



The Crow's Nest

NEWSLETTER OF THE FERNDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Summer 2012

FERNDALE'S MISSING MURAL: WHAT HAPPENED TO GEORGE WASHINGTON?

Jean Spang

Visitors to the Ferndale City Hall, for almost 40 years, were greeted at the top of the foyer stairs by a 6'6" x 13'9" mural depicting George Washington with his *Farewell Address* in hand and Valley Forge behind him. Featured in the lower left-hand corner of the mural was Washington's famous quote:

You have in a common cause fought and triumphed together. The independence and liberty you possess are the work of joint efforts, of common dangers, sufferings and successes.

In 1975, in anticipation of the nation's Bicentennial in 1976 and with the approval of City officials, the local Kiwanis Club and artist Vincent A. Lipovsky, as a gift to the residents of Ferndale, donated the Washington mural, to be placed in City Hall as a lasting reminder of the Bicentennial—the largest and longest patriotic event that the nation and Ferndale would ever have. Every month of 1976 was to have local special events honoring the nation's birth. Ferndale City officials planned some events. Schools, churches, service groups, and the city's fledgling historical society planned others.

In January a Bicentennial Ball was held in the St. James Church gym, followed by a patriotic concert there in February. Taft School hosted patriotic musicals in March. Special Easter services, with mentions in sermons about America's birthday, were held in local churches. On May 2 local organizations, including the Ferndale VFW Post 1407 and American Legion Post 330, joined the Wayne County Bicentennial Committee's nine-mile long parade stretching from the Fairgrounds to Kennedy Square in Detroit; on Memorial Day Ferndale officials and local residents participated in a local parade. On Flag Day in June a time capsule with mementoes from Ferndale history was buried near the Ferndale Public Library. The July 4th celebration in Ferndale was grandiose, with a parade (complete with many marchers, including city officials, in period costumes), city picnics, street dances, and fireworks.

August was "local history month" featuring tours of local historical sites, and Ferndale High School students even displayed their hand-crafted models of Ferndale's present and former buildings. September featured "A Salute to the States," a minstrel show presented by the local senior citizens group; and the garden club had a flower show honoring the Bicentennial. For October, the PTA and the Bicentennial Committee sponsored "ethnic" Halloween parties, encouraging participants to dress in costumes their ancestors might have worn; the Committee also hosted a masquerade party with a 1776 theme. Art and crafts shows and sales, as well as talent presentations, all based on Bicentennial motifs, were the features of November. The year ended in Ferndale on January 1st with a gala Bicentennial Grand Ball.

Meanwhile, for the whole year, major Ferndale streets were assigned names from the nation's earliest days: Nine Mile was Independence; Woodward, Washington; Pinecrest, Liberty; Hilton, Samuel Adams; Paxton, John Hancock;



George Washington at the top of the Ferndale City Hall stairs. 1976-2010

Allen, Franklin; Livernois, Jefferson; and Wanda, Thomas Paine. Fire hydrants and parking meters sported patriotic colors red, white, and blue. Flags were everywhere on display. And George Washington held court from the top of the City Hall foyer stairs.

Vincent Lipovsky (1907-1988), the painter of the Washington mural, had a studio in Royal Oak and was known for his murals in the local Federal Department Store (Woodward at Nine Mile) and other area venues. In 2010, after some forty years of its display in Ferndale's City Hall, his Washington mural disappeared.



Vincent A. Lipovsky (artist)
March 1909-July 1988

The Ferndale City Hall was remodeled in 2010; the mural was removed while renovations were in progress. By 2011, members of the Ferndale Historical Society began to inquire as to George Washington's whereabouts, only to be told repeatedly by city officials that "he" was "in storage." Finally, in early 2010, after more inquiries to various city departments, it was revealed that the city had deemed that the mural no longer "fit" and had been "given" to the Dailey Company in Lake Orion, the construction company responsible for city renovations. More phone calls led to Dailey Company officials who

graciously offered to return the landmark mural to its rightful owners—the residents of Ferndale.

On Tuesday, June 19th, 2012, thanks to the Ferndale Department of Public Works personnel, a large truck on loan from the Ferndale Public Schools, invaluable help from the Dailey Company, and heavy lifting by Roger Schmidt (Historical Society President) and Garry Andrews (Historical Society Vice-President), the Washington mural was brought back to Ferndale, where it was immediately hung in the Ferndale Historical Museum.

Today George Washington, with his *Farewell Address* in hand and Valley Forge behind him, looks across the room at another mural rescued from Ferndale's past: the Abraham Lincoln mural, which in 2005 was left rolled up, unidentified, and damaged, at the Museum. Only after research into various sources, including issues of Lincoln High School's student newspaper *The Lincolnian* dating back to 1929, was the mural identified as the nine-foot "landmark" that had hung at the top of the LHS main hallway stairs almost fifty years—until Lincoln (Junior) High School was demolished in 1978. Given to the school by the Class of 1929, this mural had been painted by five LHS art students: Ivy Booth, Elsa Goodyear, Rosemary Wesley, John Norton, and Stuart Friedrich, under the direction of their teacher Miss Rosemary Lawrence.

Once identified, the Abraham Lincoln mural was then professionally restored by world renowned art preservationist Dayton Spence, with the financial assistance of the Ferndale Public Schools. Now hung in the Museum, this mural--showing Lincoln staring straight ahead, a log cabin on his one side, the White House the other, and a visual tribute to his Emancipation Proclamation--features the famous words from his Second Inaugural Address:

*With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right,
as God gives us to the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in.*



Washington and Lincoln, icons in American history, with quotations relevant to times past and present, are now together and on display--after perilous journeys in Ferndale history.

FERNDALE CELEBRATES THE BICENTENNIAL, 1976



Modeling costumes they will don for Ferndale's Bicentennial Ball are (clockwise, from bottom left) Richard Shores, Jane Kortarek, Haran LeDoux, Margaret Gaffney and Enid DeTar. The Ball is scheduled Saturday, June 17.

Bicentennial Ball to initiate year of activities in Ferndale



A 100-year time capsule was buried Monday in front of the Ferndale Library. Placing the capsule in the ground are June Kortarek, Mayor Robert Puczkowski and Rudolph Blasinski.

****Burying the time capsule at the Library**

**** NOTE: Contents of time capsule to be opened in 2076: Parchment scroll containing hundreds of signatures of area residents, photos, flags, current newspapers- and a pair of blue jeans and a t-shirt. Photos: Unattributed clippings in Ferndale Historical Museum archives**

From our Vice President/Director

Dear Friends and Fellow Members:

*Happy Summer to you all! We have been very busy here at the Museum. We were locating and dealing with a large mural, (see feature article). The staff at the museum have also been feverishly working on the 85th Anniversary Birthday Program for the City of Ferndale, a commemorative keepsake. Due out in August, this program features the illustrious history of Ferndale through the past 85 years in story and photos. Every home and business will receive one when completed. This is also the time of year when we present to you our slate of Board Officers coming up for election-- held in October. This year the slate of officers is as follows: **Garry Andrews**, President/Director/Curator, **Roger Schmidt**, Vice-president, **Jean Spang**, Research Specialist/Executive & Corresponding Secretary, **Chris Hammer**, Treasurer, **Jan Froggatt**, Recording Secretary, **Lynne Prudden**, Membership Chair, **David Lungu**, Board member, **Lisa Harteau**, Board member, **Gay Tarvis**, Board member, **Dan Harteau**, Trustee. As for other news, the Ferndale Community Foundation accepted our grant application and awarded us a grant that will enable the Historical Society to finally preserve, secure and protect our large collection of archives, including everything in print from yearbooks to scrap books pertaining to Ferndale's history. We are very grateful and appreciative and have already started the work and the project should be completed by the end of August. It is our sincere wish that you enjoy the rest of your summer, and we look forward to sharing more exciting news in the fall issue of our newsletter. Please check to see that your dues are in order to be sure you continue to receive your newsletters. Donations are always welcome and, remember, all donations are 100% tax deductible.*

Regards and Onward,
Garry Andrews

THE HEAT WAVE OF 1936: THE LOCAL TOLL

Jean Spang

The killer heat waves and droughts of the American southwest in the 1930s, so masterfully depicted in John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, reached Michigan in 1936, with especially disastrous consequences for the Detroit area. The week of July 8-14, 1936 had seven consecutive days of triple-digit temperatures. The highest temperature ever recorded in Michigan was in Mio on July 13, 1936: 112 degrees. Of Michigan's 570 heat-related deaths that one week, 364 were in Detroit.

The Detroit area's lack of preparation for extreme heat was soon realized on July 8 as the thermometer rose to 104.4 degrees and Lake St. Clair water temperatures read 80 degrees. One of the early casualties was "Susie," the star chimpanzee of the Jo Mendi Theater at the Detroit Zoo, who succumbed after a performance in the raging heat. On July 9 Ferndale firefighters decided to prove that "it was so hot you could fry an egg on the pavement." Result: a mess, but no fried egg.

During the day and at night, people searched everywhere for relief from the unrelenting heat. With the exception of a few theaters in Detroit, air conditioning was not available. In homes, cars, industrial plants, commercial buildings, and public buildings, air conditioning was unheard of in 1936—which meant that the backyard, the porch, public parks, beaches, any shade tree, and Belle Isle became places to wait out the heat in daytime and sleep at night. Lemons for lemonade became the biggest sellers in grocery stores. The supply of fans for sale in local stores quickly ran out. Ice for iceboxes was hard to locate. In the "polite" 1930s, even dressing appropriately for heat (i.e., "skimpy" clothing) was considered improper. Everyone was expected to politely "endure."

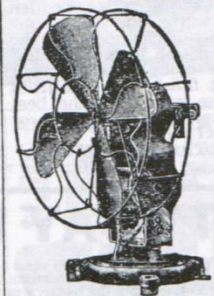
Because the region had never before faced such a long period of persistent heat, there were no "cooling centers" or regular public service cautionary announcements available (these were the days before TV). People were left to cope with the raging temperatures as best they could. The number of deaths in Detroit from heat-related causes alone during the seven-days, 364, testifies to the scope of the disaster.

Coverage in the local paper, the *Ferndale Gazette*, stressed the heat's effect on food prices and the unavailability of fruits and vegetables at the Ferndale Farmers Market (Allen at Troy). The few strawberries for sale there cost 30 cents a quart, a "terrifically high" price. Also noted was the severe damage to evergreens in Ferndale yards. These reports are reflective of the decimation of crops throughout Michigan during that fateful week.

In 1953, Michigan had 90 degrees for 11 straight days and, in 1964, 90s for 12 consecutive days. In 1998, the hottest Michigan summer ever recorded, the daytime highs and nighttime lows averaged a sweltering 74.5 degrees. But the "heat epidemic" of July 8-14, 1936 remains the deadliest epidemic, other than cholera and influenza, that Michigan, especially Detroit, has ever had.

Sources consulted: Richard Bak, "A Week in Hell," Detroit Land (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011): 215-230, passim. "Heat Increases Prices at Farmers Market," Ferndale Gazette, July 16, 1936: 1-2. "Heat Takes Toll from Evergreens," Ferndale Gazette, July 30, 1936: 3. "It Wasn't So Hot Yesterday," Ferndale Gazette, July 9, 1936: 3. "Michigan's Hottest Day, July 13, 1936," Michigan History Magazine, July/August 2012: 8.

Kenco Battery Fan Motor.



Costs 1 cent per hour to run. A portable fan motor for the home, office and sick room. The Kenco Battery Fan Motor is the most efficient motor of its kind on the market. Is adjustable on any angle. Can be attached to the wall or set on a desk, stand or shelf. It is an ornament to any room. The field is made of electrical steel punchings, the armature is of the six-slot drum type, brushes are adjustable, is equipped with oil cups with automatic feed. The base and frame are finished in black enamel; the noiseless bearings, 8-inch fan and guard are heavily nickel plated. One set of twenty cells of dry battery wired in multiple series will run this motor three hours per day for about three months. If worked continually, not allowing the battery to recuperate, the total number of hours the battery will operate the fan motor is greatly reduced. Where constant service is required, we recommend the use of two or three sets of batteries. When the batteries are exhausted, they are no longer of any use and must be thrown away. A new set, however, will make the fan outfit as good as new. The fan motor itself should last for years.

No. 20K6150 The Motor complete, with fan, guard, 20 feet of cord and twenty dry cells wired and packed in a neat case ready to connect to the motor when received. Weight complete, 52 pounds. Price..... **\$8.75**

No. 20K6151 Motor, with fan and guard, without batteries and cord. Weight, 7 pounds. Price..... **\$4.90**

No. 20K6152 Battery for this motor, consisting of twenty high grade dry cells, packed in a neat wooden case, completely wired, ready to connect to motor. Weight, 45 pounds. Price..... **\$3.95**

[1908 Sears, Roebuck Catalogue: A Treasured
Replica from the Archives of History
\(Chicago: Follet Publishing Co. 1969 pg. 205\)](#)

RECIPES FROM 1937
FROM COOK BOOK, SPONSORED BY THE WILSON PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATION

*(Note that no oven temperatures are given.
These were the days when many stoves had no such gauge; some were wood stoves.)*

Hermits

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 cup butter | ½ teaspoon cinnamon |
| 1 ½ cup sugar | ½ teaspoon nutmeg |
| 2 cups chopped raisins | ½ teaspoon allspice |
| 3 eggs | ½ teaspoon cloves |
| 2 teaspoons soda | 1 cup nut meats |
| ½ cup sour cream | 3 ¾ cups flour |

Mix with a wooden spoon and drop very small amount on buttered pan.

Mrs. W. R. Hooker

Sour Cream Cookies

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 2 ½ cups light brown sugar | 1 teaspoon salt (level) |
| ¾ cup shortening | 1 teaspoon nutmeg |
| 3 eggs | 1 teaspoon baking powder |
| 1 cup sour cream w/ 1 teaspoon soda added | |

Stir into smooth dough soft enough to handle, but do not mix.

Mrs. Willie Watson



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 _____

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Donations are tax deductible

GUN CONTROL IN A LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOL

1936: from the Lincoln High School newspaper, *The Lincolnian*:



1955: from the Lincoln High School yearbook, *The Log*:



RIFLE CLUB—With targets sighted and rifles raised, the male members of the rifle club prepare to pellet the bulls-eye, while the feminine gun enthusiasts observe, awaiting their turn to test their marksmanship. Members of the club are, left to right, standing: Diane Kavalat, Kim Cunnington, Nancy Rosencrants, Martha Cullon. Bottom row: Mr. William Brown, Don McAlester, Doug McLean, Jack Hill, Jack Grant, Mr. Bill Hamil.

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE . . .

AXE HANGS OVER CITY'S CHICKENS, March 28, 1946, *Ferndale Gazette*

Ferndale residents who have been keeping chickens may soon have to dispose of their poultry and convert their henhouses to other uses. . . . Every spring the [City Commission] has been plagued by those who want chickens and neighbors who don't want them. It has been one of the chief headaches suffered by municipal rulers.



The Gardendale Co-Operative Association asked the city to consider changing its chicken ordinance to eliminate keeping of chickens and other livestock within the city limits "unless it can be done without becoming a nuisance." The commissioners, though granting permits in the past because of the war and food rationing did so reluctantly and each time a group of residents obtained permits there was considerable debate as to the wisdom of permitting the chicken population to keep pace with the civilian growth of the city. . . . [Chickens were soon banned from Ferndale.]

THEN FAST FORWARD 64 YEARS . . .

Illustration: M.E. Johnson, for Johnson Milk Depot Ferndale, Ferndale Historical Society Collection

FERNDALE LEGALIZES BACKYARD CHICKENS, January 11, 2010, *Daily Tribune*

Residents can now keep up to three chickens in their backyards if they meet a few basic requirements and get a permit from the city.

FERNDALE'S HERO FIREFIGHTER, 1930: LIEUTENANT BURT HORLE

JANUARY 22, 1930, A CHILD SAVED

Mrs. Arlington Gascoyne and her son Warren were in the basement of their home when the child set fire to a wastebasket full of papers. His screams alerted the mother, who carried him to safety. As she tried to reenter the home to save her other son, who was asleep upstairs in his crib, the flames and smoke prevented her.

As the firemen pulled to the scene, 2635 Highland (Hyland) she alerted Lieutenant Burt Horle about her other child. Horle wasted no time. He donned a fresh air mask, shinnied up the back porch pole and "groped" his way to the child's crib. Unable to see, he pulled off the mask and freed the child from under the bed. Two-year-old Paul Dean Gascoyne, according to his mother, had to be tied to his bed or he wouldn't stay in it. He had been awakened by the smoke and was fighting to free himself. In the process he overturned the bed, which may have saved his life since the air was cleaner near the door.



Horle, nearly overcome by the heat and smoke, untied the child and made his way back to the porch, shielding the child from the fire as he went. Just as he handed the boy to another fireman, he collapsed. He and several other firemen, as well as Mrs. Gascoyne, had to be revived with the Pulmotor. The fire spread from the basement to the first floor and eventually got into the walls. It took the men almost two hours to finally extinguish it. The damage was estimated at \$300. For his efforts, the newspapers, the city, the department, and the citizens of Ferndale all proclaimed him a hero. Horle took it in stride and denied he was a hero, saying, "It's all in a days work." Less than six months later, he would be seriously injured while responding to a fire and ultimately died from his injuries.

Source: Roger Schmidt, *Tough as Nails: A History of the Ferndale Fire Department* (Ferndale Historical Society, 2004):229.

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Calendar of Events: Board Meetings, Historical Society, held at Museum, public is welcome:

Thursday, September 27, 6pm

Thursday; October 25, 6pm

Thursday, November 29, 6pm

The Crow's Nest, Summer 2012

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