

A Return To The Past!

This summer, Museum staff member **Victor Paul** made new window boxes for the Museum and painted the front door--a bright yellow, the color which, according to photographs, was the color of the door of the Canadian Legion Hall in 1959, long before the Museum occupied the facilities. Many thanks to Victor for his hard work in sprucing up the building!

Museum Hours
Saturdays
2:00 - 4:00 PM
or by appointment
(248) 545-7606

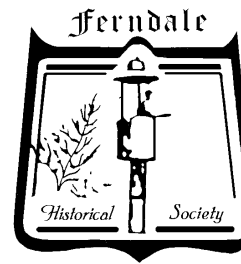


Ferndale Historical Society
1651 Libernois
Ferndale, Michigan 48220

Saturday Serials At The Ferndale Theatre, 1920s/30s

Going to the Ferndale Theater was a common Saturday afternoon activity for Ferndale kids. Those serials they showed had us coming back week after week. Soon after the film started I always suspected the proprietor, Mr. Ealand, would start blowing an enticing odor from the popcorn machine into the seating area. We naturally could not resist for long and before the first reel was over the place was a mad house with popcorn flying around accompanied by yelling and screaming. Mr. Ealand would then turn up the house lights, walk down to the stage and warn us that if the noise continued he would have to ask us to leave. Well, he never carried out that threat but he did succeed in getting us to lower the noise to a dull roar. *Ross D. Stevenson, in Old Timers Tell It Like It Was (Ruth Rodgers Elmers; June Waugh Kotlarek; Gerry Kulick, Editor), Ferndale Historical Society, 1987: 103-04.*

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The Crow's Nest

"Preserving the heritage of Ferndale for future generations"
Newsletter of the Ferndale Historical Society

Fall, 2004

Vol. 20

"MOTHER HANDSOME'S": FERNDALE'S FIRST HAVEN FOR WOODWARD TRAVELERS

Mary Ann Chappell, tavern proprietor, remains one of Ferndale's most memorable 19th-Century pioneers. Records indicate that soon after 1808 she successively owned two taverns "on the military road out of Detroit" (Woodward) in Wayne County. Later, in the 1820s, she opened a tavern in a log cabin at the Woodward/Lafayette intersection in Royal Oak. (Some travelers record that they "slept soundly on a blanket on the floor" in this tavern.) Then, in 1833, she purchased property on the west side of Woodward between what is now Drayton and Oakridge in Ferndale; there she built a frame-structure tavern, now thought to have been Ferndale's first frame building. (The few other structures then in the area were log cabins.) Reportedly an "army follower" in her early career, she is described in historical references as "an eccentric old lady," of "conspicuous lack of personal beauty," and "as rough and boisterous in speech as she was plain in person." Yet "Mother Handsome," as she came to be affectionately known, was "undeniably popular as a landlady" and "kind and attentive" to her patrons. "I don't think I ever enjoyed a better meal" was at least one satisfied customer's assessment of her culinary efforts and Oakland County lore. Her tavern in Ferndale became a popular stopping place because of its location near the Woodward/Saginaw Trail (Pinecrest) intersection; all north-bound traffic had to use either of these roads. How long Mother Handsome's Tavern operated in Ferndale is not known; the oldest map of the area, 1872, notes only "a site formerly owned by M. A. Chappell." Thus Mother Handsome and her tavern passed into the mists of Ferndale legend. *Source: Maurice F. Cole, Ferndale of Yesteryear (Detroit: Harlo Printing Co., 1971): 2-3*



Bringing Back The Crow's Nest



The Ferndale Historical Society has suggested, and the City Council is considering, the building of a 20-foot tall crow's nest at the Woodward and Nine Mile intersection. Seventy years ago Ferndale police

officers would direct traffic from such a platform located in the same area. Although Detroit had crow's nest *Continued on Pg 2.*

INSTALLATION DINNER

Thursday, October 28, 2004

6:00 PM - Kulick Center

Cost: \$12 per person

For tickets contact:

Ray White (248) 541-2476

June Kotlarek (248) 542-8729

or purchase tickets at the door

"Preserving the heritage of Ferndale for future generations"

Ferndale Historical Society



A Note From The Past*

Early in the life of the village, in 1920, a resolution was adopted by the governing body ...

Resolved, That the Village Commission order a Crow's Nest be placed on Woodward Avenue and 9 Mile Road, same to be placed on a concrete foundation, and like type as used in the city of Detroit.

...in making preparations for the widening of Woodward Avenue later in that first decade of the village's existence, the Crow's Nest was removed. The northbound strip of Woodward Avenue today covers the original location of that famous structure. *Entire quote from Maurice F. Cole, *Ferndale of Yesteryear* (Detroit: Harlo Printing, 1971): 86.

Bringing Back The Crow's Nest from Pg.1

traffic platforms in the 1920s, Ferndale was the only city in southern Oakland County to have one. The crow's nest is, therefore, one of Ferndale's historical landmarks. Officials agree that restoration of this icon would be a fitting reminder of Ferndale's heritage, especially since Woodward has been chosen by both state and federal governments as a National Scenic Byway. Projections are that the replica would be located on the Woodward median, on the north side of Nine Mile; grant funds may make construction possible; and, if all goes according to plan, building would be completed in time for next year's Woodward Dream Cruise. **Ray White**, of the Historical Society, has been instrumental in promoting the resurrection of this Ferndale landmark.

Historical Society Proposed Slate of Officers 2004/2005

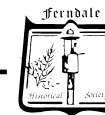
President: Ray White; **Vice-President:** Roger Schmidt; **Treasurer:** Phyllis Hill; **Recording Secretary:** Chris Kole; **Corresponding Secretary:** Jean Spang; **Newsletter Editor:** Jean Spang **Newsletter:** David Lungu; **Historian:** Diane O'Neill; **Membership:** Phyllis Hill; **Board of Directors:** Charles Beaudet, David Lungu, Eleanor Mielke, Carolyn Steger; **Trustees:** Thomas Barwin, Frank Flores. To be installed at the Installation dinner.

A Very Special Thanks...

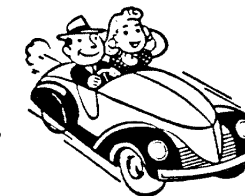
Two charter members of the Ferndale Historical Society, each a dedicated Museum staffer, deserve special mention: **June Kotlarek** is retiring as Society president; and **Ruth Elmers**, who has served in various Society offices over the years, has moved to Minnesota to be near her family. Without the dedication and foresight of these two dedicated workers, the preservation of Ferndale history and the development of the Ferndale Historical Museum into a respected information resource would not have been possible. Our heartfelt thanks for their untiring work-and their good humor in the process!



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June Kotlarek
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Phyllis Hill
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Mary White
Ray White
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WOODWARD AVENUE: Ferndale's Historic Sites On The National Scenic Byway



The U.S. Secretary of Transportation designated Woodward Avenue as a National Scenic Byway in 2002. Woodward, along with the Las Vegas Strip, is among the few urban routes on this list of 95 byways which includes Route 66, California's Route 2, Big Sur Coast Highway, and New Mexico's Santa Fe Trail. Of Woodward's 28.6 miles, Ferndale's 1.7-mile portion has some 17 locations* that define Ferndale's role in southeastern Michigan development. Few sites remain intact; nevertheless, the remembered structures and activities are reminders of what made the Woodward--and Ferndale--we know today:

- Mother Handsome's Tavern:** (1830s) West side of Woodward between what is now Drayton and Oakridge: key stopping place for travelers heading north.
- Granger Saw Mill:** (1869) West side of Woodward near Eight Mile Rd. (now Machpelah Cemetery): Ferndale's oldest business on Woodward; prepared planks for original Belle Isle Bridge.
- Porter School:** (1870) Southeast Woodward/Nine Mile corner; Ferndale's first school.
- Charles S. H. Silman House:** (1879) East of Woodward, south of Marshall: Ferndale's first house on Woodward, a "mansion" by standards of the time.
- Woodward Heights Subdivision:** (1910) Northern corners of Woodward / 9 Mile, platted for development, along with the southwest corner, "Greenwood Park," and southeast corner, "Little Farms": Woodward Heights Subdivision was Ferndale's largest.
- Badder Building:** (1919) Northwest Woodward/Nine Mile corner: built for a real estate business, later site of Federal's Department Store (the Gap today) and the Radio City Theatre.
- Memorial Day Parade:** (1919) Nine Mile at Woodward: Michigan's first Memorial Day parade.
- St. James Catholic Church:** (1919) West side of Woodward at Hazelhurst: Church began meeting in the old Porter farm chicken coop.
- American State Bank:** (1920) Southeast Woodward/Nine Mile corner: Ferndale's first bank; 1923, relocated to southeast Woodward/Vester corner (today's Elk's Club); the bank's branch, Woodward at Bennett, in the late 1930s, became Ferndale's first City Hall and Court.
- Ferndale Classic Theatre:** (1920s) East side of Woodward near Vester: the city's first "modern theatre with the latest sound equipment." Now the Magic Bag.
- Crow's Nest:** (1920) Woodward/Nine Mile intersection: traffic signal platform where a police officer directed traffic; replaced by an electric traffic light in 1928.
- Woodward Widening Project:** begun in 1926, ultimately resulting in Ferndale, in 1928, becoming the first city in the world to have an eight-lane highway crossing its borders.
- Rodger's Dutch Mill:** (1928) West side of Woodward between Leroy and Hazelhurst (First Methodist Church today), Ferndale's most popular landmark because of its windmill.
- Harrison Building:** (Ferndale Center Building) (1919) Southeast Woodward/Nine Mile corner; temporary headquarters of the newly incorporated City of Ferndale offices and Court.
- White Cruiser Drive-In:** (1930s - 1950s) Southwest Woodward/Breckenridge corner: The second oldest drive-in on Woodward (Ted's at Square Lake was the first).
- H & Y Drive-In:** (formerly Dan's Drive-In) (1950s) Woodward/University, popular drive-in.
- Woodward Dream Cruise:** (1994) Originated in Ferndale, now an annual parade of classic cars celebrating Detroit's Golden Age attracting some 1.6 million visitors yearly.

*Summarized typescript list of Ferndale locations by Ruth Elmers and Gerry Kulick, *Ferndale Historical Society Museum, for the Woodward Avenue Corridor Research Study, prepared by the Oakland Co. Development and Planning Division, 1995; Woodward Dream Cruise has been added to this list. Some location descriptions from Maurice F. Cole, Ferndale of Yesteryear* (Detroit: Harlo Printing, 1971), and various Woodward Dream Cruise publicity leaflets on file in Museum archives.