

# History Explorer

Historical Society of Greater Lansing

[www.LansingHistory.org](http://www.LansingHistory.org)

April 2013

## Secrets of the English Inn Museum Fundraiser 677 South Michigan Road (M-99), Eaton Rapids Wednesday, May 15, 2013 - 6:00pm-8:00pm

Join the Historical Society of Greater Lansing on Wednesday, May 15 to learn the Secrets of the English Inn. We'll take a behind the scenes tour of the guest rooms, learn about the original family that built the house (Janet and Irving Reuter, one-time president of Oldsmobile), discuss how it was once used by the Catholic Church, and explore all of the hidden secrets of the Inn, including sneaking a peak into the Prohibition-era booze storeroom and offer guests a chance to crack the jewel safe where Mrs. Reuter kept her loveliest treasures.

Tickets for the event are \$50 per person. All proceeds will benefit the Historical Society of Greater Lansing's museum fund. The evening includes unique behind the scenes tours, hors d'oeuvres, and a cash bar. Tickets can be purchased at [www.lansinghistory.org](http://www.lansinghistory.org), by clicking on the English Inn fundraiser tab, or by sending in the enclosed ticket form with payment. Sponsorships are also being sought.

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## Michigan School for the Blind Tour Thursday, April 18, 2013 - 6:00pm (note time) 1141 North Pine Street, Lansing

HSGL President Valerie Marvin will lead a tour of the campus of the Michigan School for the Blind beginning at 6:00 pm. The tour will conclude with a light snack at Rizzi Designs, in the old School for the Blind Superintendent's Home.

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## Lansing Eats! Recipe Book

HSGL is collecting recipes for a small recipe book that we'll be selling at our summer openings of our Lansing Eats! Exhibit. HSGL wants you to send your favorite recipes to us for inclusion in the book. Please send your recipe via e-mail to [info@lansinghistory.org](mailto:info@lansinghistory.org) or in the mail to HSGL, P.O. Box 12095, Lansing MI 48901. Recipes must be submitted by April 26. Thank you!

## Annual Meeting – Lost Lansing Walking Tour A Look at Some of Lansing's Missing Historic Sites Saturday, June 15, 2013 – 10:00 am Tour meets outside of Lansing City Hall

Learn about some of Lansing's most tragic losses during this walking tour of missing historic buildings. Sites to be discussed include the old City Hall and Post Office, the Olds Home, the Barnes Castle, and others. Tour participants will need to be able to talk to Cooley Gardens, located on Malcolm X Street, next to the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame (where we'll have access to restrooms). We'll enjoy a picnic lunch there. A \$5 per person donation is requested to cover the cost of food. Please RSVP by June 12 if you wish to stay for lunch.

At Cooley Gardens we will hold our annual business meeting, including the election of board members. Board members up for re-election this year are:

Valerie Marvin, President  
Bill Castanier, Vice President  
Adam Beckwith, Secretary  
Tim Kaltenbach, Treasurer  
Harry Emmons, Trustee 2013 - 2015

Additional walking tours will be offered on Saturday, July 20, and Saturday, August 17. To keep up with all of HSGL's upcoming events, visit our website, [www.lansinghistory.org](http://www.lansinghistory.org).

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## Lansing Eats! Exhibit

The next HSGL exhibit will focus on Lansing's food culture. At present, we are looking for objects to be loaned or donated for the exhibit in the following areas:

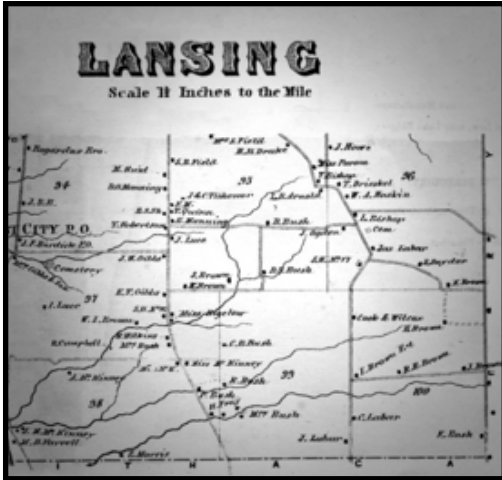
- Menus, ephemera and objects related to Lansing-area restaurants and food purveyors;
- Ration books or anything related to victory gardening during WWII;
- Cooking-related appliances purchased in Lansing;
- Bottles or containers from Lansing-area food and beverage companies (like QD or Hi-Klas);
- Recipe-compilation books from Lansing-area religious and community organizations.

If you have something you would consider sharing with us, please contact Adina Langer at (609) 297-7023 or e-mail her at [artiflection@gmail.com](mailto:artiflection@gmail.com).

**Lansing: the City You thought You Knew**

*by Zig Olds*

The Lansing Area has a rich and well documented history as the State Capital, Automotive Pioneer, and Agricultural Education Leader. Beneath these well known, well documented aspects there is another layer of lesser explored topics related to Lansing. Maybe they have been forgotten with time, or maybe they occurred on a less active side of town. Do you remember the Button Factory in Lansing? The following short tales are intended to give a brief look at some aspects of Lansing History that may have faded from view.



**A City in the Forest**

1874 saw the construction of Lansing's newest lumber mill. The main building was 24x60ft with an engine room comprising 12x36ft. A 40 horsepower engine operated seven saws (one Circular, three Table, two Cut-off, and one Drag Saw). The Mill employed seven men to haul fresh cut timber for possessing. The products produced at the mill included basic building materials/lumber, spokes, and handles for tools. In its first six months of operation the mill encountered better yields than expected, and was still just beginning to make way in the 90 acres it proposed to clear. The compound had abundant storage sheds, and its own rail switch to quickly access the loading of cars, which of course required train service to the area.

**Historical Society of Greater Lansing**

P.O. Box 12095 ~ Lansing, MI 48901  
[www.LansingHistory.org](http://www.LansingHistory.org)

*Officers & Board Members*

- |                                 |                           |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Valerie Marvin - President      | Lille Foster - Trustee    |
| Bill Castanier - Vice President | Adina Langer- Trustee     |
| Adam Beckwith - Secretary       | Jesse LaSorda - Trustee   |
| Tim Kaltenbach - Treasurer      | Erik Nelson - Trustee     |
| Joan Bauer - Trustee            | Zig Olds - Trustee        |
| Harry Emmons - Trustee          | Nathalie Winans - Trustee |



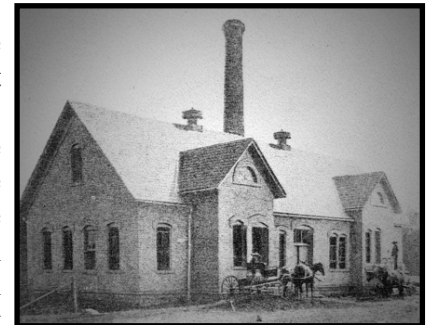
**Tree Trunks bring Train Tracks**

The Timber Industry was significant to the economy of Lansing, and the entire county. Lumber and Pulpwood products were shipped from Lansing to various destinations for further processing. It was the need to ship these items which brought the Railroad to this region. The potential for economic growth (created by the forthcoming railroad) caused a great amount of competition between Lansing and the surrounding communities, as to where the Depot would be built. Depots generally were constructed where sawmills were located, and this gave Lansing an advantage in the acquisition of a depot. The addition of rail service helped propel Lansing to the next level, becoming an important center for agricultural trade once the timber resources were exhausted. At this point, a variety of new businesses were needed, and born to support Lansing area farms and industries.

**Rolling whitecaps of a different variety**

Founded in 1888, The Lansing Cheese and Butter Manufacturing Company started in a humble wooden frame structure located on a half-acre lot that it shared with a small creek. In 1895 the name became the Lansing Cooperative Dairy, and it serviced 94 patrons. Continued success created the need for a larger, more formidable, structure. 1906 saw the construction of the current building made from concrete and creamy white colored

bricks made in Chaska, Minnesota. The Cooperative paid out nearly \$50,000 to its patrons in 1910. At the end of the day, the Creamery would provide free buttermilk to children who came equipped with empty pitchers. Any unclaimed excess was then poured into the neighboring creek, causing it to run white at times. The Creamery ceased functioning in 1952, and the building was relegated to storage use. Recently (2008), the property sold at auction for \$7500, with the new owner intending to restore the structure to its former glory and possibly converting it into a private residence.



**Buttons help keep it all together**

J.M Turner began The Lansing Company in 1897 for the purpose of manufacturing pearl buttons for garments. By the mid-Twenties styles and technologies had changed, and the Lansing Company grew with these changes. Lansing stopped manufacturing its own buttons, and moved into the Import and Distribution of buttons from around the world. Glass buttons from Czechoslovakia, ornate designs from Holland, Italy, France and Japan, and domestically made Bakelite varieties all encompassed the Lansing product line. In 1972 the Lansing Company employed more than 200 workers and maintained a 90,000 square foot building. This Facility is where the imported buttons are packaged (“carded”) for retail distribution and sale. Over 6000 different styles are offered with 400 million buttons being shipped out annually. In order to keep the large inventory of little

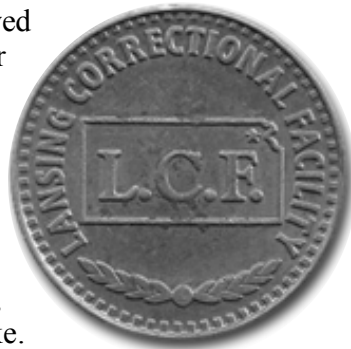


buttons organized and maintained, Lansing was an early investor in computer technology. Since 1961 the company has relied heavily upon computers for everything from purchasing to payroll. Today the BlumenthalLansing Company (as it is now known) continues to be a worldwide leader in button distribution.

Lansing from “the inside”

**Lansing from “the inside”**

As a Community expands, so does its need to maintain certain unsavory elements. For over 140 years, the Lansing Correctional Facility has provided business, jobs, and project labor for the Greater Lansing Community. Built on a tract of 40 acres, the Main Building was completed in 1867, largely by inmate labor. Life behind the stone walls was referred to as dreary and monotonous. The facility was governed by the “silent system” in which prisoners were not allowed to converse with one another *under any circumstances*. The “silent system” was common practice among prisons across the United States during the 1800’s. Discipline at the institution was rigid for everyone including Officials, Officers, and Prisoners alike. Corrections Officers received only one day off (a Sunday) for every five continuous weeks of work. Inmates were occupied by manufacturing Bricks, Soap, Paint, Furniture and License



Plates for the State. In 1911 the penitentiary opened the “Tinker Shop” where visitors could purchase items crafted by the prisoners. Among the more popular items were brooms made from straw harvested from the prison farm. Though farming at the facility was heavily reduced in 1975, the Prisoner living conditions improved greatly over their 19<sup>th</sup> Century counterparts, including televisions supplied to the cell blocks. In more recent times the Lansing Correctional Facility became the oldest adult correctional facility to receive 100% in an American Correctional Association accreditation audit.



**The Fords invade Lansing by air**

Just as Railroads played a major role in Lansing’s initial growth, a new form of transportation was poised to move Lansing even further ahead. In 1926 Henry Ford hired noted architect Albert Kahn to oversee construction of what would become Ford Hangar at the Lansing Airport. The purpose of the structure was to allow the manufacture and display of Ford’s Tri-Motor Airplanes to a more central audience. Most airplane hangars of the time were poorly constructed clumsy structures with minimal lighting. Khan employed a cantilever design which allowed the space to be free of columns thereby maximizing the available work area. He also innovated the way in which natural light was utilized via the large sliding glass doors combined with large windows throughout the structure. Ford’s plans for the Tri-motor plane fizzled during the Depression Years. The hangar has since changed hands many times, but it remains intact and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

**More than just a name...**

Lansing’s past has many interesting tales, some woven taller than others. The brief topics covered here are just to name a few lesser known examples in Lansing History...History involving Lansing, NY, Lansing, NC, Lansing, MN, Lansing IA, Lansing, KS and, Lansing IL respectively. Not only do these various locations share a great name, but they also share the same calendar...Happy April 1<sup>st</sup> everyone.



Historical Society of Greater Lansing  
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 \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Please Send The Newsletter  
Via Email

Make Checks Payable to  
**Historical Society of Greater Lansing**

*The Historical Society of Greater Lansing is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit corporation.  
Thank you for your support of our programs and activities.*

**Historical Society of Greater Lansing English Inn Fundraiser**

Wednesday, May 15, 2013 - 6:00pm-8:00pm

English Inn - 677 South Michigan Road (M-99) - Eaton Rapids

Number of tickets \_\_\_\_\_ Total enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (\$50.00 per person)  
See Reverse for Sponsorship Opportunities

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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Make checks payable to the **Historical Society of Greater Lansing**. Mail to P.O. Box 12095, Lansing, MI 48901

**Historical Society of Greater Lansing English Inn Fundraiser  
Event Sponsorship Opportunities**

\_\_\_\_\_ \$100 Additional Gift – Copper - ¼ page advertisement

\_\_\_\_\_ \$250 Additional Gift – Silver- ½ page advertisement

\_\_\_\_\_ \$500 Additional Gift – Gold - full page advertisement

We will contact you about artwork for your advertisement.

Make checks payable to the **Historical Society of Greater Lansing**. Mail to P.O. Box 12095, Lansing, MI 48901

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