



History Explorer

Historical Society of Greater Lansing

www.LansingHistory.org

August 2016

Moore's River Drive Architectural Tour

Thursday, August 4, 7:00 p.m.

*Tour meets at the Lansing Country Club sign, 2200 S. Moore's River Dr.
Please do not park at the Country Club.*

Take a stroll down historic Moore's River Drive and enjoy stories from one of Lansing's most elite historical neighborhoods. The homes on Moore's River Drive are a three dimensional textbook of popular 20th century architectural styles and forms, from Tudor Revivals to Bungalows, and Colonial Revivals to mid-century Moderns. The tour will include information about the founding and evolution of the neighborhood, stories about some of the original home owners, and tips for identifying architectural styles and features.

MSU Sports Complex Tour

Saturday, August 20, 2016 - 10:00 a.m.

Tour meets at IM Circle West at MSU, 308 W. Circle Dr.

On the second annual tour of the historic MSU campus, join Stephen Terry to learn the development of the mighty Spartan nation on a visit to the athletic facilities of the university. Beginning at the no longer standing 1885 armory and the first military drill field, we'll see the only building left on the campus that displays the Michigan Agricultural College logo, gather around and learn about the origins of the Spartan, see the earliest athletic fields of the campus, and view the current athletic complex.

HSGL Newsletter Archive Expanding!

HSGL would like to send a big thanks to Timothy Bowman, who spent months tracking down old issues of HSGL newsletters to expand the online archive available at www.lansinghistory.org. Newsletters from 1955-1979 and 2011-present are currently available, with more to come soon. Timothy would like to thank Linda Peckham, Craig Whitford & Bill Atkinson for loaning their personal collections! Also to Heidi Butler, Zig Olds, Jim MacLean, Doug Johnson, Lille Foster, Win Stebbins and Valerie Marvin. If you have editions that we're missing, please contact Timothy at lugn215@yahoo.com.

Save the Date

Sunday, September 18 - Riverside Cemetery Tour (Okemos)

HSGL Dues Increase

The HSGL Board made the difficult decision at their last board meeting to institute a small increase to individual and family level memberships. Effective August 1, 2016, an individual membership will cost \$25, and a family membership will cost \$35, both an increase of \$5. The Board voted to take this action after reviewing the increasing expenses HSGL is facing that relate to our programming, exhibits, and collections storage space.

Lansing Has Fun!

Exhibit Upcoming Events

*Lansing City Hall, 124 W. Michigan Ave.
Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. 5:00 p.m.*

Check out HSGL's Lansing Has Fun! exhibit at City Hall. We'll be hosting several events this fall in conjunction with the exhibit at City Hall.

An Evening with

Scrabble World Champion Peter Morris

*Thursday, September 8, 2016, 7:00 p.m.
Lansing City Hall, 124 W. Michigan Ave.*

Twenty five years ago this fall another gamer, a young MSU graduate student, Peter Morris, was on the lookout for just the right word on his way to win the first ever World Scrabble Championship in London.

Morris will kick off the HSGL's fall lecture and event series when he talks about his championship win. Artifacts from that Championship including the World Championship Trophy (a Tiffany Bowl) are among items on display at the HSGL exhibit "Lansing Has Fun."

Fifty Years of Journalism with Berl Schwartz

*Thursday, September 29, 2016, 7:00 p.m.
Capital Area District Library, 401 S. Capitol Ave.*

Another man who has a way with words, Berl Schwartz, publisher of the Lansing City Pulse, will discuss his 50 year career in journalism. In his newspaper career Schwartz has interviewed hundreds of newsmakers and entertainers including the late Muhammed Ali and John Lennon. He will weave into his stories of how journalism has changed dramatically over 50 years. This fall, the Lansing City Pulse will also reach a milestone celebrating 15 years of publishing.

The Rural Missionary Society: One Point of Light in Greater Lansing

By Ron Emery

In his inaugural address in January of 1989 George H. W. Bush spoke of “a thousand points of light, of all the community organizations that are spread like stars throughout the Nation, doing good.” This is a brief description of one of those “points of light.” This star burned brightly for over a century. But as a result of an aging membership and a cultural shift that took most women out of the home and into the workforce, the Rural Missionary Society is now only a memory.

Shortly before noon on a bright September day, cars began arriving at the Old Gunnisonville School in DeWitt Township north of Lansing. With each arrival, one or two colorfully attired ladies would alight and head for the front entrance. The dresses worn were actual or reproductions of calicos from the last century. Inside Florence Homer, a retired schoolteacher rang an old bell and told the “students” to take a seat in the old wooden desks. One of the colorfully dressed ladies presented Ms. Homer with a ripe red apple. Kathleen Emery, the group’s Chaplain then read an American Indian Prayer. The minutes from the last meeting were read and approved along with a treasurer’s report. A brief number of business items were discussed followed by a group recitation of the Society’s “Collect,” or prayer. In it the ladies petitioned the Lord to “keep us ... from all pettiness...put away all pretense... never be hasty in judgment...teach us to put into action our better impulses...[get] to know the great common human heart of all... and [not forget] to be kind.” Thus concluded the September 15th, 1983 business meeting of the Rural Missionary Society.” The one-hundredth anniversary of the Society occasioned the colorful dresses and the special meeting place in the old school house.

The Rural Missionary Society was founded in 1883 by seven farmwomen living in the Lake Lansing Road and Wood Street area north of Lansing in Lansing Township. Because snow-covered winter roads made travel challenging in the winter months, the seven ladies began meeting monthly at each other’s homes to socialize while sewing aprons and towels that they then sold to provide boots, shoes and other clothing to the needy in the area. Originally they called themselves “The Rural Gleaners” collecting and gathering items to advance their charitable purpose.

Early members included names like Moore, Tower, Gladden, Magery, Scammon, Taylor, Lorenz, Downer, Churchill, Herron, and Baumgras. As their efforts continued, they attracted more

members. Later members names included West, Geisenhaver, Ide, Angell, Clingersjith, Valjean, Keyes, Sleby, Nichols, Dobson, Wheeler, Emery, Bohland, Sheren, Revanaugh, Hiatt, Becker and Adsit. They also invoked more formality for their club including a constitution and regular meetings.

The 1963 amended constitution described the organization’s object as “to promote sociability, literary, civic and welfare work.” (Art II) To be a member ladies must “reside in or have lived in the community”, “be willing to entertain and cooperate in organization activities,” and attend at least three regular meetings per year. Three current club members must sponsor new members. (Art III) The constitution provided for three classes of members, “active”, “associate” and “honorary”. Active members could vote and run for office in the organization. They also were required to pay the \$1 dues at each meeting. They were expected to entertain the group in their own homes on a rotating schedule. Active members that missed three meetings in a row without an excuse were considered to have forfeited their membership. These were the real stalwarts of the society.

Associate members paid dues of \$2 per meeting, were expected to participate in some of the organization’s activities but were not allowed to vote or become an officer. Often, these were formerly active members who had moved away or for other reasons could not fully participate.

Membership for 50 years earned one the title of “honorary member.”

Regular meetings were held monthly on the last Thursday of each month with one annual meeting the last Thursday of May. The Annual meeting often was a picnic outside with spouses invited. Regular meetings were held at the homes of active members throughout the year.

The typical meeting as reported in the minutes book would read as follows:

“On a cold cloudy afternoon, the regular meeting of the Rural Missionary Society was held at the home of Edith Sheren with Grace West and Virginia Prince assisting. A very delicious luncheon was served to the assembled members and guest. Marie Becker President called the meeting to order and asked the Chaplain Delia Baumgras to read devotion. (After a treasurers report and the minutes were approved) Historian Ella Lenz read an interesting account of the club’s Mother’s Day Banquet held May 24, 1955.... Leila (Gronner) asked members to display the antiques and keepsakes they brought and to tell about them. As these articles were passed around and discussed, we realized once again that we have “program material” in our own membership. (Minute Book p6)

The minutes of each meeting would report on certain important facts of each meeting such as who the hostess was that day, a glowing description of the food served, the number of members present, business-meeting staples such as treasurer’s and committee reports, and often but not always, a historian’s report which usually involved reading the minutes of some meeting in the recent or distant past. Meetings also could sometimes also include poetry readings, discussions of books read, and guests who reported on some activity of interest to the members.

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Historical Society of Greater Lansing
 P.O. Box 12095 ~ Lansing, MI 48901
www.LansingHistory.org

Officers & Board Members

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

In 1929, the society joined the Ingham County Federation of Women's Clubs. Two members would represent the society at that organization's two meetings a year. The society was active in and a member in good standing of the federation until 1989.

In its ongoing effort to carry out its charitable function, the society made regular contributions to the Ingham County Home Association that operated the Willow Manor at 570 W. Willow Street in Lansing. The home provided a safe and secure place for single women over 62 in Ingham County who did not need nursing care but who needed companionship along with three meals a day. The society for some time sent members to the Manor's trustee meetings. These delegates would then report back to the society on the status of the Manor. At the May 1973 meeting, society president and Manor delegate Laura Adsit proudly reported that the Women's Home Mortgage had been paid off in full, and that the Manor would soon be planning renovations of the dining room and public bathrooms.

At other meetings, the members of the flower committee would report that flowers had been sent or donations made to various churches in memory of deceased members or their spouse. Donations were made to the Lansing City Rescue Mission, Meridian Township Human Services Program, or the Lake Lansing Nature Conservancy, or other worthy causes.

The society's orientation was originally the Lake Lansing Road-Wood Street neighborhood of Lansing Township. However, as members aged those still living moved into apartments, assisted living, or other living arrangements out of the neighborhood diluting its neighborhood identification. At first members would meet at the homes of members in such places as DeWitt, Eaton County, and Grand Ledge. Later still, rather than meet in members homes, practicalities dictated that some of the meetings be held in local restaurants like Scalawags in Lansing, the Log Jam in Grand Ledge, the Brookshire Inn in Williamston, the Kellogg Center at MSU, or Mijo's in Dewitt Township.

In addition to an aging membership unable to entertain as they did when younger, the society suffered a precipitous drop in membership. Older members died or were physically unable to participate while the number of younger members dwindled. During the early 1970's the society could boast of up to 23 active members, with 3-4 associate members. By the 1990's the number had fallen into the single digits. In February of 1986, a meeting was cancelled because of a lack of members as many had gone south. Later that year, the minutes reflect that the group discussed the future of the organization given the number of ladies that had moved away from the area or spent the winter months in a warmer climate. Likewise, meetings in January and February of 1987 were cancelled. In March of 1988 a meeting was again cancelled because not enough members were in Michigan. Meetings in January and February of 1989 likewise were cancelled for a paucity of members available to meet.

In October of 1987 the society took a major part in the planning and hosting of the Ingham County Federation of Women's Clubs Seventy-First Fall meeting. Although a small and declining organization, the society received great praise for its efforts in hosting the meeting. This would be the "last hurrah" of the society.

Because of the decline in members, the society could no longer participate fully in its earlier endeavors.

The denouement occurred in 1989 when the society withdrew from its membership in the Ingham County Federation of Women's Clubs. In a letter dated October 20, 1989, the Federation's corresponding secretary Isobel A Dickinson, advised the Society's President, Kathleen Emery, that the County Federation accepted the Rural Missionary Society's "resignation with great regret." Membership for the following years teetered around 10 and 11 hitting a low of 8 in 1995.

The minutes for the September 1996 meeting held on the 19th are the last recorded in the organizations' minute book. At that meeting, Secretary Kathleen Emery's minutes reflect that the next meeting was scheduled for October 17th at the home of Marie Lawrence in DeWitt, with another to be held in November at Leila Miller's home. The meeting, attended by all 8 active members recited the "Club Collect" apparently for the last time. The minute book reflects no further meetings held.



Three Rural Missionary Society members dressed to celebrate the organizations 100th anniversary. (left to right) Laura Adsit, Midred Geisenhaver, and Loraly Becker (daughter of Laura Adsit)



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:

- \$25 Individual Membership
- \$35 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

P.O. Box 12095 - Lansing, MI 48901 www.LansingHistory.org

HSGL & Wonder Women Estate Sales Present
“Whatcha Got?” Evening of Antiques Fundraiser
 Thursday, August 25, 7-9 p.m.

The Historical Society of Greater Lansing (HSGL) and Wonder Women Estate Sales Gallery are hosting a summer fundraiser for the Society at Wonder Women’s new estate sale outlet at 108 East Grand River in Lansing’s Old Town on Thursday, August 25 from 7-9 p.m. Admission is \$20.

The event will feature a talk by noted author and nationally recognized antiques expert Harry L. Rinker. Rinker has authored more than 20 books on antiques and collectibles. He also hosts a syndicated call-in radio show, “Whatcha Got?” that airs on Sundays from 8 a.m.-10 a.m.

In addition to talking about what’s hot in antiques, Rinkler will interact with the audience in a live version of “Whatcha Got?”

Attendees can each bring a small antique (it must be able to be held in your hand) and ask Rinkler what is it and what’s its value.

In addition to the presentation, staff from Wonder Women and HSGL will be stationed around the store to tell specific stories about some selected unique antiques that are for sale during the fundraiser.

Tickets may be bought in advance at www.lansinghistory.org or by sending in the form below with payment. Tickets are \$20 per person and include summer desserts and light refreshments.

This is a special event co-hosted by Wonder Women. Specially selected antiques will be available for sale during the event. Rinker’s books will also be available. For more information on Rinker visit <http://www.harryrinker.com/>

“Whatcha Got?” Evening of Antiques Fundraiser Ticket Order Form

Sponsored by HSGL and Wonder Women Estate Sales
 \$20 Per Ticket – All proceeds benefit the HSGL Museum Fund

Name _____

Number of Tickets _____

Address _____

Phone _____

City, State, Zip _____