

History Explorer

Historical Society of Greater Lansing

www.LansingHistory.org

February 2012

Potter House Museum Fundraiser

Friday, May 18, 2012 - 6:30pm to 8:30pm

The Historic Potter House - 1348 Cambridge, Lansing

\$50.00 per person

Mark your calendars for HSGL's May fundraiser, a tour of the beautiful, historic Potter House. The owner of the home, HSGL member James McClurken, has graciously offered to open his home to the Historical Society for this special event. The evening will include an in-depth architectural tour of the home, led by Lansing architecture professor Jim Perkins. Please note that all of the money raised at the event will go towards our museum fund.

The home, which is truly a Lansing treasure, was built by James Potter. Though its Tudor Revival style gives the home a traditional English feel, it is full of "modern" surprises, including the fact that the home is actually constructed of poured concrete! Designed by architect Harold Childs of East Lansing, the house is a fascinating combination of old-world excellence and modern American engineering.

Perhaps what truly sets the Potter House above her peers are the stunningly beautiful hand painted murals that showcase exotic animals from around the world. These murals will be shown as a part of the house tour. James Potter, who commissioned the house in the 1920s, is the same Potter that gifted land to the City of Lansing for the establishment of a grand city park. By the 1920s, the park was fast on its way to becoming the same Potter Park Zoo that Lansing residents know and love today.

James Potter's generosity to the City of Lansing can be an inspiration to us all. If you would like to follow in his steps, and give a gift that will help establish a new Lansing cultural institution that will be valued for years to come, please consider partnering with the Historical Society of Greater Lansing in our efforts to raise money for a museum by purchasing a ticket to the event or by serving as an event sponsor. You will find ticket and sponsorship information enclosed in the center of this month's newsletter.

Rally Round the Flag, Boys!

Matt VanAcker, the Co-Chair of Michigan's Save the Flags project, will speak about the Michigan Capitol Battle Flag collection, including 240 battle flags carried by Michigan soldiers in the Civil War, the Spanish American War and World War I. Emphasis will be placed upon the Civil War collection, and most specifically, the flags with connections to Lansing. The bullet-torn, blood-stained battle flags that these men carried and died beneath were their proudest possessions. They stood for the Union, for their loved ones back home, and also as the rallying point in combat. Matt will speak at the Thursday, February 16 Historical Society of Greater Lansing meeting and will open the flag collection at the Michigan Historical Center to HSGL members on Saturday, February 18.

Talk

When: Thursday, February 16, 7:00 pm

Where: Auditorium, downtown Capitol Area District Library, 401 South Capitol Avenue

Flag Showing

When: Saturday, February 18, 10:00 am – 12:30 pm

Where: Michigan Historical Center, Flag Storage Room, 702 West Kalamazoo Street

Membership & Email Newsletter

If you're not sure when your HSGL membership expires, be sure to check the mailing address label on your newsletter! Memberships can be renewed or upgraded at any time.

In order to save money on postal costs, the HSGL is now providing its members with the option to receive their newsletters via e-mail. It costs the society approximately \$150 every month to print and mail our newsletter to all of our members. If you would like to help us economize, please send an e-mail to info@lansinghistory.org and ask us to send your newsletter via e-mail.

Lyons Elementary Turns 60

by Jo Trumble

Lyons Elementary Teacher & HSGL Member

Born in New York, Ontario in 1847, Hugh Lyons had quite a life. He fought in the Civil War for the Union and then became a mercenary soldier in Mexico. He worked in Howell before coming to Lansing in 1872. Hugh married Laura P. Brooks in 1879 and their son Arthur E. Lyons was born March 31, 1880. Hugh took the money he earned from the patent for

his hat conformator, a device

that would fit a derby to any head, and started his own company.

Hugh Lyons and Co. was established on the site of the former James Potter Furniture Co.

Established in 1886 and incorporated in 1894, it

became only the second in the state to create showcases, store fixtures, retail display items, and the hat conformator. When the business opened, it employed two men and occupied only two room 8x10 feet in size. By 1902, Lyons had grown the business to such an extent that it employed 150 men, and occupied a new plant situated on six acres located at the crossing of the Grand Trunk and Michigan Central Railroads. The new plant included several two story buildings and covered more than 100,000 square feet. In addition to selling his wares locally, Lyons' products were sold in the United States, Canada, and Europe. He also owned retail stores at 679 Broadway in New York City and 238 Madison Avenue in Chicago.

Hugh Lyons had been a business man in Lansing for years. Due to his progressive style of business, he

came to the notice of other businessmen in Lansing that pushed him to become mayor. He became mayor in 1904 and served until 1907, two terms total. He was credited for making improvements and reforms within the government. He was the mayor when Theodore Roosevelt visited on May 31, 1907. However, the stress of being in charge of both the city and his sprawling business took a toll on his health and he died in 1909 and was buried in the Mt. Hope Cemetery.

Upon his death, Hugh's son Arthur ran the business. It had grown at

such a rate that by 1924

Lyons employed between 250 and 275 "high-priced" men.

In the early 1920s, a portion of the company was renovated for the production of commercial

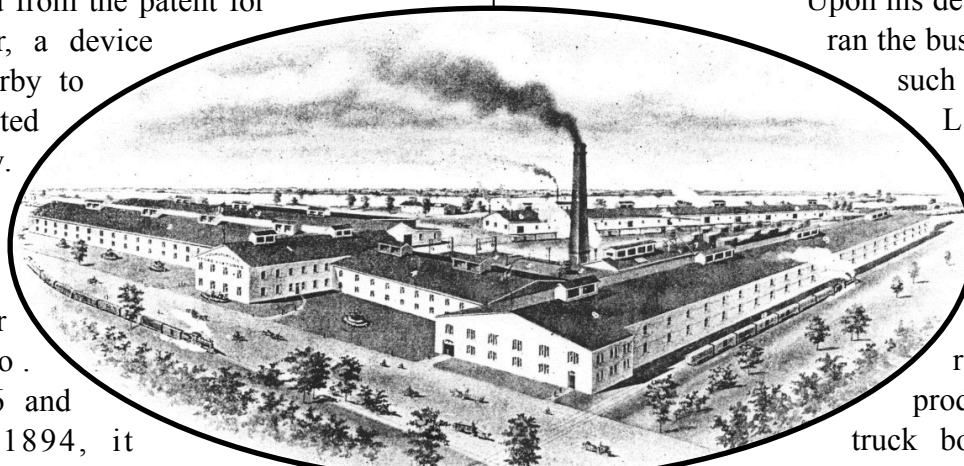
truck bodies for REO truck

bodies. The shift in manufacturing

from cabinetry to car bodies was a natural one, as it required the skilled workman that the Hugh Lyons Co. had always employed. The company, that would also employ his grandson Barrett, later a professor at MSU, succumbed during the depression.

In 1910, a street running parallel to Pennsylvania Avenue and Cedar Stree, formerly known as Potter Hill Street was renamed Lyons Avenue. It runs from Hamilton Avenue north, just past Baker Street in south Lansing.

World War II's end and the baby boom influenced many changes across the nation. One of the largest challenges before the City of Lansing was providing a good education for all of the children. The Lansing School District took on this challenge by commissioning new schools. At the same time, on a street called Lyons Ave., Olofsson's Tool and Die Company was not being welcomed by the neighborhood. The people were not happy that they would have to put up with all of the traffic and noise that a factory would bring. As a mutually beneficial deal, ten acres of the company's property was sold to the city for \$20,000 to establish a park and school. The result was the creation of Lyons Avenue Elementary School and Lyons Park.



Historical Society of Greater Lansing

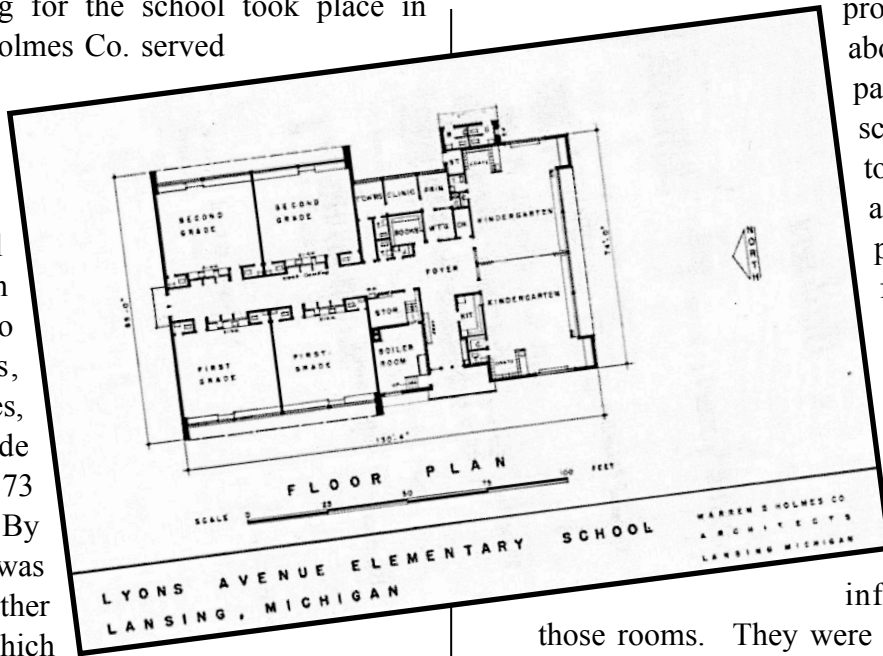
P.O. Box 12095 ~ Lansing, MI 48901

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Ground breaking for the school took place in 1951. The Warren S. Holmes Co. served as the architects, and the general contractors were the Granger Bros. In 1952, Miss Coral Lowry was the principal that welcomed through the doors two Kindergarten classes, two first grade classes, and two second grade classes as the first 173 students at Lyons. By 1953, the first addition was completed, creating another five classrooms, one which was established as a library for the school. The year 1958 saw the addition of an all-purpose room that functions still as the lunchroom, gymnasium, and auditorium.



property to teach students about life sciences. The park still is used by the school and the community to teach outside lessons and as an extension to the playground. Deer can be found roaming around by the swings in the mornings.

The creation of four more classrooms shows how the difference in educational approaches influenced the layout of

those rooms. They were made as open classrooms with partitions that would divide the larger rooms into two each. These were the last additions to the building, creating the current school. Later improvements worked on safety issues that were not a concern when the building was created. Initially, elementary schools were created to host neighborhood students that were close enough to walk to school. With buildings being closed due to economic climate and attendance lines being changed, students started being bused to the school. This led to safety concerns when the buses would be parked in front of the building. A bus turn around and larger parking lot was created to help with this problem.

A time capsule was buried to commemorate the event. Students that helped to create and then bury the time capsule contacted the school when the building celebrated its 50th year. They talked about how they dug a hole to plant a tree and bury the box at the same time. After volunteers came with metal detectors, the box was found. Unfortunately, having been buried with the tree, the box has now become part of the tree itself. The tree still stands in front of the building, protecting the capsule until the tree dies.



Mrs. Marion Spink took over as principal of the school in 1955 and was an avid photographer. She was often found with her camera recording the events many considered common place at the school. Part of her collection of pictures can be found at the Lansing Library where they were donated.

enrollments. These students continue to learn to be proud of the history of their school, and the man whose name it bears.

The park was utilized and developed as a nature trail. Many of the classes took advantage of the extra



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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Historical Society of Greater Lansing - Membership Application

Please accept my application for:

- New Membership
- Renewal Membership
- Gift Membership

in the Historical Society of Greater Lansing

I have enclosed:

- \$20 Individual Membership
- \$30 Family Membership
- \$100 Business Membership
- \$_____ Additional Gift to HSGL

Member Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email Address _____

Please Send The Newsletter
Via Email

Make Checks Payable to
Historical Society of Greater Lansing

*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

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Potter House Fundraiser Ticket Order Form

Friday, May 18, 2012 - 6:30pm-8:30pm

The Potter House - 1348 Cambridge, Lansing

Historical Society of Greater Lansing Potter House Fundraiser

Friday, May 18, 2012 - 6:30pm-8:30pm

The Potter House - 1348 Cambridge, Lansing

Number of tickets _____ Total enclosed \$ _____ (\$50 per person)

Tickets will be mailed to the address you enter below

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Make checks payable to the **Historical Society of Greater Lansing** and mail to P.O. Box 12095, Lansing, MI 48901



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Potter House Fundraiser Sponsorships

Friday, May 18, 2011 - 6:30pm-8:30pm
The Potter House - 1348 Cambridge, Lansing

- **\$1,000 - Platinum Sponsor**
Full-page advertisement commemorative booklet, 8 tickets to event
- **\$750 - Gold Sponsor**
Full-page advertisement in commemorative booklet, 6 tickets to event
- **\$500 - Silver Sponsor**
Half-page advertisement in commemorative booklet, 4 tickets to event
- **\$250 - Bronze Sponsor**
Third-page advertisement in commemorative booklet, 2 tickets to event
- **\$100 - Copper Sponsor**
Name included in list of sponsors in commemorative booklet, 2 tickets to event
(See reverse for advertising information)

Sponsor Information

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

I understand that my contribution may be used by HSGL in any way necessary to benefit HSGL Programs.

Signature _____ Date _____

Make checks payable to: **Historical Society of Greater Lansing**

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

Advertising Information

Below are representation of the sizes of advertisements for various levels of sponsorship. Advertisements must fit inside these dimensions to fit appropriately in the event program. Your black and white camera ready artwork should be in PDF or JPG format at 300dpi resolution, if possible. Please email artwork by May 1, 2012 to davemarvin@sbcglobal.net. If you have any questions or would like us to help prepare an advertisement, please feel free to call David Marvin at (517) 282-1156.

Full Page Ad

Finished Size 5" wide x 8" high

Third Page Ad

Finished Size 5" wide x 2.75" high

Half Page Ad

Finished Size 5" wide x 4" high