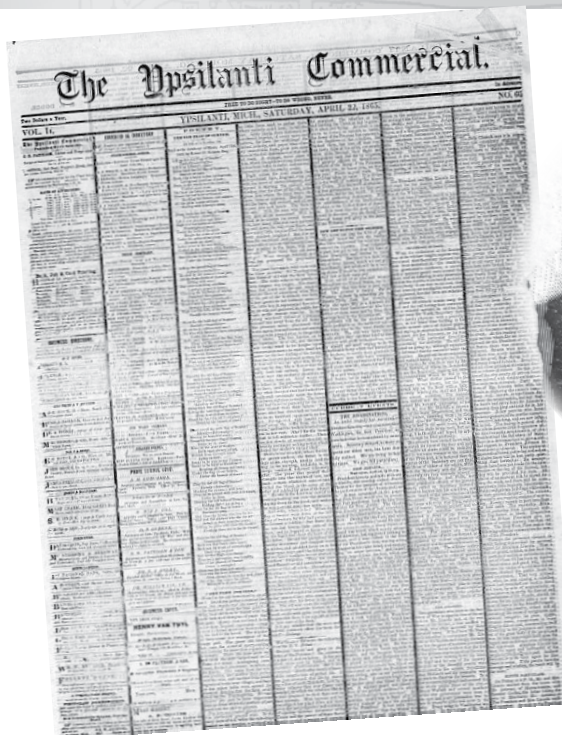


Ypsilanti GLEANINGS

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



Charles M. Woodruff published the *Ypsilanti Sentinel* for a long while, and was succeeded by his son.

This issue of *The Ypsilanti Commercial* from April 22, 1865 bore the news of Abraham Lincoln's assassination in the previous week.

Extra! Extra! Read all about Ypsilanti Newspapers

BY ROBERT ANSCHUETZ

Relaxing in an easy chair with a newspaper in your hands after work was a daily luxury that many of us fondly remember. Sadly, today we are likely getting our news through internet news sites, cable TV “news” programs, or social media. Long gone are the days when many of us enjoyed reading our daily newspapers at the breakfast table. The Anschuetz family home was literally full of daily newspapers. We subscribed to *The Ypsilanti Press* and *Detroit Free Press*, and my dad brought home a copy of the *Detroit News* from work almost daily. We also got the *Ann Arbor News* on a regular basis. Of course, the kids skipped straight to the sports, entertainment, and comics sections. That’s four – count them, four! – newspapers

that we had in our house almost every day. Fortunately, we had plenty of guinea pigs, rabbits, gerbils, and hamsters that needed large amounts of newspapers for their cages.

The local newspapers impacted our family in another way. My twin brother and I were employed by two of our local newspapers. In fact, our newspaper routes were our very first jobs. We started our newspaper careers with the *Ann Arbor News*, delivering newspapers for a short time to the Terrace Lane Apartments at the corner of Prospect St. and Holmes Rd. That didn’t last long, but later in our junior high and high school years we had a paper route with *The Ypsilanti Press* that lasted for

Extra, Extra! Read all about Ypsilanti Newspapers continued on page 4

SPRING 2026

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The Ypsilanti Historical Museum is a museum of local history which is presented as an 1860 home. The Museum and Rudisill, Fletcher-White Archives are organized and operated by the Ypsilanti Historical Society. We are all volunteers and our membership is open to everyone, including non-city residents.

www.ypsihistory.org

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From the PRESIDENT'S DESK

BY BILL NICKELS

Ypsilanti continues to get good press. The blog Ever After in the Woods wrote the following about our Bomber Restaurant, *"I'm the kind of person who gets misty-eyed at the sound of a radial engine and spends way too much time staring at grainy black-and-white photos of the Willow Run assembly line. So, walking into this Ypsilanti shrine isn't just about breakfast for me, it's a pilgrimage."*

On another Ever After in the Woods blog entry titled *"11 Michigan Eateries that Do Zero Advertising Yet Fill Up Every Night,"* Ever After wrote the following about our Sidetrack Bar & Grill. *"Sidetrack earned its reputation one perfectly grilled burger at a time, building a following that doesn't need Facebook ads or promotional campaigns to keep seats filled. The menu reads like a greatest hits collection of American bar food, executed with the kind of consistency that turns first-time visitors into weekly regulars."* With restaurants like these two, Ypsilanti is a special town to live and work in!

While cleaning up some documents on my computer, I found some writings by Ypsilanti resident R Donn Newhouse.

He grew up on North Park Street as a neighbor of Preston Tucker. He wrote about what it was like to know Preston Tucker as a neighbor, not as the industrialist that designed and manufactured an innovative automobile after World War II. R Donn passed away in 2017. Look to see his writings in a future issue of the Gleanings.

Because this is the USA's 250th anniversary, a committee headed by Cheryl Farmer is working to make this year's 4th of July Parade special. A trading post operated by Gabriel Godfroy on the west bank of the Huron River was the beginning of Ypsilanti. The committee decided to search for Godfroy's descendants. The committee found them living in Monroe, MI! Cheryl arranged to meet three of the Godfroy's descendants; Cheryl invited me to go along. We met James Isaac Godfroy, Mary Jean Godfroy, and Mary Phyllis Godfroy Sieger and learned that Godfroy who operated Ypsilanti's trading post had several Godfroy brothers. They scattered around Michigan and Indiana, each starting trading posts of their own. The Monroe descendants will be Marshalls of the 4th of July Parade. Businesses, neighborhood groups, clubs, and organizations in



From L to R: James Isaac Godfroy, Cheryl Farmer, Mary Jean Godfroy and Mary Phyllis Godfroy Sieger.

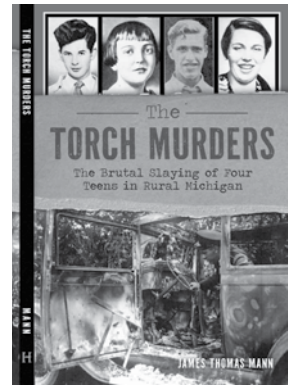
Ypsilanti are reminded to plan an entry in this year's parade!

The summer of 2026 is expected to be a busy year around the museum. With the help of a \$140,000 State of Michigan grant, the roof of 220 N. Huron will be replaced with a mix of standing seam metal, EPDM, and copper. Using interest money from an Ypsilanti/Ann Arbor Community Fund, the wood trim around the museum will be repaired as needed and painted. This is major work that should be lasting for our building.

We are also confronted with financial challenges. The State of Michigan grant is not sufficient to totally pay for our new roofs and the Community Fund money is not enough to totally pay for the repair/painting of our trim. Both projects combined are \$14,325 short of planned sources. In addition, building insurance has increased from \$4,981 in 2023 to \$9,928 in 2025. This year, snow removal costs have tripled to \$6,485. These expenses and cost increases make operating costs uncertain in the future. We appreciate your membership dues, Gleanings Sponsorships, Life Memberships, and Annual Appeal Donations. With your continued support and our financial planning, I am confident that we can work through these challenges.

The Torch Murders

Local historian and Gleanings contributor James Mann has written a new book, entitled "The Torch Murders." The book was published in October, 2025 by The History Press. It tells the story of a horrific murder in Washtenaw County. The crime was uncovered in August of 1931 by the discovery of the remains of four teens found in a car which had been torched. An investigation ensued and soon three men were found guilty and sent to Jackson Prison. Or were they guilty? Mann's in depth research sheds new light on an infamous event.



James Mann's new book, "The Torch Murders."

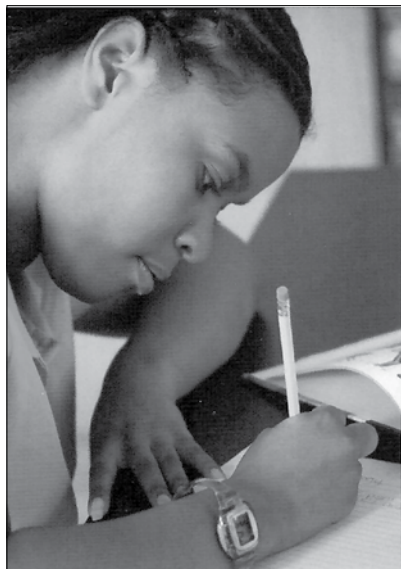
Copies can be purchased at the Museum Archives or on Amazon, Thriftbooks, and eBay.

LLC Centennial Fund Scholarship Drive

Help us grow a scholarship endowment specifically for some of the most vulnerable young women in our area — those who are aging out of Michigan's Foster Care system.

Since 1928 the Ladies' Literary Club of Ypsilanti has supported post-secondary education for young women in our community with university scholarships. The Centennial Fund Drive celebrates 100 years of giving and targets young women working to reach beyond their challenging life circumstances.

Donate today to keep dreams alive for foster care students working toward a better life!



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several years. We had over 50 customers for our daily deliveries. Our house was at the epicenter of the route, which covered Forest Ave., River St., Cherry Ct., Oak St., Norris St., and Cross St. - including many Depot Town businesses. We had an afternoon route on the weekdays and Saturday, and a morning route on Sunday. The newspapers were delivered to our front porch in a large bundle, and we had to fold and bind each paper with a rubber band. We were provided with carrier bags, but we found it more efficient to stuff at least 10 papers under each arm and run a portion of the route, then come back to our house and get another bundle and go down another street. Yes, we really ran our routes instead of walking them – the luxury of boundless teenage energy.

My brother and I split *The Ypsilanti Press* route in half, and we alternated the portions of delivery each day so it wouldn't be so tedious. We were diligent about placing the newspapers in either the mailbox newspaper holders or inside our customers' screen doors. We never just threw the paper in the yard, or even up on the porch. Due to the bulk of the issues on Sunday, our dad used to drive us around our route for our deliveries. While he smoked a cigar and listened to classical music, my brother and I took turns jumping out of the car and delivering four or five newspapers before getting back inside the car and driving a little further down the street. We adhered to the Postal Service's motto: "neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." Nobody ever missed a paper in the many years we delivered them, including the great blizzard of 1978.

The worst part about the newspaper delivery job was the weekly collection of money owed by our customers for their newspaper subscriptions. The job of a paperboy involved much more than just delivering papers. It really was a business. We paid *The Ypsilanti Press* a wholesale price for the newspapers, which we would deliver daily, and on a weekly basis collect money from our customers. Every week we would take a large portion of the money we collected to *The Ypsilanti Press* offices on Michigan Ave. and pay for the bundles of papers we received. We put in a lot of effort to make a very small profit from each customer. But the route provided us with money for baseball cards, model rockets, video games, quarters for the arcade, and our lunches at the mall. If I recall correctly, the cost for a subscription around 1980 was \$2.20 per week. My brother and I "collected" together – that's the term we used to fetch the money due from our customers. We had to knock on our customers' doors and if nobody answered the door, we would have to come back later. Sometimes people avoided our knocks, and their bill would eventually rise above \$10 until we finally got them to answer the door. We would even give the customers a break on their bills that stacked up for weeks and they would still complain about the cost!

Now let's get back to today's newspaper situation. The bottom line is that it is much more difficult to get your hands on

a real newspaper these days. There aren't as many newspaper boxes anymore – there used to be several in Depot Town and all over Ypsilanti. Home delivery is also now spotty and very expensive. But for a long time, Ypsilanti offered many different newspapers that provided opinions, local and national news, advertising, and gossip. This article lists all the newspapers that I could find while researching, but I'm sure I've probably missed a few. The listing of Ypsilanti newspapers below is roughly in chronological order. One word of note, I have tried to be accurate in proper names of the newspapers listed, particularly noting whether to include the definite article "the" in the title. This gets complicated, because the banner at the top of the newspapers isn't always consistent. For example, I've seen both issues of the *The Ypsilanti Daily Press* and *Ypsilanti Daily Press*. The same can be said for *The Ypsilanti Press* and *Ypsilanti Press* and *The Ypsilanti Commercial* and *Ypsilanti Commercial*.

***Ypsilanti Republican* (1837-1838)**

The *Ypsilanti Republican* was the first newspaper published in Ypsilanti, starting in 1837 and published for just one year until 1838. The newspaper was published only a decade after the city's founding when Ypsilanti grew to the size where enough business advertisements and citizen readership could support a weekly newspaper. The *Ypsilanti Republican* newspaper was founded by a man named Mr. Wallace.

***Ypsilanti Sentinel* (1843-1900)**

The *Ypsilanti Sentinel* was established in 1843 under the editorship of General John Van Fossen. Others involved in the formation of the *Sentinel* were J.M. Edmunds, Arden H. Ballard, and M. Towne. The newspaper was organized to promote the interests of Henry Clay, who was the national Whig party's candidate for Presidency of the United States. When Clay lost the election, the *Sentinel* suspended operations, but they offered their offices to Charles Woodruff under the condition that he would resume publication of the newspaper. Woodruff agreed and published the newspaper for three years. He ultimately became frustrated with the newspaper offices, calling them inadequate to support his business, so he temporarily left the publishing business. The *Ypsilanti Chronicle*, under Aaron Guest, took over the office space for a year. After the failed attempt of the *Chronicle*, Charles Woodruff purchased back the business and printing equipment and revived the *Ypsilanti Sentinel* once again.

The offices of the *Sentinel* were in the old Larzelere Block, in the rear half of the second floor, which was reached by an outside stairway on Washington St. The Larzelere block bordered Huron St., Adams St., Catherine St., and Buffalo St. Some years later, the *Sentinel* business was moved to a two-story building, erected by S.B. Morse, in the rear of the Larzelere Block and fronting on Washington St.



The *Ypsilanti Daily Press* was located at the northwest corner of Huron St. and Pearl St. It caught fire twice, in 1954 and 1965 before its successor, *The Ypsilanti Press*, moved to 20 E. Michigan Ave.

Charles Woodruff was a classical scholar and was a master of the English language. He was a proponent of formal education and helped advance Ypsilanti's educational prominence in Michigan. Under Woodruff's leadership, the *Sentinel* was more of an opinion newspaper than one that focused on local interest stories. The *Sentinel* also published syndicated news stories from around the country and around the world. Most issues of the *Sentinel* contained two full pages of advertisements. These advertisements, many of which were local Ypsilanti businesses, would often tell more of the story of local Ypsilanti upcoming events than the remaining pages of the newspaper that were devoted to broader news and opinions.

Woodruff wrote about topics of general interest and was good at expressing his opinions. The *Sentinel*, under Woodruff, didn't document the local Ypsilanti happenings as was the case for many other newspapers, including the *The Ypsilantian*. The *Sentinel* expressed strong opinions on national and local issues and was a staunch supporter of democratic principles.

Charles Woodruff continued publishing the *Sentinel* until his death in 1896, when his son Marcus Tillius Woodruff continued its publication. M.T. Wood-

ruff eventually sold the newspaper to a Mr. Francis, who only remained as the publisher for a short while. Francis attempted to start a daily edition of the newspaper, which only lasted a month before the financial strains of a daily publication forced him to abandon the business. The remains of the publishing business were sold to the Democrat Publishing Company of Ann Arbor, who also published the *Daily Argus*. They continued to publish the *Sentinel* as a weekly. A short while later, the *Sentinel* was merged with the rival newspaper, *The Ypsilanti Commercial*, and in 1901 was published under the name *The Ypsilanti Sentinel-Commercial*.

Several issues of the *Ypsilanti Sentinel* exist in the Ypsilanti Historical Museum and Archives. For a larger sample, many *Ypsilanti Sentinel* issues from 1843-1848 have been scanned by Central Michigan University and are available at the United States Library of Congress.

The earliest issue available is December 27, 1843. The *Ypsilanti Sentinel* issues are available through the link <https://tinyurl.com/mr25cyhd>.

Ypsilanti Chronicle
(approximately 1847-1848)

The *Ypsilanti Chronicle* was a short-

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Scans of *The Ypsilanti Sentinel-Commercial* from the YHS Archives through 1904 are available for download at the Internet Archives (www.archive.org).

The first edition of *The Sentinel-Commercial* looked very similar to the last issue of the Commercial. Both advertised that they cost “\$1.00 per year, strictly in advance.” *The Sentinel-Commercial* proudly stated on the banner that it was established in 1846, which was presumably the date of the launching of the second iteration of the *Ypsilanti Sentinel* under the direction of Charles Woodruff.

The page 4 announcement of the *Sentinel* and *Commercial* merger on the first date of issue of January 10, 1901, states:

“The name which appears at the head of this paper may look a bit new and sound a trifle strange, but the *Ypsilanti Sentinel-Commercial* will be found to be no new arrival nor a stranger in the homes of the many readers it will reach. The hyphenated name does not indicate the assumption of the time honored English custom, either, but simply implies that the two oldest and best papers of this city and section of Washtenaw county have united in order to make a stronger and better one than either has been before, and at the same time retain the name by which each has so long entered the homes of their respective readers. There are to be no startling new features in the paper, but it will continue to give all the news of the field in a clean, interesting newsy manner. It will be issued on Thursday of each week as of yore.

It will be a better medium for advertisers than ever before as it will reach nearly twice as large a constituency as either paper did before the consolidation and much larger than any other paper in this section. Advertising if it is worth anything at all, and the most progressive business men everywhere are the most liberal advertisers, must depend for its value in no small degree upon the circulation of the advertising medium. The *Ypsilanti Sentinel-Commercial* is read by more people in the city and more outside than any other local paper. It will be published from the former Commercial office at No. 24 N. Washington St.”

***Ypsilanti Daily Argus* (circa 1904)**

The *Daily Argus* was an Ann Arbor newspaper published by the Democrat Publishing Company that at one time was the most widely read local daily newspaper in Washtenaw County. Their readership spanned both Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti. For a short while, they published a newspaper catering to Ypsilanti residents called the *Ypsilanti Daily Argus*. The Internet Archives (www.archive.org) has a few issues from 1904 that were scanned and uploaded by the Ypsilanti Historical Museum and Archives. The cost was 25 cents per month, or \$2 for an entire year for the daily newspaper.

***The Daily Telegram* (circa 1899-1900)**

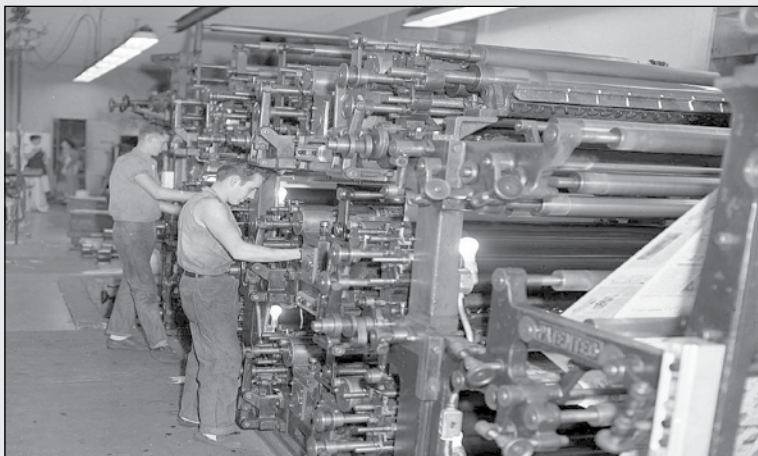
The Ypsilanti Historical Museum and Archives has scanned a few issues of *The Daily Telegram* from 1899 and 1900 and has made them available on the Internet Archives (www.archive.org). The newspaper was short-lived, and the price per copy was two cents for the four-page newspaper.

***The Ypsilantian* (1880-1912)**

The Ypsilantian began in January 1880 as an independent newspaper published by Marcus Tillius Woodruff, who had learned the newspaper business in the office of his father, Charles Woodruff, at the *Ypsilanti Sentinel*. Quickly after it started publication, *The Ypsilantian* became the leading weekly newspaper to publish local news, gossip, and happenings. This diverged significantly from the political slant and opinions of the *Sentinel* and *Commercial*. Instead, *The Ypsilantian* chronicled local events. After a few years, M. T. Woodruff sold the newspaper to George F. Smith and Perry F. Powers. Powers sold his interest to William M. Osband, who eventually purchased out the interest of Smith. Even though the newspaper mostly steered away from politics, *The Ypsilantian* was an advocate of Republican principles.

William Osband was very well educated and had served as a professor at Wesleyan Seminary, Albert University, Olivet College, and Albion College. In 1878, Osband came to Ypsilanti in order to improve his health. Ypsilanti was famous in Michigan for its rejuvenating spas and Osband had summered in Ypsilanti previously with his family. Osband took a job travelling for the Globe Furniture Company of Northville prior to purchasing *The Ypsilantian*. From 1882 to 1895, Osband was a professor of Natural Sciences at the Michigan State Normal College. During this time, Osband specialized in political editorials while his daughter Marna Osband wrote about the local news of Ypsilanti. *The Ypsilantian* was very popular with Ypsilanti citizens. Osband had a wide circle of friends who were able to send him interesting news items from across the country and around the world. Ypsilanti travelers often contributed their own personal stories of their journeys outside the city.

The Ypsilantian offices were in the basement of the Ypsilanti Savings Bank building on Congress St., which became a popular gathering place. Local citizens mingled with the movers and shakers in the city, and together they both shared and made news stories. A typical issue of *The Ypsilantian* newspaper, like both the *Commercial* and *Sentinel*, was eight pages. Four columns of the first page and three columns on the eighth page contained local advertisements. The third page contained advertising, Sunday School lessons, news from the Normal school, and notes from Ann Arbor, Rawsonville, Dexter, and other neighboring towns. The fourth page was devoted to the editorials, mostly written by William Osband. These editorials were often political and definitely partisan. The fourth page also carried four columns of legal notices, rail-



A printing press produces the *Ypsilanti Daily Press* circa 1940-1950.

The *Ypsilanti Daily Press* of January 23, 1954 managed to publish an issue on the day of the tragic fire that closed the offices for a while and necessitated printing at the City Printing Company.



road schedules, and additional advertising. The inside four pages were typically syndicated news stories which provided several hours of material for their avid readers. Samuel Porter Ballard, of Willis, who was known as the Willis Poet, contributed writings that enthralled *The Ypsilantian* readers. His was a column that was not to be missed. The *Ypsilantian* merged with *The Ypsilanti Evening Press* in 1912.

Daily Ypsilantian (circa 1887)

The *Daily Ypsilantian* was an attempt around 1887 by *The Ypsilantian* to publish a daily newspaper. It was not a financial success, and *The Ypsilantian* went back to weekly publication.

The Evening Times (circa 1890-1900)

The Evening Times was published for a joint location of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti and catered to both locations. The eight-page newspaper sold for 2 cents. On the top of the newspaper on the left-hand side of each issue was stated: "Ann Arbor: A beautiful residence city of 15,000 inhabitants, has University of Michigan with 3,300 students, and other educational institutions with 1,000 students." On the right-hand side was stated "Ypsilanti: A handsome residence and manufacturing city with 7,000 inhabitants. Has the State Normal School with 1,000 students and other educational institutions."

The Ypsilanti Evening Press (1904-1912)

The Ypsilanti Evening Press started as a daily newspaper in 1904 by a group of Ypsilanti businessmen under the management of Frank Codrington. The paper did not publish on Sunday. Codrington resigned his state editorship of the *Detroit Free Press* to become the principal stockholder in *The*

Ypsilanti Evening Press. Due to its business connections, *The Ypsilanti Evening Press* was able to amass a large number of advertisers. The first-edition editorial in 1904 promised "to concern itself with giving needed publicity to Ypsilanti projects and to advancing the educational and material welfare of the city." The civic disclaimer on the newspaper stated "It cannot say it has no friends to reward: for it considers every resident of Ypsilanti its friend." On the second day of publication, 500 extra copies had to be run to fill the demand. *The Ypsilanti Evening Press* was printed at Fred Coe's business located at 23 N. Washington St.

Alas, the community of Ypsilanti was too small to support the success of multiple daily newspapers, and losses started piling up. A major stockholder, Stuart Lathers, a professor of speech at Michigan State Normal College, took over management from Codrington. In 1907, Detroit newsman G.H.D. Sutherland purchased the newspaper. He only held onto the business for one year.

In 1908, the editor of *The Evening Press*, William B. Hatch and his wife Eunice Lambie purchased *The Evening Press* as well as *The Ypsilantian*. Both newspapers were initially continued as separate publications. William Hatch wrote long editorials about temperance and law enforcement. However, he soon grew tired of the long hours required of a daily newspaper, and hired George C. Handy to run the business. Handy was a recent graduate of the Michigan State Normal College and in 1906 had worked as the circulation manager of *The Evening Press*. Handy briefly ran a newspaper in Indiana but returned to Washtenaw County to attend medical school at the University of Michigan. However, before he could get very far in his medical pursuit, he was tapped by Hatch to run *The Ypsilanti Evening Press*.

The Ypsilanti Record (circa 1916-1923)

The Ypsilanti Historical Museum and Archives has scanned a few issues of *The Ypsilanti Record* from 1921-1922 and have made them available on the Internet Archives (www.archive.org). The price per copy was three cents for a single copy of the 12-page newspaper, or \$1 per year.

The Daily Ypsilantian-Press (1912-1928)

In 1912, *The Ypsilantian* and *The Ypsilanti Evening Press* merged under the new title *The Daily Ypsilantian-Press*. In 1917, George Handy, who was the editorial spokesperson for *The Ypsilanti Evening Press*, became the owner of *The Daily Ypsilantian-Press*. In 1928, Handy changed the newspaper's name to the *Ypsilanti Daily Press*.

Ypsilanti Daily Press (1928-1962)

George Handy managed the *Ypsilanti Daily Press* until his death in 1958. Handy's lengthy involvement and ownership of *The Ypsilanti Evening Press*, *The Daily Ypsilantian-Press*, and the *Ypsilanti Daily Press* supports a claim that he is Ypsilanti's most prominent newsman of all time. Handy's guiding principle was to "Consider the good of Ypsilanti first." He used the newspaper to further community projects and community needs. During the Great Depression, Handy offered subscriptions to farmers in exchange for produce. The food collected by the *Ypsilanti Daily Press* was then donated to the hungry of Ypsilanti. Handy also answered every "Dear Santa" letter at Christmas with the gifts of the child's choice. Presumably kids weren't as greedy back then and didn't ask for outrageous gifts.

The *Ypsilanti Daily Press* suffered a tragedy when their building on Pearl St. just west of Huron St. suffered significant damage due to a fire in January 23, 1954. In spite of the massive damage to the business, the *Daily Press* was able to put out an issue that very

day and consolidated their printing operations at the City Printing Company at 411 West Cross St. The headline on the front page of the January 23, 1954, issue states "*Fire Destroys Press Building*" and is accompanied by a full-page picture showing the damage to the building. The headline said "*Apologies to Our Readers*" and explained that the paper would be curtailing operations for a few days due to the necessity of moving operations to City Printing. The fire resulted in the top floor of the building being removed and, most unfortunately, destroyed thousands of photographs and documents that were being curated for the newspaper's 50th anniversary issue that year. Ypsilanti residents ultimately rallied to the cause and contributed their own personal photos for the 50th anniversary issue, which came out in October of 1954.

After George Handy died, the Handy family retained control of the newspaper for a few more years, but sold it in 1962 to Booth Newspapers and it took on the name *The Ypsilanti Press*. The YHS Archives has a collection of the *Ypsilanti Daily Press* from 1911-1912 that has been scanned and uploaded



This is the cover of the very first issue of the *Eastern Echo* that was published on July 6, 1956. Ypsilanti's college had been renamed from Michigan State Normal College to Eastern Michigan College just five days before this issue, on July 1, 1956.

Historic Depot Town



Linda French
Owner

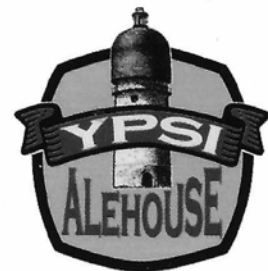
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**124 Pearl Street
Ypsilanti, MI 48197**



The Ypsilanti Press occupied the building at 20 E. Michigan Ave. from 1965 until it closed operations in 1994.

This November 22, 1963, special edition of *The Ypsilanti Press* announces President John F. Kennedy's assassination.



to the Internet Archives and is available at <https://tinyurl.com/4fntpkj3>.

***The Ypsilanti Press* (1962-1994)**

The Ypsilanti Press continued the proud tradition of successive newspapers from *The Ypsilanti Evening Press*, *The Daily Ypsilantian-Press*, and the *Ypsilanti Daily Press*. *The Ypsilanti Press* continued business at the corner of Huron St. and Pearl St., but a second fire at that location in August 1965 rendered the building a total loss. After the second fire, *The Ypsilanti Press* moved into the 25,000 square foot facility at 20 E. Michigan Ave. This location was vacant because the previous owner, Sesi Lincoln Mercury, had moved to Ypsilanti Township earlier that year. The *Ypsilanti Press* operated in the building on Michigan Ave. for almost 30 years, enduring a fire at that location as well. For a while, *The Ypsilanti Press* weekend edition was called *The Weekender*. *The Ypsilanti Press* went through several more owners, including Panax Newspapers in 1968 and Harte-Hanks Communications in 1971. In the mid-1970's, *The Ypsilanti Press* switched from Linotype machines to computerized typesetting, laser printing, and offset press technology.

In 1986, Garden State Newspapers acquired *The Ypsilanti Press*. In the 1980's *The Ypsilanti Press* printed other local newspapers such as the *Michigan Daily* and the *Eastern Echo*, as well as flyers and internal newsletters for companies such as Domino's Pizza. At that time in the 1980's, the circulation of *The Ypsilanti Press* was approximately 16,000 customers and it employed 120 people in production and 280 people in delivery.

The Ypsilanti Press served the community for many years before closing shop in 1994. For a while, the *Ann Arbor News* published specific news for Ypsilanti. Past issues of *The Ypsilanti Press* and its ancestral newspapers are available on microfiche in the Michigan History study room on the

2nd floor of the Ypsilanti District Library on Whitaker Rd. There are also many issues scanned and uploaded to the Internet Archive (www.archive.org).

***Normal News* (1881-1896)**

The *Normal News* was the original name of the Eastern Echo. The *Normal News* began publication in 1881 when Ypsilanti's college was known as the Michigan State Normal College.

***Normal College News* (1896-1956)**

The *Normal News* changed names to the *Normal College News* in 1896. The last issue of the Normal College News was in June 1956, as the name of Michigan State Normal College was changed to Eastern Michigan College on July 1, 1956.

***Normal News Letter* (1903)**

The *Normal College News* went by the name of the *Normal News Letter* for a short period of time in 1903. The name was soon reverted back to the *Normal College News*.

***Eastern Echo* (1956 – Present)**

The *Eastern Echo* is the newspaper of Eastern Michigan University that started the July 6, 1956 issue. While all of the other dozen or so newspapers have faded away in Ypsilanti, the *Eastern Echo* is still going strong. The *Eastern Echo* operates today out of the second floor of King Hall. The *Eastern Echo* is funded through advertising revenue and is published on Mondays during the fall and winter semester. It has a circulation of roughly 10,000 readers and is available at more than 40 off-campus locations.

A funny issue was published on March 31, 1955. Instead of

the *Eastern Echo* banner at the top, the words *The Spartanette* were on page one. The headline below the banner was “*MSC Adopts MSNC As Junior College.*” Other articles on the first page were “*Golf Course to Be Built in Spring*” and “*State Board Bans Greeks*”. Of course, this was an April Fool’s issue.

Many issues of the *Eastern Echo* dating back to the 1950s are in the YHS Archives and have been scanned and uploaded to the Internet Archive. For an almost complete collection of the *Normal News*, the *Normal College News*, the *Normal News Letter*, and the *Eastern Echo*, including issues dating back to the very first issue in September 1881, visit the repository maintained by Eastern Michigan University at https://commons.emich.edu/student_news.

Second Coming (circa 1969-1971)

The *Second Coming* was an anti-establishment newspaper geared toward students of Eastern Michigan University. The *Second Coming* was published every two weeks during the academic year.

The Ypsi Thrifty Guide (circa 1982)

The *Ypsi Thrifty Guide* was a weekly publication that covered local news, arts, and entertainment, but mostly contained ads for local businesses and for-sale notifications. This was Ypsilanti’s version of similar newspapers around the country under the umbrella of *The Reporter Papers*.

The Ypsi Guide (circa 1980s)

The *Ypsi Guide* was an updated name of *The Ypsi Thrifty Guide*. The *Ypsi Guide* was a free weekly newspaper distributed by businesses. Local interest stories were its specialty, and it survived a short while on advertising by local Ypsilanti businesses.

Ypsilanti Sun Times (circa 1990s)

The *Ypsilanti Sun Times* was a weekly 8-page newspaper published in the 1990s. The newspaper’s motto was “*Your Community Newspaper.*” The publishing address was 103 Ferris St.

Depot Town Rag (1977-2011)

The *Depot Town Rag* was a local publication with stories of interest to all Ypsilanti residents. The *Depot Town Rag* was always free and proudly proclaimed on the front page that it was “*100% Free Rag Content.*” The *Depot Town Rag*’s first issue was published in October 1977 by the Depot Town Association, led in part by Tom Dodd. In the second issue of November 1977, a question was posed to the readers: “*What to call this little rag? Since last month’s (first) issue, we’ve received some suggestions: Mainline, Whistle Stop, Highballer, the Right Track, the Left Track, etc. Any Suggestions?*” I guess none of those other proposed names were right for the quirky newspaper. I, for one, am glad they stuck with the name *Depot Town Rag* instead of any

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of those other ideas. The *Depot Town Rag* provided readers with local news, history, commentary, and a place to gripe. The *Depot Town Rag* is missed by all who ever read an issue. The *Rag* survived until its last issue of January/February 2011.

The final issue of the *Depot Town Rag* had an article titled “*I Spy*’ a slick new format for this old rag” that expressed some hope for its future. The article reads:

“Our little neighborhood newsletter began in 1976 and has changed format four times since then. This issue marks the end of publishing the current format for the *Depot Town Rag* – defined as a newspaper put together by non-professionals. After this printing, readers will find us in the pages of Ypsi’s newest ‘city slicker,’ *iSPY*. That’s “Ypsi” spelled backwards, so *Rag* reports out to fit in just fine.

We still plan to tell the neighborhood’s stories with the same non-professional style to which our readers have become accustomed. We’ll stick a little bit of history into the historical hoopla down here – and we plan to continue making up some of it too. As TV’s History Channel likes to say, “*History is made here every day.*”

We made a little bit of history, ourselves; after this issue the only places our readers will be able to find the old Rags is in the Archives of the Ypsilanti Historical Society and the archives of the Bentley Historical Library on the University of Michigan’s north campus. Most of our issues are on file in these repositories, but the few mysteriously missing copies may turn up in an auction at Sotheby’s some day.

Little did the *Rag*’s author of this article know that someday the *Depot Town Rag* would also be available to everybody in their homes due to the immense job of scanning each issue by the YHS Archives staff and volunteers. The link to the *Depot Town Rag* issues posted to the Internet Archives is <https://tinyurl.com/mucx97my>.

The Ypsilanti Citizen (YpsiCiti) (circa 2010)

The *Ypsilanti Citizen* (*YpsiCiti*) was an online publication that provided news and feature articles about Ypsilanti. It tried to fill some of the gap left by the discontinuation of *The Ypsilanti Press*. It was run by Dan DuChene and Christine Laughren.

emYOU! The Magazine (circa 2008-2010)



The *Depot Town Rag* kept Ypsilanti residents informed and amused until this, its final issue of January-February 2011.

emYOU! The Magazine was published by Bilal Saeed, a student at Eastern Michigan University. His goal was to put out a magazine that showcased EMU’s strengths and diversity while catering to the needs of students.

iSPY (circa 2010)

iSPY (which is Ypsi spelled backwards) was a monthly guide to arts and entertainment publication in tabloid format. The publication covered Ypsilanti events and absorbed some of the same type of local content that *The Ypsilanti Citizen*, *emYOU! The Magazine*, and the *Depot Town Rag* used to publish. The paper was edited by Dan Duchene. In its inaugural issue of June 2010, the paper proclaimed: “*We at iSPY are so excited to bring Ypsilanti this new monthly publication. We hope the community is as excited as we are with its launch. Geared toward informing Ypsilantians about events and cultural news in the area, iSPY is the product of a collaboration between the two local publishers responsible for the Ypsilanti Citizen and emYOU! The Magazine.*”

The Rough Rider (circa 1925-1970)

The *Rough Rider* was the school newspaper of Roosevelt High School. The newspaper was written by students for students.

High School Chat (circa 1900-1910)

The *High School Chat* was an early name for the Ypsilanti High School newspaper, which eventually was renamed to the *Ypsi Sem*.

Ypsi Sem (circa 1910 – circa 2000)

The *Ypsi Sem* was published during the school year by students at Ypsilanti High School under the supervision of a journalism teacher. The *Ypsi Sem* was a weekly newspaper and contained all of the information that students would be interested in – gossip, social events, sports, student politics, and rules that students didn’t want to follow such as conduct and dress codes. Students got school credit for the journalism class that produced the *Ypsi Sem*. My sister wrote articles for the *Ypsi Sem* while she attended high school in the 1980s. The Ypsilanti Historical Museum and Archives has scanned and uploaded many copies of the *Ypsi Sem* to the Internet Archives.

The Weekly Ypsi Sem (circa 1920’s)

The *Ypsi Sem* also published under the name *The Weekly Ypsi Sem*.

Ypsilanti Courier (circa 1997-2014)

The *Ypsilanti Courier* was a weekly newspaper that was part of Heritage Newspapers in Washtenaw County. The *Courier* was a nice addition to Ypsilanti's news scene after *The Ypsilanti Press* went defunct. The *Courier* survived for almost two decades and had really informative local news stories and was the last major printing newspaper in Ypsilanti. Now, unfortunately, the *Courier* is defunct.

Continuing the News

News of today is delivered much differently than in the past. There are still physical newspapers available in Ypsilanti, including the *Ann Arbor News*, the *Detroit News*, and the *Detroit Free Press*. However, local newspapers have largely been replaced by "news" from Facebook and Reddit. Today there are a few online newspapers specifically covering Ypsilanti. These include *Concentrate Media* (<https://concentratemedia.com/place/ypsilanti/>) and a new online incarnation of the *Ypsilanti Press* (<https://ypsilanti-pressllc.town.news/>).

For researchers like me, looking back at old newspaper articles from Ypsilanti is a fun distraction from the deluge of news, both good and bad, in the modern news era. We were living in simpler times back then with simpler problems, but no less passion in the writing of stories. Reading an opinion page from the *Ypsilanti Sentinel* or *The Ypsilanti Commercial* left no doubt where the editors stood on an issue.

Throughout this article, I have provided web links and other information about how to access these old newspapers. The Clarke Historical Library at Central Michigan University (<https://tinyurl.com/46b9me2k>) has a large collection of physical and digital Michigan newspapers with digital links, including *The Ypsilanti Commercial* (1864-1898), the *Ypsilanti Daily Press* (1940-1946), and the *Ypsilanti Sentinel* (1843-1848). Heri-

tage News maintains an archive of the *Ypsilanti Courier* (2005-2014) at www.heritageneews.com/archive/.

Eastern Michigan University's online portal (<https://tinyurl.com/27rxekun>) has a near-complete scanned digital collection of the *Normal News* (1881-1896), the *Normal News Letter* (1903), the *Normal College News* (1896-1956), and *Eastern Echo* (1956-Current). The EMU library would be also a good resource to check for Ypsilanti newspapers. The Burton Historical Collection at the Detroit Public Library has a collection of the *Ypsilanti Daily Press* and *The Ypsilantian*. The Library of Congress website has digital copies of the *Ypsilanti Sentinel* and the *Ypsilanti Daily Press* (<https://tinyurl.com/yc23tfdk>).

The Ypsilanti District Library on Whitaker Rd. also has a complete set of microfiche and a film reader for *The Ypsilanti Press*, including its predecessor newspapers dating back to 1904 in their Michigan Room on the 2nd floor. The Ypsilanti Historical Museum and Archives has physical copies of many old Ypsilanti newspapers plus microfilm copies of *The Ypsilanti Commercial* and *The Ypsilanti Courier*. We are grateful to the staff and volunteers at the YHS Archives who have scanned countless newspapers, primarily *The Ypsilanti Commercial*, the *Ypsi Sem*, *The Ypsilanti Press*, and *The Ypsilanti Sentinel-Commercial*, and have uploaded them to the Internet Archives.

(Robert Anschuetz grew up in Ypsilanti in the historic Swaine house at the corner of Forest Ave. and River St. Some of information for this article about early Ypsilanti newspapers came from the 1906 book "Past and Present of Washtenaw County Michigan" by Samuel W. Beakes. A note: I did not include Washtenaw Community College's student newspapers, On the Record and The Washtenaw Voice, because technically WCC has an Ann Arbor address. Robert is a regular contributor to the Gleanings, having written over 50 articles.)



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The Great Fires of 1851 and 1860

and the Rebirth of Downtown Ypsilanti and Depot Town

BY JANICE ANSCHUETZ



A rare 1851 photograph of Congress Street (now Michigan Avenue) after the fire.

If you have ever wondered how the sturdy and stately brick buildings came to define the character of downtown Ypsilanti and nearby Depot Town, I'll try to explain to you how this happened. When you read about the fire in Depot Town in 1860, you will be among only a handful of people to know about it, as it not even mentioned in Harvey Colburn's 1923 book, *The Story of Ypsilanti*. I will also tell you a little about residents like Walter Hewitt, Polina Hewitt and Benjamin Follett whose resilience helped shape our beautiful city.

In the spring of 1851, the citizens of Ypsilanti woke to a strong smell of smoke and every able-bodied man quickly dressed and headed for the downtown business section in an attempt to put out a massive fire that was quickly spreading. We can still read about the fire in various newspapers both near and far. The *New York Tribune* ran an article titled "Destructive Fire at Ypsilanti" with a byline of March 28, 1851. The article reads:

"A very destructive fire broke out about one o'clock this morning in J. Cady's Grocery Store on the corner of Congress and Washington St. and the entire square North of Congress and East of Washington sts. crossing Huron St. was entirely destroyed down to the River. - Thirty-three buildings were burnt

BY TELEGRAPH.

REPORTED FOR THE DETROIT DAILY FREE PRESS

Great Fire at Ypsilanti.

YPSILANTI, March 28,

A very destructive fire broke out about 1 o'clock last night, in J. Cady's Grocery Store, on the corner of Congress and Washington street, crossing Huron street, and extending to the river, destroying 33 buildings.

Loss estimated at between \$50,000 and \$60,000. Insurance about \$15,000.

Principal sufferers are as follows:

J. Cady—Grocery store.
C. B. Earl—Paint and Sash shop.
Miss F. Nichols—Milliner store.
Buck & Beach—Dry Goods.
J. M. Brown— " "
A. Guest—Grocery store.
Loveridge & Camp—Dry Goods.
P. W. Sage—Saddle and Harness shop.
W. R. Martin—Drug store.
C. C. Chase—Grocery.
Rice & Boyce—Shoe store.
R. Phillips— " "
W. A. Parks—Jewelry store.
J. Cross—Grocery store.
J. H. Dimick—Drug store.
E. Sampson—Drug and Book store.
W. B. Hewett—Shoe and Leather store.
Hewett, Bro. & Co.—Dry Goods.
G. C. Collins—Clothing store.
G. M. Osborne—Hard Ware.
Worden and Brother—Stove and Tin shop.
G. Davis—Cabinet and Chair shop.
C. E. Brisler—Tin store.
J. Stockdale—Wagon shop.
S. Ostrander—Wagon and Blacksmith shop.
Lesperance & Smith—Chair and Cabinet shop.
The Masonic and Sons of Temperance Halls.

The *Detroit Daily Free Press* newspaper of March 29, 1851, tells of the grim details of the Ypsilanti fire that destroyed the downtown business district.



The Towner House on North Huron and Emmet Streets, where Elijah Grant's dead body was kept safe from the fire.

and the loss is estimated at between \$50,000 and \$60,000 – with insurance at about \$15,000.”

We find a similar entry in the Richmond (Virginia) Daily Times of April 3, 1851. (As a reminder to the reader of this article, Michigan Avenue was originally called Congress Street). The Detroit Daily Free Press of March 28, 1851, ran a similar story and listed the buildings destroyed including: “J. Cady – Grocery store; C. B. Earl – Paint and Sash shop; Miss F. Nichols – Milliner store; Buck & Beach – Dry Goods; J.M. Brown – Dry Goods; A. Guest – Grocery store; Love-ridge & Camp – Dry Goods; P.W. Sage – Saddle and Harness shop; W.R. Martin – Drug store; C. C. Chase – Grocery; Rice & Boyce – Shoe store; R. Phillips – Shoe store; W.A. Parks – Jewelry store; J. Cross – Grocery store; J. H. Dimick – Drug store; E. Sampson – Drug and Book store; W. B. Hewett – Shoe and Leather store; Hewett Brothers and Company – Dry Goods; G.C. Collins – Clothing store; G.M. Osborne – Hard Ware; Worden and Brother – Stove and Tin shop; G. Davis – Cabinet and Chair shop; C. E. Brisler – Tin store; J. Stockdale – Wagon shop; S. Ostrander – Wagon and Blacksmith shop; Lesperance & Smith – Chair and Cabinet shop; and The Masonic and Sons of Temperance Halls.” This listing helps us to realize the magnitude of the fire which affected the village of only 1,772 people at the time.

No one could describe this event better than Harvey Colburn in his book “The Story of Ypsilanti”, first published in 1923, and available for sale in the Ypsilanti Historical Museum and Archives. He writes “The year 1851 was made notable by ‘The Great Fire’ perhaps the most disastrous material calamity which has befallen Ypsilanti. On March 28, at one o’clock in the morning, a fire broke out in the business district of the West Side, which rapidly spread beyond control of the primitive fire-fighting apparatus of the time. The flames raced from one frame store building to another and finally engulfed the entire north side of Michigan Avenue from Washington Street to the River, together with the adjacent portion of Huron Street. On the square bounded by Michigan Avenue, Huron, Pearl and Washington Streets were left standing only the house on the corner of Huron and Pearl, together with the Ashley Minor residence, and an old blacksmith and wagon shop.”

Colburn tells us that the citizens of Ypsilanti made a valiant effort to stop the fire, even going so far as to tie ropes to one of the frame structures in order to pull it down to stop the fire from spreading. He provides other descriptions of the scene such as the Davis boys dragging out their piano and Samuel Post’s attempts to save the ornate doors of his building which was nicknamed “the Nunnery.” At the southeast corner of Congress and Huron Streets was the home of Elijah Grant. He died the day before the fire. The flames were so hot that there seemed no way to save the building so family and friends removed a window and carried the lifeless body to the Towner House at the northwest corner of Washington and North Huron Streets.

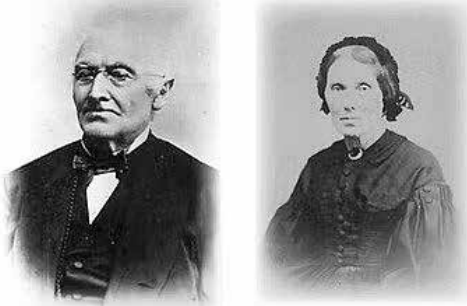
Not wanting this tragedy repeated, the village government soon passed a resolution that the replacement buildings must be built using relatively fireproof brick. This created an architectural legacy and many of those buildings remain standing today, giving the main street of Ypsilanti the look of resilience and prosperity. Even though the destruction of the buildings was a heavy blow to Ypsilanti, no lives were lost and the people of the town worked together so that the fire did not spread further. Many of the structures that burned had been hastily put together from whatever lumber was available and would likely have been replaced in time anyway.



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Colburn tells us that barely were the ashes cool than sturdy brick structures replaced them. We can thank businessmen like Walter Hewitt, Samuel Post, John Brewer, Gilman Davis, Doctor Rexford



Walter and Polina Hewitt had faith in the village of Ypsilanti and were one of the first to rebuild their business in downtown after the fire of 1851.



and others who invested money, time, and hope into building a better Ypsilanti. This rebuilding effort demonstrated the community's commitment to rebuilding and helped solidify Ypsilanti's commercial core, which continued to grow and prosper in the decades that followed.

I would like to tell you a little about a determined, hard-working and hopeful couple that rebuilt their businesses and home which were destroyed as flames raced out of control that fateful early morning of 1851 - Walter and Polina Hewitt. Their decision to rebuild affected the Ypsilanti community for years to come in terms of both business and pleasure. They constructed a three-story sturdy brick business complete with a large auditorium which stands proudly today at the northeast corner of Michigan Avenue and Washington Street, even though the third story was removed for safety sometime in the 1930s. Prior to the fire they had both a store and shoe manufacturing business at the same location. Walter tanned leather and Polina sewed shoes all day as well as running a boarding house for eleven people and raising six children. Their journey in life was not an easy one. In fact, it reminds me of what could be a story plot by Charles Dickens. Perhaps the best way to demonstrate their determination was to start with the early life of Walter, who was born February 4, 1800, in Stillwater, Saratoga County, New York. By the time that he was only seven years old his father had died leaving his mother to raise children as best she could. Walter credited her with making sure that the entire family walked to church each Sunday, whenever weather in New York permitted, and that her children received an education. She also encouraged her children to stay healthy.

As a child, it was not unusual for Walter to swim for a mile a day and exercise in other ways, like running. Alas, one day he challenged his teacher to a foot race, fell and badly injured his knee. He remained in bed for two months and, knowing that the only way he could continue with his education, had to drag his useless leg the two miles to and from school each day. As painful as it was, he did this and was also the star pupil in his country school. After graduating with honors, he learned the leather trade of tanning under his brother. In 1825 he married Polina Childs who was also very hardworking. Since the age of 14, she had been em-

ployed as a school teacher and also cared for her younger siblings. One of Walter's dear friends in Ypsilanti wrote that "Of her, he always loved to speak, and during his last days, when the subject of his early trials was mentioned, and she was referred to as being of undaunted spirit, he said with all the vigor he could use. 'Yes, to her I owe all that I am.'"

With the opening of the Erie Canal, the young Hewitt couple decided to go west to seek their fortune. Once in Detroit they purchased land for a farm and then joined a party led by an Indian guide and traveled by foot through vast forests which led to the area that we now know as Walled Lake. Soon, the entire group came down with malaria and many were prostrate with fever for weeks. No one was left healthy enough to tend or feed the sick and supplies were low. At this point, Walter crawled out of the primitive hut they all lived in which was filled with sickness and despair. He wrote in his biography that he was at the lowest point in his life and saw no hope other than to die. His life mate Polina, half dead herself, joined him and while sitting on a log next to each other it was her optimism which inspired him to live. When the couple recovered enough to travel, they sold the homestead which they had bought in Walled Lake and traveled back to Detroit. Walter left his mark on Walled Lake, which he is credited with naming. This is how it happened: while continuing his practice of swimming each day to regain his health, he noticed a stone structure beneath the water which he interpreted as a stone wall and referred to that place in the wilderness as being Walled Lake.

The young couple lived in Detroit for four years and established a business with Walter tanning leather and Polina sewing shoes. Again, they were called west to seek their fortune, but this time it was to the small village of Ypsilanti. They wasted no time in sharing their talents and ambitions to help establish a warm and welcoming community from a lawless frontier town. Hewitt became an active member in the secret Vigilantly Society which aimed to restore law and order and rid the community of thieves and lawlessness.

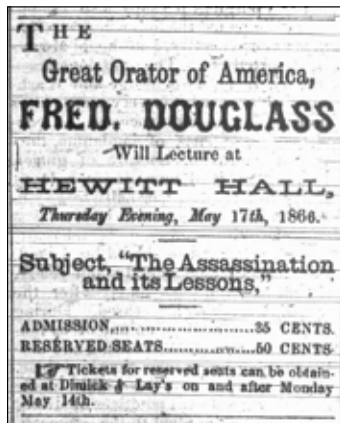


The three-story Hewitt Hall building at the northeast corner of Congress and Washington Streets was rebuilt after the fire.

Then, when elections were held in 1832, he was elected as a village trustee whose job it was to decide what improvements were needed in the village. Throughout his life he was influential in the community. In 1839 he was village treasurer, he was elected president of the village of Ypsilanti in 1840, and then in 1842 he was elected to the state legislature.

Like many other prominent men in Ypsilanti at the time, he was an active Mason. He was also instrumental in building the beautiful Presbyterian church building on Adams Street that we all admire today.

Before the fire, the Hewitts' growing family of six children lived on Pearl Street which was the home that was destroyed in the fire of 1851. Walter had also purchased a farm outside the village on what we know as Hewitt Road which was run by one of his brothers. His business and store were located at the northeast corner of what we now know of as Michigan Avenue and Washington Street. After the fire, Walter and Polina, not being the type to give up, rebuilt a study and impressive three-story building there. The building boasted a barber shop on the second floor. Frequented by the village's growing black population, it became a place where political news could be discussed and spread. The third-floor ballroom hosted musicals and plays such as the play Uncle Tom's Cabin, which left the audience in tears. Speakers such as Frederick Douglass spoke to a packed house there three times - in 1866, 1867 and 1868. Other notables such as Tom Thumb and his wife and the Fisk Jubilee Singers, an African-American singing group which toured the world, and many other entertainers, performed there. The speakers and entertainment drew an audience from far and



A poster advertising one of Frederick Douglas' three lectures at Hewitt Hall.

wide and many came by train and spent the night in the then thriving and newly built downtown area.

As the great fire of 1851 was responsible for creating the downtown of Ypsilanti with notable brick buildings, still another fire in the village in 1860 shaped the Depot Town area we all enjoy today. According

to census details, the population of the village of Ypsilanti had grown dramatically and almost doubled in size from 1,772 people in 1850 to 3,956 in 1860. By then, there were basically two business areas. One was the rapidly expanding downtown with substantial and elegant brick buildings replacing what had been a frontier town of wooden structures and the ragtag area made of wood adjacent to the railroad depot at Cross and River Streets. However, that was soon to change when a massive fire raged through and devastated the area. In an article in the Ann Arbor newspaper Michigan Argus dated February 3, 1860, we learn more about it. I have not edited the article and you are reading it exactly as printed:

"FIRE AT YPSILANTI - Loss \$11,000. Insurance \$2225.

About 11 o'clock, AM. On Monday last, a fire broke out in the Daguerrian Gallery of A. J. Lark on the second story of E. Cross Street, which resulted in the destruction of six wooden buildings. The building in which the fire originated was owned by B. Follett; loss \$2500 - no insurance.

This building was occupied below by D.L. Yost, Harness Shop, who saved most of his good - loss \$100; and by J.N. Crance, Drug and Variety Store, who lost everything - \$800 - and no

*The Fires of 1851 and 1860
- continued on page 19*

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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 - \$10 • Kids (under 12) Free



Ypsilanti History Center House Museum & Archives

220 N. Huron St. – Ypsilanti, MI 48197
Museum 734 482-4990
Archives – 734 217-8236
www.ypsihistory.org

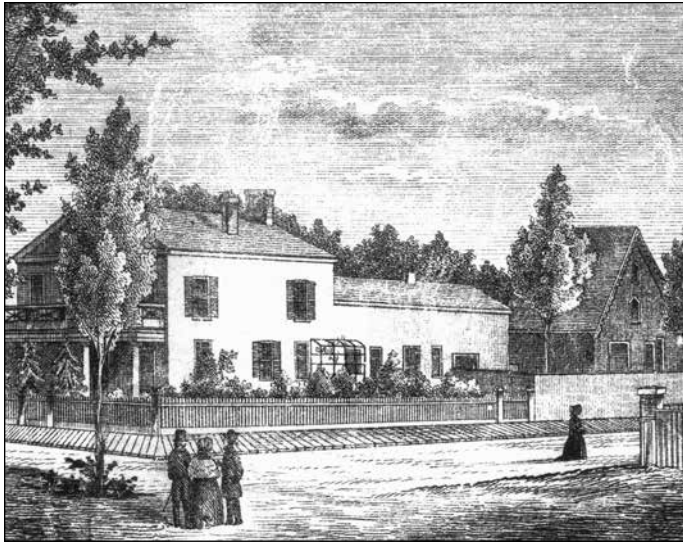
Hours: 2 to 5 Tuesday thru Saturday
Admission: Adults – Free Kids – Free



Michigan Flight Museum

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Benjamin Follett, who was instrumental in establishing the Ypsilanti Fire Department, was worried that his beautiful mansion on River Street and Maple Street would catch fire. Several of his outbuildings did catch fire.

insurance. Above it was occupied by the Herald Printing Office. One small press and a part of the materials saved – loss \$800 – insured \$625. The Herald office was owned by B. Follett, and the paper was published by S. B. McCracken.

Adjoining this building was the store of A. G. Moulton. Loss of Mr. M. on building was \$1000; on goods \$20. – Insured \$100. A. H. Smith owns half of the next building and has no insurance. Loss on building \$500, goods \$100. The other half of the building owned by A. Kilpatrick, loss \$600 – no insurance.

Next building owned by J.W. Babbitt, and occupied by him Isa Billiard Saloon. No insurance. Loss on building \$1200 and on contents \$300. J. Wolvin owns the next building and occupied it as a dwelling and refreshment saloon. Insurance \$1,200. on building and furniture which will cover loss.

The Dickinson House on River Street, adjoining the one above, was singed a little, and was only saved by the superhuman exertion of firemen. The barn of Mr. Peck, about a half mile distant was fired by falling cinders, and was entirely consumed. Three horses were rescued. The old National Hotel building, now occupied by the Normal School, the dwelling of B. Follett, and other buildings in the vicinity were in great danger, and were at times on fire. We visited Ypsilanti Tuesday morning, and are indebted to B. Follett, Esp. for the above facts and figures.”

Now, dear reader, pat yourselves on the back and be proud to be among the less than 1% of people interested in the history of Ypsilanti to know of this Depot Town fire. Even Harvey Colburn’s book does not mention it. However, the rebuilding of Depot Town afterwards, complete with the stately brick buildings we see and shop at today, are indebted to this raging fire. As we read in the article, the newly formed Ypsilanti Fire Department, which began in 1856, is

credited with saving the spread of the fire into the eastside neighborhood. Colburn tells us about the birth of the Fire Department in *The Story of Ypsilanti*. The fire department company was known as The Neptune Number One. Benjamin Follett was the first foreman and it is interesting that many of the buildings he owned were burned in the fire of 1860. At the ringing of a bell, all available men were called to duty and manned the first fire engine which was a hand-engine operated by long pump-handles that were operated by as many as a dozen men. The fire hose would be dropped into any convenient cistern. The interest in this novel device ran high and it was not unusual for Neptune One to hold tournaments and challenge other fire departments to pump water faster and they proudly won state prizes for their skill. The fire department also participated in local events such as racing the Ann Arbor fire department and according to them, always won. They also sponsored a very popular “Fireman’s Ball” which was an ever-popular social event for the village.

So, after this wandering and lengthy narrative, we can sum-



The Ypsilanti Fire Department began in 1856.

marize by saying that the great fire of 1851 and the Depot Town fire of 1860 had lasting benefits in terms of leaving an architectural legacy. The fires also demonstrated the small community’s resilience which allowed it to grow and prosper in the decades that followed. We owe Ypsilanti’s rebirth to the courageous and determined people who invested in the future of Ypsilanti. You can read more about them in biographies of Hewitt and Follett, which were published in the *Gleanings* and are available online. Hewitt’s biography can be found in the Summer 2012 issue of the *Gleanings* at https://ypsihistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/ypsilanti_gleanings_2012.2_summer.pdf. Benjamin Follett’s biography can be read in the Summer 2014 issue of the *Gleanings* at <https://aadl.org/ypsiganings/311796>.

(Janice Anschuetz has researched and written over 60 articles for the Gleanings and continues to learn about and appreciate the many people who have contributed to the growth of Ypsilanti.)

Illuminating the Past: A Magic Lantern in the Museum Collection

BY MCKINLEY STRIGGOW

Since 2007, graduate student interns have evaluated both two-dimensional and three-dimensional donations. Over time, these objects – along with the layered stories behind them – are researched and shared with the public. One such artifact is a magic lantern. The museum proudly preserves two examples, yet one in particular stands out.

Jessie E. Swaine's father purchased the lantern England and she cherished the lantern throughout her childhood and into adulthood. In 1967, she gave one final demonstration before formally presenting the lantern to the Historical Society, ensuring its preservation for future generations.

At the time of that 1967 demonstration, the Society had only recently acquired its permanent home at 220 N. Huron Street, following the City of Ypsilanti's purchase of the house from the estate of Laverne Ross. Although securing the property marked an important milestone for the organization, the building required extensive renovation and would not be open to the public until 1972.

In the years that followed, artifacts such as the magic lantern were kept at the Ypsilanti Public Library for safekeeping. The lantern's journey – from England to Jessie Swaine's care, and ultimately into the stewardship of the Historical Society – mirrors the broader story of Ypsilanti itself: a community shaped by transatlantic ties, civic pride, and a longstanding appreciation for culture, education, and public life. Once a source of wonder in private parlors and social gatherings, the magic lantern now stands as a testament to the city's layered social and cultural history.

Today, Mrs. Swaine's cherished childhood treasure is displayed in the Music Room on the museum's second floor. There, the lantern serves as a focal point for interpreting the eighteenth and nineteenth century's fascination with light, illusion, and emerging visual technologies. Long before motion pictures transformed popular entertainment, devices like this lantern projected hand-painted glass slides that brought distant places, humorous scenes, and dramatic stories vividly to life.

More than an optical wonder, the magic lantern transformed ordinary evenings into a shared experience of light, illusion, and storytelling in an age fascinated by invention. Its presence in the museum not only preserves Mrs. Swaine's personal story, but also illuminates a broader cultural moment when communities like Ypsilanti embraced new technologies as both social experience and shared spectacle.

(McKinley Striggow is an intern and a graduate student in the Historic Preservation Program at Eastern Michigan University.)



Magic Lantern donated by Jessie E. Swaine in 1967.



Photo from the *Ypsilanti Press*, July 4th, 1967, shows Jessie Swaine demonstrating how to use the Magic Lantern.

Letter from the Museum Advisory Board

BY NANCY BALOGH

As we enter the season of renewal and hope I have been reflecting on my first year as chairperson of the Museum Advisory Board. I have been observing and learning from the dedicated people who embody our mission and make the museum a success. It is truly a collaborative effort and made possible through hard work and partnership. As we turn a new page I look forward to renewed energy and possibility.

Since 1972, the Ypsilanti Historical Society has been preserving and interpreting the city's history. Industry and manufacturing has played a significant role. Ypsilanti underwent a transformation with the construction of the Willow Run bomber plant. The plant drew thousands of workers from across the country, including a new workforce of women. As part of a class at Eastern Michigan University's Historic Preservation Program, students created a museum exhibit that replicated a room typically occupied by a "Rosie the Riveter" during WWII. Through their research students were able to locate the granddaughter of a "Rosie" that lived in the museum house after it had been turned into small apartments. They discovered that a name matched a homeowner in Ann Arbor. Without any prior notice they went knocking on this unsuspecting woman's door. At first she thought it was a solicitor and did not answer. But our "sleuth" professor Nancy Bryk



"Rosie" uniform recreated for the new exhibit.

and her students were persistent and it paid off. Finally, Linda Kuba opened her door. When the mission was explained to her she graciously invited the guests into her home and proceeded to show the students photos of her grandmother. Linda told the story of how her grandmother came from Chicago to Ypsilanti to work at the Willow Run bomber plant and she even had a photo of her grandmother in her work uniform. This photo helped the students to recreate the "Rosie" uniform as part of the exhibit. If you haven't already done so, stop by the museum and see the work of our EMU students. Go back in time to the 1940's and observe this moment in Ypsilanti's history.



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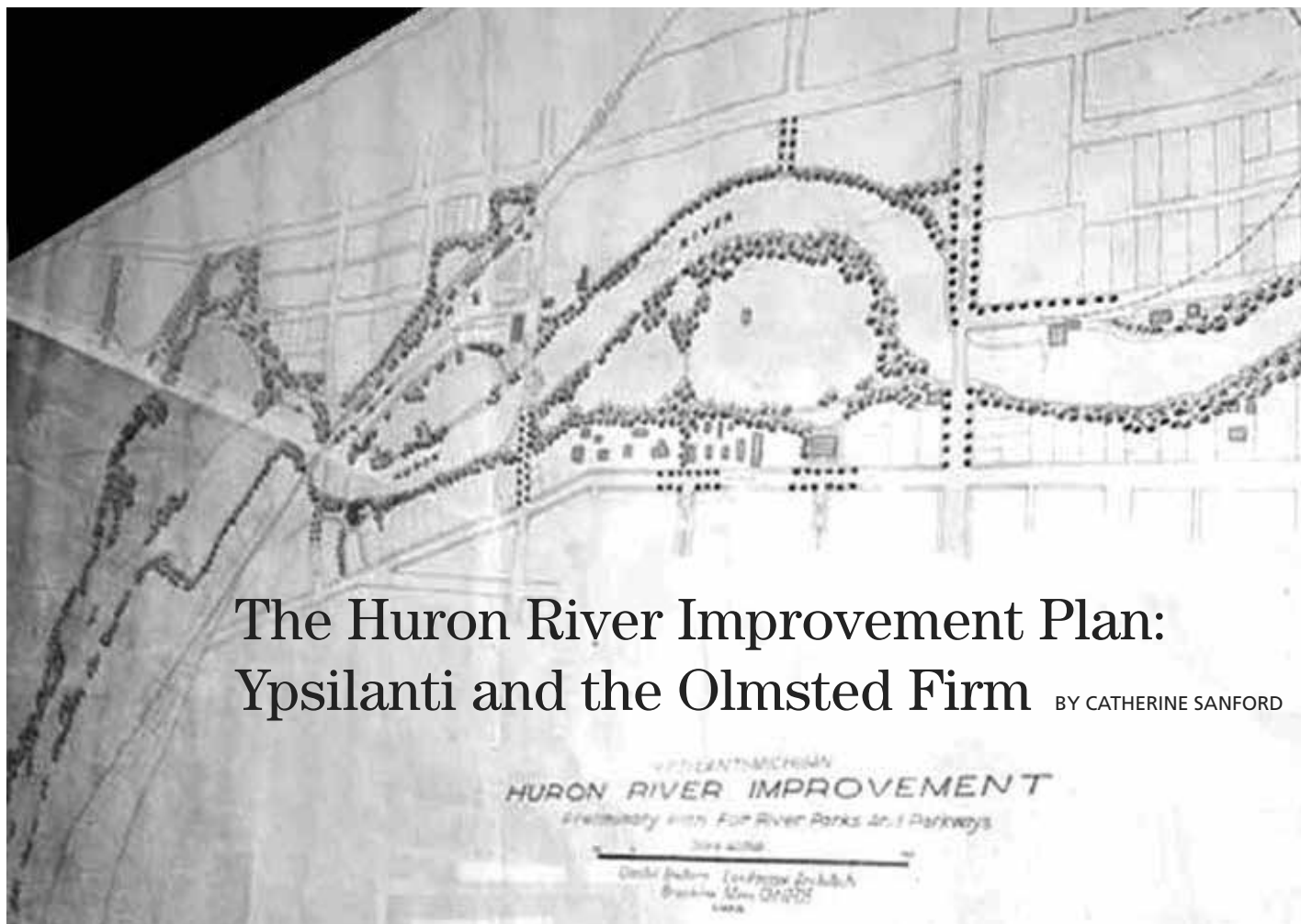


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The Huron River Improvement Plan: Ypsilanti and the Olmsted Firm

BY CATHERINE SANFORD

Map in the Archives "Huron River Improvement: Preliminary Plan for River Parks and Parkways."

Down in the YHS archives, behind the desk, hangs a large map detailing a section of the Huron River running through Ypsilanti. The title of the map is "Huron River Improvement: Preliminary Plan for River Parks and Parkways." It is dated October 12, 1905 by the Olmsted Brothers based in Brookline, Massachusetts (a suburb of Boston). The Olmsted Brothers were the sons of Frederick Law Olmsted, a pioneer of landscape architecture of the late 1800s. F.W. Olmsted Sr. is best known for his work on New York's Central Park and also designed Belle Isle Park in Detroit.

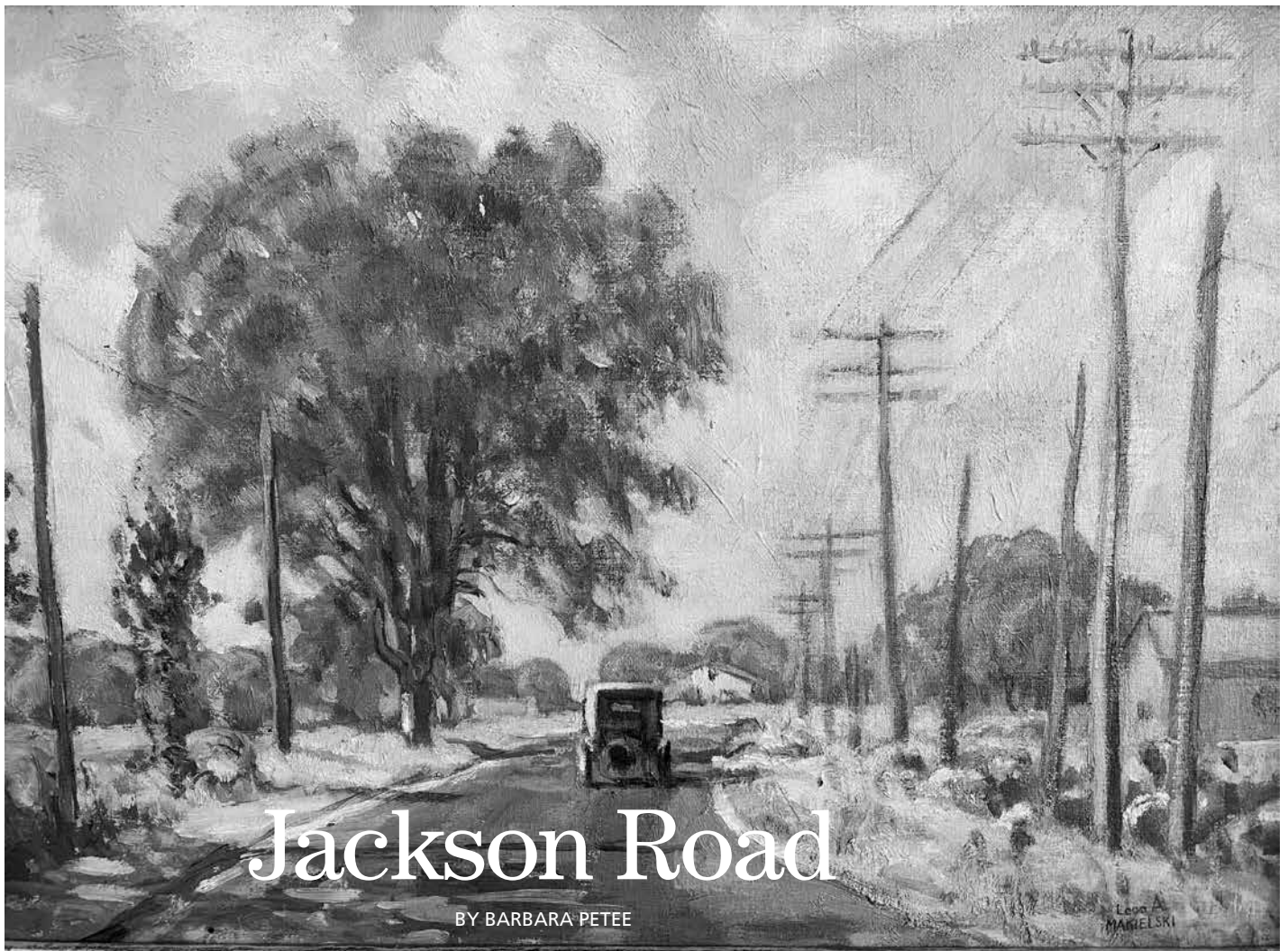
The Olmsted Brothers Firm was founded in 1898 by John Charles and Frederick Law Jr. after their father ceased work due to old age and memory loss. John Charles had been helping his stepfather with the business for some years and was trained by him to take over the firm. The Olmsteds (both father and sons) did work not only on park systems but also planned subdivisions and transportation plans. This work was essential during the urban boom of the turn of the century as cities became more crowded and those who could afford to move out to the suburbs did so. Many other men were partners in the Olmsted firm, which had carried out 2,500 commissions by the start of the Great Depression. It no doubt inspired countless other landscape architects

and urban planners. The Olmsteds all believed that every citizen should have equal access to green spaces, which would restore the body and mind. They also believed in the value of community and the ability of landscape design to bring people together.

This map in particular was created to demonstrate a network of parkland along the Huron River in Ypsilanti. There was talk around town of creating a park along the Huron River as early as 1900. By 1905, a plan was in place to fund a new park, which we know today as Riverside Park, which the park commission said would be part of a "chain of pretty parks across the city". It is important to note that similar language was used to describe Boston's "Emerald Necklace" of parks, which were designed by F.L. Olmsted Sr. The Ypsilanti parks committee were clearly modelling their new park system after one of the country's greatest parks projects.

If you'd like to know more about the Olmsted Firm's projects in Ypsilanti, our archives has a copy of their master plan for Ypsilanti from 1913. More information about the company can be found by visiting The Olmsted Network's website, olmsted.org.

(Catherine Sanford is an intern and a graduate student in the Historic Preservation Program at Eastern Michigan University.)



Painting of Jackson Road, by artist Leon Makielski.

We are sitting at Le Nemours café in Paris, my husband and I, in this golden hour in the first week of May. The air is warm, the sky – all day a smooth sheet of Robin’s egg blue – is mixing now with ribbons of yellows and pinks. Chestnut trees, already lush with bright, green leaves sway in the gentle breeze, in time with the music.

Throughout Paris and France, indeed the whole of Europe, the celebration of VE Day rings out, eighty years on.

We sip wine and enjoy warm bread as we watch a group of men and women dance to the music that fills Place Collette, that beautiful square just in front of Comedie Francaise and the courtyard that leads to Palais Royale. How effortlessly the couples twirl, step up then back. They dip and tilt their hips at each other in unabashed, seductive moves; their bodies part then reunite in one quick pull and, back in each other’s arms, they begin again.

The crowd is jubilant. Some laugh. Some weep. Others seem caught between a memory and this moment, thinking of the courage of their ancestors. My gaze follows one woman as she dances with her partner; her hair is swept up in a style

from eight decades ago. She reminds me of my mother.

I, too, am between a memory and a moment as I watch, smile, wonder, remember.



Jackson Road runs east and west between the towns of Ann Arbor and Chelsea, Michigan. Once past Chelsea, heading west, the road is known simply as Old US 12 and, going east, it changes to Jackson Avenue once it crosses Wagner Avenue, eventually becoming Huron Street in downtown Ann Arbor and then Washtenaw Avenue as it stretches east to Ypsilanti. But that one stretch – the few miles between Ann Arbor and Chelsea, though long ago paved, is still rural between the two towns; lush with old trees on either side that often block older farms, or remnants of where they once thrived.

It is the Jackson Road I know best and it’s the route my grandparents, Ted and Laura, more than a century ago, would have taken often as they made their way between the towns.

My Grandfather was born in 1887 on a one-hundred-forty-acre farm just a few miles south of Chelsea. He lived a century and a year. The third of eight children, he’d be the first

of his siblings to leave the farm, graduate high school and, eventually, become manager of Detroit Edison's Ann Arbor office, a role he held until his retirement.

He'd known Laura most of his life and once she completed her training as a nurse they married on July 18, 1917. Their first home was in Ann Arbor, followed by a year in Detroit, and then back, closer to their roots, in the home they built in Ypsilanti, at 1023 Washtenaw. It was 1923.

In an oral interview he gave on his one-hundredth birthday, when asked what drew him to his wife, Grandpa shared that Laura was such good company. They understood each other.

Together, they shared a life of equally profound love and loss. Laura passed in 1943, leaving my grandfather a widower and his three, nearly grown children, without a mother for most of their lives. But there were four children from their union; Patricia, forever the oldest, forever a child, was born in 1921 and died less than two years later, from diphtheria, in April 1923.



Patricia Weber, firstborn child of Ted and Laura.

I never asked Grandpa much about Patty because I didn't want him to be sad; though I knew he carried her close throughout his life. The only photo I ever saw displayed on his bureau was of her – in his bedroom in the home he built with Laura, when he lived in Ohio with us, and in his final home, back in Ypsilanti. It sat on his dresser along with a comb, a brush and his black bead rosary.

In that same interview Grandpa talked of how difficult Patty's death had been.

They missed her terribly, and I still hear his voice, rising just a pitch, as he recalled how they had such plans for her. They'd bought books to educate her and had hopes for travel.

Her death was what prompted Laura to return to practice nursing, eventually developing the model for what became the first public health program throughout Washtenaw County. I don't know if the children she nursed and the women and men she educated had any idea where the seed of her journeys on those rural roads was born. But I know, so I lift her up whenever I can.

As a child, Patty's loss made me sad to think about; as a parent, it is unimaginable.



We don't live far from Ann Arbor and, no matter how many



Author Barbara Petee, age one, with her parents, Monica and Richard, taken in front of their home at 1443 Kingwood in Ypsilanti.

towns and states I've lived in, Ypsilanti will always be where I'm from. And so, on a brisk March morning, just a few months ago, when spring was finally getting the upper hand over winter's last days, we took a drive to Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti for a few hours of antiquing and lunch. Though my grandfather passed almost forty years ago, I still find myself, when wandering through antique stalls and shops in the area, looking for something that might have been in his home, though many of the heirloom pieces of furniture were parsed out to my sisters and me. The china cabinet that stood in his dining room for decades is now in my home, no longer laden with fragile dishes or delicate crystal but full, just the same, with photos of my grandparents, my parents, one of Patty, on the back of which, long ago, was written, An angel singing.

There are also a few books and journals, and the small brass perpetual desk calendar that was my grandfather's, with dials to set the month, date and day. I used to play with it as a child. It sat on the secretary desk in the corner of his dining room that had an array of cubby holes and drawers for a sundry of items – paper clips, small notepads, stamps. His typewriter sat in the middle of the desk and I imagined be-

ing grown up, in an office, clacking out something on the typewriter that was important and interesting enough that others wanted to read.

When I first acquired the calendar, I set it to the date of my grandfather's passing because, at the time, it seemed, time stood still. But time never stops, and I know now that, over time, the unimaginable becomes less sharp and painful until it dulls and, finally, almost dissolves, settling into the rest of our history.

A few years after his death I moved the dials to September 8, 1990. The day I married Tim. Now, when I'm straightening the shelves, or happen to be passing by, I turn it to the current date and day.

But on that day, this past March, while spring pushed its way forward, I found myself frozen in place, on the third-floor loft of an old barn at our favorite antique stop. Once a thriving farm, it went from growing and harvesting crops to buying and selling antiques more than a century ago. A sprawling, low-lying building that has been added to over time houses rare case goods and a trove of other pieces – from clocks to cutlery, copper pots and pans, rare books. A few paintings from Europe are on the walls, but most of the art is housed in the old barn. There, the artists on display have two common traits: they are all from Michigan, and they are all deceased.

The owner, a third-generation descendant, offered to show us the gallery as we walked back from the finishing shop several yards from the main building. A one (dead) man art show was being staged and opening in April. Would we like to see it?

Yes.

We wound our way from the main floor, to the second and then, what I imagine was once a hay loft, to the third floor where the largest gallery has been established. The featured artist was Leon Makielski and the collection, titled A Midwest Perspective, ranged from a few portraits to mostly landscapes; some set in Indiana, a few in Illinois that I'd learn were done during the years he studied at the Chicago Art Institute. He'd studied in Paris, too, primarily the Impressionists. And as my eyes began to take in the paintings I saw a fusion of two things I love the most: the Midwest,



Author's mother, Monica, taken during her college years at Marquette University.



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and the beauty of those artists who, a few hundred years ago, blurred and blended the lines to capture a place and moment, stirring all the senses – the warmth of the sun, the smell of cut grass, the taste of the air after a rain, the sound of the wind through fields of hay. The colors.

While the first few pieces I study, including the dome of Notre Dame University in South Bend make me think of a church in France, it becomes clear that most of his works are places in Ann Arbor, the town Makielski called home the majority of his life, where he taught painting at the University of Michigan, and where he bought a farm to raise his family, using the barn for his studio.

My eyes take in the familiar locations rendered in oils and acrylics: the Cross Street Bridge over the Huron River in Ypsilanti, fields of wheat and bales of hay that, I imagine, could have been my grandfather's farm. I begin to turn as I take them all in, these familiar places that not only touch my heart but bear witness to my family's past. And that's when I see it, the small painting in the opposite corner of the room that seems to have sunlight streaming through it. A summer morning on a rural stretch of road with a lone Model T making its way from the view of those looking on; farms and small buildings dotting the land. It is headed west.

I can't move, because I know. Somehow, I know. They are in that car, together. Laura and Ted. Grandpa. My grandmother, who didn't live to hear that name from the lips of her eleven grandchildren, but whose life influenced and shaped so many of us.

The owner notices my expression and looks to the far wall, in the direction of the painting. Isn't that a beauty, he says.

My words rush out as we begin to walk toward it. I tell him about my grandparents, Grandpa's farm in Chelsea, my grandmother establishing public health in rural Washtenaw County — my grandfather having purchased a car for her travels so no one who needed her care would be out of reach. I share about my Aunt Patty; how short her life, how impactful it was.

We are both silent for a few moments and then he carefully lifts the painting from its hook to see the title and date on the back. In the artist's own hand, it simply reads: Jackson Road 1923.



I think of my grandparents often these days. The love they gave to Patty, and each other, when they surely knew all that could be done had been and, in the end, it would not be enough.

What strength it would have taken to rise again, the morning after the twenty-sixth of April 1923 and put one foot in front of the other. To put each other before themselves. To have such faith to say another prayer, after their most fervent

supplication had gone unanswered.

The acceptance. The courage. The love it took to continue to get in that car in Ypsilanti and head west on Washtenaw Avenue, then onto Jackson Road to share with their family in Chelsea that, by the following May, a second child, a son, would arrive. He would live to be ninety-six, outliving his two younger siblings by decades. The youngest, a second daughter, would grow into a beautiful, sophisticated woman and remain close to her father in all ways. She would become a teacher, travel through Europe with a friend from college, and later with her husband, after their seven children were educated, grown and on their own; far flung from their small Midwest hometown of Ypsilanti.

As their youngest I watched and learned from them, remembering and taking the lessons that mattered most.

Now our children are grown with families of their own. They too have watched and learned and gratefully accepted the best we could offer and have become who and what they were meant to be.

And so, reluctantly, but knowing I must — I let go.

They are, at last, my kites without strings.



Time is precious for all things, but unlike my Grandfather's perpetual calendar, I cannot choose one date and make it last.

So, we move forward. And, despite our uncertainties about this world in so much flux and our anxious thoughts about who and what we leave behind as we move forward, we draw on our courage, planted and nurtured so long ago.

Who taught us that? Our parents, our children, our experiences. Our grandparents. My grandparents; the one I knew and loved so deeply and the one I know only from memories and stories of others who, in 1923, twenty-two years before the armistice of 1945, twenty years before she passed,



Ted Weber, author's grandfather.



Laura Weber, author's grandmother.

sixty-five years before his death, but just three months after Patty's, found the courage to shoulder their grief and move ahead with the belief that this life – these few, precious moments we are given, are to be lived.



As evening settles in on Paris on this Eighth of May, while those around me dance, remember and celebrate so many, who gave so much, accepted so much, so there could be nights such as this – full of wine and song and memory, so that we could be born and grow, learn and teach, nurture, travel, weep and laugh, work and rest, love — I celebrate Ted and Laura most of all.

I cherish my journey; the whole of it that began so long ago by ancestors who I've known, and those I've only known of. We inherit the color of their eyes, their smiles. Their names. But

the real treasures of our inheritance go much deeper, and we are richer for them.

The woman with the dark, swept hair passes by.

I sip my wine and picture the painting that hangs now just above my writing desk. And I silently thank my grandparents for having the faith and courage it took to get into that automobile and head west, then east — again and again — on Jackson Road in 1923.

(Barbara Petee, born in Ypsilanti in 1962, recently retired from a 39-year career in healthcare administration. With a passion for writing, she is now taking time to recall and capture in words the moments and people from her life that influenced her most, as well as continuing to write short and long fiction.) © 2026 By Barbara Petee

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The men in the 14th Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry.

Ypsilanti and the Civil War

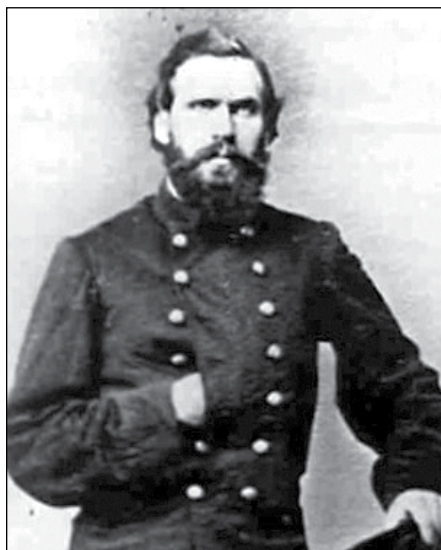
By Kasen Saul

The Civil War was a major turning point in the history of the United States, and it was a war unlike any other the U.S. has been in. With spring around the corner and April soon to be here, it will mark the 161st anniversary of the end of the Civil War. Something that may not be common knowledge to residents of Ypsilanti, or college students attending EMU, is that Ypsilanti contributed a lot to the Union Army during the Civil War. More specifically, the city provided many soldiers to the Union. With the end of war anniversary approaching, it is a perfect time to highlight some of the men and groups from Ypsilanti that helped contribute to the Union.

One of the largest contributions that Ypsilanti provided for the Union was that of the men in the 14th Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry. The 14th began accepting volunteers from both Ypsilanti and Detroit on January 7th, 1862 and ended recruitment on February 18th of the same year. In this timeframe, the regiment was able to provide 925 soldiers to the Union. The regiment would contribute to many key battles throughout the war and,

in total, would engage in battle with Confederate soldiers 15 times. The 14th's first engagement with the Confederate army was in the Siege of Corinth, Mississippi, which lasted for over a month. When the Confederate soldiers surrendered, the 14th Regiment would find its way to Tennessee, where it would be assigned a new role, joining the First Brigade, Second Division of the 14th Corps. The regiment

would remain a part of this corps until the end of the war and would engage in many more battles. An important battle for the 14th came during the Siege of Atlanta, which started on July 22nd, 1864. The siege was led by General William T. Sherman, in which the 14th would play a critical role. This contribution would come during the Battle of Jonesboro, in which the 14th would be the first regiment to have a successful charge, breaking through the Confederate lines. After the charge, they would capture the Confederate General, Daniel Govan, as well as his men and important pieces of equipment from the enemy. The Battle of Jonesboro was critical in the Siege of Atlanta, as it was the final battle of the siege. The victory was important because the Union Army would be able



Byron Cutcheon, Civil War hero and Ypsilanti Medal of Honor recipient.



The Battle Flag of the 14th Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry.

14th would continue to march with General Sherman. They would continue to engage with the enemy in cities such as Savannah, Georgia, and Averysboro, North Carolina. The 14th's final major battle would take place in Bentonville, North Carolina. Afterwards, the 14th would be sent back to Michigan on July 21st, 1865, and disbanded on July 29th. (To find out more about the 14th Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry, refer to the YHS *Gleanings* from Fall 2024) .

Although the 14th played a major role in Ypsilanti's contribution to the Union, other important figures from Ypsilanti also played key roles. Something many may not be aware of is that Ypsilanti was the home of a Medal of Honor recipient from the Civil War. Byron M. Cutcheon was born in Pembroke, New Hampshire, on May 11th, 1836. Cutcheon would become a teacher in Pembroke, but would eventually end up moving to Ypsilanti in 1855 to further his education by attending the University of Michigan. After finishing his schooling, Cutcheon would enlist in the Union Army and join the 20th Regiment, Michigan Infantry, where he would reach the rank of Lieutenant Colonel on November 16th, 1863. Just 5 days after being promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, Byron would receive another promotion to Colonel and a year later would be named Colonel of the 27th Michigan Infantry. May 10th, 1863, was the day that Cutcheon would display his acts of courage would lead to his being awarded the Medal of Honor. While a part of the 20th, Byron and his men were in pursuit of Confederate General John Morgan and his own men. However, things for the 20th looked a bit bleak, as the night before, they had been pushed back by Morgan and his soldiers. Morgan and his men would then attack the Union soldiers at Horseshoe Bend, Kentucky. This didn't deter Cutcheon, however. He knew that the Confederates had the advantage. Still he ordered his men to attack a farmhouse that the Confederates were using as protection, and he would lead the charge.

to cut off the final supply line for the Confederate Army in the city of Atlanta. This would lead to the city's evacuation and the surrender of Confederate General John Bell Hood.

After the fall of Atlanta, the

was successful, and he defeated the enemy forces. This action is what led Byron to receive the Medal of Honor, as in the charge, he displayed courageous behavior that was so notable that he would earn the commendation of his General. Byron would also fight in other major battles during the Civil War, which included the Battle of the Wilderness and the Siege of Vicksburg. However, in 1864, while leading a charge, Byron was shot and wounded in the Battle of Spotsylvania. This would not be the end for Byron as he would continue with his service, eventually reaching the rank of Brigadier General, and was honorably discharged on March 6th, 1865. Byron Cutcheon would be awarded his Medal of Honor from the United States Congress on June 29th, 1891. This would not be the end of Byron's accomplishments, however. After the war Byron led a very successful life. When he was discharged from the military, Byron returned to Ypsilanti and began practicing law alongside his brother, who had an office in the city. After graduating from Law School at the University of Michigan in 1866, Cutcheon would be appointed to the position of state agent of the Michigan Soldiers Monumental Association. This would only be the beginning of Byron's post-war life however. Cutcheon would eventually move to Manistee, Michigan, and gain many more titles. Some of the titles given to Byron Cutcheon included president of the Michigan Soldiers' Home Commission, member of the State Board of Railroad Commissions; he was also elected to the board of Regents at the University of

Michigan, and would become the prosecuting attorney of Manistee County. However, his biggest accomplishment post-war was being elected to Michigan's 9th congressional district in the 49th Congress. He would remain in that seat from 1883 to 1891, the same year he would receive the Medal of Honor. Byron Cutcheon would pass away at the age of 71 as a man full of accomplishment and success, whose service not only benefited Ypsilanti and the state of Michigan, but the



Cutcheon's grave in Highland Cemetery.

entirety of the United States as well. Cutcheon died in 1908 in Ypsilanti and was buried at Highland Cemetery.

The Civil War was a critical time in U.S. history, and it is fascinating to find out how our community played a role during this time period. Without the men from Ypsilanti who volunteered, the result of the war may have been completely different. This is why it is important to remember and honor these men, as they not only made a name for themselves but our city as well.

(Kasen Saul, a student at Eastern Michigan University, volunteers at the Ypsilanti Historical Museum)

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