



History Explorer

Historical Society of Greater Lansing

www.LansingHistory.org

November 2018

Upcoming Events

Prehistoric Copper Mining in Michigan

by John R. Halsey

Saturday, November 10, 2018 – 1:00 p.m.

*Lake Erie Room, Second Floor, Library of Michigan
702 W. Kalamazoo Street, Lansing*

Join John R. Halsey, the author of *Prehistoric Copper Mining in Michigan: The Nineteenth-Century Discovery of "Ancient Diggings" in the Keweenaw Peninsula and Isle Royale*, to learn about copper mining by Michigan's early Native American residents. Halsey was Michigan's state archaeologist for 34 years. For decades he has worked to protect Michigan's archaeological record. His work encompasses helping to establish the National Marine Sanctuary at Thunder Bay, educating the public through historical and archaeological activities, public appearances, and writing on archaeology and history for *Michigan History* magazine and other local and regional publications.

Capitols and Capitals: The State's Odyssey from Detroit to Lansing

by Valerie R. Marvin, Michigan Capitol Historian

Thursday, November 29, 2018 – 7:00 p.m.

*Library of Michigan
702 W. Kalamazoo Street, Lansing*

Join Valerie Marvin, Michigan Capitol Historian, as she discusses how Michigan's three state capitals came to be.

Michigan's current capitol, the state's third, opened to great acclaim on January 1, 1879. Students of Michigan history, however, know that the road to that day was a long and winding one.

When Michigan declared herself a state in 1835, Detroit served as the seat of government. The city's hold on the capital was tenuous at best as the 1835 constitution stated that a permanent seat of government had to be established

by 1847. The battle to choose the permanent site took place in the state's first capitol building, a two-story brick Federal style structure with a thin, steeple-like central tower built 1823-1828. Here legislators from across Michigan voted on dozens of proposed sites before finally compromising on rural Lansing Township—then-home to only eight voters.

Moving the seat of government meant that the state would need to construct a new capitol building. Hastily erected in the last months of 1847, the wooden structure was always intended to be temporary. Poor economic conditions and the Civil War ultimately extended its use 30 years, during which time everyone in government complained about its cramped quarters, poor ventilation, and the ever-present threat of fire. Finally, in 1871, Governor Henry P. Baldwin called for the construction of a third capitol and challenged the legislature to appropriate money for the project, which was soon underway.

From 1872 to 1878, Lansing residents watched eagerly as the new state capitol began to rise up. Crafted of brick, sandstone, and cast and wrought iron, Michigan's new building clearly echoed the appearance of the newly enlarged national capitol in Washington D.C., a sign of the state's loyalty to the Union. When it opened on January 1, 1879, eager citizens poured in from across the state to visit the state's new treasure, confident that Michigan finally had a dignified capitol that would stand for the ages.



Image courtesy of the Michigan State Capitol Commission.

Civil War Memorial Restored in Delta Center Cemetery

by Mary L. Kwas

It was 50 years after the start of the Civil War, a time when the surviving veterans were coming to the end of their lives, that a monument honoring their service was erected in Delta Center Cemetery, located in Delta Township on St. Joe Highway.

The dedication was a big event, held on the Saturday closest to Memorial Day in 1911. According to a story in the *Lansing State Journal* (27 May 1911; 29 May 1911), nearly 300 people assembled to witness the unveiling of the memorial, which was presented by the ladies of the Cemetery Association of Delta. The ceremony was conducted by the Charles T. Foster Post of the GAR of Lansing and included the Foster Post Drum Corps. Following the ceremony, a picnic lunch was held at the town hall, and after that a camp fire and program of vocal music and speakers concluded the day. The music included performances



Fig. 1 Cannon Restoration

by soloists, a duet, and a choir. Speakers addressed “What the War Cost Eaton County and Delta Township,” “Reminiscences of a Southern Prison,” and “Reminiscences of War.”

The memorial consisted of a 12-pound Parrott rifle, a kind of cannon, mounted on a base of concrete. Bronze plaques listed the names of 71 living and deceased Civil War veterans, which included the 57 men who had volunteered from Delta Township,

44 of which were already interred in the cemetery, and other Civil War veterans who had later moved to the area.

The memorial stood proudly in Delta Center Cemetery for over 100 years. But by 2018 it had seen better days. The concrete base was deteriorating and large holes were clearly visible. It looked like the monument would not survive much longer without some TLC. Upkeep for the cemeteries in Delta Township is the responsibility of the township’s Parks, Recreation and Cemeteries Department. This was a job, however, that needed some special skills. To the rescue came an inmate road crew from the Eaton County Sheriff’s Office.

The road crew consists of six to eight men serving time for non-violent offences, and the crew performs community service work throughout Eaton County, especially in Delta Township, which has contributed to the success of the program by providing work opportunities in the parks and cemeteries. The work of the road crew is coordinated by Deputy John Rademacher, under Corrections Division Captain Robert Jordan.

As it happened, in the spring of 2018 the road crew included one man who had experience working with stucco and knew how to make the repairs. So, with materials supplied by the Parks, Recreation and Cemeteries Department, the crew undertook the repair of the monument. Over five days, the men cleaned the base, filled the holes, sealed the base, stuccoed and painted it, and re-edged the lettering. In addition, the men cleaned up the ground around the monument, laid a decorative block border, and covered the area with gravel. Finishing touches included small American flags, held up by U.S. Veteran star medallions, placed around the monument, and two large flower pots now filled with live flowers—mums for fall.

With many thanks to the Eaton County Sheriff’s road crew for a job well done, the newly restored monument again stands with pride. As is fitting to the memory of all our veterans, the monument displays the appearance of a well-cared-for and well-loved memorial. The work was completed by Memorial Day, and the flags continue to wave brightly for this Veterans Day.



Fig. 2 Cannon Memorial

Historical Society of Greater Lansing

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www.LansingHistory.org

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Wayfinding and Lansing History

Mindy Biladeau, Executive Director Downtown Lansing Inc.

The Downtown Lansing Inc.'s (DLI) Design Committee works to improve the physical characteristics of downtown Lansing, educates the public about significant historic resources, and encourages good design. From streetscapes to historic renovations, the committee strives to create a welcoming atmosphere and to enhance the look and feel of downtown Lansing for residents and visitors. Through DLI, we follow the Main Street approach to community-based downtown revitalization. For the past few years, one of our projects has been to share Lansing's history through the installation of historical markers or interpretive panels.

Due to a variety of factors, including a lack of funding, our history project lagged until we were provided an excellent opportunity to collaborate with Lansing's new three-year wayfinding project. Vehicular wayfinding signs were installed throughout downtown Lansing in the fall of 2017. Complementing the vehicular signs are 10 pedestrian wayfinding kiosks. Our project adds panels with short stories and photographs on Lansing's history to the reverse side of the downtown map at these kiosks. As happens with unexpected opportunities, the committee had to act fast to get the work done. DLI Design Committee members Cathy Babcock, Bryan Lijewski, and Bob Rose quickly determined the best way to get this project done was to collaborate with Bill Castanier and the Historical Society of Greater Lansing (HSGL).

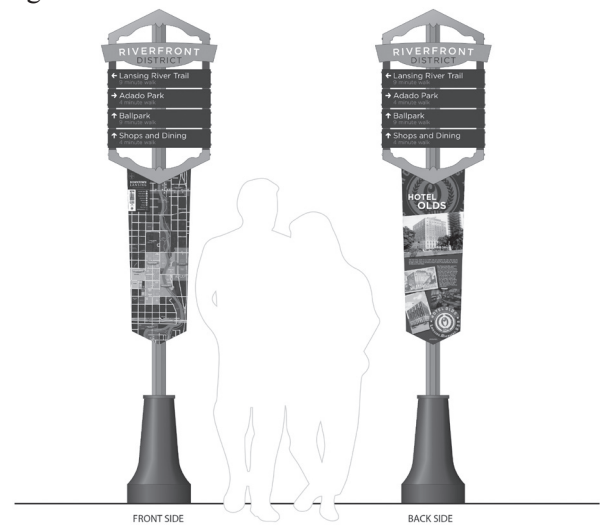
We immediately began to research topics and collect historic photographs. One tough initial task was to narrow down our list of topics since Lansing has so much interesting history to tell! We were able to do so largely based on the location of the new kiosks, which are to be centered on Michigan Avenue east of the Capitol, extending north to Shiawassee Street, east to Cedar Street, and south to Kalamazoo Street.

Our final topics include baseball, cigar making, inventors, daredevils, department stores, gas stations, Hotel Olds, the Ottawa Street Power Station, prohibition and soda pop, and manufacturers. A slight setback was encountered when we realized the resolution of the historic photographs we had been collecting did not meet the designer's requirements. We returned to the Capital Area District Libraries local history collection and the Michigan State University Archives and Historical Collections to gather high-resolution images. These fascinating images can tell stories on their own.

After the text was written and the photographs collected, the information was submitted to Mindy Biladeau, the Executive Director of DLI working directly with the wayfinding project consultant, Corbin Design. Corbin Design took our information and worked their graphic-design magic to create the 10 stunning history panels. After several staff and committee reviews, a few more text and photograph tweaks,

and a last-minute change to one of our topics, the project was approved to proceed.

With the successful implementation of this project set for fall 2018, we are eager to learn how residents and visitors will interact with the history panels. Collaborative partnerships between Downtown Lansing Inc., the City of Lansing, the Greater Lansing Convention and Visitors Bureau, and Michigan Economic Development Corporation were key to getting this project off the ground. We are thankful for all our contributors. We look forward to continuing our work with the HSGL on future projects, events and tours. We have just begun working on Phase 2 of our project, so be on the lookout for more Lansing history out on the streets of downtown Lansing!



Rendering kiosk historic panel and map

Hotel Olds

The Hotel Olds, named for its builder and auto magnate R.E. Olds, was sold and renamed several times over the years until the building was bought by the State of Michigan in 1997. Today, the building is named in honor of George Romney, the state's 43rd governor (1963-1969).

The 13-story Hotel Olds opened in 1926, featuring 300 luxurious rooms for guests. Many legislators and governors, including Governor Kim Sigler (1947-48) and Governor Frank Murphy (1937-38), used the hotel as temporary lodging. The hotel's legendary bar and grill, The Fielder Room, was named for the manager's faithful red Irish Setter, often seen padding through the hotel. Some say, if you listen carefully, you might hear Fielder barking or the often-played tune "In My Merry Oldsmobile."



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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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

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Member Name _____

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