Snapshots and Memories brings results

“Conserving our heritage” – that’s part of our mission at the Bloomfield Historical Society. The hard part isn’t conserving our heritage, it’s finding it. That’s why we held this spring’s program, Snapshots and Memories. We are pretty sure there’s a bunch of Bloomfield heritage out there – snapshots, memories, old menus and early phone books – but getting the community to think about things like that as “heritage” is the challenge. Some current Bloomfielders (and former ones too) brought in just what we were looking for.

Jack Bedell brought in a menu and some press clippings from his family’s restaurant that was on the NE corner of Woodward and Square Lake Roads. Ah, for one of their prime filets for $5.50 now... .

A couple of miles down Woodward from Bedell’s was the Bloomfield Market. Owned by the Miner family, some very famous residents were regular customers according to the receipt books that were brought to the program. Even the Kingsley Inn shopped there. You have to wonder what they were cooking up at the Inn back on June 6, 1955, with garlic salt, vinegar, moth spray and Glo-Coat.

Thanks to Barry Parsons we’ve also acquired a Special Edition of the Sept. 14, 1936 The Blue and White from Bloomfield Hills High School. Principal Shunck welcomed his 170 (!) students to a new year: “The kind of automobile that brings you to school or the sort of position your father or mother may hold will have nothing to do with what your fellow students think of you.” Still good advice for the students of the “new” Bloomfield Hills High School.

(Continued on page 2)

History was made in 2004

Longtime Director of the Bloomfield Township Public Library Karen Kotulis-Carter has retired. Karen said at the first official meeting of the Society in January of 2004 that “it had been her honor and privilege to spearhead the creation of the Bloomfield Historical Society with many enthusiastic people at her side.” Karen had been working since the ‘90s to put together a functioning organization devoted to collecting and telling the history of the Bloomfield area. The small organizational committee on which she served was informed, perhaps, by its several meetings at the 1833 home of Deacon Elijah Bull. Over the years, community members had indicated they wanted more of the Library’s resources devoted to local history. When it came time to enlarge the building, the new Local History Room with its Archive was one of Karen’s first priorities.

As Karen starts a new “chapter” in her life, we thank her for getting us on our way. We wouldn’t be here without her.
John, an avid biker, combines his love of history with his two-wheeled travels. We’re featuring a few of the highlights of one of his favorite History Routes. Find the full Route on the Bloomfield Historical Society website. — editor

**Are there any history bike tours of Bloomfield?***

Start at the corner of Quarton and Chesterfield: keep your eyes open and you’ll see:

The stone-lined mill race for the *Morris Saw Mill* (c. 1860) on the south side of Chesterfield Road just east of Lowell Ct. The saw mill operated here from 1830 until approximately 1908.

**Cross Woodward Avenue:**

Entrance Columns at Charing Cross and Woodward open into Bloomfield Estates Subdivision. The art deco pillars were built by the Bloomfield Estates Development Association between 1925 and 1930 after the Wider Woodward Avenue project was completed. They cost about $4,000. It is believed that these columns were designed by famed architect Eliel Saarinen.

**Mastodon Pond:**

The pond on the right at Brookdale Blvd. is probably a “kettle lake” formed by the last receding glacial activity. On the 1915 plat map this pond is labeled “Bloomfield Lake”.

It is not called that today, however. In 1934 the bones of a young mastodon were discovered by a CWA (Civil Works Administration) crew dredging the pond near the southwest bank. After being examined by the Cranbrook Institute of Science, the bones were sent to the Museum of Paleontology at the University of Michigan where they were displayed for many years as the *Bloomfield Mastodon*, and affectionately known as “Bloomfield Charlie”.

**Grand Trunk Railroad overpass:** 1930 (find the year in the concrete base) – This is one of 18 grade separations constructed between 1925 and 1930 when a 9.3 mile stretch of the Grand Trunk Railroad right of way was relocated about ¼ of a mile east of its original mid-19th century position along the east edge of Woodward Ave. The relocation was necessary to support the widening of Woodward. The section relocated extended from downtown Royal Oak to Long Lake Road.

**Kensington Road** (Ball Line Road – 1818): The stretch of road from Big Beaver to Hickory Grove is presently known as Kensington Road. However, from 1818 until about 1930, it was called Ball Line Road after Horatio Ball who originally surveyed it in 1818. The name Kensington Road first appears on the 1916 McAlpine map of Bloomfield Township.

**Wattles Road:** Turn left (west) for short distance to connect with *Squirrel Road*.

**Go North on Squirrel to Walbri Road.** On the west is Walbri, the 1920s estate of Detroit industrialist *Walter O. Briggs*, as in Briggs Stadium. The estate house and most of the original outbuildings are still standing today as private residences. Walbri’s 107 acres extended on the west side of Squirrel Rd. from the Sacred Heart Academy property to slightly north of present day Long Lake Road.

(Continued on page 4)
More things showed up after the program — and promise to continue. One local resident sent copies of those great front-page articles about the program in our local papers to her brother (actually, Brother) in Wisconsin. Next time he was here on a family visit Brother David Dodge, O.F.M., brought a treasure-trove of things including the story of his mom, Jane. Seems she was head of the china department at Wiggs Department Store, first in Pontiac then on Telegraph at Long Lake. Society members were relating that story to Bruce Jansen, the craftsman from Boyne who was installing the new sign honoring the Historic Wing Lake School. Turns out, Bruce worked at Wiggs for years, as well as at the Cock-n-Bull restaurant on Telegraph. He promises to bring in a menu from there.

Sharing. That’s what we’re talking about. Sure, there’s always more to learn about our early settlers. But remember, the Saarinens and the Romneys, Isaiah Thomas and Elmore Leonard, Howard Johnson’s, Wiggs and the St. Christopher Motel are our history, too. Don’t forget to include your first Bloomfield home and school photos.

We’ll have another Snapshots and Memories this Spring, so plan on gathering those family treasures, particularly over the holidays when the family gets together, and be ready to share them with us. The important thing is to help us “Conserve our Heritage”.

Founding member and namer of Legacy, Chuck Kirkpatrick
Chuck not only loved history, he lived history. He graduated from Purdue on a Naval ROTC scholarship and served as an officer during the Korean War on a variety of vessels – including the first hunter-killer sub. He got his MBA in finance from Northwestern, then joined Ford where he spent nearly 40 years in a variety of increasingly senior posts. Longtime Historian of his beloved Bloomfield Village, Chuck was one of the founding members of the Society and served on our Board early on. When it became time to create our newsletter, Chuck, editor of one himself, named ours Legacy. He served on the boards of numerous organizations but it’s ours that will miss his warm smile, his organizational abilities and his knowledge of the history of our community. Chuck died at home on his 85th birthday.

The War Continues
Recently (well, 150 years ago) the Battle of Chickamauga was fought – and among the thousands who lost their lives that day was 18-year-old Peter Lowes of Bloomfield, who served in Co. D of the Michigan 22nd. His cousin Robert Lowes, also in Co. D, was taken captive the same day and then died in Andersonville Prison in ’64. (More in Legacy, Spring 2012 on our website.)

Today, across Oakland County, students can make a connection with the Lowes of Bloomfield and other individuals from their own communities who served in the Civil War. Curriculum expert and local historian Carol Bacak-Egbo has produced a series of lessons that can be adopted by teachers in classrooms across the county to help make those connections personal. If you’re curious — whether you’re a kid or not — go to www.oakland.k12.mi.us/.

The lessons complement the poster-size Oakland County in the Civil War map that is being provided to each school, thanks to the Sons of Union Volunteers. The map is also available for $20 by emailing a request to us, or by calling our Editor (248.760.3968).

It’s a perfect gift for the young historian in your life.
Jog right on Long Lake Road, then left on Squirrel
2700 Squirrel Rd. (on the west side across from Lenox Road.) The small lake on this property is considered by some as a *source* of the main branch of the Rouge River.

**Turn right on Square Lake Road**
Charles L. Bowers School Farm (on left) – The first portion of this 85 acre working farm was purchased in 1967 by the Bloomfield Hills School District where it’s the new home of the Benjamin-Barton Farmhouse and the Craig Log Cabin.

*[Editor's Note: A more extensive version of John’s history bike tour is on the Society website.]*

---

**Our First Log Cabin Day**

Some of the nearly 100 visitors who filled the Craig Log Cabin on Michigan Log Cabin Weekend. Society members were there to tell the story of the Craigs and other owners of the Cabin. Michigan’s log cabins are celebrated the last weekend in June. Plan ahead.

---

**HELP WANTED**

- 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 at info@bloomfieldhistoricalsociety.org. Our mail had “gone missing” for a time but now it’s getting where it belongs – and getting answered.