



Town Crier

HEAR
YE!

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HISTORICAL SOCIETY of GREATER LANSING

P. O. Box 515, Lansing, Michigan

February, 1966

FEBRUARY 9 MEETING (WEDNESDAY 8 PM)

Post Oak School

Everyone is urged to come and learn about the proposed face-lifting project on the Grand River

A FACE-LIFTING PROJECT

The Grand River, a most important feature of early Lansing history, has been shamefully neglected in recent years. Once this proud river, tree-lined and lovely with its verdant green banks, was the scene of community song fests, band concerts, excursion boating and boating regattas. Today this river's banks are lined with unsightly debris, weed-infested shores and unattractive backsides of factories, warehouses and stores. Its waters are clogged with rubbish and fallen logs, and polluted by sewage.

In recent years Lansingites have become increasingly aware of this tragedy, and not long ago some public-minded citizens, visualizing the real possibilities which this river could offer in beautiful parks, recreation, and clean water for the conservation of plant and animal life prevailed upon our city government to join state and federal agencies in promoting the study of river rehabilitation. Theodore J. Haskell, assistant director of the Lansing Parks Department has been one of the moving forces in this program.

Eventually a committee was appointed by Mayor Bowerman and continued under Mayor Murningham's administration to study river rehabilitation on the local level. The committee was charged to analyze the problems of the Grand River and the Red Cedar and Sycamore which joins it at Lansing, and to make recommendations for its improvement.

A river survey is now in progress to note condition of water, vegetation, debris, etc.

You are urged to come and hear a representative of this committee give a first hand account of the plans, problems and progress in the renovation and re-vitalization of the important river. Pictures will be shown, emphasizing the needs and problems.

THE R. E. OLDS HOME - ITS PRESERVATION

It has been definitely confirmed that the Historical Society of Michigan has accepted the R. E. Olds house. All further information is tentative and in the planning stages. It is now the responsibility of the society to arrange the moving of the house.

In a recent conversation with William Alderfer, director for the Michigan Historical Society, the following information was gleaned. First, a search for suitable property must be found - the property must needs be close by due to the nature of the move. The Society approached Mayor Murningham and some other city officers, who expressed a real interest in cooperating on the project. Though no action has as yet been taken by the City Council, exploratory work is already in progress to work out arrangements for locating of a new site - hopefully in Scott Park at the end of South Capitol Avenue.

The Society is also in the process of making an agreement with the Olds Foundation with reservations favorable to operation of the home for historical purposes. The Olds Foundation has indicated its willingness to provide funds for the maintenance and upkeep of the house once it is moved. One stipulation concerning the future use of the building is that it be culturally oriented and would be open to the public. It is hoped that it can be made one of Lansing's tourist attractions as well as providing a meeting place for cultural groups such as our own historical society. The building will be the headquarters for the State Society.

Without doubt the greatest problem before the Historical Society at the moment is the procurement of funds to move the building. It is estimated that the cost of moving and providing for a new foundation will be approximately \$100,000. The Finance Committee, of which Alvin Bentley, Owosso, and Richard Frank, Lansing, are both members, is presently seeking sources of possible funds. It is now waiting to hear from several of these sources which have already been approached about donations.

In late October of 1965 the Michigan Historical Commission Museum fell heir to "the antique contents" of the Isabella E. Hamilton home at 1303 Center Street, Lansing.

While the Museum has occasionally been remembered in other wills, never has the staff encountered the opportunity or the problems of being able to make the first selection from so much material in one location. While it appeared at the beginning that there was only moderate value represented, a total of nearly 300 items have been added to the museum's collection.

One of the oldest objects in the group is a framed sampler, which was worked by Miss Hamilton's great-grandmother, Charlotte Ball, in 1828, with the quaint quotation "Beauty and wit will die, learning will vanish away and all the acts of life will soon be forgotten, but virtue will remain forever."

Among the many articles of clothing was a "pumpkin" bonnet of about 1800 - an excellent and rare item for any collection. Furniture, including a marble top table, books, pieced quilts, sheet music, mirrors, frames, and misc. Household items mostly of the late 1800's, constituted the bulk of the donation.

Miss Isabella Eliza Hamilton was the great-granddaughter of Judge Alvin Nelson Hart and Charlotte F. Hart of Lapeer, Michigan. Mr. Hart was a member of the first legislature held in Detroit in 1835. In 1860, the judge and his daughter, Mrs. Isabella Hart Hamilton, moved to Lansing where they were active in the organization and building of the Franklin Avenue Presbyterian Church.

Miss Isabella Hamilton was the last descendant

of Senator Alvin Hart and the fourth generation of the family to live on the corner of Center and May Streets in North Lansing. She was a graduate of old Central High School in 1906, and of Michigan Normal College, later teaching in public schools in St. Johns and Lansing for eighteen years. Miss Hamilton died in May, 1965.

STUDY OF PLANT AND ANIMAL LIFE IN EARLY AMERICA

Those members with an interest in early plant life in America will be interested in reading R. D. Burrough's account of the botanical and zoological discoveries of the Lewis and Clark expedition printed in the January 1966 issue of the Natural History magazine.

When President Jefferson handed Lewis and Clark the letter of instructions clearly defining their responsibilities on the expedition, it was discovered that one of their duties would be to "study and collect as many animals and plants as possible, not wasting time on those species already known east of the Mississippi". Both men, though not professional naturalists, were experienced travelers with practical knowledge of botany and zoology, and thus did a creditable work in collecting specimens and writing copious notes on their discoveries. What happened to their collection and the accompanying notes makes fascinating reading--there is mystery, adventure and speculation all wrapped into one.

REPORT ON WIRTH JOHNSON MEMORIAL FUND

To date \$55.00 has been given to the Michigan State Library for books for the Michigan History Department in Memory of Wirth Johnson by the Historical Society of Greater Lansing.

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P.O. Box 515 Lansing, Michigan



Members offering books to the Ingham County Jail may request labels shown here by calling Doyle C. Fitzpatrick IV5-9111 Ext. 7288.

