

History Explorer

A publication of the Historical Society of Greater Lansing

November 2006

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Season's Greetings



Historical Society of Greater Lansing

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How to contact us...

Historical Society of Greater Lansing
 P.O. Box 12095
 Lansing, MI 48901
 Tel: 517.394.4443
 Fax: 517.394.0579
 E-mail: cawhitford@aol.com

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

Christmas in an Early Day

Recollections of two well known Lansingites:
 How Daniel W. Buck and John N. Bush Celebrated Their First Christmas
 When Lansing was but a Forest



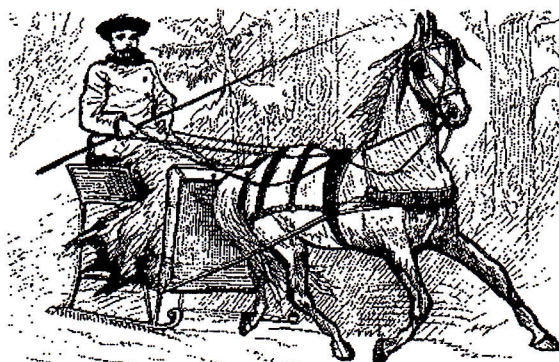
With each returning year old Father Time confers innumerable Christmas presents upon the children of men. People who have lived in this community for only a short time do not realize the benefits that the growth of years have bestowed upon them; but two of the early residents of Lansing have been kind enough to describe for Republican readers their first Christmas in Lansing, which will certainly reveal sufficient reason for rejoicing.

Daniel W. Buck is one of the three men who have lived longest in Lansing. He came to Lansing in the fall of 1848, and when Christmas came around he was employed in a furniture factory at North Lansing.

"My first Christmas in Lansing," said Mr. Buck, "was not spent in Lansing at all, but in Delhi, where my brothers-in-law, the Norths, lived. I remember the morning well. There was no sleigh that winter and I started from North Lansing to go out to Harrison North's to dinner. I drove down Washington avenue, it was a road through the woods then, and the stumps were not cut out of the road yet. I got lost in those woods once right where the Baptist church is now and went by way of Dryer's place over by the location of the School for the Blind in my efforts to get to the Lansing House. "Well," said Mr. Buck, resuming the thread of his narrative, "I drove down the avenue and on my way from Franklin street to the corner of Allegan street, I passed just three houses. Two of them were



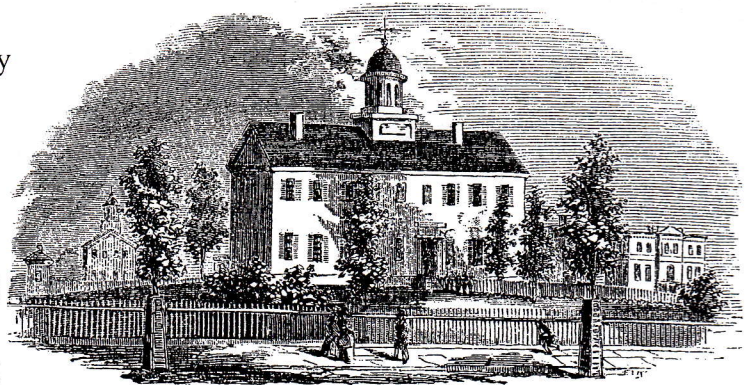
Daniel W. Buck
 Pioneer Furniture Maker
 & Undertaker, 1847



Continued on Page 2

Christmas in an Early Day, continued...

log houses and the other was a slab shanty. The shanty was where Mrs. Peck's place is, and one of the log houses was at the corner of Washington and Shiawassee street. At the Allegan street corner was a store. A man came up here from Ohio and built that with money he got by robbing a bank. We did not know that then, but we found it when he was arrested and taken back. The Lansing House was on the next corner. It was a log house. I drove past that and along the avenue until I came to Main street. Then I turned



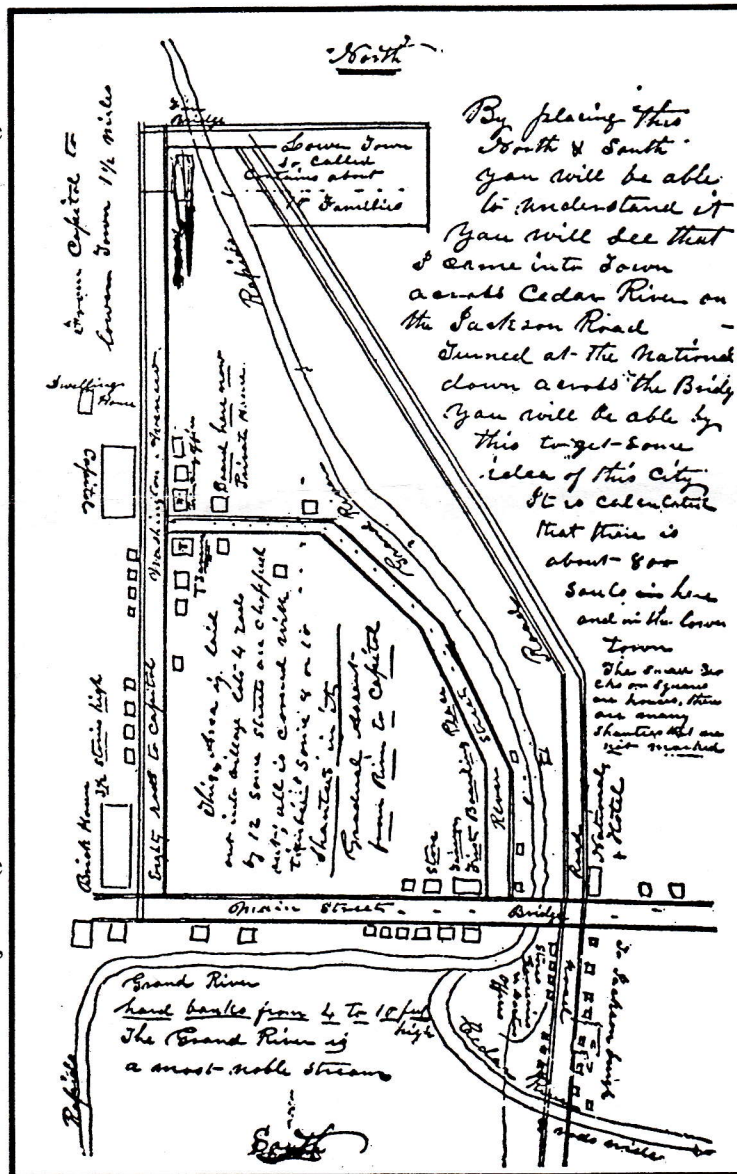
The New Capitol

east and crossed the old bridge which then went across the river from the foot of Main street. There I struck woods again and strictly speaking that was the end of my Christmas in Lansing, for I spent the day with the North family. There were not more than two or three hundred people here then, and there was no village of city organization. The town was simply part of the township. North Lansing was a good deal more of a place than this end of town"

One year earlier than Mr. Buck, John N. Bush struck Lansing. The capital was located here in the session of 1846-47, and Mr. Bush came to Lansing in 1847.

"I don't remember much about what I did on Christmas day 1847," said Mr. Bush. "I had a job plastering the Seymour

house then, it is called the Franklin House now, and I had agreed to finish the work by New Year's so I think I must have worked. If I thought much about Christmas I presume my thoughts went home, for I was a stranger



Map of the town of Michigan (Lansing), 1848
Drawn by Senator Luke Hazen

here then, and I don't doubt my mind went back to the place where other and happier Christmases had been spent. We were all strangers in Lansing one to another then. We came her[e] with the first influx of settlers at the new capital and were all busy getting established. I don't remember that there was any public service held. There was no church here, and if there was any service it was in the first school house built in Lansing. It is still standing near the corner of Franklin and Center streets, I think. Doubtless we all thought of Christmas, but being busy we did not pay much attention to it. A Christmas dinner those days would have consisted of venison, partridge, and possibly chicken. Bear meat was to be had for the shooting, and the Indians used to bring in lots of cranberries from the marshes. Most of

the men who stopped work that Christmas day probably went hunting for deer, bear or game birds."

From the State Republican 12/19/1896

A Musical Holiday Turner-Dodge House


A Musical Holiday is the theme of the annual Holiday Open House at the Turner-Dodge House, December 9th and 13-16th, 1-4 p.m. Turn of the 19th century Christmas decorations will carry the theme throughout and musical performances will warm the ears throughout the authentically restored house.

Plan a visit to the ballroom for the musical performances both Saturdays by talented community and school groups from Mid-Michigan. Some of the must see items are an antique music box doll that plays tunes on cylinder records in the Girls Room and a Regina Music Box playing a steel disk in the Music Room between the performances held there by area musicians.

One of the highlights of the Open House is an exhibit of charming English holiday biscuit tins and holiday crackers (poppers) by Val Berryman, curator of the MSU Museum. There will also be a gallery of antique Christmas Art in the Ballroom from Berryman's collection.

On the weekend preceding the Holiday Open House, you can enjoy a sneak peak of the holiday decorations and enjoy the first LCC and MSU Student Holiday Art Show on December 1, 2 and 3, from 1:00 5:00 p.m. A great place to do a little shopping and benefit the Friends of Turner-Dodge House.

This beautiful old home on the north bank of the Grand River is the home of Lansing pioneers who were important to the development of the Capitol City and the State. They were progressive leaders who were involved with the critical issues of their times: public education, transportation, abolition, higher education for women, the education of the blind, prohibition, workers' rights.

The Turner-Dodge House is located at 100 E. North Street in Lansing's Old Town. Admission is \$3.00 for adults, \$1.00 for children and \$4.50 for non resident adults. Call 517/483-4220 for more information. 

Historical Society of Greater Lansing

Proudly announces the 6th Annual

David R. Caterino Collector's Showcase

Saturday, May 6, 2006

10:00 AM to 4:00 P.M.

**Capital Area District Library
401 S. Capitol, Lansing**

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 of the greater Lansing area we also invite you to participate.

Help us fill the Gallery with History!

For an application or more information contact:

Craig A. Whitford

517.394.4443

email: cawhitford@aol.com

The Enduring Legacy of R.E. Olds



By Dave Pfaff
Historian, R.E. Olds
Transportation Museum

Ransom E. Olds and Metta Olds both died in 1950, REO was gone by 1975, and of course Oldsmobile was killed off in 2004. But the physical legacy of R.E. and Metta Olds lives on in Lansing if you know where to look.

The most visible reminder is the "Olds Tower", later the Michigan National Bank Tower, now called the Boji Tower for the current owner. The Tower, still the tallest building in Lansing, was built by R.E. Olds in 1930. Just north is the State of Michigan George Romney Office Building, built in 1924 as the Hotel Olds by R.E. Olds. East on Allegan Street is the Hollister Building, owned by R.E. Olds in 1904, the first location of his Capital National Bank, the first offices of the REO Motor Car Company, and managed by his brother Emory Olds.

Don't miss the monument to R.E. on Cherry Street, near the site of the first Olds presence in Lansing, the P.F. Olds & Son factory on River Street.

Surviving REO facilities are the John Bean building on South Cedar Street, and the former REO truck and bus and later REO lawn mower factory at Mt. Hope and Washington Avenue


A significant survivor is the R.E. Olds Hall of Engineering on the campus of Michigan State University. R.E. donated funds to rebuild the structure after a fire destroyed the existing building in 1916. This was the first building on campus that was privately funded. It is still in full use.

The Atlas Drop Forge factory on Mt. Hope, established in 1906 to supply REO, is still in use by Atmosphere Annealing.

Metta and R.E. donated the land and building for the Women's Clubhouse on South Washington in 1913. The building is currently the headquarters of the Michigan Retailers Association.

The R.E. Olds Transportation Museum honors the significant contributions R.E. Olds made in the pioneering days of the auto industry and his enduring legacy. The Museum has several Olds family items and many early Oldsmobile and REO vehicles and memorabilia.

The most significant existing legacy of R.E. Olds are the current, newly constructed General Motors factories producing motor vehicles in Lansing. Without the early Olds and Oldsmobile production in Lansing, these facilities would most likely not be here.

These are just the high-lights as many other Olds related sites exist. 

A Biography of Henry R. Pattengill

From the Portrait & Biographical Album of Ingham & Livingston Counties, Michigan (1891)

A man who has the interests of the place of his residence at heart, whether it be in an humble prominent way, always commands the respect of every right-minded person. In an educational direction there is an additional degree of deference paid the promoters of advancement, for in the Republic of America in which we blend the French idea of equality with the English theory of brotherhood, we realize how greatly we are indebted to our public school system for many of the men that have come to the fore in public as in private affairs. The gentleman whose name is at the head of this sketch is a noted educator in the State and is now the editor and publisher of the Michigan School Moderator, a semi-monthly magazine, that is published for the use of teachers and school Boards, giving much valuable information in regard to school paraphernalia, as well as the latest theories and methods as used by the most advanced educators of the day in foreign lands as well as our own country.

Mr. Pattengill was born in Mt. Vision, Otsego County, N.Y., January 4, 1852. His father was the Rev. Lemuel C. Pattengill, who was a native of New Lisbon, Otsego County. His paternal grandfather, also Lemuel Pattengill, was a native of Connecticut, where he engaged in farming, removing, however, to New York where he was an early settler in Otsego County. Lemuel Patengill, Sr. was a Captain in the War of 1812 and was wounded at Queenstown Heights, and taken prisoner by the British soldiers and held for two or three months in Canada. His decease occurred in New York at the age of eighty-five years. The family are Eastern in their antecedents.

The original of our sketch was born in Otsego County, N.Y., after which, at the age of one year, he was taken by his parents to Akron, Erie County, whence after a residence of five or six years he removed to Wilson and as soon as old enough attended the Wilson Academy. Removing to Litchfield, Mich., in 1865, he attended the Litchfield High School. After that he went to Hudson and was a graduate from the High School at the age of seventeen years. In 1870 he entered the University of Michigan in which he pursued the literary course for four years, graduating in 1874 and taking the degree of Bachelor of Science. At the commencement at which he was graduated he was one of fourteen speakers and was class prophet. After finishing his college course he determined to devote himself to educational work and went to St. Louis, where he became Superintendent of the Union Schools, holding the position for two years. Thence he went to Ithaca and was Superintendent of Schools for eight years. During his stay of eight years in that city he established a High School and interested the School Board in higher educational work until a \$25,000 school house was built, in which the High School was conducted. During the contemplation and building he was on the building committee and at the same time was President of the Village for two terms. He was also President of Gratiot County Teachers' Association for eight years.

In 1884 Mr. Pattengill went to Grand Rapids and there became assistant editor of the School Moderator a magazine published for the use of teachers and in the interest of educational affairs. He continued in this position for one year and then bought out the paper, removing his office to Lansing, from which it has since been published. The magazine was first printed in Grand Rapids in 1880 and the purchase was made by our subject in 1885. Since that time it has grown from a sixteen page quarto to a thirty-two-page quarto magazine and it has also increased in circulation


from fourteen hundred to five thousand. As before said, it is devoted to the educational interests and established for the benefit of schools. The best teachers and educators of the day are contributors. Besides this magazine Mr. Pattengill publishes a number of other books. One of the most popular is the "Civil Government of Michigan," of which he himself is the author. Another very attractively written and popular book is "Thoughts for those who Think," also written by our subject. "Tip-Top Pieces for Little Folks," a "Manual of Orthography," a "School Song Knapsack," and "An Outline for Special Day Exercises for School." All the above named books he has written, and also publishes the "Michigan Historical and Geographical Cards for School," upon which he has a copyright. Numerous other works that bear upon educational matters come from his presses.

In 1886 our subject filled the vacancy of Assistant Professor in English at the Agricultural College under his able instruction it grew into one of the most popular courses in the college. In 1889 he showed his fearlessness in regard to public opinion when he espoused the part of Prof. MacEwan in the controversy or rupture in the school, and it this time he attacked the Board of Control upon their action regarding Prof. MacEwan. Mr. Pattengill is an enthusiastic institute worker and has been appointed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction as Conductor of Institutes and in this capacity has done service in one-half the counties in the State.

The original of our sketch was married in St. Louis in 1877, his bride being Miss Lizzie Sharpsteen, who was born in Perry, N.Y., and is a daughter of Mortimer Sharpsteen, also a native of New York. She came West when a young lady with her parents, locating in Iowa and later settling in Gratiot County, where her father was an early pioneer and farmer. Mrs. Pattengill was a graduate from the High School of St. Louis, and is a most accomplished, amiable and attractive lady. She is the mother of four children whose names are as follows: Lillie, Victor R., Margaret I. and Ral M. Mr. Pattengill has a beautiful home which he

erected at a cost of of \$7,000 on the corner of Townsend and Lenawee Streets. Architecturally it is finely proportioned and artistic, and interiorally is supplied with every comfort and convenience that makes modern living comparatively so delightful. It is above all and before all homely and is a fit place for the development of true culture and refinement. The editor has here a fine library of carefully-selected works of the best authors and his children are made to realize that they are the heirs of all the ages by being surrounded and made familiar with the best thoughts of the best English writers of early as well as modern times.

Our subject is connected with several societies, being lecturer of the Lansing Grange. He is a member of the State Teachers' Association, of which he was at one time Secretary. In his political following he is staunchly Republican and being one of the most enlightened and intelligent men of the vicinity he has been many times a delegate to county and State conventions. When a boy Mr. Pattengill was severely hurt by a reaper. For five months he was confined to his room and kept on his back. This accident caused a slight lameness which undoubtedly changed the course of his life, as his early home being on the lake, he probably otherwise would have been a farmer or sailor.

Henry R. Pattengill died on November 26, 1918. He is at rest in Section F of Mount Hope Cemetery. At Pattengill Middle School his name and contributions to education live on. 



*Yours for keeps
Henry R. Pattengill.*

The "Downey"

A Brief History of a Lansing Political Landmark

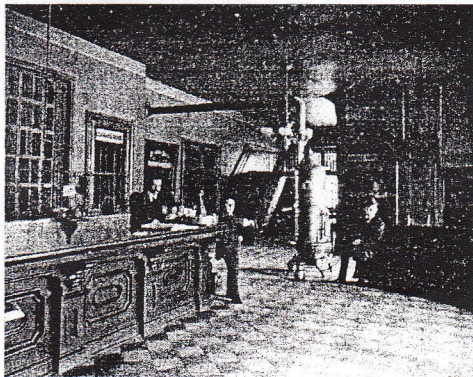
By Craig A. Whitford

During the late 19th and early 20th century the most popular hostelry in central Michigan was none other than the "Downey". In 1887 Henry J. Downey, along with his two sons, Charles P. and Oscar C. Downey, purchased the Lansing House built in 1866 and renamed it the Hotel Downey. They immediately invested \$20,000 in refitting the house and during the next five years spent \$75,000 more in placing it firmly on the first-class basis. At the time of his death in 1894, H.J. Downey had established himself as one of the solid business men of the city, and was regarded everywhere as a man who merited the success he had achieved.



CHAS P. DOWNEY

After their father's death the two sons continued to operate the hotel

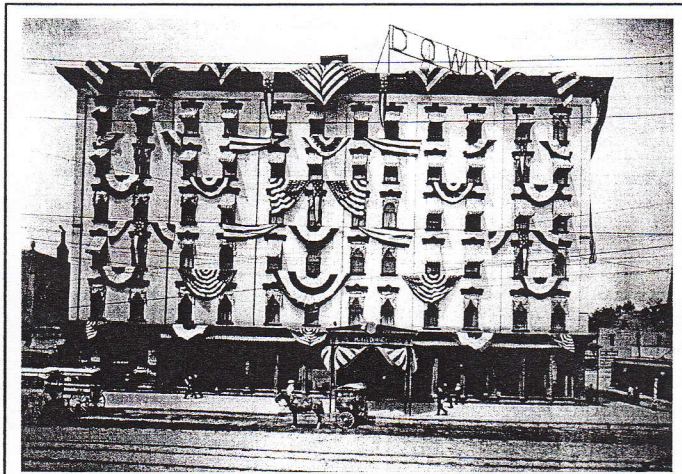


Hotel Downey lobby, c. 1895

popularity year by year.

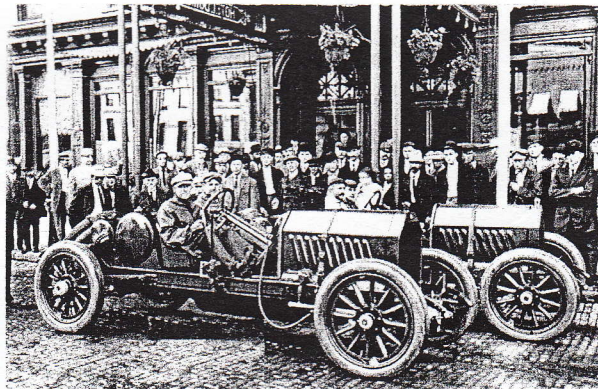
The hotel was as familiar to political visitors in its day as was the statehouse. Numerous conventions recognized the Hotel Downey as the place to establish headquarters when in Lansing. The hotel parlors were

and the thorough education they had received in the hotel business enabled them to increase the Downey's



A wonderful view of the Hotel Downey before the fire of 1912. Built in 1866 as the third incarnation of the Lansing House, Henry Downey acquired the hotel in 1887 and he renamed the building the Hotel Downey in 1888. The hotel was used as campaign headquarters in several gubernatorial campaigns. Suite 201 in the hotel became know as the "Victory Room" because of the list of successful candidates that occupied the room. The list reads like a who's who of Michigan politics, Woodbridge Ferris, Albert Sleeper, Fred Green and William Buckner all led their campaigns from Suite 201. The Hotel Downey closed on May 1, 1936 and an era of Michigan political history ended. (FPML/CADL.)

sumptuously appointed and were arranged in such fashion that they were exceptionally well qualified for committee rooms during political conventions and legislative assemblages. Whenever the Michigan state legislature was in session the Hotel Downey was always



Departure of Olds Racers at the Downey, 1910.

busy and hustling, giving the appearance of a metropolitan hotel, its corridors and lobby packed with eager, animated guests and visitors. A 1912 newspaper account noted that "More political plots have been hatched in the old bar and in the various rooms

of the building than any other tavern in Michigan."

Electric cars passed the "Downey" every ten minutes and the hub of the hack and omnibus lines originated at the hotel.

A fine bar replete with everything for thirsty travelers, along with commodious sample rooms and a cigar stand, could be found on the ground floor.


The Hotel Downey was enlarged in 1907 with two stories added to the structure and the new sixth floor became a convention hall, a grill room and a sample room.

Continued...

On the night of February 6, 1912, at 6:10 pm an electrical fire began in a transformer at the top of the elevator shaft. The fire quickly spread through the roof and by midnight the fire was under control but the upper two floors were gutted while the lower ones were damaged by smoke and water. The damage was estimated at \$110,000. At the time of the fire over 250 guests were registered at the hotel. The Michigan Retail Lumber Dealer's Association was holding a convention and all of its members were successfully evacuated. The fire was brought under control by about 11:30 pm with the assistance of the Jackson Fire Department.

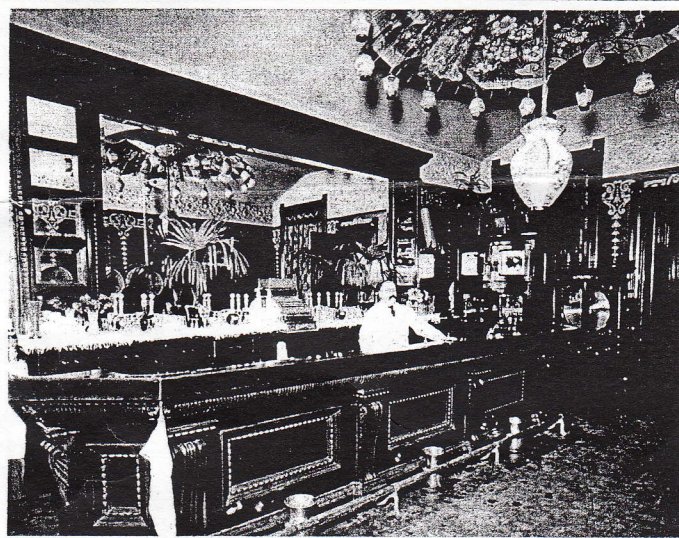


On the night of February 6, 1912 the Hotel Downey was destroyed by fire, losses were estimated at \$109,991. The hotel was expanded in 1907-1910 when two stories were added to the structure and the new sixth floor became a convention hall. After the fire the building was quickly rebuilt because none of the exterior walls of the building were damaged in the fire.

Following the fire the hotel was quickly rebuilt because none of the exterior walls of the structure were damaged in the fire. Unfortunately the "Downey" never regained its place as Lansing's favorite watering hole. The Hotel Downey closed in 1936 and was razed to make way for the new five-story art deco J.W. Knapp's department store which opened in 1938 and still stands today in downtown Lansing. 

Downey Tokens

Author Paul Manderscheid, in his specialized opus *Lansing's Money*, catalogs the existence of three different token issues from the "Downey":



The Downey Hotel bartender Richard Waite in 1904. Most major political officials conducted business at the Downey; it was the place to go after a hard day at the office. Notice the unique chandelier and the spittoons alongside the bar. Richard Waite, Dick to his friends, kept a neat and clean establishment. (FPML/CADL.)



2200A 25-B-R (design) / DOWNEY / (design)
GOOD FOR / 5C / IN TRADE
(Cunningham 560D7A)



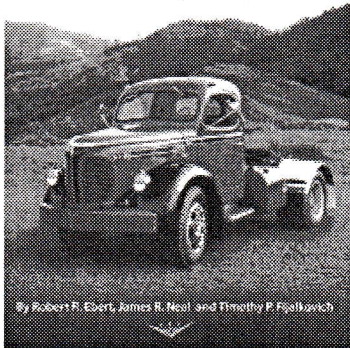
2200A5 21-B-R DOWNEY HOUSE / H W © /
LANSING / CIGAR STAND
GOOD FOR 5 (ornate; 6 stars on numeral) /
IN TRADE
(Cunningham Unlisted)

2200B 30-A-R DOWNEY HOUSE (design) Cigar (design) /
STAND
GOOD FOR / \$1.00 / IN / Cigars
(Cunningham 560D8A)

References:

- Cunningham, Paul A. *Michigan Trade Tokens*. 1987.
- Manderscheid, Paul *Lansing's Money, A Survey of Lansing Michigan Tokens & Paper Money*. 1993.
- The Michigan Central Line. *Headlight Flashes*. Lansing, Michigan. 1895.
- Lansing State Journal. *The Lansing Journal, Twentieth Century Edition – Art Souvenir Edition covering the Historical, Social and Industrial Record of Michigan's Capital City*, January, 1902.
- (FPML/CADL) Forest Parke Library & Archives, housed in the Capital Area District Library, Lansing.
- Various newspaper clippings.

The World's Toughest Truck
The Reo/Diamond Reo Story



Book Signing

“THE WORLD’S TOUGHEST TRUCK: THE REO/DIAMOND REO STORY”

Friday, November 17, 2006, 5-8 P.M.
Way Station Books & Stuff
223 S. Washington Ave.
(2 blocks South of Michigan Ave.)
Downtown Lansing during
SILVER BELLS IN THE CITY
Holiday Light Parade
Enjoy the parade and festivities,
and start your holiday shopping
with this new book of local interest.

**THE WORLDS TOUGHEST TRUCK:
The Reo/ Diamond Reo Story**

By Robert R. Ebert, James R. Neal & Timothy P. Fijalkovich

Many people might not realize the R, E, O in Reo, and later Diamond Reo, were the initials of the person who started the world-famous truck company, Ransom Eli Olds. When Olds left Oldsmobile in January, 1904 “he would never again have a business relationship with the company that bore his name.”

Later in 1904 he incorporated the R. E. Olds Company, soon to be changed to the Reo Motor Car Company. This business would help to revolutionize the light and heavy truck industry and point the way to the future of truck transportation until Reo’s bankruptcy and ultimate liquidation in the late 1970s.

The World’s Toughest Truck is full of photographs (eight pages in color) and everything there is to know about one of Michigan’s legendary businesses Reo/ Diamond Reo.

Priced at \$24.95 plus postage and handling from the publisher Driveline Publishing, P.O. Box 838, Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387 or call (800)767-5828. Paperback. **Locally the book is available at Way Station Books & Stuff, 223 S. Washington Avenue at \$23.00, plus tax.**

HSGL 2006 Calendar

Reserve these historic dates now!

November 15, 2006

Tour Historic Pattengill Middle School

Please RSVP for the tour by calling
David Votta at 334-1521

Pattengill Middle School - 6:00 P.M.

1017 Jerome Street, Lansing

Parking is available on the east side of the school.

November 17, 2006

Book Signing

“THE WORLD’S TOUGHEST TRUCK: THE REO/ DIAMOND REO STORY”

Friday, November 17, 2006, 5-8 P.M.

Way Station Books & Stuff, 223 S. Washington Ave. (2 blocks South of Michigan Ave.), Downtown Lansing during **SILVER BELLS IN THE CITY**.

December 9th & 13-16th, 2006

A Musical Holiday Turner-Dodge House

A Musical Holiday is the theme of the annual Old Fashioned Family Christmas at the Turner-Dodge House, **December 9th and 13-16th, 1-4 p.m.** The turn of the 19th century holiday decorations will carry the theme throughout the authentically restored turn-of-the-19th-century house. There will be musical performances in the ballroom both Saturdays. There will also be an exhibit of charming English holiday biscuit tins and holiday crackers (poppers) by Val Berryman of the MSU Museum and a display of Christmas Art from his collection in the ballroom. Call 517/483-4220 for more information.

*Give a Gift of Membership in the
Historical Society of Greater Lansing
this Christmas*



**Historical Society
of Greater Lansing
Gift Membership
& Renewal Time**

Dear Members:

*If your mailing label is highlighted in **YELLOW** it's time to renew your membership for the 2006-2007 program season. We encourage you to assist us in increasing our membership by giving a gift membership to a friend or family member which will keep them informed of our activities throughout the year.*

Membership Application 2006-2007

Annual Renewals are due October 1, 2006 for the 2006-2007 program year.

Please accept my New Renewal membership in the Historical Society of Greater Lansing. I have enclosed:

\$15 Individual \$25 Family \$150 Life \$____ Gift

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Tel: (Day) _____ (Eve) _____

*Historical Society
of Greater Lansing*

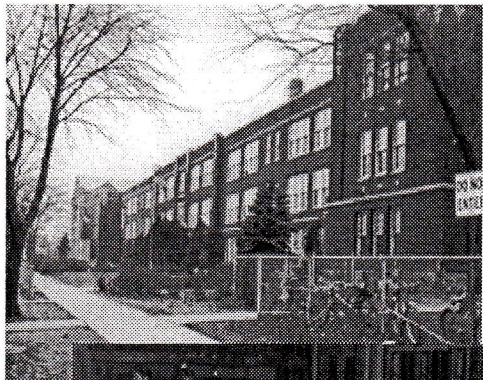
P.O. Box 12095
Lansing, MI 48901

The Historical Society of Greater Lansing is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit corporation.

Thank you for your support of our programs and activities.

A Historical Tour Through

Pattengill Middle School



As the Lansing School District and Pattengill Middle School staff prepare for the move to the new Pattengill Middle School building, join us for a tour of the classrooms, hallways, nooks and crannies of this historic structure dedicated to the memory of Henry R. Pattengill and the education of our youth. *Please RSVP with David Votta at 334-1521.*

Join Us...

Wednesday,

November 15, 2006

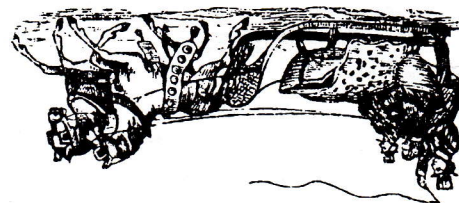
6:00 P.M.

Pattengill Middle School

1017 Jerome Street, Lansing

Parking available East of the school

Mission Statement: *Our purpose at Pattengill Middle School is to provide a positive and respectful learning environment that will provide a challenging curriculum where every student can strive to achieve maximum academic and personal growth to become a lifelong learner in our diverse world.*



Season's Greetings

Please RSVP to:

Change Service Requested

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