

History Explorer

Historical Society of Greater Lansing

www.LansingHistory.org

December 2021

Stebbins Collection Valuable Tool for Historical Research

Tucked away in the basement of the downtown main branch of the Capital Area District Library is a unique collection of greater Lansing area real estate history. The Stebbins Real Estate Collection as it is known is one of the most valuable resources for researching the history of area homes and is used by thousands of home owners and researchers every year.

The collection contains nearly 90,000 real estate cards containing information on one side about the square feet, number and types of rooms, type of heating, date built and other appropriate information. On the reverse side is a photo of the house or business and the price. These mimeographed 3x5 cards "real estate cards" or prospect cards were provided to real estate firms twice a week in the forties and fifties and often contain personalized notes from realtors.

Like every important archival collection there is usually a back story about how the collection was preserved and how it managed to find a home.

In this instance you can thank realtor C. Rowland "Rolly" Stebbins and his three sons Malcolm, Kenyon and Win who all had a hand in preserving these records for future generations.

The cards were meant to be used and then disposed, but Rolly Stebbins had a different idea. Stebbins brought the old cards home and he had his sons alphabetize them and then put the cards in numerical order by address. Rolly's idea according to his son Win was to have his sons learn the alphabet and organizational skills.

Sitting on the floor of their home at 1710 Moores River Dr. the boys would work the organizational magic and the real estate cards would be placed in shoe boxes and stored at Rolly's office on N. Washington. In addition, on summer car trips to sites across the United States Win said "We would sort them in the back of Dad's station wagon as we travelled."

The collection was almost headed for the dumpster in 1965 when Lansing Community College purchased the 500 and 600 blocks of Washington Ave where Stebbins real estate company, Advanced Realty, was located. Geneva Wiskemann, local historian and archivist, and her husband George came to the rescue and loaded up the more than dozen file cabinets and trucked them off to their farm north of Lansing where they stored them in an old barn.

After they were stored there a few years it was decided a safer location was needed and Wayne State University Archives snatched them up and that's where they sat for nearly 15 years before being transferred to Capital Area District Library for archiving.

Today, the records are available for viewing by appointment only due to a covid protocol on Tuesdays, 11 a.m-5 p.m. For an appointment email localhistory@cadl.org.

Most recently the cards were used in the Pave the Way exhibit to show how real estate properties in the St. Joseph-Main St. Corridor were often used to discriminate against minority ownership through what was called real estate steering where real estate agents would steer minority buyers to redlined neighborhoods. Pave the Way has been a multi-year project to show the impact of the construction of I-496 on minority families and businesses in the St. Joseph-Main St. Corridor. Notably many real estate cards from the St. Joseph-Main St. neighborhood have hand written notes indicating everything from "colored only" designations to "can be sold to colored."

Expert on Sculptor Corrado Parducci to Speak

Look up! You might notice an ornamental architectural sculpture by noted sculptor Corrado Parducci who completed 13 installations in the Lansing area during the 1930s, 50s and 60s including works at Michigan Bell, on the campus of MSU, the Capitol Area District Library downtown main branch, several churches and Michigan National Bank Tower (Boji).

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The Historical Society of Greater Lansing is hosting Dale A. Carlson, photographer and architectural historian, for a program Thursday, December 9 at 7 p.m. at the Robin Theatre in REO Town, 1105 S. Washington, on Lansing's Parducci installations and his work statewide including notable work in Detroit at the Guardian Building, The Buhl and the Penobscot.

Carlson is the author of "Corrado Parducci: A Field Guide to Detroit's Architectural Sculpture." The book will be for sale at the event for \$20.

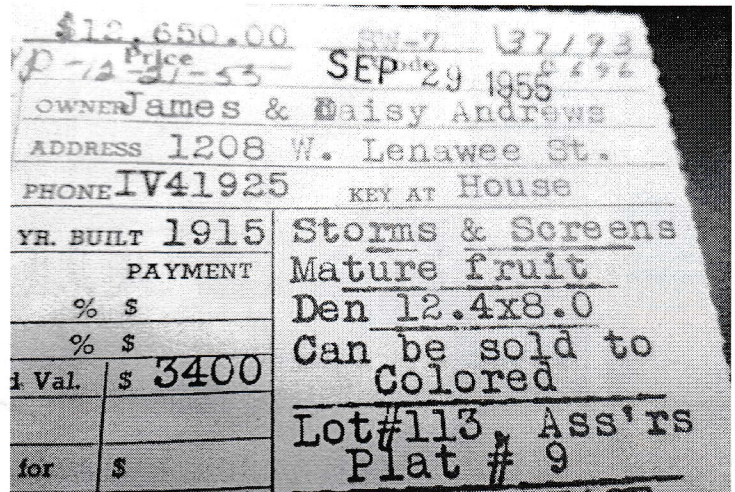
The author studied art, journalism and graphic design at four Michigan colleges including Michigan State University and has an associate's degree in photographic technology from Oakland Community College.

In addition to his work on the Boji Tower, Parducci who immigrated to the United States in 1904 completed the well-known installations at Sexton High School including "Punch and Judy" and a baseball player. His work can also be seen at six Lansing churches: Central United Methodist, Grace Lutheran Church, Pilgrim Congregational Church, St. Paul's Episcopal Church; First Baptist Church (Christ Community) and Christ United Methodist Church.

Parducci worked in a variety of styles including Aztec, but is most remembered most for his Greco-Deco ornamental style. In his career he completed installations on more than 600 structures across the United States.

Prior to the Parducci program which is free the HSGL will hold an election of officers and trustees beginning at 6:30 p.m.

The slate includes: Bill Castanier, president; Zig Olds,



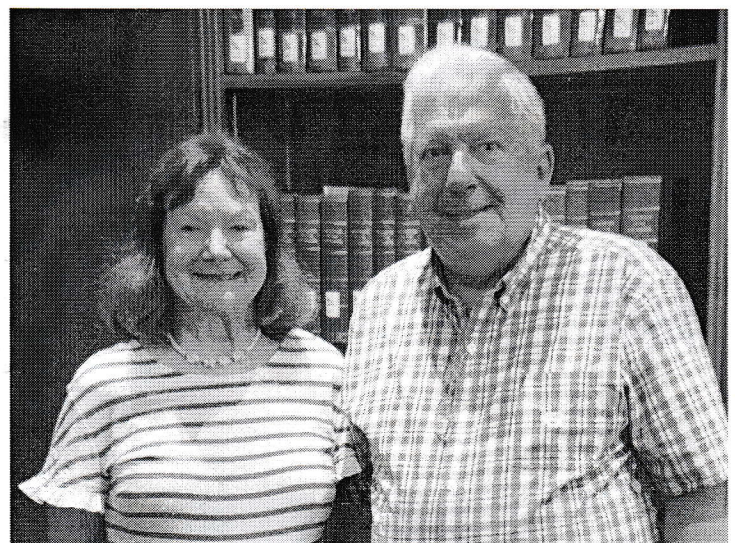
vice president; Timothy Kaltenbach, treasurer; and Ron Emery, secretary. Trustees standing for reelection are Helen Mickens and Cathy Babcock.

Officers are elected for one-year terms and trustees for alternating terms of two years.

Masks are strongly encouraged and the program will also be featured on zoom and Facebook Live. To join a zoom presentation, you must register by emailing info@lansinghistory.org.

Lansing Couple Wins History Award

One of Lansing's most important couples Lille Foster and Win Stebbins were chosen as 2020-2021's The Robert J. Morris & Linda R. Peckham Towering Achievement Award for Contributions to Local History by the Historical Society of Greater Lansing for their contributions to the preservation of Lansing History.



Historical Society of Greater Lansing
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www.LansingHistory.org
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Win served as a member of the Pave the Way Advisory Committee and has arranged for the donation of several items of historical importance to the HSGL collection including material from Plymouth Congregational Church and his father Rolly Stebbins' real estate company, Advance Realty. Win is a direct descendant of A.C. Stebbins who was an important Lansing industrialist and was one of the founders of the Lansing Wheelbarrow Co. His family has recently digitized the family photographic collection which contains thousands of photographs from early Lansing and Harbor Springs where the family owned a summer cottage. Prior to his engagement as a public historian Win was an engineer with the Michigan Department of Transportation.

Lille Foster who can also trace her roots to early Lansing is a former trustee of HSGL and is a descendant of Michigan's Superintendent of Public Education, Henry R. Pattengill who served from 1893 to 1897. She has written a book on her father's war time experience based on a collection of his letters titled "U.S. Army Life 1941-45: In the Letters of Theodore Pattengill." Foster has donated collections of Pattengill's material to numerous archives across mid-Michigan.

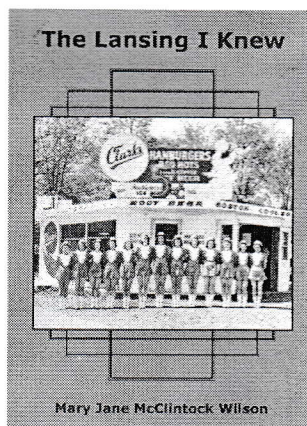
New Memoir Traces Lansing's History

Mary Jane McClintock Wilson serves as a tour guide in her new book "The Lansing I Knew" as she reminisces about the people, places and things she observed in her 97 years in Lansing.

"I had saved many items from my childhood and teen years which helped paint the picture of Lansing," she said.

In her book McClintock Wilson writes "The Lansing I Knew" is a story of a Lansing town of my early years, of people places and happenings seldom found in Lansing history books. In great measure the work arises from the remembrances of Lansing citizens."

During the author's childhood and teen years Lansing was booming and new housing developments and apartments were sprouting up. The family first lived in the newly opened Washington Apartments on



South Washington where the nearby Clapham's Grocery Store supplied most of the neighbor's needs.

In 1928, the family moved to Drexel Street in a newly opened subdivision where her brother William was born. It was there Mary Jane rambled through the neighborhood meeting the families who lived there. She especially liked spending time at the Number 7 fire station which today has become a private home. McClintock Wilson said, "I decided to do the book since so many memories I have are going to be lost."

She said she began working on the book two years ago and blocked her story out like a play creating different topical categories for each chapter like "A Goodly Neighborhood, Early Churching and Schooling and Pearl Harbor.

"My favorite time growing up was my teen years. My good friend Betsie Sessions and I would ride our bikes together all around the town," she said.

"I loved the friendships of high school and we'd hang out after school at area soda shops," she said.

One of her favorites after school hangouts was Rouser's Drug Store. "A group of us would go there after school and fill three or four tables. I still remember the Swiss Milk Panama Sundae and the Mud Sundae," the author said.

When the Great Depression struck, she recalls cutting back on everything from clothes to food despite her father, Freeman, owning a car dealership.

When Pearl Harbor hit, McClintock Wilson was about 16 and she stayed in touch with her high school classmates who had gone overseas.

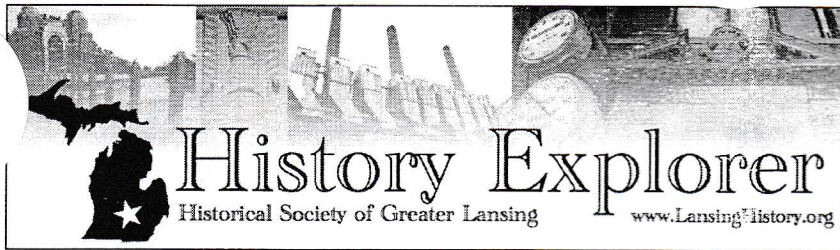
"I can remember writing to all the boys I knew overseas," she said.

While attending Verlinden, West Junior High, Lansing Central and Sexton, McClintock gravitated toward English and the dramatic arts programs.

In her adult years McClintock has contributed meaningfully to preserving local history including serving on a committee to save and restore the State Capitol and preserving the history of Sparrow Hospital. She also wrote a biography of her father and his time serving with the ambulance corps in World War I with Ernest Hemingway.

"Most of my contemporaries are gone, but this is one way I have of honoring them," McClintock Wilson said

The book, \$15, is available on line through Amazon, at Everybody Reads Bookstore, and Schulers Books. Those wanting a personally inscribed book can E-mail HSGL at info@lansinghistory.org.



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