



# History Explorer

Historical Society of Greater Lansing

www.LansingHistory.org

May 2017

## Upcoming Events

### **The Michigan State Police: 100 Years of History 1917-2017**

*Thursday, May 4, 2017 – 7:00 p.m.  
Classroom C-1, MSP Training Academy  
7426 N. Canal Rd., Dimondale  
(near the State Secondary Complex)*

HSGL will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Michigan State Police with a program conducted by MSP Historian and MSU Criminal Justice Professor Phil Schertzing.

Schertzing will describe the origin and the evolution of the State Police over the past century. Numerous cases with a Lansing connection will be featured, including the 1927 Bath School Bombing, the 1934 Kerns Hotel Fire, the 1937 Labor Holiday, and the 1951 Cass Building Fire. Demonstrations at MSU and the State Capitol, the controversial Michigan Protective League, and the Red Squad that compiled dossiers on alleged subversives, will also be discussed.

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### **Rock, Rebellion And Brownies**

*Tuesday, May 16 – 6:30 p.m.  
Delta Township Library, 5130 Davenport Dr., Delta Township*

Join the Historical Society of Greater Lansing for a look back at the tumultuous Sixties through the eyes and ears of two MSU graduates: Bob Pearson and Bill Castanier. There's the old saw: "If you remember the '60s, you really weren't there." This presentation, taken from the pages of the *State News* and the airwaves of WILS Radio, will help you fill in the blanks. Castanier was a *State News* staffer in the 1960s and Pearson worked as a DJ at Lansing's leading rock station WILS.

### **Bath School Bombing Remembered**

*Thursday, May 18, 2017 – 4:00 - 8:00 p.m.  
Bath Middle School, 13675 Webster Rd., Bath Township*

Join HSGL and The Bath School Museum Committee for an evening of activities remembering the tragic Bath School Bombing on May 18, 1927, when 38 children and 6 adults were killed when more than 1,000 pounds of explosives were planted and set off by a disgruntled board member. To this day the tragedy remains the largest act of school violence in the U.S.

The evening includes a tour of the Bath School Museum from 4:00-6:00 p.m., a viewing of the 2011 documentary featuring survivors and their families from 6:00-7:00 p.m., and a panel discussion with three second-generation survivors: Michelle Allen, Sue Hagerman, and Jim Church at 7:15 p.m. The panel will be moderated by retired archivist and local historian Geneva Wiskemann.

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### **1937: An Exhibit Opening**

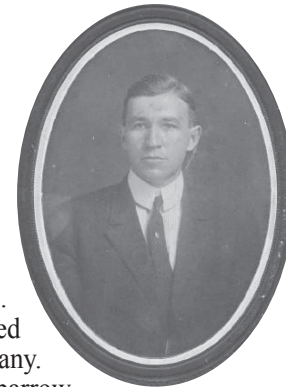
*Friday, June 2 – 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.  
Lansing City Hall, 124 W. Michigan Ave.  
The exhibit will be open on  
Saturday, June 3--10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
Lansing City Hall, 124 W. Michigan Ave.*

HSGL will open its new exhibit "1937--The Year" on Friday evening, June 2, in the lobby of Lansing City Hall. The exhibit looks at many different aspects of life in the Lansing area. We'll be talking about everything from Spam (which was introduced in 1937) to major national and international events swirling around the world, including the Spanish Civil War, the Depression, and the emergence of what would become WWII. The exhibit will cover many different parts of culture, from movies and books to the WPA, local lawmakers, fashion, architecture, and flight.

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# Charles E. "Ed" Madden, Union Man

By  
Ron Emery



The plant manager of the Lansing Wheelbarrow Company turned to the young man and congratulated him on his excellent work record. He then continued, "Of course, Madden, with this promotion you will quit your union-organizing activities." It was not a question, but a declaratory statement made in earnest. Without hesitation, the young man replied, "That I cannot agree to."

This cryptic reply, perhaps unknowingly, set the trajectory of young Madden's career. Rather than join management, he chose to advance the workingman's lot. His response to management was to "beat 'em, rather than join 'em." But he would have to move from Lansing to do so, as his commitment to union organizing rendered him unemployable in Lansing.

Charles Edward Madden was born in Lansing on May 2, 1885, to Luke and Mary Gannon Madden. Ed, as his family called him, was the youngest of four boys and two girls. His father had been born in Toronto and had slipped across the border in 1863 and enlisted in two separate New York regiments. When he mustered out two years later, he headed to mid-Michigan. He met Mary Gannon, and they settled in Lansing.

The family was one of meager means. Between their wedding and Luke's death in 1903, they rented seven different homes. Luke had never learned to read or write. This limitation relegated him to the vagaries of day labor at the lower end of the wage scale. A two-year sojourn in Bay City to find a better job was unsuccessful as Luke's Civil War injuries made him unsuited for the physical demands of the lumbering trade. The family returned to Lansing. Charles learned that the lot of a laborer was not an easy one.

Despite his father's illiteracy, Ed demonstrated a great interest in education. His excellence as a student impressed Fr. Lafayette Brancheau, the parish priest, who encouraged Ed to enroll at Assumption College Seminary in Windsor. His priestly calling ended with his father's death, however, as Ed returned to Lansing to support his widowed mother.

Back in Lansing, Madden sought employment in Lansing's thriving manufacturing sector. His first job was as a molder at the Maud S. Windmill & Pump Company. As a molder he would shape the materials that Maud S. turned into windmill, pump, and gasoline engine parts. It was the newest of the major Lansing manufacturing firms.

Madden then moved to the Lansing Wheelbarrow Company. It produced and sold warehouse trucks, handcarts, steel scrapers, and wheelbarrows. Madden's two older brothers also worked at the Lansing Wheelbarrow Company. Both would leave Lansing Wheelbarrow shortly after Ed was let go after rejecting his promotion. Madden then sought a job at the Wagon Works, which built and sold wagons and carriages. He was not hired.

Unbeknownst to Madden, Lansing's "captains of industry" rotated among the leadership of all three companies. The interlocking management assured knowledge of those "trouble-makers" seeking employment. In the early years of the 20th century, unionization efforts labeled one a "trouble-maker." Madden felt he had clearly been the victim of "blacklisting." With job prospects in Lansing stymied, Madden headed to Detroit for new opportunities.

In May 1912 the Owosso Argus Press, Eva Brandel's hometown newspaper, announced that she was marrying "a fine young man...[who] has an excellent position...[in Detroit.]" The "excellent position" was at the Highland Park plant where Madden joined the throng of workers flocking to Ford's promise of "five dollars a day." Madden did well initially. On his 1918 draft card he listed his occupation as a foundry foreman at the Highland Park plant. The father of three, he needed that paycheck. Besides, Ford's Harry Bennett and his so-called "Ford Service Department" were especially adept at identifying union organizers and violently or otherwise "disrupting" their efforts. Realities of life dictated that Madden "join 'em," at least for a while.

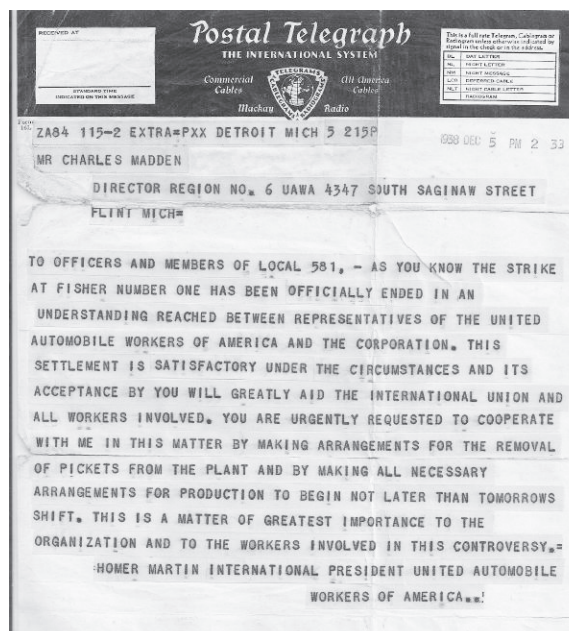
The stock market crash and the economic devastation of the depression followed. Ford's draconian cuts included Madden's job. Now with nine kids, efforts to find other work initially were unsuccessful as he joined millions of unemployed Americans. He

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**Historical Society of Greater Lansing**  
 P.O. Box 12095 ~ Lansing, MI 48901  
[www.LansingHistory.org](http://www.LansingHistory.org)

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even tried his hand at cement contracting but “lost his shirt.”

In 1926 the Oakland Motor Car Company built a car production plant in Pontiac. GM’s Pontiac Division soon supplanted Oakland at the plant. On the day before Christmas 1929, Madden began a 21-year career at the plant. He worked at various jobs throughout his tenure: inspector, repairman, mill worker, and team leader.

Madden quickly immersed himself in union affairs at Pontiac. Madden was an early leader at the Pontiac plant. He distributed leaflets, advocated collective bargaining at employee rallies, and urged workers to sign cards requesting union representation. He attacked company policies that required workers to stay by presses when the presses were down, to buy their own tools, and to appear at the worksite to set up, all without compensation. He also championed higher pay, shorter workweeks, job protection for sick or injured workers, and recognition of the right to collective bargain. He was the first local president carrying out his duties while walking eight miles to and from his Rochester home to the plant. As shop committee chairman, he led the UAW team that negotiated the local Pontiac contract when GM finally recognized the UAW. He was the conduit between the UAW local and national leadership.

With passage of the National Labor Relations Act in 1935, Madden helped lead the nascent efforts to unionize the auto industry. He was the Pontiac representative at the First Constitutional Convention of the international UAW held in Detroit in August 1935. One of 200 delegates from 71 separate local unions from seven states, Madden actively debated, offered amendments to the international constitution, and was appointed to three international committees including the education committee. International UAW leaders took note.

At the Second Constitutional Convention at Milwaukee in August of 1937, Madden’s national UAW stature grew exponentially with his election as one of 16 members of the international’s Executive Board. His vote total even exceeded that of future labor icon Walter Reuther. The significance of his appointment mirrored the significance of the Board’s authority, which included:

- 1) “[S]upervision over all affairs of the...UAW...the power to authorize, issue charters, reprove and punish all subordinate bodies”...
- 2) “[T]akeover and supervise “locals”...when there is a dispute...revoke charters...and/or reorganize locals.”
- 3) “Adjust disputes between employers and employees.”
- 4) “Decide questions regarding the interpretation of the constitution and new contracts.”
- 5) “Pass on all claims, grievances and appeals.”

He backed Homer Martin, the first UAW international president in the internal struggles of the international UAW. Becoming one of Martin’s trusted lieutenants, Martin sent Madden to settle internal union disputes at Flint, Bay City, and Saginaw. Although reliable, he was not always successful. In Bay City Madden and another Board member were “thrown out of the [union] hall.” Martin sent

Madden to the 1938 Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) convention in Washington, D.C., as the UAW representative. Martin also appointed Madden UAW’s Region 6 Director. It was in that position in 1938 that Madden received a telegram from Homer Martin ordering strikers back to work following a strike settlement at the Fisher Body Plant. Although Madden’s authority waned when Martin’s caucus lost favor and was replaced, Madden stayed active and led the Pontiac local into the late 1940s.

With many battles waged and many victories won, Charles Madden retired in May of 1950 for health reasons. Although retired, he remained in touch with the Pontiac local and spoke out in person or by letter on union issues until a fatal heart attack took him on July 8, 1956. The Pontiac local eulogized “Charlie” Madden as follows:

Educated for the Catholic Priesthood and one with a most brilliant mind, Charlie could have succeeded in most any walk of life. But of his own will he chose to be a wage earner and to elevate the position of a wage earner to a place of dignity. He used to say that before the union one left his dignity on the outside before entering the shop, and that since the union you could take it in with you.

His widow, ten children, and many grandchildren were left to honor his work in elevating the workingman and improving the lives of millions of American families. Rather than abandon union activities for a short-term promotion, he spent a career championing workers rights. In the end he truly did “beat ’em rather than join ’em”.

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## Upcoming Events *Continued from page 1*

### **Lansing Labor Holiday Historical Marker Dedication and Reenactment**

*Saturday, June 3 – 1:00 p.m.*

*Lansing City Hall Plaza, 124 W. Michigan Ave.*

Visitors to downtown Lansing will run into a purposeful traffic jam created to commemorate a monumental labor rally held in 1937 and which became known as the “Lansing Labor Holiday” on Saturday, June 3. The holiday occurred on June 7, 1937, only a few months after the settlement of the Flint and REO sit-down strikes. For one day Lansing became the center of union activity when a general strike was called in response to the arrest of several local union leaders. Thousands poured into downtown, abandoning their cars and shutting down the city temporarily.

On June 3 the Historical Society of Greater Lansing and the Lansing Labor Holiday Commemoration Committee, a group representing area unions, and MSU and LCC historians, will gather to recreate that famous traffic jam and dedicate a new historical marker in downtown Lansing. The events are being held in conjunction with the annual Be A Tourist In Your Own Town celebration in the community.





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

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