

Living History

Melodie Nichols :: Museum Curator

April–June 2009

Carlos and Hazel
Some things never change but fashion is not one of them.
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Get involved
We all have a gift to offer... volunteerism. It's really a gift of time and any amount will make you feel good. See how you can help the museum.
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Carlos and Hazel Allen



Carlos Allen was born November 29, 1895 in Middleton, Michigan to Zoeth and Louisa (Chaffin) Allen. He grew up on a farm, and walked three miles to Middleton high school. After graduating in 1915, he came to Detroit where he worked as a draftsman for Regal Motor Company for about a year. In 1916, he enlisted in the National Guard and served on the Mexican border until February 1917. *continued on page 2*

CLAWSON HISTORICAL MUSEUM PURPOSES AND POLICIES

The Clawson Historical Museum is owned by the City of Clawson. It is governed by a Historical Commission of five members appointed by the Clawson City Council. It is managed by a curator appointed by the City Manager. Its operating budget is funded through the City of Clawson and augmented by generous donations from the Clawson Historical Society.

Museum Purpose *The purpose of the Clawson Historical Museum is to collect, preserve and encourage the use of documents, photographs and artifacts related to the early history of Clawson, from its settlement in 1823 through the present, focusing especially on the decade of the 1920's, when Clawson incorporated as a home rule village.*

Collections Policy *Historical records include those related to area public and civic organizations, such as the Lions Club and the Women's Club, churches, schools and government, as well as personal oral histories of residents, property abstracts, school and business records and thousands of photographs documenting Clawson's buildings, homes, streets and the changes they have undergone through the decades.*

Also included in the collection are maps, almanacs, and contemporary published materials such as local newspapers and news clippings, books, historical research papers, and national magazines and periodicals that reflect the culture of the 1920's.

These materials are available to the public for research on genealogy, property history, environmental investigations and other personal interests. Student research is especially encouraged.

From the desk of the Curator

Visitors frequently ask me why the museum isn't open more often than just Wednesdays and Sundays, and wonder what I do with the remainder of my 20 hours a week. I thought I would take this opportunity to give you a little insight into what goes on at the museum when the doors are closed.

While we have wonderful volunteers, the bulk of the work and planning falls to me, and that includes housekeeping. Each of our eleven display rooms and two offices need to be cleaned thoroughly twice a year, from their windows to their baseboards, and all artifacts dusted and inspected to see how they are holding up, whether they need repairs, or are in good enough condition to remain on display. I won't go into the details of vacuuming linens or dolls' wigs, but cleaning is done very carefully and only after the artifact is inspected. Quilts and other textiles that are susceptible to damage from light need to be watched carefully, as well.

Our patrons regularly donate new items, and these need to be accessioned to become part of the museum's holdings. This may include cataloging the item or photograph, assigning it a number, photographing it, marking it, storing it, providing the proper donor and release forms... you get the idea. Sometimes, research needs to be done to learn more about the artifact.

I have also begun updating some of our exhibits, including the wonderful display of historical photographs in the community room. That, along with compiling this newsletter, takes up a little of each week's time. Hardly a week goes by that I don't receive a call from someone with a research question, so I dive into the archives to hunt up information. Many other projects are in the works, as well, including major updates to the Historical Society website now viewable at www.clawsonhistoricalsociety.org, editing a book for publication, as well as writing a companion book for children, which I hope will be published later this summer. I have also been researching the Fisher family, who built the museum's house in 1919. That's just a taste of what goes on here when the doors are closed, and I just keep finding more interesting projects that I would like to take on! There just aren't enough hours in a week!

Hope you visit soon.

Melodie

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He married Hazel Chaffin on April 5, 1917, one day before the United States declared war on Germany. The National Guard mustered in July, 1917, and Carlos was sent to Waco, Texas, where the 125th Infantry became part of the 32nd division (The Red Arrow.) He served with the 32nd Division through the war, including the Alsace front, Second Battle of the Marne, Soissons, Juvigny and the Argonne. He was wounded at Chateau Thierry in July 1918, earning a Purple Heart.

After the war, he was sent as a delegate from Detroit to the first American Legion convention in 1919 in St. Louis Missouri. He was a charter member of the Charles Larned post in Detroit and a member of the David E. Cleary post, No. 167, in Clawson.

Carlos worked as a cost accountant for Ford Motor Company, a salesman for Kitchen Craft, and later as an assistant manager for the Detroit office. He was with John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company for five years, and then joined Case Realty Company as a salesman in 1937. He eventually purchased that business and renamed it Carlos R. Allen Realty.

The Allen's had one son, Nathan, born in 1921. Hazel died in 1948 at the age of 52. She had also been active in Clawson, serving as a member of the Clawson Woman's club, American Legion and Clawson Moms Unit 6. During WWII, she was the director of salvage. Mrs. Allen was also an amateur photographer and pianist.

Carlos Allen served on the Clawson city council from 1940-1942, when he was appointed mayor. He served in that capacity until 1945. He died in 1955 at the age of 60 after suffering a stroke at his home in Palo Alto, California.



Syllabub

Here's an interesting recipe from the February, 1928 *Needlecraft Magazine*. A syllabub was a popular confection made with whipped cream and liquor or sherry. This version uses flavored syrup, and would have been a "temperance" version of the familiar classic that dated from at least Colonial times. Try one!

1 pint cream
½ cup powdered sugar
whites of 2 eggs
½ teaspoon vanilla
½ teaspoon almond
fruit syrup or sherry flavor

The chilled cream is whipped solid, the sugar and stiffly whipped whites of eggs folded into it and seasonings added. Raspberry syrup is good, or the sweetened sherry flavoring may be used. Chopped nuts and maraschino cherries are an addition. Serve in glasses lined with lady fingers halved and the lower half dipped in the flavoring syrup.

Book signing

Join Deloris Kumler Sunday, July 5th, from 1-4pm at Leon & Lulu when she will share excerpts from her new book on Clawson history, *Clawson, The Way It Was*. The book features history, stories and photographs from the earliest days through 1979.

Get involved

There are several interesting projects ongoing at the museum. If you have been considering what you can do to be a part of things, check your interests against these museum projects:

- 1) The museum archives have over 4,000 photographs. The categories include people, city streets, business, schools, July 4th, etc. To protect these photos from oils in our skin, they are stored in polyester sleeves. Most of the photos still need to be put into the sleeves. They are already filed and organized, so you would just need to grab a folder, and maybe a friend to chat with, and slip each photo into a sleeve, then return it to its folder. It may not sound fascinating, but the photos are interesting, and you would be helping to preserve them for future researchers.
- 2) In the early 1970's, Ethel Kohler, who was a school nurse for many years and a founding member of the historical society, set about compiling family histories from everyone she knew around town. The handwritten book, mostly notes taken during interviews, need to be typed and organized. If you are the kind of person who likes a challenging puzzle, you might enjoy taking home a few pages and putting them together, then seeing what other information and photos you can compile on these families.
- 3) Shortly after the museum was started, several older residents were interviewed about their lives in Clawson. These oral histories are a valuable insight into life in Clawson in the nineteenth and early 20th century. Unfortunately, there are transcripts of only a few of these recordings. Transcribing is a slow process, but if you are a decent typist, providing typed and indexed versions of these oral histories would be an invaluable addition to the museum.

4) If you have ever called the museum to inquire about an obituary, you know we have an extensive collection of newspaper clippings related to Clawson residents. They are neatly organized and filed alphabetically; however, most of them are on the original newsprint, which is showing signs of deterioration. These clippings need to be photocopied onto acid free paper so we don't lose this information as the newsprint disintegrates. If you have patience and attention to detail, you could provide a valuable service. This is another job that would be great to share with a friend.

This is just a sampling of some of the opportunities. Admittedly, they are not glamorous, but all are necessary. None of them require a lifetime commitment, just a few hours and as much work as you want to take on. If you think you would like to help out, or want more information about a particular job, call Melodie at 248.588.9169.

Calling all white elephants

The Historical Society Yard Sale will be held May 15th and 16th at 706 S. Marias (the Kumler home). Proceeds from the sale will support the Clawson Historical Museum. If you have items you wish to donate for the sale, please contact Melodie Nichols at 248.588.9169. All items are welcome, except clothing.

Be sure to come early to shop on Friday and Saturday. Sale items include several pieces of furniture, books, dishware, ceramics, and much more.

The Clawson Historical Museum

Living History

A look back

George Robinson's general merchandise store stood on East 14 Mile Road, about where the Aco Hardware store is today. The photo dates from the early 1920s (Mr. Robinson owned two different stores here in town). He stocked about everything, from cereal, washing soda and bananas to fresh vegetables, bread and even Crane's Quinine and Tar Compound, a popular remedy for colds and "the grippe." Seems you could get about everything you needed those days in Clawson—he even had a gas pump out front! If George didn't have it you could probably do without it.



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