



# History Explorer

Historical Society of Greater Lansing

[www.LansingHistory.org](http://www.LansingHistory.org)

May 2016

## Upcoming Events

### The Most Memorable Moments of MSU Sports

Thursday, May 19, 2016 - 7:00 pm  
Downtown CADL - 401 S. Capitol Ave.

Every Spartan fan has a favorite sports memory. Perhaps yours was when Magic Johnson led the Spartans to the 1977 NCAA Basketball Championship, the career of Jumping Johnny Green, or the 2015 Women's Cross Country NCAA Championship. Join longtime sports journalist Jack Ebling, current host of the weekday radio program "The Drive" as he discusses some of his favorite moments in MSU sports.

A three-time Michigan Sportswriter of the Year, Ebling has covered Spartan sports since 1978. He has authored over more than 125 pieces for national publications, and for many years worked the sports beat at the Lansing State Journal. He has authored several books on Spartan sports including *Heart of a Spartan: The Story of a Michigan State Football Renaissance*, *Spartan Champions*, *JUD: A Magical Journey*, *Magic Moments*, and *Green Glory*.



### Historic REO Town Tour

Saturday, June 18, 2016 - 10:00 am  
Tour meets at the BWL REO Town Depot -  
1203 S. Washington Ave

Explore the history of historic REO Town, the one-time center of the Lansing auto industry. The tour begins at the historic Grand Trunk and will continue north on Washington Avenue.

### Be A Tourist in Your Own Town - Lansing Has Fun!

Saturday, June 4, 2016 - 10:00 am - 5:00 pm  
Lansing City Hall - 124 W. Michigan Ave.

Join HSGL for the reboot of our *Lansing Has Fun!* exhibit! The summer portion of the exhibit will feature artifacts from several Lansing area clubs, fraternal organizations, and civic organizations such as the Lansing Rotary, the Boy Scouts, and the Masons. We'll also tell stories and share photos and artifacts from Lake Lansing amusement park, local Lansing rock bands, mid-Michigan DJs, parades, River Fest, the Michigan Festival, and everyone's favorite summer sport--baseball. For one day only, for Be A Tourist, we'll also have a number of old fashioned board (including a local version of Monopoly) and card games available for people to play and enjoy. Be sure to stop by! (Be A Tourist passports are not required for entry.)



### HSGL Annual Meeting

As this newsletter goes to print, the HSGL Board is working to finalize plans for our annual meeting in late June. Details regarding the meeting will be coming soon.

As our bylaws require, we will be voting on the HSGL Board for the 2016-2017 year at the meeting. The proposed slate of candidates for the board includes:

Bill Castanier, President	Jesse LaSorda, Trustee
Valerie Marvin, Vice President	Zig Olds, Trustee
Ron Emery, Secretary	Mary Kwas, Trustee
Tim Kaltenbach, Treasurer	Norm Charles, Trustee



### CORRECTION

After further research, the author now feels that the Mar-Moor Estates Garden Club Cook Book featured in the April HSGL newsletter dates to ca. 1979.

## The Hall Home at 415 West Main Street

by Johanna Balzer

Looking at a picture of a house on the postcard, I knew I should recognize it, but it took a few minutes to do so. It was stately in the photo from early in the 1900's, but in my memories from the 1950's, the stately house had become a lived in home that had survived the Great Depression and the day to day living of a husband and wife and their three sons.

The home belonged to Ethel Blanche and William Philo Hall from the 1920's to their deaths, he dying the day John F. Kennedy was elected to the presidency, and her burial during JFK's inauguration ceremony two and a half months later. From this home their lives reflected the changing times of Lansing, the state, the U.S., and the world. Blanche was my father's sister. Her maiden name was Cushman, and she and Philo both grew up in the Bath area, he the son of the village blacksmith and she the daughter of a prominent farmer.

The home had a shared driveway and parking area with four other homes. The Hayward's were to the east, the Jakoviac's next door. The Raehall's lived across the street.

Perhaps it was the coal furnace, or the Oldsmobile Main Plant directly behind and down the hill, that gave everything from the exterior to the interior an oily black film. The enclosed back porch had a delightfully earthy odor. A grape arbor sheltered the back door, with the Heatherwood milk box sitting on the steps.

When the refrigerator came on, it did so with a lusty buzz that let you know everything was cool. The front door of the home had a mechanical bell centered in the



The Hall House at 415 West Main Street.

middle that first made a cranking sound, then a cheerful tinkling.

Philo was a test driver in the early days of the automobile. I have a photo of him taken in a race car type vehicle, with a helmet on his head, and dated 1911. At age 17, he began his driving career with REO Motor Company, and worked for them for 35 years until WWII. He drove REO's to many different states, experiencing their handling on various terrains. In the final 12 ½ years of his career, Philo was a driver for the Michigan Department of Health, often chauffeuring its director, Dr. Albert Heustis. He retired in 1958, having never received a traffic ticket nor being in a serious accident.

He not only chauffeured the doctor, but he drove medical supplies across the state. When the killer tornado struck Flint in 1953, he took emergency supplies to the devastated city. On occasion, he took incubators to hospitals.

Philo was an excellent driver, but on one of the incubator runs, the police stopped him for speeding. He had taken my aunt along for the ride, and she was quite overweight. When the policeman asked where he was going in such a hurry, Philo indicated that he was headed for the maternity hospital. The policeman looked at my aunt, thought she was about to deliver, and said, "follow me." He turned on the siren and got them to the hospital in no time. They never let on that she wasn't having a baby.

Blanche and Philo raised three sons. They all graduated from Lansing Central High School at the end of the 1920's and early 1930's. The best known of the sons was

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P.O. Box 12095 ~ Lansing, MI 48901

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#### Officers & Board Members

Valerie Marvin – President	Jesse LaSorda – Trustee
Bill Castanier – Vice President	Erik Nelson - Trustee
Ron Emery – Secretary	Zig Olds - Trustee
Tim Kaltenbach – Treasurer	Bob Rose - Trustee
Joan Bauer - Trustee	Roni Sionakides - Trustee
Harry Emmons – Trustee	Anne Wilson - Trustee

James Alexander Hall. He is in the Midland County Sports Hall of Fame. James was a catcher on the World Champion AC Dow Fast Pitch Softball Team in the early 1950's in Midland. The oldest son was Doty Cushman Hall, who worked for Oldsmobile. Both "Cush" and James played basketball at Lansing Central. While in the service, James once pitched a winning baseball game against the famous player, Bobby Feller. The middle son was Hugh Courtland Hall who spent most of his career with Citizen's Bank, living in Grand Blanc. He served in the army during WWII. James was a Marine in the South Pacific during WWII, and was on the Missouri when the peace treaty was signed with Japan.



Philo Hall, on the right. Note the REO pennant on the truck.

After the boys were raised, Blanche and Philo turned the upstairs bedrooms into tourist rooms. In their front yard was a sign with bubble glass letters saying such. I remember an assortment of people staying with them, from traveling salesmen to people down on their luck. I've found one of Blanche's account books, with rates in the 1930's as low as 25 cents. Main Street was the east/west thoroughfare until the 496 freeway was built. The Hall's did very well with their tourist rooms.

Hundreds of trucks must have gone by the house every day, many were car carriers from the Oldsmobile plant behind their home. We spent a weekend upstairs while our home was having some maintenance done, and the truck noise was even louder up there. There must have been an indentation in the street, as almost constant booming sounds came from their tires. They literally shook the house all day and all night.

We spent most Sunday evenings with "Auntie Blanche and Uncle Philo." I would watch the Walt Disney Show, while the adults talked in the kitchen. My aunt had received a barrister book case, which I now have, and a matching desk from a writing contest she had entered. She loved to read and write, and on occasion had something published. I would gaze at her books with more interest than in Disney, dreaming of their exotic tales,

desperately longing for the day when I could read well. Later the adults would come in, and we would all watch Ed Sullivan.

At Christmas, the sons, wives, grandchildren, my parents and I, would all pack into the house. Somehow we squeezed into the living room and adjoining dining room while gifts were passed around. There were 23 of us at the dining and kitchen tables. A couple of Yules, my aunt bought small Christmas trees, flocked in pink. They were very pretty, and so 1950ish. She set them on a library table in her huge front window, where all of Lansing could see them as they passed by.

After their deaths in 1960 and 1961, the house was sold to another couple. These owners had it only a few years before it was sold to be razed for the new Oldsmobile parking lot.



Philo Hall spraying DDT at an unidentified location.



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Lansing, MI 48901

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Historical Society of Greater Lansing - Membership Application

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- New Membership
- Renewal Membership
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in the Historical Society of Greater Lansing

I have enclosed:

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

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