

Ypsilanti GLEANINGS

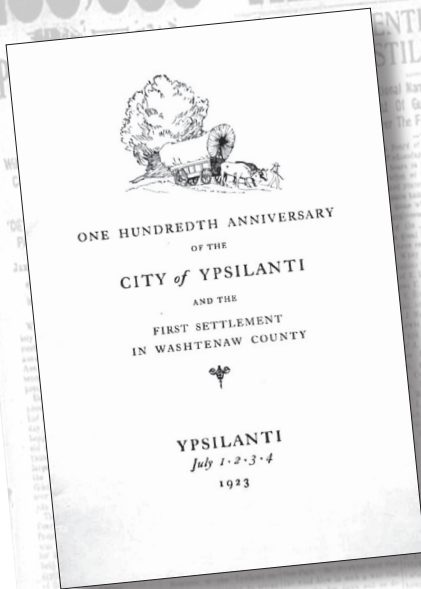
Official publication of the Ypsilanti Historical Society, featuring articles and reminiscences of the people and places in the Ypsilanti area



SPRING 2023

Another Look at the 1923 Centennial Celebration

BY ROBERT ANSCHUETZ



Ypsilanti Centennial Program Cover.

In the Spring 2022 issue of Gleanings, James Mann wrote eloquently about the Ypsilanti Centennial Celebration, held from July 1st through July 4th 1923. This article is a continuation of sorts to that article, and adds additional details about the 1923 Centennial Celebration just in time for Ypsilanti's Bicentennial Celebration that is being held this year.

One hundred years ago, Ypsilanti hosted the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of the city, the first settlement in Washtenaw County. The Centennial Celebration was also known as the Centenary. A souvenir program was distributed to residents that outlined all of the various festivities that were to be held in the city. The agenda of events was published in the Daily Ypsilantian-Press which supplemented the events pub-

lished in the Centennial Souvenir Program. Here are the daily descriptions of the Centennial Celebration events as outlined in those two publications.

Monday, July 2: All visitors will register at the Board of Commerce, southwest corner of Michigan Avenue and Adams Street, and a complete list will be made public each day. An ancient stage coach will be a daily sight in the street with members of the Rotary Club driving. The Kiwanis Club will keep open house at their log cabin in Gilbert Park on Michigan Avenue, between Park and Lincoln Streets. A feature recalling the old days will be the ox team drawing a covered wagon and driven by boys of the American Legion. Business houses will display in their windows the garments and furniture of early periods. In the evening is the Centennial Ball. With every person in a costume belonging to a period prior to 1900 this will be a gay and picturesque



Huron Hotel Advertisement Featuring the Stage Coach Arrival.

Another Look at the 1923 Centennial Celebration continued on Page 4

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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.

www.ypsihistory.org

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From the PRESIDENT'S DESK

BY BILL NICKELS

One year ago, during February of 2022, planning for our new handicap ramp began by shopping for contractors. Finally, on February 28, 2023, the project was completed with the installation of hand rails.

Our Archives are a pretty busy place! Before EMU Graduate Intern Becca Murphy left us in December, she spent several afternoons introducing our new EMU Graduate Intern Connor Ashley to the position. He joined us in January. Owen Phillips, a Schoolcraft College student, wrote and asked if he could fulfill a class requirement and volunteer 15 hours in our Archives. The time has stretched beyond the 15 hours as he is busy filing a backlog of obituaries. With professional archival experience, Ben Dettmar wrote and asked to volunteer. He is busy working with volunteers Russ Kenyon and Tom Quigley on our website's Photo Archives. A BIG THANKS goes to all of our volunteers!

The Ladies Literary Club was filled to capacity on Sunday March 5th for "The Way We Were" Quarterly Meeting. Clifford Larkins presented an updated version of Jack Harris' 1979 Heritage Festival program that took viewers on a tour of 1979 Ypsilanti. That was followed by Barry LaRue's edited family 8 mm film visit to an earlier Ypsilanti. Because of many requests to repeat the program this summer, YHS will



Archives EMU Graduate Intern Connor Ashley.

likely schedule a repeat performance both live and on Zoom. We will rely on having email addresses of members for Zoom meetings. If you know we don't have your email address and would like to have the opportunity to participate, send us your email at yhs.museum@gmail.com.

The Ypsilanti Rotary Club is planning a local museum day that will focus on the Michigan Firehouse Museum, the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum, and our Ypsilanti Historical Museum & Archives. June 24th is the planned date. Look for an announcement sharing the day's program soon.

The Ypsilanti Historical Society views our museum as a source of local history for government, businesses, schools, and people from all over the world (Greece is the 3rd most user



Handicap ramp to the Museum and sidewalk to our apartments.

of our Photo Archives). As part of that philosophy, we partner with EMU's Historic Preservation Program in several ways. Sharing the cost of two EMU Historic Preservation Graduate Interns brings professionalism to us and marketable employment experience for the interns.



Charles Calcaterra and Archives volunteer Owen Phillips examining the Field Marshall uniform.

Our collections are being used by the Historic Preservation Program class titled Intro to Curatorship. The graduate students tour the museum and select an artifact to research. Charles Calcaterra noticed a Nazi World War II jacket in our military collection. It was part of a World War II anniversary display several years ago and was described as an officer's field jacket. Doing research that would be expected of a museum professional, Charles learned the jacket belonged to a Field Marshal who led the German army in the battle for St. Petersburg! Further research indicates that it belonged to one of a small number of Field Marshals who participated in that battle.

The jacket was donated by Martin Opem Jr. who was a World War II veteran. Charles speculated how he would come to own the jacket. Of the Field Marshal's who fought at St Petersburg, one of them died in a British POW camp – Ernst Busch. Considering the jacket might have belonged to Ernst, Charles is doing further research to document the jacket's original ownership.

Ypsilanti's bicentennial celebration is becoming an eclectic collection of events. Sponsored by Washtenaw Wanderers, Stefan Szunko will lead walking tours of Ypsilanti's Historic District, Downtown, and Normal Park throughout 2023. Go to <https://www.facebook.com/WashtenawWanders>

for details.

As part of Ypsilanti's centennial celebration in 1923, Harvey Colburn wrote a history of Ypsilanti's first 100 years, *The Story of Ypsilanti*. The Ypsilanti Historical Society made a reprint of the book during Ypsi-

lanti's sesquicentennial celebration in 1973. Now, having just a few of the reprints available, YHS is doing a second reprint, this time with a searchable index! For \$20, this second reprint will be available this spring.

Ypsilanti Bicentennial Commission's History Committee prepared a history of Ypsilanti's last 50 years titled *Ypsilanti's Histories*. When completed, it will go to the printer and will also be available for \$20 later this spring. Chapters written by over thirty different authors are complete and the book is being prepared for printing. It also will be available for \$20 a copy later this spring.

Enjoy the many different events being planned for our bicentennial year!



Archives volunteer Ben Dettmar.



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312 N River St, Ypsilanti
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occasion.

1:30 pm – Rotary Club places marker at John D. Pierce residence (Ballard and Emmet streets)

3:30 pm – D.A.R. unveils marker of First Settlement in Washtenaw County (Corner Prospect and Grove Streets)

5:00 pm - Kiwanians welcome Rotary stage coach at Log Cabin in Gilbert Park

7:00 pm to 9:00pm – Ford Motor Company Band in Gilbert Park

8:30 pm – Centennial Ball, Normal Gymnasium

Tuesday, July 3: This is the distinctive Home-Coming Day. At Prospect Park the community will gather with their guests for picnic dinner. Visiting, interspersed with a few informal speeches, will fill the time delightfully. At 8:30 p.m. occurs the first presentation of “*The History of Ypsilanti*,” a pageant in which nearly fifteen hundred people will appear. The text has been written by Mr. Thomas Wood Stevens, of Pittsburgh, America’s greatest pageant writer. The production is in charge of Mr. Daniel L. Quirk, Jr., director of the Ypsilanti Players, whose part in the Little Theatre movement has brought Ypsilanti into nation-wide

notice. Seventy-five hundred seats will be provided.

Homecoming Day (Prospect Park)

10:30 am – Washtenaw County Pioneers meet

12:00 pm – Big Picnic dinner

12:00 pm – 12:30pm – Hart’s band

2:00 pm – James Schermerhorn of Detroit, Speaker

8:30 pm – The Pageant of Ypsilanti, Normal Science building grounds (Forest Avenue)

Tuesday, July 4: Sports and Games will distinguish Independence Day. There will be a huge barbecue in Recreation Park, while baseball, wrestling and horseshoes will provide spirited amusement. A program of water sports and log-rolling will enliven the evening, and later there will be a second presentation of the pageant.

11:00 am – Barbecue at Recreation Park

2:30 pm – Baseball (Jack Dunn’s U of M stars vs. McCulloch’s Ypsi teams)

2:30 pm to 4:30 pm – Hart’s

Ypsilanti Band

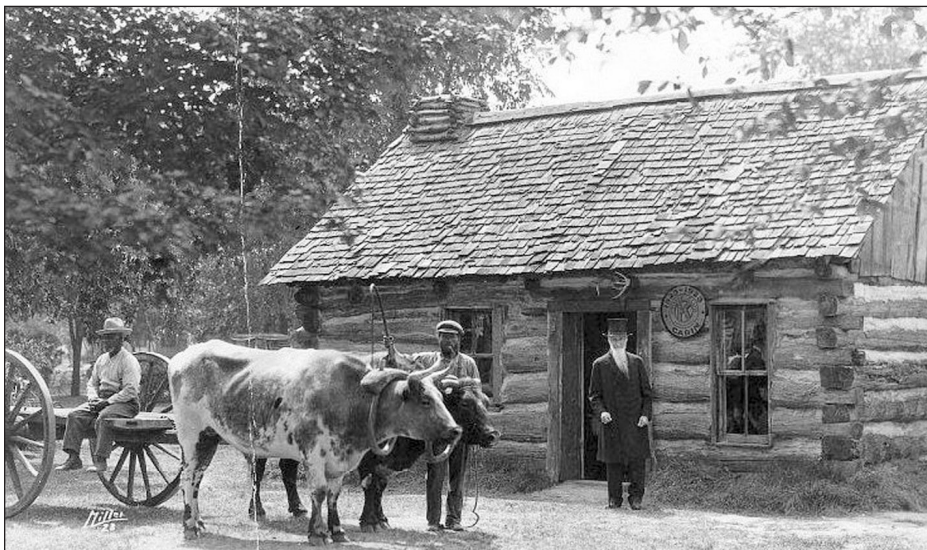
8:30 pm – The Pageant of Ypsilanti, Normal Science building grounds (Forest Avenue)

10:45 pm – Fireworks Display (same as pageant location)

Towering over the festivities, both literally and figuratively, was the newly opened four-story Huron Hotel, which included a tavern where visitors could stay, eat, and catch up on old times. The hotel was increased to six-stories in 1926, and is now appropriately known as the Centennial Plaza and houses the Ypsi Alehouse. Guests were also encouraged to stay at the Hawkins House, and a list of available hotel rooms were posted at the Board of Commerce.

In conjunction with the Centennial Celebration, Harvey C. Colburn was tasked with writing a book highlighting the history of the city. Colburn was the minister of Ypsilanti’s First Congregational Church and also a history buff, but he had only lived in Ypsilanti for 5 years when he wrote the book. An article titled “*Harvey C. Colburn*” was written for the *Gleanings* in the Spring 2010 edition that fully documents the creation of the book titled *The Story of Ypsilanti*. The book was over 300 pages and included tales of the individuals, businesses and fabric of the growing city. At the conclusion of the book, Colburn writes about the driving force behind the past events of Ypsilanti that would be part of the Centennial Celebration that bears repeating:

“It would be quite inconceivable that such a city as Ypsilanti has proved herself to be should pass her centenary without baking for herself a great birthday cake and decorating it with a hundred glorious, glowing candles. So, all good Ypsilantians look forward with enthused anticipations to the festival. Imagination already pictures thronging streets and the reunion of home-coming children. There are pious pilgrimages to sacred spots: the fields overlooking the



Rebuilt Log Cabin at Gilbert Park with 100-Year-Old Seth Reed.

Huron Valley, where once Benjamin Woodruff and his brave company built their log cabins in the grove; the riverside where the first mill stood, with its splashing wheel turned by the swift current; the bit of ground where were buried the dead; the old brick school-house where children of the long-ago learned to read from forgotten primers; the church worn and weather-beaten but once so fine, standing with tall spire and green shuttered windows; the spot where Indians danced while the villagers trembled; the street where ox-teams stood with loads of grain waiting the convenience of the miller; ancient mansions where curiously garbed gentlemen and ladies in spreading hoop-skirts feasted and danced with old-fashioned dignity."

Colburn continues with the specific plans that were being construed for the upcoming Centennial Celebration in his poetic writing style:

"The forgotten past is made to live again. See! Here is the rough tavern built all of logs and dispensing primitive hospitality. True, the landlord behind the bar and his busy helpers are all Kivansians. But the part is well taken and there is no complaint if the drinks have lost something of their old-time flavor. Here comes the stage-coach! How the hoofs clatter and the wheels rattle over the brick pavement. There was less noise when bottomless mud filled all the road from Detroit to Ypsilanti. But the gentlemen in beaver hats and the ladies in poke bonnets who look out of the windows might well be our own great-grandparents and there is a real flavor of the past in the leather trunks and carpet bags thrown on the roof the vehicle. Suppose the driver is only a commonplace twentieth century Rotarian; he yet handles his four horses well and deserves any bonus he may have earned by driving from Detroit in less than fifteen hours."

The Centennial festivities kicked off on Sunday, July 1st, with the welcoming of visitors and former residents.



Ypsilanti Ladies Dressed for the Centennial Ball – Mrs. Swaine Holds the Large Fan in the Center.

They came to Ypsilanti via the Michigan Central Railroad, the New York Central Railroad, the Detroit, Jackson & Chicago Interurban, and the Michigan State Trunk Lines No. 17 and No. 23. The event planners prepared for the next three days of activities, and there was a palpable display of pride and an excitement throughout the city. Visitors to the city were encouraged to register their names at the Board of Commerce, located at the southwest corner of Michigan Avenue and Adams Street. Guests came from all over the United States, and included decedents from many of the pioneer families of Ypsilanti. The list of these visitors was published in the newspaper and made available to the public each day.

Nearly every local business in Ypsilanti had displays in their windows of articles pertaining to the Centennial, including clothing, pictures, tools, and furniture. The crowded streets of visitors and residents admired the heirlooms reminiscent of the days of 1823. Display items were donated by citizens of the city to be showcased during the event. Millers' windows displayed many photographs of the older citizens of Ypsilanti and the first graduates of the Normal College. Nulan's Hardware store displayed family heirlooms of local citizens. J.E. Moore's window display show-

cased bedspreads and quilts. Wortley and Gardener displayed shoes of past generations. Weinmann and Matthews showcased old books and other articles, including five volumes of the Holy Bible and a set of pearl combs and earrings. Willoughby's window displayed a deed of 3,000 acres of land given by King George III to Gideon Vernon. Grinnell's featured a 100-year-old piano that was loaned to the store for the occasion. The windows of Goldman's and Showerman's had on display an old quilt. Foerster's had on display an old table. Fred Dupont's store featured an old hatchet that was said to have been owned by George Washington. Proud's window displayed old clothing. Other businesses that showed antique items included Haigs, Nisely's, Dawson's, the Art Shop, Simpson's, Warren J. Cook's, Davis & Kishlar's, Webb and Marrs.

The Daily Ypsilantian-Press recommended that a future Ypsilanti Museum be formed to preserve the numerous items of historic value that were displayed in the windows of the various businesses. The July 3rd Daily Ypsilantian-Press stated "*Much valuable information may be gleaned from a visit to various store windows. School children are receiving a lesson that will impress itself upon their minds. Other school children should*

have the same opportunity. A celebration should not be necessary to make these things available. And so the suggestion is advanced that Ypsilanti should prepare now for a museum of some sort for the display of historic valuables. Many old residents will be interested in the proposal. There may be someone in our presence this week who would wish to provide such a museum and give it his name. There are many who stand ready to contribute. The Ypsilanti Press invites suggestions. The issue is important and demands immediate attention if anything is to be accomplished."

The churches of Ypsilanti held a joint service in Pease Auditorium on Sunday evening. The auditorium was completely filled as Rev. Dr. H.A. Leeson, former pastor of the Ypsilanti Methodist Church, presided over the event. Many former pastors in Ypsilanti spoke during the event, and many hymns were sung. The sermon was delivered by Rev. Dr. A.W. Wishart of Grand Rapids. During morning services, each local church observed numerous out-of-town visitors as they reflected on the history of the city.

The final rehearsal for the community Pageant covering the History of Ypsilanti also took place in the evening, where the entire seven episodes were acted under the direction of D.L. Quirk, Jr. The rehearsal lasted until 1:00 am. For the first time, the entire pageant was acted out, and the lighting effects were added. Over 1,000 people participated in the Pageant. For the rehearsal, the actors were not in costume, but the spectators were highly impressed with the program. The Episodes of the Pageant were as follows:

Episode I, On the Pottawattamie, 1701

Episode II, Pontiac, 1763

Episode III, Voyageur Days, 1795-1810

Episode IV, Pioneers, 1823

Episode V, The Normal Founded, 1852

Episode VI, The Slave Trade Period, 1861

Episode VII, The Ypsilanti Light Guards

On Monday, July 2nd, the Centennial Celebration kicked into high gear. A postal-service stagecoach, with a banner on top proudly proclaiming "On Our Way to Ypsilanti's 100th Anniversary 1823 to 1923", was driven from Detroit to Ypsilanti. Several hundred people surrounded the stage coach in front of the Detroit City Hall as Detroit Mayor Frank E. Doremus shook hands with all of the members of the stage coach party. The stage coach left Detroit and headed to Ypsilanti along Michigan Avenue, which was the way that early pioneers would have traveled the same route. There were two staged hold-ups and other events along the way. The stage coach was driven by Michigan State Representative Joseph E. Warner.

The stage coach arrived around 6:00 pm in Ypsilanti at the Kiwanis Log Cabin at Gilbert Park. Just prior to arrival, a group of masked bandits rushed out and forced the drivers to sit with their hands up as the stage coach was robbed of its pouch of valuable mail. The drivers were then ordered to take their passengers to the cabin where they were held captive for a while, but later released. Dr. E.S. George and



D.A.R. Dedication of Stone Monument at Woodruff Grove.



Participants of the Centennial Pageant.

Carl Pray urged the newcomers to remain in Ypsilanti permanently, extolling the virtues of the city such as fresh spring water, fertile fields, and good liquor in quantities sufficient to meet their needs. They predicted that future Ypsilantians would be able to have fine farms, send sons to the legislature, and even be authors of gasoline taxes. One passenger, Clyde Ford, hesitated at the offer, and complained about being held up several times enroute from Detroit, and losing valuable cargo. Rep. Warner played his part in the little skit and declared that this would be his last journey as a stage coach driver, and stated that the trip had been too much of a strain for him and he intended to purchase a couple of cows and start peddling milk in Ypsilanti. The lady passengers, Mary Hoover, Josephine Forbes, and Mrs. Spalsbury were so overcome by the harrowing trip that they were not able to speak to the gathering crowd. Letters of greetings from the Mayor of Detroit, president of the Detroit Board of Commerce, and Wayne and Dearborn Rotarians were read. Carl Lindegrin led the crowd in singing "America" and "Michigan, My Michigan." After the stage coach arrived in Ypsilanti, it made daily trips around

the city driven by members of the Rotary Club. Much more information about the Centennial stage coach was written in the Summer 2015 issue of the Gleanings in an article titled "*The Ypsilanti Centennial Celebration: Stagecoach Special.*"

The Kiwanis Club moved a log cabin from south of Ypsilanti to a plot at Gilbert Park on the south side of Michigan Avenue between Park Street and Lincoln Street. The log cabin had to be completely disassembled and reassembled in a short period of time, and this specific log cabin was chosen because it was reminiscent of those that were built in Ypsilanti around the time of Benjamin Woodruff's arrival. Members of the American Legion drove a covered wagon pulled by oxen in the area around the log cabin to add 1823 authenticity. The log cabin at Gilbert Park was furnished with period items, some of which were purchased in the years prior from Henry Ford, while Ford's band performed period music at the log cabin. Gilbert Park was crowded with spectators visiting the log cabin with its display of old household goods from the early 1800's. In an adjacent tent, old farm machinery which was loaned by Henry Ford for

the occasion attracted considerable attention. About five thousand visitors were in the park each day. After the Centennial Celebration, the log cabin was given to the city of Ypsilanti. The log cabin had lasted at its original location in Washtenaw County for almost 100 years, but after it was moved for the Centennial Celebration, the log cabin quickly fell under disrepair and was demolished 5 years later.

The local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution dedicated a boulder to the heroic pioneers of Woodruff's Grove who came from New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. The triangular piece of land at the intersection of Prospect and Grove Streets on which the boulder stands was a gift to the city by the descendants of the late L.Z. Foerster. The marker was placed near the location of the first settlement in Washtenaw County established by Benjamin Woodruff and a small group of settlers in 1823. It was estimated that between 300-400 citizens attended the dedication. The Ford Tractor band played inspiring strains of Sousa's March "*The Stars and Stripes Forever.*" A Bugle Call was given followed by a verse of "America." Rev. Harvey Colburn

offered a prayer, and children sang "America the Beautiful." Mark Norris, grandson of the Mark Norris who was one of the leading citizens of Ypsilanti in pioneer days, spoke of his boyhood impressions of the city, when the lamplighter went along the streets each night with his ladder and lantern lighting the lamps. Among those present for the ceremony was William Thayer, who was Ypsilanti's last lamplighter. Norris gave to the D.A.R. an old parchment land grant signed by James Monroe in 1824. Amanda Morton Homes unveiled the boulder. At 92, she was the oldest resident of Washtenaw County. Eunice Hatch and Julia Quirk assisted in the unveiling.

The Centennial Ball was held at the Normal Gymnasium in the evening, and opened with a Grand March at 9:00 pm. Members of the community dressed up in fashions of the 1800's, and it was an opportunity for the city to pull out all the stops. Nobody was allowed on the dance floor except for those in costumes representative of a ball in 1823. Guests without costumes were allowed as spectators. Virginia reels, square dances, and minuets from the early 1800's were performed by Hart's band. It was reported that several hundred citizens arrived in costume. Many of the women's costumes were altered wedding dresses. The three halls within the Normal

College gymnasium were intricately decorated. Egyptian scenes were portrayed in the hall where modern music was performed, while flags and Japanese designs were the theme in the other two halls.

Tuesday, July 3rd, was considered the Home-Coming Day of the Centennial. Members of the Ypsilanti community and guests gathered at Prospect Park at noon for a picnic dinner. Prior to the picnic, the Washtenaw County Pioneer Society met at 10:30 am at the same location and provided an opportunity to discuss plans for Ann Arbor's Centennial Celebration to be held a year later in 1924. The picnic was an opportunity for visitors and residents to get together to renew old acquaintances. The speaker at the homecoming picnic was James Schermerhorn of Detroit, who was previously an editor for the Detroit Free Press and founding editor and publisher of the Detroit Times. Schermerhorn had a reputation as one of the country's leading lecturers, toastmasters, and orators who kept the audience entertained while presenting an inspiring message. An afternoon thunderstorm held some of the crowd back, but when the skies cleared, an estimated 800 people made their way to the park for the event.

The highlight of the evening was the

first presentation of "The History of Ypsilanti" Pageant. The Pageant was presented at the grounds in the rear of the Normal Science Building on July 3rd and 4th at 8:30 pm. Due to the size of the crowds, no chairs or stools were allowed, and the audience was required to sit on the bare ground or on pillows or blankets. The Pageant was presented free to the public. This was an elaborate pageant in which an incredible fifteen hundred people participated. The script of the pageant was written by Thomas Wood Stevens, of Pittsburgh, who was noted as America's greatest pageant writer. Ypsilanti's Daniel L. Quirk, Jr. directed and produced the pageant. An amazing seventy-five hundred spots on the lawn were provided to witness the grandest pageant that Ypsilanti would ever see.

On the first evening's performance of the Pageant, there was lightning in the sky. There was also a falling star observed by the audience. The audience raved about the performances. Mr. Pommer, who came from New York, stated "It is wonderful the way Ypsilanti is doing this pageant. I live in a suburb out of New York - the kind where all the men go off in the morning to New York to business and only women are left in the town for the day. There you can't get three people to do the same thing at the same



Centennial 4th of July Barbeque at Recreation Park.

time.” Another attending commented, “I’ve been to pageants all over the country – have a particular fondness for them – but this is the finest pageant I’ve ever seen.” An attendee from the July 4th performance said, “Ypsilanti people are immune these days. There is no costume weird enough to make an Ypsilantian move an eyelash. There can be no fashion, no spectacle stranger than those we have encountered the last week.”

The July 4th events were, as would be expected, centered around patriotism, sports and games, and food. One of the biggest events of the Centennial program was the barbeque held at Recreation Park at 11:00 am. One of the country’s best barbecue cooks, Tat Hawkins, came from Dewey, Oklahoma, to preside over the event. A large pit was dug according to the specifications provided by Hawkins, himself. Tables for serving were arranged within an enclosure so that hot slices of beef were able to be rapidly cut and passed out to visitors. The plans were made to serve hot sandwiches to 5,000 people free of charge.

After the barbeque, Ypsilanti played a baseball game against Ann Arbor, their county rivals. The Daily Ypsilantian-Press reported that “the good beef lent strength to the Ypsilanti batting arms and they flailed the ball to the corners of the lot for twelve safe singles. Several strangers in the line-ups gave the proper out-of-town air for the home-coming celebration... Ypsi’s men played like big leaguers, breezing along to the seventh without an error, and putting up an all-round game that kept the crowd on its toes.” Ypsilanti won the game by a score of 6 to 5. The participants for the Ypsilanti team were Hole, Haggerty, Crane, Bartels, Bell, Snyder, Ford, Thorn, Gould, Rynearson, and Crossman. Simultaneous to the baseball game was a game of quoits. Quoits is a game which involves throwing a ring over a spike, similar to horseshoes. Roy Van Winkle and B.J. Parish brought home the doubles championship. In

addition to baseball and quoits, wrestling events were held and horseshoes were played by town residents and visitors. In the evening, water sports and log-rolling provided more entertainment. The Centennial Celebration concluded with a second presentation of the Pageant behind the Normal Science building.

By all accounts, the Centennial Celebration from July 1st - July 4th of 1923 was a roaring success. The headline of the July 5, 1923 Daily Ypsilantian-Press proudly stated “100,000 Here for Centennial”. Ypsilanti resident W.H. McDermott believed he had the largest number of Centennial guests in his home – a total of 38 including family and out of town friends. Having 100,000 visitors to such a fairly small city showed the important role that Ypsilanti played in the growth of Michigan and the United States as people moved westward. The city put on a Pageant unrivaled in the history of Michigan with almost 7,500 spectators each night. The homecoming picnic was attended by 800 people who braved the rain to come out and reminisce. The Ypsilanti Centennial provided a model for Ann Arbor’s Centennial celebration which was held a year later in 1924.

In The Story of Ypsilanti, Harvey Colburn wraps up with what he sees as the essence of the Centennial Celebration as follows:

“So Ypsilanti plays; and in its play, in the serious moment that comes in the midst of laughter, it does honor to its quaint ancestors.”

We should embrace the same spirit in 2023 as our city celebrates its Bicentennial. In fact, the city of Ypsilanti’s Centennial 1923 celebration should inspire us to celebrate our 2023 Bicentennial with much community pride in the grandest of fashion.

(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.)



Ladies Literary Club

218 N. Washington Street
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197
www.ladiesliteraryclub.org

Rent our historic 1842 Greek Revival Clubhouse for showers, receptions, business meetings, club meetings and family gatherings.

*For more information
visit our website:*

ladiesliteraryclub.org

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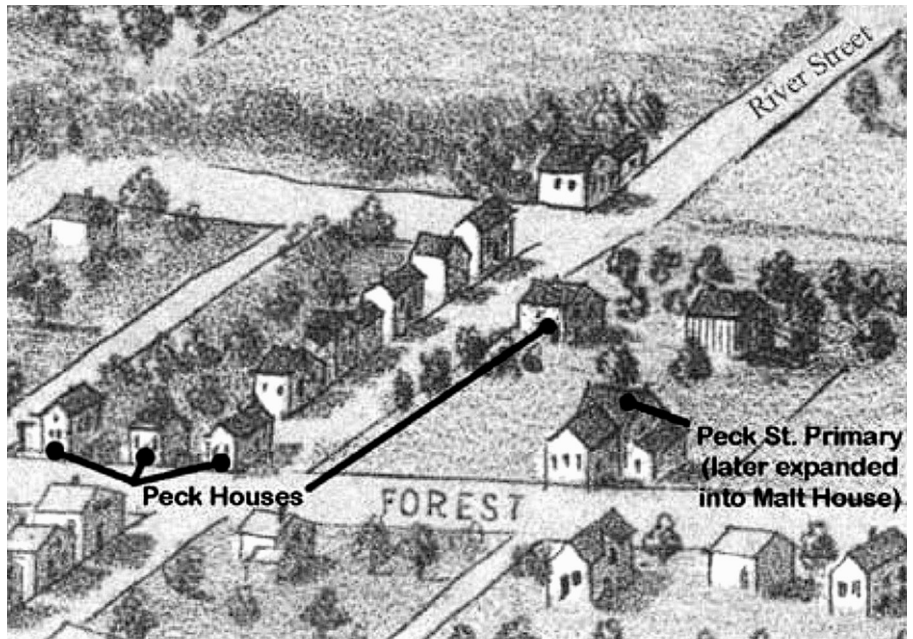
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Peckville and the Peck Family

BY JANICE ANSCHUETZ



This 1869 map of Ypsilanti shows the location of four of the Peck houses as well as the Peck Street Primary School which was at the time converted into a Malt House.

This article was originally published in the Summer 2010 issue of the Ypsilanti Gleanings. I thought it would be fitting to republish this article on the occasion of Ypsilanti's bicentennial to remind residents that there were other settlements besides Woodruff's Grove in the early days of Ypsilanti. The area known as Peckville continued to thrive for over 100 years, long after Woodruff's Grove was relegated to the history books.

One hundred years ago, anyone in town could point the way to Peckville, straight north on River Street, down two blocks from the train station. Today Peckville exists only in memories, a few scraps of paper and pictures at the Ypsilanti museum archives, an unused street and a few old homes and remnants of buildings.



In September of 1823 Sophia Peck came to this area with her husband and two young sons.

In September, 1823, when present day Ypsilanti was woods, wilderness, swamps, bugs, wild animals and Native Americans, Joseph and Sophia Peck and two young sons, Egbert and Erwin, under two years of age, came here from New York on a sailing ship, with high hopes and ambition. They brought with them three head of cattle and a pregnant mare. The trip took longer than expected and a foal was born on board the ship. On the voyage, they had run out of food and water for the livestock and the foal was too weak to stand. The starving cattle had to be helped off of the boat. The young family remained in Detroit until the animals were strong enough to travel. The next leg of the journey was by flat boat from Detroit to Snow's landing at Rawsonville, and then on though the

wilderness to the pioneer settlement at Woodruff's Grove.

Joseph and Sophia built a log cabin and settled on a parcel of land from the middle of the river to what is now Prospect Street, East Forest Avenue to what is now Holmes Road. In order to file claim to this land, Joseph had to leave his family and travel through dense woods to Detroit which had the nearest land office. His efforts were rewarded in June 1825 when he received a parchment patent, signed by President John Quincy Adams. This 85 acre farm was bought for 10 shillings (about \$1.25) an acre. By 1836 Joseph and Sophia had replaced their first small cabin with a large farm house, which still stands today at 401 East Forest Avenue, and was lived in by their descendants for over 130 years.

The pioneer spirit may have been in Joseph's genes. His direct ancestor William Peck, came from England and was one of the founders, in 1638, of the Colony of New Haven, Connecticut. Joseph was born in East Hayden, Connecticut on August 5, 1790. He was one of the eleven children of Elisha and Olive Peck.

In his son Ewin's obituary, Joseph is given credit for being the first white man who bought a settlement in Ypsilanti. He was considered a very friendly man and while delivering the mail to Detroit, or going there to pick up supplies, he would often return with strangers interested in settling in Ypsilanti, and offer them his hospitality. In *The Story of Ypsilanti*, Harvey C. Colburn writes, "*The Peck home was a center of hospitality and a cordial welcome was given to all new settlers and travelers coming along. Soon this section was known as 'Peckville'*". Peck Street, which exists now as the second driveway north of East Forest Avenue, on River Street, led to an artesian well which supplied early settlers and travelers with fresh water.

Joseph became the first justice of the peace in this area and served on the first jury in Ann Arbor. He is also credited with



Joseph and Sophia's home, built in 1836, still stands at 401 East Forest and was occupied by members of the Peck family for over 130 years. Cora and Dwight Peck were the last Pecks to live there.

building a mill around 1830. He must have been a thrifty person, as were his sons. In the museum archives are several torn off bits of paper with legal records on them such as receipts for the bricks and lumber that built the Peck Street Primary on his property and several other legal agreements written on what we would call scrap paper.

Knowing the importance of education, he built the Peck Street Primary in 1839 on what used to be Peck Street. The brick school house was sold to the 4th Ward School District in 1850 for \$40. At that time the school had 99 students. It soon became one of the first "graded" schools in the state.

This was a revolutionary concept in education promoted by the Normal College (now Eastern Michigan University). In other words, students were assigned to grades as opposed to working out of a common skill book. In 1858-59, there were 139 pupils enrolled in the Peck Street Primary. This building was outgrown and replaced by the Fourth Ward School at Prospect Road and Oak Street. The old Peck School was deeded to an English immigrant, George George, in 1866 and soon was converted into a malt house. The malt house was expanded and then torn down in 1912 and what is now the garage at the Swaine House is what remains of the Peck Street Primary. Several slates and slate pencils have been found in the driveway, which was once Peck Street.

Joseph Peck died in Ypsilanti at the age of 59 on February 13, 1849 and was buried in the cemetery where Prospect Park is now and later his remains were removed to Highland Cemetery.

His wife Sophia Churchill Peck (on legal records in Washtenaw County she is "Sophia" but is named Sophara in an 1877 genealogical account of the family) was born in June, 1793 in Salsbury, Connecticut and died at the age of 84 in Ypsilanti, on September 30, 1876. Her mother was born in England and is said by the family to have nursed soldiers at Valley Forge. Her family contends that she is part of a branch of the family of Winston Churchill. She must have been a very impressive woman. A family friend, Florence Babbitt, writes of her "my father always said that if Mrs. Peck had been a man



The Peck Street Primary School was built in 1839 and in the 1860s was turned into a malt house and then in 1913 into a garage which is still in use today.



Slate and slate pencils found near Peck Street Primary that still work.



Reward of Merit presented to Florence Smalley Babbitt in 1857 at the Peckville School.

she would have been President of the United States.” (This was written from the Hawkins Hotel in Ypsilanti, March 20, 1929.)

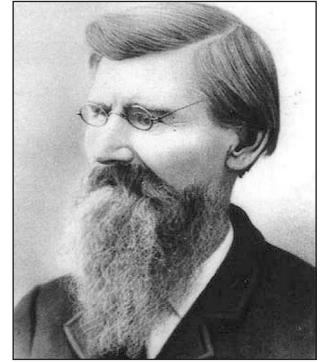
Joseph and Sophia built their log cabin at Peck and River Street, among the Native Americans and in the woods. It is possible than an old photo shows the original home and barn behind the picture of the Swaine house taken in 1883. The old home matches the description of where the original log cabin stood. When it was torn down, probably in the 1890s, the kitchen addition was moved and attached to the Swaine house where it stands today. An oft repeated family tale helps us picture what the wilderness of what would become Ypsilanti was like in the mid 1820's. Grandson Dwight Peck relates this story in an interview given over 50 years ago and published in the Ypsilanti Press.

“A large double log house was built for the family on an open sandy lot. Across from this open spot were dense woods. Near the house, in the opening, was a permanent camp of tents belonging to the Potawatomi. They were friendly with the pioneers and often were invited into the kitchen to share the newly baked bread, the fresh butter and the milk. However, the squaws did not care for the butter and wiped it off onto the bare floor. The floors were wide white wood and scrubbed until they shone. Being soft wood, the butter immediately stained it and Mr. Peck found an indignant housewife that evening. He calmed his wife and he, himself, scrubbed and sanded the floors until they were again spotless.

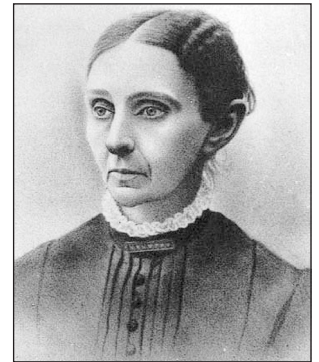
However, despite this, the relationships between the family and the Indians remained friendly and the squaws and children were always welcome. One day, a squaw came in with an exceedingly bright eyed and cute papoose. Mrs. Peck, with two small babies of her own, played with the

tiny Indian and laughingly asked the squaw if she would swap babies. Quick as a flash, the Indian gathered up Erwin Peck and ran out the door. The father was immediately called and began the search for his son. He frantically went among the tents and through the woods. The day lengthened. Mrs. Peck found she was not too good at soothing a crying papoose. Finally after hours of searching, and inquiry, small Erwin was found, but it was a difficult matter making the squaw understand that the trade in children could not be permanent.”

Over the years the young family prospered in their new, large home at 401 East Forest. The 10 room house was so large that horses could enter by the front door carrying logs for the large fireplace and then walk out the back door. Egbert, born October 31, 1822 and Erwin, born December 27, 1823 were soon joined by Elizabeth born in 1829, Joseph Herbert, born in 1831 and a sister named Lois. More Peck houses were built on East Forest Avenue to house this growing family but only three of these original homes remain today.



Egbert, son of Joseph and Sophia, lived for a while in the home at 59 East Forest with his wife Juliet Thayer Peck. Later, their children lived at 52 East Forest, in a home that was torn down about 40 years ago.

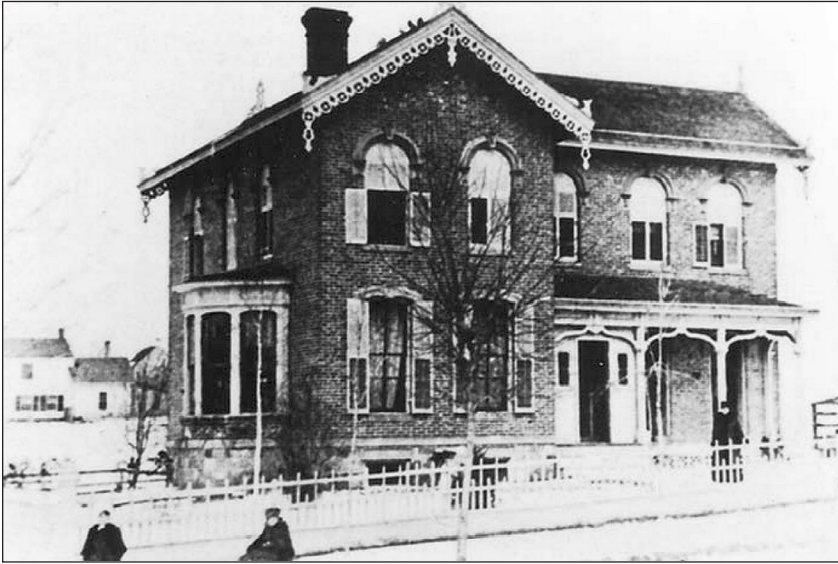


Juliet Thayer Peck, wife of Egbert Peck.



Peck house at 117 East Forest was lived in by Peck descendants for many years. It was moved to that location from the Hutchinson property when he bought the land there for his mansion.

Erwin lived for a while in the home at 59 East Forest Avenue. His brother Egbert, wife Juliet Thayer and their children lived at 52 East Forest Avenue, in a home that was torn down about 40 years ago. The Peck home at 117 East Forest Avenue actually was moved there from across the street and a Peck family lived in that home for over 60 years. The large homestead built by Joseph and Sophia remains today at 401 East Forest Avenue. The kitchen of the Swaine house was once part of the early Peck home on River Street and Peck Street. Remnants of the Peck Street Primary were converted to



The house and barn that can be seen to the left of the Swaine house (101 East Forest) is believed to be the original home of Joseph and Sophia Peck. The kitchen section of the original house that can be seen is believed to have been later moved and attached to the Swaine House.

a garage in 1912. Peck Street remains as a driveway. Dwight Street is named for Dwight Peck, who was the last remaining Peck, along with his wife, Cora LaForge Peck, to live in the home built by Sophia and Joseph.

Erwin and Egbert and some of their children continued to farm the land and various descendants, including Egbert's son Dwight, who was the last son to live in the family homestead, followed in their footsteps until the majority of the land was sold to a developer in the early 1920s. After World War II, the Prospect Park Subdivision was built on what once were fields, orchards and grazing land.

There are bits and pieces written about the Peck farm which help us to imagine life in Peckville in the 1900s. In the Michigan Argus of February 3, 1860 we read of a fire in Depot Town with some of the sparks flying as far as Peckville and starting one of Peck's barns on

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fire and destroying it.

Fellow farmer and friend William Lambie refers to E. C. Peck numerous times in his diaries. For example in 1880 "Peck got 20 bushels of corn." Another entry reads "Went to E. C. Peck barn raising". In 1883 he writes "July 25 Frank and I went to E. C. Peck he promised to come and harvest," and then in 1890 "Mrs. L. and I went to old friend E. C. Peck's funeral".

The local paper in 1875 published a story which illustrates how important the Peck family and descendants have been to the history of Ypsilanti. On March 1, 1875, at a meeting of the Pioneer Society, "It was proposed that the Pioneer residing longest in the County should carry the flag leading the procession to the Vestry of the Baptist Church in Ypsilanti. Quite a contest sprang up as to whom the honor belonged to. An old gentleman, Benjamin F. Knapp, who states he was at Woodruff's Grove in 1820 (there was no Woodruff's Grove until April 1823) claimed the right, but he was only on a Prospecting Tour and never a real resident of the County, and now living at Brownsville, Wayne City. Robert Geddes rightly has that honor...The only persons present at the dinner who had been in Washtenaw County over 50 years were Robert Geddes and E. C. Peck."

E. C. Peck (Egbert) has left other reminders of his life in various papers in the museum archives. An interesting glimpse of farm life is a receipt for sheep and describes the transaction. On November 4, 1867 he gives A. B. Werner 50 sheep with the understanding that Werner is to keep the sheep for three years and deliver to him 100 pounds of wool each year, at his residence and at the end of three years Werner is to deliver 50 sheep, aged one to three years old to E. C. Peck. This seems to be a good business transaction for both men.

Joe Butcko published some of his memories of growing up on East Forest Avenue as a child in the 1930s in the summer edition, 2008 of the Gleanings. He describes the Peck farm



Dwight Peck and Cora LeForge Peck, third generation of the Pecks, were the last Pecks to live in the 1836 home of Joseph and Sophia at 401 East Forest Avenue.



Cora LeForge Peck dressed for the 1923 Centennial Ball.



Photo shows the current kitchen portion of the Swaine house that is believed to have originally been part of the Peck house.

as he remembers it.

"In 1932, there were only about six houses on the north side of Forest Avenue from River Street to Prospect. It was all farmland owned by the Peck family whose house and barns were on Forest Avenue about 150 yards east of River Street. The Peck farm was a working farm with horses, cows, etc. Parents would send their kids with a bucket to get milk. Mr. Peck would let us watch him milk the cows and, with a twist of his wrist, he would squirt us in the face with the milk. Today, he would be put in jail – the milk wasn't pasteurized. Among Peck's other enterprises, the city hired him to clear sidewalks with his horse pulling a wooden snowplow."

Peckville may be gone but will never be forgotten. There are few people in Ypsilanti now who can "point the way to Peckville," where a log cabin and Native American tipis once stood, where children went to school carrying lunch pails and slates, where cattle, sheep, and horses grazed,

and where there were fields of corn, apple orchards and sugar maples shading a dirt road. Now there are only houses and yards. However, the pioneer Peck family has left its legacy in establishing a farm from the wilderness, building one of the first schools and even starting the tradition of planting sugar maples down East Forest Avenue from Prospect Road to the river. Every morning when I go into my very old Peck kitchen, with the bubble glass window panes, or drive my car down Peck Street to the garage (once Peck Street Primary), I think of Joseph and Sophia and their courage, hard work, enterprise and hope.

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

Museum Advisory Board Report

BY EVAN MILAN, CHAIR

Well through winter, and the first quarter of 2023, we can now look forward to the usual festive atmosphere that warmer weather brings to the city. 2023 marks the 200th anniversary of the establishment of Ypsilanti and, along with the many events that have been developed through 14 months of hard work by many devoted Ypsilantians, our museum is doing its part to celebrate the momentous occasion. Our Displays Committee has worked tirelessly to curate an exhibition that highlights some of the key elements of our community.

In the library, I encourage everyone to take time to look through the articles and rare images, that have been picked out of our extensive archives collections that exemplify our cities celebratory affinity element to our singularly unique anniversaries. Visitors may be interested to see that on display are images from the centennial celebration of 1923, images of parades, and images of the monuments that keep the memories of selfless citizens of Ypsilanti alive. We have also recovered artifacts from the centennial and sesquicentennial of 1973 that bring a tangible commemorative shot glass, plate, and silver coins that were available to revelers in 1973. Additionally, facsimiles of the program of events for the 1923 centennial celebration are available for visitors to read through, first hand.

As the Ypsilanti of today is quite diverse in its character, so was the Ypsilanti of the past. Through the years of research that has been undertaken by the lifelong resident use of the area, Virginia Davis Brown, we are

able to honor some of the lesser-known points of interest that are scattered though our communities 200 year history. As you walk though the exhibits, you may discover facts of Ypsilanti that you may not have known. For instance, did you know that Ypsilanti was

once home to a maker of baseball bats? A match for the Louisville Slugger, I am sure, the factory had 15 employees.

As the season progresses, there will continue to be new pieces appearing though the museum. A World War II uniform jacket, donated to YHS from the estate of William and Nathalie Edmonds, will soon be displayed. Additionally, the mannequins, lauded as some of the best dressed, will find themselves sporting new apparel with an emphasis on 20th century dress. Rotating throughout the season, as well, display boards providing information on Ypsilanti centric subjects will be dispersed around the museum.



Museum visitors will see in the display case in the Library items from the centennial celebration of 1923 and the sesquicentennial of 1973.

As we celebrate the history of Ypsilanti, please consider the unique resource we have in the Ypsilanti Historical Museum and Archives. We always welcome new members who aim to give some of their free time to our community. Volunteers of the Ypsilanti Historical Museum have the opportunity to guide tours and tell some of the stories that fundamentally make up Ypsilanti. The maintenance of our 163-year-old house museum is also a constant task. Volunteers with a penchant for restoration and repairs can equally find projects around the Asa Dow home. More information on opportunities and resources are always available on our website at www.ypsihistory.org.

Centenary for the Emmanuel Lutheran Church Building

BY JAMES MANN



The original Emmanuel Lutheran Church building, known as the German Church, stood on the northeast corner of Michigan Avenue and Grove Street.

The city of Ypsilanti will mark a milestone this year, with the Bicentennial of its founding in 1823. This year will mark another milestone, as it is the centennial year of the Emmanuel Lutheran Church building at 201 North River Street. The story of the church is more than just that of the building, but of the community that calls it their spiritual home. That story begins when the Evangelical Missionary Society of Basel, Switzerland, sent the Rev. Friedrich Schmid to Christianize the native people in the Saginaw Valley region of Michigan in 1833.

The Rev. Schmid arrived at Detroit in August of 1833, and held the first Lutheran church service in Michigan in the barn of Joh Hais. For the service a dry-goods box was the pulpit, and another used as the altar. The congregation sat on bundles of cornstalks. The following Tuesday Schmid set out for Ann Arbor walking the whole way. On arrival at Ann Arbor, he resided at the home of Johnathan Heinrich Mann and later married Mann's daughter, Sophie Louise in September of 1834. The couple would have twelve children. *(The Mann family and the author of this article are not related.)*

At Ann Arbor he found the Lutheran families at odds. In a report to the Basler Institute he wrote, "Also, there was a great deal of disagreement and quarreling among the Germans, so much so that they were brought into court. Slandering and besmearing each other had reached a high point, so that numerous families for many months hadn't spoken a kindly word to each other." Some months later he would report, "Those who formerly did not speak a kind word to each other now bow their knees before the King of Peace and pray with one another in childlike simplicity."

Over the next forty years the Rev Schmid would establish several congregations including ones at Ann Arbor, Monroe, Freedom, Waterloo, Bridgewater, Saginaw and elsewhere. In 1859 he established the church in Ypsilanti with sixteen members. Their names were N. Bammor, C. Breining, J. Collin, F. Dergler, George Ehman, G. Erich, G. Franz, V. Hartman, C. Kohler, W. Lange, George Otto, L. Schade, C. Siegmund, J. Sweitzer, A. Thumm and George Warrer. They would meet in the home of Ehman for services until a house of worship could be built.

A wooden frame church building was constructed at the Northeast corner of Michigan Avenue and Grove Street in 1860, on land donated by Mark Norris, who was not Lutheran.

Because the majority of those who attended the church were immigrants from Germany, the services were held in German. The services were held in the dialect of high German (Hochdeutsch) but at home, the families would speak in low German. The problem was high German is almost another language, not only in vocabulary, but also in pronunciation.

"This presented a major hurdle: the church services of Emmanuel would be incomprehensible for those of the congregation who weren't schooled in Hochdeutsch," noted Jason Birchmeir in a Gleanings story from the 2007 - Summer issue. Children would not be confirmed, until they had completed their study of high German.

After the opening of the church, a five day a week parish school was held in the home of the Easlinger family. Then in 1886 a small frame school-house was built next to the church. *“At first only German reading and religion were taught in this school; later arithmetic, grammar, spelling, and reading in English were taught,”* reported The Daily Ypsilanti Press on July 3, 1936.

A short history of the church, dated 1982, recounts the following story; *“Up the hill at East Michigan and Prospect lived the Wallace family. The daughter Mary became interested in the German church school and offered to teach the girls sewing, knitting and crocheting. Her offer was accepted. She soon noticed how poorly clad a number of the children were. So, she collected children’s clothing and had the children come*



Interior view of the German Church.

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to her home to try them on and told them the garments were theirs. The double experience of going into the large beautifully furnished home and receiving clothes to wear impressed the children very deeply as one of life's wonderful experiences and Mary Wallace, not a Lutheran, was always remembered by children and parents alike."

The schoolhouse was closed in the 1890's, as the members of the church felt the children should attend the public schools to prepare them for college and life in the community. The Sunday school continued, and high German was still taught to the children.

From 1875 to 1890 the church had several pastors who stayed with the community for only a year or two. This changed in 1890 when the Rev. Heri Luetjen became the pastor and held the position for the next twenty-two years. In 1912 The Rev. Luetjen retired because of health. He suggested his successor be someone who could preach in both German and English, as more English speakers were joining the parish.

The new pastor, the Rev. Hugo Fenker, succeeded Rev. Luetjen in 1912 and began the practice of services in English. The Rev. Luetjen presided over services in German twice a month for a few years after for the older members of the parish. The introduction of English resulted in an increase in the population of the parish. Another change that occurred under the Rev. Fenker, was the end of the practice of having the women and girls sit on the right side of the church while the men and boys sat on the left side. Now the families could sit together during services.

As the number of those who attended the services increased, it soon became apparent that a new church building was needed. A building fund was started by the Ladies Aid Society and the Luther League in 1912. At the annual meeting of the parish in January of 1921, a committee for the raising of



Emmanuel Lutheran Church as it appeared after the dedication of the current building in 1923.

funds was appointed. Long time member of the parish John Engel donated the site at 201 North River Street in 1921, and the gift was accepted.

"The Location was ideal—in roughly the center of the congregation, near downtown yet apart from the business section, sloping toward the river, with street frontage of 66 feet, and 180 feet along the Huron," noted Birchmeier.

A building committee was appointed and chose Frederick Spier of Spier & Gehrke, Detroit as the architect. The contractor was J. E. Scott & Company. The cornerstone of the building was laid on Sunday, August 27, 1922. Construction was completed in 1923, at a cost of \$55,000.

"Following the ancient customs of the church," noted The Daily Ypsilanti Press, *"the general plan is in the form of the cross. The nave of the church forms the body of the cross; the chancel its head, and the two transepts the two arms. It was the committee's desire from the very beginning to erect a pure Gothic church. The distinctive features of the Gothic are an upward thriving, thrusting and concentra-*

tion of thrusts. These features can be seen especially in the buttressed walls and tower, the vaulted ceiling of the chancel, and the arches supporting the ceiling of the transept of the nave."

"On approaching the church, one's attention is attracted to the beautiful, recessed front entrance. This entrance is constructed of Maul art stone, a beautiful oak frame with two massive doors. The walls of the church are constructed of Sandusky gray limestone, laid up in rough ashier style, with raked joints. The art stone used 'Maul's Co. Granite face.'"

"The exterior dimensions of the church are 87 and half feet long and 54 feet wide. The auditorium has a seating capacity of 400. The chancel measures 18 feet by 30 feet. The organ occupies the space to the left of the chancel. The basement included rooms for the Sunday School, a meeting area, rest rooms, and a small kitchen."

The dedication of the church was held on Sunday, December 23, 1923.

"Entering the edifice," reported The



Emmanuel Lutheran Church as it appears today with the educational addition.

Daily Ypsilanti Press of Monday, December 24, 1923, *“the pastors and congregation read the 122 Psalm responsively. The Elders and Deacons carried the Bibles and the communion vessels. When the procession moved to the altar, the pastors halted to permit the Elders and Deacons to put the sacred vessels and Bibles in their proper places. Then the pastor proceeded to the altar and before the assembled congregation dedicated the new church to the service of the true God.”*

Then the choir sang *“I was glad when they said unto me let us go unto the house of the Lord.”*

The Rev. Fenker’s thirty-two years of service to the Emmanuel Lutheran Church community ended suddenly with his death on the first Sunday of December, 1944, as he died while preparing to go to church, dying with his hat on his head and a Bible in his hand. After the death of the Rev. Fenker, leadership of the community was assumed by the Rev Harley Sipe.

The years after the Second World War saw an increase in the number of members of the church. New space

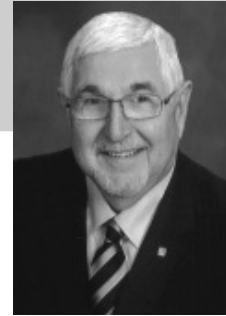
was needed. Two houses were cleared from the site to the north of the church and ground was broken for the educational addition on July 5, 1956. The addition was built at a cost of \$240,000, and provided thirty-one classrooms, two offices, a kitchen, boiler room and storage. The dedication was held on October 6, 1957. On that day the architect, Ralph S. Gerganoff, presented the keys to the addition to the Rev. Sipe. Musical numbers for the dedication included *“Onward Christian Soldiers,” “How Beautiful Thy Dwellings,”* and *“The Lord’s Prayer.”*

The Jacob Leopold Blum house to the south of the church was demolished in October of 1961, to make space for additional parking. This provided forty additional parking spaces for the site.

Emmanuel Lutheran Church is still an active community near the center of the city. Over the years the church has been the site for concerts and free dinners. It will continue to be a living part of the city for years to come.

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

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William and Mary Cross.

WILLIAM CROSS

A Man who Journeyed to Ypsilanti in 1824

BY JANICE ANSCHUETZ

This is another article in a series I am researching and writing to commemorate the 200th birthday of Ypsilanti. William Cross and his family were the fourth settlers to come to Woodruff's Grove in 1824 and he eventually bought, subdivided and sold much of the land that has become the City of Ypsilanti that we know today.

William Cross was an intelligent and moral man who used his imagination and investments to help shape the Ypsilanti that we know today. He helped to expand the boundaries of a primitive and lawless wilderness into a village that boasted a college, churches, and recreational land (Recreation Park was once known as Cross Grove) into a pleasant community. You may be surprised to learn that your home or apartment might be on land which he bought and became four separate additions to the city of Ypsilanti. Other properties that he owned were subsequently divided into city lots including what we know as the Normal Park neighborhood, Depot Town and the original land of the Normal College which was previously occupied by the Cross farm northwest of the village of

Ypsilanti.

Let me tell you what I have learned. William Cross was born in Genesee County, New York, on March 3, 1805. He was the fourth child born to Jason and Mary Cross, who would eventually have a large family of 10 children. We know from his Ypsilanti Commercial newspaper obituary dated January 26, 1894, that Jason and Mary came to Woodruff's Grove from Honeoye Falls, New York, in 1824 and were the fourth family to arrive at the settlement on land east of the Huron River. Several of their grown children accompanied them with the idea of purchasing relatively cheap but rich farm land in the Michigan Territory.

William and two of his brothers, Alvin and Daniel, as well as his parents, quickly bought up land and began the process of turning a wilderness into a community. His sister and brother-in-law celebrated the first marriage in Washtenaw County. His parents' log cabin was considered luxurious at the time because it boasted a wooden instead of a dirt floor and had a fireplace with chimney rather than a hole in the roof to allow the smoke to escape from cooking and heating fires, according to one of the early residents.

Like his parents, William (called Will by family and friends) was 25 years old when he purchased his own land, near what is now Grove Road. The major crops grown by him and his brother Alvin were grain and corn. In a Huron Valley Advisor article published on August 7, 1968 by Margaret Murawski, she explains *"There's never been a sure way to get rich, but having a good imagination helps. During the 1830's Will Cross decided to stop hauling his grain over the bad roads running from Ypsilanti to the markets in Detroit. Cross, an enterprising and imaginative young man, opened a distillery in Ypsilanti and put his grain to profitable use in the liquor he made and sold..."* Unfortunately for Will's distillery business, a temperance movement was sweeping the country, and Ypsilanti jumped on the band-wagon. Will's distillery was doomed. Whether or not he supported the movement isn't recorded. But at the very least his business sense told him to close down the distillery. We read in the book *The History of Washtenaw County, Michigan* published by Charles Chapman and Company in 1881, that he dismantled his stills and used the copper tubs to store grain.



William and Mary Cross's Home at 4 S. Summit Street.

Norris & Cross Ward 4 Addition to the City of Ypsilanti.

It is interesting to me that Will soon became partners with one of the leaders of that Temperance movement in Ypsilanti, Mark Norris. They invested in buying vacant land, dividing it into lots, and then sold the lots for people to build houses and businesses on. The land was incorporated into the city boundaries. The two Norris and Cross additions to the village of Ypsilanti occurred in 1834. This was about the time the railroad lines were laid and prosperity and jobs in the industries could be moved to other markets by train expanding the population. In an article published in the Normal College News, Volume 20, 1900, William Cross and Mark Norris were credited

with finding financial backing to extend the Ypsilanti Village limits. It is from this venture that what we now know as Cross Street got its name. It has also been said that the street was named Cross because it went across town and through Will's large farm on the west side of Ypsilanti. His business partner, Mark Norris, only has a small street named after him of less than a mile, named Norris Street, which can be found on the east side beginning at what is known as "small Oak" Street, crossing Forest Avenue and then turning north and ending at North River Street. You might want to raise a pint to him as you visit the Ann Arbor Brewery on Norris Street, or

perhaps not, because he was an outspoken supporter of Temperance.

In total, there were four real estate additions to the city of Ypsilanti accredited to William Cross. These real estate additions are testimony to his business skills and ambition. The Norris & Cross Addition includes lots on both the east and west sides of the Huron River. On the west side, the Norris & Cross 3rd Ward Addition was registered on November 6, 1834, and is located near the old Ypsilanti High School. The western addition includes approximately 75 lots and runs along Hamilton Street, Adams Street, and Washington Street, and is bordered on the north by Forest Avenue

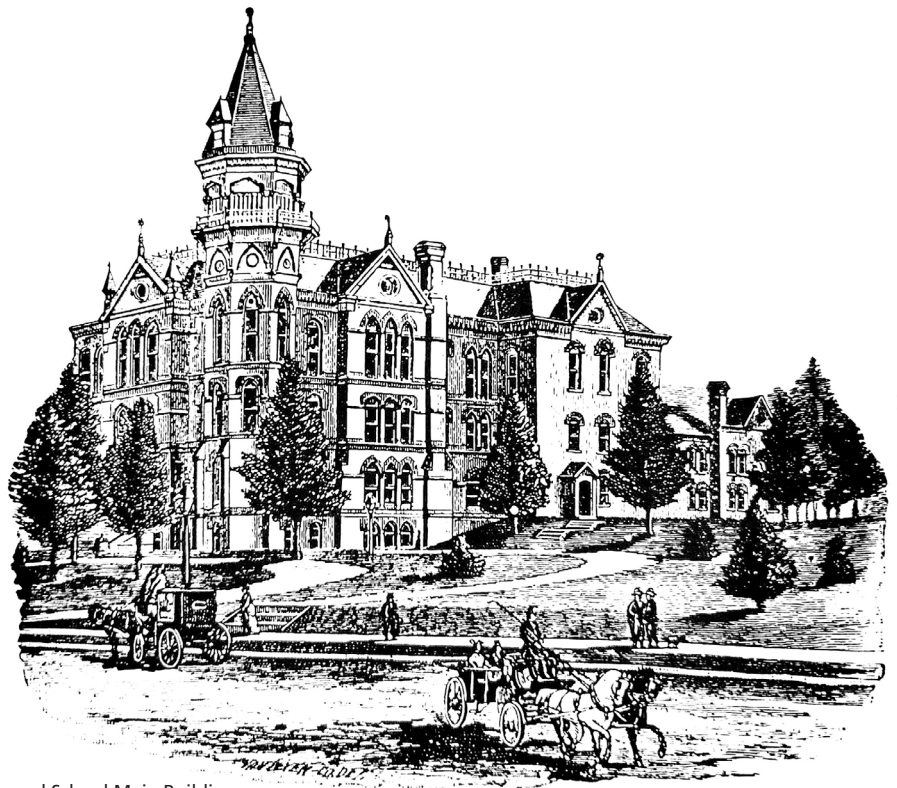
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and on the south by Cross Street. On the east side, the Norris & Cross 4th Ward Addition was registered on November 10, 1834, and is located just east of the railroad tracks. The eastern addition includes approximately 25 lots and runs along Norris Street and River Street, and is bordered on the north by Forest Avenue and on the south by the Train Depot. The Cross & Bagley Addition was registered on September 25, 1856, and is located near the Water Tower. It is located along N. Summit Street and Normal Street bordered on the north by Washtenaw Avenue and on the south by Congress Street, and is subdivided into approximately 75 lots. The Cross & Shutts Addition was registered on June 24, 1857, and is located along the east side of Miles Street near Prospect Park. This small addition includes only about 10 lots.

After abandoning the whiskey making enterprise, Will opened a mercantile store which he ran for several years. He became an active member of the growing community and participated in many functions, including serving on the board of the Presbyterian Church. This ambitious man became known as much as a business man as a farmer. His claim to fame, with his name going down in Michigan history, is his role in the infamous Cholera Wars. Like many rural communities, a volunteer militia was organized to keep citizens safe. In 1828, Michigan Territorial Governor, Lewis Cass, commissioned him Captain in the Ypsilanti militia. He served faithfully for five and a half years and it was during that time that he arrested the secretary of the Michigan Territory while guarding the small village from the possible spread of cholera. Because he did not follow orders of his superior officer, Will was disgraced and demoted. You can read more about this in an article I wrote titled "Ypsilanti and the Governor's Stay at Home Order of 1832" that was published in the Summer 2020 issue of the *Gleanings*, or in most Michigan history books under what is



Normal School Main Building.

known as the Cholera War.

Not to be discouraged, Will's life changed for the better when he met and married Mary R. Hammond on May 14, 1834, with Presbyterian minister Ira Weed performing the ceremony. Will sold his original farm and moved across the river where he purchased over 150 acres of land. His father gave him part of the land as an encouragement to marry. He also owned the land where the Normal College was built and made a profit by selling it to the college. Essentially his own farm and property covered what we now know as The Normal Park Neighborhood. In his wife Mary's obituary published in the *Ypsilanti Commercial* on January 26, 1894, the property is described as being from the Ann Arbor Road (now Washtenaw Avenue) to Chicago Road (now Michigan Avenue). The article states "the junction with Chicago Avenue only consisted as a country lane" which was closed off by a primitive gate. This would have been where Michigan Avenue takes a sharp turn to the left and Congress Street begins. The farm was planted with a huge

orchard of fruit trees and grapes. In fact, Will won honorable mention at the Michigan State Fair of 1854 for the grapes he entered into the contest.

At first Mary and Will and their six children lived in a modest home on the land, but by 1866 William sold much of his property and subdivided the rest into lots. People who live in and around the Normal Park neighborhood now enjoy what had once been William and Mary's farm land. Perhaps, like me, the next time you stop for the traffic light on Michigan Avenue, when it makes a sharp left turn and the right lane goes straight onto Congress Street, you will picture the small country lane with a primitive field gate which was once one of the entrances to the William Cross farm. Cross shared this land with the village for use as a fairground and had a horse race track on it where Recreation Park is now. The park fairgrounds also hosted the huge 50th birthday of Ypsilanti, celebrated in the park-like setting with a hot air balloon, speeches by notables, including the governor, demonstrations, food, and thousands

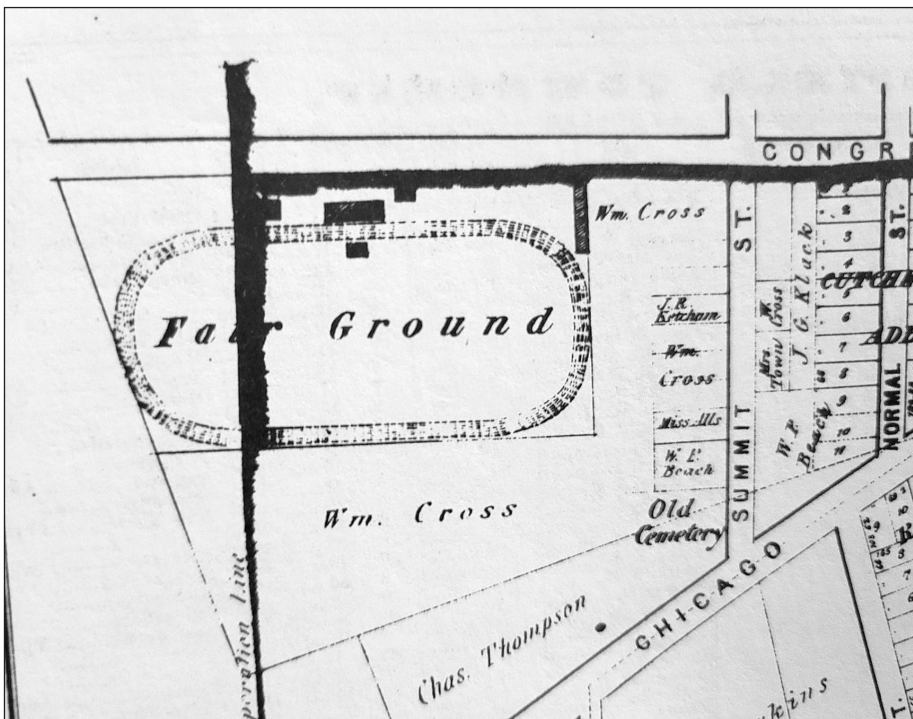
of people in what was then known as Cross Grove. You can read more about this in my Summer 2020 Gleanings article titled "Enjoy a 4th of July Parade Like No Other."

When Will subdivided his property he saved one of the best lots for his own pleasure and built a large and substantial home which is admired to this day, at the corner of Congress and Summit – 4 S. Summit Street. It is said that the home cost over \$3,000 to build and had 11-foot ceilings on the first floor and 10-foot ceilings on the second. It was topped with a cupola that Will added so that he could view the thriving village he helped found as well as the meandering Huron River. The home was described in one newspaper account as being a "lavish showplace." Mary and Will also built a home for their daughter next door. Both homes are still there.

In the book Past and Present of Washtenaw County Michigan, by Samuel W. Breakes, the author gives us this impression of Will: "Mr. Cross has always been an active worker, and has given largely of his means to help Yp-

silanti. When the time shall come for him to 'lie down and sleep' forever his work and name will be remembered and cherished in the hearts of many citizens of Ypsilanti." This was a valid prediction as anyone visiting or living in Ypsilanti today nearly 150 years later knows of Cross Street, named for William. Thousands of people each year enjoy a swim in the pool at Recreation Park or watch a ball game there or enjoy a picnic on land he preserved for recreation so many years ago. So, dear readers and citizens of Ypsilanti, I hope that I have given you a brief glimpse of a man who, when he died in 1882, left his wife Mary to continue to live in their home for 12 years until her death in 1894, and was "cherished in the hearts of many Ypsilanti citizens". They have both now laid down to sleep at peaceful Highland Cemetery with other valuable founders of Ypsilanti.

(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.)



William Cross Property Surrounding the Fairgrounds (Recreation Park).

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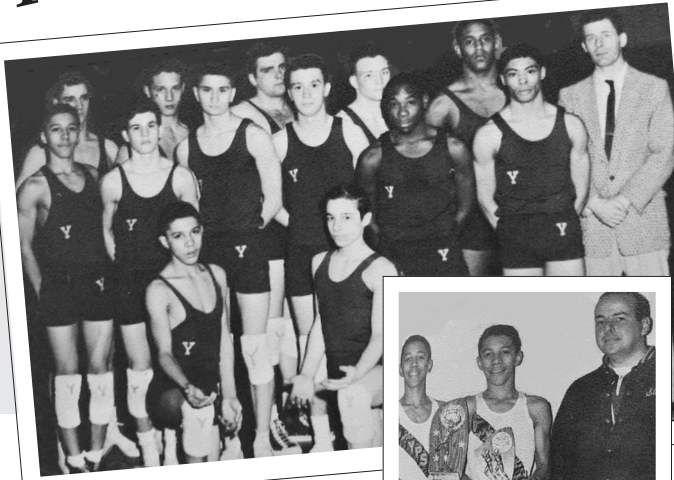
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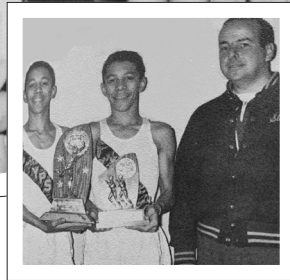
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A Reunion of Ypsilanti High School Athletes

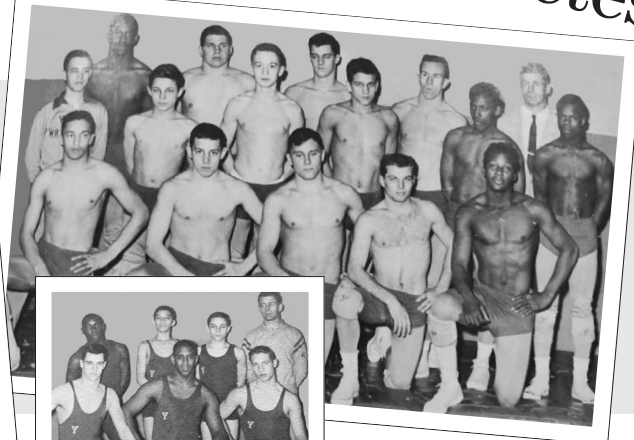
BY: C. TINO LAMBROS



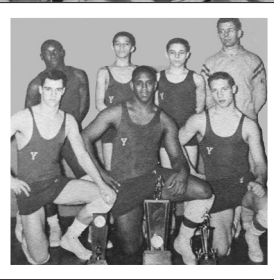
1961 YHS - State Championship Wrestling Team – Kneeling in the front row at the left is Ernie Gillum and standing behind him is Bob Arvin.



Ronnie and Ernie Gillum with Hall of Fame Coach Dick Lee in 1937.



1959 wrestling team photo. Front row: Fred Lett, Paul Harris, Andy Fink, Butch Smith and Bill Robinson. Second Row: Bob Keefer (Manager), Tino Lambros, Dennis Mannisto, Roy Wilbanks, Carl Bow and Don Lee. Third Row: Norman Taylor, Fred Greenway, Bob Arvin, Tom Hill and Coach Bert Waterman.



Six All State YHS wrestlers from the 1961 team. Front Row: Bob Arvin, Norm Taylor and Joe Arcure. Back Row: John Curtis, Ernie Gillum, Tino Lambros and Coach Waterman.

The door to the apartment was open, but I knocked anyway to announce my arrival. Voices inside all chorused, “Come on in. The door’s open”. As I opened the screen door, I asked, “Got room for a white guy in there?” A round of chuckles from within welcomed my arrival.

We had all taken part in an annual August golf outing event at Ypsilanti’s Township Green Oaks Golf Course. It is a multi-class outing for mostly Ypsilanti High School grads, a reunion of sorts.

I entered the apartment. All five seating spaces were taken so I planted myself on the floor with a comfortable wall to lean against. I looked around the room and realized the six of us had been friends and teammates for over 60 years. The amazing athletic and personal accomplishments that this group and extensions of this group represented were amazing - YHS graduation years from 1959 to 1964 and “home grown – neighborhood kids.”

I began thinking that with Ypsilanti’s 200th Anniversary in 2023, a series on Ypsilanti area athletes, coaches, and notable teams may be in order. During my 17 years working with the YCHS Athletic Hall of Fame I have learned much about local sports history. Interest in high school sports gained interest locally in 1898. The YCHS Athletic Hall of Fame currently has 172 individual members and two state championship teams. The earliest Hall of Famer is 1921 YHS graduate George Haggarty, followed by two more close by, John Dignan (1928) and Lou Batterson (1930). Our town has produced many noteworthy individuals and teams .

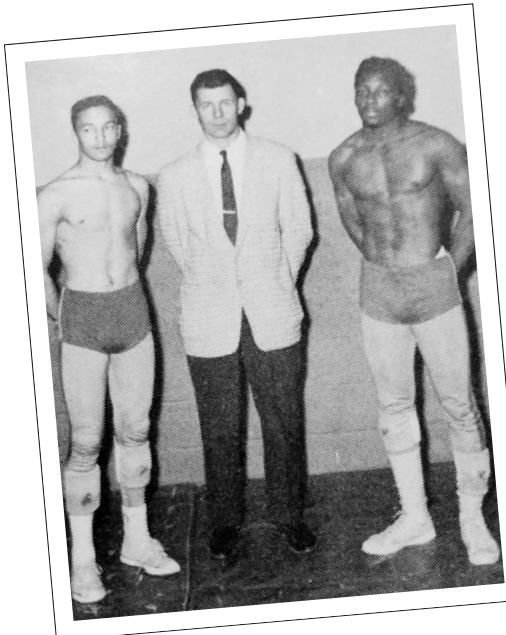
In that apartment were six outstanding individual athletes, and with friends and family members that number reached

nine. On my right was my YHS “wrestling hero”, Freddie Lett, YHS 1959. To this 9th grader, Freddie was smooth on the mat. He made it look easy. I use the Muhammed Ali quote to describe him, “Floats like a butterfly, stings like a bee”. Freddie’s dad was always in attendance. When Freddie graduated, Mr. Lett continued to attend our meets for a few more years. We appreciated his support and continued interest in us.

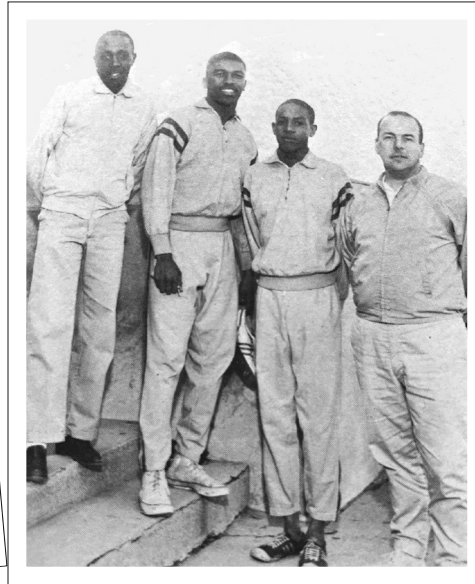
Next, sitting on the couch in his apartment was Ronnie Gillum, one of “The Twins”. If you were in YHS in the early 60’s, you knew “The Twins”, 1962 graduates, Ernie and Ronnie Gillum. They became synonymous with YHS cross country, wrestling and track. Two of the all-time best. Ronnie was the most dominate wrestler on the 1962 State Championship team. He had only one close match, a 2-1 decision.

Twin brother Ernie, a two-time undefeated State Champion wrestler, was also outstanding in cross country and track. He was one of the best in high school, college and beyond. Ernie passed away in 2013. I spent quite a bit of time at the Gillum residence on Adams Street during wrestling season. Two beautiful women were there: Mom Gillum and Grandma Stark. They raised “The TWINS”, as well as three younger Gillum sons. I was welcomed into their home. Grandma Stark and Mom Gillum were so kind and gracious.

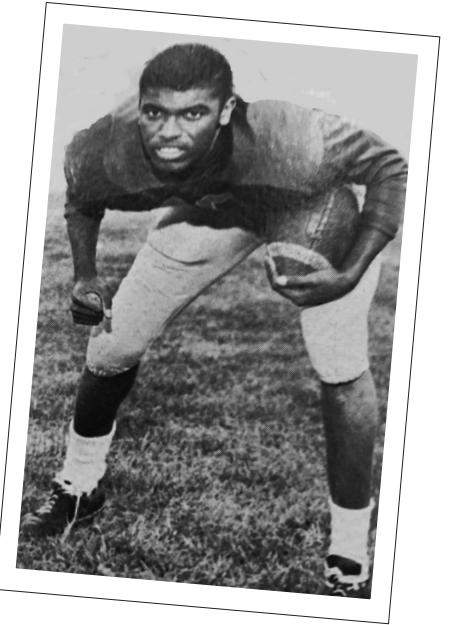
Following up on Ronnie’s close 2-1 victory match leads us to another outstanding YHS athlete who was an inspiration to all of us - 1964 YHS graduate Charles Beatty. His 2-1 loss as a sophomore to senior Ronnie Gillum was Charles’s only loss of his high school wrestling career. Charles ranked #1 in the U.S. coming out of high school. Charles passed away in 2021.



1959 Co-captains Fred Lett and Bill Robinson with Hall of Fame Coach Bert Waterman.



1963 YHS track – Left to right: Levi Simpson, Mike Bass, Randolph Brewer, and hall of fame coach Dick Lee.



Mike Bass - 1962 football Captain and 1963 Class President.

One cannot talk about Charles Beatty without talking about his father, Charles Eugene Beatty Sr. Mr. Beatty was a 5-time state track champion at Detroit Northwestern, multi-record holder. He continued at Michigan State Normal College (EMU) where he excelled and was a world class track star. Fortunately he stayed in Ypsilanti as a teacher, coach, mentor and a distinguished school administrator – the first black school administrator in Michigan. The “Chief” had a tremendous influence on hundreds of young people in Ypsilanti. He continues to be highly thought of by all who knew him.

In the middle of the couch sat Randolph Brewer, 1963 YHS graduate. Another 3-sport athlete - cross country, wrestling and track. He led the cross country and track teams to many victories. He was a member of the 1960 State Championship cross country team. Randolph was an All-State runner.

At the other end of the couch sat 1964 YHS graduate, Mike Bradley. My first association with Mike came when my brother Chris was Mike’s Little League baseball coach. Mike was an outstanding football player and wrestler. He was a member of two state

champion wrestling teams and a 1964 State Champion. He was a long time teacher/coach at YHS. Mike’s dad, Mr. Bradley, was always in attendance, from that pre-teen baseball player, all through high school. He was a wonderful, soft-spoken gentleman, who would greet you with that warm smile.

The last of this circle of YHS greats was 1963 YHS graduate Mike Bass. We first met when we were 10 or 11 years old as charter members of the first chartered Ypsilanti Little League. Mike was an outstanding baseball player but this will not show up in his resume because he never played organized baseball after Babe Ruth League. Mike

was a 3-sport athlete in football, basketball and track that continued into college and 7-years of pro football.

The Bass name is well-known as his mother, Louise, was a teacher at then East Junior High School and his father was Dr. Thomas Bass. One friend, Ricky Jefferson, described Dr. Bass as having “slapped a lot of us into this world”.

I sat on the floor admiring the accomplishments of these guys and their close connections to so many others as I listened to their conversations. They talked about their families, their heritages, their neighborhoods, growing up in Ypsilanti and their friends. It

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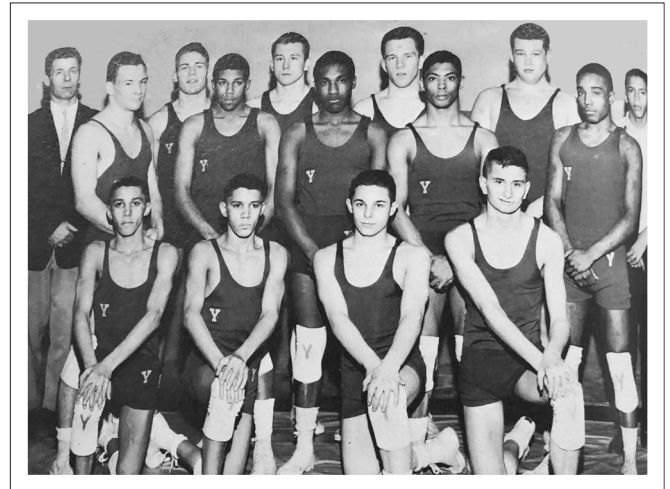
was fascinating, interesting talk which also included friends who had passed on. Family histories on how their families escaped slavery moving from the south to the north and to Canada. Stories handed down from generation to generation.

It was time to leave. It was a wonderful couple of hours with legendary YHS athletes. No one talked about their athletic accomplishments and there are many. They saw athletics as their path to the future, to achieve lifetime goals and career paths and kept their focus on what was ahead for them. We all left Ronnie's apartment at about the same time. It was a group who had been friends for over 60 years looking ahead for when we can get together again.

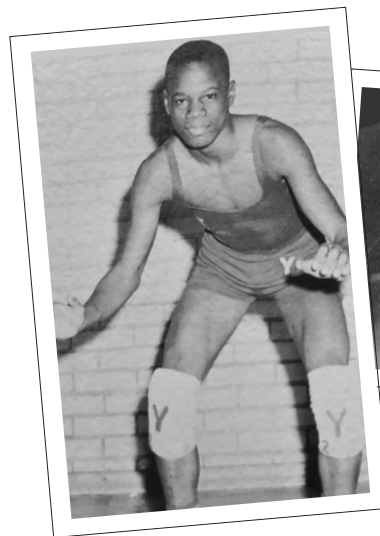
A quick resume of those gentlemen mentioned – most from fact and some from memory and the numbers are “at least”... 9 men, 8 - YHS graduates from 7 years – 1959 -1964. 12 –Individual State Champions (5 undefeated); 11 –Additional All State honors; All were on State Championship teams with a couple being on 3; 10 –Teams that finished in the top 5 in State; 8 – College athletes; 10 –Members of college conference championship teams; 6 – College All Americans; 8 – College teams top 5 in NCAA Championships; 3 – Members of NCAA Championship Teams; 4 Olympic team Contenders; 5 –Coaches; 6 – teachers; 5 – H.S. Regional Wrestling Coaches of the Year; 12 – Members of various Halls of Fame; 1 who did the following– NFL All Conference, scored a touchdown in Super Bowl VII, and honored by placing his name in Washington's stadium's Ring of Fame.

As I got in my car I didn't feel like “the white guy in the room”. I felt like a guy who spent a couple hours with a group of terrific lifetime friends who accomplished so much, not just athletically, but in their lives.

Each man in that room could be a major article in “The Gleanings”. There are so many more stories out there about Ypsilanti area athletes - interesting lives that are so much a



1962 YHS State Championship wrestling team. Front row at left Ronnie Gillum and next to him twin Ernie Gillum.



Charles Beatty - 1964 state wrestling champion.



1959 YHS Co-Captains Fred Lett and Bill Robinson.



Class Officers (left to right): Leland Randall – Advisor, Tim Willoughby – Vice President, Janet Kempt – Treasurer, Bonnie Grief – Secretary, and Michael Bass – President.

part of our local history. In the 1970's the ladies were added to school athletic programs. There are many that could be added to our list including state champions, college conference and NCAA champs and All-Americans, world champions and Olympic participants.

Currently Lincoln, Roosevelt, and St. John's athletes, teams, and coaches are not well represented. Readers can help. Send names, contact information, a short bio, and suggestions for, or from any of the local schools, as we head into the 200th Anniversary of our Ypsilanti community. There are enough candidates to highlight one or two in each quarterly issue. Please send your suggestions to “The Gleanings” at the Ypsi Historical Museum or to ctino13@hotmail.com .

(Tino Lambros grew up in Ypsilanti and attended Ypsilanti High School. He was active in a variety of sports programs.)



Dignitaries rode in carriages to the fairgrounds.

Semi-Centennial of 1874

BY JAMES MANN

“A great day in the story of Ypsilanti was Saturday, July 4, 1874, a day of marching and music, oratory and song, the glitter of military trappings and the glory of skyrockets and Roman candles. So was celebrated the semi-centennial of the settlement of Washtenaw County,” wrote Harvey Colburn in *The Story of Ypsilanti*. There may have been as many as thirty thousand people in the city that day. They were not here, however, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of Ypsilanti in 1823. This was the 50th anniversary of the first celebration of the 4th of July in Washtenaw County.

Benjamin Woodruff led the first group of settlers up the Huron River in 1823 and established the first community in April of 1823. Once the site was established, he returned to Sandusky, Ohio, to bring his family to the new settlement. His plan was to return in time to celebrate the 4th of July in their new home, but the return journey took longer than expected, and Woodruff and his family set foot at their new home on July 6, 1823. Woodruff decided the 4th of July of 1824 would be observed in the best of style. “Accordingly,” wrote Colburn, “he purchased in Detroit and brought up the river such necessary supplies as the settlement could not furnish. Among these were raisins, rice, cheese, loaf-sugar and a half-barrel of whiskey.”

All the settlers living in Washtenaw County at the time were invited, all thirty-eight of them. The meal was prepared with the meat roasted in two large kettles. “Before the meal was served, Woodruff read the Declaration of Independence and made a patriotic address and all joined in singing ‘Hail Columbia.’ The dinner was spread out of doors on tables made of boards roughly hewn but covered with the

finest home-made linen brought from Ohio or back East. The food was satisfying. There were roast beef, chicken, new potatoes, green peas, beets, warm biscuits with butter and honey, cheese, rice and raisin puddings and loaf cake. Elona Rogers and Ella Woodruff prepared the hot sling. As the task was new to them and they were unmindful of their instructions, they put in a double portion of whiskey, a blunder which, as they suspected, was evidenced in a noticeable increase of liveliness and good humor. Dancing to the merry scraping of Mallett’s violin prolonged the festivities into the evening.”

The 4th of July celebration of 1874 was to be on a grander scale, with trains filled with visitors arriving crowded to capacity. “The mail train on the Central Road had to be increased by the addition of an extra car at Detroit, and after leaving the Junction hundreds of people were left at every station until reaching Ypsilanti, who were unable to get on board. The Dexter accommodation brought down, in addition to its regular train, three extra coaches and all were filled. A monster train of nineteen cars came in from Detroit as an extra, bringing the Cadets, the National Guards and two thousand or more people from along the line of the road,” reported *The Detroit Free Press* of Monday, July 5, 1874. “What has been said of these trains may also be said of the Detroit express on the Central Road and the regular train on the Detroit, Hillsdale & Indians Road. Besides the regular train on the latter road a special came in consisting of twenty-one cars, all loaded to their fullest capacity,” continued the account.

“On the arrival of the train from Detroit, in response to a telegram from Ann Arbor announcing that the regular



A large banner over Cross Street greeted visitors with the word "WELCOME".

trains could not bring the people, the engine took eight of the coaches to that city and returned with them loaded. Besides the people who came by railroad thousands of farmers came in from the country in wagons and processions. As the mail train came in from Detroit a large procession was passing between Denton's and Sheldon's with band a-playing and flags flying and presenting from a distance a beautiful appearance."

"There were besides wagons, buggies, two seated carriages, nondescript vehicles, which bore to the celebration the entire countryside. Picture every hitching-rack crowded and rows of teams standing in lines on every street leading to the center of activities," added Colburn. By 10:30 in the morning the parade had formed on Cross Street near the Michigan Central Railroad Depot. Just west of the depot a grand arch stretched over the street, made of flowers and evergreens, and surmounted by an American flag. Also, there was a female figure of the Goddess of Liberty, dressed in the stars and stripes and wearing the cap of Liberty. Under the arch was a banner with the greeting: "1824-1874. Welcome."

The procession passed under the arch and made its way on Cross Street turning onto Huron Street and then onto Congress Street, now Michigan Avenue, to the fairgrounds, now Recreation Park. *"The Ypsilanti Light Guard"* wrote Colburn, *"all in fine*

uniforms, clears the way, and the crowd shrinks to leave an extra foot for the marchers. The Marshal of the Day and his assistant marshals prance by on excited horses. The band passes and the military follow. Here are the Detroit Cadets: one hundred and fifty of them. How well they march! Here is a Detroit National Guard Company, ninety strong. Here is Company B of Ann Arbor with sixty rifles. After the military come carriages containing important persons, Governor Bagley of the State of Michigan and his staff, the chairman, chaplain, orators of the day: carriages containing near-important persons, editors, minor politicians and others."

These were followed by the Ypsilanti Volunteer Fire Department, with the hose cart decorated elaborately with streamers. They were followed by the German American societies from the east side of the city. The parade passed under a banner reading: *"Yipsylanty, Washtensk; 1824-1874. Hard to spell but can't be beat."* At the end of the parade was a raggedly marching line of about fifty older men ranging in age from sixty to eighty-five. These were the pioneers, the men who had cleared the land and built the cabins, spending their youth in what was to them a wilderness. One walked with a limp, as he tried to keep in step with the music. Another tipped his hat and

wiped his head with a red handkerchief. These men should have ridden in carriages, but instead were assigned to walk the distance. *"On reaching the fair grounds,"* noted The Detroit Free Press, *"the Procession, and thousands who were not in the regular procession, proceeded to where the speaker's stand had been erected, in a pleasant little grove in the northwest corner of the grounds, which were too small to shelter the immense throng from the hot sun. A large stand had been erected on the southern edge of the grove, for the accommodation of the officers of the day, the speakers and invited guests. Around the grounds were located numerous booths for the sale of eatables and drinkables of a nonspirituous nature. On arriving on the grounds, the procession broke up and scattered around under shade trees, the military notably getting as far as possible from the crowd around the speaker's stand."*

On the stand were the honored guests, including the governor and other officials of the state, the mayors of Ann Arbor and other communities of the county, and others. *"The exercises at the stand were observed with the greatest difficulty,"* observed The Detroit Free Press. *"A strong wind was blowing from the north, rustling the leaves of the trees to such an extent and carrying the voice of the speakers directly away from the crowd so that it was impossible for more than two or three hundred people, on the stand or in its immediate vicinity, to hear. The speakers tried to overcome the ob-*



stacles by changing their position from the stand to a place among the crowd, but not much advantage was gained."

The program began with music performed by the Constantine cornet band. This was followed by a prayer offered by the Rev. John D. Pierce. After the prayer a choir of twenty men and women of Ypsilanti sang "Hand in Hand" conducted by Fredrick Pease of the Normal School. Now Lyman Decatur Norris, the son of a pioneer family gave the main address of the day, an oration on the history of Ypsilanti, beginning with the arrival of the French fur traders and the Jesuit missionaries at what is now Michigan. Well, that was the start of the text he had prepared, but because the wind made hearing his voice difficult, he had to abridge the speech and began with the settlement of Woodruff Grove fifty-one years before.

Norris referred to the birth of Alpha Washtenaw Bryan, the first child of the settlers to be born in the county. At this the audience broke out in applause and called for Alpha Bryan and his mother to appear on the stage. This Alpha and his mother of eighty years of age did for a moment. At the end of his address the choir and the audience sang "The Star-Spangled Banner." This, The Detroit Free Press noted, was done with "fine effect."

The next speaker was introduced, Schuyler Colfax, who had been the Vice-president of the United States during the first term of President Ulysses Grant but had left the office the

The Ypsilanti Fire Department fire engine was an impressive sight in the parade.

year before. "Mr. Colfax apologized for the weakness of his voice," reported The Detroit Free Press, "by saying that he had just been taking a trip over the Michigan Lake Shore Railroad and had been obliged to speak at every station and water tank along the road, and hence was somewhat hoarse. He said that although he wore no pioneer's badge still he had the honor to claim to be one of the pioneers of Washtenaw, for when a lad of but thirteen years of age he left home in New York and came through Ypsilanti on his way to northern Indiana, and stayed here one night at an old hotel, which stood where the Hawkins House now is. He then began his regular address by alluding to the republican government of France and Spain as evidence that the republican, of which this country is the most eminent type, is gradually becoming the accepted form of government by the nations of the earth." At the conclusion of his address, the choir and audience joined in singing "America" and "Auld Lang Syne."

Now it was time to find something to eat and many made their way to the hotels in the city while others stopped by the booths set up on the grounds of the fairgrounds. Tents had been set up on the fairgrounds for guests. The Pioneer Society had prepared a dinner

for themselves under the shade of the trees. After dinner it was time to visit friends and talk about old times. At four in the afternoon the military companies passed in review before the Governor and his staff. Then the companies marched to the depot to board the trains and return to Detroit. "At 6 p.m. the Ypsilanti Fire Department was reviewed," reported The Detroit Free Press. "The company had recently been uniformed, which with the steamer Clark Cornwell appropriately trimmed, presented a very attractive appearance."

Now the day was coming to an end and the final act of the program was to begin. This was fireworks. The show began with a large balloon rising from the earth watched by all until it passed from sight. Then rockets and candles were fired. Several set pieces for the occasion had been prepared, including "Washtenaw 1824-1874," and "Welcome to Ypsilanti," as well as "George Washington on a horse." The show ended with a sign simply stating, "Good Night."

At this the immense crowd began the walk from the fairgrounds. Colburn concluded, "So sleepy children were tucked into farm wagons and the crowds melted away in the darkness. It was a great day when Ypsilanti celebrated her semi-centennial."

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

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