

Summer 2014

Impressions

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Farming – Full Circle on Main Street

This is a story of one of Washtenaw County's most important and longest enduring industries – Agriculture. It is a story of farms and family life, of buildings and tools, of crops and animals, of transformation and change. Above all, it is a story of a way of life that touches the lives of every resident of the county, past and present, whether they be the farmer plying the land to bring forth its bounty or the city dweller who gladly partakes of that plenty from the local farmers' market.

Those of us who have grown accustomed to an urban or suburban lifestyle may know something of the seemingly distant and isolated rural lands that provide us with food and natural products. Would you be surprised to find working farms just outside the Ann Arbor city limits? In the more western parts of the county farming remains a dominant fixture. And the 1,300 farms in the County today are only a fraction of the nearly 3,400 farms in the County in 1890 - 232 of which were in or around Ann Arbor.

In this exhibit, you will learn about what it was like to live and work on a farm in the 19th century and how changes in technology and development affected the life and work of farmers and their families over the course of the 20th century. (Cont. on page 6)

WCHS

Our mission is to educate and inspire our community to engage in the preservation and presentation of area history

Pauline Walters is Back with Us at 500 N. Main!

We welcome the recently re-elected WCHS corresponding secretary, Pauline Walters, back with us at Main Street. There is plenty of work to get done and greeting old friends is at the top of the list! When you drive, bike or walk by, stop in and say hello. Our staff will be happy to see you and it's a great opportunity to check out the current exhibit.

The History of Michigan Agriculture

Michigan is nearly surrounded by the largest bodies of fresh water in the world, with a shoreline longer than that of any other state in the Union and thousands of inland lakes and streams. (See page 7)

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WCHS

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Impressions

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

With now two years of experience the new format for our Annual Business Meeting is pretty much a proven success. Based on attendance and comments from attendees the format of picnic (with BBQ), program and a relatively short business meeting at an historic Washtenaw County location on a sunny Sunday afternoon is a hit with members and guests.

Most recently on Sunday, May 18 the meeting was held at the Historic Sutherland-Wilson Farm Museum owned by Pittsfield Township with restoration directed by the Pittsfield Township Historical Society. They were wonderful hosts and the site and work accomplished to date was very impressive.

During the business meeting the slate for election of officers and board members was presented and unanimously approved. I wish to welcome Emma Hawker to her first term as a member of the board of directors and, also, extend thanks to outgoing board members Sally Silvennoinen and Bob Yuhasz for their outstanding years of service to the board and the Society. We expect to continue to seek their input and advice on Society activities.

Les Loomans

Descendant of Ann Arbor's Founder Visits the Museum on Main Street!

On Monday, June 2, Mary Sommerville, the 4th great granddaughter of Ann Allen came to visit the museum and see Ann Allen's fan and her Huguenot Bible.

Mary currently lives in Hillsdale, MI. She has traced her relationship to Ann Allen through Thomas McCue, the son of Ann and her first husband, Dr. William McCue. Thomas and his brother, John, remained in Virginia under the guardianship of James McCue, William's brother, when Ann and John Allen moved to Michigan. John Allen and Elisha Rumsey co-founded Ann Arbor in

1824. Thomas visited his mother several times while she lived in Ann Arbor and in 1844, he returned to take Ann and her daughter, Sarah Allen, back to Virginia. After Sarah married, Ann lived with her in New Hope, VA but was a frequent guest at Thomas' home, Belvidere, which was four miles away in Mt. Sidney. Ms. Sommerville has visited Belvidere and also Ann's grave in the "New Cemetery" of Old Augusta Presbyterian Stone Church. *By Judy Chrisman*



New to the Collections

We recently received a snapshot of the demolition of Farmers and Mechanic Bank at Huron and Main after freight cars crashed into it in 1927, from June Williams. It's especially significant because we will receive an actual piece of the interurban rail from Jackson Road.

Earlier this year, board member Anita Toews spearheaded the possible donation of a piece of interurban rail to the Historical Society. The 2014 winter wear and tear on the roads created giant potholes that revealed portions of the rails running beneath the street. The rail extends from Main to Maple. The Michigan Department of Transportation had a state archaeologist check to see if there was any important archaeological value before it could be removed. The good news is we will receive two 6' pieces of the rail that will be

displayed in MoMS garden. MDOT wants us to arrange for the transport. If you would like to help with this project, call 734-662-9092.

O'Neal Inc. has recently purchased a building that once housed the Ann Arbor Buggy Company. Several years ago Diane Good offered to donate a buggy that was made there. The Society worked with Joe O'Neal to find a place to put it but nothing was ever finalized. It will now be donated to us to be displayed in the window of the building where it was made

The Society also has a buggy on display hanging from the rafters at the Downtown Home and Garden on S. Ashley Street in Ann Arbor.

Do you or your family have historical items to donate? Email Curator Judy Chrisman at judychr@aol.com or call the Museum-734-662-9092.

WCHS Educational Programs

One of the benefits of being a member of the Washtenaw County Historical Society is the free educational programs we offer in the Spring and Fall. Over the years they have evolved to include a wide range of topics and held at sites throughout the county. Planning and presenting these programs is one of the functions of the office of the vice-president. The Historical Society would like to thank our past vice-president, Karen L. Jania, for an outstanding job for the last two years. The attendance has increased and the variety of topics has been expanded. We welcome our newly elected vice-president, James Davis, as he plans an exciting series for this Fall and the Spring of 2015. As always, we value your ideas and suggestions for program topics that fit your interests. Feel free to email James at davis@mail.ic.edu.

A few of our readers have expressed appreciation for the concise and informative program summaries that have appeared in *Impressions*. WCHS board member, Diana Mankowski, is the writer who captures the essence of what the programs are about. In April we were at the Argus Museum and in May our Annual Meeting was held at the Sutherland-Wilson Farm Museum in Pittsfield Township. See pages 10-11.

Save these Date for the Fall 2014 Programs!

The series begins on Sunday, September 21, October 19 and November 16, from 2-4 PM. Members will receive the program postcard with details beginning in late August.

Check out the Current Exhibit and Garden at The Museum on Main Street

The Garden is Blooming - Stop and Smell the Roses...

Last year we planted dozens of new bulbs and flowers in the garden on Main Street thanks to a gift from the estate of Mary Marchand. They will provide us with a panorama of colors and scents. In addition to the fragrant quince, lilacs and roses that have bloomed for more than 10 years at the corner of Main Street at E. Kingsley & Beakes Streets. We thank our master gardener, Lilly Ferguson for volunteering her service.

The Current Exhibit is "Farming - Full Circle"

Open now through November 2

Hours: Saturdays & Sundays, 12 Noon-4pm

And by appointment, Groups are welcome.

Call 734-662-9092 Email: wchs-500@ameritech.net

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



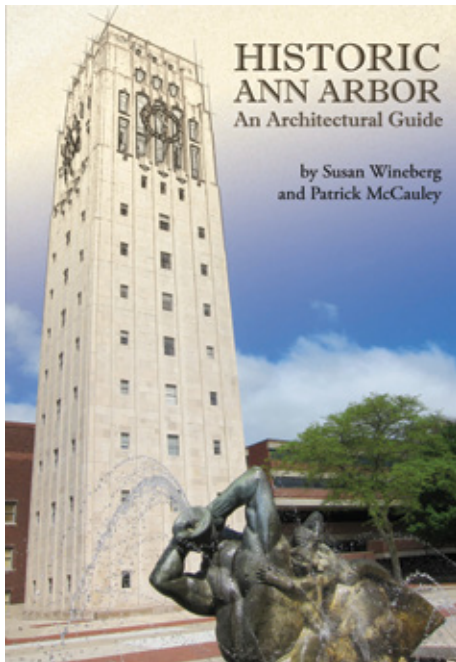
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P.O. Box 3336 • Ann Arbor, MI 48106-3336



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

New Book from the Ann Arbor Historical Foundation – “This is a Special Place”

Local historians Susan C. Wineberg and Patrick M. McCauley have completed a new book on Ann Arbor's historic buildings. *Historic Ann Arbor: An Architectural Guide*. The book was published by the The Ann Arbor Historical Foundation. Patricia Austin, AAH Foundation President, had a few questions for co-author Patrick McCauley.



Why did you and Susan write this book? I bought *Historic Buildings* when I was in college in the late 90s, and I was blown away by it! It taught me so much about Ann Arbor's history and architecture. During breaks or after class I would walk around the Old Fourth Ward and admire the old houses, but it wasn't until I had *Historic Buildings* that I really knew anything about them. I remember being really impressed that there were still buildings that dated to the 1820s-1840s! After college, I continued to become more interested in these old buildings, I even bought a few to restore. Skip ahead years later... Susan was introduced to me by our friend, Ed Rice, in 2006, right after I bought my house on Pontiac Trail. She was impressed that the house had an exposed Colonial style corner posts on the interior (a very dated feature when Ann Arbor was settled) so she came by to see them. Susan began helping me to research my own house, and, over the next couple of years, I began working on a paper about it. The research was all very epic and thorough, and we found tons of great stuff about the house.

When I showed her my earlier drafts, she said she thought it was well written, and I think she was impressed with the crazy research that I had done. I kept dropping hints like "Are you ever going to update *Historic Buildings*?" or "If you update *Historic Buildings*, you should add this building" and "If you update *Historic Buildings*, I would be happy to help you out." Then she began asking me if I could find information about certain people or buildings she was looking into. I was very adept at using the internet and digital archives and histories. Then she invited me to help her undertake the project, or maybe I just wore away at her until she decided to revise the book. In either case, here we are six years later with the finished product!

When did you start this project? I think the first rumblings of this project began in 2007 and 2008, according to our letter to the Ann Arbor Historical Foundation board in January of 2010. Susan and I, along with Louisa Pieper came up with our first list of buildings to add during 2008.

How did you do it? The original intent was to have a streamlined book, with more entries, but less text. I was going to write and research the new entries, and Susan would help with the research, and revise the old entries. That didn't work out so well. Every time we thought we were done, new information would come up, or we would find a building that was missed. Then we decided that we had to include the University buildings, oh and then Mid-Century Modern! It sort of snowballed into what we have today. I was definitely naive about how much work this would take, and how long it would be. The end result is a combination of both of our ideas of what the book should be like, and I think it's a stronger product as a result of this collaboration. It's hard to tell who wrote which entries.

Who would be interested in this book? Anybody who even has a remote interest in architecture, or history, or Ann Arbor. Plus all of the U-M people! Most people really like houses, and the more they know about them, the more they appreciate what goes into them.

What should the readers expect from the book? I hope that they really have their eyes opened to all of the great buildings that surround us and that we walk by every day. Ann Arbor is a special place, and has been the scene of many influential historical events and people. The houses and buildings that remain, really help to tell this story.

Any additional information that you wish to share? One other thing that I would add is that the changing technology really made the scope of this book possible. The internet, and all of the genealogy forums and website really helped to fill in the stories of all of these people and buildings featured in the book. Because of this digital technology, it's so much easier to get a complete picture of the people's lives from long ago. Family members post genealogy information about the people, and random histories of these people have been put online, so you don't need to just rely on what's at the Bentley, or the public library. That was a game changer.

Where can people buy the book and what is the cost? It costs \$35 and is at:

- **Barnes & Noble**
3235 Washtenaw, (734) 973-0846
- **Bookbound**
1729 Plymouth Rd., (734) 369-4345
- **Downtown Home & Garden**
210 S Ashley St., (734) 662-8122
- **Museum on Main Street**
500 N. Main, (734) 662-9092
- **Nicola's Books**
2513 Jackson Ave., (734) 662-0600
- **The Mail Shoppe**
317 S Division St., (734) 665-6676

You can also purchase the book from the WCHS Gift Shop online at www.WashtenawHistory.org

30th Annual Historic Preservation and Rehabilitation Awards

On June 19th, Mayor John Hieftje presented the 2014 awards to the winners of the Ann Arbor Historic District Commission's annual preservation and rehabilitation awards. These awards honor the work done by individuals and institutions to preserve the city's character and architecture. Last year our own Pauline Walters was the "Preservationist of the Year". This year that well-deserved recognition goes to Ethel Potts. Awards given since 1984 are online at www.a2gov.org.



University of Michigan: Munger Residences

Rehabilitation Awards are given in recognition of substantial work that returned a property to a state of utility through repair or alteration, facilitating contemporary needs but respecting the features of the property that are significant to its historic and architectural values.

- University of Michigan: East Quad
- University of Michigan: Munger Residences

Preservation Awards are given in recognition of superior maintenance of a significant property to preserve its essential historical, cultural or architectural value for a period of 10 years or more.

- Susan and Martin Hurwitz: 1520 Cambridge
- Kappa Alpha Theta (Eta Chapter): 1414 Washtenaw
- First Presbyterian Church: 1432 Washtenaw
- Ann Arbor City Club: 1830 Washtenaw
- Ken Wisniski and Linda Dintenfass: 13 Regent Drive
- Howard Shapiro: 7 Regent Drive
- Margaret Bignall and Paul Hossler: 1448 Broadway
- Carol and Robert Mull: 1111 Fair Oaks
- Stone School Cooperative Nursery: 2811 Stone School Road
- John Hollowell: 844 W. Huron
- Steve Sivak: 1158 Pomona
- Akhavan Rayhaneh: 2022 Delafield



Ann Arbor City Club



Patrick McCauley and Susan Cee Wineberg

Special Merit Awards are given in recognition of exceptional people, projects, landscapes or other unique preservation projects.

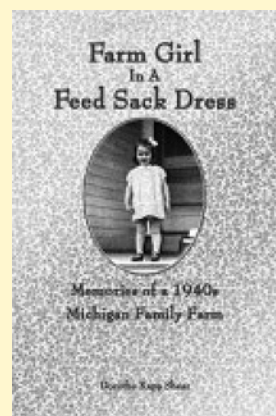


- Susan C. Wineberg and Patrick M. McCauley: Authors of "Historic Ann Arbor: An Architectural Guide"

Preservationist of the Year Award is given to an individual who has provided the City of Ann Arbor with exemplary services in the pursuit of historic preservation, incentives, and/or education.

- Ethel K. Potts: 2014 Preservationist of the Year

Read All About Growing Up on a Michigan Farm



Farm Girl in a Feed Sack Dress by Dorothy Kapp Shear, is a detailed recollection of growing up on a southeastern Michigan farm, just outside Ann Arbor, in the 1940s and 1950s. Shear shares twenty-plus years of memories and provides an intimate look at farm life as agriculture was transitioning from manual labor and horses to greater mechanization and modern conveniences. The one-room schoolhouse, childhood games, farm chores and the farmstead, church and a rich community of friends and family are all vividly described.

Brookwater Farm of Webster Township – The Story of the Boyden, Alexander, Mumford and Zeeb Families of Webster Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan by James Baldwin Parker and Jeannette Mumford Straub.

Burr Oaks Farm – The Kleinschmidt Family of Webster Township and Washtenaw County, Michigan Featuring Paul & Alvin Kleinschmidt's Memories with Those of their Sister, May Mast, by James Baldwin Parker.

Stop by the Gift Shop for these books and more. Call ahead during the week at 734-662-9092.

The Argus Corner



The presentation, "The Camera Click that Changed an Industry", a WCHS educational program, held at the Argus Museum on April 27th. Several attendees donated Argus items that day. A Kadette radio and an Argus camera model A was gifted to the museum by Tom Stoner and a pre-production sample of a monocular scope was donated by former Argus employee, Alex Azary. Also among the donations were several magazine advertisements for Argus products which were given to the museum by Colby Halloran and Kate O'Rourke, whose father worked for the company. I extend a special thank you to one of the Argus Museum's dedicated volunteers, Rose Majeran.

One of the museum's ongoing projects is oral histories of former Argus employees. Recently, Noah Roach (pictured here), visited the museum with his daughter, and great-granddaughter. The 100-year-old Roach worked for Argus Inc. in 1948, after moving to Ann Arbor from Arkansas in 1947. Roach worked "piece work" on the camera assembly line and was paid per piece to drill holes and create threads on the camera bodies. Like many Argus employees, relatives were also employed by the company. His brother-in-law, Brice Bennett worked for the company for several years and his son-in-law, Gerald "Max" Robinson, was also employed by Argus.

The biggest project that was recently undertaken was retrieving the Gambino Collection. Henry J. Gambino (Harry to those who know him well) is the author of the Argus "bible", *Argomania* (ISBN 0-9770507-0-X). Gambino donated his entire collection to the Argus Museum/WCHS. The collection of over 1000 three-dimensional and two-dimensional items is significant not only in size, but quality and rarity as well. The collection includes still and movie cameras, slide and movie projectors, darkroom equipment, accessories, Argus publications, and advisements. A model K camera a model B camera, underwater housing for Argus cameras, early models of the A and the C cameras and a 75mm f:5.6 lens made for a C-3 camera are among the rarer items. Other uncommon items manufactured by Argus (under one of its names), include an early model Kadette radio, binoculars, a television camera and a spotting scope.

Included in the collection were several Vokar cameras and accessories. The Ann Arbor company, founded by an ex-Argus employee, relocated to Dexter by 1943. Gambino also generously donated the copyrights to his book. We enjoyed the hospitality of Henry Gambino, and his wife, Maureen, during our time in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. Without the generosity of ACG members, this endeavor would not have been possible. Their donations covered the entire cost of the trip, which included renting a cargo van, gas, packaging supplies, and meals and accommodations for me and a volunteer to take the 2,223-mile trip to retrieve the collection, and, as Harry said, "Bring them back home."

If you would like more information about any of these events and projects, please feel free to contact me at cchidester@onealconstruction.com or 734-769-0770.

By Cheryl A. Chidester, Argus Museum Curator

Farming- Full Circle - continued from page 1



In this exhibit, you'll learn about the kinds of crops and products farmers in the county produce for markets across the country, and we bring our story full circle with a modern day farmers' market stall. In it you will find information, maps, and brochures about local farms and farmers' markets so you know where to find locally grown farm-to-table produce and products. It is a family-friendly exhibit with interactive fun for everyone.

We want to thank artist, Lisa Bartlett, for our cows, The Washtenaw Dairy for the milk bottle with cream separator, Dorothy K. Shear, for the feed sack fabric, Matt Vanderby for the touch screen and putting our miniature farm together, JoAnne Nesbit for her creative genius and Patricia Davis for the bags of wool. "Farming-Full Circle" is open now through November 2. Hours are 12 Noon-4 PM on Saturdays and Sundays and by appointment. Groups are welcome. Call 734-662-9092, email wchs-500@ameritech.net or see www.washtenawhistory.org



A History of Michigan Agriculture

As part of the National Preservation Program for Agriculture Literature, land-grant libraries participated in a series of projects to identify and preserve the most important historical literature on agriculture and rural life in their state. This essay was submitted by the Michigan State University Libraries.

The very name, "Michigan," derived from two Algonquin words, michi (great) and gama (lake), is a fitting tribute to the profound impact that this resource has had on the economic and social development of the state.

The Great Lakes served as the route for early European exploration and settlement, separating Michigan's sprawling Upper Peninsula from its familiar mitten-shaped Lower Peninsula. When French fur traders and missionaries ar-

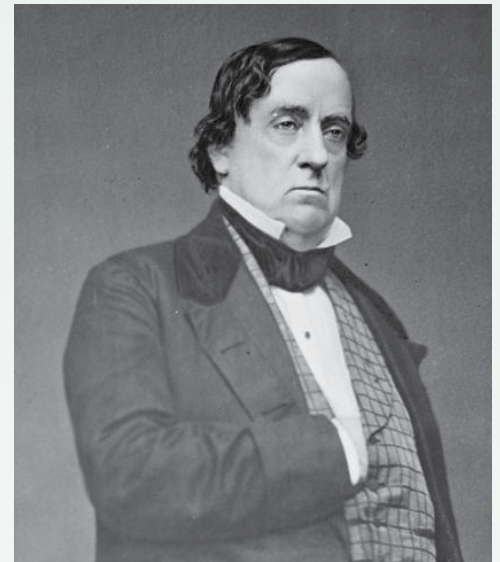
ropped for their own subsistence and/or the limited local market. Farms were allotted to French settlers under a feudal system and were laid out in narrow strips about a block wide, extending three miles back from the Detroit River. The narrow plots promoted neighborliness and provided water access for everyone. The land was not aggressively cleared for agricultural use, but the soil was rich and productive. The interest of the French in horticulture was great; apples, peaches, pears, and cherries were grown in considerable quantities.

These French orchards marked the beginning of Michigan's great fruit industry.

With the overthrow of the French by the British in 1763, a few English farmers moved into Michigan; but, as title to the land had not yet been secured from the Native Americans by treaty, settlement was not encouraged. The farming and trading community on the De-

troit River stood fairly unchanged for fifty years. The Territory remained isolated from other settled portions of the country, cut off by a vast stretch of forested land. After the War of 1812 the United States opened up lands in the Northwest Territory as compensation for soldiers; but unfavorable early government surveys and geological reports prompted Congress to divert settlers from Michigan and to offer lands in neighboring states instead.

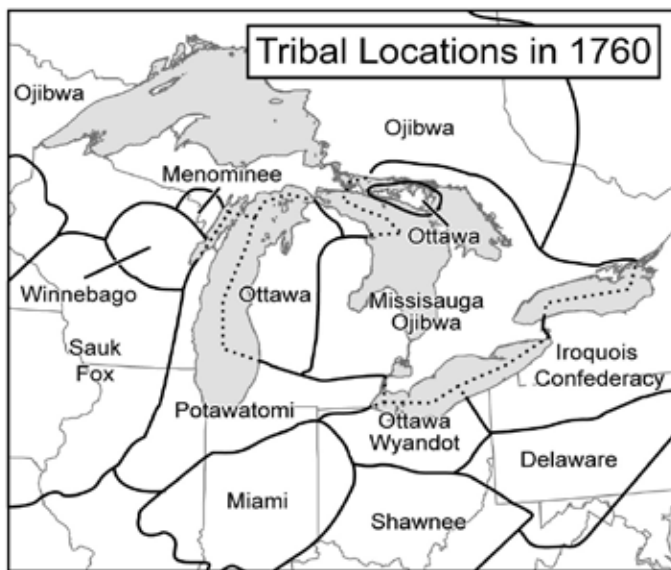
Today's "Water Wonderland" was regarded as an impenetrable swampland, with scarcely one acre out of one hundred deemed fit for cultivation. A well-known poem of the day warned would-be immigrants not to go to Michigan, "that land of ills; the word means ague, fever and chills." It took a generation for Michigan to overcome its bad reputation.



Lewis Cass

Lewis Cass, the first governor of the Territory, paved the way for further settlement by negotiating treaties with the Native Americans, surveying and platting the land, lobbying Congress to appropriate money to build a road through northern Ohio, and publicizing the true character of the land. The opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 gave further impetus to settlement by placing Michigan in the direct line of travel. The years 1836-1837 saw more government land sold in Michigan than in any other state. From New England and New York the pioneers came by the thousands, taking up lands best suited to farming in areas with an abundant water supply and transportation access to markets. They transformed the wilderness with their homesteads and carried Michigan into statehood in 1837.

The immigration excitement soon extended to Europe. In 1848 a State publication, *Der Auswanderer Wegweiser (The Emigrant's Guide to the State of Michigan)*, was distributed in Germany with the express purpose of convincing German emigrants to purchase land in Michigan. Extolling the virtues of lake and river transportation and the cheap price of land (\$1.25 an acre), it succeeded in attracting a steady stream of industrious German settlers. Continued on page 8



rived in the mid-17th century, they came upon Michigan's first farmers—Algonquin women from the Chippewa, Ottawa, Menominee, and Potawatomi tribes—dwelling within the borders of the Territory. Armed with basic tools for clearing the land, these early agriculturists grew crops in clearings where sunshine penetrated the dense forests that once covered the state. Beans, squash, pumpkins, and maize were planted in these "garden-beds," supplementing their main diet of fish and game.

It was the abundant game that drew the French into the region, resulting in the establishment of trading posts at strategic points along the lakeshores and riverbanks. The profitable fur trade was their main preoccupation, but the French made some effort at farming, cultivating



David F. Allmendinger, founder of Allmendinger Piano and Organ Co. in Ann Arbor, with his family in 1907.

In subsequent years other groups came, drawn first by the Homestead Act of 1862, which offered free of cost 160 acres of government land to those who would live on it for five years; and later by the booming lumber, mining and automobile industries. Irish, Dutch, Finns, Swedes, Poles, Italians, Canadians, Russians and a host of others established ethnic communities throughout the state, making Michigan one of the most culturally diverse states in the nation.

Many of these groups took to agriculture, introducing new crops and new methods of cultivation. As they spread across the state, the settlers soon discovered that Michigan's topography, soils, and climate varied greatly from place to place. This variation results from the repeated glaciations of the region, the extension of the state across six degrees of latitude, and the influence of the surrounding lakes, which moderate winter and summer temperatures. And, as farms were not laid out according to soil type but rather in a grid pattern still visible in many rural areas today, a single farm might embrace several soil types. The great variation in soils and climate permitted the cultivation of a wide variety of agricultural products.

Farmers learned to apply scientific principles and practices to crop selection and animal husbandry. Very early on, the territorial government had recognized the positive role that progressive agriculture could play in clearing the land of forest and stumps and draining swamps;

and in utilizing soils, seeds, and climatic factors to best advantage. During the 1840s the national interest in agricultural education and farm organizations found its expression in Michigan through the creation of the *Michigan Farmer*, the oldest farm press in the United States. Dedicated to introducing improvements in the practice and science of agriculture, and elevating the profession of farming, the *Michigan Farmer* (along with the Michigan State Agricultural Society) was

highly instrumental in advancing Michigan agriculture. It was an early advocate for the establishment of the Michigan Agricultural College (Michigan State University) in 1855 – the first state agricultural college in the nation.

With the coming of science to the farm, a new era for Michigan farming began. Subsistence farming gave way to increased commercial production as more and more land was brought under cultivation, and increased productivity made larger surpluses possible. The advancing agricultural frontier had encouraged the extension of the railway system; and the ensuing improvements in transportation widened the regional market for agricultural products. Westward expansion had created an insatiable demand for Michigan white pine, and the lumber camps and saw mill towns, which quickly sprang up, were filled with people who needed to be fed. Copper and iron were discovered in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and a large influx of immigrants, mostly foreign, arrived to work in the mines.

From 1869 to 1890, Michigan led the nation in lumber production, and the timber from Michigan's seemingly inexhaustible forests built and rebuilt Chicago, as well as many other American cities. In roughly the same years, from 1847 to 1900, Michigan led the nation in copper and iron production. The golden age of mining and lumbering left a lasting economic and social imprint on Michigan, creating fortunes, folklore, farms, railroads, harbors, and towns –and ghost towns when the industries declined.

Catastrophic forest fires followed logging, drastically altering the soil in large areas of the state. Cutover regions were sold as farmland, but the fertility of the soil often proved to be submarginal and many "farms" were later abandoned, reverting to the state for non-payment of taxes.

By the close of the nineteenth century, the era of specialization had arrived and farmers were cultivating crops especially suited to local conditions and market demands. While previously important products such as wheat and wool declined with the beef cattle and sheep industries, the growing urban areas created a profitable market for perishable products such as milk, eggs, fruits, and vegetables. Many farmers turned to the raising of dairy cattle, swine, and poultry. Swamplands were found to be ideally suited to the growing of mint, celery, and onions, and Michigan soon became a leader in production of these crops. Other notable specialties included navy beans, potatoes, sugar beets, chicory, lettuce, cucumbers, and bedding plants.

The changing agricultural and rural life of the state has been documented in the *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections* (1874-1929) and in the *Michigan History Magazine* (1917-present). A comprehensive account of Michigan agriculture and rural life is found in Lew Allen Chase's *Rural Michigan* (1922), George N. Fuller's *Michigan: A Centennial History of the State and Its People* (1939) and in William James Beal's *History of the Michigan Agricultural College* (1915). *The Michigan Farmer* and *The Grange Visitor* are important agricultural press titles.

The WCHS 2013 Annual Report is included in your newsletter!

One of the roles of a historical society is to preserve and document history with the most efficient technology of the era. If you would like a digital copy of the Annual Report or to receive your quarterly issues of *Impressions* electronically please let us know by email to wchs-500@ameritech.net.

A Farmer in His Field in Dixboro, Michigan



What's unique? "A farmer in his field." Most farm photos are of houses, barns and animals. Very few photographs show a farmer working in his field. In 1947, Rev. Loren W. Campbell (extreme left) implemented a rural program (Lord's Acre) he learned at Oberlin College. Dixboro Methodist Church parishioners gathered in a member's field to plant wheat for later harvest and sale. The proceeds helped underwrite the cost of a building addition to the church. My grandfather, Clinton J. Leslie, is the fourth person from the left. My uncle, Clinton N. Leslie, sits on the front-row tractor and my cousin, Gary N. Leslie, is seated on the wheel. Notice the collie dog - how fitting!

By Dale Leslie

A Fine Dairy Farm

Ann Arbor Argus, December 31, 1897

A FINE DAIRY FARM.

The Towars, of Detroit, Will Make One of the J. C. Allen Farm.

The following item taken from the Detroit Evening News relates to the recent sale of the late James C. Allen farm in Ann Arbor town, and what it is to be used for:

"George W. and Frank J. Towar, comprising the Wayne County Creamery Company, have just purchased from Mrs. Frances Allen, a farm of 600 acres in Washtenaw county, less than two miles from Ann Arbor. The price paid was \$25,000.

"'Next spring,' says Frank Towar, 'we shall make it the finest dairy farm in the country and will stock it with 125 high grade cows—the best that can be found. There are two cold water springs on the farm, and the Huron river skirts its west side. The land is rolling, and the grass and clover the finest we could find anywhere.'

"George W. Towar, although well along in years, has made application for admission to the agricultural college, for a course in scientific farming, which he believes he will find useful in the management of the new enterprise."



Threshing at the Dhu Varren Farm

(c. 1935) The name of the farm on Whitmore Lake Road was "Dhu Varren Farm". It was operated by the Detroit Edison Company, which owned land on both sides of Whitmore Lake Road that it had acquired in the early years of the 20th century, when it bought the water rights to dam the Huron River at Barton Pond. As an afterthought, Detroit Edison developed the hilly area above the pond, useless for farming, as the residential community of Barton Hills. Dhu Varren Farms was opposite Barton Hills, on the east side of Whitmore Lake Road. Edison had a big dairy operation there, too, taking over the old Towar Dairy – a model dairy operation from c.1900. "Dhu Varren" is Welsh for Black Rock. Edison chose the name because it was a synonym for coal, Edison's main source of power in the 20th century. Currently, they use natural gas, instead. Dhu Varren road in Ann Arbor Township got its name because it's western end was the southern boundary of Edison's Dhu Varren Farm operation. *By Wylan Stevens*

Explore the world of historic local newspapers from your own computer! The images on this page are from The Ann Arbor District Library's digitized newspaper articles and photos at oldnews.aadl.org. The AADL has obtained copies and rights to many local newspapers over the years, including the *Signal of Liberty*, *The Ann Arbor Argus*, *The Ann Arbor Courier*, and most recently, *The Ann Arbor News*. If you have a particular research request, email oldnews@aadl.org to contact the Old News team.

Educational Programs Bring WCHS Members and Friends of History Together for Two Great Afternoons



Cheryl Chidester

The Washtenaw County Historical Society hosted two standing-room-only events this spring. The first – *The Camera Click that Changed an Industry*—was held April 27th at the Argus Building in Ann Arbor. The talk was given by the curator of the Argus Collection, and WCHS's newest employee Cheryl Chidester. The entire lobby and additional room to the right was filled with over 50 people to hear this talk. In her presentation, Chidester ran through a brief history of the Argus company and its products since its founding in the 1930s. While Argus was a brand name in photography,

projection, and optics for over seventy years, the company's origins were in the radio business.

It started selling cameras in the summer, when radio sales tended to be slow, and with the success of its Model A camera and Argus C3, the company sold its radio patents to RCA and rapidly expanded its photography line consisting of cameras, accessories, and photo equipment at a variety of price points. During World War II, Argus converted its production lines to military equipment and specialized in optics, producing telescopes for the army air corps, spotting scopes, sights, and power scopes for a range of Allied tanks and weaponry.

One of the many former Argus employees in the audience shared stories of army cameras sent to Ann Arbor for repairs after being damaged on the front and showed off a prototype of a scope that Argus produced for military use during the war. It was in the post-war years that Argus greatly expanded and enjoyed its golden years as a high-producing, family-oriented company, marketing its slide projectors with the theme of quality time spent with family and friends and using company employees and their photos for advertising.



company, however, meant a slow pace in making company decisions, and that combined with little turnover in its products that were built to last meant that by the mid-1950s Argus was having a hard time competing against foreign markets.

The company was eventually bought out by Sylvania and then GTE and has become a tiny cog in a vast empire. While the company lost its name recognition and moved production elsewhere in the 1970s and '80s, Ann Arbor

remembers the importance of Argus in its history by being home to the Argus Museum, housed in the former Argus production plant and offices, currently owned by O'Neal Construction.

Chidester closed out her presentation by telling the audience how the museum grew its collection, discussing the museum's mission statement and scope, and encouraging everyone to visit the museum's web presence on Facebook, Wikipedia, and aadl.org.

After the presentation, guests were invited upstairs to view the museum's display area, and many audience members stuck around to snack, mingle, and listen to stories of what it was like to work at Argus, shared by the former employees in attendance.

The family-oriented nature of the

By Diana Mankowski



WCHS 157th (approximately) Annual Meeting at the Sutherland-Wilson Farm Museum



Farmstead Photos by WCHS member Ron Schwartz

On Sunday, May 18th, Ina Hanel-Gerdenich brought modern day technology into the historic setting of Pittsfield Township's Sutherland Wilson Farm Museum with a PowerPoint presentation in the barn. Before the meeting, docents provided tours of the home. Approximately 60 guests enjoyed a meal featuring catering by Satchel's Barbeque and salads and desserts provided by the WCHS board members. After the meal, the Pittsfield Township Supervisor, Mandy Grewal, gave a short welcoming speech.

In conjunction with the current exhibit, *Farming Full Circle*, Ina gave a talk about Farming in Washtenaw County. She detailed the history from pre-settlement farming before the 1820s through the specialty farming which began in the late 19th century and continues today. Washtenaw County ranked nationally and locally in agriculture and livestock and at one time had the most sheep in any state east of the Mississippi.

After the presentation and several questions from the audience the business portion began. The annual meeting was called to order by President Leslie

Loomans. He thanked the Sutherland-Wilson Farm Museum and the Pittsfield Township Historical Society for providing the venue for the meeting as well as tours of the home. After the business was concluded there was more eating, fellowship and another round of house tours. In addition to the guided tours there was a self-guided tour. The Farmstead contains a well-preserved collection of 19th and early 20th century farm buildings typical of southeastern Michigan. These include a raised gable-roof barn, carriage house/stables, ice house, wood shed and hog house. The farmstead remains much the same as it has appeared for nearly 175 years.



The following slate of candidates was presented by Nominating Committee Chair, Jay Snyder. There were no nominations from the floor. Motion that the slate be adopted as presented. The motion was carried.

- President
Leslie L. Loomans
- Vice President
James Davis
- Recording Secretary
Judith Chrisman
- Corresponding Secretary
Pauline V. Walters
- Treasurer
Patricia W. Creal
- Board of Directors
Term ending 2017
Susan Wineberg
Emma Hawker
Cynthia Yao
- Term ending 2016
Karen Jania
- Endowment Committee
David LaMoreaux



Drawing by Michael Klement

Summer in the County



Cobblestone Farm Market

Open Tuesdays through November 4
4:00 PM - 7:00 PM
Buhr Park, 2751 Packard Road

Now in its third year, the Cobblestone Farm Market is a partnership between the surrounding neighborhood and the Cobblestone Farm Association. This market, which features organic, Michigan-grown produce, is committed to encouraging community and healthy living through healthy food access. The Ticknor-Campbell house is open for tours at the same time.

Ypsilanti Heritage Festival

August 15-17

Walking Tour: A Brief History of North Huron Street Saturday 8/16, 1pm / 3pm / 5pm / 7pm. Tour forms at the corner of Huron & Cross Streets, near the Community Food Tent. Local historian James Mann's walking tour will look into the history of some of Ypsilanti's oldest and most stately buildings. FREE!
Huron & Cross Streets., Ypsilanti
ypsilantiheritagefestival.com

CHECK OUT THESE SUMMER EXHIBITS!

The Argus Museum invites you to our new exhibit: *A Matter of Light and Memory: An Analog and Alternative Photographic Process Exhibit*. Opening Reception, Thursday Aug. 7, 6-8PM. On view through September 26. Gallery Hours: Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm. The Argus Museum is on the 2nd Level of The Argus Building, 525 West William Ann Arbor, Michigan.

The Museum on Main Street was recently the host for a delicious exhibit *Three Courses*. Attendance was great, despite the terrible winter, and the comments were enthusiastic. We appreciate Dr. Margaret Carney for curating this exhibit (12/6-5/12) and providing several guided individual and group tours. It is the only museum in the world devoted exclusively to dinnerware, making new memories for every visitor. The Ann Arbor-based **Dinnerware Museum** brings enough dinnerware to each special exhibition to whet your appetite. The Dinnerware Museum, through its collections, exhibitions and educational programming, provides a window on our material culture, norms and attitudes towards food and dining. A delight for collectors, foodies, and visitors worldwide, the Dinnerware Museum has been described as creating a dream museum one place setting at a time. Their most recent exhibit, *Coffee*, is now open at Zingerman's Coffee Company, 3723 Plaza Drive in Ann Arbor. 734-929-6060. June 22-August 23. For more information or to have the Dinnerware Museum "pop up" in your location email Margaret Carney at director@dinnerwaremuseum.org.



Explore the Heritage of the University of Michigan Online

This new online exhibit tells the stories of a great public university. The people who built it. The place where it grew. The minds it set in motion. The University of Michigan Heritage Project is an immersive, digital experience of the University of Michigan's past. It is a collection of multimedia stories about the people who have shaped, and been shaped by, one of the world's great public universities. By design, the Heritage Project is not the definitive history of U-M. Rather, it is a living resource that will grow and change as the University's life continues. The Project also connects to other sources of information about the University's history. It is a production of the Office of the President, the Office of the Vice President for Global Communications and Strategic Initiatives, and the Bentley Historical Library. The Library holds the University's archives and an unparalleled collection documenting the history of the state of Michigan, as well as many other materials of historical significance. Holdings include more than 30,000 linear feet of archives and manuscripts, 57,000 printed volumes, 1.5 million photographs and other visual materials, and over 10,000 maps. www.heritage.umich.edu

Congratulations to Grace Shackman!



On June 18th, Grace received the inaugural Old West Side Citizen Award. Susan Kaufmann and the Homes Tour Planning Committee honored her for "the decades she spent recovering and preserving local history that could easily have been lost in a changing neighborhood." Grace was thanked for "giving us a more textured sense of the lives and experiences accumulated in our homes, for the walking tours that help us notice and understand the signs of history around us, and for the grace with which you do your work." *Old West Side News, June 2014*

Enjoy the rest of this Summer. Your next issue of Impressions will arrive in the Fall, followed by Winter.