

## Editor's Notes

You may remember that we've been asking you for some family stories.

**Last issue** we got one from Al Stephens who asked if we knew about his grandfather, Alfred F. Stephens.

**This time** we have a mystery on our hands. The story's on the right.

1915 seems to have been a very active year. The War in Europe was a year old and we fervently hoped it stayed "over there"!



And a young Edsel Ford, Frank Book and some other buddies right out of college decided to hop in their top-of-the-line Model T, Stutz and Cadillac 8 and head off to the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco. A mural in Bloomfield captures that journey – and we'll show it to you in high-definition color, and tell you how it came to be here, in our next **Local History/Local Resources Program** on **Sunday, October 18** from 3-4:30 at the **Library**.

## A History Mystery

A reminiscence from a long-time resident appeared recently at the Welcome desk at the Bloomfield Township Public Library, along with a photo of his childhood home in Bloomfield Estates. It was handwritten on notepaper bearing the name of the junior Fred Rollins. We thought he had dropped it off for us. *Except that Mr. Rollins died in 1999.* Where had the note and photo come from? Who, for that matter, was Fred H. Rollins? First, we'll let Mr. Rollins speak for himself as he reflects on a much different time:

### Fred Rollins

The following are some recollections of my early years while living in Bloomfield Estates from 1920-1938.

"The following are some recollections of my early years while living in Bloomfield Estates from 1920 – 1938. I later returned to live in Bloomfield Hills in 1985 where I reside at my present address.

In the early Twenties there were no paved roads north of Birmingham. Woodward avenue was a dirt road north of Birmingham to Pontiac. The suburban street car and Grand Trunk Railroad ran along side of each other just east of Woodward.

Our home, "Red Gables", 3 acres, was built in 1916 by Judson Bradway. Our home was developed by him as part of Bloomfield Estates bordering Big Beaver on the South + Charing Cross road on the north. East of Woodward. This was the first subdivision that Judson Bradway developed. All homes had well water.

We kept two riding horses + a pony. My Mother and Father and I all enjoyed riding thru the country side. In the early years there were very few fences + we could ride for miles East + West of Woodward.

We joined Oakland Hills Country Club in 1919. The clubhouse then was a old farm house (Miller Farms) south of Maple. Walter Hagen was the Pro. I am currently the oldest living life member."



(Continued on page 3)

## What can you tell me about that white house at Woodward and Lone Pine?



**The Lone Pine Inn** still stands on the northwest corner of the intersection of Lone Pine Rd. and Woodward Ave. It was originally the home of Ezra Smith Parke MD who had purchased about 5 acres from Deacon Elijah Fish. Dr. Parke and his wife Rhoda had come to Bloomfield Township in 1822 from Oneida County NY, following his brother, surveyor Hervey Parke.



Detail of 1915 Map of Bloomfield Township

President James Monroe established our first Post Office with a charter to Dr. Parke and the designation “Bloomfield.” Dr. Parke took a prominent part in local affairs, serving as Township Clerk and conducting regular Sunday services with his wife,

Historian Jervis McMechan, theorized in *The Book of Birmingham* that “for many years these would have been the only Methodist services available to the families in the settlement... the farmers, their wives and children would spend a good portion of

their one day of rest on the Sabbath, hitching horse to wagon and making the several-mile journey to the hill and the services led by the Parkes. For most it was the one time in the week they could get away from their never-ending chores. And the place to which they went became inevitably ‘Piety Hill.’”

Ezra Parke’s son Hervey Coke Parke, who was born in the home, became one of the founding partners of the Parke, Davis (pharmaceutical) Company.



Detail of 1916 McAlpine Map

In 1910 George Booth purchased the “Lone Pine Cottage” (as it was called then). Booth, along with several other prominent local Bloomfield residents, including Colonel Barbour, organized a private school which they named the Bloomfield Hills Seminary. The school operated in this location for about six years, changing its name to the Bloomfield Hills School in 1916. It closed in 1918.

By 1922 the Parke House became known as the Lone Pine Inn, which housed the popular Lone Pine Tea House.

In 1927 the Lone Pine Tea House relocated to the newly constructed Fox & Hounds complex at Woodward and Long Lake Rd.

Cranbrook used the house for a number of institutional purposes until 1973 when it was sold as a commercial property.

The City of Bloomfield Hills designated the property as an historic district in 1976.

## Fire “bombs” at the Barton House

*It seemed like a good idea at the time*



When Carl O. Barton bought the sprawling country home on Long Lake Road he may have found several of these curious devices already in place, protecting previous owners Sarah and Marjorie Hendrie from potential fire damage – or he may even have installed them himself as the latest in fire protection.



They were the “fire bombs” or Miracle Fire Extinguishers produced by the Stempel Manufacturing Company.

Several were found in the attic as the Barton House was being prepped for its slimmed-down move from Long Lake up Eastways to the Bowers School Farm. The bombs were designed to act like a combination mouse trap and hand grenade. When the heat of a fire melted a latch a heavy-duty spring tossed the glass “bomb” at the flames. Inside the pear-shaped glass was a red-dyed saline and water solution that was supposed to at least slow the spread, if not put out completely, a small fire in a potentially fire-prone area such as the attic.

Fortunately the Barton House bombs never went off.

*(History Mystery Continued from page 1)*

### Now for some of the rest of the story.

We wanted to thank Fred Rollins Jr. for providing us with his brief reminiscences so we tried to contact him. It took some detective work to confirm what we were beginning to suspect: he was no longer with us. What we did find was a fascinating bit of local history.

Back before 1900 Colonel Edwin George (of Kirk in the Hills fame) got into the fur manufacturing business. By 1909 George had taken on a partner, Fred H. Rollins (Senior), named the business The House of George – and sold it to his partner. Except, Rollins refused to give up the name of The House of George as stipulated in the purchase agreement.

It took a decision by the Michigan Supreme Court (George v Rollins et al.) in 1913 to force the creation of The Rollins Company and Rollins Furs.

By 1922 The Rollins Company had prospered and opened in the Buhl Building “one of the most distinctive fur establishments in the entire country,” according to *Fur Age Monthly*. Eventually another store was added in Birmingham on Old Woodward. Some of our readers may remember Rollins Furs.



*Fur Age Monthly*

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## Bloomfield Historical Society

*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.*

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*(History Mystery Continued from page 3)*

“Our” Fred H. Rollins, born in 1911, attended the Bloomfield Hills School for its last year (see page 2) then finished at the Hill School in Birmingham. He became a Chi Phi at Michigan and eventually president of the Detroit Rotary Club as they hosted the national convention of Rotarians in 1950 – in addition to continuing to run the family businesses and Rollins Furs. He died on September 23, 1999.



So, who dropped off the hand-written reminiscence and photo of Red Gables? Did you know the Rollins family? Did you drop off the note? Drop us a note at [info@bloomfieldhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@bloomfieldhistoricalsociety.org).

We'd like to know the rest of the “rest of the story.”

**Just please, don't be a History Mystery.**

### In memory of Gerald Tuchow, Esq. 1930-2015

Gerry Tuchow was one of the founding fathers of Bloomfield Historical. We'd sit around in his and Marilyn's home “Old Oak” and talk not only about how one goes about organizing a nonprofit organization devoted to local history but about politics, art, the theatre (he was an active member of The Players Club) and just about anything else that was going on. He was a modern attorney by profession but with his interest in history he was really an advocate for the past. We were glad to be able to recognize his many contributions to Bloomfield Historical at our annual meeting in April and were delighted that he was able to be there. We will miss his wise counsel, his laughter, his ability to find something interesting in the most mundane.

### DAR honors Historic Wing Lake Schoolhouse



The National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution recently presented a national Historic Preservation Recognition Award that notes the importance of the work undertaken to preserve the Schoolhouse.



Society members, and former Wing Lake scholars, Ron Case and Dorm Dickerson recalled their school days.