

# History Explorer

Historical Society of Greater Lansing

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

March 2015

## Lansing Goes to War Exhibit Opening and Events

*Thursday, March 5, 2015 – 6:00pm*  
*Lansing City Hall - 124 W. Michigan Ave.*

Please join HSGL for the opening of our newest pop-up exhibit, Lansing Goes to War. The exhibit tells the stories of over a dozen local men and women who have answered the call to serve beginning with the Civil War and going through Desert Storm, including soldiers, sailors, Marines, flag bearers, nurses, pilots, medics, printers, auto mechanics, and radar operators. The exhibit also highlights the affect of war on Lansing, featuring war bonds, scrapbooks, ration booklets, a shell casing produced at Oldsmobile, and letters sent from Lansing service men and women to their loved ones overseas.

The exhibit will remain in Lansing City Hall throughout the end of June, and will be available and open during regular business hours, from 7:30am–6:00pm, Monday–Friday.

## Upcoming Events

*The Wartime Conscription of Swing*  
*By Prof. David Stowe*  
*Thursday, March 5 – 7:00pm*  
*Lansing City Hall - 124 W. Michigan Ave.*

Step back to the 1940s when war engulfed our country and changed everything – including music. Soldiers abroad and sweethearts back home sang along to tunes like White Christmas, I'll Be Seeing You In All the Old Familiar Places, In the Mood, and Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy. Enjoy these tunes yourself while learning about the marriage of war and swing with HSGL.

*Letters From My Father, A World War I Mechanic*  
*By Mary Jane Wilson*  
*Thursday, March 26 – 7:00pm*  
*Lansing City Hall - 124 W. Michigan Ave.*

Hear the firsthand account of Freeman 'Mac' McClintock's World War I service in France through his letters, as read by his daughter. One of dozens of Michigan mechanics recruited for their knowledge of automobiles, by the end of the war McClintock oversaw the garage where President Wilson and General Pershing's cars were kept during peace negotiations. In the years following the war, McClintock returned to Michigan and opened successful Packard and Cadillac dealerships in Lansing.



## Collectors Sought For Showcase Event

The first annual Collectors Showcase will be held March 21 from 12:00-3:00 p.m. at the Delta Township District Library. Individuals who would like to show off their collections and share their knowledge are being sought for this for-fun, no-sale event, co-sponsored by the Library and the Delta Township Historical Society. For more information or to register a collection, go to the Library's web site at [www.dtdl.org/events/collectors-showcase](http://www.dtdl.org/events/collectors-showcase), or call (517) 321-4014 ext. 603.

**State Building Lands:  
Giving Michigan Grounds for Complaint**

*By LeRoy Barnett*

As territories were admitted to the Union after the War of 1812, Congress tried to help the embryonic states establish their administrative centers. This assistance manifested itself as land grants for the purpose of constructing public buildings at the respective capitals.

The first state to benefit from this practice was Indiana, which received four sections of land in 1816. When, twenty years later, Michigan was ready to join Columbia's fold, it sought to be rewarded in a similar fashion. Its expectations were fulfilled by a federal statute approved on June 23, 1836, which awarded us five square miles of the public domain (surprisingly, our sister-state, Arkansas, was given three times as much land.) (1)

The pertinent law stated "that five entire sections of land, to be selected and located under the direction of the Legislature . . . are hereby granted to [Michigan] for the purpose of completing the public buildings of the said state, or for the erection of public buildings at the seat of government of the said state, as the Legislature may determine and direct." (2)

The following year, after Michigan was accepted into our national federation, the legislature directed Columbus C. Douglass to identify and claim the best five square miles of land available in the state. This job was completed late in 1837, and it generated almost instant controversy among some local residents. (3)

The disturbance arose because a few settlers tried to assert preemption rights to some of the selected tracts. About a quarter of the grant was contested by "squatters,"

and eventually the state had to yield 831 acres to nine of the claimants. (4)

Meanwhile, Michigan lost a little of its chosen property in Grand Rapids when the federal government ruled that some parcels were given to a missionary group in an earlier Indian treaty. (5)

To compensate partially for these setbacks, the state tried to select 277 acres at the point where the White River meets Lake Michigan southwest of Whitehall and Montague. (6)

As negotiations to acquire this property were underway, those lands whose titles were not in question were offered at auction for a minimum bid of \$12 per acre. (7) These sales were conducted to raise money for the new state capitol, which had to be permanently located no later than 1847. (8)

When the deadline drew nigh for Michigan to finally establish and erect its capitol, the legislators became concerned about the paucity of funds brought in by the state building lands. To improve this situation, the lawmakers reduced the minimum asking price to \$8 per acre in an effort to stimulate sales. (9) Furthermore, the solons set aside more state property to be auctioned off in support of constructing the new seat of government in Ingham County.

These additional lands were reserved in the recently platted settlement of Lansing, and they covered nearly ten acres of the downtown area. Also included in the act to supplement the building account were 192 lots comprised in the fifty acres that had been donated to Michigan by William H. Townsend as an inducement for placing the state capital next to lands owned by him. (10)

From the sale of these collective properties there was derived a total of nearly \$114,000, or proceeds of around \$45 per acre. (11) At a time when the public domain was selling for \$1.25 an acre, this represents a rather respectable price. Even so, the receipts covered only about 20% of the expenses incurred in developing the state capital and building new government offices in Lansing. (12)

<b>Historical Society of Greater Lansing</b>	
P.O. Box 12095 ~ Lansing, MI 48901	
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The inadequacy of federal land grants to defray the costs of establishing political centers in the new states was soon recognized by Washington. Consequently, those territories admitted to the Union between 1845 and 1861 each (except Texas) got ten square miles of public building land from Congress. In the following period through 1874 the size of the land award was increased to twenty sections, and thereafter no state received less than fifty square miles (excluding Alaska and Hawaii). (13)

From this perspective alone one could say that Michigan failed to get full measure from the national government. But our treatment at the hands of Washington is even more disturbing when examined in greater detail. This statement is made because it appears as if federal officials never approved our selections at the mouth of the White River, and neglected to fully restore the territory lost through preemption claims on state building lands. (14)

As a result of these oversights, Michigan received only 2,500 acres via the grant rather than the 3,200 acres to which it was entitled. (15) Assuming that this missing territory could have sold at the average price of \$45 per acre, our state was shortchanged by about \$31,500 (equivalent to around a quarter million contemporary dollars). (16) This loss may have robbed us of a chance to fully or quickly develop a new seat of government in Lansing, a thought which shows the importance of the smallest land grant Michigan received from the federal government. (17)

#### *Citations*

- (1) Orfield, Matthias. *Federal Land Grants to the States with Special Reference to Minnesota*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1915. Pages 74-75.
- (2) U. S. Statutes at Large, Volume 5, page 59.
- (3) Resolution 9, Laws of 1838, pages 284-286. House Document 15, 1839, pages 267-270.
- (4) House Document 57, 1841, Volume 2, pages 198-201. State Archives of Michigan, RG 60-8, box 42, folder 4.

- (5) State Archives of Michigan, RG 60-8, box 42, folder 4.
- (6) *Ibid.*
- (7) Act 68, Laws of 1844, page 90.
- (8) Constitution of Michigan, 1835, Article 12, Section 9.
- (9) Compiled Laws of 1846, page 243.
- (10) Resolution 43, Laws of 1848, page 461. Act 174. Laws of 1848, pages 232-234. Joint Document 3, 1848, pages 12-15. Joint Document 5, 1871, Volume 1, page 6. State Archives of Michigan, RG 60-8, Volume 23 and box 5, folder 9.
- (11) Seventy-third Annual Report of the Commissioner of the Land Office of the State of Michigan, 1914, page 13.
- (12) Annual Report of the Auditor General of the State of Michigan for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1874, page lviii.
- (13) Orfield, Matthias *Federal Land Grants to the States with Special Reference to Minnesota*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1915. Pages 74-75.
- (14) State Archives of Michigan, RG 60-8, box 42, folders 4, 8.
- (15) State Archives of Michigan, RG 64052, box 31, folder 5.
- (16) Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970. Washington, D. C., 1975. Pages 197-214.
- (17) Annual Report of the Auditor General of the State of Michigan for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1874, page clxi. *Laws Relating to State Lands*. Lansing, 1930. Pages 171-200.



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 \_\_\_\_\_

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.*

# WHEN JOHNNY COMES MARCHING HOME

## *A Celebration of Luther & Lafayette Baker, the Capture of John Wilkes Booth, and the End of the Civil War*

The final days of April, 1865, were a dark time for our country, as Americans waited to hear if John Wilkes Booth, Lincoln's assassin, would be found and brought to justice. The manhunt for Booth was led by none other than Lansing's Luther Baker, cousin of Lafayette Baker, then head of the Secret Service. These two Lansing men would capture the spotlight in the waning days of April. This April, HSGL will host a series of events marking the end of the Civil War and honoring the Baker family. For more detailed information regarding the events listed below, visit our website, [www.lansinghistory.org](http://www.lansinghistory.org).



### **The Mystery of Dr. Mudd & John Wilkes Booth Lecture**

*Thursday, April 9 – 7:00 pm*

*East Lansing Public Library – 950 Abbot Rd., East Lansing*

### **Reading of Michigan Civil War Love Letters**

*Saturday, April 11 – 2:00 pm*

*Library of Michigan – 702 W. Kalamazoo Street*

### **Lincoln Collection Pop-Up Exhibit**

*Tuesday, April 14 – Thursday, April 16 9:00 am – 9:00 pm*

*Downtown CADL, 401 S. Capitol Ave.*

### **Lincoln's Michigan Connections Lecture**

*Thursday, April 16 – 7:00 pm*

*Downtown CADL – 401 S. Capitol Ave.*

### **Lansing Goes to War Exhibit Viewing**

*Friday, April 24 – 5:00 pm*

*Lansing City Hall – 124 W. Michigan Ave.*

### **Capitol Grounds Civil War Monument Tour**

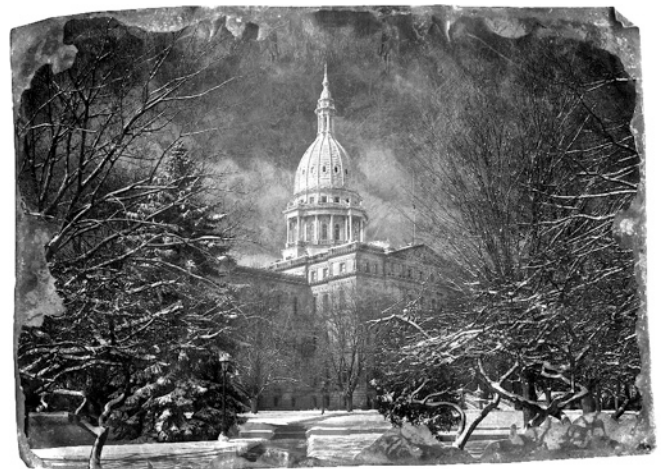
*Friday, April 24 – 6:30 pm*

*Michigan State Capitol*

### **Mount Hope Cemetery Civil War Tour**

*Saturday, April 25 – 1:00 pm*

*Mount Hope Cemetery, 1800 E. Mt. Hope Ave.*



### **Luther Baker and the Capture of John Wilkes Booth Lecture**

*Saturday, April 25 – 4:00 pm*

*LCC's Dart Auditorium, 500 N. Capitol Ave.*

### **Civil War Foods of the North and South Lecture**

*Sunday, April 26 – 1:15 pm*

*Michigan Historical Museum, 702 W. Kalamazoo St.*

### **Michigan's Civil War Battle Flags Viewing**

*Sunday, April 26 – 2:30 pm*

*Michigan Historical Museum, 702 W. Kalamazoo St.*

## Ingham County Historical Commission Members Sought

The Ingham County Historical Commission is currently seeking Ingham County residents to serve on the Ingham County Historical Commission. Please see the requirements below if you are interested. Those who wish to apply should visit <http://bc.ingham.org/AppointedBoards.aspx> or contact Becky Bennett at [bbennett@ingham.org](mailto:bbennett@ingham.org) or 517-676-7200 for more information.

### ADVISORY BOARD SUMMARY SHEET

#### COUNTY OF INGHAM, MICHIGAN

NAME OF BOARD/COMMISSION: Historical Commission

APPOINTED BY: Board Chairperson, with Administrative Services Committee serving as liaison.

COMPOSITION: Nine members; Commissioners may serve.

LENGTH OF TERM: Members are appointed to three-year, staggered terms expiring December 31.

AUTHORITY: Created by Ordinance (Board Resolution #74-202)

PER DIEM: None

OATH OF OFFICE: None required.

#### SUMMARY OF DUTIES/RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Commission studies and advises the Board with respect to all matters pertaining to history, acts as liaison on historical matters between the Board and other organizations and persons, keeps a record of its proceedings and actions, and reports to the Board, in writing, at least annually of its activities and recommendations. It develops, promotes, conducts and participates in historical projects, programs, activities and services. The Commission is authorized to accept, hold, control, administer and disburse property and monies for historical purposes in the name of the County, subject to the approval of the Board. It may negotiate and enter into, or recommend contracts pertaining to, historical matters in the name of the County, subject to the approval of the Board.

MEETINGS: Held on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the Courthouse, Mason.