



# History Explorer

Historical Society of Greater Lansing

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

May 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 calling (517) 282-0671. Tickets may also be purchased at the door.

HSGL would also like to thank our Honorary Host Committee for their help in supporting this event:

**Mr. Tim Barron**

**Honorable Joan Bauer & Mr. Doug Langham**

**Mayor Virg & Ms. Teri Bernero**

**Mr. Jack & Sue Davis**

**Dr. Eva Evans**

**Judge Charles & Ms. Judith Filice**

**Ms. Maureen and Mr. Michael Hirten**

**Mayor David and Ms. Christine Hollister**

**President Brent and Risé Knight**

**Mr. J. Peter and Ms. Susan Lark**

**President Don LeDuc and Ms. Susan Coley**

**Mr. Guillermo Lopez**

**Senator Gretchen Whitmer and Dr. Marc Mallory**

## HSGL Bids Board Member Farewell

The HSGL Board would like to say a fond farewell to Lille Foster, a longtime HSGL member and supporter. Lille served on HSGL's board from 2010 – 2013 as a trustee. During this time Lille played an integral role in many important HSGL activities, including organizing a tour of Lansing's historic downtown churches for our 2011 annual meeting, and helping rewrite HSGL's mission statement in 2012. She and her husband Win have volunteered countless hours on assorted HSGL projects. We will certainly miss working with her on the board, but look forward to continuing to see both Lille and Win at upcoming HSGL events!

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## 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).

### Oral History Recordings

This coming summer, the HSGL is planning to increase our efforts to record oral histories with members of the Lansing community. Throughout the past year about a dozen oral histories have been recorded. These histories have been a great source of information for us, and have helped immensely with the planning of our pop-up exhibits, the writing of tour scripts, and other projects. We're looking to expand this effort, which means we need volunteers who are willing to tape future interviews. Can you help us out? Equipment and training will be provided by HSGL. If you would like to volunteer, please call us at 517-282-0671 or send an e-mail to [info@lansinghistory.org](mailto:info@lansinghistory.org). Thank you!

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### Lansing Eats! Exhibit Opening

Mark your calendars for Friday, May 31 from 5:00 – 7:00 pm for the opening of HSGL's newest exhibit, *Lansing Eats!* The exhibit, which will be on display at the Creyts building (831 N. Washington), will include items from the last 100 years of eating in Lansing.

We'll start by exploring how food was produced and acquired in and around Lansing, from turn-of-the-century farms and butcher shops, to food rationing and Victory Gardens during WWII, to contemporary community gardens such as the Hunter Park Garden House affiliated with the Allen Neighborhood Center.

Next we'll take a look at how food was packaged, promoted, and distributed in Lansing, focusing on places like Winans Dairy, Hi-Klas Bottling Company, Fabiano's Candy, and iconic restaurants like Dines, Jim's Tiffany, and Tango's. And speaking of famous, we'll bring you back to Martha Dixon's mid-century kitchen at WJIM (now WLNS) in Lansing. Martha's spirit lives on through her cookbooks and transcripts from her popular television show.

Finally, we'll dive into how people appreciate food in Lansing. You'll have an opportunity to thumb through classic cookbooks, gather around an unusual dining room table, and share your favorite food memories on our Memory Map.

### HSGL Collections Now Properly Catalogued and Stored

HSGL took another important step towards our dream of a Lansing history museum this past month as a group of volunteers met to catalogue, box, and properly store the items in our permanent collection. The effort was led by HSGL collections curator Adina Langer, who has been building a database of objects in the collection, cataloguing each object, and building a collections storage system for us from the ground up. After spending many hours on this, she spent two days with HSGL volunteers Karen Douglas, Mary Johns, Nancy Logan, Valerie Marvin, Judy Pfaff, and Pat Lavolette labeling and boxing each item for permanent storage in our space in the Creyts building. At present we have about 200 objects in the collection, which is growing every day. If you would like to know more about what we are collecting, and what you might be able to donate, visit [www.lansinghistory.org](http://www.lansinghistory.org) and click on the Donate To Our Collections Link.

HSGL is also going on the road to promote our ideas for a museum, and our collecting goals. We're speaking to groups like the Rotary, Kiwanis, business associations, neighborhood organizations, religious groups, and others! If you'd like to invite one of our HSGL speakers to present a talk for your organization, please give us a call at 517-282-0671 or send an e-mail to [info@lansinghistory.org](mailto:info@lansinghistory.org).



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

## The History of the English Inn

by Erik Nelson

The English Inn is a restaurant and pub located on the historic Medovue Estate, in Eaton Rapids, Michigan. The property was originally developed in 1927 and has seen many changes in ownership and purpose in its near-90 years. The main home on the property was commissioned to be built by Irving Jacob Reuter (1885-1972) and his wife, Janet (1886-1984).

Having risen through the ranks at the Remy Electric Company, Irving Reuter caught the attention of corporate executives after Remy merged with General Motors in 1918. By 1925, he was appointed General Manager and president of the Oldsmobile Motor Car Company, headquartered in Lansing, Michigan. Throughout the company's 107 year history, over 14 million automobiles were produced in the company's Lansing factories.



The home commissioned south of Lansing was of Tudor revival style and was designed for the auto baron and his wife by Harold Childs of East Lansing, who also designed the Potter House. The home was erected by The Reniger Construction Company of Lansing. Named "Medovue" by the Reuters, construction of the 10,000 square foot home was completed in 1928 and utilized many cutting-edge construction techniques and modern conveniences. The home was constructed of steel and poured concrete and included features like automatic lighting in the closets, a turntable garage floor and a luxurious shower with multiple heads. The home even had a battery-operated "secret compartment" to hide Janet's jewelry.



In 1930, architect Kenneth Black designed an addition to the home, a prominent Tudor peak on the South East wing of the home. This addition accommodated an additional guest room and bathroom. The property currently sits on 15 acres in Eaton Rapids with the original

pergola, swimming pool and gazebo as well as an artesian well, fishpond, annual and perennial gardens, and nature trails.

Irving and Janet lived and lavishly entertained at Medovue from 1928 to 1936. Great names of American business and automotive giants were guests at social functions. Reuter abruptly retired from Oldsmobile in 1934 and he and Janet moved to Florida in 1936.



From 1940 to 1962 the Roman Catholic Church owned the property, and the Reverend Joseph H. Albers, first Bishop of the Diocese of Lansing, used the home as his private residence. In an effort to show modesty, Bishop Albers chose to use the original walk in closet as his sleeping quarters. A cross was embellished above his bed and the small room saw a new use. In the lower level of the home a room believed to have been a recreation room was converted into a chapel. Wood paneling was added as well as an altar and confessional.

Many verbal histories have been told about the period following the Catholic Diocese, however, records related to these uses have been difficult to find. The Medovue property was used for a period in the 1960's as a school for gifted and talented youth programs by Michigan State University. The 1970's and 1980's saw the home used as a nursing care facility for the elderly.

In 1989 the property was renovated and converted to an Inn, restaurant and conference center, listed in the State Register of Historic Sites in 1991. It is now owned by Gary and Donna Nelson and operated by their son Erik Nelson.





Historical Society of Greater Lansing  
P.O. Box 12095  
Lansing, MI 48901

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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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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Please Send The Newsletter  
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**Historical Society of Greater Lansing**

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Thank you for your support of our programs and activities.*