

Historical Society of Greater Lansing
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November 2002

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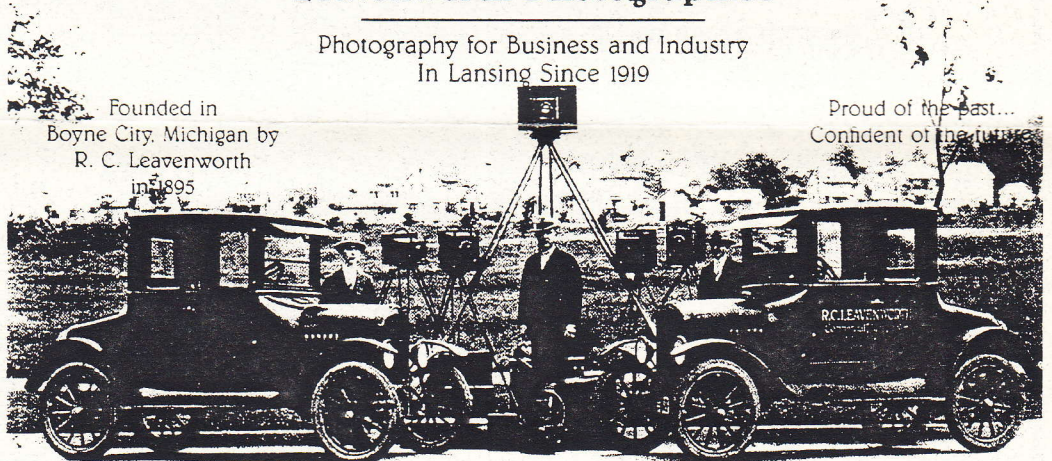
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*This newsletter is published during
 the months of September to May. Ar-
 ticles and news of historical interest
 are always welcome.*

*The Historical Society of Greater Lansing,
 Main Library, Capital Area District Library &
 Leavenworth Photographics*

Photography for Business and Industry
 In Lansing Since 1919



proudly presents

Lansing Yesteryears

*A slide presentation of Historic
 Photographs of Lansing from the
 1800's through the 1960's.*

*With Roger Boettcher, Owner/Photographer
 & Narrated by Duane Vernon*



Join Us. . .

November 13, 2002

7:00 P.M.

Friends Auditorium

Capital Area District Library
 401 S. Capitol, Lansing

Lansing Automotive History
with Dave Pfaff

Hill Diesel Engine Company

Hill Diesel Company had its origins in Lansing with the *Bates and Edmonds Motor Company*, founded in 1899 by Madison Bates and James Edmonds. Madison Bates previously worked at *P.F. Olds and Sons* where he and R.E. Olds developed the Olds gasoline internal combustion engine. He held several engine and auto related patents, some in partner with R.E. Olds. James Edmonds handled the financial end of the business. After years of successfully producing the "Bull Dog" and "Bull Pup" stationary gasoline engines (and an unsuccessful foray into the automobile business with the Bates auto), *Bates and Edmonds Company* began experimenting with an oil engine in 1911. The early oil engines were designed to run on low grade fuel but were not true diesels. They were higher compression than contemporary gasoline engines, but still had igniters, not the compression ignition of a true diesel. They started development of their true diesel in 1925. The early oil engines and diesels were used for applications such as air compressors, electric generators, hoists, and pumps. The Bates and Edmond diesel engines were available in 10 to 140 horsepower, with a V8 of 240 horsepower. They were also used in marine applications where they were superior to gasoline engines because of their better fuel economy (cost per hour) and the fact that the lower grade fuel was much less volatile than gasoline and therefore a lesser explosion hazard in a confined boat hull.



East side of the Present R.E. Olds Transportation Museum, showing a portion of what was the Bates & Edmonds Motor Co., later Hill Diesel factory on Mill Street, now Museum Drive.

Mr. Edmonds' interest in the engine operation was purchased by R.E. Olds in 1929 and renamed *Hill Diesel Company*, with the operation continuing at the former Bates and Edmonds factory on Mill Street. The name came from H.D. Hill who became General Manager of Bates and Edmonds in 1910 upon the retirement of Madison Bates.

These engines were exported to Europe in large volumes. In 1930, Mr. Hill stated "*...its (Hill's) products are better known in foreign lands than in Lansing,*" when at that time over 1000 Hill Diesels were in France and also in North Africa, China and Siam.


In 1930, R.E. Olds converted a REO Speed Wagon truck to use a Hill Diesel and made a delivery of a Hill engine-generator to New York City in an

"...its (Hill's) products are better known in foreign lands than in Lansing,"

attempt to interest *REO Motors* in buying the Company (or engines). The total fuel cost,

round trip, was \$3.72 for 959 miles.

The Hill Diesel was widely used as an auxiliary power plant for the huge ocean-going diesels. Thirty-five were in operation at the Suez Canal for various functions, and were used for the lighting plant on Mount Saint Michael off the coast of France. Hundreds were used in the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard. Others were used on private yachts; as electrical generators; at light houses and at the Panama Canal. During World War II, 6,000 were made for generators with the factory running 24 hours a day, employing 550, to meet demand. Diesels were also made at the *Ideal Engine Company* (also owned by R.E. Olds) for a time and called *Factory #2*.

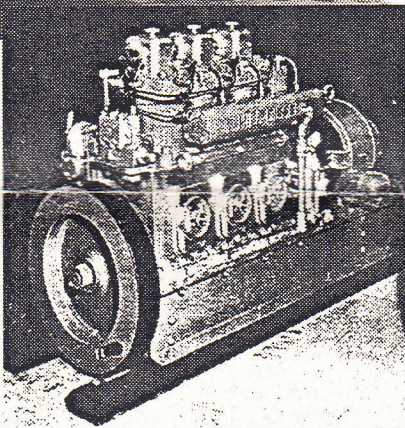
Continued 

Hill Diesel Engine Company, continued.

Mr. Olds used a three cylinder, 30 horsepower, Hill Diesel for the generator on his personal 93 foot yacht, the "Reomar", as well as twin six cylinder Hill Diesels for the main engines.

In 1941 Hill was sold to Rogers Diesel and Aircraft Corporation of New York and was merged with Indian Motorcycle Company in 1947, another Rogers' company. At the time, Hill was building 2, 4, and 6 cylinder engines. In 1953 the operations, employing about 150 workers, were moved to Providence, Rhode Island where production continued with generator units for the military.

A portion of the Bates and Edmonds Mill Street factory survives as the conference room of the R.E. Olds Transportation Museum while the Ideal Engine Company factory, renamed in 1924 the *Ideal Power Lawn Mover Company*,



The Hill Diesel Engine (above), once on display in the lobby of the Hotel Olds and schedule to be installed in R.E. Olds yacht, the *Reomar* (top).

still exists at 704 E. Kalamazoo Street, now used by *Armstrong Pool*.

There are four Hill Diesel engines on permanent display at the *Michigan Steam Engine and Threshers Club* in Mason, Michigan, and are run during their annual show each July, generating electricity.

A special thanks to Alan Hines for his help in researching this article.

Dave has researched and compiled two booklets on Lansing automotive history: *The Motor Vehicle of Lansing, 1882-2003* and *R.E. Olds and Automotive Related Sites in Lansing, Michigan*. Each is available at \$4 and \$2 respectively from the Olds Heritage Center or email the author at:

davepfaff@hotmail.com

President's Message

Craig A. Whitford

Dear Friends:

Our September program, *A Picture Post Card Walking Tour of Lansing*, was a success despite

the somewhat damp weather. Copies of the brochure, featuring 40 images of the downtown area, along with a map is available in case you missed the program and would like to take the tour on your own or with some friends. Just let me know if you would like a copy.

Copies of the September Brochure are still available

As I write this, the fall colors have peaked in the greater Lansing area, thus signaling a time for our indoor programs to begin. Our November program, *Lansing Yesteryears*, will be one you will not want to miss. An extensive slide presentation, from the collection of Leavenworth Photographics, will feature seldom seen views of Lansing from the 1800's through the 1960's. Roger Boettcher, owner of Leavenworth Photographic will be your host, with narration provided by Duane Vernon. I look forward to seeing many of you at this wonderful program.

Researching the History of your Home...

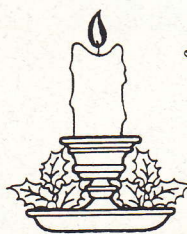
Our January 2003 program will focus on the ever-popular subject of **Researching the History of your Home**. Our featured speaker will be HSGL Board member Robert Hudson who will provide first hand knowledge of the resources and tools needed in order to begin the endeavor.

Membership Renewal

Just a reminder...It's membership renewal time and if you have not already done so, please forward your membership dues to our treasurer, Bill Atkinson. Bill will also be on hand before and after our November program to collect dues. If your membership label doesn't read 02-03 in the upper right hand corner, your membership dues are payable for the coming season. In addition, the goal of the board this year is to increase our active membership. I encourage you to assist us in this goal by signing up a new member, or perhaps purchase gift memberships for family & friends.

We Need YOU! Local History Room Volunteers

The Society is also looking for members to create a volunteer pool to assist in re-opening the Local History Room. If you have an interest in local history and research, and would like to participate in this very important project, please give me a call. Our goal is to open the Local History Room for 4 hours every other Saturday to historians and researchers and we need your assistance.



May your upcoming holiday season be one of peace and great joy

Historical Society of Greater Lansing

Proudly announces the 2nd Annual

**David R. Caterino
Collector's Showcase**

Saturday, April 5, 2003

10:00 AM to 4:00 P.M.

**Capital Area District Library
401 S. Capitol, Lansing**

If you collect history of the greater Lansing area and would like to share it with the public we invite you to join us as an exhibitor.

If you are a local author or artist of the greater Lansing area we also invite you to participate.

Please contact us today!

For an application or more information contact:

Craig A. Whitford Harry Emmons
517.394.4443 517.485.5998
email: LansingHistory@aol.com

Nov.-Dec. 2002 Calendar

Reserve these historic dates now!

November 10, 2002 - 10, 1:30 & 3:00 P.M.
Native American Skies
Presented by Stardogs Astronomy
A travelling planetarium show.
Capital Area District Library, 401 S. Capitol, Lansing

November 13, 2002 - 7:00 P.M.
Lansing Yesteryears
Presented by Leavenworth Photographics
A slide presentation of Historic Photographs of Lansing
Friends Auditorium, Lower Level
Capital Area District Library, 401 S. Capitol, Lansing

November 17, 2002 - 2:00 P.M.
Opening Books with John Fierst:
John Tanner in Michigan
Nine year old John Tanner was taken captive in 1790 during the Indian Wars in Ohio, John Fierst, Head of Public Services, will talk about Tanner's Narrative.
Friends Auditorium, Lower Level
Capital Area District Library, 401 S. Capitol, Lansing

November 22, 2002
Silver Bells in the City
Downtown Lansing

December 11, 2002 - 6:30 P.M.
HSGL Board Meeting
Local History Room, Lower Level
Capital Area District Library, 401 S. Capitol, Lansing

January 15, 2003 - 7:00 P.M.
Researching the History of your Home with Robert Hudson
Friends Auditorium, Lower Level
Capital Area District Library, 401 S. Capitol, Lansing

Membership Application 2002-2003

Annual Renewals are due for the 2002-2003 program year.

Please accept my New Renewal membership in the Historical Society of Greater Lansing. I have enclosed:
\$15 Individual \$25 Family \$150 Life \$_____ Gift

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Tel: _____ Email: _____

Send To: HSGL, Box 12095, Lansing, MI 48901

If your membership label doesn't read 02-03 in the upper right hand corner, your membership dues are payable for the coming season.

**9th Membership
Renewal Time**

Please RUSH to:

Robert Morris & Linda Peckham
LIFE

Change Service Requested

*Historical Society
of Greater Lansing*
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