

LEGACY

A newsletter of the **Bloomfield Historical Society**

Spring/Summer 2010 Volume 5 Issue 1

Stonycroft and the development of Bloomfield Centre



Stonycroft c.1900 (photo courtesy of Diane Klingensmith)

At the end of the Nineteenth Century Bloomfield Centre was a dusty intersection where Long Lake Road crossed Woodward – the main road between Detroit and Pontiac.

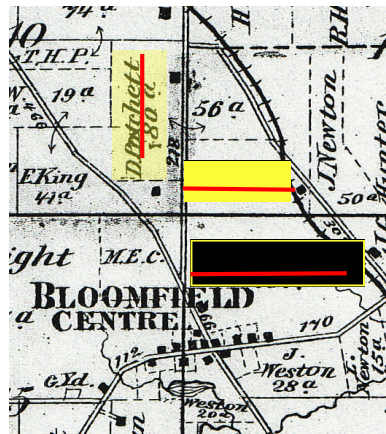
Charles Stinchfield, a wealthy timber baron, banker, and past president of American Radiator, was about to change that.

On the northeast quadrant of the intersection in 1896-97 Stinchfield purchased three pioneer family farms – the Hagermans', Patchetts', and Crofoots' – with the idea of creating an idyllic summer estate as an escape from the heat and crowding of the city of Detroit. Mr. Stinchfield was one of the very first to recognize the rolling beauty and potential of the area. Soon after came George G. Booth, Edwin S. George and William T. Barbour, among others.

(Now, there appears to be a possible ulterior motive for Stinchfield to have purchased land in Bloomfield at the time that he did. By giving the appearance that Stonycroft -- and not the family home on Davenport Street in Detroit -- was his primary residence, he would have been able to avoid paying a substantial amount of Detroit City income tax. Both he and his lumber baron partner, David Whitney Jr., were taken to court in 1903 over this.)

Stinchfield consolidated the three farms into a nearly 300-acre tract that he initially called Tanglewood. Shortly afterward, according to family legend, it was named Stonycroft because it reminded Charlie of the hardscrabble ground of Maine.

From the very first moment – and for the next twenty years – he spared neither time, trouble nor expense in making the land productive .



*A peek
at Spring...*



**... through a parlor
window at the
Benjamin-Barton
Farmhouse**

The “4-B’s” of Preservation Bloomfield have been guiding an important piece of restoration during the quiet of winter. Watch for a Spring event to celebrate this accomplishment.

INFO@ ...



(Continued on page 3)

Society Historian John Marshall tackles questions you ask:

Question from Bloomfield resident Thomas Reiss: What can you tell me about our Century Home on the west side of Lahser, just north of Lahser High School?

Early history:

Taking a quick look at the 1857 Hess map of Bloomfield we can pinpoint the Reiss home on the farm of early settler John J. Hall and his family. Hall was born in England about 1798. In 1837-1838 he purchased his first 120 acres of land in Bloomfield Township and married Eliza Houston from Hamilton, New York. John and Eliza had five children – three girls and two boys. Hall acquired additional property, eventually increasing his farmstead to close to 300 acres – making it one of the largest in the Township.

The farm stretched along both sides of Lahser Road between Long Lake Road and Hickory Grove Road including most of Orange Lake, all of the Lahser High School campus and the west end of Bloomfield Hills Country Club.

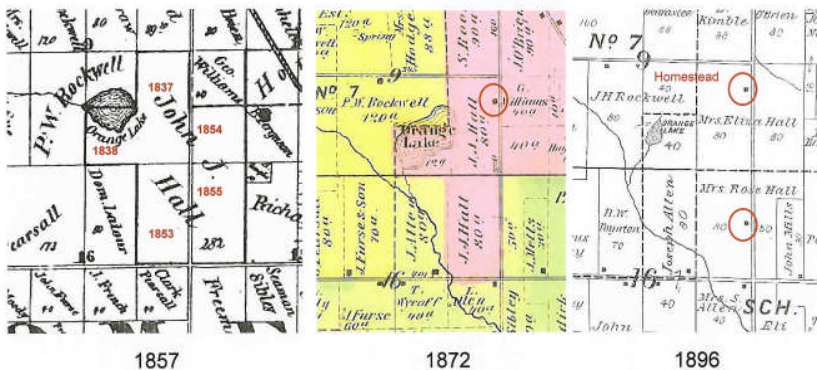
What did a prosperous Bloomfield farm look like in those days? We learn from the Agricultural Census of 1850 that the Hall Farm supported 13 cattle, 99 sheep and 11 swine. It produced 290 bushels of wheat, 400 of oats, 400 of Indian corn as well as 210 pounds of wool and 300 pounds of butter.

John J. Hall, the father, died in 1873 at the age of 75 years. His older son, John Jefferson Hall Jr., acted as executor of the estate and inherited the farm property. The other children were bequeathed various amounts from \$25 to \$3,000. John Hall, Jr. married Rose Tyler in November 1873; his brother, George H. Hall, married Eliza J. Porter in January 1876.

In 1880 John Jr. sold the northern portion of the farm along with the original Hall farmhouse (now 3140 Lahser Rd.) to his brother George and kept the southern portion. John and Rose built a house that still sits on the west side of Lahser Road, a short distance south of the high school.



The Reiss Century Home today



A sad chapter

The property ownership map of 1896 shows that Mrs. Eliza Hall and Mrs. Rose Hall were the owners of what had been the John Hall Farm.

What happened to the two sons John J. Hall, Jr. and George H. Hall?

It is a sad tale.

The death records in the Oakland County Vital Records department show that George H. Hall (age 39 years) and his two sons, Charles (13) and Dudley (6) all died of diphtheria within five days of one another in January 1891.



Detail from 1915 "bird's eye" view of Bloomfield Township

Three short years later George's older brother, John Jr., died of spinal meningitis at the young age of 47. John's widow Rose and their son Edward T. Hall (1878 - 1930) continued to live in their house on Lahser and eventually sold the property in 1913. The portion west of Lahser Rd. was platted into Still Meadows subdivision. The Hall property on the east side of Lahser (except for a 250 foot wide strip on Lahser Rd.) became the west end of the Bloomfield Hills Country Club.

George's widow, Eliza P. Hall, married Ebb Voorheis five years later in July 1896. Various portions of their property were sold off during the following years. In 1945 Howard C. Kresge, son of Sebastian S. Kresge, the founder of the Kresge Stores and K-Mart chain, briefly acquired the house and 53.5 acres. By 1991 the property around the house had shrunk down to the present 1.28 acres and it was purchased by Thomas Reiss and his wife.

Today

Now, when you pass through the 300 acre farm on either side of Lahser Road between W. Long Lake and Hickory Grove Roads, remember the interesting and poignant story of pioneer John J. Hall and his two sons John Jr. and George.

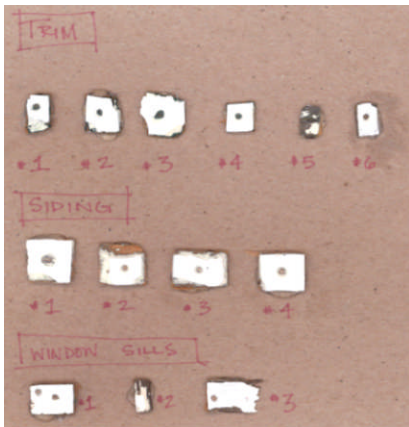


The Benjamin-Barton Farmhouse Shows Its True Colors

Some pretty exciting stuff has been going on at the Benjamin-Barton Farmhouse thanks to a gift to Preservation Bloomfield from Mary Barton Joliffe. Erin Shoemaker of HopkinsBurns Design Studio and U. of M. intern Susannah Cramer-Greenbaum visited the Barton House to unlock some of the secrets of its past. Here is Erin's report: We were seeking the color that the house was originally painted. With thickly crazed layers of paint and bits flaking off here and there we were in for a challenge. How does one determine the paint color from over a hun-

dred years ago? Black and white photos can give clues to dark or light colors, but the only real way to determine the color is with historic paint analysis.

The process this day was to determine basic color identification of the oldest layer of paint and to record the layer stratification. It began with careful research of the building to determine which areas were the oldest portions of the house, those being the most likely to have original paint remnants. The finish was carefully examined to determine appropriate areas for sampling. Factors such as exposure to ultraviolet light can affect the accuracy of the sample; this can not only fade the color of the paint, but it also deteriorates the binding materials, causing the paint layers to disintegrate during the analysis.



Once sample areas were selected, many of which were from areas that received little direct sunlight or wear, such as behind the shutters, they were removed from the building for microscopic analysis. The samples were mounted and carefully inscribed with a concave incision to reveal the layering sequence of the paint. They revealed a number of visible layers of paint. The siding had at least ten distinctive layers while the trim and windowsills had fewer. These layers were visually matched to a Benjamin Moore paint palette, recorded and incorporated with the history of the property.



Schumacher

Drive by the Barton Farmhouse later this Spring to see its "new" siding and trim colors — as they were in the 1800s.

(Stonycroft and Bloomfield Centre – Continued from page 1)

Following the best practices of the day, he had some areas tiled and drained to redeem a great deal of the land that was formerly a dismal swamp. He remodeled old barns, and built new ones, to store grain, hay and livestock. There was a small grist mill, an ice house, a well-equipped blacksmith and carpenter shops. He built a new and neat house for his superintendent as well as two tenant houses.

Horses, cattle, sheep and hogs, grazed the land. The products of Stonycroft were hay, grain, corn, potatoes, and fruit. Stinchfield kept a goodly number of Shetland ponies for the children to drive.

The centerpiece of what was described at the time as a surpassingly beautiful estate, was a handsome summer house, modern in every respect. A wide veranda extended around three sides of the house. All of the rooms were large, airy and beautifully furnished.



Bloomfield Blossoms

In 1906 the Interurban electric cars came up Woodward Avenue and through Bloomfield Centre.

To obtain property for the right-of-way from landowners, railways sometimes faced unusual demands. Stinchfield wanted to electrify his home...and the railway needed a passing track on his property. An agreement was reached that provided him with enough electric current for six years to operate a 5-hp electric motor and all the poles and wires needed to connect a line from the power house to his property.

Stinchfield soon enjoyed the distinction of having the first home in the area lighted by electricity.

According to the local newspaper all was well until a northbound interurban started up the steep grade at Bloomfield Centre. It was reported at that time that "the load on the circuits was heavy enough to transform the illumination of the Stinchfield dining room to something rather like that characteristic of a modern bar."

Charles Stinchfield passed away in 1918. By the mid 1920's, this property was readied for development by the Stinchfield Land Development Company, overseen by his heirs.

Katie Kiyo

Join us this Sunday for...

Digging into our Past

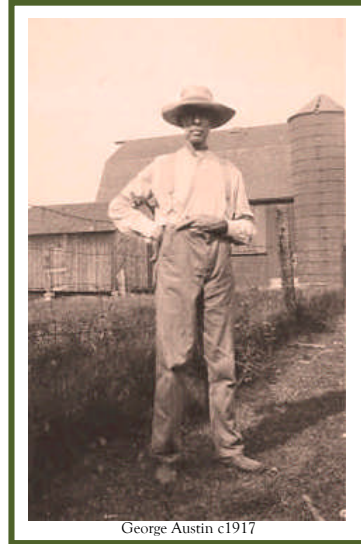
Learn about those who preceded us from what they left behind.

Join Dr. Richard Stamps, Associate Professor of Anthropology and Archaeology at Oakland University as he tells the story of the Giles Austin family and farm located just up Squirrel Road from Bloomfield Township on what is now the OU campus.

He will relate his historical and archeological research about the life style of this pioneer family and compare his findings with our findings about the families who lived in the Craig Log Cabin and the Benjamin-Barton Farmhouse.

Professor Stamps will show some of the artifacts discovered on the Austin Farm and also some that have been found on the sites of the Log Cabin and Barton Farmhouse.

Bloomfield Historical Society
www.bloomfieldhistoricalsociety.org



George Austin c1917

Annual Meeting and Local History/Local Resources Program

Open to the public at no charge
This Sunday,
April 18, 2010
3 to 4:30 p.m.



Bloomfield Township Public Library
Leslie H. Green Community Room
1099 Lone Pine Road
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48302 www.btpl.org
Questions? contact the Library: 248.642.5800

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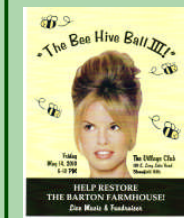
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Katie Kiyo, John Marshall

Compliments of Macomb Duplicating

Reminder — New Membership Year started April 1. It's time to renew or join!

Upcoming events of interest



The Bee Hive Ball III

May 14, 2010

Info: 248.642.6923

A Preservation Bloomfield event
to help restore the
Barton Farmhouse



Special presentation of
Detroit: Our Greatest Generation
Sunday May 16

Co-sponsored by the Society and the
Bloomfield Township Senior Center
248.723.3500

MISSION STATEMENT

The Bloomfield Historical Society is dedicated to fostering an appreciation of the rich history of the Bloomfield area by identifying, promoting and conserving our heritage. We encourage research to educate and engage all generations.

www.bloomfieldhistoricalsociety.org

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