

INSIDE: Dearborn's Only WW1 Casualty

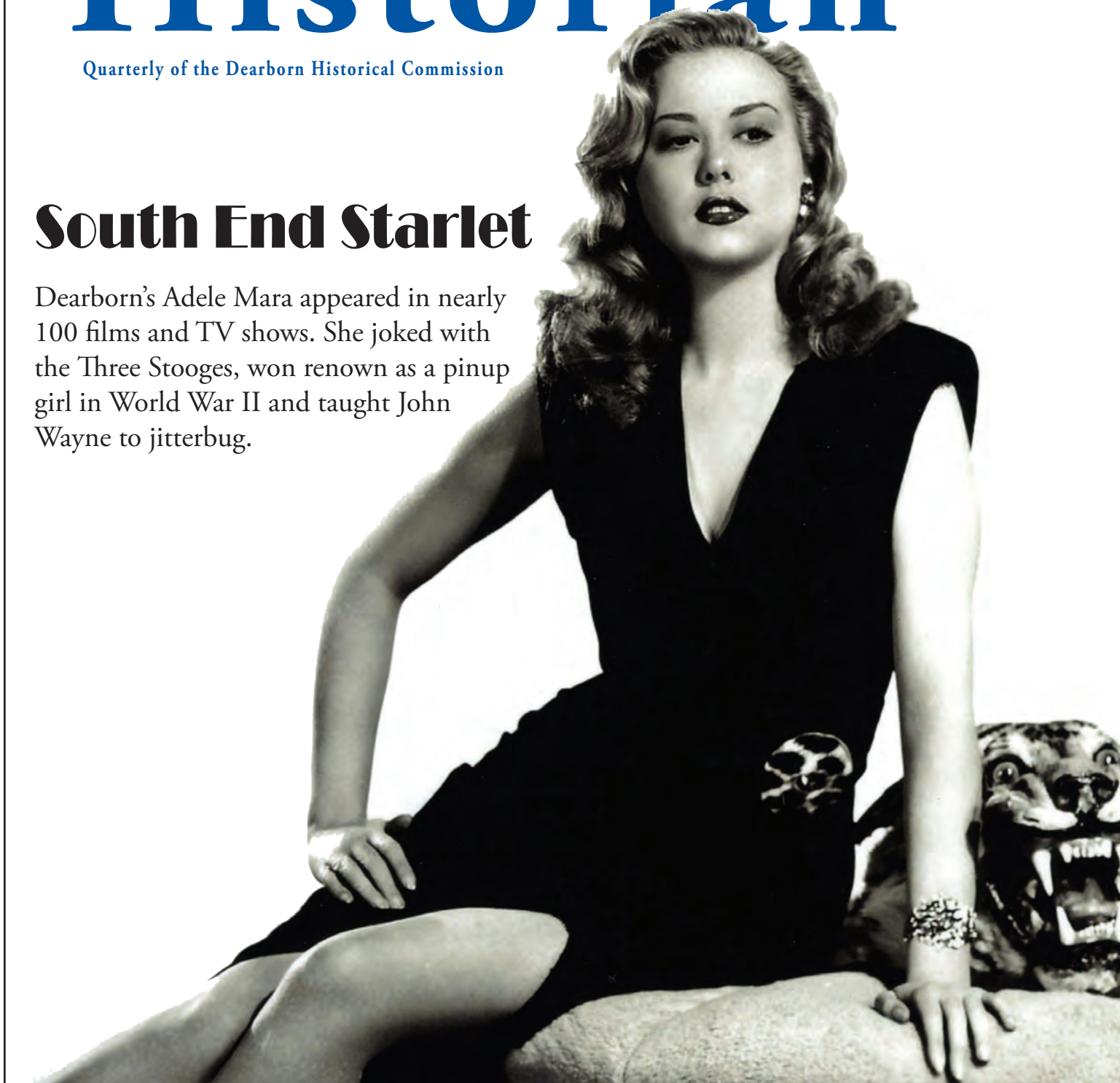


The Dearborn Historian

Quarterly of the Dearborn Historical Commission

South End Starlet

Dearborn's Adele Mara appeared in nearly 100 films and TV shows. She joked with the Three Stooges, won renown as a pinup girl in World War II and taught John Wayne to jitterbug.



The New Editor



Bill McGraw

Please Allow Me to Introduce Myself

I received some good news early this summer: The Dearborn Historian was looking for an editor.

My friend David Good was retiring after putting out The Historian for seven years as a volunteer. To make a long story short, I got the job. This is my first issue. I couldn't be happier.

I've been a reader of The Historian since I moved to Dearborn 30 years ago August. Its stories and photos supported my belief that Dearborn is the most unique and interesting suburb in metro Detroit, with the most compelling history. Warren, Sterling Heights, Troy and Southfield are big and busy. But they don't have Dearborn's mix of auto headquarters; industry; commerce; Mideastern community; restaurants; colleges; shopping; world-class tourist attractions and neighborhoods filled with distinctively designed homes and well-tended parks.

And no suburb has Dearborn's past, from its 18th Century settling to its 19th Century site as a military base to its 20th Century role as one of the world's most famous industrial centers.



David Good

David's editing is a hard act to follow, but I will do my best to maintain his standards and creativity. He will remain as contributing editor and will continue to write stories and contribute in other ways.

"The Historian has a pretty impressive pedigree going back more than 50 years as a journal doing original research," Good told me. "And I'm grateful I had the chance to resurrect it as a volunteer project in 2011 after the Historical Museum stopped publishing for four years. I also appreciate the editorial freedom that Jack Tate gave me after he took over as acting chief curator in 2012.

"During 34 years of writing and editing at the Detroit News, I had a number of jobs I truly considered fun, but nothing was quite as rewarding as being editor of The Historian."

As for me, I'm a local product: I was born in Detroit, and prior to my 1988 move to Dearborn, I had lived in Grosse Pointe, Detroit and St. Clair Shores. I graduated from Wayne State and worked for 37 years at the Free Press as a freelance writer, reporter, sportswriter, editor, columnist and Toronto-based Canada correspondent. I also had a hand in two of the Free Press' non-newspaper successes in recent years, The Detroit Almanac (2000) and "12th and Clairmount" (2017), the Emmy-winning documentary on the 1967 riot.

I want to hear from you. Give me your feedback, your story ideas and even your stories. Write me at billmcgrawdetroit@gmail.com. Lastly, please spread the word about The Historian, and ask your family and friends to subscribe. Subscriptions help us keep Dearborn's fascinating history alive.



Next Issue

Work has been underway for months on Ford Motor's \$1 billion transformation of its research and engineering campus south of Oakwood Boulevard and Michigan Avenue -- the birthplace of the Mustang, among many other iconic cars. Check out The Dearborn Historian's fall issue for a look back on the campus and its early years.

Photo/Millard Berry

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SUMMER 2018 \ VOLUME 55, NUMBER 2



Published by the
Dearborn Historical Commission
915 Brady Street
Detroit, Michigan 48124

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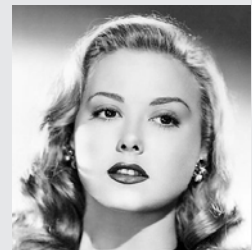
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THE DEARBORN HISTORIAN
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Contents

ON THE COVER:

**Adele Mara:
From Amazon and Eagle
to Hollywood and Vine.**

By Rudy Constantine 4



**Retired Chief John Connolly’s Love Letter
to Dearborn Police 2**

Volunteers Deliver a Great Garage Sale
By L. Glenn O’Kray 7

**The Death and Life of Walter Blankertz, Dearborn’s
Only World War I Casualty**
By Mason Christensen and Abdulkadir Yapici 10

Requiem For a Bowling Alley
By Bill McGraw, 14

**Book Excerpt: How Henry Ford Found a Swedish Solution
to His Problem with Precision**
By Simon Winchester 16

**Despite a Century of Change,
the Wagner Hotel Remains**
By Bill McGraw 19

High School in the Jazz Age 21

Local History in Brief 23



L. Glenn O'Kray

I Just Wanted Them to "Say Yes to History!"

On July 31, the Dearborn City Council chose not to support a millage proposal for the Dearborn Historical Museum. Susan Dabaja was on vacation. Councilman Bob Abraham voted in support of the motion. All others voted in opposition.

The vote followed a year-long effort to put forward a ballot proposal that would cost the average Dearborn household \$17 per year to fund the museum's operating costs, building renovations and an extensive rehabilitation that would have provided space for storage, display and staff. We just wanted to give Dearborn residents the opportunity to decide the museum's future.

Despite that setback, each council person praised Director Jack Tate for his work at the museum. Thank God they recognize his contributions!

It was recognized that the Ross Fund, an endowment of \$571,480 that we received for the sale of land to Andiamo's, has been substantially supporting the museum. But, at the current rate of expenditures, these funds will run out by 2026.

Council members had these concerns: They felt the museum had no long-term plan. They thought that approving a tax increase would bring the city too close to the maximum allowable millage limit, leaving little wiggle room should additional taxes be required for unforeseen projects.

Councilman David Bazy suggested an architect walk through the museum and estimate costs on needed repairs. He said no action should be taken until a plan was determined for the Michigan and Brady corner, next to the museum, which is a vacant parcel that might be developed. Jack Tate and the Dearborn Historical Commission have been open to the use of the property.

Council member Leslie Herrick said in an interview, "I want to see what the museum's vision is for 20 years from now. While it is good that each

second grader is brought in for a day, I would like to know what the museum is planning to attract their families and appeal to other new visitors in the future." She also said that the museum should consider having a capital campaign.

I believe that the city council members are diligent in their concern for the use of tax dollars. I also agree with Councilman Abraham's statement that the museum is being treated differently than the city's other departments. No other city structure has fallen into disrepair without repairs. In my research for the publication "Before Fair Lane," a collection of photos of Dearborn's old homes, I found no other 100-year-old structures that were in nearly the sad state as the museum buildings.

Every second grader in the Dearborn Public Schools has attended a day at the museum for two generations. Jack tells of parents escorting their children on these expeditions and recalling how they themselves had gone on similar trips.

I began volunteering in the school program this past spring. I chuckle when I reflect that one young fellow thought that the pioneers hunted for chickens in the early days of Dearborn. We need the museum to enlighten our youth on our city's fascinating past.

One member of the July 31 audience suggested that Dearborn's history be managed by our sister museum, The Henry Ford. City resident and Dearborn Historical Museum volunteer Jill Franks, a former Henry Ford employee, said that institution did not support Dearborn history. She also said that if the museum closes, Dearborn's history will be lost. I agree.

Resident Janet Good said that many Dearborn residents are looking for the millage proposal on the ballot. Its absence inaccurately will tell some in the community that the museum failed to follow through on the project.

City council members want Jack to go through the process of requesting additional funding for the museum in the next budget process. I just want city council members to treat the museum as they would any other city entity, just as Bob Abraham requested. I just want them to support the motto emblazoned on the t-shirts of those in support of the millage, "Say Yes to History."

Retired Chief John T. Connolly's Love Letter to Dearborn Police

John T. Connolly, who rose from patrolman to chief of the Dearborn Police Department, died Aug. 16 in Spokane, Wash., his retirement home. He was 91. Chief Connolly joined the force in 1949, and wrote the letter below to the DPD when he retired in 1986. The Historian has reprinted the letter exactly as Chief Connolly wrote it; his quirky syntax and punctuation help capture the chief's personality.

I am very sorry i couldn't be with you tonight. about this time, i am in georgia. I think everyone is aware of the high esteem I hold for this department and its employees.

37 years is a long time to work in one place, and i cant believe how quick it passed.

In 1949, when I started, Rakph B.Guy, Sr, was chief of police. eleven of us started together, now only floyd duneke is left.

So many highlites it would take all night to recount. But how many of you remember the new year's eve raid in 1951 of the pastime coffee house. Louis Stanek, Carmen Brown, John Karavas and Baby face Connolly had about 150 people inside the coffee house. oh, I wish i could be here. so many good stories I could tell you.

Funny times, sad times, hard times, when we made \$4,00 a year, and they gave us \$50 raises for the year. great times, great people to work with, Larry Hartom, Mickey Misko, Charlie Schwall, and how about Alvin Dean.

finally they found a job for my talent. I got to work with the police dogs. I was a corporal, and orvie was a sergeant. remember mealy and maggie, orange police cars, yellow police cars, all colors of police cars.

Finally the turning point for the department, and for me personally, John b.

O'reilly was appointed chief of police, and we moved into the 20th century. needless to say, he is probably the man I admire most.

Once again my thanks to him for the opportunity to work for him for almost 20 years. a man of purpose, integrity, and a man you could trust.

I owe so many people past and present, hoss, Frank, Ray, Bob and Jack, especially for their many years of outstanding work that kept me out of trouble, and that wasn't easy. of course, rosie, who put up with me for the last eight years. my thanks to all of them, and to all of you, my friends.

I love you all, and i know that the dearborn police department will continue to be no. 1. best of luck to chief ron, and all of you. keep up the good work. I won't be far away, and i keep an eye on you.

good luck - bless you all!
signed:

Johnt. Conolly
(chief, deputy chief, inspector, lieutenant, sergeant, corporal, patrolman, friend)



Adele Mara: From Amazon and Eagle To Hollywood and Vine

In Dearborn, Adele Was Known As Adelaida Delgado

By Rudy Constantine

Adele Mara and her younger brother Luis smiled with pleasure when Frank Moshonis, owner and manager of the Fordson Theatre on Dix Avenue, awarded them free tickets to the theater for having performed so well in the Saturday matinee talent contest, which always took place in front of a riotous audience of unrestrained pre-teens and early teenagers.

Adele Mara: In Her Own Words

Mara on Xavier Cugat:

"He and his wife were my guardians. When he opened at the Waldorf Astoria at the Starlight Roof, I was there... We worked theaters with Danny Kaye, Abbott and Costello, Ray Bolger. When Cugat was on the radio, I would play castanets in the background."

Mara on John Wayne, with whom she worked on "Flame of the Barbary Coast (1945)," "Sands of Iwo Jima" (1949) and "Wake of the Red Witch:"



Adele Mara and John Wayne.

"When I left Columbia, I was about 18. They needed a girl to dance with John Wayne. He didn't know how to dance so I taught him to jitterbug for "The Fighting Seabees" in 1944. "I said, 'You just do this and I'll do the rest.'"

"I don't know why he drank so much. I think because he was one of the boys. All the group he used to hang around with were that kind of guys... I used to see him all the time and he was one of the sweetest guys in the world. Everybody loved him, but he wasn't very talkative."

Mara on working in television in the 1950s, when the medium was exploding.

"I did do some television, but every time it was lunch I would think about my little kids. I would come home in my clothes, from Warner Bros., feed Tommy and do all kinds of stuff with him and then I'd go back to work. I did a "Markham" (1959-1960) with Ray Milland when I was pregnant, so I can always look at that and say Tommy was in my tummy at that moment."

From "Ladies of the Western," by Michael G. Fitzgerald and Boyd Magers, McFarland and Co. Inc. Jefferson North Carolina

That event was a valuable learning experience for the two siblings; it encouraged them to continue performing. They could not have known (although perhaps wished for) that their lives would become entwined with show business on a national scale. Little did they know that they would leave the South End and travel to eventual success in Hollywood in films and TV, with Adelaida, the family star, leading the way. Certainly, their parents did not have the



With Three Stooges' Larry Fine

slightest idea or hope that this might take place.

In the early 1920s, their parents, Angel and Eloisa Delgado, arrived in New York City from Spain. After passing through Ellis Island, the couple set a path for Detroit, where, soon after, Angel was hired to work at the Ford Highland Park plant on Woodward Avenue. Adelaida was born in 1923, and Luis followed two years later.

In 1925, Angel Delgado, along with thousands of his fellow workers, was transferred to Ford's new Rouge Plant in Dearborn (known at that time as

continued

Fordson, prior to the 1928 consolidation.) The family soon found a new home in the South End at 3253 Amazon, where they remained for as long as they lived in Dearborn.

The parents came from the Seville area of Spain, where flamenco music and dancing were popular; they brought that tradition with them, and both children learned and enjoyed flamenco as they grew. Adelaida loved to sing as well as dance, and early on she was an enthusiastic member of the Roulo Elementary School glee club, along with her best friend Mae Waun. Later, at Salina School, Adelaida and Luis often demonstrated flamenco at various school functions as well as at the Fordson Theatre.

In the late 1930s, Adelaida and her friends, Waun, Virginia Mann and Virginia Constantine, often traveled across town to Eastwood Gardens, at Gratiot Avenue and 8 Mile Road. Eastwood was one of the largest open-air dance pavilions in the country, where such popular big bands as Glen Miller, Artie Shaw and Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey were among



Adele in a pose typical of the pinup art of the 40's.

many who performed there.

One night, Xavier Cugat and his Latin American orchestra were on stage. When the musicians took a break, Cugat liked to hold an impromptu talent contest. Adelaida competed, and, while she failed to win, Cugat liked what he saw and offered her a chance to join his group. A few months later and a little over one year after her Salina School graduation, with mother Eloisa in tow, Adelaida traveled train to

Adele Mara

Born: Adelaida Delgado, April 28, 1923, Highland Park, Michigan.

Died: May 7, 2010, California.

Childhood: Lived on Amazon Street in Dearborn's South End, attended Roulo and Salina schools.

Career highlights: Mara danced as part of bandleader Xavier Cugat's show as a teenager... spotted by a Columbia talent agent at 18...Changed name to Adele Mara...Had nearly 100 film and television credits...Played Rita Hayworth's younger sister in a Fred Astaire film, "You Were Never Lovelier" (1942)...Appeared with John Wayne in "Wake of the Red Witch" (1948)...and "Sands of Iwo Jima" (1949)...taught Wayne to jitterbug in "The Fighting Seabees" (1944)...played a receptionist in "I Can Hardly Wait," with the Three Stooges...starred with John Carroll in "Angel in Exile" (1948) and with Chester Morris in "Alias Boston Blackie" (1942)...Mara's numerous

appearances in western films include "Robin Hood of Texas" (1947) with Roy Rogers and "Twilight on the Rio Grande" with Gene Autry... In 1942, she was voted Miss Pin-Up of the Year by Yank, the army weekly magazine.

Family: Mara's husband, Roy Huggins, was a producer and writer of such television classics as "Maverick" and "77 Sunset Strip"...Mara and Huggins had three sons, John, Thomas and James. Huggins died in 2002.

New York, where she sang and danced with Cugat's orchestra at the Copacabana Club, the famed 60th Street night spot.

Within a year Adelaida was spotted and signed by a movie talent scout. She changed her name to Adele Mara and moved with her mother and Luis to Hollywood, where she initially played leading ladies in a series of movies with such stars as Chester Morris and Joe E. Brown. In 1942, she was voted Miss Pin-Up of the Year by Yank, the Army Weekly Magazine, which had a circulation of more than 2.5 million during World War II.

In the early 1940's, Adele accompanied her mother back to Dearborn, where Eloisa rejoined Angel Delgado in their home on Amazon. Adele took advantage of her trip to meet up with old neighborhood friends. This writer recalled returning home from Salina School one afternoon and encountering Adele Mara sitting on a sofa in the family living room. He had seen her in a Boston Blackie film, but was not aware of her history with the South End and her friendship with his older sister Virginia; he was quite impressed by her obvious beauty and charm. A few days later, Adele left for California. The parents remained in Dearborn until they left to join Adele and Louis in California several years later.

Following "Alias Boston Blackie" and other similar movies, in the 1940's Adele changed movie studios and starred in a number of westerns with Gene Autry, Roy Rogers and Tex Ritter. With Gene Autry, ("Twilight on the Rio Grande"), she was Elena del Rio, searching for her father's killer. Also, during this period, she played the owner of a trading post in "Riders of the Northwest Mounted."

During the course of her career, Adele appeared in more than 40 films. Leading man Victor Mature was one of her later co-stars; she was his wife Maria in "The Big Circus," a film not well-received by critics. Adele also starred with John Wayne in "Wake of the Red Witch" and "Sands of Iwo Jima," her best-remembered role. "Sands of Iwo Jima," nominated

for four academy awards, was set on the Pacific island where U.S. Marines, after 36 days of fighting and suffering more than 26,000 casualties, defeated Japanese forces. Those marines are now memorialized by the statue in Arlington, Virginia, as they planted the American flag atop Mount Suribachi.

In the early 1950s, Adele retired from films and married Roy Huggins, a successful TV producer ("Maverick," "The Rockford Files" and "The Fugitive"). They raised three sons, Thomas, John and James.

In the late 50's Adele returned to performing in a series of guest spots on various TV programs, including three episodes of "Maverick," produced by her husband.

On May 7, 2010, Adele Mara (Adelaida Delgado) passed away from natural causes in Pacific Palisades, California, a long way from 3253 Amazon and the South End.

Luis Delgado acted in TV and in a few films, usually associated with James Garner. Luis and Garner had a 40-year friendship beginning with the popular "Maverick" TV show in which Garner starred and Luis had a smaller role. In another Garner success, the long-running "Rockford Files," Luis had a recurring role as Officer Billings. He never changed his name.

Rudy Constantine, who grew up in Dearborn's South End, is a dedicated researcher of the neighborhood's history.



Volunteers Deliver a Great Garage Sale; More than 1,500 Visit Historical Museum Event

By L. GLENN O'KRAY

The Dearborn Historical Museum held its best ever garage sale this summer.

Rick Danes, president of the Museum Guild of Dearborn, and Jack Tate, museum curator, reported the sale raised a total of \$10,253.

The museum added a bonus this summer -- a trunk sale. Some 28 vendors paid an additional \$315 to sell their wares. And I am happy to report that shoppers purchased \$500 worth of the Museum Guild's wonderful book, "Before Fair Lane."

Assistant Curator Matt Graff was pleased with

the results. "We'll probably never be able to match this one," he said.

Assistant Curator Andrew Kercher walked the grounds with a large mallet, telling customers that he was "smashing prices." Chet Daughman had fun thanking shoppers for coming to "the Museum Mall."

The big seller? Manikins.

The staff had many to sell because they once served some purpose but no one is sure what that purpose was.

continued



Brad Zieg and an unidentified shopper.



Barbara Goldi, Rick Danes and Patty Wallace

Many museum supporters look forward to coming to this event every year.

“I had a medical treatment yesterday, but I was determined to come to the sale,” said Elaine Miles.

Not only did buyers come in cars, but also on bikes. One rider was seen carting off a large radio in his basket. City Councilwoman Leslie Herrick was proud of her purchase of a slightly used purse.



Irma Danes

Sales of this variety bring all types of shoppers. Irma Danes reported that one girl was caught trying to steal a bicycle. The girl claimed Irma’s husband, Rick, said she could have it. No charges were pressed and the girl left without the bike.

Then there is the subject of negotiating. Irma also reported that one fellow wanted the price of a pair of



Aaron Schrader

shoes reduced from \$3 to \$2 because they were too small. She suggested that he get another pair instead. He then wanted the price reduced because the shoes were too big.

Mason Christensen was tickled pink that representatives from different museums came as well. And all shoppers were not local; some came from the outer edges of metro Detroit.

Leftover items from the guild’s sale were donated to that organization.

continued



Laura Lauer

However, no project of this type can be done without the hard work not only of staff but also of volunteers. I cannot tell you the number of hours that they worked, but I can tell you that they worked really hard. That included setting up the tents and

Volunteers who helped make this event a success came from the museum staff and historical volunteer community, as well as member groups of the Museum Guild of Dearborn. Those participating groups included the Dearborn Democratic Club, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Creative Flower Arrangers Guild, Dearborn Garden Club, the Dearborn Genealogical Society, Dearborn Historical Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, Dearborn Herb Study Society, and Michigan Arts to the People.

Without our volunteers, we would get nowhere. Thank you, one and all!



booths, selling goods, carrying goods to cars, and dismantling the “store.”



Andrew Kercher and Leslie Herrick

The Death and Life of Walter Blankertz,

Dearborn's Only World War I Casualty

By MASON CHRISTENSEN and ABDULKADIR YAPICI

Sgt. Walter Blankertz was a fierce and cunning soldier who advanced on German lines while firing his .40-caliber pistol and used his language skills to trick the enemy into deadly traps. His military friends said he smiled even in the face of death.

At 4 p.m. on August 1, 1918, a short burst of artillery fire hit a shell hole in eastern France, where Blankertz and fellow soldiers of the 120th

Machine Gun Battalion were resting. The rounds killed Blankertz and five other men, just hours after they had attacked a German position.

Blankertz became the only Dearborn casualty during World War I, but his memory lived on for years.

Walter Blankertz was born January 14, 1895, the son of Herman and Caroline Blankertz. His father was a native of the Monroe area, where

continued



Walter, left, with his mother and neighbor children in front of his father's harness shop on Michigan, between Mason and Monroe.

he learned the harness-making trade. Herman served as a cavalry saddler in the U.S. Army in Texas and Mexico from 1885 to 1890. Stories of his military experience may have later influenced Walter to become a soldier.

Herman Blankertz returned to Michigan in 1891 and married Caroline Tillman during a ceremony in Wyandotte. The Blankertz family first lived in the small, former office building used as part of the military arsenal in Dearborn. They later moved to a home owned by D. P. Lapham at the corner of Mason and Garrison streets and eventually settled in Shillalah, a former tavern that had been moved from Mason Street to Michigan Avenue, where Walter was born. During the late 1890s Herman bought a feed store from William Schultz and moved it to 22064 Michigan, between Mason and Monroe. For the next 53 years, Herman operated his harness and other businesses at that location.

Walter Blankertz enlisted in Company F of the 31st Michigan National Guard Infantry Regiment on January 2, 1915, and was assigned to Company C of the 120th Machine Gun Battalion. He would be one of fewer than 200 men who served in World War I from the village of Dearborn and Dearborn Township, which were then small, but growing, with a combined 1920 population of 7,676.

Walter was part of a substantial Dearborn German-American community that served in the military or helped in the war effort. An interview with Lieutenant Thomas Williams published in the Detroit Journal noted that Blankertz was a fluent German speaker who used that ability against enemy forces. Blankertz would sneak up to German lines and issue fake orders so he could kill soldiers who left the protection of trenches.

Blankertz served in the Alsace sector



Blankertz in his army uniform.

in eastern France. His unit participated in the Second Battle of the Marne -- the turning point of the war -- during the last days of his life. During the afternoon of July 31, 1918, the 120th received an order to support infantry forces that had captured ground from German troops. When other soldiers were dispatched, the rest of unit was left in a state of uneasiness, according to "Do You Remember When?" a history of

continued



The procession to Northview Cemetery during Blankertz's interment in 1921.

Blankertz's regiment. They all knew they would be joining their colleagues at the front line the next day. During that afternoon, Sergeant Blankertz -- also known "Baldy" and "The Smiler" -- was reportedly silent. Fellow soldiers slapped him on the back to help him shake off feelings of dread before advancing on the enemy. He eventually smiled.

During the morning of August 1, 1918, the rest of the 120th machine gun regiment was to be involved in an attack upon a German position atop Hill 212 and Hill 230 near Sergy, in the Aisne department of France. Stationed near the foot of the hill, Blankertz's commander, Captain Sharp, told the troops, "the time is here, you will go over with the second wave, a section of machine guns with a company of infantry."

When it came time for the second wave to attack, Blankertz's unit spread out into columns that ran abreast of advancing infantry. Blankertz was an impressive sight during the attack, "striding ahead of his guns, with his pistol spitting round after round of .40-caliber lead into the ranks of crying Bosche," according to the unit history.

In the meantime, his comrade, Albert (Hetz) Hetzel, killed a German sniper while fighting alongside Walter. After gaining considerable territory, Blankertz and other members of the 120th found shelter in a shell hole to gain some rest and mount their machine guns.

Around 4 p.m., a German aircraft dropped a flare over the location of Blankertz's Company C to provide a firing point for artillery. Initial shells widely missed the Americans' location. But suddenly multiple shells slammed into their position, killing Blankertz and five other colleagues. Of approximately 40 soldiers hiding in that hole, only about 12 remained unharmed. Blankertz was buried at the top of the Hill 212, between the communities of Sergy and Cierges.

Back home, Blankertz's death was commemorated multiple ways in 1919. Dearborn Township approved a proposal to plant trees along roadways dedicated to local soldiers who lost their lives in military service. In February 1919, Emmanuel Lutheran Church held a memorial service for Blankertz and Fred Kaschefsky, who

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had died of influenza in military camp. To commemorate his military service, the Veterans of Foreign Wars named Post No.134 after Sgt. Blankertz. It was licensed on May 7, 1919, and Dearborn Township inaugurated the chapter and its colors on Memorial Day. Meetings of the organization took place in the McFadden-Ross House, part of the Dearborn Historical Museum today.

Blankertz's remains eventually were returned to Dearborn. On August 7, 1921, he was re-interred in Northview Cemetery after a full military funeral.

For years, the VFW held a ceremony at Blankertz' grave every Memorial Day. But the Blankertz chapter of the VFW -- which once counted 1,250 members -- closed in 2013 because of declining membership.

Military friends of Walter Blankertz wrote a poem for him that was featured in his unit's history, "Do You Remember When?"

(Dedicated to Our Sergeant, Walter Blankertz. From the Members of His Section Whom He So Nobly Led Into Battle on the Morning of August First, Nineteen Hundred and Eighteen)

They Called him "Smiler" over there
 And we who knew him know
 Just what his sunshine meant to them
 When days were black and nights aglow
 With bombs that blew their works away
 And men to bits. His smile was glad
 In face of death- a snatch of heaven
 Out there in hell where men went mad.

"He lost his life," the people say;
 But we who knew him know
 He gave his life, his friends, his work,
 His Hopes laid by- the first to go-
 As in the days before we knew



**Walter Blankertz is the only name on the World War I marker at the veterans' memorial at the Henry Ford Memorial Library. The World War II marker, in background, contains 250 names.
 Photo/Bill McGraw**

Why Christ ascended Calvary.

Where poppies grow his body lies,
 But we who knew him know
 Not guns of men nor fangs of beasts
 Can e'er destroy the living glow
 Of love his smile spreads 'long the path
 Of us, who walked a way with him
 And basked awhile in sunshine rare
 And learned to smile, through eyes
 were dim.



BOOK EXCERPT: How Henry Ford Found a Swedish Solution to His Problem with Precision

From the book: THE PERFECTIONISTS by Simon Winchester. Copyright © 2018 by Simon Winchester. Reprinted courtesy of Harper, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers.

In “The Perfectionists: How Precision Engineers Created the Modern World,” author Simon Winchester traces the history of precision and the way scientists and engineers have used it to transform industry as well as the everyday lives of people everywhere in the world. Winchester devotes one chapter to automobiles, and how two pioneers, Henry Ford and Henry Royce, co-founder of Rolls-Royce, used precision tools to advance their personal visions of auto manufacturing: Ford made cars for the masses; Royce built an empire on selling expensive motorcars to the wealthy. In this excerpt, Winchester tells of how precision issues at Ford Motor prompted Henry Ford to buy the Swedish company founded by Carl Edvard Johansson, one of precision’s global giants.

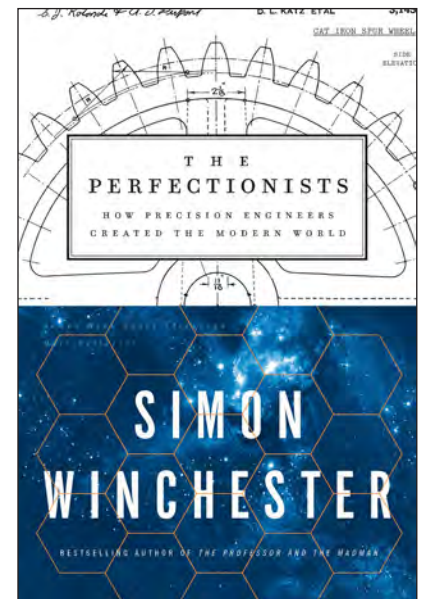
By SIMON WINCHESTER

There is one further component to this story: the use by Henry Ford of an invention that helped make it possible for the cost of his Model T to decrease almost every year during its eighteen years of production, to go down in price from \$850 in 1908 to \$345 in 1916, to a stunningly affordable \$260 in 1925.

The car was the same, the materials the same, but the means of production had become vastly more efficient. Henry Ford had been helped in his aim of making it so by using one component (and then buying the firm that made it), a component whose

creation, by Carl Edvard Johansson, a Swedish man of great modesty, turned out to be of profoundly lasting importance to the world of precision.

The Swede was Carl Edvard Johansson, popularly and proudly known by every knowledgeable Swede today as the world’s Master of Measurement. He was the inventor of the set of precise pieces of perfectly flat, hardened steel known to this day as gauge blocks, slip gauges, or, to his honor and in his memory, as Johansson gauges, or quite simply, Jo blocks—the same polished steel blocks and tiny billets my father brought home to show me back in the mid-1950s as an example of what precision was truly all about.



Carl Edvard Johansson got the idea while on a train. He was at the time, in 1896, working as an armorer-inspector at a government-run firearms factory in the city of Eskilstuna, Sweden’s steel-making equivalent of Pittsburgh or Sheffield, and which still has a steelworker on its coat of arms. His plant had been making Remington rifles under license but was just then switching to a variant of the German Mauser carbine and, in the process, was changing to an entirely new system of measuring. Johansson, who had an abiding respect for ultraprecise measurement, had gone to the Mauser factory in the German Black Forest to investigate the company’s ways of measuring, and for some

continued

reason, he found its scheme wanting. According to legend, he was pondering the idea of making improvements to the forthcoming Swedish operation while on the long and otherwise tedious rail journey home.

His idea was to create a set of gauge blocks that, if held together in combination, could in theory measure any needed dimension. What, he wondered, was the minimum number of blocks that would be needed, and what should the sizes of the various blocks be? By the time he stepped off the clanking steam train at Eskilstuna station, he had solved the problem: with just 103 blocks made of certain carefully specified sizes, arranged in three series, it should be possible, he said, to take some twenty thousand measurements in increments of one one-thousandth of a millimeter, just by laying two or more blocks together.

It took Johansson some long while to make the first prototype set—he used his wife’s sewing machine, converting it by adding a grinding wheel, to smooth the blocks to their correct dimensions. It was a task well suited to his personality, a biographer later recalled. For Johansson was, by all accounts, a modest, retiring, unassuming, private, pipe-smoking,



A set of precise pieces of perfectly flat, hardened steel known to this day as gauge blocks, or Jo blocks

mustachioed, patient, formal, stooped, eternally avuncular son of the croft, a man who grew up on a rye farm in central Sweden and, yet, went on to change the world. The 103-piece combination gauge block set he eventually developed, according to his biographer, has since “directly and indirectly taught engineers, foremen and mechanics to treat tools with care, and at the same time giving them familiarity with [dimensions of] thousandths and ten thousandths of a millimeter.”



Carl Edvard Johansson

Gauge blocks first came to the United States in 1908, the initial set of them brought through customs by Henry Leland, the machinist and precision fanatic best known as the Man Who Invented the Cadillac. Just as with the nineteenth-century demand for wooden pulley blocks for the Royal Navy – no connection at all, other than ironically – sales of the new Jo blocks rocketed, as more and more industries were established, all of them demanding this simple and elegant means of measuring their various products. Eventually, Johansson himself was persuaded to set up shop in America, first in New York and then to make block sets in an old three-story piano factory in Poughkeepsie, a hundred miles to the north, on the Hudson River. His arrival was greeted by the press: “The Most Accurate Man in the World,” said one. “The Edison of Sweden.”

At the time, Henry Ford did not make use of Jo blocks in his factories, even though his entire system of mass production depended wholly on the most extreme accuracy. Whether he was implacably opposed, or whether there was some other reason, remains unclear: his opposition or insouciance ended swiftly, however, once he became aware of a sharp exchange between his factory

continued

managers and the Swedish ball-bearing maker SKF.

This firm, founded in 1907 and still in existence—its initials stand for Svenska Kullagerfabriken AB—was receiving from Ford in the 1920s what it claimed were numerous “unjustified complaints” regarding the dimensions of its bearings. Ford workers on the Detroit production lines claimed that the SKF bearings were often significantly out of true, and were causing delays and stoppages on the factory floor. SKF managers protested robustly, insisting that their bearings were perfectly spherical, and that measuring them using Jo blocks would demonstrate that this was so.

As indeed the Jo blocks duly demonstrated. If any complaints were to be leveled, said officials from SKF, they should by rights be leveled at the machines and assembly lines on which the bearings were being used—and Henry Ford, to his horror, realized that they were right. Maybe, he said to his colleagues assembled for an emergency meeting, his cars were precise only to themselves; maybe every manufactured piece fit impeccably because it was interchangeable to itself, but once another absolutely impeccably manufactured, gauge-block-confirmed piece from another company (a ball bearing from SKF, say) was introduced into the Ford system, then maybe its absolute perfection trumped that of Ford’s, and Ford was wrong—ever so slightly maybe, but wrong nonetheless.

So Ford, being powerful and rich and unstoppably ambitious, did what others might not have had the moxie to do. He made contact with Johansson and persuaded him to move his entire gauge block production process seven hundred miles, from Poughkeepsie to Detroit, and set up shop within the vast new Ford factory there. Johansson did as he was bidden, and in due course, and in line with Ford’s relentlessly persuasive manner, he then sold up and allowed his small, elderly, old-fashioned, yet vitally important business to become a division of the Ford Motor Company—to be swallowed up, in other words—and then, in 1936, left Henry Ford to his own devices and went quietly back to his native

Sweden, there to collect gold medals and honorary degrees and visiting fellowships and royally bestowed distinctions in impressive numbers.

Johansson grew deaf in his later years, and used an ear trumpet, which he called his pipe of peace. He once met Edison, who was deaf as well, and he liked to recall how the two great inventors put their heads together, quite literally, and discussed gauge blocks, which by this time, after the Great War, were achieving accuracies of up to one-millionth of an inch. But can you maybe do better than even that? Edison inquired. Yes, replied Johansson, it was now possible to achieve precision tolerances down to one ten-millionth of an inch, but he would not reveal exactly how. Quite right, the notoriously cantankerous and ungenerous Edison harrumphed. Far better to keep quiet where matters of invention are concerned.

Carl Edvard Johansson died in 1943, respected and beloved in Sweden, and forgotten elsewhere. The industrial system of mass production that his invention unwittingly helped refine and expand, and which relies on as absolute a degree of precision as is attainable, continues to this day—on the ground and, more perilously, high up in the air as well, where any failure of precision can be unimaginably dangerous.



Simon Winchester is a British-American author and journalist who has written several critically acclaimed books, including “The Professor and the Madman,” “Pacific,” “A Crack in the Edge of the World” and “Krakatoa: The Day the World Exploded.” He lives in Massachusetts.





The Wagner perseveres even while surrounded by 21st Century office buildings. Photo/Millard Berry

Despite a Century of Change, The Wagner Hotel Remains



Around the turn of the 20th Century, the Wagner was a center of Dearborn life.

The 122-year-old Wagner Hotel in west Dearborn has survived the transformation of its neighborhood once again.

the \$60 million mixed-use Wagner Place on Michigan Avenue and Monroe.

Ford Land Development Co. preserved the red-brick building that is topped with a turret as it designed

The hotel's new neighbors are two three-story buildings that will house 600 Ford Motor Co. data analysts. The new buildings are a world away from the

continued

In the World War I era, the Wagner can be seen at the center, at the end of a long line of small stores.



humble wooden houses that stood around the Wagner at the turn of the 20th Century or the small stores that followed. The photos on this page illustrate how the busy corner has evolved over the decades.

The Wagner opened in 1896, owned by the Wagner family, which owned a brickyard. The building has evolved from a hotel to a post office to a series of stores in recent years, selling everything from televisions to bridal dresses. In the Wagner's new incarnation, its first floor will be the site of restaurants and other retail outlets like the first floors in the other buildings. The second floor of the Wagner will be used for conference space.

During its early years as a hotel, the Wagner was a center of Dearborn life. The interurban streetcar, which connected Detroit to Ypsilanti, Ann Arbor, Saline and points west before and after World War I, stopped in front of the hotel.

Here are some other random happenings from the Wagner, when it was young:

1904: A 63-year-old escapee from an Oakland County asylum attempted to commit suicide in a room. Myron Holly, 63, who was blind, slashed his abdomen. "The man is very weak from loss of blood but, unless peritonitis sets in, he may recover," the Detroit Free Press reported.

1908: The Dearborn Baseball Club and Miles College in Detroit met for a July 4 game as part of a daylong schedule of activities, but first gathered at the hotel to march to the field. Manager S.D. Lapham bragged about the team's new uniforms.

1916: The Dearborn High Junior class threw a dinner for the senior class and invited Henry Ford, recently moved to Dearborn, to be guest of honor. Ford talked to the students about his first speech, which he delivered at Sing Sing Prison in New York, for unknown reasons. Ford said he probably should not have begun his talk by looking at the audience and saying he was happy it was so large.

1929: the Wagner was the site of an armed robbery. Clyde Davis, 21, and Robert Reese, 22, both of Dearborn, held up a card game, but Davis got nervous and accidentally fired his gun, wounding a card player, Norrin Doty, 22. They were charged with assault with attempt to rob while armed.

Source: Detroit Free Press
-- Bill McGraw



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1928 Yearbook Tells a Story about HIGH SCHOOL IN THE JAZZ AGE as Fordson Celebrates its 90th Class

By BILL MCGRAW

Looking through the 1928 Fordson yearbook, the first thing that strikes me is how similar that book is to yearbooks today. The yearbook 90 years ago covered faculty, students and paid a lot of attention to seniors. It took sports seriously. The 1928 book, though, was referred to as “the student annual.” Its proper name then and now? The Fleur De Lys, the stylized three-petal lily often associated with France.

I was examining the 1928 “annual” because Fordson High School in June celebrated the graduation of its 90th class. The 2018 class had 611 students and was predominantly Arab-American. The first class, in 1928, had 34 students who were pictured as seniors, and its ethnicity was reflected in the smorgasbord of European names among the seniors -- Nolan, Lesnorowski, Chrobak, Bedrosian, Greski and Jarvis.

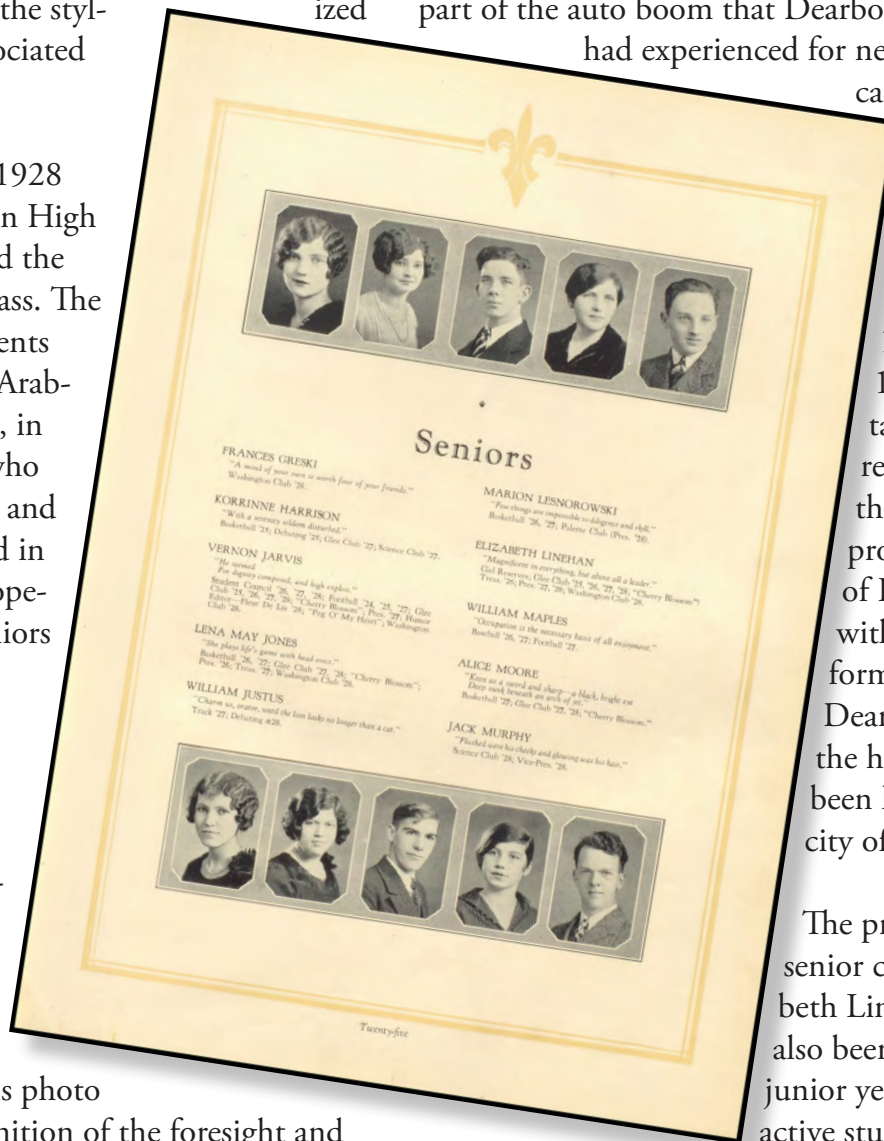
The senior photos include a balding gentleman with a mustache. He is identified as E. L. Williams, “the first honorary graduate.” The inscription under his photo reads: “In grateful recognition of the foresight and determination manifested in the planning and building of this, our splendid building.”

The students, in fact, were so in love with their building that they dedicated the yearbook to the school itself, still one of the most notable in the nation, with its Ivy League-like towers, oak paneling, statues and library fireplace.

In 1928, the students and their families were part of the auto boom that Dearborn and Detroit had experienced for nearly three decades.

The future looked rosy, but the Depression began after the Wall Street crash in 1929. The year 1928 was notable for another reason: It was of the vote that approved the merger of Fordson, the city, with Dearborn to form today’s city of Dearborn. Fordson, the high school, had been located in the city of Fordson.

The president of the senior class was Elizabeth Linehan, who had also been class president junior year. She was an active student, according to the listing of activities under her name. The inscription accompanying her photo was quite a



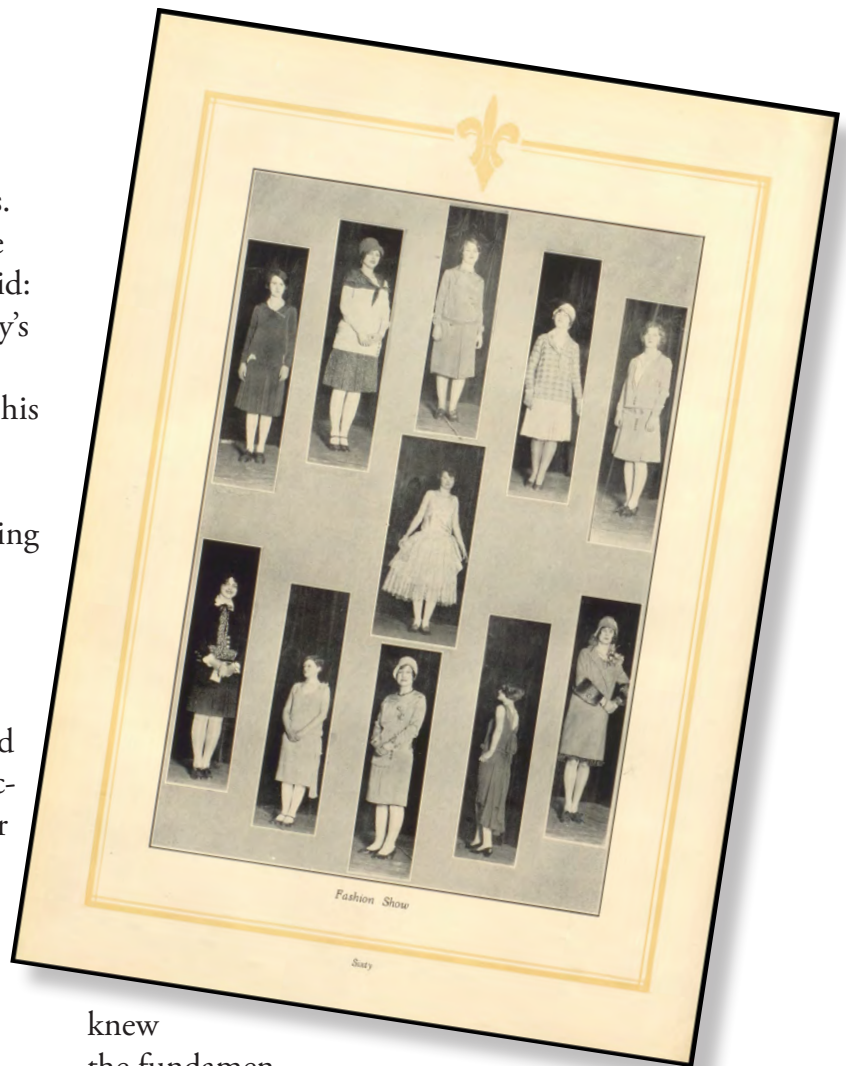
statement: "Magnificent in everything, but above all a leader."

It's unclear who wrote the seniors' inscriptions. Senior Korrine Harrison's inscription suggests she was cool under pressure. Or was she boring? It said: "With a serenity seldom disturbed." Jack Murphy's sentence seemed to have come out of a romance novel: "Flushed were his cheeks and glowing was his hair."

The yearbook noted that the Boys' Homemaking Club raised money by "popping corn and selling it at basketball games" and attended a lecture on "yeast and molds."

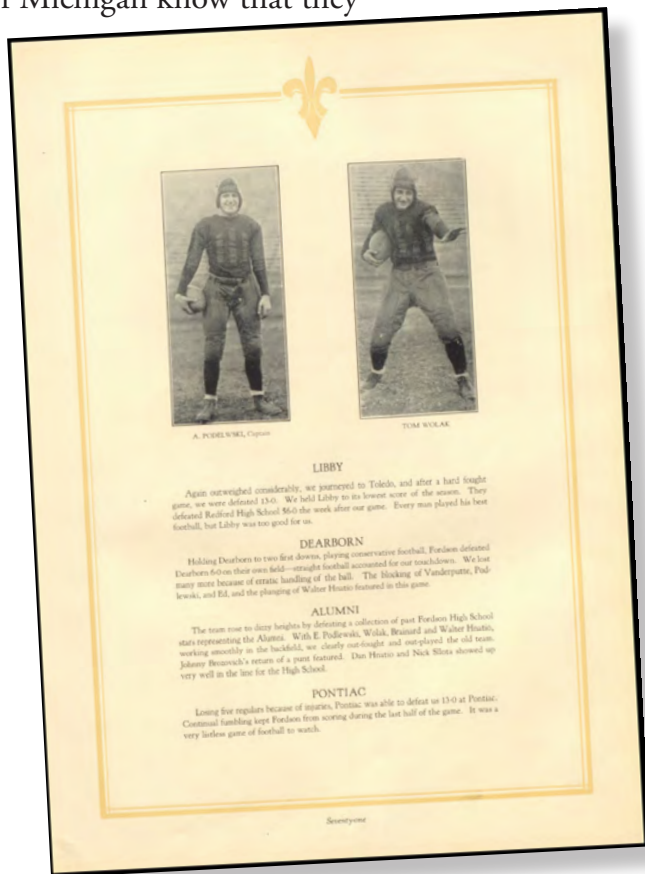
The yearbook reveals that Fordson in 1928 had a student-run court that handed out such sentences as cleaning the halls for offenses like fighting or smoking.

In sports, the football team's record was 4-3-1. "Fordson gradually let the people of the state of Michigan know that they



knew the fundamentals of the game," the yearbook said. Among its victories was one over Dearborn High, 6-0.

The boys' basketball team had a great year – it advanced to the state finals but lost to Iron Mountain at the new Olympia Stadium on Grand River in Detroit.



Local History in Brief

New job for former director of the Arab American Museum

The Arab American National Museum in Dearborn is looking for a new leader after director Devon Akmon resigned this spring and took a job as a consultant with the DeVos Institute of Arts Management in Washington D.C. He also will teach and consult through the organization's national capacity-building programs and Global Arts Management Fellowship. Akmon joined the museum as curator of community history shortly before the museum opened in 2005. He was promoted to deputy director in 2009 and assumed control of daily operations in 2012. In Dearborn, Akmon, 41, oversaw the physical expansion of the museum with the creation of the Annex, a new community arts space immediately adjacent to the museum, and an artist-in-residency unit in the neighboring City Hall Artspace Lofts. The DeVos Institute of Arts Management provides consultation and training for arts institutions.



Ford Motor hires historian

Ted Ryan, who worked for 21 years as Coca-Cola's "image historian," was hired earlier this year by Ford to essentially "sculpt Ford's story and seek to reframe how America and the world think of the iconic automaker," according to Phoebe Wall Howard in the Free Press. Ryan, 54, was born in Atlanta, Coke's hometown. Howard added: "Ryan will collect physical and digital artifacts, help with communications, marketing, product development and weave the



legacy of the company into the narrative of where it's headed."

continued

Henry and Clara Ford return to Fair Lane

Officials at the Fair Lane Estate and members of the Ford Family unveiled life-sized bronze statues of Henry and Clara Ford June 3. The statues, located near the estate's famed power house, are the gift of Lynn Ford Alandt, the Fords' great-granddaughter, and her husband Paul Alandt. The piece shows Clara sitting on a bench, overlooking her beloved garden. Henry is standing at her side. The sculpture was created by New York-based StudioEIS, which in 2016 produced the statue of Edsel and Eleanor Ford walking arm-and-arm at their estate in Grosse Pointe Shores. The Fair Lane estate, where Henry and Clara Ford moved in 1915, continues to be closed for tours because of restoration work, but the grounds remain open daily from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission is free. The estate's elaborate gardens were designed by landscape architect Jens Jensen.



Ford family members pose alongside Henry and Clara Ford in June. Back row, from left: Henry Ford, Benson Ford Jr., Tom Buhl, Lindsey Buhl, Paul Alandt, Edsel Ford II, Fred Ford.



New Interim Boss at Edsel Ford House is a Familiar Face

Bob Bury has resigned as head of the Detroit Historical Museum and has taken the job of interim CEO of the Edsel & Eleanor Ford House in Grosse Pointe Shores. Taking Bury's place is Elana Sullivan, 49, who most recently served as chief advancement officer of Detroit Country Day School in Beverly Hills. She's in charge of the DHM in Midtown, the Dossin Great Lakes Museum on Belle Isle and the Collections Resource Center, home to the city's collection of more than 250,000 historic artifacts. Bury supervised the Detroit Historical Society's takeover of the museums' operation and the \$12 million renovation in 2012.

Dearborn Historical Museum
Calendar of Events
2018 Winter/Spring

September

- 28 The museum's 6th Annual Beer Tasting Party, 5 p.m. to 11 p.m.
- 29 The Great Lakes Apparition Seekers' ghost hunt at the museum, 8 p.m. to 1 a.m.

October

- 3 A lecture by the Great Lakes Apparition Seekers titled "Behind the Scenes of a Ghost Hunt," 7 p.m.
- 26 The 6th Annual Trick or Treat Party will take place at the museum, 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.
- 26, 27 The Great Lakes Apparition Seekers will stage ghost hunts at the museum both days, 7 p.m. to midnight.


November

- 4 A lecture on the history of U.S. currency, at the museum, 7 p.m.

December

- 1 Victorian Tea and Santa visit, Commandant's Quarters, 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.

*Unless specified, all meetings above held at McFadden-Road House.
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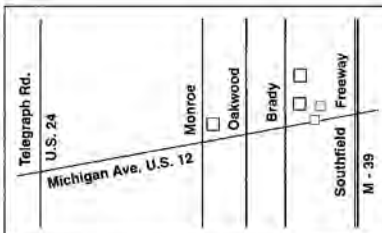
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