

The Milford Historian

===== Newsletter of the Milford Historical Society =====

July 2002

***Mission Statement:** We are organized exclusively for educational purposes. We bring together those people who are interested in history, especially the history of the Village of Milford and Milford Township.*

Annual Picnic on the Public Square

General Membership Meeting

Sunday, July 14th, 2002 @ High Noon

This year our historical society will hold its annual picnic at a very historic spot! The original Public Square, platted in 1836 will be our picnic location starting at noon and going until 5:00 p.m. The Public Square is, of course, also known as South Side Park on Huron Street next to the fire station. The replica log cabin will be open for our inspection and shelter if needed. Bring lawn chairs and a card table if you have them. Some picnic tables are in the park and we will have sawhorses and planks from Granny's Attic to supplement our fine array of dining room furniture.

Our general membership meetings are open to the public and **a** are invited. You don't have to be a member to enjoy this good time with people who like history!

Bring your own table service and a big dish to pass based on the first letter of your last name. There are grills in South Side Park if you want to make a charcoal fire to cook on.

Milford Historical Society Picnic 12:00 p.m.

Sunday, July 14th, 2002

A-F Salad

G-Q Main Dish

R-Z Dessert

A-Z Lawn chairs

From the President's desk:

You're never too old to celebrate! As we just finish celebrating the 4th of July, with all of the fanfare, parades, fireworks and gatherings of families and friends for cookouts and activities, I think about what we are celebrating. And in light of the events of September 11th, this year's celebration was even more meaningful than any other in recent history. But I wonder just how many of us pause to think about what we are celebrating..... what does Independence really mean. . . .We take for granted so many of the little things that happen day to day that other people around the world don't have the liberty to do. We can pick up a magazine or a book or newspaper and read about anything and everything. We can go where we please, at any time we please. And we can dress any way we like. We can express our opinions, in words and actions, individually and collectively, without fear of recourse. We can assemble in public places, for parades or political rallies, and we can go off on our own, in complete privacy. We can earn a good living, and spend our money freely on goods and services as we please.

Yet we take these things as a matter of course. Nothing special. I say we celebrate our independence each and every day. That we use our freedoms wisely and remember to protect them fiercely. Because that freedom and independence empowers us to do many things....
Your President, Sue Fleming

Feature Story: Taking a Walk on Milford's Main Street.

The year 2002 brings more construction activity on Milford's Main Street. This is the third year in a row that there's been some type of tear-up to our historic center of town. The big mess is yet to come when the road surface is removed and replaced. Main Street will then look like the famous -1910 photo of Michigan gubernatorial candidate Fred Warner delivering a campaign speech to a crowd that is standing on a Main Street made of dirt.

The most recent project now 99% complete is the replacement of the sidewalks on both the east and west sides of the street between Commerce and Liberty. Crews have been busy for the last two months removing the concrete and replacing it with very handsome paver stones. Center Street Park in front of the gazebo has also been redone with the same stone.

The replacement of our sidewalks may be insignificant at first glance, but sidewalks are an important part of any community and are worth noting here. We all use the sidewalks in our travels from store to store and they are a welcome place to park our feet while watching some of the four or five parades Milford seems to host each year.

Milford's Downtown Development Authority has orchestrated our current day sidewalk creation and construction. The new sidewalk paver stones are made by Unilock Corporation. The style is called Stonehenge and they were made in the towns of Pickering and Georgetown in Ontario, Canada. The contrasting border of charcoal colored paver stones were custom made for the Milford project and they give the sidewalks a striking appearance.

Sidewalks have been part of Milford's infrastructure challenge for over 130 years at least. A look back at the sidewalk issues of the 1870's in Milford is documented in old issues of the Milford Times. Thanks to the help of MHS member Barbara Young, some historic sidewalk facts are as follows.

Milford's sidewalks on Main Street in the 1870's were constructed of wood planking.

With water-powered sawmills in the area, sidewalks made of planks would be a cost-effective choice. Some of the news about sidewalks and their construction appeared in summary newspaper articles titled Common Council Proceedings. One such description in 1872 granted a petition to "build a walk six feet in width to be of two inch pine plank, laid crosswise". This sidewalk was along Commerce Street from Main Street going east to Mr. Fletcher's residence. [Editor's ***note: it was obvious to the readers of the paper in 1872 that Mr. Fletcher's residence made for a very descriptive and understandable geographical boundary location!***]

Other descriptions state widths at 5' 4" and as wide as eight feet depending on the location. An ordinance was created in 1877 specifically describes how sidewalks were to be made. Here, a width of ten feet is required with plank to be laid on four good pine or hard wood stringers, four by four inches and not less than twelve feet long. The ordinance goes on to state that the boards or planks shall not be less than six inches wide and shall be nailed on to the stringers or bed pieces with at least six twelve penny nails in each plank.

The responsibility of the building and maintaining of these wooden sidewalks fell upon the property owner. Those who did not comply with the requirement to install a sidewalk faced a tax lien against the property. At that time the village had an "Overseer of streets" to do the required construction and a "Marshal" who notified parties who were in non-compliance.

An excellent picture of Main Street and wooden sidewalks appears on page 66 of our history book Ten Minutes ahead of the Rest of the World. Also in the picture are cobblestone gutters and hitching posts for horses.

Milford's past with its plank sidewalks perhaps helps explain why an enterprising individual with a metal detector recently found old coins in the dirt beneath cement sidewalks. Gaps between the boards would allow an old coin to drop through and be lost until the next time that ancient dirt saw the light of day!

Museum

Our Museum received some serious exterior painting thanks to volunteers from Milford's GM Proving Grounds. Jerry Wilson and his crew spent many hours Saturday, June 8th scraping, priming and painting our original Milford wood sided building. The GM volunteers earned us a bonus as well! Their volunteer time helped snag a \$250.00 award from the GM Foundation.

Organizer Bill Schimmel will get the job finished up by the end of summer. Thanks to all who spent this time and energy keeping our museum looking great !

P.s. The museum still needs docents to help with our tours on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons. You only are on duty one or two days a month. Call Audrey Nelson (number on back page) if you can help out.

4th of July Parade

As this newsletter goes to the printer, the 4th of July parade will be underway. Congratulations go out to Kari Boyd of Johnson Elementary School for providing the winning entry to the essay contest. She and friends she selects will ride in one of the convertibles provided by the GM Proving Grounds. Organizer Sue Fleming says this is her last year for putting together Milford's biggest parade. She deserves a big thank you for her many hours is directing this big event.

Bill Schimmel constructed this year's float and Catherine Irish and crew did finishing touches. A final report will be in the September newsletter. On with the parade!

Granny's Attic Yard Sale

The correct dates for the museum yard sale are **July 12th and 13th** Please bring your items to the museum on Thursday, July 11th. Please label your donation with a "yard sale price" when you bring it. If you need a charitable contribution letter for tax deduction credit, see organizer Tom Joynt. He'll have copies of this letter at the museum during the drop off time all day Thursday, July 11th. Go Granny Go!

Call for Recipes

MHS member Kelley Irwin will be assembling a recipe book that features some of the great food items we all enjoy at our potluck dinners. Get your recipes ready for inclusion in this book. Kelley will describe what her "recipe" is for making this book at one of our upcoming general membership meetings.

Ford Powerhouse

The Ford Powerhouse restoration project continues in earnest. We have great emphasis on this project as you saw at the 4th of July parade. "Buy a Brick" program is getting underway to allow everyone in the Milford area and beyond to participate in the raising of funds. See the display in the window of the *Milford Times* office on Main Street.

A slight change is being made in the name of the building / project. To be historically correct, the new name of the building is the Pettibone Creek Hydroelectric Station. We all know it's the great art deco brick beauty on West Liberty Street. A feasibility study is underway to determine the viability of using the building as it was originally built, i.e., making electricity. More updates in the next newsletter.

Announcement

The White Lake Historical Society will hold a potluck picnic on Thursday, August 8th at 6:30 p.m. at the Kelley-Fisk Farm on M59. RSVP at 887-5483 if you plan to attend.

Dates to Remember

July 11th - Drop off your priced yard sale items
July 12th & 13th - Granny's Attic Yard Sale
July 14th - Annual Picnic, South Side Park
July 28th - Trip to Greenfield Village (contact Sue Bullard for details)

August 9th, 10th, 11th Milford Memories
September 14th & 15th - Home Tour, Flea Market, Tractor Show (get that tractor ready!)
September 19th - General Membership meeting
November 21st - General Membership meeting
