

Ypsilanti GLEANINGS

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



SUMMER 2022

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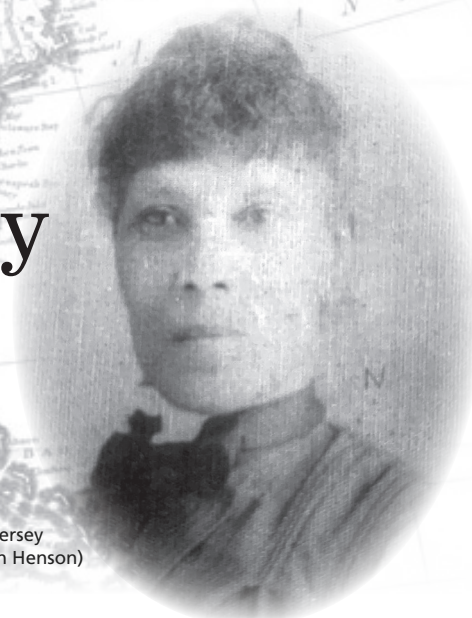
www.ypsiihistory.org

The Ypsilanti Historical Museum is a museum of local history which is presented as an 1860 home. The Museum and Rudisill & 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.

Georgia, Indiana, Canada, and Finally Ypsilanti

BY PASTOR THERON W. "BILL" KERSEY III

Julia Lawson-Kersey
(Grand Daughter of Josiah Henson)



The name Kersey is from the coastal city in England with the same name. My ancestors were mixed Caucasian (English), Indigenous (Tuscarora), and African-American races. They were free farmers living in Georgia and were considered African-American. With the enactment of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793, they were subject to being arrested and sold into slavery. The way they defended themselves from that threat eventually led them to making Ypsilanti their home. Here is their story.

My great-great-great-grandfather, Ephriam Kersey, was born in 1794 in Georgia. He was a free African-American farmer. Escaped slaves as well as free African-Americans were potential targets of slave catchers. To evade be-

ing arrested, Ephriam travelled north into Kentucky and across the Ohio River around where Madison, IN is located. Ephriam married Rebecca in Indiana where in 1824 his son Elisha and five additional siblings were born. With support from Indiana Quakers, he found a home and owned property in Jennings County Indiana. It is documented that he lived there in 1835, 1840, and 1850.

The second Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 further empowered slave catchers by forcing citizens to cooperate with them. African Americans, regardless of their social status, lost all rights and privileges to escape arrest again, sometime between 1850 and 1861, Ephriam

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From the PRESIDENT'S DESK

BY BILL NICKELS

Korey Morris completed his internship with us at the end of April. With his almost completed Historic Preservation graduate degree from EMU, he was offered and accepted a full-time job with the Ford Piquette Avenue Plant museum – CONGRATULATIONS Korey! With our agreement with EMU and their Historic Preservation Program, Korey was replaced by Austin Martin as our new museum Graduate Intern. Please welcome Austin when you visit the museum.

Mary Claire Anhut called in May and offered a portion of her family's "The Anhut Family Collection at the Henry Ford Estate." We were pleased and excited to accept such a significant offering. The collection is composed of eighty-six pieces of dining room china and silver, many inscribed with "F." With the special Henry Ford rocking chair previously donated by the Anhut family, the collection will be known as "The William and Mary Claire Anhut Ford Collection" and displayed in the museum's dining room. It honors Henry Ford's influence on the geography, economy and history of Ypsilanti. He built a dam on the Huron River that created Ford Lake. He built the Ypsilanti Ford Plant, influenced Joe Sesi to found Ypsilanti Industries and his Lincoln Mercury dealership, and influenced Alfred Langer to build his

Motor State factory in Ypsilanti. Collectively, they employed thousands and paid major taxes to the City of Ypsilanti. His building of the Bomber Plant changed Ypsilanti's history.

This summer, our thirty year old handicap ramp will be demolished and replaced with a concrete ramp. The concrete ramp should last for many years with minimum maintenance and, with a new design, enable access to our two apartments via a sidewalk at grade level eliminating the stairs with our old ramp. In addition, the removal of a dead tree permits us to add a parking spot to our parking lot! Things do work in mysterious ways – Joe Lawrence donated \$250,000 and restricted us to use only the earnings from the investment on building projects. The invested money earned enough money to pay for our new ramp at the same time the old ramp needed to be replaced.

Our archives were significantly upgraded early in June with the purchase of acid free archival boxes. This upgrade will help insure the preservation of our paper documents for many years to come.

During May, I received a telephone call from YHS member Larry Thomas. He said he had family documents from his 90+ year-old sister that she wanted donated to our archives. We received



Museum Board member Nancy Taylor and Mary Claire Anhut pack up the donated Ford collection.



Austin Martin is the new Museum Intern from Eastern Michigan University.

a valuable description of the Showerman family who arrived in Ypsilanti from Detroit early in the Nineteenth Century over the old log road while their belongings arrived by barge up the Huron River. Knowing the value of these documents, I thought there must be plenty of Ypsilanti information about you, your family, and the house and or businesses you own that may likely be lost if it is not submitted to our archives to be available for future generations to research. We have family files that keep genealogical information, business files, and street files that keep the histories of properties and buildings. All can be kept for the future by bringing them to our archives Tuesday through Sunday from 2 to 5.

In some ways, we are still recovering from losses experienced during our 16 month COVID closure. Because of a shortage of volunteer weekend docents, we have been closing the museum one or two times per month. Three or four new weekend docents would solve that problem. Weekend docents choose a maximum of one weekend day per month to be available to greet guests between 2 and 5 while being paired with a second docent. Before their first day, they spend a couple of hours learning Ypsilanti history and are presented with a docent guidebook. Let our Museum Graduate Intern Austin Martin know your interest at 734-482-4990 or yhs.museum@gmail.com. It is a good way to learn about your community and meet some interesting people!

Our archives have thousands of obituaries filed in alphabetical order. We accumulated a box full of obituaries during and after COVID that are looking for a volunteer to trim, place them in acid free envelopes, and file during our open hours. That is an interesting way to learn about your community a person at a time. Let our Archives Graduate Intern, Becca Murphy know your interest at 734-217-8236 or yhs.archives@gmail.com.

Have a wonderful and safe summer!



Tom Quigley, Al Rudisill and Tom Warner assemble acid free boxes.



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and his family likely traveled north along the much used Underground Railroad route along what is now US 27 into the Kalamazoo area and east through Ypsilanti to Detroit or Wyandotte and Canada. It is uncertain if he traveled as a free African-American or traveled with the protection of the Underground Railroad. I next found him living free in Ontario, Canada in 1861. Living in Colchester, Ontario, Ephriam was a successful farmer until he died in 1794.

Ephriam's son, my great great grandfather Elisha Kersey, married, farmed, and had a young family in Indiana in 1850. He also traveled with his family from Indiana to Ontario between 1850 and 1861. He died in Dresden, Ontario where he worked as a carpenter. The Kersey family was known for its gifted carpenters, brick masons, musicians and ministers.

The youngest son of Elisha was named Solon. Solon's wife, Julia Lawson-Kersey, lived in Ypsilanti and was the granddaughter of Reverend Josiah Henson, a well-known abolitionist and author. Reverend Henson founded a school for the successful Underground Railroad travelers near Dresden, Ontario. Solon had three daughters, one of which was Bessie Kersey Vick-Crosby who lived in Ypsilanti for a period of time.

Another son of Elisha's, John, was my great grandfather. He was born in 1847 while his father Elisha farmed in Indiana. As a child, he traveled to Canada with his parents and is reported as farming in Camden, Ontario in 1871. His 3rd daughter Ella was born in Dresden, Ontario in 1881. After the Civil War, with the Fugitive Slave Act no longer a threat, he returned to the United States sometime after Ella's birth in 1881 and before he remarried in 1893 in Ypsilanti. Different than his parents and grandparents, John returned to the United States with his brother Solon's family members in Ypsilanti. He died in 1897.

John's son Theron William Kersey, my grandfather, was born in 1893 here in Ypsilanti. He was a big Detroit Tiger fan and Minister of Music at the Brown Chapel AME church. He was famous for the church's annual Easter Sunday Cantata.



Theron W. Kersey (Son of John Kersey).

Employed at Central Specialty, he died on the job in 1959.

Theron's son Theron William Kersey Jr, my father, was Ypsilanti born in 1922 and lived in what we called "The Project," Ypsilanti's public housing on Harriet Street. He worked at the Bomber Plant and was drafted into the Army where he served in France and the Pacific operating a bull dozer burying the dead. He later worked at the Ypsilanti Ford Plant, Lucille's Funeral Home, and the Bop Shop on North Huron next to Jackson Cleaners, dying in 1976.

I was born in 1941 and lived in The Project the first three years of my life until my parent's dissolved their parental responsibilities. I and my siblings became wards of the State of Michigan where they found separate African-American foster homes for the three of us.

My first was in nearby Whittaker where I attended early elementary school at the old large brick school on the corner of Whitaker Road and Ellis Road. From there, the State of Michigan successively found African-American foster homes for me in Bangor, South Haven, and finally in Lesley, MI. Even though I was treated well by all of my foster parents, the uncertain life led me to not talking when I was in the company of others. From this behavior, the State of Michigan concluded I was cognitively disabled and placed me in a Washtenaw County residence with similar children.

My grandmother rescued me from the facility and asked to become my foster mother. In order to do so, she needed to buy a house. Even though she was an educated music teacher, she had a difficult time getting a mortgage to buy a house. She unsuccessfully applied to teach music in Ypsilanti Public Schools. Mr. Clyde Beatty, then principal of Ypsilanti's Harriet School, was able to get her hired as a 2nd Grade teacher enabling her to become my official foster mother. Back home in Ypsilanti, I attended Ypsilanti High School from the 7th to 12th grades graduating in 1961. On Ypsi High's track team, I was a sprinter with West Pointe bound Bob Arvin, the team's shot putter. Even though Bob was a top notch student with expectations he would do great things, he was both humble and kind, you would wish everybody would be like Bob.

At the age of 19, I volunteered for the United States Air Force



Bill Kersey's wedding with Grandmother Olive.

and served four years. It was during my service that I first really knew what it was like to be discriminated against because of my color. While serving in Hawaii, the only people who would talk to me were the Samoans. That's because they looked like me. This was about the same time that Hawaii became our fiftieth state.

I was a member of Ypsilanti's Community Church of God in 1973 and worked with the young boys in the church. Reverend Fred Davis asked me to take over when he was gone; I was 27 years old then. I was ordained in 1984 and served as Assistant Pastor from 1984 until 2006 when I became the Pastor. I served in that capacity until I retired in 2021. I still keep in touch with some of the young boys I worked with during the 1970s.

I expect the story of my family is similar to many other African-American families who traveled north using the Underground Railroad route through, Kentucky, Indiana, and Michigan on the way to Canada.

Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa is quoted *"You did not choose the family you were born in. You are a gift to them as they are to you."*

(Theron W. Kersey's nephew, Terrence A. Vick, provided the family genealogy for the article. Terrance is Senior Pastor of Kingdom Grace Ministries. The article is dedicated to Saundra Vick, Theron's cousin and Terrance's mother.)



This article is dedicated to Saundra Vick, Theron Kersey's cousin and Terrance Kersey's mother.)



Jane Bristol Kinne, painted by her niece Roccena Belinda Norris.

In the last edition of the Gleanings you read some of the letters that Dr. Amasa Kinne wrote to his young wife Jennie in Ypsilanti while he was serving as a volunteer physician during the Civil War. I promised to tell you more about her and share her short Civil War diary with her descriptions of the village of Ypsilanti at the end of the war and after President Lincoln's murder. I hope you find it as fascinating as I did. Jennie, whose given name was Jane, was anything but a typical stay-at-home Victorian wife and mother, as demonstrated in her own Civil War Journal and her life achievements. She was well-educated, had progressive notions about the role of women, and was an active member of the Ypsilanti Ladies Library and a founding member of the Ypsilanti Ladies Literary Society. She is remembered in history as the first woman elected to the Ypsilanti School Board. As you will learn, she did much to enrich the lives of citizens of Ypsilanti while she lived here and raised three intelligent and progressive children.

The Civil War Diary of the First Woman Elected to the Ypsilanti School Board –

Jennie Bristol Kinne

BY JANICE ANSCHUETZ

Let me introduce you to her. The information comes from her great-granddaughter and namesake, Jane Buckwalter, a resident of Brooklyn, New York, who mailed me a great deal of family information including the Civil War diaries of both Amasa and Jennie as well as countless family letters. Additional items were mailed to me by Sue Demb, another great-granddaughter who provided most of the photographs and several family albums. All in all, the descendants of Jennie and Amasa have provided a wealth of in-



Jane Buckwalter, great granddaughter of Jennie and Amasa Kinne in front of a painting of Jennie Kinne, her namesake.

formation to be shared with posterity. This material will be available in the Ypsilanti Historical Society archives, which prior to these generous donations had NO files on this remarkable Ypsilanti family. This should be a reminder for all of us that it is important to share your own Ypsilanti history with the archives.

Jane, who went by the nickname Jennie, was born at Scotsville, New York on Christmas Eve, 1837. She was first child, and only one to survive childhood,

of Lucretia Nimocks and Charles Northrup Bristol. The young family first lived on a farm near Rochester, New York and in 1843 made the journey to Moscow, Hillsdale County, Michigan where they bought a farm. This proved to be a deadly mistake for Jennie's father who died of malaria within nine months. It is not commonly known but malaria was rampant in the undrained swampland in Michigan, including Ypsilanti, and many suffered for years or died from it. Jennie's mother soon married a widower, Nathaniel R. Hammond, and they lived on the Bristol farm until he set out west in 1850 and the farm was then rented.

Jennie and her mother moved in to her maternal grandparent's home in Moscow where she attended a rural school. This was just a country school so when Jennie was about 11, in order to continue her education, she moved yet again to stay with an aunt and enrolled in Spring Arbor Schools, which later became Hillsdale College. After a year she moved to Jonesville and first lived with her aunt, Maria Nimocks, and then boarded with another family. When her Aunt Clarissa Nimocks married Hiram Tuller, she went to live with them and attended the Jonesville Public Schools. Though only 16 years old, Jennie taught a summer session in a country school nearby before continuing her education at Albion College from 1854-1856, graduating at eighteen years of age as a qualified teacher.

Her first teaching job in Grand Rapids, Michigan was quite a distance from her family. It was an expensive and hard journey home by railroad and stage to visit them. She instructed in English, French, and algebra in the high school. Her next teaching job was closer to home in Jack-



The large home of Dr. Charles and Genevieve Bartlett in New Haven, Connecticut, where Jennie Kinne lived with her family after leaving Ypsilanti.

son, Michigan, where she taught for four years with the wage of \$300 for the first year, and the years thereafter she earned \$400 a year. Her room and board expenses were only \$2.25 a week.

Little did Jennie know that her life would soon be changed forever. While visiting the home of one of her Albion College teachers, Helen Norris, at Madina, Michigan, she met Helen's uncle, Dr. Amasa Kinne, a widower with two children. Amasa was 21 years older than Jennie, and his father objected to the marriage,

but it seemed that they were meant for each other. Their wedding was in Jonesville on April 3, 1861 and Jennie, along with her mother, moved to her husband's home and medical practice at 220 West Cross Street in Ypsilanti. She quickly became an essential part of the village life. Her new home was adjacent to one of the best public schools in the nation – The Union Seminary. The Presbyterian Church, which they attended, was across the street. We know that the young woman became involved in charity work such as the Ladies Home Society, which provided food, clothing, medical care and even wood for heat to poor families and old people in need. Jennie became part of the Ladies Library and was often elected as an officer. She was also a founding member of the Ladies Literary Association. In later life, she was elected as the first woman board member of the Ypsilanti Public School System, following in her husband's footsteps.

Jennie and Amasa were soon blessed with a baby girl, Florence Bingham Kinne, who was born January 24, 1863 and then three other children including another girl, Genevieve Bristol Kinne, who was born two years later on January 14, 1866, meaning that her husband must have come back to Ypsilanti shortly after the war ended. He was not at home from the war while she was writing her Civil War memoirs.



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Jennie Kinne in front of her Ypsilanti home at 220 West Cross, next to the Union Seminary.

Then they had a boy, Charles Bristol Kinne, born December 21, 1867, who sadly died when he was only eleven years old on New Year's Day, 1878. Amasa had another son named Charles with his first wife, Susan Smith Kinne, who died at the age of two. Their last child, Edmund Peaslee Kinne was born on October 21, 1875.

We read about baby "Floy" (Florence) in Jennie's letter to her husband in the last issue of the *Gleanings* and how she misses her father who has gone away to war. Jennie writes from her Ypsilanti home that "These are such eventful times that it has often occurred to me to chronicle them and Doctor, that's my husband, (Amasa Kinne) often has said that it would be nice to have a little record of our Floy's life as scarcely a day goes by without her waking the whole house into a smile at least by some new speech or motive of her own. I have been so busy for the most part of today in getting Willie (Amasa's son by his first wife, Susan Smith) ready to go to the farm (belonging to Amasa's sister Mary Ann Kinne Norris Beach, mother of Helen Norris who introduced Jennie and Amasa) that I have hardly had time to smile if there had been anything to smile at. Edy Nimocks came tonight to make us a little visit. Floy is well acquainted ...and calls her 'Cousin Weedy'".

Jennie continues her diary with this note. "Today has gone like other days and other third of Aprils for all that it is the Anniversary day. Then it has been commemorated in a manner to have it stand out above the ordinary anniversary. After we were quietly seated for our evening, Laura came rushing in and said we must illuminate for Richmond has

been taken." Jennie continues, "Yes, the great stronghold that defended the Southern Confederacy has yielded at last to the mightier power of the federal army. The confeds (sic) have come to the last ditch yet instead of staying to die in it Lee and his whole army have decamped but theirs is a "forlorn hope" and no one will be greatly surprised to hear soon that Lee's starved hosts have been scattered like leaves of the forest when the strong east wind drives in. Yes, Richmond is taken, the rebellion is almost crushed."

Jennie then describes how the small village of Ypsilanti reacted to this event. A friend brings news that people in the village of Ypsilanti are opening their shutters and drapes and placing every available source of light from candles to lanterns to kerosene lamps to gas lights in their windows. Jennie tells us "Mr. Tindall's house was all ablaze with gas, so not to be behind our worthy pastor, our blinds were made wide open and all out available sources of light were thrown out; another caught the spirit and another, and so on away up the street." The Kinne family lived on one of the main streets in the village – Cross Street – adjacent to the Seminary and on the route to the Normal College. "Men were glad and boys and women, soon a high bonfire blazed up down town and a crowd assembled as quietly as their joy would let, to listen to those who chose to talk to them. Yes, when my anniversary days come to be so many that it will not be easy to remember them all, this will shine out clear and bright as one of the historic days."

Jennie's account of this event and its affect upon the people in a small village inspired me to do some additional

research in local newspapers of the time. Although we do not have a written record of the village's celebration on April 3, 1865, we can read about how the official end of the Civil War, with Lee's surrender. The local newspapers carry this account a week after Jennie's entry. On Monday, April 10, 1865, the Detroit newspapers announced that General Lee had officially surrendered his command to General Grant at Appomattox Court-house.

The Ypsilanti Commercial reported that people in the village "seemed to be at a loss how to make their joy known". The reporter continued "Everything that could

make a noise was brought into requisition. Friend Jenness was near bursting. He got hold of a bell and promenaded the street. S. M. Cutch-eon gave vent to his enthusiasm through a tin horn." Samuel Post, one of the richest men in the village, quickly gathered together a marching band and a flag and marched through town and up and down streets.

There was joy and excitement among the young and old. Cow bells and tea bells rung throughout the village, but the most exciting manifestation was when some young men took control of the cannon on the village square and fired it again and again until at last it exploded sending hot metal pieces flying but miraculously missing the gathered crowd. Those who had signed the temperance pledge seemed to have put their promises not to drink alcohol aside during this occasion and celebratory alcohol was consumed with abandon and gusto. Bonfires and fireworks completed this exciting day when no more young men would have to leave their families and fight or be killed.



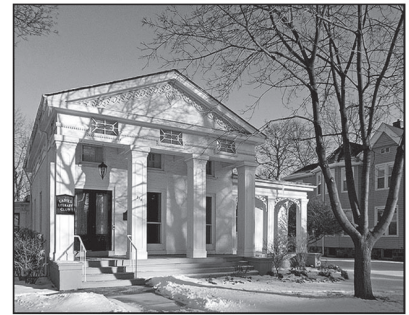
Florence Kinne and her niece Florence Bartlett. Florence Kinne was the first female teacher at Yale.

The Normal, which was a few blocks away from Jennie and Amasa's cozy home on West Cross Street, was lit up with candles and kerosene lamps as were homes and businesses. Spontaneous crowds, parades and speeches celebrated this much anticipated event. And then the joy quickly

turned to sorrow and disbelief. Jennie had been planning for a celebration in her home, making a cake for expected company when she heard the news that Lincoln had been shot. She records

"I had too much to do to write on this day as I was preparing to receive my guests. Yet the terrible events as they have come to

me now blot out all the pleasant interview of friends on this memorable night of this day. On the same day that Major Anderson and a company were in Charleston raising the old flag, the assassin was taking aim at the heart of President Lincoln. Last night, just as my guests were taking leave at half past ten, the terrible deed was done and this morning at seven our President was dead, the one who of all others had endeared himself to the hearts of the people. I have no heart to write today. The stars and stripes that had been raised in the joy that peace had come are at half mast. It means that our noble President is dead, fallen by the murderous hand of an assassin, shot down as his wife stood beside the great and good man. The nation is in mourning...We can only hope and pray that the good Lord will send comfort to his people in this saddest of all calamities...It was sad at church today (which would have been Sunday April 16, 1865). As Mr. Tindall (pastor of the Presbyterian Church) announced the death of the President, his voice failed him and it seemed as if everyone wept as for a



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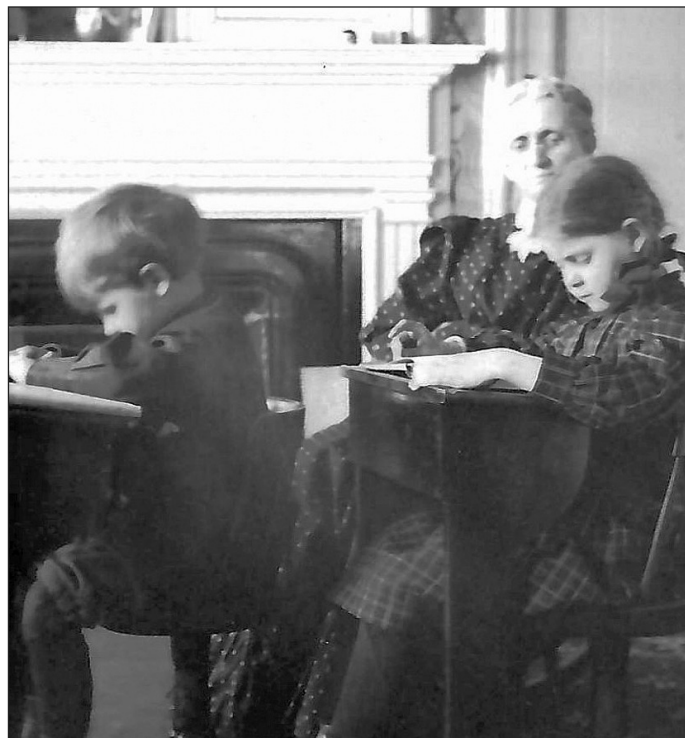
Highest "AV" Peer Rating
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father. The churches were all draped in black.” Sermons were preached throughout the city and people left church weeping.

Jennie then tells about the Ypsilanti village’s funeral for President Abraham Lincoln. Her account is brief, so again I searched the newspapers of the time for more information. It seems that as the people in the village of Ypsilanti could not contain their joy at the announcement of the end of the war, it was difficult for them to deal with their grief at the news of the president’s murder. The Ypsilanti Commercial of April 22, 1865, expressed it this way. “...the awful calamity could not be fully realized at once, but hour after hour the horror and grief kept gnawing deeper and deeper into the soul of our community, until lamentation and indignation was upon every lip and every eye.” Soon the mayor of Ypsilanti issued a proclamation that the city be placed in mourning by suspending business. The newspaper described Ypsilanti as presenting a “most solemn appearance: the streets lined with festoons of black, flags at half mast, the bells tolling, and sorrowing groups at every corner discussing the fearful news.”

It was decided that a national funeral would be organized and conducted throughout the United States for the fallen president. Church leaders gathered in Ypsilanti and together devised a plan so that as many citizens as possible could join for prayers and praise for Lincoln on Wednesday April 19, 1865. Thus, both the Presbyterian Church and the Seminary on Cross Street and Washington Streets were chosen to provide simultaneous services with speakers and choirs alternating their performances between the two buildings. The Ypsilanti Commercial described this occasion. “...at noon on Wednesday, the sorrowing congregations again assembled, and though it was a mournful rainy day, as if God himself felt to weep over His own departed instrument, every available space was occupied in both the Presbyterian Church and the Union Seminary. Both places were heavily festooned with black drapery.”

In both places, the service was opened by a choir and a hymn followed by a sermon. The newspaper reported, “At the Presbyterian Church Reverend Tindall opened the service, Rev. Hewitt and Hickey followed, coming from the Union Hall (at the Seminary) and Mr. Tindall going there to exchange with them.” Jennie Kinne was present at the church and wrote “It seemed indeed a funeral and everyone seemed in mourning. A great rough-looking farmer who sat with us brushed away the tears from his view during the services.” The reporter for the Commercial summarized by stating “The community has felt the past week that a deep, dark cloud was upon us in the form of a calamity such as our country nor the world has ever seen before: but from conferring together, and listening to the counsel of good and holy men, we have come to see, as a nation, now more than ever in the hands of God and all things work together



Jennie Kinne teaching her grandchildren Genevieve and Marshall in New Haven, Connecticut.

for good to those who love Him.”

Jennie’s short Civil War diary ends on April 27, 1865, when she writes “Booth the assassin of the President is taken but not alive. His leg was found broken, is said to have been broken as he jumped from the President’s box at the theatre to the stage, after the murder. He refused to surrender therefore Sergeant Corbett fired to cripple him but the shot took effect too high and he only lived two hours. His body together with his accomplice Howell was brought to the Navy yard in Washington. The body was privately interred in the clothing which was upon it. Thus the prime mover in the conspiracy was gone. The others will no doubt meet the death due to traitors and that will end the fearful tragedy. Still it brings not back to us the great and good man who was never too great to listen to the story of the poor and needy.”

I am sure that Jennie could never imagine that her brief Civil War Diary would be read by us over 150 years later and her words were to create a picture in our minds of life in Ypsilanti at this important time. Thanks to family and census and newspaper records we can find out more about this remarkable young woman. Jennie’s husband, Dr. Amasa Kinne, returned from the war quite ill with jaundice and she had her hands full nursing him back to health. On January 14, 1866, months after the end of the war Jennie had another baby girl, Genevieve, who joined Florence, the baby Jennie refers to as “Flory” in her narrative, who was born January 24, 1863. Charles was born on December 21, 1867

and lastly Edmund Peasless, who was born on October 21, 1876.

Both Jennie and Amasa lived busy and productive lives. Dr. Amasa Kinne's achievements in the community, as a school board member, and his active participation in local and national medical and temperance societies are documented in the *Gleanings*, Winter 2022 edition. Jennie was president of the Ladies Library Association for two years and helped raise money by selling food at the amazing 50th anniversary of Ypsilanti's founding, which I wrote about in the Summer 2020 edition of the *Gleanings*. Not only was she a founding member of the Ladies Literary Association, but served as its president for two years.

In 1882, Jennie ran as candidate for the school board but was defeated. She ran again and was elected as the first woman on the Ypsilanti School Board in 1883, paving the way for women, and eventually served for sixteen years. This was such a novel achievement, when women did not have the right to vote yet, that it was written about in the Marion, Ohio, *Daily newspaper*, of October 10, 1895, the second time she ran for office. They reported that Jennie received 182 of the 536 votes cast for schoolboard. Like her husband, she was a strong believer in prohibition and also in woman's rights, including the right to vote, and she lived to celebrate both the 18th and 19th amendments.

Amasa died on Valentine's Day, 1894, in Ypsilanti and Jennie's mother, who lived with them, died the following year. These sad events were followed in 1898 by the celebration of the marriage of their daughter Genevieve to Dr. Charles Joseph Bartlett in her Cross Street home. The young couple immediately traveled to Leipzig, Germany so that Charles could further his studies. Two years later they went home to New Haven, Connecticut, where Charles eventually became Professor of Pathology at Yale Medical School. In 1899 Jennie joined them in New Haven to be present at the birth of their first child, Florence, and assist with her new grandbaby. Sadly, baby Florence would die at age 3.

We find that Jennie must have returned to 220 West Cross as she is in the Federal Census of 1900, but by the census of 1910 she has moved into the spacious home of Charles and Genevieve and their children. Her daughter Florence was also living with them by that time and was a technical assistant in the laboratory of her brother-in-law at Yale. In 1905, Florence Bingham Kinne was hired to teach at the Pathology Department at the School of Medicine, becoming the first female instructor at Yale. When she was hired,

she was likely to have been one of the only women in the entire School of Medicine, since the first female students were admitted in 1916.

Always a teacher at heart, Jennie helped to home-school the children of her daughter and son-in-law until they were eleven years of age. It seems that Jennie and Amasa's love of education was passed on to their children. Both of their daughters, Florence and Genevieve, were among the first women graduates of the University of Michigan and then became teachers. Family legend is that when they attended the University of Michigan they were required to sit behind a screen while in class so as not to distract male students. Jennie and Amasa's son Edmund was also educated at the University of Michigan. He became an engineer and worked in Chicago before moving to Alliance, Ohio. He gained some fame by inventing the "Kinne Coupler" which was used to join railroad cars automatically. In doing so, like his father who was a physician, he saved lives. Before this invention, coupling railroad cars was extremely dangerous. My own great uncle bled to death when attempting to join railroad cars and had an arm and leg severed.

Before this invention, coupling railroad cars was extremely dangerous. My own great uncle bled to death when attempting to join railroad cars and had an arm and leg severed.



Jennie Kinne with her granddaughter Florence Bartlett.

Jennie continued to live in New Haven with her two daughters, son-in-law and grandchildren, being a much loved and useful member of their household until her death on January 24, 1922, at the age of 85. Her earthly body was returned to Ypsilanti where she rests in Highland Cemetery on River Street, not far from her home on Cross Street, along with her husband and family. However, evidence of her determination, positive spirit and hard work still live on. She has left behind a strong and vibrant library system in Ypsilanti. She enriched the education system,

as her and Amasa's Cross Street home could be said to be the foundation of the high school which was built on it after the Union Seminary and their home was demolished. The Ladies Literary Association continues to be a vital and important part of our community. Jennie and Amasa's devotion to women's rights and equality continue to make progress, and perhaps most importantly, Dr. Amasa and Mrs. Jennie Kinne have left behind an extended family of well educated, kind and amazing descendants, who have shared their story with history by donating materials to the Ypsilanti Historical Society Archives and other historical institutions, and allowing me to write this little narrative and share it with you.

(Janice Anschuetz has lived in the historic east side of Ypsilanti for over 50 years. She is an Ypsilanti historian and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)

The Story of a Surprise Within a Surprise

BY JANICE ANSCHUETZ

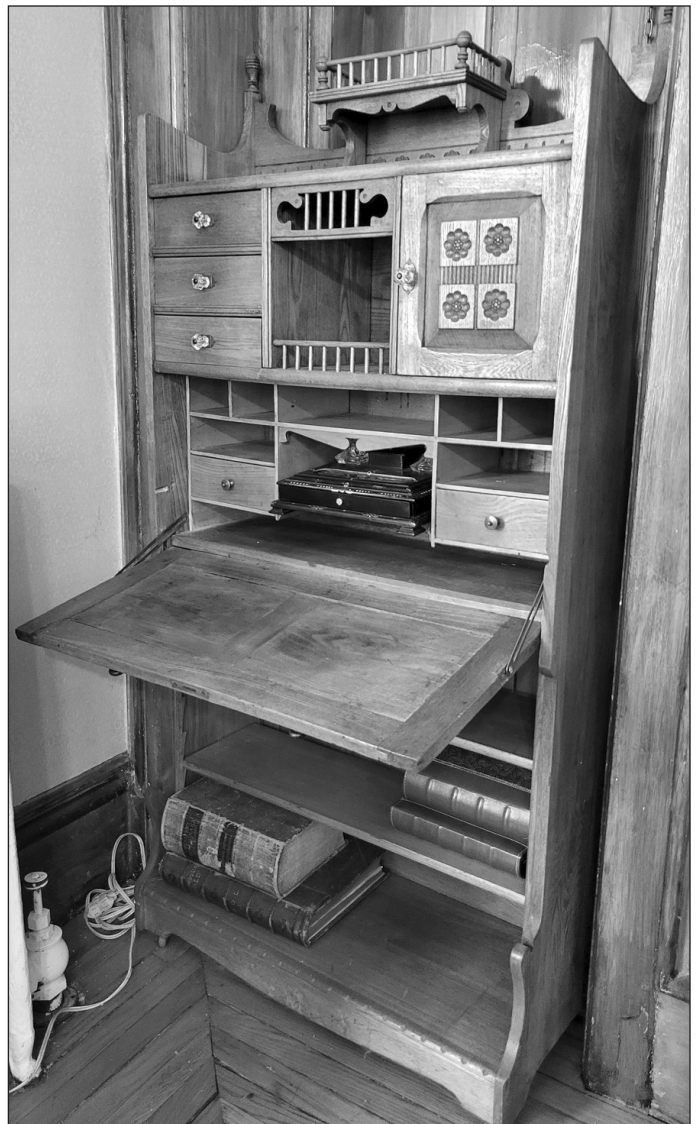
Who doesn't like surprises? I sure do and while living in the nearly 150-year-old Swaine House for over 50 years I've had my share of them - from burst pipes to digging up tombstones in my yard - but now I want to tell you about a nice surprise inside of a surprise. The odds of that happening are slim to none but happen it did. In the Winter 2020 edition of the Gleanings, I wrote about the generous delivery of a beautiful Eastlake desk which had belonged to the family that had built and lived in our house.

Nearly fifty years ago, the desk had been given to a friend of the housekeeper after the last member of the Swaine family died and the house was being emptied in order to put it up for sale. Cheryl Ori, the woman's daughter, contacted me to find out if I would like it. Then, Cheryl and her kind husband, Jim, not only gave it to me but delivered it. As I pulled down the writing surface to open the desk, not only were there the usual drawers and cubby holes but two strange trim pieces. I had never seen anything like that before and was curious about why they were there. I was sure that there must have been some purpose for them. Little did I know that two years later another surprise would solve this mystery.

I received a phone call from Laura Banchero, of Pennsylvania, who was settling the estate of her mother. Laura told me that before she passed, her mother had selected a number of items which had been in the Swaine family that she had inherited from her own mother, Audrey Yeager, which she wanted returned to the Swaine home. Audrey had lived with the Swaine family while attending the Normal, now Eastern Michigan University, during the Great Depression and became a lifelong friend of the family. Laura then brought me a small suitcase which contained a number of miscellaneous items including handmade lace, a knit comforter, an antique stereoscope viewer, a carving knife set with horn handles, a Bible, some photographs of Jessie and Florence Swaine and their mother in our parlor, poetry, writings by members of the Swaine family, pho-



The tiny desk in the center of the Eastlake desk.



The Eastlake desk that belonged to the Swaine family.

tos from the 1930s, and a small portable Victorian writing desk, among other things. The charming desk has a drawer which held several writing pens, very sharp scissors, a small ruler, and also, best of all, a big surprise.

And what was that surprise within a surprise you may wonder? Well, there are actually two of them. The portable desk fits perfectly in the middle section of the Eastlake desk and the unusual trim which I described to you, was actually the bracket on which it rests. It is made to either stay in the desk, neatly out of the way, or to slide out and be used anywhere. For example, while traveling on a train or going on vacation, or even into the garden - and that was not all. There was still an-



The contents of the tiny desk in the Eastlake desk.

other surprise – a photograph taken of Lizzie George Swaine in the 1930's showing the same Eastlake desk in the Swaine parlor, now my parlor! So, I have told you about not one but two surprises and the generous and kind people responsible for them. Today, we use laptop computers instead of lap top writing desks, which serve the same purpose but they are in no way as beautiful and charming as the little stenciled portable writing desk that is now sitting happily inside of the Swaine Eastlake desk where it belongs.

(Janice Anschuetz has lived in the historic east side of Ypsilanti for over 50 years. She is an Ypsilanti historian and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)



Lizzie George Swaine with the Eastlake desk (at left) in the Swaine Parlor – Circa 1930.

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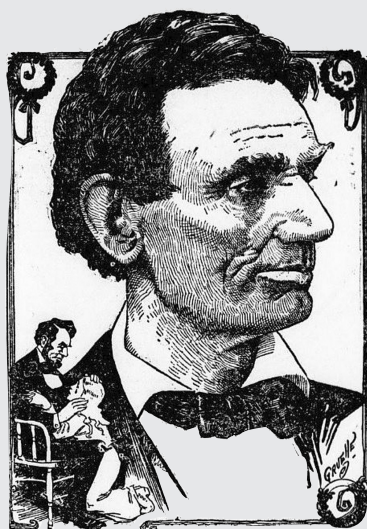
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Newspaper Cartoonist's Depiction of Abraham Lincoln Comforting Eliza Davis Taylor.



Lincoln and Herndon Law Office and Dr. Taylor's Medical Practice were housed in this building at the corner of 6th and Adams in Springfield, Illinois in the 1850s.

Eliza Wells -

Ypsilanti Resident's Remarkable Life with the Lincolns

BY ROBERT ANSCHUETZ

If you could travel back in time and talk to anybody in the city of Ypsilanti around 1900, who would it be? You might think of one of the prominent citizens of Ypsilanti such as Norris, Babbitt, Swaine, Quirk, Starkweather, Follett, etc. But how many of you would pick Eliza Almira Davis Wells? I know I would! What makes this woman's life-story so remarkable is that she was allegedly cared for by Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln and lived with them for two years in Springfield, Illinois, prior to Lincoln becoming President.

The information for this article comes from several reliable sources. Much of Eliza Wells' family genealogical information was published in 1891 in her son Harlow Wells' biography in the "Portrait and Biographical Album of Washtenaw County" published by the Biographical Publishing Company. This book provides only three short sentences devoted to the monumental historic account: "Mrs. Wells, or Miss Eliza Davis as she then was, was left in charge of Abraham Lincoln. She was a teacher at the time in Springfield, having been thoroughly equipped for the work at the Hudson Seminary. She taught Mr. Lincoln's children and was married from his house to Harlow Davis, February 6, 1853."

The detailed facts about Eliza Wells' life with the Lincoln

family were provided by a first-hand account by Eliza herself in a November 26, 1909 newspaper interview by reporter L.M. Cramer for Springfield's "Illinois State Register." The article was published during the year coinciding with the 100th anniversary of Lincoln's birth. A condensed version of the newspaper interview was published in several newspapers the following year, including "The Spokane (WA) Press" (February 15, 1910) and the "St. Joseph (MI) Herald-Press" (February 14, 1910). Some additional details of Eliza Wells' connection with the Lincolns were published in her April 1912 obituary, which was carried nationally in several newspapers including the "Buffalo (NY) Evening Times," the "St. Louis (MO) Star and Times", the "La Crosse (WI) Tribute", and of course the local Ypsilanti newspapers.

The enchanting details of Eliza's story will be revealed later in this article, but first we will start with a short biography. Eliza Almira Davis was born on November 15, 1832, the daughter of Reuben and Eliza (Kilbourne) Davis of Hudson, Ohio, near Akron. Eliza's father, Reuben Davis, was of Welsh descent and was born in 1800 in Killingworth, Connecticut. Reuben was a Whig, as was all his family. As a young man, he moved to Hudson, Ohio, where he was proprietor of a large boot and shoe store and also had a

separate department for the manufacture of custom work.

Eliza's mother, Eliza Kilbourne, was born in 1808, the daughter of George and Almira Kilbourne, who were from Goshen, Connecticut. From Connecticut, they ventured to Hudson, Ohio, along with the Hudson family for whom the village was named. The Kilbourne farm was a tract of land three-quarters of a mile south of Hudson. Eliza Kilbourne and Reuben Davis married in 1824. They had two children, Eliza Almira, a girl, and George, a boy who died in infancy.

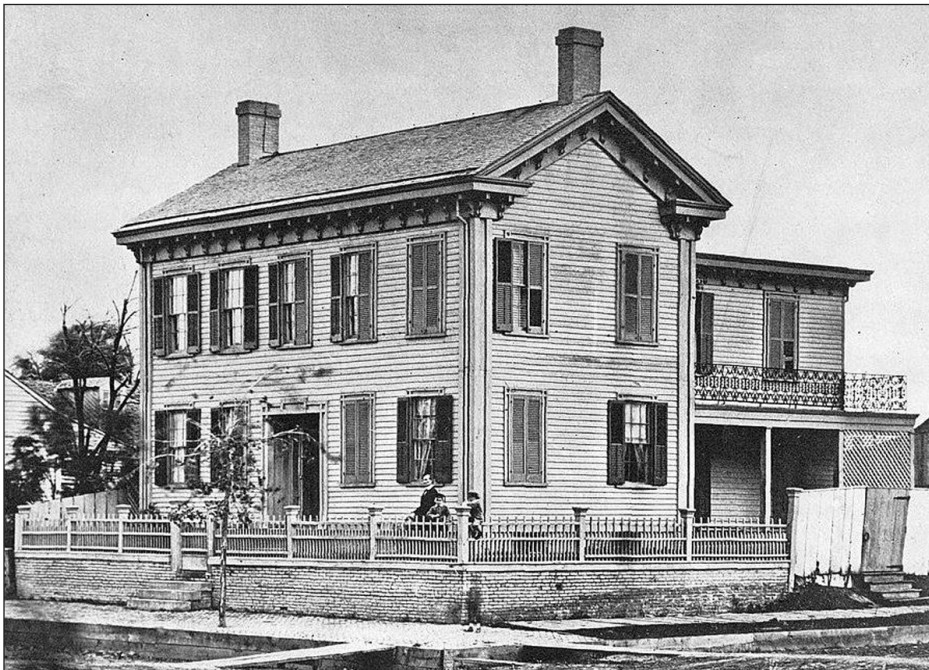
The young Eliza went to school at the Hudson Seminary. When she was just 11 years old, her father Reuben Davis died in 1844. Her mother, Eliza Kilbourne Davis, was remarried in 1850 to Reuben Taylor, a medical student from Springfield, Illinois, and a member of the Taylor family in Westfield, Massachusetts. Dr. and Mrs. Taylor moved to Springfield, and young Eliza took the last name of her stepfather. Dr. Taylor held his medical practice in Springfield in the same building and across the hall from then-lawyer Abraham Lincoln's law practice. In the meanwhile, Eliza became a teacher in

Springfield.

Now this is where the story gets interesting!

Abraham Lincoln developed a great friendship with Dr. Taylor, and Eliza was subsequently introduced to Abraham Lincoln. Young Eliza wasn't impressed with Lincoln's funny stories, and was even critical of his wardrobe. We know these facts from the first-hand account by Eliza in her 1909 newspaper interview. "I didn't like him – then – that was all," said Eliza much later in life. "I thought he was so ugly," she went on.

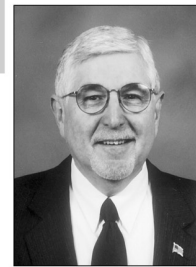
During a siege of cholera in Springfield in 1850, Eliza's stepfather, Dr. Taylor, was working day and night to treat patients. Lincoln's assistance to Dr. Taylor during the cholera epidemic manifested itself both in kindness and financial support. Lincoln made the days easier for Dr. Taylor with words of appreciation and some general good cheer. When medicine was needed by poor patients who couldn't afford it, Lincoln footed the bill. Lincoln even made house calls with Dr. Taylor so that he wouldn't have to bear the entire burden of the stress put on him



Home of Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln in Springfield, Illinois.

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by the cholera outbreak.

Shortly after the cholera outbreak, Dr. Taylor developed typhoid fever. He fought a brave fight for many days as Lincoln tried his best to encourage him to a recovery which wasn't destined to occur. On his death-bed, Dr. Taylor was mostly concerned with his own new wife and his step-daughter. Lincoln had the following death-bed conversation with Dr. Taylor that Lincoln reconstructed to Eliza at a later date: "Don't ye worry, doc, a bit about going. I'm left to look after your family," said Lincoln. "I won't Abe," said Taylor. Dr. Taylor died in December of 1851. Tragically, Dr. Taylor's wife, and Eliza's mother, Eliza Kilbourne Davis Taylor died less than a month later of typhoid fever, and also presumably of a broken heart, leaving the teenage daughter Eliza an orphan.

Eliza reflected on the time after her mother passed away in the newspaper interview. "The funeral was over. They had sent me alone into the parlor, where my mother's coffin was, to say the last farewell. I cannot tell about my grief. I was absolutely alone, for I had not even a distant relative. I threw myself across the coffin simply stunned with sorrow. I shook with sobs and I do not know how long I was there. But after a while I became aware of a gentle hand stroking my hair. And someone was speaking softly."

The man attending the funeral comforted the young orphan girl with words of encouragement. "Eliza, girl, poor Eliza girl, come home with us. Our house is your home henceforth. Poor Eliza girl," said the man. Eliza later reflected, "And I raised my eyes and for the first time in my life I looked into the kindest and most beautiful face God ever created. It was Mr. Lincoln's." The newspaper article mentions that as she recited those words to the reporter, decades after her mother's funeral, Eliza broke into tears. "From now on Eliza, you are our daughter," said Lincoln.

"After that day I lived in the Lincoln



Eliza Wells Home at 309 W. Cross Street in Ypsilanti.

home for two years, lived as a favored daughter would. None of us dreamed then that Abraham Lincoln would ever be the President," said Eliza in the interview. "I knew he was good enough for that or any other high place. But we did think he might be the Governor some day."

Abraham Lincoln took the young orphaned girl into his own home where she ended up living like a daughter to the family. The Lincolns had recently lost their son Eddie in 1851 to tuberculosis and were still grieving, leaving them with young sons Robert and Willie. Tad was yet to be born. Mary Todd took Eddie's loss especially hard, and Eliza did all that she could to help take care of the children and household. Eliza educated Lincoln's oldest son, Robert, and also helped take care of Willie, who was two years old.

Eliza recalled and recited many stories in the newspaper interview about the humbleness, kindness, and generosity of Abraham Lincoln. Eliza's stories

told of the great and gentle Lincoln that grew up with many hardships that he never forgot his entire life. Eliza also shared stories of his devotion to his family and vehemently dispelled notions of any unhappy family life in the Lincoln household, at least when she was a co-occupant.

In her interview, Eliza tried to clear up some misconceptions about Mary Todd Lincoln being spread in the newspapers and magazines at the time, which described her haughtiness, extravagance, and overbearingness. "In all the years I knew Mrs. Lincoln, and the two years I lived in the family, I never saw any indication of such a disposition upon her part, and unless her whole nature changed greatly after she went into the white house as its mistress, a great injustice has been done a noble woman. Always her hand was stretched out to the poor and unfortunate when I knew her. She was always ready to go to the homes of the poor whenever there was sickness there or death, to do

what she could for their relief or comfort. Often have I seen her take a sick baby into her lap, and croon to it and fondle it as though it were of her own station in life. It's wicked that they should say such things of her today."

While living in the Lincoln home, Eliza was courted by a young Harlow Davis who was introduced to her by none other than Abraham Lincoln. The story of how this introduction came to be is detailed in the newspaper interview. Eliza had been invited by the Lincolns to go to a function at the home of Senator Stephen A. Douglas, who later became Lincoln's political rival. Eliza was in a sorrowful mood and didn't want to go to the function. To get her to change her mind, Lincoln teased her and said, "You are to go to this reception with us and if you go without coaxing, I'll see that you find your future husband there." It was a joke, of course, but it turned out to be prophetic. Reflecting on the occasion, Eliza said, "Sure enough, after we had been at the reception but a short time, Mr. Lincoln got into a most animated conversation with a handsome young man, and in a few minutes he started across the rooms towards Mrs. Lincoln and me with him." As the two approached Eliza, Lincoln said, "Eliza, you remember what I promised," and while her face turned red, Lincoln introduced her to Mr. Harlow Davis, the man whom she would later marry.

Harlow Davis was born on August 16, 1828, in Hartford, Connecticut. He was educated in Hartford, and when he was twenty-two years of age, about 1850, he went to Springfield and opened a store in partnership with Charles Eldred. Their place of business was opposite the old State House near the businesses of Dr. Taylor and Abraham Lincoln's law office. Eliza and Harlow's romance blossomed and Harlow asked Abraham Lincoln if he could wed the young girl in his care. Lincoln said yes, and Eliza and Harlow were married in the parlor of the Lincoln residence on February 6, 1854. Lincoln blessed the wedding. Eliza

reflected, "The wedding - ah, the wedding was a great wedding for those days, and Mrs. Lincoln and the man who was afterwards the chief executive officer of the land, could have given me no prettier wedding had I been their real daughter."

After the wedding, Eliza moved out of the Lincoln residence to live with Harlow, with some sorrowness that she had to leave the Lincoln's home and family where she had taken comfort. Harlow and Eliza quickly welcomed the joyous news that Eliza had become pregnant. The joy was short-lived, however, as Harlow died shortly after on July 26th of that same year, leaving his pregnant wife a widow. Abraham Lincoln provided solace and comfort once again to Eliza and invited her back into their home. This time she did not take them up on the invitation. As Eliza explained it, "I could not stand it to go back to the roof that had sheltered me for the two happiest and the two saddest years of my life. I wanted to be among my own people, by flesh and blood relations. As dear as the Lincolns were, I felt I must be among my own kin at that time."

The pregnant Eliza moved to Wyan-

dotte, Michigan to be closer to relatives. It was there that she gave birth to her son on January 15, 1855, whom she named Harlow, after his father. Eliza remembered, "After hearing of the birth of my baby, the Lincolns again insisted that I come to live with them, they wanted to bring up my little boy along with their children, but I could not consent." Eliza married Chandler Wells in Flat Rock, Michigan on May 9 of the following year and they gave the baby Harlow Davis the last name of Wells.

Chandler Wells was a native of Buffalo, New York, and was born on June 4, 1812 to Sgt. Marmaduke and Martha (Holmes) Wells. When Chandler was six years old, his parents settled on Government land in Gibraltar, Michigan. From there, they moved to Flat Rock where Chandler Wells farmed his land and was elevated to the position of Reverend in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Chandler Wells married Nayome Clark in 1838. They had three children together - Martha, Clark, and Chandler - before she died on April 27, 1853. Chandler met and married Eliza Davis a few years later.

In addition to Harlow, the Wells' had a



Parlor of Lincoln Home where Harlow Davis and Eliza Davis Taylor were married.

daughter together, Ida, who was born on January 6, 1859. After Rev. Chandler Wells died on October 28, 1870, leaving Eliza Wells a two-time widow, she moved to Ypsilanti so that her children Harlow (16) and Ida (11) would have a better education. Chandler and Eliza's daughter Ida later married R.A. Garrison and moved to Detroit. She died at a very young age of diabetes on September 14, 1906. Harlow Davis Wells went on to establish a grocery business on Congress Street (now Michigan Ave.), was a city Alderman, became Mayor of Ypsilanti from 1895-1896, and Postmaster of Ypsilanti from 1900-1904. He married Violetta "Lettie" M. Riggs of Belleville, Michigan, on March 2, 1897. Harlow Davis Wells died on February 24, 1913 and is buried at the Highland Cemetery.

In Ypsilanti, Eliza Wells kept house at 309 W. Cross Street and was an honorary member of the Home Association in keeping with some of life's lessons in generosity passed on to her by the Lincolns. The Home Association provided welfare for poor people including money, food, and heating materials. The newspaper interview indicated that all throughout Eliza's house were photographs of Lincoln. Eliza said that one of the greatest regrets is that she had recently lost the photograph taken of the Lincoln house the day she left it as a bride, in which the Lincoln family and she and her husband were grouped on the steps of the Lincoln house.

"I saw him once after he was elected president, and that was when he was just leaving for Washington" said Eliza in the newspaper interview. "He kissed me good bye – I will never forget that – and his last words to me seemed to indicate he had some presentiment he would give his life to his country." Those last words from Lincoln to Eliza were, "I have a feeling of oppression, as though some calamity is about to befall us. I hope it is to be my trouble, and not the nation's."

So how did this story of Eliza Wells

go unheard of for so long? The 1909 newspaper article clears this up a little by concluding: "So quietly has Madam Wells lived in Ypsilanti all these years and so little has been given to telling the things dearest to her heart, that few people in that town today, aside from her own immediate circle of friends dream that for years this little lady's life was closely woven with that of the martyred war time president. Madam Wells is probably the only person living, aside from the president's son (Robert) now ill in New York, who knew Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln personally."

The fact that this story isn't published in every Lincoln biography or every historical book related to Ypsilanti is indeed a mystery. As I was researching this story, there were several contradictory pieces of information that made me question some of the facts. Here are some of those issues:

Historians on the Civilwartalk.com web forum doubted the accuracy of the accounts in the newspaper interview. Abraham Lincoln has been studied extensively and nobody ever heard such a story of Eliza Wells. <https://civilwartalk.com/threads/from-now-on-eliza-you-are-our-daughter.143432/>

Eliza was at least 19 or 20 when her mother died, not 16. It wouldn't be so urgent to find a foster family in Illinois after her mother died, especially when she had plenty of relatives back in Ohio.

I couldn't find records of the wedding of Eliza Davis (or Eliza Taylor) to Harlow Davis in Springfield, even though I found the complete wedding records for Sangamon County during the five-year period when the wedding it was said to have occurred.

Eliza Wells said that the man that she married at Lincoln's house was named Harlow Davis. I was getting somewhat confused researching the article because Eliza's maiden name was also Davis, and she says that she married someone with the same last name of

Davis. Also, Eliza's grandfather was allegedly Reuben Davis, and Reuben was her step-father's name (Dr. Reuben Taylor). Was she getting some of these names confused?

I found a website from Hudson, Ohio (where Eliza was born) that had a detailed history of a Harlow Davis house in Hudson. <https://hudsonheritage.org/property/harlow-davis-house>. The website gives the entire history of the Davis and Kilbourne families which matches closely to the biography of Eliza's son from the 1891 Washtenaw County biography. The difference is that in the Hudson, Ohio account, it turns out that Eliza's GRANDFATHER was named Harlow Davis, not Reuben Davis. It would be extremely coincidental if Harlow Davis was also the name of the man that she married in the Lincoln house as Eliza said. Especially given that Eliza's story said that her husband was from Connecticut, which is also where her grandfather was from.

I can't find any state death certificates or find-a-grave information for any Harlow Davis in Springfield, Illinois, which should have been fairly easy to find if the information about his death in 1854 is correct.

Some of the years aren't quite right. Eliza Wells said that she was married in February, 1854 in the Lincoln house and in July 1854 her husband died. Their son Harlow (the future mayor of Ypsilanti) was born the following January of 1855. However, I found the marriage certificate of Eliza's wedding to Rev. Chandler Wells in Michigan, and it was from 1854, which was the same year she allegedly was married in the Lincoln house and prior to her son's birth. Eliza's account would have put the wedding to Rev. Chandler Wells in 1856.

The bottom line is that without extensive research of the facts (which may be impossible if some of the facts aren't true), it is hard to say what parts about the story are accurate and which parts are not. Eliza's mother definitely

married a Dr. Taylor from Springfield, Illinois, as I found the marriage certificate and this was also documented in the Hudson, Ohio, biographical information of the Davis/Kilbourne families. I believe that Eliza Wells' stepfather Dr. Taylor and Abraham Lincoln were acquaintances in Springfield, which would mean that Eliza knew the Lincolns. It's even quite plausible that the Eliza Wells lived with the Lincolns for a period of time, but possibly more in the role of nanny, housekeeper, or teacher as some of the obituaries alluded. A close foster-parent type of relationship would almost certainly have been documented in historical biographies of Abraham Lincoln, and it wasn't.

The part of the story that I'm especially not so convinced about is whether she married a man named Harlow Davis in the Lincoln house who would have been the biological father of Harlow Wells, Ypsilanti's future Mayor. The name Harlow Davis is the name of Eliza's grandfather, and I couldn't find records of the marriage or the death of Harlow Davis in Springfield in 1854. Whether Eliza Wells, in her old age, was confused about the facts, a good storyteller, or trying to cover up an out-of-wedlock birth may never be known. The newspaper article may have also exaggerated or changed some of Eliza's statements to make a better story.

Whether Eliza Well's story of her rela-

tionship to the Lincolns is totally accurate or not needs much further researching. If the majority of her account is true, which I believe to be the case, who knows what other fascinating secrets and stories Eliza Wells may have known about Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln and their two young children? That is why, if I could talk to anybody in the city of Ypsilanti in 1900, it would definitely be with Mary Wells to try to get to the bottom of this fascinating story.

(Robert Anschuetz grew up in Ypsilanti in the historic Swaine house at the corner of Forest Ave. and River St. He is a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)

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Harlow Wells

Ypsilanti Mayor and Businessman

BY ROBERT ANSCHUETZ



Harlow Wells – Mayor of Ypsilanti 1895-1896.

Harlow Davis Wells was born on January 15, 1855, in Johnstown Township, Wayne County, Michigan. His birth account is remarkable. His mother Eliza (Davis) Taylor, allegedly married a gentleman named Harlow Davis on February 6, 1853 in the parlor of Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln's home in Springfield, Illinois. Tragically, the story goes, Harlow Davis died in 1854 while Eliza was pregnant. Eliza Davis moved to Wyandotte, Michigan, while still pregnant to be closer to family and it was near there that she gave birth to young Harlow. Eliza Davis later married Chandler Wells of Flat Rock, Michigan. The young baby Harlow was given the last name Wells. On January 6, 1859, Chandler and Eliza Wells had a daughter together named Ida. When Chandler Wells died around 1870, Eliza moved with her children to Ypsilanti for a better education.

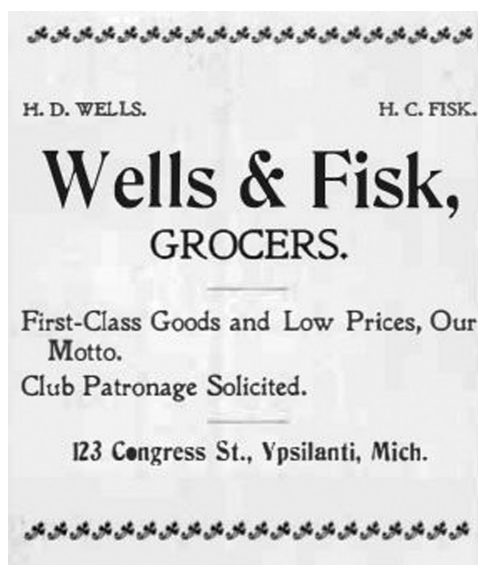
In Ypsilanti, young Harlow Wells finished his education in the high school seminary and was hired at the Weeks & Lawrence grocery store at 123 West Congress Street (now Michigan Avenue., where unfortunately, the original building burned to the ground in the 1970s). Harlow worked on Saturdays during the school year and virtually every day during the summer while finishing his education. When he was

twenty years old, Harlow began full-time work at the store. Mr. Wells remained with Weeks & Lawrence, which passed through various changes in partnership, until he began his own business manufacturing brooms under the name of H.D. Wells & Company.

The broom business didn't last long, however, as he sold the business and in 1883 went back into the grocery business in partnership with Hiram C. Fisk, under the name of Wells & Fisk at the same location of the Weeks & Lawrence store for which he had worked previously.

The Wells & Fisk store had a frontage of twenty feet on Congress Street. and a depth of eighty feet. The store was well stocked with the choicest of both staple and fancy groceries, including table delicacies. Wells & Fisk did a successful business and kept three clerks employed in addition to the two owners.

In an August 13, 1885 local newspaper article, Harlow Wells was described as having black hair and enjoyed playing ball, and was also said to be fond of practical jokes. The article also stated that "no one knows how to enjoy a bachelor's life as well as Harlow." Harlow Wells served as delegate to the Washtenaw County Republican con-



Advertisement for Wells & Fisk Groceries.

vention, and in 1890 he was elected Alderman (equivalent to a city councilman) of the Third Ward of Ypsilanti. Wells was a Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee of the City Council and in his first year was also Chairman of many other important committees. Wells' political career culminated with him being elected Mayor of Ypsilanti in 1895-1896.

Harlow's sister, Ida, married R.A. Garrison and moved to Detroit. She died at a very young age of diabetes on September 14, 1906. Harlow lived with his mother Eliza at a home at 309 W. Cross Street, which still stands near Adams Street. A long-time bachelor, Harlow finally found true love in his 40's and at age 42 married Violetta "Lettie" M. Riggs of Belleville, Michigan, on March 2, 1897. Mr. and Mrs. Harlow Wells continued to live at 309 W. Cross along with his mother Eliza. On January 17, 1900, Harlow was appointed as Ypsilanti's postmaster and served for

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four years until March 23, 1904.

Socially, Wells was a member of the Masonic order and reached the First Degree in the Knights Templar order. Harlow's mother Eliza Wells died in Ypsilanti on April 15, 1912. Harlow Davis Wells passed away at a relatively young age on February 24, 1913 and is buried at Highland Cemetery. Af-

ter his death, Violetta moved back to Belleville where she later died on November 4, 1922. Harlow and Violetta had no children.

(Robert Anschuetz grew up in Ypsilanti in the historic Swaine house at the corner of Forest Avenue and River Steet. He is a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)



Buildings on the Southside of the 100 Block of Congress Street looking East. The Wells & Fisk Grocery store occupied the first floor of the cut-off 3-story building at the far-right of this photograph.



Dennis & Maggie Hagan in the Library of the Museum during their spirit hunting activity.

TOLEDO SPIRIT HUNTER'S REPORT

BY DENNIS HAGAN

The Toledo Spirit Hunters first started their investigation of the Ypsilanti Historical Museum on the second floor in the front bedroom where the original owner of the home was reported to have died. The investigation uncovered knocking sounds heard on the top of one of the dressers. The investigators also felt a paranormal presence in one of the front bedrooms. Farther down the hall on the second floor in the room with several musical instruments the investigators got a flurry of activity with orchestra music being played over an electronic device called a "spirit box." One of the investigators also saw a light anomaly come into the room from the hallway. The investigating team was very pleased with the high amount of activity they experienced in that room.

The team moved down the hall to the children's playroom. While they were getting their equipment in place both investigators were startled by one getting their vest tugged on while at the same time the other investigator got her hair tugged on and moved. When this happened a "scream" was heard over the Ghost Tube and "did you do that" was heard over the Spirit Box. The male investigator asked the spirit to come hold his hand to be seen on the "SLS Camera" a Structure Light Sensor Camera. "Wait" was heard on the Spirit Box in response to the question. The Toledo Spirit Hunters would rate The Ypsilanti Historical Museum to be number two on our list of museums investigated for "spirits" because of the tremendous activity they encountered during their investigation.

Museum Advisory Board Report

BY EVAN MILAN, CHAIR

We are now in June, and as I prepare this quarter's report, it dawns on me that this marks a year that I have been honored to serve as your Museum Advisory Boards Chair. Many things have occurred subsequent to May 15th 2021, when I began my three-year term. We have been continuing to navigate our unprecedented circumstances in the first years of the 20s. We have managed to bring some of the museum's traditions, such as our Christmas open house and tour group visits, back into practice. We have also found ourselves navigating through the retirement and loss of some of our most devoted members and friends.

With a year of experiences to consider, there is one overarching theme I find that cannot go unsaid. Our Museum, our Society, our community at large would not be what it has developed into, without the endless hours of work put in by our volunteers. On Sunday, June 12, I was privileged enough to be joined by some of our Docents, Advisors, and Trustees for an opportunity to say thank you for their years of service. There are so many members, however, who were unable to attend. I take this time to thank each and every individual who has spent time, even just a few moments, to help us improve and maintain the Ypsilanti Historical Museum and Archives.

We must also offer a great deal of gratitude to our community, for allowing us to house some of Ypsilanti's

most cherished artifacts. Visitors to the Ypsilanti Historical Museum will soon find some new pieces in our collection with relevance to Henry Ford. Mary Claire Anhut has donated pieces of a silver dining set bearing the iconic script F, denoting the illustrious owner of these pieces. Additionally, as we are honored to house a display honoring the awe-inspiring army career of Charles Kettles, we have recently discovered, with the help of Mr. Kettles' son, that there are more pieces to be displayed commemorating the legacy of an Ypsilanti Veteran. In the next few months, visitors to the museum will soon be able to view these long-stored artifacts.

Finally, the museum will soon commence a project of improved accessibility for our visitors. After years of contending with a deteriorating ramp and steps leading to our Heritage Room entrance, an improved cement succor will lead the public to our doors. The Board of Advisors is indebted to the Board of Trustees for putting in the work to budget a project of this magnitude, as well as to clear it with the Ypsilanti Historic District Commission.

Signs are good that we will enjoy a productive Summer, both in the museum and in our community. We can all look forward to a trajectory of continued growth and development.



Mary Claire Anhut donated pieces of silver to the Museum which originally belonged to the Ford family.



Front of Haab's Restaurant on Michigan Avenue.

HAAB'S Restaurant

— A History

BY JAMES MANN

"Remember when every town or city had one restaurant," asked the handout, "that was so well known that its name and the town's name were synonymous?" For Ypsilanti, that restaurant was Haab's. No longer. Haab's Restaurant closed for the last time, at 8:00pm, on Thursday, March 3, 2022, bringing to an end almost 90 years of history and memories.

The history began with the brothers Otto and Oscar Haab. The brothers graduated from the University of Michigan in 1932. Oscar with a degree in Literature and Otto with a master's degree in languages. This was the time of the Great Depression so employment in their chosen fields were limited. The two went into the restaurant business and managed the Old German restaurant in Ann Arbor for two years.

The two opened Haab's Brothers Cafe at 18 West Michigan Avenue in Ypsilanti in 1936 in what had been a saloon since 1850. Already installed, during a 1906 renovation, were the tin pressed ceiling tiles and the long Mahogany bar made by the Brunswick pool table people. In the beginning this was a small restaurant set in a single room, with only five or six tables. The business did well, in part because the brothers had a franchise for a dish called "Chicken in the Rough." This is chicken dipped in batter and turned once as it is fried. Another reason was the hard work by the brothers, with Otto working as the greeter and bartender, while Oscar kept the books and cut the steaks.

Over the years that followed thousands would come through the doors of Haab's for the food, including local residents, travelers, students, and on at least one occasion, Henry Ford. The food, especially the steaks, made Haab's a destination restaurant.

"Haab's underwent a substantial expansion and renovation in 1965, adding the Ante Bellum room and Grandma's Parlor, with a capacity of 250. To recreate the pre-Civil

War style, the Haabs used hewn oak beams and supports, Tiffany glass chandeliers, custom woven carpeting, oak tables with captain chairs, Irish linen drapes, a 17th Century rippled bird's eye maple buffet with carved trim and black walnut organ," reported The Ypsilanti Press of Sunday, November 21, 1976.

Age and health caused the brothers to sell the restaurant in 1976, to Mike Kabat and Harvey Glaze. Kabat was then manager of the Ann Arbor Town Club and Glaze was the head chef. The new owners continued with the formula that had made Haab's a success, a traditional beef, pork and chicken menu, and putting the customer first. The change in ownership went so smoothly many customers did not realize it had happened. For several years after the sale, Oscar Haab would sometimes stop by the restaurant in the morning, let himself in with his own key, and go to work behind the bar, washing and polishing glasses.

"After 40 years we certainly weren't going to take away his key," said Mike Kabat to the Detroit Free Press of Friday, May 6, 1983. "We wanted him to feel this is still his home base." Otto Haab died in September of 1981 and Oscar died at the age of 89 in November of 1995.

Harvey Glaze retired in 1986 and his share of the business was purchased by Steve Yandian, who was then the general manager of Haab's. He left the business after 14 years, and was replaced by Dave Kabat, the youngest son of Mike.

To celebrate the anniversary of the opening of Haab's, the restaurant began an annual event when on one day in October, prices on select items were reduced to the original 1936 cost. A "Chicken in the Rough" was 50 cents, a spa-



The original menu from the 1930's when Haab's opened.



One of the main dining rooms in Haab's Restaurant.

ghetti dinner was 40 cents, and a barbecued beef sandwich with French Fries was 20 cents. The event proved popular, as each year up to 2,000 or more people stood in line for up to three hours for a seat at one of the tables.

Now age, health and the pandemic have taken their toll, and the doors of Haab's have closed for the last time. The history has come to an end. There are still the memories.

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



The Armory was built in 1923 standing just south of Ypsilanti, and was visible to those on I-94 at the Huron Street exit.

Armory at Ypsilanti

BY JAMES MANN

The founding Fathers of the United States opposed the founding of a standing army, as they saw it as a tool of tyranny. Instead they placed their trust in a citizen's militia, the men of every community, ages 16 to 45 years of age, who would take up arms in times of emergency. By the end of the War of 1812, and after the burning of Washington, the role of a standing army had become more acceptable, especially along the frontier, where isolated settlements feared attack from the Native People. The militia continued to play a defensive role on the frontier, but in the east where the fear of invasion had disappeared, the militia had taken on a role more ceremonial and prestigious. The days of training and drill became a time for family picnics. Still, the men of the militia were expected to respond when the call of duty sounded.

The Ypsilanti Light Guard, as the local militia was known, answered the call of duty in 1898, with the outbreak of the Spanish-American War. The 86 men of the Light Guard became part of the Army of Occupation in Cuba, and returned home in May of 1899. On their return a banquet was held in their honor in Light Guard Hall.

Each unit of the militia needed a place to meet, train and drill, and this was the armory. This building was also put to other uses by the community. Light Guard Hall, the armory in Ypsilanti, stood on the northeast corner of Michigan Avenue and Washington Street, in what had been a theater known as Hewitt Hall. The Light Guard had begun to rent the hall by 1874, and continued to use the space for a number of years after that time. The upper floors of the hall where the theater and hall had been were removed in the 1930's. The Light Guard had moved to new quarters long

before then.

The Michigan State legislature made an appropriation of funds for the building of an armory in Ypsilanti, construction of which was completed in 1923 at a cost of \$53,000. The two-story brick building stood just south of the Huron Street exit of I-94, occupying the high ground, and was clearly visible to those driving past. The armory had *"a wooden-floor drill hall with a raised stage, fireplaces on the first and second floors and a circular drive at the front of the building which faced Whittaker Road,"* reported The Ann Arbor News of March 20, 1995.

Here the local unit of the Michigan National Guard drilled, trained and prepared for their other duties. When first in use there was a horse barn on the grounds, as horse-drawn carts were still in use. The building was not only used by the National Guard. *"Among its many uses,"* noted the account, *"the armory hosted wrestling matches, antique car and hot road shows, retirement parties, wedding receptions and other get-togethers."* Bill Nickels recalls the Ypsilanti Township Fire Department and the City of Ypsilanti Fire Department hosting the annual Fire men's Ball during the 1950's. The two companies, Bill recalls, engaged in a friendly rivalry, but which never resulted in "fisticuffs."

The old armory was demolished in 1989, to make way for the Radisson that now occupies the site. A new armory stands on South Huron River Drive, just east of the Ypsilanti Township Hall.

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

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