

The Milford Historian

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

May, 2001

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.

Early Automobile Touring in America

General Membership Meeting
Thursday, May 17, 2001 @ 6:30 p.m.

Automobile touring became a national trend around 1915, reaching its height in the 1920's. The presentation on this topic by Mr. Daniel Hershberger will explore various aspects of auto touring including the very specialized equipment that was carried, the development of roadside tourist camps, early trail marking programs and road maps. Take a nostalgic journey May 17th!

Our general membership meetings are open to the public and all are invited. You don't have to be a member to enjoy this Thursday night out with people who like all kinds of history!

Our evening starts with a sumptuous pot luck dinner at St. George's Episcopal Church, 801 E. Commerce. We will have a brief membership meeting at 7:30 p.m. and then the evening program starts at 8:00 p.m. Bring your own table service and a big dish to pass based on the first letter of your last name.

Milford Historical Society 6:30 p.m.
Thursday, May 17th, 2001

A-F Main Dish
G-Q Dessert
R-Z Salad

From the President's Desk

I feel very privileged to have been elected to serve as your president for the upcoming year. We have a long history of very effective leadership, and those will be big shoes to fill. I hope you will all feel free to let me know how I am doing and to make suggestions along the way.

I am excited about the many activities that the MHS has embarked upon this year. The Ford Powerhouse restoration project is moving along in a very productive and positive direction. We have joined the ranks of our neighboring historical societies and other community groups in supporting the Chautauqua activities. First with the kick off this May, and hopefully with a presence at their upcoming events as well. Our student docent program is nearing the close of its first year with what I believe has been a mutually positive experience for our students, our Museum director and the membership. The 4th of July parade is starting to take shape. And our annual picnic will be held at the Museum this year to highlight our accomplishments there.

Granny's Attic is on the calendar for July. Plans are underway for the Cemetery Walk and Root Beer Floatcontinued, Page 3. .>>>

Feature Story: Albert Kahn - A Famous Architect and His Influence on Milford

The restoration of the Ford Hydroelectric powerhouse on West Liberty Street in Milford has caused much review of Milford's "near term" history of the 1930's when this impressive building was built. Research on the building indicates that the famous architectural firm of Albert Kahn and Associates designed it.

The name of Albert Kahn is a familiar one to those of us who know a bit about Detroit area history. The Kahn firm was responsible for a host of important buildings both commercial and residential. We know that two buildings in Milford bear the Kahn stamp. Besides the Powerhouse on Liberty Street, the Ford Carburetor Plant on Oak Street is also a Kahn creation. Let's explore who Albert Kahn was and he accomplished.

Albert Kahn was the architect of the auto industrialists. He was responsible not only for almost all of the major industrial plants of the Big Three and other auto manufactures in the U.S., but also for aviation industry plants, hospitals, banks, commercial buildings, public buildings, temples, libraries, and over one hundred beautiful mansions.

Albert Kahn was born in Germany in 1869. His father, a rabbi, brought the family to the United States. As a youth, Albert apprenticed with a

Michigan architect, George D. Mason, and won a scholarship to study in Europe. After returning home, he started his own firm in 1895, Nettleton, Kahn and Trowbridge at the age of 25. The firm, now known as Albert Kahn and Associates, is now 106 years old and still operates in Detroit.

Kahn was obviously in the right place at the right time to become the premiere architect of the industrial buildings needed for the rapidly expanding automobile empires in Michigan.

He was hired to build factories for the Packard Motor Company. In 1904, after building nine Packard plants, Kahn suggested a new method he had learned in Europe for plant number ten. He applied the technique using reinforced concrete to his design for this new Packard factory, which stands today on East Grand Boulevard in Detroit. This innovative, sturdy, light, clean, spacious, efficient factory so excited and pleased the young automakers that were flocking to Detroit that they all rushed to order his new design. Thus began Kahn's long, productive career that paralleled the history of the infant auto industry and its capital, Detroit.

Early auto plants were dirty, cramped, dark, and inefficient. Kahn's new method took into account what the workers did and where their materials should be, increasing the efficiency of the workflow.

"Nine-tenths of my success has come because I listened to what people said they wanted and gave it to them," Kahn said. Albert was way ahead of his time with the concept of "customer satisfaction" that the auto companies so vigorously embrace today.

The tenth Packard Plant was a huge success. Everyone marveled at the new building. Visitors said it was clean, open airy, bright, handsome, pleasant, comfortable, efficient, healthful, simple, bold, and well proportioned. Orders from other automakers began to pour in.

"The industrialist always want the new plant finished by yesterday," he said. "I work fast, but I never hurry."

Kahn built more than 1000 buildings for Ford and hundreds for General Motors. He built two of Detroit's most recognizable buildings: The Fisher Building and the General Motors Building on Grand Boulevard.

In 1916, Henry Ford contracted with Kahn to build the Ford Rouge complex in order to build submarine chaser boats for World War I. After the war, the Rouge complex was devoted to building cars and gradually expanded into the world's largest industrial plant.

In the next issue of the *Milford Historian*, we will conclude our study of this great architect Albert Kahn and look at how he and Henry Ford made their mark on our Village.

...President's message...

Ice Cream sales during Milford Memories. Home Tour activities are starting to gear up again. And we have decided to add a flea market to our event this year instead of doing the craft show. And of course, we have a full and interesting schedule of speakers for our general membership meetings.

What really excites me though, is the number of opportunities we have for our members to become involved. Through our sign up sheets at the general membership meetings, we have recruited many new faces to volunteer. I would ask that all of you take a look at our activities and think about signing on for one or two. Or that you can say "yes" when someone comes calling to ask for your help on one of these projects. While it involves some work, where else can you have so much fun with such a great group of folks!

Your president, Sue Fleming

News Updates

New Board Member

We would like to welcome Tami Averill to the MHS Board of Directors. Tami was appointed to fill a spot that has been empty since January. The board is now fully staffed. Welcome Tami!

Museum Opens

Our Milford Historical Museum at 124 E. Commerce will open May 2nd. Outgoing museum director Mary Lou

Gharity will have the place ready for business and staffed with docents.

The spring cleaning of the museum happened April 15th and 25th. Much thanks to our members and student docents for the fine job of getting the museum clean and ready for our visitors in 2001.

Computer Bits

Our museum has a new computer! Thanks to a generous donation from Paola and Robert Nisonger, the IBM computer with printer is in place and working. It will be helpful with the many business tasks of our historical society.

And, on a similar note, our MHS now has its own web site. Thanks to the efforts of Jeff Leja and John McMartin, you can search using the address www.milfordhistory.org and find us.

Dues

If you haven't paid your dues yet, it's not too late. If you want to make a nice gift for Mother's Day, graduation, or a special occasion, a membership to the MHS is an easy and thoughtful present. See the application form on the back page.

Detroit Tigers Celebrate 100 Years

The Tigers celebrate a big anniversary this year. Their 100th year was officially April 25, 2001. Since this is a milestone in history, it's only right that we help! So, How about a field trip? The MHS members and friends are

invited to participate in a group outing to Comerica Park on Sunday, June 24th. As a group, we can purchase tickets for \$10.00. It's possible that we may even charter a bus (details not available at press time). If you want to go, get your name on the list so that we can get a head count.

With transportation and food, plan on \$20.00 per person. To sign up, call Sue Bullard or Renee Renko and let them know. **PLAY BALL!**

4th of July Float

Board member Bill Schimmel has volunteered to orchestrate the creation of the MHS parade float. If you want be part of the fun, call Bill. Bill's phone number is on the back page.

Granny's Attic Yard Sale

As you do your spring cleaning this year, decide what you can donate and set it aside. This year's chairman, Tom Joynt, suggests the "3 inch 3 year" rule when reviewing your "stuff" (if it hasn't moved 3 inches in 3 years, bye!). Too good to donate, call Tom about consignments. Drop off day at the museum is Thursday, July 5th

Program and Event Line-up for Summer 2001

May 17th: 1920 Motor Camping
June 24th : Tiger game
July 4th Parade on Main Street
July 6th & 7th: Granny's Attic
July 15th: Picnic @ Museum
August 11th and 12th Milford Memories.
