

# Ypsilanti GLEANINGS

YHS Museum & Archives

Official publication of the Ypsilanti Historical Society, featuring historical articles and reminisces of the people and places in the Ypsilanti area.



FALL 2008

## The Schmidt Family Antique Business

By Jean Schmidt Magee

(YHS Archives Excerpts by Kathryn Howard)

In the late 1800's Niels Iver Schmidt came from Denmark and settled in the United States. He was only 19 years old. He was an upholsterer by trade and eventually opened a furniture store in Troy, New York. On the side he began dealing with antiques. Alfred Schmidt, Niel's son, decided in the early

Eventually the family moved to Detroit and opened an auction house and dealt in antiques. It was during this period that Alfred met Blanche Scott (a beautiful redhead). He swept her off her feet and they were married within just a few days of their first meeting. The Great Depression hit the family hard,



The Schmidt's Antiques shop at 5138 West Michigan Avenue.

1900's to go into the antique business with his father. They began knocking on people's doors to purchase their feather beds, which were called feather bedding. This was really a ruse for dealers and pickers to gain access into houses and their attics in order to discover forgotten antiques in good condition. The ruse worked well and many antiques were discovered. I remember the wonderful Christmas tree we had which was full of wonderful old ornaments including Christmas tree lights, frogs, Santas, and many other unusual things.

and they were forced to close two furniture stores. Alfred decided to move the family back to Troy, New York. This move would only last a short while. Alfred, along with my brothers, Bob, Iver, Joe and me, packed up the car and returned to Detroit. Alfred again began to hold auctions and sell furniture and antiques.

During the Schmidt's years in Detroit, Henry Ford came calling to the shop and told Iver's  
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# From the President's Desk

By Alvin E. Rudisill

The "wheel chair lift" in the new entrance to the Fletcher-White Archives is now operational. This is a welcome addition and we have already had several physically challenged individuals make use of the lift.

It has been a busy couple of months getting the apartment on the first two levels of the Carriage House ready for rent. I am happy to report that we met the deadline and our new renters moved in on the first day of September. The next time you see Jerry Jennings please let him know how much we appreciate all his maintenance and renovation efforts. We also appreciate very much the help we received from Lynda Hummel and a number of her family members during the last couple of days before the deadline.

The Ypsilanti Heritage Festival brought in over three hundred visitors to the Museum and Archives. Our Museum Advisory Board members along with the many volunteer docents are to be congratulated and thanked for the many hours spent conducting tours and answering questions.

The Board recently approved a new genealogical research service that will be offered through the YHS Archives. George Ridenour, a volunteer for the Archives, will use a variety of online information databases (including Ancestry.com, Rootsweb and Familysearch) as well as historic newspaper articles and information available from the Fletcher-White Archives to find your family's story! The charge for the service is \$12.00 for the first hour and \$10.00 for each additional hour. George is an experienced researcher who has written several articles for *The Gleanings* – from historical houses and family history to ghost stories and famous visitors to the area.

We sadly report that Dorothy M. Humphrey passed away August 28, 2008. Dorothy was a long-time member of the Ypsilanti Historical Society, a docent, a faithful volunteer for all Museum activities and an active member of the Museum Advisory Board. She will be greatly missed by all of us here. ■

The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "Ypsilanti Historical Society Home Page - Windows Internet Explorer". The address bar displays "http://ypsilantihistoricalsociety.org/". The website content includes a header with the society's name and address, a navigation menu, a "Welcome!" section, a "For Information about upcoming Society events, visit us on-line at:" section with the website URL, and a "A Matter of Trust" section detailing a fundraising campaign. A sidebar on the left lists various website sections like Home, Administrative, Archives, etc. At the bottom, there is contact information and a "click here for a map" link.

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## The Schmidt Family Antique Business – *continued from front page*

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father that he would like to furnish his house as he remembered it when he was a child and if we got any of the things he had written down, he wanted to buy them. He gave us his private phone number.

In 1939 Alfred and Blanche traveled to the Irish Hills in order to visit some friends, the Hewitt's, local antique dealers in Cambridge Junction. They came across a house and farm for sale on Michigan Avenue in Ypsilanti. The property had two barns, two houses, and 89 acres of land. During their return trip to Detroit they decided to purchase the land and start an antique business there. Michigan Avenue was only a two-lane road, used mainly for travel between Detroit and Chicago.

In order to make ends meet, Blanche put out a sign in the front yard of their new home, offering rooms for travelers. If they arrived late at night, she let them in, and then would greet them the following morning with breakfast. Alfred purchased a large red truck in order to drive to New York and return with antiques to sell. His father Niels had remained in Troy, New York and at the time still operated a furniture store and antique dealing business.

When the family began hosting antique auctions they would personally write and



*Blanche (second from left) with children Iver, Jean and Bob.*

address hundreds of postcards advertising the sales. Auctions were held monthly in the house or on the grounds. It was truly a family affair. Alfred served as the auctioneer, and his sons Bob and Iver helped with the selling. Blanche collected the money, while daughter Jean took the numbers, prices and customer names. They eventually hired a caterer to feed the numerous customers and set up the food in the family garage.

During World War II, Bob and Iver served in the army. Both sustained serious injuries and spent months hospitalized prior to their return home. The youngest brother Joe had begun to help the family business while at-

tending a one-room school. The war years were very difficult for the family business because of the lack of help available. Jean married Verne Magee from Ypsilanti and he began to help the family business while also maintaining his employment with the Ford Motor Company. Like his brothers-in-law, he would also serve in the military during the war. Alfred and Blanche continued their buying trips during the war but this was difficult because of strict regulations on car lighting at night and rationing of gas and tires.

The house became too small to adequately host the auctions, so the family built a large building to accommodate the merchandise. Iver returned from the war and took over as auctioneer from his father. Buck Holcomb, a neighbor, was hired to work alongside Iver and Joe. One of the family's loyal customers was Bennie Oosterbahn, the football coach for the University of Michigan.

One day a devastating fire catastrophe struck the property. One of the barns caught on fire. Many customers helped remove the furniture stored in the barn. At that time all we had was a crank phone and had to wait for the fire department to come. By the time they arrived the barn was totally gone but we still had the house. The newer barn that was left became known as the "clock barn" and housed many items over the years.

*continued on page 4*



*Shop with silo and barn used for storage in background.*

The Schmidt Family  
Antique Business –  
*continued from page 3*

Even though money was tight, Alfred continued to invite his customers to eat with his family. Blanche was a wonderful cook and became extremely creative in order to stretch money and serve as many people as possible. She served many “creamed” dishes with lots of bread and biscuits. Her garden provided plenty of vegetables for salads. Blanche worked every day at the family store, and prepared the lunch for the seven employees, and then dinner for the family and any customer who had been invited.

“...Henry Ford came calling to the shop and told Iver’s father that he would like to furnish his house as he remembered it when he was a child and if we got any of the things he had written down, he wanted to buy them. He gave us his private phone number.”

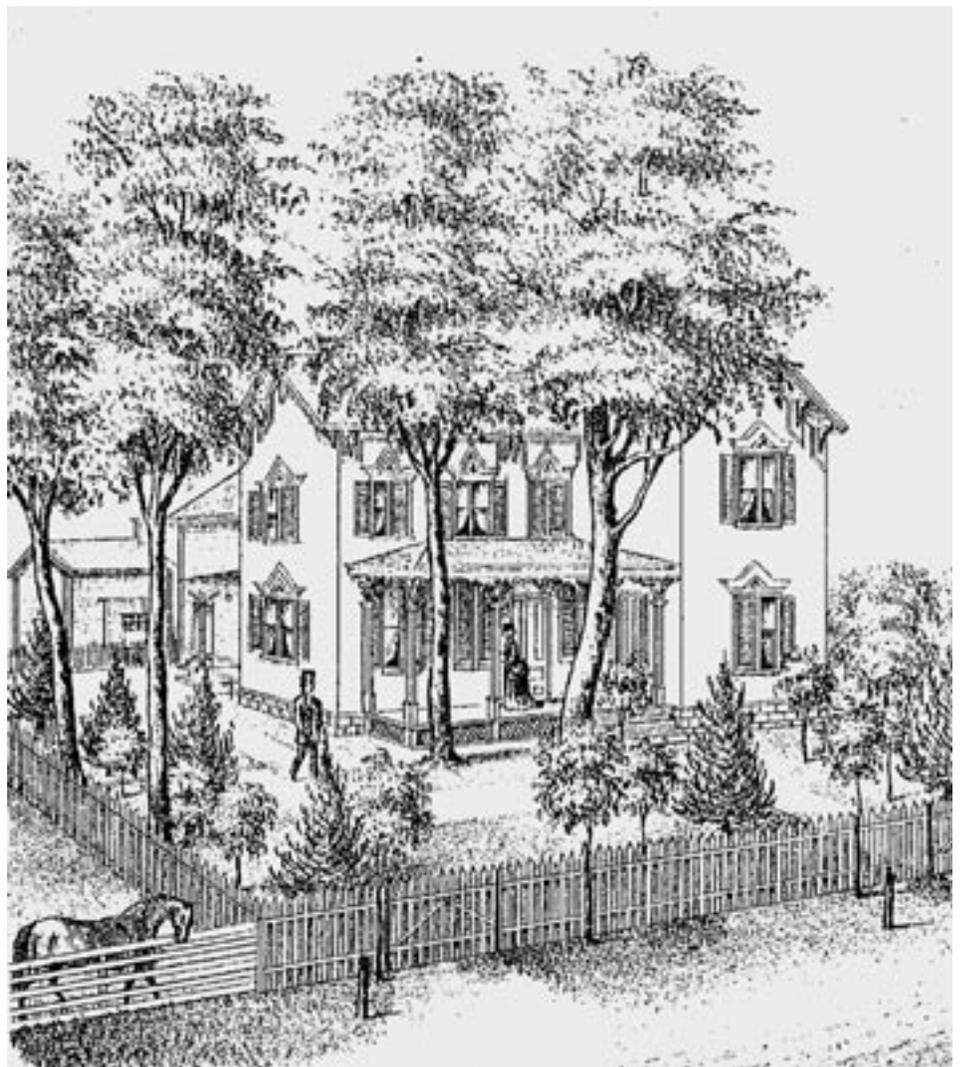
In those days Alfred was considered a “gentleman farmer” and he tried raising chickens and cattle. The cattle were eventually given away after escaping too often, but Blanche took good care of the chickens.

In the 1950’s Alfred and Blanche decided to take a business trip to Europe. They would eventually travel throughout Europe including England, Scotland, Holland, Belgium, France, Austria, Germany and Denmark. They found a goldmine of antiques there; it was like a museum. They found lots of china, glass, furniture and thousands of clocks. They purchased what they could and crated and shipped everything to their store via New York City. The family continues today purchasing antiques from Europe.

The biggest and heaviest Christmas packages of the season, 12 feet long and weighing about 5,000 pounds, are packed with  
*continued on page 23*



*Some of the antique treasurers contained in the 12 x 7 x 7 foot liftvans.*



*A sketch of the main house on the Schmidt farm where early auctions were held.*

# Is Elijah the “Real McCoy”?

By Pamela German and  
Veronica Robinson

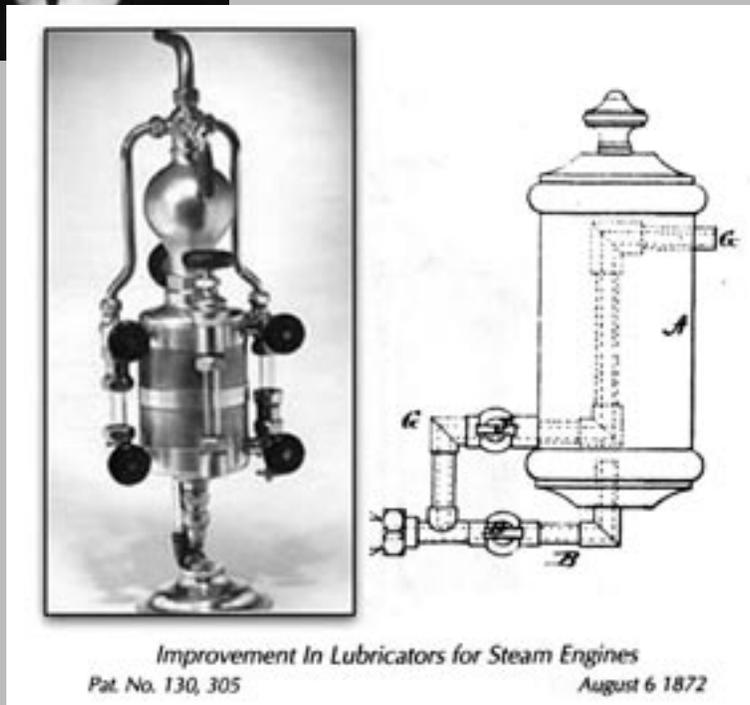
The phrase “The Real McCoy” is widely used in American culture to mean *the real thing*, the *genuine article*. Though many sources claim to be the basis for the phrase, scholars cannot accurately pin the origin of the term to just one of them. Ypsilanti’s claim to the name is an inventor named Elijah McCoy whose origins, like those of the phrase, are subject to debate. Some sources claim McCoy was born in 1843 and others, 1844, on either March 27 or May 2. Regardless of the exact date, the sources agree that Elijah was born in the Canadian province of Ontario in the city of Colchester. His parents, Millie and George McCoy, were former slaves in Kentucky that had escaped to freedom in Canada in the late 1830’s. Elijah had eleven brothers and sisters and moved with his family to Ypsilanti, Michigan in 1849 when he was near six years of age. While in Ypsilanti, Elijah’s father, George, owned a successful cigar-making business and acted as a “conductor” along the Underground Railroad – smuggling escaped slaves into Detroit where they would cross the river into Canada.

Elijah was an exceptionally bright boy and excelled in mathematics and science. Around the age of 15, Elijah completed his local education and his father sought to send him to an engineering school. Unfortunately, at that time, any universities that offered education within the engineering field were not open to students of African descent. Upon the advice of a friend, George sent his son to apprentice in Edinburgh, Scotland. Elijah spent five years in Edinburgh as an apprentice to a mechanical engineer. He returned to Ypsilanti in 1864, at the close of the Civil War, as a “master mechanic and engineer,” but racial prejudice would slow his blossoming career, as he found it difficult to obtain a position in the engineering field. He settled on a job as a fireman and oiler on the Michigan Central Railroad in 1870. As Elijah discovered on the job, one of the major inefficiencies of railroading was proper lubrication of the engine’s moving parts. Trains had to stop periodically to be lubricated by hand, so as not to over-heat, and



Left: Elijah McCoy spent five years in Edinburgh, Scotland as an apprentice to a mechanical engineer.

Below: Elijah’s improved automatic steam chest locomotive lubrication device.



this reality significantly slowed rail travel. Elijah soon realized the need for a device to provide oil directly into a railroad engine and he set out to create one.

Elijah began to study the subject of engine lubrication and experimented in his father’s barn, but it was in his machine shop in Ypsilanti, Michigan, that he invented his famous lubricating cup. Elijah used a piston within an oil-filled chamber and driven by steam pressure to release oil into the appropriate parts of the engine. He patented this Automatic Steam Chest Locomotive Lubrication Device (U.S. Patent 129, 843.) in 1872. And later that year, patented an improvement to the device (U.S. Patent 130, 305.) This new device lubricated the engine while it moved, thus eliminating the need for time consuming and expensive stops to lubricate. This invention became Elijah’s crowning glory as an inventor.

It didn’t take long for McCoy’s invention to revolutionize the railroad industry. In July of 1872, William Gardner Shipman, an engineer, was quoted in the Ypsilanti Commercial “I have been using Elijah McCoy’s Patent Lubricating Cup for some time and pronounce it to be the very best lubricating cup I have ever used.”<sup>1</sup> Railroad officials soon hired McCoy to instruct their employees on how to install and maintain the new devices; and from 1872 to 1915 all railroad locomotives were equipped specifically with McCoy lubricators.<sup>2</sup> McCoy’s lubrication devices were used in different types of engines - not just locomotives, but stationary engines as well - and as a result, many imitator products flooded the market. Engineers preferred McCoy’s specific device to these new imitations and in turn demanded to know that the lubricator on their machinery was “The Real McCoy.”

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Is Elijah the “Real McCoy”? -  
*continued from page 5*

In his spare time, McCoy continued to experiment and develop new inventions - 50 by the end of his career - which included variations on the automatic lubricator, folding iron-

ing tables and even a lawn sprinkler. He was responsible for 57 total patents filed with the US government, though it was his railroad engine lubricating cup which made him the potential basis for the expression “The Real McCoy.” Unfortunately his inventions did not make him a wealthy man as he sold many of his patent rights to investors who would make

millions from McCoy’s work. Elijah McCoy passed away on October 10, 1929 in Eloise, Michigan.

There is no official documentation of the first time the phrase “The Real McCoy” was spoken, though there are several other theories, in addition to Ypsilanti’s Elijah, as to where the phrase originated. One version of the potential origins dates to a dispute between two branches of a Scottish family clan. One of the leaders was referred to as the “Reay Mackay” which might have evolved into the “Real McCoy”. Another Mackay was a whiskey-maker, also from Scotland, who sold and advertised his whiskey from 1856-1870 as “The Real Mackay.” It is likely that the Scottish version came first, as it was printed in an advertisement from 1856 but whether or not it is the actual basis of the American phrase is anyone’s guess.

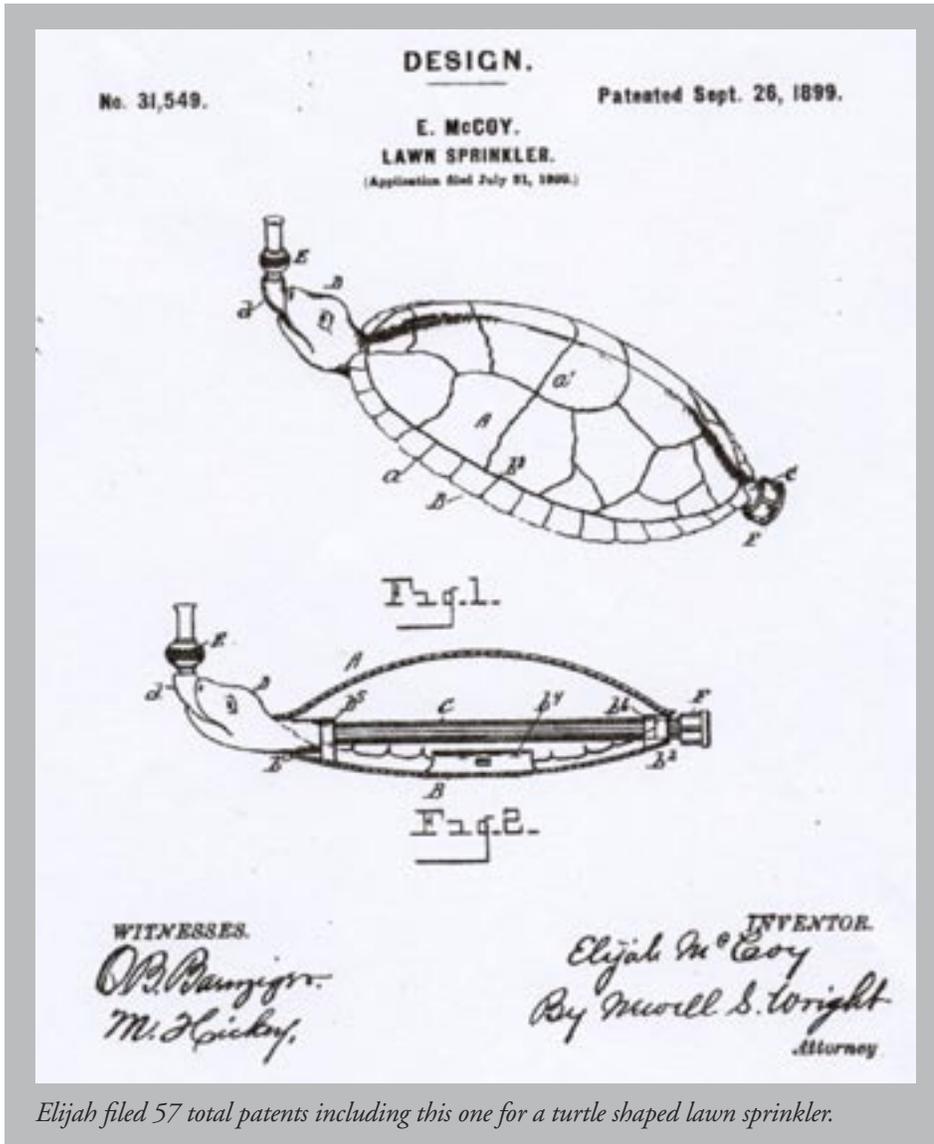
Potential American McCoy’s other than Ypsi’s Elijah, include members of a famous family feud (Hatfield-McCoy), a prohibition criminal (Bill McCoy), a boxer known as Kid McCoy (né Norman Selby) and an Abilene, Kansas mayor (Joseph McCoy) who often referred to himself as “The Real McCoy”.

We may never truly know which person the *real* “Real McCoy” was, simply because no one recorded the first time the phrase was used. Though, undoubtedly, the phrase will continue to live on in the American vernacular. Here in Ypsilanti, “The Real McCoy” will live on as our prolific inventor and local legend, Elijah. To us he is “The Real McCoy.” ■

References:

Marshall, Albert P. *“The Real McCoy” of Ypsilanti.*  
 Ypsilanti, MI: Marlan Publishers, 1998, 20.  
 Ibid, 24.

*(Pam and Ronnie are graduate students in the Historical Preservation Program at EMU and serve as Interns in the YHS Museum and Archives.)*



*Elijah filed 57 total patents including this one for a turtle shaped lawn sprinkler.*

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# Anhuts – Father and Son

By Alvin Rudisill and  
Mary Claire Anhut

For most of us in the Ypsilanti community the word “Anhut” brings to mind the names of Bill and Mary Claire Anhut and their nine children. Both of the Anhuts have been involved in our community since 1963. Their activities have been many and varied while working for church, education and the many needs of the wider community. For their efforts the couple was honored in 1989 by the Ypsilanti Area Chamber of Commerce with the Distinguished Service Award.

William Frederick and Mary Claire (Dwyer) Anhut, both Detroiters, moved to Ypsilanti with their children when they purchased controlling interest in the Huron Hotel. That is where son followed father. John Nicholson Anhut was in the Detroit hotel business beginning in the 1930s. He purchased the Imperial and Clifford hotels in downtown Detroit and was the attorney for the Detroit Hotel Association. In 1951 he purchased The Botsford Inn from the estate of Mrs. Henry (Clara) Ford.

According to a piece in a Farmington History publication “While courting his wife, Henry Ford saw the Botsford Inn, and in 1924 purchased it from Milton Botsford. It was bought from Ford by John N. Anhut in 1951...” Actually, Henry and Clara square danced in the Inn’s ballroom and apparently bought the Inn for sentimental reasons. Later, as reported by vintage Inn waiters, Mr. Ford would close the Inn to outside patronage when the couple wished to dine there. Botsford Inn is a national landmark which, at the time of its operation as an inn was the oldest inn in Michigan providing food and housing.

Bill Anhut’s older brother, John Walsh Anhut, operated Botsford Inn very successfully until it was sold to Botsford Hospital in 2000. Bill worked at the Inn and at both hotels during summers and vacation times while he was a married student at the University of Michigan Law School from 1953 to 1956. For seven years after graduation he



Above: The Bill and Mary Claire Anhut family at their 2006 reunion.



Right: An early 1900 caricature of John N. Anhut, the lawyer.

worked full time for his father. The family business was established by John N. Anhut under the name The Anhut Hotels Company. Bill had been inaugurated into the hotel business at the age of 14 when he was an elevator boy at the Lee Plaza apartment hotel on West Grand Boulevard. Years later as a Notre Dame college student, he worked summers at the family’s Clifford Hotel in the laundry. Mary Claire remembers Bill demonstrating for her the method of reaching into the huge hotel dryers with both arms and

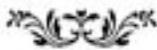
shaking and separating the wet sheets and towels so they would dry faster.

Both Bill and his dad were lawyers, hotel owners and operators and both had large families. But his dad had several additional ventures and accomplishments. At 25 years old he was the youngest state senator when he served in the Michigan Legislature 1909-1910. He owned land in Superior Township at three of the corners where Ford and

*continued on page 8*

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*The Anhut Motor Car Company in Detroit in 1909.*

## Anhuts – Father and Son - *continued from page 7*

Prospect Roads meet. Bill, his two older brothers and four sisters spent their summers on the farm at that property putting off as long as possible the numerous chores to be performed before their Dad came home from his office. John N. Anhut also raised race horses at the farm and Imperial Farms horses raced not only in Detroit but at tracks in other cities.

Perhaps one of the most interesting ventures Bill's father and his associates tried was jumping into the new motor car business. The Anhut Motor Car Company began with a car, according to an article in the October 27, 1909 publication *"The Horseless Age"* titled *"New Six Cylinder Roadster to Be Made in Detroit,"* the car was to be known as the Anhut Light Six-Thirty-Six. The complete article provides the following information: *"The latest addition to the numerous types of cars made in the centre of the American automobile industry is to be known as the Anhut Light Six-Thirty-Six, which will be made by*

*the Anhut Motor Car Company, whose incorporation is reported in another part of this issue. The first car of the company made its appearance on the streets of Detroit last week. It is a powerful light roadster with pleasing lines, and is claimed to develop a speed of 60 m.p.h. The company is headed by Congressman*

*"Perhaps one of the most interesting ventures Bill's father and his associates tried was jumping into the new motor car business. The Anhut Motor Car Company began with a car...to be known as the Anhut Light Six-Thirty-Six."*

*John N. Anhut, who is its president, and the other officers are: Mayor Philip Breitmeyer, vice president; Charles Lansby, treasurer; and H. H. Thorpe, secretary. The company has secured a*  
*continued on page 25*



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# “The Real McCoy” Origin Owned by Ypsilanti (and others)

By Tom Dodd

Readers of GLEANINGS well understand “The Real McCoy” as an idiom used universally to mean “the real thing” or “the genuine article” e.g., “he’s the real McCoy.” Its origins, though generally thought to be nineteenth or early twentieth century, are more obscure than most histories found in our museum’s archives. Ypsi readers are quick to lay claim to the history of Elijah McCoy and his creativity, but other communities are equally selfish in their ownership of the history of the popular phrase.

Scots prefer the real MacKay (pronounced as i). The Irish changed it to McCoy after the Irish MacKays, McCoys and Magees crossed to the Ulster Plantations in the 17th century.

**“The Real McCoy”**

Welterweight boxer  
Hatfield haters  
Cattle baron  
Scotch whiskey  
Bootleg whiskey  
Imported heroin

or Ypsilanti’s favorite:

**Elijah McCoy**



Charles McCoy.



McCoy Scotch Whisky.

## Origins, Ypsiwise and otherwise:

Michael Quinion of the World Wide Words website lists several theories on the origin of the phrase:

- Elijah McCoy (1844-1929), Black Canadian inventor of a lubrication system for steam engines. Supposedly, after failed attempts by competitors to make counterfeits of his lubricant, the phrase “real McCoy” was used to refer to his authentic product. McCoy is followed from southern slavery to Detroit and then to Ypsilanti, but it is the folks in Ypsilanti who identify so strongly with his creative efforts.
- A boxer, Norman Selby, known as Kid McCoy, an American welterweight champion from 1898–1900. There are apocryphal tales to the effect that he had many imitators and had to adopt the term to distinguish himself. Others say that during one match, he pretended to be dazed and weak after being hit in order to trick his opponent into attacking him. But then he came back and surprised his opponent with an attack, and the announcer said “which is the real McCoy?”
- “The Real MacKay,” a phrase that appeared first in 1856 as “A drappie [drop] o’ the real MacKay,” by the Scottish National Dictionary; the same work says that the phrase was later adopted as a slogan to promote G Mackay & Co Ltd’s whisky. The Oxford English Dictionary quotes Robert Louis Stevenson from 1883 in a letter saying “He’s the real Mackay.”
- The McCoy family of an infamous family feud between the Hatfields and the McCoys on the West Virginia-Kentucky border in the United States in the late nineteenth century.

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“The Real McCoy” Origin Owned  
by Ypsilanti (and others) –  
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- A famous American cattle baron by the name of Joseph McCoy (Alistair Cooke’s theory).
- During the U.S. Prohibition era, it was common for rum-runner captains to add water to bottles to stretch their profits, or to re-label it as better goods. One American rum-runner captain and boat builder, William S. McCoy, became famous for never watering his booze, and selling only real top-quality products. Because of this, some accounts place McCoy as the source of the term “the Real McCoy.”
- A reference to pure heroin imported from Macau.

Quinion notes that many authorities favor the Kid McCoy story, but he personally finds the MacKay story more convincing because of the concrete evidence which generally predates the references supporting other stories. Sadly, outside of Ypsilanti, almost no one seems terribly excited about our Native Son, but is there another community that so gladly adopts the legend and repeats it with such enthusiasm? Elijah’s lubricating cup may be the Holy Grail for Ypsilanti historians.

Other instances of “McCoy” in popular history include:

- The Real McCoy (film), a 1993 film starring Kim Basinger
- Real McCoy (band), a Eurodance group popular in the 1990s
- The Real McCoy (TV series), a British TV comedy show
- The Real McCoy (album), an album by McCoy Tyner
- The Real McCoy’s (TV series), famous TV series on CBS between 1957 and 1962
- The Real McCoy (book), a 2003 novel by American writer Darin Strauss
- The Real McCoy’s, a brand of potato crisp
- Dundas Real McCoys, an ice hockey team from Dundas, Ontario
- Genuine McCoy, a famous brand of pottery

“The Real McCoy,” Ian McCoy’s Journalism 350 newspaper provides the following insights:

- Sports fans favor Charles “Kid” McCoy who got his nickname while prizefighting as a teen under the pseudonym of Charles McCoy. His birth name was Norman Selby. He became a popular barnstorming boxer, taking on all comers around the world for nearly 25 years. He was famous for his “corkscrew” punch and the cutting damage it inflicted on opponent’s faces and for his trickery and unpredictability in the ring. After retiring from the ring, McCoy spent eight years in San Quentin penitentiary for killing a lover. He committed suicide in 1940.
- MacKay Scotch Whisky is nominated by Scotch whisky fans as the ne plus ultra of brands.
- Randolph “Old Randall” McCoy (1825-1914), a patriarch of Kentucky’s McCoy family, may have descendants who



*Top Left: Cattle baron McCoy  
Top Right: Randolph McCoy  
Bottom Left: William McCoy  
Bottom right: Macau heroin effect*

emigrated to the Willow Run bomber plant in World War II and lay claim to both the Ypsi legend (Elijah) and the legend of the long-running Hatfield & McCoy feud.

- Texans claim a cattle baron as the Real McCoy. Joseph McCoy (1831-1915) of Sangamon County, Illinois, emigrated to Texas, where he became the cattle baron who promoted the Longhorn, turned Abilene into a cow town, and sent two million head to Chicago in four years, a feat that spawned the “real McCoy” phrase. McCoy wrote a history of his achievements, not published until 1974. Joseph McCoy and Ypsilanti’s Elijah McCoy seem to be the only examples of a “good guy McCoy’s” in this contest. All the others are crime-related.
- William Frederick McCoy smuggled whisky into the U.S. east coast from Nassau and Bimini in the Bahamas. Captured in 1923 by the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Seneca, Bill McCoy pleaded guilty and spent nine months in a New Jersey jail. He later returned to the Florida building business.
- Macau heroin still makes headlines in drug busts in South Vietnam.
- Elijah McCoy, inventor. ■

\*Resources selected from Wikipedia, the free, on-line, encyclopedia.

*(Tom Dodd is the Editor of the Depot Town Rag and a regular contributor to The Gleanings.)*

# Shoe Store Buddies Thrived on Success

By Phil Barnes

It was 1940 in Ypsilanti and the war was imminent. Downtown Ypsilanti was a thriving, bustling business community. Sixteen year old Ellis Freatman was an energetic, hustling salesman at Greene's Shoe Store. Among the staff of five or six salespersons was George Allen, a young student at Michigan State Normal College. During the accomplishments of routine sales duties, Ellis and George became fast friends. Both were in the infancy of careers which would take them to lofty success. George eventually became an NFL Hall of Fame football coach and Ellis is well known as a trusted and prominent Ypsilanti attorney and a former tennis star in high school and at Michigan State Normal College where he was Captain of the team.

George Allen's football career is widely renowned, with 11 seasons in the NFL. He started at Morningside College in Iowa in '48 and joined the Los Angeles Rams in '57. He eventually coached the Washington Redskins in Super Bowl 7 in '72. George was born in Detroit and earned letters in football, basketball and track at Lake Shore High School. He attended Alma College and Marquette University before graduating from Michigan State Normal College with a B.S. and later earning a Masters Degree from the University of Michigan.

Ellis and George were thrown together in the local shoe store and quite by accident became fast friends. "He was a wonderful influence on me," describes Ellis, "despite my being a much younger person. George was a very popular guy on campus and his handsomeness drew much interest from the college girls. One day a beautiful young lady came in the store and George saw that I was interested. He asked me if I would like a date and he set it up. The girl's name was Marie and she was very sweet to me during our luncheon date.



Top left: Ellis Freatman was a shoe store salesman in the early 1940s.

Top right: George Allen, shoe store salesman, Michigan State Normal College graduate, and NFL Hall of Fame football coach.



Left: Ellis and Marilyn: Ellis claims that Marilyn has never said a cross word to him in their 56 years of marriage.

*I'm sure she was bored to death, but she made it through lunch, and I knew she was just being nice to me, albeit to please George. He enjoyed the whole scenario and I was smart enough to not let it happen again. George and I became very good friends and this lasted throughout the entire time we worked together. He was a great guy and I found him to be quite conservative. I tried to pattern myself after his stylish ways, personal habits, and especially his integrity. He had very good taste and dressed impeccably."*

Ellis was drafted just after Pearl Harbor and worked his way up to officer status serving in the South Pacific, primarily in Okinawa. George continued his education and served as a U.S. Navy Officer trainee in the V-12 program. In a time when communications were limited, both lost track of each other and never crossed paths again. Ellis recalls the "shoe store" time very vividly after 68 years

and treasures the opportunity to have met and known George Allen. His mature influence helped a young 16 year old high school student, and eventually youthful soldier, to grow up and survive the war.

Ellis and his wife Marilyn have been happily married for 56 years and have been community leaders and residents for all of those years. ■

*(Phil is an EMU graduate who taught in the Ypsilanti School System (1959-1963) and then served as an administrator in the Milan School System (1964-1994). He is a regular contributor to The Gleanings.)*

*(Editors Note: George H. Allen's son, George F. Allen, served as Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, 1994-1998, and in the U. S. Senate, 2001-2007.)*

# Peninsular Dam & Power Plant

By Alvin Rudisill

The Peninsular Paper Company was organized on April 3, 1867 with capital stock of \$50,000. The original stockholders were Samuel Barnard, Lambert A. Barnes, William H. Myers and Daniel L. Quirk. Lambert Barnes served as the first president until 1870 when Daniel L. Quirk became President. Quirk's son Daniel joined the firm in 1890 and became President at the turn of the century. The Quirk family then controlled and operated the mill for more than 100 years until it was sold in 1974 to the James River Corporation of Richmond, Virginia.

Construction on the mill began in 1867 and the first paper was produced in 1868. The March 13, 1869 issue of the Ypsilanti Commercial indicated that "... The company called *The Peninsular Paper Company* have build a dam probably unequaled in the Northwest. The mill is built of brick, main building 40 x 106, three stories high, and an attic, Machine room 30 x 86, Finishing room 28 x 30. In addition wheel room, boiler room and shed. Every part of the building is complete."

The decision to build the mill at this time was probably made because a contract was obtained from the Chicago Tribune to take the output of the mill in newsprint. At the time newsprint was made from rags and the newsprint contract was for 17 cents per pound. However, after the mill was in operation the Chicago Tribune insisted that the Peninsular Paper Company build another mill far enough away from the first mill to safeguard the newspaper's supply of paper in case of fire. Therefore, in May of 1876 the capitalization of the company was increased from \$50,000 to \$100,000 and another one-machine mill was erected on the north side of the Huron River. This second mill was operated for 22 years until 1898 when it was destroyed by fire. The salvaged machinery was then moved to the original building on the south side of the Huron River which was enlarged to accommodate two paper machines



*Peninsular Paper plant #2 was constructed on the north side of the Huron River in 1873.*



*Peninsular Paper plant #2 burned down in 1898 just 25 years after it was constructed.*



*Peninsular Dam as it looked in 1900.*

and the additional equipment necessary for the increased output.

The original Peninsular Dam was replaced in c1914 but on March 14, 1918 a sudden deluge of rain washed away the dam. The waters of the Huron River rose over 12 feet in 10 minutes causing considerable other damage to bridges along the Huron River chain. Plans for replacing the dam were drawn up by Gardner Williams, one of the most outstanding engineering innovators in the state whose reputation reached far beyond the state and even the country. Williams acted as a designer and consultant to a number of great engineering projects, including a lock

munities planned as part of the dam developments. Only Barton Hills was completed.

According to a 2001 Dam Inspection Report by Ayres, Lewis, Norris & May, Inc. "...The abandoned powerhouse was constructed in 1918, and was outfitted at that time with two vertical Francis turbines. Power production from the facility was abandoned in 1970. At the time of decommissioning activities, all generators and related electrical equipment were removed. Other decommissioning activities included closure of the head gates, and filling of the vertical turbine pits with earth to prevent passage of water through the structure. That same report indicated problems with dam safety. "...In

"The original Peninsular Dam was replaced in c1914 but on March 14, 1918 a sudden deluge of rain washed away the dam. The waters of the Huron River rose over 12 feet in 10 minutes causing considerable other damage to bridges along the Huron River chain."

on the Great Lakes, steam and diesel powered electric plants, hydro-electric plants in several Midwestern states, and a dam in Siberia that at the time was the longest multiple-arch dam in the world.

The March 8, 1915 issue of the Daily Ypsilanti Press included an article titled "The Story of Ypsilanti's Successful Fight for Gas Plant." The article included a picture with the caption "Municipal Water and Electric Light Plant, Ypsilanti, Formerly a Paper Mill with Fine Water Power." The picture appears to be the north side of the Huron River prior to the construction of the power plant that currently exists on the site.

The Eastern Michigan Edison Company (a subsidiary of Detroit Edison) called on Williams to design a series of nine dams on a 50 mile stretch of the Huron River between Dexter and Belleville. The first of the dams, Barton Dam, was finished in 1912, followed by Argo Dam in 1913, Geddes Dam in 1919, Superior Dam and the Papermill Dam in 1920 and French Landing Dam in Belleville in 1925. Plans on the drawing board for Dexter and Delhi were cancelled because of the depression as were several lakeside villa com-

1979 the Dam was rated unsafe in a report by the National Dam Safety Program (NDSP) by Ayres, Lewis, Norris & May, Inc. due to severe deterioration and spalling of the left concrete abutment pier between the fixed crest spillway and the radial gate spillway (since replaced with stop-logs). This abutment pier was repaired after the report was issued, and the unsafe rating of the Dam was noted as "removed" in the 1992 MDEQ Dam Inspection Report."

The January 25, 1983 issue of the Ypsilanti Press indicated the Ypsilanti City Council was interested in looking into the feasibility of getting into the hydro-power business through the use of the Peninsular Dam. The Council voted unanimously to support in principle acquiring the dam and nine acres of adjacent park land that the paper company had proposed donating to the city. The consulting firm of Ayres, Lewis, Norris & May, Inc. advised the Council that installing a turbine generator and power station could feed electricity into Detroit Edison's lines would cost approximately \$570,000. However, the firm further advised that the city could turn a profit of \$400,000 in 12 years time by selling the electricity to Detroit Edison, which  
*continued on page 14*



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*The rebuilding of the Peninsular Dam in July of 1918.*



*Dam being rebuilt after a sudden deluge of rain wiped out the old dam on March 14, 1918.*



*Peninsular Paper Company in 1916 (looking south across the Huron River).*



*Peninsular Paper Company including the dam and power plant in the early 1900s.*



*Peninsular Paper Company sign on top of the power plant in 2008.*

*continued on page 21*

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# Attempted Murder, Suicide and Rabies

By George Ridenour

## The following story is true!

January 1, 1909 dawned with the promise of a new year, the usual resolutions, a few hangovers, hopes for a better future, and an attempted murder/suicide. How was anyone to know that persons involved in the event would become actors in the murder of 7-year-old Richard Streicher in 1935.

Adolph Klaviter had come to the United States from Posen, Germany with his wife, Emma, and three children Richard 15, Hattie 12 and Ernest 11. He had by 1909 worked in local mills, the railroad and as a fireman. During hard times Emma took in roomers, boarders, and even washing to help ends meet. Such was life at 222 Lincoln, Ypsilanti in 1909.

Adolph remained true to his German heritage. His wife Emma, however, spent more and more time intermingling with the society of Ypsilanti and especially Depot Town. Adolph was sullen and angry about her love of dancing and parties. He was reported to have received an anonymous letter questioning his role as a husband especially with a wife who was out dancing late into the night. Adolph was well known to be insanely jealous of his wife. Emma seemed to appreciate life more than her husband.

The blaring headlines of the Ypsilanti Commercial will set the scene for what happened next:

**“Stabbed Wife and Kills Self:** 40 year old Adolph Klaviter 222 Lincoln Street Ypsilanti was found the morning of January 2, 1909 in a ditch a few feet away from the north side of the railroad tracks near the Prospect Street Bridge. He was lying face down with both legs

*broken, face smashed, and head deeply cut. He was clad in overalls, shirt and socks!”<sup>1</sup>*

On New Years Eve Emma was out with her daughter, friends and some other women dancing in Depot Town. They were dancing and celebrating the arrival of 1909. They all came home at 2:00 am. Everyone went upstairs to retire. Emma decided to sleep downstairs.

*“While preparing for bed Emma heard the sounds of Adolph creeping toward her in the darkness. A moment later she felt his hand as he tried to cut her throat. Her instinctive motion of turning her head saved her life and she was cut from her ear to her eye and down to her lip the whole cheek being laid open over on her neck!”<sup>2</sup>* Her screams awaken the household. Adolph fled and could not be found.

The official Michigan State Police files would report: *“In slashing his wife he cut through the cheek bone, broke the jaw and inflicted three short deep cuts on the side of the chin.”<sup>3</sup>* The funeral for Adolph was held January 4, 1909 at the chapel of the Wallace and Clark funeral home. The service was attended by family, friends and the chapel was filled with flowers. Reverend A. L. Nicklas of Ann Arbor was the minister. Emma did not attend due to her injuries.

The coroners’ inquest of Wednesday, January 13, 1909 brought in the following verdict:

*“That upon due investigations we find that the said Adolph Klaviter came to his death by committing suicide by stepping in front of a Michigan Central train between the hours of 2:00 and 4:00 a.m. on January 1, 1909.”<sup>4</sup>* Evidently the crew did not see him as no report was filed.

Several weeks later a bill for \$100 was denied payment by the county. The money was owed the Pasteur Institute of Ann Arbor by the city of Ypsilanti. It seems Adolph, Emma, a niece, and a puppy bit two boarders the previous summer. They were treated for the precaution of rabies. One could ask were the treatments successful given Adolph’s murderous actions?



Adolph Klaviter tombstone in Highland Cemetery.

An urban legend is told of a young Ypsilanti boy of the neighborhood coming upon the commotion at the railroad and seeing an Ypsilanti Police officer carrying the stockinged leg and foot of Adolph???. When told the man had committed suicide and learning the name of the deceased the young boy was heard to ask: *“If suicide why is his sock white?”* (You see he would have had to walk over Dawson’s or other coal yards situated in the area where he walked). The boy was told to *“get the h--- out of here.”* Was it a suicide? Could there have been a whiff of revenge? The person finding the body was none other than the brother of Emma, who worked on the Michigan Central Railroad. Was it a coincidence?

The two sons would become members of the Ypsilanti Police Department and the Washtenaw County Sheriffs Department. Emma would recover. Later, she would marry husband number two Wilmot Douglas, manager of the Oliver House in Depot Town.

Ironically, in the years 1935-37 all will become a part of the investigation into the murder of 7-year-old Richard Streicher. How? That’s another story. ■

<sup>1</sup> “Stabbed Wife and Killed Self” Ypsilanti Commercial, Volume 5, No. 258 January 2, 1909

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> State Police Narrative - Fall, 1937

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

*(George is a volunteer in the YHS Archives and a regular contributor to The Gleanings.)*

# The Huron Hotel

By James Mann

Early in the history of Ypsilanti the city earned a reputation for the quality of its hotels. This reputation was a thing of the past by 1920, when the hotels that once stood for quality were run down and worn out. That year the Ypsilanti Board of Commerce was founded, and the members were asked to suggest a project the board could carry out for the benefit of the whole city. The most popular project was the construction of a new hotel.

*"An option was secured on the property at the corner of Washington and Pearl Streets," wrote Harvey Colburn in The Story of Ypsilanti, "a part of the Lambie property, and an agreement entered into for the erection of the building. In February 1922, a campaign was begun for the sale of the stock among the citizens of Ypsilanti, by which over \$200,000 of the capital was secured. The significant feature of this sale was the emphasis not upon anticipated dividends but upon unselfish devotion to the interests of the city."*

*"It was carried to success by the untiring service of one hundred and forty volunteer workers," continued Colburn, "who secured six hundred and fifty separate subscriptions. The response of the citizens was enthusiastic, as indicated by the large number of subscriptions and the fact that many blocks of two shares of one hundred dollars each were sold to people of moderate means."*

The hotel was designed and built by the H. L. Stevens Company. Construction took about eight months. The doors of the Huron Hotel were opened for public inspection on January 1, 1923. *"It is doubtful if any enterprise has ever been undertaken in Ypsilanti which has concerned so many people and awakened such general pride as the new Huron Hotel,"* noted The Daily Ypsilanti Press of that day. *"It is so home-like, so intimately comfortable that it seems to extend to visitors the hospitality of a genuine Ypsilanti home. One is conscious of this immediately upon entering the Gothic doorway that admits into the corridor leading to the lobby."*

*"Upon entering, one faces the desk where every modern appliance promotes the easy dispatch of one's business. There is a chart giving a detailed*



*Huron Hotel under construction in 1922.*



*Huron Hotel showing additional two floors that were added in 1926.*

*description of the resources of every room; at a glance it is apparent how many rooms are as yet unoccupied. There are racks for keys; a switchboard, two telephone booths."*

*"Turning from the desk," continued The Daily Ypsilanti Press, "one confronts the recessed reception room, which strikes the note of high good taste, which is maintained throughout the building. Four large, formal Italian chairs and*

*a luxurious davenport backed by an exquisite inlaid table form a sort of boundary for the reception room."* The floor was covered with a rich valet rug with an attractive pattern. The chairs were covered in tapestry and were finely carved.

The coffee shop, which could also be entered from Washington Street, had a captivating *continued on page 18*

## The Huron Hotel - *continued from page 17*

color arrangement with black and orange the prevailing colors. *"The tables are shining black as well as the chairs and are picked out with a bit of orange. The walls are black about a third of the way up, then golden, and then are decorated with a frieze in black. This is a most intriguing design and upon examining the dishes, one finds that they furnish the motif for the frieze."*

*"The final touch comes from the skillful introduction of green-blue. This color appears in the over curtains along with the orange; it occurs in the most engaging manner in the treatment of 10 tall vases, which are discovered on black and orange brackets at various strategic points about the shop."* East of the coffee shop was the kitchen which had every modern convenience of the day. From the kitchen a corridor lead to the two dining rooms. In one 54 could be seated, and in the other 150 could be accommodated.

*"The bedroom furniture is walnut, as in the rest of the hotel, and shows the simple, strong designs which are deservedly popular at this time. All the pieces are interchangeable. A room may be arranged with a single bed; with twin beds, with a double bed; it may at will be converted into a sitting room; its proportions, its relation to bathrooms permits this easy exchange of characters."*

*"Every room is provided with a telephone instead of bells. While a single room contains bed, chairs, running water, a combination chiffonier land writing desk, mirror, wastebasket, a picture on the wall, there are other rooms with baths, others with a writing desk as another feature. Towels and soap and stationery are all marked or labeled with the name of the hotel."* When built, the hotel had four floors. Stock sales were resumed in November of 1925 as plans were made to add

an additional two stories to the building. The addition was finished in 1926.

Many would enter the hotel, most only to stay a short time. A few made the hotel their home, as did Gertrude Woodward and her sister Adha, who moved into the hotel in 1923. The sisters remained there for the rest of their lives. Adha died at the age of 96 in 1955, and her younger sister Gertrude died in 1966. When Gertrude died it was found she collected newspapers and had high stacks filling her rooms. She had collected so many newspapers over the years, as to fill the rooms, narrow pass ways made movement from one



*Bill Anhut as pictured in the Huron Valley Ad-Visor in 1963.*

place to another possible. Another long time resident of the hotel was the Ypsilanti Men's Coffee Club, which began meeting in the hotel every weekday morning in either the late 1940's or early 1950's. The club continued to meet at the hotel into the 1960's, before seeking another place to meet. Today the club meets at the Tim Horton's at Michigan Ave. and Hewitt Road.

The hotel enjoyed years of success after the

Second World War, as Willow Run Airport was the major airfield for Detroit. Air crews and travelers stayed at the hotel. This began to change when Detroit Metro opened in the 1960's. Then the hotel was out of the way and no longer the place where air travelers and air crews stayed. The state of the hotel began to decline. There was talk of turning the hotel into a home for seniors.

The hotel was purchased by William Anhut on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> of February, 1963. A headline in the June 28, 1966 Ypsilanti Press read, *"William Anhut: He saved the community hotel for the city."* At that time the hotel had no heat, as it had been turned off to conserve fuel. The building was basically sound. Anhut did his own bookkeeping, sanded and painted walls, and greeted guests at the dining room door. A friend from Detroit helped paint the elevator shaft. On one occasion, paying guests from New Hampshire asked what there was to do in Ypsilanti on a Friday night. Anhut told them they could help paint the hotel. They helped paint the dining room.

Anhut was not new to the hotel business. His family was in the innkeeping business and Bill himself had served as the President of the Detroit Hotel Association and as International President of the Hotel Greeters of America. In time the hotel was once again a going concern. Anhut later sold his interest and others ran the hotel.

Today the building still stands, but is no longer a hotel. Now it is an office building. The building was renamed the Centennial Center in 1978, but to many it is still the Huron Hotel. ■

*(James Mann is a local historian, the author of a number of books on local history, and a regular contributor to The Gleanings.)*



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# Vajen-Bader Smoke Protector Loaned to Firehouse Museum

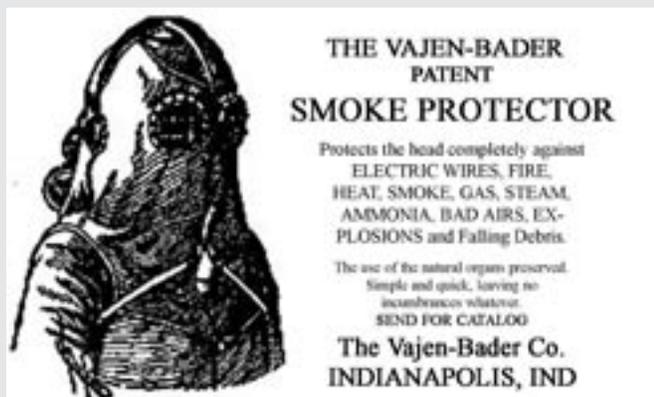
By Alvin Rudisill

The Vajen-Bader smoke protector owned by the YHS Museum has been placed on permanent loan to the Firehouse Museum. The smoke protector was found in storage in the basement of the Museum and a decision was made to loan it to the Firehouse Museum where it can be placed on permanent display. The smoke protector was patented by the Vajen-Bader company in the late 1800s.

The 1896 Vajen-Bader catalog had the following description of the protector: *“The wearer of the Vajen helmet can see through eye-pieces that were guarded by cross wires. Over his ears the plates of the helmet are constructed as to furnish him with an artificial tympanum, rendering his hearing even more distinct than natural. There is a whistle in the front bottom part of the helmet which is a means of calling and signaling. On top of the helmet there is a strong cushion protecting the head from falling debris. This helmet enables the firemen to venture into thick smoke without fear of suffocation.”*

The next time you visit the Firehouse Museum make sure you search out the Vajen-Bader smoke protector. ■

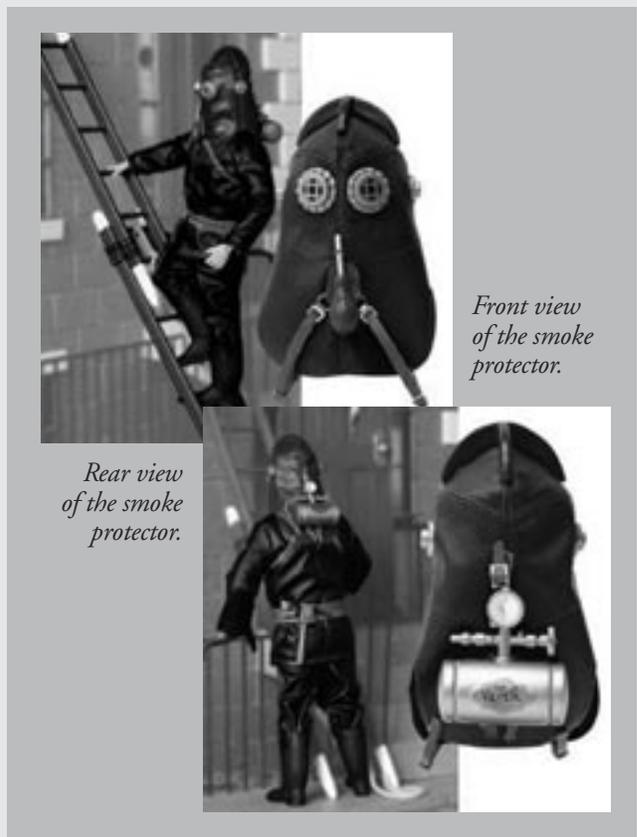
*(Al Rudisill is the editor of The Gleanings and President of the YHS.)*



*Early ad for the smoke protector.*



*The Vajen-Bader smoke protector loaned to the Firehouse Museum.*



*Front view of the smoke protector.*

*Rear view of the smoke protector.*

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# News From the Fletcher White Archives

By Gerry Pety

Weather wise this has been a stupendous summer with mostly moderate temperatures during the day and cool evenings. Very similar to last summer when you think about it. Well, summer is just about through and we all need to buckle down and do the things we have been putting off, like coming to the archives! We have just finished putting many of our files in order and adding new materials. George and Marcia have been doing organizational and genealogical duty, James has been doing historical investigation and our intern, Veronica, has been typing labels, labels, labels and even more labels (Al's idea!). Lyle, our map specialist, has been out most of the summer with an ill mother. Hope she is up real soon. Lyle, you have many maps depending on you!

Our new elevator was installed in July for those of you who have difficulty navigating stairs, whether in a wheel chair, scooter or just walking. So if you have been using this as an excuse, um, you now have no excuse whatsoever! It is easy to use and we will help you understand its simple operation.

We have had several acquisitions to the genealogy area. A big thank you to Donald Staebler, who after much research, contributed a very large binder edition on the Staebler family, a rather well known family around these parts. Another thanks to Kathryn Suito Boyle for all of the additional information/photos added to the Swift family file. We also received from her two textbooks used by the Swift family in the 1880's: *Harpers Second Reader for 2nd Grade*, and *Sheldon's General History*, a high school textbook. Both are impressive when you realize how much the kids were required to read and know compared to today's children at the same age! We have people who study 19th century public school curriculum come in often seeking these old books. Seems that what is old is also new again in the education of our children.

Also, thanks to Bob Bowen for the aerial photographs of the old, south side Ford Plant in Ypsilanti. Hard to believe that until Bob brought these in we had very little photography of the plant which had been there for over 50 years. How time flies!

Barbara Miller brought us an entire historical cache regarding an organization called Church Women United. This is a cooperative group of church women of all faiths working in coordination with one another for the good of the community and their respective religious groups. Thank you Barbara, it is here for all who wish to do research on this group.

Finally, George Ridenour, through the auspices of the YHS, is doing genealogical investigation for those who would like to research that recluse aunt Maude or that crazy uncle Chuck, but do not have the time or knowledge to do so. Charges are reasonable and if you would like to know more either call or stop by the archives for the details. This is in addition to those who want to do their own research and just need a little help, which is still free at the archives.

So unless a court of law has an electronic tether on your leg, and won't let you come to see us, you have NO excuse not to be here at the YHS Archives! ■

## Peninsular Dam & Power Plant - *\continued from page 15*

under state law at the time was required to buy the power, at a price of 6 cents per kilowatt hour.

The Council resolution at the time gave the city administration the authority to inspect more closely the possibility of installing the equipment. The council was informed that the construction could be supported by either voter-approved general obligation bonds or by revenue bonds, which would not have to go on the ballot. However, the consulting firm indicated the power house adjacent to the dam would have to be demolished and rebuilt which drew strong objections from Mayor Pro Tem Thomas Dodd who strongly objected to destroying the power house which supports a large sign advertising the Peninsular Paper Company. Dodd indicated the power house structure "...is a good example of classical revival architecture and was a city landmark."

Finally, after years of discussion the city approved the purchase of the property. At the City Council meeting on August 25, 1986 "...The \$1 acquisition from the James River Corporation includes 6.2 acres on the north side of the Huron River, west of LeForge Road, and an abandoned dam and power station. James River, the Richmond, VA-based firm that owns Peninsular Paper, offered the property as a gesture to the community... The city and James River first discussed the donation of the land six years ago and the corporation approved the deal a year ago." (Ypsilanti Press – August 27, 1986).



*Peninsular Place Apartments now occupy the space on the south side of the Huron River where the Peninsular Paper Company was located.*

In 1989 the city requested funding from the state to have an "interpretive museum" inside the power house related to hydro-electric activities. However, the funding did not materialize. City Manager Matt Hennessee indicated that "... We still want to do it and the city may want in the future to generate power (from the dam) with Detroit Edison." (Ypsilanti Press – March 15, 1989).

In June of 2004 the Peninsular Paper Mill buildings on the south side of the Huron River were demolished to make way for two large u-shaped residential buildings called "Peninsular Place," one of the buildings houses 99 apartments and the other houses

88 apartments. The old paper mill smokestack was preserved as part of the new housing complex.

According to current Ypsilanti City Council Bill Nickels, the city is again interested in exploring uses for the power house and dam. Current thinking, according to Nickels, is that modern power generating equipment will fit in the basement of the power house thereby leaving the first floor open for other uses such as a museum, restaurant, bar or retail shop. ■

*(Al Rudisill is the President of the Ypsilanti Historical Society and the Editor of The Gleanings.)*

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# The YHS Letter Collection: Highlighting the Civil War

By George Ridenour



The Civil War unleashed the most horrific events the young country had ever faced but resulted in the end of slavery and the forging of a unified nation.

Some of the staggering statistics are as follows: Over 620,000 soldiers died; 25 percent of Southern white men of military age were killed; 25 percent of all Southerners who fought were permanently injured; More than 25 percent of Union soldiers were killed or wounded; At the Battle of Gettysburg alone, there were up to 51,000 Confederate and Union Casualties; 40,000 black soldiers died, 30,000 from wounds and disease; 80 Confederate and 80 Union generals were killed; and Two regiments, the 1<sup>st</sup> of Texas (at Antietam) and the 1<sup>st</sup> Minnesota (at Gettysburg) lost 82 percent of their men in a single battle.

The Ypsilanti Historical Society Archives has a small collection of “Civil War Letters” from Ypsilanti members of the Union Army. Here is a sample of the letters in the new collection:

- Letters of Sylvester “Vette” Noble. He was an Aide to General William Tecumseh Sherman. The letters cover 1862-1865. These letters give a peek at life in camps, in captured “rebel” towns, the burning of Atlanta, surrender of Lee and the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Vette, ever the character, a private, Sergeant Major, and back to private provides a distinct view of life during the war.
- Letters of Clark Wortley to his father Jacob.
- Confederate soldier Robert Wandroper.
- Civil War diary of Charles T. Van Dusen.
- Letters, roster, and musters of Captain Henry Pinckney, commander of Company G, 3d Michigan Cavalry.
- General J. R. Mowry of Ypsilanti. Covering the years 1863-1865 to his wife in Ypsilanti.
- Robert B. Scodin, Union Army 1861-62.
- Misc. Civil War letters by various soldiers.

The Letter Collection contains other letters covering this area and the history of the times:

- James Heron letters of 1775-1777
- Mark Norris collection covering Ypsilanti from 1833-1859
- Charles M Adams, Massachusetts, 1863-1874
- Whittlessey family Civil War letters
- Follett family letters about life and times in Ypsilanti 1839-1863
- Business and Social letters of Mark Norris
- Forest Brown, Botanist, with US Department of Agriculture (includes many drawings and plant specimens) from 1889-1918. Covers all areas of US during his travels as a botanist and researcher.

More letters are being uncovered and will be included in the collection. ■

*(George Ridenour is one of the volunteer staff in the YHS Archives who assists visitors with their research efforts.)*

The Schmidt Family  
Antique Business –  
*continued from page 4*

goodies for Michigan Antique Collectors. Ten of the boxes, called liftvans, arrive in Detroit via the St. Lawrence Seaway on the last boats before lake shipping closes for the winter. Hoisted on flatbed trucks, they are transferred to Ypsilanti for exhibition and auction at Schmidt's Antiques.

Unpacking the liftvans is a five-day job for 10 men. It is also like one big Christmas celebration. Each box is filled with surprises. A gondola seat from Venice, upholstered in faded red velvet. A pair of bulbous brass urns from Denmark, called castle sticks, evidently intended to hold thick candles. Carved wooden angels from a dismantled church rub wings with a wing chair. There are chandeliers, mirrors, tall case clocks, pilot wheels, marble pedestals and paintings packed tightly together, with china, bronzes, brass and copper items tucked into the crevices. No space is wasted in the 12x7x7 foot liftvans. For packing material there is excelsior and old newspapers printed in assorted languages. Breakage is rare, according to the Schmidts, despite the long journey from Rotterdam, London and Glasgow. *"The contents of the liftvans on view in the big red barns at 5138 W. Michigan Avenue, Ypsilanti, would provide months of winter fun for collectors."* [Detroit Free Press Sunday Magazine: December 22, 1963.]

One of the largest auctions ever handled by the Schmidt family was in the 1960's. It was the estate of Gladys and Charlie Newton. Charlie Newton assisted Henry Ford assembling buildings and furnishings for the Henry Ford Museum and Village. They owned a fabulous home at 220 South Huron Street, Ypsilanti, which was full of beautiful early antiques, including the structure of an inn that had been rebuilt in their basement. Gladys had become close to the family and was a loyal customer. The large secretary located in the Milliman Room of the Ypsilanti Historical Museum was purchased from the Newton estate by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Morrison and given to the Museum.

Over the years the Schmidt family acquired several fine estate auctions including a house in Macon that had been owned by Henry Ford.

Lillian Jackson Braun, popular mystery writer of the "Cat Who Series," became a close friend of Jean's and often patronized the family business in Northville and Ypsilanti.

Schmidt's Antiques is still family-owned. Chuck and Jay Schmidt, grandsons of Alfred and Blanche, are now the operators of the family business, and both reside on the family land. Schmidt's Antiques has been serving the community and its many patrons from across the country for seventy years, and will continue to do so in the future. ■

*(Jean Schmidt Magee provides an inside view of the Schmidt family antique business. Kathryn Howard is a member of the Board of the Ypsilanti Historical Society.)*

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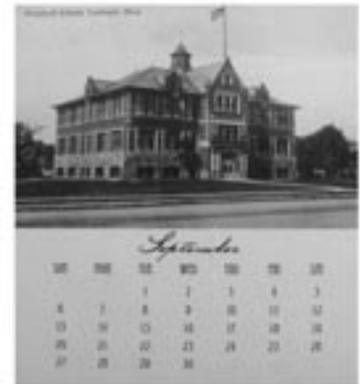
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## Museum Advisory Board Report

*By Virginia Davis-Brown, Chair*

It is amazing to look up and see color in the trees and view the beautiful flowers and then realize that summer is waning. Before long the nights will be cooler and summer will be gone.



We hope you were able to visit the Museum and see our new Lost Ypsilanti Exhibit. This is the third year we have had it with a total of 57 sights and people being featured. This is a great way to learn a little more about our city and the surrounding area. The exhibit was extended until September 15 to provide additional opportunities for visitors.

The Heritage Festival was a great time for us to host the many people who came to visit the Museum. Over 350 people visited and some were very surprised to see what a wonderful place it is. Most remarked about the quality of the building and our artifacts.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all those who volunteered to help. It takes over 75 people to cover all the hours and the rooms and without our many volunteers it would have been impossible to be open the three days. You are wonderful.

Plans are underway for the Quilt Exhibit which will be opening September 28 and running thru October 12. The hours are Tuesday thru Sunday from 2 to 5 p.m. If you are a quilter, or have quilts that you would like to exhibit, and have not exhibited before, please call 484-0080 for more information. Quilts can be a brand new creation or ones that have been in the family for many years with many memories.

We want to thank Bruce Thompson, a wood carver from Ypsilanti Township, for sharing his beautiful hand carved creations with us. Bruce carves at the Ypsilanti Township Senior Center on Clark Road. If you have ever wanted to carve I'm sure Bruce would love to have you join their group. Our new exhibit has been loaned to us by John and Fofie Pappas. They are sharing their beautiful carvings. What talent we have in this area.

You still have time to see Ernest Griffins collection of milk bottles from former local diaries. It is hard to believe that we had so many diaries in the Ypsilanti area.

Do mouse and animal traps turn you on? We have a display of them and you will be surprised at the way many of them were designed to work.

Our gift shop has just received 2009 calendars with reproduction pictures of old post cards of Ypsilanti. The gift shop has also received a new shipment of stoneware. This might be the time to start thinking about Christmas.

Thank you all again for you support and interest. ■

Anhuts – Father and Son -  
continued from page 8

factory at 206-212 Howard Street, abutting on the Michigan Central Railroad, which covers an area of 70 x 300 feet. The car is to sell at \$1,600, and it is planned to turn out 500 to 1,000 for next year.”

The reason few of us will remember the Anhut car is that the Anhut Motor Car Company was short lived. The 1805-1942 edition of the Standard Catalog of American Cars provides information about the demise of the company. “Barnes – Detroit, Michigan – 1910. H. C. Barnes had been the factory superintendent for Anhut Motor Car Company in 1909, and in 1910 took over the firm and reorganized it into the Barnes Motor Car Company. A brass stamping with a “Barnes Six” logo is known to have been made but how

may Barnes cars were marketed is problematical. In November, 1910 the Barnes Motor Car Company proceeded into bankruptcy...”

The Anhut car was available in two and four-seater models manufactured with a common chassis. There were also a few prototypes of the Anhut car produced by a Canadian manufacturer in Chatham, Ontario but full production was never reached.

Both father, John N. Anhut, and son, Bill Anhut, were men of ideas who worked hard to bring ideas to fruition, succeeding more times than not. They were men who took chances in business and in life to help support their large families and who also took time to help their friends and the communities in which they lived. ■

(Mary Claire Anhut assisted Al in gathering information and writing this article.)



Detroit Mayor (1909-1910) Philip Britmeyer at the wheel of a 1910 Anhut Six with State Senator and car builder, John N. Anhut.



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# Come Join Us...Be a Part of Preserving the Unique History of Ypsilanti

By Peg Porter, Membership Committee Chair

We have a goal of 80 new members during the next year beginning August 15, 2008 and running through August 15, 2009. The goal represents a 25% increase over current membership (excluding professional, business and other organizational memberships).

Is this an ambitious goal? Yes, but it can be met. How will we do it? Some examples and suggestions:

- We have a new membership marketing handout that was distributed to Museum visitors during the Heritage Festival and will be available for ongoing use.
- We will actively seek opportunities to present information about the Society and its programs to community groups. The first will likely be held in Ann Arbor this fall.
- Current members are encouraged to volunteer to talk about the Society at their churches, service clubs and other organizations. We can provide materials or speakers.
- We need your help in identifying ideas for outreach to parts of the community that have had limited or no involvement with YHS.
- Society memberships make great gifts for family members or friends. Keep that in mind as the holidays approach.
- All docents and other volunteers are encouraged to join in order that they can fully participate in the Society.

It's important to remember that the Society is the foundation for the Museum, the Archives, Gleanings, and other programs. An active, committed and involved membership is the key to our success. We will report regularly on progress toward meeting our goal.

To paraphrase a popular political slogan, "Can we do it? Yes we can!" ■

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# Fundraising Contribution/Pledge Agreement YHS – “A Matter of Trust”

The Internal Revenue Service has designated the Ypsilanti Historical Society an organization described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

AMOUNT OF CONTRIBUTION/PLEDGE: On this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_,  
I agree to contribute and/or pledge to the Ypsilanti Historical Society the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

## CONTRIBUTION CATEGORIES:

- Demetrius Ypsilanti Circle..... \$50,000 or more
- Benjamin Woodruff Circle ..... \$25,000 - \$49,999
- Mary Ann Starkweather Circle..... \$10,000 - \$24,999
- Elijah McCoy Circle ..... \$5,000 - \$9,999
- Daniel Quirk Circle..... \$1,000 - \$4,999
- Friends of the Society ..... up to \$999

**Donor Recognition:** A permanent plaque will be placed in the Ypsilanti Historical Museum identifying donors to the Property/Facilities Fundraising Program by name and category.

## METHOD OF PAYMENT (please initial):

- \_\_\_\_\_ A. An immediate cash payment of \$\_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ B. An immediate cash payment of \$\_\_\_\_\_ with annual cash payments of \$\_\_\_\_\_ in each succeeding year for a period of \_\_\_\_\_ years.
- \_\_\_\_\_ C. An immediate cash payment of \$\_\_\_\_\_ with the balance of \$\_\_\_\_\_ payable through my estate upon my death. I have consulted a lawyer and I understand the balance is an irrevocable pledge that my estate will be obligated to pay to the Ypsilanti Historical Society. This Deferred Pledge Agreement may also be satisfied in part or in full by payments made by me at my discretion during my lifetime.
- \_\_\_\_\_ D. I pledge that the total amount of my contribution to the Ypsilanti Historical Society will be payable through my estate upon my death. I have consulted a lawyer and I understand this is an irrevocable pledge that my estate will be obligated to pay to the Ypsilanti Historical Society. This Deferred Pledge Agreement may also be satisfied in part or in full by payments made by me at my discretion during my lifetime.
- \_\_\_\_\_ E. Transfer of “other assets” such as securities, other personal property or real estate interests. *(Note: The Society reserves the right to accept or reject gifts of other assets pending a due diligence review of the assets, their transferability and the appropriateness of acceptance of such other assets by the Society. This review will be conducted by legal counsel for the Society.)* Donor to provide description of assets being transferred.

**EXECUTION:** Executed this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.

Donor: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Donor Address \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Donor City, State & Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**ACCEPTANCE:** The undersigned, being a duly authorized officer of the Ypsilanti Historical Society, does hereby accept the within contribution/pledge.

Ypsilanti Historical Society Officer Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**INTERPRETATION:** This Agreement shall be interpreted under the laws of the State of Michigan.

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