



History Explorer

Historical Society of Greater Lansing

www.LansingHistory.org

March 2018

Upcoming Events

Spiritualism in Our Own Backyard

by Penny Swartz

Thursday, March 15 - 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.

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.

Aladdin Kit Houses

by Dr. Frank Boles,

Director Clarke Historical Library

Thursday, April 19, 2018

Library of Michigan – 702 W. Kalamazoo

Join HSGL and Dr. Frank Boles, Director of the Clarke Historical Library at Central Michigan University for a discussion about kit houses, and Michigan’s own Aladdin Company in Bay City, Michigan. The firm manufactured kit homes from 1907 until 1989. It was big business on a national level, second in sales volume only to Sears Roebuck & Company.

The company’s story, though, is more about entrepreneurial endeavor than finance. The firm’s founders, brothers Otto and Bill Sovereign, were respectively a lawyer and an advertising agent, neither

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LANSING'S EASTER BONNETS

Women's Hats From the 1910s to the 1960s

by
Mary Kwas & Valerie Marvin

Today women wear hats to keep warm in the winter or shelter themselves from the sun in summer, but otherwise hats are rarely seen atop women's heads. This was not always the situation, and for many years a well-dressed woman would not consider leaving home without a hat. While a hat varied with the seasons, it was also a strong fashion statement. Women anticipated the new styles each year, and when better than at Easter, as thoughts turned to spring flowers and feminine colors.

For the religiously observant, hats were also an important sign of modesty and piety. Until relatively recently, observant Christian women were expected to cover their heads in church, following the directions of St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians. While different branches of the faith have chosen to follow this command in a variety of ways, hats or veils were de jour for the weekly Sunday service in most American churches until the late 1960s. And while a simple hat might be fine for an ordinary Sunday, Easter, the holiest day in the Christian calendar, required something very special.

Local Lansing women had a variety of options for hat shopping. One hundred years ago they could

have purchased a hat directly from a milliner (the 1918 directory includes eighteen, ranging from small independent ventures to large stores like Knapp's) or from one of the many department stores and women's clothing stores located downtown. Not surprisingly, many of these stores advertised in the *Lansing State Journal*. Today these ads allow us to peer back in time and peruse the changes in women's hat styles as they evolved throughout the 20th century.

Early in the century, wide-brimmed hats were all the rage. By 1911, hats were at their largest, with brims that extended beyond the shoulders. Such hats were topped by luxurious ostrich feathers, clouds of veiling, large bows, artificial flowers and fruit, and, at times, entire stuffed birds. These hats were typically perched on top of a large donut-shaped hairstyle, ala the Gibson girl. Keeping one of these creations firmly on the head required lengthy hairpins, jabbed through the hat and hair.

During World War I, hairstyles decreased in size and hats settled down a bit more firmly onto the head. While some hats still bore big feathers and flowers, the overall look became simpler. Turbans rebounded in popularity, berets began to appear, and even the occasional tricorne was seen. In general hats were plainer than the predecessors, as befitted the austere war years. By the end of the war, a youthful look was preferred. Hats had deep crowns and were worn low on the head, as though a little girl were wearing her mother's hat. And, in an interesting concession to the increasingly common automobile, many could be tied under the chin so as not to blow off when motoring!

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**The Millinery Salons Will Have Ready
12 Big Tables Easter Hats at \$5 to \$7.50**

Marvelous new hats have been arriving hourly all week. We've been keeping them under cover, that they might be as fresh and blooming as spring flowers for Saturday.

Can you imagine the choice?—over 200 new hats, untouched and unseen by the public—right out of their packing boxes—every color and shape from the piquant poke to the trim sailor. Each a "classy" one-of-a-kind model. Liseries, Milans, Hemps and straw braid combinations—everything at \$5.00, \$6.50 and \$7.50. (Second Floor—Millinery Salons).



This 1918 advertisement from Arbaugh's department store shows the deep-crowned hats popular at the time. In some cases brims are still wide, but others sport a more militaristic look. Ribbons, bows, and stiff embellishments provide a great variety to these charming and artistic hats.



Women's Easter Hats

Smart new hats for Easter of silk, felt, straw and combination effects. All headsizes and colors. **\$1.88**

Styles changed dramatically during the Roaring Twenties. Women took to the ballot box and the new beauty shops were they had their long tresses

bobbed, shingled, or given the "Eton" cut. Dress hems rose, revealing knees, and sleeves shortened to expose shoulders. Skin was in, as was sunbathing, meaning that the need to protect oneself from the sun with a large hat was fading.

These new women, epitomized by the daring and sexy flapper, wore the new cloche or bell hat. Helmet-like, the cloche was often made of felt or straw, lined with silk, and carefully sized, as the hats fit the head snugly. Likewise, the ribbons, flowers, and Art Deco ornaments that decorated cloche hats maintained a low profile, hugging the hat close for a streamlined look. The look was sleek, sophisticated, and terribly modern. These two ladies from a 1928 Knapp's ad would look just right with a wolfhound by their side.

Here's Your
EASTER HAT

A Thrilling Group Just Arrived . . .

2.98

Wide Brims!
Bretors!
Pillboxes!
Sailors!
Off-Face!

All Colors!
All Headsizes!

Arbaugh's
Second Floor

Don't be dismayed if you have yet to choose your Easter hat . . . in fact, you you are in luck! You'll have no trouble at all here . . . for you'll find every type of hat imaginable to do you proud on Easter morn, and for wear long after.



Women seeking a new look in the 1930s began to emulate the styles of their favorite Hollywood actresses, who sported smart day dresses, flowing evening gowns, chic beach pajamas, and a wide

variety of hats on the silver screen. Hats during the Depression years of the 1930s returned to more shallow crowns and wider brims to accommodate the fuller, curled hairstyles of those years. Such hats were worn tilted at rakish angles, a significant change from the straight cloche. Veiling began to reappear, as did small clutches of feathers and feminine bows. Fedoras, taken from men's hats, were suitable for tailored suits for the working woman. By the end of the decade, higher crowns made a reappearance. This 1938 Arbaugh's ad shows a variety of styles and embellishments.



During the 1940s women's head coverings took a number of different shapes and forms. For the new Rosies working in factories, a tight snood or kerchief was a stylish way to protect one's head and hair from the dangers of mechanical equipment. Other women wore military inspired hats to salute the war, a perfect pairing for a uniform-like suit. As the decade progressed, hat styles broadened and a variety of new shapes and styles emerged that emphasized the upswept hairstyles of the day. The Doll hat was very small and perched on the front of the forehead, while the Halo hat was worn on the back of the head and framed the face. Hats were embellished with feathers, flowers, and veils. This

1948 Arbaugh's ad indicates the ultra-feminine style of the day.



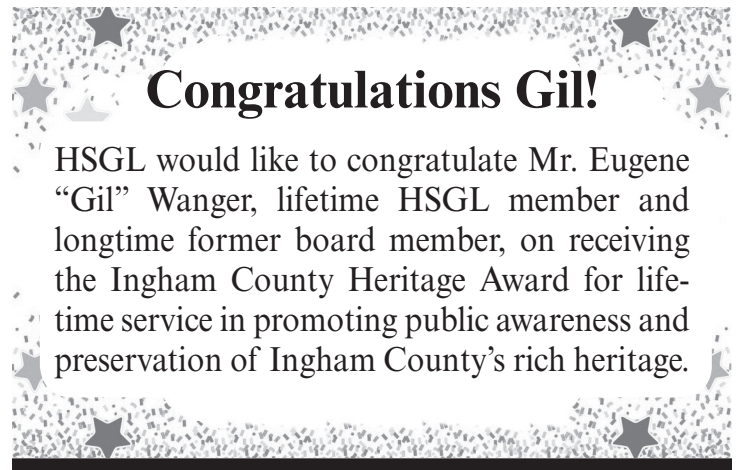
The postwar boom of the 1950s saw a variety of sophisticated hat styles designed to complete an ensemble, instead of being individual fashion statements unto themselves. Sculpted profiles returned, evidenced in petite pillboxes speared by a single svelte feather and the dramatic widow's peak hats. Short hairstyles allowed hats to cling tight to the head, serving as a backdrop to beaded eggshell hats, brightly feathered bands, and for summer the straw porkpie hat. The flower-garden look continued in the hats of the 1950s, as seen in this 1958 J. C. Penny's ad. Also seen is the Cartwheel hat, a flat hat worn on top of the head. By the late 1950s, turbans made a reappearance. The popularity of women's hats, however, was already beginning to wane. Fewer women wore hats on an everyday basis, perhaps saving them to wear to church or club.

The 1960s brought radical changes to women's styles. Throughout the decade fashion became more

casual, with sophisticated sculpted dresses and suits giving way to simple, childlike garments. In keeping with this trend, women began to shed their hats for bare heads. Some began to stack their hair into beehives, whereas other women kept their hair short but added a bubble torque or a lampshade hat that could add six inches of height to the wearer. Bow headband hats with matching veils could be worn for dressier occasions, as could pillbox hats, a favorite of First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy. This 1966 ad for Maurice's shows a pillbox perched on the back of the head. And, of course, there were also the Mod styles, a fashion from London popular with Baby Boomers.



By the 1970s fashionable hats had nearly disappeared. Relaxed fashions no longer required them, nor did the church, where women prayed with uncovered heads. Today hats are considered quirky and odd, people seem to like them, but most are not brave enough to actually wear them. Perhaps it's time for a return to hats. Nothing makes a statement of being all put together, as having the right hat to finish the outfit, just in time for the Easter parade.



HSGL would like to congratulate Mr. Eugene "Gil" Wanger, lifetime HSGL member and longtime former board member, on receiving the Ingham County Heritage Award for lifetime service in promoting public awareness and preservation of Ingham County's rich heritage.

Upcoming Events - Cont'd

Aladdin Kit Houses

of whom knew anything about building houses. When a friend began to make money selling "knocked down boats" (kit boats), they decided they could do the same with houses. They "designed" their first house on their mother's kitchen table. Through a piece of financial chicanery (a less kind person would say "fraud"), they placed a tiny ad for the house in one of the nation's leading magazines, the *Saturday Evening Post*. Surprisingly someone actually ordered one, and paid the required one-third down! Soon enough Otto was posting new ads showing the "famous Board of Seven," consisting of everyone then on the company's payroll, carefully reviewing plans for new houses.

The story of Aladdin is the story of American enterprise and vernacular architecture. The Sovereigns knew how to sell a house. They would ultimately sell about 75,000 of them. They also were keenly aware of what would sell to America's emerging middle class and, along with their kit home competitors, defined the houses that most Americans aspired to own. Spend an evening learning about the Sovereigns and their homes.

The over 350 linear feet of Aladdin Company Papers were acquired by the Clarke Historical Library from an abandoned warehouse in Bay City that had been sold for back taxes. They were processed for public use through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.



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P.O. Box 12095
Lansing, MI 48901

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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
- \$100 Business Membership
- \$_____ Additional Gift to HSGL

Member Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email Address _____

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