

# Ypsilanti GLEANINGS

YHS Museum & Archives

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



FALL 2023

## “How Can I Keep From Singing”

The 40th Anniversary of the Ypsilanti Community Choir

BY MICHELLE CANDIOTTI-SANFORD AND C. TINO LAMBROS



Community Choir Music Director Ariel Toews-Ricotta.

“How Can I Keep from Singing?” a Quaker song arranged by Ginger Littleton, is not the official theme song of the Ypsilanti Community Choir, but it could be. As the city of Ypsilanti begins its 3rd century, the Choir begins its 41st year, continuing the long, proud history of music in the area.

The vision for the choir came from Denise Rae Zellner in 1983. As her culmination project for her MA from the University of Michigan in choral music conducting, Denise envisioned a non-auditioned adult community choir for those who love to sing. 57 charter members appear on the choir roster, while 12 more names appear supporting the choir from the Ypsilanti Community Band’s Board of directors. The Choir’s charter states that all concerts are **FREE ADMISSION**. Each year the Choir has two regularly scheduled concerts, the Holiday concert in December and the Spring concert in May.

Choir members run the gamut of musical backgrounds. Members include professionally trained voices and musicians to those who do not read music. Several choir members are in multiple musical groups including bands, orchestras, and other choirs. Then there are those that simply look forward to the one night a week rehearsal to socialize and sing their hearts out to learn the music. All ages from early adulthood and above are represented – recent high school graduates, college students, retirees, and everything in between. Two choir members celebrated all 40 years with the choir - Marlene Barr and Wayne Jahnke

With such a diverse and eclectic membership, one might think it would be a difficult task to pull all together. Not so. The Choir has been blessed with two of the best musical and people-oriented leaders; Music Director Ariel

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**Ypsilanti Historical Society**

220 North Huron Street  
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197

Museum: 734.482.4990  
Archives: 734.217.8236

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**GLEANINGS Staff**

Editor ..... Al Rudisill  
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If you have suggestions for articles or if you have questions, contact Al Rudisill at 734.476.6658 or [al@rudisill.ws](mailto:al@rudisill.ws).

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## From the **PRESIDENT'S DESK**

BY BILL NICKELS

The 4th of July opening of the 1973 Sesquicentennial Time Capsule was a huge event. Hundreds gathered around the picnic shelter in Riverside Park to view the event. Fortunately, the capsule was dug up and privately opened several days before. A concrete burial vault without a seal was used as the Time Capsule resulting in wet contents. The several days before the 4th were used to dry out the contents. When Mayor Nicole Brown and I displayed the mostly paper items, audience members were invited to tell about the items. Somebody in the audience knew something about everything! We know Marcia Harrison, John Barr, and Nathalie Edmunds added personal letters to the Time Capsule. As of now, water damage has prevented us from identifying their letters. Selected contents of the Time Capsule will be displayed in the museum for the rest of the year.

On Sunday July 16th, Ypsilanti Histories' Book Release occurred at the Whittaker Road branch of the Ypsilanti District Library. Chapter authors Lisa Walters, George Goodman, and Steven Ramold all presented short summaries of their chapters and all authors received their complimentary copy of Ypsilanti Histories. Four Yp-

silanti mayors were present; George Goodman (1972 – 1982), Cheryl Farmer (1995 – 2006), Paul Schreiber (2006 – 2014), and present mayor Nicole Brown. Ypsilanti Histories is available in the museum's bookstore for \$20. Send the museum a check for \$23 and we will mail you a copy.

Ypsilanti's bicentennial celebrations neared completion the weekend of August 19 with a major event in Riverside Park and August 20th with the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation's Bicentennial Home Tour featuring North Huron Street homes.

It is hard to believe that Ypsilanti's bicentennial year is coming to a close. When Ypsilanti's Heritage Festival disbanded in 2019, their potential bicentennial leadership group dissolved. COVID ended a second bicentennial committee that started plans for a celebration. I am thankful that Evan Milan picked up the reins of leadership and passed them on to Annie Somerville who made the 2023 celebration happen!

Sunday October 8th is our fall Quarterly and Annual Meeting. A short business meeting will be followed by a little known piece of Ypsilanti's history. Marcia McCrary will tell about



Digging up the Time Capsule in front of the water tower.





Jerry Jennings repairing the back porch on the Museum.

a flourishing Nineteenth Century bug-  
gy industries that were a precursor to  
Ypsilanti's Twentieth Century automo-  
tive industries.

Summer has been a time for outdoor maintenance at the museum. Landscaper Marlo Berman did some major work. Board Member Jerry Jennings cut off rotted bottoms of back porch columns and substituted new bases. Our Carriage House received new 6" gutters which should keep our tenants dry when they walk out their door during rain and should solve a foundation water problem.

YHS Treasurer Bette Warren decided it was time to retire. "THANKS Bette

for your eight years of service." The position of YHS treasurer is one of the more demanding YHS positions.

In her place, Amy Singer is now YHS's new treasurer. Amy's full-time job is with the Eastern Michigan University Halle Library. It just occurred to me that all YHS Board of Trustee members have an EMU connection – either as alumni or as present/retired employees!

With the coming of fall, we have the opportunity to shift our attention from summer and Ypsilanti's bicentennial to something new. Promising things are expected from Eastern Michigan, University of Michigan, and Detroit Lions football!



Amy Singer is the new Treasurer of the Ypsilanti Historical Society.

our attention from summer and Ypsilanti's bicentennial to something new. Promising things are expected from Eastern Michigan, University of Michigan, and Detroit Lions football!



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Toews-Ricotta and Accompanist /Assistant Director Maria Cimarelli. The team of Toews-Ricotta and Cimarelli work their magic every year.

The tangible qualities are amazing. Director Toews-Ricotta became director in 2006. She holds a master’s degree in band and choral conducting from the University of Michigan and an undergraduate degree in flute performance from the University of Denver. Ariel serves as the Conductor of the Civic Philharmonic Orchestra (part of the youth program under the Detroit Symphony), Conductor of the Michigan Philharmonic Youth Orchestra and Assistant Conductor of the Plymouth Symphony Orchestra (now Michigan Philharmonic). She is a full-time nurse in the Cardiac Intensive Care unit at U of M Hospital.

Maria Cimarelli has equally impressive credentials. She is the vocal music accompanist for the Creative and Performing Arts Program of the Livonia Public Schools, of music at Franklin Community Church, and for the Michigan Opera Theatre Children’s Chorus. Maria holds degrees in vocal music performance and vocal music education. She has appeared with the Detroit Symphony as a guest soloist on numerous occasions, most notable at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. and Carnegie Hall in New York City. Maria was cast in a Strauss opera that was produced in Detroit by the Detroit Symphony and recorded on London Records.

But, as impressive as these accomplishments are, it is their

intangible qualities that make the choir. It is their leadership, their people-skills, their use of humor that brings about the success of the choir. Ariel and Maria bring a family feeling to the choir. The Ypsi Community Choir is a social group, a happy group, and positive atmosphere that leads to excellence with all members pulling for each other.

The support of choir members is 100%. Ariel and Maria bring their expertise, as well as their delightful personalities and touch of humor to each and every rehearsal. Musical numbers that seemed too difficult in the first rehearsal become polished, beautiful presentations by concert night due to their influence. The common goal is to provide the community with an entertaining, quality program. That goal is reached every performance.

Often the Choir is joined with other community musical talent in their concerts, talented high school students, college musicians, instrumentalists, the Depot Town Big Band, and others. Come join the choir. Check it out for yourself. A great way to get involved in the community as the City of Ypsilanti begins her 3rd century and the choir closes in on their half-century milestone.

The PARTICULARS – Find out more about the choir and choir updates...check out the choir’s website...**WEBSITE** – [ypsicommchoir.org](http://ypsicommchoir.org) – The choir is a 501(c)(3) non-profit.

The Choir is honored to have corporate sponsor **Scott Ward and his Horizons Planning Corporation**. The choir invites you to join us for the 2023-24, the 41st Year of the Choir. Our Holiday Concert Rehearsals begin in September.



Two choir members celebrated all 40 years with the choir - Marlene Barr and Wayne Jahnke.



The Ypsilanti Community Choir Begins its 41st year.





Accompanist and Choir Assistant Director Maria Cimarelli.

Rehearsals are Thursdays at 7:30 pm at the Emmanuel Lutheran Church – 201 North River Street. **Our 2023 Holiday Concert – Thursday – December 7th–7:30 p.m.** – Washtenaw Community College Campus, Morris Lawrence Building – Towsley Auditorium. Previous concerts and performances can be found on the choir website.

Two musical classics have evolved into the Choir’s grand finales over the 40 years of the choir. Audiences look forward to the Spring Concerts rendition of “Battle Hymn of the Republic”, lyrics by Julia Ward Howe and music by William Steffi. The Holiday Concert concludes with their rendition of Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus” from the “Messiah”. The audience is encouraged to join in.

What better way to send the audience home with that good feeling and what better way to send the choir home with well-earned standing ovations.

Join the choir and see how the opening question of this article becomes an exclamation.

**“HOW CAN I KEEP FROM SINGING!!!”**

*(Authors – Michelle and Larry Sanford joined the choir in January 1999 and Tino Lambros in January 2006)*

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## Kirk A. Profit

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One Michigan Avenue  
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# Walter B. Hewitt

– An Early Resident of Ypsilanti  
Whose Life Story Could  
Have Been Written by  
Charles Dickens

BY JANICE ANSCHUETZ

A Christmas trading card with the inscription: "Presented by Hewitt & Champion, Fine Boots and Shoes. Ypsilanti, Mich."

**A**s we celebrate the 200th birthday of Ypsilanti, I like to remember some of the founders of our city, such as the man Walter Hewitt, for whom Hewitt Road was named. His life story reads like a Charles Dickens novel, and I wrote about it in the Ypsilanti Historical Society's Gleanings publication in the Summer 2012 edition. It is certainly worth reading again and remembering that traveling here from New York State to eke out a living was a very challenging and often life-threatening feat, as it was with Walter, who nearly died of ague and fever in his log cabin. Yet this man of courage never gave up and his determination and moral values left its mark on many early residents and we think of him even today as we view his impressive building at Michigan and Washington Streets. This is a life story with a sad beginning and a good ending and I hope that you will enjoy it.

Good historical research and writing do not die; they just "fade away." They may in fact stay hidden in an Ypsilanti Historical Museum archives file until they are rediscovered, read, and republished more than a century later. Such is the case with a fascinating obituary that pays tribute to the life of Walter B. Hewitt, one of Ypsilanti's most important business, political and cultural pioneers.



Walter Hewitt & Polina Childs Hewitt

Published anonymously in the *Ypsilanti Commercial* of September 10, 1886, the obituary recounts Hewitt's life as if he were a character in a novel by Charles Dickens – an immensely popular author at the time of Hewitt's death. Like David Copperfield, Hewitt rose from poverty and misfortune to riches and glory by remaining true to the virtues of honesty, integrity and hard work.

What follows is the story of the life of Walter Hewitt, exactly as it appeared 126 years ago as an obituary in the *Ypsilanti Commercial*. It has been transcribed in its entirety from a hand-written version.

*"Walter B. Hewitt died in this city Saturday, September 4, 1886. The subject of this sketch was born at Stillwater, Saratoga County, New York, February 4, 1800. His father's name was Elisa, who emigrated from Connecticut to New York.*

*"The ancestors of Mr. Hewitt came from England and participated in the early struggles of this country. Mr. Hewitt was named after his grandfather, Walter, who was actively engaged in the Revolutionary War,*



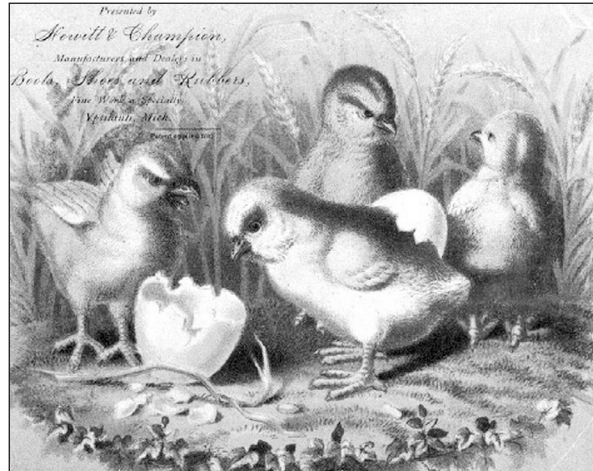
and during the hours of destitution, when Washington's soldiers were leaving those bloody tracks in the snow, he braved the dangers of Indian and British warfare and carried to the starving army many a load of provisions. His grandfather, Edmund Johnson, was also distinguished for his love of liberty, his powerful strength, and great daring. He was a captain in the Revolutionary War and so agile was he that he could easily leap over a yoke of oxen.

"Cynthia Johnson Hewitt (his mother) was left a widow when he was but two years old. The farm was sold and sometime afterward she married George Ardres Downing, a skilled mechanic.

"Mr. Hewitt's early life was spent as were the lives of boys of those early days. He began school at seven, and his extreme bashfulness made it a great event in his life. He attended the village school, taught by a Mr. Brush, and his instruction included a little geography and sums in "Pike's" arithmetic. At this time most problems were solved in pounds, shillings, and pence, and in this study he became proficient. In the school of his early days, blackboards and globes were unknown. The maps in geography were regarded as useless and the instruction was of the most arbitrary character. Although punishment by force was common, he escaped that disgrace.

"His winter days were spent in school. During the summer he helped make quilts or assisted in the general housework. Judged by our standard, the conveniences of his early days were few. There were no shoe or tailor shops, but itinerant shoemakers would spend a day or a week at the various houses supplying the needs of the inhabitants. To him, his first pair of shoes formed a great event in his history (and a real pair of shoes did not come till he was twelve years old) and so careful was he of them that when he came to a dusty place in the road he would take them off and wrap them in his handkerchief.

"His mother was a woman of great mental power, and as he was then much in her society, she made a powerful impression on his life. She filled his young heart with stories of Revolutionary days, and while he turned the (spinning) wheel, she inculcated those principles of integrity for which his life has always been distinguished. His mother was a woman of firm religious conviction, and though she lived many miles from the Baptist Church, yet when Sabbath came she would gather her children together and struggle through the almost impassable woods to the



An Easter trading card: "Presented by Hewitt & Champion, manufacturers and dealers in Boots, Shoes and Rubbers, fine work a specialty, Ypsilanti, Mich. (Patent applied for)."

place of worship. The intellectual stimulus which he got from his mother showed itself in his desire for study and improvement. So when his next teacher came, a man by the name of Grosvender, he was a boy active in body and mind. To swim a mile was almost a daily occurrence, and one day he challenged his teacher to a foot race. This was unfortunate, for during the struggle he fell and injured his knee. For months he was confined to his bed, but his energy conquered. He arose finally and determined he would have an education – and for a year he

walked two miles to school daily, dragging his useless limb after him. Although it took him two hours to hobble over as many miles, his time in school was well spent. It was a proud moment for him when the teacher gave public testimony to his superiority as a scholar. At this time too, he was a fine penman, and copies from his hand were sought after by the scholars.

"When Deacon Munger came from an adjoining district for a teacher, Mr. Grosvender recommended the boy with the best principles, and with the best record as a scholar. He successfully fulfilled the duties of a teacher for several terms, and received \$12 a month and 'board around.' He had a month of advanced scholars, who were nearly his equal in arithmetic, but they never knew it, for many a fortnight found him by the fireplace pouring over his books by the pitch pine light. The knowledge which he thus obtained was lasting, much of it being as vivid as ever seventy years afterward.

"After finishing his school, he went to work in a brick yard and then learned the tanner and currier's trade of his brother, Edmund J. Hewitt.

"In 1825, he married Polina Childs, and then came to his ears stories of the West, an almost unknown land. He resolved to leave the conservative East and face the pioneer struggles of the West. In those needy times he found a strong helpmate in his wife. She had been a school teacher at fourteen, receiving six shillings a week, and for a number of years had charge of a large family of younger children. These struggles had brought out her mental and moral powers. She cheerfully faced many hardships, and when in the solitude of Michigan forests, financial loss, and disease threatened destruction, her spirit rose triumphant and dispelled the fear of failure. Of her, he always loved to speak, and during his last days, when the subject of his early trials was mentioned, and she was referred to



The three-story building at 126, 128 and 130 West Michigan Avenue (the current address) housed Hewitt's show and boot factory and store, and also an auditorium named Hewitt Hall.

*as being of undaunted spirit, he said with all the vigor he could use, 'Yes, to her I owe all that I am.'*

*"The Erie Canal caused a stream of immigration to flow to Michigan and in 1826 he joined the westward pushing emigrants and landed at Detroit when it had a population of but little more than 2000. At this time the people were mainly gathered on Woodward and Jefferson Avenues. The French largely predominated and obtained most of the land in the vicinity of the river. St. Ann's and a Presbyterian Church were the only ones built. Gristmills were run by oxen and the town had the appearance of a frontier post. He held dear recollections of Larned Cole, A. C. McGraw, Frazer and of Father Richard and the first printing press.*

*"After landing, he obtained an Indian guide and started through the pathless forests to find land upon which to build a house. He finally located at Walled Lake and here underwent all of the privations of pioneer life. For weeks every one of the party was prostrate from fever. There were none to tend the sick, none to provide food, and it was here that he shed the first tears of despair. He crawled from the house, that was filled with the sick and sat down upon a log, almost wished that death would bring them relief, and it was here that Polina Hewitt showed the strength of her character. Half dead herself she encouraged him until the fever abated its fires. Foreseeing that a life here would be intolerable he disposed of what little land he had and returned to Detroit.*

*"Here he went into business, but a good opening presented itself at Ypsilanti, and in 1831, he came to the city that has since been his home. He rented a building on Main St. and soon had a prosperous shoe shop in operation. He, unaided, did the cutting for twenty two men while his wife did all the stitching for the shop besides doing her household duties and boarding twelve men. Such work naturally brought success. He bought farming lands and building lots and soon erected a store on the corner of Congress and Washington Streets. Naturally a man of integrity and business ability would be called upon by his fellows to transact their business and so we find him filling various offices of public trust. He was one of the trustees under the first village ordinance, was town clerk before the village was incorporated, was treasurer in 1839 and president in 1840 and in 1842 was elected to the State Legislature. He was not a public speaker and did not seek political honors. He sought results rather than theory.*

*"He was very active in Masonic works and was the first secretary of the Lodge of Freemasons. His relations with his fellow men were peculiarly happy. During his last hours, he recalled with pleasure that as far as he knew, he had never wronged a person willfully. He was one of the very few who, amid a variety of business transactions, was never the party to a lawsuit.*

*"With regard to his religious views, he was always reserved. He never scoffed. He never condemned. A conversation*



with him but a few weeks before his death showed that he stood as high on the mountain that gives the glimpse of immortality as is given most of us to stand. Conscious of his own impending death, he was calm and hopeful of the future, no doubts followed to darken his declining moments. He had been a kind father, a tender husband. He had honored his fellowmen and had received their esteem. He had nothing to regret, all to hope for, and, as he looked back over the past, he could say in the language of him who sat at his post in the Legislative hall, 'This is the last of earth. I am content.' Reverend T. W. MacLean conducted the funeral exercises Tuesday."

### Founder of Walled Lake and Ypsilanti Pioneer

Although this is a wonderfully written life story, pieces are missing that made me want to find out more about Walter Bernard Hewitt and his life and legacy, misfortune and triumph. Several books, including the *History of Oakland County* by Samuel Durant, published in 1877, and *History of Oakland County Michigan...*, written by Thaddeus D. Seeley in 1912, credit Walter Hewitt with being the founder

of the community of Walled Lake. While swimming in the lake for health and exercise he discovered a rock formation which he believed was a "wall" built by primitive people and thus named the lake and the surrounding area "Walled Lake," which is it called to this day and he is given credit by historians for being the founder of that community.

Though trained as a teacher, tanner, and shoe and boot maker, at the age of 25, in June, 1825, Hewitt built a log cabin in the wilderness surrounding what came to be called Walled Lake, and attempted to establish a farm in the swamps. However, after several years without much success, he moved with his young family to Detroit, where, it seems, he worked as a shoemaker. There his wife presented him with a son, Edmund, who was born November 14, 1829.

Hewitt worked four years in Detroit in the boot and shoe trade. Then, according to his biography in the *History of Washtenaw County* (published in 1881), he and his young family decided to seek their fortune in the growing village of Ypsilanti, to which they moved in 1831. Traveling from Detroit to Ypsilanti in those days was an adventure in itself.

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In *The History of Ypsilanti*, written by Harvey Colburn in 1923, the author gives us a sense of what was involved: *"The road was almost impassable to an ox team and it sometimes took three days to make the thirty-mile trip. For years after its opening, the Detroit road ran through seas of mud and over miles of jolting corduroy; no teamster thought of leaving home without an axe and log chain to cut poles to pry his wagon out of the mud. For a time the road was so impassable that travelers had to come from Detroit by way of Plymouth and Dixboro."*

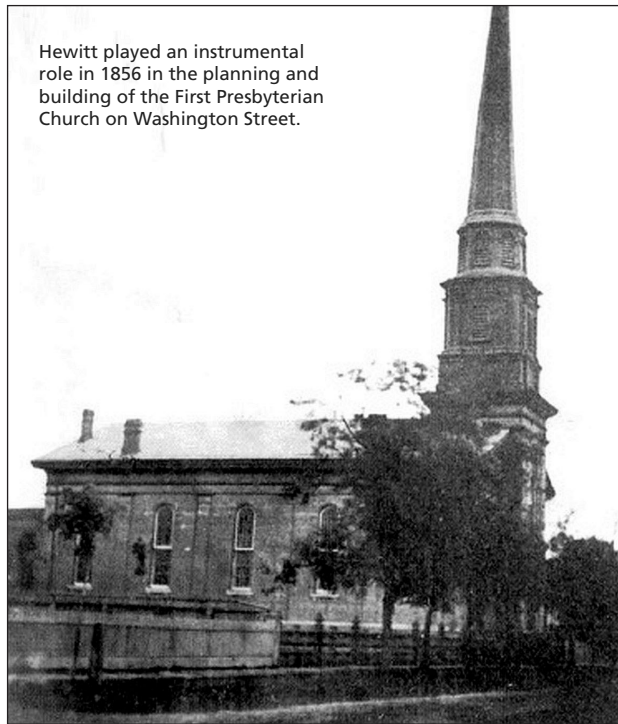
Unfazed by such challenges, however, Walter, his wife Polina, and their young son Edmund completed the trek to Ypsilanti, where Walter again took up the business of tanning and making shoes and boots.

#### **A Political Pioneer and Champion of Law and Order**

In the book *History of Washtenaw County, Michigan* we read: *"As early as 1829 the township of Ypsilanti was organized, under authority of a Legislative enactment approved Oct. 1, 1829. Three years later the villagers of Ypsilanti assembled within the shop of John Bryan, to carry out the provisions of another Legislative enactment, which provided for the organization of their village. This meeting was held Sept. 3, 1832, and resulted in the return of John Gilbert as Village President; E. M. Skinner, Village Recorder; Ario Pardee, Village Treasurer; and Abel Millington, Mark Norris, Thomas R. Brown, James Vanderbilt, Walter B. Hewitt, Village Trustees."*

The Trustees' job was to decide what improvements were needed in the village, such as new roads and operating statutes, and then to make sure these were implemented by committees they appointed. After serving as a village Trustee, Hewitt played an expanding and important role in establishing Ypsilanti. He was made town treasurer in 1839 and elected president of Ypsilanti in 1840. In 1842 he was elected to the State Legislature.

Hewitt's service to the community went far beyond politics, however. In the early 19th century, Ypsilanti, like America's Wild West, seemed to attract a criminal element, and Hewitt and other law-abiding citizens sought to make their village safe for women, children, and families. *The History of Washtenaw County* tells us that *"During the year*



Hewitt played an instrumental role in 1856 in the planning and building of the First Presbyterian Church on Washington Street.

*1838 many malcontents paid visits to the settlement, committed many robberies and depredations, and created a panic of no usual character. To remedy such an evil, the citizens assembled at the house of Abiel Hawkins, considered well a proposition to organize a committee of defense, and at a second meeting held at Mr. Hawkins's house, Dec. 15, 1838, decided to form a society known as The Ypsilanti Vigilance Committee."*

Hewitt was an active member of the Vigilance Committee. In *Past and Present of Washtenaw County*, written by Samuel W. Beak in 1906, we learn more about the committee's efforts to restore law and order in Ypsilanti: *"The meetings of this so-*

*ciet*y were of the most secret character and their methods of work were carefully guarded. But they showed results, for before the end of the year 1839, one hundred and twelve men had been convicted, \$10,000 worth of stolen property had been recovered, and a number of bad characters had been driven out of the community."

During this decade the Hewitt family grew rapidly. Edmund was born on November 17, 1832, and was followed by a sister, May. On February 23, 1834, Lois joined the family. Charles was born on October 3, 1836, and Walter Jr., the youngest, on September 29, 1839. Still another child died in infancy.

Walter supported his family by tanning leather and making shoes and boots. His business was first located on Congress Street (Michigan Avenue), but, according to reports, was destroyed by a major fire in downtown Ypsilanti in 1851. Polina (sometimes spelled Pauline or Paulina) not only helped her husband by sewing shoes all day, but also ran a boarding house with as many as 12 boarders. The boarding house may possibly have been the Hewitt residence at 201 Pearl Street, in the area of present-day Washington and Pearl Streets.

As the family accumulated money, Hewitt was able to purchase a farm in the area that now bears the family name -- Hewitt Road. We read in the *History of Washtenaw County* that *"In 1850 he bought a farm near Ypsilanti which has occupied a share of his attention since. He lost about \$4,000 in 1851 by a fire consuming his building and stock which were only partially insured."* That same year, during the great fire that destroyed most of downtown Ypsilanti, his



*business was also burned down. In the city directory for 1873-74, Walter's occupation is listed as "farmer."*

### **A Contributor to Culture and Community**

Not to be discouraged by his misfortunes, Hewitt continued to work the farm and built an even grander business and store at the northeast corner of Congress and Washington Street. The address is now 126, 128 and 130 West Michigan Avenue. This was a three-story building that housed not only his shoe and boot factory and store, but an auditorium named Hewitt Hall, which provided a venue for local talent and added much vitality to the growing community. This was the place where Ypsilanti's Frederic Pease staged concerts and operas, and introduced his operetta "Enoch Arden," and where plays such as Uncle Tom's Cabin brought the audience to tears. It was the place, too, where Ypsilanti men were recruited for the Civil War and where, at the end of the war, the entire community celebrated with speeches, flag waving, and poetry.

Among the performers who entertained Ypsilanti at Hewitt Hall were Tom Thumb and his wife, and the poet Will Carleton. Frederick Douglas spoke there three times, in 1866, 1867, and 1888. People came from far away to attend various events, and were able to stay overnight across the street at the Hawkins House Hotel. In 1893, after the building of the Ypsilanti Opera House, Hewitt Hall was rented by the Ypsilanti Light Guard. In 1914, it became a roller rink, which was much damaged by a fire that year. By 1937, both Hewitt Hall and the entire third floor of the commercial building were razed, possibly due to deterioration.

Perhaps the exposure to musicians and performers at Hewitt Hall were the basis for the love of music and talent pursued throughout his life by Hewitt's son, Walter, Jr. The latter became a published composer, a celebrated organist, and a professor of music at the Normal College.

Walter B. Hewitt's efforts to uplift the community with entertainment and enlightenment at Hewitt Hall were not his only contributions to Ypsilanti culture. Playing an instrumental role, he joined with others in his church congregation in 1856 to build the beautiful First Presbyterian Church on Washington Street. According to Samuel W. Beck, author of *Past and Present of Washtenaw County, Michigan*, the building committee of which Hewitt was a part was responsible not only for helping to plan the building with the architect George S. Green, but for raising the entire cost of \$16,000 and making sure the new building met all specified standards.

By the time the church was built, Walter and his family were living just a few blocks away from both the church and his booming store and factory, at 442 North Huron Street. There, the hard-working, good-spirited Polina (or Paulina) Childs Hewitt, who was



Walter & Polina's son Edmund with his granddaughter Gladys taken in 1912.

the sixth child of Mark Anthony and Hannah Childs, died on February 1, 1873, at the age of 71. Walter lived on as a widower for 13 years, and died in his home in 1886.

Here this narrative comes full circle, back to Walter B. Hewitt's obituary. Perhaps, as you drive down Hewitt Road, you can now better appreciate how much all of us owe to the brave young men, such as Walter Bernard Hewitt, who, with fortitude, courage and faith, helped not only to build Ypsilanti, but to give it shape as a vital community.

*(Janice Anschuetz has lived in the historic east side of Ypsilanti for over 50 years. She is the author of the chapter "How the Historic East Side Came Back to Life" in the new book celebrating Ypsilanti's bicentennial titled "Ypsilanti Histories - A Look Back at the Past 50 Years." She is an Ypsilanti historian and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)*

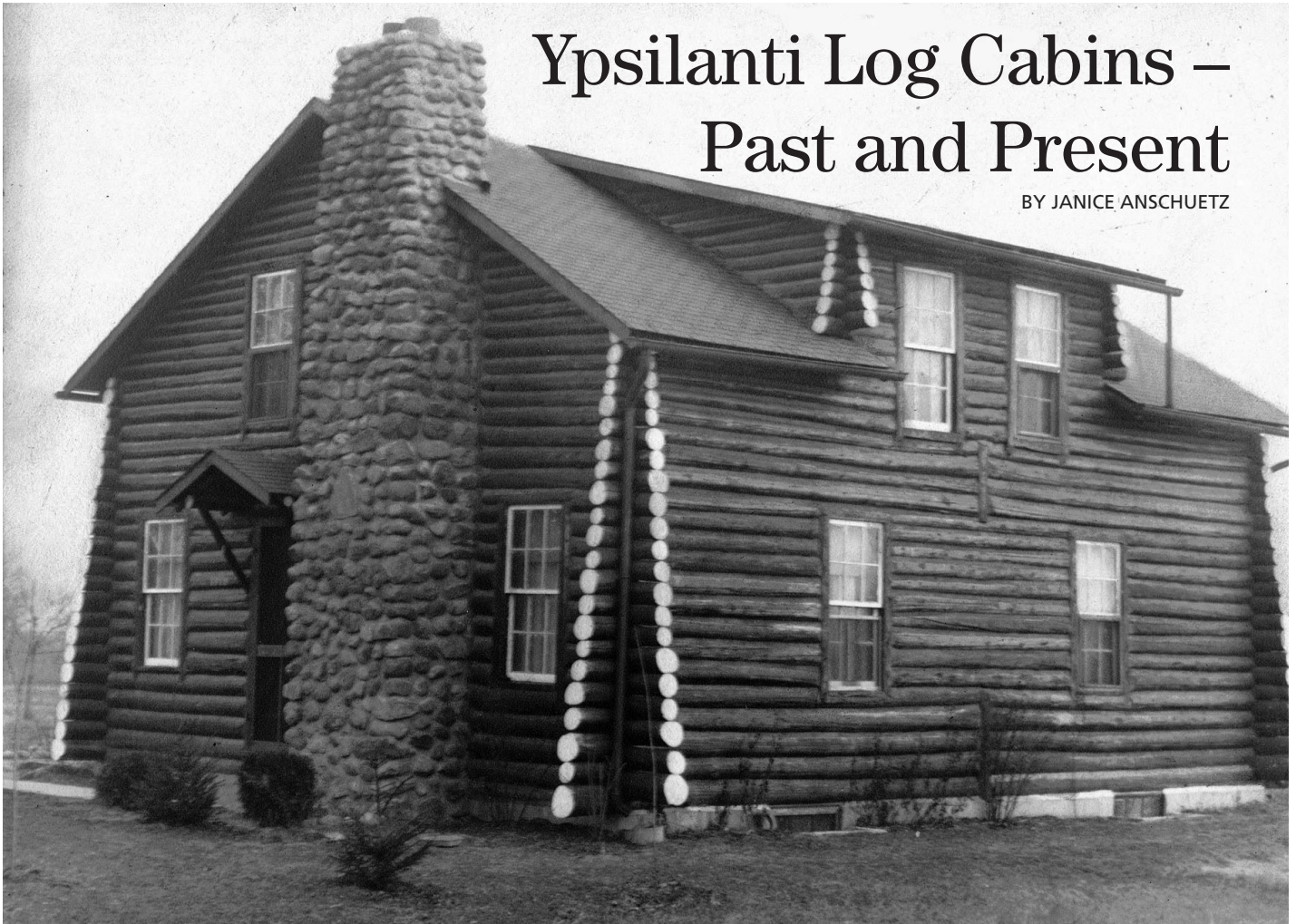


Hewitt home at 422 North Huron Street.



# Ypsilanti Log Cabins – Past and Present

BY JANICE ANSCHUETZ



Benedict Family log cabin at 1318 E. Forest Avenue.

Researching and writing about early Ypsilanti history for the *Gleanings*, I have often read about log cabins. Elona Rogers Clark was one of the first citizens of Ypsilanti and she shared with us her impression of the settlement, then known as Woodruff's Grove, when she arrived in 1824. Elona was then a servant girl who was only 14 years old and lived with a family in a log cabin. It didn't have windows, a chimney, or even a wood floor, all to be added later when the few men in the settlement had time for "home improvement" after tending crops. She described it as like dwelling in a sheep pen, rather than a house. When Roxanna Belinda Norris, after a long and trying journey from New York State with two small children, viewed smoke coming from the chimneys of a few log cabins in Ypsilanti, from a high point which is where Highland Cemetery now is, she put her weary head down on a stump and cried. Log cabins could be viewed as very depressing places



Benedict Family – Aden and Helen with their three children Joyce, Barbara, and Richard.

to live.

Over the years, Elona Cross and other early pioneer residents saw the primitive village grow into a town filled with large and fancy homes. Log cabins were replaced by wood sided houses when saw mills could provide the lumber from trees and blacksmiths make the iron nails. Yet some of the older homes in the city today boast support beams for the foundation made of logs with bark still on them. I know of several on River Street where the original logs continue to support the frame homes, and Ypsilanti still has at least one log cabin which I am writing about in this article.

In 1923, Ypsilanti celebrated its 100th birthday and there were no longer any log cabins in Ypsilanti. By then the homes were made of lumber or brick, had indoor plumbing, furnaces, chimneys, and even electricity. To help the town get into the spirit of the occasion, and to honor those hearty pioneers who founded Ypsilanti, the Kiwanis Club was able to ac-



quire an authentic log cabin south of the city in neighboring Whittaker. Then the group disassembled it and transported each numbered log to Gilbert Park at the southwest corner of Michigan Avenue and Park Street in Ypsilanti. This had once been the town grazing pasture in the early days, and then the town square, and by 1923 was a beautiful park complete with a fountain and gazebo large enough for a band to play or a dance to be held. Log by numbered log, the cabin was built again by the determined men and the completed cabin became the heart of the elaborate 100th birthday celebration. The log cabin was outfitted with furniture and equipment that would have been authentic in the 1820s, some of which was provided by Henry Ford himself. The Ford Band entertained the crowds from the gazebo, and not to be outdone by the Kiwanis Club, members of the American Legion drove a covered wagon pulled by oxen down the main street in town and then around Gilbert Park. However, despite a glorious rebirth, the old cabin soon deteriorated into disrepair and was torn down a few years after the celebration.

Perhaps this log cabin was the inspiration that Ypsilanti resident, Aden Benedict, needed to build his dream home at 1318 East Forest Avenue around the year 1935 – his very own log cabin. However, this one was built and destined to last 100 years. We find information about Aden Benedict in city directories and the United States census, as well as marriage and death records, and with the help of his descendants, including his granddaughter, Cheryl Ori.

My relationship with this cabin began when I first moved to Forest Avenue, about 55 years ago. My neighbor pointed out a log cabin on my street, which was then “sided over” with planks of wood so that it looked like an ordinary frame home. It then became kind of my “secret log cabin.” My grandfather was born in a log cabin in the Appalachian Mountains which was built by



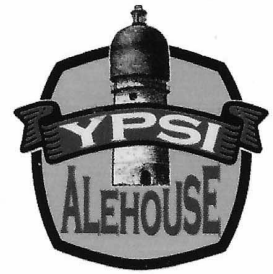
Aden Benedict in his beekeeping outfit.

my ancestors in 1804, and when I was able to find it many years ago it had been “sided over.” Log cabins are very drafty because winter winds and rain can damage the “chinks” between the logs, so rather than “rethinking” the structure every year with leaves, moss and mud, they were often sided over to provide more comfort for their inhabitants.

Throughout the years, I have always smiled as I drove by that charming structure nestled in trees. All I could find out about it was that it had been built by a beekeeper around the time of the Great Depression. That information added to the warm feelings I always had for it, as I admire beekeepers. When it went up for sale in 2012, I lingered over the pictures on Zillow, which even showed a log bath-



Aden Benedict resting comfortably in his log cabin.



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Aden and Helen's daughter Joyce and granddaughter Cheryl taken inside the log cabin in 1954.

room and kitchen. I discovered that it had been purchased by Michelle Shankwiler who promptly began a Facebook page titled “Ypsirustica, The Ypsilanti Log Cabin” where she posted her progress in removing the wood siding and restoring the logs underneath. This to thousands of hours of hard work. Michelle even allowed people to visit it during one Log Cabin Day, which is held in Michigan the last Sunday in the month of

June. I also discovered a wonderful Christmas video that she made of the cozy cabin on YouTube. I think that I could qualify as being a log cabin stalker.

You can imagine my joy when I met Cheryl Ori, who first told me that she had grown up on East Forest Avenue, as had her mother, and that her mother had lived in a log cabin built by her grandfather. “Was he a beekeeper?” I enthused. Oh yes, he was! I was able to find out more about him and his family with Cheryl's help, legal records, the United States Census, Ypsilanti City Directories and newspaper accounts. Cheryl even shared family photographs of the cabin looking young and proud and even had a picture of her grandfather getting ready to care for his bees.

To begin with, Aden Benedict was born on January 25, 1901 in Washington Township, Paulding, Ohio. We know that his family moved to Ypsilanti and in the 1922 Ypsilanti City Directory he is living with his family at 610 North Adams Street. His profession is given as “a laborer”. His father Frank is a “foreman” and his mother Mary is a dressmaker. His sister Geraldine also lives in the home and is a bookkeeper.

On January 21, 1925, Aden married Helen L. Fetters, who is five years younger than him and whose occupation on their marriage certificate is a stenographer. It seems that Aden is employed by the railroad because he lists his job as a “signal rep.” The next mention of Aden and Helen is in the 1930 Federal Census. They lived in a small dwelling at 408 East Forest, Ypsilanti, which is next to, and west of, the party store at Forest Ave. and Prospect St. By then they have two children. Their daughter Joyce, who grew up to become a teacher in Ypsilanti for 37 years, was then four years old, and their son Richard was a toddler of two years old.

By the 1940 census, the family had increased by one, and they had moved less than a mile east to the log cabin at 1318 East Forest in Ypsilanti Township. County and city records list the log home as having been completed in 1935. Although

the census records are difficult to read due to the handwriting, Aden is listed as a Foreman at an industry which we later learn is Central Specialties, Joyce is 14 years old, her brother Richard is 13 and daughter Barbara is 9 years old. Helen's occupation is listed as a photographer or perhaps



Restored Log Cabin at 1318 E. Forest Avenue in winter-time. (top)

Michelle Shankwiler – current owner of the log cabin on Forest Avenue. (bottom)





Log Cabin from Ypsilanti's 1923 Centennial Celebration with the workers who reconstructed it at Gilbert Park.

it is stenographer (the handwriting is difficult to read) working from home. This is the last time that son Richard is named in the census. World War II was soon raging and though a high school student, Richard wanted to do his part. He gathered permission from his parents and high school principal to join the Marines and never came back home to the log cabin. Private Richard Benedict was killed in action at Okinawa on June 10, 1945. According to Aden's granddaughter Cheryl Ori, his parents never recovered from their grief and regret for signing the forms allowing him to enlist. In an Ypsilanti Daily Press article of October 12, 1945, we read that they dedicated a memorial to him that was a "large, outdoor brick fireplace which has been erected in the yard of the Methodist Church House. It will be available for the use of young people of the community and the college and other groups who care to use it."

By the 1950 census, Aden and Helen were still living in the log cabin with one daughter Barbara, age 19. Aden is listed as a tool and die maker at a "small tool factory" and Barbara was either studying a Secretarial curriculum or working as a secretary at the State University – probably MSNC. Sadly, Aden will no longer be part of the next census, which is taken every 10 years. According to his obituary he was found dead at the family cottage at Vineyard Lake. Aside from listing

family members, this short article tells us that he had been employed as a tool maker at Central Specialty for about 20 years, which at that time provided Craftsmen tools for Sears and Roebucks. Central Specialty was located about a mile from his log cabin, also on Forest Avenue where Motor Wheel used to be, just east of the railroad tracks on the river. Aden was a member of the First Methodist Church and a member of the church board. He was a Mason, and belonged to the Masonic Blue Lodge, Phoenix No. 13 and a member of the beekeepers association.

I wonder if descendants of some of the bees that Aden tended to at the log cabin visit the many beautiful flowers that Michelle Shankwiler has planted around it. I certainly have enjoyed seeing the boards taken off of the logs to reveal a well built and wonderful log cabin which will most likely last another 100 years, unlike the one at Gilbert Park enjoyed for only a few short years. The "secret" log cabin is no longer secret.

*(Janice Anschuetz has lived in the historic east side of Ypsilanti for over 50 years. She is the author of the chapter "How the Historic East Side Came Back to Life" in the new book celebrating Ypsilanti's bicentennial titled "Ypsilanti Histories – A Look Back at the Past 50 Years." She is an Ypsilanti historian and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)*

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# Archives Intern Report

BY CONNOR ASHLEY

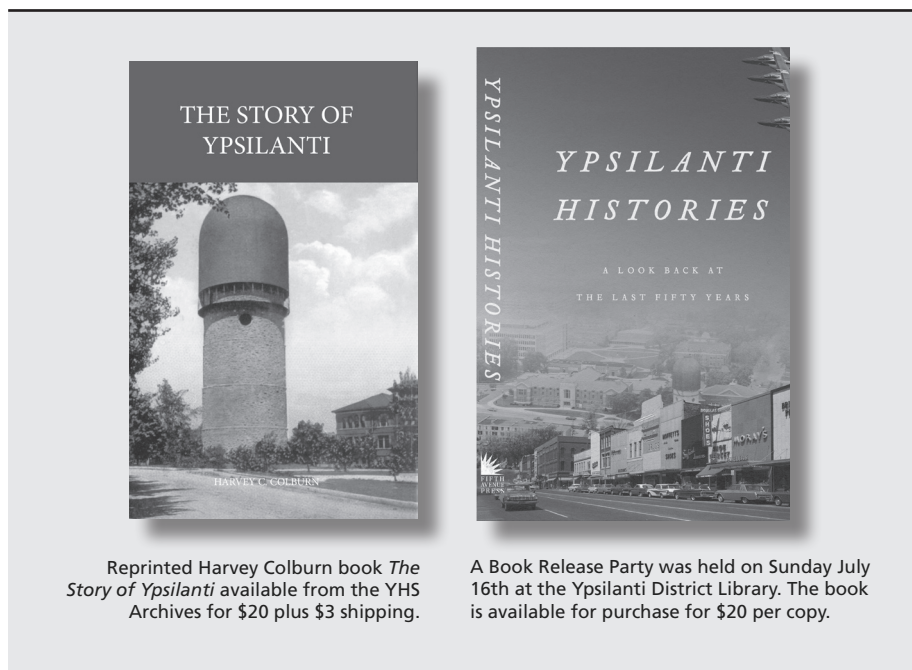
Happy Fall from the Ypsilanti Historical Society's Rudisill-Fletcher-White Archives! We hope you and yours are looking forward to the changing color of the leaves, your preparations for Halloween and Thanksgiving, and, of course, Eastern Michigan Eagles Football. As last season's co-champions of the West Division of the Mid-American Conference (MAC), winners of the Michigan MAC trophy with victories over both Central Michigan and Western Michigan, and as victors in the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl, this upcoming 2023 season is looking exciting for EMU football fans under head coach Chris Creighton!

I want to make a special thank you to James Mann, the longtime Ypsilanti Historical Society volunteer, revered local historian, Highland Cemetery guru, and well-respected member of the Ypsilanti community. As the YHS archival intern, my museum intern colleague Austin Martin and I operate the Museum and Archives during the week. For more than a decade, James Mann has volunteered his time on both Saturdays and Sundays to travel here to the Historic Dow House and open the Museum and Archives to the public. Without the kindness of his time, we would not be

able to be open at all on the weekends. His tireless volunteering and dedication to the history of Ypsilanti are no doubt a reflection of his Roman Catholic faith and the service-oriented mission of the Knights of Columbus. Thank you, James Mann for all the effort and work you have done for YHS for so many years. And thank you as well for your lovely movie nights!

I would also like to take this opportunity to add that we are still selling copies of the new printing of *The Story of Ypsilanti* (which includes an index) and the new Ypsilanti Bicentennial book *Ypsilanti Histories* in the Rudisill-Fletcher-White Archives. They are both being sold for \$20, payable currently by cash or check. We are currently in the process of setting up a system to accept credit card payments in-person, and we will make that announcement when we are set up. We are also able to mail copies of both books to addresses in the United States. The cost is \$20 for each book and \$3 for shipping. Please make out all checks to the Ypsilanti Historical Society and include "book purchase" in the memo line.

Thank you for your continued support for YHS and Go Eagles!



Reprinted Harvey Colburn book *The Story of Ypsilanti* available from the YHS Archives for \$20 plus \$3 shipping.

A Book Release Party was held on Sunday July 16th at the Ypsilanti District Library. The book is available for purchase for \$20 per copy.



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# Benjamin Woodruff – Setting the Record Straight

BY ROBERT ANSCHUETZ

Charles Woodruff – founder of Union Seminary School, Ypsilanti Alderman, and owner of the Ypsilanti Sentinel newspaper.

In the previous issue of the Gleanings (Summer 2023), I wrote an article about Benjamin Woodruff and the founding of Woodruff's Grove. Since the publication, it was brought to my attention that I made a serious error about Benjamin Woodruff's genealogy. The story about the history of the village of Woodruff's Grove is accurate (to the best of my knowledge), but the relationship between Benjamin Woodruff (the founder of Woodruff's Grove), Benjamin Woodruff Sr. (the Revolutionary War drummer boy), and Charles Woodruff (the city alderman, founder of the Union Seminary School, and owner of the Ypsilanti Sentinel newspaper) are not correct.

In this article, I will set the record straight about the various Benjamin Woodruff families who settled in Washtenaw County. So how did these mistakes come about? First, it happens to be that there were multiple different Benjamin Woodruff's who settled in Washtenaw County at about the same time, causing much confusion. Second, assumptions about the connections of these family members in sites such as Ancestry.com and FindaGrave.com have led to inaccurate family trees. And third, even books such as Harvey Colburn's *The Story of Ypsilanti* have some mistakes that have led to a very difficult puzzle to sort out.

Foster Fletcher, Ypsilanti's former historian, tried to sort out the various Benjamin Woodruffs as early as the 1960's by writing a letter to the definitive source of Woodruff genealogy at the time, C.N. Woodruff. Here is an excerpt from a letter from C.N. Woodruff responding back to Foster Fletcher's inquires:

"There were two distinct BENJAMIN WOODRUFFS (their blood relationship so far undiscovered) who came to Washtenaw County, Michigan, one in 1823, the other in 1835/36...

"Major" Benjamin Woodruff, was credited with the founding of Woodruff's Grove (1823). It is my opinion that he and his wife were buried in the "Old Woodruff Grove Burial Ground."

It is also my opinion that...(an) abstract of the Revolutionary service pertaining to "the other Benjamin Woodruff" who was brought to Pittsfield Twp., aged upward of 90 years, brought there by several of his sons and their families, where they settled on a farm at Carpenter's Corners, ca. 1835/36. This aged soldier, brought from Seneca Falls, N.Y., had long been a widower..."

The "other Benjamin Woodruff" in Pittsfield Township also had a son named Benjamin Woodruff, who himself had a son named Benjamin Franklin Woodruff. So that makes a total of four Benjamin Woodruffs who settled in Washtenaw County around the same time. It was the son of "the other Benjamin Woodruff" who married Freelove Sanford, and had several children, including the prominent Ypsilantian named Charles Woodruff whom I wrote about in the article. Ancestry.com and FindaGrave.com records have intertwined these different Benjamin Woodruffs, making it difficult to get the correct information about the founder of Woodruff's Grove and his family.

In Harvey Colburn's book, *The Story of Ypsilanti*, he writes:

In the spring of 1823, one Benjamin Woodruff, living near Sandusky, Ohio, and his brother-in-law, William Eiclör, resolved to better their fortunes by moving into the wilds of Michigan. Woodruff was a school teacher, was born at Morristown, N.J., and had served for eighteen months as a drummer in the Revolutionary War.

Here, Colburn seems to also mix up two Benjamin Wood-

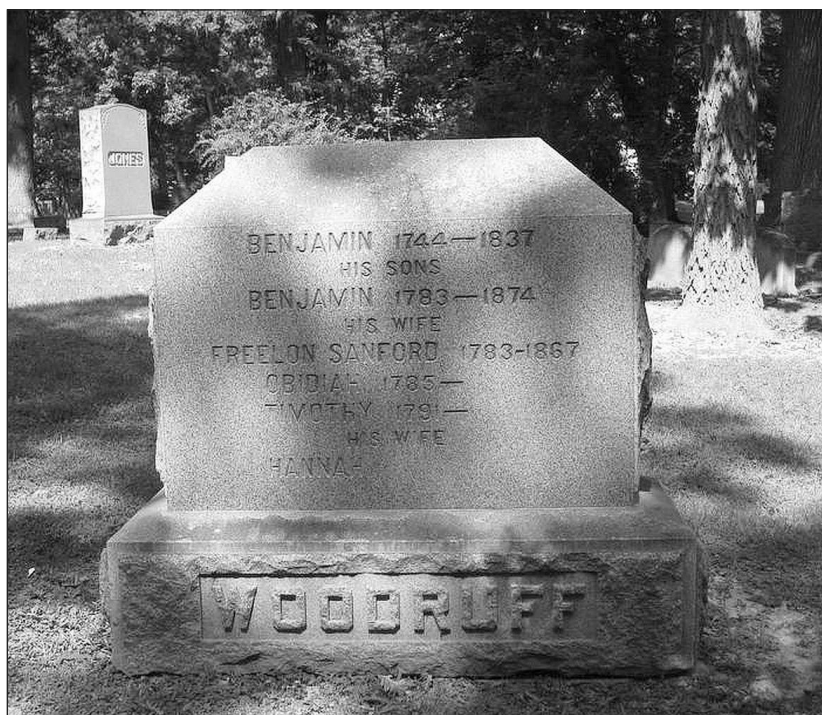


ruffs. The founder of Woodruff's Grove indeed came to the area with his brother-in-law. However, it was the "other" Benjamin Woodruff who was born in New Jersey in 1744, was a drummer in the Revolutionary War, and was later buried at Forest Hill Cemetery in Ann Arbor. If this Revolutionary War soldier also happened to be the founder of Woodruff's Grove, he would have been 79 years old in 1823 when he supposedly came up a flat boat on the Huron River and brought his young wife and six children to start a new village.

In the article, I also wrote about Charles Woodruff, who was the founder of the Ypsilanti Union Seminary, an alderman in Ypsilanti, and also ran the Ypsilanti Sentine Inewspaper. In the article, I mistakenly attributed this Charles Woodruff as being the founder of Woodruff's Grove's son. I also included a photograph of a Charles Woodruff, but it was not the correct Charles Woodruff. The esteemed Charles Woodruff of Ypsilanti was in fact the son of Benjamin (the Revolutionary War soldier's son) and Freelove Woodruff, who lived at Carpenter's Corners in Pittsfield Township.

So, what were the names of the wife and children of Benjamin Woodruff, the founder of Woodruff's Grove? Apparently, they are not well documented. Many sites, including my article, list Freelove Sanford as the founder's wife, but as we have shown here, and is inscribed on the tombstone at Forest Hill Cemetery, Freelove was actually married to the Benjamin Woodruff (son of the Revolutionary War veteran) of Carpenter's Corners in Pittsfield Township. It is commonly stated that Benjamin Woodruff came to Woodruff's Grove with his brother-in-law, William Eiclor. Elona Cross, in her writings about early Pioneer life in the Grove, states that William Eiclor was Mrs. Woodruff's brother, so it might be a good assumption that Benjamin Woodruff's wife had the maiden name of Eiclor. Elona Cross also mentions in her writings a Mrs. Delia Woodruff, who may have been married to one of the Woodruff's sons.

So, what facts should we take of the Benjamin Woodruff article from the Summer 2023 Gleanings? All of the information about the founding



The Forest Hill Tombstone of the "Other" Benjamin Woodruff (Revolutionary War Soldier), and his son Benjamin – father of Charles.

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of Woodruff's Grove, its location, the early pioneers, the rise of the Grove, the fall of the Grove, and the co-existence with the town of Ypsilanti – all of that is accurate. Also accurate is the biography of Benjamin Woodruff, the Revolutionary War Soldier, and biographical information from the obituary of Charles Woodruff.

What is glaringly wrong, however, is the mix-up with Benjamin Woodruff (the Revolutionary War soldier), Benjamin Woodruff (his son, who married Freelove Sanford and raised sons Benjamin Franklin and Charles, who became prominent in Ypsilanti), and Benjamin Woodruff (the founder of Ypsilanti). Also, the photographs of Benjamin and Freelove Woodruff are not the pioneer family of Woodruff's Grove – they are the settlers of Carpenter's Corners in Pittsfield Township. The photograph of Charles Woodruff in the article is not the correct Charles Woodruff.

The section of the article about Benjamin Woodruff's life after the Grove is also incorrect. After further research, the best available information states that the founder of Woodruff's Grove and his wife moved into the town of Ypsilanti, died around 1840, and were buried in unmarked graves, probably in the old Woodruff's Grove cemetery located somewhere near the historical marker of Woodruff's Grove. Charles C. Chapman's book, History of Washtenaw County, states that following the

collapse of Woodruff's Grove: "Woodruff moved to Ypsilanti, where he and his wife died. He was social and accommodating, and made a good landlord. His grave is not marked." There are so many questions as to how and why the founder of Woodruff's Grove disappeared quietly from the community. And also what became of the Woodruff's six children?

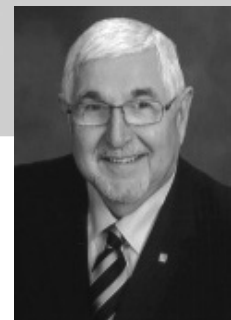
It isn't even clear when and where Woodruff was born or died, because the information commonly attributed to his birth and death is from the "other Benjamin Woodruff" of Pittsfield Township. I found a Woodruff genealogical record from 1968 by C.N. Woodruff in the YHS Archives that speculates that Benjamin Woodruff, the founder of Ypsilanti, may have been born to Benjamin and Mary (Cross) Woodruff of Morristown, New Jersey, and baptized on August 26, 1762. A note attached to this record states: "it is this BENJAMIN we believe to have gone to N.W. Ohio and then in 1823, to 'Woodruff's Grove,' Washtenaw Co., Michigan. Because of the lack of any record discovered (church or military) in N.J. publications, it is quite possible that BENJAMIN WOODRUFF left Morris County (N.J.) and perhaps, the State of New Jersey, during the revolutionary period. It appears from Michigan accounts of him, that he had married children by 1823, and that both he and his wife were deceased by 1840." This conclusion may or may not be accurate, but I have included it here as

a plausible record of the founder of Woodruff's Grove.

In closing, I sincerely apologize for the mistakes I made in the previous article. I was attempting to correct the record of Benjamin Woodruff, and instead perpetuated the same misinformation that has previously been recorded. This goes to show that we still know little about the man who founded Woodruff's Grove. The date of his birth, where he was born, when he died, and even the names of his wife and six children are all mixed up with the other Benjamin Woodruffs who settled the area at nearly the same time and whose history is better known. All we do know is that the city of Ypsilanti owes its existence and history to the man named "Major" Benjamin Woodruff who braved the wild frontier in 1823 and founded our town.

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

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Rick Katon and Peg DuFresne	Carolyn Navarre	William and Gina Vollano
Valerie Eaglin	Bill Nickels	Linda Wall
Cheryl Farmer	Dennis Norton	Eric and Lisa Walters
Leonard and Judith Frank	David Northrop	Nancy Wheeler
Jeff Fulton	Derwood Novak	Daneen Zureich
Laura Gellott	Doc, Denise and Marianne Ogden	
Todd Gerring	Charlotte Osborn	



## Town and Gown Relations Through the Years

BY PEG PORTER

*Author's note: At age 5, I began kindergarten in Welch Hall at what was MSNC. The campus was our playground. Particularly popular was the old fountain, a gift from an early graduating class. The fountain was no longer in working order but still an attraction. The line between campus and town was fluid depending on where you were. Today's campus is nearly closed off as is Forest Avenue and lovely green spaces paved and built over. Change sometimes brings a sense of loss. With this in mind, I'm sharing my thoughts as a third generation Ypsilantian, an alumna and one-time staff member.*

In 1849 the first teacher's college "west of the Alleghenies" was established in Ypsilanti; the young community competed with other towns to be the site of the school. Ypsilanti pledged \$1,200 and property to serve as the site for the location of the campus. The town was accessible by rail, this plus land and seed money strengthened the application.

The establishment of educational institutions to train teachers was relatively new. My maternal grandfather's experience was typical in the earlier years. R.C. Young was born in 1870 in Oceana County. The youngest of four sons, he began teaching shortly after he completed his education at the local school. He then was hired by another small community to educate their children.

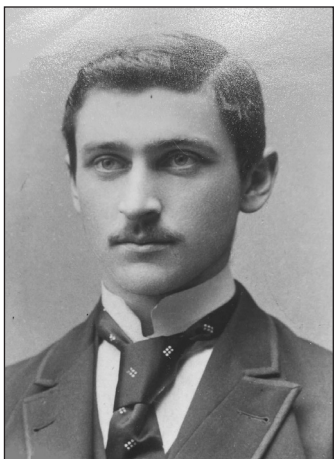
Typically the teacher lived with a local family who also pro-

vided meals. This arrangement was usually for a year at a time. My grandfather spent most summers continuing his education and working a variety of jobs to support his young family. He eventually received his degree from the University of Chicago.

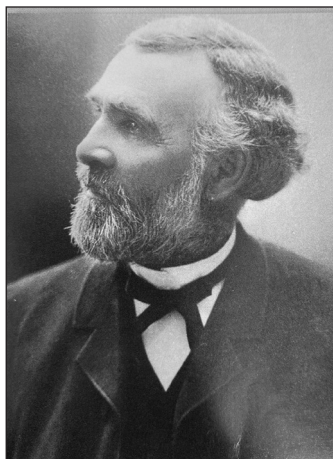
With population growth and the expansion of public schools, the need for trained teachers rapidly increased. As a result, the primary purpose of the Michigan State Normal College was to train teachers for Michigan public schools. From the beginning there was an experimental aspect to the Normal as various tools used in training educators were developed and tested.

There were a number of significant impacts on the young community including population growth, new businesses and the construction of both private and public structures.

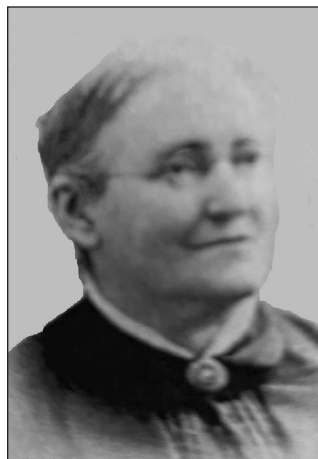




R. C. Young, the maternal grandfather of the author, was a teacher at the age of 18.



Daniel Putham was an administrator at the Normal College, an alderman for the City of Ypsilanti and Mayor of Ypsilanti from 1889 to 1891.



Sarah Smith Putham, wife of Daniel Putham, was the founder of the Ladies Literary Club in 1878.



Edith Shaefer, daughter of Normal College President Lewis Jones (1903 – 1911), with son Fred.

### My paternal grandparents

ran a tea room in their home that was popular with faculty. Other townspeople provided rooms for students during the years before dormitories were built. In short, Ypsilanti became a college town. Until recently the town's slogan was "Where commerce and education meet."

The linkage between the town and the college/university was strongest in the time up to the Centennial of MSNC in 1949. Under President Charles McKenny, a student center was built which would bear his name. McKenny Hall opened in 1932 welcoming townspeople to its dining room which became a popular destination after Sunday services. The building was also the site of other events. My parents were married in the Formal Lounge in October, 1937.

The Centennial was a citywide celebration with a parade and visit by Governor G. Mennen Williams and his wife the former Nancy Quirk, daughter of Daniel Quirk Jr. During earlier years, faculty were active in City affairs and town citizens provided support, both official and personal. For example, Daniel and Sarah Smith Putnam came to Ypsilanti shortly after the establishment of the Normal. He held a number of administrative posts at the College as well as serving as an alderman for the City and as mayor (1889-1891). His wife Sarah was the founder of the Ladies' Literary Club (1878). Later, daughter Mary was a member of the College faculty. More formal involvement was provided through representation on the Board of Regents. It was not unusual to have more than

one local citizen on the Board.

The role played by the laboratory school, Roosevelt, should not be underestimated in forging close relationships between the town and MSNC. Many local children went to school "on campus" where their classmates were sons and daughters of faculty and staff. The school's teachers held faculty status with the College/University. In my family, my father, uncle, brother and I graduated from Roosevelt High school. The closure of the school in 1968 ended that important link.

One of the most interesting examples of town/gown connection occurred when President Lewis Jones' (1903-1911) daughter, Edith, married Harry Shaefer, a local merchant. One of the couples' grandsons, Tom Dusbiber, believes they met when both attended Ypsilanti High School. My father, Don, and their son Fred were close friends, beginning when they were young and continuing throughout their lives.

Edith was a member of the Ladies' Literary Club as was daughter Sally.

It may be naïve to wish for more meaningful relationships between EMU and Ypsilanti. The small college became a large university and the town also grew and became more diverse. However, there is something to be said for being a good neighbor with a greater appreciation for the community.

*(Peg Porter is Assistant Editor of the Gleanings and a regular contributor of articles.)*



Harry Schaefer, a local merchant, with wife Edith who was the daughter of Normal College President Lewis Jones.

# Challis Jewelry Store Robbery - 1926

BY JAMES MANN

**B**efore police had patrol cars to cover their area, officers had to walk the beat on foot. As they did during the late-night hours, they would watch for suspicious persons, and check the doors on business buildings to be sure each was locked. On the morning of March 20, 1926, Officers Morey and Ballard made their way down the alley behind the buildings facing Michigan Avenue on the north side, at 3:00 am. All seemed well. When they made the rounds again at 5:15 am, they found the door to the Charles Challis Jewelry Store had been pushed in. "Knocking the combination off the small safe, the robbers made way with diamonds, watches and a small amount of silverware stored there. They did not molest a larger safe in which silverware and larger articles of value were stored. "The safe which was rifled is of fireproof construction, but one blow knocked off the combination," reported The Daily Ypsilanti Press of Saturday, March 20, 1926.

The adjoining Charles Smith restaurant had been entered as well. There, an ax and screwdriver were found. Police were of the opinion that these were used in the Challis robbery. "The Smith store," noted the account, "was also entered from the rear, and the lock knocked off the safe, but it is of old heavy construction, and inner compartments were not touched. Nothing else was disturbed in Smith's place, and the only damage was to the outer lock on the safe."

The robbery of the Challis Jewelry Store had been carefully planned and carried out. Police could find no clues to follow. In the Charles Smith restaurant next door, someone had dropped a certificate of title to an automobile. The police followed this clue through the Detroit underworld. Ownership of the car had changed hands several times but it was not the car driven to Ypsilanti for use in the robbery. Officers from Ypsilanti, assisted by Detroit police and Pinkerton agents, followed the trail through numerous blind pigs until 3:00 am of Sunday, March 21, 1926, when the correct house and car were located.

Then W. G. Smithills returned home with his wife and a roomer named Henry C. Neverman and were taken into custody. The house was searched, and two caches of jewels were found. One behind a mopboard in the kitchen, which

had finger marks on it, and another under a loose board under a bed. "Here officers found piled a wealth of jewels, valued roughly by Mr. Challis at \$20,000. He was able to identify about two thirds of the jewels taken from his store when he went over the loot with officers Sunday. The gems had been heaped in compactly, but indiscriminately—diamonds, emeralds, rubies, mostly unmounted gems," reported The Daily Ypsilanti Press of Monday, March 22, 1926.

"After discovering the two caches, officers practically wrecked the house in efforts to locate further loot," continued the account. "The fact that not all of Mr. Challis's gems have been recovered leads officers to believe some have either been disposed of or that there is another cache yet to be discovered." "In addition to the gems," concluded the account, "the Smithills' place was found to contain a quantity of other stolen articles including blankets, linens, and some furs."

Mr. Smithills, who was 26 years of age, was arraigned on a charge of robbery before the municipal court in Ypsilanti on the afternoon of Monday, March 22, 1926. His wife was arraigned at the same time on a charge of receiving stolen property. "Both demanded examination and were held under bond, \$5,000 being demanded as security for Smithills' appearance April 1 and \$1,000 for the appearance of his wife Wednesday afternoon," reported The Daily Ypsilanti Press of Tuesday, March 23, 1926.

"In the opinion of court attendants," noted the account, "who admitted however lack of qualifications as connoisseurs, Mrs. Smithills should have been able easily to have secured her bond, if not that of her husband also, by merely removing a portion of her clothing and jewels." Fur coat, silk dress, jewel laden fingers, diamond studded pin, a watch and bracelet inlaid with four separate rows of precious stones were among the articles suggested as a source of possible revenue, not to mention a 'million-dollar complexion' which did not fail to make an impression on at least one court attaché," continued the account.

The reason for the failure of the court to accept assets as security was explained by Justice Curtiss when he said, "But



636 S. Mansfield Ave.  
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Tel: (734) 483-5811  
Fax: (734) 483-9701



I asked cash bond.” The couple were taken to the county jail in Ann Arbor after the arraignment. The next day, Tuesday, March 23, 1926, police arrested a man named James B. Murphy, who acted as the lookout during the robbery. Murphy told police Darrell Warfield of Ypsilanti planned the robberies. According to Murphy, it was Warfield who had him and the Smithills come to Ypsilanti, furnished him with an ax and screwdriver with which to gain entrance to the Challis store and Smith restaurant. It was Warfield, said Murphy, who told them the hours the police walked their beat, the number of men on duty and where they were located.

“He also advocated entering the Fletcher & Fletcher store, advising Smithills that the safe was in the rear, and, that if entrance could be gained while officers were on other sections of their beat they could work in comparative safety although the police booth was directly across the street. He told them they would find between \$6,000 and \$8,000 in the Smith safe, and in Murphy’s statement he said Smithills worked nearly an hour endeavoring to open it before he gave it up for the Challis store,” reported The Daily Ypsilanti Press of Wednesday, March 24, 1926.

Warfield, who lived in Ypsilanti at 316 Harriet Street, was long known to local police as a “bad character,” and was, it was said, known in the Detroit underworld as “Big Chief.” He was also the proprietor of a local pool hall at 10 West Michigan Ave.

“Warfield’s police record here,” noted the account, “does not include conviction on any offense, but numerous charges have been made against him, none of which were ever proven. He was taken into custody in connection with a stabbing affray in which inmates of the state prison camp featured August 29, but released by state police after an investigation had been conducted. Local officers have received many complaints that people have been robbed in his pool room, but in no case was there sufficient evidence to obtain a warrant against Warfield.”

Warfield, said Murphy, planned the robbery, but while he and Smithills ran the risk of arrest, he, Warfield refused to take part, and stayed safely at home.

Murphy was wanted by police in Flint, who had 19 warrants out for his arrest, including charges of passing bad checks and embezzling at least \$19,000. For this reason, Murphy would not stand trial for the Challis robbery, but was instead turned over to the officials at Flint.

Some of the jewelry stolen from the Challis store was recovered with the arrest of Murphy, as two women, Ester Holz and Blanche Murphy were taken into custody as well. The two women were charged with receiving stolen property. “They have refused to give up the rings and watches given them by the men after the robbery,” noted the account.

Darrell Warfield was arraigned before Justice D. Z. Curtiss on the charge of being a principal in the robbery, rather than

as an accessory before the fact. A statement from Smithills, still held in the county jail, named Warfield as the man who had planned the crime. Further, Smithills said in his statement, Warfield had also planned the robbery of a bank in Ypsilanti, which was to have been perpetrated the next morning, just as the bank opened.

“After obtaining the jewelry, Smithills’ statement says, he and James Murphy, his companion, decided not to remain in Ypsilanti, and the pair returned to Detroit without giving Warfield his share of the loot. A Toledo ‘fence’ was to have disposed of the gems for them,” reported The Daily Ypsilanti Press of Thursday, March 25, 1926. Warfield was placed under a bond of \$10,000 and was held in the county jail in default of bond.

As part of their statements, both Murphy and Smithills named two other men, Charles Hurley and Edgar Nance, as taking part in the robbery. The movements of the two were traced to Superior, Wisconsin, where they were arrested and held for transfer back to Michigan. On the afternoon of April 29, 1926, the men were examined by Justice Curtiss, and bound over to the Washtenaw County Circuit Court for trial during the May term. Bail was set at \$5,000 for each. None were able to secure the necessary amount.

Smithills was also scheduled for examination that day, but by this time he had secured \$2,500 from a bonding house in Detroit. He failed to appear for the examination, so his bond was declared forfeit. There is no further record of the case so what became of these men is not known but it was most likely not a pleasant time for any of them.

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

## Do you want to learn more about Ypsilanti History and share it with others ?

The Ypsilanti Historical Society is  
looking for Docents to assist with tours of the museum  
and volunteers to help in the Archives

If you're interested or want more information  
contact Austin Martin at the museum office  
or Connor Ashley in the Archives

734.482.4990 museum office

yhs.museum@gmail.com

•

(734) 217-8236 archives office

yhs.archives@gmail.com

# The McCourt Label Cabinet

BY ANDREW DEWINDT

*(This article is the work product of Eastern Michigan University Historic Preservation graduate students who took Professor Nancy Bryk's curatorship course at the Ypsilanti Historical Society during the Winter 2023 semester. Each student utilized the Ypsilanti Historical Museum to locate an object and provide a curated presentation and final project on its historical significance and an interpretation of its importance. They also utilized the Rudisill-Fletcher-White Archives to identify key information on their item's history and its relationship to Ypsilanti.)*



The McCourt pharmacy label cabinet was used to store and dispense labels for drug store pharmacies.

This McCourt pharmacy label cabinet was used to store and dispense labels used in the preparation of prescriptions in drug store pharmacies. Rolls of self-adhesive labels, also manufactured by McCourt, were placed into compartments in each of the cabinet's drawers and fed through a metal guide to be dispensed out the front of the cabinet similar to the "please take a number" ticket dispensers used in waiting rooms. This was part of the rationalization of the pharmaceutical industry around the turn of the 20th century, and trade catalogs from this time include many advertisements for and articles discussing the design and use of cabinets and filing solutions for the increasing amount of paperwork that druggists and pharmacists were having to work with, including labels. An example of this is an article in the December 1906 issue of *The Bulletin of Pharmacy* which details an entire system for creating and cataloging inventories of stock, prescriptions, labels, and other papers. An October, 1909 letter to the editor of the same publication details one drug store clerk's construction of a custom cabinet for keeping them organized.

McCourt mass-produced their cabinets and the labels with which to stock them, and this can be seen in the construction; all of the components are of regular size and shape. All of the drawers are joined together in the same way and bear saw marks indicating they were cut with a circular saw. The metal parts are identical, likely stamped and formed from sheet metal. Wire nails, common after the mid-1880s, are present throughout the cabinet.

The cabinet is constructed almost entirely of wood, the exterior of which, including the back, has been stained to a dark finish. The sides and back are veneered over poplar,



The top four drawers of the McCourt cabinet are divided into 14 compartments for 1 1/4" labels.

while the drawer faces are finished oak. The interior of the cabinet and drawers are made of unfinished poplar. The cabinet contains five drawers, each of which slides into a simple, flat shelf with no runners. The underside of this shelf is supported by a small triangular piece of wood bracing near each corner along the rear wall.

Each drawer is of identical construction, with tongues on the rear walls slotting into grooves in the sides, which fit into rabbets in the face of the drawer. The bottom of the drawer slots into dadoes in the sides and face. Corresponding dadoes in the back side of the face and the rear wall of the drawer allow for 1/8" wide wooden dividers cut to the same profile as the side wall. The top four drawers are divided into 14 compartments for 1 1/4" labels, and the bottom drawer has ten of these compartments beginning from the left, followed by two compartments for 1/4" labels, a narrow gap, a compartment for 1 3/4" labels, and a compartment for 2 1/4" labels.

A recessed groove is located in the lower portion of the face of each drawer, which contains paper labels that correspond to the rolls in the compartment of the drawer directly below. Some of these labels are attached haphaz-



ardly with adhesive, likely by a pharmacist re-organizing the cabinet, and some are arranged in strips of card stock attached with small nails which were likely made by the manufacturer. Many of these external labels are discolored and stained. A metal rod runs along the back of each drawer, and is fitted into holes in the drawer sides. Stamped sheet metal label guides sit on top of each compartment, and pivot on the rod to allow access to the label compartment for changing the rolls. Tabs on the underside of the label guide allows the roll to be fed over the top of the drawer face, which has shallow recesses aligned with the label guide to allow for them to protrude  $\frac{3}{4}$ " from the front of the cabinet. A gap in the underside of the label guide that protrudes from the front allows for a single label to be gripped with a finger, pressed against the top of the guide, and pulled out and ripped from the roll by the pharmacist.

There are compartments for 70 different labels, and nearly all compartments contain a roll of self-adhesive labels. All of the labels contain addresses in the same block of buildings on Main Street in Bellevue, Ohio, however the names of three different drugstores are present. These do align with labels on the exterior of the cabinet, which suggests both that they were originally kept in the cabinet, and that the drug store it came from went through changes in ownership. The presence of phone numbers in different formats further suggests that this cabinet was in use over an extended period of time. The oldest labels do not have phone numbers and are from the store of "Frank P. Hale, Druggist," followed by some which have local exchange phone numbers for "R&R Drug Company: The Nyal Store," and finally "R&R Drug Company: The Rex-all Store," some of which have 7-digit phone numbers. A full list of labels can be found in Appendix A.

Many indentations are worn into the top of the cabinet. These are in the shape of bottles, which suggests that pharmaceutical products were often

stacked on top of the object, likely for extended periods of time.

The only manufacturer's marking is the number 1562, which is burned into the inside of the back wall of the cabinet twice behind the bottom drawer. However, there are the remains of a tag nailed to the face of the bottom drawer. This is similar to a tag applied to similar cabinets manufactured by McCourt, and the cabinet is overall similar in size, shape, form, and function to cabinets manufactured by the company. The construction of the drawers, including the stamped sheet metal holders through which the labels are dispensed, is identical to McCourt cabinets listed on online auction websites, as well as a 1906 patent filed by the company's founder, Newton McCourt. The molding profile along the top and bottom edge is also an exact match to other cabinets manufactured by the same company.

McCourt began manufacturing pharmacy labels and label cabinets during the first decades of the 20th century, a time when medicine, pharmacy, and pharmacists were rapidly changing. State Governments, and eventually the Federal Government, were increasingly regulating the labeling of food and drugs. Most notable was the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act, which required all products sold in the United States meant for human consumption to feature a label clearly listing their contents. This legislation would eventually develop into the establishment of the Food and Drug Administration, or FDA.

The scientific study of medicine, and particularly pharmaceutical products, had emerged with renewed focus in the 19th century. These decades had seen the application of chemistry and the scientific method to traditional, natural medicinal products, as well as the development of new technologies to deliver them, including gelatin capsules, tablets, and the hypodermic syringe. Two trends were emerging; a new, scientific medicine of doctors and surgeons, and patent or quack

Northwestern Druggist
January, 1915



As quick as thought itself you have the RIGHT LABEL.

**This is the Most Highly Perfected Method of Labeling in the World.**

Labeling—convenience, labeling—accuracy and labeling—economy become permanent factors in your store with the use of the

**McCourt Label System**

- instantaneous labeling
- no mistakes
- 50% to 75% saved in labeling-time
- 25% to 40% saved in labeling-cost

10,000 American druggists are enthusiasts of the McCourt Label System. They particularly appreciate the McCourt re-ordering feature which permits the purchase of small quantities of McCourt Roll Labels at low prices.

McCourt Roll Labels are engraved on imported Scotch paper and will not curl, stick together nor become brittle. Not one single label in a McCourt Roll is wasted.

**Why You Should Write Us**

We are experts in the manufacture of labels and label cabinets. Our label experience is extensive—therefore our advice valuable. Write us.

Let us tell you how to stop your label losses and troubles. Let us send you some interesting label literature that you will be glad to have and to read.

A special pill and powder box service is rendered exclusively to users of the McCourt Label System. Ask us about it.

**McCourt Label Cabinet Company**  
48 Bennett St.    Bradford, Pa.

**An Attractive Business Proposition for Salesmen**

□ □

The McCourt Company has a number of openings for able, responsible representatives on a commission basis.

To the right men we will give ample demonstration of how easily the McCourt Label System sells and make arrangements that are extremely liberal.

In some instances exclusive territorial rights may be obtained.

Write us fully, detailing your experience and enclosing references. Aggressive men with character, push and training will have our preference and receive the utmost co-operation from us.

A 1915 advertisement for the McCourt Label Cabinet that was in the Northwestern Druggist.

medicines sold as cure-alls by hucksters which ranged in quality from dubiously beneficial for minor ailments to dangerously addictive and hazardous to health. The field of pharmacy was at the intersection of these trends; offering a wide variety of drugs to the public, but also identifying with the rationalization of medicine.

Druggists and pharmacists in the early 20th century were both medical practitioners and salespersons. Articles

and advertisements in trade catalogs of the period shared and advocated both advice in regard to new regulations and innovations in pharmacopeia, as well as advertising and constructing window displays. Advertisements by makers of pharmaceutical and medicinal products not only extolled the health benefits of their products, but also suggested methods to effectively sell them.

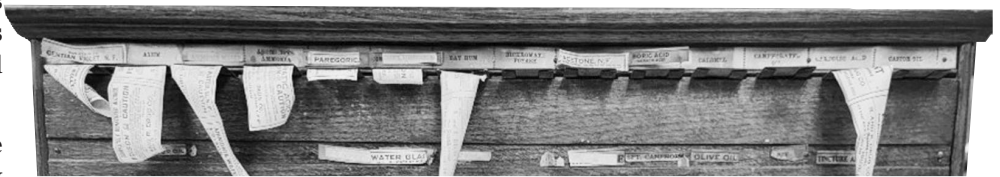
At the same time, pharmacists were increasingly educated and many saw themselves as experts in a field which required a combination of both particular knowledge and practical experience. An article entitled "Pharmacy, a Profession or a Trade, Which?" published in the January 1917 issue of *The Practical Druggist*, one of several trade publications in circulation at the time, argued that a respectable pharmacist required three-to-five years of work experience in a drug store as well as a two-year or four-year degree from a college of pharmacy. The excerpt below highlights the author's opinion on the state of education in the field, hints at where it was at the time, and advocates for where it will increase.

*You may venture to argue that not all of our present-day practicing pharmacists found it necessary to attend a pharmacy school for two years to "break into" pharmacy. Quite true! But these men and women do not represent what is best in pharmacy, nor do they possess the spirit of and the intentions of the ordinary pharmacist. Not many years ago it was not necessary to graduate from a law school to become a practicing lawyer. What was necessary, however, was service as an apprentice and a fund of knowledge, sufficient to enable a man to pass the state examination. Who ever thought of calling law a trade?*

This rationalization was reflected in the advertisements published in these journals by McCourt. The company advertised their cabinets and labels as being both convenient and economical as well as practical and modern. An advertisement in the December 1917 edi-

tion of *Bulletin of Pharmacy* reads, in part, "*The purchase of a McCourt Label Cabinet that pays big dividends in convenience and time saving. It puts modern methods back on your prescription counter.*"

This list below contains the name of the medicine on each label in the top drawer, followed by the name of the drug store that appears on it. The list is formatted from the left side of the drawer to the right.



- | Top Drawer |   |
|------------|---|
| 1.         | Solution of Gentian Violet<br>N.F. - R. and R. Drug Co.                       |
| 2.         | Completely Denatured Alcohol<br>R. and R. Drug Co.                            |
| 3.         | Ammonia Water, U.S.P<br>R. and R. Drug Co.                                    |
| 4.         | Muriatic Acid<br>R. and R. Drug Co.   |
| 5.         | Camphorated Opium Tincture, U.S.P (Paregoric)<br>R. and R. Drug Co.           |
| 6.         | Carbon Tetrachloride,<br>N.F. - R. and R. Drug Co.                            |
| 7.         | Sulfuric Acid<br>R. and R. Drug Co.: The Rexall Store                         |
| 8.         | Wood Alcohol<br>R. and R. Drug Co.  |
| 9.         | Acetone, N.F.<br>R. and R. Drug Co.   |
| 10.        | Glycerin Lotion<br>R. and R. Drug Co.: The Rexall Store                       |
| 11.        | [Blank space] -<br>R. and R. Drug Co.   |
| 12.        | No. [Blank space] , Dr. [Blank space]<br>R. and R. Drug Co.: The Rexall Store |
| 13.        | POISON [Blank space]<br>R. and R. Drug Co.: The Rexall Store                  |
| 14.        | [Empty]   |

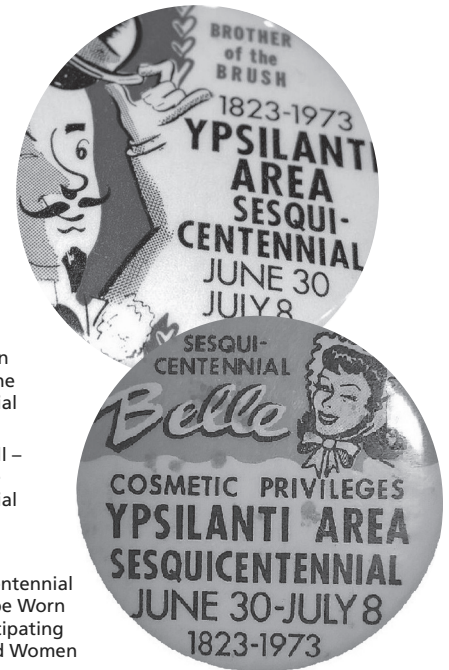
*(Note: This article has been reduced in size so it could be published in the Gleanings. The EMU student research articles all contain many references as well as bibliographies.)*





Marcia Harrison  
– Co-chair of the  
Sesquicentennial  
Committee

John Kirkendall –  
Co-chair of the  
Sesquicentennial  
Committee



Sesquicentennial  
Pins to be Worn  
by Participating  
Men and Women

## The 1973 Ypsilanti Sesquicentennial Celebration

BY ROBERT ANSCHUETZ

Ypsilanti celebrated its 150-year Sesquicentennial anniversary in 1973. The city went all-out to plan more than a weeks' worth of entertainment, with events spread across the city and the township. There were hundreds of volunteers who were involved in the planning and production of dozens of great events. This article will describe the atmosphere at the time of the event, plus list several of the events that took place during June and July of 1973.

To get a sense of the times, 1973 saw America dealing with Richard Nixon's Watergate scandal, the Vietnam war, and an energy crisis. Skylab, the first space station was launched in May of 1973. Locally, the *Ypsilanti Press* was covering the Carolyn King story, as Carolyn was one of the first girls in the United States ever to play Little League Baseball. Also, Ypsilanti high school students were getting ready to move out of their old school on Cross St. and into the brand-new school at the corner of Packard St. and Hewitt Rd. These were turbulent times in America, and perhaps the longing for simpler times led to the city of Ypsilanti to plan for an anniversary celebration that would even top the Semi-Centennial celebration of 1874 and the Centennial celebration of 1923.

Ypsilanti started preparing for its Sesquicentennial celebration in 1963 – a full decade before the actual milestone. An organization called "Project 73" was formed in 1963 to plan for the Sesquicentennial. Dr. William Edmunds served as the chairman of the organization and real estate developer Kenneth Leighton served as the treasurer. In January 20, 1966, *The Ypsilanti Press* proclaimed in a headline, "Project 73, BPW Club study plan to move, preserve octagonal house."

The article tells us that Edmunds and Leighton had made a presentation to the Business & Professional Women's Club of Ypsilanti to seek support of plans to save the octagon house which was then located on Washtenaw Ave. and later moved to River St. The article went on to say, "Project 73, the plan for observance of the sesquicentennial of Ypsilanti, is proposing a package offer under which the house would be moved to a River St. location." The purchase went forward, and on May 5, 1966 the octagon house moved to River St. In a follow-up *Ypsilanti Press* article from November 5, 1968, it states that the "house's exterior has been extensively remodeled by Kenneth Leighton, a real estate dealer, and treasurer of Project 73... Project 73 is not defunct he added, but has abandoned hope that the octagon house – only one of two in the city and about 100 in the nation – would be nucleus for Ypsilanti's 'Heritage Square' proposed for the N. River area." It's a shame that the "Heritage Square" idea didn't materialize. As with the demise of the Heritage Square Idea, the Project 73 organization never gained much traction and soon sputtered out.

Ypsilanti renewed its Sesquicentennial planning in the Spring of 1972. Wanting to make a huge celebration, the city of Ypsilanti contracted with Rogers Company, from Fostoria, Ohio, to be the producing company for the celebration. Phil Frable, from the Rogers Company, led the project. The Ypsilanti Sesquicentennial Committee was set up as a non-profit corporation with elected chairmen. The Ypsilanti co-planners of the event were Marcia Harrison, a member of the Ypsilanti school board, and John Kirkendall, a local attorney. Reporting to them were numerous divisions, various officers, a board of directors, and an advi-



Ladies Library on Huron Street served as the Sesquicentennial Hall

sory board, totaling over 100 people. Beneath this core of leaders were over 50 committees that were responsible for setting up every aspect of the celebration. Souvenir stock was sold at \$1 a share to help raise money for the non-profit organization running the event. Commemorative Sesquicentennial coins and plates were also produced and sold to raise money.

Phil Frable first visited Ypsilanti in the fall of 1972 to establish the divisions and leadership of the organization. He came again in December 1972, meeting with every committee to advise them and establish target dates. Frable worked closely with co-chairs Harrison and Kirkendall to plan the Sesquicentennial celebration that would be held from June 30th to July 8th. To ensure the event ran smoothly, in May of 1973, Frable began a nine-week stay in Ypsilanti prior to the Sesquicentennial.

The Sesquicentennial Committee published a commemorative booklet titled "*Ypsilanti Area Sesquicentennial 1823-1973*". The opening page of this book was a letter from Richard Nixon congratulating the people of Ypsilanti in celebrating our 150th anniversary. *The Ypsilanti Press* published a seven-section commemorative Sesquicentennial Edition on July 1, 1973. The sections were titled: Sesquicentennial, Centennial, Horizons, Golden Triangle, Foundations, On the Move, and Family Life. Over a six-week period leading up to the Sesquicentennial events, the *Ypsilanti Press* also published six editions of a single page newsletter called the Sesquicentennial Press. Writer Charles Slat delved into the history of the Ypsilanti area between 1820 and 1825 to come up with news stories which might have been published at the time of the founding of the city. Articles from some of these issues included: "Godfroy's Destroyed," "Washtenaw Created," "Woodruff Arrives," "Ypsilanti Created," and "Ann Arbor Chosen - Woodruff's Residents are Ignored."

After countless hours of planning, the Sesquicentennial agenda, which included over 200 events, was set as follows:

**THURSDAY, JUNE 28 – SUNDAY, JULY 8**

American Legion Post No. 282 1st Annual Fourth of July  
Carnival on East Michigan Avenue

**THURSDAY, JUNE 28**

The Ypsi Players present "Gold in the Hills, Or, a Dead Sister's Secret" at the Dinner Theatre in the Huron Motor Hotel

**FRIDAY, JUNE 29 – SUNDAY, JULY 8**

10 a.m. – 5 p.m. – Historical Museum open – North Huron 10  
a.m. – 6 p.m. – Hospitality Center – Huron Hotel Lobby

**FRIDAY, JUNE 29**

The Ypsi Players present "Gold in the Hills, Or, a Dead Sister's Secret" at the Dinner Theatre in the Huron Motor Hotel  
9:30 p.m. – Sesquicentennial Celebration Ball at the Washtenaw Country Club - Music by Johnny Trudell

**SATURDAY, JUNE 30: HOMECOMING DAY**

10 a.m. – 6 p.m. – Hole-In-One contest;  
Green Oaks Golf Course  
11 a.m. and 1 p.m. – Puppet Show – Downtown Area  
10 a.m. – 7 p.m. – Kaiser-Frazier Antique Car Show –  
Michigan Avenue and Hamilton Street  
Noon – 4 p.m. – Student Art Show – Huron Hotel  
Noon – 6 p.m. – Jaycee Regatta – Ford Lake  
1 – 3 p.m. – Antique Auction – 40 Water Street  
Afternoon – Barbershop Octet Entertaining – Downtown Area  
Afternoon – Karate Exhibitions – Riverside Park  
2 – 6 p.m. – Rock Concert – Riverside Park  
6 – 9 p.m. Bowling Tournament – Ypsi-Arbor Lanes  
6:30 p.m. – Ypsi Players Dinner Show – Huron Hotel  
8 – 10:30 p.m. – Rotary Club Square Dance – Downtown Area

**SUNDAY, JULY 1: FESTIVAL OF FAITH DAY**

Morning – Sesquicentennial services in all area churches  
10 a.m. – 6 p.m. – Hole-in-one contest Green Oaks Golf Course  
Noon – 3 p.m. – Open House Ypsilanti historic churches  
Noon – 6 p.m. – Jaycee Regatta – Ford Lake  
1 p.m. – Puppet Show – Downtown area  
Afternoon – Barbershop Singing – Downtown Area  
1 – 5 p.m. – Garden Club open house – Senior Citizens Center  
1 p.m. – Garden Show – Senior Citizens Center  
1 p.m. – Flower Arranging Contest – Senior Citizens Center  
3 p.m. – Community Festival of Faith Celebration –  
Shadford Field  
4 – 8 p.m. – Old Fashioned Ice Cream Social – Presbyterian  
Church, North Washington St.  
7 – 8 p.m. – Ypsilanti High band concert – Prospect Park



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6 and 9 p.m. – Bowling Tournament – Ypsi Arbor lanes

6:30 p.m. – Ypsi Players Dinner Show – Huron Hotel

#### MONDAY, JULY 2: PIONEER DAY

All Day – Huron Hotel 50th Year Celebration and Old Fashioned Saloon – Huron Hotel

10 a.m. – Selection of “Playground Sesquicentennial Kings and Queens” – each city and township park

Afternoon – Karate Exhibition – Riverside Park

Afternoon – Puppet Show – Downtown area

1 – 3 p.m. – Range Riders Horse Show – Riverside Park

1 – 3 p.m. – Antique Auction – 40 Water Street

6:30 – 8 p.m. – Homemade Ice Cream Social – Rainbow Girls at Masonic Temple

7:30 – 8:30 p.m. – “Barnhill Memorial Boys Band” concert – Recreation Park

#### TUESDAY, JULY 3: SENIOR CITIZENS DAY

All Day – Civil War Unit Encampment – Riverside Park

10 a.m. – 3 p.m. – Senior Citizens Center open house and old-fashioned crafts demonstrations at Senior Citizens Center – Recreation Park

Noon to 7 p.m. – Toy Making Workshop, Michigan History Exhibit, Historical Museum

Afternoon – Karate Exhibition – Riverside Park

Afternoon – Puppet Show – Downtown area

1 p.m. – Selection of “Sesquicentennial Playground King and Queen” for Ypsilanti Area

1 – 3 p.m. – Antique Auction – 40 Water Street

4:30 – midnight – “Almost Free Lunch” 50 cents – Huron Hotel and Saloon

8:30 p.m. – Pre-Spectacle Performance – Ypsilanti “One-Five-O” at Shadford Field

9:15 p.m. – Historical Spectacle Performance – Ypsilanti “One-Five-O” at Shadford Field

#### WEDNESDAY, JULY 4: INDEPENDENCE DAY

All Day – Civil War Unit Encampment – Riverside Park

11 a.m. – Giant Fourth of July Parade through the streets of Ypsilanti

Morning – Ladies Literary Club lemonade stand – Club lawn – Before, After and During the Parade

After Parade – Kiwanis Club Chicken Barbeque – Riverside Park

Noon – Karate Exhibition – Riverside Park

1 – 5 p.m. – Historical Museum open – North Huron

2 p.m. – Brothers of the Brush beard judging – Shadford Field

Afternoon – Karate Exhibition – Riverside Park

Afternoon – Drill Team Exhibition – Riverside Park

Afternoon – Band Concert – Riverside Park

Afternoon – Strawberry Pie Eating Contest – Riverside Park

4:30 – midnight – “Almost Free Lunch” 50 cents – Huron Hotel

and Saloon

8:10 p.m. – Old Fashioned Street Dance – Downtown Area

9 p.m. – Fireworks – JYRO Park

#### THURSDAY, JULY 5: COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY DAY

All day – Jaycee Auxiliary Art Fair – Downtown Area

All Day – Girl Scout and Boy Scout Camporee – Frog Island

Afternoon – Karate Exhibition – Riverside Park

Afternoon – Puppet Show – Downtown Area

1 – 2 p.m. – Antique Auction – Downtown Area

2 – 4 p.m. – Country and Western Concert with Paul Webb and the Young Country – Downtown Area

4:30 – midnight – “Almost Free Lunch” 50 cents – Huron Hotel and Saloon

7 – 8 p.m. – Bluegrass Concert by Dave Hubbard and the Don Q. Boys – Downtown Area

8 – 9 p.m. – Pre-Spectacle Entertainment at Shadford Field

9:15 p.m. – Ypsilanti “One-Five-O” Historical Spectacle – Shadford Field

#### FRIDAY, JULY 6: SALUTE TO YOUTH DAY

All Day – Jaycee Auxiliary Art Fair – Downtown Area

All Day – Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts Camporee – Frog Island

All Day – City and Township Fire Truck Demonstration – Gault Village and Downtown Area

Afternoon – Karate Exhibition – Riverside Park

10 a.m. – Track and Field Day – Ypsilanti Township and City Parks

1 – 3 p.m. – Range Riders horse and dog show – Riverside Park

5 – 7 p.m. – Antique Auction – Downtown Area

6 – 7 p.m. – Water Ball Fight – Gault Village

6:30 p.m. – Ypsilanti Players Dinner Show – Huron Hotel

7:30 – 8:30 p.m. – Judy’s School of Baton – Talent Review – Downtown Area

8:30 p.m. – Pre-Spectacle Entertainment at Shadford Field

9:15 p.m. – Third performance, Ypsilanti “One-Five-O” Historical Spectacle – Shadford Field

#### SATURDAY, JULY 7: VETRANS, ARMED FORCES AND FRATERNAL DAY

All Day – Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts Camporee – Frog Island

All Day – Jaycee Auxiliary Art Fair – Downtown Area

10 a.m. – Area Wide Field Day – Prospect Park

11 a.m. – Scramble Golf Tournament – Green Oaks Golf Course

Noon – 4 p.m. – Student Art Show – Huron Hotel

Noon – Karate Exhibition – Riverside Park

2 p.m. – 4 p.m. – Puppet Show – Downtown Area

4 p.m. – 8 p.m. – Country and Western concert with Paul Webb and the Young Country – Downtown Area

4 p.m. – 8 p.m. – Barbershop Octet Concert – Downtown Area

4 p.m. – 8 p.m. – Masons Beef and Strawberry Festival – Masonic Temple

6:30 p.m. – Ypsilanti Players Dinner Show – Huron Hotel

7 – 8 p.m. – National Twirling Association Talent Show – Downtown Area

8 – 9 p.m. – Blue Grass Concert by Dave Hubbard and Don Q. Boys – Downtown Area

8:30 p.m. – Pre-Spectacle Entertainment at Shadford Field

9:15 p.m. – Fourth performance, Ypsilanti “One-Five-O” Historical Spectacle – Shadford Field

**SUNDAY, JULY 8: BROTHERHOOD DAY**

11 a.m. – Scramble Golf Tournament – Green Oaks Golf Course

1:15 p.m. – Time Capsule Ceremony – City Hall, North Huron

2 p.m. – Jaycee Canoe Race – Huron River

Afternoon – Karate Exhibition – Riverside Park

Afternoon – Puppet Show – Downtown Area

Afternoon – Barbershop Octet Concert – Downtown Area

6:30 p.m. – Ypsilanti Player’s Dinner Show – Huron Hotel

8:30 p.m. – Pre-Spectacle Entertainment at Shadford Field

9:15 p.m. – Fifth and final performance, Ypsilanti “One-Five-O” Historical Spectacle – Shadford Field

In late June, 1973, the time had finally arrived for the Sesquicentennial celebration. All of the extensive planning was about to be put into action. However, just prior to the opening of the celebration, a disaster struck. The highlight of the celebration was to be a five-night theatrical spectacular highlighting the history of Ypsilanti, titled the *Ypsilanti “ONE-FIVE-O”* (150). Just a week before the Sesquicentennial celebration was to begin, a severe storm swept through Ypsilanti, and the stage and props setup at the new Ypsilanti High School football field, Shadford Field, were severely damaged by the storm. Men and women worked around the clock to repair the stage and props, and managed to get it completed before the first performance was held.

The Ladies Library on Huron Street was renamed as Sesquicentennial Hall and served as the event’s headquarters. In front of the headquarters, the Jaycees donated the commemorative Sesquicentennial bronze plaque embedded in a large rock. Just as in the 1923 Centennial celebration, the Huron Hotel served as the hospitality center for the event. The Ypsilanti Historical Museum was opened daily during the event, as flocks of citizens and visitors came to learn more about their town. The old city hall was still in use at that time, and Mayor George Goodman participated in city-Government planning and coordination from this site.

There were numerous events at the Sesquicentennial celebration, with the highlights being the Ypsilanti “ONE-FIVE-O” pageant, the naming of the Sesquicentennial Queen, a dinner theater show at the Huron Hotel, the Barnhill Memorial Boys Band, music concerts, the 4th of July Parade, the Jaycees Regatta Hydroplane Races at Ford Lake, a best-beard contest, a Huron River canoe race, and a Civil War



Sesquicentennial Souvenir Stock

Sesquicentennial Seal

encampment at Riverside Park.

The Sesquicentennial Queen award was announced at the Sesquicentennial Ball, and winner was Corky Pitts. She won a Ford Pinto and a trip to the Bahamas, amongst other prizes. She also rode on the Queen’s float in the 4th of July parade. The runners-up formed her court, and they also won nice prizes. In parks and playgrounds across the city and township, young girls competed for the title of “queens of the playground.”

The Ypsilanti Players, organized in 1915, presented several performances of the melodrama *“Gold in the Hills or A Dead Sister’s Secret,”* which was written by J. Frank Davis in 1922. The play was directed by Dick DeWees, and had a cast of 17 actors. The performances were held at the Huron Hotel banquet room, which was itself celebrating its 50th anniversary. Tickets, which included a dinner, were priced at \$6. At the time, the Ypsilanti Players, founded by Daniel J. Quirk, Jr., was the third oldest community theater in the country, trailing only Boston and Chicago.

Throughout the Sesquicentennial celebration, male residents in the city were encouraged to take the oath of “The Brothers of the Brush” and let their beards grow out. Groups of men joined together to take the pledge, and groups of men with 15 or more individuals were given a charter. At



Sesquicentennial Queen Float





Ypsilanti "ONE-FIVE-O" Actors

least 20 charters were named, representing over 400 men. The beard contest was won by Wayne T. Jackson. There were many other categories that awarded prizes to such types of beards as mutton chops, burnsidies, Van Dyke, and full beard. Each category winner was awarded a \$10 gift certificate.

Women throughout the city were encouraged to join the "Sesquicentennial Belles," chaired by Lynn Binder and Joan Boughner. After signing a pledge, members of the Sesquicentennial Belles were issued a "cosmetic privileges" button and were permitted to wear make-up, perfume, and jewelry. Women in the city who didn't join the organization and wore make-up, perfume, or jewelry could be turned over to the Keystone Kops and Ye Awful Judges of Ye Kangaroo Kourt. Of course, it was all in good fun.

Another highlight of the Sesquicentennial celebration was a parade held on Independence Day with the theme of "*Old in History, New in Spirit.*" The Sesquicentennial parade was in conjunction with the 44th annual American Legion Post 282 Fourth of July Parade. An estimated 100,000 persons came out to view the parade, which included bands, 37 floats, 30 horse units, clowns, drill teams, antique cars, and pony carts. The parade assembled at the Senior Citizens Club at Recreation Park, proceeded down Congress onto Michigan Ave., then took a left onto Huron St., then another left onto Cross St., and ended on Packard Rd. at Estabrook



Brothers of the Brush Beard Contest at Shadford Field

School.

The highlight of the Sesquicentennial had to be the "Spectacular" titled *Ypsilanti "ONE-FIVE-O,"* which was produced by Edward H. Horner, Jr. Horner produced the play in only 5 weeks, and it included 585 men, women and children in the production. There were 8 narrators, while all the other participants in the production acted and danced through pantomime. Horner was not a native of Ypsilanti, and was hired by the Rogers Co. Horner was responsible for directing, producing, lighting, audio, and props. He helped build the stage at Shadford Field, and choreographed all of the dance routines, holding the production to a \$5,000 budget. The stage stretched between the 20-yard lines at the football field, and was 31 feet high and 225 feet wide. It only took one and a half days to build the stage.

The Executive Producer of the play was Phillip R. Frable, the Associate Director was John Pekar, and the Spectacle Supervisor was Barbara Johnston. James Palesek, Carl Barnhart, and Barbara Weiss also were involved in the planning. Ypsilanti amateur actors filled most of the cast for the show. They were cast for the event at the Cleary College auditorium. There were six major dance scenes in the play – a Native American dance ceremony, square dancing, the Virginia reel, a waltz scene, the Charleston from the roaring 20's, and a large teen dance. The play ran for an hour and 45 minutes depicting a three-hundred-year period including Chief Black Hawk, the bathing beauties of the late 1800's, the Willow Run Camp for Boys, and an entire scene about Eastern Michigan University. Tickets were \$2, with reserved seating at \$2.50. The program was presented in an Overture, 12 Episodes, and an Epilog, telling the story of Ypsilanti-area and Washtenaw County from 1680 to 1973. The show was performed a total of five times during the evenings of July 3,5,6,7,8. Here is the sequence of episodes in the *Ypsilanti "ONE-FIVE-O"* program:

**OVERTURE: "BRING FORTH THE TORCH"**

- Scene One: A Land of Ancient Tribes
- Scene Two: The Torch of Time

**EPISODE ONE: "ONE HUNDRED FIFTY YEARS AND MORE"**

- Scene One: Welcome
- Scene Two: The Royal Court of Honor
- Scene Three: A Happy Birthday Ypsilanti Area

**EPISODE TWO: "THE DISCOVERY"**

- Scene One: April 1680 – de LaSalle
- Scene Two: 1701 Cadillac Arrives
- Scene Three: The French and the British
- Scene Four: Godfroys on the Pottawatomie Trail
- Scene Five: An Indian Settlement
- Scene Six: A Ceremonial Ritual

**EPISODE THREE: "THE SETTLEMENT"**

- Scene One: Arrival From Sandusky
- Scene Two: The Sixth of July
- Scene Three: Looking Over the Settlement

Scene Four: Independence Day

Scene Five: Some Fancy Steppin’

**EPISODE FOUR: “THE EARLY YEARS”**

Scene One: Summer of ‘24

Scene Two: Death Strikes

Scene Three: The Land Was Cleared

Scene Four: Ezra and Luke Surveying

Scene Five: Naming the Unbuilt Metropolis

Scene Six: Blackhawk is Captured

Scene Seven: The “TOLEDO WAR”

**EPISODE FIVE: “RELIGION IN YPSILANTI”**

Scene One: A Circuit Rider and His Flock

Scene Two: Early Churches

Scene Three: During the Holidays

Scene Four: Silent Night

**EPISODE SIX: “THE TIES OF MICHIGAN”**

Scene One: Construction Begins

Scene Two: A Train Leaves Detroit

Scene Three: The Virginia Reel

Scene Four: A Walk to the City

**EPISODE SEVEN: “MICHIGAN AND THE WAR”**

Scene One: The Underground Railroad

Scene Two: The Great Fire

Scene Three: Birth of New Business

Scene Four: Fort Sumpter Fired Upon!

Scene Five: A Normal Company of Students

Scene Six: Appomattox: April 9, 1865

**EPISODE EIGHT: “EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT”**

Scene One: Books, Learning and Children

Scene Two: One Room School House

Scene Three: An Apple for the Teacher

**EPISODE NINE: “THE RETURN OF BETTER DAYS”**

Scene One: Caught Off Guard

Scene Two: New Innovations

Scene Three: Ypsilanti Mineral Bath House

Scene Four: The Birth of Cleary College

Scene Five: A Bicycle Built for Two

Scene Six: The Great Waltz

Scene Seven: A Woman Liberator

**EPISODE TEN: “THE NEW CENTURY”**

Scene One: The Cyclone of 1890

Scene Two: The Little City Grew

Scene Three: Lusitania Torpedoed

Scene Four: Ypsilanti Players

Scene Five: It’s Centennial Time

Scene Six: Flivers, Flappers and Flagpole sitters -  
The Charleston

**EPISODE ELEVEN: “THE TIMES OF CHANGE”**

Scene One: Then Came the Crash

Scene Two: The W.P.A.

Scene Three: Camp Willow Run

Scene Four: Midgets and Bombers

Scene Five: The Rising Sun on Iwo Jima

**EPISODE TWELVE: “THE NEW AGE”**

Scene One: Town Leisure

Scene Two: Eastern Michigan University

Scene Three: Do Your Own Thing

Scene Four: Give it to Me

**EPISODE EPILOG: “THE GRAND FINALE”**

Scene One: You’ve Come a Long Way

Scene Two: A Patriotic Tribute

Scene Three: The National Anthem

The Ypsilanti Sesquicentennial celebration was a warm-up of sorts to many festivals to come. Starting in 1974, the left-over budget of almost \$10,000 from the Sesquicentennial celebration kickstarted the 1974 Ypsilanti Summer Festival. Ypsilanti would go on to celebrate several more Summer festivals. In 1976, Ypsilanti celebrated, along with the entire nation, the Bicentennial of the United States. In 1978, Ypsilanti held a Sidewalk Celebration in Depot Town to celebrate the installation and repair of sidewalks. In 1979, the Sidewalk Celebration was rebranded as the Ypsilanti Yesterday’s Heritage Festival. The festival was renamed as the Ypsilanti Heritage Festival, and it continued until the 42nd event in 2019. The 43rd Ypsilanti Heritage Event was cancelled for 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic concerns, and it hasn’t returned since. In 2023, Ypsilanti celebrated its Bicentennial with events held on New Year’s Eve, the Fourth of July, and August 19th.

On the final day of the 1973 Sesquicentennial, a time capsule was filled and sealed in front of the old City Hall on Huron Street, and later buried near the water tower. Tom Valmassi was the chairman of the Time Capsule Committee. This is the same time capsule that was opened 50 years later in 2023 during Ypsilanti’s Fourth of July celebration as part of the Bicentennial activities. The 2023 Ypsilanti Bicentennial celebration continues the long tradition of Ypsilanti city-wide festivals.



The Stonewall Regiment Civil War Re-enactors at Riverside Park

*Robert Anschuetz grew up in Ypsilanti in the historic Swaine house at the corner of Forest Ave. and River St. He vividly remembers attending the Ypsilanti Sesquicentennial events of 1973. He is a regular contributor to the Gleanings.*



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