



Impressions

NEWSLETTER WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Baldwin Hill House in North Burns Park

Many cities and towns have streets named after presidents, birds, trees or buildings. But there are some street names that have special meaning in Washtenaw County, because they are named after people, past and present. Our next exhibit at the Museum on Main Street, "What's in a Name? The Streets and Roads of Washtenaw County" will share some of those stories. In this issue of *Impressions* you will find the story of the Baldwin Hill family written by James Baldwin Parker on pages 4-5.

The Baldwin Hill House is the oldest house in North Burns Park. Mr. Baldwin's fruit and berry farm stretched north along Washtenaw Avenue, west along Hill, and south to what is now Burns Park. He was an active member of the Washtenaw Agriculture Society and a leader in the Washtenaw Pomological Society. Baldwin was often asked to speak as an authority on the growth of peaches, strawberries, and the apples for which he was best known. The groves of hickory and

oak trees that still shade lawns along Washtenaw were called "Baldwin's Picnic Grove" and were part of the original farm. A few old apple trees from Mr. Baldwin's orchard can be found in neighborhood yards. Baldwin Avenue bears the family name.

Olivia and Israel Hall purchased the Baldwin house and 78 acres of farmland in 1876. Mrs. Hall shared the real estate interests of her husband and was an active member of the suffragette movement. At that time the Washtenaw Fair Association had a horseracing track at the southeast corner of Hill and South Forest Avenue. Mrs. Hall was concerned that the county fairgrounds with its horse racing track on Hill Street was a bad influence so close to the neighborhood school. She persuaded the Fair Association in 1890 to move the race track to her land at the back of the old Baldwin farm, past what would become Wells Street. You can still see the remnants of the horse racing track in the form of two concentric, elliptical rows of trees.



Israel and Olivia Hall in their Washtenaw Avenue mansion (Bentley Historical Library)

The former track is now used for Burns Park Elementary School Gym class's dreaded "long-run," or four grueling laps around through the trees. *Source: History of the North Burns Park Neighborhood by Ellen Ramsburgh, www.northburnspark.org*

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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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The President's Letter

As with any building open to the public, protecting visitors, employees and members at Museum on Main Street, as well as our historical collections, from fire, flooding and other hazards requires several systems and lots of equipment. Recently the board conducted a thorough review of alarms and safety systems. Starting with an inspection of the sprinkler system (100% of the building is sprinkled) the alarm system also was completely inspected and additional equipment was installed on both systems.

The alarm company would be alerted for several different occurrences: security issues, smoke detector activation, sprinkler system activation, water on the basement floor, electricity loss, telephone service interruption, and, finally, security system battery failure. Other safety and protective equipment includes fire extinguishers (one located on each level), a fire alarm bell, emergency lighting and two sump pumps (one electric and one powered by city water pressure in the event electric service is lost).

If an alarm is received when no one is present at the museum the alarm company would notify the fire department or police, if necessary, as well as one of four board members who are on the call list.

Maintaining these systems and equipment is a high priority for the board and understanding their operation and communication procedures is a must.

Les Loomans



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Museum on Main Street

500 N. Main Street

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(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

Upcoming Exhibit

*What's in Name? Streets and
Roads of Washtenaw County*
Opening this Summer!

Check us out, on the web and

www.WashtenawHistory.org





Washtenaw County's dark and sordid past was the topic of the day at the Bentley Historical Library on Sunday March 18th at the Society's Educational Program.

James Thomas Mann is a local historian, author and storyteller who lives in Ypsilanti, Michigan. He has written several books and a column about local history.

Mann entertained the audience with stories from his two books. When the first book, *Wicked Washtenaw County: Strange Tales of the Grisly and Unexplained* was published Mann did several book talks. In the question and answer period people began asking many questions about other crimes he had not heard of. In his research to find the answers he gathered enough material to write the second book *Wicked Ann Arbor*. The pages of both books are packed with fascinating local stories including the 1946 Ann Arbor Police scandal, the strange disappearance of Cheng Lin in 1955 and the 1908 riot at the Star Theater. There are some rarely seen photographs from the Bentley Historical Library and a complete bibliography.



Body Snatching In the nineteenth century it was not popular to donate your body to science. People felt a proper burial and resting eternally was the proper thing to do. However, medical schools had a great need for dead bodies to study anatomy. To get enough cadavers they had to deal with body snatchers or grave robbers. Mann shared details about the early years of the University of Michigan Medical School and its participation in this grisly practice.

Armed Robberies On January 4, 1926, two men armed with sawed off shotguns robbed the Michigan Central Railroad Depot in Ypsilanti which was located at the corner of Cross and River Streets. They tore the phone off the wall and told the waiting and terrified passengers "Tell Chief Connors Shorty is back." They escaped by taxi along with a few hundred dollars from the Pullman Company and passengers.

Roomers and Lovers On January 12, 1937, Mrs. Betty Baker, the wife of an Ann Arbor Police officer, was sentenced to life in prison for the killing of her lover, Clarence Schneider. He was found slumped over the wheel of his car on a lonely road in Ann Arbor. She claimed to have only wanted to scare him by waving the gun around and it accidentally discharged. The State charged jealousy caused her to shoot Schneider. Mr. Baker claimed he had never heard of this affair that his wife was having until she testified in court. Even though Mr. Schneider was a roomer in the Baker home.

UM starts a National fad Mann wrapped up his talk with a story about the national trend of the Panty Raid that began on the night of March 21, 1952 at the University of Michigan, when about 600 male students stormed the women's dormitories on the Hill confiscating lingerie. There were some in attendance who remembered that event and perspectives from both sides were shared.

Both books available for purchase in our Gift Shop. Call 734-662-9092 and reserve your copy.



The Baldwin Family on Hill Street

By James Baldwin Parker

As a long-time member of the Washtenaw County Historical Society, and as an amateur historian, genealogist and author in Webster Township where I reside, I met with Pauline Waters and Beverly Willis at the Museum on Main Street, not long ago. I told them some of the history of my relatives in Ann Arbor – in particular about the Baldwin family who lived on Hill Street more than 150 years ago.

Joseph Dorr Baldwin, born 1814, in Baldwinsville, Lysander Township, Onondaga County, New York, and his second wife, Elizabeth Falley Hubbard, moved to Ann Arbor in 1847 from Detroit and built the house on Hill Street in 1848. Baldwin became well-known as a developer and grower of fruit, fond of experimenting with fruit development; he served as Vice-President of the Washtenaw County Pomological Society. He was also an active member of the Congregational Church. After selling most of his land and home in 1870 to Louis and Olivia B. Hall, Mr. Baldwin continued to live at his Geddes Street home until his death in 1890. He is buried with his wife and other family members in nearby Forest Hill Cemetery, where a prominent marker may be seen not far from the entrance. The Baldwins had four surviving children: Edward Eugene Baldwin, by Joseph's first marriage, a lawyer of Bolton, Hinds County, Mississippi; James Clifford Baldwin of Sherman, Grayson County, Texas in 1876; Mary Hubbard Baldwin (1848-1920) of Ann Arbor; and Charles Cutler Baldwin (1853-1886), a resident of Colorado and Ann Arbor, a civil engineer. Family tradition holds that the southern branch of the family served with the Confederacy during the Civil War. Mary Baldwin's husband, Joseph Baker Davis (1845-1920), was also prominent in Ann Arbor. He was Assistant Professor of Civil Engineering with the University of Michigan from 1872 to

1910, and from 1903 to 1909 served as Associate Dean of Engineering. He was active in the early development of Michigan railroads before 1872 and was an expert in surveying. He died in Bradenton, Florida. A son, Charles Baker Davis, also taught briefly as surveying instructor at the University in 1902-1903 before settling in Birmingham, Alabama – an engineer owning a machinery company there. There are no direct descendants of the Baldwins living in the Ann Arbor area.

Joseph Dorr Baldwin is descended from a long line of Baldwin ancestors in Massachusetts, where his grandfather, Samuel Baldwin, Jr. (1743-1826), was a captain in the Revolutionary War and owned the farm in Massachusetts where the "Baldwin Apple" was discovered, according to family tradition, and later commercially developed elsewhere by a cousin, Col. Loammi Baldwin. It is certain that Joseph was familiar with this family tradition, which likely prompted his interest in fruit development. His father, Dr. Cyrus Baldwin, was a physician in Baldwinsville, New York (near Syracuse), who migrated with his grown family to Romeo, Macomb County, Michigan in 1830, then moving to Grand Blanc, in Genesee County, in 1833. There he became the first resident physician of Genesee County and the surrounding vicinity, traveling throughout the countryside to minister to the sick and dying, as says the poem on his gravestone, with his medicines and instruments in his saddle bags. Dr. Baldwin moved to Atlas, Genesee County, in 1837, where he lived until his death in 1855. His medical instruments are preserved at the Sloan Library in Flint, Michigan.

Dr. Cyrus Baldwin and his wife Susan Dorr, had eight children; I am the great great grandson of their son Joseph Dorr Baldwin's sister, Sarah Bradley Baldwin, whose husband was

Deacon Edward Parsons, also one of the earliest pioneer settlers in Grand Blanc. Their daughter married George Russell Parker of Grand Blanc, my great grandfather. My grandfather, Dr. James W. Parker, of Grand Blanc, my father and two brothers have continued Dr. Baldwin's medical tradition – all have been graduates of the University of Michigan Medical School. The land for Physician's Park in downtown Grand Blanc was donated and named by me in honor of Dr. Baldwin and the other early doctors in that community.

I've done considerable research on the Baldwin family through the years – they migrated to New England from Aston Clinton, County Bucks, England. It was Deacon Henry Baldwin (1623-1698) who built the huge Baldwin Mansion in 1661, in Woburn, Massachusetts, which I visited many years ago – onetime home of the Baldwin Genealogical Society of America, and in more recent years, a restaurant. Dr. Baldwin came to Michigan from Baldwinsville, New York, because he and his brother, Dr. Joseph Cutler Baldwin, the founder of Baldwinsville in 1808, lost most of their fortunes after financing the construction of a canal there – a branch of the Erie Canal – built north a few miles to Baldwinsville. So Cyrus Baldwin moved to Michigan in 1830 with his large family to start over again, at the relatively advanced age of 57. His son, Joseph Dorr Baldwin, made his fortune selling supplies in Detroit to the flood of Michigan pioneer settlers coming through Detroit via the Erie Canal and Lake Erie; he retired to Ann Arbor in 1847.

So, the next time you drive along Washtenaw Avenue or Hill Street near "The Rock," glance over toward the second house west from the corner on the south side of Hill – the Baldwin/Hall house, and perhaps you will remember something of its history in early Ann Arbor.

The Baldwin Hill House

1530 Hill Street

Built in 1848 by J. D. Baldwin, this Classic Revival house was originally the centerpiece of a large and prosperous fruit farm on the edge of town.



Learn more about these beautiful and historic homes in Burns Park at www.northburnspark.org

It is very unusual in its flat roofed design, unlike the more common Greek Revival 'temple' style with a gabled roof. The stucco, the porches, fireplaces, and a new fan lighted doorway were all added by Olivia B. Hall, who, with her husband, Louis, purchased the land in 1870. The Halls later subdivided much of the surrounding area, specifying the deep front yard setbacks and access alleys on the interior of several blocks.

There are two possible stories on the origin of this house. *The Michigan Alumnus*, Vol. XXXIX, 1932, contains an unattributed article which states that this house was built in 1860 by Daniel E. Wines, father of Levi D. Wines, for Deacon J. D. Baldwin, at a cost of \$100 cash and unenumerated quantities of farm produce and wood. However, the house is of the Roman type 'country residence' style, very much in architectural vogue during the late 1840s and there is no record that Baldwin moved his family during their early years, and for these reasons we think it was built when Baldwin first came to Ann Arbor in 1847, and was probably remodeled in 1860 when

his daughter, Mary, was married to Joseph Baker Davis, a well-known professor of civil engineering.

J. D. Baldwin came from Onondaga County, NY, by way of Detroit where he had been engaged in the hardware and leather trade. He purchased 154 acres of land outside the city and established a flourishing fruit and berry farm. His mother, Susan Dorr Baldwin, was the daughter of one of the soldiers who, disguised as an Indian, threw overboard that shipment of tea in the Boston Harbor – the Boston Tea Party.

Much of his acreage was forested, the portion along the Ypsilanti Road (Washtenaw Avenue) where the First Presbyterian Church now stands was known as 'Baldwin's Picnic Grove.' Water for his home and farm came from a spring a short distance up what is now Hill Street (in those days Myrtle Avenue and later Spring Street).

In 1876, he sold his home and most of an 80 acre piece of land, bounded by what is now Baldwin, Wells, Forest, and Hill Streets, to Israel and Olivia Hall, who later subdivided the farm, keeping nearly

three acres in the core of their block for their garden. With great foresight, they placed the restrictions on the property, including the general set-back, which gives such grace and character to the area.

The house was first occupied by the Hall's son, Eugene, a contractor and builder, and in 1885, the Hall's youngest son, Louis, and his bride Elizabeth, moved into the old Baldwin house. The original pink brick of which the house was constructed had already been stuccoed over and Mrs. Hall soon added the fireplaces and the sloped roof porches. She had the entry changed and the fan light in Georgian revival style was added. Louis Hall became a prominent member of the Dental School faculty of the University of Michigan. They raised four children, Louis, Elizabeth, Douglas and Richard. The family was involved in ambulance and other service in World War I, and son, Richard, was the first American soldier to die in that war.

Excerpt from: Ann Arbor Historic Homes Tour Handout, October 28, 1979 written by Wylan Stevens.

Watchman of the Tracks

You might say author, Dale Leslie, takes matters into his own hands when writing about local history. "There are significant events and personalities to me that slip through the cracks of generally recorded local history. I find it rewarding to create those 'A-ha!' memories that are part of Ann Arbor's Unique Quality of Life," Leslie says.

In *Watchman of the Tracks*, Leslie features a driving tour that pinpoints where notables such as poets Robert Frost and Robert Hayden, author Betty Smith and playwright, U-M graduate Arthur Miller have lived in Ann Arbor and the inconspicuous grave site of Hayden in the Fairview Cemetery. "Hayden was the first African-American to hold the post of the U.S. Library of Congress Poet Laureate, his grave is marked by a silver medallion nearly hidden by ground cover," Leslie notes.

A second-term board member of the Washtenaw County Historical Society Board of Directors, he writes succinctly about the 1935 mammoth project of moving the Harry Boyd Earhart three-story, five-bedroom manse where Concordia University sits across a ravine creating an amazing sight of the the home raised several feet in the air to keep the foundation from cracking. And he painfully recalls the tragic deaths of his popular pediatrician, Dr. Aaron Edwards, and his two daughters in a home fire in 1958 that stunned the shaken small town of Ann Arbor.

The most personally challenging memory he details in "Watchman" is the death of political radical, 28-year-old Diane Oughton of Ann Arbor, in a 1970 alleged bomb factory townhouse explosion in New York's Greenwich Village. "My own children are 32 and 30, and it felt like I was writing about their death, a loss that would be indiscernible."

A humorous anecdote in the publication is town character Harry Botsford posing as a medical doctor in a Windsor, Ontario nightclub in answer to a call

"Is there a Doctor in the House?" Harry's boldness surprised those in his party. The patient? Renowned entertainer Jerry Lewis became ill in his dressing room and the imposter "Dr. Botsford" provided a diagnosis. When a legitimate doctor arrived, he told Harry, "Dr. Botsford, I agree with you. Mr. Lewis is suffering from exhaustion!"

Historian Leslie has also collected some unique, meaningful photographs, including a seldom seen view of a farmer in his field. "I've been told that farmers are usually depicted in a barn or in a rocking chair in the farm house. There are very few photographs of farmers working in their field," he notes.

It's an Eck Stanger photograph of a 1940's kickoff of the "Lord's Acre" project where members of the Dixboro United Methodist Church plowed, planted and harvested crops on a Joy Road farm to fund a church building addition. Leslie's grandfather, uncle and cousin pose in the photo which is complete with



Robert Frost outside his Ann Arbor home

the farmer land-owner and his collie farm dog.

Leslie's more recently added venture of video production of lesser publicized historical events includes a tour by Centenarian Donald Staebler of his farm on Plymouth Road in Superior Township that has been deeded to Washtenaw County Park Development upon his passing. At a vigorous 102, Staebler does not appear to be going anywhere soon except walking across Plymouth Road to his barns every morning.

Get your free copy of *Watchman of the Tracks*

In this book Dale Leslie, remembers the people, places, and events in over 50 years living and working in the Ann Arbor community. You can download the PDF from our website at **www.washtenawhistory.org** click on the link "Watchman of the Tracks".

2012 WCHS Memberships:

You can renew, join, or make donations online at

www.WashtenawHistory.org

Programs - Events - Exhibits

The Washtenaw County Historical Consortium is a volunteer organization representing 27 museums, libraries, and historical attractions in and around Washtenaw County, Michigan. For more information see www.hvcn.org/info/wchs/consortium



The Michigan Firehouse Museum

Located in Ypsilanti's historic Depot Town, 1100 W. Cross St.

Walking through the restored firehouse, view a fire engine steamer replete with horses, an original 1898 firehouse and multilevel exhibit area of antique fire trucks, early fire rigs, historic artifacts and the largest collection of fire truck bells in the country. The Museum is open Tuesday-Saturday 10-4 and Sunday 12-4. Adults: \$5, ages 2-16: \$3, under 2: free. Call 734-547-0663, email: FireMuseum2@msn.com

www.MichiganFirehouseMuseum.org

The Mill is Open at Sharon Mills County Park

Nestled on the banks of the River Raisin in Sharon Township, Sharon Mills County Park occupies a site where Native Americans once hunted and where a sawmill was built in the 1830's. Later a gristmill was erected and operated by John Rice and subsequently by the Kirkwood family until the late 1920's. In 1928, Sharon Mills was purchased by Henry Ford. Ford rebuilt the mill, added a stone addition and installed a hydroelectric generator for power. At present, the interior of the mill is adorned with historic photos with five interpretive panels on the main floor of the mill. A growing collection of relevant artifacts are arranged in a display case. Beginning Memorial Day weekend, the grounds of Sharon Mills County Park are open daily from dawn to dusk. 5701 Sharon Hollow Rd, 1/4 mile south of Pleasant Lake Rd. **www.ewashtenaw.org**

Bentley Historical Library

Current Exhibit runs through August 31, 2012

"MICHIGAN IN 3D" From the wilderness of the Upper Peninsula, to the cities of southern Michigan, see 19th Century Michigan and the Great Lakes in three dimensions using images scanned from original stereoscopic cards. Open Monday-Friday, 9 AM-5 PM
1150 Beal Ave., Ann Arbor, 734-764-3482. **www.Bentley.umich.edu**

Summer Saturdays

The Rentschler Farm is open for the Summer Season. The Depot Museum is open on Saturdays year round.

Rentschler Farm

1265 E. Michigan Avenue, Saline

Saline Railroad Depot Museum

402 N. Ann Arbor Street, Saline

734-944-0442

www.SalineHistory.org

Sundays on the Porch

**Every Sunday 1-4 PM
through October, 2012**

See real farm equipment in operation, antique furnishings, appliances and more! Free and open to the public.

The Hack Museum

775 County Street, Milan

734-439-4007

www.HistoricMilan.com



Civil War Days at Gordon Hall

June 8, 9 and 10, 2012

Civil War Days offers a full schedule of outdoor and indoor activities providing a glimpse into the lives of both civilians and soldiers during the war.

Gordon Hall

8341 Island Lake Road
west of the Village of Dexter
734-426-2519

www.DexterMuseum.org



Drawing by Michael Klement

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New Book in The Gift Shop!

*Giving It All Away: The Story of William W. Cook and
His Michigan Law Quadrangle* by Margaret A. Leary

CURRENT RESIDENT OR

New Exhibit Opens this Summer at the Museum on Main Street

Have you ever wondered why Ann Arbor has First through Fifth Street, and Fourth and Fifth Avenue – but no First through Third Avenue? Local author, Don Collard, says “John Allen started us off right in his 1824 plat, showing north-south streets neatly numbered from First on the west to Fifth on the east, with Main Street an alternate name for Third.

But when William S. Maynard platted what is today the Old West Side in the 1840s, he created a dizzying mirror image. Starting from Allen’s First Street, Maynard numbered his north-south streets from east to west. Old maps and directories show these were usually called West Second, and so on, but First belonged to east and west alike. According to O. W. Stephenson’s 1927 history *Ann Arbor: The First Hundred Years*, Maynard later asked that the original Fourth and Fifth streets be redesignated as avenues, and so they remain today”.

The names of Washtenaw County streets and roads have a history that reveal insights into our founders and others who settled this county. Using artifacts from our local family collections this next exhibit will tell some of the stories behind the streets and roads we travel every day.

A perfect companion to this exhibit is **A Step Back in Time - A Walking Tour of Historic Ann Arbor** – A downloadable MP3 podcast walking tour of the historical locations and people who have lived in Ann Arbor. You can download it for free from our website at www.WashtenawHistory.org.

“What’s in a Name: the Streets and Roads of Washtenaw County” will open in late June. We encourage you to come see it then walk, bike or drive to experience these streets with a new perspective.