

Washtenaw Historical Society News

January, 1974

Coming meetings of the Society, each of which will be at the Ann Arbor Federal Savings, Division at Liberty, Ann Arbor. Use parking lot in rear at the corner of Division and Washington Streets.

January 24, 8:00 P. M. Frank Wilhelm will speak about Judge Dexter.

February 28, 8:00 P. M. The snowed-out Christmas party will be reinstated as a Valentine Party. Bring the gifts, identified as his or hers, which you had planned for the Christmas Party.

March 28, 8:00 P. M. Foster Fletcher of Ypsilanti will speak on the History of Ypsilanti.

Meetings of local Historical Societies:

Ypsilanti, January 27, Sunday from three to five, at the Museum, 220 N. Huron, Ypsilanti.

February 2, two to four, same place, "Valentines of Yesterday."

Dexter - call Mrs. J. McAllister - te. 426-4507

Milan - call Warren Hale - tel. 439-1226

Saline - call Mrs. J. H. Moser - te. 429-4135

GENEALOGY NOTES

Mr. Lenard Zorn, President of the Michigan Genealogical Conference, was in Ypsilanti at the time of the open house at the Ypsilanti Historical Museum in December. It had been his intention to meet with family historians of Washtenaw County with a view to drawing the genealogists of the county together. Family historians who are known to us were notified by phone. Inclement weather and insufficient notice were responsible for the limited attendance. If you are interested in associating with other family historians in the county, and you were not notified of the meeting in Ypsilanti, please give your name, address and telephone number so that you will be included in future plans. Write or telephone Ralph Muncy, 1015 Martin Place, Ann Arbor, telephone 663-3761.

IN MEMORIAM

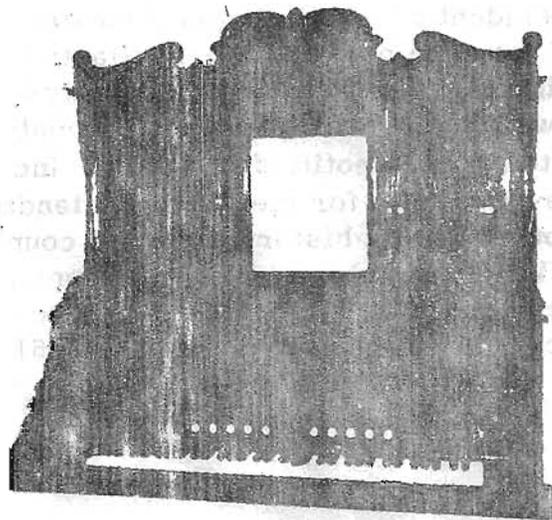
Ernest Allmendinger	Mrs. Elizabeth James
Helene Allmendinger	Hudson T. Morton
Mrs. Clair Griffin	Mrs. B. Frank Ohlinger
Elsa Haller	Mrs. Nathalie Sallade
Hildegarde Heusel	Elizabeth Slack

At the rising of the sun and at its going down we remember them—
 At the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter—we remember them.
 At the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring—we remember them.
 At the blueness of the skies and in the warmth of summer—we remember them.
 At the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of autumn—we remember them.
 At the beginning of the year and when it ends—we remember them.
 When we are weary and in need of strength—we remember them.
 When we are lost and sick at heart—we remember them.
 When we have joy we crave to share—we remember them.
 When we have decisions to make—we remember them.
 When we have achievements that are based on theirs—we remember them.
 As long as we live, they too will live;
 For they are now a part of us, -as we remember them.

Written by Jack Riemer and Sylvan Kamens

Of all the many memorials I have read none seemed quite so beautiful as this which appeared on the Memorial leaflet of the Beth Israel Congregation in September of 1973. They have graciously consented to our use of it.

--Lydia Muncy.





"OUR" ALLMENDINGER ORGAN

"Our" Allmendinger organ is a beautiful instrument. The "General History of the Music Trades of America (New York) which Bill and Bill published in 1891 from the archives of Steinway & Sons, contains an interesting article about "The Allmendinger Piano and Organ Company, as follows:

"The history of Mr. David F. Allmendinger, superintendent of this company, is, up to the year 1888, the history of the company, as to him alone, prior to that year, was due the progress made in the manufacture of the "Ann Arbor" organ. Mr. Allmendinger was born in 1848, in Wurtemberg, Germany, and went to Ann Arbor, Michigan, three years later. In 1863 he was apprenticed to the trade of cabinet making, and became very proficient in the arts of turning and fancy carving. In 1868 he entered the pipe and organ factory of G. F. Gardner, formerly foreman of the pipe organ factory of Walker & Co., Ludwigsberg, Germany. Shortly afterward Mr. Allmendinger was entrusted with the tuning and voicing of the Vienna flute pipes, and with other difficult work. On the retirement of Mr. Gardner in 1871 Mr. Allmendinger purchased a portion of the former's tools and material, and began to make organs on his own account. In that year he built his first reed organ-still in use in one of Ann Arbor's churches. This and several other organs, both reed and pipe, were built in a room in his dwelling. In 1880 he erected a frame building, 22 x 42 ft., and made and sold a considerable number of organs. In 1888 the demand for his organs exceeded his powers of supply, and some of Ann Arbor's business men, having noted his ability and progress, went into business with him. The Allmendinger Piano and Organ Co. was incorporated, and a four-story brick factory was built and equipped with first-class facilities for the production of Ann Arbor organs.

"Mr. Allmendinger has invented many improvements in reed organs, among them being an expression indicator, whereby the quantity of air in the bellows can be ascertained at a glance; a removable dust protector; an improvement in the hinging of the fall board; an automatic key slip, and a mouse-proof attachment."

The Chapman History of Washtenaw County published in 1881 has some information about Mr. Gartner which is interesting though it varies slightly from the above. Neither account carries one important fact - Mr. Allmendinger married his boss's daughter!

"In the year 1867 G. F. Gartner & Son established the Organ Works for the manufacture of pipe and reed organs. He employed several hands and being from Germany and a first-class workman he manufactured all his works by hand.

"Our" Allmendinger Organ.

He found after some 5 years that this style of work did not suit the people any better than that manufactured by machinery, and also was not as profitable a business as was first supposed. He closed up his business in 1872. In this organ works there was a young man named D. F. Allmendinger who had entered the works when first started, and mastered the business, and when Nr. Gartner closed his business he opened the Ann Arbor Organ Works. At first the business was small and carried on in one part of his dwelling house, but in 1880 he built a frame factory 24 x 40 feet and two stories high. He has in his employ 3 workmen, and turns out 25 to 30 organs per year. His annual sales foot up to \$2500. Mr. A. furnished 3 churches in A. A. with pipe organs and they gave general satisfaction. Although only doing a small business at present, yet he turns out pipe and reed organs of a good quality. The manufactory is situated on the northwest corner of 1st and Washington Streets."

We are indebted to two of Mr. Allmendinger's daughters, Mrs. Julia Murray, and Mrs. Rose Wuerth, still living in Ann Arbor, for additional interesting material about the family which will appear later either in the Sesquicentennial Journal or in the Newsletter. Examples of Mr. Allmendinger's artistry in wood carving are found in the beautiful grill work in the archway between the parlor and sitting room of the home he built on West Washington Street, which has been the home of Judge and Mrs. Murray for many years. The grill is illustrated at the beginning and ending of this article.



ANOTHER "GUESS WHO"

Mr. Reed Brook was born on Ashley Street in Ann Arbor, December 10, 1895. The family moved to Toledo when Reed was still very young.

His ancestors were part of the Palatinate group of German immigrants who waited in England for months for a ship to take them to America. They were in New York State as early as 1709, and in the Penn Yan area of that state in the early part of the 19th century. The exact date the family came to Michigan is not certain, but Grandfather Brook was born on a farm west of Whitmore Lake in 1860.

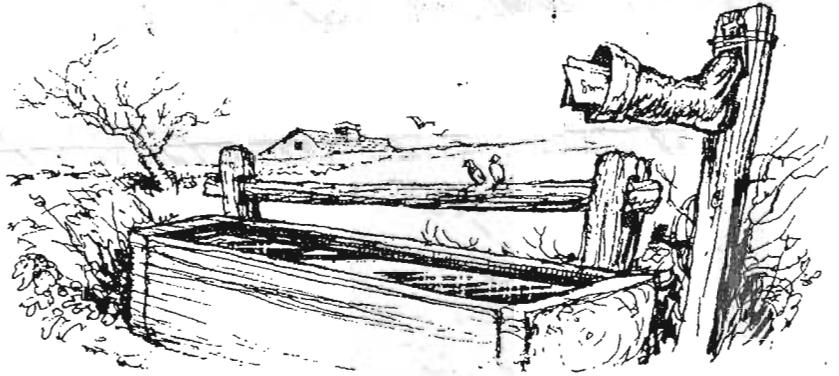
Reed was six years old when the family moved into a rented house on East Shore Drive, Whitmore Lake. Father Brook was a carpenter, and often had ten or twelve men working under him. Wages were about \$1.00 a day. In 1903 they moved into their own home which he had built near the house they had rented.

The Whitmore Lake School in those days went through the 10th grade. To finish high school one had to go to Ann Arbor. Transportation being poor and money scarce, Reed's formal schooling ended at that point. With a consuming interest in history he has continued an active program of self-education.

Guess who?

In August of 1917 he joined the army. Because he was an expert shot he was an instructor on the rifle range for a time. Later the training in carpentry he had received from his father became apparent and he was put in charge of a detail of 33 men rebuilding Camp Sheridan. Returning from military duty he worked for the ice company for a year or so.

November 16, 1920, he took the Civil Service examination for Mail Carrier and received his appointment in April, 1920. For eight years he traveled his long route behind a team of horses. Much of Northfield Township is low land, so even after switching to a Model T there were many weeks in the spring when he would have to use horses. Even the high wheeled Model T would often get stuck, particularly near the corner of North Territorial and Nollar Roads. In 1933 the route was sixty miles long, the southern limit being St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Nollar Road the eastern, Whitmore Lake Road the western limit, and Eight Mile Road the northern.

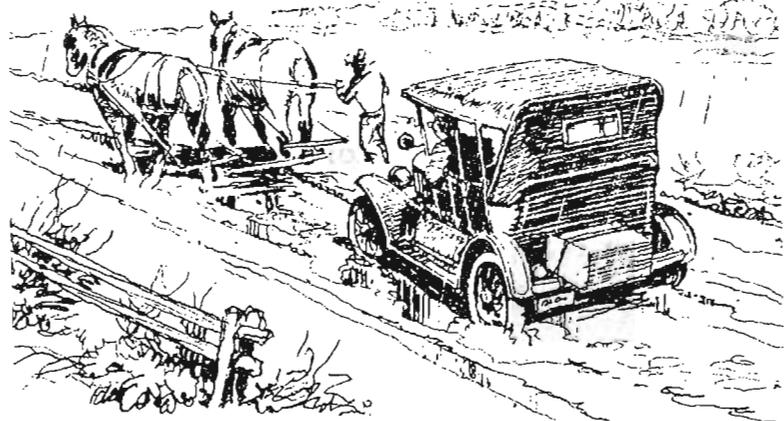


He was officially retired from the Postal Service April 1, 1948, after a series of heart attacks. He did not carry the mail during the last fifteen months prior to his retirement as he had accumulated that many months of sick leave. His faithfulness to his job no doubt undermined his health.

From 1948 to 1952 Mr. Brook served as treasurer of Northfield Township and assisted the treasurer for an additional sixteen years. He has served on a variety of township boards as well as the Area Study Committee for Washtenaw County which resulted in the consolidation of many of the rural schools. The Reed Brooks have a daughter of whom they are justly proud.

Although poor health now makes it impossible for him to attend evening meetings he has long been an active member of the Washtenaw County Historical Society, serving faithfully on the Board as the representative of his area. He has written a history of the Whitmore Lake Methodist Church as well as the history of the Whitmore cemeteries and the naming of Whitmore Lake.

In the course of the interview Mr. Reed Brook touched on many interesting facts about Whitmore Lake which will be covered in a later article.



The letter on the following page is published without comment other than to mention that Capt. James T. Morton was grandfather of Hudson T. Morton, Jr.

Pittsfield Oct 15th 1841

I received your note of the 9th Inst - appointing me the first sergeant in your company - rendering some service &c. It is with gratitude that I reward you for your good intention - or favourable consideration in my appointment - But I am laboring under the indisposition of an incurable Hemish in the organ of sight - which excuses me from all military obligations - so you will see that if I should accept - and by emergency military fame should be raised to the zenith of her ancient glory and I should be close attention merited - or by good fortune arrive at some post of honor - which I might love and delight to hold - another might object - to my misfortune in the organ of sight - which would in that case be a legal disability for which I should have to be set aside to make room for his ambition - under such circumstances it would be incompatible with my prospects and interest - and incongenial with my feelings to accept - therefore I think it my duty and do hereby decline the acceptance of the same

I am your most
Obedt Servt

Wm R. Ransom

To Capt James D. Norton

GRIST FOR THE MILL

Hazel Proctor gave an illustrated talk to the members of the Men's Thursday Luncheon Club on January 3rd. The subject of her talk was: "The Fleming Creek Mill - A Dream." The talk was illustrated by slides which had been taken by members of the Society with additional slides made from pictures of the mill which had been made several years ago by the Ann Arbor Engineering firm of Ayres, Lewis, Norris and May. Mrs. Proctor's talk stressed the need for a museum as well as the restoration and operation of the Fleming Creek Mill. Her talk elicited reminiscences from many of the members of the club. A number in addition indicated a desire to support the project. Mr. J. W. Galloway made a gift to the Society of a working model of a grist mill to be effective whenever the Society has a place in which to house it.

Several additional artifacts have come into the possession of the Society recently, and there have been offers of a number more whenever the Society is able to house and to display them.