trip to Lake George this fall when the tragic boat accident occurred. They were on the second bus that took the second identical ship that sailed without an incident. Betty said, "Except for the reporters, the people at Lake George were wonderful and did all they could for the travelers."

Jim and Betty continue to live upstairs at 107 W. Michigan surrounded by Jim's mother's trunk full of memories and dad's roll top desk that Jim has used continuously since he started in the jewelry business. They look forward to an Alaskan cruise and their continued involvement in Ypsilanti. ■

Lucy Osband – the Forgotten Lady *continued from page 6*

intellect and spirit over physical conditions."

- "The range of her knowledge was marvelous, and her memory was equally so. She never seemed to anyone to be old, she was so alive to all progress in every line of endeavor and her spirit was so young."

One of the purest, loveliest of souls refined by years of worry and pain and in life a source of inspiration and helpful living to thousands of men and women in all parts of the world. (The Ypsilantian, p.9)

The Department of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance at Eastern Michigan University celebrated its 100-year anniversary in 1994. Much of what was celebrated would never have been realized without the efforts of a "Forgotten Lady," - a lady whose efforts no longer remain anonymous. ■

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Lost Ypsilanti Speaks - The Starkweather Fountain *continued from front page*



The top part of the Starkweather fountain, the figure of Hebe, in the late 1930s after it had been moved to the entrance to Tourist Park on Catherine Street.

several years and then in 1935 the top part of the fountain, the figure of Hebe, was moved to Tourist Park, now Water Works Park, on Catherine Street. There she graced the entrance to the park. After that the fountain disappeared completely.

Over the years there has been a great deal of speculation and rumor about what eventually happened to the fountain. At one time suspicion fell on the city park commissioner, who it was rumored had sold the fountain and other City owned items for personal gain. This accusation was never proven. Another rumor that circulated was that City workers dumped the fountain into the Huron River. The most likely scenario is that the fountain was scrapped during World War II as a part of the war effort. ■

**The information in this article is based partly on an article written by James Mann in a series called "Footnotes in History."*

Report from the Museum Advisory Board

By Virginia Davis-Brown



What an exciting fall this has been at the Museum. We were thrilled when we had over 400 visitors see our "Lost Ypsilanti Speaks" exhibit. We have decided that it will continue next year with new sites as well as the old ones. We hope that it brought back some memories and you were able to better understand the history of Ypsilanti.

This year we were able to have the "Quilt Exhibit" again and what a wonderful exhibit it was with 127 quilts displayed throughout the museum. It seemed that every one was different and had it's own story to tell. We want to thank all who were kind enough to lend us their precious quilts. Our special thanks to Sandy Knight for demonstrating the technique of quilt making.

There are two new exhibits now on display at the museum, one is a collection of 54 miniature lamps that were loaned to us from Irene Jameson's collection. They are all different and beautiful. The other is honoring people who served in World War II with a display of uniforms and items of that period. You must come in and see them.

It is a busy time as we have decorated the Museum for the holidays. The Christmas tree is up and all the decorations are in place waiting for the Open House on December 4, from 12:00 noon to 4:00 pm and the New Years Eve celebration starting at 6:30 until 10:00 pm. If you have not spent part of New Years Eve with us before, we invite you to come to our house to enjoy the music, refreshments and visiting with old friends and maybe meet some new ones on the last night of the year.

It has been a wonderful year for all of us and we thank you all for your support, but there is one thing that you can do for us this next year. We are always in need of docents, so if you have a couple of hours a month that you could spare please let us know. You can always call me at 484-0080 or let anyone at the Museum know and we will be in contact with you to receive training. ■



**HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM ALL OF US AT THE
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Genealogical Society Meeting!

The Genealogical Society of Washtenaw County will meet on Sunday, December 4, 2005 at 1:30 pm at the Education Center Auditorium, St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Campus, 5305 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti, Michigan. The meeting is free and open to the public. Visitors are welcome.

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Report from the Archives Advisory Board

By Maria Davis

The newly formed YHS Archives Advisory Archives Board has been working for the past several months to develop more efficient daily operations. The Board has had on-going discussions regarding the organizational structure of the Archives and how to best utilize the resources it encompasses. Our first objective was to develop a new loan policy. This policy was revised, presented to the Board of Trustees, and approved at the November meeting. The Archives Board is excited about the implementation of the new loan policy and will continue to work hard to benefit the YHS Archives into the year ahead.

News from the Fletcher-White Archives

By Gerry Pety

The tomato plants are all gone, the summer sun has gone into hibernation and the onset of a cold winter is afoot in Ypsilanti. While this wonderful weather lasted we had visitors from Oregon, California, Colorado, New Mexico and even Toledo, Ohio! What a fantastic group of visitors we had this summer and fall! One thing you have to understand is that even though they come from all parts of these great United States and Canada they have their family roots planted deep in the Ypsilanti soil. And the most compelling reason for most of our visitors is genealogy and the exploration into that soil. Somewhere and sometime in their life they came across a reference to this quizzical little town called Ypsilanti. What a strange name this place was given. This invariably results in a general search into a place called Ypsilanti City where their family came from. Soon then the question arises, what did they do there, where did they live, and why were they there to begin with? Hopefully most found answers they sought, as we saw and spoke with a lot of happy people who came to find these answers here in the archives. Maybe, you have lived all of your life right here in Ypsi but just never understood why grandma Minnie and grandpa Benjamin came here to live in 1902. This is your chance to break in those new shoes of yours and scamper down to the archives and find out.

Wow! We have been inundated by the students of Eastern Michigan University or Michigan State Normal to some of you older folks. They are budding historians, in most cases, here to learn how to find tidbits of the history of the area and to practice the methodology of historical writing and research. I try to be extra nice to these young people as someday they will be writing about all of us in this time and place. When the students are in the archives, I believe, I learn as much as they do about our Ypsilanti history and the heritage we share. Welcome to you all!

Along with his graduate students from Eastern, Dr. Ligibel has donated a lot of articles and the like from about 40 years ago for our files on a variety of subjects. Likewise, Mrs. Smeaton-Burgess has contributed a book on Dixboro, Michigan and a history notebook about Michigan State Normal College. We did not have either of these items in the archives until now. Thank You!

Thank you to Carol Mull who contributed a pre-press copy of her forthcoming book about the Underground Railroad in Washtenaw County. Over the summer Carol has done extensive research here at the archives and elsewhere in the county. The book is very well documented, researched and many familiar Ypsilanti names are to be found within its pages. It is available here for research purposes and for copying and is a great historical read for those interested in this subject. Come in and take a long look at this book.

Finally, if you have any interesting stories about ghosts, spirits or the paranormal involving Ypsilanti please send us your information for our new file here at the archives. People are always interested in these articles and, who knows, maybe the ghost of aunt Bertha may be the talk of Ypsi again! ■

Upcoming Membership Meetings!

By John Pappas

Sunday, Dec 4, 2005 – 1:30 pm: Our Annual Membership Meeting will be held at 1:30 pm on December 4th to elect new members to the Board of Trustees. Refreshments will be served and the Museum will be decorated for Christmas. It will be a short meeting so bring some friends and enjoy our beautiful Museum house.

Sunday, Feb 19, 2006 – 2:00 pm: You are invited to our annual Valentine Tea and special program featuring our own Ypsilanti Historical Society archivist, Mr. Gerry Pety. Gerry will update us on recent activities and acquisitions, explain changes in loan policies and procedures and share with us some interesting additions to our archival collection. Those wishing to tour the YHS Archives will be able to do so following the program and refreshments.

Sunday, May 21, 2006 – 2:00 pm: Join us for our Spring membership meeting and our featured program, "How to Capture and Save Your Family's Stories for All Time." Our presenter will be Stephanie Kadel Taras, a professional biographer with extensive experience in writing the life stories of everyday people in Michigan. She will share real life stories and practical tips which will entertain and engage the audience. Dr. Kadel Taras will also provide a variety of resources and do-it-yourself strategies. Refreshments will be served following the program and there will be time to visit with our speaker. ■

More information will be forthcoming on these programs. Please mark these dates on your calendar. See you there!

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Tucker Article *continued from page 7*

Bolstered by the public interest and more magazine articles Preston and his growing entourage of automobile folks set their sights on a Dodge Plant in Chicago, where B-29 engines were produced during WW II. Many plants were in the hands of the War Assets Administration and they needed to be re-purposed for peace time usage. Obtaining this plant was no small task as there were others who wanted it and then as now, politics and business often overlapped and special interests sometimes got in the way.

With the plant finally secured, Tucker teamed with those he thought could help him sell stock while the actual work of producing a car to sell was yet to begin. A number of experts, both legit and a few "not so" legit weave in and out of this era of Tucker's history. But, with the plant in his possession, the public behind his dream of producing "The Car of Tomorrow, Today" and a brisk stock sale totaling about \$17,000,000 dollars Preston was ready to produce an Automobile.

On June 19th, 1947 over 3000 stockholders, potential dealers, politicians and media attended the debut of the Tucker 48' sedan. (The name Torpedo had since been discarded for reasons of image) The band played, the curtain raised and his daughter, Mary Lee Tucker christened the car with a bottle of champagne as the onlookers cheered. I remember talking to Mary Lee a few years ago about the experience and she had been away at college and flew in for the event. The first time she actually saw her dad's dream was when the curtain opened and she was speechless. I've since seen some vintage film footage of this event and you can see the wonder in the then 20 year old, Mary Lee's eyes when the curtain raises. Orders were pouring in, dealerships were being planned and the Tucker '48 was soon to be available. The public's interest was high and although far from being out of the woods, things were looking good for Ypsilanti's, Preston Tucker.

Then, the Security and Exchange Commission started an investigation, word

was leaked to the national press that all was not right at Tucker Corporation and the government came in, seized all the companies records and essentially ran them out of business. The bad press hurt and the enemies in government and industry that Preston had made went out of their way to make it worse. Friends, prospective dealers and impartial experts rallied but the damage was done.

When the trial came about in 1949 the prosecution had such a weak case that Tucker's lawyer, Bill Kirby chose to offer no defense and in less than a half hour the jury found Preston and his associates not guilty. The damage, however, was done and the 51 Tucker sedans were all that were ever built.

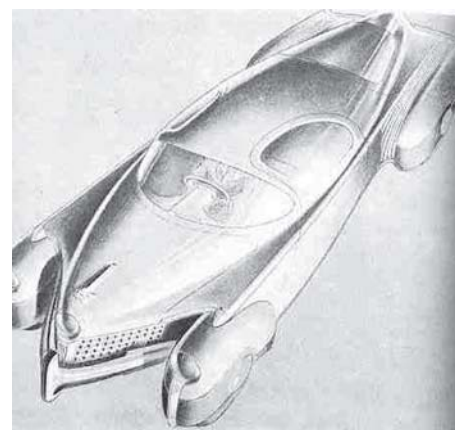
Preston Tucker died of pneumonia in Ypsilanti in 1956 while negotiating to build a car in Brazil that was to be called the Carioca. The dream was over.

Much has been written and even a major motion picture was made regarding this unique personality and his role in the history of America. Many folks in Ypsilanti knew Preston and his kids. I've had the pleasure of meeting a number of the family and folks who worked for him and these are 2 facts I'd like to point out.

- There was never a Tucker automobile built in Ypsilanti. Plans, drawings, transmission elements and engine work, but no actual car was built here.
- Despite the ballyhoo and mixed opinions, Preston Tucker was focused on his mission and had every intention of building the car he dreamed of. There may have been mistakes in judgment, choices of business associates and engineering errors at times but this was not a "take the money and not deliver" scam.

The same forces that made Tucker, turned on him and brought him down and we can only wonder why.

A great book to read is The Indomitable Tin Goose by Charles Pearson and it is available at the Ypsilanti Public Library. Another is Design and Destiny by Phil Eagan who worked on the Design Team at the plant.



This is an early "Torpedo" rendering from around 1945. Very futuristic. By the time the Tucker 48 was designed, a number of changes had been made, but when the original article appeared in PIC Magazine, this is the concept that fired up American car lovers.

As I said earlier, I've met Tucker family members and former employees and if any of the readers are interested, I'd be glad to share some of their observations in a future article.

The surviving Tuckers are prized by collectors and are currently selling for close to \$400,000 dollars.

Tucker has been inducted into the Automotive Hall of Fame in Dearborn as recognition of his earnest and innovative effort.

There is a club of Tucker owners and fans with close to 400 members around the world. The Tucker Automobile Club of America hosts conventions, has scholarships programs and helps all those interested learn more about the topic. For more info check out their web site. <http://www.tuckerclub.org/index.php>

At the Gilmore Automotive Museum in Hickory Corners, Michigan you can find, the Tucker Historical Collection and Museum which is a wealth of documents and artifacts related to this slice of history. For more info check out their web site. <http://www.tuckerclub.org/html/hcl.php>

Not too shabby for a dreamer who dared to step off a side street of Ypsilanti and tried to challenge the status quo. No, not too shabby at all, I'd say. ■

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