



# History Explorer

Historical Society of Greater Lansing

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

May 2014

## The Secrets Behind LCC's Herrmann House

*Tuesday, May 6, 2014 - 6:00pm  
Herrmann House - LCC Campus  
520 North Capitol Avenue  
\$50 per person*

Join HSGL for a behind the scenes look at the Herrmann House, home to LCC's first family, President Brent and Mrs. Rise Knight. Learn the history of the home, built in 1893 by John Herrmann. The Herrmann family operated an elegant store in Lansing specializing in bespoke men's suits for nearly 100 years. The evening includes hors d'oeuvres, a tour of the home, and a mini-exhibit of objects from the Herrmann family on display in the Rodgers Carrier home, also owned by LCC. Please see insert for information on tickets and sponsorships. All funds raised benefit the HSGL museum fund.

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## HSGL Annual Meeting

*Thursday, June 12, 2014 - 5:30pm  
Moores Park Pavillion*

Mark your calendars for HSGL's annual meeting on June 12 at Moores Park. Hot dogs, drinks, and paper products will be furnished by HSGL. Attendees are asked to bring a dish to pass. We will vote on an amendment to the bylaws and the 2014-2015 HSGL Board at that time. The proposed language and slate will be included in the June newsletter, which will be sent out early.

After we enjoy dinner, we'll hear a presentation by architectural historian Tegan Baiocchi on the career of Wesley Bintz, designer of the Moores Park Pool, as well as many other pools across the country. She'll also lead a tour beneath the pool, allowing us to examine the dressing rooms and other areas included in Bintz's design.

## Made In Lansing Exhibit Grand Opening

*Friday, May 30, 2014 - 5:00pm-7:00pm  
Lansing City Hall*

Join us for the opening of our newest pop-up exhibit, Made in Lansing. The exhibit chronicles nearly 125 years of invention and innovation in Lansing, while showcasing a wide variety of products made in and around our city, ranging from wheelbarrows to pocket protectors, patent medicines, furniture, bob sleighs, lawnmowers, watches, mittens, braille books, caskets, quilts, and more. The exhibit will also be open from 10:00am to 5:00pm on Saturday, May 31 for Be A Tourist in Your Own Town, and during regular City Hall business hours.

A second part of the Made in Lansing exhibit is being generously hosted by the R.E. Olds Transportation Museum. The exhibit includes the many other products that were produced in Lansing by the auto companies, besides automobiles! We'll also look at the history of the Lansing labor force, and the auto unions. This portion of the exhibit opens on Saturday, May 31, and will be available during regular museum business hours. If you are an HSGL member, please state this when paying your entry fee and receive a discount!

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## New Exhibit Case Bases

HSGL would like to say a big thank you to Mr. Glenn Williams of Tenor Clock Repair and Three Men and A Tenor for the wonderful new bases he built for our news exhibit cases in Lansing City Hall. The plexiglass case tops were given to us by the Michigan State University Museum, which no longer had need of them. Thanks so much to MSU and to Glenn for donating many hours of time and work for this project.

**The Rogers Carrier House  
at 528 North Capitol Avenue**

*by Johanna Balzer*

Now home to Lansing Community College, the Rogers/Carrier home belonged to my great aunt and uncle, Jane and Ralph Carrier. Designed by Lansing Architect, Darius Moon, and built in 1891, it is in the Queen Anne style, and listed on the State Register of Historic Places. The home was in continuous ownership of the Carrier family from 1903 to 1965. It has been restored and stands today as a reminder of the Victorian era, where one more curlicue, bay window, or turret only added to the ambiance of the home.

Uncle Ralph was a Lansing businessman. He founded Federal Drop Forge in 1920, which formerly stood on South Washington Ave. Ralph Carrier was a partner in one of the state's leading wholesale grocery concerns. He was involved in many civic and church groups, and at age 29 served as the youngest Lansing city alderman. Ralph also served for one year as mayor pro-tem. He died in 1944.

Aunt Jen, as we called her, was my grandfather, Doty Cushman's, sister. Prior to her marriage she taught in one of the one-room schools at Gunnisonville. Uncle Ralph and Aunt Jen were married in 1887. As a child, I

loved to visit this elegant home that was quite different from the farm where Aunt Jen had grown up and where my parents and I lived.

Aunt Jen, was tall and dignified, and I can still remember the elongated marquissette ring she wore on one of her tapered 85-plus year-old fingers. Her daughter, Florence, and son-in-law, Boyd Small lived with her. They were married in 1922.

Boyd was the founder in 1914 of Small's Men's Shop at 105 E. Michigan Ave. In 1919 it occupied the corner of the former Wentworth Hotel on the corner of Michigan and Grand. In 1928 it moved to the Michigan

Theatre Building at 211 South Washington. It did business until 1981, with Boyd leaving the shop in 1931. Boyd was a veteran of WWI.

A small child's mind could take the actual and imagined goings on in the home on journeys behind closed doors, under stairwells, and all the

way to the third floor attic. At Christmas time, the home would have a glowing tree in the front window or next to the fireplace. Aunt Jen would always have a beautifully wrapped gift for me. Sometimes it was one of the Avon children's sets. Other times it was a gift from Knapp's Department Store. I treasured these gifts from my beloved great aunt.

I have some pieces of furniture, a lamp, and vase from the home. It was Halloween 1954 when we climbed the backstairs to the maid's room where an antique desk waited for me, recognition that by being in Kindergarten, I would now need it to do my homework. Likely Aunt Jen thought I needed the desk because of her early career as a school teacher. I remember it coming down the stairs and out the door. There was a huge harvest moon, and the remaining leaves on the trees waved back in forth over



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the yellow-orange orb. I waited to see a witch fly past the moon, but was greatly relieved when it did not.

In the summer, we would often visit on Sunday afternoons. Boyd had a row of soft drinks lined up on a ledge along the basement stairs. He would let me pick out a bottle, and then he or Florence would pour it into a high-ball glass, fizzing over the ice cubes. The drinks would be placed on a tray and carried to the front porch, facing Capitol Avenue. We would sip our drinks while sitting on rattan chairs. I would think that things just couldn't be any more elegant.

They always drove a Cadillac, and Boyd would dust it with a feather duster. I can remember driving up to their home, and Boyd in the side yard dusting away. He was a sales representative, and often had a bank promotion item of some sort to give me. I still have a metal, red Ford bank from Boyd. I thought he was a refined and generous man.

I would have to be on my best behavior, and my parents were always dressed up when we went to Aunt Jen's. Sometimes she would have us over for a pancake supper in the dining room behind the French doors. One evening I mortified my mother by getting up from my chair, walking around the table, and carrying back the syrup to my plate. My mother asked, "Why didn't you ask someone to pass you the syrup?" She was that embarrassed by my lack of manners. I explained that they were all talking, and that I didn't want to interrupt. I was ashamed of not being mannerly. It was just so necessary to be proper in that Victorian home.

When Uncle Ralph was alive, they had maids. One of them was Margueritte Jackson. She was attending Michigan State University and later became the first

black history teacher at Lansing Sexton High School. Margueritte also was a charter docent for the State of Michigan Museum. Later she and her husband, Rex, moved not far from our home near Gunnisonville. She told my mother and I stories of what life really was like with the family in its informal times.

Margueritte loved liver and onions. Sometimes when the family was away, she would cook some for herself. Inevitably, Uncle Ralph would come home, smell them cooking, and come right into the kitchen and help himself. Poor Margueritte would go without her beloved liver and onions.



I remember Aunt Jen in her final days, lying in a bed in one of the second floor bedrooms. Great nephew, Jerry Cushman (later a teacher and administrator at Everett High School) and his bride, Joy, came up to her room right from their wedding with the attendants in their suits

and gowns to share their wedding joy with her, as she was too ill to attend the event.

Florence and Boyd lived in the home for a few more years, then moved into a condominium at 3333 Moores River Drive. We visited them a few more times before Boyd's death at age 93 in 1981. Later Florence moved to Roswell, New Mexico to live with her niece, Nancy Jane Carrier Christy. She died at age 94 in 1991. The Carriers are buried in Evergreen Cemetery.

*In addition to touring the Herrmann House at HSGL's May 6 fundraiser, we shall also be showing a small exhibit about the Herrmann family at the Roger Carrier Home, designed by Darius Moon. We'd like to thank Johanna Balzer for sharing this article that she wrote on the Rogers Carrier Home with us in anticipation of the event.*



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
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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 \_\_\_\_\_

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