



Impressions

NEWSLETTER WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Heart & Soul of the WCHS

On December 17, 1857, 19 citizens of Ann Arbor called for “a county convention for the purpose of forming a County Historical Association to be composed of anyone from the townships who cared to attend.” From these 19 citizens to the current membership, every one of our members is essential to the success of the Historical Society. You attend our programs and events, donate artifacts, come to the exhibits at the Museum on Main Street and volunteer. The WCHS does not receive any outside funding, so your financial support goes a long way toward ensuring that our community’s history is interpreted and preserved for generations to come. We are a nonprofit 501 (c)(3) organization, your membership dues and donations are tax-deductible.

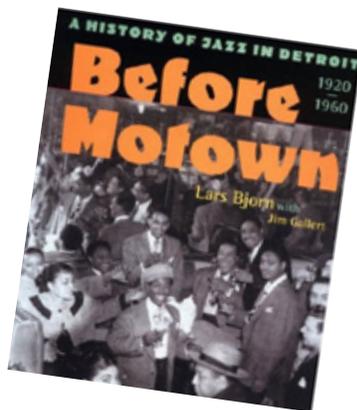
Thank You!

We truly value and appreciate your participation. We wish you and the ones you love a safe and happy Holiday Season and a great New Year!

WCHS Program Notes

Detroit Music Before Motown

On a beautiful fall afternoon, about 80 Michigan-history enthusiasts gathered together inside the Bentley Historical Library. The combined Annual Meeting of the Friends of the Bentley Historical Library and the October Program of WCHS on Sunday, October 21, featured University of Michigan–Dearborn Sociology Professor Lars Bjorn speaking about the history of music in Detroit before Motown. The talk was based on his book, written with jazz broadcaster and writer Jim Gallert, *Before Motown: A History of Jazz in*



Detroit, 1920-1960, and offered the opportunity to provide what Bjorn called “the audio and video that couldn’t come with the book.” Bjorn’s presentation incorporated music and video in addition to fascinating information and images related to jazz in Detroit during the late 1940s and 1950s.

(Continued on page 4)

Membership

Renewal Time

Membership is open to all who are interested in history, preservation, education, or want to support the work of the Washtenaw County Historical Society. You can renew online at www.WashtenawHistory.org, or use the personalized envelope enclosed in this issue of *Impressions*. As a member you will continue receiving our newsletter, enjoy an invitation to Society events and activities (see page 7) and know that you are supporting an important community resource.

Current Exhibit “Rest in Peace” is Open Until February 10, 2013

Looking for something fun to do with visiting friends and family? Bring your guests to experience this very interesting exhibit. We are open Saturdays and Sundays (including December 22, 23, 29 & 30) from 12 Noon-4 PM and by appointment. Call 734-662-9092.

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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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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Once again this issue of IMPRESSIONS includes our annual membership renewal information. While preparing to write my President's Letter I decided to visit our website and review a number of earlier President's letters as they related to membership and funding. The site (www.WashtenawHistory.org) contains 1943 through 2012 (to date) IMPRESSIONS (earlier named WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS with sometimes a second heading: "Published occasionally by the Washtenaw Historical Society").

I seldom found President's Letters, but did find President's Corners, President's Messages and President's Annual Letters. In many newsletters I found nothing from the President at all. A few examples follow: In July 1957, President Katharine Groomes wrote "... we still had a nice gain. Our present membership is 436." She goes on to mention the status of the Building Fund. In September 1967, under President Orlan Boston, an extensive article by Roscoe Bonisteel included "... but like all institutions of the kind it must have funds with which to work, and also must be free from domination." Also he wrote, "...we have to think above the yearly donations, sources of revenue and income in order to effectively operate." In September 1982 President Patricia Austin said "We need to attract new members to the Society if we are to keep it alive and viable..." In October 1992 President Pauline Walters discussed the upcoming Holiday Christmas Tree Trimming Contest at Englander's Furniture Store and its impact on fundraising for the Washtenaw County Historical Society.

Besides having a fun few hours reading earlier newsletters, I was able to conclude that historically (and still true today) a key part of the President's message must focus on building and maintaining membership, and encouraging donations and fundraising.

Leslie Loomans

Washtenaw County Historical Society

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Ann Arbor, MI 48104-1027

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

Museum Hours

Saturday & Sunday, 12 Noon – 4:00 PM

and by appointment Monday-Friday

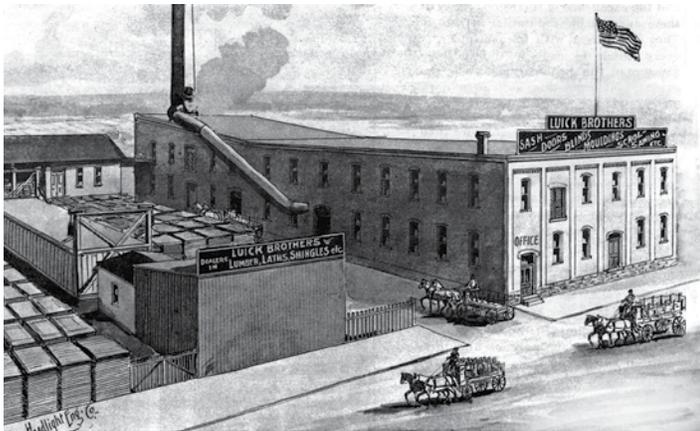
Call ahead 734-663-9092



Check us out, on the web and

www.WashtenawHistory.org

THEN & NOW - **KERRYTOWN AND TWO LOCAL MAYORS**



Luick Brothers Lumber Company 401-417 N. 5th Avenue, 1895

(Bentley Historical Library)



The Museum on Main Street is centrally located near several historic districts. Right around the corner is Kerrytown, a complex of three historic brick buildings, the oldest is from 1874 - The Luick Brothers Lumber Co. The former Godfrey Moving and Storage building on N. Fourth Avenue, was built in the 1880s by Junius Beal.

Legal Services S. Central Michigan *Godfrey Moving & Storage Co.*



The Washtenaw Farm Bureau store was built in 1942 by Charles McCalla. They once housed the most important trades of a growing city – lumber, warehousing, feed and grain.

The Luick Brothers Lumber Company supplied wood and wood products to the area from 1873-1930. Gottlob Luick served as mayor of Ann Arbor from 1899 to 1901. When Luick retired in 1931, he gave the lumberyard land to the city for a farmers’ market. During the economic depression of the 1930s, farmers used the old lumber sheds for stalls and shelter during cold weather.

A permanent farmers market was built by the WPA (Works Progress Administration), a federal jobs program from 1938-42. Charles McCalla purchased the Luick building in 1942 and used it for storage. He built his Washtenaw Farm Bureau store next to it selling livestock feed, seeds, pet supplies, and candy. Market farmers would often buy their supplies from him. McCalla’s children renamed the business the Washtenaw Farm and Garden Center in 1962.

Cecil O. Creal was the owner of Godfrey Moving & Storage Company until 1956. He was elected President of the Ann Arbor City Council for multiple terms, and served two terms as Mayor of Ann Arbor, 1959-1965. Creal’s grandparents lived in the historic house at 420 N. Fourth Avenue, that would later become the Paul Lawrence Dunbar Community Center (1937-1960). It is the current home of the Legal Services of South Central Michigan.

In the 1970s these three commercial buildings were converted into Kerrytown with exposed brick walls, large glass windows, wood beams and floors, enclosed walkways, courtyard and a bell tower. It is a vibrant, community-centered mix of shopping, dining and entertainment. And it is still the home of a Farmers Market, as Mayor Luick originally requested.

Source: The Downtown Ann Arbor Historical Street Exhibit Program, Ann Arbor District Library, Bentley Historical Library

The Garden is Ready for Winter

Master Gardener Lilly Ferguson and volunteer assistant Kathy, did a wonderful job preparing the garden for winter. Lilly planted dozens of new bulbs and added compost to enrich the soil. We hope you enjoy the beautiful new flowers next year.



The New Museum Bike Rack

Thanks to WCHS board member, Bob Yuhasz, who installed the bike rack on the north side of the property. One of our museum volunteers used it the very first day.

Detroit Music Before Motown

The Best in Black Entertainment

To set the stage for our journey into the Detroit jazz scene of the 1940s and '50s, Bjorn played the song "Atomic Cocktail" by Slim Gaillard. He called it a "footnote to Detroit jazz history" because Gaillard grew up in Detroit but left for New York City before making it big.



Slim Gaillard (Shaw Artist Corporation)

The playful song showed the kind of talent that was coming out of Detroit at the time, many of whom played at the Paradise Theater (1941-1951, a.k.a. Orchestra Hall), the center for black music in Detroit and perhaps the best in black entertainment in the whole country.



The Detroit jazz scene was centered in and around the African-American communities of Black Bottom and Paradise Valley where the commercial entertainments of the black community thrived, and middle-class whites went "slumming" in what were called Black and Tan clubs.

Bebop City

Venues like the Paradise Theater, Baker's Keyboard Lounge, the Bluebird Inn, and the Rouge Lounge hosted the best in modern jazz including such big names as Ella Fitzgerald, Terry Gibbs, Lucky Thompson, Frank Rosolino, Milt Jackson, Barry Harris, and Yusef Lateef. In Detroit, many of these jazz clubs and musicians were at the forefront of modern jazz or bebop, which was about listening, as well as the developing sound of rhythm & blues, which was about dancing. Many jazz players also had experience with and connections to R & B, and many R & B musicians were building on roots in big band or swing jazz. Playing Todd Rhodes' song, "Your Daddy's Doggin' Around," Bjorn clapped his hands and tapped his feet to emphasize the heavy afterbeat and honking sax that helped define early R & B. He also pointed out that many emerging rock 'n' roll performers were listening to and taking from these different musicians and musics coming from Detroit, especially R & B.

Detroit R & B

In this evolving music scene, Detroit produced such big-name artists as the King Porter Orchestra; Alberta Adams, known as Detroit's "Queen of the Blues"; TJ Fowler, a boogie woogie star from River Rouge; and Paul Williams, whom many in the audience recognized from the mention of his R & B hit (and nickname) "The Huck-lebuck." Because there were no large recording companies in Detroit, most artists needed to leave in order to succeed on a national level. But a small Detroit recording company, Fortune Records, produced records for many high-quality artists and distributed them through larger companies to



Orchestra Hall re-opened as Paradise Theater on Christmas Eve 1941. It became a major jazz venue, hosting renowned jazz musicians such as Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Count Basie, and Duke Ellington. Admission was 50 cents, and patrons could stay all day. There were three shows a day with four on weekends. "B" movies were shown between acts. Those without the 50 cents were allowed in the back balcony door.



make it on the R & B hit list. Fortune Record stars included Andre Williams, known as the Godfather of r a p because of his R & B hit "Bacon Fat"; doo-wop brothers Jimmy and Nolan Strong; Hank Ballard and the Midnighters, discovered at a Paradise Theater talent show; and Jack Scott, a Windsor-born rockabilly artist who moved to Hazel Park, MI (hometown of WCHS Corresponding Secretary Pauline Walters) in the 1950s and became the first white rock & roll star out of Detroit.



Jack Scott (www.last.fm)

The Flame Show Bar

John R. became Detroit's main music drag in the 1950s. Most of its clubs have since closed or been demolished, but the audience enjoyed pointing out familiar locations on the map Bjorn projected on the screen. One of the most famous of the John R. clubs was the Flame Show Bar, where, Bjorn argued, "it all comes together." The Flame, an upscale version of the Paradise Theater, featured the best in black entertainment, and many artists got their "big breaks" there, including LaVern Baker, Johnnie Ray, Little Willie John, Delloreese Patricia Early (Della Reese), Earle Van Dyke, George Benson, and Jackie Wilson, a.k.a. "Mr. Excitement."

The Flame was also a regular hang-out of future Motown founder Berry Gordy, whose sister ran the photo concession. It was at the Flame where Gordy met many of the people who would help him build Motown. In Berry Gordy and Motown the bands, musicians, improvisation, and vocals of Detroit jazz in the preceding decade came together to form the most important black-owned business of the 1960s.

Throughout Bjorn's talk, especially near the end as he spoke about the later 1950s, one could hear members of the audience joyfully expressing recognition at seeing the name of a location or performer that brought back fond memories. The talk concluded with a question and answer session that went over such topics as gender in jazz, Detroit Jazz Fest, and the leveling of the physical remains of Detroit jazz history due to such causes as neighborhood blight, urban renewal, and the building of freeways. Mingling and refreshments followed.



Ed & Nancy at Flame Show Bar, Detroit, MI (Doreen Mulman)

This was a joint program with the Annual Meeting of the Friends of the Bentley Library

Opening the business meeting was Bob Powell, President of the Board of Friends, who introduced Francis Blouin, current Director of the Bentley Library who will be stepping down later this year. Blouin enumerated the many ways in which the Bentley Library has expanded its collections and accessibility over the last year including significant money spent to digitize a collection of Civil War letters and several key donations from organizations in Detroit and at the University of Michigan. Blouin also praised three long-time Bentley staff members who are retiring this year, calling attention to all the wonderful work they have done for the institution.

After Bob Powell returned to the microphone to offer his own praises for the staff and Friends of the Bentley, he called on Karen Jania, head of reference at the Bentley and WCHS Vice President, to introduce the guest speaker for the afternoon. Lars Bjorn has been actively researching the Detroit jazz scene since the 1970s. For this program, he focused on Detroit jazz in the 1950s, which, he said, is when "everything came together." Arguing that Motown would not have existed without jazz, he went on to illustrate the connections between jazz, rhythm & blues, and rock & roll that came together in the 1950s, culminating in Motown's first hit in 1959.

Washtenaw County History from A to Z
at www.WashtenawHistory.org

The Washtenaw County Historical Society has put together an amazing online resource of local history sites and information. From A-Z, these links will take you to sites packed with articles, photographs, postcards, letters, oral histories and walking and driving tours. Jan Tripp, our webmaster, is always interested in learning about new sites to add to our list. Please email your suggestions to him at Jan_Tripp@comcast.net

Ann Arbor City Council Minutes

You can search the full text of Ann Arbor City Council meeting minutes from 1891-1930. All sets of minutes can be viewed as images or as searchable pdf's.

Ann Arbor Cooks

The Ann Arbor District Library, Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor, Ann Arbor Hadassah and the WCHS partnered to create this online collection of digitized cookbooks published by Ann Arbor churches and organizations.

Ann Arbor Historical Signs

A collection of photographs taken by the Ann Arbor Sign Inspector. Most of these images are taken in the 1970s.



Ann Arbor Postcards

Search, view and download over 260 color postcards of Ann Arbor dating from 1890. One example is the image of Lovers Lane on this page.

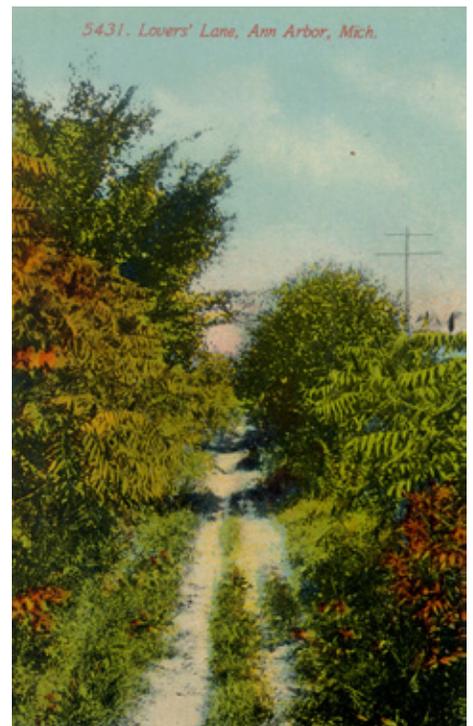


University of Michigan Student Dance, 1944 (Bentley Historical Library)

“Where did you go on your first date?”

Was it dinner or a picnic? A group outing, a dance or a walk? We want to know! The Spring exhibit at the Museum on Main Street is about courtship and dating in Washtenaw County from the 1800s to the present. If you still have the letter sweater your steady wore or that pin that proclaimed your status, we would love to see it or borrow it. The committee is looking to incorporate your Washtenaw County experiences and memories into this exhibit.

Maybe it's your dance card or scrapbook, J-Hop or prom pictures, souvenirs from dates, scrapbooks, or other memories. If you have them in your archives or know of where some might be, let us know. We can also scan any photos, cards, etc and return the originals to you. Please share your stories and memories, call 734-662-9092. You can email any stories, memories, or scanned items to WCHS Exhibit Chair Judy Chrisman at judychr@aol.com.



Lovers' Lane, Ann Arbor, Mich (Bentley Historical Library)

2012 Sunday Afternoon Educational Programs

The Washtenaw County Historical Society is dedicated to its mission to provide quality educational experiences for our members. We strive to cover a variety of topics from people to historic places and events to matters of preservation, conservation, and collecting. The Sunday afternoon lecture series is free and offered to both members and visitors during the months of September, October, November, February, March, April and May. This is an overview of the programs we presented in 2012. 2013 program dates are February 17, March 17 and April 21. The Annual Meeting will take place in May.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPEAKERS

February 19 - Book Talk

with **Carol Mull**, author of *The Underground Railroad in Michigan*.

Ms. Mull highlighted the significance of the area where the talk was held in the Pittsfield Township Administration Building on Michigan Avenue where neighboring farmers had been active participants.



March 18 - Book Talk

with **James Thomas Mann**, author of *Wicked Ann Arbor & Washtenaw County*. Washtenaw County has a dark and sordid history, filled with unexplained murders and vicious crimes. Mann recounted these stories and other strange happenings around the county. Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor.



April 15 - Exhibit Talk

UM Professor **Michelle McClellan**



Bad Habits: Drinks, Drags & Drugs in Washtenaw County History. This exhibit was a collaboration with the 2012 UM LSA Research Theme

Semester. The program was held in Manchester at the historic Bethel United Church of Christ.

May 16 - Annual Meeting

The annual business of the Society was conducted, including board elections. Guest speaker **Martha Churchill** gave a very informative and humorous history on the city of Milan and surrounding area. Milan Senior Center, Milan.

September 16 - Exhibit Talk

Rest in Peace - The Washtenaw Way of Death. Guest Speaker Mike Mitchell, of Staffan-Mitchell Funeral Home (established in Chelsea, in 1853) talked about the early days of the funeral industry, and how the newest trends in the industry are the oldest practices with the popularity of green burials and photo/video tributes. Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor.



October 21 - Book Talk & Music

with **Lars Bjorn**



Noted jazz historians Lars Bjorn and Jim Gallert wrote the first full history of jazz in Detroit *Before Motown*. Bjorn gave a music infuse, foot-

tapping talk about Detroit musicians, club owners, and others who contributed to Detroit's music scene. Co-sponsored with the Bentley Historical Library. Read about this talk on pages 4-5 of your newsletter.

November 18 - Remembrance through Music and Imagery

Guest Speaker **Cheney J. Schopieray**, Assistant Curator of Manuscripts at the William L. Clements Library talked about mortality as a lens through



which we may view many aspects of early American society. From the trans-Atlantic movement of ideas and traditions, to the universal experience of personal and collective remembrance. Ann Arbor Senior Center, Burns Park.

**THANK YOU For attending
our 2012 Program Series!**





Drawing by Michael Klement

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This is your
WCHS Membership
Renewal Issue!

CURRENT RESIDENT OR

WCHS MYSTERY PHOTO ON FACEBOOK

We will be posting mystery photos on our Facebook page (and *Impressions*) and hope that you can help us identify it.

This was discovered in the collection at the Museum on Main Street and we have no idea what it is. It has a handwritten black marking '12 43' on the front which may be a Christmas gift date. The pot with the holes is all one piece. The items are white with brown and gold paint.



Post your answer on Facebook at www.facebook.com/washtenawhistory

Email your answer to: wchs-500@ameritech.net or call 734-662-9092

Mail your answer to: The Museum on Main Street • 500 N. Main, Ann Arbor, MI 48104

