

The Milford Historian

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

May 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.*

What was Henry Thinking?

General Membership Meeting

Thursday, May 16th, 2002 @ 6:30 p.m.

The village industries, including the Milford carburetor plant, represented a diverse set of small firms employing a range of technologies, industrial relations, and supervisory systems. Professor Bruce Pietrykowski of U of M - Dearborn will talk about the many aspects of Ford's village industry program initiated in the 1910's and lasting through the 1940's. Join us for an interesting evening that looks at an important aspect of Milford's history.

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 evening with people who like history! Bring a white elephant to meeting. See page 2 for details.

Our evening will start with a sumptuous potluck dinner at St. George's Episcopal Church, 801 E. Commerce Street. (Set up at 6:15 p.m., eat at 6:30 p.m.) We will have a brief membership meeting at 7:30 p.m. The featured speaker 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 16th, 2002

A-F Main Dish

G-Q Dessert

R-Z Salad

A-Z White Elephant

From the President's desk:

You're never too old to remember when In our busy lives we get caught up in what we are doing and find ourselves running from place to place to get it all in. It behooves us though, to slow down once in a while and take some time to think back, and remember when.

This past weekend, during the Museum clean-up, I had the opportunity to work in the kitchen with our young docents. While we were busily working, we were talking about what the various kitchen utensils were and how they were used. We shared some memories, and the time passed much more quickly as we cleaned and talked.

And recently, I also had the chance to be a judge at the Michigan History Day in Lansing, where middle school students choose an event in history, and depicted how it changed the lives of people and society as a whole. In asking the kids questions about their exhibits, they shared their reasons for choosing their topic, many based upon stories they had been told from their grandparents. I probably learned as much about history and these young people as they learned.

As we prepare to open up our Museum again, maybe this would be a time to bring the young people in our lives in and share some of our memories of our own experiences, or that of our parents or grandparents. Our stories are a great way to remember when, and to build memories for the next generation to remember when. . .

Your President, *Sue Fleming*

FeatureStory: Finding Great Things in a Milford Attic.

There's some really good historic stuff around and many of us kind of know what's there and where it's hid. But until it comes out of that dark trunk in the attic, it remains a secluded treasure waiting to be rediscovered. One such scenario is exactly what MHS member Brad Beam and his wife Evelyn have been working on for many months now.

What is especially significant to Milford about this story is that Brad is the great-great-grandson of Elizur Ruggles, the man who, with his brother Stanley, founded Milford in 1832. And, because Elizur lived in Milford his entire life, is buried in Oak Grove Cemetery, and had a rather large extended family, there's bound to be some items of historic interest that were passed on to future generations.

These artifacts were in Brad's mother's attic. His mother, Eleanor Beam passed away several years ago and now Brad and Evelyn are doing the sorting to pass these items on to the next generation. There are many letters written by hand on delicate-to-paper. Also, a tough part of this work is that many old photos exist and don't have any identification with them. The next generation includes many other Milford families who are related to Elizur Ruggles. Names such as Bourns, Roe, Travis, Sessions, Cook, Foote, Servis and Phillips help create a huge matrix of related people.

One item in the collection was a genealogy of the Ruggles Family that was completed by Elizabeth Foot in 1959. It helped this writer understand the size of the Ruggles clan. One of the earliest entries is that of the name of Thomas Ruggles of Stanstead Suffolk England dated 1547. A descendent of Thomas was John Ruggles, three generations later, who left England in 1634 and came to the new world on the ship "Hopewell" and lived in New Milford, Connecticut.

Brad has the original land grant that Elizur obtained when Elizur homesteaded the land in the southeast part of our village. This document is signed by President Andrew Johnson's secretary (of the interior?). Also in the collection is a fire insurance policy that

Elizur had on the property on Atlantic Street. This 9" x 20" document from Aetna of Hartford, Connecticut is for property valued at \$1400 (this is in 1864 terms, of course!). The policy covered Elizur's possessions as follows: \$800 on two-story frame house, \$200 on furniture, \$200 on frame barn and shed, and \$200 on the hay and grain therein. The cost of the policy was \$14. According to this reporter's math, the insurance cost is 1% of the estimated value of the property.

A tax statement dated December 31, 1884 assessed on the Ruggles property was an interesting read. For the 82 acres, the tax was \$49.92. (One must remember that Atlantic Street wasn't paved back then!)

Another interesting item that Brad has is the last will and testament of Elizur Ruggles. Elizur left one third of his estate to his wife and the remaining to his children. The opening lines of the will read as follows and the will was written in ink by someone with beautiful penmanship: *"In the name of God, Amen. I Elizur Ruggles of the Village of Milford in the county of Oakland State of Michigan being of sound mind and-memory and consider&g the uncertainties of life do therefore make, ordain, publish and declare this to be my last will and testament that is to say first, after all my debts are paid....."* Son-in-law Jonathan Phillips as executor and friend Walter Crawford witnessed this document.

Brad says he will be giving some of the collection to the Milford Historical Society. The Museum reference room is a proper place for many of these important historic items. Some items may make for an interesting display so all our museum visitors can see!

A big thanks goes to Brad and Evelyn for sharing their treasures. Please keep the lid on that trunk open!

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May 16th General Membership Meeting

To start off our May meeting, we will have a white elephant raffle. Bring a white elephant to the meeting and put it on the "pile". Then, buy a ticket for the raffle (three for \$1.00). The proceeds go to our general fund. Who knows,

if your number comes up, you may be able to select something of historic significance!

*****News Updates*****

Museum

Our Museum opened May 1, 2002. It will maintain the usual hours of 1:00p.m. To 4:00 p.m. on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The season will run through December.

Our museum was the center of a cleaning bee on April 20th. The big old house gets dusty sitting over winter and many tasks were completed by the following volunteers: Mary Lou Gharrity, Sue Fleming, Tom Joynt, Sue Bullard, Russ and Kathy Rheaume, Barb Miller, and student docents Jessica Heidt, Jamie Kettren, and Heather Whitney. Thanks to you good people who put our museum in shape and ready for visitors!

And, long overdue, is the now to be annual event of Docent Recognition Day. It will be held Saturday, May 18th at 1:00p.m. Cake and punch will be served. Come and join in the celebration whether you are a docent or not. Speeches will be made and, of course, that cake needs to be eaten!

And, the final museum news item is that volunteers from the Milford Proving Grounds will paint the grand old place on Saturday, June 15th with Sunday, June 16th as the back-up rain date. Bill Shimmel is the chairman of this event. Bill needs some stepladders and extension ladders plus some of our members to help hand out paint, etc. If you can help with a ladder or event management, please call Bill at 685-1406.

Board of Directors

In the March newsletter, we mentioned that Kathy Irish was now onboard replacing Renee Reeves Renko. We want to thank Renee for her years of service as first vice president, director, and membership chairperson.

Program Chairperson

A big thanks to Al Riggs is in order for his good work in arranging our program speakers for the general membership meetings. Al has

served faithfully for the past several years at this assignment. The programs he searched out and arranged were diverse and very entertaining and the attendance reflected this. Thanks Al for a providing programs we enjoyed!

Effective with our May meeting, Judith Reiter will be our new program chairperson.

4th of July Parade

Parade chairperson Sue Fleming promises that our annual parade will be a proud event! This year's theme is "We've got the Power..." The emphasis of this theme is to help everyone understand the importance of our waterpower heritage in Milford that recently has been amplified with the Liberty Street Ford Powerhouse restoration project.

For the parade, our MHS float will help send the message about the powerhouse. Fifth grade students once again will be involved in an essay contest and the winners will ride in the parade and have other special perks. We will even have helium balloons for parade attendees. Thanks to Sue Fleming for her great organizational skills !

If you're coming to the parade, it might be a good time to bring your items for Granny's attic yard sale. The sale starts the next day so you can save the old horse an extra trip to town by bringing your items on the 4th. Contact Tom Joynt (685-8803) if you have any big items that need to be transported.

Dates to Remember

May 16th - General Membership meeting
May 1 8th - Docent Recognition Day
July 4th - MHS sponsored parade on Main St.
July 4th - p.m. drop off items for Granny's sale
July 5th and 6th - Granny's Attic Yard sale
July 14th - Annual Picnic
July 28th Trip to Greenfield Village
August 9th, 10th, 11th Milford Memories
September 14th & 15th - Home Tour
September 19th - General Membership meeting
November 2 1st - General Membership meeting
