

# History Explorer

A publication of the Historical Society of Greater Lansing

January 2004

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## Historical Society of Greater Lansing

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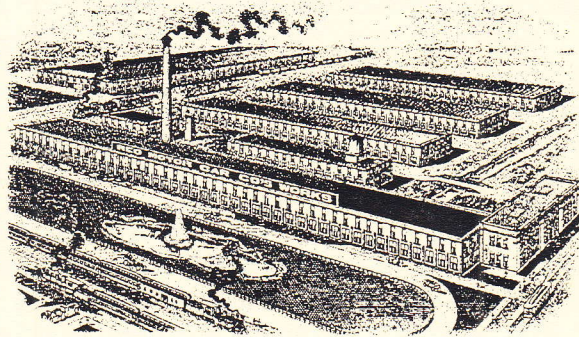
*Historic Explorer is published during the months of September to May by the HSGL. Articles and news of historical interest are always welcome.*

## THE PRODUCTION OF AUTOMOBILES ON A LARGE SCALE How A Million Dollar Automobile Plant Was Designed And Set in Operation

*From Scientific American, June 24, 1905*

From the projecting of an automobile factory to the producing of 1,000 machines in nine months is a record that stands unparalleled in the automobile industry. Yet such is what has actually been accomplished under the management of that pioneer inventor in the field of the new locomotive - Mr. R.E. Olds. After having produced the first practical runabout for the man of average means, Mr. Olds was induced to turn his inventive ability to the production of a popular-priced, powerful touring car. The Reo Motor Car Company was organized August 27, 1904, for this purpose, and in less than thirty days an experimental factory was in full operation, producing the first Reo touring car. This machine made its debut on the road on the afternoon of October 14, during the course of which it displayed its fleetness and covered seventy miles. During the remainder of the fall this original Reo touring car covered 2,000 miles.

So rapidly did the work of planning the large factory and surveying the ground for the same progress, that by September 15 this was accomplished, and ground was broken on the twenty-five acre site obtained by the company. This site is directly opposite the Grand Trunk passenger station, and it faces on the main street of Lansing. The Grand Trunk tracks bound it on the north, and the Lake Shore tracks on the east. Double side tracks are provided by both railroads, and, although the company's shipping facilities are of the best, at present a frequent sight is that shown in the photograph (See page 2), which depicts a train-load of Reo touring cars



blocked on the siding. A very good idea of the general appearance of the factory with its large testing track, can be had from the above cut depicting the same, while the other views show the making of parts (Such as flywheels, cylinders, etc.), the assembling of the chassis, and the

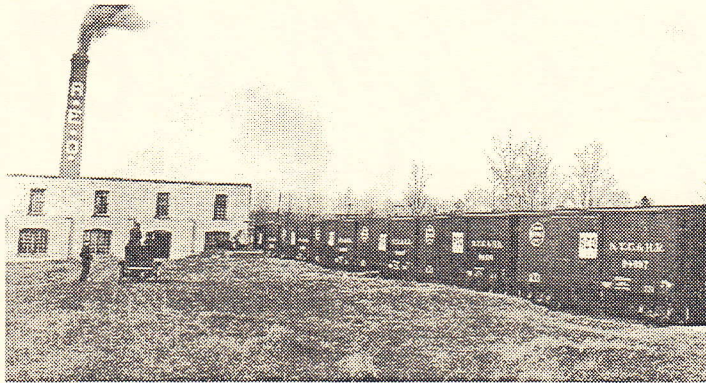
finished chassis being tested before the boilers are mounted on them and the finishing touches given. Not only is all the machine work done in the new factory, but the bodies, also, are built, upholstered, and painted. Thus every part of the machine is made in the huge plant, which comprises altogether four two-story buildings, arranged as shown in the cut.

Not only has the Reo Company turned out about 1,000 machines since the installation on December 15 last of the machinery in the first 75 x 800-foot building to be completed, but it recently startled the spectators at the Empire City Track Decoration Day races by defeating a 40-horse-power foreign race car by one-fifth of a second with its "Reo Bird" racer, having two 16-horse-power stock engines coupled together and placed on a light chassis. The three miles were covered in 3 minutes 20 4/5 seconds, or at 55 3/4 miles an



*Continued on Page 2*

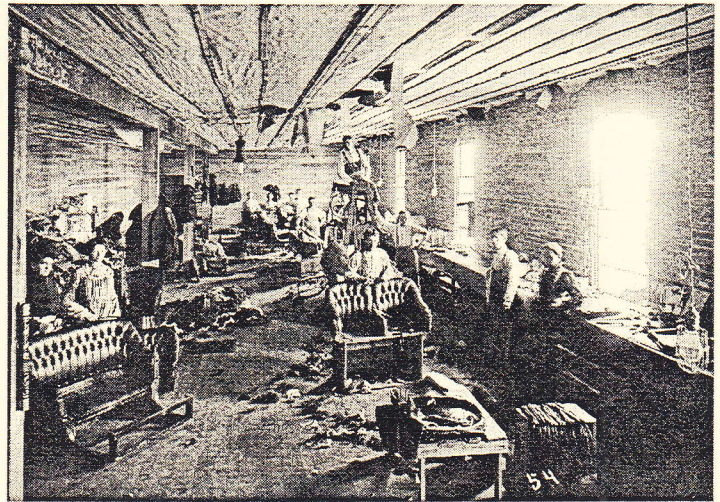
REO, Scientific American, June 24, 1905, continued...



"Blocked on the Siding." Reo automobiles awaiting shipment, c. 1905

hour; and although this is remarkable time for a machine of by 32 horse-power and less than 1,432 pounds weight, any stock Reo touring car can be depended upon to travel 40 miles an hour, or over, at the will of the driver. Besides the touring car at \$1,250, the company also builds a single-cylinder runabout at the price originally set by Mr. Olds - \$650. Both of these machines are constructed with great care, of the best materials obtainable, and the possessor of either of them will find he has an automobile of comparatively small first cost, greatly reduced cost of maintenance, and a large percentage of dependability, which is the most desirable feature of any self-propelling vehicle.

While the work accomplished by the Reo Motor Car Company is remarkable, it is no more than might be expected when we consider Mr. Olds' past records and experience in gas engine and automobile manufacturing. The Reo Company will soon put out a commercial car that will be so low in first cost that the horse cannot compete with it. **RE**



Reo Motor Car Company Upholstery Shop, c. 1905

**AUTOMOBILES**



## The Man

Mr. R. E. Olds, who built the first practical gasoline runabout, and is famous throughout the motor world as a skilled, scientific inventor and builder of motor cars.

In order to carry out his ideas to their fullest perfection, Mr. R. E. Olds, on January 1, 1904, withdrew from the concern with which he had long been identified and formed the company which now manufactures

# The REO Motor Car

16 H. P. 1450 lbs.

With detachable side-door tonneau. Seating five passengers comfortably. Speed, without tonneau, 40 miles per hour. Speed, with tonneau, 35 miles per hour.

Price \$1250.

This splendid, speedy, roomy up-to-date car is built on principles thoroughly demonstrated by long experience, and now for the first time carried through to practical perfection.

The engine is of phenomenal power and compactness, and the entire car is a combination of efficiency, luxury and endurance which will be the wonder of the motorist world.

An equally wonderful two-passenger car at \$650.

For detailed information address

**REO Motor Car Co.**

Factory: Lansing, Michigan.  
Sales Office: 138 W. 35th St., N. Y.  
R. M. Owen, Sales Manager.



## The Car

The REO. A source of power, five gears, and compactness 4000.

Reo Motor Car Company Advertisement, c. 1905

## BE A BOOSTER

There are many folks in Lansing  
Who rate our city high  
And rave about our industries  
And laud them to the skies.

What this one, means to their fair burg  
What that one's done, they prate  
But when you ask them what the drive,  
It's from some other state.

Now merchants all, expect the boys,  
To spend their hard earned cash  
Right here in good old Lansing  
To help them, buy their hash.

But do they play the game by us,  
And purchase local cars,  
And help swell our prosperity,  
With "Reo's," "Olds" and "Stars"?

The Reo car made Lansing  
And put us on the map,  
Employs a mighty lot of us,  
So excuse this little rap.

They have a car for every use,  
For tradesmen big and small,  
There's no excuse, not buying one,  
So please don't try and stall.

If you want the workman's trade in Lansing  
Of factory, mill and shop,  
Then buy your cars in Lansing  
And we'll all be on the top.

- Stanley Cook  
REO SPIRIT, March 1926



## Images from Yesterday

*Western Auto Supply Company  
225 N. Washington Avenue  
H.E. Morrow, Manager  
c. 1929*

*The well dressed man in the center aisle is manager H.E. Morrow. Morrow resided at 1004 1/2 S. Washington Avenue with his wife Emma V. (From the 1929 Lansing City Directory)*



## Gasoline Slot Machine

*From Scientific American, October 18, 1913*

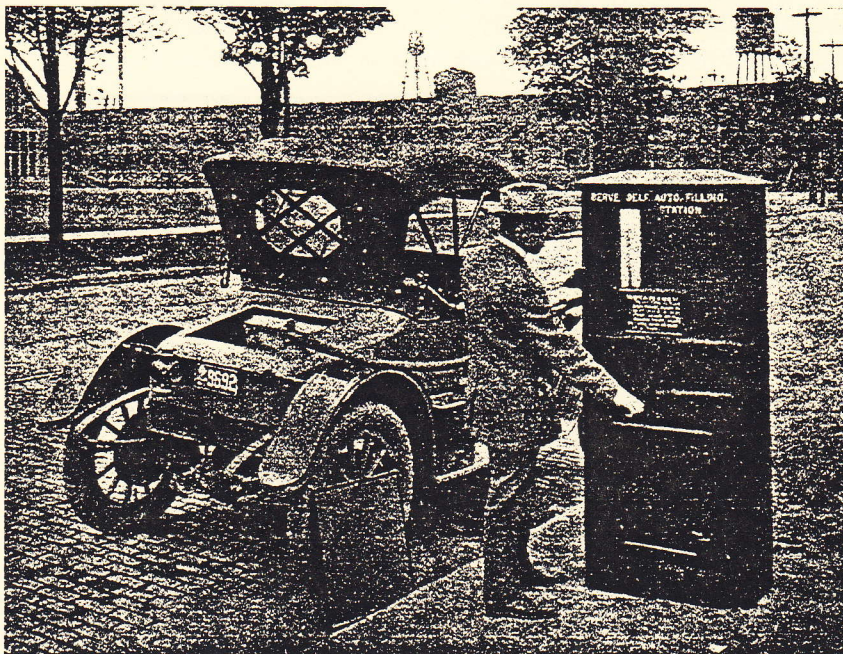
Taking its cue from the fortunes that have resulted from the harvest of pennies dropped into chewing gum slot machines, and with the advantages of such automatic vending devices apparent, a Michigan company recently has placed on the market the gasoline vending slot machine that is shown in the accompanying illustration.

The machine, which is quite as automatic in action as are its gum vending predecessors, has a number of features equally attractive to the man who puts in his money and receives gasoline, and to the man who puts in the gasoline and receives the money. In operation, it is merely necessary for the person requiring gasoline to drop a fifty-cent piece in the slot, place the end of the flexible hose in his gasoline tank and turn the crank. The machine is equipped with a gauge – visible in the picture – to show whether it is full or empty, and even if a person should inadvertently place his money in the slot

when the tank is empty it is promptly returned at the first turn of the crank, just as your penny is returned when the chewing gum slot machine is empty. Of course, as much more than fifty cents worth as is wanted can be obtained – up to the capacity of the tank – though a fifty-cent piece is the only coin that may be put into the slot. So that the device can be used anywhere, regardless of the

fluctuating price of fuel, it is equipped with a metering mechanism which can be adjusted to deliver the proper amount of gasoline for the amount of money put into the slot.

The machine that is show by the picture has been installed by a garage proprietor in the city of Lansing, and he is particularly “tickled” with it, for it requires no attendant, is positive and unfavorable in action, is always ready to serve anyone with the necessary coin, and left to itself dispenses some 200 gallons of fuel a week. As the machine requires no attention once it has been properly installed, it is obvious that garage proprietors are not the only ones who may benefit by its usefulness; anyone may install one and be assured of a profit. Not only does the machine run without attention other than that required in filling the “gas” tank, but it is capable of “delivering the goods” any minute in the twenty-four hours and any driver who knows of its location has no need to awaken sleepy garage attendants



*A gasoline slot machine for automobilists, c. 1913. Installed on South Washington Avenue. To the left is the depot and in the background is the Reo Motor Car Company plant.*

in the middle of the night – provided he is able – to obtain the wherewithal to get home.

On the other hand, it is evident that a vending machine liable to hold fifty or a hundred half-dollars would be a magnet for thieves unless placed where it would be constantly under the eye of an attendant. **WE**

## "Great Lakes State" Coin to be Released on Statehood Day - January 26, 2004

During October, 2003 Governor Jennifer M. Granholm announced the final selection of Michigan's quarter design concept, which features a crisp depiction of the state's distinctive outline, the Great Lakes, and the phrase, "Great Lakes State." Michigan's quarter is the 26th to be released as part of the U.S. Mint's 50 State Quarters program which began in 1999.

"The Great Lakes are an unmistakable part of who we are in Michigan," Granholm said. "I'm proud to recommend a quarter that will showcase our unique connection to these treasures to the world."

Granholm noted that one member of the quarter commission, astronaut Jerry Linenger, summed it up well when he said, "From space, there is no other region on the globe so recognizable. Michigan is one of the defining features on the planet."

"The Great Lakes made it possible for many innovations to come to light," said Dr. William Anderson, director of the Department of History, Arts and Libraries (HAL), the department charged with helping



to coordinate the Michigan Quarter Commission. "I believe by introducing a quarter that focuses on our water resources and unique geography, we have an excellent opportunity to educate children and the public everywhere about how our state, its industries and livelihood have so strongly been defined by the Great Lakes."

The 50 State Quarters program is a 10-year initiative (1999-2008) commemorating each of the 50 United States in the order they ratified the Constitution or joined the Union. On

January 26, 1837, Michigan became the 26th state admitted to the nation. This program represents the first change to the quarter since production of the Bicentennial quarter in 1975-1976.

The Department of History, Arts and Libraries is dedicated to enriching the quality of life for Michigan residents by providing access to information, preserving and promoting Michigan's heritage, and fostering cultural creativity. The department includes the Library of Michigan, the Michigan Historical Center, the Mackinac Island Park Commission, the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs and the Michigan Film Office.

*As many of you read this, I will have just returned from Denver, having attended a "first strike" ceremony of the Michigan quarter. Several Michigan Quarter Commission members were in attendance. On January 26, 2004 a formal unveiling ceremony will be held at the Capitol, please watch your newspaper for details and watch your pocket change for the Michigan quarter. - Ye Editor*



### Show Your Support for the Reo Centennial by purchasing

#### Reo Centennial Commemorative Poster No. 3

The full-color poster features a 1927 Reo Speedwagon fire engine in front of old Lansing Fire Department Station No. 5, which stood at the corner of South Washington Avenue and Baker Street. The Reo plant is visible behind the station.

The proud owners of the Reo fire engine are Vic & Lucille Macek of Shawnee, Kansas.

Reo Centennial Posters 1 and 2 are also available. Poster 1 features a 1975 Raider and Poster 2 features the 1931 Reo Royale and the Strand Theater on Washington Avenue. The 1931 Royale is owned by Harry Emmons, vice president of the Society.

Posters are available for \$14 each

Reo Centennial

c/o Jim Neal

1069 Applegate Lane

East Lansing, MI 48823

Please make checks payable to the Reo Centennial

## The Gift Depot

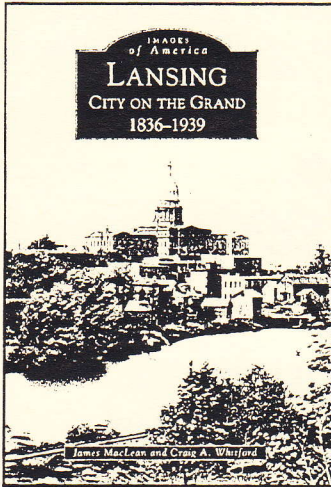
The following gifts will be available for purchase during our January 21, 2004 meeting.

**1** Give the Gift of History with a membership in the Historical Society of Greater Lansing

Individual Memberships: \$15/year  
Family Memberships: \$25/year

**2** Lansing: City On The Grand, 1836-1939

By James MacLean & Craig A. Whitford



Lansing's history as the capital of Michigan began with a legislative mandate in the 1835 State Constitution, which required that the seat of government be moved from Detroit in 1847. The result – the emergence of a new capital city on the banks of the majestic Grand River – allowed Lansing to cultivate a world-class community based in government, education, the automotive industry and entrepreneurial achievements. This book features more than 200 historic photographs that document the dynamic capital city during its pivotal first century, from the pioneer era to the inception of the Olds Motor Vehicle Company and through the eve of World War II.

**\$19.99** (plus tax)

Published by Arcadia,  
An Imprint of Tempus Publishing, Inc.

**3** AIRPORT KID - Learning To Fly

By Marion "Babe" Weyant Ruth and Craig A. Whitford



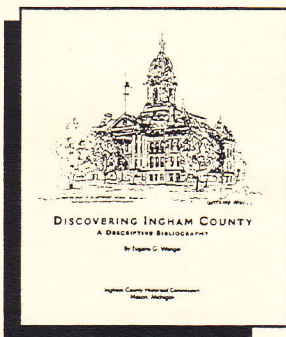
The true account of Lansing's most famous aviatrix - Marion "Babe" Weyant, a teenage girl with a passion for aviation and a desire to take flight. Originally written by Babe in 1936, the story traces her adventure from 1931 until soloing at the age of 18 in 1936. Over 150 photographs and vintage news clippings are featured in 96 pages, capturing the excitement of her journey, the pilots she encountered and her interest in aviation which she continues to share.

**\$20.00** (plus tax)

Published by  
Michigan Historical Press, Lansing

**4** Discovering Ingham County  
A Descriptive Bibliography

By Eugene G. Wanger



This 100+ page edition is a sequel to Mr. Wanger's *INGHAM COUNTY HISTORIES: An Annotated Bibliography for Students, Buffs and Collectors...* "an interesting and useful guide for discovering the history and historical resources of Ingham County, The Capital County of Michigan..." Published by the Ingham County Historical Commission.

**\$15.00** (plus tax)

Published by the  
Ingham County Historical Commission

## HSGL 2004 Calendar

Reserve these historic dates now!

**January 21, 2004**

Reo Joe: Work, Kin & Community  
with Lisa M. Fine, Associate Professor of History, MSU

A REO Centennial Program exploring the workers and families of the REO Motor Car Company.

Friend's Auditorium - 7:00 P.M.

Capital Area District Library, 401 S. Capitol, Lansing

**March 17, 2004**

History of Your Home II: Construction Clues  
with Robert "Rock" Hudson

Learn about the history of your home from the foundation up with this informative presentation.

Friend's Auditorium - 7:00 P.M.

Capital Area District Library, 401 S. Capitol, Lansing

**March 20, 2004**

The David R. Caterino Collector's Showcase

Collectors from throughout Ingham County gather to share their collections of photographs, memorabilia and more. There is no charge for displaying your collection of local history artifacts.

Library Galleries, Lower Level - 10 A.M.-4 P.M.

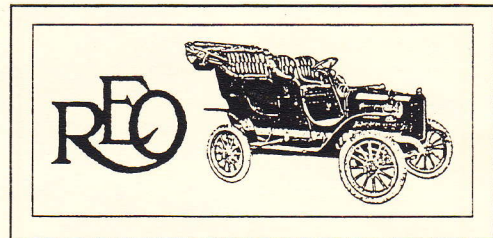
Capital Area District Library, 401 S. Capitol, Lansing

**May 19, 2004**

125th Anniversary of the State Capitol  
Annual Membership Dinner & Election  
State Capitol, Lansing

Reservations are required for this evening filled with the history of our State Capitol. Enjoy fellowship with area historians and history buffs, as well as a tour of the Capitol building during it's 125th Anniversary celebration.

*Celebrate the REO Centennial with Chocolate*



The original, one and only, "REO Bar" – 2.25 oz. of the finest homemade chocolate, manufactured by "Fabiano's Homemade Candies" of Lansing, Michigan.

These beautiful chocolate bars come in either Milk or Semi-Sweet Dark Chocolate. They sport the early REO monogram along side a 1906 REO Runabout.

Available by mail order for \$6.00 for two (2) bars, including postage and handling. Please specify milk, or dark chocolate when ordering, or you will receive one of each.

Send your check or money order to **Mia Tioli, 110 E. Hodge Ave, Lansing, MI 48910** or call 517.887.2089 – email Mia at [miatioli@aol.com](mailto:miatioli@aol.com) for more information.

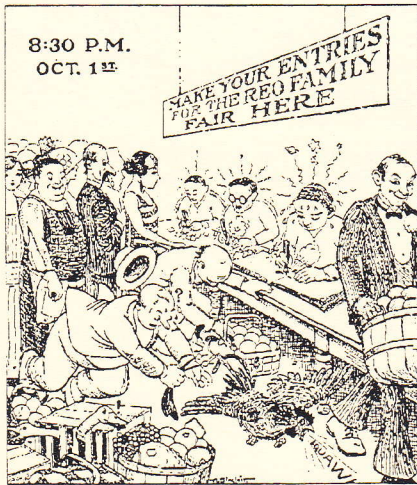
All proceeds go to benefit the R.E. Olds Transportation Museum and the REO 2004 Centennial.

A 2004 Reo Centennial Program

Reo Joe:

# Work, Kin & Community

with author Lisa M. Fine, Associate Professor of History,  
Michigan State University



*The Story of Reo Joe: Work, Kin, and Community in Autotown, U.S.A.* is the title of a new book by author Lisa Fine. The Reo Motor Car Company was much more than the automobiles which were built, it was about family and community. Professor Fine will discuss what was distinctive about Reo and its labor force, in particular, and set that into the context of automotive and industrial history. Professor Fine will also discuss the special challenges of doing research for this work. Please join us for an informative evening.

Join Us... *Wednesday,*  
*January 21, 2004*  
*7:00 P.M.*

**Friend's Auditorium**  
Main Library - Capital Area District Library  
401 S. Capitol, Lansing

Please RSVP to:

Change Service Requested

*Historical Society*  
*of Greater Lansing*  
P.O. Box 12095 Lansing, MI 48901

# Historical Society of Greater Lansing

Craig A. Whitford, President

P.O. Box 22026, Lansing, MI 48909

Tel: 517.394.4443; Fax: 517.394.0579; Email: cawhitford@aol.com

January, 2004

Dear Friends:

On Saturday, March 20, 2004 the Historical Society of Greater Lansing and the Capital Area District Library will host the third annual **David R. Caterino Collector's Showcase** in the lower galleries of the library.

This event is dedicated to Dave's memory. His passion for collecting, researching, studying and sharing his extensive Lansing collection will always be remembered. In his desire to continue sharing with future historians, Dave donated his collection to the Forest Parke Memorial Library of Local History.

Please accept this as your personal invitation for you to participate in this event as an exhibitor. I invite you to share your local or regional interest collection with the public. Many of you receiving this letter have participated in these events in the past and I encourage you to join us for this event.

Historical societies are also invited to attend. This is a wonderful opportunity for you to promote your organization to the public. We welcome your participation.

This exhibition will run from 10 A.M. until 4 P.M. on Saturday, March 20th. There is no cost for you to participate, just your interest in sharing your hobby, collection, or organization.

Please let me know your interest by returning the form at the bottom of this letter, or by giving me a call at **517.394.4443** or email me at **cawhitford@aol.com**, *before March 1, 2004*. We need your participation in order to make this event successful and I look forward to hearing from you.

***Help us fill the Gallery with History!***

Craig A. Whitford  
President

=====

\_\_\_\_ YES, I'm interested in participating as an exhibitor in the David R. Caterino Collector's Showcase. I will display my collection (hobby) featuring: \_\_\_\_\_ and will require \_\_\_\_ tables. (*Tables are 6 to 8 feet in length*)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return to: Craig A. Whitford, P.O. Box 22026, Lansing, MI 48909**

The David R. Caterino  
**Collector's**  
**Showcase**

March 20, 2004

**LANSING** area collectors will be displaying a variety of Lansing and area history from their private collections including exhibits of Lansing Area Photographs, Postal History, Lansing Milk, Beer and Medicine Bottles, Antique Firearms, Railroads & Interurbans, Post Cards, Lansing Advertising & Cigar Boxes, Olds & REO Memorabilia, LFD & LPD History, MAC/ MSC/MSU items; Local Authors...

*and Much More!*

*Join Us. . .*

March 20, 2004  
 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

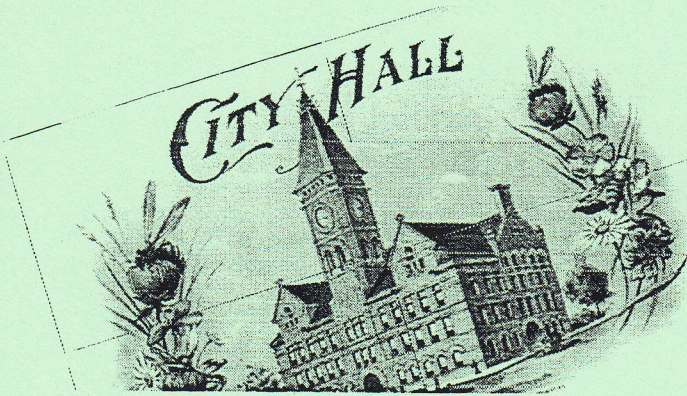
**Lower Galleries**

Capital Area District Library  
 401 S. Capitol, Lansing

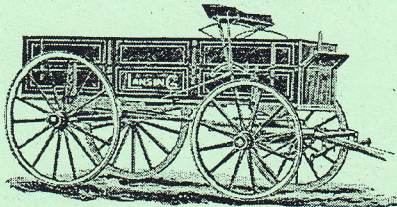
*You are invited to bring items to share or ask questions about.*

If you collect history of the greater Lansing area and would like to share it with the public, we invite you to join us as an exhibitor. If you are a local author or artist we also invite you to participate. An application is provided on the back side of this insert or contact:

Craig A. Whitford, President  
 Historical Society of Greater Lansing  
 Tel: 517.394.4443; Email: cawhitford@aol.com



The Lansing Farm Wagon—With Thimble Skoins.

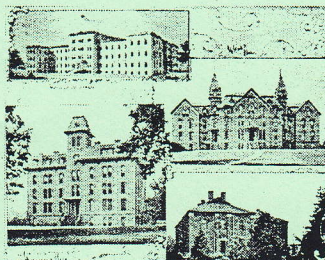


The lightest Lansing wagon in the market. Constructed of steel, very well bolted timbers, thoroughly and minutely finished, well painted and every part fully warranted.

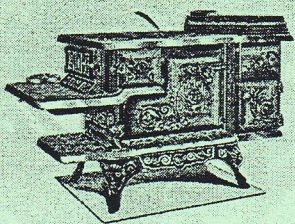
LANSING WAGON WORKS,  
 Manufacturers of Light and Heavy  
**Farm and Freight Wagons**  
 Lansing Duplex and Other Light Spring Pleasure  
 and Market Wagons  
 BROWN'S PATENT LOOSE JOINTED AXLES

COLONIAL  
  
 THEATRE  
 Lansing's Home

*Michigan Agricultural College*

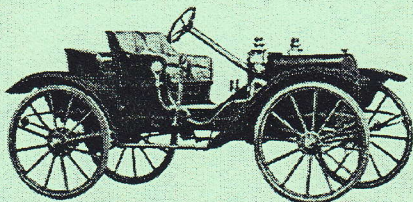


**Bement Palace Cook**  
 HIGHEST GRADE  
 WARRANTED



The most durable, the best working, the finest appearing Cook Stove on the Market.

**NEW CLARK MOTOR CAR**



Manufactured by CLARK & CO., Lansing, Mich.  
 DELIVERIES WILL BEGIN TO BE MADE IN AUGUST