

History Explorer

Historical Society of Greater Lansing

www.LansingHistory.org

November 2012

Silent Auction Raises Over \$7,000

Thank you to everyone that came out to our annual silent auction in October! We had a great time, and raised over \$7,000 for future HSGL museum exhibits and development! This brings our total money raised for museum purposes over the past 13 months to over \$18,000 – not too bad! Thank you to everyone who donated, attended, worked at, and supported the auction. To see pictures of the event, visit: www.lansinghistory.blogspot.com.

The Sounds of Old Time Radio

Local radio pioneer Dave Downing will demonstrate how the sounds of yesteryear were created during his Sounds of Old Time Radio program presented by the Historical Society of Greater Lansing on Wednesday, November 14. Downing will explore the roots of radio and how many of the concepts which originated with the early days of radio are alive and well in modern radio, TV, audio books and video games. He will also demonstrate some of the principles of “theatre of the mind” with sound effects and will ask the audience to participate in creating some of their own sound effects. The program is free and open to the public. Parents are encouraged to bring their children.

What: The Sounds of Old Time Radio
When: Wednesday, November 14, 2012 - 7:00pm
Where: Capitol Area District Library, Downtown
401 South Capitol Avenue, Lansing

Membership Dues

Don't forget to renew your HSGL membership for another year. Many people's membership expired at the end of October, 2012. Your membership status is indicated on your newsletter mailing label or in your email, if you receive the newsletter electronically. Thank you.

Lansing High School Days Exhibit Opening November 30

Join us on Friday evening, November 30, for the opening of our next mini-museum exhibit, *Lansing High School Days*, at the Creyts Building (831 N. Washington) from 5:00–7:00pm. We have a great selection of artifacts from a dozen Lansing high schools, including Old Central, Eastern, Sexton, Everett, Harry Hill, Lansing Christian, St. Mary's, Resurrection, Gabriels, O'Rafferty, Lansing Catholic Central, and the Michigan School for the Blind. You'll love the artifacts you'll see – a 1955 prom dress, varsity sweaters and jackets, class rings, drama costumes, band uniforms, diplomas, football programs, sports jerseys, yearbooks, and much more! Don't forget to wear your school colors when you come!

The exhibit will be open the following dates: Friday, November 30, 5-7 pm, Sunday December 2, 1-4 pm, Sunday, January 6, 1-4 pm, Sunday, February 3, 1-4 pm, and Sunday, March 3, 1-4 pm. The exhibit will also be open for viewings by alumni groups, neighborhood organizations, classes, and other interested groups by appointment. Send an e-mail to info@lansinghistory.org or call 517-282-0671 to schedule a private viewing today!

HSGL Christmas Gift Membership

Give your family and friends the gift of history this year by purchasing a one year membership to the Historical Society of Greater Lansing. Gift memberships can be purchased online at our website, www.lansinghistory.org, or by sending in the membership form in the newsletter. Please include the contact information for the person or family receiving the membership and your payment. The membership will be activated at the time of purchase, and is good for twelve months.

James A. Hamilton

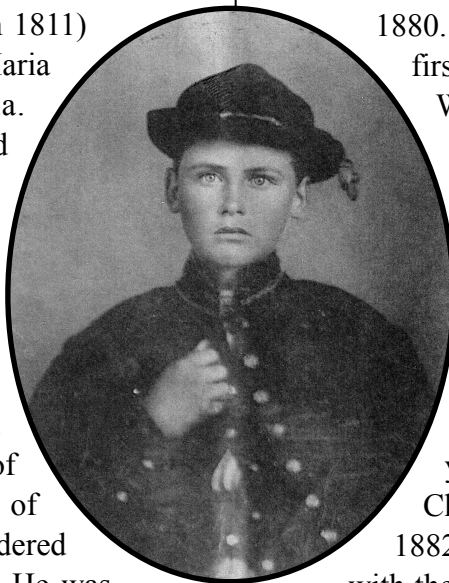
One of Lansing's Last Boys in Blue

by Jesse Lasorda with contributions by Dave Hoeflinger

While the United States celebrates the sesquicentennial of the beginning of the Civil War, one should not forget one of the last Civil War survivors from Lansing, Mr. James "Al" A. Hamilton. James left his mark on the mid-Michigan community not only for his service to his country but also for his overwhelming commitment to give back to his fellow veterans after the war.

James was born December 6, 1847 to William and Maria Hamilton on their family farm in Meridian Township. James's father William (born 1811) was of Scottish decent; his mother Maria (born 1822) was from Pennsylvania. During his early years, James resided near the village of Okemos.

James enlisted into Michigan's 12th Infantry, Company G on August 16, 1864 in Jackson at the tender age of 17. As a young infantryman, he was involved in numerous battles and skirmishes in his nearly one year of service. He frequently told the story of witnessing General Robert E. Lee surrendered while on picket duty on April 9, 1865. He was also on picket duty when Confederate General Kirby Smith disbanded his army on May 26, 1865. During the war, the 12th Michigan Infantry lost one officer and fifty-two enlisted men to injuries and wounds. The 12th also lost three officers and 372 enlisted men to disease. Total losses for the 12th were 428 men. James was mustered out of the Army on June 17, 1865 at DeVall's Bluff, Arkansas



James's brother, Edward Hamilton, also served during the Civil War and was wounded at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. He was taken prisoner and confined to Andersonville Prison in Georgia for twenty-three months. Andersonville Prison was noted for its inhumane treatment of Union soldiers during the war. James's uncle, Austin Whiteman, also served during the Civil War and was wounded at the Battle of Gettysburg.

After the war, James returned to the Okemos community where, for a time, he worked as a carpenter. On October 18, 1879 James married Ella (born 1849), who was from New York. The couple moved from Okemos to Lansing on North Walnut Street circa 1880. In September 1889 the couple had their first child, a daughter that they named Bessie. While in Lansing, James worked in the building and construction trades. Many homes and plants were built as a direct result of his long-time carpentry skills.

James's commitment to the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.), a veteran's origination, was beyond reproach. He was the commander for ten years of the Lansing Branch of the G.A.R., Charles T. Foster Post #42 (organized in 1882). He also served at the national level with the G.A.R. as the quartermaster until his 94th birthday. He played a leading role in Memorial Day festivities in the Lansing community.

One of the annual events in which the Charles T. Foster Post #42 participated was the Memorial Day march from their Post located at the corner of East Michigan and South Washington Avenues to Mt. Hope Cemetery. From there the old soldiers



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P.O. Box 12095 ~ Lansing, MI 48901
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gathered at the Soldiers' Lot, the highest point in the cemetery. Flowers were placed at the graves of the soldiers and also laid in Sycamore Creek, a short distant away, for Navy veterans. Thousands of supporters would then gather in the basin of the cemetery to picnic. As the Civil War veterans aged, the annual march became more difficult and, eventually, the veterans were ferried to the cemetery with the assistance of automotive pioneer Ransom Olds.



On July 1, 1891 James received his first Civil War Pension check for the grand total of \$12. He was suffering the lingering effects of the war, which included the partial loss of his teeth, disease of the right leg, and rheumatoid arthritis. Often Civil War soldiers hired attorneys that specialized in helping soldiers obtain their pensions, as was the case with James, who hired O. L. Matthews of Lansing Michigan. By April 1926 his pension was increased to \$72 per month. In 1930 his monthly pension had reached \$100 per month.

In July 1938 Hamilton attended the 75th reunion at Gettysburg. He was 91-years-old at the time. As a memento, he was given a mule's shoe, which was unearthed seventy-five years after the battle at Gettysburg. He brought it back to Lansing after the reunion.

James Hamilton served four years as alderman for the City of Lansing during the regime of Mayor Hammel. He was a supervisor at that time as well. James was a life member of the Lansing Mason Lodge #33.

James and Ella Hamilton's only child Bessie married Henry Hoeflinger, who came to the United States from Germany in 1885 and became a citizen in 1892. The Hoeflingers raised several children while living on West Genesee Street among the many German immigrant families in Lansing's downtown area. The Hoeflingers are still present in the mid-Michigan area and I am very grateful for their willingness to share their wonderful family history.

According to local newspaper accounts, James and Ella were pillars of the community, living at 514 North Walnut Street in Lansing's north end (now known as Old Town) for more than forty years. James would walk down to the old north side drugstore daily to purchase a cigar while well into his nineties. James's wife Ella W. Hamilton passed in 1926 and is buried in Eaton County at Deepdale Cemetery.

James A. Hamilton "answered his last assembly call" on December 23, 1941, as reported by The State Journal. His obituary was extensive - not a surprise, considering his overwhelming desire to give back to his fellow man. He was laid to rest at Deepdale Cemetery.

As fitting tribute to Mr. James A Hamilton, the road on which the old homestead and farm where he grew up, located in Meridian Township, was named on his behalf - Hamilton Road. So, as we travel down Hamilton Road we should not forget the young boy in blue who served his country well.





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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:

- \$20 Individual Membership
- \$30 Family Membership
- \$100 Business Membership
- \$_____ Additional Gift to HSGL

Member Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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Via Email

Make Checks Payable to
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