

The Crow's Nest

Newsletter of the Ferndale Historical Society

Spring 2008

THE JAEGER, *LEG ART*, GIRAFFE TRANSFERS, AND MORE: FERNDALE'S ENTERPRISING ENTREPRENEURS: 1821+

Jean Spang

The names of the earliest “entrepreneurs” who traveled the Saginaw Trail through what was to become Ferndale remain obscure. But *Jabez White* and *Mother Handsome* are Ferndale legends. White, a shoemaker, was a “squatter” who in 1821 built a tavern near the 8 Mile/Pinecrest branch of the Saginaw Trail. Mary Ann Chappell, known as “Mother Handsome,” by 1823 had built a tavern on the Saginaw Trail (Woodward) near 10 Mile, relocating in 1833 to a site due south, near what is now Ferndale’s Oakridge. They were Ferndale’s first entrepreneurs, capitalizing on the increasing traffic to and from Detroit. Each saw a need, filled it, and demonstrated the resourcefulness characteristic of individuals who in later years were to establish a thriving Ferndale.

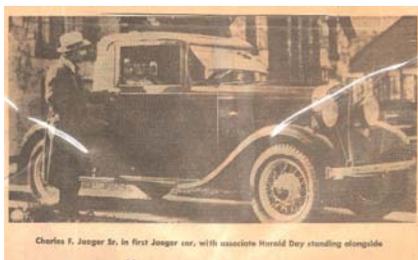
William Fulton, in the 1840s, was the first settler to carve a farm out of the local wilderness. His 80 acres straddled Base Line (8 Mile): the south 40 included the present State Fairgrounds; the north 40, the eastern - most side of present Ferndale. He built a log cabin, cleared the land, sold logs to the nearby railroad (50 cents/cord), and established a dairy farm. Benjamin Parker, in 1856, purchased 80 acres (Pinecrest/Leroy). Disliking cattle, he raised sheep, leaving his wife to care for the cattle and build a dairy business--making her, after Mother Handsome, the second successful woman entrepreneur in the area. In the late 1850s, Arthur C. Porter and Welcome Campbell each bought large acreages east of Woodward. Charles H. Silman, in 1879, purchased 50 acres (present Woodward/Silman site), and, like Fulton, sold timber. All were to become prosperous.

The Granger Saw Mill (present site of Machpelah Cemetery), established in 1869, was to change forever the means of livelihood for these early settlers. The Granger family, with timber obtained from the wilderness nearby, planked both old Woodward (all the way to Jefferson) and the first Belle Isle Bridge. Once the nearby woods were gone, the Grangers, to serve farmers, bought the area’s first threshing machine (now on display at Greenfield Village). The John Rich Grist Mill (northeast 8/Pinecrest) opened in 1890, and continued operations

[continued on p.2]



*The Benjamin Parker Farm,
Pinecrest /Leroy, ca. 1890s
Credit: Roy Cline*



*The Jaeger, \$675, 1933, Car created &
briefly manufactured by Ferndale inventor
Charles F. Jaeger
Credit: Detroit News*



*International Animal Exchange,
based in Ferndale. ca. 1960s
Credit: courtesy Saga*

[continued from p 1]

until 1916. But area farming as a way of life was ending.

As early as the late 1890s, real estate developers, some in cooperation with railroad companies, sensing the promise of local farmland as lucrative subdivisions, bought large properties. Within 20 years, farms adjacent to Woodward/9 had been formally platted. By 1912, businessmen had begun to erect buildings at the Woodward/9 intersection. Ferndale's Golden Age of the Entrepreneur had begun.

By 1921, one hundred years after Jabez White opened his tavern, Ferndale's business enterprises provided basic goods and services: grocers, plumbers, hardware stores, banks, and gas stations. Ferndale even had a millinery shop, owned by Mrs. Charles Keys, the third documented female entrepreneur in Ferndale history. Manufacturers of products, mostly for the auto industry, began to locate east of Woodward.

Once the basic needs of the new community's residents were met in the early 1920s, Ferndale entrepreneurs began to offer unique goods and services. Some telling examples from succeeding decades: Roy Waugh, in the 1920s, began Roy's Radio Shop as a second job, at a time when a crystal set, even with thin reception, was considered a modern wonder, creating a landmark business (Allen/Marshall) that lasted five decades. The Jaeger, a car invented by resident Charles F. Jaeger, was the most ambitious business enterprise undertaken by a local individual in the 1930s, a venture ended only by the Depression.

World War II presented singular challenges. By 1943, Ferndale had some 30 light manufacturing plants, most serving the war effort, yet local electronics sales representative, H.E. Haggerty, found himself without a job. So, in response to silk and nylon--and hosiery--shortages in the U.S., he invented *Leg Art*--a paint that women could use to paint their legs so they would look like they wore stockings.

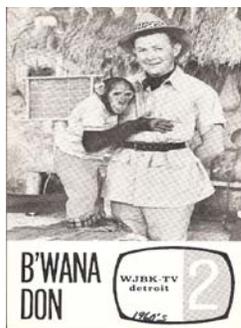
The opening of the nearby Northland Center, the world's first shopping mall, in 1954 was to change retail and commercial business in Ferndale forever, residents preferring a mall's convenient parking and array of goods. Still, one of the most unique shops in Ferndale was to grow and expand during this time. By the 1960s, B'wana Don's, Ferndale's only pet shop, had allowed its owner Don Hunt to become a Detroit TV personality with his presentations on wild animals, and later to become an internationally respected businessman, catering to the zoo trade, with his International Animal Exchange.

A life-time away from Roy's Radio is today's recording studio, 54 Sound (on East 9 Mile), where Grammy award-winning rapper Eminem has made recordings. This venture exemplifies the local entrepreneurs of the past 30 years who have reinvented Ferndale as an entertainment center, complete with clubs, restaurants, legitimate theater groups, music venues, art galleries, and bars. Each saw a special "need" and filled it. Tavern owners Jabez White and Mother Handsome wouldn't be at all surprised.

Sources consulted: Maurice Cole, *Ferndale of Yesteryear, Ferndale Historical Society (1971): passim*;
Ferndale: 1918-1943: 25 Years of Progress, *City of Ferndale, 1925, passim*.



Roy's Radio Shop, Allen/Marshall, ca. 1920s
Ferndale's introduction to Radio—and TV



Don Hunt, "B'Wana Don"
WJBK - TV, ca. 1960s



54 Sound, Recording Studio, ca. 2005

LIFE ON FERNDALE'S FIRST FARM, ADJACENT TO THE PRESENT STATE FAIRGROUNDS, 1850s

[In the early 1850s] *one of [William] Fulton's oxen got sick and died. Wolves killed several of his sheep; bears fed on his oats and other crops. He made deadfalls to trap wolves and built scaffolds from which to watch and shoot bears at night. Often he would start for Detroit with farm produce in the early morning hours before daylight. As the road leading out to the main highway was very bad his wife often accompanied him with a lantern as far as the main road. . . [In 1854] a very wet year occurred. Water stood almost everywhere and conditions became very unhealthful. Many of the settlers fell sick with fever and ague. Frequent deaths occurred. At one time there were hardly enough well people in the neighborhood to care for the sick and bury the dead.*

Source: "The Life of William Fulton," as told to his grandson, quoted in Maurice F. Cole, *Ferndale of Yesteryear* (Ferndale Historical Society, 1971): 10.

ROY'S RADIO SHOP AND THE 2-INCH TV: 1920s

Roy's Radio Shop was a landmark in Ferndale for some 50 years. His first shop was located next to a drugstore on the northeast Woodward/ Nine Mile corner; later he relocated to the Allen/Marshall corner. His daughter June, in the 1930s, began to help repair radios in the shop--at a time when "girls" were considered an oddity in such a workplace. She relates:

In the late 20's, just before the Depression, the manager of the Highland Park Kresge store contacted dad and asked if he would take a new invention called television and see what he could do with it to improve on it. The screen was 2 inches square. There was a disc similar to a frypan without a handle that would spin around creating red lines and if you were patient enough and sat and adjusted controls you might be lucky enough to discern a shadow of a picture. I was fortunate enough to see a girl bouncing a ball, and an opera singer. The broadcasts came from the Jenkins Laboratories in New Jersey. The name on the TV was Baird. Similar ones can be seen at Greenfield Village today.

Source: June Waugh Kotlarek, *Memories of Roy's Radio & TV Service*, Typescript Manuscript, June 1984: 1.

CHARLES F. JAEGER INVENTS A MEDIUM-PRICE AUTOMOBILE

A resident of Ferndale for 50 years, inventor Charles Jaeger lived on Woodland in a house he and his three sons built by hand. His Jaeger Motor Car Inc. was incorporated, August 9, 1932, with the goal of producing a medium-priced automobile. The price of a Jaeger 6-cylinder: \$675. Only six or seven of his cars were ever built (sources vary as to number); financial problems caused by the Depression ended production. But the story of Mr. Jaeger and his car testify to the types of people who, early on, chose to make Ferndale their life-long home. He died in 1970, but left a legacy of other inventions. Among them, a new spring suspension for motor cars; a power saw which, attached to a car's front, could be used by builders and contractors for cutting lumber; and a centrifugal pump driven from a car front, used by utility companies. He later became a well-known manufacturer of prefabricated housing.

Sources consulted: Don Lochbiler, "For Yule, Give Car Buff a Jaeger," Detroit News, December 10, 1970. Various unattributed, undated newspaper clippings, and unsigned typescripts, on file in Ferndale Historical Museum archives.

Officers of the Ferndale Historical Society

President	Roger Schmidt
Vice President	Frank Flores
Recording Secretary	Christine Kole
Treasurer	Garry Andrews
Corresponding Secretary	Jean Spang
Historian/Membership	Lynne Prudden
Communications/Publicity	Garry Andrews

Board of Directors: Phyllis Hill, David Lungu, Eleanor Mielke, Mary White

Trustees: Ray White; Robert Bruner, City Manager

THE LEG ART ENTREPRENEUR: WORLD WAR II

During World War II, *Leg Art* paint was one of the paints popular with women who resorted to painting their legs when they were unable to obtain hard-to-find silk or nylon stockings. (Some even went so far as to draw a line with an eyebrow pencil down the back of their legs to imitate the back seam of hosiery.) *Leg Art* was the inspiration of an enterprising Ferndale resident, H. E. (Pat) Haggerty. A service representative for a local electronics firm, he was forced to find a new way of making a living when the electronics industry began focusing on products for the war effort, with no role for service representatives. Needing a product to sell, he started manufacturing *Leg Art* in the basement of his house on Saratoga, later moving to a storefront on Marshall. He also sold *Hal Patrick's After Shave*, another product of his basement laboratory.

Source: Compiled from Ferndale Historical Society records, including a letter to Gerry Kulick, November 20, 1993, from Dick Haggerty, son of H. E. Haggerty.

B'WANA DON: FERNDALE TO AFRICA IN ONE CAREER

One of Ferndale's most famous entrepreneurs, Don Hunt, began with a local pet shop on Woodward. By the 1960s he had become a Detroit television personality with his features about wild animals. Later, his wild-animal ranch in Texas and experience in working with animals headed to zoos world-wide, inspired his move to Kenya as head of the International Animal Exchange, an organization "dedicated to wildlife preservation and propagation through research, education, recreation, and entertainment."

Don Hunt has been absorbed with animals as long as he can remember. Back home in Detroit [Ferndale] where he grew up, his first real love was a springer spaniel puppy which he saw in the window of a pet store when he was 11 years old. He had a neighborhood newspaper route while attending grade school and saved a few dollars, but it was far from enough to buy the pup. The owner finally agree to his purchase terms--part cash, part working in the store after school . . . He kept on working in the pet shop throughout his high school years and while attending the University of Detroit. This was followed by two years in the Army and when he returned to Detroit he learned that the owner of the pet shop was about to retire. Don promptly bought the business.

Source: Emile C. Schurmacher, "Africa's Incredible Game Catcher, *Saga* (no date): 15+.

WE REMEMBER



Ferndale Historical Museum Loses A Dear Friend

On Thursday, March 6th, 2008 Victor Paul passed away. Victor was an avid volunteer and a wonderful friend of the Ferndale Historical Museum. He was a friend to many during the time he was with us and he will be deeply missed by all of us. His great sense of humor and his gentle smile will long be remembered. We celebrate his life.

Business/Owner

American State Bank
George D. Badder, real estate and billiards
Clyde E. Beardsley, grocer
William O. Bellaire, real estate
Lorenzo and Glenn A. Berry, groceries
Edward Crawford, baker
Alfred E. Crosby, undertaker
Ferndale Enterprise (newspaper)
Ferndale Lumber and Supply
Louis Gentile, grocer
Fred Gordon, Attorney
C.A. Graves
T. Frank Hooley, lawyer, judge
William Hopkins, grocer
Int. Construction Co.
Kaltz Bros., fuel
Milton L. Kantz, builder
Mrs. Charles Keys, milliner

Business/Owner

August Kuhlman, men's furnishings
John McCormick, grocer
Ed Martin, plumber
Michelson Land & Home
Norton Electric
Millard Patrick, garage
Ulysses Patrick, garage
William J. Rodgers, druggist
August H. Schmidt, hardware
Leonard Schnell, hardware
Carl Scoessel, tailor
Calvin Smith, attorney
C.F. Smith Co., grocers
Bert Van Giesen, plumber
Lewis Walton, banker
L.L. Watson, real estate
A. Wooliever, architect
Herman Zehnder, dry goods clothing

Source: Polk's Michigan Gazetteer (1921-22), quoted in Maurice Cole, *Ferndale of Yesteryear* (Ferndale Historical Society, 1971): 122-3.

**IN HONOR OF VETERANS EVERYWHERE,
A THANK-YOU AND A REMEMBRANCE**



Leaving for war, Ferndale, World War II
Credit Line: Jack Richards



"Prospect for Lincoln High Students,"
World War II. Drawing by LHS student
Robert Pond, staff member, The Lincolnian
(1941-46), school newspaper.



Hitch-Hike booth for military personnel
August 30th, 1944, Woodward North of
Eight Mile
Credit: Daily Tribune

**THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FERNDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
--AND ITS LOCATION IN THE FORMER CANADIAN LEGION HALL--**



**PRESERVING FERNDALE HISTORY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS:
THE FERNDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY AT 25**

The Society marks its Silver Anniversary this year. The original group of 28 Ferndale residents interested in city history was convened in 1977 by Mildred Garbutt, wife of then city mayor Bruce Garbutt. The immediate purpose: Raise \$23,000 to buy the landmark house on Hilton that had been the home of David Campbell, one of Ferndale's first pioneers. The house had been offered to the City of Ferndale for a museum by its owner, Maurice Cole, Attorney, former Superintendent of Ferndale Public Schools, and author of *Ferndale of Yesteryear*, the definitive source on Ferndale history. The group failed to raise the money in the allotted time, and the building was demolished. But several members of the group began collecting memorabilia tracing Ferndale's past, with the idea that one day the city would have a museum.

In 1983 a small group was formally incorporated as the Ferndale Historical Society, and the City agreed to lease the former Canadian Legion Hall, 1651 Livernois, to the Society for a museum. Rent: \$1.00/year. Since then, the Museum has become a repository for photographs, documents, and artifacts covering all aspects of the city's history-- attracting scholars, news reporters, and the general public alike.

Among the Museum collections, the records of Ferndale's housing stock remains the most-used. With the assistance of graduate students from Wayne State University's Library and Information Sciences Program, the Museum's vast photo collection is being digitized, with the goal of making these holdings available online. *Project Ferndale Architecture*, the photographing of the city's structures--residential, commercial, manufacturing, religious, civic, and educational--a project begun in 2005, continues. And reconfiguring the museum, once again, to better accommodate its burgeoning collections is in progress.

The Museum is maintained by some 10 volunteers who work varying shifts and, according to their interests, work on diverse projects: writing and producing the *Crow's Nest*; responding to research questions; installing displays; maintaining archival files, or "seeing and doing what needs to be done" in a small museum. Their consensus is that the best part of working at the Museum is finding an unexpected fact about Ferndale--such as, yes, the sister of the famous Annie Oakley really lived in Ferndale (on Hilton), and Annie's husband, Frank Butler, died at her house some 12 days after Annie passed away! The worst? Meeting Ferndale residents who don't know that Ferndale has an historical museum.

And the preservation of Ferndale's history continues . . .

THE FERNDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**The Society was originally founded February 21, 1977,
but by August 26, 1980 had become inactive.**

It was reactivated and became incorporated on January 21, 1983.

Incorporators and First Board of Directors:

**James Avery, Paul Behrendt, Edward H. Calnen, Ruth Rodgers Elmers,
Mildred Garbutt, Frank LaRock, Helen Jamieson, and Enid DeTar Pohlman**

First Slate of Officers:

**Mildred Garbutt, President; Ruth Rodgers Elmers, Vice President; Helen Jamieson, Treasurer;
Susan Madoina, Corresponding Secretary**

I thank our membership for their continued support through their generous donations throughout the year. With the rising cost of utilities and the new preservation techniques that we are learning, our operating overhead is increasing. We are in continual need of funds for supplies for archiving projects and the upkeep of our museum and administration needs. All of our staff are volunteers and give generously of their time and talents. Our support comes from membership dues, sales from our gift shop, some small grants, and donations from our membership. We are always in need of donations. If you would like to help with our overhead costs, any donation will be greatly appreciated. All contributions are 100% tax deductible. I will gladly send you a receipt for your donation. We greatly appreciate your support!

We are beginning an inventory of museum artifacts and will be redesigning the museum in a way that will allow a “walk-through” tour of Ferndale history--from its village days to the present. Please come and see this new look.

I thank our regular volunteers that have helped me so much in the past few weeks and have literally become my administrative staff: **Jean Spang, Lynne Prudden, Betty Blank, Phyllis Hill, Carol Schmidt**, and Saturday’s **Diane O’Neill**. Without their dedication and faithful support we would not, nor could not, be moving forward as we are towards new goals and a more efficient running of our museum for the community.

*Garry Andrews,
Museum Director and Society Treasurer*

**SPRING IS COMING!
GOOD PHOTOGRAPHY WEATHER!
PROJECT FERNDALE ARCHITECTURE: VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!**

The photographing of Ferndale’s some 8,000 structures--homes, businesses, churches, civic facilities, and schools--continues in earnest. Volunteers for this very important project are always welcome. Camera, film, and supplies are furnished by, and complete instructions are available from, the Historical Society. Contact **Phyllis Hill**, 284-548-5914.

Sherry A. Wells Notes Local Events to Come: Kite day for kids; Memorial Day Parade Open House at the Ferndale Historical Museum; Dedication of the LaRock Memorial Garden; “Mothers, Daughters, and Leaders of Oakland County”, a traveling exhibit honoring, among others, our own Gerry Kulick

FERNDALE MEMORIES FOR SALE

BOOKS

Ferndale of Yesteryear, by Maurice Cole	\$25.00
Old Timers Tell It Like It Was, compiled and Edited by the Ferndale Historical Society	15.00
Father, Ford, \$5 a Day: The Mullers from Missouri by Ferndale Author, Sherry A. Wells	15.00
Tough as Nails: A History of the Ferndale Fire Dept. by Captain Roger Schmidt	45.00

FERNDALE AFGANS \$45.00

CALENDARS

2005, 2006, 2007 Calendars	\$ 8.00
2008 Calendar	15.00
Seabee’s D-Day Calendar	10.00

NOTE CARDS view of the Crow’s Nest (Per set of 12) \$ 5.00

POSTCARDS (4 different photos of Ferndale) each \$ 1.00

FERNDALE HISTORICAL PICTURES

8 1/2 x 11 – Glossy – Suitable for framing \$10.00

Please Look Inside!

- Page 1 Ferndale's Enterprising Entrepreneurs
Page 2 More of Ferndale's Entrepreneurs
Page 3 Early Farm Life; Roy's Radio Shop; Charles F. Jaeger
Page 4 *Leg Art*; and B'Wana Don
Page 5 Ferndale's 1921 Business; Honoring Our Vets
Page 6 Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Ferndale Historical Museum
Page 7 Director's Greetings; Memories for Sale
-

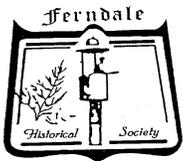
CALENDAR:

- Thursday, March 27th, 6 pm Historical Society Board Meeting, Kulick center
Thursday, April 24th, 6 pm Historical Society Board Meeting, Kulick center
Thursday, May 22nd, 6 pm Historical Society Board Meeting, Kulick center
Monday, May 26th, 10 am Memorial Day Parade Open House, Ferndale Historical Museum
-

The Crow's Nest, Spring 2008

Copyright and published quarterly by:
The Ferndale Historical Society
1651 Livernois
Ferndale, MI 48220 USA

Editor: Jean Spang
Graphics/Layout/Production: Lynne Prudden
Mailing: Various Volunteers (Thank you!)
Copying: Lenny's Copy Center



Ferndale Historical Society
1651 Livernois
Ferndale, MI 48220
(248) 5445-7606

**FIRST
CLASS
MAIL**