

● NOVEMBER 2011

Impressions

NEWSLETTER WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

All of the buildings in the Law Quad were built and donated to the University of Michigan by William W. Cook. Yet he never even saw them.



The John P. Cook building in March, 1930; In the background, frame of the Legal Research Library. Source: Bentley Historical Library

Margaret Leary Brings the Story of William W. Cook to Life

Reported by Beverly Willis

We were immediately engaged when Margaret Leary began her Book Talk at Malletts Creek Library on Sunday, October 16th in Ann Arbor. Margaret, a recently retired University of Michigan Law Library Director and author, discussed her book *Giving it All Away: The Story of William W. Cook and His Michigan Law Quadrangle*. Reading

aloud Margaret shared excerpts that gave insight into a critical chapter of UM history, and Cook's involvement in the development of corporations and communications industry laws. She began with a description of finding the death mask of Michigan Law's most famous benefactor, William W. Cook when she came to work at UM

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**Our mission is to educate
and inspire our community to
engage in the preservation and
presentation of area history**

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The President's Letter – November 2011

Within this issue you will find membership renewal forms for 2012 membership. As we did for 2011, the annual membership drive has been shifted to near year-end rather than spring. This timing is excellent for gifting a membership to a friend or extended family member as the holidays approach. It is also good timing for those thinking of year-end tax deductible gifts to the WCHS.

Our Strategic Plan's membership objective is pretty straight forward and rather bold: "Double our membership in five years." In our recent Plan review it was noted that, although membership structure has been revamped, membership drive timing has changed, benefits of membership have been emphasized and three new membership categories have been established.

Amazingly though, if over the five year period each existing member was able to recruit only one new member, the objective would be achieved. There must be many community members, not presently members of the Washtenaw County Historical Society, truly interested in Washtenaw County history.

Ultimately I believe the major benefit of membership is helping our Society achieve its Mission Statement: "to educate and inspire our community to engage in the preservation and presentation of area history."

Leslie Loomans



Check us out, on the web and
www.WashtenawHistory.org

Washtenaw County Historical Society

P.O. Box 3336

Ann Arbor, MI 48106-3336

Phone: 734-662-9092

email: **wchs-500@ameritech.net**

Museum on Main Street

500 N. Main Street

Ann Arbor, MI 48104-1027

(at the corner of Beakes,
E. Kingsley & N. Main Streets)

Museum Hours

Saturday & Sunday,

12 Noon – 4:00 PM

and by appointment
for groups or individuals

Exhibit: Christmas Past to Present

Opens November 27

Membership Drive – Each One, Reach One!

The Washtenaw County Historical Society is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization. Membership dues and gifts continue to be a leading source of our annual funding. We count on the “Friends of History” to help preserve and maintain our 176 year old house and collections at 500 North Main Street. Your tax-deductible dues and donations allow us to offer free educational programs and mount interesting and interactive exhibits. Up to 5% of membership dues are put into the WCHS Endowment Fund for major capital needs. Your generous contributions this summer repaired, replaced and restored our beautiful fence. We could not have done it without you.

We are asking our members to renew your membership and invite someone else to join or give them a gift membership. This newsletter contains a remittance envelope for your convenience. Our goal is to increase Society membership so we can continue the work of preserving and presenting the history of Washtenaw County. By joining for the first time or renewing, you will be supporting efforts to preserve our rich heritage for today’s citizens and the future generations to come. Many people join simply to financially support the Society and because they love museums and history.

Membership Levels

\$15	Individual
\$10	Youth/Student
\$10	Senior (age 60+)
\$19	Couple (one 60+)
\$25	Family (parents/children)
\$25	Library/Organization
\$50	Business
\$100	Patron
\$250	Sponsor
\$500	Sustaining



MEMBERSHIP DOLLARS SUPPORT OUR EXHIBITS The museum’s attendance is up this year. The Civil War Exhibit attracted several groups including school age youth and scouts.

WCHS Gift Memberships If you have attended any of the WCHS programs or exhibits and enjoyed yourself, chances are you have friends and family who would feel the same. Our monthly programs and exhibits provide opportunities to meet new and interesting friends who share your passion. Every member is encouraged to submit ideas, photos, artifacts or articles that would be of interest to our readers for possible publication in *Impressions* or used in an exhibit. WCHS Gift memberships are \$15 each and a great way to share that fun and fellowship with others.



BENEFITS: WCHS Members Receive

- Seven issues of *Impressions*, the newsletter
- Six programs with postcard updates
- 10% discount in the Museum Gift Shop
- Invitations to member events
- Opportunities to volunteer
- Connections to others who share your passion
- Satisfaction knowing you are a Friend of History

New Membership Categories

Library/Organization We like to share the events and activities of our member organizations in the newsletter calendar.

Sponsors have the flexibility to choose a project to support.

Sustaining members allow us to focus on presenting the great programs, exhibits and activities that you enjoy.

Renew or Join Online

You can renew and pay for your yearly membership and make donations online. Your credit card payment is made through PayPal, the most widely used method to securely submit payments online. Go to **www.WashtenawHistory.org**

WCHS October Book Talk & Signing

(Cont. from page 1)

For thirty years, she researched the life of the man whose generous gift placed the school into the top ranks of legal education and gave the University of Michigan the Law Quadrangle named for him. Holding his death mask in her hands, Margaret felt there was an instant connection. When she asked her colleagues about Cook they said he was difficult and attached strings to his gifts, but no one really knew for sure. Margaret began doing archival research at Michigan's Bentley Historical Library and went through hundreds of boxes of material. She visited the places Cook had lived and worked.

She discovered he played a crucial role in the first global communication system and was a leader in developing corporation law. He was involved in politics at the University of Michigan from a distance and when he died there were lawsuits over his estate, including one from his ex-wife.

Cook was born April 16, 1858 in Hillsdale, Michigan. His father, John Cook was a founder of Hillsdale and a member of the Michigan Constitutional Convention in 1850. He led the committee that wrote the sections of the Constitution about corporations.

From his father, Cook developed an interest in law and business. From his mother, Martha he developed a sense that home was "the safety of the nation." Therefore, Cook's first gift to the University was a women's dorm, named Martha Cook which opened in 1915. Martha raised not only her own nine children, but the five John Cook had with his first wife Betsy, who was Martha's sister.

Cook earned a B.A. in 1880, and graduated from the Law School in 1882. He went straight to New York City and began a law practice. In the early 1890s, he was part of a small consortium that bought all the street railways in Detroit, began to shift them from horse to electric power, and sold them in 1894. Cook briefly ran those railways in 1891.

Cook was a very important man. He was a leading writer on corporation law and published a book five years after he graduated from law school. From the 1890s until 1923 he was the leading authority on corporation law. Corporations needed to become the engines of our industrial democracy. As they were conceived in the 1890s they were not capable of doing that. It took Cook's revolutionary ideas about the role of stock holders and



Margaret A. Leary won the 2010 Frederick Charles Hicks Award that honors outstanding contributions to the improvement of academic law librarianship. She invented the Law Library's Faculty Research Service. Librarians who also hold law degrees as well as well-trained law students, now help Michigan Law faculty members with more than 500 academic research projects every year. www.law.umich.edu

the need for stock to be fairly valued for the corporations to become the entities they needed to be. He was the general counsel for the Mackay Company, the only competition to Western Union from 1895-1920. It was the first company to create a trans-global communication system through a combination of Atlantic cable telegraph lines across Europe and the US and cable lines under the Pacific Ocean. He helped design the business strategies that made it all possible. (Continued on page 5)



(Continued from page 4)

Cook is arguably the largest single donor ever to the University of Michigan. Translating the value of gifts finished in 1931 to today's dollars, \$20 million would be about \$300 million. His gift not only financed the entire construction of the quadrangle but had \$40-50 million left over for a research endowment. Cook recognized as early as 1910 that a public university like the University of Michigan could not reach its greatest fulfillment without solid support from alumni. Cook wanted to be a model of private giving and literally gave everything he owned to the University.

After putting ten years of his own time, money and effort into the law quad, he never saw any of the buildings. One reason was poor health, the only building finished during his lifetime was the Lawyers Club in 1924. He didn't want to be asked for money and he didn't want to get engaged in the politics. He preferred to be very involved remotely from Port Chester, NY, through his agent, and lengthy involved correspondence with university presidents. "Cook wanted the law school building named after Harry Burns Hutchins, who had been Dean of the Law School from 1895-1910, and President of the University from 1910-1920. Hutchins was the person most responsible for Cook's gift, first finding how successful Cook had been, and then nurturing what was often a difficult relationship for the next twenty years" Leary said.

In 1889, Cook married Ida Olmstead, the daughter of prominent New York lawyer Dwight Hinckley Olmstead, who reformed the way of registering land in New York City, by developing and urging the adoption of the lot and block system used to this day.



Ida's father was a very well known lawyer and Cook may have been more attracted to the prestige of her family than her. The marriage was not a success, and the couple separated several times, the final one in early 1894. They were divorced in 1898, after Ida went to North Dakota and filed suit based on desertion by Cook. At the time North Dakota was the divorce capital of the United States. William said yes but on the grounds that she deserted him so he got the divorce. For the rest of her life, Ida referred to herself as Mrs. William W. Cook. Given the option to choose being married, divorced or single, William Cook would always choose to be single. He never confessed that he had been married.

Ida returned to New York and moved in with her sister. After Ida's sister died, Ida's grandniece decided to attend the UM in 1939 and Ida came with her. She lived in the Michigan Union and then moved to the Anberay apartments. Holding on to her 15 minutes of fame, Ida wandered the streets of Ann Arbor offering to tell people about her sex life with William Cook. In a conversation with her great nephew, he shared his remembering that part of the story with Margaret. But he was only 8 years old at the time and had no idea of what "the story" was.

Cook was near the end of his life, in 1929, when the Legal Research Building was under construction. His personal library—the room and the book collection, were taken to Ann Arbor from his Manhattan townhouse, and reconstructed in the Library. It is not open to the public.

More than 55 people enjoyed this enlightening and informative talk. There were some shared memories and a few questions and answers followed by the book signing. ❖

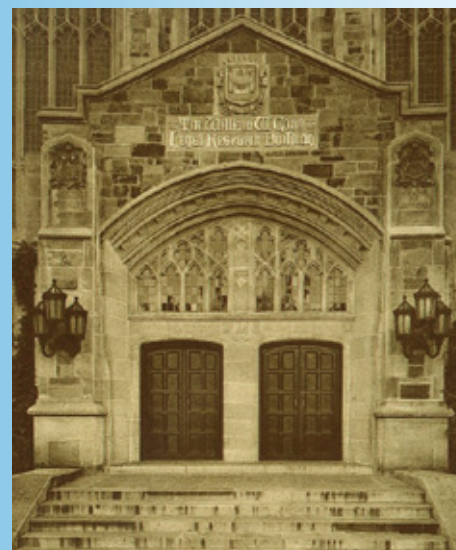
Cook's Buildings



Martha Cook Dormitory for Women (1915)



the Lawyers Club (1924)



The William W. Cook Legal Research Library (1931)



Hutchins Hall (1933)

Photo: UM Law School, Bentley Historical Library

Comments from Visitors to the Civil War Exhibit

Over 1,000 people saw the Civil War Exhibit. Individuals, families, groups, students and passers-by filled out surveys and these are some of their remarks.

"I was unaware of how much Michigan women gave to the war effort"

"I will come here often."

"The local connections were fun and I loved the artifacts."

"I really enjoyed the emphasis on 'the Average Joe' and local history."

"It was a-maizing to learn how Alumni Hall (now Art Museum) was originally dedicated to those who fought in the Civil War"



"I like the emphasis on every day life"

"As a newcomer, interesting to see the local history."

"Great Exhibit - we loved it!"

"Michigan provided more support than I previously thought."

SHARE YOUR CHRISTMAS MEMORIES AND PICTURES

We are inviting our readers to share your memories, photos or artifacts of Christmas past and present as part of this exhibit. If you bring a photograph we will try to scan it while you wait so you can take the original with you. If you have toys, ornaments or other items you want visitors to appreciate and enjoy, call Judy at 734-662-9092. **See page 7 for exhibit Opening Invitation, please join us!**

Bring stories, pictures and artifacts to
The Museum on Main Street, 500 N. Main St.,

Mail stories, pictures and artifacts to:
Washtenaw County Historical Society Christmas Memories
PO Box 3336, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-3366

Email memories and pictures to wchs-1000@ameritech.net

Impressions by Email

If you would like to receive your copy of the newsletter electronically as a full color PDF please let us know by email: wchs-500@ameritech.net

What's on your mind?

Do you have an idea, suggestion or comment about *Impressions*? Please feel free to share it with us, email the editor at wchs-1000@ameritech.net

Art Show Invitation

Four Seasons at Geddes Farm

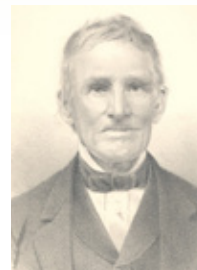
November 2-30, 2011

Moonwicks Cafe
5151 Plymouth Road
Dixboro, MI

The Ann Arbor Women Artist's Plein Air Painters will present an exhibit of their work depicting the Geddes Farm. "En Plein Air" is a French expression meaning "In the Open Air." The artists were invited to paint on location and take photographs during each of the four seasons to capture the scenery and architecture of this historic Geddes farm.

JOHN GEDDES

is remembered for leading a call in 1857 to organize the Washtenaw Historical Society and his role in the Society's reorganization in 1873 as the Pioneer Society of the County of Washtenaw. It was this later organization with annual dues initially at twenty-five cents that led to the publication of the 1881 *History of Washtenaw County*. The Pioneer Society was the predecessor of today's Washtenaw County Historical Society, and the dream of John Geddes of an historical museum has been realized in our Museum on Main Street.



At today's Huron River Drive and Dixboro Road, can be found the still-occupied home that John Geddes built in 1837 with lumber sawn by himself in the Geddes Sawmill on the Huron. Read more about him on our website at www.WashtenawHistory.org

November-December 2011 – Programs & Events Around the County

The Washtenaw County Historical Consortium is a volunteer organization representing 27 museums, libraries, and historical attractions in and around Washtenaw County, Michigan. Member organizations can post their events directly to the online calendar and we will list as many as we can in our newsletter. For more information see www.hvcn.org/info/wchs/consortium

Christmas Holiday Bazaar

Saturday, December 3, 9AM-4 PM

Santa will visit between 10:30 am - 12 PM. **DEXTER AREA HISTORICAL MUSEUM**, 3443 Inverness Street
Dexter, MI. 734- 426-2519

German Family Christmas

Dec. 3 & 4 and 10 & 11, from 1-4 pm

The Kempf House will be decked out with a traditional tree and decorations reflecting a German-American family's celebration of the holidays in the early 1900's. Christmas cookies served. Admission free. Donations appreciated. Kempf House Museum, 312 S. Division, 734-994-4898.

KempfHouseMuseum@gmail.org

"So Once Were We": Death in Early America

October 17, 2011 — February 17, 2012

Mortality is a useful lens through which we may view many aspects of early American society. *So Once Were We* explores American practices and traditions for coping with death, from the early years of European exploration and discovery to the early 20th century and the burgeoning modern funeral industry. **WILLIAM L. CLEMENTS LIBRARY** 909 S. University Ave., Ann Arbor.

Country Christmas at Cobblestone Farm

Saturday, December 3, 12 Noon-4 PM

Transport yourself back to a nineteenth century Yuletide at this living history event. Enjoy the sights and sounds of Christmas past. Cobblestone Farm is decorated in period style, holiday music and the delicious aroma of cooking on the wood stove. Costumed interpreters will provide tours of the farmhouse and invite you to visit the gift shop and the animals in the barnyard. **COBBLESTONE FARM**, 2781 Packard, Ann Arbor, 734-794-7120. gtaylor10@comcast.net

Genealogical Society of Washtenaw County, Michigan

Sunday, December 4, 1:30-4:30PM St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Education Center Auditorium, 5305 Elliott Dr. (off E. Huron River Dr. at Clark Rd.). Use parking lot P. The lecture and class are free. For more information contact: Marcia McCrary, President (734) 483-2799, **gswcmi@gmail.com** Our Program will feature Cecile Wendt Jensen CG presenting "Introduction to Polish Research." The class will also be presented by Ms. Jensen and will be about "Free Genealogical Resources for Michigan Researchers."



Christmas

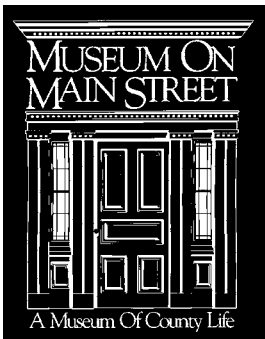
**Opens Sunday
November, 27
12-4 PM**

**PAST to
PRESENT**

*When was the first Christmas card sent?
Who is Santa and why do we
kiss under the mistletoe?
Learn the origins of our modern
blend of Christmas traditions, celebrations,
symbols and icons in this family-friendly exhibit.*

HAVE HANDS-ON FUN! Creative materials will be
available for making festive holiday cards, decorations,
paper chains, wreaths and more to take home or share with others.

The Museum on Main Street, 500 N. Main, Ann Arbor 734-662-9092



WASHTENAW HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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*\$15 WCHS Gift memberships
make great stocking stuffers and are
a wonderful way to say... "Thank you",
"welcome to new neighbors" or "happy holidays"
to friends, family and colleagues. See page 3.*

CURRENT RESIDENT OR

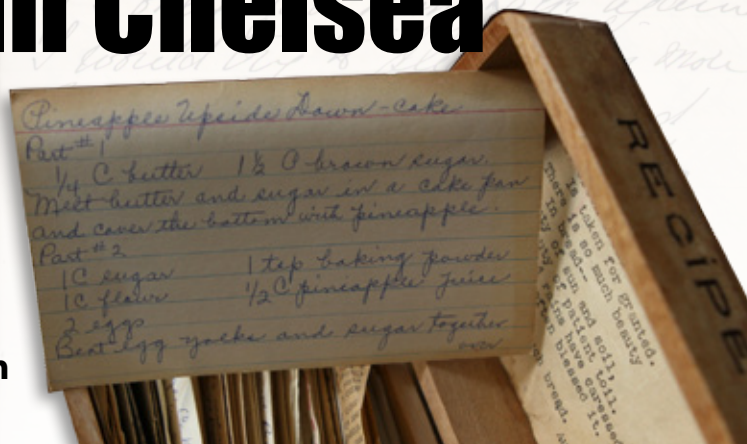
THE WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY • NOVEMBER 2011 PROGRAM

Culinary Chat in Chelsea

Sunday, November 20, 2011

2-4 PM

**Chelsea Retirement Community Theater
805 W. Middle Street • Chelsea, Michigan**



Please join us for a fun and casual conversation between two friends who volunteer with the Longone Culinary Collection at the University of Michigan Clements Library. **PHIL ZARET** will share his experiences of reading through thousands of hand-written diaries and manuscripts for culinary references to create a searchable database with over 5,000 entries. **JOANNE NESBIT** will share what cookbooks, ephemera and artifacts can tell us about our history. You can share your own culinary memories!

**Six free monthly programs are a benefit
of WCHS membership. Bring a Friend!**

"LIKE US" ON



For information call **734-662-9092**

Email: wchs-500@ameritech.net

www.WashtenawHistory.org