



History Explorer

Historical Society of Greater Lansing

www.LansingHistory.org

January 2013

Lansing Sports Hall of Fame Tour

Join HSGL for an evening tour of the Greater Lansing Sports Hall of Fame with chairman Robert Emery on Thursday, January 17 at 7:00pm at the Lansing Center. The tour will include the chance to learn about Lansing area sports standouts and see many significant Lansing area sports objects, including memorabilia from NBA All Star Magic Johnson, Major League Baseball players John Smoltz, Vic Saier and Charlie Gehringer, NCAA wrestling champion Dave Porter, Olympians Judi Brown and Kevin Jackson, NFL referee Dean Look, MSU and NFL great Brad Van Pelt, Professional Tennis player Todd Martin, Big 10 Softball Coach of the year Carol Hutchins, hockey players Kip, Kelly and Kevin Miller, and more.

What: Lansing Sports Hall of Fame Tour
When: Thursday, January 17, 2013 - 7:00pm
Where: Lansing Center, Downtown
333 East Michigan Avenue, Lansing

Museum Update

The HSGL is pleased to announce that HSGL collections curator Adina Langer is busy setting up HSGL's very own collections storage system. Soon, our objects will be catalogued and will eventually be available online through our website for people to peruse and enjoy. The project, though, takes a lot of work. If you are interested in helping Adina with the cataloguing process, we'd love to hear from you! Please call Adina at (609)297-7023) or email her at artiflection@gmail.com to volunteer.

Lansing High School Days Exhibit Open!

A big thanks to everyone who has visited HSGL's current exhibit, *Lansing High School Days*, at the Cretys Building. The exhibit has been open a month and we have already had more than a hundred visitors attend. Thanks you also to everyone who loaned or donated items for the exhibit.

We have a large 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: Sunday, February 3, 1:00-4:00pm and Sunday, March 3, 1:00-4:00 pm. The exhibit is located at the Cretys Building, 831 N. Washington, Lansing.

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.

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.

**Dr. L. Anna Ballard, M.D.
Lansing's First Female Physician**

by
Karen Berg Douglas

In the winter of 1848 Lansing was beginning to emerge as a growing community with 1,200 residents.

Appleton Ballard was looking for a new home for his family and traveled here from Sparta, Ohio, with a few friends, to scout out the territory. Evidently, he liked what he saw, because in April of that year he hitched up a wagon train and headed for Michigan.

Ballard drove the two-covered wagons with his three older sons: James, David and Henry. Following behind in a carriage, driven by Epiphene Ellenwood Ballard, his pregnant wife, were their two daughters, Sindenia and Eunice, and two younger sons, Alonzo and Benjamin. The journey took about two weeks.

Two months later, on July 21, 1848, Epiphene Ballard gave birth to her eighth child in a simple plank house on the East Bank of the Grand River in Lansing.

The baby girl was christened Lydia Anna Ballard.

One day, however, she would be known as Lansing's first female medical physician: Dr. L. Anna Ballard.

The Early Years

The Ballard family settled into the old plank house, but they only lived there for just a few months. The area was the business center of the new city for a short time until businesses began to move across the river, up Main Street, toward what became Washington Avenue.

Appleton Ballard had bought some lots on the South side of Washington. He was anxious to move to the new location, but it was difficult to find a carpenter - or the lumber - to build a new home because so many new settlers were moving into the area.

So, according to family history, Ballard "exercised his ingenuity" and came up with a way to get the plank house with mother and baby safely over to the new lot. He

arranged to have the house, and all of its contents, lifted onto a raft and propelled upstream to the new location!

The following year, the family moved to a farm south of Okemos. It, too, would be a temporary location as they began to be bothered by howling wolves prowling around their house at night. Sometimes, they even scratched at their doors. The neighborhood men staged wolf hunts, fearing for the safety of their children, as well as their pets and farm animals. And shortly thereafter, the Ballard family decided to move into town, again.

A tract of land north of the city was purchased one winter. By spring, a house was built, the family moved in and the Ballard boys had cleared the forest of heavy timber for spring crops. And before long, Appleton and Epiphene had two more daughters: Sarah and Alice.

Friends and neighbors knew the Ballards as a warm, close-knit and faith-filled Christian family. They worked hard all week and piled into their ox-driven wagon each Sunday morning for worship services at the First Methodist Church. On rainy days they dodged stumps in the crooked dirt road that often brought mud halfway to the hubs of the wheels on their wagon. Snowy, wintry days took them even longer to reach their destination, but God was paramount to their lives and living.

Anna attended Cedar Street School. She liked the challenge of a spelling contest with other students, and what she later described as "the famous mental arithmetic drill." This gave her an opportunity to compete with teachers, along with Judge Russell Ostrander and Dr. Robert Haze, one of Lansing's early physicians.



A childhood photo of Anna

Following her public school education, Anna enrolled at the Michigan Female School, described as "an educational Mecca" for young women. When she graduated in 1869, she secured a two-year teaching position at Central High School in Lansing.

The Road to a Medical Career

The road that Anna traveled to fulfill her dream of becoming a medical doctor could have been just as challenging as the bumpy, crooked road her family traveled to reach Lansing in 1848.

But Anna never relinquished her dream.

She possessed a strong independent spirit of commitment, intellect, and dedication for bettering the health of humanity - a spirit that embraced her heart at an early age. Anna did not want to practice homeopathy, like many women chose to do.

She wanted to be a medical doctor - with a college degree.

Fortunately, time was on Anna's side. The University of Michigan in Ann Arbor began accepting women as students in January of 1870. Shortly thereafter,

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Michigan's Medical School – the first major medical school to teach science-based medicine – admitted 18 women.

A year later, in 1871, Anna completed her two-year teaching position at Central High School and accepted a job as a clerk and a medical student at a drug store in DeWitt. Her instructor was Dr. G. W. Topping, physician, surgeon and druggist - and the husband of her sister Sindenia. Anna was a student in the Department of Medicine and Surgery at U-M during the 1873-74 academic school year.

Unfortunately, the male-dominated profession was still suffering from growing pains. Many members of the all-male faculty believed the subjects taught might offend “the sensibilities” of female students. Others protested by questioning a woman’s “physical incapacity” to practice medicine. And, some suggested that a separate “Female Medical College” be constructed - in Detroit.

It is difficult to determine if the controversy affected Anna, but she left the U-M and continued her studies at the Woman’s Hospital Medical College in Chicago - a college that later affiliated with Northwestern University.

And, on February 28, 1878, Dr. Lydia Anna Ballard received her medical degree – 42 years before women had the right to vote!

To enhance her knowledge and skills, Dr. Ballard served as resident physician in the Dr. Mary Thompson Hospital for Women and Children in Chicago for a year, following graduation.

In 1879, she returned to Lansing to be close to her aging parents and opened a medical practice for women and children. The sign on the door would read: “Dr. L. Anna Ballard, M.D.” She would maintain the practice for more than 50 years.

A Medical Practice in Lansing

Interestingly, Dr. Ballard received a warm welcome from her male colleagues in the local medical community upon her arrival in Lansing. She was greeted with kindness, respect and friendship.

Within a short time she was recognized as competent and dedicated - and a leader in every sense of the word.

While maintaining her practice, Dr. Ballard taught classes in the Lansing Nurses Training School; helped to organize the Lansing Medical Society in 1882, later serving as its secretary and president; and also helped to organize the Ingham County Medical Society, where she held the positions of secretary and treasurer.

In 1887, eight years after Dr. Ballard opened her practice, she addressed a joint meeting of the Judiciary Committee of the Michigan Legislature, and led a successful appeal that amended the law on the age of consent for young girls from 10 to 14. Her presentation was

considered so outstanding that a leading lawyer of the House had the speech printed in pamphlet form and distributed to lawyers throughout Michigan.

By the end of her first 12 years in practice, Dr. Ballard had earned an enviable reputation in the medical profession and was called to all parts of the State for counsel among women.

In addition, she was cited as the only doctor in Michigan willing to testify in court regarding injuries to women and children that were sustained through abuse.

Dr. Ballard’s professionalism in medicine continued to bring her respect from her male colleagues, as well. In 1908, upon his impending death, Dr. Rush B. Shank – with an endorsement from the Medical Society – asked Dr. Ballard to deliver the eulogy at his funeral on behalf of the medical profession. Shank was the oldest and one of the most prominent and highly respected physicians in Lansing.

In 1923, when Dr. Ballard retired, there was another honor.



Dr. L. Anna Ballard, M.D.

“In recognition of your long useful and ethical career, the profound and genuine interest you have always manifested in the activities of the Ingham County Medical Society during the active days of your practice, the Ingham County Medical Society, by unanimous vote, wishes to express its esteem and respect for you as a colleague and noble citizen by conferring upon you “Life Membership” in the Ingham County Medical Society.” – J. Earl McIntyre President and Max Wershow, Secretary-Treasurer, Ingham County Medical Society – December 25, 1923.”

Dr. Ballard never married. She died on August 23, 1934 at her home at 312 N. Capitol Avenue. Her body was interred at Mount Hope Cemetery.

Her obituary would reveal that she rounded out her life with numerous commitments to her community. She was a member of Central Methodist Episcopal Church, the YWCA, the Industrial Aid Society and the Lansing Woman’s Club. She also was a charter member of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, and president of the local chapter from 1887 to 1891. Later, she wrote articles for its national publication.

But, the practice of medicine was her passion and she remained grateful for the opportunity to serve.

“Among my never-fading memories,” Dr. Ballard once wrote, is the courteous way I was received by my brother physicians and ... their kindness to a pioneer woman physician.”

Dr. L. Anna Ballard saw a need and fulfilled her mission. She will be remembered for her pioneer spirit, as a role model for women in medicine, and her dedicated commitment to humankind - not only in this city, but in this state and beyond.



Historical Society of Greater Lansing
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Lansing, MI 48901

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