



WINTER 2022

ELONA ROGERS CROSS —

One of the First Residents of Woodruff's Grove

BY JANICE ANSCHUETZ

Elona Rogers Cross was a woman of courage who loved to pass long winter nights with her neighbors in a cozy cabin, “singing, dancing and playing” in the wilderness of Woodruff’s Grove. As we celebrate the founding of Ypsilanti, Michigan, 200 years ago, you might wonder, as I did, what the small settlement was like at that time. The best way to do this is to share the words of Elona Rogers Cross, an orphaned teenager and servant who made the difficult journey to the wilderness and wilds we now know as Ypsilanti. She traveled with the kind Grant family who took her in when her



Elona Cross.

parents died in Ohio. Elona wrote this memoir, which was first presented by her at the Michigan Pioneer Society, and then published in the History of Washtenaw County, and now in the Ypsilanti Historical Society’s Gleanings.

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Map showing the Huron River and the Cross homestead near present-day Grove Road and Ford Lake.

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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.

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From the PRESIDENT'S DESK

BY BILL NICKELS

This has been a memorable year working with contractors and not working with contractors in some cases. After much thought, we decided to replace our decayed wood handicap ramp with a hopefully long-lasting concrete ramp. Work started in July and dragged on until October. Our handrail contractor is now fabricating the ramp's ADA approved handrail. Installation will likely have to wait until 2023.

While we had a concrete contractor on site, we were able to add an additional spot to our parking lot where a dead tree was removed. We were also able to add a grade level sidewalk to access our two rental apartments at the rear of the museum (tenants previously had to walk up and down the old handicap ramp to access their apartments).

At the conclusion of the above work, a landscaper was hired to install erosion control landscaping at the edge of the hill that descends down to the Huron River.

YCUA, our municipal supplier of water, received grants to replace the water main in front of the museum and install new copper service lines replacing old lead service lines. Planning for the project started last year. Our new water line was installed in late October.



Volunteer John Harrington installs a restored back porch storm door.

When the weather first turned cold, we learned that one of our three museum furnaces needed a major repair. Instead of repairing the eighteen year-old furnace we decided it was time for a replacement.

For small projects, we don't work with contractors. You may remember that a Boy Scout Eagle Scout project gave us a new rear porch floor last year. This fall, John and Pattie Harrington removed, stripped, painted and reinstalled the rear porch door. Sometime



Our completed concrete handicap ramp waits for the installation of ADA approved handrails.

ago, Don Randazzo fabricated a replacement for the base of a porch column. Both are examples of how volunteers help us take care of our 160 year-old building. We have things to do that fit every maintenance skill. We welcome new volunteers who would like non-material feel-good rewards. Let us know of your interest at 734-482-4990 or yhs.museum@gmail.com.

We are thankful for Joe Lawrence's gift in 2020 and our supportive membership. The earnings from Joe's gift and our membership dues with annual donations enabled us to finance the above necessary projects.

Have a safe and joyous Holiday Season. We look forward to 2023, Ypsilanti's bicentennial year!



A YCUA contractor drilled under street pavement to replace what might have been a lead water pipe with copper tubing.

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Elona's husband, Alvin Cross.

What amazes me about this narrative is not only her attention to detail, but that as an orphan and poor servant girl, with little education, she writes so well and gives us such a vivid picture of the life of the brave people that settled in this wilderness. I hope that you enjoy it as much as I did, and still do, in re-reading it. Please use your imagination as you read this, and allow Elona to paint a picture in words.

The following paragraphs are excerpted from the article written by Elona Cross and titled "Mrs. Alvin Cross" from pages 449-457 in *History of Washtenaw County* by Charles C. Chapman, published in 1881.

"I was born in the year 1805, in the town of Colerain, near Boston. My maiden name was Elona Rogers. My father's name was Thomas Rogers. When I was about four years of age my parents removed to New York. They settled in Steuben County, in the town of Cohoeton, from which place they moved to Boomingville, Ohio in 1816. Here my parents both died, leaving five children. Having no one to care

for the family we were soon scattered, and I found a home with the family of Mr. Oronte Grant.

Mr. Grant owned a large prairie farm, not far from Sandusky, which was well cultivated and valuable. Unfortunately the title was not good, and after paying for the land, improving, stocking it, etc. he was obliged to give it up. Three years were allowed him in which to provide a new home, and he determined that it should be situated where no previous title would disturb him – in the wilds of Michigan.

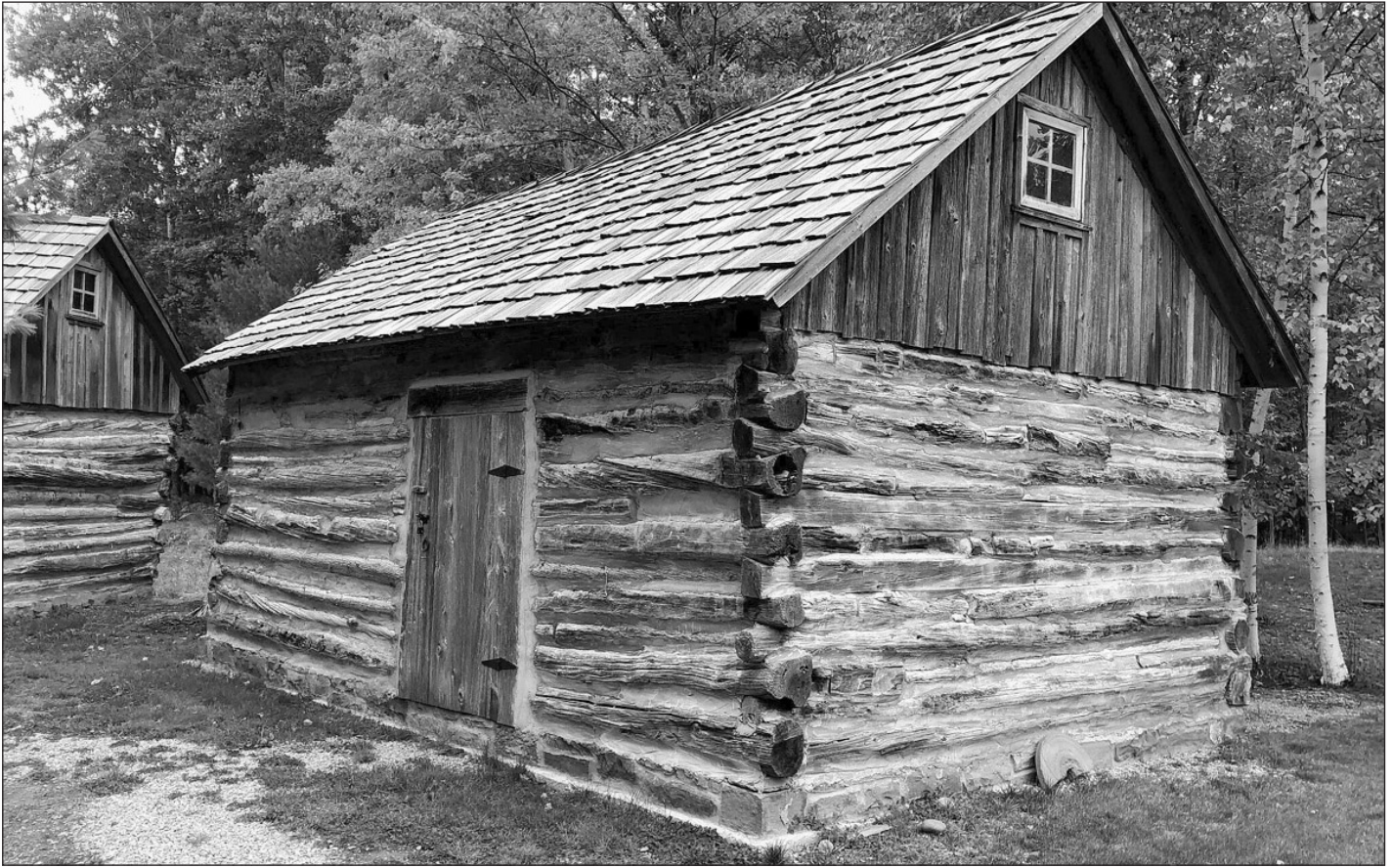
At the time of which I write there resided on a part of Mr. Grant's farm, a Mr. Benjamin Woodruff, pettifogger and school teacher, whose wife had just fallen heir to several hundred dollars from her grandfather's estate. They wished to invest this in a home where land was cheap, and he decided to accompany Mr. Grant. (author's note: Elona taught me a new word. A "pettifogger" is defined as an inferior legal practitioner, especially one who deals with petty cases.)

A wagon was loaded with provisions and driving Mr. Grant's large stock of cattle they started for Monroe. The company consisted of four men, Messrs. Woodruff and Grant, William Eiclor – Mrs. Woodruff's brother – and Hiram Tuttle, a neighbor who also had cattle to drive.

At Monroe they sold the cattle, reserving only such as would be needed on the farms which they intended to purchase. Here also they were joined by four men, Mr. Stiles, Mr. Willard Hall, Mr. George Hall, and Captain Fair, who were fish-



Island in the Huron River near present-day Water Works park where the First Ypsilanti 4th of July Celebration took place.



When Elona first arrived at the settlement which would be named Woodruff's Grove, there were eight primitive log cabins like this one. The one that she stayed in had no chimney and a dirt floor. She first thought it was a sheep pen.

ing at Monroe. These men were former acquaintances of Woodruff and Grant, and were familiar with the new country along the course of the Huron river (sic), having been up as far as a place called Godfrey's trading post, now City of Ypsilanti.

From their representations it was thought best to view that part of the Territory, and thither the company proceeded, leaving Mr. Eiclör in charge of the cattle and provisions. After selecting and locating their farms it was necessary to return to Monroe for the oxen, provisions, etc., leaving Mr. Stiles and his party to subsist by hunting and fishing until their return, they being the only white inhabitants of the region.

On the first of June, 1823, they were ready to commence the building of Woodruff's house. The unbroken forest lay before them, and with the sound of their axes began the new settlement, afterward called Woodruff's Grove.

When the work was well commenced, Woodruff and Grant went back to Ohio, leaving the building to be finished by the others of the party, under the supervision of Mr. Tuttle. Mr. Woodruff intended to return with his family – which consisted of wife, six children and hired woman, Mrs. Snow – before the fourth of the next month, that they might celebrate the great national holiday in their new home. They failed to

accomplish this, not arriving until the sixth, and the festivities were postponed until the following year.

Detroit was their only postoffice, and wishing a more definite address for letters, Mr. Woodruff visited the city, and after consulting the Governor, gave the settlement the name of Woodruff's Grove. (author's note: We read in *The Story of Ypsilanti* by Harvey Colburn, published in 1923, that in order to get letters to the settlement quicker it had to have a name and thus, Woodruff proposed his own name. When Woodruff had mail to deliver, he carried it in his tall beaver hat and when he met someone that he had a letter for, he would remove it from his hat and charge them twenty five cents for the service.) He then purchased a boat, which was their only means of procuring supplies of provisions, lumber, etc. until fall, when a road was cut to Detroit.

Early in the following spring of 1824 Mr. Grant made preparations to return with his family, which consisted of Mrs. Grant, a young girl named Jane Johnson and myself. Mr. Tuttle's wife and child were also of our company. We shipped at a small place called Venice, in the vessel *Costello*, and took with us provisions enough, as Mr. Grant supposed, to last until crops could be raised.

There were four bushels of flour, one barrel of meal, one of shelled corn, one of honey, two barrels of potatoes, one

barrel of wheat, one cask of pork, one barrel of oats, and a large box of beans and garden seeds. We also had a half barrel in which were carefully packed, in moist earth and moss, small apple-trees, currant bushes, rose bushes, lilac, snowball and other shrubs. There was also a large box of carpenter's tools and such bedding and furniture as was considered most necessary.

We were three days in reaching Detroit; there we were obliged to wait three days for the boat to come up from the Grove after us. We were six days in reaching the Grove, stopping the first night at Willard's tavern. The second day we reached the mouth of the Huron, and stopped at a French house. The third night we were kindly entertained at the house of a half-breed named Parks. The next day we reached King's settlement; this was Saturday, and here we spent the Sabbath, the men who poled the boat being glad to rest.

Monday night we camped in the woods; and Tuesday about noon reached our destination, on the flats, about half a mile down the river from the Grove, where Mr. Tuttle had prepared a home for his family. When we were ready to land, the men began to exchange smiling glances; and Mrs. Tuttle and Mrs. Grant realizing all at once that this wilderness must now be to them home, began to cry. Jane and I were too young and light-hearted to sympathize with such feelings, and gaily started to see the house, but soon returned, not being able to find anything but a small building, which we supposed to be a sheep-pen. Our ignorance was quite excusable, for the low, rough log pen, without floor or windows, did not resemble a human habitation. It taxed our ingenuity to prepare dinner on a fire-place (sic) and no chimney, a hole in the roof allowing the smoke to escape. Mrs. Woodruff came down before night to welcome the new arrivals, and I returned with her. That night I first heard the howling of the wolves, and was unable to sleep. Next morning, as I stood in the door of Mr. Woodruff's house and looked around I felt homesick.

During the previous fall, several families had been added to the settlement: Daniel Cross, John Bryan, Mr. Noyce and



Elona and the other women in the settlement had to grind their own corn using a stump and pestle like this one. The pounding sound could be heard every morning.

Mr. Brainard. There were now in sight eight small log huts, built in the same manner as Mr. Tuttle's, except that those of Messrs. Bryan, Cross, and Woodruff had rough floors and stick chimneys. Mr. Grant's house was the one occupied by Mr. Stiles and as soon as Stiles could move on to his farm, Mr. Grant came to the Grove to live.

George Hall and his brother, and a Mr. Beverly, had built on the west side of the river, near the place now occupied by the paper mill. (author's note: probably near what is now Water Works Park).

Work now began in earnest. Roads were cut in different directions, a landing made for boats where Rawsonville now is, land cleared, etc. In May, Mr. Jason Cross and his brother in law, Avery, came in. They both had families of grown up children, who were quite an addition to the working force of the place. Mr. Grant owned the farm

now belonging to Mr. E. King, and there are still standing there some of the apple-trees we brought from Ohio. (author's note: this land is now covered by Ford Lake). Daniel Cross owned the farm which now belongs to Benjamin Emerick. Mr. Tuttle's place is occupied by his son John Tuttle; on these farms land was broken and corn planted. A young man named McCord, who lived with Mr. Tuttle, also planted corn on the farm now belonging to Mrs. Crittenden.

On the Tuttle and Grant farms were old Indian corn-fields, which were easily put under cultivation. Mr. Woodruff did not work on his farm, but rented it, and gave up his time to help people who were coming in.

The Indians passed through the place in June, the company numbering between 300 and 400, all marching in single file. They were peaceable and inoffensive, and continued so, until they were furnished with whisky by the white people. (author's note: They were on their way to Fort Malden in Ontario, Canada to receive an allowance from the British government for fighting with the English in the war of 1812.)

Deer were plenty, and bears, wolves and wild-cats abound-

ed. Venison was the most common article on our bill of fare.

A few logs, together with bark, scattered around which had the appearance of having been used for a roof, was all that remained of Godfrey's trading post, in the spring of 1824. Nearby this, on the bank of the river, was a fine spring, and here a Mr. Stewart built the first house. On the west side of the river, in Ypsilanti, others soon joined him, and quite a settlement sprang up during the summer.

Mr. Woodruff sent out an invitation to everyone in the county to celebrate the Fourth of July at the Grove. He brought up from Detroit such articles for the dinner as were considered necessary, and could not be found in the settlement. Among these were loaf sugar, cheese, raisins, rice, and last, but not least, a half barrel of whisky.

Mrs. Woodruff's oven was the only one in the place. It was built out of doors, of stone, plastered with mud. Here the baking was done. All joined in the work of preparation. A beef was killed, and when the meat was ready to roast, lo! the oven and every bake kettle were already full. Logs were rolled together and a fire quickly made out of doors (author's note: Now we would say "outdoors". When I first read this sentence, I thought the fire was literally made out of doors). Two large kettles were turned on the side before this fire, and on sticks laid in these the meat was roasted to perfection. The

company gathered in Mr. Woodruff's yard where a log had been set up to resemble a cannon; on this the boys fired their rifles and ushered in the day with wonderful salutes. From a stump nearby (sic), Mr. Woodruff read the Declaration of Independence and made a speech. Then all who could sing joined in singing "Hail Columbia," and we were ready for dinner. Our table was made of rough boards, covered with the whitest and smoothest of home-made linen. We were all proud of our success in preparing the dinner, and it certainly was very inviting. There were roast beef and chickens; new potatoes, green peas and beets; warm biscuits with butter and honey; cheese; rice puddings and loaf cake, both well filled with raisins. The following are the names of those who partook of the dinner, as nearly as I can remember;

Mr. Woodruff and family; Mr. Grant and family; Judge Fleming; Arden H. Ballard; Thomas Sackrider; Mr. Stiles; Mr. David McCole; Sanders Beverly; Mr. Leonard Miller; Captain Phair; Mr. Stoddard; Orange Crane; Mr. Mayhey; Mr. Ecklor, and Mr. Harwood.

The dinner passed off well, and Delia Woodruff and I had the hot sling ready for toasts. This was new work for us and we forgot our instructions and put in a double portion of whisky. The effect of this mistake was soon apparent on the toast drinkers, in increased liveliness and good humor. Everything passed off pleasantly, and in the afternoon we were joined by Mr. Mallett and his sister, from Brownstown. Mr. M. was the fiddler and we had a lively dance in the evening, being joined by others who had not been present at dinner. Harmony and good fellowship reigned throughout the day, and it was a time long to be remembered by those present.

Death visited the settlement for the first time, and cast a gloom over every heart. A young Irishman named Oakman,

who had come to the place with John Phillips, was taken sick and lived but a short time. Chills and fever now commenced and some families were not able to do anything for themselves. (author's note: This was probably malaria from the swamps near the river and was common in Ypsilanti for many years. I read the journal of a visitor to Ypsilanti in the 1830s who described people with homes near the river

as being lethargic and looking "yellow" in complexion due to malaria which was carried by mosquitos). Mrs. Woodruff made a large kettle of porridge every day and sent me with it to those who were sick. The supplies brought with us were divided with those whom sickness had made destitute, and were soon exhausted. Money was scarce, and we now began to see hard fare. The corn yielded well, but there was no way to grind it. Hulled corn was our staple for a long time. Those who had been able to work had made gardens and raised plenty of turnips and some beans and potatoes. In the winter, mortars were made by burning a hollow in the top of stumps, where the corn was placed and pounded with a pestle fastened to a pole which worked like a well sweep. The fine and coarse parts of the pounded corn were careful-



Elona and Alvin Cross – Side by Side at the Highland Cemetery

ly separated, the fine used for bread, the coarse for samp. (*author's note: "samp" is the name for coarsely ground corn, and porridge is made from it. Little did I know that I had samp porridge for breakfast many cold mornings before walking to school in Detroit and that I sought samp from grist mills to give to my mother and southern grandmother to make into cornbread and porridge*). Mr. Cross and Mr. Grant had each sowed a piece of wheat, and after harvest we had pounded wheat, which was quite a welcome change. The cold weather abated the sickness, and we beguiled the long winter evenings by meeting together at the different houses to dance, sing and play. This was enjoyed by old and young, and was an excellent preventive of homesickness, a disease we carefully guarded against. Work again progressed, fields were cleared and fenced, door yards enclosed, and by spring Mr. Rawson had a saw-mill running at the landing (now Rawsonville). The surrounding country was rapidly settled; wild animals were not so numerous. In the fall of 1825 I returned to Ohio, and was absent from Michigan about two years.

It might be mentioned that from the time of our coming to Michigan we had no religious meetings of any kind. It was Mrs. Grant's custom to gather in all the younger people of the place on the Sabbath and read to them out of the Bible, and teach them to sing and spell.

An incident occurred at Mr. Woodruff's that served as a standing joke. Mr. Ballard and Judge Fleming were about retiring for the night, when they heard a terrible noise, and supposed that some wild animal was about to spring upon them through the window. They quickly dressed, and pale and trembling hastened to Mr. Woodruff's room, only to learn that they had been frightened by a screech owl.

After Mr. Grant went on to his farm he made maple sugar, and a party of us girls, in sugaring off, set fire to the woods. Rails were burned and much damage done. It was always spoken of as the Indian Fire. We kept our own counsel and no one knew that we had caused it.

I returned from Ohio again to Michigan in 1827, was married to Alvin Cross in the autumn of 1828, and moved on the farm where I now reside on section 14, township of Ypsilanti, in 1829. Mr. Cross died the 18th of February, 1875. Mr. and Mrs. Woodruff died in Ypsilanti over 40 years ago. Mr. and Mrs. Tuttle lived upon the farm that he purchased in 1823, on section 23, in Ypsilanti until their deaths. Mr. Tuttle died and Mrs. Tuttle died six or seven years ago. Mr. Grant, after living on his farm purchased in 1823, on section 15, Ypsilanti, some eight years sold it to Edward Phelps and removed to Indiana, and soon after Mr. and Mrs. Grant both died. The first burial service at the Grove was that of Mr. Oakman; there was no one present to offer a prayer; Mrs. Grant read a chapter of the Bible, and after singing a hymn he was buried. Rev. John Baughman preached the first sermon at the Grove at the house of Mr. Brooks, in the year 1825. The first grist-mill

built in the county was by Major Woodruff, about half a mile down the Huron River from the Grove. It was built of hewn logs; the building was some 20 x 30 feet square, and he commenced running the mill in the fall of 1825, and it was a day of rejoicing among the settlers, having had a hard time previous to this to prepare their corn fit for use. The year of 1825 could truly be called hard times, as there was no store near them, and if there had been, the inhabitants of the Grove and vicinity had nothing to buy with, and consequently had to go without many of the necessaries of life, to say nothing of the luxuries that the present generation now enjoy."

The interesting narrative ends here, but like me, you might want to know more about Elona, who tells this tale. I will share with you what I was able to find through research and family records. Both Elona and Alvin Cross lived and died on their farm on the Huron River. Alvin was the son of Jason and Mary Moon Cross and was born in Genesee, New York, on August 11, 1803. He came to Woodruff's Grove in 1824 with his parents and some of their grown children including three sons, Alvin, William and Daniel, and their daughter, Eliza. Eliza and her husband Andrew McKinstry celebrated the first marriage in Washtenaw County in November, 1825. Elona and Alvin were married at the Grove in 1828. Family records and Ancestry.com give us the names of their six children: Loomis (1829-1861), Mary E. (1831-1862), Jay L. (1832-1849), Alvin (1834-1863), Jason Alonzo (1843-1917) and Albert W. (1852-1857).

Alvin is credited with growing the first wheat crop in Washtenaw County, which was a great relief to the early settlers who had had their fill of corn bread. Alvin and his brother filled another need in the primitive settlement – they brewed whiskey until the great Ypsilanti Temperance Movement of 1832. We have to remember that it was difficult to transport a bumper corn crop to market and much easier to fill jugs with refreshments to sell, which was not only drunk for pleasure and enjoyed at social events, but used for medicinal purposes. Once the men stopped brewing whiskey, they converted the vats into bins to hold wheat.

A newspaper article from February, 1875, tells us that Alvin and his brother Daniel died within a week of each other. Elona and Alvin Cross now rest in Highland Cemetery with other family members. Their beautiful tombstones now stand proudly side by side, as Elona and her husband did in life. The newly restored white stones gleam and seem to reach out to people walking by. Elona's description of Woodruff's Grove two hundred years ago is a lasting legacy to a brave pioneer woman, an orphan with hope in her heart, who helped her husband and family overcome adversity with humor and grace and loved to dance and sing in the cold and dark winter evenings with friends, family and neighbors.

(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.)



Bicentennial Updates

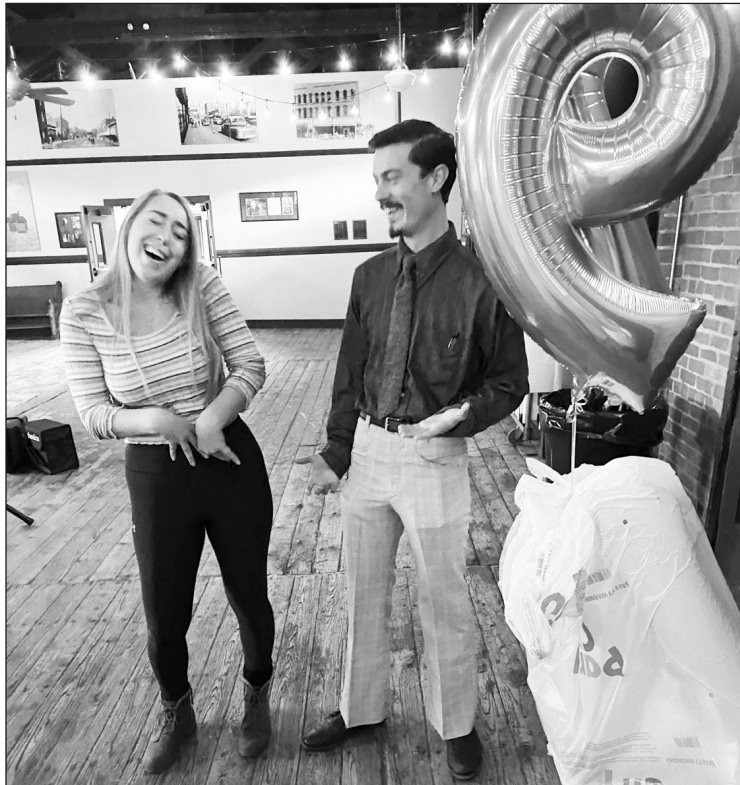
BY EVAN MILAN

We are now less than a month from the start of our bicentennial year in the City of Ypsilanti. The City Bicentennial Committee has been working tirelessly to plan a celebration that will encapsulate all the pieces that make up our community. There will be events to attend, and pieces to take away to remember the celebration for years to come.

Our first event occurred on Friday, September 23, 2022 at the Freight House. The event was both our inaugural event, and a fund raiser to aid in the costs associated with our impending celebration. Homecoming 1973 paid homage to the Ypsilanti of the sesquicentennial year. With attendance estimated at 50, our event was a lively evening with drinks provided by 734 Brewing Company and Sidetrack and pizza provided by Pizza Perfect. The evening was spent with music of the 70s and dancing; the Hustle brought a crowd onto the dance floor.

Our next event will occur on New Year's Eve to ring in the new year and jump start our anniversary celebrations. New Year's Eve will be held off of the Michigan Avenue business district, centered behind Puffer Reds. The event will include two ball drops, one in the early evening for the younger revelers who are unable to attend the midnight festivities. Shuttles are expected to be available to allow for easy commutes from parking and restaurants.

The city's annual 4th of July festivities will be augmented to allow the uncovering of the time capsule, buried at the foot of the water tower, to reveal the contents it has held for 50 years. A picnic will be held subsequent to the annual parade, expected to end in the mid afternoon to accommodate various celebrations our attendees may have otherwise planned. Summer will also bring our Bicentennial Festival on August 19th. We expect to have a number of speakers present, entertainment, and several historical tours available. Those who remember the Magical History Tour of the Heritage Festi-



Evan and Evangeline agree, "bicentennials are no laughing matter."

val will find its return on the 19th. Additionally, there will be cemetery tours lead by EMU History Professor Mark Higbee. Those who have toured Highland Cemetery with James Mann will find Dr. Higbee's tour distinct. The August 19th tour will focus on the African American Veterans of the Civil War, who made their homes in Ypsilanti after the war. Mark's tour is also anticipated to be scheduled during the city's Juneteenth event.

To be released in the early Summer, YHS President Bill Nickels, EMU History Professor John McCurdy, YDL Acquisitions Director Sarah Zawacki and myself have taken up the task of compiling the stories of Ypsilanti's histories in the 50

years since the sesquicentennial. Our bicentennial history will be somewhat different from the book written by Harvey C. Colburn in 1923 and the history compiled in 1973. The book we've compiled will consist of 40 articles written by authors who lived through the events and historians who are passionate about the subjects.

Love Letters is one piece of our celebration already in full swing. Love Letters is a community project, intended to collect the thoughts of those who love Ypsilanti. I encourage all of our Historical Society members, both local and not, to take the time to write down their thoughts on our community. More information on how to write and submit a Love Letter can be found on the YpsiWrites website (<https://www.ypsiwrites.com/bicentennial-love-letters-to-ypsilanti>).

More information on bicentennial events, volunteering, and sponsorship opportunities can be found on the bicentennial section of the city website (<https://cityofypsilanti.com/861/Bicentennial-Committee>).

(Evan Milan is the Chair of the Bicentennial Committee and also serves as Chair of the Museum Board of the Ypsilanti Historical Society.)



A recent picture of Gordon Cohours at the age of 102 years.

- GORDON COHOURS -

Centenarian and Ypsilanti Resident for Over 100 Years

BY ROBERT ANSCHUETZ

Gordon Cohours is a centenarian who has lived in Ypsilanti for over 100 years. That being the case, Gordon has a very interesting story to tell. Gordon was born in Detroit, Michigan, in the late hours of Valentine's Day of 1920, but the procrastinating attendant recorded the date of birth as February 15, 1920. Gordon's parents were Edward and Grace Hennessey Cohours, and they lived on Stair Avenue in Detroit. Edward Cohours made his living as a lake captain for the G.A. Tomlinson Fleet Corporation from approximately 1916-1956. Edward Cohours was the captain of various Great Lakes freighters, including the E.M. Young and the Ball Brothers.

Edward and Grace Cohours' first child, Edward, was born in 1916, four years before Gordon's birth in 1920. Edward Cohours' sister Gertrude lived on Pearl Street in Ypsilanti, and

she extolled about the favorable living conditions in Ypsilanti for raising a young family, including the excellent school systems. Gertrude convinced her brother Edward and his wife to make the move to Ypsilanti in 1921, and the family moved to a Victorian home located at 413 S. Huron Street. The family soon grew to six with the addition of baby boy August Hilaire in 1922 and baby girl Grace in 1925. In addition to being a Great Lakes freighter captain, Gordon's father owned a Chevrolet Dealership next to Woodruff School on Michigan Avenue called the Universal Garage, but it burned down in 1924.

Growing up on Huron Street afforded the young Cohours children the benefit of befriending the children of Charlie Newton, who lived nearby on the same street. Charlie Newton worked for Greenfield Village and was friends with Hen-

ry Ford. The Newton home was a real showplace, furnished in part by museum-quality pieces from Ford's collection. Henry and Clara Ford made frequent visits to the Newton home, and once surprised the Newton children with a pony with a buggy, and a full-sized horse. Gordon Cohours remembers meeting the Fords on several occasions and getting rides on his friends' pony cart. Gordon recalls that Henry Ford had his clothes tailored in Ypsilanti by a Tailor named Mr. Freud located on Huron Street.

Gordon Cohours attended the old Woodruff School on Michigan Avenue from Kindergarten through 4th grade. On Gordon's walks to school each day, he passed many of the 1920's businesses located both on Huron Street and Michigan Avenue. The Ypsilanti Central School east wing expansion was completed on Cross Street in 1930, and Cohours transferred to that school in 5th grade, as at the time, Central School provided K-12 education. Gordon recalls the opulence of the newly built school expansion, which included a swimming pool. While attending school, Gordon joined Boy Scout Troop 7, and he accompanied the troop as they attended the 1933-1934 World's Fair in Chicago. While attending the fair, he surprisingly ran into some neighbors from Ypsilanti!

Gordon recalls some of his childhood playtime activities around Ypsilanti. In the winter, the city would close

off Congress Street and the children would sled right down the street toward downtown. Gordon also remembers when Henry Ford dammed up the Huron River to create Ford Lake. As a child, he would swim in the newly created lake near the old Ypsilanti Township Town Hall on Grove Road. Later as an adult, Gordon built his own boat and boated around the lake that was created during his childhood.

Gordon's grandparents lived on a farm in St. Clair, Michigan, and during the summer he would spend several weeks on the farm. Gordon's father would later inherit the farm. Gordon and his brothers also accompanied his father on several trips on Great Lakes freighters that his father captained during the summer months. They would meet his father and hop aboard the freighters at the docks in Toledo.

Gordon's mother had a challenging life taking care of a household and four young children while her husband traveled throughout the Great Lakes. Gordon recalls that during the depression around 1933, the Ypsilanti banks suddenly closed, leaving the family with little cash on hand. His mother attempted to withdraw savings from the bank, but the banks froze the assets. His mother went to a relative who lived in St. Clair and had a second bank account across the river in Canada. The relative was able to withdraw a large amount of American money from the Canadian bank to



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Gordon & Virginia Blaha Cohours married in 1945

Virginia Blaha in 1945.

Gordon Cohours in 1944 when he was in the Merchant Marines.



provide the Ypsilanti Cohours family with needed cash.

After graduating from Central school, Gordon enrolled at the Normal College in Ypsilanti. After two years at the school, he transferred to John Carroll College in Cleveland, where he studied from 1939-1941. In 1941, Gordon became a cadet with the Tomlinson Fleet and got a job aboard the freighter James Davidson in December 1941. Shortly afterwards, the United States was attacked at Pearl Harbor, and inland shipping was re-directed toward the war effort. Gordon decided to become a merchant seaman and started a cadet program in the merchant marines.

Gordon attended the Coast Guard Academy in Connecticut and served as a navigator all over the world during the years of World War II. The merchant marines provided logistics and protective support to the Navy throughout the war. Meanwhile, Gordon's older brother worked at the Willow Run bomber plant, where he worked on the center wing fabrication on the B-24 assembly line.

During the days of World War II, Gordon met his future wife Virginia through a friend. Virginia Blaha was born and raised in Ypsilanti and was the daughter of a plumber. Virginia worked at the Ypsilanti Ford plant starting in 1940, and would continue working there until 1950. Gordon and Virginia went steady and remained committed to each other through the war. In 1945, Gordon was on a month's leave, and they decided to get married on May 5, 1945.

At the end of the war, Gordon re-enrolled at the Normal College to complete his degree in teaching. The newlywed couple was living with Virginia's parents in Ypsilanti, but they wanted their own place. The couple purchased an empty lot on Cross Street from a judge in town. They searched through architectural catalogs and found a nice house that they would have built on the lot. Several tradesmen that his father knew constructed the house, and the couple moved there in 1947.

With a new wife, a new house, and a new teaching degree, what Gordon needed now was a new job. Gordon

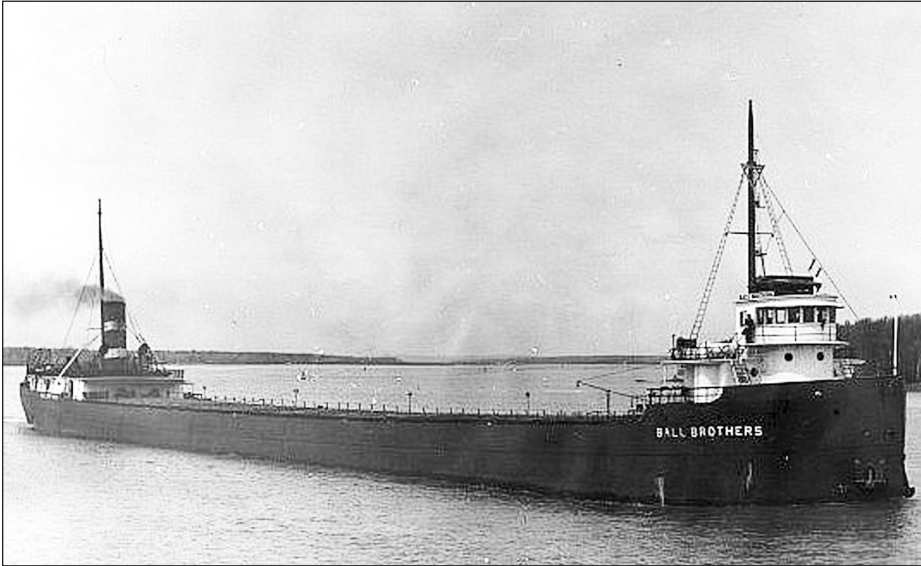
related an interesting story about how his first teaching job came about. As a young child, Gordon's dentist was named Dr. Edward S. George, who later became the President of the Ypsilanti school board. After graduating the Normal School with his teaching certificate, Gordon went to get his teeth checked out by his life-long dentist and Dr. George told him, "By the way, you need to call Ernie Chapel about a job." Ernie Chapel was the Superintendent of Schools in Ypsilanti and trusted Dr. George's recommendation about providing a teaching position for Gordon. So, in 1947, Gordon took a job at Ypsilanti High School as a substitute teacher in civics and economics, as well as a teacher of swimming and driver's education. Gordon kept that position for a couple years, and in 1950 he transferred over to a 7th grade position at Prospect School (later Adams Elementary). Prior to the establishment of the junior high schools in Ypsilanti, they experimented for a few years with moving 7th and 8th grades from the Central K-12 school to the elementary schools, including Prospect School.

Since the teaching profession didn't pay all that much, Gordon's wife talked to him about getting a job at the Ypsilanti Ford Plant as a summer job. The pay was so good, he decided to stay full-time with Ford from 1953-1958. During this time, Gordon went back to Michigan State Normal College and earned a Master's Degree in Special Education. Gordon returned to teaching, with a teaching job in Livonia from 1958-1963. In 1963, Gordon got a job as a Principal in the Southgate school district. He held this job until his retirement in 1980.

Gordon reflects on what he missed most from the Ypsilanti of his youth. He says that what he misses most was the Interurban street car system that allowed him to take a train from Ypsilanti to Detroit and even on to Port Huron. Gordon's wife Virginia died in 2016 at age 98. They were married for over 70 years and lived at their house



Cohours Family Home at 413 Huron Street.



Ball Brothers Great Lakes Freighter was Captained by Gordon's Father Edward Cohours.

on Cross Street for that entire time. The couple loved boating and golfing together.

Gordon Cohours has lived a life full of changes. From growing up in the depression, to the dawn of technol-

ogy including automobiles, radios, television, airplanes, the space program, computers, and smart phones. Through it all, Gordon has embraced the vast changes and has lived a full and dynamic life. What has remained constant is his life in Ypsilanti at the house he has lived in and his zest for life. Gordon even maintains to this day a friendship with a surviving childhood pal from the 1920s. It is amazing that someone who was living in the city for the 1923 Centennial celebration will also be a witness to share in the festivities of the Bicentennial celebration of 2023. What an amazing person, and what an amazing life!

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

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Front of The Thrift Shop showing the window display.

Nancy Hamilton is currently serving as President of the Thrift Shop and has been a volunteer since 2012.

The Ypsilanti Thrift Shop's Early History

BY NANCY HAMILTON

When World War II broke out in Europe in September, 1939, the United States was in an isolationist mood. But President Franklin Roosevelt could read the tea leaves, and he wanted to get the country prepared for war when it came. Knowing the importance of airpower, he tapped the Ford Motor Company to begin production of the B-24 bomber. The site chosen was, of course, Willow Run, named after the small creek that ran through the huge tract of land near Ypsilanti that was owned by Henry Ford. Construction of the plant began in 1941, and in 1942 it began turning out aircraft. Workers arrived from all over the country. Many of those newcomers arrived with few possessions, and many were unprepared for Michigan winters.

In April of 1942 a group of Ypsilanti women, determined to do what they could to aid in the war effort, met at a ho-

tel with the purpose of establishing what was to become the Ypsilanti Thrift Shop. By-laws were adopted that stated their goal of founding "an independent organization for the purpose of conducting a permanent rummage sale, the proceeds from which, over and above operating expenses, shall be used for charity," and to this day, that remains the operating principle of the shop.

In the beginning, the shop was located in a former tin shop in Depot Town at 35 Cross Street. This was fine until the women volunteers began to notice that the owner of the building and his friends were hanging around playing cards and staring at them as they worked. This didn't sit well with the ladies, so they decided to relocate. They moved to 510 West Cross St., but that was too far from the business district to attract customers, so they packed up and moved to 2

South Adams Street, which was much more conducive to business. The shop was obliged to move a couple of more times, until they decided to buy a building of their own and put an end to all the problems associated with renting. Finally, the Association bought a former warehouse at 14 S. Washington Street, for the price of \$16,000.

The warehouse was owned by Atwood McAndrew, owner of Mack & Mack Furniture, and it was his wife who suggested and facilitated the sale of the warehouse to the Thrift Shop Association. I learned this from their son, who brought in several suits and coats to donate one day. The building had been used strictly for storage, and it wasn't ready for occupancy. There was no heat, no running water, no obvious retail space, no paint, no permanent interior walls, and no carpet. A tremendous amount of work had to be done to make the place habitable. Paint, electrical materials, a gas furnace, and ductwork were donated, and much of the work was done by volunteers and their husbands.

Finally, on April 2nd, 1974, the Ypsilanti Thrift Shop was opened for

business with a celebratory tea and a ceremony attended by volunteers, community members, and well-wishers. Helen Milliken, wife of then-governor William Milliken, was the guest of honor, and she cut the ceremonial ribbon. Over the years, the Shop has had some expensive maintenance problems. In 2016, the 100+ year-old roof was leaking, causing damage to wood and masonry as well. Under President June Gordon, we undertook an extensive campaign to raise the money for a new roof and repairs. The campaign was supported by many local businesses and benefactors, and the work was completed.

In 2021, the air conditioner broke down during the summer and had to be replaced. The following winter the furnace died and had to be replaced. At the beginning of the pandemic, we installed an ionizer that removes dust particles as well as viruses from the air. In the summer of 2021 we installed a lift to carry items between the attic and the main floor, so volunteers wouldn't need to take chances on the somewhat scary stairs, of which there are 20 steps.



From left to right: Barbara Dagostino, Recording Secretary; Beth McClure, Vice President; and Nancy Good, Treasurer. Barb has been a volunteer since 2017 and Beth and Nance since 2016.



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June Gordon shows new volunteer/EMU student, Ricki Kreps, how to affix a price tag.

The expenses involved in these necessary repairs and improvements would have been crippling if it hadn't been for the foresight and wisdom of the Board of Directors, who had prudently set aside a good sum of money in an emergency fund. They were carried out without detracting from our ability to continue our mission of supporting local charities.

In 2021 a wonderful thing happened. We received word that the Joseph Lawrence Trust had left us a bequest in the amount of \$250,000. The money is invested, and we are to use only the interest that accrues for "the preservation, maintenance and refurbishment" of our building. The money was left to us by Joseph Lawrence, in honor of his mother, Christine S. Lawrence, who had been an active volunteer at the Shop. The first thing we were able to do, thanks to the endowment, was to have the front room of the Shop painted. The painting of the other rooms will proceed as interest accumulates from our investments.

For the first several years of its existence, the Thrift Shop Board met

monthly, usually at McKenny Hall on Eastern Michigan's campus. Minutes were kept in small spiral notebooks, which are preserved and housed in the Bentley Historical Library on the University of Michigan's North Campus. The first Board meeting was held on May 7, 1942, presided over by Mrs. Daniel Quirk, the wife of the president of the First National Bank of Ypsilanti. Committee chairs reported the names

of their members and Mrs. Quirk read summaries of the duties of each committee. The Board decided not to sell on commission.

By June 1942, they were already discussing the need for a better location, dues were set at \$1.00 per year for all volunteers, they considered being open in the evenings, with apparently no decision made, and they reported a need for furniture and dishes. Workers at the bomber plant were arriving with nothing. By July 1942, the Shop moved to the old bus station on S. Adams. There was \$295.22 in the treasury and membership in the Thrift Shop Association was closed with 82 members, and there was a waiting list of people who wanted to join.

It is interesting to learn about the needy cases to which the shop donated its proceeds. In July 1942, it was reported that \$125 was given for "refractions," that is, eye exams and glasses for children, and also to pay for tonsillectomies. In August, \$11 was given to pay for a boy's 2-week stay at the Cedar Lake Camp. Later that year, \$25 was donated for Red Cross Kits and \$25 for a blood donor program. Twenty-five dollars was given to a boy taken to Starr Commonwealth, for clothes and other needed articles. In November, five children were provided with eye exams and glasses. In other years,



The Lawrence family, J. Don, Christine and son Joseph (Joe). The Joseph Lawrence Trust bequeathed money to the Thrift Shop in honor of Christine who was an active volunteer.



Jim Aulenbacher discusses uneven floor with Debbie White.



Thrift Shop volunteers Kyle Sutherland and Evelyn Miller assist a customer.

the Shop provided for furnishing a room at the hospital for visiting parents of child patients, and hospital care for “an indigent child.” Money was provided for the room and board of a 15-year-old girl whose mother was in the hospital for an operation. The Thrift Shop was called on most frequently to help children who needed glasses and for donations to local charities such as the Carver Community Center, Gilbert House, and Beyer Hospital. From the start, the Social Services Committee received monthly sums to deal with needy cases.

The annual meeting held in January 1943 reported on the Shop’s activities from May-December of 1942. The shop had earned \$1,620.03 in daily sales and \$52 in dues. (Apparently not everyone paid up.) New members of the Board were chosen by drawing names from a hat!

In 1945, the Shop did some very interesting fund-raising. Mrs. Cleary wrote to Hedda Hopper, the famous Hollywood gossip columnist, telling her about the shop and asking for one of her hats, for which she was well-known, to be used in a special project. Mrs. Hopper wrote back, saying the hat was on its way! The minutes fail to report on the eventual fate of the hat. Perhaps the Historical Museum has some information to share on the subject.

Reading the minutes of Board meetings for the first 15 years or so of the Shop’s existence, it is apparent that it was difficult for the Shop to get as many donations as they needed. People simply didn’t have the surplus of goods in their lives that we have today. To supply the need for more saleable items, Mrs. Quirk held a “Bundle Tea,” which it seems became an annual

event for several years. The tea was held at the Quirk mansion, at 304 N. Huron Street. Elegant tea sandwiches and petit fours were served, along with tea and coffee. The entrance fee was a bundle of saleable clothing for the shop. According to the newspaper clipping, this was hugely popular.

The list of good works and charitable donations made by the Thrift Shop is much longer than this paper can report. Through the years the shop has helped fill the needs of those unprovided for by other agencies and organizations, stepping in to help where help was badly needed. We have a legacy to be proud of.

(Nancy Hamilton is the President of the Ypsilanti Thrift Shop and has been a volunteer for many years.)



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John Z. Gault and the Gault Dairy Farm

BY ROBERT ANSCHUETZ

John Z. Gault property from the "1915 - Standard Atlas of Washtenaw County."



The Gault family farm house in 1926.

John Zachariah Gault was born in Detroit, Michigan, on March 23, 1870, the fourth of six children to William and Ellen Cobine Gault. John Gault's grandparents on both sides were of Scottish descent, and his parents immigrated to Detroit from Northern Ireland. John Z. Gault attended public school in Detroit and then started working in the photography business. In 1888, Gault started working as a photo printer for the firm of Arthur & Philbric in Detroit. After working on the printing side of the photography business, Gault became a photographer, first in Detroit, then in Howell, then in Ionia, and then back to Detroit in 1895.

On July 4, 1895, Gault married Georgina Haven in Windsor, Ontario. Georgina was born on May 27, 1871, in Brantford, Ontario, to Hector and Mary Haven, who later moved to Elk, Michigan. The young Gault family established their home in Detroit. The Gault's first child, daughter Mary Gault, was born on August 21, 1896. At that time, Gault gave up his job as a photographer and, in 1897, he became a Detroit policeman, a position which he held until 1899. Son John Russell

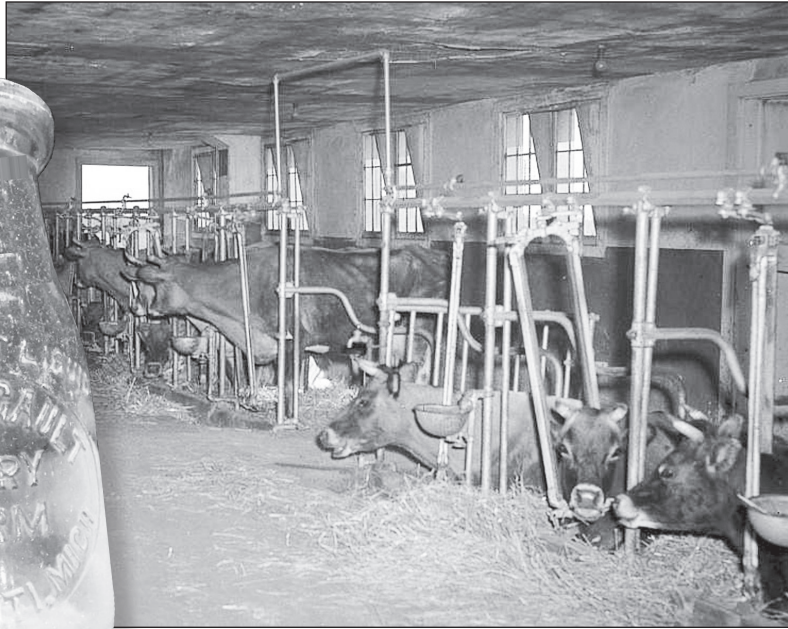
Gault was born on April 4, 1898. In 1900, with two young children, Gault gave up the dangerous profession of a police officer and began a job as a Detroit letter carrier. This job provided some stability to the family and he held the position until 1906.

In 1906, with news that a third child, son Charles Gault, was about to be added to the family, John and Georgina made the risky decision to purchase 130 acres of farmland for \$100 per acre in the Golden Triangle area of Ypsilanti Township from Frederick R. Emerick, with the intent to get into the dairy business. In a scene straight out of the 1960's comedy *Green Acres*, John Z. and Georgina Gault moved their family from the big city life in Detroit to a rural farmhouse near Emerick Street and Grove Road in Ypsilanti Township, just outside of the city limits. Son Charles Gault was born on July 2nd 1906, and their daughter Harriet R. Gault would be born in Ypsilanti two years later in 1909.

John Z. Gault grew his bovine herd by purchasing Jersey bulls



John Z. Gault dairy farm milk bottle.



Gault's dairy farm milking facility in 1948.

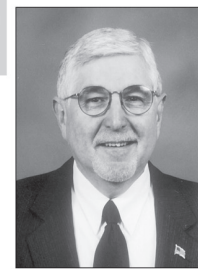
and cows from nearby farmers including Frederick R. Emerick. The number of livestock grew quickly, and the farm started producing an abundance of dairy products. The farm also produced grain for feeding their livestock. For a decade, John Z. Gault worked hard to grow his dairy farm and establish a local customer base through milk deliveries. There was plenty of competition in the dairy business in Ypsilanti, with other dairies including Ypsilanti Creamery Company, Ypsilanti Dairy Association, Clark Dairy, Austin Dairy, Gabelk Dairy, Warner Dairy, Bella Vista Farms, Rosewood Dairy, Superior Dairy, Lewis Creamery, Detroit Creamery, Calder Dairy, Hearl Dairy, McCalla Dairy, and Ypsilanti Dairy. Dairy was also produced at various smaller farms throughout the Ypsilanti area. In 1923, the Washtenaw Post reported that 42 milk dealers furnished milk in Ypsilanti.

Despite the competition between the dairy companies in Ypsilanti, these companies worked together to set fair competition and regulations for the industry in the state of Michigan. In 1913, John Z. Gault spearheaded a petition along with fifteen other citizens of Washtenaw County who were

involved in the dairy industry. This petition was sent to the Michigan House of Representatives and requested the passage of Michigan House bill No. 290 which would regulate the sale, inspection, and production of milk and cream for the consumption of all incorporated cities in Michigan. The House referred the petition to the Michigan Committee on Public Health.

With little warning, John's wife Georgina died at the young age of 48 on February 4, 1920, a victim of the Spanish Flu pandemic. She was buried at the Highland Cemetery. On August 20, 1923, John Z. Gault married widow Janet Wyckoff in Grass Lake, Michigan. Janet was born Janet Van Dusen and had been married to Homer Wyckoff and they had four girls: Margaret Soule (b. 1900), Eleanor (1903-1903), Ruth Lydia (b. 1904), and Helen Lowry (1906-1916). When Janet's husband Homer died in Indiana in 1907, Janet moved back to Ypsilanti with her three living children to live with her widowed mother, Hannah, and her Aunt Mary Van Dusen at 329 Maple Street. Janet's profession was a teacher, and she was also very active in the State of Michigan chapter Daughters of the American Revolution. Janet Gault

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served as the D.A.R. state chairwoman of press relations. I wrote about the Van Dusen family in the Summer 2019 Issue of the Gleanings. Janet's brother, Charles Van Dusen, rose to the position of President of the Kresge Corporation in 1925. After their marriage, John Z. and Janet Gault lived at 329 Maple St. with Janet's Aunt Mary Van Dusen. In 1931, Mary Van Dusen died, leaving John and Janet Gault in the house.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the Gault Dairy Farm was doing good business. The farm had 12-20 Jersey cows, 100-130 Holstein cows, plus 2-3 bulls. Dairy products were delivered to citizens of Ypsilanti by mule or horse teams pulling a wagon. Milk sold for approximately 2 cents per quart. John Z. Gault's sons helped in the milking operations. Years later, John Z. Gault's eldest son John recalled those days of helping on the farm, "Of course there wasn't any I-94 in those days, it was just farmland. In those early days my father had more than 100 milking cows. We didn't have milking machines. He had four or five hired hands who lived in a bunk house on the farm. We'd all have to help with the milking, twice a day, morning and night. I went to the old Woodruff School on Michigan Avenue in Ypsi. Walked to school every day. Pretty good hike."

In 1926, Gault hired John Weatherman to be his dairy manager, and Weatherman's family moved from Indiana into the Gault family farmhouse. Weatherman's daughter, Bernice Ashby, wrote an interesting article for the August 15, 1996 issue of the Ypsilanti Courier about the days on the farm. The Weatherman family lived at the Gault Farm from about 1926 to 1933, while John Z. Gault and his wife were living at 329 Maple Street. A condensed version of Bernice Ashby's article about life on the Gault Dairy Farm in the 1920s and 1930s is provided in the paragraphs below:

After a trip to Michigan to see what was available, my father was inter-



John Z. Gault at the Washtenaw County Dairy Banquet in 1939.

viewed and hired by John Z. Gault to fill the opening of dairy manager at Gault Dairy Farm. The next day we arrived at Gault Dairy Farm on Emerick Street in Ypsilanti. We were delighted with the huge two story house that was to be our home for the next seven years. The house was well equipped with modern plumbing and electric lights. This was different from our rural background, we were used to kerosene oil lights, wood burning stoves, an outside pump and a privy.

After we settled in, my mom was approached by Mr. Gault and asked if she would cook and serve meals to the hired men that worked on the farm. There were usually four to eight hungry workers, plus our family of five, to cook for three times each day. She accepted the offer and it was her first paying job. She was the world's best cook and wonderful meals were served at 5 a.m., noon and 5 p.m.

Gault Dairy Farm was highly respected in Ypsilanti. Deliveries were off to an early start. Early on, milk was loaded into a horse drawn vehicle and left from the farm at 4 a.m. At that

time milk was delivered to homes, stores and restaurants. In the winter if the milk was left on the doorsteps the freezing would cause the cream to rise to the top and push the cap off the glass bottles. At each stop the bottles from the previous delivery would be picked up and returned to the dairy for sterilization and prepared to be used again on another day. In years to come, milk was no longer delivered by horses. Trucks took their place, but the sound of the clip, clon on the road was missed.

Children were not allowed in the barns, but occasionally I would take a message to my dad and I would see the men who did the milking (by hand) come from the cow barn and down the long hall with buckets of milk. Each bucket was weighed and a chart was kept on which cow had given the milk. After that the milk went through the process of being bottled in an exceptionally clean area where workers wore white coveralls and hats.

Early fall brought the huge thrashing machines rumbling down the road in preparation for harvesting the grain. This was a very busy time and extra men came to help. Our kitchen became a hectic area because all these men had to be fed. It was a matter of pride that each hostess and three or four helpers prepare the best pies, cakes, two kinds of meat and golden fried chicken. Homemade lemonade was a great thirst quencher. Meals were served in shifts at beautifully set tables that were loaded with food. Those waiting rested under the great maple trees in the front yard until their turn.

Our family members often talked about life on the farm and how we loved walking in the woods, looking down on the small stream of water that is now Ford Lake. We enjoyed talking to the Gault family and visiting with the men in the bunkhouse in the evening. On Saturday night, a special joy was borrowing the pickup truck and do what everyone else did, go into



The Gault family farm on Grove Road – circa 1920s.

John Z. Gault dairy farm receipt from 1913.

town. We would park, walk around and look in the dime stores and talk to friends.

After the Weatherman family moved out of the property around 1933, the Gault farmhouse was rented out to a series of boarders. One of the renters of the farmhouse was allegedly the famous singer Patsy Cline. The late Ypsilanti historian Tom Dodd documented this fact in an article titled Ypsilanti Dairies the Summer 2007 issue of the Gleanings. Other dairy farm workers and their families also lived on the Gault Dairy Farm property in various dwellings.

John Z. Gault's son, Charlie Gault, was an early radio operator and took the hobby quite seriously. At age 10, his mother bought him a \$5 A.C. Gilbert crystal radio set. His passion for radios grew and he even met his wife Elma through radio conversations with her at her home in Toledo. In the 1930's Charlie Gault opened Charlie Gault's Radio Store in a house on his parents' dairy farm. In 1937, Charlie Gault

built and installed the Ypsilanti Police Department's first two-way radio system. Charlie and Elma later moved to a cottage-like house in the woods on Washtenaw Ave. near the Ypsilanti-Ann Arbor border that was known for many years for the display of Snow White's Seven Dwarfs marching along a log toward a pond that Charlie dug by hand.

John Z. Gault served as Ypsilanti Park Commissioner from 1926 to 1932, and again from 1940 to 1943. John Z. Gault is credited for the creation of Riverside Park and Frog Island Park, together the heart of Ypsilanti's municipal park system, and the sites of many festivals and special events throughout the summer. In 1934, Gault, along with others including Dr. Edward S. George, Ypsilanti School Board President, negotiated the purchase of Frog Island Park from the Detroit Edison subsidiary called the Huron Farms Corporation. In 1939, the park was provided to the Ypsilanti board of education for use as an athletic field until Ypsilanti High School moved from its

nearby location to its current address on the edge of town.

Riverside Park took more effort to create. Ownership of the land was split between the various businesses and residents on Huron Street, whose ribbon-like property extended from the top of the hill on Huron St. and down the four hills and across the floodplain to the Huron River. Detroit Edison owned the largest single parcel, and Gault negotiated property purchases with private owners Freeman, Quirk, Wardle, Ross, and Thompson. Over time from 1928-1940, Gault was able to assemble the parkland all the way from Cross St. to Michigan Ave. from its multiple owners, leveraging funds from civic groups such as Kiwanis and Rotary to clear and landscape the park. John Z. Gault was a member of the Kiwanis Club and helped garner these funds. Gault's interest in parks extended beyond Ypsilanti city limits. He was one of the early planners of what would become the Huron-Clinnton Metropark system including Metropolitan Beach, which has been enjoyed by countless Detroit-area families



Gault Village in the early 1960's.

throughout the decades since its opening.

John Z. Gault eventually stepped away from both his Parks Commissioner position and from his Dairy Farm to enjoy his large family of children and grandchildren. For his 71st birthday, the family celebrated with a large sculpture of chocolate and vanilla ice cream in the form of a Jersey cow in colors of brown and white. Retirement was not always full of good cheer, however, as John Z. Gault's grandson, Sgt. John Gault, was shot down in Germany in WWII. He was missing for three months, and his remains were later retrieved and brought back to Ypsilanti for burial in the Highland Cemetery. Janet Gault died on November 5, 1950 and is buried at Highland Cemetery near her first husband Homer Wyckoff.

John Z. Gault died in November 1954 and is also buried at Highland Cemetery. When John Z. Gault passed away, because of the high taxes that would have been assessed for the dairy operation, his children dispersed of the dairy operation and created the Gault Development Co., a real estate and building company, at 741 Emerick St., and began to create the Gault Village neighborhood. John Gault was the president, Charles Gault was the vice-president, Mary Gault Gilbert was the secretary, and Harriet Gault Murphy was the treasurer. The old farmhouse was torn down, and from the 1950s and into the 1960s, Gault Village was developed in several phases, including Gault Farms, Grove Place, Shady Knolls, and Nancy Park. Charles O'Neil and Bert Smokler developed 446 homes on the south side of the farm, part of which is now called the Hickory Hill subdivision. Bernice Ashby's article says that the streets in the Gault Village neighborhood were named after John Z. Gault's family members, including streets named Georgina, Jay, Arthur, Shirley, Margarita, Lester, and Evelyn. There also is a Gault Drive in the neighborhood.

Planning for the Gault Village shopping center started in 1955, and it was built in 1963 at a cost of 1.25 million dollars. Gault Village shopping center was built on 18.13 acres, with a total of 186,532 square feet of store area. The Gault Village shopping center originally contained 35 stores, including a department store and a supermarket. Until the early 1970s, the Gault Village neighborhoods were served by I-94 access

off Grove Road. In 1971, the on and off ramps at Grove Road were closed and moved to the Hamilton/Huron intersections. While this may have had the beneficial effect of quieting traffic flow in the neighborhood, there was a detrimental impact on the Gault Village shopping center, which slowly lost tenants, fell into disrepair, and today sits mostly empty.

John Z. Gault contributed much to his adopted city of Ypsilanti. In 1906, John Z. Gault and his family bucked the national trend of moving from the country to the city, as they moved from Detroit to rural Ypsilanti. Gault and his family established a large family dairy while employing dozens of workers who were desperate to support their families during the depression. Gault also left a lasting impact on the city of Ypsilanti with his role in the creation of Frog Island



Gault Village Shopping Center in 1965.

Park and Riverside Park. And finally, the Gault family estate off of Grove Road was converted into a vibrant neighborhood and shopping area that housed generations of Ypsilanti residents.

(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.)

Museum Advisory Board Report

BY EVAN MILAN, CHAIR

Shocking as it may be, the year is winding down. We will soon be celebrating the 200th anniversary of the founding of Ypsilanti. But, before we celebrate 2023, the Ypsilanti Historical Museum has a few traditions to properly bring 2022 to a close.

On Saturday, November 12, ten members of the Eastern Michigan University Baseball Team brought the Christmas Season down to the museum; performing all the heavy lifting (literally), we would not be able to deck the halls without the team's help. Members of the Society spent the week between the 13th and the 19th readying the museum for the yuletide season. The Ypsilanti Historical Society will be hosting an open house on December 11, from 2 pm to 5 pm, where everyone can come through and take part in our annual celebration. Refreshments will be available in addition to the holiday displays.

The Museum's collection has grown this autumn. Among the many pieces donated to the Ypsilanti Historical Society from the William and Nathalie Edmonds Estate, we are proud to have acquired uniforms from both the First and Second World Wars. Additionally, the museum now has a collection of more than

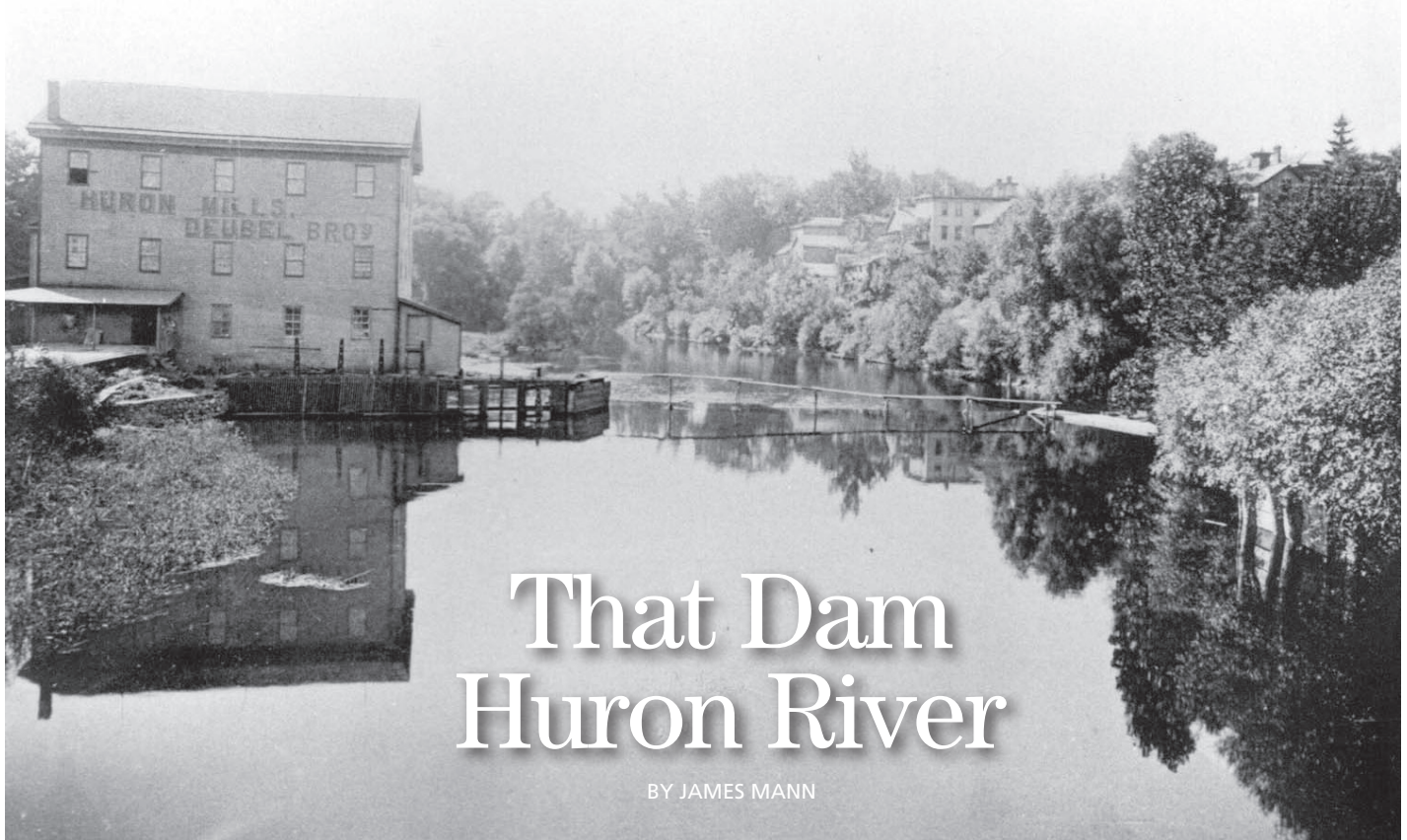
15 medals of the Woman's Relief Corps. The Corps was founded in 1883 as the Woman's Auxiliary to the Grand Army of the Republic to aid in the support of veterans of the Union Army who served during the Civil War. These medals will soon be on display in the Ypsilanti Room as an addition to our Civil War display.

Visitors to the museum will notice a few improvements made throughout the museum. The once deteriorating wood ramp to our Heritage room has finally been replaced by a sturdy concrete successor. Additionally, a parking space has been added to our, often full, lot and the spring will bring a new flowing tree to the south side of the building. Inside the museum, many of the incandescent bulbs that have lit our rooms and displays are being replaced with energy efficient 40-watt equivalent LEDs.

With the Bicentennial, exhibits will be updated to showcase Ypsilanti artifacts of the city's previous celebrations and achievements. I encourage everyone to take this opportunity to visit the museum and see our rotating displays before the New Year. We look forward to seeing everyone at the December open house, and wish everyone happy holidays.



The EMU Baseball Team joined with members of the Historical Society Board to decorate the Museum for Christmas.



That Dam Huron River

BY JAMES MANN

View of the Huron River looking south from Congress Street Bridge, now Michigan Avenue. The Huron Mill building on the left burned in the fall of 1915.

Today the Huron River flows quietly through the city of Ypsilanti almost unnoticed, as it seems to have no part in the daily life of the community. Yet, the river played a significant role in the development of the city. The river is a major reason the city of Ypsilanti was founded, and why it is where it is today. In the time before the first settlers arrived here, the Native people used the flowing water of the river as a means of transportation, with their canoes loaded with goods and supplies. Near where Michigan Avenue crosses the river, was where two trails intersected, the Sauk and the Potawatomie, making the site a major place for trade, ceremonies, and conferences. A trading post was established by the French here, as early as 1760.

In time, the trading post came into the procession of Gariel Godfroy, who with others, in 1809 registered a land claim with the U. S. Land office in Detroit. These became known as the French Claims. By 1823 the Native people had been removed from the region, and the land was opened for settlement. That same year, the first settlers poled their way up the Huron River on rafts and founded a community south of the present city and named it Woodruff's Grove.

In time the settlers had built a grist mill at the Grove making use of the flow of the river to power the mill. This was done in 1824 where the water had a natural fall of 11 feet. The mill opened in 1825 and continued in operation until 1830. "The power of the water at this mill did not necessitate the construction of a dam," noted Chapman's History of Washtenaw County.

The first mill dam was built at about the same time, just north of Forest Avenue. "The obstruction forming this new water-power being of brush, clay and logs, it would appear to be the work of the beaver tribe, instead of enterprising men: However, the rude barricade, which confined the Huron at this point, was swept away by the flood of 1832," reported Chapman.

Then in 1825 the Chicago Road, now Michigan Avenue, was surveyed, following the Sauk Trail. This road passed Woodruff's Grove by a mile to the north. By this time, the French Claims had been purchased by investors, who had a village plotted, and prepared to sell the land to newcomers. The members of the Woodruff's Grove community moved to the new site, which was named Ypsilanti.

As the population of Ypsilanti grew, so did the number of dams on the river. These would have been small dams, built to steer the flow of water to a water wheel, which, in turn, turned the machinery in the mill, be it a flour, grist, saw or paper mill. As Ypsilanti was then a frontier community, the necessities of life had to be fulfilled by a local product. Over time, with the improvement of the roads, and the coming of the railroad, the needs of the population changed. Still, some of these mills were in use into the early years of the 20th century. As electricity replaced flowing as a source of energy, the small dams were removed, and now only traces of these works remain.

That Dam Huron River continued on Page 26

Jerry Jennings AWARDS



Rick Katon receiving the Jerry Jennings Award from Marcia McCrary.



Maria Davis receiving the Jerry Jennings Award from Marcia McCrary.



Bette Warren receiving the Jerry Jennings Award from Marcia McCrary.

This year's Jerry Jennings Awards were presented on Sunday, October 9, 2022 at the Quarterly meeting of the Ypsilanti Historical Society. The three award winners are Rick Katon, Maria Davis and Bette Warren.

Rick Katon joined the Board of Trustees in 2016. He has been responsible for keys and security arrangements, plus creating museum tour guidelines. He has been a docent for many years, a docent trainer and he revised the Docent Manual. He worked for SOS Community Services and the 24th District Court. He graduated from Eastern Michigan University and directed and has acted in several P.T.D. productions.

Maria Davis became a member of the Ypsilanti Historical Society Archives Advisory Board in 2005. She has been a faithful member and guiding light of the Board of Trustees of the Ypsilanti Historical Society. Maria retired

from Eastern Michigan University in 2007. Other community involvement includes the Ladies Literary Club and the P.E.O.

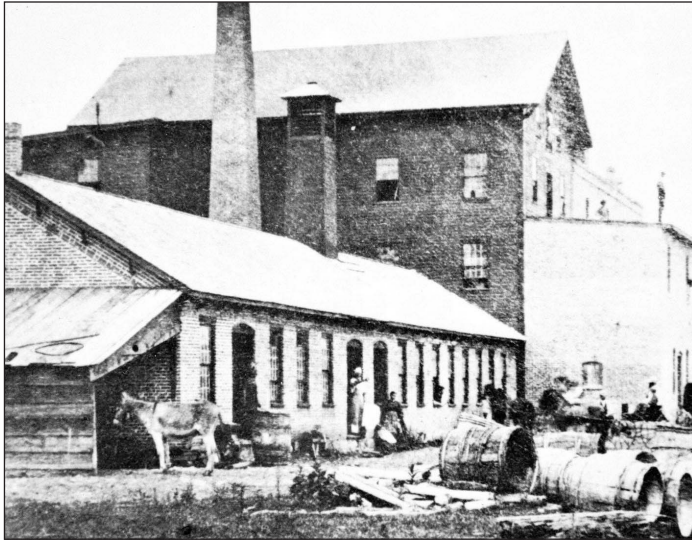
Bette Warren has been a Board of Trustees member and Treasurer for the Ypsilanti Historical Society since 2016. She has served on the Endow-

ment Advisory Board, the Museum Advisory Board and the Archives Advisory Board. She is a Professor Emeritus of Mathematics and Statistics at Eastern Michigan University. Bette is active with the Riverside Arts Center Board and is the current Treasurer of the Genealogical Society of Washtenaw County.

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The Cornwell Paper Mill stood at the south end of Ypsilanti. This was later the site of the city waterworks and is now the location of the former Ford plant.



After the Cornwell Paper Mill closed the site became the city Waterworks.

The best site for a dam on the Huron River was to the north and west of Ypsilanti where as early as 1830 a sawmill had been built. The river here had a head of 17 feet. A small village was settled around the mill named Lowell. By 1842 the mill had closed, and the community failed because of the wild-cat banking of the era. This site was just north of the intersection at Huron River Drive and Superior Road. Today the site is known as Superior.

The first true paper mill in Ypsilanti was founded in either 1855 or 1856 by the Ypsilanti Paper Company. Before this, paper mills were small operations manufacturing wrapping paper for local stores. This mill made newsprint, which was sold throughout the country. The mill began operation in 1856 and was destroyed by fire in 1871. A new mill was constructed and soon after was destroyed by fire. A new mill was constructed on the site, this time of brick. This was known as the Cornwell & Company Paper Mill and stood where the Ford Motor plant was later located.

“The main building, 66 x 130 feet, is occupied as the machine room; another room 50 x 107, is the store or freight house; and the third, 36 x 120, forms the engine room. Both water and steam power are used,” noted Chapman’s History of Washtenaw Coun-

ty. The mill was finally dismantled in 1886.

A woolen mill and dam were erected just north of Forest Avenue during the later years of the American Civil War. The building was made of brick and stood five stories tall. This building is today remembered as the Ypsilanti Underwear Factory. This building was demolished in the 1930’s, and the dam had been removed long before.

The incorporation of the Peninsular Paper Company under the laws of the State of Michigan as a stock company was organized and papers filed in 1867. Construction of a mill just outside the city limits of Ypsilanti began in the spring of that year. The first paper was produced in 1868.

“The mill,” reported The Ypsilanti Commercial of March 13, 1869, “is built of brick, main building 40 x 106, three stories high, and an attic, Machine room 30 x 86, Finishing room 28 x 30. In addition, wheel room, boiler room and shed. Every part of the building is complete.” This mill was erected on the south side of the river. This was a one machine mill.

The company had a contract with the Chicago Tribune for newsprint, and this was made from rag paper. For this reason, newspapers were sometimes called “rags.” Every morning long

lines of men who had gathered rags sat in carts and wagons waited at the mill for the business to open.

The Chicago Tribune insisted a second mill be built, this one far enough away from the first, so if there was a fire at one mill, the supply of newsprint would continue without interruption. For this reason, in 1872, a second mill was constructed across the river from the first on the north side.

Chapman’s History of Washtenaw County noted that the first mill, “consists of a main building with dimensions 40 x 100 feet, three-stories high, a wing 30 x 120 feet, one story high, and an annex for office use 16 x 24 feet in size. The main building is used for the preparation of stock; the wing is used for making and finishing paper.”

Chapman further noted the dimensions of the second mill, on the north side of the river as, “The main building, 40 x 116 feet, two stories and basement, and wing, 40 x 132 feet, one story and basement, the main building being used for preparing stock and the wing for making and finishing paper.”

“The motive power of these mills,” continued Chapman, “is supplied by three turbine waterwheels in each mill, one 66, one 42 and one 30 inch, under 13 feet head. Attached to each mill is a fire-proof boiler room contain-

ing 150-horse-power boilers...The machinery required to do this work consists of eight paper-mill engines, four in each mill, one rag cutter and duster in each mill, one large rotary boiler in each mill for boiling stock, besides one open tub, and two Foudrinier paper-machines, one 72-inch and one 66-inch. To do the work required, 110 persons are employed, about one-half of whom are women and girls.”

The second mill on the north side of the river continued in operation until September 28, 1898, when the building was destroyed by fire. All the machinery that could be salvaged was removed to the mill on the south side of the river. This building was enlarged to accommodate two paper machines and the additional equipment. Left behind was rubble and the 75-foot brick chimney which proved to be a challenge to local boys who risked climbing to the top. Another result of the fire was that the Chicago Tribune, on learning of the fire and loss of the second mill, immediately ended the contract with the Peninsular Paper Company. The company decided not to rebuild the mill but move into the production of specialty papers.

One half mile upriver from the Peninsular Paper Mill was the site where the village of Lowell had been. The

Cornwell family acquired the site in 1874 and here constructed a new paper mill, made of brick with a stone foundation. “This,” notes Chapman, “has been justly named the most extensive paper-mill in the State of Michigan.” The mill was destroyed by fire in 1906 and was never rebuilt. The property soon after came under the ownership of the Washtenaw Light & Power Company.

“Probably the most up-to-date and scientifically constructed electric power plant in the country has been completed and put in commission at Superior, one and a half miles west of Ypsilanti, by the Washtenaw Light & Power Co., as an auxiliary to its plant at Geddes. The plant has been constructed at the site formerly occupied by the Ypsilanti Paper Co. and utilizes the waterpower at that point. The new installation comprises two turbines—one 71 inch, the other 50 inches in size—which are expected to generate 1,200 horsepower with the normal head of water furnished. Two dynamos have been installed, one of which is of a new type being placed directly over the turbine, so the waste power is reduced to a minimum. It has roller bearings and all the latest improvements,” reported The Ypsilanti Daily Press of Wednesday, March 11, 1908.

“The Washtenaw Light & Power Co.” noted the account, “are now furnishing light and power not only to Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, but to Saline and Trenton and has a franchise for lighting the village of Wayne and will install the system there during the summer. Under the management of General Manager Hemphill, the light and power company has been carrying on a campaign of educating the people to the uses, convenience, and adaptability of electricity, both in the home and the shop and store, and this is having its result so the everyday use of electricity is becoming more and more a necessity in domestic and business economy, and yet, says Mr. Hemphill, ‘It is really only in its infancy.’”

Not long after this, the Washtenaw Light & Power Company was acquired by the Detroit Edison Company.

The Detroit Edison Company began in 1905 to purchase the sources of waterpower along the length of the Huron River. The company purchased the Geddes Power Plant, now the site of Gallup Park, in that year. The plan was to use the flow of the river to power the city of Detroit. That same year the site at Argo in Ann Arbor was acquired, as well as the sites at Osborne and Delhi.



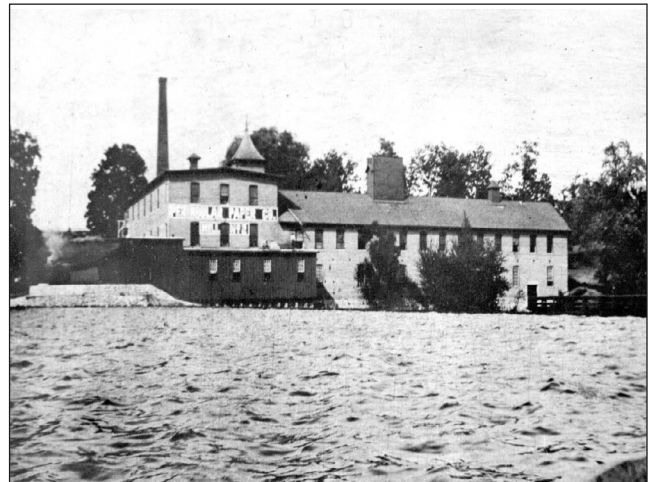
The Peninsular Paper Company had two mills each standing across the Huron River from the other, so a fire in one would not damage the other.



Built during the last days of the American Civil War, the Woolen Mill is best known as the Ypsilanti Underwear Factory.



A view of Peninsular Paper Mill Number 2 on the north side of the river and dam.



Peninsular Paper Number 2 as it appeared from the river.

“The first dam built by the Edison Company was at Barton in 1912. This was followed in 1913 by the reconstruction of Argo with a concrete dam, higher head race embankments and a new powerhouse. In 1914 the Superior Powerhouse was rebuilt, and in 1918 the rock filled dam, which had gone out in a flood, was replaced with a concrete structure. Previously, in 1916, the Geddes dam and powerhouse had been rebuilt, and shortly thereafter the Peninsular Paper Company reconstructed their dam and powerhouse at Ypsilanti,” wrote Louis E. Ayres in the *Washtenaw Impressions* of April 1949.

“This entire program,” noted Ayres, “for the Huron River contemplated nine plants, developing 225 feet of head, and creating a total pond area of 5500 acres, was estimated to cost \$2,682,000 in 1912, and expected to produce 45 million Kilowatt hours annually at the cost of 0.6 of a cents per Kilowatt hour. But only seven of these plants were built, five by Edison, one by Peninsular Paper Company, and one by Henry Ford.”

The program was abandoned by the Edison Company in 1925, in part because the cost of waterpower had risen, but the cost of generating power in steam plants had gone down due to the efficiency of the large high-pressure boilers and steam turbines then in use. “Also,” continued Ayres, “Detroit had grown so much that the amount of power available on the Hu-

ron River was but a drop in the bucket. If all of these water-power plants had been built, and were now in operation (1949), their combined annual output would probably not exceed six-tenths of one percent of the power generated in the several steam plants of the Edison Company.”

As the Edison Company acquired the dams and water flow, it also had to purchase the land that would be flooded by the dams as the water backed up behind the dam. Farmers who sold the land were unwilling to sell the few acres the company wanted, so Edison was forced to purchase the whole farm. Some of this land was sold to Henry Ford and others, but the company held onto the land for years after.

“Their utilization of these farms has been a valuable object lesson to the county,” noted *The Ypsilanti Daily Press* of April 13, 1936. “In the area above the Barton Dam, they have developed a forest of evergreens and an attractive residential suburb. Below the Geddes Dam on the north side, they have a fine apple orchard and on the south side a cherry and apple orchard and another forest of evergreens. Above the old dam at Delhi, they have a large peach orchard from which some thousands of bushels of peaches were sold in 1935. All of these ventures besides being an object lesson on intelligent land use, have added materially to the attractiveness of the valley.”

The original Peninsular Paper Mill Dam was replaced in 1914. This was most likely when the powerhouse was built, and contained two Francis turbines, manufactured by the Allis-Chalmers Company. This provided electric power to the mill and was connected to the power grid as part of the Edison project to harness the flow of the river. This new dam would not stand for long.

On the morning of Thursday, March 14, 1918, the Huron River was at a high-water mark because of the spring melt. That evening a severe storm passed over the city dropping a heavy rain on the city. The combination of the spring rain and the additional rain caused the dam at Superior to give out at about 4:00 am. This caused a wall of water of 3 to 4 feet high to rush down the river. This wall of water had sufficient weight and force to wash out the new Peninsular Paper mill dam. The water level of the river rose over 12 feet in 10 minutes. The wall of water continued down the river causing considerable damage along the way.

The damage included the dam at the Underwear Factory, which was completely destroyed. The Underwear Factory had by this time converted to electric power, so the loss of the dam was not a major problem for the company,

Plans were soon made to replace the two dams. The new Peninsular Paper



Superior Dam after the flood of 1918.

Mill dam was soon in place, and a new dam was constructed at Superior in 1920. These are the dams in place at these sites today.

To the southeast of Ypsilanti was a narrow valley known as the King Flats, which was part of some 4,000 acres of land purchased by Henry Ford between Ypsilanti and Belleville. During the summer of 1931, the land of the valley was cleared of trees, buildings, and other objects, with only the Tuttle Hill Road Bridge left, as work on a dam was started. The bridge was supposed to be removed but was left in place, and is now at the bottom of Ford Lake, resting on its side. Once the land was cleared Ford had the cleared land placed under cultivation. "Soybeans were grown on a large part of the land and chemical experimentation will follow to determine their value for oil, to be used as a paint base and other manufacturing processes," reported *The Ypsilanti Daily Press* of December 31, 1932.

"In addition to the soybean crop," continued the account, "much of the fertile land bordering the Huron River was cultivated for garden produce during the past season. More than 1,000 acres of land were used for beets, carrots, cabbage, celery, squash, and potatoes. Approximately 10,000 bushels of such produce, was delivered to the company stores in Detroit and Lincoln Park."

The dam was built at a narrow point of the river at the lower end of the bot-

tom lands. Work on the dam began in May of 1931 and was completed in November of 1932. "It is," noted the account, "1,000 feet across and creates a 33-foot water head capable of producing 3,000 horsepower. A highway concrete bridge has been constructed over the dam completing a fine new graveled road which replaces the old Tuttle Hill Road, now covered with water. The structure is 11 feet above the surface of the lake and has concrete railings three feet high."

The purpose of the dam was to generate electric power for the Ford plant at the south end of the city. The factory is a one-story structure, 160 by 390 feet, with bricked outside pilings

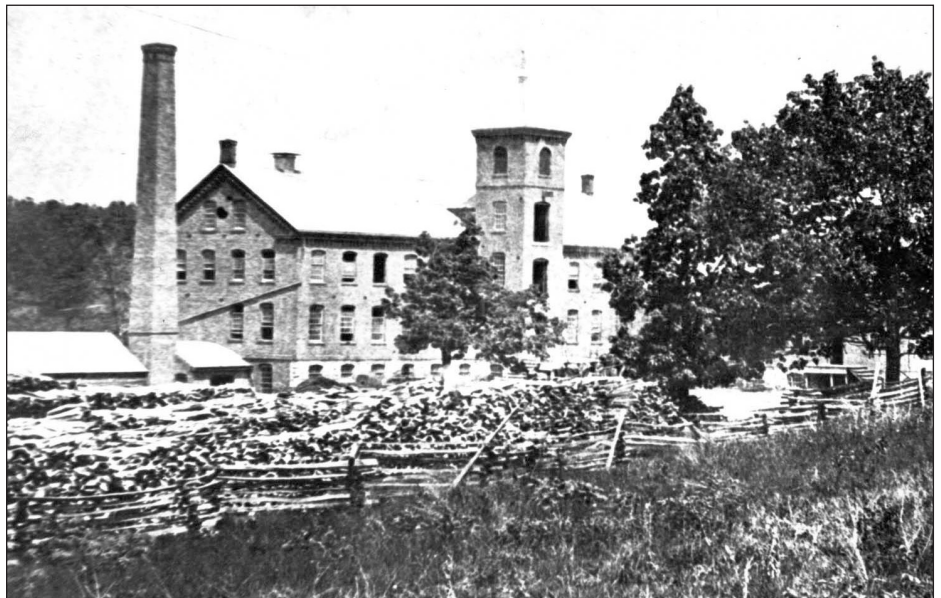
and with walls of glass set in steel sash. Interior structure is of steel and concrete to make the building entirely fireproof.

"Adjoining the factory is the old Ypsilanti city water works hydroelectric pumping plant, which Mr. Ford purchased. The plant has been restored with modern equipment and with its six to eight feet of water head is used as an adjunct to the power plant at the dam."

The water backed up by the dam created what is now known as Ford Lake. The dam is now the property of Ypsilanti Township. The dam is still in use and generates electricity for Ypsilanti Township.

Construction on the new Peninsular Paper Company Dam was completed in 1920 and under a lease agreement with the Detroit Edison Company the hydroelectric plant was operated and maintained by Edison. This lease agreement was terminated in August of 1950. After that date Edison continued to operate the plant, but maintenance was now assumed by Peninsular Paper.

The hydroelectric plant remained in operation into the late 1960's, when one of the two generators in the plant failed. Then in 1970 the second gener-



The Cornwell Mill at Superior was an impressive building until destroyed by fire in 1906.

ator failed. The cause of these failures is not known but is assumed to be due to deterioration of insulation. After a brief and informal investigation by Peninsular Paper into the cost to restore the units to operating condition, the company deemed the cost not to be economically justified.

“In decommissioning the plant,” noted a report by Ayres, Lewis, Norris & May, Inc., “the generators and all related electrical equipment were removed. In order to prevent the passage of water through the structure and to avoid a public hazard, the head gates were closed, and the turbine pits were filled in with earth. It is not known whether the turbines were removed from the wheel pits prior to being filled in.”

The Peninsular Paper Company commissioned the Ayres, Lewis, Norris & May, Inc. firm to carry out an assessment of the feasibility of recommissioning the plant in 1979. The study determined this to be feasible in terms “of engineering, environmental, and institutional factors. From an economic standpoint, however, it was determined to be non-cost-effective in terms of the economic factors pertinent to the owner, a private industrial concern. Conceivably, a combination of tax credits, low interest loans, and/or construction grants reducing costs and expenses by approximately 25 percent would place this project within a financially feasible range.”

The James River Corporation, which then owned the paper mill, sold the dam and property on the north side of the river, opposite the mill, to the city of Ypsilanti for \$1.00 in August of 1986. The Peninsular Paper Mill buildings were demolished in 2004 and are now the site of Peninsular Place apartments.

The city of Ypsilanti explored the possibility of restoring the dam back to hydroelectric use, but funding was not available. Then in 2018 the Huron River Watershed Council recommended the removal of the dam. The Huron River Watershed Council com-



In minutes the water level of the Huron River rose to 12 feet, causing the Pen Mill Dam to give way.

missioned a study by Princeton Hydro which supported the recommendation.

The Huron River Watershed Council listed as benefits for removing the dam as:

“Pen Dam is a high hazard dam that no longer generates power and costs taxpayers’ money to maintain and fix. The dam does not meet state safety standards and the city is legally required to fix or remove it. Without the dam Peninsular Park and the Huron River become more accessible for recreation and enjoyment. The improved park and building will support businesses by creating a renewed area for residents and visitors. Removing the dam will cost taxpayers less in the long run than repairing and maintaining it. The cost of removing the dam, noted the council, is a onetime expense, whereas maintenance would be ongoing. The dam harms the environment. The health of the river and wildlife would improve which would also raise the quality of life for all in the area.”

The council further notes that the cost of restoring the hydroelectric power state at the dam would not be cost effective, as it would not produce enough power to cover costs of con-

version, permitting, and maintenance.

The council estimated the cost of repairing the dam at, in 2018, at \$807,000.

The one-time cost of removing the dam was placed, in 2018, at \$1,734,000. More recent estimates place the cost at 2.7 million. These estimates do not include the cost of engineering, permitting, mitigation of sediment, which includes toxic material, as well as work on the railroad bridge, restoration of uncovered land and bank stabilization. The Ypsilanti City Council has voted \$500,000 toward the removal of the dam and will seek state funding to cover the additional costs.

There is support for saving the dam as it is an historic site, and improvement in hydroelectric power could make generating power at the plant possible and cost effective. There is possible funding for repairing and putting the plant back in service. A recent estimate for the repair and maintenance of the dam was placed at \$600,000; this could include placing the hydroelectric power back in service. Grant money for this project could be available.

The Huron River Watershed Council has recommended to the City of Ann Arbor the removal of the dam at Su-



Underwear Factory after the flood. The flood waters removed the dam at the factory but it was not a loss for the company as the mill had made the change to electric power.

perior. The dam at Superior fails, the council reported, to produce enough power to cover the cost of its maintenance. The Huron River passes through the city of Ypsilanti little noticed, yet it played an important part in the history of the community. In fact, if it were not for the river, there would never have been a city of Ypsilanti.

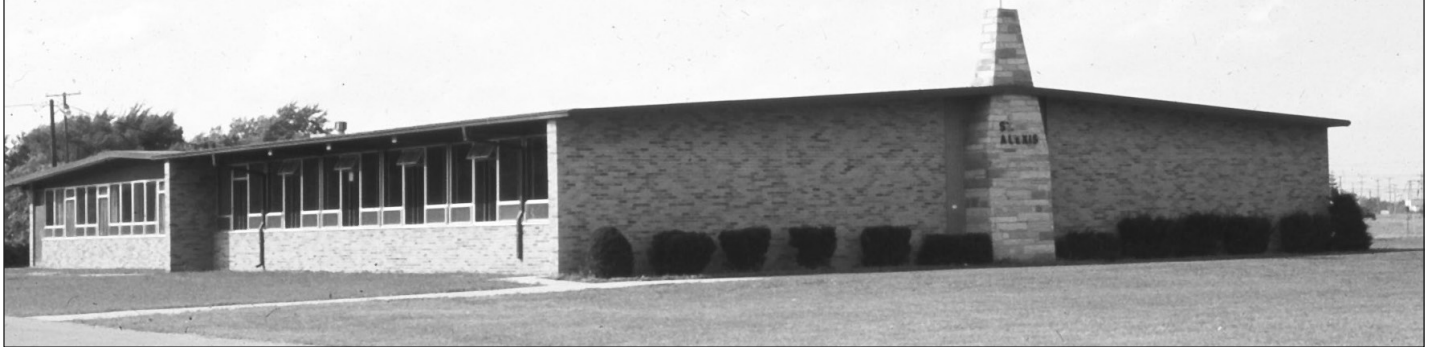
(James Mann is a local historian, a volunteer in the YHS Archives, and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)

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A Tale of Two Churches

BY JAMES MANN



St. Alexis as it appeared at the time of the dedication in 1967.

At the start of American involvement in the Second World War, and when the Ford Motor Company completed construction of the Willow Run Bomber Plant near Ypsilanti, a new population of families moved into the area seeking employment in the war industries. These families had many needs that had to be dealt with, including housing, food, schools for the children, and health care. There were also the spiritual needs of the new residents, which needed attention as well.

At first the Catholic population was expected to be aided by St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Ypsilanti, but this soon proved to be inadequate, as the numbers were too large and there was no public transportation. To serve the needs of the Catholic population in the Willow Run area, Cardinal Mooney, the Archbishop of Detroit, established St. Alexis Mission in the spring of 1941. Father Clare Murphy was sent to head the mission. At first, he lived in the rectory at St. John the Baptist and said mass in the Willow Run Theater. Each Sunday before mass, Father Murphy heard confessions. Soon after he acquired his own trailer and became a resident of the Willow Run Community.

A history of the parish notes: "Because Willow Run was a government project, Father Murphy was able to procure materials during the first years of the war to build the first permanent church structure on its old site, the corner of Holmes and Midway."

"The Church itself," notes a second history of the parish, "has a very primitive beginning, having homemade plank pews and with an alter and other furnishings supplied from other churches, from their surplus discards. Later Father Murphy obtained as a gift, a long frame building which had previously been used as a base of operations by the surveyors and engineers engaged in building the highways leading to the 'Bomber Plant.' A small kitchen and a library were added, and the building became St. Alexis Hall and was the scene of many various types of parish entertainments during the ensuing years."

Father Murphy left to become the pastor of St. Frances

Cabrini parish in Allen Park. He was replaced by Father Collins. After the end of the war the nation suffered a housing shortage, as men returning home from military service needed a place to live and nothing was available. The temporary housing of Willow Run village became home to these men and their families. The housing filled some of the needs of men enrolled at the University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University.

"With the coming of Father Raymond E. Jones," notes a history of the parish, "new life entered St. Alexis Mission. Father's emphasis was to build a permanent parish. When the people saw that Father was as handy with a bulldozer as with a blessing, they pitched in to help. The building was painted, sidewalks were laid, and a program for youth organized. In need of funds—as is nearly every parish—Father Jones organized wrestling matches, got the men to pump gas as partners in a local station, and in other numerous projects. Most of these funds went for the repair and maintenance of the school busses."

On Saturday, February 5, 1955, a fire of undetermined origin destroyed the interior of the church. An investigation carried out by the state fire marshal's officers found no evidence of arson but did not rule that out as a cause. Because of the fire the interior of the church had to be rebuilt, and as the work was carried out, the building was lengthened to accommodate more people. At the same time, a temporary school structure was planned to alleviate overcrowded conditions at St. John's Elementary School. Five Quonset huts were purchased as war surplus and placed on Holmes Road.

Father Henry Kraft became pastor and he hoped to build a new church, school, and social hall. First, he had to relieve the community of its debt. Under his administration several activities were carried out and by Christmas of 1964 he was able to announce the debt had been paid in full. He then began the preliminary work for the construction of new facilities. He was unable to fulfill his plans as Father Richard Bonin became pastor in January of 1966.

Then in June of 1966 St. Alexis Mission was elevated to the status of parish and was now St. Alexis Church. Groundbreaking for the new buildings was carried out on October 23, 1966. The dedication of the new church, school, and social hall was performed by John Dearden, the Archbishop of Detroit on August 26, 1967. This new building replaced the five Quonset huts then still standing at Midway and Holmes Road. Later a 30-foot bell tower was installed, with a bell. The tower was topped with a cross. On the bell is the German phrase, which translates: "praise be God in the highest." The bell was cast in 1883 and was acquired from Materials Unlimited.

In January of 1993 Kenneth J. Povish, the Bishop of the Diocese of Lansing, sent a letter to the members of St. Alexis and St. Ursula parishes. He opened his letter by noting the establishment of St. Alexis in 1941, and the establishment of St. Ursula in 1960 when the building of I-94 cut the Catholic population of the area into two isolated communities.

"The two Catholic communities have developed in different, yet complementary ways. St. Alexis, a younger and somewhat more fluid community, placed great emphasis and resources in developing a very fine Catholic school. St. Ursula, a more stable and

older community, moved towards the establishment of a very well-designed but possibly overbuilt permanent parish church. Today both communities are established, financially viable, and roughly the same size, St. Ursula has 213 families, and St. Alexis has 285 families. These are, by Catholic Church standards, very small parish communities. This fact becomes especially significant as we face a reduction of ordained clergy and a need in quickly developing areas of the diocese to establish new parishes," wrote Bishop Povish.

"The building of the bridge over I-94 in the late 70's has rejoined the communities north and south of the freeway and now gives us the freedom for new thinking and planning. What was once an obstacle to unity is now only a two-mile drive from one parish grounds to the other. As far as physical resources, what St. Alexis needs, St. Ursula has, and what St. Ursula needs, St. Alexis has," noted Povish.

Bishop Povish called on the two communities to cooperate in planning for the consolidation of the two.

"What I am writing you today can be seen by some as negative and regressive. I believe that this view will be only a very small minority in either parish. Attitudes such as 'this is ours'



An updated photo of St. Ursula Catholic Church.



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or 'we are not going to work with you' must be seen as sin, or the effects of sin, rather than an outlook that is consistent with the Gospel message. I have too much faith in you and in the work of the priests that have developed your two parishes in the past to believe that you would let any negative thinking or past history stand in the way of Catholics joining with their brothers and sisters for the common good. As Christians we can never let material things or intolerant thinking stand in the way of our joining together for the good of all."

St. Ursula Catholic Church was created in June of 1960 by John Cardinal Dearden to service the southeast portion of Ypsilanti. The first mass was said by the Rev. Mitchell J. Bednarski, the founding pastor, in the Ypsilanti Township Hall. Then beginning on August 10, 1960, services were held in the Kettering School. Services continued to be held there until completion of the new building, on the southeast corner of Harris Road and Foley Avenue. The plan was for a church, rectory and parking lot. Groundbreaking was held in November of 1960.

"The buildings of the new church have been designed by Joseph Cry, Architect and Associates of Livonia," reported The Ypsilanti Press of November 3, 1960. "The buildings are of contemporary design and reflect subtle contrasts of brick, mosaic tile and precast quartz wall panels."

"The church will seat 600 persons and will be complete with social hall, kitchen, nave, and Sacristies. The structure is created to be transformed into an eight-classroom elementary school at a future date. The entire site is planned for future construction of a school, convert and permanent church. The church is unique for several reasons. The choir room is extended beyond the front of the church and is located behind the altar as an apse. This space would later be used as a vestibule for the school. The roof is constructed of rounded steel girders with fire resistant acoustic ceiling roof panels. All windows are to be tinted grey for sun control and privacy. An exterior sculpture of St. Ursula will grace the main entry of the church. It will be mounted on a multi-colored quartz wall at the narthex. The brick is grey with variegated blue Italian mosaic tile panels beneath all windows."

This was a one-story structure 108 x 42 feet on an 8 ½ acre site. The rectory was built on a lot adjacent to the church facing Foley Avenue. The cost of construction and furnishing was expected to be \$62,000. The first mass in the finished structure was held in October of 1961. A new church building was later constructed, and formal dedication was held in 1967.

Under the plan for consolidation of the two parishes, each standing about two miles apart, the building at St. Alexis became the school, and the building at St. Ursula became the church. The combined parishes were renamed Transfiguration Catholic Church. Not everyone was happy with the arrangement.

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A small group of parishioners from St. Alexis occupied the building for several weeks as part of a sit-in, to request a Sunday mass at St. Alexis. The Diocese of Lansing did not comply with the request, stating as the reason, there were not enough priests to staff every site. The Diocese did not force the parishioners to leave, but time caused the protest to end.

At this time, the registration fee to the school was increased. St. Alexis had supported the school in previous years by hosting bingo games at the parish two nights a week. The money raised went to support the school. There was suspicion by some that this was part of a plan on the part of the diocese to cause the number of students at the school to decrease, giving reason to close the school and sell the property for a profit. The school was closed in 1995, due, the diocese said, because tuition was too low to cover expenses. The building that was St. Alexis is now home to Global Tech Academy. The bell tower still stands, but the cross that once topped it has been removed.

The parish that had been St. Ursula, and became Transfiguration Catholic Church, was merged with St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in 2008. The reason given by the diocese was dwindling attendance. The merger of Transfiguration parish into St. John the Baptist resulted in anger and bitterness in some, as the process was not well considered or administered in the best manner. Today at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, there is a room named St. Ursula, in memory of the parish.

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

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