



Drawing by Michael Klement

Impressions

NEWSLETTER WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Courting, Dating & Playing: Social Recreation in Washtenaw County Since 1830



"Courting, Dating & Playing" highlights some of the most popular leisure activities and social places in the county's history while simultaneously exploring the related dynamics of romantic relationships. Visitors will learn how courtship was different from dating, how the county's higher educational institutions shaped social recreation, and about many of the popular date destinations of the county's past.

Sit back, relax and reminisce in an authentic booth from Drake's Sandwich Shop. Experience the sights and sounds of this favorite gathering place with a tabletop interactive touch screen. Take a spin around the room of fancy J-Hop dresses, tuxedos and dance cards under the mirror disco ball and streamers. In the parlor, discover the art of courting, lover's lane(s), and even write your own love letters. Splash along river banks, lakeshores and a 1909 waterpark with a high diving tower and giant water slide on S.Fifth Avenue at Hill Street.

See original movie seats from 1940, and the 1928 opening of The Michigan Theatre. You are also invited to share your own photos and stories in our "Memory Lane". This free and fun exhibit is open until July 28, 2013.

The Museum on Main Street is located at 500 N. Main in Ann Arbor at the corners of E. Kingsley & Beakes. Open Saturdays & Sundays, 12 Noon-4:00 PM and by appointment. Groups are welcome, call 734-662-9092. For more information email wchs-500@ameritech.net or view the website at www.WashtenawHistory.org



Special Thanks

Many of the items on display come from the collections of the Washtenaw County Historical Society. This exhibit is particularly enhanced by individuals and organizations who loaned artifacts from their personal collections.

Mike Tibbals - the Drake's Booth
The Michigan Theater - Movie corner
WCHS Board members Susan Wineberg, Bob Yuhsaz, Jan Tripp, Pauline Walters
Patty Creal and Friends of History John Chrisman and Bob Creal for sharing their time, talents and treasures.



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

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It has been officially spring since March 20 and, even though a few days since then didn't feel spring like, now is a great time to visit the Museum on Main Street. The gardens are looking especially good and are worth the trip by themselves but, of course, don't miss our newest exhibit. There is an authentic booth from Drake's Sandwich Shop for visitors to sit in and take a picture (even I remember Drakes as a student at the U of M).

Our exhibit committee continues to outdo themselves with each new exhibit. They seem to have the right combination of ingenuity, fresh ways of presenting artifacts, and willingness to expend a lot of energy. Also, be certain to browse for a time in the museum shop.

Remember that there are four or five free parking spaces on the north side of the museum. There is also a bicycle rack so peddling to the museum is an option.

Finally we encourage all members and their guests to enjoy our new format for the annual meeting on May 19th, a Sunday afternoon picnic and program which promises to be a fun afternoon.

Leslie Loomans, President

Conservation Work at WCHS: Repairing the Past For Today's, and Tomorrow's Visitors

By Molly Baumkel, UM Museum Studies Intern

When you think of the Washtenaw County Historical Society, you probably picture the exhibits you've visited over the years – about local one-room schoolhouses, holiday decorations, or quilting – perhaps with children or grandchildren in tow. You might not know that, below you, is a basement filled to the brim with artifacts from Washtenaw County life over the past two hundred years, some of which are in pristine condition and some of which are in disrepair.

A few of them just need a good cleaning, but many of them have acquired more serious damages like large holes and tears. For example this painting of James Kingsley has a 3 corner tear and needs to be repaired. Attorney James "Honest Jim" Kingsley, came to Ann Arbor in 1826, was the first member of the Washtenaw County Bar, a probate judge, and a member of both the territorial and later the state legislature, as well as Ann Arbor's second mayor and a regent of the University of Michigan. Kingsley Street in Ann Arbor is named after him. While conservation is crucial to maintaining a well-rounded historical record, the real aim is to preserve artifacts in hopes that they will one day be in good enough condition to be on public display. You will be hearing more about this initiative in future issues of *Impressions*.

We want to make the paintings available for public exhibition so that they, too, might be part of what you imagine when you think of Washtenaw County Historical Society and become part of what your children and grandchildren remember when they think of their hometown.



Portrait of James Kingsley has a 3 corner tear on the upper left

An Act of Grace - Revisited

Educational Program Report
by Diana Mankowski



Author Karen Simpson

WCHS held a Sunday program on 17 March 2013 at the Malletts Creek branch of the Ann Arbor District Library. The well-received and audience-engaging program featured Karen Simpson, a local author whose novel, *Act of Grace*, is loosely based on the events of a Klu Klux Klan rally in Ann Arbor in 1996. In a nice surprise, the woman whose actions inspired the book was on hand to address the audience and take questions.

Karen Simpson is trained in heritage interpretation and administration with an M.S. in Historic Preservation from Eastern Michigan University. She has designed exhibits for museums and historical institutions that deal with issues of cultural diversity and racial reconciliation and has presented and published papers on aspects of African-American culinary and agricultural history.

In explaining how *Act of Grace* came to be, Simpson talked about how moved she was by a young African-American woman's actions in June 1996. When the KKK came to Ann Arbor that month, Keshia Thomas, then 18 years old, threw her body on the ground to shield and save the life of a white man wearing a confederate flag T-shirt as the crowd was about to attack him. Simpson found

Thomas' reason for saving the man – because he was somebody's son – to be “really deep” and a profound act of kindness and empathy even as other people could not understand why she would save the life of someone who was essentially her enemy.

Five years later, while conducting research for her M.S., Simpson came across a document about the 1863 Detroit race riot. With memories of the 1967 riot and knowing the history of the 1943 riot, she was surprised that she had not previously known of this riot in 1863. After learning as much as she could about the history of the 1863 riot and the history of race relations in Detroit, Simpson was inspired to write a novel that explored the long, violent history of race relations in Michigan.

Act of Grace is written from the point of view of the main character, Grace Johnson, whose ancestors' spirit insist that she must face the violent history of the past in order to reconcile for herself and her community why she saved the life of a Klansman. Simpson laughingly described how she initially wrote the novel in many sprawling drafts because “Grace wouldn't shut up.” It was in trying to bring some structure and historical sources to the story that she made the decision to focus on the 1919 Detroit race riot and to weave the story of black World War I soldiers--specifically the 369th Harlem Hell Fighter--into the central conflict of the novel. It was from this story that Simpson gave a reading of an extended excerpt of the novel--the moment when Grace is visited by her war hero ancestor to tell the violent story of their family's past.

After the reading, Simpson invited Keshia Thomas to the front of the room to tell her own story and answer questions from the audience. The two women had not met until just the day before, when a theme semester on race at the University of Michigan brought them together. They never spoke before the book was published, but Thomas said that she

related to Grace on so many levels it was “unreal.” She talked about how the pain stuck out the most and that Simpson had “really nailed it” on that aspect. And also about how the novel is a book about race – that is about more than revenge – it is also about healing, forgiveness, and enlightenment.

Thomas also told a story about how she never saw the man she saved again, but that the man's son randomly came up to her one day in Amer's Restaurant to thank her. After the audience encouraged Thomas to write a book, telling the story from her own perspective, she thanked Simpson for letting her speak and the audience for validating in a way what she did so many years ago.

Simpson then returned to the podium for a lively Q & A session. Simpson offered her thoughts on how racial relations and violence has progressed in the digital age. She talked about her next novel, which will be about a curator working on a history of African-American horse racing in Kentucky. During this session, she also talked about how Grace took her ten years to write because it also involved the process of learning to write a book. This revelation then led her to discuss what inspired her to write and to offer some keen advice on how to go about writing, publishing, and learning about both. It also prompted a discussion of the current publishing industry and the role of black authors within it. Simpson closed the program with her gracious offer to “give back,” encouraging any aspiring authors in the audience to call or email her to connect and discuss.

Sundays on the Porch

Enjoy an afternoon in Milan at the Friend-Hack House Museum on 775 County Street, May-October, 1:00-4:00 PM. See real farm equipment, antique furnishings and appliances. Free admission, donations are accepted.
www.historicmilan.com

The Allmendinger Piano and Organ Company: An American Success Story

By Susan Wineberg

The Allmendinger Organ and Piano Company was an Ann Arbor business started in 1872 by David Friedrich Allmendinger (DFA), an immigrant from Swabia, Germany. He arrived as a young boy in 1851. In 1867 he was apprenticed to Gottlieb Gaertner, who is listed in the 1868 City Directory (classified) as "Organ Builder" at 44 S. Fourth. Gaertner taught Allmendinger how to carve wood and make organs. Allmendinger eventually married Gaertner's daughter and took over his business after he retired. He built his first organ in 1869 and opened his business in 1872. He was commissioned to build one for Zion Church in 1876 and one for Bethlehem Church in 1877.

Although his first commissions were for churches, his success lay in serving the public with affordable, light, reed organs which were increasingly popular after the Civil War, especially among the music-loving German population. Everyone had an organ in their parlor as a status symbol and playing the organ at family gatherings was a favorite pastime, especially for farmers. In fact, every town had an organ factory. Early records of the company show that many of their organs were sold in Macomb, Lenawee and Washtenaw counties.



WCHS Organ at the Kempf House



MUSIC STUDIOS
REUBEN H. KEMPF,
From European Conservatory,
TEACHER OF
Piano Playing, Organ, Harmony.
Organist and Choir Master of St. Andrew's Vested Choir.
PAULINE W. KEMPF,
From Cincinnati Conservatory,
Teacher of Vocal Instruction
CONCERTS. RECITALS.
Studios, : 312 Division Street South.



LEAVE ORDERS FOR FINE PIANO TUNING.

1899 ad in the Ann Arbor City Directory

By the 1890s, when the Kempf House organ was built, Allmendinger was operating out of a large brick factory on First Street, making over 800 organs a year and employing 50 people. We know this because there are 8 boxes of material at the Bentley Library consisting of photographs, drawings, trade cards, correspondence, and other items relating to the company.

The Kempf House Organ was probably made around 1895. This organ has an interesting history. It was first noticed at the Treasure Mart in 1973 by a former board member of the WCHS, Hazel Proctor, while it was being looked at by another couple. She wanted it for the

WCHS and the owner of the Treasure Mart, Mrs. Demaris Cash, wanted it to go to the Society too. But there was no room, so the couple – Dr. J.R. and Mrs. Smith from Ypsilanti (he was a faculty member in the School of Music) were given the organ with the understanding it would eventually go to the WCHS. In 1985 it was tracked down by Gary Kuehnle, a former WCHS curator and in 1986 it went on display at the Kempf House, at long last on display somewhere!

Ironically, Reuben Kempf whose studio was in this house, was promoting other organ companies. There were many other pianos and organs being made at the time.

The organs—and later pianos—were made at 120-130 S. First St, at the NW corner of Washington and First. If you walk into the building at this entrance, you will be in a mini-museum with 3 examples of the output of the factory and three panels of historical information written by yours truly in 1990. The Ann Arbor Organ Company was one of the leading industries of Ann Arbor in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

As you enter you will encounter the beautiful 1874 organ hand carved by David Friedrich Allmendinger for his friend William Parker, owner of Fleming Creek Mills which is now the Parker Mill Museum owned and operated by Washtenaw County. Beautiful birds are carved in the top piece and the detailing is exquisite.

It is carved from walnut with burl inlay, and was owned by Mrs. Zina Bolgos, Allmendinger's granddaughter, until it was acquired by First Martin Corp. owners of the building and creators of the display.

A second example of their craft is an 1894 organ (the date is stamped on it) which



120-130 S. First Street in 2013
Formerly the Allmendinger Organ Factory

returned 'home' from England in 1993. This was also orchestrated by First Martin after the Chamber of Commerce received a letter from a Rev. Berrow's wife in England who thought it should return to its birthplace when they could no longer use it. An 'uncrating' ceremony was held at the factory in 1993. It too is of walnut but is evidence of the factory process with less intricate detailing and more turned elements made on lathes.

The company began as the Ann Arbor Organ Works, then became the Allmendinger Organ Co. and eventually was the Ann Arbor Organ Company. In 1910 it became the Ann Arbor Piano Company. By 1911, the factory really consists of four buildings constructed in 1880, 1888, 1906 and 1910.

The company started in two houses at the corner of Washington and First. This lively photo below shows many people, a horse and buggy and a house on the right that was built by the first Jewish family in Ann Arbor—the Weils—who owned a tannery nearby. Purchased in 1872 when Allmendinger set up shop, the houses soon needed to be expanded and a larger frame building was constructed connecting the two houses.

A panel at the exhibit on S. First Street describes the history of the piano and organ company. These histories were eventually made into a brochure by a descendant of Allmendinger and published in 1991. The library has



David F Allmendinger Family, Portrait taken in front of the family home in Ann Arbor Michigan. (Ancestry.com)

recently scanned the brochure and it is available for download at www.aadl.org/allmendinger_brochure.

The 1890s organs all contained the gold seal of the Organ Company. The Kempf House Museum organ has the seal and the gold lettered "D.F. Allmendinger, Supt." Note that our 1895 organs have many stops, shelves for whatnots, and a beautiful golden oak finish.

The company ended in 1915 after a valiant attempt to compete with phonographs, other piano companies, and Sears Roebuck. The building housed many entities including a windshield factory. It was sold in 1935 to Mr. Carrol

Benz and has been known since then as the Benz Building, even after the U-M bought it in 1969. It was sold to First Martin in 1984 that remodeled it for modern office use. The company owned by Bill Martin is proud of the building and keeps it in fine condition with lights at the cornice at Christmas.

Allmendinger's home at 719 West Washington still stands today. It was here that he raised his 13 children and created a mini-Belle Isle on his property. Descendants of the family lived in the home until 1992.

George Taylor of Cobblestone Farm called to inform me that these organs can be repaired. He also reminded me of the Lee Conklin Antique Reed Organ and History Museum in Hanover (Jackson County) which the WCHS visited in the 1990s. They have over 100 fully restored and working reed organs. They include parlor, cottage and church organs along with melodeons. Some are as old as the mid-19th century. The museum is in the former Hanover High School and includes a restored classroom, barber shop, library, printing press and telephone switchboard. It was added to the National Register in 2013. Let's go!



Ann Arbor Organ Works, ca 1890/1910 (Bentley Historical Library)

Explore Local History Online at www.WashtenawHistory.org

From A-Z you will find links to articles, resources, photographs, postcards, letters, oral histories and walking and driving tours. This issue highlights F-I. We are always interested in new sites to add. Send an email to Jan_Tripp@comcast.net



Kempf House Museum

Jewish Cemetery - The first Jewish cemetery in Michigan was established in 1848-49 in Ann Arbor across the street from where the Power Center for the Performing Arts is now located. www.Michmarkers.com

Kellogg--Warden House - Also known as Museum on Main Street at 500 North Main Street, Ann Arbor. A short history of the house by Susan Wineberg. The house was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1994 www.wWashtenawHistory.org

Kempf House Museum - The 1853 Greek Revival style home is now the home of the Kempf House Museum. Visitors to the Kempf House Museum will delight in seeing how a busy German-American family lived and worked in the 1890s. 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. You will also hear about how Ann Arbor has grown into a prosperous city, a cultural center, and the home of the University of Michigan. www.KempfHouseMuseum.org

An Insightful and Historical Perspective Offers a New Look at Local Architecture



Grace Shackman is teaching two new classes this spring at Washtenaw Community College:

Architecture and History of Washtenaw County Colleges starting May 23 and *Mid-Century Modern* starting May 29. The former will be taught with Fred Mayer, retired U-M planner. Both classes will consist of two evening sessions at the WCC campus and two walking tours on the weekends. To register either go to the Washtenaw

Community College Economic and Community Development web page at www.washtenaw.augusoft.net or through the catalog.

Architecture and History of Washtenaw County Colleges

The course will compare four local institutions: U-M, a large research university; EMU, a regional four-year university; WCC, a two-year community college; and Concordia; a small liberal arts college.

Mid-Century Modern

The course will explain what is unique about this style and the role that Michigan and specially Ann Arbor played in its development.

Grace Shackman is a historian of Ann Arbor places and people. She has written numerous articles for the Ann Arbor Observer, the Old West Side News, in addition to three books on local history. Grace is also a Master Gardener.

Stop and Check Out the Blinking Railroad Lights in Saline

The Saline Railroad Depot once had freight house, telegraph, and passenger facilities and served as a crucial link between Saline's rural territory and the outside world. While all of the original surrounding buildings have been removed, the Depot still stands on its original site. Located at 402 N. Ann Arbor Street, just north of Downtown Saline, it is now The Depot Museum and open year round on Saturdays for browsing and guided tours. Visitors will see a station agent's room, freight room, furnished caboose, and livery barn. A restored Eclipse Windmill and walking trail are also on the property. Regular hours are 11:00 AM-3:00 PM and by appointment. Groups larger than ten require a reservation. Call 734-944-0442 or view www.salinehistory.org.



The Saline Depot Museum (Photo: Mr.History - www.flickr.com)

The Origins of The Dinnerware Museum

There's an Ann Arbor
Connection that's more
than 100 years old

by *Margaret Carney, founding director*

When looking for a home for the Dinnerware Museum, I considered locations with some history of dinnerware manufacturing. It would have made sense to have such a museum there, and many such communities have little historical museums focused on the local product. But that is not what the Dinnerware Museum is all about. The Museum is about all aspects of dinnerware – factory-made, hand made, designed by well-known designers, art about dinnerware, art about food, and even food itself. A local history of dinnerware manufacturing would likely just get in the way of such an international, diverse focus.

I became interested in dinnerware when in the early 1990s I had the opportunity to meet and interview noted industrial designers Eva Zeisel, Don Schreckengost, and others. Exhibitions I researched and curated regarding the creations of Glidden Parker for Glidden Pottery and Eva Zeisel for Hall China, were truly fun and inspirational. And my daily interaction with contemporary artists was a wonderful opportunity to enjoy remarkable functional pottery.

Ann Arbor was not without its attractive family connections, when considering a permanent home for the Dinnerware Museum. My grandfather, Robert John Carney, who became an assistant professor of Analytical Chemistry at the University of Michigan, was born in Sturgis, Michigan, July 19, 1884. He moved to Ann Arbor over 100 years ago and received his A.B. and Ph.D.



David Oliveira, Portuguese, b. Lisbon 1980, 3D Wire Sketch Sculpture, The Dinnerware Museum Purchase 2012.15.

from Michigan, the latter being awarded in 1916. In 1907 he became an instructor in Analytical Chemistry. He married my grandmother, Frances Gibson Sweet, in Ann Arbor in 1909. They first lived on Waley Court, a little road off of State Street near Packard. They moved to 519 Lawrence Street around 1920-21. Their three children, Robert, Frances, and John were all born and raised in Ann Arbor. All attended the University of Michigan, where my father received his M.D. in 1939, and then immediately married Dorothy Briscoe, of Trenton, Michigan. At the time, one could not marry while in medical school at the University of Michigan.

Other local connections include my father's first cousin, Ed Meader, whose father was a Methodist minister residing near Kalamazoo in his later years. Ed had worked for the CIA and married Mary Upjohn after the death of his first wife and Mary's divorce. Mary Upjohn Meader and Ed Meader traveled extensively in Africa and elsewhere and provided substantial support for the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology at the University of Michigan. Mary was a noted aerial photographer in the 1930s. I am proud of all these Washtenaw County connections.

Yet despite some adventurous relatives, there is no indication that the dinnerware used by the Carney family, was any different than those used by everyone

else in Washtenaw County in the 20th century. Yet each holiday meal, each celebration, and all daily meals together were cherished and memorable events. I chose Ann Arbor as the location for this new specialized museum – in fact the only museum in the world devoted exclusively to dinnerware – not only because it was the ancestral family home, but more importantly because I know that the Dinnerware Museum will soon become a treasured family tradition in Washtenaw County. While the Museum becomes established, offering temporary exhibitions at temporary locations, the community will have the opportunity to embrace this new attraction. The Dinnerware Museum is creating a museum in the 21st century – one place setting at a time. We have the opportunity to create something in Ann Arbor that doesn't exist anywhere else in the world. The Museum is a window on our material culture, norms, and attitudes toward food and dining. This should play well in such a culturally astute and foodie town as Ann Arbor.

The inaugural exhibition is on display at the Ladies' Literary Club of Ypsilanti, 218 N. Washington. Open daily from 11AM-4 PM through May 17th, free admission. For more information contact Dr. Margaret Carney, 607-382-1415, email director@dinnerwaremuseum.org or www.dinnerwaremuseum.org



CURRENT RESIDENT OR

Drawing by Michael Klement

**Re-live and share
your memories of
Drake's Sandwich
Shop at our current
exhibit. See the
front page!**



**The garden is full of
color on Main Street.
Stop by and see the
many glorious
blossoms, flowering
bushes and trees.**

THE WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Annual Meeting & Picnic!

**Sunday, May 19, 2013 • 2-4 PM
County Farm Park • Ann Arbor**

Under the big pavillion - County Farm Park is located at the Southwest corner of Washtenaw and Platt Road. Parking lot and entrance off Platt Road.

- **Lunch is on us!** Bar-B-Q from Satchel's with a mix of salads, sides & beverages will be served.
- **Great playground for kids!**

PLEASE RSVP BY MAY 17th so that we may plan accordingly. Call 734-662-9092 or email wchs-500@ameritech.net

The Picnic begins at 2:00 PM. A short program about Farm Park History by **Tom Freeman** will be followed by the election of officers.

Nominations

OFFICERS (2013-2014)

- President..... Leslie Loomans
- Vice President..... Karen Jania
- TreasurerPatricia Creal
- Corresponding SecretaryPauline Walters
- Recording Secretary Judy Chrisman

ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE

David LaMoreaux

DIRECTORS, TERM ENDING 2016

- Joseph Cialdella James Davis
- Tom Freeman Jan Tripp

**The Museum on Main Street • 500 N. Main • Open Saturdays & Sundays, 12-4 PM
"Courting, Dating & Playing: Social Recreation in Washtenaw County Since 1830"**



www.WashtenawHistory.org
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