Today we’re learning from yesterday
Our community is coming together to help save an original Bloomfield Farmhouse or it will suffer the same fate as The Fox and Hounds.

Preservation Bloomfield, the newly named non-profit corporation comprised of representatives of the 4-B’s: the Charter Township of Bloomfield, the City of Bloomfield Hills, the Bloomfield Hills School District Board and your Society, has been working since last Fall to move the Farmhouse and preserve it at the Schools’ Farm. We’ve raised a lot of “early money” but we still need thousands more to move the Farmhouse by late Spring.

Imagine the future:
A yellow school bus pulls up to a nearly 200-year-old Farmhouse and 20 third graders pour out. They gather in the foyer to be introduced to farm life in Bloomfield at the turn of the 20th Century as part of their Social Studies curriculum.

Or, imagine an adult knitting class, sitting around a spinning wheel in the parlor, just steps away from yarn “on the hoof”. What kind of stories will they be inspired to share?

Think of a company outing, demonstrating that it is possible to have an entirely “different” meeting experience without raising shareholders’ eyebrows.

First, though, it has to move.
Once it’s moved there are two more phases: restoration and endowment. And this all has to be done without significant taxpayer funding.

We’ve enlisted the services of nationally-known Preservation Architect Gene Hopkins FAIA of HopkinsBurns in Ann Arbor as our guide in this historic undertaking. Hopkins, who grew up on a farm, walked the area, reviewed the Society’s research and found an ideal location for the Barton Farmhouse sheltered in a natural “bowl”, adjacent to the historic windmill as well as to the enormous root cellar and big red barn.

Bloomfield Hills Schools has formed a Farm Planning Committee with members drawn from throughout the community, including the Society, to draft a 10-year-utilization and instructional plan for the Farm. Already a popular location and teaching experience for school children, the Farm and its new Farmhouse will become a resource for the wider community and a potential home for the Society.

(Continued on page 2)
info@

Answers to questions from our e-mailbox

The Search for Schoolhouse No. 4

Society Historian John Marshall tackles questions you ask:

Sometimes a simple question leads to a most interesting search. At the Benjamin-Barton Open (Farm)House last Fall, one of the visitors asked if I knew anything about a schoolhouse that had once been located across from the Bowers Farm (in Green Box). He had heard that the schoolhouse had been moved to West Bloomfield. I said that I would see what I could find out.

As I usually do, when beginning a search for historic houses, cemeteries, or schools in the Bloomfield Area, I consulted a collection of Bloomfield Township property ownership maps. Sure enough a schoolhouse (No. 4 in Red Circle) shows clearly on the maps for 1872, 1896, 1908, 1916, 1921, and 1930. The placement seemed to vary a little over the years, but it was clearly there. There is no evidence of a school building in that area today. What happened to it? Had it been moved?

Although I felt it was a long shot, I sent off a short e-mail query to the president of the Greater West Bloomfield Historical Society (GWBHS) asking if he had heard anything about such a schoolhouse relocation. About two weeks later I was delighted to hear from a woman who said that she and her husband had purchased the schoolhouse and had it moved to Greer Street in Sylvan Lake. She said that they had it remodeled and rented it out for a number of years. However, it has since been demolished.

Now that I had discovered the fate of the schoolhouse, I was still curious about its history. A search of the Tract Index for the NE ¼ of Section 12 in the County Register of Deeds Office showed that in August 1901 Fractional School District No. 4 of the Townships of Troy and Bloomfield purchased a small piece of land (about 150 feet by 130 feet) from Myra Linton. Curiously, she reserved the rights to all trees over six inches in diameter. In July 1949 the School District sold this plot to the Briggs Commercial & Development Company that had platted the area around the school.

These property transactions gave further insight into the history of this early school, but many questions still remained. Slates to Computers, by Amylee Chamberlain had an excellent description of the history of this school, taken primarily from a 1919 “minute book”. According to it, the first schoolhouse was built perhaps as early as 1822; the second in 1845; and the one that was moved in 1902. The Linton School continued to operate through the 1946/7 school year with only 15 students. The 28 families in the district voted to consolidate with the Bloomfield Hills School District and the students began attending Vaughan School. The property was sold to Briggs Development in 1949. It was probably about this time that the schoolhouse was moved to our neighboring township.

Can you add to John’s answer? Do you have a photo of any of the Linton Schools? Did you go there? Write us at info@bloomfieldhistoricalsociety.org

A Linton School student’s homework paper from just after WWI included the following history of the area:

The 1st settlers in the neighborhood were German, English, Irish and French. They farmed for a living, settling on land that contained areas of gravel with stands of oaks and maples.

Time to Renew!

Society Membership runs from April 1 to March 31. Your dues help support such important endeavors as preserving the Benjamin-Barton House.
What’s the buzzzz at the Farm?

Society Board member Al Eicher has been involved in a lot of things not directly related to his career in communications. This is his story about Bees and how they got to the Farm.

In the beginning, in 1969, a big swarm of bees, about 4lbs, flew in and landed on a bush at our home near the Schools’ farm. I decided to keep them and bought all the equipment to house and extract the honey. By fall of that year, I took about 20lbs of honey from the hive and left the other 40lbs for the bees winter supply of food. I found that our friends and neighbors wanted this great clover honey.

Next Spring I called the township fire department and asked them to direct any calls they might receive regarding swarms of bees that were bothering people. I got calls right away and in a short time I had 4 hives at my house. That fall we got about 150 lbs of honey. So in 1971, I talked to June Hamilton at the farm about transferring some bees there. Soon we had 8 hives buzzing happily in the 20 apple trees and elsewhere. We never bought bees as there were swarms of bees available in late April and May in the Township.

Horses and bees...

One evening, in June, Elizabeth Smith, Director of the Bloomfield Open Hunt Club called and asked if I could help her. It was the second day of the International Horse Show and the crowds were in the stands, a swarm of bees had flown in and landed on the middle of the top rail at one of the jump positions. Horses and bees do not mix! She said, “Can you come quick?” Luckily for her I had an empty hive. which I loaded in the huge trunk of my new red Cadillac with a white vinyl roof. My son and I paraded through the jump site in that red Cadillac, to the swarm. I found the queen bee and put her in the new hive and in about 15 minutes all the bees had followed her. We got a big round of applause as we drove away with the bees.

We have a lot of great memories of the bee hives at the Farm.

Kathryn Eicher sells honey produced by Farm Bees

Time Was… 1905: Our Great State Fair

The world and America and Michigan were in the midst of an industrial transformation, from rural to urban, from horse and buggy to the motorcar.

A journey through the front pages of the Birmingham Eccentric, is testimony to the two different worlds colliding, one coming and one going.

Page 1 of the Sept. 15, 1905 edition headlined the story: “Michigan’s Big Fair.” The story extolled the variety of events, sights and sounds awaiting the visitor.

“In place of the old-time balloon there is an airship that really sails the air.”

“In place of the few scattering fireworks there is a drama of fire, Pains Stupendous Pyrotechnical Presentation of The Fall of Port Arthur!”

[The Japanese and Russians fought for Port Arthur in Feb. 1904 during the Russo-Japanese War. Port Arthur was a Russian naval base in Manchuria. The two sides fought to a standstill.]

In addition to the traditional horse racing, “a Great Automobile Parade” will be held on Saturday at 11 AM with automobile races in the afternoon.

“The exhibit of cattle is quite as large as last year – there is ample room to show Michigan’s wealth in this line, while the fruits of farm, dairy and cheese factory reminds one of the day when he was a boy and the County Fair the great event of the year.”

The fair is open from 7 a.m. to midnight with 50,000 people daily expected. Admission is 50-cents.

Enough of turn-of-the-century contrasts, the Eccentric concluded “The Fair is a dandy!”

Excursions by our time-traveling correspondent Steve Raphael.

In the early years news items on the front page had to fight for space with ads like this.

You can volunteer to help the Bloomfield Township Public Library continue its transformation of the Eccentric from microfilm to on-line digital images. Contact Marty McGee, Volunteer Coordinator for BTPL at 248.642.5800. Marty has already shown Society members Fran Wilson and Lanie Tobin how to do this and they have helped get the first 24 years on line and available for browsing at the Library’s website: www.btpl.org.
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Legacy is published by the Bloomfield Historical Society
1099 Lone Pine Road
Bloomfield Hills MI 48302

Michael Carmichael
John Marshall
Steve Raphael

See you at the Annual Meeting
... and the Local History Program

The Historic Kirk in the Hills
Sunday, April 6, 2008 from 3 to 4:30 PM
Bloomfield Township Offices Auditorium
4200 Telegraph Road

The Kirk (Scottish for “church”) looks like it’s been on the shores of Island Lake for generations, but in reality it’s been there for a little over half a century. Patterned after a Scottish cathedral built in the 13th century the Kirk has quite a story to tell.

- Discover what occupied the property before The Kirk was erected.
- Meet the fascinating Col. Edwin George and discover his role in the business, cultural, and religious community of S.E. Michigan
- Learn more about the background of the design, architecture and construction of The Kirk.

This presentation is another in the Local History/Local Resources Series, jointly sponsored by the Bloomfield Historical Society and the Bloomfield Township Public Library. It is open to the public at no charge. Contact info@bloomfieldhistoricalsociety.org with any questions.

Sunday, April 6 from 3 to 4:30 PM at the Bloomfield Township Offices 4200 Telegraph

Benjamin-Barton House in perspective
Thanks to Bloomfield Hills City Commissioner (and Society member) Dave Kellett
When the house was assumed to have been built, in 1832:
Michigan was still a Territory
Michigan becomes a State 5 years later (1837)
The Revolutionary War 57 years earlier (1775)
The War of 1812 20 years earlier (1812)
The Toledo War 3 years later (1835)
The Civil War 29 years later (1861)
Thomas Jefferson died 6 years earlier (1826)
The Louisiana Purchase 29 years earlier (1803)
Michigan’s population was about 85,000

Kirk Historian, Chrystal Thomas will be our guest speaker.

www.bloomfieldhistoricalsociety.org
info@bloomfieldhistoricalsociety.org

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.

Since last April
The Society has:
- Held three Local History/Local Resources Programs
- Documented the fall of the Fox & Hounds
- Co-Chaired the restoration of the 1859 Wing Lake Stone School
- Become a founder of the 4B’s
- Published two issues of Legacy
- Begun documenting Century Homes
- Hosted Barton Open (Farm)House

Join us and become part of our Next Steps