



# History Explorer

Historical Society of Greater Lansing

www.LansingHistory.org

November 2017

## Upcoming Events

### **Arthur Vandenberg: The Man in the Middle of the American Century**

by Hendrik Meijer

Wednesday, November 8, 2017 - 6:30 p.m.  
Library of Michigan - 702 W. Kalamazoo St

It would be a fair question to ask why the portrait of Michigan Senator Arthur Vandenberg is displayed alongside those of Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun, Robert M. La Follette Sr., and Robert Taft in the U.S. Senate Reception Room in the nation's Capitol. What distinguishes him to be among those important luminaries?

A new biography of the Grand Rapids Republican senator by Hendrik Meijer, CEO and executive chairman of Meijer Inc., helps illuminate why Vandenberg is so important to the political history of the United States. Meijer's book, *Arthur Vandenberg: The Man in the Middle of the American Century*, took 27 years to research and write, but it was worth waiting for. The author found that a major impediment to writing a book was his day job at the helm of one of the nation's largest supermarket chains.

Meijer will join Lansing Community College history professor David Siwik to talk about his new book. The event is free and books will be for sale.

Vandenberg, who in the first half of his career was a newspaper editor and publisher of the now defunct *Grand Rapids Herald*, believed strongly that man makes his own destiny. He also strongly advocated for neutrality during World War I until the United States was forced into the conflict.

The Michigan senator also was noted for his ability to cross the aisle and seek consensus. During the administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt he was responsible for the establishment of the FDIC. He later sought the Republican nomination for president.

Meijer also discovered in his research that Vandenberg

became close with the author Sinclair Lewis, despite their differing political views. It is thought that Lewis used Vandenberg as the prototype for two characters in his book *It Couldn't Happen Here*.

Vandenberg may be best known for his speech following Pearl Harbor which became known as the "speech heard 'round the world." Following World War II he was instrumental in the establishment of NATO, the Marshall Plan, and the United Nations.

The author was aided in his research by numerous scrapbooks, diaries and journals of both Vandenberg and his spouse Hazel. He discovered the family held back one page from a scrapbook...but, you'll learn more about it if you come to the event!

Meijer's book suggests that there is a role in politics for that one person who steps up and puts the good of the country ahead of the party.

---

### **War and Speech: Propaganda, Patriotism, and Dissent in the Great War Exhibit Tour with Curator Shirley Wajda**

Tuesday, January 16, 2018 - 6:00 p.m.

Michigan State University Museum -  
409 West Circle Drive

Exhibit Open November 11, 2017 - November 11, 2018

*War and Speech: Propaganda, Patriotism, and Dissent in the Great War* explores, through the MSU Museum's extensive World War I poster and militaria collections, the new ways in which Americans understood civic duty and civic speech.

The techniques of persuasion that helped to shape the modern world were developed for and during the Great War

Continued on page 3

## Veterans Memorial Forest

by Mary L. Kwas

By late summer 1944, after five years of hard-fought battles across Europe, the end of World War II was in sight. On August 25 Paris was liberated by Allied troops and French fighters, and on September 10 the Allies reached the German border. Victory in Europe was anticipated not only by the military, but also by those on the homefront who had sacrificed to support the war effort.

So it was fitting that also on September 10, *The State Journal* announced in a short article that the proceeds from the Victory Garden Harvest Show, coming up the following weekend, would be used to establish the Veterans Memorial Forest on two acres of Grand Woods Park. *The State Journal* supported the idea of a memorial forest, writing in an editorial: "Towering trees whose spreading branches will sift the sunlight in the tranquil glades will be more imposing than any man-made structure and will be an appropriate living and growing tribute to those who have done so much to keep freedom a living and growing thing." (LSJ 9-12-44)

The garden show was sponsored by the Lansing Branch of the Women's National Farm and Garden Association and was supported by the Home Garden Club. The show opened with a ribbon-cutting by the daughters of Governor Harry F. Kelly. Entries came from professionals, amateurs, and even children. Children's school gardens contributed produce, posters, scrapbooks, and dolls and toys built of vegetables and flowers. Adult entries included a huge head of kale, a patriotic-colored arrangement of morning glories, and florists' displays of gladioli. Michigan State College, the Navy Mothers Club, Blue Star Mothers Club, and the American Legion Auxiliary provided other exhibits and entries. The show was a success with over 300 gardeners contributing produce and flowers. Proceeds from the

1945 show would also support the memorial.

Grand Woods Park had been chosen for the site of the memorial forest in cooperation with the city of Lansing. While located just outside the city limits in Eaton County, the 53-acre park was owned by the city and had been open only four years. It had begun life as a pig farm and garbage disposal facility, but had been closed in the 1920s and redeveloped as a park in 1940. With a pavilion built with funds donated by Sears, Roebuck & Co., the park was popular with scouts and other children's groups wanting nature-based programs and activities. Having formerly been farmland, the park was probably more open than wooded, thus being a perfect spot for adding trees.

Project chairwoman Mrs. Maurice J. (Ingeborg) Baker, who was also general chairwoman of the garden show, worked with Carl Fenner, city forester, to develop the memorial. In spring 1945, 100 trees were planted, including ash, maple, elm, and dogwoods. A row of evergreens on a hill to the left of the entrance was also added. By the time of the dedication in 1948, over 300 trees had been planted.

In the fall of 1947, a bronze plaque was purchased for \$300 and mounted to a rock base to become the monument. It says: "Affectionately dedicated to the memory of the service men and women of Greater Lansing and East Lansing, Michigan, who made the supreme sacrifice in World War II. Forest trees planted by Garden Clubs, started 1944. Lansing Branch of the Woman's National Farm and Garden Association. Home Garden Club."

Arbor Day, April 30, 1948, was set for the dedication of the memorial. Carl Fenner oversaw last-minute landscaping around the rock, adding additional evergreens, in time for the ceremony that began at 3:00 p.m. that day. Mrs. Baker formally presented Veterans Memorial Forest to the city, and Mayor Ralph W. Crego accepted, before participating in the planting of additional trees. The dedication was attended by about 50 people.

Today, some 70 years later, things have changed.

The city of Lansing turned over the management of Grand Woods Park to Delta Township in 1984 in a lease agreement, and in 2016 Delta Township purchased the park from Lansing. The park is popular with hikers, dog walkers, disc golfers, and groups using the pavilion and picnic shelters. Not all the original memorial trees have survived, not that they were expected to. No dogwoods are seen in that area of the park today, but a row of tall

### Historical Society of Greater Lansing

P.O. Box 12095 ~ Lansing, MI 48901

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

#### Officers & Board Members

Bill Castanier – President	Jacob McCormick – Trustee
Valerie Marvin – Vice President	Carol Munroe – Trustee
Ron Emery – Secretary	Zig Olds – Trustee
Tim Kaltenbach – Treasurer	Bob Rose – Trustee
Joan Bauer – Trustee	Anne Wilson – Trustee
Mary Kwas – Trustee	

evergreens still stands to the left of the entrance, and on the hillside to the right are remnants of old hardwoods as well as their younger descendants.

But the monument honoring the veterans of World War II still survives and can still be seen just inside the entrance to Grand Woods Park. Drive a little past the first parking area, and there on the right, tucked into a green space of evergreens and shrubs, is the heart of Greater Lansing's Veterans Memorial Forest. It is still a good place to remember our veterans on Memorial Day or Veterans Day, or any time you pay a visit to the park.

### Arbor Day Observed at Grand Woods Park



**Fig. 1: Dedication of the memorial. From left: Mrs. Maurice J. Baker, Mayor Ralph Crego, H. Lee Bancroft, superintendent of city parks, K. E. Hewes, chairman of the park and cemetery board, and Mrs. H. C. Cunningham, president of the local chapter of the National Farm and Garden Club. (LSJ 5-1-1948)**



**Fig. 2: The monument as seen today.**

## Frank Lloyd Wright Home Tour Nets \$20,000

Thank you to everyone who attended, stood in line, and had a good time at the Frank Lloyd Wright home tour organized by Prof. Susan Bandes and HSGL. We showed four homes to over 1,200 people! Thanks to everyone who supported both of our home tours—we're so pleased with the success!

## Upcoming Events - Cont'd

(1914-1918). In the United States, posters, cartoons, songs, and other popular culture were designed to mobilize the entire home front, to make every adult and child feel intimately involved with the war effort. At the same time, Liberty Loan campaigns, military parades, and other activities to support the troops as they trained and fought featured all aspects of military life, from the doughboy's field kit to hard-won battlefield trophies brought back in victory.



Paradoxically, during this first world war to defend ideals of democracy and freedom, state surveillance and restrictions on dissent increased. These powerful images of persuasion simultaneously extended a promise of inclusion to all Americans in the life of the nation, even as women, African Americans, Native Americans, and others struggled for long-denied civil and political rights.

Propaganda posters produced by the United States government, by commercial lithographers, and by average citizens created a new, modern way of signifying patriotism and the American people. *War and Speech* provides a window to that moment, framing Americans' ideas about nation and citizenship in this critical historic era.



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.*