

April-June 2023

Daisy Fire Estimate 'Just Under \$200,000'

OUR TIME, OUR HISTORY.

PLYMOUTH, MICHIGAN

65 Years Ago May 1958 *Plymouth Mail*

After 70 years of existence in Plymouth without a fire loss, Daisy Manufacturing Co. was this week tallying up its losses in a blaze which destroyed thousands of air rifles and other items last Friday night and resulted in the serious injury of a fireman.

While insurance inspectors and company officials are still busy calculating the loss and determining what can be salvaged, Executive Vice-President Cass Hough announced yesterday afternoon that a "very preliminary, rough estimate would put the loss just under \$200,000."

The fire will result in the largest loss in the city since February 1954 when fire burned out Fashion Shoes and damaged two other stores with a loss of \$75,000.



Daisy Executive VP Cass Hough, (middle of photo) shown inspecting the fire damage, estimated at a loss of \$200,000 to the warehouse structure and stored air rifles; equal today to a loss of \$2.1 million.

And in answer to rumors that the fire may have been deliberately set, Fire Chief Robert McAllister stated yesterday that "there is no physical evidence of arson."

The fire itself was not a spectacular one — but it was of the most stubborn and difficult variety. The blaze was confined to within 25 feet of the eastern end of a 30 by 100 foot steel warehouse building located between the main building and the railroad.

While fire itself was responsible for total loss of many air rifles, water from a sprinkler system soaked other parts of the warehouse, and caused damage to other guns and parts which probably cannot be repaired.

The fire trucks left the scene at 1:15 a.m. Saturday but two men remained with a hose until 11 a.m.

As for the cause, Fire Chief McAllister said that when Inspector Paul Sanders reached the fire with the first truck, there was rubbish burning and blowing from a rubbish pile many yards away. Some burning papers were even blowing up to the main building.

Hough said that workers had been burning rubbish at the usual place during the afternoon and they reported that they thought the fire had burned out when they left. The last workers leave at 4:30.

At about 6:15 p.m., a watchman discovered the fire and called the fire department. Two employees vainly fought the fire with plant hoses. Although the warehouse is steel, a side door was wood and fire had burned through it.

It was only the day before that the warehouse had been completely filled, Hough said. It contained mostly air rifles, many of them for a special order for Sears & Roebuck and Montgomery - Ward. There was also dies, gun parts and assorted rivets.

Amazingly, on May 2, 1958, the day after Daisy shut down production in preparation for the company's move to Rogers, Arkansas, a fire swept through a warehouse building that housed air rifles specially ordered by Sears and Montgomery Ward. It was determined the cause of the fire was due to drifting ashes from a burning rubbish pile several yards away from the warehouse. During the fire, employees let local boys walk away with large quantities of air rifles. Two weeks later, the city commission was considering an air rifle ordinance to address the unsafe proliferation of misguided BB gun firings.

Hough said this week that the loss represented only five percent of the firm's warehouse supply, but a third of it did consist of special merchandise readied for the two big mail order firms. "It will slow our deliveries to Wards and Sears but the stock loss is comparatively small."

Looking back over the air rifle company's 70 years, Hough said that this is their first fire loss. The same insurance company has written the policies during the entire 70 years.

Plymouth Historical Museum
 155 South Main Street
 Plymouth, Michigan 48170
<http://www.plymouthhistory.org>
<http://www.facebook.com/plymouthhistory>
 734-455-8940 Fax: 734-455-7797

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Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday
 1-4 PM all days
 Open year round (except some holidays)

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The Museum Memo is printed four times a year.

Monthly Drawing

Suzanne Curtiss, John Wilson, and BJ Haire are the respective winners of the April, May, and June drawings for a \$25 gift certificate.

Kroger Plus Card Donations



Thank you to those who have added the Plymouth Historical Society to their **Kroger Plus Card**. The Museum receives a small percentage from any purchases made by those who have an up-to-date registration on their cards.

To participate in the program, visit www.krogercommunityrewards.com. Click on "Michigan" and click on "Enroll."

You must have a valid online account at Kroger.com to participate. If you need help, give us a call at 734-455-8940 ext. 9. We'll be happy to help you get enrolled.



1958 Advertisement



New Members—Welcome!

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We appreciate your support!

The Plymouth Historical Museum is a privately funded 501(c)3 charitable organization. We receive no government funding. We always have a "wish list" of things that help us as we work to preserve and share the history of Plymouth.

Here are some of our common purchases to provide inspiration:

- 1 Roll Postage Stamps **\$63** per
- IT/Network support **\$500**
- ½ month heating bill **\$375**
- ½ month electric bill **\$475**
- 1 month employee salary **\$600**

To donate, make your check payable to the Plymouth Historical Museum.

Bits 'n Pieces

By Elizabeth Kelley Kerstens, executive director

The 2023-2024 Museum Board elections were successfully completed in May. Thank you to everyone who mailed in a ballot! The full Board is listed on page 2. Returning board members elected were Jeff Ashton, Steve Beltran and Kathy Sullivan. We would like to thank Ernie Hughes, outgoing Board member, who served for six years. The new Board officers are:

President	Tim Tingstad
Vice President	Stephanie Hoff
Secretary	Kathy Sullivan
Treasurer	Jim Burroughs

Free Summer Saturdays are in full swing at the Museum and we've been getting plenty of visitors! Please keep in mind that the Museum will be closed June 26-July 18. A Big Thank You goes to our Free Summer Saturdays sponsors:

June	Blackwell Ford
July	Growth Works
August	Bill Brown Ford

In June Stella Contracting replaced the external stairwell cover with a more modern, protective covering (see photo). The previous roof was more than 50 years old and was falling apart.



Exhibit Upgrades

The train depot upgrade, funded primarily by the Dunning Foundation, opened in February. At the end of April, when everything in the upgrade was completed, we had a very successful grand opening. Visitors even received a treat of baked goods when they departed, compliments of our Master Baker Ellen Elliott!

Spurred on by the popularity of this recent exhibit upgrade, we are looking at the next area to remake. Keep in mind that most of the exhibit spaces on the Museum's main floor were created more than 50 years ago!

We are planning to enclose the Victorian rooms while allowing visitors to walk through the home. We also want to take advantage of the high ceiling in the area, and add a second floor there for more exhibit storage space. We are in desperate need of additional space!

Plans are moving forward and a lot of funds are needed to make this a reality. Please consider making a targeted donation for this exhibit enhancement, in honor of the 75th anniversary of the Plymouth Historical Society! Thank you!!!

Visit the Museum Store!

The store features an assortment of gifts and books pertaining to Plymouth's history. Museum admission is not required to visit the store. Museum Hours: Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, & Sunday, 1-4 pm. 155 S. Main Street, Plymouth, 734-455-8940.

Wanted: 3-ring binders for the archives. We prefer 2- or 3-inch binders, but 1-inch binders are also welcome!

Ticket Sale Dates for Upcoming Events

Date	Event	Members	Public
Aug. 13	Abracadabra Ice Cream Social	Now	June 26
Oct. 21	Things That Go Bump in the Night	Aug. 21	Sept. 4
Oct. 28	Plymouth Ghosts Cemetery Walk	Aug. 28	Sept. 11
Dec. 2	Winter Wonderland Murder Mystery	Oct. 2	Oct. 16

**Donations Received
March – May 2023 Thank You!**

Thank you for the following generous donations that were received between March and May 2023:

**The Starkweather
(\$500–\$999)**
Gary Gray

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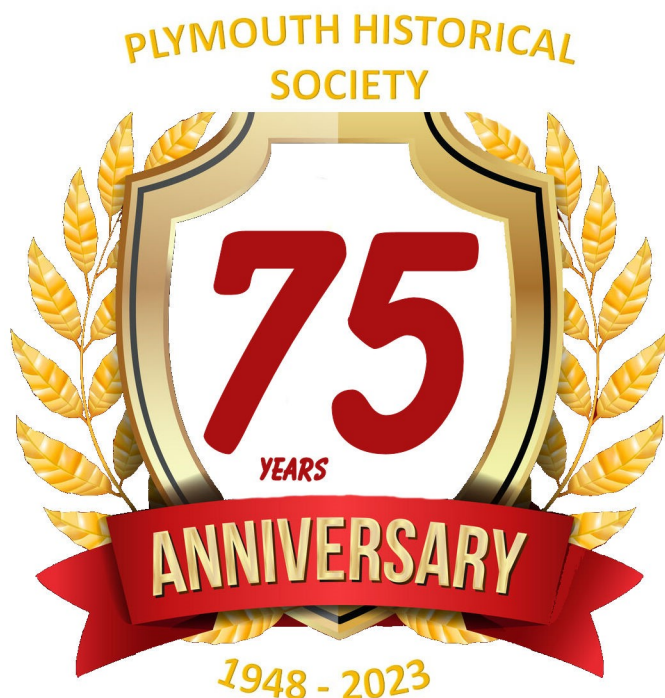
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56 Years Ago
June 1967
Plymouth Mail

Letters To Editor

Where Were The Flags?

Dear Editor:

It was my lot to be visiting Plymouth on Memorial Day, and I am sure it was with gratification that observance chairmen in some of your neighboring communities let Plymouth have more than its share of gremlins.

Where else was the business area virtually devoid of flags? (Certainly not Northville, Livonia or Farmington!)

Where else did the public address system break down just before the day's principal speaker was to deliver the traditional Memorial Day address?

Where else did the master of ceremonies introduce a distinguished veteran who wasn't even present?

Really, though, it was that matter of the flags that prompted this brief letter. All I could see were those at the City Hall, the Secretary of State's office, a funeral home and one business office facing the park on Ann Arbor Trail.

Why weren't flags flying in front of all other downtown business houses?

I hope your people cooperate better when they put on that big Centennial. Undoubtedly, you have plenty of committees already set up for that affair, but maybe you also should add an anti-gremlin chairman.

A Visitor



On the Wrong Track?

A history of railroading in Plymouth reveals mishaps, interesting rules

THE Plymouth Historical Museum has been the repository for the Pere Marquette Historical Society archives since September 2021. The company-wide records contain an eclectic mix of photos, operational documents, maps, manuals, and other ephemera. In December 2022, the collection grew by 90 banker's boxes of personnel and organizational records that are still being processed. The importance of these additional records to genealogical research cannot be overstated.

The Pere Marquette Railroad (PMRR) was formed in 1900 as a result of the consolidation of four Michigan-based railroads. By 1947, Chesapeake & Ohio Railway had acquired PMRR, therefore these records represent PMRR and its predecessors.

Many of the personnel records contain only an employment application with one or two documents.

To give a taste for what you might find in this collection here are a few examples.

Roy Harris Rexford applied in Plymouth on April 6, 1920, to be a brakeman. His address is listed as Flint, where his wife and daughter

were living. His mother was living in Minneapolis. He was 24, 140 pounds, five foot, six inches tall, with light-colored hair and gray eyes. His work history is listed, including his service in the Army during WWI. Rexford resigned April 21, 1920, returning all of the railroad property he was issued.

While his employment was short, he left behind a valuable genealogical document.

John E. Spaulding applied in Saginaw on November 30, 1906, to be a brakeman and switchman. He resigned from his previous employment after some difficulties that seemed to follow him to his new employment. By March 1907, he was dismissed from PMRR for his handling of a large load of potatoes in Plymouth. Under his direction, the potato cars ran amuck and struck other cars so hard that a stove was overturned, resulting in a fire and major damage.

William Scott Kelly applied in Flint on July 2, 1920, to be a switchman. The comprehensive application asks the question, "Do you use intoxicating liquors of any kind or to any extent?" Kelly's response was "No sir." On September 10,



1920, Kelly was at Pierce's Restaurant



adjacent to the Plymouth depot when he was discovered to be drunk and disorderly and behaving unreasonably. He was arraigned before Justice Phoebe Patterson, who sentenced him to 30 days in the Detroit House of Corrections. As a result, he was dismissed from duty for violating "Rule G." According to Rules for the Government of Employees [sic] of the Pere Marquette Railway Co., reissued September 1, 1920, Rule G reads, "The use of intoxicants by employes is prohibited. Their use or the frequenting of places where they are sold is sufficient cause for dismissal."

PERE MARQUETTE RAILROAD COMPANY.



D-Day Still Vivid in Mike's Mind

The chance that Mike Bodak will forget the date of June 6 is as slight as the possibility he will ever walk again. Neither is likely to happen.

He landed at Normandy swinging from the shroud lines of a parachute. He left France on a stretcher.

Mortar shrapnel deeply imbedded in his neck will see to that, as unrelentingly as time itself would otherwise try to wash the memories from his mind.

And this Thursday — June 6, 1963 — will be the 19th 'anniversary' for Bodak and the hundreds of thousands of other GI's who unleashed the greatest land-sea combat invasion in man's history.

It is the day, 19 years ago, of the Normandy landings, a day of fear, gallantry and death. Mike nearly tasted them all. Only his indomitable strength averted the last one.

Born in Verona, Mich., in the Upper Peninsula, Mike enlisted in the Army in 1941, took officer candidate school at Ft. Benning and was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1942.

OUR TIME, OUR HISTORY. PLYMOUTH, MICHIGAN

60 Years Ago
June 1963
Plymouth Mail

He volunteered for airborne duty, took jump school at Benning and was assigned to the 508th Parachute Regiment, which later became a unit within the famed 82nd Airborne Division.

Along with other airborne units, his were assigned as part of the invasion force for D-Day. He was shipped to England, a first lieutenant by then.

Mike and 20 other troopers took off in darkness that night 19 years ago, aboard a C-47 cargo plane. Their drop zone was near the town of Etienneville and their objective was a nearby causeway.

From a height of 600 feet, Bodak was only seconds from the ground. He landed on the slope of a hill and barely had time to slip out of his parachute harness when a machine gun fired on him.

Scrambling through heavy forests, Mike became a casualty when a mortar round

burst in the trees and shrapnel pitted his neck and back and tore off much of one heel.

In 1963, disabled veteran Army Captain and Paratrooper, Mike Bodak, resided at 346 Sheldon Road in Plymouth, in a house designed for a person confined to a wheelchair. Photo 1942.



On June 4, 1963, to commemorate the 19th anniversary of D-Day, the Plymouth Mail featured Plymouth resident and disabled veteran, Army Captain Mike Bodak. Captain Bodak bravely served as a member of the famed 82nd Airborne Division that parachuted into the Normandy region of northern France, during the pre-dawn hours of June 6, 1944. He was severely wounded during the invasion and was permanently confined to a wheelchair. Captain Bodak was awarded the purple heart and bronze star medals.

For two and one-half months, Bodak lay near death in a German hospital until Gen. Patton's swift-moving tanks freed him. He was flown first to England, then to the United States, eventually arriving at Percy Jones Hospital in Battle Creek.

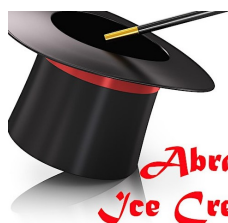
He was awarded the purple heart and bronze star and, after nearly two years of

endless operations, was released from the hospital in 1947.

Promoted to captain and retired for medical reasons, Mike receives a full disability pension. He is still a regular visitor to the VA hospital in Ann Arbor, where doctors treat him like one of themselves.

When he was discharged from Percy Jones in 1947, doctors gave him five years to live. The extra decade, Mike says with a twinkle in his eye, isn't "borrowed time," but instead is a "bonus" for good behavior.

Today, Mike Bodak lives at 346 Sheldon Rd., in a house designed and built for a man confined to a wheelchair. He is resigned, but not bitter.



Abracadabra Ice Cream Social

Sunday, August 13, 2023, 2 - 4 pm

Children must be at least 4 years old, no exceptions. Limit of 30 children, so don't hesitate to purchase your tickets! Tickets are \$30 for one adult and one child; tickets are \$15 for additional attendees.

The ice cream social is sponsored by Greko Printing and Imaging. Meet Magician Dan Jones! Learn magic tricks and enjoy ice cream and cookies.

Plymouth Historical Museum 155 S. Main Street, Plymouth, MI 48170

75 Years Ago
April 1948
Plymouth Mail

Plymouth Pioneer Resident Dies at Age of 80 Years

Mary E. Conner (1868-1948), was the daughter of Michael Conner (1821-1895), who was the owner of Conner Hardware, a historic landmark in downtown Plymouth.

One of Plymouth's pioneer residents, Miss Mary E. Conner, died at the Gertrude Hanlon Convalescent home early Monday morning, April 14, following a stroke. She was 80 years of age.

Funeral services were held yesterday, Thursday, April 22, at 2 p.m. from the Schrader Funeral Home.

Miss Conner's father came to this country from Greenwich, England. Before settling permanently in Plymouth, he is reported to have traveled to California in 1852 during the gold rush. Following Mr. Conner's return, he opened the Conner Hardware store at the corner of Penniman avenue and Main street in 1857. It was in the family home behind the hardware where Miss Conner was born.

She graduated from Plymouth High school, later becoming associated in the business with her father and brother. Following the death of her father, however, she relinquished the duties and her brother, William T. Conner carried on the business.



The Conner family home at 1103 Penniman Avenue. The house was built in 1895. Photo circa 1900.

Volunteer Spotlight

Jim Balgooyen



Please welcome one of our newest volunteers, Jim Balgooyen, who just started as a Museum guide at the beginning of May. Volunteering is certainly part of Jim's family as his wife, Carol (Strayer), has also volunteered in the Museum archives. Both are longtime Plymouth residents, living in the area for more than 35 years. Jim and Carol have two daughters, a veterinarian in California and an environmental chemist in Duluth, Minnesota.

Jim was born and raised in Muskegon. He graduated from Mona Shores High School and attended the University of Michigan, receiving a BA in economics. He then attended Michigan State University and earned his MBA and at the same time met his future wife, Carol. I asked Jim where his allegiance was during football season. Jim took the safe road and said "I like them both...until they play each other." After a little arm bending, he admitted he leaned more to the maize and blue.

That is not surprising, since Jim spent most of his career at U of M. He worked for 33 years in the U of M Athletic Department, rubbing shoulders with the likes of Bo Schembechler, Lloyd Carr and Jim Harbaugh. Jim began his career there as the business manager and retired from U of M with the position of chief financial officer.

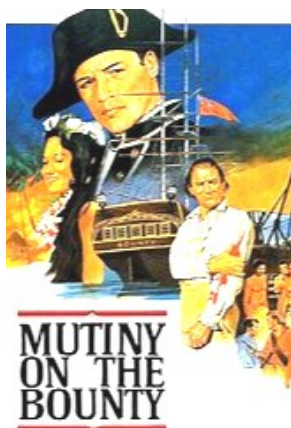
It was interesting to note that Jim vacations every year on Mackinac Island. His family inherited a home from his parents north of the airport and shares the home with his brothers and sisters every summer. Jim explained it is a great time for family fun; walking and biking around the island.

Jim admits he has always had an affection for history, being an avid reader of history books. Besides his desire to do volunteer work in his retirement years, Jim felt helping at the Plymouth Historical Museum was the perfect choice. During his time volunteering at the Museum, Jim has been impressed with the passion for history shown by his fellow volunteers and Museum visitors.

We heartily wish Jim the best of luck in his new venture!

—Written by Mike Woloszyk, Museum marketing director

Thank You Volunteers! Volunteers Make a Difference!



Penn Theatre
Plymouth, Michigan

Plymouth Days Gone By

Compiled by Gerry Sabatini from the newspaper archives
at the Plymouth District Library

Service With A Smile; That's Motto Of Mayor

61 Years Ago
December 1962
Plymouth Mail

After almost 10 years of constant service to the city and the community as mayor for two years and mayor pro-tem for four, Robert Sincock, genial, popular service station owner, it's located in the heart of the downtown business section at the corner of Main and Ann Arbor Trail—is ready to take a rest and enjoy life with his wife, Dorothy, and three children, Mary Ann, 14; Craig, 10; and Paul, 5, in their home at 1370 Penniman.

Bob ends his long service with the Plymouth City Commission next April when he finishes his second four-year term as an elected commissioner and almost two years as an appointee to fill the unexpired term of the late Henry Fisher.

His only regret as he gets ready to leave office is that he won't be a member of the Commission to see the completion of the proposed new City Hall and the new reservoir. Both have been his prime objectives during his long tenure as a public servant.

Bob was born and raised in Calumet in the Upper Peninsula where he operated a men's clothing store for 12 years before moving to Plymouth some 20 years ago.

It was in Calumet that he wooed, won and married his wife Dorothy.

Shortly after becoming a resident of Plymouth, Bob took a position with Burroughs Corp. as a foreman-supervisor and was employed there for seven years before getting the urge to meet the public again as the owner of the service station in the downtown location.

That was quite a change for it meant getting up in the early morning hours to open the station, working as many as 14 to 16 hours and then back home for dinner and a bit of sleep before getting ready for another day of the same type.

"Things were rough in the early days," recalls Bob. "It was go all the time and I mean go. I changed tires, worked on cars, washed them, changed oil and grease and did everything that goes with the operation of a service station."

But things picked up and Bob has found the operation a profitable one over the years, advancing to the point where he now has four fulltime employees and only spends eight or 10 hours daily.

And now he's looking forward to having some fun with his family and to more time playing the organ—he admits he's not the best organist in Plymouth but he gets a lot of enjoyment from a session of tickling the keys.

OUR TIME, OUR HISTORY.
PLYMOUTH, MICHIGAN



December 1962. Plymouth Mayor Robert Sincock is shown cleaning the window of a car while attending a gas pump at his Standard Oil service station. Sincock, who owned and operated the station, also represented the city in a leadership role as mayor.



Robert S. Sincock
1916-1986

Robert Sincock, father of Plymouth's current city manager, Paul Sincock, served on the Plymouth City Commission for 14 years, 1954-63 & 1968-73, serving two years as mayor—1961-63. Sincock was born in Calumet and moved to Plymouth in 1943, when he joined Burroughs Corporation as a supervisor for war production work. He was a Plymouth Rotarian for 33 years, and served as its president 1976-77. Sincock's diverse career included owning the Standard Oil service station on Main Street at Ann Arbor Trail, and working as a realtor for the J.L. Hudson Real Estate Company. In addition to Rotary, Sincock's 40 years of volunteer leadership with the Plymouth community included service on the board of directors of the Community Fund, the Plymouth Symphony Society, and the Council on Aging, and chairman of the Fall Festival. He is credited with raising funds to build the present day City Hall, and promoting the construction of the Cultural Center and ice arena.

Denny McLain Turns Organist For Winter

Denny McLain, the Tigers 20-game winner, has found the pitch in another field.

Surprising as it may be, Denny is an outstanding performer on the organ and is much in demand as an instructor.

In the off-season he delights in playing the organ in supper clubs and this winter will be the star attraction in the Champagne Room in the Mayflower Hotel.

All last winter, Denny displayed his organ playing ability in the various suburban locations and proved to be a great gate attraction.

It was because of this popularity that he is being brought to Plymouth for the coming winter.

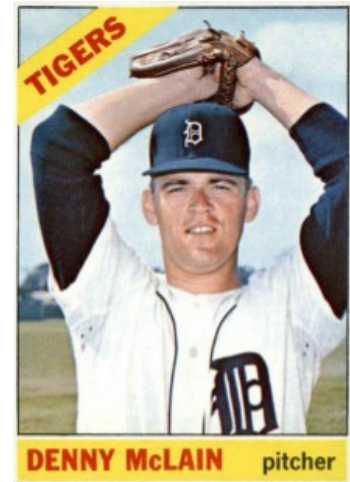
Featured Entertainer at the Mayflower Hotel in Plymouth

Denny is a native of Chicago and once was the property of the Chicago White Sox. However, there came a time when the Sox had to make a choice and they chose Dave DeBusschere, the Detroit boy who is now managing the Pistons.

Ironically, Denny later was claimed by the Tigers and went on to stardom when the Tigers late manager, Charlie Dressen, taught him how to throw a curve.

He won't be throwing curves on the Hammond organ - but his rhythm makes for sweet music.

57 Years Ago
November 1966
Plymouth Mail



Denny McLain, former star pitcher for the Detroit Tigers, (1963-70), won 20 games in 1966. It was a prelude to his 31 win season in 1968 and 24 win season in 1969. In addition to his talent as a baseball player, he was an accomplished organist; a musical skill he learned from his father. During the 1966 offseason, McLain was the featured entertainer at the Mayflower Hotel in Plymouth, when he was hired to play the organ every Saturday night in the hotel's Champagne Room. McLain's in-demand musical talent led to performances in Las Vegas, and television appearances on the Ed Sullivan Show and the Steve Allen Show.

William A. Blunk, One Of Plymouth's Prominent Business Leaders For Many Years, Dies

William A. Blunk
1860-1938

All Business
Places Closed
During Funeral

85 Years Ago May 1938
Plymouth Mail

The city of Plymouth Wednesday afternoon paid final tribute to William A. Blunk, one of its pioneer and most active business leaders, who died Monday at his home after an illness of seven months' duration.

During the funeral hour between 4:00 and 5:00 o'clock, every business house in Plymouth was closed in respect to the memory of a citizen who had, over a long period of years, played an important part in the development of the community.

He was born in Templin, Germany, April 15, 1860 and came to America in 1866, locating in Livonia township. Later the family cleared a farm near New Boston and after living in that locality a few years, he moved with his parents to a farm in Salem township.

It was on September 2, 1885 when he married Miss Minnie M. Bolgos, the wedding taking place in St. Peter's Lutheran church of Plymouth.

Four sons were born to this family, Ben W. Blunk, Manna G. Blunk, Arthur E. Blunk and Irving E. Blunk, who survive with their mother. All of them are well known Plymouth business leaders.

It was about 1905 when Mr. Blunk purchased a farm just one mile south of Plymouth where the family lived for several years. Then in 1913 Mr. and Mrs. Blunk purchased a 40-acre piece of land in the village of Plymouth, which is now known as the William A. Blunk sub-division.

Mr. Blunk built his first home on this sub-division at the corner of Blunk and Williams street. During subsequent years he improved that portion of the city and erected 52 new houses, his home building development being one of the largest and most important ever carried on in this city.

In 1922 he was the organizer of the Blunk Bros. store of which he was made president, a position he had held since that time. While never very active in the store, no person could have been more interested and observing of its progress and expansion than was Mr. Blunk.

He was an active member of St. Peter's Lutheran church nearly half a century, and his faith in his religion endured to the very end. He retained his alert mental facilities to the very end, and was able to recognize every member of his family up to the minute of his passing.

He was an enthusiastic fisherman and in recent years greatly enjoyed the game of quots, of which he became very proficient.

Funeral services were conducted from the church, the Rev. Edgar Hoenecke officiating. He was laid to rest in the mausoleum at Riverside cemetery.

In 1913, William Blunk purchased 40 acres of land in Plymouth, and developed the Blunk subdivision. Blunk Street in Plymouth is one of several streets named for Blunk family members; including Irvin, Arthur, Blanche, William, and Ann Streets. Blunk's first home was built in 1907 at 1012 William Street.

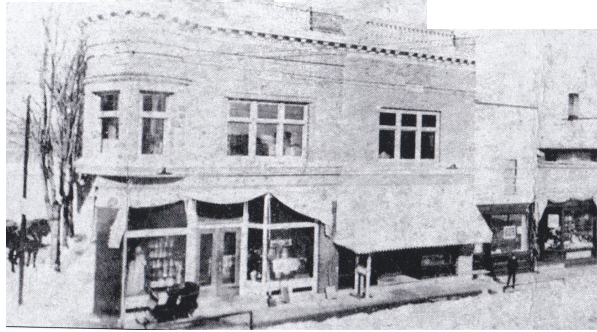
Plan Colonial Face-Lifting For Old Connor Building

Turn-of-the-Century Connor Building Awaits Face-Lifting

*The Conner Building,
circa 1920.*



Conner Hardware built this building in 1884, replacing the original 1857 structure. Photo circa late 1880s. The building was a two-story wooden frame structure and faced Main Street in almost the same location as the present Conner Building. It served as a hardware & lumber company during the early days of Plymouth when the village was an agricultural town. The wooden building was replaced in 1898 with the present brick structure. Conner Hardware closed in the mid 1940s.



A 1963 architectural drawing of the proposed renovation for the Conner Building.

The 65-year-old Connor Building, at the corner of Main St. and Penniman Ave., will undergo a major face-lifting within the next few months, it was revealed this week.

Announcement of plans to colonialize the building, which houses Fisher's Shoes, Cassady's and Austin Vacuum Cleaner, was made by James Houk, principle owner of Fisher's.

The two-story brick structure, a turn-of-the-century landmark, was recently purchased by Mrs. James Houk from Max Moon, whose father-in-law, Michael Connor, constructed the building in 1898.

The building has been leased to Fisher's Shoes, Inc., which in turn will handle the remodeling and sub-leasing.

Architect for the project is Plymouthite Harold Pine, who has already issued a call for construction bids on the face-lifting job. Houk said that the general construction contract will be awarded early next month and that work will begin immediately.

Exterior changes will include the elimination of the many Victorian architectural aspects that link the building to the early 1900's.

A heavy masonry railing that faces Main St. on the top of the building will be removed, Houk explained. Wrought iron railings will be installed around second-story windows and two new display windows will be added to the Penniman Ave. side of the building.

The structure will be painted a soft grey to give further evidence of the colonial theme which dominates the Downtown Plymouth area, Houk said.

Much of Plymouth's earliest history is tied to the site of the present-day Connor Building. The two-story brick structure was preceded by a wooden frame building.

That building, which also faced Main St., was built in 1858 by W. T. Connor, father of Michael Connor. It was a general store and lumber outlet in the days when Plymouth was a sleepy agricultural community, far removed in miles as well as in years from today's metropolitan Detroit.

The wood frame structure was torn down the year of the Spanish-American War to make way for the present red brick building. Michael Connor had assumed leadership of the Connor enterprises from his aging father.

Two additions were made to the original building, one in 1902 and the second in 1922. It has remained essentially the same ever since.

LIBRARY CELEBRATES CENTENNIAL — 1923-2023



PLYMOUTH District Library is celebrating 100 years of serving the people of Plymouth! If there was to be a theme that runs throughout those 100 years, it would highlight community and generosity.

The Plymouth Library was established as a branch of the Wayne County library system in June of 1923, funded in part by a baseball game between the businessmen of Plymouth and neighboring Northville – a community kick-off if ever there was one!

The local Women’s Club was instrumental in the establishment of the library, with humble beginnings of two shelves and 319 books. From its onset, it was a place to explore and connect, both with other locals and with the wide world. Over the years, eager attendance and demand for titles prompted growth from the Village Hall to the “Burgess house” on Main, which was later expanded upon and then replaced by a brick colonial building and eventually replaced again with the 72,000-square-foot building patrons now enjoy.

Plymouth citizens love their library and it’s not hard to see why: our library is committed to service. Early records paint the picture of the many ways the library anticipated and met the information needs of the community, from microfiche ceiling-projected books for bedridden polio patients to non-fiction titles to help locals learn about the countries where their soldiers were stationed. The commitment to serve is strong still today and our library continues to adapt to meet community needs.

In addition to being dedicated to serving the community, our library exists due to the generosity of that same community. The archives tell stories of residents who stepped up to ensure that the library was comfortable and well-equipped. From Scouts who helped move books across Main Street, to Garden Club members who baked cookies for a building dedication to one anonymous patron – cross at being unable to find an easy chair comfortable for reading – who consequently had delivered “two of the easiest library chairs one could hope to find anywhere.”

Never-ending gestures of caretaking such as these are of course shadowed by the generosity of those whose significant contributions provided for the library buildings themselves. These include those for whom the building is named: Bessie Dunning and her daughter Margaret, who in 1944 purchased and donated the Burgess House; and Edward C. Hough and his late sister Mary Hough Kimble, whose foundation funded the replacement of that building in 1958.

Ralph Lorenz Joins U. S. Navy to Fight Country Where He Was Born

On May 24, Lieutenant (junior grade) Ralph Lorenz, United States Navy, reports to the Harvard school of business administration for a brief course, to be followed later by a course of study at Babson Institute.

Lorenz, who has been manager of the Mayflower hotel for the past four years, will be assigned to the division of supply of the navy, where his training in hotel and restaurant management will be utilized.

Lorenz as a youngster, went through the first world war at his home on a farm near Galecia, Austria. That portion of the country after the first war was divided, and his home town became a part of Poland, near the city of Krakow.

In 1921, Ralph and his mother joined his father, who had established a home in Plymouth. Ralph could speak nothing but German, and school became hard for him. But not for long. He worked diligently and long, and was graduated in 1930 from the high school.

Under his management, the hotel has prospered, said Fred Schrader, president of the hotel company. The board of the hotel granted Lorenz a leave of absence to assume his commission in the navy.

Ralph’s parents still live here at their home on Harvey street, and they are extremely proud of their son, who goes to war to fight for an adopted land.

Relatives of Lorenz, still residing in Poland, are now in a concentration camp in Prussia, Ralph said.

Mayflower Hotel Manager Resigns to Enter Service

80 Years Ago
April 1943
Plymouth Mail

*Ralph G. Lorenz
1910-1992
Photo circa 1930s*



Mayflower Crystal Dining Hall May Be Converted Into Sleeping Dorm.

81 Years Ago 1942

So critical has become the rooming situation in Plymouth that the directors of the Mayflower hotel have under consideration the question of closing the Crystal dining room and making it into a sleeping dormitory.

Manager Ralph Lorenz has already converted the popular President’s room into sleeping quarters and at the board of directors meeting Tuesday noon he asked the directors to give consideration to the possibility of conversion of the Crystal room into sleeping quarters.

“We turn away every night from a half dozen to 25 or more people who come here seeking a place to sleep. There have been times when we have permitted people to remain in the lobby over night. No one outside of the hotel business knows just how serious is the situation in Plymouth” stated Manager Lorenz yesterday.

“We have any number of army men stationed near here who cannot find sleeping quarters. Men who come here for the government in connection with affairs at the Kelsey-Hayes or at some of the Ford plants, just cannot find places to sleep”, he stated.

Friends of the Plymouth Historical Museum
155 S. Main Street
Plymouth, MI 48170

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Calendar of Events

Events are at the Museum unless otherwise specified. Tickets can be found at <http://plymouthhistory.org/events/>.

June

- 17-25—Free Summer Saturdays, sponsored by Blackwell Ford.
- 24—Death By Chocolate Murder Mystery—Sold Out
- 25—Last day for “Snapshots of Plymouth.”

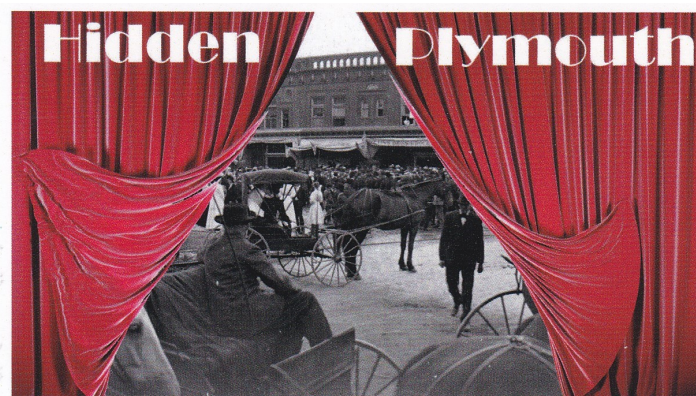
June 26-July 18—Museum closed

July

- 19—Special Exhibit “Hidden Plymouth” opens.
- 22-29—Free Summer Saturdays, sponsored by Growth Works

August

- 5-26—Free Summer Saturdays, sponsored by Bill Brown Ford.
- 13—Abracadabra Ice Cream Social, 2-4 pm.
Tickets on sale now to members; on sale to public June 26.



“Hidden Plymouth”
Sponsored by Joe & Ellen Elliott
and Jim Burroughs

New Special Exhibit
opens Wednesday July 19, 2023

Plymouth Historical Museum
155 S. Main Street, Plymouth