



History Explorer

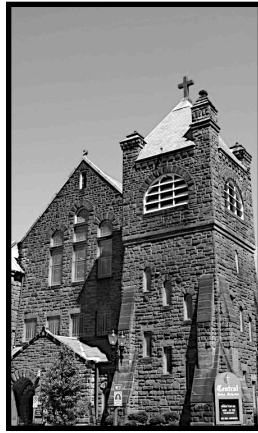
Historical Society of Greater Lansing

www.LansingHistory.org

June 2011

Annual Meeting

Thursday evening, June 16 is the date of this year's annual meeting, which will consist of a walking tour of four of downtown Lansing's most beautiful and historical churches, followed by a dinner and short meeting. The churches featured on the tour are: Christ Community (the old First Baptist Church), Central United Methodist Church, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, and St. Mary's Catholic Cathedral.



The event will begin at 5:30 pm sharp at St. Paul's Episcopal Church. All those participating will meet in the Merrifield Room. Parking will be available at the Roosevelt Parking Ramp located on the corner of Ionia and Seymour streets downtown. From there a historical society board will direct you into St. Paul's Merrifield Room. We'll then split into smaller groups, for ease of traveling, and each group will tour all four churches.

Upon completing the tour, we'll all reconvene at St. Paul's Merrifield Room, where we will enjoy a wonderful dinner from A Catered Affair. The menu will consist of three meal choices – beef (top round steak with mushroom sauce) chicken (Michigan cherry chicken), and a vegetarian option (fettuccine with mushrooms and asparagus spears). You'll need to let us know which option you prefer when you purchase your tickets.

The cost of the tour is \$20 per person for historical society members, and \$25 for non-members. To purchase tickets, please call Bill Atkinson at 927-8930. **Please note that tickets must be purchased no later than June 12.**

St. Joseph Cemetery Tour

On Sunday, August 21 at 2:00 pm, the Historical Society invites you to attend our annual cemetery tour. This year's event will take place at St. Joseph Catholic Cemetery, located on the west side of Lansing at 2520 W. Willow Street. You'll need to enter the cemetery from Willow, and then turn left just before the large Shrine sculpture. To the left will be the large mausoleum, and behind the mausoleum, a large parking lot. Please park there.

The tour, which will last about an hour, will cover several interesting topics, including the establishment of St. Mary's Cemetery (which later became St. Joseph's), the history of Catholicism in Lansing, Catholic burial practices, and Catholic cemetery statuary and symbolism. Several prominent Lansing area families will be featured, including the Risley family, who donated the land for St. Mary's Cemetery, the DeLucas (of pizza fame), the Levendowskis (of L&L groceries), and the Idings (of Bud Kouts).

At the conclusion of the tour, society members will have the opportunity to visit St. Joseph's mausoleum, which includes a small (air-conditioned!) chapel. Restroom facilities will be available in the mausoleum.

Newsletter Options

Beginning in August, the Historical Society of Greater Lansing will offer members the option of receiving *The History Explorer* via e-mail. By e-mailing our newsletter instead of mailing it, the society will be able to save a considerable amount of money spent on postage and printing. If you would like to receive your newsletter via e-mail, please send an e-mail to info@lansinghistory.org. Thank you!

Fall Fundraiser

Please mark your calendars for HSGL's upcoming fall fundraiser. The event, a silent auction, will take place on Saturday, October 8th, from 4:00 to 7:00 pm. Lansing's downtown Comerica Bank, located on the corner of Washington Avenue and Michigan Avenue, has graciously offered to serve as a sponsor and host of the event. The evening will include a silent auction and light hors d'oeuvres.

The evening will culminate with a tour of the historic bank building, completed in 1933, during the Great Depression. Designed by local Lansing architects Lee and Kenneth Black, the building is an Art Deco icon in downtown Lansing. Dubbed "one of the most impressive (banks) in the state outside of Detroit", the building features the cool, crisp, and clean lines so popular in 1920s and 1930s architecture. The most iconic feature of the building's exterior is, of course, it's elaborate archway that soars above the main entrance. At first glance, the carvings seem to be purely of aesthetic quality, but a second look reveals a great deal of significance to the art.

In addition to analyzing the exterior of the building, we'll also discuss the bank's interior, including the brilliant mosaics found in the main lobby. The tour will also include a trip to the bank's basement level vault (which is now devoid of money, just in case you're wondering!) and an elevator ride to the top, where, on a clear day, the view extends all the way to Michigan State University!

In order to make the event a success, the HSGL board will be soliciting our members and community businesses to donate items for the silent auction. Items that society members could donate might include: tickets to an event, concert, or game, services such as food preparation, private tours, or photo scanning, historical collectibles like

rare photos, books, or memorabilia, gift cards and certificates, and handicrafts, such as quilts.

Another way to help the society out would be to agree to serve as a financial sponsor of the event. Sponsorships will be available at the following levels: \$5,000 Platinum, \$1,000 Gold, \$500 Silver, \$250 Bronze, and \$100 Copper.

If you would like to donate an auction item or serve as an event sponsor, please fill out the form found in the newsletter and send it in to the Historical Society at P.O. Box 12095, Lansing MI 48901.

To purchase tickets for the fundraiser, please fill out the ticket form found in the newsletter and send to P.O. Box 12095, Lansing MI 48901. Tickets are \$15 individually, \$25 per couple.

Governor Austin Blair

On Thursday evening, May 19, the Historical Society of Greater Lansing enjoyed a lecture on Michigan's War Governor, Austin Blair, given by retired State Capitol Historian Kerry Chartkoff. Blair, an easterner by birth, found success in Michigan as a lawyer and politician. His home in Jackson proved to be the perfect staging ground for his work in helping found the Republican Party. A fierce abolitionist, Blair championed other progressive causes, including women's suffrage. While in the Michigan State Senate, he led the fight to abolish the death penalty in our state. The effort passed in 1846, making the State of Michigan the first government in the English speaking world to end capital punishment.

As Michigan's Civil War governor, from 1861 to 1864, Blair oversaw the State's wartime administration. Along with Adjutant General John Roberts, Blair helped organize the departure of nearly 90,000 Michigan soldiers throughout the war. He worked tirelessly for the war effort, devoting a great deal of his own money to the cause. Upon the completion of his work in the governor's office, Blair set his sites on the national government. Though he did serve in the U.S. House of Representatives, Blair never managed to achieve his lifelong goal – a seat in the U.S. Senate. He died in Jackson in 1894.

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P.O. Box 12095 ~ Lansing, MI 48901
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**227 North Capitol Avenue, Lansing, Michigan:
An Unusual Story
By Lille Foster**

Many are unaware that the home built at 227 N. Capitol in the 1850's is still standing—in its original location. Today it is incorporated into the Baptist Church (which was next door to the north) behind a stone façade and is used as Church offices.

Cortland Bliss Stebbins bought the modest home in 1865 and immediately made several renovations. In his autobiography, Mr. Stebbins states “I raised the wing to 1 ½ stories; dug a cellar; raised the roof over the main part and added a one story section to the rear of the home.” C.B. Stebbins also wrote, “In 1872 I made extensive improvements in the house. I had an architect examine it and told him about what I wanted to do, and he decided that it would cost about \$1,500. I went to work according to the plans he prepared, and the expense was \$3,500! The house shows for itself.”

When C.B. Stebbins died in 1901, his daughter, Susan, inherited the home. Susan had a passion for collecting and filled the twenty-five room home and several outbuildings with antiques and collectibles—glass, books, lithographs, three hundred toy banks, pewter, miniature furniture, swordcanes, lusterware, old coins, campaign badges and more!



Following her death in 1937 at age 73, Susan Stebbins Stark's antique collection was willed to the people of Michigan, the Kalamazoo Valley Museum, the Public Museum of Grand Rapids, the Michigan State University Museum, the Michigan Historical Museum and the Henry Ford Museum. In fact, Henry Ford arrived at the home with two chauffeur-driven limousines to hand-pick items for his museum!

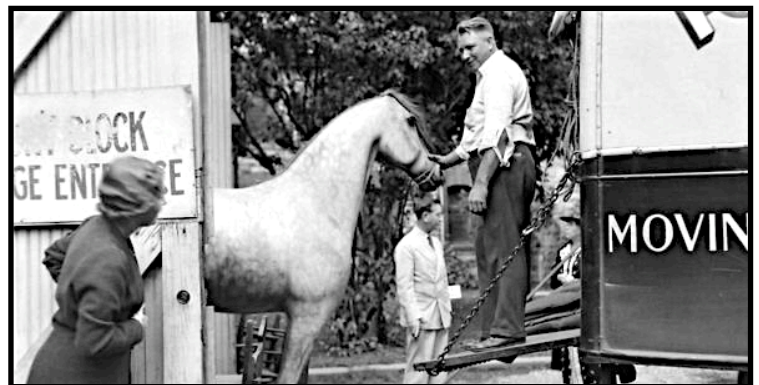
In 1945, R.E. Olds purchased the home and donated it to the Baptist Church next door, where he worshipped. The church decided to incorporate the home into the church and use it for its offices by building a new cut stone exterior along Capitol Avenue. The home is intact behind the new façade, except for not having front windows.



227 N. Capitol Avenue, Lansing, Michigan circa 1890 with Cortland Bliss Stebbins and his grandson, Stowell Cortland Stebbins on the front steps.



The interior of 227 N. Capitol with Mrs. Stark's collectibles.



Removing collectibles from the outbuildings after Susan Stebbins Stark's death.



The stone façade on the front and side of 227 N. Capitol today.



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P.O. Box 12095
Lansing, MI 48901

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Historical Society of Greater Lansing - Membership Application

Please accept my application for:

- New Membership
- Renewal Membership
- Gift Membership

in the Historical Society of Greater Lansing

I have enclosed:

- \$15 Individual Membership
- \$25 Family Membership
- \$150 Life Membership
- \$_____ Additional Gift to HSGL

Member Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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Make Checks Payable to
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Thank you for your support of our programs and activities.*