

The Crow's Nest

NEWSLETTER OF THE FERNDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Fall 2012

U.S. 1940 CENSUS RECORDS: A SNAPSHOT OF FERNDALE ON THE EVE OF WAR

Chris Hammer

This past spring, the National Archives released the complete census records from the 16th Decennial Census, providing a profile of the people who made up the United States of America on April 1, 1940—the eve of Pearl Harbor and the United States' entry into World War II.

The United States Constitution requires a census of Americans to take place every ten years. By federal law, to protect privacy concerns, all individual census records are sealed from public view for 72 years. While previously released census records are available on microfilm, this year's release of the 1940 census records marked the first time that the National Archives released the records digitally. This provides an unprecedented amount of access for the newly released records.

The Ferndale Historical Society has added these digital records to its collection for further research into what Ferndale looked like in 1940. Provided is the most detailed look yet at Ferndale's citizens during this important time in the city's history. The census-takers walked door-to-door throughout the city to collect information about all of Ferndale's residents. They asked for every person's name, age, race, marital status, ethnicity, place of birth, education, and relationship to the head of the household. Because the Roosevelt Administration sought to understand the country's recovery from the Great Depression, the census takers were particularly interested in employment questions, asking the number of weeks a person was unemployed in the past year, annual income, and employment with New Deal agencies such as the Civilian Conservation Corps, the National Youth Administration, and the Works Progress Administration—the latter of which was the subject of a recent *Crow's Nest* article ("Ferndale and the WPA: The New Deal's Lasting Local Impact," Spring 2012).

In addition to these questions asked of every individual, every twentieth person was asked further questions about himself or herself, such as the place of parents' birth, language spoken at home as a child, veteran status, and Social Security status (another New Deal program).

In total, Ferndale in 1940 contained 22,523 residents, which represented an increase of 1,668—or 8%—over the 1930 figure of 20,855 residents. This figure was not without disappointment, though. After the Census Bureau released Ferndale's preliminary census count of 22,504, the *Ferndale Gazette* reported that a "scream of protest has gone up all over the city," calling the 8% increase "almost ridiculous" and speculating that "Ferndale has grown at least 10 per cent" since 1930. It cited several statistics to back up its claim, including over 1,000 new houses built, a 15% increase in church enrollment, and an increase of about 1,000 in the school enrollment. As a result, the paper asked that "any and every person whose home was not visited by an enumerator" to write to the *Gazette* for forwarding to Oakland County's census supervisor, Francis McElhaney. Nevertheless, the final count only added 19 people, so the *Gazette's* complaints largely fell upon deaf ears. But subsequent decades' counts saw further increases. In 1950, Ferndale's population reached 29,675—an increase of nearly 32% over 1940—and in 1960 Ferndale's population broke 30,000 for the first time in its history (31,347). Census records for 1950 and 1960 will be released in 2022 and 2032, respectively.

Not only do Ferndale's census records offer a view of Ferndale as a whole, they provide invaluable research opportunities about individuals within Ferndale, whether for research about houses in Ferndale or about family members who resided in Ferndale.

For instance, consider what the census records show about Ferndale's mayor at the time, Theodore Degenhardt. Degenhardt became Ferndale's mayor in 1933 and served until 1941. At the time of the 1940 census, Degenhardt was 52 and owned the house at 200 East Cambourne, where he lived with his wife Anna, daughter Rosemary, son Theodore, and his sister-in-law. The (*cont'd*)

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census records also reveal that Degenhardt was born in Missouri, that he worked 48 hours a week as a builder, and that his house was valued at \$4,200. Degenhardt was succeeded by Lincoln High School teacher Carl Forsythe, who served from 1941 until 1949.

There is no more complete collection of information available about a community and its individuals than its census records. The Ferndale Historical Society's collection of 1940 census records now provides an additional resource for genealogical or housing research. Combined with the Ferndale Historical Society's extensive and exclusive O'Neill Housing Collection, there now is no better resource into Ferndale's past than the Ferndale Historical Society.

Sources consulted: National Archives website; 1940 census records available at the Ferndale Historical Museum. Theodore Degenhardt census record, District 63-37, Sheet 1-B.



Mayor Theodore Degenhardt. Photo: Ferndale Historical Society collection.



Mayor Degenhardt lived at 200 East Cambourne in 1940. His house, along with all of the houses in Ferndale, have been photographed as part of the Ferndale Historical Society's O'Neill Housing Collection. Photo: Roger Schmidt.

PATRIOTISM, JUNE 1943,

FLYER FOR BOND RALLY AT LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL, FEATURING JESSE OWENS . . .

Let's All Get Behind This War

HEAR
Mr. Jesse Owens
Famed Runner of 3 championship in 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin
speak on "This War For Freedom!"

HEAR - - Rev. Andrew E. Kirth
Speak on "Our Heritage—Its Value"

HEAR Lincoln High School Orchestra
SEE The Y. S. O. Review
A Patriotic Pageant given by the Young People of Birdhurst
Recreation Center

HEAR Mr. Pat Flowers, Popular Pianist
AT A

Giant Patriotic Program
Sale of Stamps and Bonds sponsored by Mr. Tom Leland
Mayor Forsythe, Mr. Fred McCaul, Supt. Edgar Downes
Lieutenant Margaret Cox

At Lincoln High School
Friday - June 18th
7:30 p. m.
Sponsored by the Northwest Educational Committee

Admission Free !!

A letter from Hugh Booth, Citizen, to the Ferndale Council of Churches, June 8, 1943, urging support for the Victory Bond and Sale Rally at LHS on June 18, 1943, stresses that on the program is Jesse Owens, "the only winner of the Olympic games at Berlin with whom Hitler would not shake hands."

Photo at left: Ferndale Historical Museum Archives.

*Photo at right: Wikipedia:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesse_Owens
(accessed Sept. 26, 2012).*

Jesse Owens

A black and white photograph of Jesse Owens in mid-stride during a track race. He is wearing a light-colored singlet and shorts. The background shows a large crowd of spectators in a stadium.

Jesse Owens in 1936

Personal information

Full name	James Cleveland Owens
Nationality	American
Born	September 12, 1913 Oakville, Alabama, USA
Died	March 31, 1980 (aged 66) Tucson, Arizona, USA

FERNDALE VOTES, 1928 TO PRESENT*

Compiled by Chris Hammer

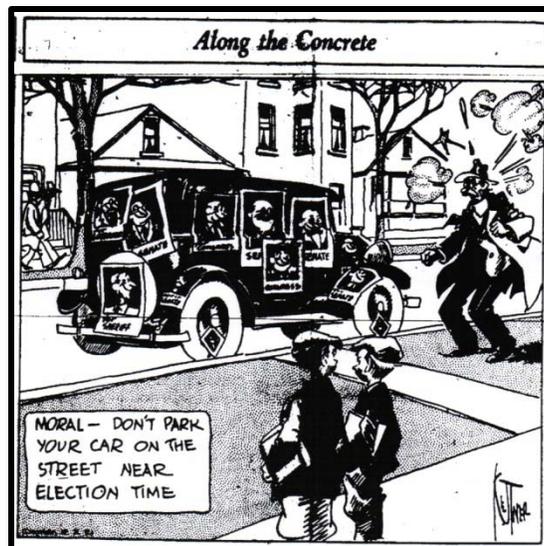
With election season here, a search of the *Daily Tribune* and *Ferndale Gazette* provides a historical perspective on how Ferndale has voted in presidential elections over the years. Ferndale has voted for the national winner in the presidential election in 13 out of the 17 elections for which results are available. Lyndon Johnson received the largest vote total in Ferndale's history, with 9,156 votes in 1964.

The following table lists the Republican and Democratic candidates for president and each candidate's vote totals in Ferndale. The national winner of the election is listed in **bold**.

Year	Winner in Ferndale	Runner-Up in Ferndale
1928	Herbert Hoover (R) – 3,966	Al Smith (D) – 1,010
1932	Franklin Roosevelt (D) – 2,524	Herbert Hoover (R) – 2,112
1936	Franklin Roosevelt (D) – 3,975	Alf Landon (R) – 2,427
1940	Franklin Roosevelt (D) – 4,387	Wendell Willkie (R) – 3,396
1944	Franklin Roosevelt (D) – 5,157	Thomas Dewey (R) – 4,475
1948	Thomas Dewey (R) – 4,427	Harry Truman (D) – 4,039
1952	Dwight Eisenhower (R) – 7,249	Adlai Stevenson (D) – 5,830
1956	Dwight Eisenhower (R) – 7,588	Adlai Stevenson (D) – 6,462
1960	John Kennedy (D) – 7,388	Richard Nixon (R) – 6,951
1964	Lyndon Johnson (D) – 9,156	Barry Goldwater (R) – 3,895
1968	Hubert Humphrey (D) – 6,809	Richard Nixon (R) – 4,512
1972	Richard Nixon (R) – 6,559	George McGovern (D) – 4,635
1976	Jimmy Carter (D) – 5,668	Gerald Ford (R) – 5,050
1980	<i>results unavailable</i>	
1984	Ronald Reagan (R) – 5,518	Walter Mondale (D) – 4,258
1988	<i>results unavailable</i>	
1992	<i>results unavailable</i>	
1996	<i>results unavailable</i>	
2000	Al Gore (D) – 6,107	George W. Bush (R) – 2,970
2004	John Kerry (D) – 7,637	George W. Bush (R) – 3,456
2008	Barack Obama (D) – 8,532	John McCain (R) – 2,621

Note: Incomplete result in 1932.

* Sources consulted: *Daily Tribune* (1928-1932, 1940, 1948-1976, 1984); *Ferndale Gazette* (1936, 1944); *Michigan Secretary of State* (2000-2008).



Ferndale Gazette, October 26, 1932

MAY 28, 1972: HEDGE'S WIGWAM, UP IN SMOKE

Roger Schmidt

A year-long battle with the city of Pleasant Ridge came to a fiery end on Memorial Day weekend 1972 for the owners of the Trading Post. The building, formerly known as Hedge's Wigwam, burned to the ground despite the best efforts of the Ferndale Fire Department, under contract to provide fire services to the city.

The investigation determined that the fire was arson but the question was: Who did it and why? The possibilities included: (1) revenge by a motorcycle gang; (2) the owner wanted to move his operation to Roseville; and (3) the city wanted it gone. So who did it?

Roy Hedge was the original owner and operator. He started with an orange juice stand at Ten Mile and Main Street in 1920. Business was good along the Woodward corridor and he soon expanded his operation to include barbecue items.

On a trip to Mackinaw City he got the idea for a restaurant with an Indian theme when he visited one there. Over the next year he collected items and made arrangements. The new restaurant opened in 1927 at 24632 Woodward, and for the next forty-five years was known for good food at reasonable prices.

The family-style eatery featured Indian statues in the parking lot, a giant wigwam above the entrance and Native American décor. There were paintings, varnished redwood tables, cedar chairs [*one now on display at the Ferndale Historical Museum*], parchment hanging lamps, birchbark wall coverings and even a small waterfall. The restaurant soon became a showpiece for Pleasant Ridge and an area landmark. In its heyday, the '30s, '40s and early '50s, the Wigwam was the "in" place to take a date. Hedge died in 1955 and left the business to his long-time employees. At the time of his death, the restaurant was serving close to 2,000 meals a day.

By the '60s the building was showing its age and the owners wanted to modernize. At about the same time, plans were announced for building I-696. Because the restaurant would have to be torn down to make way for the highway, the plans to make improvements were dropped and the restaurant closed in 1967 [*Daily Tribune, 1-12-62*]. In early 1971, Jack Christenson Jr., an advertising agency owner and promoter, announced his plans to open a boutique and antique store in the building. There were to be 100 plus individual booths, each operated by a different craftsman, selling everything from leather goods to candles and incense.

On March 26, 1971 Ferndale Fire Chief McMurray and Fire Inspector Ken Galbraith inspected the building and recommended to the Pleasant Ridge City manager, Louis G. Barry, that until the building was brought up to code, no occupancy permit should be issued: the wood-framed booths, flammable materials used to decorate them, were deemed safety and welfare hazards. Christenson claimed he had added fire exits and fire-retardant coatings to the birchbark wall and sought an injunction against the city's objections to his efforts, which was granted in Circuit Court. On April 15, the Trading Post opened for business, and the city subsequently issued a steady stream of tickets to Christenson over safety violations, noise problems, and crowd issues.

On March 22, 1972 at 12:20am a fire broke , causing water and smoke damage to parts and smoke damage to parts of the main building; damage was estimated at \$11,500 [*Daily Tribune, 1-3-72*]. It took thirty firemen to arrest the blaze. Pleasant Ridge filed an injunction to close the business until a sprinkler system was installed. Meanwhile on April 20, another fire damaged a basement storage area. Once again, the Circuit Court ruled against the city.

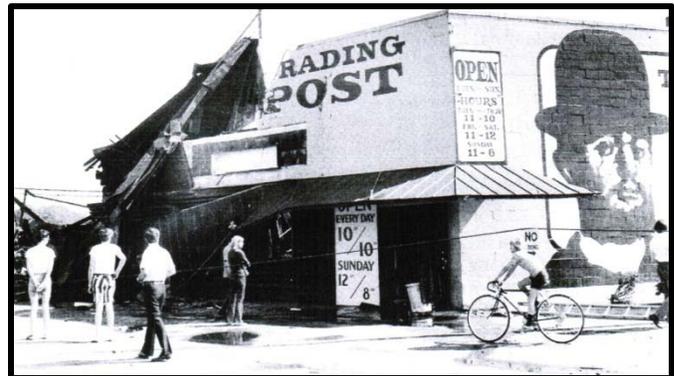
On May 28, 1972, at 11:50pm, smoke was seen coming from the building. Fifty-five firemen, including those from Ferndale and surrounding areas, and 2 million gallons of water, were required to quell the blaze, which, by 3am, had destroyed the whole structure. One fireman had to be treated for smoke inhalation. At the height of the fire the Pleasant Ridge police arrested four people for allegedly trying to loot merchandise from display windows. Two weeks before the fire a shooting by a security guard had been reported. Another report, later denied, was related to a motorcycle gang and complaints about rowdyism and loitering [*Daily Tribune, 3-2-73*].

Once publicity about the biggest fire in Pleasant Ridge history simmered down, the question remained, and still prevails: Who did it?

Source: Summarized from Captain Roger Schmidt, Tough as Nails: A History of the Ferndale Fire Department (Ferndale Historical Society, 2004): 140-143.



Hedge's and its guards, 24362 Woodward. Opened 1920; closed 1967. Photo: Roger Schmidt



Trading Post, successor to Hedge's, opened in 1971, burned 1972. Photo: Courtesy Detroit News, in Roger Smith collection.

THE REAPPEARANCE OF A HEDGE'S INDIAN, 1980*

Five concrete Indians stood guard in front of the landmark Hedge's Wigwam, 10 Mile at Woodward, for over 40 years. Hedge's closed in 1967; in January 1968 the Indians were sold at auction. Each weighed 500 pounds and sold for \$25 to \$75 apiece.

Years later Hedge's "Chief Pontiac" turned up on guard at an old cider mill in Oakland Township. The mill was purchased by new owner Gerry Mancour who named it the Paint Creek Cider Mill. No information was available on how the "Chief" got there, but in 1980 Mancour made arrangements with 20-year-old David Bochenek, a Rochester college student, to restore the statue in colors used by the Pontiac Indian tribe who originally lived in the area. As of September 26, 2012, the Hedge's Indian, now a cider mill guard, remains on duty.



Paint Creek Cider Mill Indian, ca.1980s

Sources consulted : Janice M. Goldman, "Uprooted Hedge's Indian chief gets new uniform at cider mill," Daily Tribune, September 1, 1980. Photo: Courtesy of the Daily Tribune, photographer Craig B. Gaffield.

OUR ILLUSTRIOUS FAN BASE . . .

Garry Andrews, Director, Ferndale Historical Museum

It might be assumed that our interest, when working for a Historical Museum, falls only upon dusty relics and disintegrating paper. For the most part, that may be true. However, there is an element that cannot be overlooked by our visitors to the museum or our answer-seekers through our website. Inquiries come in all forms and deal mostly with family genealogy or a question about a home or business from the past. But sometimes a very odd question is asked.

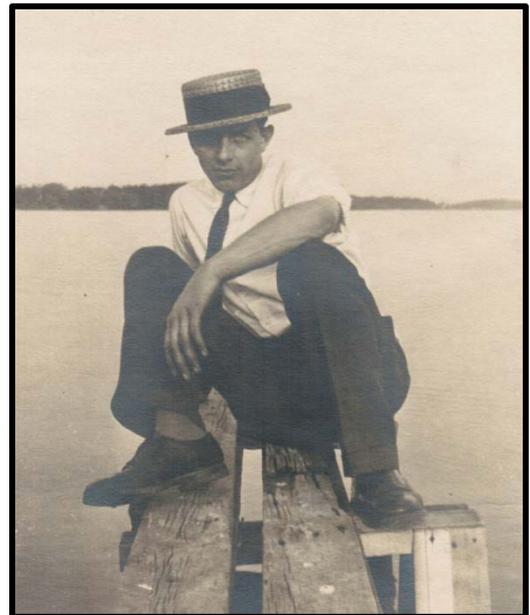
For example, I once had a gentleman inquire about a neighbor he grew up next to in Ferndale in the early 1940s. He knew the name of the street he lived on and the name of his nextdoor neighbor (Billy), but he wanted to know the name of his friend Billy's pet, a "beautiful golden Labrador Retriever." One would think that we might just laugh and move on. But we here at the FHM are always willing to make every attempt to answer any question that comes our way. So I took on the challenge. Two things I learned by this research: nothing good comes from fetching a dog a bone—and that pets, especially in Ferndale, have the same privacy rights as their human owners. Therefore, any and all such information is sealed and cannot be obtained.

I had another visitor who circled the display area in the museum, constantly jumping back at everything he saw, grabbing his heart and screaming "Oh, man!" at the top of his lungs. After his third time around, it was becoming a bit unnerving so I slowly directed him to the door and took him outside to show him our ancient maple tree on the front lawn. The response he gave after seeing it: "Oh, Man!"

We have had a couple of colorful "short term" volunteers. One, who believed that marijuana and orange juice made a perfect breakfast combination--until she almost took out the Museum's glass display case at City Hall. Have you ever wondered what shattering glass sounds like in a quiet, empty, tiled, and concrete foyer of a proper city hall? It is better left unheard!

We must never forget our most memorable volunteer, a young man, who before coming to work, would spend his time flying all night long, via his computer, on a dragon fighting off the aliens from the planet Ozark. And, oh, he told me he lived on a planet out in the universe as well and only lived on earth in his spare time. He was always too tired. I finally let him go when I found him sleeping in the bathroom.

We also get inquiries about the unnamed people in old photographs from Ferndale. So, I shall ask all of our readers: Can anyone tell us who the man is in the accompanying picture (and date). If so, would you please send the information to us at the Museum so it can be documented. We would be so grateful! (*cont'd next page*)



Ferndale's "Man of Mystery" from the Ferndale Historical Society Collection.

(cont'd from Page 5) A recent visitor showed up at the museum door carrying a gigantic blue bag. Investigation of the mystery bag revealed a large panda head (circumference: 58") and an accompanying panda suit that would fit a 5'11" figure. The visitor, Sandy Ungerman, told me that it was the costume she had worn as a "mascot" for the Ferndale Police Department in every Ferndale Memorial Day Parade for 30 years, beginning in the 1970s. This panda is now proudly on display in the Ferndale Historical Museum. Now this is History!

There you have it, Friends. There is not a dull moment when you work within the realms of history—even if we have to breathe in old dust from time to time.

HEADLINE IN THE *FERNDALE GAZETTE*, JUNE 9, 1928:

PART OF HAZEL PARK ANNEXED TO FERNDALE: BIG MAJORITIES CAST IN CITY AND DISTRICT—450 ACRES ADDED TO EAST SIDE; LARGE VOTE RECORDED*

Annexation of 450 acres of Hazel Park area to Ferndale was approved by large majorities, at a special election Saturday, both in the affected territory and the City of Ferndale. The affected area gave a 132 to 69 vote for the move, while it was approved in Ferndale by a vote of 412 to 21.

Police and fire protection will be provided for the newly annexed territory as soon as it officially is annexed. Fire alarm boxes and additional fire hydrants will be needed in the new territory.

Four of Ferndale's eight precincts voted unanimously for the annexation. There was no booth at which more than seven opposing votes were cast.

The territory which will become a part of Ferndale extends from the Eight to the Ten-mile roads, the boundary of the city being moved eastward a distance varying from one to six blocks. The Fordmont Park subdivision is the largest subdivision taken in.

The eastern Ferndale limits will be West End avenue between Eight and Nine-mile roads; Pilgrim avenue between Nine-mile and Nine and a Half-mile roads and Lennox avenue from there to Ten-mile roads.

The remainder of Hazel Park is included in petitions asking annexation to Royal Oak, which are to be acted upon at the June session of the County Board of Supervisors.

**Source: Summarized from Ferndale Gazette, June 4, 1928, on file in the Ferndale Historical Museum archives.*

HANDS-ON BAKING

HOW TO BAKE A COCOA CAKE—NO EGGS OR BUTTER: A RECIPE FROM THE WILSON SCHOOL PTA COOKBOOK, NOVEMBER 1937

2 cups brown sugar, ½ cup lard, cream these with hands. Then add: 1 cup sour milk, 2½ cups flour, sifted, ½ cup hot water to which 1 teaspoon of soda has been added. Bake in oven 350 degrees for 30 minutes. This makes two large layers.

Mrs. James Fabris

A FERNDALE PIONEER

ELECTED: FERNDALE'S FIRST WOMAN COMMISSIONER, 1921

A total of some 247 representatives have served on the forty-seven commission/councils that have governed Ferndale since 1917. Of these representatives, nine have been women. One, Pamela McCullough (1994-96) became mayor; and Kate Baker briefly served as interim mayor (2011).

The first woman to hold a political office in Ferndale was Elizabeth A. Smith, 2940 Horton. She and her husband had moved to Ferndale in 1919. Like many residents, she thought that city officials were not doing enough to develop water, sewage, and paving projects that would establish Ferndale as a viable community attractive to the increasing numbers of newcomers seeking employment in the area.

She won her seat on the Village of Ferndale's Second Commission in 1921 as the result of the tumultuous recall election that deposed all members of the Village's First Commission because of their perceived slow pace in establishing the needed infrastructure for the thriving community. Oddly enough, she never campaigned for office, and, by her own admission, she got the position only because so many of the men worked nights and had no time to serve. The Village's Department of Public Works foreman, Charles A. Knechtel, drove her to meetings. She did not run for reelection in 1922 and later concluded that the First Commission "was probably doing as well as it could." Nevertheless, she blazed the way the women who would later become active in Ferndale politics.

After serving her one term, Elizabeth Smith continued to be involved in neighborhood issues. She was among residents who brought pressure on Reichhold Chemical Co. to install odor-killing equipment. She later said that "women should run for office based on their qualifications—not as women."



Photo of Elizabeth Smith: Maurice Cole, *Ferndale of Yesteryear* (1971): 53.

Sources consulted: Maurice Cole, *Ferndale of Yesteryear* (Ferndale Historical Society, 1971): 53. Richard D. Raddant, "Ferndale Election of 30 Years Ago Recalled by First Woman Official," *Daily Tribune*, February 7, 1951.



Ferndale Historical Society Operators of the Ferndale Historical Museum

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

- Individual \$ 10.00
- Family \$ 25.00
- Lifetime \$ 100.00

Return to: Ferndale Historical Society
1651 Livernois Street
Ferndale, Michigan 48220

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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Calendar of Events

Thursday, October 25, 2012, 6pm	Board Meeting, Historical Society, at the Museum, public welcome
Thursday, November 29, 2012, 6pm	Board Meeting, Historical Society, at the Museum, public welcome
Saturday, December 8, 2012, 3pm-7pm	Fund Raiser for Ferndale Historical Society, Downtown Ferndale
Thursday, January 25, 2013, 6pm	Board Meeting, Historical Society, at the Museum, public welcome

The Crow's Nest, Fall 2012

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CLASS
MAIL

“Preserving the Heritage of Ferndale for Future Generations”