

FALL
2016



Impressions

NEWSLETTER WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Young Historians Take Center Stage at the Museum on Main Street

“As Museum Curators, how can we learn about, preserve and present the history of an Ann Arbor Community Helper?” This was the guiding question the 2016 Second Grade class of Ann Arbor STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics) at Northside School asked themselves.

Community helpers are all of the people we count on to provide the services that make our lives easier, safer and healthier. The students focused on the history of the Ann Arbor Police and Fire Department and the University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital. Their bright, interactive, colorful and informative displays are in the center of each room, surrounded by photos, artifacts and

hands-on activities from the Ann Arbor Police and Fire Departments, Huron Valley Ambulance, the Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum and the Washtenaw County Historical Society. Bring your digital device and your curiosity. There are photos, QR (quick response) codes, on-site videos and hands-on activities. This family-friendly exhibit is a great opportunity to see how heavy the fire nozzles are, hold the helmets or to even try on firefighting “turn-out” gear.

How They Did It

Teachers Lisa Bankey, Atoya Martin and Katherine Sood prepared their students for this exhibit in many ways. They learned how community helpers

Inside...

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2015 Annual Report is inserted

Top Photo: 1938 – Demonstration of Ann Arbor Fire Department’s New Ladder Truck , E Huron St & N Fifth Ave . Ann Arbor, MI. This is the building that currently houses the Ann Arbor Hands-on Museum. oldnews.aadl.org

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WCHS

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Impressions is published four times a year by the Washtenaw County Historical Society, a non profit 501(c)(3) organization. Donations are tax deductible

Greetings from the President!

We invite you to come see the current exhibit at the museum, *Our Community Helpers*. This family-friendly exhibit was created by the 2016-second grade class of Ann Arbor STEAM@Northside Elementary School (Science Technology, Engineering, Art, Math). The display depicts the history of the Ann Arbor Police and Fire Departments and C.S. Mott Children's Hospital at the University of Michigan. The children have created colorful, detailed timelines and dioramas to tell the history. Also included in the exhibit are artifacts from the holdings of the museum and items on loan from the Ann Arbor Fire and Police Departments and Huron Valley Ambulance. The exhibit will continue through January 8, 2017. The following collaborative exhibit is with a class from the University of Michigan Museum Studies program highlighting items from the Historical Society collection.

We also thank the participants who attended the Annual Argus Collectors Group/Argus Museum Conference October 13-16 in Ann Arbor. Read all about it on pages 4 and 5.

In memory of the life of Pauline Walters we have created the Pauline Walters Memorial Award. Pauline served the Society for many years as Corresponding Secretary, Membership Chair and as President from 1991-1993 and 1999-2004. The award will be presented this spring, at our annual meeting, to an individual for the promotion of some aspect of local history. Information on the award and criteria for applying will be in the Winter Issue of *Impressions*.

The mission of the Washtenaw County Historical Society is to educate and inspire our community and to engage in the preservation and presentation of area history. We try to fulfill this mission through the exhibits, educational programs and the articles that are found in *Impressions*. It is through our membership fees and annual donations that we are able to fulfill our mission and to keep the society strong and fiscally responsible. See page 8.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank James Davis for his leadership as president this past year and to Jan Tripp who was our techie board member for the past ten years. We hope you enjoy this issue of *Impressions*, that you get a chance to visit the exhibit at the Museum on Main Street, and are able to attend one of the upcoming educational programs. November 20th Grace Shackman presents on Mid-Century Modern Architecture (page 3) and the 2017 schedule is on page 9.

Karen Jania

The Washtenaw County Historical Society

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washtenawhistory.org • [facebook.com/washtenawhistory](https://www.facebook.com/washtenawhistory)



Museum on Main Street

500 N. Main St
Ann Arbor, MI 48104-1027
(at Beakes & E. Kingsley)

HOURS Saturday & Sunday,
12 Noon – 4:00 PM
by appointment Monday-Friday
Groups are welcome,
Call 734-662-9092

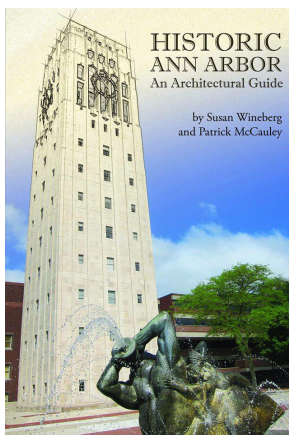
Current Exhibit:
Our Community Helpers
(closes January 8, 2017)

Send Your Questions to Susan

Have a historical question? WCHS board member Susan Wineberg can try to help answer it. If not, she can point you in the direction of the resources or people who can help in your research. Email your questions about local history to the Washtenaw County Historical Society at wchs-500@ameritech.net.

Susan has been a resident of Ann Arbor since 1964 and lives in the Old Fourth Ward Historic District in an 1851 Greek Revival house. She has degrees in Near Eastern Studies and Anthropology from U-M and one from EMU in Historic Preservation. Susan has written three books about Ann Arbor Architecture: *Historic Buildings*, Ann Arbor Michigan (1992) with Marjorie Reade; *Lost Ann Arbor* (2004) and *Historic Ann Arbor: An Architectural Guide* (2014) with Patrick McCauley. This book is available at the Museum on Main Street Gift Shop. **WCHS members receive a 15% discount!**

She has served on the Ann Arbor Historic District Commission three times and been on the board of the WCHS since 1986. She served as President for five years when we were setting up and opening the Museum on Main Street. The Society appreciates Susan's years of dedication and look forward to printing some of the most interesting queries in future issues of *Impressions*.



Susan Wineberg in the Allmendinger Building, 130 S. First St. Ann Arbor (Photo: Concentrate Ann Arbor)

November

20

Mid-Century Modern Architecture



The William and Elizabeth Muschenheim House (photo: michiganmodern.org)

Washtenaw County was a national leader of mid-century modern architecture (1940s-1970s). You will learn why, when, historian and author, Grace Shackman, shares photos, characteristics and unique features of local homes and buildings.

2:00 – 4:00 PM Morris Hall, Pittsfield Township Administration Building, 6201 Michigan Avenue

We apologize to those of you who showed up at Pittsfield Library for the October program to discover it was actually at Mallets Creek. We appreciate your support and hope to see you on November 20th.

December

4

Researching Your Home's History

Join local Realtor and home restoration expert Patrick McCauley as he explains how to research a home's history. He will show us the steps you should take to put together the complete history of a historic building, from the architectural style and construction date to the stories of the people who lived in the home.

Many of the resources used will be familiar to genealogists, while some may be new. This promises to be an engaging topic for all interested in genealogy and history. This talk is followed by "My First Proof Argument. Did I Prove My Case?" presented by Barbara Snow at 3:30 pm

1:30 – 4:00 PM Education Center Auditorium
St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Campus,
5305 Elliott Dr., Ypsilanti,

Definitely Worth the 14-Hour Drive!

Argus Camera Corner
Cheryl Chidester

Well, the reviews are in – the 2016 Argus Collectors Group/Argus Museum Conference was a big success! Attendees hailed from across the country and Canada as well as across the street. There were many familiar faces in the crowd as well as some new ones.

The opening of the Ann Arbor Area Crappy Camera Club's (A3C3) photography exhibition, "Homage to the HOLGA", was well-attended. The challenge the group took on to use various Holga cameras as artistic tools was appreciated. (The show will be available for public viewing M-F, 9-5 through December 16th.)

Participants also appreciated the opportunity to view the Museum on Main Street's (MoMS) exhibit, "Our Community Helpers"; the current exhibit which is a collaborative effort with Ann Arbor Public Schools. The WCHS accommodated the group with special conference hours for the MOMS and a chance to "meet and greet." A number of participants were eager to share the concept with their own local museums.

The Friday tour of the Clements Library was also a big hit; participants were very impressed with the Library's collection and the building's architecture. As many of you know, the recently-renovated Albert Kahn-designed building houses original resources for the study of American history and culture between the fifteenth and nineteenth century and is normally open only by appointment to serious researchers. Clayton Lewis, the curator of the Graphics Division, gave an informative talk and engaging tour.

Dinner at the Argus Museum was again created and donated by ACG (Argus Camera Group) and Museum members, Pam Smith and Sandy Martens.



Joe O'Neal demonstrating the steam engine

After dinner, attendees enjoyed the informative, and nostalgic presentation, "Argus in the 1950s" given by Seattle-area and WCHS and ACG member Bob Kelly. Additionally, there were two temporary conference displays exhibited. "Whatever Happened to Gustave Fassin", a look at the man behind the design of the Argus A – the company's first 35mm camera (on loan from Mike Reitsma, Burlingame CA), and "Argus in The Media – Screen Shots" (on loan from Vaughn Martens, Racine WI) were welcome additions to the conference. Everyone was enjoying the camaraderie that the conference offered that evening – so much so that many were gently asked to call it a night!

Saturday presenters, Mark O'Brien (ACG, A3C3) and Dietmar Haenchen (Michigan Photographic Historical Society) gave very well-researched presentations on B&W films and historical developments of the 35mm cameras, respectively. Several participants commented on the wealth of information these men shared.

The highlight of the annual conference is usually the banquet and this year was no exception. This year's banquet was hosted by Joe and Karen O'Neal – the event took place at their Macon Creek Mill. The well-maintained mill, built by Henry Ford in 1944, is situated on beautiful grounds and offered great photo ops. Adding to the experience were two demonstrations given by Joe O'Neal.

The mill boasts of a very non-typical 18-foot water wheel. Ford reproduced it to preserve an example of a Poncelet Wheel. French engineer, Jean Victor Poncelet, designed the wheel to improve efficiency of low-head water wheels. His design influenced another Frenchman, Benoil Fourneyron, who created the prototype of today's modern turbine. The Macon Creek Mill's wheel is likely the only one of its kind still in existence. That evening, it was put into motion!

Additionally, the mill is home to an operating steam engine that once powered a brick factory on the

Continued on page 5



Bob Kelly, Art Dersham, Vaughn Martens, Richard Chiriboga, Alan Symons

property Ford purchased to build the Rouge Plant. The engine was modified to help manufacture early Ford cars. The lubricating device for the engine is a "Real McCoy", invented by Elijah McCoy!

Sunday's event was again in conjunction with the Michigan Photographic Historical Society (MiPHS) 40th Annual Photographica Show and Sale. Conference participants socialized with MiPHS members as they perused, and sometimes purchased camera and photography-related items. Each year, MiPHS donates a table to the Argus Museum for promotion and sales.

Thank you to all who attended the 2016 ACG/Argus Museum Conference. Everyone who participated contributed to the success of the event. ACG members donated funds to off-set the cost of meals, items for the museum's collections and archives and auction items. Pam Smith made C3 Christmas ornaments available with a donation while Sandy Martens (with the help of Vaughn Martens) fabricated the photography competition award. (Vaughn won the competition☺.) Wesley Furr recorded the presentations and donated DVDs for retail sales.

Bob Kelly graciously accepted the responsibilities of the emcee. The help of volunteers Rose Majaren, Phyllis Tirador, Christian Russell and Jack Chidester was invaluable.

Former Argus employees, and brothers, Art and Elwyn Dersham, visited with attendees and donated Argus-related items. Local businesses that donated items to the conference auction include Camera Mall, the Argus Farm Stop and Hollanders. The Ann Arbor Area Convention and Visitors Bureau again supplied maps and guides for attendees (as well as the bags for conference materials). Thank you all.



Pam Smith, Sandy Martens, Rose Majaren



Detail of Fassin Display

Plans are already underway for next year's conference. Although I've been told that it will be difficult to top this year's event, I think that next year's conference is developing into one you won't want to miss. As one of this year's conference participants, Ron Norwood, stated, "It is definitely worth the 14-hour drive!"

The Argus Museum

525 W William St
Ann Arbor, MI 48103
(734) 769-0770

HOURS Monday-Friday
9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Follow us on
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washtenawhistory.org

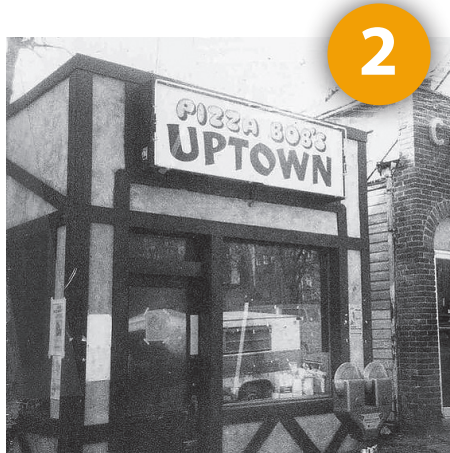


People's Food Co-op

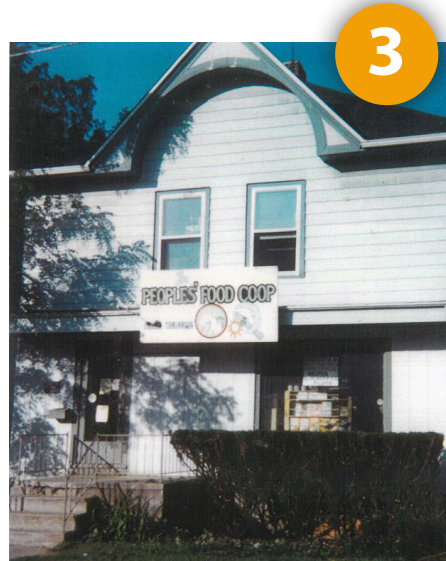
By Patti Smith



Officially, it started in the winter of 1971, but the origins go back further: to an informal vegetable co-op in the 1960s, to a gas station cooperative in the 1930s, to the first known cooperative in England in 1844. But our co-op—People's Food Co-op of Ann Arbor—got its official start on a cold day in January, 1971. Some friends had been buying food in bulk and sharing it amongst themselves. This allowed them to buy healthier food at lower prices. They decided to literally take this idea to the people in the form of a table on State Street, in front of a store called Little Things.



The success of that stand led to a space beneath Pizza Bob's. Early members of the co-op describe walking down a set of "questionable" stairs into a narrow storage room. In that room were bags of beans, tubs of peanut butter and honey, and containers of organic grape juice. Everyone had to bring his or her own containers and bags because there were none. The whole operation was run by volunteers and on an honor system—one took what one wanted, weighed it and added up the total, then left their money.



Eventually, the building that housed the little co-op was sold, and the volunteer collective had to find new space. This led to the first stand-alone spot—the house at 722 Packard. Early volunteers recall the luck of finding a business in Detroit that sold fixtures from stores that had gone out of business. This enabled the group to get shelving units and other necessities. People in the community donated refrigerators and other items.



Just as the physical location was changing, so was the co-op. Until 1973, volunteers ran the co-op. That year though, the positions became paid; all employees were called "coordinators" as everyone was to viewed as an equal and to share in all of the work. In 1977, cashiers checked out buyers who up until then had written down their purchases and checked themselves out. The next year, a formal membership structure was adopted.

During this time, business grew and grew. In 1975, thanks to loans, donations, and gross profits, the co-op added a second location at 212 N. Fourth Avenue.

5



The new downtown location attracted a different kind of shopper. Until then, most of the clientele was made up of students but now downtown workers and longtime residents began shopping at the co-op.

As the times changed, new issues arose at the co-op. For instance, a manager was hired in 1981. Until then, there was no one manager who had the authority over other employees. The membership structure changed as well. Previously, one paid a small fee and became a member with voting rights. But in 1985 the co-op moved to a capitalization structure wherein people paid a fee that would be used for capital improvements.

During this time, the board of directors decided it was time to buy a new building. The idea was to gather together the co-ops on Fourth Avenue (the Herb & Spice Co-op, Wildflour Bakery, and the Produce Co-op) under one roof. The building at 216/218 N. Fourth Avenue was purchased, with plans to fundraise the outstanding costs. Unfortunately, the funds never materialized. The co-op sold the building a few months later.

But all was not doom and gloom! The Packard store moved to 740 Packard in 1985, and brought an improved product line and onsite parking.



6

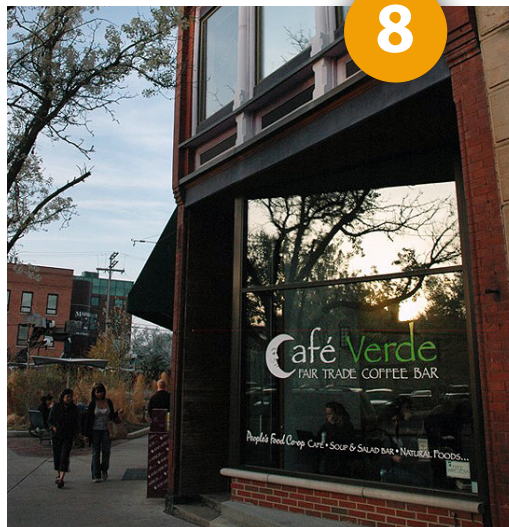
The folks at Fourth Avenue needed more space and, in an interesting twist, ended up in the space that they had bought and sold previously: 216 N. Fourth Avenue. This bigger space opened in 1994. Around the same time, the landscape of food was changing as places like Whole Foods became bigger and bigger. The first Whole Foods opened in Ann Arbor in 1993 and its impact was felt immediately, particularly at the Packard store.



7

While the new store on Fourth Avenue continued to prosper, the same could not be said for its sister store. It was a beloved location with loyal customers and employees, but the board ultimately made the decision to close the store. In 1997, with a ceremony and many tearful goodbyes, the store at 740 closed.

8



But like before, all was not doom and gloom as Café Verde opened up just three years later. This much loved fair trade coffee bar continues to delight co-ops.

The seeds that were planted over 40 years ago continue to thrive at the People's Food Co-op! Long may it grow!

History of Ann Arbor's People's Food Co-op, is available exclusively at the co-op.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR Ann Arbor townie Patti Smith is a former legal aid lawyer and current special education teacher in nearby western Wayne County. She is the author of two books: *Images of America--Downtown Ann Arbor* and *A History of the People's Food Co-op Ann Arbor*. She also writes for *Concentrate*, *Mittenbrew*, *The Ann*, *AADL's Pulp* blog, and the *Ann Arbor Observer*.

Membership Renewal

When you join the Washtenaw County Historical Society, you become part of a 159-year-old heritage and tradition. Your memberships and donations support the work of the Society, the Museum on Main Street and the Argus Museum. It also supports our community outreach to local schools, libraries and other historical partners. Membership runs 1/1-12/31.

Membership dues support

- Care for the collections
- Educational programs
- Community outreach

Membership Benefits

- Quarterly issues of *Impressions*
- Educational programs
- Opportunities to volunteer and network with history fans
- Discounts at the Gift Shop

3 Ways to Join or Renew

BY MAIL: Current members will receive renewal letters with return envelopes in early December.

IN PERSON: The Museum is open on Saturdays and Sundays from 12 Noon - 4 PM when there is an exhibit.

ONLINE: You can renew or join anytime at washtenawhistory.org

“Because the Washtenaw Historical Society is recognized as the only community agency charged with the custodianship of the community’s memory, through tangible records and written words, it is faced with a great and unique responsibility. It must create in the minds of the individuals who constitute the present society of the Washtenaw region an appreciation of the lessons which past experiences may teach”

December 20, 1943, Dr. Carl E. Guthe,
Director of the UM Museums



Seasons Change in the Garden

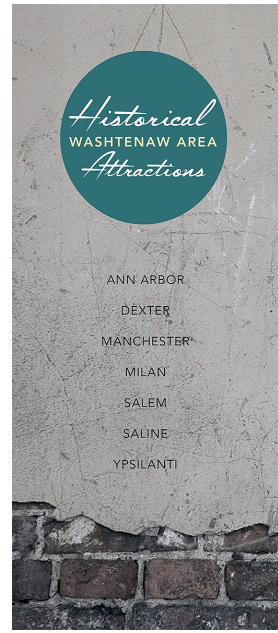
This year’s garden is being put to bed for the winter by Master Gardener Lily Ferguson. Over the years, she has generously cared for and surrounded the Museum on Main Street with the most aromatic and beautiful plants and flowers. Lily volunteers her time, talents and energy for the maintenance and beautification of our historic house.

From the sweet smelling lilacs and quince in the Spring to the lush and fragrant roses and peonies in Summer, the garden was beautiful. Daffodils, irises and lilies bloomed throughout the season. The Fall

brought a rush of the seasons final and deep colors of crimson and golds. This year sun-kissed hues of gladioli were added to encircle the sundial that was donated by the UM Alva Gordon Sink Alumnae Group in honor of Pauline Walters.

The garden has always been one of the most popular features of the Museum. The plants in front really caught the attention of several passers-by this season because of their interesting pod shapes. It was fun to see how many stopped to look, examine and take photos. We want you to enjoy this space.





We invite you to explore all that Washtenaw County offers!

Washtenaw County, Michigan, has a rich, cultural heritage reflected in its numerous preserved historical sites. Some attractions do not have regular visiting hours, but most are available by special appointment for individual or group tours. Visitors are urged to contact a site prior to visiting to confirm available hours and accessibility.

The updated brochure is presented by the Washtenaw County Historical Consortium, consisting of various historical agencies, whose goal is to promote local area history. For more information visit wchconsortium.org.

Funding was possible through the generosity of the Washtenaw County Convention and Visitor Bureau, Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission, and Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development. **This free map is available at the Museum on Main Street.** Stop by and get yours during business hours. Call 734-662-9092 or email wchs-500@ameritech.net to request copies.



Open Houses

The Kempf House Museum was built in 1853, Trained guides will lead you through restored rooms, including the music studio where the 1877 Steinway Concert Grand Piano remains as it has for over 100 years.

1:00 – 4:00 PM 312 S. Division
Ann Arbor kempfhousmuseum.org



Winter & Spring Program Dates

The WCHS Educational programs are designed to highlight some of our local historical attractions. We offer a mixture of talks, tours and walks throughout the year. The Annual Meeting will be in May, date to be determined. If there is a particular topic, place or person that you are interested in learning about, email your ideas and contact information to Anita Toews at toews@aol.com or call 734-662-9092.

Sunday, February 19

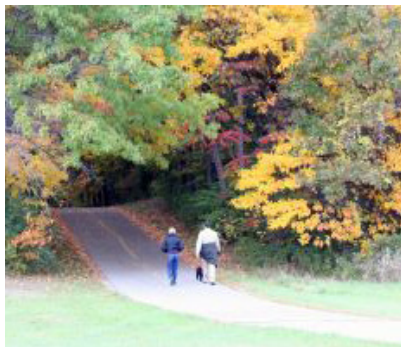
Joe Ciadella will talk about history of the The Huron-Clinton Metroparks. This includes 13 beautiful parks, covering over 25,000 acres throughout Southeast Michigan, encompassing Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Washtenaw and Livingston counties.

Sunday, March 19

Walking tour and talk on the automotive history of Washtenaw County at the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum in Depot town. The museum tells the story of local pioneering automobile companies including Tucker and Kaiser-Frazer. Hydra-matic and Chevrolet Corvair, local dealerships, part suppliers, and our local Ford plant are also exhibited.

Friday, April (date to be determined)

Walking tour and talk at the newly renovated William L. Clements Library. The Library houses original resources for the study of American history and culture from the fifteenth to the early twentieth century.



(Continued from page 1)

provide services for the people who live here. And they learned about the founding of Ann Arbor and its early history. Research included field trips, studying, in-school presentations and plenty of creative brainstorming. Each class designed their exhibit. They worked as teams to plan, write, create and build the displays.

At Northside, students, staff and the community are actively engaged in project-based learning with real-world applications. The projects are shared with the community at the Northside Expos. This exhibit debuted in the Spring 2016 Expo and we are proud to bring it to you at the Museum on Main Street as their public real-world application.

Groups and school field trips are welcome. Call 734-662-9092 to schedule yours!



Students build their displays in Mrs. Bankey's class



Former AAPD officer Howard Zeck and Sgt. Tom Hickey with Mrs. Martin's class



Mrs. Snood's class and parents got an up close view of the UM Survival Flight helicopter

Thank You!

This exhibit was made possible with participation from:

Ann Arbor STEAM@Northside
Joan Fitzgibbon, Principal
Edward Broom, Assistant Principal

Ann Arbor Public Schools
Dr. Jeanice Kerr Swift,
Superintendent

Teachers
Lisa Bankey
Atoya Martin
Katherine Sood
Mr. Van Loo, STEAM Lab instructor
Mrs. Jensen Art Teacher

Helpers
Mrs. Herwick
Mr. Bruder
Alicia Juillet

Ann Arbor Police Department
Sgt. Tom Hickey
Mr. Howard Zeck

Ann Arbor Fire Department
Jim Adams, Station #6
Fire Inspector Andrew Cox

**UM CS Mott
Children's Hospital**
Diana O'Leary
Byron Myer

Huron Valley Ambulance
Jason Trojan

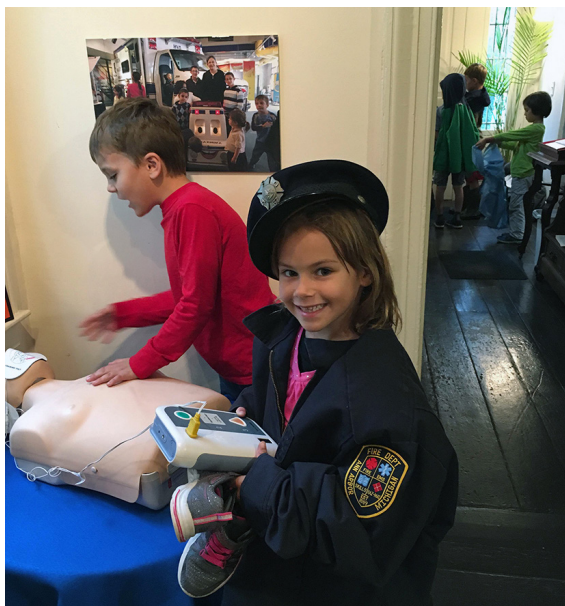
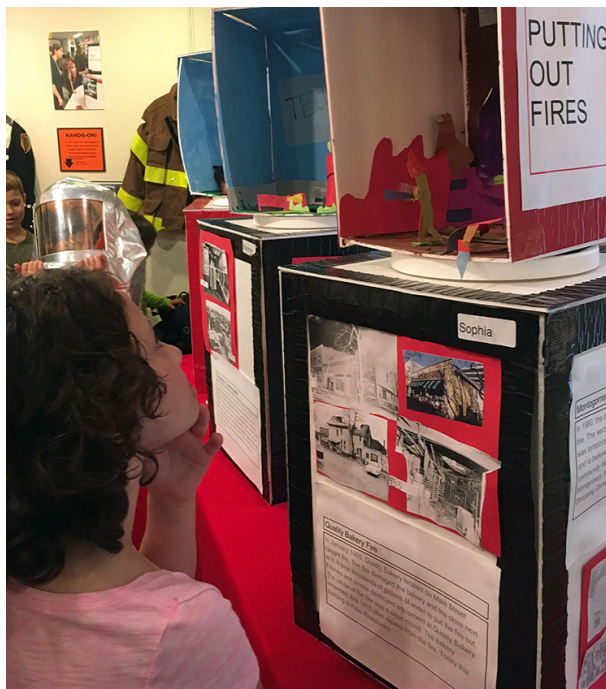
Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum
Photos and the AAHOM provided FREE Hands-on museum passes to every student who worked on this exhibit.

Very Special Thank You to All of the students who worked so hard to research, plan and create this exhibit at the Museum on Main Street. You have truly inspired us!

Explore 3 rooms of interactive timelines, hands-on fun, photos, artifacts and more



Visitors try on the turn out gear in September



22 First and Second Graders from Ann Arbor Open @ Mack came to see the exhibit on October 20. Between reading the work of their peers and having fun with the hands on activities, a good time was had by all.

AAPD Online History Exhibit

The online exhibit of the History of the Ann Arbor Police Department is an ongoing collaboration between the Ann Arbor District Library and the Ann Arbor Police Department. The library acknowledges the city of Ann Arbor, the officers and staff of the Police Department; especially Lieutenant Michael Logghe for his efforts in collecting, organizing and preserving the many documents, photos and artifacts illustrating the Department's history. aapd.aadl.org

The Michigan Firehouse Museum

This educational treasure trove that includes an original 1898 firehouse and modern, multilevel exhibit display area. The large, modern addition offers 25 changing exhibits of antique fire trucks and early fire rigs, multiple displays of historic artifacts including tools, equipment, memorabilia and the largest collection of fire truck bells in the country. The Museum is open Tuesday-Saturday, 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM, Sunday 12 Noon - 4:00 PM, Adults \$5, Ages 2-16 \$3, Under 2 Free. 110 W. Cross St in Ypsilanti. michiganfirehousemuseum.org

Washtenaw County Historical Society

Museum on Main Street • The Argus Collection

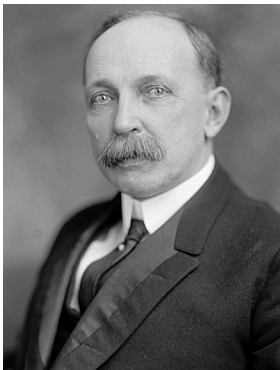


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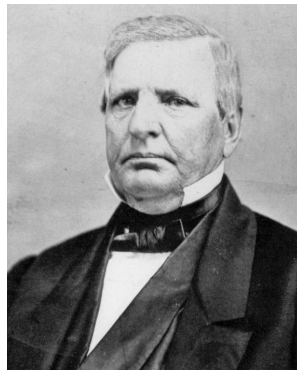
Thank You!

The WCHS appreciates your support. Your donations and 2017 membership renewals, help make sure that the work of preserving local history continues.

26 Years at the Corners of N. Main, East Kingsley and Beakes Street



Samuel Beakes



James Kingsley

The Museum on Main Street was moved from its original location at 1015 Wall Street to 500 N. Main Street in 1990. Crossing over the Broadway Bridge at the foot of Pontac Trail, it was on its way to be re-located at the intersection of streets named for prominent Ann Arbor citizens.

Pontac Trail originally came all the way in to Main Street, but in 1889 the part south of the river was renamed Beakes to honor Samuel Beakes, the Ann Arbor Argus publisher, who became the city's youngest mayor at age twenty-seven. At Main, Beakes Street converges with Kingsley,

named for attorney James Kingsley. Kingsley was originally named North Street, because it was the northernmost street in John Allen and Elisha Rumsey's original plat.

Beakes Street

Samuel Beakes bought the Ann Arbor Argus newspaper in June 1886, and published it until 1898 when it merged with the Democrat and Ypsilanti Weekly Times newspapers to be the Ann Arbor Argus-Democrat. He gave up his interest in the paper in 1905 when he retired. Beakes served as mayor of Ann Arbor 1888-1890, city treasurer 1891-1893 and 1903-1905, postmaster of Ann Arbor 1894-1898, and city assessor 1906-1913.

He also wrote the history of Washtenaw County in 1906 known as *Past and Present of Washtenaw County*. It contains illustrations and biographical sketches of many of its prominent and leading citizens and illustrious dead.

Kingsley Street

Attorney James Kingsley, came to Ann Arbor in 1826. He was the first lawyer admitted to practice by the Washtenaw County bar. He was elected probate court judge of Washtenaw County and served also on the Territorial Legislative Council.

For the University of Michigan, he served as both a Trustee (before reorganization) and as a Regent (after the 1850 reorganization). He was elected mayor of Ann Arbor (1855-1856); he was elected to the State House of Representatives, the State Senate, and delegate to the 1835 Constitutional Convention. It was through his efforts while serving in the State House of Representatives that he promoted legislation to locate the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

After Kingsley's death, talk began about renaming the street. At the July 8, 1892 meeting of Common Council (Ann Arbor's pre-City Council governing body), citizens submitted their requests for a formal name change. Their requests stated that the street name of "North" was no longer appropriate, as the street was no longer the northernmost street in the city. A petition, supported by a letter from Michigan Governor Alpheus Felch, requested that the street be renamed after Kingsley. The motion passed the council unanimously.

(Sources: AADL.org, Concentrate-Issue Media Group, Don Collard, *The Lost Street Names of Ann Arbor*)