



History Explorer

Historical Society of Greater Lansing

www.LansingHistory.org

September 2016

Upcoming Events

An Evening with Scrabble World Champion Peter Morris

Thursday, September 8, 2016 - 7:00 p.m.
Lansing City Hall, 124 W. Michigan Ave.

Twenty-five years ago this fall, young gamer and MSU graduate student Peter Morris was on the lookout for just the right word on his way to win the first ever World Scrabble Championship in London.

Morris, who is considered one of the best writers on the history of baseball, will kick off the HSGL's fall lecture and event series on September 8 in the lobby of Lansing City Hall when he talks about how he won the Championship. Artifacts from that championship match, including the world championship trophy, are among the items on display in the HSGL exhibit "Lansing Has Fun" which looks at what Lansing residents did to have fun over the last 100 years.

Riverside Cemetery Tour

Sunday, September 18, 2016 - 2:00 p.m.
Riverside Cemetery, 2389 Hamilton Road, Okemos
**Plan to park in the nearby Baryames Tuxedo in Okemos*

HSGL's annual cemetery tour will be at Riverside Cemetery in Okemos.

Riverside Cemetery can be called a "forgotten" cemetery as it is tucked between Grand River Ave and the Red Cedar River. It sits on 2.9 acres and approximately 411 burials marked by headstones along with about 100 graves that are not marked are present representing some of Okemos' early families including Hamilton, Grettenberger, and Bennett.

There are six Civil War veterans, one Spanish American War veteran and two WWI veterans buried in the cemetery. The earliest burial is 1842 with very few burials after 1935. The cemetery has a quaint field stone wall and its original iron fences.

Riverside Cemetery is located just over the viaduct on Grand River Ave (going east) and is located on the south side. Parking is available at Baryames Tuxedo Shop or Playmakers.

50 Years of Journalism with Berl Schwarz

Thursday, September 30, 2016 - 7:00 p.m.
Capital Area District Library, 401 S. Capitol Ave.

Another man who has a way with words, Berl Schwartz, publisher of the *Lansing City Pulse*, will discuss his 50-year career in journalism. In his newspaper career, Schwartz has interviewed hundreds of newsmakers and entertainers, including the late Muhammed Ali and John Lennon. He will weave into his stories how journalism has changed dramatically over 50 years. This fall, the *Lansing City Pulse* will also reach a milestone celebrating 15 years of publishing.

Schwartz started as a copy boy at the *The Blade* (Toledo); was the executive editor of the York (Pa.) *Daily Record*; managing editor of *The Knoxville* (Tenn.); and a Washington correspondent for several other publications and news services. He graduated from the University of Pennsylvania.

HSGL Newsletter Archive (Sorta) Complete!

HSGL would like to send a big thanks to Timothy Bowman, who spent months tracking down old issues of HSGL newsletters to create an online archive available at www.lansinghistory.org. Newsletters and fliers from the 1950s-present are available. Timothy would like to thank Linda Peckham, Craig Whitford, Bill Atkinson, Geneva Wiskemann, Doug Johnson, and Heidi Butler at CADL for loaning their personal collections! If you have editions that we're missing, please contact Timothy at lugnud215@yahoo.com.

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Dr. Dwight Healy Rich

by Jo Trumble

The educational work of Dwight Healy Rich was so instrumental in the Lansing School District that he came to earn the title of “Mr. Education in Michigan.” A review of his many accomplishments indicates the title was rightly given.

Rich was born to Bertha Anna and Ulysses Grant Rich on January 30, 1897, in Michigan, North Dakota. By 1905 his family, which included his older sister, Adelaide Lucile, were living in South Dakota. The family would later reside in several cities in Minnesota as his father served as pastor in these cities. The Reverend Rich then moved the family to Michigan with pastorates in Dowagiac, Gaylord, Laingsburg, and Hancock, before settling in Lansing for the last three years of his life.

After Dwight Healy Rich graduated from Hancock High School, he headed down to Kalamazoo College, but would join the growing ranks of men headed for World War I while still a student. He had an interest in aviation so he joined the Army, which included the new aviation portion of the armed services. Following the war, he graduated from Kalamazoo College in 1919 with a Bachelor of Arts degree.

Rich then headed to Chicago University to study law. This did not capture his interest as much as working with the next generation so he switched to teaching. He was able to find a position at Orange Military Academy in Illinois then transferred to Calumet High School to teach math. By fall of 1923, Rich started working for the Lansing School District. He moved into Old Central High School to teach math and serve as director of athletics, advancing to assistant principal from 1926-1928.

By 1928 Rich had earned the respect of the district and was given the task of opening a new building for them: Eastern High School. Rich was principal in the new building for 17 years. As the first principal, he shaped policy that would continue for years. He helped to create a student advisory board that would select the name Quakers and choose blue and gold as the colors. Rich also joined coaches



Laying the cornerstone at the new Dwight H. Rich Junior High School. Left to right: Mr. Vernon Ebersole (President of the Board of Education), Dr. Forrest Averill, Dr. Dwight H. Rich, Mrs. Eleanor Rich. Image courtesy of CADL, Forest Parke Library and Archives.

and students to select the uniforms for the athletic teams.

Eastern was designed with a main office that looked like a bank. It held a counter-to-ceiling iron grill with three windows for the secretaries. Rich was not someone you just walked in to visit. He was described by students as an imposing presence within the building, wearing his ever-present blue serge suit. That, however, did not mean he was not accessible. Eastern was created with an apartment to house visiting dignitaries and for class use. Rich would occasionally host dinners there for the VIPs or board members.

After 17 years at Eastern, Rich was asked to take another role, that of Superintendent of Schools for the Lansing School District. His tenure at this post, from 1945-1962, coincided with the Baby Boom. This meant there were many building projects and programs that he oversaw. Some of his most notable were the building of the library now known as Capitol Area District Libraries’ downtown branch, Lansing Community College, and Everett High School. He pioneered many new programs, including starting a pupil accounting department, utilizing audio-visual services, and starting special education programs. He also hired Marvin Beekman to head the program.

Thanks to his desire to raise academic standards for all children, Rich was known among colleagues as “Mr. Education in Michigan.” He used his position to help the wider community. An example of this was during one of

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Lansing's most devastating floods when he organized staff to prepare Eastern's gymnasium to house people within 24 hours. He was also instrumental in bringing many influential people to Lansing to enhance education, such as persuading Vernon Ebersole to run for the Lansing School Board. Vernon would become the longest-serving board member to date.

Continuing his own education, Rich earned a Master's degree in 1927 at Columbia University. Kalamazoo College honored him with an honorary Doctorate of Law in 1949, as did Central Michigan in 1962.

After his retirement in 1962, a new school was christened Dwight H. Rich Junior High. The building opened in 1963. It now houses Lansing STEM (Science Technology Engineering Math) Academy program for PreK-8th grade students. Sadly, his name is no longer seen on the outside of the building.

Rich's community involvement was vast. He was a founder of the American Legion Boys State Program, president of the Lansing Exchange Club, president of the Michigan Association of School Administrators, and president of the Associated Public School System. Rich was a visiting instructor at Michigan State University where he was given the Centennial Award in 1955. He was a member of the Lansing Chamber of Commerce, which awarded him 1957 "Citizen of the Year." He was active during WWII with the Michigan State Troops. Ingham County Selective Service Board had his services for 14 years. He was a Mason and Knights Templar. He was also an active member of Plymouth Congregational Church.

Rich's family was also very important to him. In 1921 Rich married Eleanor Augusta Currey. Mrs. Rich played an active role in the community as well. She was a past president of the Women's Board of Managers at Sparrow Hospital and served as a Gray Lady for 37 years with the Red Cross. Mrs. Rich was also a member of the P.E.O. Chapter AG, an organization that promotes educational opportunities for women. She attended Plymouth Congregational Church and was part of the Plymouth Circle. The couple had three daughters. Their oldest, Elizabeth "Lisbee," was born in 1922, followed by Carolyn in 1928 and Margaret in 1932. Rich's mother would live with the family after Ulysess's death, and the family also had a long-standing housekeeper named Ethyl Hodges.

Rich's interest in aviation would continue throughout his life, as he followed the newest innovations and pilots. His daughter Margaret shared a story about the family entertaining Amelia Earhart. While Margaret was just little during the visit, one of her older sisters recounted to her that Eleanor Rich asked Earhart what she would like for dinner, and Earhart replied: "Anything but chicken; everybody

serves me chicken." While a search for what date this could have been turned up little, Amelia Earhart was known to come to mid-Michigan often.

In retirement Rich served as the executive secretary for the board of governors for the MEA's Michigan Education Home Association. This group oversaw an Ann Arbor retirement community for educators. He also was an advisor for the Midwest Program on Airborne Television Instruction headquartered at Purdue University.

Rich was attending an educational meeting at Purdue when he died of an apparent heart attack on December 16, 1965, at the age of 68. Eleanor was beside him. Rich is buried in Evergreen Cemetery in Lansing. He was so important to the area that the family put together two large binders filled with letters from the community.

One cannot look at the Lansing School District and not see Dwight Rich's touch. The expansion of the district, creation of buildings, and implementation of innovative programs are only the beginning of how this man touched the Lansing Community. These will be some of the lasting tributes to this distinguished citizen.

*Rich's last surviving daughter, Carolyn Rich Wickham, died August 1, 2016.

Upcoming Events... *Continued from page 1*

HSGL Dues Increase

The HSGL Board made the difficult decision at their last board meeting to institute a small increase to individual and family level memberships. Effective August 1, 2016, an individual membership will cost \$25, and a family membership will cost \$35, both an increase of \$5. The Board voted to take this action after reviewing the increasing expenses HSGL is facing that relate to our programming, exhibits, and collections storage space.

Lansing Has Fun! Exhibit

Lansing City Hall, 124 W. Michigan Ave.

Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. 5:00 p.m.

Check out HSGL's *Lansing Has Fun!* exhibit at City Hall. The summer portion of the exhibit features artifacts from several Lansing area clubs, fraternal organizations, and civic organizations such as the Lansing Rotary, the Boy Scouts, the Lansing Woman's Club, and the Masons. We'll also tell stories and share photos and artifacts from Lake Lansing amusement park, local Lansing rock and country bands, mid-Michigan DJs, parades, River Fest, the Michigan Festival, and everyone's favorite summer sport--baseball. Be sure to stop by!



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:

- \$25 Individual Membership
- \$35 Family Membership
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- \$_____ Additional Gift to HSGL

Member Name _____

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City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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