

# History Explorer

A publication of the Historical Society of Greater Lansing

October 2008

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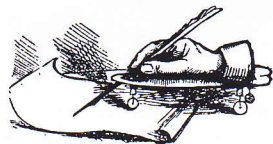
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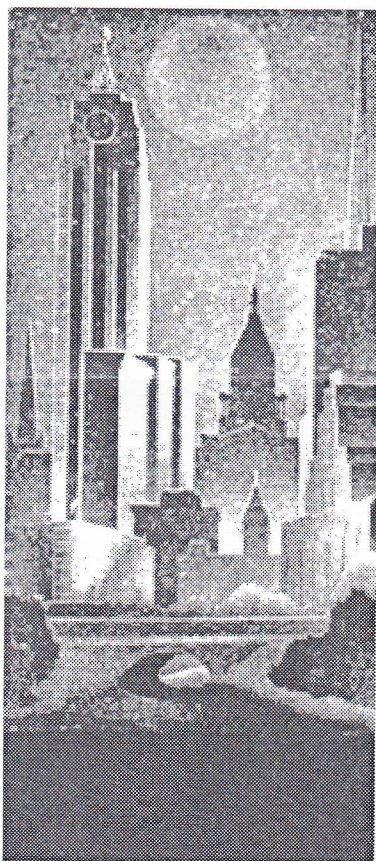
cawhitford@aol.com

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

*It's Pure History!*

*Historical Society of Greater Lansing*

*Announces 2008-2009 Program Schedule*



Plans for the 2008-2009 program season, celebrating the 150th Anniversary of Lansing as an incorporated city, were finalized by the Historical Society of Greater Lansing. The organization will conduct 14 different programs in the coming year offering a broad range of topics, tours and workshops for community participation. Society President Craig Whitford stated, "Our programs are our most important benefit for the membership and the community."

This Society will kick-off the coming year on the evening of October 23, 2008 with *Wish You Were Here: A Postcard Tour of Lansing*. Authors Jim MacLean and Craig Whitford will share with you a visual tour of Lansing through historical postcards. This program will take place at 7:00 PM in the Friend's Auditorium of the Capital Area District Library.

Additional programs will include topics such as the *Founding of Lansing, Elijah E. Myers and the Capitol, Mayors of Lansing, Artistry of Charles H. Mead,*

*Celebrating  
150 Years  
of Lansing History  
1859-2009*

*Grand River History, Outhouse Treasures, History of your Home or Business (always a favorite) as well as a special Lansing Sesquicentennial edition of the David R. Caterino - Collectors Showcase. Plus much, much more!*

Details of dates, times and locations will be published in future issues of the *History Explorer*. Questions regarding membership or our upcoming programs may be directed to Craig Whitford. He can be reached at 694.0556 or email him at cawhitford@aol.com.

*Join Us...*

**October 23, 2008 - 7:00 PM: *Wish You Were Here! A Historic Postcard Tour of Lansing.*** The collecting of picture postcards is among one of the most enjoyable hobbies and pastimes shared by historians and collectors alike. This relaxing evening will feature 60 different images capturing a moment in the history of our capital city gleaned from the collections of the Forest Parke Memorial Archive & Library as well as private holdings. Please join us for this nostalgic tour.

## “Harmony” An Interview with Mayor John S. Bennett (1908-11)

*From the Lansing Journal - August 8, 1913*

Harmony in the city family was the main thing which marked the administration of John S. Bennett, who served two terms as mayor of the city beginning in 1908.

“During the four years I was mayor Lansing was in a prosperous condition,” said Mr. Bennett in his homecoming interview. “There were many new industries added to the city and a substantial growth in population was enjoyed. Many new ideas were brought forward by the common council, and being adopted, laid the foundation for the future betterment of our city. At no time during the history of Lansing were the several departments of the city, the council and the different boards working together in more harmony than during our four years’ administration.

“The gentlemen constituting our boards were chosen from among the business citizens. They all worked for the best interest of their department. Few cities can show a more rapid and even development in its departments than can Lansing during those four years. For the proficiency attained due credit must be given to the chiefs and superintendents of the several departments. They were all efficient men and worked in harmony with each other.

“Among the improvements made during that time I want to mention the establishment of the interurban lines to Lansing and Owosso. Both of these feeding veins to our city have been a great benefit to the business interests of the city as well as in a large measure promoting its growth.”

“Much interest was taken in the improvement of the parks. The east side was greatly improved by cleaning out the pond and in every way making it look as beautiful as possible. The work was carried out under the plan laid out by a former superintendent of public works. It has been my wish for years to make the East Side park a popular place for recreation. Moores park was also added to the list of our city parks while I was in office. It was the magnificent gift of J.H. Moores to the city of Lansing. Work was also begun in one of the state blocks in the fourth ward, laying it out for a park. In the future when the shrubbery and trees have a start this will make another addition to the city’s recreation places. Block No. 54 would also make an ideal spot for a park.

“Property was purchased for market purposes and Lansing soon ought to have available space for an up-to-date market. A site for a city yard was also obtained. Suitable buildings have been erected and when the repair work for the public works department is done there will be a place suitable for the storing and caring of the city property at a great saving.

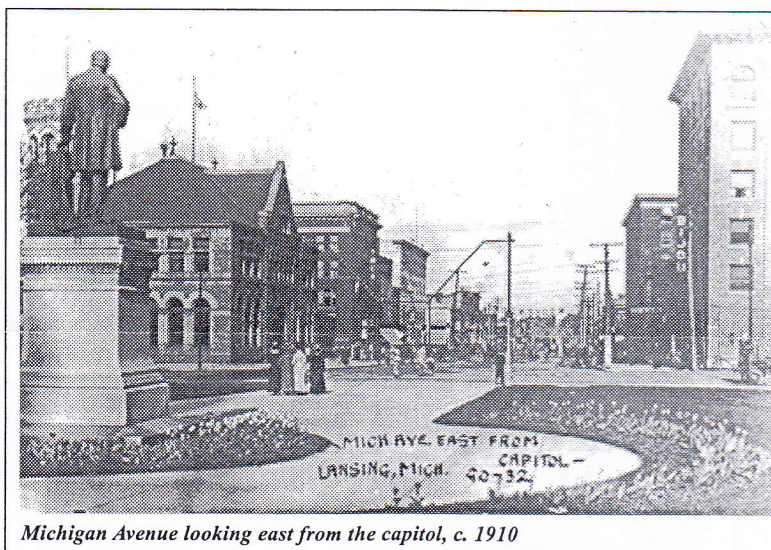
“The new system of street lighting was also ushered in when I was mayor. The system of lighting the business section of the city is as perfect as could be wished for and is unsurpassed by any city in the country. This is one of the many things that

Lansing can be truly proud of—her municipal lighting plant. Then again there are few cities of this size throughout the country which have made such long strides in the matter of obtaining efficient fire protection. Lansing was among the first cities of the state or country for that matter to introduce the auto fire engine. It seemed like an enormous expenditure at the time but the soundness of the city’s judgment in installing the modern engines has been shown in the decrease in loss

by fire. Many cities have since followed our initiative along this line. These auto fire engines have done more to advertise our city throughout the country than any other one thing there being few fire departments even in the largest municipalities who can boast of as efficient a fire department as can this city.

“Another enterprise that for years to come will be a living monument to the memory and benevolence of a Lansing citizen is the gift of the hospital to the city of Lansing. This building and institution filled a long-felt need in the hearts of the people and they will always remember their friend and fellow citizen, Edward W. Sparrow, the donor. It is a building of which anyone can well be proud.

“Then came the revolution in street paving. This was undoubtedly one of the most important steps forward for the city of Lansing. Up to our administration we confined ourselves to brick pavement done by contractors. Upon assuming office a determined effort was made to bring about a change in the kind of pavement then in use. It was also suggested that the city own its own paving plant and do its own work instead of being at the mercy of contractors. Before leaving office the city had begun its own paving, having purchased the necessary machinery for the



*Michigan Avenue looking east from the capitol, c. 1910*

# Historical Society of Greater Lansing's Armchair History Series

*Celebrating  
150 Years  
of Lansing History  
1859-2009*

## *Wish You Were Here!*

### *A Historic Postcard Tour of Lansing*

The Historical Society of Greater Lansing invites you to attend our first program of the Season - *Wish You Were Here! A Historic Postcard Tour of Lansing*. The collecting of picture postcards is among one of the most enjoyable hobbies and pastimes shared by historians and collectors alike. Real photo, color lithographed, linens and modern souvenir postcards each capturing a moment in time in the history of our capital city. This relaxing evening will feature 60 different images gleaned from the collections of the Forest Parke Memorial Archive & Library as well as private holdings. Please join us for this nostalgic tour.

*Join Us. . .*

*Thursday,  
October 23, 2008*

*7:00 PM*

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

*Sponsored by the  
Capital Area District Library*



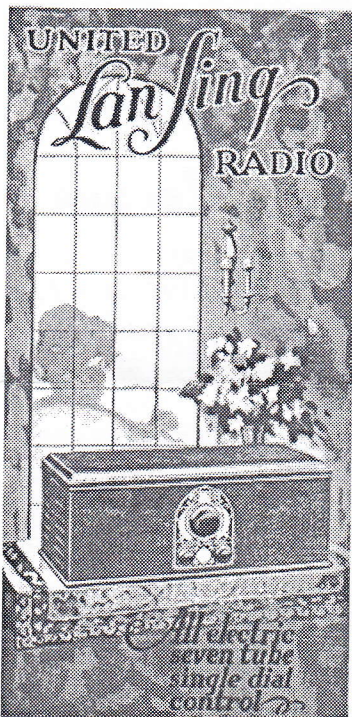
Harmony continued from Page 2

work. This change was brought about largely owing to the endeavors of Mr. Sparks, our engineer. This will enable the city to have many more miles of paved streets in the future at the minimum cost without being held up by contractors. And good paved streets are very essential to the beauty and progress of a city.

“The last and most notable event of my four years’ in office was the election of the charter commission for the purpose of framing a new charter. This was quite an expensive luxury. However, the gentlemen comprising the commission succeeded in framing a charter which was adopted by the people and one of the most important features of the new document, to my mind, is the paragraph increasing the salary of the mayor tenfold.

“In summing up my administration there has been no four years in the history of Lansing when the foundation for more improvements have been laid for a future city of unusual important.

“The home-coming will be one of the biggest things for Lansing which has ever happened. It will bring people here who lived here 40 and 50 years ago and saw Lansing in its infancy. They will see the marvelous change, the advancement, the growth, they will see old friends. It will mean a lot for the city and incidentally there will be nobody to enjoy it more than the citizens themselves. It will be a grant celebration.” **RE**



## The LanSing Radio

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

The LanSing radio was marketed by the United Engine Company of Lansing, Michigan, in the era of 1929 to 1931 according to the Lansing City Directory. United, headquartered in Lansing from 1912 to 1931 was a distributor of stationary engines and various farm related equipment. For most of this period they were located at 719/721 East St. Joseph Street. While there were a number of manufacturers of stationary engines in Lansing, the most

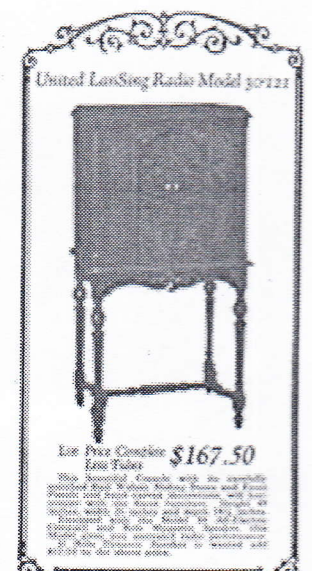
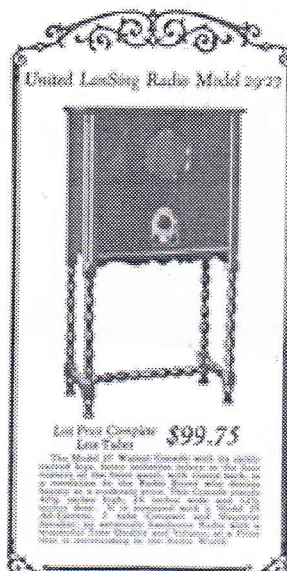
Engine jumped on this trend, again not as a manufacturer, but as a marketer of home radios. There is no known evidence that United was involved in manufacturing of the radio in Lansing or elsewhere. Actual examination of a United radio would probably reveal the actual maker of the unit.

The radios were available from basic table-top units to elaborate furniture style floor models. Seven and eight tube models were available, designed to operate on 110 volt AC, 60 or 30 cycle power. Floor models were priced from \$99.75 to \$207.50, a lot of money during the depression. The top line model featured “hand carved ornamentation and skillfully matched Burl Walnut Sliding Doors and Front Panels”. A Rola Magnetic Speaker was featured; a Rola Dynamic Speaker was optional for \$17.50 extra. These units are sought by early radio collectors.

[This article was previously published in the Fall, 2008, “Spirit”, the newsletter of the R. E. Olds Transportation Museum, Lansing, Michigan] **RE**

well-known being Olds, Novo and New-Way, there were also companies located here that only sold engines, manufactured by others, which they marketed under their own trade names. Perhaps the distributors located here to take advantage of Lansing’s reputation as a center of well known and respected stationary engine manufactures.

By the 1930’s, the stationary engine business had started to decline as more and more farms, the biggest market for these engines, had connected to the expanding rural electrical grid with electric motors replacing the gasoline fueled engines. In additional, the depression had hit full force, especially impacting farmers. In the same time frame, the home radio was all the rage. United



## The Gift Depot

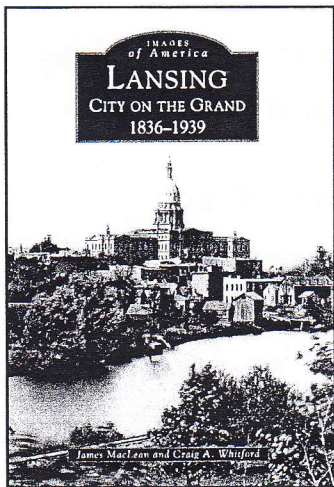
The following gifts will be available for purchase during our October program

**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



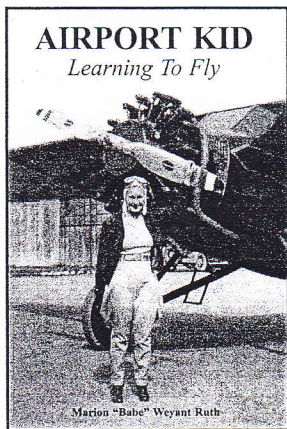
Lansing's history as the capital of Michigan began with a legislative mandate in the 1835 State Constitution, which required that the seat of government be moved from Detroit in 1847. The result – the emergence of a new capital city on the banks of the majestic Grand River – allowed Lansing to cultivate 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**

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

**3** AIRPORT KID - Learning To Fly

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



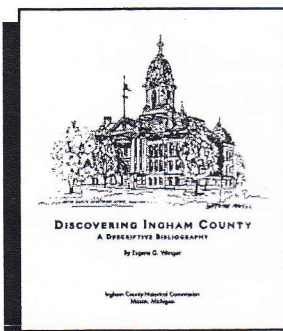
The true account of Lansing's most famous aviatrix - Marion "Babe" Weyant, a teenage girl with a passion for aviation and a desire to take flight. Originally written by Babe in 1936, the story traces her adventure from 1931 until soloing at the age of 18 in 1936. Over 150 photographs and vintage news 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**

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**

Published by the  
Ingham County Historical Commission



It's  
Membership  
Renewal  
Time

As a new year of programs begins, it is once again time to collect membership dues. **Please look at the top line of the mailing label on this newsletter.** If it reads "08/09", your dues for this year have already been paid. If other numbers appear, such as "07/08", please send your dues as outlined in the Membership Application found below. *Thank you!*

David R. Caterino  
**Collector's Showcase**  
*Celebrates Lansing at 150 Years*  
**Saturday - May 2, 2009**

For an application or more information contact:  
Craig A. Whitford at 517.694.0556 or email at  
cawhitford@aol.com

## Membership Application

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

\$15 Individual  \$25 Family  
 \$150 Life or \$\_\_\_\_\_ Gift

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

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

City: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

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

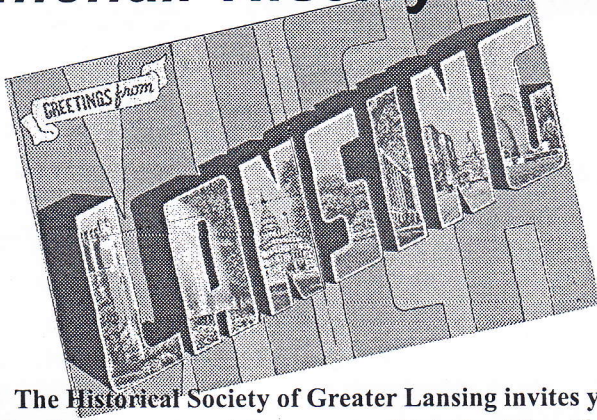
*Historical Society  
of Greater Lansing*

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.

# Historical Society of Greater Lansing Armchair History Series



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## Wish You Were Here!

*A Historic  
Postcard Tour of Lansing  
With Jim MacLean & Craig Whitford*

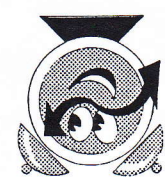
Join Us... **Thursday,  
October 23, 2008  
7:00 P.M.**

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



*Please RUSH to:*

08/09  
Bill & Judy Atkinson



*97¢  
Membership  
Renewal  
Time*

Change Service Requested

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