
LIVING HISTORY

Fourth Quarter 2012

November-December

Walking in the Past: Downtown Clawson Virtual History Project

The unique architecture of downtown Clawson is being featured in a new virtual tour. Under the direction of the museum, Bree Boettner, a research assistant from Oakland University, has created a walking tour featuring several existing downtown buildings and historically interesting sites.

Using a smart phone, visitors will be able to scan a Quick Response code that will give them access to interesting facts about the building or site, including its history and historic photographs.

While several QR codes are currently in place around town, a brochure that includes the codes is available at the museum free of charge. Additionally, sites of interests can be viewed on the Oakland County Regional Historic Sites website at :

<http://oaklandregionalthistoricsites.org/historic-sites-oakland>.

Pins for Clawson as the surroundings areas can be accessed.



QR codes are appearing everywhere these days – soon you will see them on some of our downtown buildings

1940 Census Records Now Available

Earlier this year, the 1940 US Census records were made public after a mandatory 72 year privacy requirement. The 16th US census, taken as the country was struggling to emerge from the Great Depression, provides a look at Clawson on the eve of World War II.

Seeking to gauge the efficacy of New Deal programs, the census included questions about Social Security and employment, including WPA and NYA (National Youth Association) jobs. As with previous census records, it includes information about home ownership, including the value of the home, or, if rented, the rent paid per month.

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1940 Census, continued

Of particular interest, as far as Clawson is concerned, is the number of residents employed in the automotive industry. It has long been our conviction that a great number of residents living in Clawson were employed in the auto manufacturing plants in Detroit and Highland Park, and that the Interurban trains originally made it possible for men to live so far from their employment; in essence, making Clawson a “bedroom community.”



George Brown delivering Government relief.
E.R.A. was a precursor to the W.P.A.

While the Interurban was gone by 1940, improvements in the roads must have made it possible to continue this, as fully 30% of the adults over the age of 14 were directly employed in auto manufacturing plants. This does not include those working in steel mills, rubber factories, bearing factories, and other industries that were likely suppliers to the auto manufacturers.

Another interesting statistic is that of home ownership. While many families did undoubtedly lose their homes during the Depression, a fact we know from oral and written histories, the percentage of those who still owned a home in 1940 was relatively high. In Clawson, nearly 68% of the 1038 households reported home ownership,

while 32% percent rented, paying anywhere from \$7 to \$75 per month. As a quick comparison, the 2010 census indicates that just over 74% of Oakland County residents owned their own home.

Further analysis of the census records is showing an interesting trend in women’s employment. While most people are not surprised that many women worked outside the home during World War II, a preliminary look at 1940 suggests that the increase in employment for women was already increasing well before the War began. While the study is not yet complete, from one large sampling of approximately 1/3 of the population, 16% of women over the age of 14 were engaged in work outside of either home, a family business or domestic service. This included some who were working in the auto manufacturing business, as well as a small percentage who were proprietors of their own businesses.

While statistics don’t tell the whole story, they can help us start to form a picture of what Clawson looked like. In the near future, we hope to compare these findings with the 1930 census, and eventually with all available census records from 1900 to 1940, so identify trends in employment, economic conditions and mobility. Currently we have the 1930 census indexed, but as far as we know, no formal analysis of it has been made.

If you are interested in helping with these statistics, all that is required is good eyesight (these records are hand-written and very small!) a great attention to detail and a minimal amount of computer ability.

CLAWSON HISTORICAL MUSEUM

41 FISHER COURT

MAILING ADDRESS: 425 N. MAIN STREET, CLAWSON MI 48017

PHONE: 248-588-9169

FAX 248-588-+9169

EMAIL: HISTORICALMUSEUM@CITYOFCLAWSON.COM

MUSEUM OPEN WEDNESDAY AND SUNDAY, 1-4 P.M., EXCEPT HOLIDAYS. ADMISSION IS FREE

GROUP TOURS BY APPOINTMENT



PRESERVING THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE

VISIT US ON FACEBOOK

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 Clawson Historical Museum exists to collect, preserve and encourage the use of documents, photographs and artifacts related to the early history of Clawson, from its settlement in 1823 to the present, focusing especially on the decade of the 1920s, when Clawson Incorporated as a Home Rule Village.

Collections: Historical records include those related to area public and civic organizations, 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 newspapers, books, magazines and periodicals that reflect the culture of the 1920s.

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 ARCHIVES WHAT WAS AN INTERURBAN?

To those who remember the clanking and clamoring the raucous screech, the demanding bell, and the sheer fun of riding the "electrics," the question is startling. Yet it is true that here have been few cases in business history where empires have risen with such speed, so great an impact, and then disappeared as completely as the interurban Electric Railway. By 1895, every self-respecting village had its own street railway, and most of these lines were electrified. By 1900, Detroit boasted more extensive interurban mileage than any other city in the United States, a position it held until 1903 when Indianapolis surpassed it....Fares averaged a penny a mile, and speeds were 40 to 50 miles an hour, and often higher.

But there was a cloud on the horizon, a cloud of dust being raised by the Model T. It was the Model T, more than anything else, that sounded the death knell of the interurban. The electrics had made it possible for the farmer to go to town, buy something and carry it back. ...with a truck he made his own schedule. The same thing was happening in town to the pleasure and business rider. A Sunday ride in the country now meant a ride in the touring car.

This is over simplification, but it is basic. (Paved roads also figured into declining ridership.) With the loss of revenue, expenses must be cut, and at the same time, service improved. Public opinion, too, took its toll. At one time, the interurbans were enshrined in the hearts of all. Now there were other ways to travel, and suddenly, the electric railway became something of a bad cousin.

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HOLIDAY HOURS

THE MUSEUM WILL BE DECORATED FOR A 1920S CHRISTMAS BEGINNING WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 28TH.

WE WILL BE CLOSED WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 21ST AND SUNDAY NOVEMBER 25TH FOR THE THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY.

THE MUSEUM WILL BE OPENED WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 19TH, AND WILL THEN CLOSE FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE YEAR AND ALL OF JANUARY FOR ANNUAL MAINTENANCE.

THE MUSEUM WILL RE-OPEN SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3RD, 2013.



Lighting the Museum

Practical incandescent lights have been around for over 130 years, providing a true revolution in lifestyle. While Clawsonites began to enjoy the lighting revolution in the early 1920s, many homes, including the museum, we suspect, continued to be lit by gaslight, or even kerosene lanterns, until Detroit Edison was able to extend electrical lines to all newly-developed housing.

The basic incandescent light bulb hasn't changed much through the decades, and alternatives have not been good for the museum community. Fluorescent lighting, while cooler than incandescent, is harmful to archival objects. Halogens burn very hot, and are also not archivally safe. LEDs have been the best choice, as they do not photo-degrade and do not give off much heat. They do not, however, look very

Newsletter News...

You may think you have missed a newsletter this year, but you didn't – I did! During the summer our computer systems at the museum were completely replaced, and that, along with the very hot weather, and a few personal issues I won't go into, made it a good idea to just skip that 3rd quarter newsletter this year.

Beginning next year, I hope to continue this newsletter, with improvements. If there is a particular feature or aspect of history you would like to see given some attention, please let me know. Maybe you would like more history on the Clawson Schools, or sports teams, or a return of the "Clawson Family File" feature. Maybe you own a historic home, or have a great Clawson family story you would like to share. Let me know. It gets lonely here, writing this all by myself!

"The value of art does not depend on one's rich imagination; the value of art depends on how one's rich imagination is mastered" -Eliel Saarinen

nice, or authentic, in historic fixtures.

With changes coming in the availability of light bulbs, there was great concern over what type of lighting would be available for our vintage fixtures. Referred to as electroliers (the electric version of a chandelier) in their time, most feature exposed light bulbs, which look rather out of place with a CFL in them.



Vintage-style bulbs like this Edison squirrel-cage will continue to be available to users of vintage fixtures

Fans of history can relax, however; the new law provides for the production of "historic" light bulbs that retain the look of the original bulbs.

Analyzing an Artifact - The Old House

Small, simple objects can offer a great deal of information to the keen observer. A study of pipe stem sizes lead historian James Deetz to create an intricate system for dating historic sites. Analysis of pottery shards has provided insight into the lifestyle, economic conditions and even the diet of people long past. Researchers are thrilled to find an old trash heap or an outhouse - trash from such sites yields a wealth of information about things not generally mentioned in diaries and other records, but nonetheless significant to understanding daily life.

Small items can be overlooked, their significance sometimes not recognized. Houses, on the other hand, are too big to miss – and they, too, can tell us about the people who lived in them.

Here is a simple exercise to get you started thinking about a house, new or old:

What does the house suggest to us about how people lived? Is there an indication of their values, lifestyle or economic situation?

What were the expectations of comfort, space, privacy, and convenience that we can tell from the house? How much space is allotted to the kitchen and other living areas? How are public and private spaces defined? For example, consider that a traditional American home of the 17th and early 18th centuries consisted of two rooms; all family members slept in the same room, a concept that seems foreign and likely uncomfortable to most Americans today.

What is the style of the house? Is it plain or luxurious?

In his study of American vernacular homes in Virginia, Professor Henry Glassie suggests that smaller, simpler homes were not an indication of a bad builder; people did not build cruder houses because they were less talented or imaginative, but because they were poorer. Is the house built in a revival style? Is it a kit home that was chosen for its aesthetics, or a vernacular style that follows some local building tradition?

How many people lived in each house? Was it home to more than one family? Were there extended family members, live-in help or boarders? The occupants of a house change over time, and what was adequate for one group may not be for another.

Expectations for square footage vary, as well. Consider the 1000 square foot house; while it might have been the norm 50 years ago, it may seem very small in the Midwest, while a 1000 square foot apartment in New York City or Chicago would be incredibly spacious.

What were their occupations? How did this influence their architecture? Obviously a farm house would be designed differently than that of a doctor who would see patients in his home.

Quantify the square footage per person, matrix for family income/occupation/social status, where possible. Do this only if you really like statistics!

While these exercises are a little simplistic, they will start you thinking about houses, past and present, and how we perceive ourselves and the spaces in which we live.

Cool... Museum Investigates Climate Control

If you have visited the museum in the warmer months, you probably know the museum is not currently air-conditioned, making it necessary to close when the temperatures soar. This past summer, there were at least 8 days in which the interior of the museum was over 90°F.

While that is uncomfortable for people, the primary problem with the lack of climate control is the effect of fluctuating temperature and humidity levels on the artifacts. Paper, photographs, furniture and delicate fabrics can be damaged by high humidity and inconsistent temperatures.

Installing a climate control system will mitigate this damage and ensure that our treasured history will be preserved. The museum house, however, does not contain ductwork; the house is heated by a 1949 gas powered hot water boiler and radiators. Hoping to preserve the integrity of the historic interior, we have contacted companies that specialize in historic homes. The cost of such a system may be prohibitive, but it is our goal to raise funds to do what we can to preserve the artifacts, while maintaining the integrity of the house, by providing more consistent temperature and humidity levels.

Stable interior temperatures and humidity are important for the preservation of the museum's artifacts; the comfort of our staff and visitors will be a pleasant side effect.

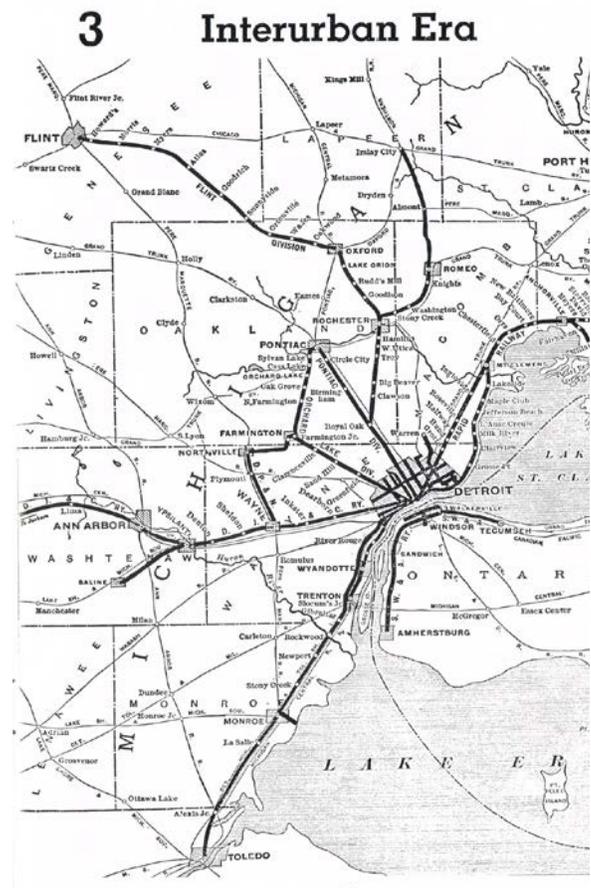
At this time it has been recommended that the house also be insulated. The cost for complete installation of a new HVAC system, including insulation of the building, is over \$40,000. In light of this, alternate options are currently being explored by the Historical Commission.

If you are interested in donating toward this project, you may make a donation via PayPal, or send a check payable to Clawson Historical Society, PO Box 222, Clawson, MI 48017, and request your donation be earmarked for the Cool Museum Project.

FROM THE ARCHIVES, cont.

The above is an excerpt from *Detroit its Trolleys and Interurbans*, published by the Michigan Transit Museum.

The interurbans ran through Clawson from 1899 until 1931, and were instrumental in encouraging settlement in the village.



What's New at the Museum?

Among the new acquisitions at the museum are a Clawson High School Band Uniform, a 1919 Michigan automobile license plate, a few 1923 ladies' magazines, and several paintings by local artist Leon Evarts.



This 1919 Michigan license plate bears a metal seal of the state of Michigan. It was made in the one year the state did not have plates painted by prisoners, a practice which they resumed in 1920. This was also the last year the plate contained the state seal. The license plate was purchased by the museum.



This painting by Leon Evarts is one of three recently acquired from Ginny Schalm, whose parents were friends of the artist.

This scene was painted on Belle Isle, probably in the early 1940s.

Clawson has a MUSEUM?

If you are reading this, you are obviously not one of the many residents I meet each year who were unaware that Clawson has a Historical Museum.

So....when was the last time you visited us?



Several groups of local scouts visit the museum each fall. These girl scouts are among the nearly 50 that will visit before the end of the year.



A sunny Sunday in September brought out a few locals to enjoy the sites and history of downtown Clawson. While most of them opted for a traditional tour, the event showcased the Digital History project that offers digital photos of several downtown sites that can be accessed with a Smartphone via Quick Response codes like the one shown on page 1.

While the museum will be closed in January for cleaning and renovation of our basement exhibits, it is never too early to book your group tour. Group tours are offered free of charge to all Clawson groups.

Off-site visits, including multi-media presentations and “museum without walls” tours are also available. For more information about group tours, history programs, or to plan your visit, call 248-588-9169.