

# History Explorer

Historical Society of Greater Lansing

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

June 2016

## Upcoming Events

### Be A Tourist in Your Own Town - *Lansing Has Fun!*

*Saturday, June 4, 2016 - 10:00 am - 5:00 pm*  
*Lansing City Hall - 124 W. Michigan Ave.*

Join HSGL for the reboot of our *Lansing Has Fun!* exhibit! The summer portion of the exhibit will feature artifacts from several Lansing area clubs, fraternal organizations, and civic organizations such as the Lansing Rotary, the Boy Scouts, the Lansing Woman's Club, and the Masons. We'll also tell stories and share photos and artifacts from Lake Lansing amusement park, local Lansing rock and country bands, mid-Michigan DJs, parades, River Fest, the Michigan Festival, and everyone's favorite summer sport-baseball. Be sure to stop by! (Be A Tourist passports are not required for entry.)

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### HSGL Annual Meeting - A History of Fenner Nature Center

*Thursday, June 9, 2016 - 7:00 pm*  
*Fenner Nature Center - 2020 E. Mount Hope Ave.*

Summer is the perfect time to enjoy one of our city's greatest treasures - Fenner Nature Center. We'll join longtime member and former President of the Friends of Fenner Nature Center Ron Eggleston for a talk on the history of Fenner Nature Center for our annual meeting. Ron's presentation will take place in the Visitors Center. Interested members are encouraged to arrive early at 6:00 and join Ron for a short hike on the trails before the meeting.

The property that is today Fenner Nature Center was once part of Springdale, a large farm owned by J.M. Turner. The farm passed down through the Turner family through multiple generations. By the time Scott Turner acquired the farm around 1900, it had dwindled to less than 150 acres. In 1952 Scott offered to sell the farm to the City of Lansing, stating that he wished it to remain in a somewhat primitive state. Lansing's City Council agreed to purchase the land for a park late that same year.

In 1958 Carl Fenner, a forester educated at MAC, became the new head of the Lansing Parks Department. Inspired by the Morton Arboretum in Illinois, Fenner set out to create an ambitious park where Lansing area residents could pursue "information, instruction and general knowledge concerning landscaping, gardening, forestry, botany, and related subjects." Arboretum Park, as it was then known, opened on August 1, 1959, to a crowd of 11,000 visitors. In 1965 the City of Lansing renamed the park The Carl G. Fenner Arboretum.

Today "the Arb", as it is still known to some Lansing residents, is jointly managed by the City of Lansing and the Friends of Fenner Nature Center. Every year Fenner hosts dozens of school tours, a series of summer camps, and the ever-popular Apple Butter Festival and Maple Syrup Festival. It continues to be an excellent resource for Lansing area residents.

As our bylaws require, we will be voting on the HSGL Board for the 2016-2017 year at the meeting. The proposed slate of candidates for the board includes:

Bill Castanier, President	Jesse LaSorda, Trustee
Valerie Marvin, Vice President	Zig Olds, Trustee
Ron Emery, Secretary	Mary Kwas, Trustee
Tim Kaltenbach, Treasurer	Norm Charles, Trustee

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### Historic REO Town Tour

*Saturday, June 18, 2016 - 10:00 am*  
*Tour meets at the BWL REO Town Depot -*  
*1203 S. Washington Ave*

In 1903, when Ransom Olds made an announcement that he would build his new REO automobiles south of the railroad tracks on Washington Street, the area became known as REO Town. Shortly after, in 1903, a new brick depot was built by the Grand Truck Railroad. In the years that followed the REO plant and Clubhouse were constructed. REO Town grew to become a busy industrial and entertainment center.

After a long period of decline following the closure of the factory, REO Town is once again experiencing new growth and development. Our tour will begin at the BWL plant and continue to the REO Clubhouse and Plant site, as well as several former businesses along Washington Ave. The tour will last 90-120 minutes. Parking is available at the BWL Plant.

## FUN WITH ADULT JIGSAW PUZZLES

by  
Mary L. Kwas

Cold or rainy weather never stopped people from having fun in Lansing, but it might encourage them to move inside. Playing of board games or card games and reading mystery or adventure novels were acceptable inside activities, as was working jigsaw puzzles.

Puzzles were invented in the 1760s in Europe and were intended as educational tools for children. Scenes included maps and lessons of a moral or historical nature. By the 19th century, more playful subjects moved puzzles into the realm of fun. From the early 1800s, Americans bought imported puzzles for their children. American production began by the middle of the century, expanding rapidly after the Civil War. Early puzzles were made of wood, but after 1880 most children's puzzles were made with less-expensive heavy cardboard.

Adult puzzles were not developed until the turn of the 20th century, following the introduction of the power scroll saw, or jigsaw, at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. With the use of the new saw, puzzle cutting entered the realm of cottage industry, and many puzzle cutters were women. The first adult puzzle craze occurred from about 1906-1910, centered around Boston and most popular on the East Coast, mainly among the middle and upper classes. Hand-cut wooden puzzles were expensive, so lending libraries and puzzle exchanges arose to share the cost.



Figure 1

Images for adult puzzles from this period made use of lithographic or magazine prints, which were pasted on solid wood, such as mahogany or even cigar boxes. Although the puzzles could be small (under 100 pieces), they were usually very difficult because of their cutting style. Color-line cutting meant that adjoining pieces could be of completely different colors, while the more curvilinear non-interlocking pieces were very similar in shape and difficult to correctly fit. Non-interlocking pieces could also be frustrating, as a light knock on the work table could scatter already fitted pieces. (A modern aid to working one of these vintage puzzles is to assemble it on the rubberized back of a small kitchen or bathroom rug, which helps hold the pieces in place.)

As demand for puzzles increased, game and toy manufacturers added puzzles to their products. Parker Brothers soon established their Pastime brand and originated the cutting of "figure pieces" or "whimsies" (Fig. 1). These delightful, intricate shapes included animals, letters, and geometric figures. They added much interest to the working of puzzles and actually made large puzzles easier to work because of the distinctive negative shapes that matched the pieces.

The second and largest jigsaw puzzle craze occurred during the Great Depression. Die-cutting on cardboard was adopted at this time for adult puzzles, which kept the costs low. Weekly puzzles

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#### Officers & Board Members

Valerie Marvin – President	Jesse LaSorda – Trustee
Bill Castanier – Vice President	Erik Nelson - Trustee
Ron Emery – Secretary	Zig Olds - Trustee
Tim Kaltenbach – Treasurer	Bob Rose - Trustee
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Harry Emmons – Trustee	Anne Wilson - Trustee

were produced by hundreds of manufacturers and sold on newsstands. Puzzles were also used as product advertising and were distributed free to buyers. These puzzles are relatively easy to find at antiques shops, but be prepared for most of them to be missing a few pieces.



Figure 2

Interest also increased for adult wooden puzzles. Thousands of unemployed men began cutting puzzles at home to supply an income. Instructions for puzzle cutting were published in magazines such as *Popular Science Monthly*. Department stores and drug stores also got into the puzzle-cutting business, selling puzzles under their own brand names. Because wooden puzzles continued to be more expensive than cardboard puzzles, puzzle lending libraries were revived. Puzzles from this period used plywood backs and interlocking pieces, some even having figure pieces in the style of Pastime Puzzles. Adult puzzles, especially the wooden ones, often did not include guide pictures on the box, although boxes could be adorned with bright, patterned papers.

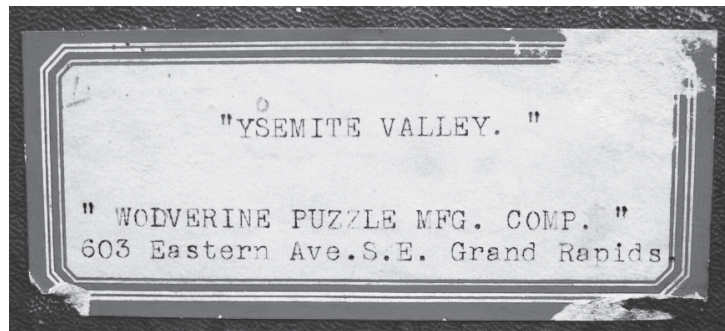


Figure 3

Michigan also had local puzzle manufacturers. The puzzle shown here, entitled “Yosemite Valley” (Fig. 2), was made by the Wolverine Puzzle Manufacturing Company of Grand Rapids, Michigan, probably during the 1930s. Landscape scenes are common among puzzles of the period. The puzzle cutter used interlocking pieces, but no figure pieces. Its inaccurately typed, paste-on label (Fig. 3) and plain box suggest that this was a home-based company. No other information has been found about them, but other puzzles produced by the company might show up at antiques shops or estate sales, so keep a lookout.

Puzzles are still a popular pastime today, although most puzzles are die-cut on cardboard with fairly uniform-shaped pieces. Wooden puzzles, however, can still be found. My favorite company is Liberty Puzzles of Boulder, Colorado ([www.libertypuzzles.com](http://www.libertypuzzles.com)), which makes laser-cut wooden puzzles. Their brightly colored images reproduce works of art, vintage posters, and Americana. Their puzzles also overflow with intricate figure pieces. Working a Liberty puzzle will spoil you for ordinary die-cut puzzles. Although still more expensive than cardboard puzzles, the laser-cutting technology keeps these beautiful puzzles affordable for a gift or splurge.



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Lansing, MI 48901

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Historical Society of Greater Lansing - Membership Application

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- \$100 Business Membership
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