

# Legacy

Bloomfield  
Historical Society  
founded in 2004  
Fall 2016  
Volume 11 Issue 2

### Editor's Notes

What's *The Afterglow* that much of this issue is about? It's a magazine that was published briefly in the mid-Twenties and up to now was only in complete form in the Burton Collection of the Detroit Public Library.

It covered extensively what life was like when the real movers and shakers of Detroit began to see that Bloomfield was definitely *the* place to be.

Now we have all of *The Afterglow* in digital form thanks to John Marshall and photographer Carroll DeWeese – and the extraordinary cooperation of the Burton Collection and the Bloomfield Township Public Library.

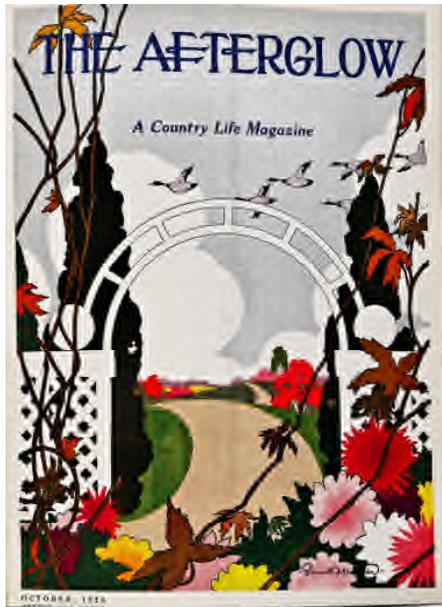
The tech wizards at BTPL have converted the original images into viewable – and downloadable – form for you to lose yourself in a Bloomfield of another era.

To see our latest Local History/Local Resources program on *The Afterglow*, stop by our website and click on "Past Programs".



As Autumn slides into Winter, local Michigan apples are crisp and juicy. There's still time to enjoy cider and donuts

from Bloomfield's own Franklin Cider Mill – you do know that it isn't really in Franklin, don't you?



## Theodore Hansen Millington Creator of *The Afterglow*

Every once in a while local historians make reference to an article in *The Afterglow*. It might be about a local notable like Colonel George, or the 1927 grand opening of the Fox and Hounds Inn or a story about the Hendrie sisters who turned an old farmhouse into a weekend retreat for fellow members of the Bloomfield Open Hunt.

It had ads for everything a country gentleman (it was the Twenties, remember) might need – from cars to furs to even-bigger homes.



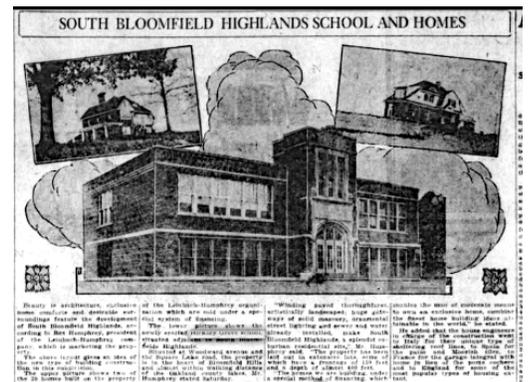
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Like Brigadoon *The Afterglow* rose out of the mists in 1925 and disappeared just as mysteriously in 1927. Theodore Hansen Millington, a Danish landscape architect turned–automotive designer–turned–real estate marketer–turned–magazine publisher was the magician who chronicled "the country life" of Bloomfield through its pages.

## Hickory Grove's Meandering Cornerstone

Thanks to Society member Jim Bowers for alerting us to another history mystery.

Back in 1921 a cornerstone was laid for a "new" Hickory Grove school. It was to replace a one-room frame building which had stood since the mid-1800s near the corner of Mulberry and Square Lake Road. (That's where Square Lake, now a busy dual-lane highway, is about to cross Center Point on its way to I-75.)



Hickory Grove featured as inducement to buy a new home

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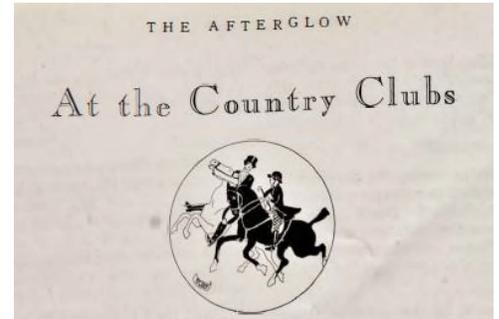
**info@ answers**  
*Society member John Marshall tackles questions you asked*

## Why would you want to view an 80 year old Magazine?

There are photos of formally-dressed people on horseback chasing foxes. Ads for fuel oil and uniforms for your chauffeur. Articles about Booths and Newcombs and Barbours.

Why would this be of any interest to us now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

The Afterglow captures in its brief (1925-1927) publishing life a fascinating glimpse into the period of the “Roaring Twenties,” a very vibrant and exciting time here in the Bloomfield area. The Social Scene was bright, the Estate House building business was never more robust, Exclusive Residential Subdivisions were being platted at an amazing rate and the Golf Clubs and Equestrian Clubs provided the venues for much of the social life.



Each issue averages about 33 pages for a total of just over 1,000 pages printed in black & white. In contrast, the cover of each of the 32 issues is a delightful original color print of something significant to the social life of the Bloomfield Area, created for the magazine by a local artist. If you have any interest in the life here in Bloomfield and Birmingham in the mid-1920s, this magazine will give you hours of enjoyment.



One can find *The Afterglow* magazine via a direct link on the Bloomfield Historical Society homepage ([www.bloomfieldhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.bloomfieldhistoricalsociety.org)) or by going to the Bloomfield Township Public Library’s website [www.BTPL.org](http://www.BTPL.org) – first selecting <Research>, then <BTPL Resources> and then scrolling down to <The Afterglow>. When you arrive at *The Afterglow* main page, you will find a brief introduction to the magazine followed by icons of the covers of all 32 monthly issues. When you select one of these issues you will immediately be taken to an on-online PDF version of the entire issue. You may start at the beginning of the issue and just casually browse from page to page at whatever pace you wish. (Each image is a double page.)

If you wish to be more organized in your examination of the various issues, each monthly issue contains an issue-specific table of contents following the front cover, listing many of the features and articles in the particular issue. This can be used to assist in going directly to the specific page of interest (or close to it) without having to leaf through the pages sequentially.

At the end of the images of the covers there’s my own “finding aid” that encompasses all of the issues. It lists many of the historic houses that we at the Society are covering as well as other items I found to be of interest.



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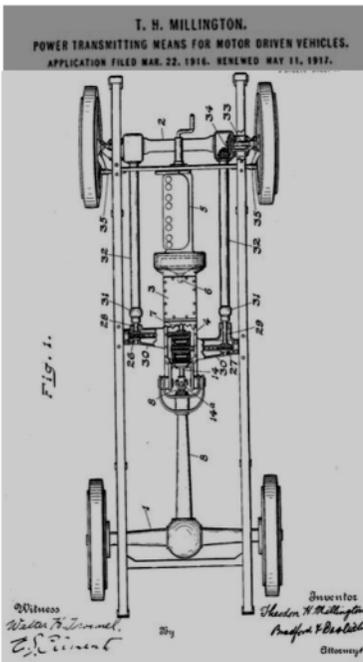
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## So, who was Theodore Hansen Millington?

In 1887 a 20 year old Millington chatted with some Americans visiting his home town near Vordingborg, Denmark. He was so smitten with their tales of life in America that the next day he told his sister goodbye and headed to the land of opportunity.

**Landscape Architect** He had trained as a florist and landscape architect but that was only the beginning of a business lifetime that in some ways mirrored the rapidly changing world of the turn of the Century.

Millington wrote that he arrived in America unable to speak English, according to a biographical piece he published in the July, 1927 issue of *The Afterglow*. Within five years he became “part of the faculty of Morgan Park, then a part of Chicago University” – as an instructor of physical education. He went on to marry Stella Sherfy, one of his students.



**Automotive Designer** Millington said that in 1902 he became “interested in automobiles and invented the four-wheel drive and the four-wheel brake, and manufactured the first four-wheel drive trucks.” And that is where things get a bit murky.

Patents do exist in his name in 1916-18 for developing four-wheel drive mechanisms for trucks and farm tractors including one system that could be retrofitted to existing two-wheel drive models, and which he writes about in *The Afterglow*. His name, however, does not appear in Patent Office applications for four-wheel brakes.

**During WWI** Millington worked as vice-president and field manager of the Oakland County Patriotic League, an organization designed to coordinate the fund-raising efforts of various charities throughout the county and considered a model of such efforts throughout the entire country. Here he would have crossed paths with many of the important and influential Detroiters who would eventually end up on his pages.

**Real Estate Marketer** After the War, he went into real estate, first with the Judson Bradway Company. The May 14, 1922 *Detroit Free Press* noted that Bradway had opened a branch office on Woodward in downtown Birmingham with Millington as sales manager. Some years later Millington went off on his own, developing subdivisions and becoming a regular advertiser in *The Afterglow*.

Millington continued in his July '27 article that his hobbies “have always been books, especially history and comparative philology, and gardening and flowers. And it was his love for country life that inspired him to found *The Afterglow* in 1925, which has grown through its popularity to a serious magazine of country life and a chronicler of its events.”

During the three years that *The Afterglow* was published Millington, his wife Stella and two of their four children; Elinor and Cedric, lived on E. Long Lake Rd. at Squirrel Rd. on what would a few years later become the Otto Kern estate, *Westview*. Daughter Elinor played an important role in *The Afterglow*, creating nine covers and several illustrations.

**The end of *The Afterglow*** Sadly for local historians the publication of *The Afterglow* ceased abruptly with the December 1927 issue. There was no notice of its impending demise: neither the *Detroit Free Press* nor the Birmingham-Bloomfield *Eccentric* mentioned it. In its short run it provided us with an extraordinary glimpse into a formative period of Bloomfield history.

**As early as October 1939**, Millington, then a columnist for *The Eccentric*, promoted more active involvement in WWII more than two years before our entry. In one column, Millington stressed the values of America: “Freedom of religion; Freedom of the press; Freedom of assembly; Freedom of the vote; Freedom of speech.” The nation would hear these in a slightly different form as President Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms a year-and-a-half later.

Little is known of Millington’s last years.

**He died in 1944** and is buried in a cemetery in a Baptist churchyard in Georgia – yet another enigma in a life filled with them.



Cover by Elinor Millington

# 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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In the mid-1800s, however, the little schoolhouse was nestled in a quiet grove of... hickory trees.

The new building was sizable – brick, two stories that contained four classrooms and an auditorium – so it was worthy of quite a ceremony when, on July 8, 1921, it was dedicated and the cornerstone was filled with, among other things, an American flag, minutes from a meeting of the school board, the current edition of the *Pontiac Daily Press* ... and 89 cents.

But four classrooms and an auditorium eventually weren't enough to provide for the children of the hundreds of new families who were moving to the new subdivisions springing up around it.

By the mid-1950s the second Hickory Grove School building was sold to a Methodist church and an even newer Hickory Grove school was built – this time on Lahser between Square Lake and Hickory Grove roads. It had eight classrooms, a room just for kindergarteners, a library, offices, its own kitchen and a multi-purpose room for good measure.



In 1973, when the church needed a new sanctuary, they returned the cornerstone of the 1921 schoolhouse to Dr. Charles Bowers of the school board. When the cornerstone was ceremoniously opened that year some of its contents had not survived the 52 years [see photo]. The stone then was resealed and placed in the media room where it became a cozy bench for children ... until 1997.

At that point Jim Bowers (who attended Hickory Grove and is the son of Dr. Bowers) picks up the story: "I just talked to my brother Pete and he told me that on the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Hickory Grove (the NEW one) he and Jim Felix (then the current school principal) placed new artifacts in the cornerstone and resealed it... it should have a videotape, newspaper article and photos (one of my nephew Eric Bowers) inside for reopening in 'who-knows-when'."

### Then what happened?

Hickory Grove stopped being an elementary school in 2009 and has sat empty since 2015. Recently, the School Board sold the building and surrounding 27 acres to a developer who plans to build detached condominiums.

### But where was the 1921 cornerstone?

Jim Bowers enlisted the aid of fellow Society member John Marshall to begin the hunt. They attended a community meeting in the soon-to-be-demolished building in August of this year – and there was the stone, sitting in an interior courtyard.

School officials have assured us that the cornerstone will be moved and will be preserved as an important part of Bloomfield history.

