**From the BHS Board**

Sometimes, when you least expect it, a bit of the history of Bloomfield’s people comes in our door. In this case it was a “baby book”. A baby book can tell us a great deal besides time of birth, weight, length and family members. If updated regularly, as this one was, you get a fascinating snapshot of what life was like at the time. While this “baby” was born in Detroit, he moved to the Bloomfield area.

His mother was a devoted journalist and we thought we’d include a couple of examples of her story of her son’s early years.

If there are “baby books” in your attic, or other examples of everyday life in Bloomfield – the sales brochure for your subdivision, a DUR schedule, or a playbill from Will-O-Way Playhouse – let us at least scan them even if you want to retain the originals as a part of your family’s history. We’ll add those digital records to our growing collection reflecting an area in transition from farms to country estates to suburban homes.

Kay Smith’s Blossom captured some of the larger parts of our history back in 1976. But, when Bloomfield Historical was formed just 10 years ago, that was essentially it. We know there are bits and pieces out there, but we’re working on gathering it together in one place that all can share.

You are helping us tell those stories – one baby book at a time. Let’s keep it up.

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**It all started with taxes**

Township Clerk Jan Roncelli asked the Society to look through some correspondence the Township had uncovered from the 1920s. One was a letter on stationery with a University of Michigan watermark, dated December 3, 1924, from an Edward P. Hammond requesting the tax bills for 455 acres he owned in various sections in the Township. The response must have been relatively prompt because on January 9, 1925, Miss Martha Wilson, the Township Treasurer, received a letter containing a check for $2,229.44 “covering the 1924 taxes on Mr. E. P. Hammond’s property.”

We knew of the 1920s Hammond estate home called Hillwood, which is still standing today at Vhay Lake. But why did E.P., who lived in Grosse Pointe own so much land in Bloomfield?

The story starts with his father:

**George H. Hammond**

It was in 1848 that ten-year-old George H. Hammond began making leather purses in his home town of Ashburnham, Mass. Before long he had 12 girls working for him – but the bottom fell out of the all-leather purse business when purses with metal clasps were introduced. George was then 15. His new venture, mattress making, led him to Detroit where, in 1855 after a fire had destroyed that business, he opened a butcher shop at age 17.

His new profession prospered and before long he was talking to William Davis, who ran a fish market a couple of doors away, about how to increase their respective businesses. The result was the refrigerator railway boxcar.

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**Hillwood and its great hall**

(Continued on page 3)
Where are the Hammond Family Properties?

**Hillwood – NE ¼ Section 14 Bloomfield Twp.:**
Edward P. Hammond acquired the 82 acres of property in the southeast corner of Kensington Rd. and E. Long Lake Rd. in November 1921. The summer estate that he built there consisted of: the spacious manor house, a very large stable with adjacent blacksmith shop, as well as houses for the chauffeur, stable master, and caretaker. A few years after Hammond died in 1940 the estate was subdivided into the Hillwood Estates Subdivision and the manor house, stable, and all three houses for the staff were converted into private residences. Recently, however, two of the staff houses were torn down to make room for newer structures – the caretaker’s cottage in 2004 and the chauffeur’s house in 2009. The stablemaster’s cottage sold recently for $1 million.

**West Wind Farm – Section 1 West Bloomfield Twp.:**
Long before E. P. Hammond built Hillwood, his father George Hammond and wife Ellen purchased the nearly 180 acre West Wind Farm in early December 1886 from Fred Carlisle. The farm was located on the west shore of what was then called Lord’s Lake and now Hammond Lake. It is at the point where Middlebelt Road meets Orchard Lake Road in Keego Harbor. By the 1930s the family began selling portions of it off, with some being platted into Sylvan Manor and Hammond Lake Estates and some going to Pine Lake Country Club to extend the golf course.

At one point the family (including George’s daughter Florence Hammond Skae and her husband Edward) owned all but a tiny sliver of the property around Hammond Lake as well as half of the land on the north side of Upper Long Lake.

**Section 9 Bloomfield Township:**
The very first property that George’s son E. P. Hammond acquired in Bloomfield Township was a real estate investment in 1916. It was 33 acres which is now the southwest corner of the intersection of Lahser Rd. and Hickory Grove Rd. When he died in 1940, the property passed to one of his sons, John B. Hammond. Today it is the site of the Orange Lake Hills Condominiums.

**Section 02 Bloomfield Township:**
In 1919, E.P. Hammond purchased a sizeable portion (340 acres) of Section 02 in Bloomfield Township as an additional investment. It is bounded by South Boulevard on the north, Opdyke Rd. on the west and Square Lake Rd. on the south. It too was sold shortly after his death. Starting in 1963 it was developed into Bloomfield’s Fox Hill Subdivisions 1 through 5. It’s also where part of the Square Lake Rd. and I-75 interchange is located.
George went on to build a huge meat processing plant on an Indiana river (which provided ice for the cars) as well as on the Michigan Central RR tracks, and close to the stockyards of Chicago. From there he shipped thousands of carloads of refrigerated processed beef and other meat products to the East Coast and beyond. By the mid-1870s sales were more than $2 million a year and climbing and he ranked with Swift, Armour, and Morris as one of the ‘big four’ in American meat packing,” according to The History of Foreign Investment in the United States to 1914. The town around the plant took his name and became Hammond, Indiana.

However, George had married Ellen Barry at 19 and never left his adopted home town of Detroit. Together they had 11 children with Edward Percy Hammond, in 1884, being the last. The last because in 1886 George died at 50, one of the wealthiest men in Detroit.

**West Wind Farm**

Two weeks before his death, George and Ellen purchased West Wind Farm on the shores of Lord’s Lake.

It was the fashion at the time to take children to “the country” in the summer to escape the heat and pollutants of an increasingly industrialized Detroit. Wealthy heads of those industries bought large tracts of farmland, often near the many lakes in the area. The adjoining lake would be renamed Hammond Lake.

[see info@ for more on the Hammond holdings in our neighborhood.]

**Ted Hammond**

Edward Percy Hammond would become a successful Detroit businessman as well. Known as Ted, the football-playing president of the University of Michigan’s Class of 1903, would marry his elementary school classmate Viola Agnes Moran in 1906 and go on a four month honeymoon, traveling Europe by car — remarkable for the time.

Ted joined the Gemmer Manufacturing Company as secretary-treasurer after it had moved to Detroit in 1907 from Wabash, Indiana in order to be closer to its customer base. It made steering gear for the auto industry. He eventually became president.

Ted and Viola had seven children. Their five boys (including Edward Percy Hammond Jr – also called “Ted”) would form one of the few all-family “professional” polo teams in the U.S.

While they maintained a large comfortable home in Grosse Pointe, the younger Hammonds also built a gracious summer home on the shore of Vhay Lake, not far from the corner of Long Lake and Kensington Roads.

There they and several of their friends from Grosse Pointe (including the Hendrie sisters who owned The Covert not far from Hillwood) established the Bloomfield Open Hunt Club. The Grosse Pointe club had become the victim of urbanization and had run out of room to hunt fox, while more agrarian Bloomfield had fields and vales that were ideally suited to the Hunt.

Hammond’s interest in automobiles led him to join the Automobile Club of Detroit. The club moved to Pine Lake in 1907 and changed its name to the Automobile Country Club. It became the Pine Lake Country Club after Ted’s sale of some of his family’s land at Hammond Lake so the Club could create a larger golf course. He was also instrumental in rebuilding the Automobile Club of Detroit and its becoming the Michigan branch of the American Automobile Association.

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Detroit’s First Skyscraper
The Hammond building
In the mid-1880s George Hammond began planning for a 10 story office building, destined to become Detroit’s first skyscraper.
After his death Ellen completed purchase of the land for the site for $350,000 and built the red brick landmark in his memory. It lasted until 1956.

Detroit historian and author Dan Austin told us about the Hammond Building and its neighbor, Old Detroit City Hall, as one of our Local History/Local Resources program series. You can see his video presentation on our website.

The battle flag of the 22nd Michigan

Is this the flag that Scarlet saw?
150 years ago, as General Sherman marched through Georgia to the sea, he and the Michigan 22nd Voluntary Infantry (along with a few thousand other Union soldiers) laid siege to Atlanta. It would last from June to September 1864.
It was a famous episode in Gone With The Wind and our local boys were a part of it. The 22nd was formed in Pontiac in August of 1862.

The Sesquicentennial of the Civil War (1861-1865)

• Want to write a column in Legacy? We’re looking for guest writers to tell us their Local History stories.
• Want to organize a website? We’re getting more content that could go online but we’d like help getting it there.
• Want to join the Archives committee and help us help the Bloomfield Township Public Library make the local history archives even more user-friendly?
Drop us a note anytime at info@bloomfieldhistoricalsociety.org. We’d like to hear from you.