

# YPSILANTI AUTOMOTIVE HERITAGE MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 1

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## Words From the President's Desk

BY RON BLUHM

Volume 1 Number 1 always marks a beginning. A start of something also means the end of something else. As many supporters of our museum know, Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum co-founder and curator Jack Miller was hospitalized early in April. With rest and therapy, he was moved to Superior Woods for continued therapy before establishing a permanent residence in July. The museum is now staffed with volunteers and two part-time employees.

Without Jack to do all of the work, board members have assumed many responsibilities. An Executive Committee composed of me, Treasurer John Shook, Secretary Bill Nickels, and Matt Lee was formed in April. Together, we meet every Monday morning and manage the daily business of the museum and plan for the future.

This Volume 1 Number 1 also announces a "Friends of YAHM" program. "Friends" support our effort to tell and keep alive the many Ypsilanti and Southeastern Michigan automotive stories. With a "Friends" donation, donors will receive quarterly newsletters, 10% gift shop savings, free admission to the museum.

In addition to visits from NBC Sports and Antiques Roadshow described elsewhere, we have been busy with visits by WXYZ-TV, Garage TV, C Span, WRGT Dayton, WMTV Grosse Pointe, and an Australian television crew. As part of their 2013 induction, the Motorsports Hall of Fame visited us in August and brought NASCAR greats Bobby and Donnie Allison.

Simply put, the mission of our museum is to keep the automotive history of the Ypsilanti area alive. "Friends" can help us do that. I am sure there are many local car stories experienced by our readers and local automotive pictures owned by our readers. Send us copies of your pictures, write down your stories, and mail them to us. We will include them in future issues. You can help us expand our history beyond what we know.

I look forward to writing my spring report. I hope to be able to tell you about additional exciting changes that now are only opportunities.



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YPSILANTI ELECTRIC COMPANY'S PLANT,  
C.1890



STAMPING PLANT, C. 1910



AUTOMOBILE MUSEUM DEALERSHIP  
C.1940

## A HISTORIC CORNER

### EAST CROSS & NORTH RIVER

The Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum sits on the southeast corner of East Cross and North River. The land was deeded by the government to Hiram Johns on April 22, 1824. At the cross roads in Ypsilanti's Depot Town, the corner has a history as old as the City itself. Birdseye maps of Ypsilanti in 1865 and 1890 show a one story reverse gable structure on the site. The building may have started as a residence but became a cooper shop making wood barrels.

In 1892, the Ypsilanti Electric Company built a structure on the site that is now the Hudson garage in the museum. The Washtenaw Electric Company purchased all of the equipment and assets in 1900. Washtenaw Electric became Washtenaw Light and Power Company in 1903.

Comstock Sash Lock & Novelty Company purchased the property in 1903. They became Michigan Pressed Steel Company in 1905 and occupied the building until 1916. A kerosene heater on display in the museum was manufactured by Michigan Pressed Steel.

The automotive history of the building started in 1917 when Joseph Thompson occupied the property and opened the first Dodge dealership outside of Detroit.

In 1921, Thompson added the large addition to the west side of the building which is now the Hudson showroom. In 1926, Thompson moved his dealership to Michigan Avenue where many auto dealers were locating.

Scott Sturtevant moved in with his Willys Overland dealership in 1927. He stayed until 1929. Probably because of the Great Depression, the building sat empty for a period of time.

In 1933, Alex Longnecker and Carl Miller moved their Hudson dealership from Michigan Avenue into 100 East Cross. until 1958 when the production of Hudson ended after 49 years.

The property was purchased from Thompson by Longnecker in 1943 who sold it to Miller in 1945. Carl Miller became the sole proprietor of Miller Motors and sold new Hudson automobiles. Miller Motors transitioned from Carl to his son Jack who sold used cars at the dealership. Jack bought up Hudson parts from closed dealerships and became the source of Hudson parts for Hudson enthusiasts all over the world. He became a leader in the national Hudson-Essex-Terraplane Club which found Ypsilanti as a home with the publication of their magazine by local Standard Printing.

In 1995, Jack had lunch with Peter Fletcher and Skip Ungrodt at the Sidetrack Bar & Grill across the street from Miller Motors. That lunch led to the creation of the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum by joining of Miller Motors with a building at 112 East Cross built as a parcel post sorting center. In 1999, Skip and Peter funded the construction of a building at 106 East Cross which connected the Hudson dealership with the parcel post building into a unified museum.

# WORLD CHAMPIONS VISIT MUSEUM

June 10, 2013  
NBC Sports

Mario Andretti won the 1978 Formula 1 World Championship driving the John Player Special Lotus Ford. His car arrived at our museum in a huge enclosed auto transporter on Saturday night June the 8<sup>th</sup>. Sebastian Vettel won the 2010, 2011, and 2012 Formula 1 World Championships driving his Red Bull Renault powered race car. It arrived on Sunday.

At 9 AM on Monday June the 10<sup>th</sup>, a TV crew from NBC Sports started the process of converting our museum into a TV studio. The television production day started at 9 AM with the arrival of a crew of TV people from NBC Sports. Their equipment arrived an hour later and they worked furiously for a couple of hours staging the set for Mario and Sebastian. Wanting a small table for water, the crew improvised with a stack of two tires and an old Hudson radiator. Then, as usually happens, it was time to wait for the arrival of the stars.

Mario arrived at the Ann Arbor airport from his home in Texas aboard his private airplane around 1 PM. We greeted him in the car museum about 30 minutes later. He found our display of General Motors hydramatic transmissions interesting and remembered race car driver Iggy Katona when he viewed his display. Seeing our Hudson Hornet race car, he reminisced about building and driving his first race car, a 1948 Hudson. Mario said he and his brother Aldo did not know much about racing. They choose a Hudson to race because of the success Marshall Teague and others were having. He credited the powerful Hudson engine and the unit steel body that did not twist in turns for the success of Hudson race cars. Mario said steel framed race cars would twist in turns and were not predictable. He asked if he could sit in the driver's seat. Sitting in the driver's seat, he described the interior of his car and for a few minutes, drifted with private memories. Getting out, we asked if he would like to hear the engine fire up. He smiled with delight. When the muffler less car fired up, Mario threw his hands up in the air! He said "That is a sound I will never forget."



MARIO ANDRETTI & THE GREEN HORNET AT THE YPSILANTI  
AUTOMOTIVE HERITAGE MUSEUM

Sebastian Vettel and his entourage privately arrived through a freight door in the back of the museum. His group kept him secluded in our front board room away from Mario and others who shared stories and took pictures in the room ready for the TV program. Mario pretended to drive the displayed power train chassis while he invited everybody to get aboard. Around 2:30, Vettel was allowed to join Mario and the two chatted while we were allowed to take pictures.

When the two were seated for the TV production, we were asked to leave the room until the production ended. At the end, Vettel disappeared as mysteriously as he arrived. Mario stayed and talked and allowed us to take pictures with the Hudson and his Lotus Ford. The social aspect of the two Formula One World Champions was quite a contrast.

The exciting day ended when Mario left and his Lotus Ford separately boarded an auto transporter to return home to Connecticut.

The day was sponsored by Infinity, a division of Nissan. Infinity is a cosponsor with Red Bull for Vettel's race car. Infinity is headquartered in North Farmington Michigan where Vettel spent part of his morning.

The interview was broadcast on Sunday November 3<sup>rd</sup> during NBC Sports broadcast of the Formula 1 race from Abu Dhabi. A link to the interview is available on the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum's Facebook page.



# PAUL CHAPMANS' Pontiac Dealership

202 N. Washington, & 15 E. Michigan

BY BILL NICKELS

Paul Chapman arrived in Ypsilanti from Pennsylvania in 1920 and started selling automobiles in 1923. General Motors introduced Pontiac as an automobile brand in 1926. Shortly after, in 1929, Paul became a Pontiac & Oakland salesman for Staebler Brothers at 2 West Michigan (Materials Unlimited building). By 1932, he was promoted to manager with the dealership expanding to include Cadillac and LaSalle. Paul obtained a Pontiac franchise in 1937. With Hitler's invasion of Poland in 1939, war became a strong possibility. When the United States entered the conflict in 1941, domestic new car production and sales suddenly stopped.



station before he shipped out for duty in World War II. This picture was recently given to retired YAHM curator Jack Miller and prompted this article.

A gas station at the northeast corner of North Washington and Washtenaw sat vacant in 1940. Fifty-four year old Paul Chapman looked at it as an opportunity. In 1941, the Paul Chapman Standard Service station displaying a Pontiac logo was in business. In 1942, Bill Jones had his picture taken in front of the

Even though he did not have new cars to sell, Ed Doran operated a Chevrolet, Oldsmobile, Buick, and Cadillac dealership at 15 East Michigan Avenue during World War II. He moved his dealership to the southwest corner of East Michigan Avenue and South River and left 15 East Michigan empty in 1945. Paul again used an empty building as an opportunity. This time, the empty building became his Pontiac dealership. The 1948 Ypsilanti Street Directory identifies Paul as an auto dealer at 15 East Michigan. Paul partnered with his son Paul C. Chapman Junior in the dealership and eventually expanded the dealership to include Cadillac and Honda.



Paul's grandson Ralph assumed leadership of the dealership in 1975 and continued until it closed in 1985. Paul Junior retired in 1984 and was followed by the death of Paul Senior in 1986.



Thanks to the Ypsilanti Historical Society Archives & Jack Miller's memories.

## Artist Joins Museum

The Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum now features auto art work by automotive stylist and artist Draganel "Dan" Magda. The highlights of his career were working as the Assistant Chief Designer for the Corvette C5 Program and heading a design team which developed the design of the 2009 Presidential limousine which debuted at President Obama's first inauguration. Dan is currently working for Ford Design. His pictures can add an automotive feel to any room and make great gifts for auto people! Dan also did the art work for our new Tucker and Chevrolet t-shirts on sale in our gift shop.





# Antiques Roadshow Visit

by John Shook

Late in April, we received a telephone call from an *Antiques Roadshow* representative. They were preparing for a visit to Detroit and were looking for places to visit around Detroit. They requested information about Ypsilanti and the contents of our museum which we sent. Later, we learned that



they would like to visit our museum and we received a request to have an old Hudson available for their use. With the help of Jack Miller, Doug Edds volunteered his 1953 Hudson and we worked feverishly to prepare the museum for their visit.

With the Hudson ready, the *Roadshow* crew of six arrived early on May



30th. Their makeup person prepared *Roadshow* star Mark L. Walberg for a drive around Riverside Park where they recorded from both the inside and outside the car. Mark next cruised the Hudson through Depot Town and down East Cross Street. Continually recording, he parked in front of the

museum and entered under our Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum sign. Their day ended with a home cooked meal prepared by volunteers Patti Bluhm and Kathy Morris.

The crew returned on May 31st. Mark and *Roadshow* toy expert Noel Barrett focused on model cars on display in the museum.

We learned that their Detroit visit was their first visit for 2014 programming that will start next January. Their Ypsilanti visit will air on February 3rd during their second hour. In addition to visiting us, they visited Motown Museum and Cranbrook Academy while they were in Detroit.

## LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

### Ypsilanti Historical Museum and Archives

220 Noth Huron Street

Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Museum—734-482-4990

Archives 734-217-8236

### Michigan Firehouse Museum

110 W. Cross Street

Ypsilanti, MI 48197

734-547-0663

## RESTAURANTS

### Sidetrack

56 East Cross Street

Depot Town

734-483-1035

### Haab's Restaurant

18 West Michigan

### Cafe Ollie

42 East Cross Street

Depot Town

734-482-8050

### Bomber Restaurant

306 E. Michigan

734-482-0550

6 a.m. to 3 p.m.

## LODGING

Parish House Inn

Bed & Breakfast

103 S. Huron St.,

Ypsilanti, MI 48197

734-480-4800

1-800.480.4866

Ann Arbor Marriott

at Eagle Crest

1275 S. Huron,

Ypsilanti, MI 48197

734-487-2000

or 800-228-9290



## 2013 ORPHAN CAR SHOW BEST EVER!

BY MATT LEE

Randy Mason (Curator of Transportation at the Henry Ford) and Jack Miller (Ypsi Auto Museum Curator) talked for several years about starting a show for cars not normally seen at the average car show. Finally, in 1997, they got a group together and formed the first Orphan Car Show as a fund raiser for the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum.

Helped by wheelchairs, both Randy and Jack were able to attend the 2013 show and enjoy the entire Pass In Review program. Honoring Jack as co-founder of both the show and the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum, a proclamation from Ypsilanti Mayor Paul Schreiber announced by Ron Pinsoneault declared September 22 “Jack Miller Day.”

A cool crisp Sunday morning greeted 278 cars entered in the 2013 Orphan Car Show. In addition to Michigan, cars arrived from Ontario, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Kansas, and Nevada.

Studebaker with 37 cars entered and Hudson with 26 cars entered best represented their parent companies. Mercury, Oldsmobile, and Pontiac finally met the show eligibility requirements and were part of the show for the first time. A 1922 R & V Knight, a 1917 Gray Dort, and a 1924 Garford were three unusual entrees. Unrestored Originals were the 2013 featured class.

Judges selected one “favorite” car from each class. The 2013 selections were:

- 🏆 Nash – 1960 Nash Metropolitan entered by Roxanne Fontana of Wixom, MI.
- 🏆 Packard – 1925 Packard 236, Roy Magenau of Grass Lake, MI.

- 🏆 Pre-WWII Independent – 1922 Reo T-6, Dan Shafarman, Lansing, MI.
- 🏆 Studebaker – 1927 Studebaker Roadster, Robert Walby, Brooklyn, MI.
- 🏆 Kaiser Frazer – 1951 Kaiser Deluxe Coupe, Gilbert Chestney, Chelsea, MI.
- 🏆 Ford Motor Orphans – 1959 Edsel Ranger, Linda and Frank Robbins, Clarkston, MI.
- 🏆 Chrysler Orphans – 1942 DeSoto Custom, Dan and Lois Dolan, Noblesville, IN.
- 🏆 General Motors Orphans – 1935 LaSalle Model 5607, Richard Zapala, Haslett, MI.
- 🏆 Brass Era – 1910 Hupmobile, Eugene LaChapelle
- 🏆 Willys Overland – 1926 Willys-Knight Model 66, Gerald Szostak, Plymouth, MI.
- 🏆 Unrestored Orphans – 1955 Hudson Hornet, Sam Haberman, Birmingham, MI.
- 🏆 Foreign (non British) – 1948 Citroen, George Waterman, Plymouth, MI.
- 🏆 Foreign (British) – 1980 Triumph TR8, Charlie Camilleri, Livonia, MI.
- 🏆 Post WWII Independent – 1950 Crosley CD, Richard J. Wanerski, Plymouth, MI.
- 🏆 American Motors – 1959 Rambler Ambassador, David Fleisher, Columbus, OH.
- 🏆 Corvair – 1961 Corvair Rampside (pickup), Bill Beckley, Ypsilanti, MI.
- 🏆 Hudson – 1929 Hudson, Ted and Adriana Fox, Brighton, MI.
- 🏆 Trucks – 1924 Standard K, Bob and Marcia McCrary, Ypsilanti, MI.

On October 21, the museum invited the 65 people who make the show happen to dinner and a report that the 2013 show made more money for the museum than any previous show!

**HOPE TO SEE YOU AT OUR NEXT  
ORPHAN CAR SHOW ON SEPTEMBER 21, 2014!!!**

## YPSILANTI AUTOMOTIVE HERITAGE FRIENDS



### MEMBERSHIP AND/OR CONTRIBUTION FORM

Join YAHM's Circle of Friends...Enjoy the following benefits of and the comfort of knowing you are helping maintain the automotive history of the Ypsilanti area!

- ◆ FREE ADMISSION TO THE MUSEUM      ◆ QUARTERLY NEWSLETTERS
- ◆ 10% GIFT SHOP DISCOUNT

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Cell phone (optional) \_\_\_\_\_ Email (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

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    ☐ Supporter \$100

Contribution to upgrading and developing new exhibits \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_    ☐ Check

Charge my Credit Card:    ☐ Mastercard    ☐ VISA

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_ CVU (3 digit code on back) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Your generous donation today will secure a touch of the past for a better tomorrow.

SINGLE    **\$25.00 annual**

FAMILY    **\$35.00 annual** (2 adults)

SUPPORTER    **\$100.00 annual** (4 adults)

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



**YPSILANTI AUTOMOTIVE  
HERITAGE MUSEUM**

100 E. Cross Street/Ypsilanti, MI 48198  
Phone: 734-482-5200

**MUSEUM HOURS**

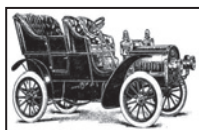
Tuesday - Sunday 1:00 to 4:00 PM Monday Closed

Admission: \$5.00 for adults.

Children 12 and under are free when accompanied by an adult.

Contact us at [info@ypsiautoheritage.org](mailto:info@ypsiautoheritage.org)

[www.ypsiautoheritage.org](http://www.ypsiautoheritage.org)



**YPSILANTI AUTOMOTIVE  
HERITAGE MUSEUM**

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