



● SEPTEMBER 2012

Impressions

NEWSLETTER WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



There are over 100 cemeteries in Washtenaw County. The oldest headstone in Ann Arbor belongs to Emily Whitmore, (1807-1825). She was buried in Pioneer Cemetery which was off Packard near Carpenter Road, perhaps the first cemetery in that area of the county.

Ann Arbor's first cemetery was located on the land where the Power Center is now. As the surrounding lots began to be built on, it became clear that the site was too small for the growing town. Forest Hill Cemetery was founded in 1857 and beginning in the 1860s, remains from the original burial ground were moved to Forest Hill and other cemeteries.

The first burial in Fairview Cemetery, located off Pontiac Trail, was in 1833. Bethlehem Cemetery, on Jackson Road, interred their first resident in 1834. The photo here is from St. Thomas Catholic Cemetery on Sunset Road in Ann Arbor. This cemetery has lots going back to the late 1800s, beautiful monuments and a view of downtown Ann Arbor from the hill. ♦

New Exhibit coming to the Museum on Main Street

We all have a natural curiosity (and a lot of questions) about life and death. Did you know that families once held funerals in their own homes? Or that flowers brought to the grave site were brought to promote good will to the spirit of the deceased? We invite you to come to the Museum on Main Street and get the answers to some of your questions when "Rest in Peace: The Washtenaw Way of Death" opens in mid-October.

Visitors will experience what a home funeral would look like in the late 1800s to the early 20th century. You won't want to miss seeing some of these rare and unusual artifacts first-hand. Local funeral home histories are included and a display that will have you looking at final resting places in a whole new way. Cemeteries are not only rich in local history, but beautiful and serene vistas to experience.

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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

Membership renewal will occur again this year in the 4th quarter. But before then the Society is searching for a volunteer to take over the membership process. Primarily a data base is maintained including names, mailing addresses (and email addresses when possible), membership classification, status, date of renewal, etc. Some computer skill is necessary but not a lot. Input to the membership drive would be a plus. After some familiarity is gained, revisions to the process may be in order, as there is some overlap with the Treasurer's financial system. The volunteer would basically have the opportunity to redesign the system if they felt there was room for improvement.

The Society, of course, depends on volunteers. Though we now can afford to have two part-time employees there are simply too many jobs left over. Currently all 12 directors and all five officer positions are filled. These 17 people are, of course, volunteers. Many take on several tasks and many have been doing so for quite a number of years. Naturally they do this because they believe in the mission of the Society and they enjoy local history and simply being part of the process. Additional volunteers serve on committees or take on special tasks.

If this would be a potential fit for you contact Pauline Walters, Corresponding Secretary, at the Museum on Main Street. She is there volunteering nearly every day of the week from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. She would be more than willing to discuss the membership process in greater detail.

Leslie Loomans



Check us out, on the web and

www.WashtenawHistory.org

Washtenaw County Historical Society

P.O. Box 3336

Ann Arbor, MI 48106-3336

Phone: 734-662-9092

email:

wchs-500@ameritech.net

Museum on Main Street

500 N. Main Street

Ann Arbor, MI 48104-1027

(at the corner of Beakes,

E. Kingsley & N. Main Streets)

Museum Hours

Saturday & Sunday,

12 Noon – 4:00 PM

and by appointment
for groups or individuals

ARTIFACTS & COLLECTIONS

UM Museum Studies Interns Make a Big Difference

We were very impressed with the enthusiasm and dedication that our University of Michigan Museum Studies intern **Alicia Julliet** had for her work with us. Her biggest project was combining the adult and children's versions of the *What's It* game, into one. Players have fun with a multiple choice questionnaire about odd and obscure items from the 19th and early 20th century. The first 12 items are fairly familiar items and are good for children. The whole game or just the children section can be used depending on the audience. She also developed facts about each item which can be shared with the audience by the presenter. There are two powerpoint programs, a long and the short version. There are also fact cards that can be used if powerpoint is not available.

Alicia managed her time so well she was able to check our travelling loan boxes "Life Before Electricity" and "From Hats to Spats" and bring them up to date. She also inventoried and organized two big boxes of items--one of kitchen items and one with carpenter and shoemaker artifacts. Alicia then numbered, catalogued and photographed the items not in the system.

The original *What's It* game was developed by Pat Austin and Bradley Taylor who was the new curator in 1982. He is now in charge of the undergraduate Museum Studies program and Alicia reported to him on her work for us.



Attention Teachers!

The WCHS has travelling loan boxes for elementary and middle school children featuring artifacts from our collection and lesson materials. "Life Before Electricity" and "From Hats to Spats", can be borrowed by teachers and kept at the school for a week. There are artifacts, teacher guides, pictures and books pertaining to the subject. Call 662-9092 or e-mail Judy (judychr@aol.com) for more information.

WCHS Collection List is Available Online

The Washtenaw County Historical Society has over 7,500 artifacts in our collections. Due to the volume, most items are only occasionally displayed in our rotating exhibits. You can go to **www.WashtenawHistory.org** to explore the entire list. Click on the artifacts link and discover the historic – Ann Allen Bible as well as the odd – Elisha Townsend's hair clippings. This summer we received a wedding gown worn by Carlotta Briggs Bullis who married Charles E. Chadman in the tower of the Bullis/SAE house in 1901. It was later altered and worn by her granddaughter, Drucilla Jane Ross, who married James W. Hayden in 1948. If you have family artifacts to donate, e-mail judychr@aol.com or call Judy Chrisman at 734-662-9092.



The purple wedding dress and coat belonged to Lois Dolhe Burnett, 1863. White wedding gown belonged to Mary Hiscock, 1881.

New Exhibition Track System

The new track system at the Museum on Main Street has made dramatic improvements in the ease of exhibit installation and visual appeal. Thanks to volunteers John Chrisman and Matt Vanderby who installed the tracks, we were able to use it this summer. When the current exhibit comes down this Fall, we will paint the picture rail and the new tracks which will then blend right into the walls. The system was made possible with a generous donation from one of our members.

The Flag is Flying Once Again

WCHS board member Bob Yuhasz and Museum docent John Kilar worked to ensure our new and much improved telescopic flagpole is now firmly in place. It can be easily lowered in the anticipation of a storm. It also has clips instead of a rope making it much quieter when the wind is blowing and the flag is waving at the corners of Beakes, East Kingsley and North Main.

2012-2013 Program Dates

Information about the October program is on the back. The November program will be held on the 18th. The 2013 Winter-Spring programs will be February 17, March 17 and April 21. The Annual Meeting will be Sunday, May 19, 2013.

Twenty Years ... Two Brothers and their Letters

Members of the Bentley Historical Library and the Washtenaw County Historical Society are cooperating on a project to transcribe, proof and place on the Internet a collection of 110 letters written between two Geddes brothers, John in Washtenaw County and William in Lebanon County, PA. between 1824 and 1844.

In 1857, John Geddes was instrumental in the founding of the original Washtenaw County Historical Society. He was president of the Society in 1857. He also held various elected positions in Washtenaw County: Justice of the Peace, State Representative and Township Supervisor.

In one letter, John mentions that he walked to Unadilla, Michigan for a political meeting. He walked extensively: to Detroit, to Ypsilanti where he attended the Presbyterian Church, and once from Pennsylvania to New York State then on to Washtenaw County.

Several years ago, an antique dealer in Boston called the Washtenaw County Historical Society and inquired if the name Geddes meant anything to people in Ann Arbor. He had a group of letters to sell. Russell Bidlack Dean Emeritus of the School of Library Science, purchased the cache and



John Geddes (1801-1889)



Robert Geddes (1797-1866)



William Geddes (1802-1877)

lovingly copied and transcribed them. After his death in 2003, the letters were donated to the Bentley Historical Library. The Bentley Library/WCHS team has digitalized them verbatim, producing scanned copies so that the exact 'voice' of the brothers is maintained.

John Michael Geddes (1801-1889) was a major figure in Washtenaw County's early history. He and his brother, **Robert** (1797-1866), were early settlers and built homes at Dixboro Road and Huron River Drive, both of which are still occupied. They also built a sawmill on the Huron River, and in 1840 supplied the oak lumber used in the construction of the four professor houses on the original UM campus in Ann Arbor.

John and Robert owned property in Geddes(burg), Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and Pittsfield Townships. **William** (1802-1877) had property bought for him by his brothers in Pittsfield Township off Platt Road and moved to that farm in 1844 at which time the letters stopped.

In the 1880s, John sold his farm to a Monaghan family and, for a while, rented a room from them. He died on November 4, 1889, in Ann Arbor at a home on Seventh St. He is buried in the Botsford/Earhart Cemetery on Earhart Road.

By Pauline Walters

Read more online!

For Dean Bidlack's story, *Dear Brother*, see www.WashtenawHistory.org



*William Geddes House
Pittsfield Township Historical Society*



John Geddes and a Salesman, 1880



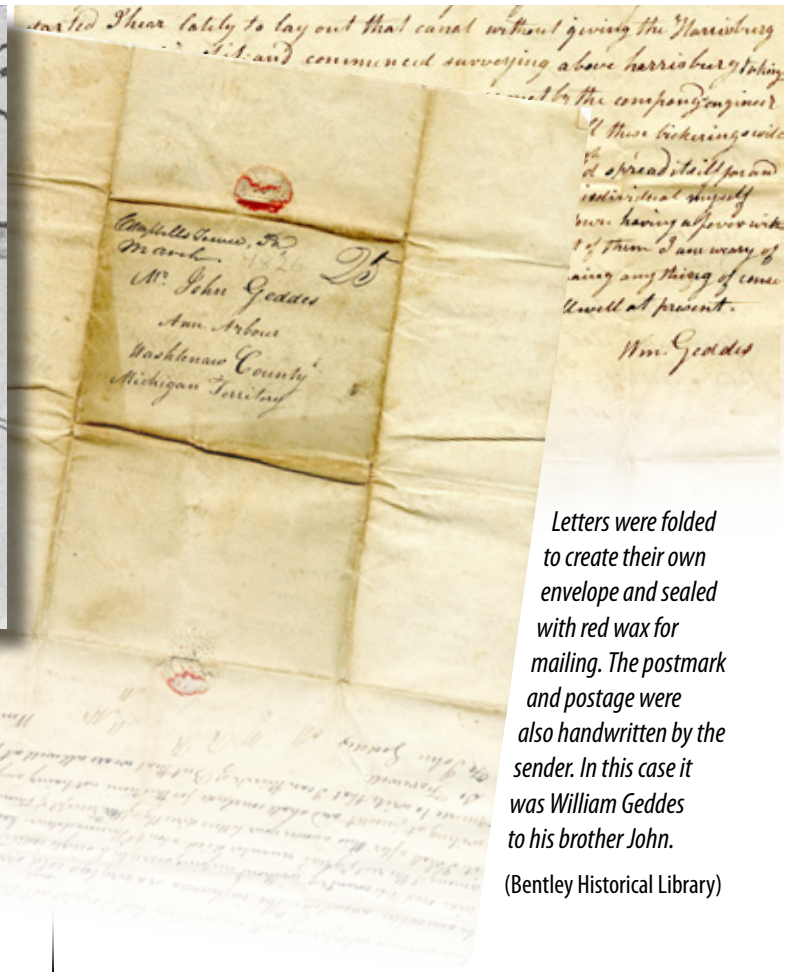
1874 plat map shows a paper mill at Geddesburg

Geddesburg & Parker Mill

A Washtenaw County Historical Marker marks the location and reads as follows:

Founded in 1832 by John and Robert Geddes, the agricultural milling hamlet of Geddesburg illustrates the tradition of water power economic opportunity which spurred westward expansion in 19th century America. Traversed by two Native American trails, the narrow of the Huron River between Chalmers and Fleming Creeks, was a strategic location. In 1824 Robert Fleming used creek water to power the first sawmill in Washtenaw County. The Geddes brothers harnessed the Huron River and constructed a saw mill in 1826. Paper pulp, Lime plaster and grist mills followed as more entrepreneurs built dams. A grist mill and a cider mill, built in the late 1800s by William Parker, are still extant and part of the Parker Mill Complex owned by the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission, built along the rivers southern shore in 1839, enabled transportation of mill and farm products.

Geddesburg, with it's school, post office, train depot, farms, mills and vernacular Greek revival houses, prospered along both sides of the Huron. At the turn of the century, Ann Arbor Water and Gas Company developed a steam plant on the original Geddes grist mill site. Washtenaw Light and Power Company purchased Geddes riverfront property for a larger dam to power steam turbines. By 1913, Detroit Edison had acquired property for five hydroelectric plants along the Huron. They were known as Geddes, Barton, Argo, Superior and French Landing. The Geddes Dam was rebuilt in a major construction project, and this hydroelectric dam operated from 1915-1959. It is no longer extant. The substation property was sold to the city of Ann Arbor.



Letters were folded to create their own envelope and sealed with red wax for mailing. The postmark and postage were also handwritten by the sender. In this case it was William Geddes to his brother John.

(Bentley Historical Library)

The Mill is Open for Public Tours on Weekends in the Fall

Built in 1873, the Parker Mill (4650 Geddes Rd.) is one of the historic treasures in our Washtenaw County area. It is part of a 28-acre park featuring walking trails, a handicap-accessible wetland boardwalk, interpretive signs, picnic areas and rest rooms. The mill is operable and contains original milling machinery, left in the mill when the Parker family ceased operation in 1958. Parker Mill Cider Mill was built in 1887 the building was originally used as a cider mill. Today the building houses a small museum and interpretive signs; no cider pressing equipment remains.



Summer Exhibit: What's in a Name? Streets, Roads & Stories of Washtenaw County



Law books used by John Allen



"Going Away" Dress worn by Ella Travis Beal as she left for her honeymoon with Junius Beal in November 1899. His wedding gift to her was this Tandem Bicycle that was ridden by Junius and Ella around Washtenaw County and parts of the World.

Hundreds of people have passed through the doors of the Museum on Main Street this summer to see "What's in a Name? Streets Roads & Stories of Washtenaw County". The goal of our exhibit was to create an authentic experience, using artifacts that were donated to the Washtenaw County Historical Society by our earliest residents. We selected some of the rare items from our museum and archival collections to tell the story behind the names of local streets that we ride, drive, bike and walk on every day. When telling the story of our area's founding, in a house that itself is 177 years old, with the actual objects from another time and place, you truly get the feeling of "being there".



Fan belonging to Ann Allen, wife of Ann Arbor co-founder John Allen.

You can imagine yourself riding that tandem bicycle Junius Beal gave to his wife as a wedding present. That same bike was ridden by Junius and Ella Travis Beal around the streets of Washtenaw County, and the world. It was shipped when they travelled abroad. You can see the original law books that belonged to Ann Arbor's co founder, John Allen, and the fan that belonged to his wife Ann. We also display a stop sign (with it's anti-war grafitti) that was at the corner of East and South University Avenue during many years of the Vietnam War.

This exhibit was made possible because of the artifacts, photographs, paintings and documents that local families have donated to the Historical Society over the years. We appreciate the opportunity to act as stewards for historic artifacts and records and accept the responsibility. It allows visitors to see some rare and important items that come from the community. If you have items that you would like to donate to the Historical Society, see page 3.

Do You Enjoy Working in a Garden? MoMS Needs You!



THANK YOU to our Master Gardener, Lilly Ferguson, who has done an outstanding job again this year. It looks beautiful and has attracted a lot of attention. But, now we really need **your** help with the Fall clean up. Please let us know if you can volunteer, call 734-662-9092 or email wchs-500@ameritech.net.

YOUR INVITATION TO HISTORICAL ACTIVITIES AROUND THE COUNTY

The Washtenaw County Historical Consortium is a volunteer organization representing 27 museums, libraries, and historical attractions in and around Washtenaw County, Michigan. Member organizations can post their events directly to the online calendar and we will list as many as we can in our newsletter. Check out www.hvcn.org/info/wchs/consortium



Ypsilanti Historical Museum

10th Annual Quilt Exhibit

Open now -October 14

Featuring historical, traditional, contemporary and art quilts. Open Tuesday-Sunday, 2-5 pm. 734-482-4990.

www.YpsilantiHistoricalSociety.org

Ypsilanti Historical Museum
220 N. Huron St., Ypsilanti

Clements Library Exhibit

Murder Most Foul: Homicide in Early America Exhibit closes Oct. 5

This exhibit looks at murder in America from the seventeenth century to 1900 using the rich resources on crime and punishment held by the Clements. Murder and the source materials about it touch on many aspects of early American social, political, geographic, ethnic, gender, and legal history, and the Clements collections are distinctive windows on this fascinating aspect of our national heritage. For information call 734-764-2347.

www.Clements.Umich.edu

William L. Clements Library
909 S. University Ave., Ann Arbor

Noon Lecture

Wednesday, October 3
12 noon -1 pm

Tasting and Talking about Gelato with Josh Minor, a 10-year Zingerman's employee, Josh will take us behind the scenes at The Creamery and show us how to make his specialty...a delicious gelato.. Cost: Members \$1, non-members \$2. 734-994-4898.

Kempf House Museum
312 S. Division St., Ann Arbor

Cobblestone Farm Market

Tuesdays in October, 3-7 PM

The Cobblestone Farm Market is a family-friendly market, featuring organic, Michigan-grown produce, live music, farm animals, an historic farmhouse tour and even more fun for kids! www.CobblestoneFarmMarket.com

Buhr Park (2751 Packard Road)
just west of Cobblestone Farm

Beyond the Federal Population Schedule

Presented by Jim Jackson

Sunday, October 28

1:30-4:30 pm

Genealogical Society
of Washtenaw County, Michigan

St. Joseph Mercy Hospital
Education Center Auditorium,
5305 Elliott Dr. (off E. Huron River Dr.
at Clark Rd.). Use parking lot P and
look for the club's signs.

The lecture and class are free.

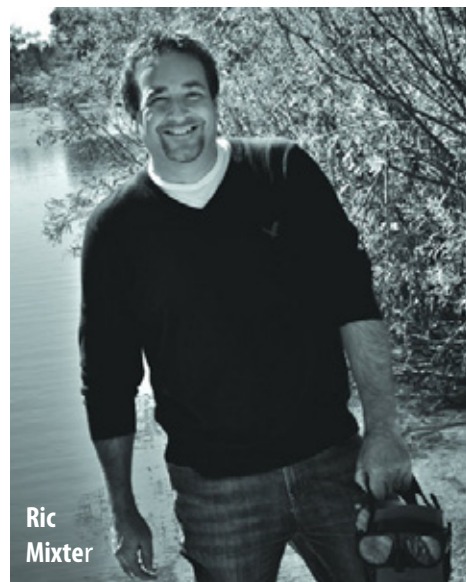
For more information contact:
Marcia McCrary, President
734-483-2799
gswcni@gmail.com

November Mysteries on the Great Lakes with Ric Mixter

Monday, October 8, 4:30-6 p.m.

November gales are notorious for their toll on Great Lakes shipping, and hundreds of ships now line the bottom of the Lakes due to storms. Join award-winning videographer and author Ric Mixter as he "dives" into the mystery of late-season storms, sharing not only rare eyewitness interviews but haunting video footage that he recorded underwater. Preregistration is required. Members Free/Guests \$5. Register online at www.a2gov.org/senior or call 734-794-6250. This program is sponsored by the Ann Arbor Men's Club, Ann Arbor Kiwanis Club and Interim Health Care.

Ann Arbor Senior Center
1320 Baldwin Ave, Ann Arbor



Ric
Mixter

Washtenaw County Color Walks

Fall is the perfect time for visiting one of our many parks, or nature preserves. Explore your options online first at www.ewashtenaw.org



Drawing by Michael Klement

WASHTENAW HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PO BOX 3336 ANN ARBOR, MI 48106-3336

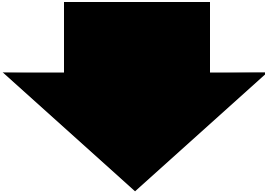
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NEW EXHIBIT THIS FALL!

"Rest in Peace: The Washtenaw Way of Death"

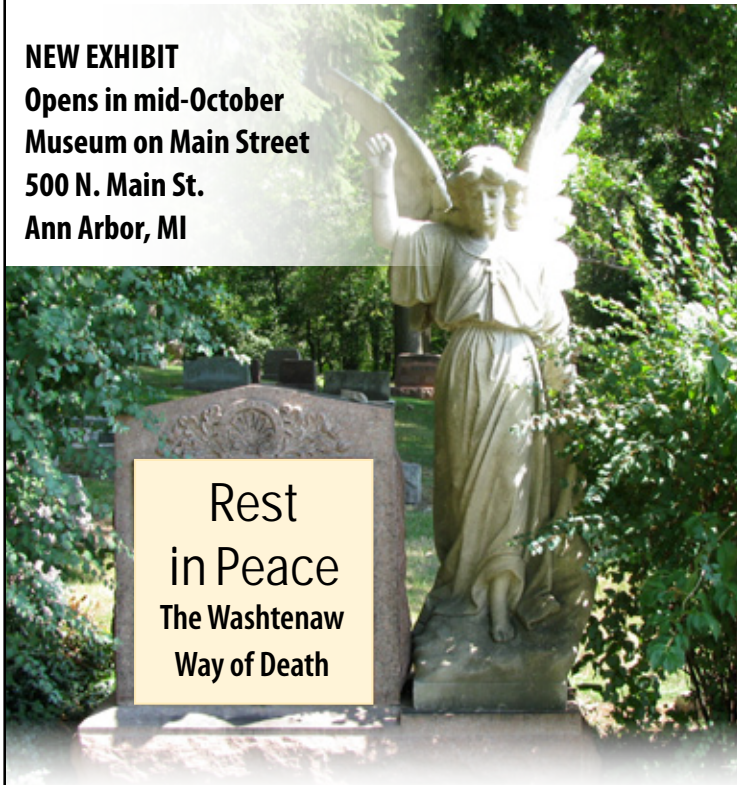
opens at the Museum on Main Street in mid-October. Visitors will experience what a home funeral would look like in the late 1800s to the early 20th century, local funeral home histories and a display that will have you looking at cemeteries in a whole new way.

CURRENT RESIDENT OR



WCHS OCTOBER EXHIBIT & PROGRAM

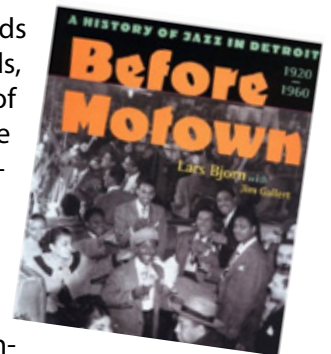
NEW EXHIBIT
Opens in mid-October
Museum on Main Street
500 N. Main St.
Ann Arbor, MI



Rest
in Peace
The Washtenaw
Way of Death

Detroit Music History *with* Lars Bjorn

From early Detroit dance bands and blues, to Motown Records, Lars Bjorn and Jim Gallert of Detroit Music History have been researching, interviewing musicians, and writing about Detroit music for 35 years. They have conducted 100-plus interviews with Detroit musicians, club owners, and others who contributed to Detroit's music scene. Co-sponsored by the Bentley Historical Library.



Sunday, October 21 • 2-4 PM
Bentley Historical Library
1150 Beal Ave, Ann Arbor, MI

You are invited to these free events, bring a friend! Call 734-662-9092 or email wchs-500@ameritech.net