

Ypsilanti GLEANINGS

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



WINTER 2023

In This Issue...

2023 Community Service Awards	1
<i>By Steve Moore</i>	
The Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission Celebrates 50 Years of Serving All of Us Happy Birthday!	5
<i>By Janice Anschuetz</i>	
LTC Charles Kettles Signs	10
<i>By Alvin Rudisill</i>	
Washtenaw County Auto Show of 1922.....	12
<i>By Robert Anschuetz</i>	
An American Christmas Carol	18
<i>By Tim Sabo and Evan Milan</i>	
Don Staebler and Staebler Farm County Park	22
<i>By Robert Anschuetz</i>	
The History of Ypsilanti's Underground Railroad.....	28
<i>By Krista Kangas</i>	
Wehrmacht Field Marshal Feldbluse	29
<i>By Charles Calcaterra</i>	
Materials Unlimited Building to Begin New Chapter	32
<i>By James Mann</i>	

Society Briefs

From the President's Desk.....	2
Society Board Members	2
Archives Intern Report.....	21
GLEANINGS Sponsors	34
Membership Application	35
Advertising Application.....	35

www.ypsihistory.org



Community Service Award winner Don Randazzo (center), nominator Rick Katon (right), and Ypsilanti Rotary Club President Steve Moore (left).



Community Service Award winner Barry LaRue (right), nominator Fred Davis (center), and Ypsilanti Rotary Club President Steve Moore (left).



Community Service Award winners Pattie and John Harrington (right), nominator Bill Nickels (left), and Ypsilanti Rotary Club President Steve Moore (second from left).

2023 Community Service Awards

BY STEVE MOORE

The Richard Cole Easterbrook Community Service Award Program was established in 2020 by the Rotary Club of Ypsilanti. The award recognizes individuals who have and are making significant contributions to the Ypsilanti Community through their time, actions, talents and dedication. The Award was named after Richard Easterbrook, who passed away in 2020, to honor his extensive volunteer efforts in and around Ypsilanti over a long period of time.

Rick was a long time member of the Ypsilanti Rotary Club and served as the Chair of the Rotary Community Service Committee as well as Project Director for Food Gatherers which distributed over five million pounds of food each year to 150 non-profit organizations serving the people of Washtenaw Coun-

ty. Rick also managed the "End Polio Now" fundraising that was carried out at each weekly meeting of the Club. He also played a major role in the annual Rotary Pancake Breakfast each year that raised thousands of dollars to support local community service projects. Other efforts he made included "Bell Ringing" every year for the Salvation Army and "Clean Up" on a regular basis for the Ypsilanti Riverside Arts Center.

On Monday, November 6, at the regular meeting of the Ypsilanti Rotary Club, three 2023 Community Service Awards were presented. They included John and Patti Harrington, nominated by Bill Nickels, Don Randazzo, nominated by Rick Katon, and Barry LaRue, nominated by Fred Davis. Each of the recipi-

*2023 Community Service Awards
continued on Page 4*

Ypsilanti HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Board of Trustees:

Maria Davis, Pattie Harrington,
Rick Katon, Gerald Jennings,
Marcia McCrary, Bill Nickels,
Alvin Rudisill, Amy Singer,
Tom Warner, Daneen Zureich

Museum Advisory Board:

Kathleen Campbell,
Evan Milan, David Mongson,
Louise Nagle, Fofie Pappas, Tim Sabo
John Stewart, Nancy Taylor,
Nancy Wheeler, Daneen Zureich,
Austin Martin/Graduate Intern

Archives Advisory Board:

Kim Clarke, Maria Davis, Rick Katon,
Russ Kenyon, James Mann
Alvin Rudisill, Louise Schmaltz,
Amy Singer, Tom Quigley/ex-officio
member, Connor Ashley/Graduate
Intern

Endowment Fund Advisory Board:

Don Loppnow, Bill Nickels,
Alvin Rudisill

Graduate Interns:

Archives: Connor Ashley
Museum: Austin Martin

Ypsilanti Historical Society

220 North Huron Street
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197

Museum: 734.482.4990

Archives: 734.217.8236

www.ypsihistory.org

GLEANINGS Staff

Editor Al Rudisill
Assistant Editors..... Peg Porter
Fofie Pappas
Kathryn Ziegler
Kathy Gilden Bidelman
Kathy Badgerow
Design & Layout..... Pattie Harrington
Advertising Director Austin Martin
Finance Director..... Amy Singer
Distribution Austin Martin

If you have suggestions for articles
or if you have questions, contact
Al Rudisill at 734.476.6658 or
al@rudisill.ws.

Ypsilanti GLEANINGS is published 4
times a year by the **Ypsilanti Historical
Society**, 220 N. Huron Street, Ypsilanti,
MI 48197

From the PRESIDENT'S DESK

BY BILL NICKELS

I am pleased to announce that Kirk Profit is joining the YHS as a member of the Board of Trustees. What is even better, he is as excited about becoming a member as we are of having him become a member. He will bring a background to our Board of Trustees that is not possessed by any of our present members. More good news, with Jerry Jennings retiring as our "Mr. Everything," Barry LaRue volunteered to accept museum and carriage house keys and become the new "handyman" we so desperately need.

Volunteers Kathleen Campbell, Tom Quigley, and Daneen Zureich were all



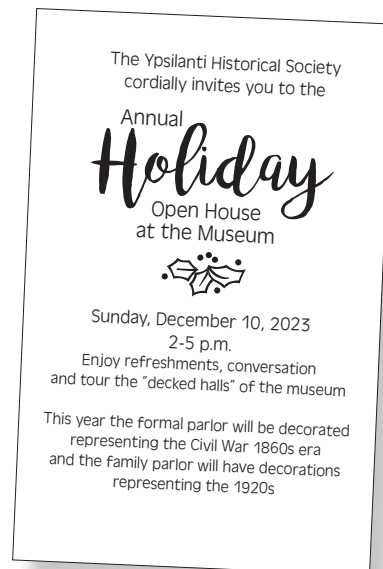
Kathleen Campbell dedicated 30 plus years of service as a museum docent and volunteered for many projects and activities.

presented with the Gerald Jennings Service Award during our October Annual Meeting. Kathleen dedicated 30 plus years of service as a museum docent, Museum Advisory Board member and Secretary, and Heritage

Festival volunteer. Tom can be found on Saturday and Sunday afternoons scanning photos and adding photo descriptions for our online Photo Archives. Daneen has been and is a current member of the Museum Advisory Board and Board of Trustees. She has been a major contributor to making the museum festive during the holiday season.

Our partnership with Eastern Michigan University's Preservation Studies program expanded during this fall semester. In addition to having two Graduate Interns from the program, two courses were entirely taught in our museum and archives! New this fall, a one-hour credit course used our doll collection to teach students how to conserve a collection.

I recently received a letter from John Ferguson, from Crystal Lake, IL, asking if we would accept his mother's 1948 bookmark from Roosevelt High School. He wrote that his mother used and kept the bookmark all these years and decided she had to find a new home for it. I replied to John in writing that we would welcome such a contribution. I was reminded that in addition to taking care of Ypsilanti's history, we are taking care of artifacts that were very important to the donors. That is an awesome responsibility!



In my last President's Report, I thanked Evan Milan for resurrecting Ypsilanti's bicentennial celebration after COVID and Annie Sommerville's leadership during 2023. Add to that, Ypsilanti Rotary's Four Museum Bicentennial Events and Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation's Historic Home Tour. The latter filled out the August 19 weekend making a two-day celebration!

As 2023 comes to an end, I am thankful for our growing partnership with EMU, our continued support from the greater Ypsilanti community, and Kirk and Barry assuming key positions within our museum and archives. Here's to more in 2024!



Daneen Zureich's family members accepted the award in her absence.



This fall a one-hour credit Eastern Michigan University course was taught using our doll collection to teach students how to conserve a collection.

Jerry Jennings giving our new "handyman" Barry LaRue a tour of the carriage house and museum.



Your Neighborhood Grocery Store

**Locally-made bread,
fresh produce,
whole organic foods,
Deli-made organic
sandwiches & salads
to go, local beer &
wine, dairy and meat,
and hundreds of
bulk herbs, spices, &
other foods!**

Curbside Pickup Available
Email your list to
curbside@ypsifoodcoop.org



**312 N River St, Ypsilanti
734-483-1520**

ents received an engraved plaque and a Rotary "Community Service" lapel pin. The dinner and meeting was held at the Thompson & Co. Restaurant on River Street.

John and Pattie Harrington were selected for the Award to honor their dedicated efforts over a long period of time including the preservation and restoration of the historic "Towner House" which is believed to be the oldest structure in Ypsilanti on its original foundation. It was built in

c. 1837 and was occupied by members of the Towner family for over 100 years. Other efforts of the Harringtons include the regular repair and restoration of the Ypsilanti Historical Society's

"Carriage House" which was recently converted to rental property. The Harringtons have been active members and served on the Board of Directors of the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation and the Ypsilanti Historical Society.

Barry LaRue is a member and current Vice President of the Highland Cemetery Association and has been the driving force behind the restoration of the historic Starkweather Chapel including fundraising for the project. Barry is a founding member and current secretary of the Riverside Arts Center Board and has been a huge contributor of time, talent and the resources which make the organization the success it is today. Barry is also a member and current President of "Destination Ann Arbor," member of the Twenty Club, past member of the Ypsilanti City Council, and past mem-



Rick Easterbrook (with the broom) along with other Ypsilanti Rotary Club members doing clean-up of the yard around the Riverside Arts Center.

ber of the Historic District Commission and Heritage Foundation Board.

Don Randazzo is also a community service legend in Ypsilanti. He was an original member of the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation and is primarily responsible for founding the "Historic Marker" program which recognizes well maintained historic properties and honors them with distinctive plaques citing their construction dates.

In 1978 Don was a

charter member of the Ypsilanti Historic District Commission and helped oversee the commission's efforts to preserve Ypsilanti's historic buildings for future generations. One of Don's most important efforts has been his invaluable work on preserving and restoring the Historic Towner House. Don, along with the Harringtons, has been a major caretaker of the property since the Heritage Foundation became involved in saving it from demolition.

The Ypsilanti Rotary Club plans to present the "Richard Cole Easterbrook Community Service Award" on an annual basis to individuals who are making major contributions to our city and surrounding area. If you have individuals you think should be considered for the 2024 awards please contact Steve Moore, President of the Ypsilanti Rotary Club at rotaryclubypsi@gmail.com

(Steve Moore is the current President of the Ypsilanti Rotary Club.)



636 S. Mansfield Ave.
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

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

The Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission Celebrates 50 Years of Serving All of Us - *Happy Birthday*

BY JANICE ANSCHUETZ



As the city of Ypsilanti turns 200 years old in 2023, the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission (WCPRC) celebrates 50 years of service to Ypsilanti and Washtenaw County. Since 1973, when the commission was formed and funded with seed money of only \$65,000 from the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners, some amazing things have happened which have improved all of our lives.



Meri Lou Murray.

I think you will find the history of this amazing organization interesting and it may inspire you to take a walk on the Border to Border (B2B) trail (which goes through the campus of Eastern Michigan University and both Riverside and Frog Island Parks), take a bike ride on the 5 miles of paved trails at Rolling Hills Park, or take a class in one of the folk arts such as spoon carving, blacksmithing or basket making at The Michigan Folk School at nearby Staebler Farm County Park. You could also indulge in any of the many classes taught at Meri Lou Murray Recreation Center that promote health and happiness or just sit on a bench at Riverside Park and watch families enjoying the handicap-accessible playground equipment donated by the WCPRC.

The Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission grew from only a dream in 1973 to currently having 14 parks, over 75 miles of multi-use trails and 37 nature preserves and conservation easements in only 50 years. You may be wondering how this happened. To begin with, the late Nelson Meade, a founding member of the commission, wrote a detailed account of the history of the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission from his memory, experience and facts, which provides the substance of this article. I also feel qualified to tell you the story of the WCPRC since I retired from the WCPRC board three years ago after serving for 47 years.

It may surprise you to learn that the WCPRC came about

as a sort of a "good accident". In 1972 Meri Lou Murray, a teacher living in Ann Arbor, was the chair of Ann Arbor's Third Ward Democratic Party. It was her job to find a candidate for county commissioner. Meade tells us that *"her district was considered a Republican stronghold and no one wanted to go through the motions just to have their name on the ballot, so the committee told her she would have to fill the slot. They then helped her come up with campaign issues."* Many members of this group were already advocating for parks, recreation, community gardens, walking trails and so forth so it was no surprise that Murray's main campaign promise was to aspire to have a county wide park system. Somehow this idea touched the hearts and souls of the voters and she won with an astonishing victory and thus, the embryo of the WCPRC was created.

Meade tells us *"It is hard to imagine how rare parks were in 1972. The bigger cities had them, but aside from a few Huron-Clinton Metroparks on the Huron River and a couple of state parks at the northwest edge of the county, the only ones were in the rural sections of the county and were roadside parks under the jurisdiction of the Washtenaw County Road Commission."* Recreation for city families at that time often meant a drive in the country. Fast food places were few and far between so the family picnic basket was packed with something like a lunch of cold fried chicken, bologna sandwiches or similar. Add to this a scotch plaid metal cooler filled with Kool Aid. Then, after driving for an hour or so and admiring corn fields and cows it was time to search for a place to stop the car, stretch your legs and eat. The fortunate family would find a small "roadside park" at the side of the road equipped with a hand pump, picnic table and smelly outhouse. During the 1970s some large parks existed in Washtenaw County but they were privately owned and available to rent to organizations such as German clubs, Knights of Columbus, the Elks, and so forth. Even Independence Lake, which is now a popular WCPRC park started out as a private park where, after parking your car, you had to find the farmer who owned the land and pay him for the privilege of fishing, swimming or picnicking.

When Murray was running for Washtenaw County Commissioner in 1972, her first campaign speech summarized this reality. *"Currently the Washtenaw County of Parks is merely a minor part of the County Road Commission...The Board of Commissioners must institute a true parks department charged with the responsibility and the authority to acquire parkland now to anticipate future recreational needs."*

Murray lived to see her dream, and that of others, come true and was always vigilant in her vision and purpose. When I once asked her about her powers of persuasion, she told me that her secret weapon was "cookies." If someone disagreed on one of her positions or proposals they would soon be gifted with a plate of homemade cookies and, while discussing their differences of opinion while munching on a cookie or two, the issue might be resolved. I don't know if Meri Lou brought cookies with her when she met with the Washtenaw County Road Commission to suggest that they allow the newly formed WCPRC to take over their four roadside parks, the 205-acre parcel of land on North Territorial Road given

to them by the state in 1960 and the \$20,000 which was received from the Board of Commissioners each year for caring for them. However, Murray reported that they were very cooperative and this land would fit into her campaign promise of providing parks.

In 1965 the State of Michigan legislators passed a law which encouraged counties to appoint Parks and Recreation Commissions and designated that by law the individual commission must have on their boards the chair of the road commission, the drain commissioner, a member of the county planning commission, one to three county commissioners as well as community members. With the newly acquired land and this legislation, the WCPRC was created. The county commission also gave them a small budget of \$65,000 a year for a few years. The County Board of Commissioners also carefully considered applications for citizen positions on the WCPRC and were wise in selecting members with expertise in parks, recreation, and conservation. Thus, the first meeting was held in August, 1973. The search for a director and subsequent staff ensued. Luckily for Washtenaw County,

the man that could do the job of providing the ground work for the new parks and recreation system was available and willing - Bob Gamble. Meade who was one of the first commissioners stated *"It was the best thing that happened to us because he knew what he was doing. He was a perfect match for the job."* Gamble was leaving a job as Parks Director in Nassau County, Long Island, after many years and was willing to take a reduced salary and move to the Ann Arbor area and start anew in shaping what was to become one of the best county parks departments in the state of Michigan.

In 1974 there was serious unemployment in our country and the Federal Government funded a program called CETA - Comprehensive Employment and Training Act - to put to work those that needed a job. Bob Gamble used the CETA program to staff the new parks and recreation system with employee wages paid for by the Federal Government. For the most part the people hired were very well qualified for their positions and the department quickly rose from one member - the director - to others such as park planner, recreation specialist, deputy director,



County Farm Park Ribbon Cutting Ceremony with Meri Lou Murray (center) and Nelson Meade (Right).



Meri Lou Murray Recreation Center at the Edge of Nelson Meade County Farm Park includes an Indoor Track, Swimming Pool, Exercise Equipment, Basketball Courts, and Pickle Ball Courts.



Parker Mill Park features a Restored Mill, Trails and Beautiful Landscape for Walking.

a senior citizens recreation coordinator who traveled to various communities such as Whitmore Lake to help them develop programs, grounds keepers, and so forth. The commission headquarters were then in the county service center at Washtenaw Avenue and Hogback Road above the sheriff department's rifle range. WCPRC employees soon had to learn to ignore shots being fired below them while they worked. The gym in the facility, which was once a Roman Catholic seminary, was used for the few classes offered. Cross country ski rentals and lessons were held on the site of the former county hospital on Washtenaw Avenue.

I joined the commission soon after it was formed, taking the place of another woman who had scheduling conflicts. I had run a volunteer recreation program in Ypsilanti at a school at the time, and was nominated by someone who felt that all county boards should have poor people on them as well as women. I fit the bill because I was poor, a woman, had a background in recreation, and possessed newly acquired degrees in sociology and history from EMU, and a Master's Degree in social work from U of M. I also grew up participating in recreation programs and visiting parks, as my five children and their children still do to this day. I was lucky because there was a community center attached to

my elementary school in Detroit. I can still sing the song which I performed in a dance on a stage when I was four years old and I remember the dance steps as well so if you want to see "Chick, Chick, Chick, Chick Chicken" performed I'm your gal.

Now that the WCPRC was created, it was time to determine its mission and priorities. Director Gamble led us through the painstaking process of outlining the purpose and procedures necessary for making sure that the taxpayers of the county were being served. Fortunately, one of the first commissioners appointed was Dr. Robert Marans who was employed by the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research and is still on the board. He arranged for summer practicum students at U of M to do a detailed and pointed survey on recreation priorities for residents. When the results were tabulated, at the top of the citizen wish list was the need to preserve open spaces plus a desire for beaches and biking.

All of this would require a steady source of income for the commission and so in 1976 a millage election was held. I remember that along with other commissioners and staff we waited until late in the night at the county building for election results to learn that the vote lost by only 349 votes. Although we were devastated, a vote was quickly held among us with unan-

imous agreement that we would ask the board of commissioners to put the question of the millage on the next ballot. The money raised then could be used as a match for federal and state parks and recreation funds and private grants for land purchase and recreation opportunities. At that time, as is now, developers were quickly buying up vacant parcels of land, some of which included potential parkland. Based on survey results, Independence Lake was on our "shopping list." Lucky for all of us, that millage passed with over 5000 votes to spare and the WCPRC has never again lost a millage campaign.

Meade tells us, "*A steady source of revenue meant that the parks commission could apply for grants that called for matching money. Soon after the election they won a grant from the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund to buy and develop Independence Lake and Rolling Hills.*" Adding to this, in 1979 the County Board of Commissioners generously gave the 127 acres of open land in the middle of the city of Ann Arbor to the WCPRC for preservation and recreation. This extremely popular park is well used today by groups and individuals and is named the Nelson Meade County Farm Park. Located at its edge, on Washtenaw Avenue, is the Meri Lou Murray Recreation Center. It was named to honor this dedicated,



Sharon Mills County Park on the Banks of the River Raisin.

hardworking, and imaginative county commissioner for her 24 years of service to both the county commission and the WCPRC.

Soon after, in 1980, Independence Lake Park was lovingly developed with a swimming lake, hiking trails and a non-motorized boat launch, and opened to the public. This same year Bob Gamble retired and was replaced by Roger Shedlock. Under his watch the list of resident wishes continued to be checked off by creating Rolling Hills County Park which was to become a county park on the east side of Washtenaw County with a beach and more. With a complicated land acquisition, several small farms were combined to provide the land. A small pond for swimming was created by damming a creek and enlarging a small pond on the property. A toboggan run was built for winter recreation, but proved unsustainable because the winters were too warm to allow the ice time to freeze on the run. A very popular disc golf course and a mountain bike trail were also created. Today the park has expanded to include five miles of paved trails for walking, running, biking, a water park with slides, a wave pool with a lazy river, group picnic areas, soccer fields, a family tree house and lots of year-round fun for all ages and abilities.

Rolling Hills opened in 1983 and the

following year Parker Mill on Geddes Road was opened satisfying the citizen's wish for historic preservation using a new source of funding with State Land Trust funds. Parker Mill was built originally in 1824 by Robert Fleming as a saw mill and then purchased by William and Mary Parker in 1873 who used the dam and old foundation to build a grist and then a cider mill. The mill stayed in the family until 1959 when it was bought by a land development firm. Included in the purchase was a small log cabin then located on Geddes Road but since restored and moved into a lovely meadow of Parker Mill County Park. The trail system of this park was provided by a bequest for \$654,000 to honor Hoyt Post who had as a boy loved to walk along Fleming Creek. This also provided the funds to build a bridge to link a small amount of land and build a gazebo reached by tunneling under busy

Geddes Road – a delightful spot along Fleming Creek.

In 1985 Fred Barkley was hired as director and brought new life and enthusiasm to the WCPRC. He continued to check off the items of interest which the citizens of Washtenaw County had provided for the commission. With a growing park system, the need for better offices which were not above a firing range was apparent and the citizens of the county asked for an indoor swimming pool, as well as gym, exercise equipment, an indoor track and classroom space. Thus, the Meri Lou Murray Recreation Center was built.

When these projects were finished another recreation opportunity was on the drawing board. The Pierce Lake Golf Course in Chelsea provides an award-winning place to recreate and relax in a rural setting complete with nature trails. Still answering the citizen's request of historic preservation, Sharon Mills County Park was purchased in 1999. The basis of this park and destination is the grist mill on the Raisin River built in the 1830's by an abolitionist with links to the underground railroad. It was completely restored to historic specifications with additional land adjacent and nearby providing trails for biking, walking and exploration of the River Raisin.

Barkley retired in 2001 and was replaced by Robert Tetens who approached the job with enthusiasm and imagination. Two amazing recent additions to the WCPRC programs were the Natural Areas Preservation



Janice Anschuetz in Front of the Rolling Hills Park Dedication Plaque.



Nelson Meade and Janice Anschuetz (WCPRC Commissioners) and Don Stabler then Age 102 - Circa 2012.

Program and the Border-to-Border Trail which is now near completion and will allow the ambitious biker or hiker the opportunity to travel by trail from Belle Isle in Detroit to the Upper Peninsula by way of the Iron Belle Trail, and the less ambitious to enjoy a comfortable ride or walk in Washtenaw County.

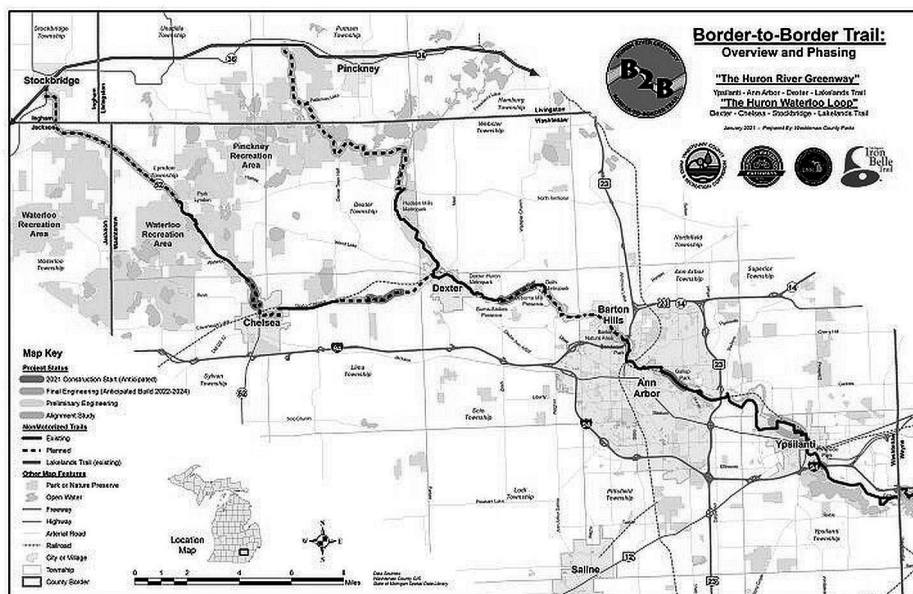
The Natural Areas Preservation Program along with the agricultural land preservation program are a major addition to the WCPRC system and will ensure that county residents in future generations will enjoy preserved land and agriculture. These are funded by a separate millage and, if possible, partnered by state, federal and local grants which will assure that land with significant physical characteristics or plants can be protected. The agricultural component assists farms to continue to operate in Washtenaw County by purchasing preservation rights to the land.

When Tetens retired in 2017 the Deputy Director, Coy Vaughn, took over the reins of the WCPRC and has worked tirelessly to run the now complex and diversified parks and recreation system. The recent and highly popular Michigan Folk School on Plymouth Road east of Prospect Road is off to

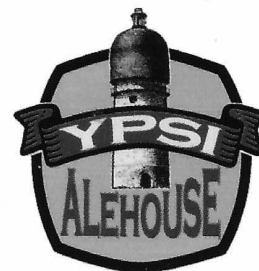
an incredible start with the building of a new headquarters at Staebler Farm County Park, which is still an ongoing project. With input from the public, it promises to become a destination park.

So, in 50 years starting with \$65,000, dedicated CETA staff, and a few roadside parks, the Washtenaw County parks system has grown into one of the best park systems in the state. HAPPY BIRTHDAY Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission and may your upcoming years be happy and healthy ones and may this little review inspire the reader to enjoy all of the fun and beauty offered through the tireless efforts of the WCPRC staff which has improved the quality of life for so many of us.

(Janice Anschuetz has lived in the historic east side of Ypsilanti for over 50 years. She served 47 years on the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission from its early inception. 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.)



Washtenaw County Border to Border Trail Map.



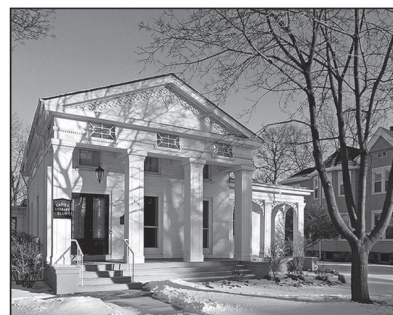
**Where good friends share
good beer and good food.**

**Located in the heart
of Ypsilanti.**

**CARRYOUT AND DELIVERY
Order at:**

<https://www.orderypsialehouse.com>
or call 734-487-1555

**124 Pearl Street
Ypsilanti, MI 48197**



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

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

*For more information
visit our website:*

ladiesliteraryclub.org



The sign on Michigan Avenue in front of the Police Station.



The face of the four signs reflecting the heroism of LTC Charles Kettles.

LTC Charles Kettles Signs

BY ALVIN RUDISILL

The Ypsilanti Historical Society collected funds to sponsor road signs honoring Medal of Honor recipient Lt. Col. Charles Kettles. Kettles received the Medal for his heroism in Vietnam in 1967. Four signs have been placed in locations where people who are entering the City will be able to view them. The four locations are: 1) Michigan Avenue in front of the Ypsilanti Police Department; 2) Huron Street across from Ypsilanti City Hall, 3) Michigan Avenue across from the Bomber Restaurant; and 4) Washtenaw Avenue by the Butman Ford used car lot. Johnson Sign Company designed and built the signs at a much reduced cost and installed them at no charge.

A Special Issue of the Ypsilanti Gleanings written by Bill Nickels includes information about the acts of heroism which resulted in Kettles receiving the Medal of Honor. The following is a description of his actions that are included in the Special Issue: *On the 14th of May 1967, Charles was stationed at Duc Pho Airfield in the central highlands of*

Vietnam. What seemed to be a routine assignment, six men of the 101st were dropped off by helicopter north of Duc Pho to do a reconnaissance patrol. They met heavy fire from the enemy and retreated to a B-52 bomb crater. Soon after he arrived to pick up the men, he was advised by Flight Control to leave the area. Another B-52 raid was scheduled to hit the area. After attempts to blow down tall trees in the area with the helicopter rotor failed, Charles had his crew chief and gunner remove their safety straps, linked them together, secured one end to the helicopter, and threw them overboard to the ground troops. Several attempts by the ground troops to climb up the straps were unsuccessful. Completely disregarding his own personal safety, Charles slid back his armor plating and hung out of the window in order to demonstrate to the patrol members how to tie the straps forming a sling around themselves. Charles lifted four of the men one at a time using the sling. A second helicopter lifted the remaining two men. Minutes later the B-52 strike finally took place. The two helicopters

moved the six men to a secure area to the west where they continued their reconnaissance.

On the 15th of May 1967, Charles' platoon flew a group of eight helicopters with five members of the 101st aboard each helicopter to the area where the patrol was dropped off the day before. After two lifts, eighty men entered combat. They moved up a river valley into an ambush and suffered heavy casualties. Charles volunteered to carry reinforcements to the embattled force and evacuate their wounded from the battle site. Small arms and automatic weapons fire raked the landing zone and inflicted heavy damage to the ships, but Charles refused to leave the ground until all their craft were loaded to capacity. He then led them out of the battle area. He later returned to the battle field with more reinforcements and landed in the midst of a rain of mortar and automatic weapons fire which wounded his gunner and ruptured his fuel tank. After loading more wounded aboard, he nursed his crippled ship back to his base. In an attempt to supply the men with needed ammunition, another helicopter was destroyed. Suffering damage from ground fire during extraction, his company was down to one flyable helicopter. After securing additional helicopters from the 161st Attack Helicopter Company, Charles led a flight of six ships to rescue the infantry unit. Because their landing area was very narrow, Charles and his platoon flew back in trail formation making them vulnerable to ground fire. Landing, Charles picked up one man and the tail helicopter signaled that all the men were aboard helicopters. Thinking all were picked up, the helicopters took off on a route that would loop around back to Duc Pho Airfield. After looping around, a radio message from the command and control helicopter reported that eight men were still on the ground and missed being picked up. With one aboard, Charles volunteered to return for the others. Without the support of gunships or artillery and surprise as his only ally, Charles flew back into the river valley. Completely disregarding his own safety, he maneuvered his lone craft through savage enemy fire to where the remainder of the infantrymen waited. Mortar fire blasted out the helicopter chin bubble and part of the windshield, but he remained on the ground until all eight men were aboard. The enemy concentrated massive fire power on his helicopter and another round badly damaged his tail boom. His UH-1 "Huey" had a load limit of five men plus his crew. With nine passengers, he was now four men over the helicopter's load limit. When the copilot tried to take off, his helicopter fish tailed severely. Charles took over the controls and found that the engine did not have enough power for a normal take off. Charles lowered the pitch of the control rotor blade so the rotor rpm could reach normal rpm. With normal rotor rpm, Charles was able to lift the helicopter off the ground and move forward. With the overloaded helicopter, the rotor rpm would again slow down, so again he lowered the pitch, easing the helicopter to the ground, trading a decrease of altitude for normal



President Obama placing the Medal of Honor on LTC Charles Kettles.

rotor rpm. With normal rotor rpm, Charles was able to lift the helicopter and move forward, only to have the rpm again slow down. Repeating this process five or six times with five or six bounces down the valley floor, Charles was finally able to achieve enough forward speed to maintain flight. Charles calls the UH-1 a "Great machine!" We can only imagine the relief the crew and rescued men felt as they finally knew they were returning to their base. Twenty-one helicopters were damaged by enemy fire beyond repair that day. Nine of his crew members were wounded.

The effort to award the Medal of Honor to LTC Charles Kettles was initiated in 1912 by Bill Vollano who served as the local coordinator for the Veterans History Project. Bill learned of the heroism of Charles when he was interviewed as a part of the Veterans History Project. Bill then contacted a number of men who served with Charles in Vietnam and together they initiated the effort to obtain the Medal of Honor for Charles. The effort was later assisted by Congresswoman Debbie Dingle.

The Medal of Honor was eventually awarded to LTC Charles Kettles on July 18, 2016 in the White House. During the presentation President Obama said, "So the Army's warrior ethos is based on a simple principle: A soldier never leaves his comrades behind. Chuck Kettles honored that creed – not with a single act of heroism, but over and over and over. And because of that heroism, 44 American soldiers made it out that day – 44."

Washtenaw County Auto Show of 1922

BY ROBERT ANSCHUETZ

The first auto show in Washtenaw County was held February 1-4, 1922, in Ypsilanti. The show was held at the Apex Motors building, located at the corner of Parsons Street and S. River Street, just south of Michigan Avenue. The opening day schedule was 7:00 p.m. through 10:30 pm on Wednesday, February 1st. It continued from 2:00 p.m. until 10:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 2nd through Saturday, February 4th.

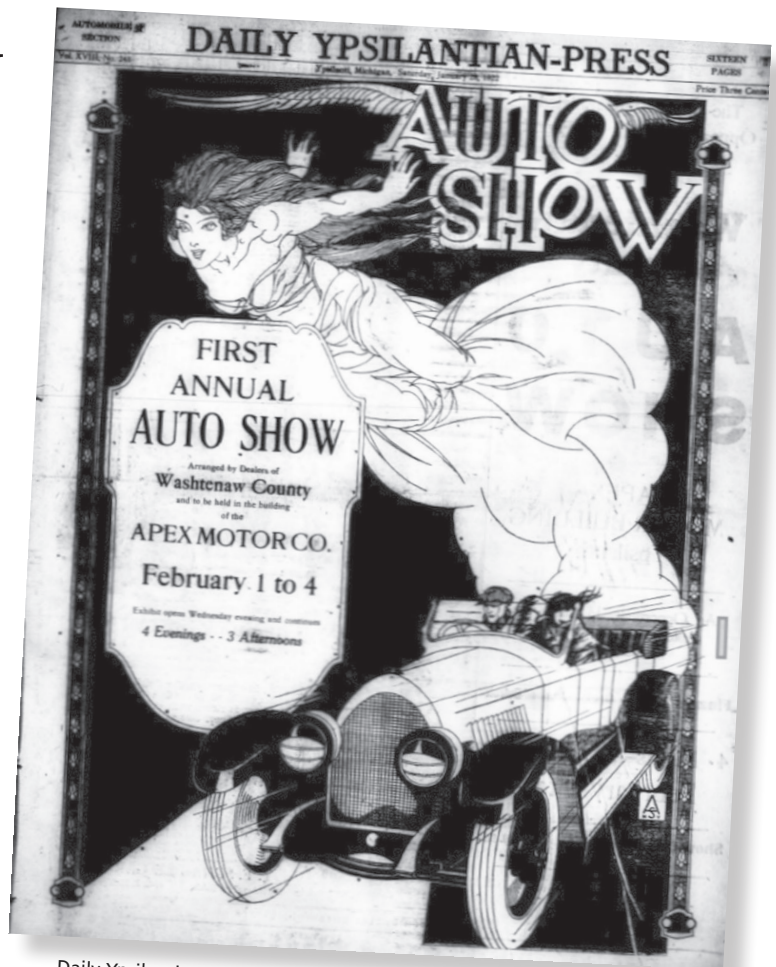


Theodore Schaible – 1922 Mayor of Ypsilanti and Member of the Washtenaw County Auto Show Executive Committee.

The purpose of the show was to increase sales and participation in auto shows from Washtenaw County customers. Dealers who participated at previous Detroit auto shows had been surprised at how few people from Washtenaw County attended, and the Washtenaw County show promised that support of an auto show held locally would be strong. The admission was 25 cents per person, and children under twelve were admitted free. The show also aimed to attract female customers, as a number of exhibitors provided souvenirs to women attendees.

The 1922 Washtenaw County Auto Show was one of 12 held that year under the general supervision of the Michigan Automotive Trade Association, which was the state dealer organization. Every United States automobile manufacturer at the time, a total of 25, participated in the show. The show provided “*An Opportunity to Study the Automotive Achievements of the New Year;*” according to their advertisement for the show. The manufacturers and dealers represented at the auto show included:

ACE – Apex Motor Corporation
 BUICK – T.E. Schaible: Ann Arbor Buick Sales Co.
 CADILLAC – Cadillac Garage Co., Ann Arbor
 CHEVROLET- Bens Bros. Ann Arbor
 CLEVELAND – Ypsi Sales & Service
 DODGE BROS – Jos. H. Thompson: Ann Arbor Garages
 DORT – Staebler & Sons, Ann Arbor
 DURANT – Squires-Goldsmith Co.
 ESSEX – Squires-Goldsmith Co.; Andrew Hunter Ann Arbor



Daily Ypsilantian-Press Auto Show Coverage.

FORD – E.G. Wiedman: H.S. Platt, Ann Arbor
 FRANKLIN – Washtenaw Motor Sales, Ann Arbor
 HAYNES – Petts Motor Sales, Detroit
 HUPMOBILES – Washtenaw Motor Sales
 HUDSON – Squires-Goldsmith: Andrew Hunter, Ann Arbor
 LAFAYETTE – Washtenaw Motor Sales
 MARMON – Washtenaw Motor Sales
 MAXWELL – Cadillac Garage Co., Ann Arbor
 NASH – Ypsi Nash Sales; Ann Arbor Nash Sales
 OAKLAND – Staebler & Sons, Ann Arbor
 OLDSMOBILE – Squires-Goldsmith Co.; Economy Garage, Ann Arbor
 OVERLAND – Woodbury & Seyler, Ann Arbor
 REPUBLIC TRUCK – Republic Truck Co.
 REO – Staebler & Sons, Ann Arbor
 STUDEBAKER – Huronside Garage; Washtenaw Motor Sales

WILLYS-KNIGHT – Squires-Goldsmith; Woodbury & Seyler, Ann Arbor

In addition to the automobile manufacturers and dealers, dozens of suppliers were represented. These included:

Monarch Mfg. Co. – Oils and Greases

Harry's Auto Accessories – General Accessories

Fox Textile Products Co. – Tents for Autos

Republic Truck Co. – Republic Truck

Cannon Electric Co. – Auto Painting

E.R. Schill – Tires and Accessories

Hayes Schock Absorber

Ann Arbor Auto Top Co.

General Sales Co. – Accessories

Lincoln Tire & Rubber Co. – General Tires

Staebler Oil Co. – Oils

Tisch Auto Supply Co. – Accessories and Shop Equipment

Fest & Lichty – Universal Ray Deflectors

Dean & Co., Ltd. – Oils

Johnson & Wilson – Painting and Trimming

J.H. Hopkins – Auto Insurance

American Auto Accessory – Accessories

Vernon J. McCrumb – Vacuum Cup Tires

A.P. Sriver – Willard Battery

P.E. Skinner; Murdock Lally Co. – Exide Battery

Citizens' Mutual Auto Insurance Co.

Bowen Products Co. – Accessories

J.J. Polzin – Curran Radiator

Simplex Auto Lock

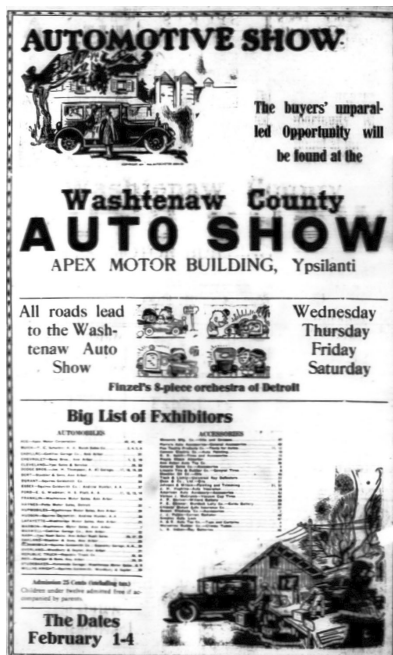
A. & E. Auto Top Co. – Tops and Curtains

Wolverine Rubber Co. – Climax Tubes

L.B. Osbon – Ray Batteries

The executive committee of the show was made up of Theodore E. Schaible, Robert H. Alber, Emanuel G. Wiedman, and Joseph H. Thompson, who were officers in the Washtenaw County Dealer's Association, which was organized in 1917. World War I caused a pause of the show for two years, and in 1919 it was revived. The leadership was formed from dealers primarily in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, although there were also member dealers in Saline, Manchester and Chelsea. Emanuel Wiedman was the first president, succeeded by Walter Staebler of Ann Arbor who sold Reo, Oakland, and Dort cars. Theodore Schaible of Ypsilanti was elected president of the association on January 1, 1922. The policy of the association was to consolidate the officers first in Ypsilanti and then in Ann Arbor, believing that more effective results would be obtained with executives in the same city. The 1922 Washtenaw County Auto Show inspired the men to work together as never before.

Theodore Schaible was the President

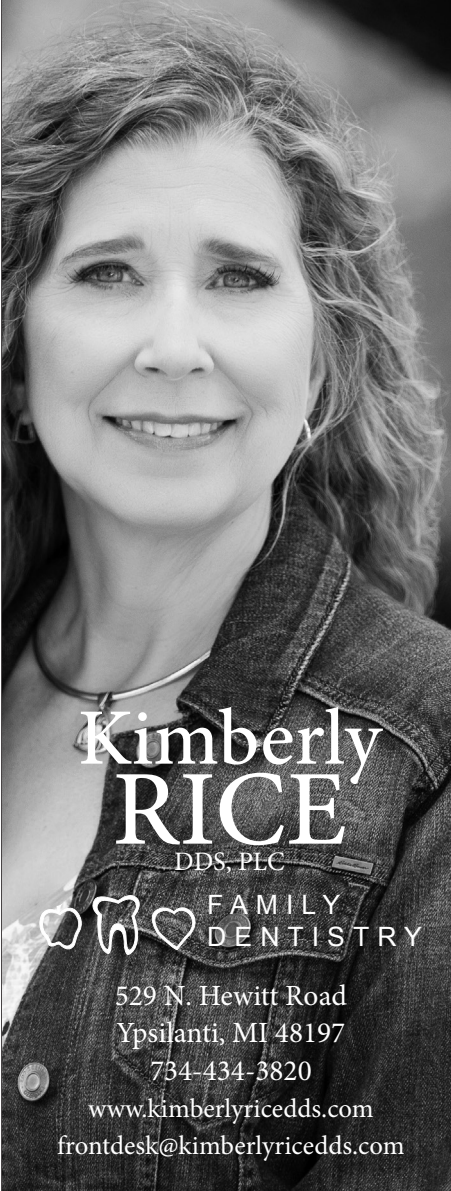


1922 Washtenaw County Auto Show Newspaper Advertisement.

Welcome to the Neighborhood!

We have been serving and supporting our community for over 20 years. Our office is centrally located at 529 N. Hewitt Road between Packard Road and Washtenaw Avenue.

Stop by and visit. If we haven't met, we welcome new patients. We provide professional family dental care with an emphasis on prevention. If you are new to the area, please check out our website for a map and directions to our office.



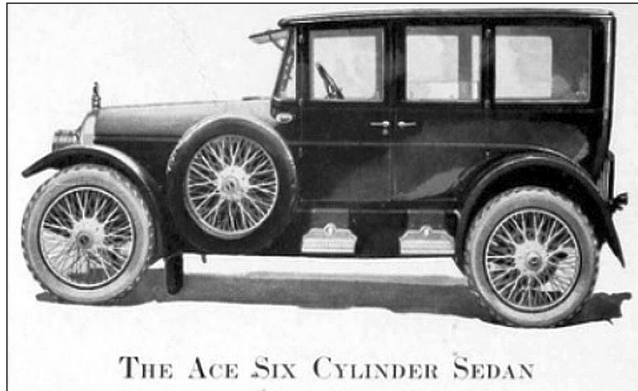
Kimberly RICE
DDS, PLC
FAMILY DENTISTRY

529 N. Hewitt Road
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
734-434-3820
www.kimberlyricedds.com
frontdesk@kimberlyricedds.com

of the Washtenaw County Dealer's Association. He was also the Mayor of Ypsilanti and also handled the Buick line of automobiles in the county. Schaible supported the cooperative method of pooling dealers and believed that the customer as well as the dealer benefited from improved methods of doing business. Schaible was in the automobile business from the early days in the county and was one of the first dealers in Saline and Ypsilanti.

Robert Alber was the Vice-President of the Dealer's Association. He was a well-known Dodge dealer in Ann Arbor, and was the head of the Ann Arbor section of the association.

Emanuel Wiedman was the Treasurer of the Dealer's Association. In Washtenaw County, the name of Ford and the name of Wiedman were inseparably linked in the public mind. One dealer said *"I suppose nearly every family in the county at one time or another has purchased a Ford from Wiedman."* Wiedman sold cars in Ypsilanti, Milan, Saline, Manchester and Plymouth.



1922 Ace Six Cylinder Sedan.

Joseph Thompson was the Secretary of the Dealer's Association. When the Dodge brothers began building their sales organization, they looked over the field of applicants and gave Thompson the Ypsilanti agency. At one time, he was one of the most active dealers in the country and a leader in the Dealer's Association activities.

The inaugural Washtenaw County Auto Show was held in

the newly constructed Apex plant, which offered 30,000 square feet on one floor, considered the best show space in the state auto show circuit. A photograph in the Ypsilanti Historical Society's archives captioned *"Local Auto Dealers"* was probably taken during the 1922 auto show. On the back of the photo, it identifies Emanuel Wiedman, Joseph Thompson, and Maurice Day. It also shows a band and elaborate decorations which were described in the accounts of the auto show in the *Daily Ypsilantian-Press*.

The show floor was decorated by the Detroit Arts and Crafts Studio. Instead of piping in pre-recorded music, as is often done today in shopping establishments, Finnel's



Local Auto Dealers – Probably Taken at the 1922 Auto Show.

YPSILANTI MUSEUMS



Michigan Firehouse Museum

110 W. Cross St. – Ypsilanti 48197

734 547-0663

www.michiganfirehousemuseum.org

Hours: 12 to 4 Thursday thru Sunday

Admission (online pricing):

Adults - \$10 • Kids - \$5 • Kids (under 5) Free



Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum

100 E. Cross St. – Ypsilanti, MI 48198

734 482-5200

www.ypsiautoheritage.org

Hours: 1 to 4 Thursday thru Sunday

Admission: Adults - \$5.00 • Kids (under 12) Free



Ypsilanti House Museum & Archives

220 N. Huron St. – Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Museum 734 482-4990

Archives – 734 217-8236

www.ypsihistory.org

Hours: 2 to 5 Tuesday thru Sunday

Admission: Adults – Free Kids – Free



Yankee Air Museum

47884 D St. - Belleville, MI 48111

734 483-4030

www.yankeeairmuseum.org

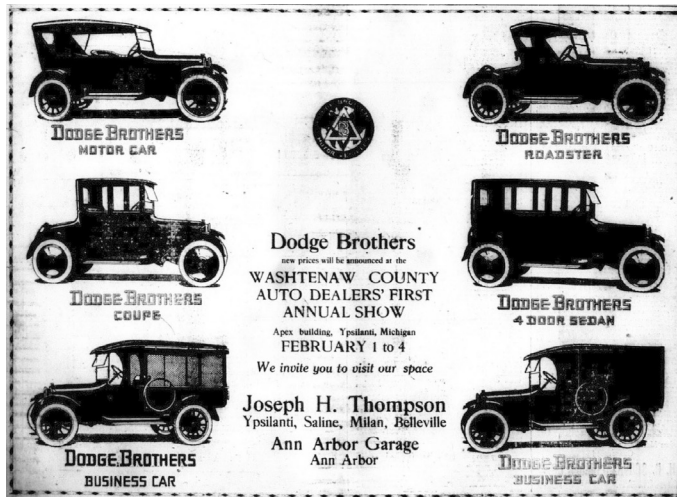
Hours: 10 to 4 Tuesday thru Saturday

11 to 4 Sunday

Admission: Museum Members – Free

Adults - \$13 • Seniors (60+) & Vets - \$10

Kids (2 to 17) - \$10 • Kids (Under 2) – Free



Dodge Brothers Advertisement for the Auto Show.

8-piece orchestra from Detroit provided live music for the attendees. The show cars occupied roughly half of the floor space, and the accessory suppliers occupied the other half. Every type of accessory was represented, including tires, oils, spot lights, tops, curtains, painting and trimming, auto insurance, auto tents and batteries.

The United States automobile manufacturers supported this event with shiny new cars and eye-catching exhibits. The Apex company provided a demonstration of the Guy Disc Valvemotor, which was the patent of Apex' chief engineer Fred M. Guy. Buick showcased a special stripped chassis, which was also their feature display at the national shows. Willys-Knight showed their sleeve-valve in action. There was also a Stanley Steamer boiler engine on display.

Advertised car prices for the 1922 auto show indicated that most cars sold for around \$500 to \$2,000. Chevrolet claimed the lowest priced fully-equipped car build at \$525 for the coupe, and \$875 for the four-door sedan. Ford offered their bare-bones Touring car at a list price of \$348 and a Runabout for \$319. Ford's advertisement for the auto show highlighted their low prices as follows "Come and see for yourself, the exceptional values offered in all the Ford Products. The last reduction became effective January 16 and was the fourth drop in 16 months, totaling 40 per cent reduction on all models. The prices now are the lowest in the history of the company."

Automobile prices had been falling following World War I, as manufacturing and supply costs tumbled for the automobile manufacturers and they were able to pass along the savings to their customers. The dealers at the show suggested that the low prices had "hit bedrock" and they were sure to increase the following year, making the Spring of 1922 an excellent time to buy a new car. It seems that the sales tactics of 1922 have continued for the next 100 years with similar sales pitches to "I don't know if my manager will approve a price this low" and "what will it take to put you in this car today?!"

The February 1st issue of the *Daily Ypsilantian-Press* covered the opening of the event on their front page:

Promptly at 7 o'clock this evening one of the biggest automobile shows in Michigan, outside of Detroit, will open in the Apex building, south of the Schaible Garage on East Michigan Avenue. A special entrance is provided opposite the Huronside Garage just east of the Michigan Avenue bridge and the main entrance for visitors driving cars will be at River Street. Scores of shining new cars are placed this afternoon, ready for closest inspection of the hundreds of visitors that will attend the show during the week. Every available foot of floor space is used to good advantage and fitting decorations that have been arranged during the past two days afford an exceedingly attractive setting.

One of the highlights of the show was supposedly the first car ever owned in Ypsilanti from a decade earlier. Ace cars manufactured by the host Apex Company attracted a great deal of attention, particularly the sedan finished in silk tapestry and painted a dark grey. Altogether, there were approximately 100 cars on display amongst the 25 manufacturers, and price tags on them represented a reduction of 25 to 35 per cent compared with the year prior. About 2/3 of the cars were new and improved automobiles for 1922.

More than three thousand visitors were expected to participate in the four days of the show. A large contingency of rural residents of Washtenaw County were expected to come to the show, since they appreciated the effort that was made to organize a show within convenient traveling distance for the Washtenaw County farmers. Opening night occurred during a heavy rainstorm, but despite the bad weather, over 500 visitors came during the first evening of the show.

The Daily Ypsilantian-Press covered the first day of the auto show as follows:

Scores of glistening cars, new in design, commanding in appearance with newest lines supported by inviting price announcements, delighted 500 motor enthusiasts and admirers of art and beauty at the Washtenaw County Auto Show, which opened in the Apex building here Wednesday evening. In all the mammoth show room there was no foot of space not in use, in fact the only criticism heard during the evening was that there were too many cars. Artistic wall coverings converted the concrete walls and pillars of the big building into a room of pleasing softness and the delightful strains of music played by the orchestra brought here for the occasion from Detroit added a festive air quite in keeping with the magnificence of the beautiful motor vehicles on display.



The Buick Special 6-54
Tufted Top—Maroon Body—
Smartest Equipment—Make this
Buick the Season's Most Exciting Car

Dashing in appearance, the Buick Special 6-54 Roadster, exhibited for the first time at the New York Show, is fitted with every convenience found on the finest cars at home and abroad.

The Special 6-54 Roadster is built in response to a consistent demand from those familiar with the performance of the big Buick Roadster built in previous years, a model cherished by each owner to the present day.

The Special 6-54 Roadster is now in production. Delivery date may be obtained upon request.

BUICK MOTOR COMPANY, FLINT, MICHIGAN
 Division of General Motors Corporation
 Former Builders of Values in Great Motor Cities
 Division of All-Private Cars—Buick Division

T. E. SCHAIKE GARAGE
 The Home of the Buick 40-42 E. Michigan Ave.

\$1785
 F. O. B. Flint, Michigan

When better automobiles are built, Buick will build them.

Buick Advertisement for the Auto Show.

On the second day of the auto show, about 1,700 visitors attended the auto show. Another 1,500 visitors attended the show on the third day. By the end of the fourth day, a total of 5,851 visitors had attended the auto show, a much higher total than expected. The show closed with a large dinner for

A Complete Exhibit
 of The
Ford
PRODUCTS

The Washtenaw County Automobile Show
 Ypsilanti, February 1st to the 4th

Complete arrangements have been made for personal attention to be given in the explanation of the new starter and the complete power plant.

New Lower Prices in Effect
 Consider and see for yourself, the exceptional values offered in all the Ford Products. The last reduction became effective Jan. 1st and with the fourth step in 16 months, totaling an 8 per cent reduction on all models. The prices now are the lowest in the history of the company.

One complete Ford Car is available throughout the world. One complete Ford Motor Vehicle is available in the United States.

Be practical and sensible in your buying of a motor car. Let your next car be a Ford and buy it at the Show!

Henry S. Platt
 E. G. Wiedman Auto Co.

Touring Car  New Price \$348	Sedan  \$845
Runabout  New Price \$319	One Ton Truck Chassis  New Price \$430
Coupe  New Price \$580	Fordson Tractor  \$385
Tractor and Disc  \$1000	Tractor and Plow  \$1200

Ford Motor Car Company Advertisement for the Auto Show.

the automobile dealers and salesmen.

The Washtenaw County Auto Show of 1922 was a smashing success. Farmers and city residents alike enjoyed the advantages of having the auto show within close proximity to their residences. The auto show had something for everybody, whether it be cars, trucks, tractors or accessories. One visitor in Ypsilanti expressed genuine surprise at the magnitude of the undertaking on the part of the Washtenaw County automobile and auto accessory dealers. Another visitor, the president of the Toledo-based Monarch Manufacturing company, stated that he had never seen such a show in a small city. *"The show in Toledo is bigger than this, of course,"* he said, *"but it never attains the atmosphere and distinctive tone that characterizes this exhibition."* It is unknown for how many years the Washtenaw County Auto Show continued on the Michigan auto show circuit.

(Robert Anschuetz grew up in Ypsilanti in the historic Swaine house at the corner of Forest Ave. and River St. He is a member of the 2023 cohort of the YpsiWrites organization and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)

The Buyers' Unparalleled Opportunity Will Be Found at the
Washtenaw County
AUTO SHOW
APEX MOTOR BUILDING
Ypsilanti

The public's chance to compare poppet-valve, with sleeve valve motor, also to see the new Gay Disc Valvemotor—every type of engine, sizes and four.

An Opportunity to Study the Automotive Achievements of the New Year

Four Nights—Three Afternoons
February 1 to 4

Admission 25 Cents (including tax)
 Children under twelve admitted free if accompanied by parents.

Auto Show Advertisement.

Historic Depot Town



Linda French
 Owner

56 East Cross Street
Ypsilanti, MI 48198

Phone: (734) 483-1035
 Fax: (734) 483-1490
 ladyfrench@aol.com
 www.sidetrackbarandgrill.com

Barr, Anhut & Associates, P.C.

ATTORNEYS AT LAW
105 Pearl Street
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
734-481-1234



John M. Barr, J.D.
 jbarr@barrlawfirm.com

Wills, Estate Planning, Probate,
 Real Estate, Business,
 Family Law, Contracts,
 Municipal Law, Litigation

Highest "AV" Peer Rating
Named "Super Lawyer"

An American Christmas Carol

BY TIM SABO AND EVAN MILAN | EDITED BY STEPHANIE KELLY

Walking off the front porch on November 1st, when the air is still warm and autumnal leaves continue to cling to their boughs, it is hard to imagine a United States where Christmas is not the cause célèbre. The moment the nine-foot-tall skeletons are packed away, and the Jack-o-lantern's smiles start to curl as they enter into advanced age, Christmas lights begin to twinkle from the eaves of houses and nine-foot-tall snowmen are blown up every night. The airwaves, too, are filled with Christmas cheer at this early date; Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, and Nat King Cole will croon familiar carols from three weeks before Thanksgiving until we've entered the new year. Auntie Mame will not be rushing things, needing a little Christmas one week past Thanksgiving.

But Christmas, with its century old roots in Europe, was not always the social highlight of the year. December in colonial New England had nearly the same spirit as January and February have today. The Christmas celebrations of the 17th and 18th centuries were largely a lively festival, lasting days, where feasting and drinking were the central theme. The raucous Christmas festivities in Europe were an appalling perversion to the Puritans and, with no references to the holiday in the Bible, the zealots rejected Christmas altogether.

In the south, where colonization was fueled by the promise of wealth, rather than religious freedom, Christmas was, more so, celebrated in a fashion more in tune with the days-long celebrations of the English estates that many of the pioneering individuals had once known. However, many Americans throughout the 18th and early 19th century were largely indifferent to the holiday regardless of religious affiliation or heritage. Christmas would not begin to take on its current character in the United States until the mid-19th century; this was when rapid industrialization, an influx of immigration, and a continuously disintegrating national unity fueled feelings of nostalgia. The family, goodwill and peace that Christmas brought, were a comfort to the Americans of the 1850s.

Many of the traditions we know today were present at the time of Christmas' American awakening. The Christmas tree has its origins in Germany in the 1790s; the evergreen is said to represent the eternal life of Christ. The tradition came to America through German immigration, and was noted to first appear in Pennsylvania in 1819. Traditionally, the tree was erected on Christmas Eve and adorned with hand-made ornaments, such as gingerbread and sugar cookies cut into festive shapes. The tree would stand until twelfth night (January 5th or 6th depending on sources); children would be permitted to eat the cookies at that time. The lights that adorn the tree also hold symbolic meaning beyond the festive appearance they lend. Once candles or simply made oil lamps, now electric string lights, the lights represent the



Thomas Nast: "Merry Old Santa Claus", from the January 1, 1881 edition of Harper's Weekly

bonfires set for the yuletide season by the Germanic peoples who celebrated the winter solstice prior to the expansion of Christianity. The fires were thought to represent the sun on the longest night of the year.

Santa Claus, too, managed to find his way to the new world; it must have been a clear night as Rudolph wasn't "born" until 1939. "A Visit from St. Nicholas", better known as "The Night Before Christmas", was first printed in 1823 and has informed many of the characteristics we now attribute to the elf with a twinkle in his eye and a belly that shakes like a bowl full of jelly. Published anonymously, the poem is most commonly attributed to Clement Clarke Moore, though some believe the work bears more resemblance to that of Major Henry Livingston Jr. Many of the attributes of St. Nick are rooted in this poem; however, the origins of Santa in America came from Washington Irving. Irving, the New York native who wrote the iconic Halloween tale "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," credited St. Nick as the adviser to Oloff van Cortlandt in choosing the location for the founding of New York City in his work of

historical fiction, *A History of New York*.

By the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, Christmas was firmly entrenched into American culture. Noted by Harvey C. Colburn in his *Story of Ypsilanti*, life during the war period was largely business as usual. Excluding the absence of the young men of Ypsilanti, Christmas was celebrated in ways unchanged from the years leading up to the rebellion. Oranges, lemons, and pineapples would have been popular adornments to the homes of prominent families along Huron Street; the hard-to-get fruits from far-off tropical regions would have been a status symbol for those throwing holiday gatherings. Roasted chestnuts and mulled wine would have been equally abundant at festive gatherings thrown by Asa Dow and his wife, Minerva. Out in the southern battlefields, Christmas went on with less celebration; but soldiers marked the day in what ways they could. From the diary of one Rhode Island Colonel:

"Christmas Dec. 25th, 1862 – We have passed a very quiet day and except that we have been excused from drill, the day has been like others. My brother-in-law...came today from Washington and made me a call. In the evening [Lieutenant Colonel] Goff of our regiment and other officers came to my tent and we had a sing. I should like to be at home on this Christmas night." -Elisha Hunt Rhodes, Colonel of the 2nd Rhode Island Volunteers.

The north may have carried on during the war, but the absent fathers and sons were never far from thought. The January 3, 1863 issues of *Harper's Weekly* (unrelated to the still extant literary magazine) released what is believed to be the first printed illustration of Santa Claus. The illustration depicts the jolly elf bringing toys and copies of the weekly news publication to the soldiers in the field.

As the nineteenth century moved forward, more Christmas traditions took hold with each passing decade. After the Civil War, Christmas tree ornaments became big business. As early as 1870, American businessmen imported large quantities of ornaments from Germany: glass balls in bright, festive colors, wax angels with spun glass wings, and tin cut into all kinds of shapes for tree ornamentation. One advertisement stated, *"So many charming little ornaments can now be bought ready to decorate trees that it seems almost a waste of time to make them at home."*

Louis Prang, a German immigrant and astute reader of public taste, began the selling and sending of Christmas cards on a large scale. Prang arrived in the United States a decade before the Civil War, and by 1870 owned two-thirds of the steam presses in the country; he perfected a process of color printing called chromolithography. He distributed thousands of his trade cards at an international exposition in 1873; and there it was suggested he add a Christmas greeting to them. When he introduced these cards in 1875, they be-

coming an instant hit; Prang could not keep up with demand. The ready-made sentiments drew family and friends closer together across an increasingly expanding landscape. The growth of commercialization of the holiday can be linked to the Industrial Revolution and a growing middle class. The holiday boosted the modern trade business. Certain states declared the day a state holiday, and in 1870 President Ulysses S. Grant made Christmas a federal holiday.

In 1889, the first White House Christmas tree was placed in what is currently the Yellow Oval room; at the time President Benjamin Harrison and his family used the room as the family parlor. First Lady Frances Folsom Cleveland is credited with lighting the White House Christmas tree with electric lights in 1894 or 1895 (sources differ); the White House had been wired for electricity in 1891. Frances's lights were made by an electrician and were expensive. The colors were red, white, and blue and each bulb had to be turned on individually to the delight of the Cleveland's daughters. Frances created a lively and festive atmosphere at the White House during the holiday season. While her electric lights dazzled many Americans, electricity was still mistrusted by most, who wondered what exactly was in those bulbs. President William McKinley received letters in 1899 which tried to dissuade the president from having a tree, the argument being that it was a "forestry fad" and that it was "un-American" due to its German origins. Amusingly, there was no Christmas tree in the White House for the 1902 season due to President Theodore Roosevelt forgetting to order a tree by December 23rd.

The Christmas holiday did not change much from the turn of the century to the end of the 1920s. During the Christmas of 1917, the Hall Brothers were busy running their stationery store in Kansas City, Missouri, when they ran out of the traditional white, red, and green tissue paper. Thinking fast, the brothers began to sell decorated envelope liners from France; it was an instant success and patterned wrapping paper became a necessary part of gift giving. The Hall Brothers would go on to found the Hallmark Company, a billion-dollar entity today. By the 1920s, Americans were wrapping their Christmas gifts in foil papers, often with geometric patterns. Tissue paper was still used, but was losing its popularity. People also decorated brown paper themselves for gift giving.

The 1920s were a decade of phenomenal change and it is also the decade that people living today can find more relatable. Americans returning home from the battlefields of the Great War brought with them news of the "wider world." The United States was now a powerful world partner, ready and able to create a new and modern way of living. On December 24, 1923, President Calvin Coolidge lit the first National Christmas Tree, beginning a tradition that continues today. Christmas ornaments made of glass were popular and reasonably priced and collectible. Tinsel was popular; invented in Germany from real silver, machines pulled the

silver into wafer-thin strips. While it was durable, it also tarnished quickly.

By 1927, retailers sold affordable factory manufactured ceramic Christmas lights in a dazzling array of colors. Toys for children often replicated everyday items from the adult world. Wheeled toys such as automobiles and airplanes (stimulated by Lindbergh's 1927 solo flight from New York to Paris) were the hot items for children's Christmas gifts. The year also saw the 25th anniversary of the teddy bear.

The department stores began to advertise goods for gift giving and having children photographed with Santa Claus.

Hudson's in Detroit had the first Thanksgiving parade in 1925 which included a Santa float. Macy's in New York introduced their Santa float in the 1927 Thanksgiving parade. There is debate about which store had the first Thanksgiving parade; Macy's states that it was their store that began the parade in 1923, and Hudson's said they were the first, with Macy's copying the following year.

Christmas has continued to develop and take on new traditions as time has pro-

gressed. The Second World War brought us many of the heartening songs we know today. "White Christmas" was featured in the 1942 film *Holiday Inn*, starring Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire. "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" featured in the 1944 film *Meet Me in St. Louis*. The original lyrics to "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" nearly had a very different tone; the line was first written "Have yourself a merry little Christmas, it may be your last." It was due to the protestations of Judy Garland, who would be singing this song to the child character of Tootie (played by seven-year-old Margaret O'Brien) that Ralph Blane changed the

lyrics to the now familiar "Have yourself a merry little Christmas, let your heart be light."

Christmas is now very different from what it once was. The holiday season seems to start earlier and earlier with each passing year, and it seems that the first Christmas commercials will soon be broadcast even before the Fourth of July. But, the season as we know it is now purely American.



The Cleveland Christmas tree, compliments of the White House.

Holiday Greetings
from the early 1900's



Archives Intern Report

BY CONNOR K. ASHLEY

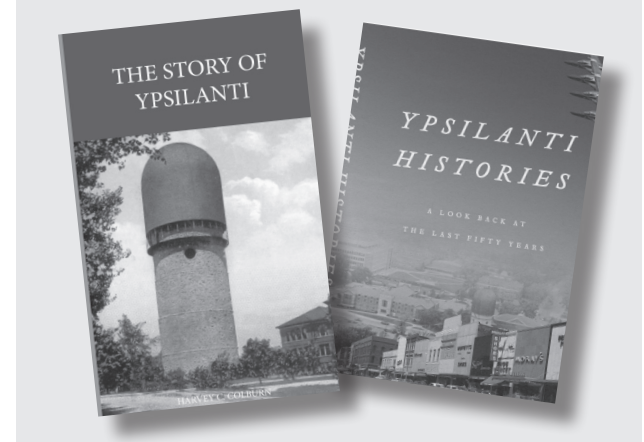
It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas here in the Rudisill-Fletcher-White Archives. Well... at least a little bit. We've added a small tree and some decorations to get into the season. More importantly though, our work has been progressing on the different projects we have going on here in the Archives. I have been spending a good amount of my time processing collections we have in our temperature controlled storage space, and our volunteers are working hard on their projects as well.

We have been working with the University of Michigan Library and MLive/The Ann Arbor News on the copyright permission of around 400 aerial photographs taken of the construction of US-23 and I-94 for The Ann Arbor News in the 1950s. The physical photographs have been in our collections for some time and the digital copies will hopefully be a part of our online Ypsilanti Historical Society Photo Archives located on the University of Michigan Library's website soon. I have to give sincere thanks to the University of Michigan for helping us contact and work with MLive on this project.

I also have to give my sincere thanks to two of our volunteers. Both of them have been incredibly helpful working with our Obituary collection. Almost every Friday, Mike Van Wasshova travels to the YHS Archives to drop off obituaries he is able to locate in local newspapers or online. Thank you Mike for making sure we collect the obituaries of as many Yp-

silantians as possible! Owen Phillips also has helped us tremendously with our Obituary collection. Owen started as a volunteer doing community service for a class at Schoolcraft College. He completed his fifteen hours and has decided to stay and help us continue to process our new obituaries. We see a little less of Owen now, but that's because he has transferred to the University of Michigan to complete a Bachelor of Arts in History. Trust me when I say we did our best to try and get him to go to Eastern, but we are very proud of him for his hard work. We are happy to see Owen whenever he has time to spare. Thank you, Owen for volunteering as much time as you have with us!

Holiday Gift Idea *The Story of Ypsilanti* and *Ypsilanti Histories* available from the YHS Archives for \$20 each plus shipping.



UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LIBRARY

EXPLORE ▾

M|LIBRARY DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

[Help](#) [Portfolios](#) [Log in](#)



The YHS Photo Archives are located on the University of Michigan website.



101-year-old Don Staebler holds his baptismal certificate.

Don Staebler and Staebler Farm County Park

BY ROBERT ANSCHUETZ

Much of the information in this article was captured from a short video documentary titled “101 Years – The Don Staebler Story” produced by Jim Campbell and Exciting Productions, and hosted by Dale Leslie, Dixboro historian. Tom Freeman, from the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission (WPARC), also participated in the video. The video can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/UTOKCiz2mT4>. Don Staebler also wrote a lengthy family biography titled “The Staebler Family in Superior Township - Crick in th’ back farm” that is available to peruse at the Ypsilanti Historical Museum Archives.

This is a story of a Washtenaw County family who worked on a farm on the outskirts of Ypsilanti for over 100 years. As the last family member was reaching the end of his life, he sold the farm to Washtenaw County for use as a county park that allows it to look much as it was, and also provides demonstrations and classes of farming techniques from over a century ago. Let’s start with the family’s Washtenaw County patriarch, Gottlob Staebler.

Gottlob Staebler was born in Germany in 1838. In 1848, he immigrated with his family to the United States. In 1871, he settled on a 120-acre farm on Prospect Road in Superior Township on the south side of Frains Lake with his wife Gertrude. The farmhouse they built around 1885 still stands. Gottlob and Gertrude Staebler raised four children in their Superior Township farmhouse – Edward, Matilda, Albert and Eugene.

Albert Staebler was born in 1877 and grew up on the family farm on Prospect Road. He attended Frains Lake School, and later worked at the Michigan Ladder Company. Albert married Ella Louisa Lucretia Goodell in 1905, shortly after they met at a country dance. Albert and Ella rented several farms in the area near Geddes Road, but after the last farm they were renting was sold, they had to move. Albert and Ella raised six children named Donald, Lloyd, George, Melvin, Helen and Ruth. Donald G. Staebler was born on August 18, 1910 while the family was living on a rented farm on Geddes Road. He was born at home with the doctor in attendance. Don was baptized at the Zion Lutheran Church in Ann Arbor on June 23, 1911.

In 1912, Albert and Ella Staebler purchased their family farm in Superior Township on Frains Lake near the intersection of Plymouth Road and Prospect Road, a short distance from Albert’s parents’ home. The farm would come to be known as the “Crick in the’ back Farm” and would remain in the family for over 100 years. The 97 acres of land were purchased from Frank Galpin. When they arrived at their new homestead a few miles from their rented farm, Ella drove the one-horse buggy with the elder children onboard, and Albert drove the team of horses pulling a wagon with all of their worldly possessions. The Staebler farm lies on both the north and south side of Plymouth Road, which was barely a dirt trail back then. The house is south of Plymouth Road and the barn and outbuildings are north of Plymouth Road.

All six of Albert and Ella’s children attended the one-room Frains Lake primary school. The school had eight grades



Staebler Farm on Plymouth Road in 1916.

in one room with one teacher. Each grade had a class in reading, arithmetic, grammar, geography and perhaps health. That limited recitation time to only a few minutes per subject per class and practically no time for individual help. One year, the school had one teacher, 40 kids, and only 39 desks. If all of the children were in attendance on any given day, it would be truly a game of musical chairs to see which child was left standing. All of Albert and Ella's children would go on to graduate from Ypsilanti High School, and all six received a college degree. It was certainly very rare in the early 1900s to have all the children who grew up on a rural farm end up with college degrees.

The Staebler children had to attend to several chores on the farm. For example, on a daily basis during harvest season, one of the boys turned a stone wheel while their father sharpened the scythe for cutting hay. The children started milking cows at age 10. They also fed the cattle, swept floors, hoed weeds, harnessed horses and moved hay bales. The children also had some time for fun, and the boys would often play at Prospect Park in Ypsilanti.

Don Staebler later wrote about the early 1900's life on the farm in all four seasons. Here are some excerpts from each of the seasons: *Spring: Spring house cleaning became the order of the day. As soon as the soil warmed up Dad hitched the horses to the old walking plow and got the garden ready for planting. "Peas had to be in the ground on Good Friday." The chickens were happy to be let out*

of their coop, where they had been "cooped up" all winter and they now got some of their food from outdoors – grass, bugs, table scraps. The cows had to be milked, but it was always a relief when they could be let out to pasture and there was no more feeding and barn cleaning. Now garden planting became a priority, usually for Mom and the kids. There were rows and rows of sweet corn, potatoes, carrots, lettuce and plants of tomatoes and cabbage to be set out – all of which in a few weeks would need weeding and watering. Meanwhile, Dad and the older boys were working in the barnyard pitching, by hand into the horse drawn spreader, the huge piles of manure that had accumulated during the winter. As soon as all the manure had been spread on the corn ground, Dad was currying and harnessing the horses and heading for the field for spring plowing. He used the old one furrow-walking plow and in later years a sulky plow on which he could ride. There was al-

ways great satisfaction in seeing the long ribbons of freshly turned earth unrolled across the field, smelling the good earth, listening to the creaking of the harnesses and the sound of horses' hooves, and perhaps to the laughter of the barefooted kids following in the new furrow.

Summer: As soon as the corn grew enough so that rows could be seen, two horses pulled the one row cultivator to keep the weeds under control between the rows. This was a seemingly never-ending job until the corn was about two feet tall. Meanwhile, weeds in the garden and in the corn rows had to be chopped out with a hoe, and then just before Independence Day kids were sent to chop out the thistles in the pasture and earning money to buy firecrackers, sparklers, and sky rockets. Haying had already begun – rake in the morning the previous day's mowing, then mow some for the next day. In the afternoon, when the raked hay was dry, it was loaded with the hay loader and hauled to the barn, then unloaded with the horse powered hayfork and hoisting ropes and equipment. The big job was spreading and stacking the loose hay up in the hot and dusty haymow as fast as it was being unloaded - then on to the grain harvest. We cut the crop of oats or wheat with a binder, which tied it into bundles and dropped them onto the ground in rows. The kids stood the bundles up into "shocks" to dry. Then, as soon as

Like the Ypsilanti Historical Society loves preserving the past.

We love to help.
How can we help you?
boaa.com

bank of
ann arbor

helps

Member FDIC



Lloyd, Helen, and Don Staebler circa 1920.

the neighborhood threshing rig could be scheduled, came threshing day.

Fall: There were garden crops to be harvested and canned for the winter, potatoes to be dug, picked up by hand, and stored in the cool basement, late apples to be picked and stored. One crop yet to be harvested before the long monotony of winter – corn. Some of the green crop is cut by hand and hauled to the pasture for the cows to supplement the now maturing grass. The job of getting the silo filled with winter's feed is now at hand. Sometime during the fall we might butcher a hog or two or perhaps a beef. One or two men came to help and took home a share for themselves.

Winter: Dad was up at 5:30 or 6:00 o'clock while the rest of us, snuggled in our warm beds, waited for him to get the kitchen warm by building a fire in the kitchen range. He lighted the kerosene lantern, picked up the milk pail and strainer, and headed to the barn to milk the dozen cows every farmer kept. Milk was the only steady cash crop, producing the monthly milk check. Mother was the next to brave the cold house. She built a fire in the "Round Oak" heating stove in the dining room. After all had made the quick and cold morning trip to the "necessary house" out back, the boys put on heavy jackets, their socks and rubbers, appropriate head gear and headed for the barn to help milk and "do chores." School didn't start until 9 o'clock so that farm chores could be completed before school. A fifteen-minute recess in forenoon and one in the afternoon was a break in the routine, which usually resulted in a mad dash for coats and boots to go sledding in the schoolyard or to clamp on skates to rush out on the ice on Frains Lake. Noon was a full hour and lunches were eaten in a hurry to get out and play. School was out at four o'clock, and most kids were expected to hurry home to do chores. The evening was spent listening to Amos and Andy on the radio or some other good program, and then around the lamp lit dining table, kids did school work or played games. Mother was mending or sewing, or cracking hickory nuts for a cake, and Dad was reading the paper delivered by mail one day late.

The Staebler family lived approximately equidistant between Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, near Dixboro, but they always went to Ypsilanti for food and supplies because of the better roads, with the main route into Ypsilanti being Prospect Road. This was before Plymouth Road was a main thoroughfare that would later provide an easy route toward Dixboro and Ann Arbor. The road to Ypsilanti wasn't plowed back then, so they took a shovel with them when they traveled in winter.

Don recalled hearing about the end of World War I through a telephone call. At the time, there were about 14 subscribers on the shared telephone line. During emergencies, the telephone switchboard operator in Ann Arbor would provide a long steady ring to alert the residents. On November 11, 1918, the telephones of the families in Superior Township received such a long steady ring. Knowing something was going on, the family piled into their 1917 Maxwell automobile and headed to Ann Arbor. The family witnessed celebrants pulling tin cans from behind their car and soon found out the great war had ended.

Electricity was brought to the Staebler farm in 1920 to power lights in the farmhouse. It was a 32-volt direct-current battery-operated system, with a gasoline powered generator to keep the batteries charged. The batteries were stored in an outdoor shelter. In 1929, Detroit Edison brought traditional 110-volt alternating-current to the farm, and they ditched their old system. With their new electrical system, the barn got lights and milking pumps, and the house received a water pump and electricity for other appliances like a clothes washer. Prior to that, water was supplied by a hand pump in the kitchen which drew water from a cistern under the porch that collected rain water supplied by the gutters from the roof.

The barn on the property was built in 1922 by three Ypsilanti carpenters - Bill Shoart, Freeman Shoart, and Libe Gale. The carpenters tore down an old barn on the property, and built a new one without any power tools. The cash crop in the early days of the farm was typically wheat, with other portions of the farm growing corn for cattle feed.



Frains Lake one-room schoolhouse still stands on Plymouth Road.

Don graduated from Ypsilanti High School in 1929. Don drove a Model T to school. He took woodworking shop classes all four years in high school, and made some beautiful furniture that he retained until he died. Before he attended high school, he also built model ships. Those woodworking skills helped Staebler throughout his years of farming, in his profession as a teacher, and later supported his hobby of traveling after he built his own travel trailer. Don had a life-long love of wood working, and continued for many years to make furniture in the woodshop he built in 1946.

Don met his wife Lena Severance on September 21, 1929 on a blind date at a church-sponsored hot dog roast at the Parker Mill. After the event, Don invited Lena to ride in his Chevrolet roadster convertible. They followed that first date with a second date at a dance at the Gleaner Hall north of Ann Arbor. Because of the depression, the young couple was not able to save enough money for a wedding, so the date was pushed back further than they would have liked. After Don settled into his career of teaching, he married Lena on August 21, 1935 in Grass Lake, Michigan, where Lena's parents were living, with Reverend Brunger serving as the officiant.



Don and Lena Staebler circa 1930.

In the 1930's the family dairy farm stopped selling its milk to a creamery in Detroit because Albert Staebler felt he wasn't getting a fair price. So, the Staebler's sold milk directly to customers that came to the farm for a period of about 10 years. Customers filled milk jugs that they brought with them. The Staeblers also separated cream from skim milk, and sold whipping cream. Milk sold for 20 cents a gallon.

E EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY



Professional Programs & Training (PPAT) offers practical, relevant and timely professional development, test prep and certificate programs to help you gain the skills, knowledge and credentials you need to excel and advance in your workplace and career. Whether it's online, in a classroom or at your workplace, our non-credit courses and certificates are designed with your success in mind. Do you have a group that needs training? PPAT partners with businesses, professional organizations and government agencies to deliver customized programs to help you meet your business goals and compliance requirements.

Contact Us

Office: 203 Boone Hall, Ypsilanti, MI 48197 | Call: 734.487.2259 or 800.932.8689 | Email: ppat@emich.edu



Don Staebler plows his field in 1942.

Whipping cream was 50 cents a quart. The family also had some hogs and chickens. The farm had stalls for five horses that were used for plowing and pulling the wagon and buggy in the early days.

Don attended Michigan State Normal College (now Eastern Michigan University), graduating in 1934 with a Bachelor's Degree in Industrial Arts, along with a teaching certificate. Three years into the program, the MSNC department-head notified Don about a teaching job at Eaton Rapids High School. This job was to be for only one year while the instructor there took a sabbatical to finish his degree. After that year of teaching, Don was able to return to MSNC to complete his own degree. After Don's graduation, the teacher at Eaton Rapids quit, and Don returned there to teach industrial arts and was promoted to principal at Eaton Rapids High School where he remained until 1942. While in Eaton Rapids, he was a member of the Eaton Rapids Kiwanis, and served as its president for a year.

Don and Lena Staebler developed a love for traveling that lasted a lifetime. Don hand-built a travel trailer in 1937 that they took on several trips out west and to the mountains of Kentucky and Tennessee. Don built a gas stove and sleeping couch in the trailer. Don won two prizes from *Popular Science Monthly* magazine and was featured in a May 1937 article titled "*Ideas to Help You Build a Better Trailer.*" One of the prizes was for his method of constructing an axle, and the other prize was for his method of developing vacu-



Don Staebler's award winning travel trailer in 1937.



Don Staebler in front of his family homestead at age 101.

um brakes. On their numerous vacations, Lena's job was to keep records of gasoline and food purchases, the gas mileage, and the towns visited. They recorded each of their trips in a diary, and also wrote their destinations on their table top.

In 1942, Don became a maintenance instructor at the Willow Run Bomber Plant in Ypsilanti, Michigan, working for Ford Motor Company, under a contract with the Army Air Force Technical Training Command. There, he taught Army cadets maintenance on the B-24 bombers. From 1945 to 1946, Don moved overseas and was an instructor at the Warton Army Technical School, Lancashire, England, where he provided technical and industrial training for American servicemen prior to returning to civilian life. Upon returning home from the war, Don developed a partnership with his father on the family dairy farm. Don and Lena occupied the upstairs of the family farmhouse, entering through an exterior stairway entrance Don built in 1948, and his parents occupied the lower floor.

In 1952, Albert Staebler died and Don and Lena purchased the farm from Don's mother. Don and Lena moved downstairs and rented the upstairs. Don and Lena continued operating the dairy farm for the next decade, with a herd of about 35 dairy cows. In 1961, Don sold the dairy herd, turned the farm to raising beef cattle, and began a career as a Technician Supervisor at the Eaton Corporation Research Center in Southfield. Don retired from the Eaton Corporation in 1975 at age 65. After retirement, he remained on the farm, raising beef cattle.

During his time on the farm, Don held other positions to supplement his income and keep him busy. From 1946-1958, Don taught auto mechanics in the Adult Education Program at Ann Arbor High School two nights per week. From 1948 until 1978 he served on the Superior Township Planning Commission, Board of Review, and Zoning Board of Appeals. For a few years, he was chairman of all three boards. Don and Lena were long-time members of the Dixboro Methodist Church, and for a while Don served as Superintendent of the church's Sunday School and as Secre-



Don Staebler (Back Row, 4th from left) taught B-24 maintenance at Willow Run.

tary of the Finance Committee. Lena Staebler passed away in 1991.

In 2001, Don sold his 98-acre farm fronting Frains Lake to Washtenaw County for future use as a county park, retaining a life lease to live there. At the time, Don was 90 years old and still tended a herd of 46 Angus beef cattle, personally feeding them every day. Staebler sold the farm to the county because he didn't want to see it developed. Don said at the time, *"I could have sold it to a developer for a higher price, but I didn't want this area filled up with houses. I want it to stay as open space. That's important as far as I am concerned."* The farm includes an historic farmstead, farmhouse, outbuildings, barns, pastures, and farm fields. The site also includes two natural lakes (Frains and Murray), Fleming Creek, two man-made ponds, woodlots, and wetlands. One of the ponds, Peaceful Pond, was formed in 1976 when M-14 was built and they needed to dig gravel for the construction. The resulting pit filled with water and became a beautiful pond. The property also includes a stand of tamarack, or larch trees, which are deciduous conifers that are more common in northern Michigan. Several original trees planted on the property when the Staebler's moved in over 100 years ago are still standing.

After selling the property to Washtenaw County in 2001, Don lived another

decade on the farm, so the process of converting the property into a Washtenaw County Park wasn't realized until recently. Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation (WCPARC) made several repairs and improvements on the property, including a complete restoration of the 100-year-old barn which won an award from the Michigan Barn Preservation Network in 2011.

In his final years, Don moved to Pennsylvania to be taken care of by his sister-in-law Mary Ciminnisi-Staebler's family, who referred to Don as Uncle Duck. Don passed away at the Ball Pavilion of Brevillier Village in Erie, Pennsylvania at age 106 on Wednesday, March 1, 2017. Staebler is buried at the Dixboro Oak Grove Cemetery.

WCPARC also recently acquired the

Michigan Folk School from Jason and Julia Gold, which had been conducting courses at the Staebler Farm, and formally rolled the folk school into the Staebler Farm County Park. In 2023, WCPARC completed the Blackbird Lodge on the property which will be used in conjunction with the farmhouse, barn, woodshop, and blacksmith shop to teach traditional folk - art crafts such as blacksmithing, archery, broom craft, bush craft, gardening & farming, food preparation, glass, jewelry & metalwork, leather, millinery & dressmaking, and woodworking. The folk-art school offers more than 300 classes each year in over 18 categories.

Don Staebler and his family owned and farmed their property on Plymouth Road for over 100 years. Don was dedicated to preserving the family history, and the history of the farm, writing many stories of his experiences there. By selling his property to the Washtenaw County, and its transition to the Staebler Farm County Park, it will allow generations of residents to experience life on a farm as it was over 100 years ago.

(Robert Anschuetz grew up in Ypsilanti in the historic Swaine house at the corner of Forest Ave. and River St. He is a member of the 2023 cohort of the YpsiWrites organization and a regular contributor to the Gleanings.)



Staebler Farm County Park Blackbird Lodge ribbon cutting on September 12, 2023.



This article about the Underground Railroad was written based on records located in the YHS Archives.

The History of Ypsilanti's Underground Railroad

BY KRISTA KANGAS

"Ypsilanti – 1850: The Fugitive Slave Act just came into effect, and free Blacks, fearing for their lives, started fleeing to Canada by means of Ypsilanti's Michigan Central Rail line, the last stop for "passengers" seeking sanctuary." One coded message read, "The wind blows from the south today," which warned of slave bounty hunters nearby.

"Businessman, George McCoy goes into town to deliver cigars while Freedom Seekers hide underneath the false bottom of his covered wagon, making their way toward Detroit. An angry mob of slave owners arrives on the porch of a Mrs. Bennett of Ypsilanti as she sat on her rocking chair right above the trap door hiding fugitives in her home. Escaped slaves hide in the hollow area along the basement stairs of the Harwood home in another step toward freedom."

Canada, as a newly founded country at the time, was in need of agricultural help and as such was a place of freedom for fugitive slaves. Native Americans too invited Blacks into their way of life. Even before the Underground Railroad, escaped slaves formed communities they called "Maroons."

But some Freedom Seekers at the time decided to stay in the town of Ypsilanti with Blacks playing a crucial role in the development of the city and its social life. The Brown Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church was one of the earliest African American congregations in Michigan and was built by the locals themselves, and the Second Baptist Church was founded by pastors William Casey and HP Jacobs, both of whom escaped slavery before founding the church.

The concept of the Underground Railroad is widely known and yet somewhat misunderstood. While being neither a railroad nor underground, it was a network of people all helping to bring others to safety and freedom. Matthew Siegfried, an Eastern Michigan University graduate and lo-

cal historian with a focus on Black Ypsilanti history, says the perspective of the Underground Railroad needs to focus on the people escaping slavery. "A lot of people were their own conductors, they made their own way," Siegfried said. "It's the Freedom Seeker who decides if they trust someone or not, and the idea of an escaped slave cowering needs to change," according to Siegfried. "Escaping from slavery was going to freedom," Siegfried said.

The locations themselves changed too as one home might have been a part of the network for only a few months. While there were notable white families that did help escaped slaves, the work of Blacks living in Ypsilanti can't go unnoticed. "The very first door you would knock on is the black person who just escaped from slavery and is at the black church," Siegfried said.

Notable Ypsilanti families played a pivotal role during this time including Asher Aray, one of the first African Americans to own property in Ypsilanti and an "employee" of the Underground Railroad, who always kept a wagon in his stable for transporting fugitive slaves to Canada. Mrs. Prescott ran a school for black children in her home, while Mrs. Maria Morton baked bread for Freedom Seekers delivering loaves to the Chase home, who also took part as abolitionists. A group of Quakers were also critical as supporters of the Underground Railroad.

During the Civil War a state-wide convention of "colored men" was held that demanded Michigan's state constitution delete any reference to race with delegates which in turn helped the black recruitment into the Union Army. African Americans were also candidates in Republican primaries until around 1900 before being shut out of politics.

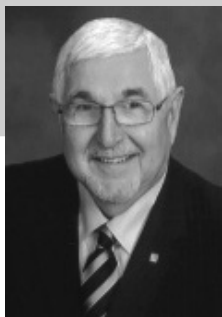
This moment in history also brought forth a wide variety of social groups such as the McKinseyites, a gang of desper-

does who although they helped escaped slaves, did so for a profit, oftentimes selling a slave to more people before bringing them to freedom. Additionally, secret organizations were formed such as the Order of the Men of Oppression, an anti-slavery cult, with secret rituals and over one million members between 1840-1860.

Because of the secrecy of the Underground Railroad not many records were kept. Although Black newspapers were the most accurate source of information as to what was going on in Ypsilanti, the total number of slaves freed from slavery through Michigan is still not known. The legacy in Ypsilanti's history can be seen all over the city, from historic structures to modern day buildings sitting right over a bit of history. So go on. Check it out. And learn about those that came here before you.

(Krista Kangas is a Journalism student at EMU and wrote this story based on records located in the Ypsilanti Historical Society Archives.)

Edward Jones®



Les Hedddle, AAMS™
Financial Advisor

2058 Washtenaw Ave
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

office 734-480-8980
fax 888-817-0043
TF 800-440-0557
cell 734-223-0433

les.hedddle@edwardjones.com
edwardjones.com



The Wehrmacht Field Marshal Feldbluse was donated to the YHS Museum by life-long Ypsilanti resident Martin Douglas Opem Jr.

Wehrmacht Field Marshal Feldbluse

BY CHARLES CALCATERRA

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 curreted 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 Martin D. Opem Jr. Collection's Wehrmacht Field Marshal *Feldbluse*, preserved by the Ypsilanti Historical Society, presents a unique history of symbolism and implied cultural significance

within a facade of mysterious provenance. The *Feldbluse*, meaning 'field blouse' or 'field tunic' in English, exhibits similar degrees of wear across both its internal and external surfaces, its accompanying medals and ribbons, as well as its rank and other Third Reich iconography. While this report remains cautious regarding the tunic's authenticity, its accompanying commendations are most likely original to the uniform.

Life-long Ypsilanti resident Martin Douglas Opem Jr. received the tunic via either donation or private purchase, adding to his vast collection of military uniforms spanning several nationalities and nearly two centuries of conflict. Opem's father, Martin Douglas Opem Sr., passed away a year after his birth, leaving his son's grandfather, Peter Gunder Opem, as the leading

male figure and role model in his life. Martin's grandfather had served as a U.S. Army Private in Unit 14, Company D of the Minnesota Volunteer Infantry during the Spanish American War between April 29 and November 18, 1898. Passing away eight years after Martin's birth, Peter Opem instilled in his grandson an appreciation for national service and a passion for military history during his earliest formative years. Martin, himself, later joined the Civil Air Patrol, but would concentrate his passion toward amateur collecting and preserving antique military uniforms and uniform parts. Early on, he collected authentic and reproduction uniforms from the American Civil War. In 1977, the same year he donated the *Feldbluse* to the Historical Society, the *Ypsilanti Press* briefly documented the extent of Opem's collection. Author Lorrie Lynch noted the presence of both reproduction and authentic uniforms acquired over seventeen years of collecting. Opem acquired these uniforms through a writing campaign to costume shops as well as through generous donations from friends and family.

As is common with amateur military collectors, Opem failed to document evidence of each uniforms' original provenance, or ownership record. Likewise, it is impossible to prove whether the vendors, shops, and acquaintances who provided these uniforms documented any provenance themselves. Therefore, any certainty regarding the authenticity of the German *Feldbluse*—or any uniform within Opem's collection—remains difficult to prove. The only information regarding the Field Marshal *Feldbluse* mis-ranks it as that of a Lieutenant Colonel and states that Opem donated it alongside a U.S. Fifth Army Eisenhower jacket. Through a series of cultural, historical, and contextual analyses of the tunic - as preserved by YHS since 1977 - we are able to achieve a high degree of *probability*, but never a high degree of *certainty*, when analyzing this uniform. This abridged report examines and interprets the *Feldbluse* with caution and only resorts to speculation when coordinating the contextual clues inherent to it. Each contextual feature represents a unique facet of the cumulative history behind both the German Wehrmacht and the tunic itself.

The Opem Collection *Feldbluse* exhibits many characteristics of German officer uniforms from the Third Reich era. Firstly, officer uniforms were tailored to the wearer, or produced through high-end gentlemen's clothiers, according to both the wearer's preferences and Berlin's regulations for officer dress. Slight alterations or deviations from standard issue patterns are common for these high-ranking uniforms since they provided additional ceremony, prestige, and a sharper appearance. Such presentation further congratulated the wearer's service as well as promoted the German military's strong and imposing image both in peace and at war. The Opem Collection *Feldbluse* is clearly fit for a man exhibiting some heft when compared to the average German officer of the 1940s. A tailor may have only taken in the waist slightly, if alteration occurred at all. Any further

alteration - such as the addition of ribbons, collar tabs, patches, epaulets, or repairs - could have been performed by a field tailor according to the issuance of new medals and awards. Considering the less meticulous running stitch which loosely conjoins the internal sleeve and jacket liners, field tailoring may have provided many of the post-issuance alterations made to the tunic.

The tunic's exterior is constructed of gabardine, or an interwoven cotton or worsted material produced in a *feldgrau*, or greenish-bluish-gray, color specific to the German army. Its collar and lapels adhere to the Wehrmacht's 1943 authorization for officers to wear their uniforms with an open, fixed collar in conjunction with a necktie or honorary medal occupying the open neck cavity. This fixed configuration is produced in a dark green wool and is adorned with a pair of stiffened wool collar tabs produced in *Hochrot Waffenfarbe*, or scarlet 'corps colors.' Embroidered with gold bullion cord at the center of these tabs is the three-pronged, arabesque Prussian *Larisch* donned exclusively by Field Marshals after April 3, 1941. The tunic's epaulets feature a stiffened wool backing in *Hochrot Waffenfarbe* and are adorned with interwoven golden cord. Each epaulet also features a crossed batons pin at its center, signifying the rank of Field Marshal.

Further down the frontside, there are two pleated breast pockets with scalloped opening flaps fastened down by one brass button each. At just below waist height, there are two internal pockets featuring scalloped flaps angled upward toward the center of the tunic and no other external stitching. Four brass buttons fasten together the tunic's frontside. There is no additional detail on the tunic's backside other than three vertical seam lines and a few-inch part, emulating shortened coattails, at the center bottom. Lastly, the plain sleeve openings lack the German military's signature turn-back cuffs featured across many officer uniforms from the era. Such an alteration was made according to the discretion of the wearer and deemed permissible by Berlin's military dress code early in the war.

Since before the establishment of Germany in 1871, the presentation and appearance of military uniforms held immense prestige in Germanic society. For members of the General Staff - prominently including Hitler's Field Marshals - uniforms presented a symbolic, worn display of prestige, valor, and accomplishment. Uniforms were a crucial vessel for self-portrayal due to their finite, yet important, degree of permitted customization under Berlin's officer dress code. High-ranking officers and those within the General Staff often possessed three or four uniforms ranging in decoration, construction, and intended use. The *Feldbluse* was an officer's preferred tunic to wear when deployed close to the front to avoid dirtying his more prestigious dress uniforms. Considering the lack of cordage, tassels, or ceremonial embroidering, the Opem Collection *Feldbluse* was certainly intended for field use, frontline travel, and informal military

functions conducted while serving in theater.

A more productive, insightful interpretation of the Opem Collection *Feldbluse*, however, addresses its meaning to a postwar American audience. Uniforms worn by defeated adversaries - like the Wehrmacht of the Second World War - are common treasures and keepsakes for any victorious opponent. For veterans, material culture such as captured uniforms, weaponry, and commendations depict a sense of combat experience, superior soldiering, and victory on behalf of the 'capturer.' For collectors like Martin Opem Jr., these uniforms are emblematic of military prestige at the time they were produced. Often complicated by a lack of documented provenance, collectors seek a balance between personal fascination and historical accuracy - or, more appropriately, historical feasibility.

Between the two known Wehrmacht uniforms housed within Opem's collection, the appearance of Third Reich paraphernalia is not a testament to German military authenticity. Instead, these uniforms hold an implicit, comparative value to America's own military history. Opem donated the *Feldbluse* alongside a U.S. Fifth Army Eisenhower jacket, each with its accompanying service pins and ribbons. When viewed as a pair, one may see why Opem collected as he did and what he sought when acquiring this mysterious German tunic: the two jackets are indirect mirrors of each other. While the two are not equal in rank - a U.S. Army Major versus a Wehrmacht Field Marshal - they represent accomplished officers on opposite sides of the Second World War. They both ex-

hibit fixed lapels, pleated pockets, and are adorned in pins and medals according to the dress codes of their respective nationalities. The 'Lieutenant Colonel' *Feldbluse*, as it was mis-documented in its accession file, supports Opem's belief that these uniforms were closer in wartime deployment and service than they were in reality. Both uniforms, therefore, stand together as an interpretive vignette into two armies' service history between 1939 and 1945.

These uniforms are not meant to speak on behalf of their former wearers, but rather as simplified voices regarding American and German experiences at war. Without explicitly stating so, Opem visually compared material cultures between the American and German armies of the Second World War just as he did the Union and Confederate armies of the U.S. Civil War as well as the Continental and Royal British armies of the American Revolution. Thus, any interpretation of the Wehrmacht *Feldbluse* should approach its questionable authenticity as did Opem. The tunic represents German military values regarding dress and outward displays of combat experience which are best comparable to those of American officers involved in the same war.

(Charles Calcaterra, the author of this article, is one of the EMU graduate students who were enrolled in Professor Nancy Bryk's curatorship course.)

Note: The numerous references that were used in writing this article were removed to reduce the space required to print this article.



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 building at 2 West Michigan Avenue became the location for the Materials Unlimited Architectural Antiques business in 1980.

Materials Unlimited Building to begin New Chapter

BY JAMES MANN

The building at 2 West Michigan Avenue, known for the last 40 years as the Materials Unlimited building, is soon to begin a new chapter in its history. A local landmark as it stands in the Art Deco style of architecture, was built in 1927 as a multi-use facility, and included a gas station, a service station, and a Pierce Arrow car dealership. The main floor was a show room for new cars, and used cars were displayed on a balcony that extended around the outside of the building. The sales offices were on the top floor, which was open and looked down on the showroom. Automobile repairs and service were carried out on the ground floor, with the opening toward what is now Riverside Park.

During the years of the Second World War the building became a USO hall used to service the military personnel stationed at the Willow Run Bomber Plant and airport. The main floor showroom became a dance floor and a band stand was installed in one corner. As the war ended, the building was used as an unemployment office. Then in 1945 this became the Moose Lodge, and remained so until 1980.

Reynold Lowe operated a demolition business during which he oversaw the destruction of priceless antique architectural pieces. In time he began to salvage the antiques from the buildings he demolished, and from this he started a new business selling items he had saved. The business grew from a three-car garage in Ann Arbor to three pole barns on Mor-

gan Road in Pittsfield Township. This site was destroyed by a fire in 1979 and the entire collection, valued at \$250,000, was lost. He then purchased the Moose Lodge in Ypsilanti for \$112,000. The new site opened in August of 1980.

Soon the 15,000-square-foot showroom on three floors was filled with antiques, including restored fireplace mantels, leaded glass doors, stained and beveled glass windows, furniture, and just about everything else, including doorknobs. Those working in the restoration of an old home or building could find what was needed in the way of woodwork, railings, doors, banisters, windows and metal fixtures.

In time the business included a production department where antique furniture was restored. There was also a lighting restoration department where antique lighting fixtures were restored; here wiring was replaced to ensure safety while preserving the old appearance.

After 40 years the time came for the business to close, and the collection was sold off and the building emptied. Now the building will enter the next chapter of its history. The building is now being prepared to serve as a center of entertainment, as a performance space for music and arts display. The history of 2 West Michigan Avenue continues.

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



The 15,000-square-foot showroom on three floors was filled with antiques.



Materials Unlimited included a lighting restoration department where antique lighting fixtures were restored.



Kirk A. Profit

Profit Legal Services, PLLC



Kirk@profitlegalservices.com
(517) 525-7294

GLEANINGS SPONSORS

Geraldine Anderson	John and Patricia Harrington	John and Fofie Pappas
The Anhut 9	Harold Hines	Eric and Janice Pedersen
The Anschuetz Family	Richard Hopper	Jasper and Carole Pennington
Jill Arcure	Betty Johnston	Roger Peterson
Ted and Kathy Badgerow	Betty Jones	Wesley Prater
James Baker	Grace Kelley	Kirk Profit
Marlene and John Barr	Martha Krieg	Linda Randolph
Penny and Jim Blodgett	Mary Krieger	James and Diane Reppke
Bomber Restaurant	Donald and Nancie Loppnow	Linda Rex
Patricia Butcko	Mary Anne Massey	Bill Riccobobo
Alice Calder	Gregory Matthews	Rex and Sally Richie
Rory and Donna Carpenter	Joseph Mattimoe and Henry Prebys	Mary Anne Robb
Patrick Cleary	Atwood McAndrew, Jr.	Ricardo and Elizabeth Rodriguiz
Anthony and Lynne Comazzi	John McCurdy	Al and Janice Rudisill
Fred and Maria Davis	Thomas and Kathy Micallef	Allen Sayler
Virginia Davis-Brown	Judy Morey	Diane Schick
Jennie Day	Jerry Moxley	Ted and Louise Schmaltz
Clifford and Lynne Dickey	Mark Naess	Robert and Denise Sprague
Rick Katon and Peg DuFresne	Carolyn Navarre	Patricia Keegan Steimle
Valerie Eaglin	Bill Nickels	William and Gina Vollano
Cheryl Farmer	Dennis Norton	Linda Wall
Leonard and Judith Frank	David Northrop	Eric and Lisa Walters
Jeff Fulton	Doc, Denise and Marianne Ogden	Caroline and John Weins
Laura Gellott	Charlotte Osborn	Nancy Wheeler
Bert Greene	Joel and Sandy Osborn	Daneen Zureich

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Ypsilanti Historical Society, Inc.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Telephone: _____ Mobile: _____

Email: _____



Please make check payable to the
Ypsilanti Historical Society
& mail to:

YPSILANTI
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MUSEUM | ARCHIVES

220 North Huron Street | Ypsilanti, MI 48197

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP

		New	Renewal
Single	\$20.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family	\$30.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sustaining	\$40.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Business	\$75.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Patron	\$100.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Life	\$250.00	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Gleanings Advertising Application

	<i>Sponsor</i>	<i>1/6 page</i> (2.375"x4.625")	<i>1/3 page</i> (2.375"x9.5")	<i>1/2 page</i> (7.5"x4.625")	<i>Full page?</i> (7.5"x9.5")
Spring Issue (Ads Due March 15)	\$20	\$50	\$75	\$125	\$200
Summer Issue (Ads Due June 15)	\$20	\$50	\$75	\$125	\$200
Fall Issue (Ads Due August 15)	\$20	\$50	\$75	\$125	\$200
Winter Issue (Ads Due November 15)	\$20	\$50	\$75	\$125	\$200

Sponsorship: A list of "Sponsors" is included in each issue. Sponsorship is available at a cost of \$20 per issue.

Company _____ Contact Person _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ Phone _____

PLEASE CHECK APPROPRIATE BOXES

<i>Issue</i>	<i>\$20</i>	<i>\$50</i>	<i>\$75</i>	<i>\$125</i>	<i>\$200</i>
Spring	_____ Sponsor _____	_____ 1/6pg _____	_____ 1/3pg _____	_____ 1/2pg _____	_____ Full _____
Summer	_____ Sponsor _____	_____ 1/6pg _____	_____ 1/3pg _____	_____ 1/2pg _____	_____ Full _____
Fall	_____ Sponsor _____	_____ 1/6pg _____	_____ 1/3pg _____	_____ 1/2pg _____	_____ Full _____
Winter	_____ Sponsor _____	_____ 1/6pg _____	_____ 1/3pg _____	_____ 1/2pg _____	_____ Full _____

Send this form, ad copy & payment to:
Ypsilanti Historical Society
220 N. Huron Street • Ypsilanti, MI 48197
If you have questions call Al Rudisill 734 484-3023



YPSILANTI
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MUSEUM | ARCHIVES

220 North Huron Street | Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Ypsilanti, Michigan
Permit No. 399

MUSEUM 734 482-4990 | yhs.museum@gmail.com
ARCHIVES 734 217-8236 | yhs.archives@gmail.com

www.ypsihistory.org

WE HAVE HISTORY BETWEEN US, SINCE 1946



L I N C O L N



SESI LINCOLN VOLVO MAZDA

3990 Jackson Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

(734) **668-6100**