



Grosse Pointe Historical Society
NEWSLETTER

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Local History Brought to Life!

SUMMER 2016



Front cover: Historic photo of a garden path at the Julian Harris home, site of the 2016 Grosse Pointe Historical Society Gala, "Moonlight at the Manor."

Photo from the collection of Clark Okulski.

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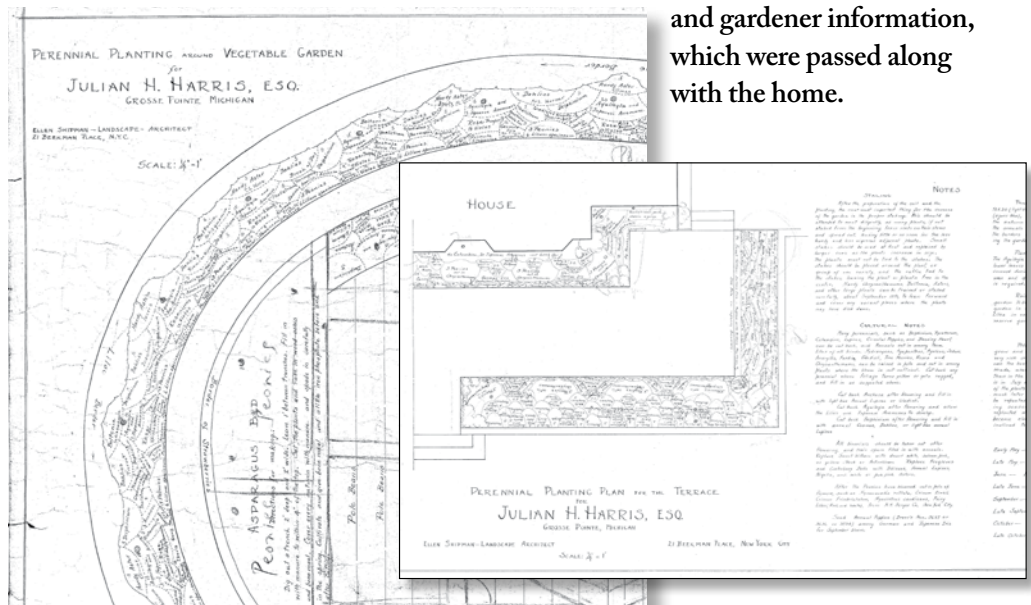
Ellen Shipman's Glorious Gardens

Adapted from the presentation, "Glorious Gardens of Grosse Pointe,"
by GPHS past president Susan Hartz

Ellen Biddle Shipman was born in 1869. In 1933 *House & Garden* magazine hailed her as the "dean of women landscape architects." From the early through mid-20th century, *House Beautiful* regularly featured her projects in their column "Gardens in Good Taste." By the time of her death in 1950 she had completed more than 600 projects in the United States. Grosse Pointe counts more public work by Shipman than any other community, with 44 projects on record.

Shipman began her apprenticeship in 1910 when she was 41. She was influenced by Charles A. Platt, a landscape artist who became an architect. He designed several homes in the Grosse Pointes, most notably the Alger House (1910), "The Moorings," now the Grosse Pointe War Memorial.

The majority of Ellen Shipman's archives are housed at the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections at Cornell University <https://rare.library.cornell.edu/> Dr. Clark Okulski, the homeowner of the Julian Harris Home, is extremely fortunate to have some of Shipman's original blueprints and planting specifications, and gardener information, which were passed along with the home.



News from the Resource Center

Digitizing Oral History Tapes

Our Wayne State University intern, Samantha Keene, recently gave Izzy and Kit a tour of the Digital Media Projects Lab located in Purdy-Kresge Graduate Library. We listened to one of our oral history reel-to-reel tapes, which we had not been able to play due to lack of hardware, and we watched the digital conversion that produced a file for us to save in our cloud storage or as a link on our Web site.



Mike Dutkewych splicing our damaged audio tape. We were able to listen to the tape once it was repaired. (left)

Mike and Samantha working with the vintage reel-to-reel tape player. (right)



Grosse Pointe Historical Society

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MOONLIGHT at the MANOR

Both the vista and the venue star at the 13th annual Gala fundraiser on June 9, from 7 to 10 p.m., at the home of Dr. Clark Okulski, 15366 Windmill Pointe Drive in Grosse Pointe Park.

The limestone-and-slate mansion enjoys the longest stretch of lake frontage of any private home in the Pointes, offering breathtaking views of Lake St. Clair and the Detroit River. Its interior features richly carved wood and stone, elaborate plaster ceilings, massive fireplaces, and leaded-glass windows. Over four decades, the present homeowners have built a collection of paintings, rugs, and artwork that perfectly complement the home's grand scale, texture and variety.

As always, the Gala will be a glamorous evening of the “grand Grosse Pointe of days gone by,” starting with a display of historic cars at the approach to the home. Several of these were built by the Hudson Motor Car Company, a nod to the home’s connection with Hudson leadership: its builder was legal counsel to the firm, and its second owner was long-time president of the car company.

15366 Windmill Pointe Drive was built for Julian H. Harris and his family. It is next door to a home built for his brother, William Harris – the childhood home of actress Julie Harris.

The Julian Harris home was designed in the early 1920s by noted Michigan architect William “Buck” Stratton, in collaboration with his wife, Mary Chase Perry, the founder of Pewabic Pottery. The family moved in, from their previous home in Indian Village, in 1928.

Julian Harris was a partner in the law firm of Beaumont, Smith & Harris, whose clients included the Hudson Motor Car Company. Harris died in 1933, and his widow sold the estate to A. Edward Barit in 1936. That year, Barit was elected President and General Manager of Hudson upon the death of Roy Chapin, Sr. Barit retired in 1954, when Hudson merged with Nash to become American Motors. The Barit family lived in the Windmill Pointe home until selling it to Dr. Okulski in 1976.

Architect Stratton and his wife collaborated on many outstanding buildings in Detroit and the

Grosse Pointes which, like the Windmill Pointe house, feature Pewabic tiles. These include the Women’s City Club building, the Belle Isle Bath House, the Madison Office Building, and the Frederick Stearns home.

The Windmill Pointe grounds were landscaped by Ellen Biddle Shipman, a leading landscape architect of the early 20th century, whose 600-plus projects – 44 in the Grosse Pointes, more than any other community – include gardens at Duke University, the Alger estate (now the Grosse Pointe War Memorial), the Edsel and Eleanor Ford House, and Henry Ford’s Fair Lane estate.

“Moonlight at the Manor” includes valet parking, a docent-guided tour of the home, and a tented party with open bars, hors-d’oeuvres, a strolling supper, and entertainment by the Royal Garden Trio. Photographer John Martin will treat each guest to a complimentary portrait, with the print available on departure.

Sponsors will be welcomed at a pre-Gala preview reception in the three-story library, with cocktails, special hors-d’oeuvres, and music from the Great American Songbook performed by pianist Jack McCormick and songstress Jeanne Bourget.



Photo from Dr. Okulski's collection



Photos:
Robin M Photography



Pointes of History Celebration

On Tuesday, May 10, 7 - 9 p.m. the Grosse Pointe Historical Society will present the Pointes of History Celebration. This event recognizes historic properties in Grosse Pointe with a bronze plaque and an audio-visual profile of the property. The current property owners are scheduled to attend and provide personal stories illuminating their property's colorful past. The public is invited to attend this free event held at the Grosse Pointe War Memorial. A reception with refreshments will follow the plaque program.

The 2016 Pointes of History Celebration will recognize the following properties with bronze plaques:

One Rathbone Place, City of Grosse Pointe – This home was built in 1918 and was designed by well-known Detroit architect Louis Kamper who designed the Book-Cadillac Hotel, Book Building and many other landmarks. It was designed for businessman John G. Rumney, president of Detroit Steel Products Company, in the Romanesque Revival and French Classic Revival styles. Images of the home's characteristic exterior and interior details will be included in the presentation.



Photo courtesy of Dr. Julie Corbett

15366 Windmill Pointe, Grosse Pointe Park – William “Buck” Stratton designed this 13,000 square-foot home for attorney Julian H. Harris in 1925. Stratton was an advocate of the Arts and Crafts movement in Detroit but his work in Grosse Pointe demonstrates his diverse range and aptitude for switching between architectural styles. Photos of the home included in the presentation will highlight Stratton's emphasis on the fine craftsmanship which was abundant in this home.

569 St. Clair, City of Grosse Pointe – Known as the Blondell house when it was originally located at Jefferson and Notre Dame, this home is one of the few remaining farmhouses from the Ribbon Farms located on or near Lake St. Clair in the 1800s. This home was moved to St. Clair street in the early 1900s. It was saved from demolition in the 1990s by its owner who totally renovated and remodeled it for modern living with respect for its farmhouse heritage. Images will reveal some of its original features from the mid 1800s.



1823 Society Members

Chip Berschback, Attorney At Law
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Breckels Massage Therapy Inc.
www.breckelsmassagetherapy.com

Cathy Champion, Realtor
www.cchampion.com

Corbett Consulting
www.juliecorbett.com

Edsel & Eleanor Ford House
www.fordhouse.org

James R. Fikany Real Estate Co.
www.fikany.com

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www.fortunapiano.com

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Grosse Pointe Florists, Inc.
www.grossepointeflorists.com

Grosse Pointe Magazine
www.grossepointemagazine.com

Grosse Pointe Rotary
www.grossepointerotary.org

Grosse Pointe War Memorial
www.warmemorial.org

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www.kmfinancialonline.com

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Windmill Pointe Brewing Co.
www.windmillpointebrewing.com

Ribbon Farm Days 2016

The Grosse Pointe Historical Society's summer program, **Ribbon Farm Days**, is for children aged 7-11 and is held at the Provencal-Weir House at 376 Kercheval Ave., GPF. Coming to this historic home, built c. 1823, gives children a rare opportunity to work in a farm house that is almost 200 years old. As they enter the Parlor, which has the original Michigan white pine floors, they immediately get a sense that time stands still in this special place.

Ribbon Farm Days is broken up into four categories: Michigan Gardens, Grosse Pointe History, Ribbon Farms of Grosse Pointe, and Fairy Tales. Craft projects are created with these specific themes in mind. Emphasis is on hand sewing, painting, gluing, weaving, coiling, drawing, building with polymer clays, and baking with fresh Michigan fruits.

Critical thinking plays a big part in these crafts, which develop problem-solving and aesthetic awareness. "The hands-on approach is so important for children", says Izzy Donnelly, director of education. "The children love doing these old time crafts in such an historic home. They also get to learn about their community and its fascinating history". There are picnic lunches and lots of outside play for recess.

Instruction and supervision are provided by two experienced classroom teachers, with a student-teacher ratio of six to one. Classes are held on Tuesdays & Thursdays from 11:00-3:00p.m. Children bring their own bag lunches. Tuition for Grosse Pointe Historical Society members is \$200 per session; non-member tuition is \$250 per session.

Session I Garden Theme: Bird Watching

June 21, 23, 28 & 30 (11:00-3:00 p.m.)

- Create a mosaic bird bath for your back yard
- Decorate a bird house with stones and beads
- Make a Baltimore oriole bird feeder for the garden
- Paint your own binoculars for bird watching
- Make apple pie tarts with Michigan apples
- A special visit from Rosann Kovalcik from Wild Birds Unlimited on bird watching using the binoculars.

Session II GP History Theme: Michigan Habitants

July 12, 14, 19 & 21 (11:00-3:00 p.m.)

- Sew a birch bark basket
- Dye wool yarn with Kool-Aid
- Weave a habitant sash
- Make a habitant vest and adorn with yarn and beads
- Paint a small pot and plant with baby pea seeds
- Make pea soup from scratch and serve with homemade corn bread
- Whip butter and serve with Michigan honey



Izzy's Second Saturdays 2016

*All Saturday events will take place from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm at the Provencal-Weir House, 376 Kercheval. Cost is \$20.00 per session for members, \$25.00 for non-members. **Reservations must be made by the Thursday before each event.** Ask for Izzy at 313-884-7010.*

May 14- "April Showers Bring May Flowers". Come and make flower magnets using polymer clay and gluing magnets on the back. For ages 7 and above.

One Room Schoolhouse Conference in GPW

The Michigan One-Room School Association (MORSA) spring conference will be held in GPW this year on Saturday, May 21, 2016. Registration is from 8:30-9:00 a.m. at the Cook School. Session I is a talk on Cook School, *History, Move and Present Day Use* by John Parthum. Session II is a talk on Primers, Chalk and Bells by Rochelle Balkam. Lunch, the annual business meeting and



Photo courtesy of the City of Grosse Pointe Woods

award will be hosted by Dan Chapman. At 1:00 guests will take a trolley ride from the parking lot to the PWH where Izzy Donnelly will give a tour of the Provencal-

Weir and log cabin. The trolley will take the guests back to the Woods municipal parking lot. Those who signed up for the Edsel and Eleanor Ford House tour will drive themselves. They will tour Edsel and Eleanor's house, the play house, view the garage with antique cars, take a walk by the bio-swale and then tour Bird Island. The registration fee is \$30.00. *The Edsel and Eleanor Home tour is an additional \$8.00.* Reservations are needed by May 7th. Please make checks payable to MORSA and mail to:

Larry Schlack
2906 Woodgate Lane
Kalamazoo, MI 49008-4815

Ribbon Farm Days 2016

Continued from page 5.

Session III Ribbon Farm Days Theme

July 26, 28, August 2 & 4
(11:00-3:00 p.m.)

- Make a paper coil basket with a lid
- Paint and adorn the basket



- Write with a quill Turkey feather with homemade ink from blackberries
- Sew a faux leather pouch and adorn with beads
- Make a Zuni fetish animal and sew onto the pouch
- Shake your own butter and melt over homemade flapjacks with Michigan maple syrup

Session IV Fairy Tale Theme: *Hansel & Gretel*

August 9, 11, 16 & 18 (11:00-3:00 p.m.)

- Sew a hand puppet of Hansel
- Sew a hand puppet of Gretel
- Sew a hand puppet of the big, bad witch
- Decorate a birdhouse as the gingerbread house with paint and plastic candies
- Make a witch's cauldron out of polymer clay
- Make turnovers with fresh Michigan blueberries and hand whipped cream

MOT at the Provencal-Weir House

Austen Stewart from Michigan Opera Theatre (MOT) called one morning to ask if they could use Provencal-Weir House for a photography session. They needed a location very quickly, and we were delighted that they thought of us!

Our historical property was a perfect venue for photographing Angela Theis and Joseph Michael Brent, two leading performers in MOT's upcoming production of Aaron Copland's "Tender Land".



Provencal-Weir House provided an appropriate backdrop and space for the performers to change into their period costumes.

Board member Kay Burt-Willson was on hand to greet the photographer, crew and performers.

Austen and the entire crew were thankful for the use of the house and the flexibility of the volunteers who made the shoot possible. We are grateful for this exciting opportunity to assist MOT and showcase Provencal-Weir House, and we wish to thank the Michigan Opera Theatre for their generous donation to the Grosse Pointe Historical Society.



Photos by Mitty Carter

Dr. Frank Bicknell Educational Lecture Series Spring 2016

Detroit In World War II Gregory D. Sumner

Wednesday, April 20, 2016 7:30p.m. Cook Schoolhouse, 25025 Mack Ave., GPW

When President Roosevelt called for the country to be the great “Arsenal of Democracy,” Detroit helped turn the tide against fascism with its industrial might. Locals were committed to the cause, putting careers and personal ambitions on hold. Factories were retooled from the ground up. Industrialist Henry Ford, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, aviator Charles Lindbergh, legendary boxer Joe Louis, future baseball Hall of Famer Hank Greenberg and the real-life Rosie the Riveters all helped drive the city that was “forging thunderbolts” for the front lines. In *Detroit in World War II* author Gregory D. Sumner chronicles the wartime sacrifices, contributions and everyday life of the Motor City

Gregory D. Sumner is chair of history at the University of Detroit Mercy, where he has taught since 1993. He holds a doctorate in American history from Indiana University and has been awarded summer fellowships by the National Endowment for the Humanities, and has twice been William J. Fulbright Senior Lecturer at the Università di Roma Tre.

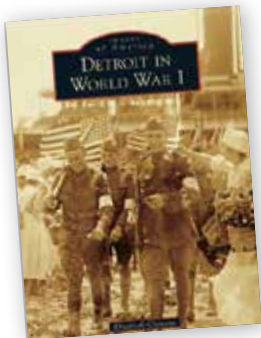
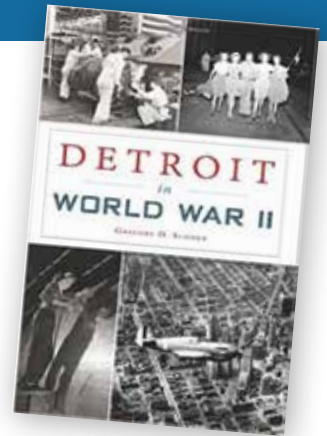
Detroit In World War I Elizabeth Clemens

Wednesday, May 11, 2016 7:30 p.m. Eleanor & Edsel Ford House, 1100 Lakeshore Road, GP Shores

World War I was the catalyst that ushered in themes which would define the 20th century: industrialization, urbanization, and the struggle for equality between social classes, gender, and race. During this time, Detroit was a city rapidly on the rise, with spectacular economic, industrial, and population growth. The war provided a unifying theme to a city struggling to define itself and caused its people to come together in new and unexpected ways to support the war effort at home and abroad.

Detroit in World War I offers a visual exploration of a city and a people caught in a time of dynamic change—from the men who served the cause to the communities they left behind—who rose to the challenge splendidly and helped create one of the 20th century’s most remarkable and vibrant cities.

Elizabeth Clemens is an audiovisual archivist at the Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs at Wayne State University and a resident of Grosse Pointe Farms.



RESCHEDULED

Perfect Union: The Centennial of the Marriage of Eleanor Clay & Edsel Ford

Wednesday, October 19, 2016 7:30 p.m. Eleanor & Edsel Ford House, 1100 Lakeshore Road, GP Shores

Eleanor Clay & Edsel Ford married a century ago on November 1, 1916. A decade later they planned their estate at Gaukler Point Estate, which would become so important to the Grosse Pointe Community.

From the Ford House website: These extraordinary people were generous during a time of economic depression; true connoisseurs when the art world was experimenting in new directions; and accomplished business people, helping to shape the auto industry as it is known today. But most importantly, they created a home for their children, grandchildren, and friends. Both Eleanor and Edsel served as trustees of their high schools, now merged into University Liggett School. When Eleanor died in 1976 at the age of 80, the Detroit Free Press noted, “Mrs. Ford’s greatest gift to the public, indeed, her greatest legacy, is her home, which she had transferred to a trust with the request that it be used for the benefit of the public.” With this final act of generosity, which Eleanor Ford included in her will, this home and furnishings remain intact, as a window to the past, and to enrich the lives of future generations.

Mike Skinner is a Detroit and Ford History buff and Past President of Grosse Pointe Historical Society.



Edsel and Eleanor Ford

Photo courtesy of Benson Ford Research Center at The Henry Ford.

COLLECTION WISH LIST

In the last year, we have received several volumes of *The Social Secretary of Detroit* that have filled most of our gaps from 1918 to 2011. We need 1924, 1929, 1933, 1934, 1942, and 1959 to complete our collection. We use this collection frequently for our varied research projects.

We are interested in receiving items of historical value about Grosse Pointe that are owned by residents of Grosse Pointe, such as letters, diaries, personal papers, maps, prints, blueprints and books.



Grosse Pointe Historical Society

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