



# History Explorer

Historical Society of Greater Lansing

www.LansingHistory.org

February 2018

## Upcoming Events

### Capitol Women: Librarians, Clerks, Janitresses, and Lawmakers 1879-1940

by Valerie Marvin

Thursday, February 22 - 7:00 p.m.

Library of Michigan - 702 W. Kalamazoo

When the present Capitol opened, Harriet Tenney, Michigan's first female state librarian, held control over almost an entire wing of the building. The first professional woman to hold a top tier gubernatorial appointment in the peninsular state, Tenney was aware of her significance. In her first report to the governor she wrote that "By the advice of the Chief Executive of the State and with the *unanimous* consent and approbation of the Senate, on the 31st day of March, 1869, this Library was placed in charge of a WOMAN."

In the years that followed, Tenney was joined at the Capitol by an ever-increasing number of women who worked as assistant librarians, clerks, secretaries, telephone operators, and janitresses. Laboring day in and day out, these women fulfilled vital roles in state government as they kept careful records, operated new technologies, and, in the case of Harriet's protégé, Mary Spencer, built a statewide lending library program that benefitted Michigan residents for decades. Among Mary's contemporaries was another fascinating figure, Belle Maniates, who clerked during the day and wrote short stories and novels at night. In 1912 Maniates published her first novel, *David Dunne*, about a boy who grows up to be governor. Several scenes in it are set in the Capitol building.

The dawn of women's suffrage in 1920 brought Michigan's first female legislators to the Capitol, including Grand Rapids suffrage leader Eva McCall Hamilton, and, in 1924, Cora Reynolds Anderson, a Native American educator and health activist from

L'Anse. Bold advocates for women and children, Hamilton and Anderson were praised by some, and loathed by others, who saw them as distractions and interlopers in the male legislature.

Learn about these trailblazing women and the rules—written and unspoken—that both limited and inspired their successes.



### Spiritualism in Our Own Backyard

by Penny Swartz

Thursday, March 15, 2018 - 7:00 p.m.

Library of Michigan - 702 W. Kalamazoo

The American socio-religious movement of spiritualism, or communing with the dead, started on March 31, 1848, in upstate New York. Two young sisters, Maggie and Kate Fox, claimed that strange, knocking noises in their house were communications from a man murdered and buried in their basement. The presentation begins with a brief overview of ancient, cross-cultural beliefs about death and the afterlife, and then examines some of the scientific, social, and religious currents of the mid-19th century that allowed spiritualism to flourish, primarily throughout the upper midwest and northeast states.

It is noteworthy that spiritualism took root in mid-Michigan, with spiritualist camps, churches, and associations springing up from Grand Rapids to Grand Ledge, Lansing, Haslett and Leslie. The presentation will offer glimpses of several of the mediums who claimed to communicate with the dearly departed, as well as the movers and "Shakers" in mid-Michigan, whose personalities lead and shaped a movement that continues to this day, right in our own backyard.

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# Analdine and Vivianne McCabe: Capitol Sisters

By Valerie Marvin

Michigan State Capitol Historian & Curator

Conventional wisdom states that the Capitol, like so many places of business, was a largely male sphere in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, where professional women were rarely seen or heard. While it is true that it was rare to find women in positions of power in the Capitol (save for the female-dominated State Library), a closer examination of rolls of staff members from this time reveals that there were, in fact, a significant number of women working in the Capitol’s legislative, executive, and judicial offices.

Most of these women fell into one of three categories. The first category, that of the woman who remained single throughout her life, would have been termed a “spinster” in this era. Yet we do her a grave injustice if we think of her as a woman whom life passed by. Indeed, many of these single women enjoyed a level of independence that was envied by their married sisters. Such women were more likely to own property (which meant they could vote in local elections) and have the freedom and time to pursue additional vocations, including writing, music, and art. The second category of woman who frequently worked in the Capitol was that of widow, or wife of a physically disabled husband. This trend grew dramatically in the years following the American Civil War, when thousands of women found themselves pressed into the role of family breadwinner. These women had children to raise and, in some cases, invalid husbands to support. For those who had never worked in the professional sphere before, the learning curve must have been daunting and steep. Yet they did what they had to, taking positions as clerks and stenographers and learning what they needed to know on the job, day-by-day. The third category of woman found frequently in the Capitol was young and unmarried. She probably had at least some high school education, if not a diploma, and

was frequently related to other, more senior members of staff, either male or female. Though popularly deemed a “young innocent,” she was sometimes considered to be the most dangerous woman of all, as she was stereotypically young, beautiful, and on the hunt for a husband. Thus it was the duty of the senior staff—particularly the mature female supervisors and the uncles and fathers of the girls themselves—to keep a close and careful eye on them and prevent any illicit love affairs.

## Analdine McCabe Lee

While it is true that untold numbers of young, single women have worked in the Capitol since 1879, few of them cast much of a shadow on the known historical record. The McCabe sisters, Catherine Analdine and Dorothy Vivianne, are interesting exceptions to this rule.

The two youngest daughters of Henry William (or William Henry) and Catherine Bathrick McCabe, Analdine and Vivianne grew up in Paw Paw, Michigan. According to the local newspaper, they were popular, pretty girls who did well in school and enjoyed a busy social calendar. Their family, consisting of five sisters, seems to have been supportive and close. Family tradition states that Analdine received a position as a Senate Committee Clerk in 1911 as a favor to her brother-in-law, John Breck. A graduate of the Michigan Agricultural School and the University of Michigan’s law school, Breck married eldest sister Nina in 1889. An active member of several political and agricultural organizations, Breck supported Republican senatorial candidate Lucius Whitney Watkins, who thanked him by securing Analdine a job at the Capitol. Analdine clerked for the Senate throughout the regular 1911 session. At that time clerks staffed multiple committees, assigned to them by room. Analdine received Senate Group 2, which met in Room B, located to the north and right of the Senate Chamber. In this position she worked for and with the following committees: Banks and Corporations, Geological Survey, Immigration, Michigan Reformatory, Mining Interests, School for the Blind, and School for the Deaf. Here Analdine did exactly what she wasn’t supposed to, she caught the eye of a senator. Happily, this senator was a highly eligible bachelor named James Lee. A Detroit Democrat, Lee was then the youngest member of the

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Senate at a mere 25 years old. Their romance was quickly noticed and piqued the interest of the media, bringing no little embarrassment to the McCabe family. Years later Analdine's sister, Vivianne, would recount that their parents were mortified by the publicity. After the close of the regular 1911 session, Analdine took a second position in the Secretary of State's office, where she was one of 70 "extra clerks." She worked in the office from October of 1911 through the following June. The couple married on Thanksgiving, November 24, 1912, at the home of Nina and John Breck, in Jackson. **Vivianne McCabe Wheaton**

Following Analdine's marriage, the McCabe's sent a second daughter to Lansing. Like Analdine, Vivianne lived with her aunt and uncle, Hiram A. and Mary J. Chapin. Hiram was an examiner for the Department of Insurance, where he made a tidy income of \$1,200 a year. The Chapins lived at 512 W. Michigan Avenue, within easy walking distance from the Capitol. A careful guardian and protector, Hiram walked Vivianne to and from work every day. This practice proved to be of extra benefit to her the day she became accidentally trapped in the dome, where she'd taken a large ledger for storage. When Vivian didn't show up for their evening walk home, her uncle quickly set about finding and rescuing her.

Vivianne worked in the delinquent tax division of the Auditor General's office, earning roughly \$800 a year. Reminiscing many years later, she recalled that her job required her to write longhand in large ledgers. Her office was located in the southeastern corner on the ground floor, where she had a view of the grounds and the statue of Austin Blair. Among her co-workers was Katherine Blair, the former governor's daughter-in-law, who would look out the window every morning and say "Hi Papa."

When not busy at the Capitol, Vivianne found plenty of time for fun. A 1912 graduate of the Detroit School of Elocution and Literary Training, she gave dramatic readings and performances in the Lansing and Jackson areas. This not-so-quiet clerk also took center stage in a local Lansing production of the opera "Ahasuerus," playing the flower dancer. A large image of Vivianne, wearing an exotic (presumably forest green), eastern-inspired costume complete with dramatic diaphanous sleeves fringed in round disks made the front page of *The State Journal*. Now not one—but two—McCabe sisters made the news during

their time at the Capitol. One can only imagine the chatter in her office the next day!

Despite her audacious performance, Vivianne **did** follow the rules when it came to meeting a young man. While proper young ladies were not to chase their male colleagues in the Capitol's hallowed halls, it was perfectly acceptable to meet, dance, and dine with other single young Lansing men at the socials held in Lansing's downtown churches. Vivian met her future husband, musician (later turned commercial artist) E. Fred Wheaton, at one such event. They married on June 26, 1915, and lived initially with Uncle Hiram and Aunt Mary before moving to Lansing's east side. In keeping with social expectations of the times, Vivianne quit her employment with the state at the end of December 1914, in anticipation of her upcoming marriage.

*Analdine and Vivianne McCabe will be featured, alongside many others, at Capitol Women, a talk by Capitol Historian Valerie Marvin at the Library of Michigan on Thursday evening, February 22, at the Library of Michigan We hope to see you there!*

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## Upcoming Events - Cont'd

### Growing (Up In) Lansing's Catholic Church

*by Rev. Msgr. George C. Michalek  
Wednesday, March 21 – 6:30 p.m.  
St. Mary Cathedral - 219 Seymour*

The first recorded Catholic activity in Lansing dates to 1853, with construction of the first church beginning in 1859. The name St. Mary was attached to the community. At the time, Lansing was regularly visited by the priest from Corunna, who moved to Lansing in 1966. New parishes were established in the "Roaring Twenties" and again in the post-WWII boom. Now there are nine worship sites in Lansing and East Lansing.

Join Monsignor George C. Michalek, archivist of the diocese of Lansing since 1979, who will explore the development of the Catholic parishes, the establishment of the diocese in 1937, and what it meant to grow-up Catholic in the greater Lansing area. The talk will be given at St. Mary Cathedral. Following his presentation attendees will have the opportunity to visit the small museum at the Cathedral dedicated to the history of the Lansing diocese.



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