

BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW THIS...

Among the Museum's collections are:

- ▶ A photo of Ferndale police officers in front of loot confiscated from the Purple Gang, 1920s
- ▶ A chair from Hedge's Wigwam (restaurant)
- ▶ 1 of only 14 original prints ever made from the famous photograph of the raising of the flag on Mt. Surabachi, Iwo Jima, WW II
- ▶ Lincoln High School yearbook, 1929
- ▶ Original neon sign from the Dipsy Doodle drive-in (1950s)
- ▶ Front page, *New York Herald*, April 15, 1865, announcing Lincoln's assassination

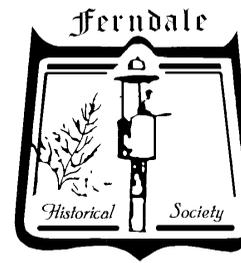
Historical Designation

These plaques, in the shape of the Ferndale shield, are green with gold lettering and above the words "Historical Society," designate the year a house was built. They are made of cast aluminum to withstand Michigan winters.



Cost: \$85.00

Available at the Historical Museum



The Crow's Nest

"Preserving the heritage of Ferndale for future generations"

Newsletter of the Ferndale Historical Society

Spring, 2005

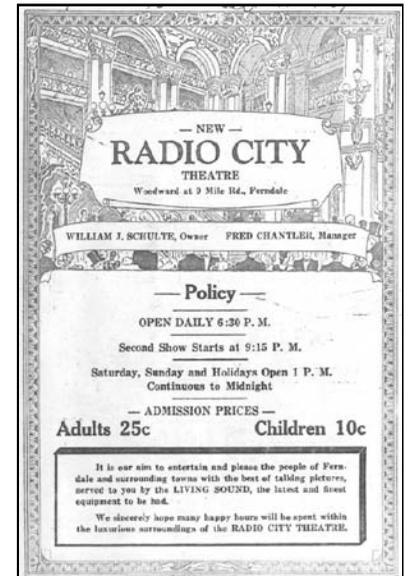
Vol. 22

Lost Entertainment Venues



Fishing, swimming, and ice skating in the marshy areas of what was to become Ferndale were popular pastimes for the region's early settlers. These activities were abruptly curtailed when workers, attracted to the area by Henry Ford's offer of \$5 a day for work at his Highland Park plant in 1914, quickly began to build houses in even Ferndale's boggiest areas. But new entertainment possibilities soon appeared.

By 1921 the Ferndale Theater had opened, showing "the best of Hollywood." Polo was played on the grounds of the Hough estate, Nine Mile/Pinecrest corner, in the early 1920s. By 1931 a stable was in operation on the west side of Pinecrest near Emwell, an area which by the 1940s had become a golfers' driving range. In 1937 the Radio City Theater opened, featuring first-run movies -- and an added attraction, "air-conditioning," from a well dug deep underground that supplied water that sprayed over the slightly domed theater roof, cooling the theatre on even the hottest summer days. Briefly in the early 1940s, the Ferndale Miniature Theatre Group, under the leadership of drama coach June Byers, had a small theater on the west side of Woodward near Breckenridge, next door to the era's famous restaurant, the White Cruiser. Open-air bowling (feather bowling) was played on Woodward in the block between University and East Hazelhurst, in the mid-1940s; this "bowling on the green" lasted only a year, ultimately succumbing to Michigan weather. Ferndale Recreation Bowling, which opened in the 1940s and lasted some 20 years, was located upstairs over an ice cream parlor, The Spot, a popular teenage hangout, in a business building at 172 West Nine Mile, west of the alley near Woodward.



Television, economics, population shifts, and changing owners and tastes meant that all of these once popular entertainment venues, with few exceptions, became only fond Ferndale memories. Yet films are still shown at the Magic Bag, the former Ferndale Theater, and bowling endures, now at Luxury Lanes.

In addition to various Archives sources, information for this article was supplied by several Society members and friends, including Sylvia Thomas, Stanley Marsh, Ray White, and Dick Williams. A special thanks to Wally Beers for asking if there "really was open-air bowling on Woodward." Crow's Nest readers: Please let us know if you can recall any other lost Ferndale entertainment venues.

Museum Hours

Saturdays

2:00 - 4:00 PM

or by appointment

(248) 545-7606

Coming Soon:

www.FerndaleHistoricalSociety.org

The official website of the Ferndale Historical Society will be active in the next few months – be sure to check us out when we're up and running.



Ferndale Historical Society

1651 Libvernois

Ferndale, Michigan 48220

"Preserving the heritage of Ferndale for future generations"

Ferndale Historical Society



Granny's Closet → Research Facility? Ferndale's Historical Museum

Concentrated city interest in formally preserving Ferndale history dates from December 1973 when the City Council appointed the "Ferndale Historical Study Commission"--at a time when the future of an historic Ferndale property, the Welcome Campbell House on Hilton, was in question. Ultimately the city was unable to acquire neither the Campbell property, or the pioneer Willis Hough house, Nine Mile/Pinecrest, for a museum. But efforts to preserve local history continued. By 1977 the new Ferndale Historical Society had been initiated; by 1979 the Canadian Legion building had been donated to the city: by 1981 the city had leased the building to the Society for a museum. Cost to the Society: \$1.00 annually.

"Preserving Ferndale's heritage for future generations" became the museum staff's guiding principle for museum volunteers. Museum collections were informally acquired and nominally cataloged: "Owned by a Ferndale resident, or related to Ferndale history" were the only acquisition requirements. The first donation, Item #A, recorded in 1984, was a display case originally from Williams Dry Goods Store (320 W. Nine Mile, near Planavon), contributed by Charles Growe, owner of the Fashion Center (same address). In subsequent years, the museum acquired thousands of vintage artifacts of all descriptions, tools, letters, maps, clippings, and

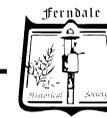
hundreds of one-of-a-kind photographs--all the best of a fantastic granny's closet--exemplifying life in Ferndale. Taken together, these items now present a graphic picture of our community and its residents over the past 100 years. This unique collection is of ever-increasing interest to visitors, due to State of Michigan efforts to emphasize local history, the recent designation of Woodward as a National Scenic Highway, and the publicity for southeastern Michigan communities generated by the Dream Cruise. In this past year alone, the museum has had visitors from various parts of the United States and even England, in addition to Michigan residents.

Preserving this valuable collection for residents and researchers alike is now of prime importance. Accordingly, several graduate students in the Information Sciences/Archives program at Wayne State University have begun to professionally organize and catalog Ferndale Historical Museum holdings. Plans are that, through grants and/or private means, the entire Museum collection, beginning with its photographs, will be digitized and entered on-line, readily accessible through a dedicated web site to a wider audience than ever before.

Granny would be flabbergasted!

DON'T FORGET . . .
Historical Society membership
renewals are due on
Memorial Day 2005.

- Officers
- President
Ray White
- Vice-President
Roger Schmidt
- Treasurer
Phyllis Hill
- Corresponding Secretary
Jean Spang
- Recording Secretary
Chris Cole
- Newsletter Editor
Jean Spang
- Newsletter
David Lungu
- Historian
Diane O'Neill
- Membership
Ken Miller
- V.P. Communications
Mike Avery
- Board of Directors
Charles Beaudet
Eleanor Mielke
Mary White
Carolyn Steger
- Trustees
Thomas Barwin
Frank Flores



FERNDALE KIDS' ENTERTAINMENT, 1930s STYLE

South of Nine Mile and West of Pinecrest [along the Oak Park border] in the early 1930s, no homes, no businesses, just gravel roads and swamps.

What a place for young boys to play cowboys and Indians. Plenty of brush, and paths were known to avoid the swamp and quicksand here and there.

One year these bogs caught on fire (underground peat bogs) and they burned slowly for several years.

Now the playing was real fun as one could run and hide in the smoke but of course on occasion one would cough a little. Used to take with us a lunch and quickly it was learned to bury the cold hot dogs in the smoky swamp ground and in about an hour the hot dogs would be, not hot, but warm to eat.

The gang really took cowboys and Indians seriously. One day I actually took an arrow; was hurt and passed out, but survived.

- Bill Rodgers, Jr., "Memories," in *Old Timers Tell It Like It Was*, Ruth Rodgers Elmers, June Waugh Kotlarek, Gerry Kulick (Editor). Ferndale Historical Society, 1987, p. 146.

Proposed Amendment To Our Constitution

At its April 2 Board meeting a proposal was made to add an amendment defining the use of the Museum building to the Society's constitution. The language would read:

The building which houses the Ferndale Historical Museum shall not be used by an individual, group, or organization other than the Ferndale Historical Society for any purpose, unless approved by the Board of the Ferndale Historical Society.

A final vote on the addition of this Amendment to the Society's Constitution will be taken at the board meeting, Saturday, May 28, 2005, at 1 pm. All Ferndale Historical Society members are invited to attend.

Jumping Into A Life Net

Just in case you need to know - but you really don't since they aren't used anymore - here's how to jump into a life net. 1. Jumping into a life net is the last resort. If you have time and it looks as if the firemen will reach you with a ladder, wait. 2. Wait for the firemen's signal to jump even though you may see the life net below. 3. Stretch out your arms towards your toes as you jump and try to land on your hips in a jack-knife position.

- Capt. Roger Schmidt, *Tough As Nails: A History Of The Ferndale Fire Department*. Ferndale Historical Society, 2004, p. 96.



Hat Pins and History: A Tribute to a Special Friend of Ferndale

The Society extends sincere condolences to the family of **Ruth Elmers**. Ruth, who passed away November 2, 2004, was one of the charter members of the Ferndale Historical Society and then a long-time Museum volunteer -- dating from the days in the 1970s when she was a member of the core group who initiated the Museum and later organized its displays. The daughter of the late William Rodgers, local pharmacist and owner of Rodgers' Dutch Mill, Ferndale's landmark restaurant of the 1920s and early 1930s, Ruth had first-hand knowledge of the phenomenal growth of our community for a greater part of the 20th century. This was a knowledge she enthusiastically shared with many a visitor to the Museum on Saturdays or in myriad phone calls from local history researchers throughout the week. Her "other" hobby was collecting vintage hat pins, an item whose history, she said, starkly reflected the changing role of women in American society.

Retired as attendance officer at Ferndale High School, Ruth devoted countless hours to researching and recording Ferndale history, and published, along with her Society colleagues, **June Kotlarek** and **Gerry Kulick**, *Old Timers Tell It Like It Was*, a compendium of reminiscences of long-time Ferndale residents. In addition to her weekly work at the Museum, Ruth spent the last two years of her life working with three colleagues in researching and writing *Drayton Dimensions in Time*, the 80-year history of one of Ferndale's oldest churches, Drayton Avenue Presbyterian. She is acutely missed by her colleagues and the many visitors to the Museum. Her love of Ferndale, and her dedication to documenting its unique past, has indeed earned her a respected place in the annals of southeastern Michigan history.

Memorial Day Observances

Parade 10:00 AM

Memorial Service 11:00 AM

Please plan to attend the Memorial Day parade. Be sure to notice the memorial brick walkway in the Veterans Memorial area on Livernois. Coffee and cookies at the Museum following the memorial service - Everyone is invited!

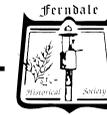
Got Some Spare Time?

Why not volunteer at the
Ferndale Historical Society Museum?

A great way to learn about Ferndale
History and have fun at the same time!

Contact:

Ray White (248) 541-2476



Check it out!



Shirley Ahlgrim, Executive Secretary, Ferndale City Hall, shows off the Ferndale Historical Society's new, permanent display case located in the City Hall entrance. Maintained by Society volunteer **Sherry Wells**, this prominent display will include rotating exhibits of Ferndale history memorabilia as well as an array of items for sale in the gift shop at the Ferndale Historical Museum.

The Museum Shop

Museum T-Shirt (9 Mile Intersection)	\$20.00*
Museum T-Shirt (Crows Nest Logo)	\$15.00*
Cole's "Ferndale of Yesteryear"	\$20.00
"Old Timers Tell It..." Hard cover	\$15.00
Schmidt's "Tough as Nails..."	\$45.00
Wells' "Father, Ford, \$5 a day..."	\$15.00
Afghans	\$35.00
Historical Calendar (2005)	\$8.00
Seabee's D-Day Calendar	\$10.00
Post Cards (5 Designs)	.75 ea
Museum Note-Card Pack	\$4.00

* Larger Shirt Sizes slightly more.

All items are available at the
Ferndale Historical Museum

Condolences: The Society extends its sincere sympathy to **Georgette Daly** and her family in the loss of **Donald Daly**, husband and father. Georgette is a dedicated Museum volunteer. She and Don have been long-time supporter of Society activities.

Accolades To Volunteers!

The Ferndale Historical Museum owes its very existence to the many volunteers who enthusiastically support its activities. For her efforts this past year, special thanks are extended to former Board president, **June Kotlarek**. Volunteers who conscientiously show up on Monday workdays or various other weekdays, and are due heartfelt appreciation, include **Betty Blank, Ellen Hill, Georgette Daly, Lucille Dean, Frank Flores, Phyllis Hill, Marian Kangas, David Lungu, Diane O'Neill, Victor Paul, Carolyn Steger, Sylvia Thomas, Sherry Wells, Mary White, and Ray White**. Two graduate students in the Information Sciences/Archives program at Wayne State University, **Melissa Allen** and **Karen Robertson**, devoted countless hours to evaluating and cataloging the museum's collections; to them, the Society accords them well-deserved special cognition and grateful thanks.