President's Report
BY RON BLUHM

With “THANKS” to a donor, much work was done on the National Hudson Motor Car Company Museum. The building has been standing for more than 125 years with little major maintenance. The beams that supported the second floor storage and office space sunk 4 inches over the years causing the upstairs floor to have a steep slope. We learned that these beams are supported by long bolts connected to the base of the triangular roof trusses. The carpenters/engineers who built the structure knew what they were doing. All our contractors had to do is jack up the floor beams and tighten the nuts on the long bolts! A couple of posts from the concrete floor to the second floor beams were added for safe measure.

The second floor of the National Hudson Motor Car Company Museum partially contained the office for Carl Miller, the owner of the Hudson Sales and Service dealership. Over the years, the office and the rest of the second floor became a catch all storage area. The donation paid for electrical repairs, plumbing repairs, installing shelves, painting walls, repairing and finishing floors. The office space now looks like it did during the first half of the Twentieth Century. The rest of the second floor provides space for organized archival materials. We accomplished what would have been impossible using our regular museum income.

The windows in the Hudson show room were also improved with help from MotorCities National Heritage Area grant money. Our partners, the Hudson Essex Terraplane Historical Society, provide immaculately restored Hudsons that are displayed for longer periods of time than would be displayed in an operating dealership. The windows now have filters that protect these beautiful cars from UV light!

Mike Joy and the Fox Sports TV crew that covers NASCAR usually stay at our Ypsilanti Marriott. In the past, they have visited our Depot Town Cruise Night the Thursday before the June race at Michigan International Speedway. This time, they recorded a Cruise Night in Depot Town and views in our museum. They put together a minute or two Ypsilanti segment that was broadcast during their pre-race program before the Sunday race. Using his Twitter account, Mike promoted our museum, Depot Town, and Ypsilanti! Once again, we have been fortunate to have the media think highly of the automotive stories we tell.

(Continued on page 2)
Our Orphan Car Show this year is going to be something very special. The Tucker Automobile Club of America is holding their annual meeting the same weekend as the show! The public has an opportunity to join club members at a special viewing of *Tucker: A Man and His Dream* on Friday night, September 16th. The public is also invited to the club banquet on Saturday night and join in all of the Preston Tucker conversations. Inquire at the museum for tickets to both events. Tucker 48 is the featured car for the show; we are planning on having four maybe five cars exhibited.

In addition, we have a rule change for Big Three orphans that include Oldsmobile, Pontiac, Mercury, and Plymouth. The old rule limited the showing of these cars to earlier than model year 1964. That rule has been changed to allow them if they are model year 1991 or older. If an orphan can qualify for Michigan’s Historic Plate, they are old enough for admission to the show! The old rule also required that the cars be in stock condition – that rule continues.

Because of the special nature of the 2016 show, we wanted expensive publicity that we could not afford. We found a special Washtenaw County fund that is specifically dedicated to promoting Washtenaw County as a visitor’s destination. We applied for and were awarded an advertising grant that is allowing us to have ¼ page ads in the July, August, and September issues of Hemmings with monthly email blasts and a radio interview about the show. This year’s show looks to be a very special weekend.

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(Continued from page 1)

**NEW TUCKER BOOK**

Just in time for September’s Orphan Car Show featuring Tucker and the Tucker Automobile Club of America’s convention here in Ypsilanti from September 16th to 18th, a new book about Preston Tucker is published. The author is Steve Lehto, a Michigan based attorney. Steve reports that he found a sealed transcript in the National Archives in Chicago that contributed to the book. The book has a forward by Jay Leno and was published in mid-July by the Chicago Review Press. It will be a good read to prepare for the September weekend that includes viewing *Tucker: The Man and His Dream*, the Club’s dinner, and the Orphan Car Show. Steve expects to be in Ypsilanti during the September convention.
I was contacted recently by a Leonard (Mickey) Frank. He said he was a childhood friend of my dad’s. He found the club on the Internet and was going to be visiting Ypsilanti soon and wondered if we could meet. We set up a date and I met him and his wife Judy on a Saturday for lunch at the Sidetrack to talk about him and his wife’s time here. After lunch, we visited the car museum and then went to the Tucker home. Mickey lived just down Park Street towards the railroad tracks from the Tucker home and he and my dad had been great friends.

We walked the couple of blocks where they played and the stories began to flow. He showed me where Jimmy Sakuyama’s (Jimmy was Preston Tucker’s draftsman/designer) trailer used to be parked; across the street from the Tucker house not behind it as I always thought. He said Jimmy was quite a character but remembered that Jimmy was very intelligent and talented.

He had many memories. One of his favorite stories was that he and my dad stole grandfather’s Combat Car prototype more than once and drove it all over town. Another was that they would take their .22 rifles and go down to the dump by Ford Lake and shoot rats. He remembered that the two stories merged because one of the trips was in the Combat Car. They were shooting rats and my dad said “Hey Mickey, imagine the rats we could get with the 50 caliber gun on the turret!” They climbed up into the turret and blasted. Mickey said there was nothing left of the rats they shot with 50 caliber guns.

He remembered R. Donn Newhouse, Dan Leabu, and all the rest. He made a point to tell me that Preston was the nicest man he had ever met and was so good to his employees. He said that trait was probably a liability in business and probably contributed to the Tucker Corporation’s demise. As an example, he told me a story about Henry J Kaiser. According to Mickey, in the mid 40’s, Henry J bought up all of the companies that made safety glass. When he began building his cars at the Willow Run Bomber Plant, the other companies were making it difficult to get materials. When this happened, Henry J stopped production of the safety glass and the supply dried up in a week. All of the other car companies had to cease production waiting for glass and found out that it traced back to Henry J. After that, Henry J had no problem getting materials. If Preston had been a SOB like Henry J, he too might have solved his materials problem.

After we returned to the car museum from the house, I introduced Mickey and Judy to the car museum regulars. Because all were from Ypsilanti, they had lots of history in common.

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John is a grandson of Preston Tucker. His dad was Preston Tucker’s son John. In addition, John is an Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum board member and president of the Tucker Automobile Club of America.
On July 25, 1945 the country was informed that Henry J. Kaiser and Joseph Frazer released their intent to manufacture automobiles under the names of Kaiser and Frazer. Kaiser would be manufactured on the west coast and Graham Paige Motors Corporation of Detroit would market the Frazer. Kaiser-Frazer Corporation was incorporated in Nevada on Aug 9th 1945. Two weeks later, Joe Frazer’s nephew Hickman Price and A.J. Fushman of the Reconstruction Finance Corp (RFC) signed a letter of intent to lease with an option to buy what would be the largest Automobile plant in the world under one roof, WILLOW RUN!

On November 1, 1945 Kaiser-Frazer moved into the administration building. In a meager six months, Willow Run was converted from wartime plane production to automotive production, a feat of speed and organization that eclipsed even the financial wizardry and labor diplomacy already displayed. The Willow Run plant started at 3,000 workers progressing to 11,000 employees.

The Howard Darrin designed Kaiser and Frazer were the only all new automobiles to come out after the war. Starting from scratch, they were late getting into production compared to the competition. Their popularity soon rivaled all the independents and by 1947 Kaiser-Frazer was forth in production of all manufactures. On September 25, 1947 a Kaiser Custom rolled off the Willow Run lines to celebrate the production of their 100,000th vehicle. Kaiser-Frazer was off to one of the most spectacular beginnings in all the history of American businesses. Sales of automobiles for 1947 totaled 144,507 and by 1948 totaled 181,316 models.

Although successful, things soon changed with the competition which began offering competitive new automobiles for 1949.

Joe Frazer then President and the automotive talent that he had brought to Kaiser-Frazer Corporation were losing control to the Kaiser
side of the business. Friction developed between the two men and Joe Frazer stepped down.

Henry J. Kaiser as Chairman and his son Edgar as President took control of the Corporation. 1949-1950 model years were a disaster with only warmed over models. The talents of men like Howard Darrin, Alex Tremulus, Brook Stevens and Corporate Engineers designed all new automobiles for the 1951 model year. With a new Henry J compact car and a new revolutionary full size Kaiser, the European community recognized Kaiser as the winner of the Grand Prix de 'Elegance of Cannes in 1951. Kaiser had it all; styling awards, Mobil Gas economy champ, and the safest car on the road, but there was trouble brewing. To enhance the slowing automotive market, Kaiser had a government contract to produce the C-119 Fairchild Cargo Transport for the Air Force, 88 were produced. Automotive production was slipping away and by late 1953 Willow Run would have to go. Kaiser Motors, as it was then called, moved to newly acquired Willys Motors in Toledo, Ohio and the Willow Run plant was sold to General Motors.

By 1955, the Kaiser and Willys Automobile lines shut down with a move to South America. Today, many stories have been told and written about Kaiser-Frazer’s legacy as a great story in automotive history.

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**#30**

By Bill Nickels

Living in Romulus, Milt Wood’s interest in racing began when he watched at nearby Flat Rock Speedway. After service in Viet Nam as a mechanic, he returned home to become a test driver for Chrysler at the Chelsea Proving Grounds. His work at Chrysler led to an interest in their racing program. When an opportunity presented itself to buy Dodge driver Bob Brevak’s 1972 Dodge Charger, he took it. Bob Brevak was a United States Auto Club (USAC) driver and an American Racing Club of America (ARCA) champion in 1990. After retiring from Chrysler in 1999, he spent 3 years restoring the car to look like it did when Bob raced it. The car still has Maurice Petty’s hemi engine! After restoration, Milt displayed the car at Winchester Speedway, Darlington Speedway, Michigan International Speedway, and other famous tracks.

Milt met Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum’s Curator Jack Miller when he displayed the car at the Chrysler Museum when he was there for a hemi display in 2007. Along with YAHM board member Mickey Ichesco, Jack knew and crewed for local ARCA driver Iggy Katona who also raced a Dodge. Jack suggested that Milt find and restore a Dodge adorned with Iggy’s racing # 30.

In 2006, Milt found and bought a 1969 Superbird from Brad Smith Racing, an ARCA team. He reskinned the Superbird making it a Dodge Charger like Iggy’s. He found parts around Mooresville, North Carolina and Keokuk, Iowa. The car was originally built by Ray Nichels and raced by USAC Indy and stock car driver Roger McCluskey. Restoration will be complete during the 2016 racing season. As a # 30 Iggy Katona Dodge Charger, the car will be exhibited at ARCA tracks where Iggy raced. YAHM will also exhibit the car as a way of honoring our local racing champion. Look for an announcement.

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**Bill is a YAHM board member.**
going through papers in the museum, Dave Novak found a 1925 article that predicted the building of the Ypsilanti Ford Plant that affectionately became known as the Generator Plant. The plant was eventually opened in 1932 and grew into a major Ford factory that manufactured automotive electrical components for over seventy years. The plant was sold in 2009 by Automotive Components Holdings, a Ford-controlled company. It is interesting and amusing to compare the predictions to the realities.

Ann Arbor Times News
June 2, 1925

YPSILANTI – After striving two years to purchase the necessary land for the development of power on the Huron River, near here, Henry Ford finally has received the approval of the Michigan public utilities commission, and plans are being made for the construction of a dam near Rawsonville which will be the largest on the stream.

Ford first decided to come into this district in 1922, and in the fall of that year the people voted to sell the municipal dam. At that time it was planned to raise the present dam from an 8 foot to a 14 foot head. Engineers inspected the land in December, however, and decided that it would be better located further down the river. A site at Barlow’s farm, just above Rawsonville, was selected.

The Ford interests bought up all the land along the river from Michigan Avenue to the Barlow farm with the exception of a few acres owned by the United States Pressed Steel Co. and 150 acres owned by James G. McHenry and his wife. This property was necessary to the project and as it could not be purchased at the desired price, work has been delayed.

A recent ruling of the state commission has recognized the Ford concern as a public utility, and as such it has the power to prosecute condemnation procedures. The development company is known as the Fordson Power Co., with Ernest G. Liebold as president. The ruling brings Ford into the power and light field in that he would be required to furnish electric power to the public in the event of an order by the commission.

The lake above the dam will reach practically to Ypsilanti being three and a half miles long and varying in width from a quarter to half a mile. Charles T. Newton, who represents the Ford interests here, asserts that the lake will be both clear and deep. It will be bordered by clean, steep banks and will be within easy reach of the city.

A gang of 70 men has been on the property since January, clearing the land. Nearly a million feet of lumber is expected from the trees cut.

No definite announcement has been made as to the type of factory Ford will locate at the new dam. When the prospect first was presented, however, it was panned as a mill for the manufacture of cloth for closed cars. A study of his needs in that line has shown the 49 per cent of Ford cars are now closed. Such a demand will take the wool form 900,000 sheep, it is said, taking the entire output of 25 mills 10 looms each.

Ypsilanti is an ideal location for such an industry. It is pointed out that Washtenaw County leads Michigan in sheep raising and that a circle of 150 mile radius with Ypsilanti as its center covers a district with more than two million sheep.

Ford has also been experimenting with flax recently and it is possible that both types of goods may be manufactured at the Ypsilanti plant. The surplus power will be offered to the city.
2016 Cruise Night Sponsors

We are over halfway through our 2016 Thursday Depot Town Cruise Night season that ends the last week in August. The free event is held on a city street and operates mostly with volunteers. It looks like it costs little. The actual expenses amount to several thousand dollars and are covered by our sponsors. Hopefully, there is a little extra at the end of the season to help support the museum. Please make the sponsorship of Cruise Nights valuable for our sponsors by shopping/eating at their establishments.

Our sponsors include:

- Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti CVB
- Arbor Brewing Company
- Aubree’s Pizzeria and Grill
- Boggs Gas
- City Body
- Congdon’s Ace Hardware
- Cueter Chrysler-Jeep-Dodge-Ram
- Depot Town Alternative Health
- Massage Mechanics
- Maize Mexican Cantina
- Mr. Bubble Car Wash
- Old Town Coin and Gold
- Ollie’s Cafe
- Sidetrack Bar and Grill
- Standard Printing

Typical Cruise Night

Etch Your Name In Ypsilanti Automotive History

Preserve your memory or honor someone today with a personalized brick at the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum!

Please check one: ☐ 4” x 8” brick $100 each 3 lines of text  ☑ 8” x 8” brick $200 each 6 lines of text

Payment Type
- Check
- Credit Card:  ☐ Visa  ☐ MasterCard

Card # ____________________________
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Funds will go to enhancing the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum
MEMBERSHIP/CONTRIBUTION FORM

Join YAHM's Circle of Friends Enjoy the following benefits

• Free museum admission • Quarterly newsletters • 10% Gift Shop Discount •

Name ____________________________________________
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Do you own a historical automobile? ☐ yes ☐ no
Make __________________ Model __________________ Year _________________

Are you interested in becoming a museum volunteer? ☐ yes ☐ no
Areas in which you have interest:

☐ Single $25 ☐ Family $35 annual (2 adults) ☐ Supporter $100 annual (4 adults)
Contribution for upgrading and developing new exhibits $____________________

Amount enclosed $________________ ☐ check ☐ MasterCard ☐ VISA
Credit Card Number ____________________________________________________________
Expiration Date __________________________ CVU (3 digit code on back) __________
Signature _______________________________________________________________________

Donations made to The Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum are tax deductible to the extent of the law.