

Ecorse Echoes: The Story of the Oldest Downriver Community

Kathy Covert



Ecorse photographer John Duguay captured this playground scene as children played at the new playground on Pepper Road at Tenth Street in July 1958. Inspecting the play ground are from left, John Ghindia, Ecorse Recreation Department Director; Mayor Eli Ciungun, and Councilman Peter Johnson.

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Kathy Covert Warnes
discoverfunhistory.webs.com

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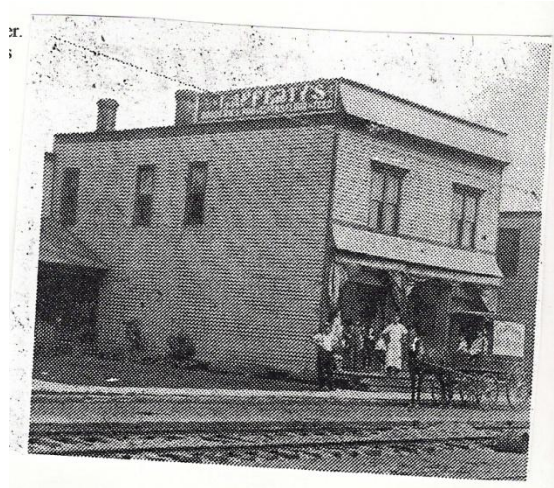
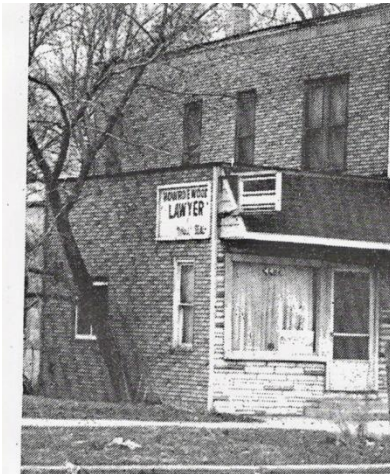
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Ecorse Waterfront, 2004

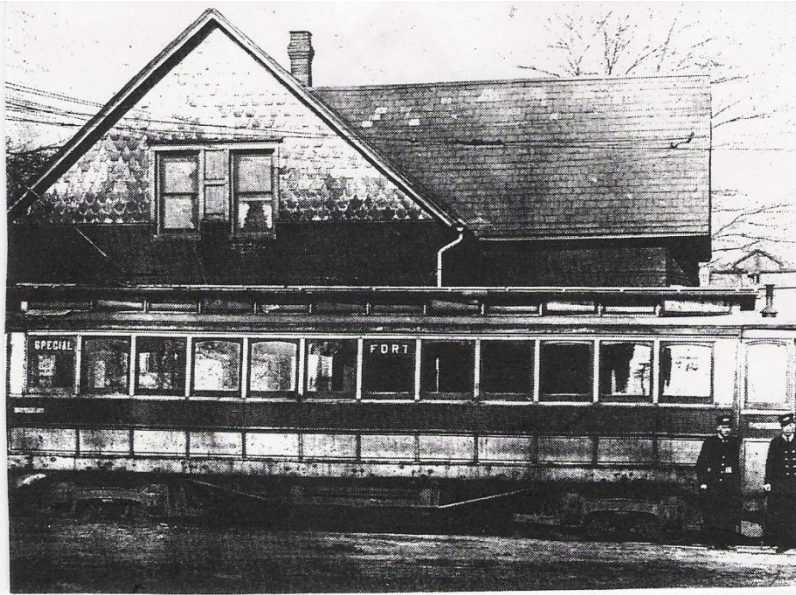
Ecorse Echoes

If Buildings Could Talk



This building on West Jefferson Avenue overlooked horses, wagons and street car scenes in 1906.

The same building witnessed cars and coca cola in the 1970s.



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Stepping off the Streetcar in Ecorse

In the early 1900s, West Jefferson through Trenton, Wyandotte, Ecorse and River Rouge was a mud road and the streetcar was the transportation of choice for the citizens of these Downriver communities.

The DUR or Detroit Urban Railroad ran these streetcars between 1892 and 1932. They were used for business, social and shopping trips to Detroit and even funeral trips to Woodmere and Woodlawn cemeteries in Detroit. Rental arrangements were made for a special car and the casket was carried along with the mourners.

On other, happier trips people rented a special car called Yolapoa to take them to parties. The conductor is not identified, but the motorman in this photo was Sampson Lake of Ecorse. Many people remember riding this streetcar into Downriver towns and stepping off into muddy Jefferson Avenue.

Introduction

Ecorse, Our Home Town

When the conversation swings around to hometowns and memories the eleven-year-old girl wearing pigtails and a baseball cap walks down Third Street in Ecorse again. She's on her way to her Grandma Robson's house for a potato soup lunch. School One is just over the tracks, so it isn't a long walk, but it's an exciting walk. The gullies between each set of railroad tracks are full of wild flowers, weeds, frogs and skating dragonflies. Once that jungle is crossed and the last gravelly slope safely negotiated, there's a dash down Third Street to look at the cemetery before going on to lunch. The lush green of the foliage contrasts starkly with the varying shades of granite and the stark white of the tombstones. The eleven year old wonders about the people buried there who once lived in Ecorse just like she does. Then she skips to her Grandma Robsons for lunch.

Those lunches of Grandma Robsons are warm, loving memory spots in my childhood. Growing up in Ecorse was for the most part a positive experience for me and for generations of Ecorse people. We have a sense of shared memories, common experiences and community, no matter what our generation. We have all gone on with our lives. We have married, had families, forged careers, enjoyed children and grandchildren and experienced some of life's sorrow as well as wonderful times. We have learned that life is a mixture of tragedy, comedy, and in-between everyday experiences that make it sweet and meaningful.

I have come back to visit and then live in Ecorse and some of it looks as old and run down as I sometimes feel. One of the Downriver newspapers that I read referred to Ecorse as "an enclave of inner city Detroit." It is our hometown – worn out, shabby and often in financial trouble, but still struggling to survive and renew itself, much like we do throughout our lives. Ecorse nurtured us. We skated at the municipal

ice skating rink, swam in the municipal pools and ate Frankie's Pizza. We received the foundations of our education from School One, Two or Three and Ecorse High School. Some of our mothers, fathers, and grandparents grew up in Ecorse as well.

These connections leave us with something stronger and more lasting than nostalgia and reunions. They leave us with a sense of continuity. Ecorse is continuity to us and our children and grandchildren. We can keep Ecorse growing and progressing by our appreciation of its history and continuing interest in its welfare. We can continue to demonstrate what it meant to grow up in Ecorse and even though we no longer live there, by celebrating our common roots and keeping its history alive in our hearts and memories.

Hooray for Ecorse,

Hooray for Ecorse,

Someone in the crowd is shouting,

Hooray for Ecorse,

One, two, three, four,

Who are we for?

Ecorse, that's who!

Sincerely,

Kathy Covert Warnes

kathywarnes@yahoo.com

Ecorse: The Timeline

Before 1701- French voyageurs travel down the Detroit River and trade with the Indians who have villages in Ecorse and Wyandotte.

Antoine de Mothe Cadillac and his men establish French ribbon farms along the Detroit River from Detroit to Lake Erie, including Ecorse and Wyandotte.

Pontiac begins his stand against the white man on the banks of Ecorse Creek.

1776- What is now Ecorse is deeded to St. Cosme by the Indians.

1784-1795. First recorded white settlements.

1818-Arrival of English settlers.

1827-Township of Ecorse created.

1827-Post office, always named Ecorse, opened on October 29, 1827, with Daniel Goodell as the first postmaster.

1836-Settlement of Grandport platted by Alexis Labadie, Simeon Rousseau, L. Bourassa, and P. White and recorded as Grandport.

1845-St. Francis Xavier Parish is founded.

1857-The Detroit, Monroe & Toledo Railroad line through Ecorse is completed.

1860s- First Schools in Ecorse.

1870s- Grandport gradually becomes known as Ecorse.

1880-Richard Beaubien of Detroit had six large icehouses built in Ecorse. This furnished work to men who had but little.

Mrs. Jonas Goodell was lying very ill and but little hope was entertained for her recovery.

1889-Hyacinthe C. Burke of Ecorse and Elizabeth Dunn of Ecorse applied for a marriage license.

1903-The village of Ecorse is incorporated as the village of Ecorse.

1910- Ecorse Presbyterian Church is founded.

1918-1933- Rum Running Days

1922- First Ecorse library in Loveland's Drugstore.

1929-Great Lakes Steel is founded.

1942-The City of Ecorse is incorporated.

1950s- More new businesses in Ecorse.

1960s- Ecorse thrives, but is troubled.

1970s- Ecorse suffers from urban blight and middle class flight.

1980s- Ecorse has severe financial problems and goes into receivership, but survives.

2001-New Ecorse High School dedicated.

Chapter One

Ecorse, the First Three Hundred Years

For centuries, some anthropologists and historians estimate at least 7,000 years ago, the Wyandots, a Huron tribe, owned and occupied the territory on both sides of the Ecorse and Detroit Rivers. French priests and voyageurs first explored the Detroit and Ecorse Rivers and before the American Revolution, the French flag floated over the Downriver area and it was part of the province of Quebec. Ecorse is bounded on two sides by the Ecorse Creek, which, at an earlier period, enjoyed the romantic name of La Riviere aux Ecorces. The word “ecorces” is the French word for bark and the French translation of La Riviere aux Ecorse is “the river of bark.” The name is derived from the fact that Huron

Indians buried their chiefs near the sandbanks of this stream after wrapping the bodies in the bark of the birch trees. Downriver residents reading the deeds to their property often found the first pages written in French and even some pages with drawings of fish, turtles or birds. These were signature of the original owners – the Pottawatomi and Wyandot Indians.

In 1701, Cadillac landed in what is now Detroit and established French “ribbon farms” along the Detroit River as far as present day Wyandotte and the French ruled the territory for the next 59 years. Many of the descendants of the early day settlers trace their origins to the trip of ribbon farms that extended from as far away as Lake St. Clair to the present day Wyandotte limits. These early French settlers can trace their land titles back to 1746, some 43 years before George Washington was inaugurated as first president of the newly formed nation called the United States.

In the next decades, the French and the British fought over the Great Lakes and Pontiac and his warriors plotted the capture of Fort Detroit in 1763 from their village on the Riviere de Ecorces. The first white man whose name is mentioned in connection with

the opening up of what is present day Ecorse for settlement was Pierre St. Cosme, who in 1776, acquired by Indian deed all of the territory from what is now Southfield Road to the River Raisin in what is now Monroe. It was from the heirs and assigns of Pierre St. Cosme that the original settlers of this territory received their deeds for their property. The first road was constructed on land granted to the Township of Ecorse by the St. Cosme Line. Years later the name was changed to State Street and still later to Southfield Road.

It is difficult to say for certain when the first settlement was made in Ecorse. Some people say that the Labadie family first settled in what was later to become Ecorse Township in 1764. If the witnesses appearing in records of the litigation that arose over property rights in 1821 are correct, then Pierre Michele Campau and Jean Baptiste Salliot were the first to cultivate farms along the Detroit River front and the date of the earliest settlement is given as 1814. Other early settlers in Ecorse were J.B. Rousson, Louis Bourassa, Joseph Bondie, J. B. LeBeau, Pierre LeBlanc, Gabriel Godfroy and Jonathon Scheffelin.

When John Quincy Adams was sixth president of the United States, the Michigan Territory was divided into townships. The United States Congressional Ordinance established the Northwest Territory and set forth procedures for land measure and recognized the old French land grants. By 1827, the scattering of settlers had developed into a small community and the Territorial Legislature created the Township of Ecorse, consisting of 54 square miles, running from the Detroit River to what is now Pelham Road, as well as two small islands in the Detroit River.

The first township meeting was held in the home of Daniel Goodell and John Cicotte was named supervisor with duties including protecting the public health, speaking for the township, and arbitrating all disputes.

At that time Ecorse Township included the territory which later became Taylor Township, and which became a separate entity in 1848. State Street was now Southfield Road and Laffort Street has been renamed LeBlanc Street. Simon Rousseau, A. Labadie, L. Bourassa and P. LeBlanc made the first plot of the village in 1836 and named it Grandport. Grandport was a small hamlet, only

four blocks long, and stood where present day Southfield and Jefferson Avenue meet. A fishing and farming center, it was the only settlement between Detroit and Monroe for many years.

An 1829 map in the Burton Historical Museum in Detroit reveals that Grandport streets were named after Revolutionary War heroes. Streets were named for Jefferson, Monroe, Webster and Jackson and also after the French settlers St. Cosme, Labadie and LeBlanc. The village of Grandport had 800 people, 152 homes, and four businesses. It became the hub of the neighboring sprawling farmlands and the site of a shipyard as well as Raupp's Lumber Mill.

People were beginning to call the village Ecorse, even though a map, drawn about 1830, still shows the Village of Grandport. Streets existing in their original location are High Street, Labadie, Bourassa and White. What was then State Street is now Southfield Road and Lafforter Street has been renamed LeBlanc. Grandport was the center of Ecorse Township, but was never incorporated and eventually the name fell into disuse. Most of the oldsters called the community Ecorse.

Ecorse Echoes

St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church became a parish in 1845 and served the communities of Fort Wayne, River Rouge, Wyandotte, Oakwood and Delray. Families intermarried and eventually there were nearly equal numbers of French and English settlers. The first recorded inter marriage was that of James Goodell and Angelique Salliotte. At that time all such records were kept at the parish of St. Anne in Detroit. Ecorse had only a small mission where Father Gabriel Richard preached once a month and which became the nucleus of the present St. Francis Xavier Parish.

The first St. Francis Xavier Church was built on High Street and Bourassa and dedicated in 1882. A visit to the old St. Francis Cemetery on Third Street is a trip through Ecorse history with pioneer names and dates on every headstone.

The Raupp sawmill which was a popular gathering place for commerce and social events, was another early landmark. The earliest school records have not survived, but it is probable that more French than English was spoken in the first schools established. In most cases, the French culture and customs predominated even in homes where one partner was English or

some other nationality. Older Ecorse residents recall being told of a log school near the shore of the Detroit River at the foot of what is now Labadie Street. Some also recall a small building on the corner of Jefferson and White that served as a school in the 1860s. Later, classes were held in the band building and in the council chambers of the old city hall.

By 1873, the business directory listed 15 establishments in Ecorse.

Alexander Bondie, Saloon Corner State and Jefferson, N.E.
Campau and Ferguson, Grocers, SW Corner of State and Monroe

Louis Cicotte, Hotel Proprietor, Jefferson Avenue

John Copeland, Lumber Manufacturer
Downriver Lumber Company Sawmill, Beaubin Slip

Judge H.H. Emmons, U.S. District Court, 40 feet back on
Jefferson

Frederick Ferguson, Brick Layer, Corner Southfield and Monroe

G.R. Goodell, Grocer, Across from Liggetts

E.J. Goodell, Surveyor & Feed Store, East side of Jefferson, just
North of Southfield

N.L. LeBlanc & Riopelle, Grocers

J.B. Montie, blacksmith, South of Detroit, Toledo & Ironton
Railroad

Louis Odion, shoemaker, Monroe Street between Southfield &
Bourassa

Michael Roulo, Hotel Proprietor

A.M. Salliotte, General Store and Notary Public, Jefferson and
State Street

Joseph Salliotte, butcher, Old Fish Market

George Cicotte, General Store, Bourassa and West Jefferson

The Villages of Grandport, Glenwood, Bacon, and Ecorse

Early citizens of Wayne County often gathered and created small communities inside another township or city. They named their created communities for families, or the post office or railroad depot in their area. Some of the communities survived for many years while others faded back into the landscape and anonymity.

These created communities included Grandport. Once the only settlement between Detroit and Monroe, today Grandport exists only in the names of Ecorse buildings and historical accounts. The oldest part of Ecorse, Grandport was a tiny village only about four blocks stretching along the Detroit River across from what is now Southfield and Jefferson.

The village of Grandport sprang up when the French flag flew over the village and the Downriver area was part of the Province of Quebec. Descendants of these early French settlers traced the title to their land back to 1746, about 43 years before George Washington was inaugurated the first president of the new United States of America.

Ecorse Echoes

When they read the deeds to their property, these early French residents often found them written in French. Owners of other deeds found drawings of fish, turtles, or birds which were the signatures of their original owners – Native Americans.

During the presidential term of John Quincy Adams between 1825-1829, Congress divided the Michigan Territory into townships. In 1827, Ecorse Township was formed, but years before that a small fishing and farming center had sprung up along the Detroit River.

In 1836, Simon Rousseau, A. Labadie, L. Bourassa and P. LeBlanc made the first plat of the village and officially named it Grandport. At that point in its history, the village of Grandport had 800 people, 152 homes and four businesses. It became the hub of the neighboring sprawling farm lands and the site of a shipyard as well as Raupp's Lumber Mill.

An 1830 map shows the Village of Grandport and the streets named on the map still exist in present day Ecorse, some showing the same names as they did over a century and a half ago. Streets in the village of Grandport were named for historical figures including Andrew Jackson, Daniel Webster and James Monroe. Webster and Monroe Streets still exist in Ecorse today. High,

Labadie, Bourassa and White Streets still exist in their original location in Ecorse. What was then State Street is now Southfield Road and Lafforter was renamed LeBlanc Street.

Grandport continued to be the center of Ecorse Township for many years, but the little village never incorporated. As the years passed, people stopped calling the commercial center Grandport and started calling it Ecorse, after the Township's name. Gradually, the name Grandport faded into Ecorse history.

Members of the Navarre family were early [French settlers](#) in the Downriver area and the family also gave its name to a short-lived community. A salt block village on the Rouge River in Ecorse, Navarre was named for early French settler, Robert Navarre. On December 11, 1899, William Wiegst became Navarre's first postmaster. In 1910, Navarre was incorporated as a village and on November 25, 1918, it was renamed Oakwood. On December 31, 1918, the post office closed and the City of Detroit annexed Oakwood in 1922.

As well as individuals and families, railroads often stimulated community growth and left a legacy of names and memories of depot towns. Glenwood, a depot station on the [Lake Shore and](#)

[Michigan Southern Railroad](#) in Ecorse, was incorporated as a village in 1900. Ecorse Storekeeper Herman G. Turski became the first postmaster on October 21, 1901. The City of Wyandotte annexed Glenwood in 1905.

Another Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railroad station called Bacon, was incorporated as a village in 1900. The village of Bacon was named after an old area family which included veterans of the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and prominent Michigan tax lawyer [Elbridge F. Bacon](#). History repeated itself when storekeeper [Herman G. Turski](#) was named the first postmaster on October 21, 1901. The City of Wyandotte annexed Bacon in 1905 and the post office closed on April 4, 1906.

At the turn of the Twentieth Century, Grandport-Ecorse was a resort area and one of the early commuter suburbs of Detroit. In 1903, the unincorporated village of Grandport became a "general law" village, the largest village in the United States. It was officially named Ecorse from the original French Ecorces, river of bark, and A.M. Salliotte became its first president.

The Detroit Free Press of July 2, 1905, described Ecorse:

All along the river shores from Fort Wayne to the Village of Ecorse, some hardier folks of Detroit who like to keep cool cheaply have boat houses in which they live during the summer. "The Little Venice of the West End", they call it, and it is truly a colony of resorters distinct in itself. The rich may go to Grosse Point, to the mountains or to the sea shore; those of limited means, such as skilled mechanics, clerks and other small salaried men with families may easily afford to rent a cottage built out upon the piers of Ecorse's "Little Venice." There they may have the air and the cool of the river; in fact, all the real luxuries of a more exclusive colony and at much less cost. Every day the resorters of Ecorse who have business in the city travel back and forth on the trolley. And every evening fish, boat and bathe with the women and children before the very doors of their summer homes.

By the 1930s, Ecorse had become the largest village in the United States. In May 1936, William W. Voisine was president of the village. Other village officials were Don H. Beckman, clerk; Paul Vollmar, treasurer; Earl E. Montie, attorney; Thomas J. Weber, assessor; Prescott J. Brown, engineer; and Oliver Raupp, James Morris, William Born, Paul Movinski, James Hardage and Francis Labadie, trustees.

In 1942, the village of Ecorse was incorporated as the City of Ecorse.

Chapter Two: Ecorse Time Capsules

Ecorse Time Capsules -1920s and 1930s



The 1920s and 1930s were important years for the growth of Ecorse as far as it could grow within its 2 ½ square mile geographical area. George Fink established the Michigan Steel

Corporation and expanded it into Great Lakes Steel Corporation. By the 1950s, Great Lakes Steel would employ thousands of workers in the Downriver area. Great Lakes Engineering Works and Nicholson Terminal Dock Company expanded an already well established maritime tradition in Ecorse by building ore carriers and ships for government service in World War I. Industry gained a strong foothold in Ecorse and caused it to grow enough to become a city in 1941.

Ecorse At A Glance, 1926

Village Government

President: George A. Moore

Clerk: Isabel Morris

Treasurer: Burton E. Loveland

Attorney: I.J. Salliotte

Assessor: George W. Hoffman

Auditor: A.P. McNiven

Street Commissioner: E.J. Montie

Water Commissioner: Frank L. Drouillard

Health Officer: Dr. L.H. Van Becelaere

Civil Engineer: Mason L. Brown

Fire and Police Chief: A.M. Jaeger

Trustees: Oliver F. Raupp, Frank Lafferty, Ernest Trueman,
Louis A. Seavitt

Board of Education

Fred N. Vellmure, president. Levi M. Salliotte, secretary. Elmer R.
Labadie, treasurer. Roy Seavitt and Louis J. Riopelle, trustees.

Police Department Headquarters, 4416 High Street

Chief: Albert M. Jaeger

Sergeant: Herbert Ormsby

Patrolmen: William J. Montie, George Taft, Sherman Ouelette,
Theodore Marcotte, Martin Sage, Mark O'Reilly, Joseph Sharon

Fire Department Headquarters, 4416 High Street

Chief: Albert M. Jaeger

Drivers: Raymond Maurice, Wilfred Eberts, Jr.

Firemen: Robert Polk, Fred Pudvan, Ari Drouillard

Public Buildings, Halls, etc.

Ecorse Band Hall: Northeast corner Monroe Avenue and
White Street

Ecorse Village Hall 4416 High Street

Ecorse Theatre: 4005 West Jefferson Avenue

Municipal Building: 4416 High

- Municipal Building Branch
- Visger Road Branch

Schools

- High and Labadie-School One
- West Josephine-School Two
- Sixth and White-School Three
- Seventh and Bonzano-Ecorse High School
- St. Francis Elementary and High School-Outer Drive

Churches

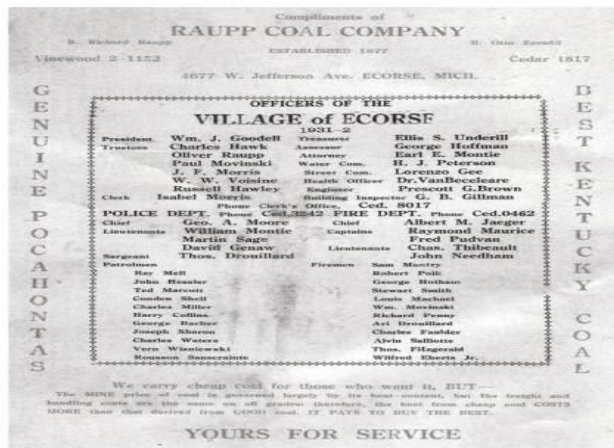
- St. Francis Xavier-Catholic
- Ecorse Presbyterian Church
- Salvation Army
- The Gospel Tabernacle
- Church of God
- Mt. Zion Baptist Church
- Church of God in Christ
- First Baptist Church
- Spiritualist Church

Libraries

- Main Library

Factories

- Great Lakes Steel Corporation
- Nicholson Terminal Dock Company
- Great Lakes Engineering
- Murray Body Corporation
- Grassnell Chemical Company
- D. T. & I. Roundhouse
- National Smelting Company
- Shwayder Brothers Mfg. Co.
- Wolverine Varnish Company
- Michigan Steel Corporation
- Ryan Foundry
- Modern Collett & Machine Co.



In 1930, Ecorse is the Largest Village in the United States

The village of Ecorse and Ecorse Township have for more than three centuries played an important part in the history and development of the Detroit area. Located on the Detroit River at an advantageous point, which gave early settlers a clear view of the river, it was the camping ground of travelers who feared their early archenemy, the Indians.

The same advantages used as a watch guard by the early settlers

are now used to advantage by the mammoth industries which have come to the district. Its shipping facilities are ideal, both on water and land with five of the eight railroads serving Detroit having terminals in the village. Its large shoreline has been developed by the Nicholson Terminal and Dock Company, by the Great Lakes Steel Corporation, Fuel Oil Corporation, and the Grassell Chemical Company. In addition, the yards of the Great Lakes Engineering Company are at the door of the village.

The village has the largest population of any municipality classed as a village in the United States. Its school system has developed with the advancing trend of the population and the village is adequately equipped, both with public and parochial schools.

Descendants of many of the pioneer families in the Downriver area now reside in the village of Ecorse or in Ecorse Township. The township, incidentally, was one of the first established in Michigan and was also one of the largest.

The LeBlanc family is one of the oldest in the district and traces its ancestry back to Pierre Leblanc who came to America in 1790

and later settled in Ecorse.

The Labadie family first settled in Ecorse Township in 1764 and Elmer Labadie, a descendant of this family, was the second president of the village which was incorporated in 1902.

Another name prominent in the early history of the village and township is Salliotte. The first member of the family came to the territory in 1669 with Father Pere Marquette.

William W. Voisine is president of the village. Others officials are Don H. Beckman, clerk; Paul Vollmar, treasurer; Earl E. Montie, attorney; Thomas J. Weber, assessor; Prescott J. Brown, engineer; and Oliver Raupp, James Morris, William Born, Paul Movinski, James Hardage and Francis Labadie, trustees.

Two branches of the Wayne County Public Library are located in the village. The public school system is composed of a high school building and four elementary school buildings.

Township officers are Frank X. Montie, supervisor; Jesse J. Pettijohn, clerk; Ellis S. Underill, treasurer.

Ecorse Echoes

The coming of the steel industry to the village quickly raised it from the small town class to the city division, but it still operated under a village form of government.

With much room prevalent for expansion, the village will rapidly develop. It is destined, according to the leaders of the village, to again take a place in the public eye as it did three centuries ago when it was the desired location of the early French and English settlers.

Wyandotte News, May 19, 1936

Ecorse 1930s Timeline

- In January 1933, Ecorse and all of the other Downriver communities were in the depths of the Depression, but things were beginning to look up. Businesses in Ecorse and River Rouge were reporting increases in sales and hiring.
- The Grosse Isle Transit Company, which operated buses through Ecorse and River Rouge enroute to Detroit, reported a

gain of 10 percent in its business during 1932. The company operated three deluxe buses between Grosse Isle and Detroit.

- In January 1933, Armos and Son Grocery Store on West Jefferson at Auburn was selling young chickens for 15 cents, dry salt pork for 6 1/2 cents a pound, and rolled rib roast for 15 cents a pound.
- Roller skating was popular at the Riverview Rolling Skating Rink at White and Monroe, Ecorse.
- West Jefferson Avenue was widened in 1937 and Ecorse staged a big celebration. Several Ecorse people were part of the Wider West Jefferson Avenue Association which was formed in 1925, including village president Fred C. Bouchard, F.X. Montie, Earl Montie, I.J. Salliotte, Chris a. Raupp, and Frank X. Lafferty. When the project was finished, the village of Ecorse selected a queen and held a parade. The event was called the Greater Ecorse Wider Jefferson Celebration and featured dancing in the street. Old Glory flew from every light post and Miss Eileen Raupp, 15 year old ninth grade student at Ecorse High School was chosen queen. Her ladies in waiting were Helen Pudvan, Irene Cochrane, Betty Navarre and Mar-

garet Spaight. Miss Raupp cut the official ribbon opening the road at the corner of Cherry Grove and West Jefferson.

- The Great Lakes Baptist Church dedicated its new tabernacle at High and Charlotte in 1938.
- In 1909, a group of 16 Ecorse bachelors organized the Western yacht Club and in time it was housed in a building opposite LeBlanc Street in Ecorse. Fred Gies, a carpenter, Captain C.J. Brinkman, and Roy Buster O'Brien were the leading spirits in the club, aided by Billy Bass and Ed Horn. In 1939, the founders of the Western Yacht Club held a reunion and only six were still bachelors.
- Tommy Drouillard, a member of the Ecorse Police Department, and his wife, served about 90 muskrats to the guests in Tommy's basement recreation room on Monroe Street in 1939.
- The Ecorse Board of Education purchased 125,000 bricks from three local dealers for \$32.50 per thousand in 1939. They were used to build School Five, which was named the Claude J. Miller School.
- Ellis S. "Duke" Underill, described as one of the most popular public officials who ever served Ecorse, announced that he

was retiring from politics, after serving as village and township treasurer and clerk in 1939.

- Village President W. Newton Hawkins and School Superintendent C.J. Miller were general chairmen of the President's Ball, the annual social affair that reminded the public about the widespread efforts to combat infantile paralysis in 1939.
- B.L. Sims store at 4078 West Jefferson, Ecorse, was selling full fashion hose for 49 cents a pair; unbleached muslin for five cents a yard; ladies' coats for five dollars, thirteen or eighteen dollars; cannon towels for 25 cents in 1939.
- In 1939, the Ecorse Theater, located at 4050 West Jefferson, was featuring movies with Shirley Temple, Ann Sheridan and a Betty Boop cartoon. James Stewart was appearing in "Shopworn Angel."
- Benjamin F. Goodell signed a contract with the Ecorse School System to be principal of the city's newest school, Five, an elementary. He taught at River Rouge High School from February 1930 to June 1939.
- A grand opening for a new gasoline service station at Tecumseh and West Jefferson, Ecorse, gave a free pack of cigarettes

with the purchase of seven gallons of gas during the four day festivities in 1939.

- Ecorse Boat Club junior doubles took first place in the Henley Regatta, Canada, with Herb Beaubien, stroke, and James Cameron, bow. William Tank won second in the senior singles; second was also taken by the senior doubles group including Nick Pappas, Louis Tank, Beaubien and Cameron. Alger Ruthven was the foursome's coxswain in 1939.

Ecorse Time Capsules, 1940s

- In 1942, St. Francis Xavier High School valedictorian was Lorraine Plourde,, stentorian was Robert Allen and Lucille Novack was class president. They were all from Ecorse.
- Ecorse and River Rouge were hit by a sudden, violent storm on May 30 and 31, 1942, which lasted about two hours and damaged electrical service, trees and buildings. At the Ecorse Council meeting, Fire Chief Albert Jaeger reported that the fire alarm system was put out of


commission due to the storm, with a large part needing replacement. About 150 feet of copper wire, which had been trailing after the storm, was stolen. Complaints from citizens were also made to Council about the flooding of cellars.

- Due to World War II, merchants were accepting housewives on a part time basis for employment in shops and stores and many women were employed in manufacturing plants.
- Retired Ecorse Police Lieutenant William Montie died in August 1944, and he was buried in Flat Rock Cemetery. He joined the police force when it was combined with the Ecorse Fire Department and headed by one chief with seven men in 1921.
- A field meet and sports carnival was held on August 4, 1944, in Ecorse at Sixteenth and Hyacinthe Streets, West Side Community Center.
- An Ecorse real estate company advertised a house with seven rooms and bath, four bedrooms, hardwood floors and full basement at \$4,500 with \$1,000 down. It also

advertised an eight room house for \$6,000 and \$200 down.

- In 1946, 564 children visited the Ecorse branch of the Wayne County Library during November.
- Evans Motors Sales, Ecorse, furnished a car for the prize during the Knights of Columbus Council #2819 Christmas Drawing on December 22, 1946.
- In May 1948, Ecorse was bustling with post-war activity. The newest of the new automobiles could be seen at Stu Evans Motor Sales, Incl. at 4688 West Jefferson, Ecorse. Displayed were Lincoln and Mercury cars. Used cars were being sold in Ecorse for \$95 to \$400 on “all makes and models.”
- In 1948, a theater naming contest began in Ecorse with the judges including Mayor W.W. Voisine, the Reverend Leonard Duckett, Arthur Erickson, Ecorse School Superintendent; and Alexander Petri, president of the Ecorse Junior Chamber of Commerce. The theater was located on West Jefferson near Outer Drive. (This was the Harbor Theater).

- In 1948, a five room home in Ecorse sold for \$6,500 with terms. One ton of coal to heat the new home cost \$11.25.
- The family market basket held smoked picnic hams at 43 cents per pound in 1948. It also held legs of veal for 45 cents per pound; eggs at 59 cents a dozen, Kleenex, two packages at 200 each at 35 cents. The shopper could buy 12 ounces of rice for 14 cents and red salmon for 57 cents for a 16 ounce can. Coffee cost the 1948 consumer 47 cents a pound and stewing chickens.



LIVE AND FRESH DRESSED

POULTRY


Large Grade 'A' White

EGGS 60^c Doz.

★ **SPECIAL**

for
MOTHER'S DAY WEEK-END
FRYING PIECES

WINGS	41c lb.
BACKS	21c lb.
LEGS	85c lb.
BREASTS	89c lb.
ROCK ROASTERS	
Fresh dressed weight, No. 1 Grade	55 ^c lb
Young HEN TURKEYS	
Oven-ready weight	69 ^c lb



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ECORSE POULTRY & EGG CO.

Taking Stock- Ecorse, 1948- a Lively and Bustling Six Year Old!



Ecorse Advertiser Statistics, Opinions, and Predictions

Ecorse was incorporated as a city in 1942, but it is one of the liveliest and most enterprising six-year-olds in the United States. Recent surveys show a population of approximately 20,000 as

compared to 1940 census figures of 13, 209. It is a modern community in every sense of the word.

Its people are hard working and prosperous and derive their income from a variety of industries including steel, chemical plants, shipping and a diversity of light industries which take advantage of the excellent transportation facilities and the city's low tax rate.

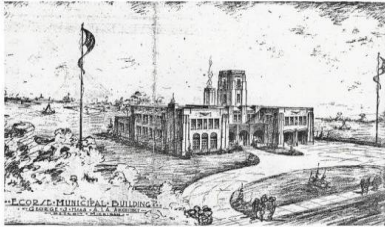
Ecorse is proud of its churches and its schools. It boasts a public library of 13,500 volumes and two school libraries and it is especially proud of its recreational advantages, its program being year 'round and city wide, and supported jointly by the City Board of Education and Community Chest.

Previous to its incorporation as a city, Ecorse was the second largest village in the United States. Its history goes back to 1764, when the Labadie family settled on the west bank of the mighty Detroit River, soon followed by other French families whose descendents are still prominent here. It is interesting to note that Ecorse was first called Grand Port and was part of the Province of

Quebec.

Only 8 miles from the Detroit city hall, Ecorse has all the advantages accruing from its nearness to the metropolitan area while maintaining and enjoying small city 'elbow room.'

Fourteen churches, seven schools, including one parochial and a ten room grade school about to be built, fine highways, three railroads, well paved streets, excellent public utilities, efficient city government, a beautiful river front park – all these things and



many more make Ecorse a fine place to live.

Ecorse Boat Club

In a multiple Quonset hut are kept the racing shells of the Ecorse Boat club. They include several eight oared shells as well as singles, doubles and fours, more than two dozen in all. The building is the gift of the Great Lakes Steel Corporation.

The Ecorse Boat Club is famous and boasts many championships, winning major races in both the United States and Canada.

When the war took many of the senior oarsmen out of the competition, the Ecorse high school crews carried on, competing both in their own class and rowing also against heavier and more experienced crews. Several times they won the famous senior eight oared race at the Royal Canadian Henley races in St. Catharines, Ontario.



Ecorse is a city of 20,000...it has a mayor and council form of government....19 manufacturing establishments...five public schools and 1 parochial school...14 churches...4 weekly newspapers...1 bank....1 public library....1 theatre....is served by three railroads....it has an assessed valuation of \$47,866,224 and a tax rate of 16.5 mills.

Ecorse Echoes

In 1920, the village of Ecorse had a total population of 4,394 souls. Twenty years later there were 13,209 people living and working in Ecorse. And today in 1948, a conservative estimate for the City of Ecorse is 20,000. The figures speak for themselves. There must be a reason and of course, there is!

Ecorse is fortunate in its location on the world's greatest inland waterway close to, and yet distinct from, the great city of Detroit-

Ecorse is fortunate in its progressive industrialist and business people. They prosper here and show their appreciation by taking the lead in constructive moves in the community interest.

Ecorse is fortunate in its people as a whole, the majority of who own their homes. They are good, solid citizens who love their home town and work to improve it.

Ecorse is fortunate in its recreational facilities, its people being especially well served in this respect.

Ecorse is fortunate in having splendid churches and schools.

Ecorse is fortunate in have a sound city government responsive to the wishes of the people.

1950s Ecorse

Ecorse People Made Beautiful Music Together

Photo by John Duguay



The Ecorse Advertiser of May and October of 1950 recorded and predicted the music programs that the 1960s classes were going to enjoy in their future. A story on Thursday, May 11, 1950, talked about the Spring Festival at School Three. The pupils of School Three were presenting their annual Spring Festival in the basement auditorium at 2:30 on May 17, 1950.

The program was planned to include vocal numbers by the

Ecorse Echoes

choruses, selections by the string choir, Irish specialty numbers, a western act based on popular tunes of the day, and a colorful spring promenade featuring a selected group of girls from the school. All pupils from the second through the sixth grades participated.

The program was directed by Miss Arlyne Burr, grade school supervisor of music in the Ecorse Schools.

A story in the same issue discussed the school music program. In the 1950s, Charles Sweet directed the music department of the Ecorse Public Schools and he expanded the program so that more children had the opportunity to develop instrumental or vocal talents. Miss Arlyne Burr and Miss Virginia Tyler supervised vocal music in the grade schools. Herbert Saylor directed the bands and supervised the wind instrument instruction in the Ecorse schools.

Grade school pupils sang in choral groups supervised by Miss Tyler and Miss Burr and many of them continued their vocal education in the high school by singing in the Junior High School Choir. Charles Sweet directed the Senior High Choir which had

gained fame as one of the best choirs in the southeastern part of Michigan.

During the years 1949-1950, Charles Sweet experimented with small vocal units. A boys' ensemble and a girls' ensemble appeared on a number of programs and Mr. Sweet attempted to develop one or more barber shop quartets in the high school.

The Ecorse Advertiser noted that "the emergence of the Ecorse band as a marching unit last fall inspired much favorable comment. Ecorse citizens will be given the opportunity of seeing a much improved and a more colorful edition of the band when it makes its appearance in this year's Memorial Day parade."

The story listed the selection of musical instruments that the Board of Education purchased for the band, including two field drums, four trombones, four flutes, twelve clarinets, one bell, lyre, and a sousaphone. A number of string instruments were also purchased as well as 27 new band uniforms, six majorette uniforms, and a drum major and band leader's uniform. An October 1950 story in *The Ecorse Advertiser* said that the Ecorse High School marching

band had been invited to participate in a "monster parade" in Dearborn. The parade was called *The Cavalcade of Dearborn* and took the form of a pageant parade with colorful floats and costumed performers providing moving stages for the animated story of the development of the Dearborn area since Indian days. It highlighted a three day celebration in Dearborn in conjunction with the dedication of the new city museum.

The Ecorse High School band was one of ten bands invited to the parade. The band, directed by Herbert Saylor, now had 65 members, six majorettes, and a drum major. It had been a colorful feature of the home football games for the past two years and participated in a number of civic affairs in Ecorse and in neighboring cities.

In 1950, Richard Smith was the drum major. The majorettes were Barbara Lunsford, Sharon Stafford, Betty Baines, Loretta McKenzie, Nancy Fought and Jewel Sanders.

There are generations of former Ecorse High School students who remember Miss Helen Garlington and her Glee Club and

Songsters and Mr. Saylor and Mr. Campbell and the Ecorse High School Band.

Ecorse 1950s



Ecorse City Hall, 1950s

Ecorse Echoes

Ecorse Grandmother Patents Idea of Puppets with Feet, May 1951

It was a child's curiosity that brought out the latest inventive genius of an Ecorse grandmother.

In 1949, Mrs. Marie C. Wirth of 3662 High Street, Ecorse, was showing her young grandson, Gerry Pittman, the wonders of the toy department in a Detroit department store. Coming to the doll section, young Gerry couldn't understand why hand dolls, more popularly known as "puppets," had no feet. This started his grandmother Mrs. Wirth, to thinking.

"Their hands and arms move, but where are their feet?" young Gerry asked his grandmother.

Up until this point in time, puppets always had a head and arms and a long costume. The puppeteer draped the entire doll over an arm and with his fingers manipulated the head and arms. The long costume hid the operator's motions, but there were no legs and

feet.

At home, Mrs. Wirth decided to do something about the legless puppets.

On November 30, 1948, she applied for a patent for her creation. Last month the patent was approved. When Mrs. Wirth's invention reaches the market, there should be no more legless puppets. Hands, feet and head will all respond to the operator's will.

Under the costume of the doll an adjustable spring connects the arms and feet. The first and third finger of the operator manipulated these extremities while the middle finger makes the head do the usual puppet tricks. With experience the puppet can be made to dance, jump and do any number of interesting feats.

Mrs. Wirth has developed three sizes of her dolls. The largest and most popular is about 18 inches tall. The history of puppets is a long and interesting one. In this country the first puppet was patented in 1901. This original had only a head and a long costume. The doll was slipped over the forearm and one finger made the

head gyrate at the operator's will. Mrs. Wirth's newest puppet is a tremendous advance in the perfection and performance of hand dolls.

Last fall, these new puppets were displayed on a WXYZ television show. They will soon be seen on television in the nation's capital.

Mrs. Wirth has recently joined the National Society of Inventors. This organization is assisting Mrs. Wirth in finding a manufacturer to put the dolls on the market.

Great Lakes Steel Stories -1950-1951

The Great Lakes Steel Corporation, Division of National Steel Corporation in late January 1951, donated \$110,000 to the Michigan Memorial Phoenix Project, the University of Michigan's broad program for atomic research.

Dr. Alexander G. Ruthven, President of the University, reported that the gift raised the Phoenix campaign over the half way mark of \$3,250,000 toward the goal of \$6,500,000. More than \$1,800,000 has been received in recent weeks from major

industrial concerns in Michigan.

George R. Fink, president of the Great Lakes Steel Corporation and National Steel Corporation told Dr. Ruthven that the gift has no restrictions and is to be used for any phase of basic research that the university desires.

“Because of the diversified nature of our business we feel that any advances in the physical sciences, the social sciences, medicine or engineering will be of material benefit to the two companies, their employees and customers,” company president George Fink said.

“It is our understanding that expert investigators in all these branches of knowledge will be working in the Phoenix Project. Therefore, we have decided that our contribution to this program should not be devoted to any particular line of investigation but allocated in the manner of projects administration deem most profitable.”

Great Lakes Picks Bowen for New Post

In July 1951, George R. Fink, president of Great Lakes Steel
Ecorse Echoes

Corporation, and of its parent organization, the National Steel Corporation, announced the appointment of J.E. Bowen as a vice president of Great Lakes Steel.

In making the announcement, Fink said that Bowen would continue in general managership of Great lakes Strand-Steel Division, manufacturer of Quonset buildings, with which Bowen has been affiliated since 1937.

An engineer and a salesman, Bowen has been a key figure in Great lakes Steel’s development of Strand-Steel Framing, the steel building material that features a groove into which nails can be driven, from pioneer applications to Quonset buildings.

Bowen, a native of Philadelphia, is 47. He attended Drexel Institute, Philadelphia, and began his career as an engineer for the McClintock-Marshall Co., steel fabricators. He joined the Great Lakes Steel organization as an engineer in 1935.

Ecorse Obituaries – 1950s

May 24, 1951

Mrs. Agnes Glen

Mrs. Agnes Glen, a resident of Ecorse for over 30 years, died May 20 in Long Beach, California, where she had made her home for the past four years. She was the widow of the late John Glen. Both were well known in this area.

Death came after a long illness.

July 12, 1951

Mrs. Lillian Monroe

Mrs. Lillian Monroe, 65, of 53 Benson Street, Ecorse, died suddenly of a heart attack on Monday, July 23.

She is survived by her husband Daniel; sons Daniel Jr. and Sgt. Harry in Korea; daughter Mrs. Lillian Heinzbecher of Ecorse; sisters, Mrs. Elizabeth Daley of Detroit; Mrs. Minnie Spaine of Butte, Montana and Mrs. Bertha Dean of Seattle and brothers Theodore Sharf of Detroit and Frederick Sharf of Roseville. She had two grandchildren.

Ecorse Echoes

Services will be held Friday at 1:30 p.m. at Ballheim Funeral Home and at 2 p.m. at Christ Lutheran Church in River Rouge. The Rev. Walter Piepen will officiate. Burial will be at Cadillac Memorial Garden.

March 15, 1951

George Lee

Funeral services for George Lee, 4365 Tenth Street, Ecorse, were held from the Gallagher Funeral Home River Rouge, Monday afternoon. Services were conducted by the Wyandotte Masonic Lodge with the Reverend Leonard Duckett officiating.

Mr. Lee, who had been the Ecorse City Building Inspector for the past ten years, was stricken with a heart attack while in the Ecorse police station Friday afternoon. Ecorse firemen with the pulmotor and Dr. L.H. Van Beclare revived him and the city ambulance took him to the Veteran's Hospital where he died shortly after arrival. Mr. Lee had apparently been in good health up to the time he was stricken.

Mr. Lee was a veteran of World War I and a member of the Roy B. Salliotte Post, American legion. He was 54 years old.

Mr. Lee is survived by his wife, May, a daughter Mrs. Helen Cikota and one son, Corporal George Lee.

April 20, 1950

Frank Brandstatter

Funeral services for Frank Brandstatter, retired Ecorse businessman, were held Wednesday morning from the Thon Funeral Home, Wyandotte. Mr. Brandstatter died early Sunday morning following a long illness.

Mr. Brandstatter had been a resident of Ecorse for over thirty years and for many years operated a grocery and market at 4140 West Jefferson Avenue. Ill health caused him to retire from business several years ago. He was 73 years of age at the time of his death.

Mr. Brandstatter is survived by his wife, Mare, and two daughters, Mrs. Steven Sollie and Mrs. Gerald Anderson of Grand Rapids

Ecorse Echoes

and a son, Arthur F. Brandstatter of Lansing, who at the present time is in Germany.

Ecorse Mayor Louis Parker's Program-November 1951



In his first public inauguration Tuesday evening, Mayor Louis Parker outlined his objectives for city betterment during the next two years.

He admitted that his program cannot be accomplished overnight, but was hopeful that most of it would be a reality and the rest well along to fulfillment during his first year term as mayor.

His first objective would be to restore the credit of the city. This would be done by careful and economical administration.

A completely revamped and extended recreation program with a full time recreation director has long been his ambition.

A city hospital with full facilities to meet the needs of the people of Ecorse.

A city incinerator for the disposal of city garbage financed on a self liquidating basis. This is a must to meet an almost immediate emergency.

A citywide sidewalk program to include the repairing and rebuilding of sidewalks throughout the entire city.

These were the major plans that Mayor Parker outlined as his immediate objectives.

Ecorse During the Summers of 1950,1951

June 1950

Rowing Club Queen

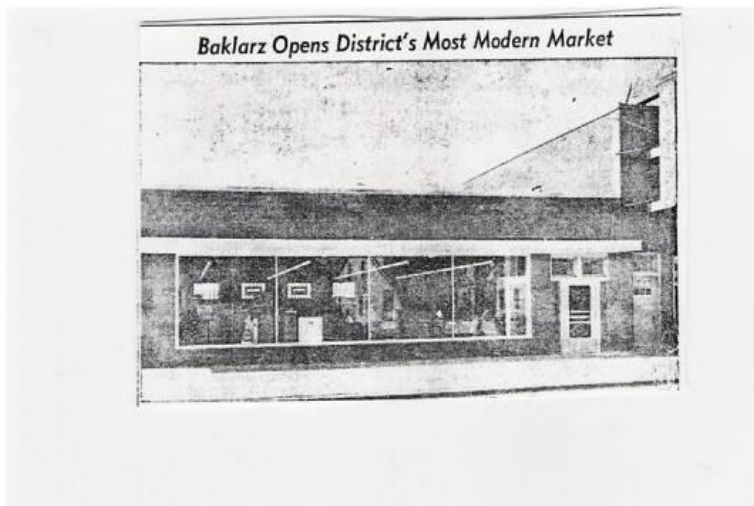
The deadline for the 1950 Rowing Queen contest loomed only days away and interest and excitement increased. Entries last week included Ginger Lewis, Lorraine Varena, Betty Amos, Shirley DuCharme, Sally Selz and Betty Samu.

Entries will be accepted up to Monday evening and any unmarried Ecorse girl between the ages of 15 and 25 is eligible to enter.

The Rowing Queen and her two attendants will be chosen at the Ecorse High School Auditorium on Thursday evening, June 22nd.

Baklarz Opens New Market

July 1950



Over 12,000 residents of the Downriver area visited the grand opening of the Baklarz Super Market last week end. Starting early Thursday morning and continuing until late Saturday night

Ecorse Echoes

residents of this area crowded the store and taxed the facilities of this largest, most modern and complete super market.

Most of the patrons came from Ecorse and River Rouge and all were interested in the free grand prize drawing for 15 prizes awarded to the visitors at the three day opening. The electric percolator, toaster and waffle iron went to Mr. Leonard McMaster, 4629 5th Street, Ecorse.

Summer Activities at School One, School Two, School Three- August 1950

School One

The boys and girls of School One enjoyed their trip to WWJ to the program of "Inside Stuff." Thursday, August 9, a group of the boys and girls will go to the Detroit News and Vernors.

A pet show was held Friday at the play center. Ribbons were given to the following boys and girls for their pets. Terry Cooper won 1st prize for the ugliest pet. Tony Tyra received 2nd prize for his pet cat and Carol Shaw's cat got third prize. The best costumed pet

was Teddy Wymer's rabbit. Jimmy Wilson got second prize for his dog dusted with blue powder and Tom Tyra received third prize for his cat.

The unusual pet ribbons went to Teddy Wymer's pet duck, Jimmy Pongranz's duck and Francis Washell's turtle. The ribbon for the oldest pet went to Julius Pongranz's police dog. The ribbon for the oldest pet was given to Betty Ann Hertza's dog. Francis Washell's pet turtle received the ribbon for the youngest pet and Clifford Renaud's hamsters received the ribbon for the second youngest pet.

The boys and girls had a party after the pet show. Several mothers contributed food for the party.

School Two

The Shadow Show was a huge success. Carol Kirtland was the announcer and Geraldine Adams was the one who operated the lights.

The boys and girls participating in the Puppet Show were: Robert

Ecorse Echoes

Anthony Billy Bankovich, Bobby Carley, Betty Cutting, Jack Cutting, Irene Gatien, Paul Gatien, Rita Gatien, Tom O'Connell, Al Petri, Charles Swartzsbaugh, Barbara Waldie, and Patricia Wallis. Barbara Jones was the announcer.

The Doll Show prizes were won by David Anthony, Gail Beausejour, Loretta Bella, Nancy Balir, Carol Ann Parkas, Diane Haterman, Carol Kirtland, Eileen Lafferty, Joanne Luna Monica Push, Judy Swartzbaugh, Judy Tinnin, Lois Gebert, Barbara Waldie, Carol Ann Younts and Janice Younts.

Carol Kirtland collects dolls for a hobby and she exhibited nine of her collection. The judges were Mrs. C. Anthony, Mrs. H. Swartzbaugh and Mrs. M. Waldie.

Barbara Jones made an attractive necklace with colored shoe buttons.

The pet show prizes went to Billy Bencik, Joey Bencik, Ann Marie Blazanovich, Sandy Borne, Nancy Christie, Dennis Isons, Ray Koson, Jean Lanau, Pat Marsh, Sandra Mohler, Sandra

McDonald, Joyce Montry, Barbara Murray, Eugene Penny, Al Petri, Don Petri, Sally Van Canneyt and Barbara Waldie. The judges were Mrs. C. Anthony, Mrs. H. Swartzbaugh and Mrs. M. Waldie.

School Three

The following won awards at the pet show held at School Three play center.

Youngest Pet – Thomas and Betty Swin, James Prizza and Bobby Nadie. The judges were Anne Vukovich and Lillian Gombas.

There will be ping pong, checkers and horseshoe contests this week at this play center.

The trip to WWJ and Detroit News was very interesting. A special program is arranged every Thursday at the WWJ broadcasting station for teen age kids called “Inside Stuff.” Each play center is taking turns visiting the station because only forty boys and girls can be accommodated at one time.

Ecorse Echoes

Ecorse Library To Be Air Conditioned

The Ecorse Public Library is to be completely redecorated. Following a meeting of the Library Commission last week, Councilman John Bauer, a member of the Commission, asked the city council for an appropriation to completely redecorate and revarnish both the interior and exterior of the building. The council approved Bauer’s recommendation.

Bauer, recently appointed to the Library Commission, has come up with a new proposal that would make the Ecorse library the most modern in the area.

“During the summer months and especially in hot weather many people go to the library to relax, be comfortable and enjoy the facilities of the library,” Bauer said. “To increase their enjoyment and make the library an even more comfortable place for relaxation I certainly recommend the installation of an air conditioning system. At present the air is circulated by a system of fans or blowers but this does not lower the temperature in the building.”

“There is so much window area that it cannot be completely shaded from the sun during these hot summer days that only an air conditioning system could give complete relief,” Bauer said.

Bauer said he would propose such an improvement to both the Library Commission and the City Council.

Encounters with Ecorse Creek

During the January 1951 thaw, eleven year old Dorothy Hollobaugh of 23 West Woodward tested the thin ice of what passed for an ice rink on Ecorse Creek and fell into the frigid water. As she was sinking for the second time on the afternoon of Saturday, January 20, one of her friends came to her rescue. Charles Hawk of 400 Labadie Court crawled over the ice to reach Dorothy and plunged into the water himself. Somehow he managed to reach shore, dragging Dorothy with him. Both of them were dripping wet and shivering cold, so Charles took Dorothy to his house to dry out. As soon as the shivering children entered the back door, Harold Hawk, Charles’ father, greeted them at the door. Harold thought that the two young people had been playing near the forbidden creek and had merely splashed themselves with

water, so he delivered a stern lecture.

Charles and Dorothy retired behind the Hawk garage to confer about their problem. After considerable consultation and realizing the hopelessness of their situation, Charles went back into his house and told his father the truth. This time his father recognized him as a hero and he and Dorothy were hurried into the house to thaw out.

In recalling her experience, Dorothy said, “I dreamed of Heaven and dreamed of hell as I was going under the water. I didn’t know how it was going to end up.”

Six months later in July of 1951, a Mr. Fowler who lived at 4630 Ninth Street rescued two year old Brenda Crider who had fallen into Ecorse Creek. Brenda’s mother had missed her late on the afternoon of Thursday, July 12. She sent her son Michael, 5, to find his sister and he ran back home and told her that Brenda had fallen into the water. In the meantime, Mr. Fowler heard children standing along the bank of the creek shouting that someone had fallen in. He rushed to the spot and saw Brenda in the water. He

waded in to rescue her and pulled her from the water, still conscious.

Ecorse Kiwanis Club Sponsors New Wading Pool

In September 1950, the Ecorse Kiwanis Club marked another milestone in its history of service to the youth of Ecorse. Its board of directors authorized the expenditure of \$1,500 for constructing another Kiwanis sponsored wading pool in Ecorse.

The pool will be located at the corner of Sixth Street and Southfield and the Ecorse Engineering Department will supervise its construction.

The Ecorse Kiwanis Club sponsored building the first wading pool in Ecorse in 1946 when it contributed \$2,500 toward constructing the pool located on the Municipal Athletic Fields.

Kiwanis Club officers for 1950 are Raymond Montie, president; Lambert Pfeiffer, first vice president; Donald Kelly, second vice president; and Magnus Meier, secretary treasurer.

Ecorse Echoes

Members of the 1950 Board of Directors are William Weeber, Edward Stauder, Laurence Helle, Nicholas Stroia, John Trueman, Benjamin Goodell and Donald Loveland.

Ecorse Portraits





Ecorse 1951- Busy and Growing



Kiwanis Club Dedicates Wading Pool- July 1951

The Ecorse Kiwanis Club sponsored a wading pool at Sixth and Southfield Road and dedicated it last Friday evening with city, school board and Kiwanis officials witnessing the dedication. It is

the second wading pool sponsored by the local Kiwanians.

Mayor Hawkins and Councilman Ormal Goodell, chairman of the Ecorse Recreational Commission, turned the valve that floods the pool for the first time. Councilman John Bauer, William Weber, recreation director; Mayor Hawkins, City Engineer William Liddle; Councilman Goodell and Robert Thompson and Ray Montie members of the school presided over the dedication.

A fence is to be built and the pool will be landscaped.

Ground Broken For New St. Francis Church, July 1951

To Start Construction of \$360,000 Edifice

Ground breaking ceremonies took place at 3 p.m. Sunday on West Jefferson Avenue between Outer Driver and Goodell Street for the \$360,000 St. Francis Xavier Church building. Building operations will get underway in the immediate future. J.B. McCray is the building contractor and Arthur Des Rosiers the architect.

Assisting Msgr. T.G. Morin in the ceremonies was his assistant

Ecorse Echoes

Father Alexander Wytrwal. Others included Mayor Lois Parker, Contractor Joseph B. McCrea, Committeemen Edward Langland, Charles Goodell and David Spaight; Miss Sarah Morin officers of the Holy Name and St. Anne Rosary Altar Societies and parishioners.

Groundbreaking ceremonies were held in conjunction with the coming "Help Us Build" Fall Festival which the parish is sponsoring in the school and on the grounds on October 24, 25, and 26th.

Rides of all sorts will be featured for the kiddies and a fish fry and turkey will be prepared by the ladies.

Chairman Edwin Montry and Cletus Affholter will be assisted by Joseph Michalec, William Montry, Francis Nolan, Donald Ouelette, Peter Paluch, Alexander Petrie, Stanely Push, Denis Renauld, John Seavitt, Blaine Smith, Samuel Stewart and William Selon. In charge of publicity are Mrs. Charles Price and Mrs. Sherman Clezak.

The entire church plant which will be in Gothic design will be constructed of cement and brick. The church proper will seat 900 in the nave and 100 in the balcony. Under crowded conditions, facilities will be available for 1,100 persons. The present parish now has 2,000 members.

Located in the balcony will be an organ console and seats for the choir. The church will also have modern lighting and furniture, art glass windows, the pipe organ and loud speaking system. Space has also been provided for a rest room. Behind the church will be a hard topped parking lot which will also be used for recreational facilities.

St. Francis Xavier parish was founded before the War of 1812 as a mission by Father Gabriel Richard, Detroit's first priest. Father Charles De Preitre was the first resident pastor, erecting a frame church on the riverfront in 1848.

Father Louis Baroux came in 1857 and the present church which is 70 years old was built in 1882 under the pastorate of Father John Van Gennip. In 1888, Father William Champion was made

pastor and served for 36 years. There were 117 French Catholic families at that time.

In 1923, Father Tobias Morin succeeded Msgr. Champion and has been pastor ever since. he erected the school building and convent and founded the parish high school in 1924.

Four Detained by Border Patrol, July 1951

Four persons found on Army property on East Westfield Avenue Monday were turned over to the U.S. Border Patrol when it was reported that two of them had crossed the river in a power boat. They gave their names as Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth McCollom, 586 West California, Windsor. With them were Millie Chapman, 894 lakeshore and Lawrence Pilon, 315 West Grand Boulevard, both of Detroit. The last two were temporarily unable to provide proof of their residence. They said that they were curious regarding the army unit stationed in Ecorse and had come ashore on property used by the army.

Four Ecorse Soldiers Take Part in Army Exercise

Four soldiers from Ecorse participated in the exercise, “Operation Signpost” which ended July 28, 1951. Pfc. Arthur Mays, gun loader, 4129 Eighteenth; Pfc. Henry Gordy, switch board operator, son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry R. Gordy, 4004 Eighteenth; Pfc. James D. Carter, chief machine gunner, whose parents live at 3841 Nineteenth; Pfc. Carl Salley, cannoneer whose parents live at 3982 Twelfth.

All four men entered the Army in February 1951. Mays and Carter attended Ecorse High School. Gordy studied at Michigan State Normal College and Salley was graduated from Cass Technical High School.

Their anti-aircraft unit worked jointly with the Air Force Canadian air defense and a major portion of the Civilian Ground Observer Corps to guard the Pacific Northwest during Operation Sign Post.

Ecorse Sergeant to Leave Korea

Specialist First Class Raymond Tandle, of the 25th Infantry

Ecorse Echoes

Division in Korea, whose wife Dorothy Jean lives at 4534 Fifth Street, Ecorse, is returning to the United States from Korea under the Army’s rotation plan. He was a member of the 25th Infantry Division, one of the first U.S. units to fight on the peninsula.

A supply sergeant with the 65th Engineer Combat Battalion, SFC Tandle entered the Army in February 1951. He arrived in Korea last September.

Ecorse Man Service with U.S. Army in Korea

Pvt. Frederick C. Lackey, son of Mr. and Mrs. Calvin Lackey, 3998 Twelfth in Ecorse, is now serving with the 45th Infantry Division on the front lines in Korea.

Lackey, a member of the 189th Artillery Battalion, entered the Army in November 1951.

Ecorse Time Capsules, 1960s

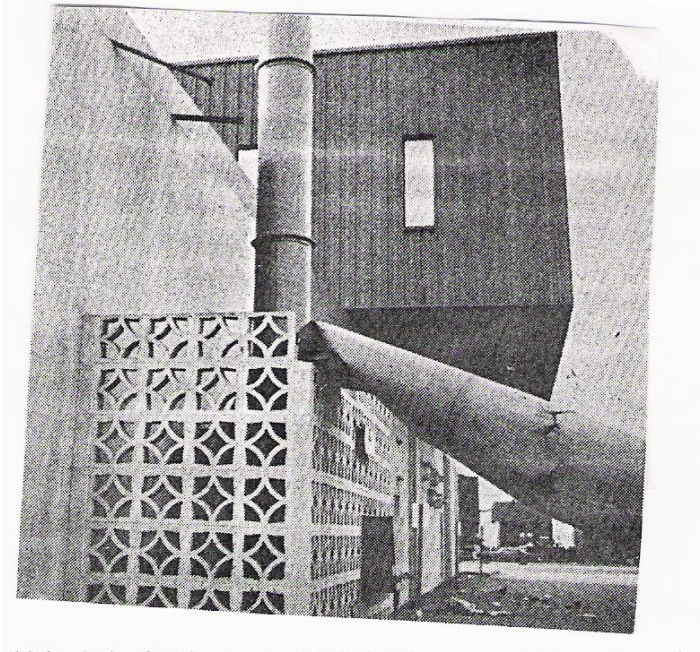


Work progressed on the new Ecorse Civil Center on West Jefferson on West Jefferson and Elton in February 1968. Construction on the building continued throughout the summer.

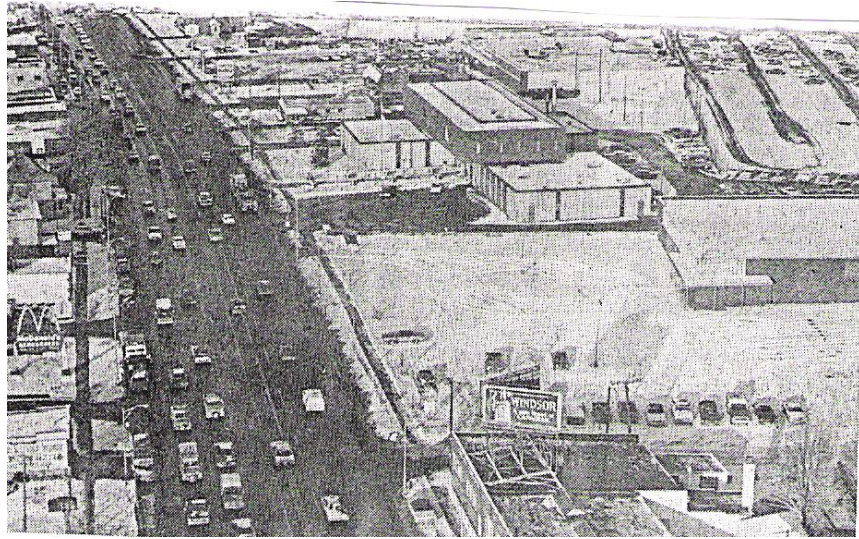


Victor Mitea and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. when Dr. King visited Ecorse in the 1960s.

Ecorse Time Capsules 1970s

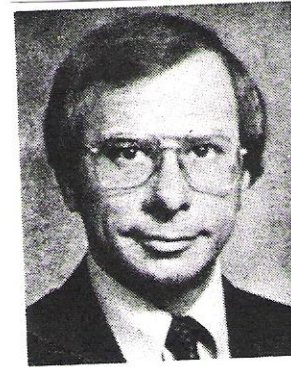


The high winds of early January 1975 blew down one of the smokestacks at the rear of the Albert B. Buday Civic Center on West Jefferson in Ecorse. It replaced the old Ecorse City Hall on High Street in 1968,



This is busy West Jefferson Avenue in Ecorse as it passes the Albert B. Buday Civic Center heading into River Rouge. When this photo was taken from a helicopter in January 1977, a light blanket of snow covered the area.

Ecorse Time Capsules 1980s



Neal Ballheim, owner of Ballheim Funeral Home, Ecorse, and an Ecorse Rotary Club member, was selected as Rotarian team leader to accompany Rotary Group Study Exchange Team of five young business and professional persons from the Downriver area to visit India in January 1983 for forty days.



Prize winner from School Two, Ecorse, who won a coloring contest sponsored by the Ecorse McDonald's , pose with their teachers in 1982.

Ecorse Time Capsules, 1990s



An original Ecorse farmhouse.



Ecorse Time Capsules 2000s

Chapter Three-Early Ecorse

Al DuHadway Writes that Grandport Was Once Center for Area



By Al DuHadway (Mellus Newspapers, 1972)

If early day settlers could have foreseen the future, virtually

everyone living in the area served by The Mellus newspapers would call Grandport their home town.

Because of a lack of foresight, the community – once the only settlement between Detroit and Monroe – ceased to exist and today is almost forgotten.

What once comprised the tiny hamlet, only four blocks long, now is the oldest portion of the historic city of Ecorse and its beginnings can be traced back to a period when the French flag floated over the village and the area was part of the Province of Quebec.

Descendants of early French settlers can trace their land titles back to 1746, some 43 years before George Washington was inaugurated as first president of the new nation called the United States.

Downriver residents, in reading the deeds to their property, often find the first pages written in French, and in some instances there appear drawings of fish, turtles or birds, which were signatures of

the original owners – American Indians.

During the term of John Quincy Adams, our sixth president, the Michigan Territory was divided into townships, with Ecorse Township being formed in 1827, but a small hamlet – a fishing and farming center had existed on the riverfront for some time. A map, drawn around 1830, shows the Village of Grandport, and the streets remain in the same locations to this day, some still bearing the same names they had nearly 150 years ago.

As evidence of the period when the community was platted, streets were named for such historic personages as Andrew Jackson, Daniel Webster and James Monroe – the latter two retaining their names today.

Other streets which exist in their original location are High, Labadie, Bourassa and White, while what then was State Street now is busy Southfield Road, and Lafforter has been renamed LeBlanc.

Ship Street, which originally was two blocks long, now is carved

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out of Ecorse Township. The new area was named Taylor, in honor of General Zachary Taylor, the Mexican War hero who later became the 12th president.

The settlement of Grandport continued to be the center of Ecorse Township, but for some reason never was incorporated. As the years passed, the name fell into disuse and most of the oldsters referred to the community as Ecorse.

It was around this time that Wyandotte – another unincorporated community – came into being, and in 1867 the city of Wyandotte was formed. Around the turn of the century River Rouge became an incorporated village.

Ecorse Village

It was not until 1902 that Ecorse finally got around to incorporating as a village with elected officials, and in 1918- during World War One – the community expanded to its present size.

Three years later, when the Village of Lincoln Park was created,

historic old Ecorse was surrounded and forever held to its small size. Ecorse became a city in 1942.

Had economic conditions been more favorable over a century ago and early farmers could have envisioned the future, persons now living in Taylor, Allen Park, Melvindale, Southgate, Wyandotte, River Rouge, portions of Southwest Detroit- as well as Ecorse – possibly would be living in the huge metropolis Grandport.

Downriver Dancing Under the Trees



Rough and tumble pioneer dances called Bowery Dances grew up

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along with tiny Downriver villages like Ecorse, River Rouge and Trenton during the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries. The Bowery Dances were held in four or five places along the Detroit River front at Rouge village, Emmon's Grove and at Quantz's Road house on the Pepper Road. People came from all along the river as far away as Toledo to attend these dances under the trees.

Torches flamed high, rude dances grew wilder, and old fashioned fiddle music joined the shouts and laughter of the hunters and farmers who had gathered when news spread about a dance at one or the other of the various groves along the river front. Hard drinking and hard fighting usually punctuated the dance before the evening ended, because those were the days when a man's skill at fighting made him a man and excited words usually led to blows.

White people and Indians danced together in the pioneer version of the Bowery Dances. Elijah J. Goodell of Ecorse, born and bred in the old village, remembered when the white people and Indians used to dance together in the grove beside his father's house.

According to Elijah, when he was a boy people who lived in the neighborhood for the most part were hunters and trappers and the

first farmers were still busy clearing the heavily timbered land. In those early days of Bowery dancing there were no advertisements or invitations. Someone would just look at the fine morning and decide to go up to Goodells or Rosseaus or Labadies and gathered together a dance. They would mount their ponies or get into a boat and paddle up the river to the next farm house, dragging the family along. From one farm house to another they would travel until a huge crowd had gathered. In those days everyone wore moccasins like the Indians and the women wore calico dresses and the men homespun hunting shirts and individualized hats.

Everyone danced on the level grass with boughs cut and thatched above them for shade in the afternoon and protection from the damp and dews at night. Eventually in the more popular groves, men collected huge rails and made a floor of them and everyone danced on the rough wood floor. Still later, when saw mills dotted the creek banks, men built board platforms for dancing and later yet, they built outdoor pavilions for dancing.

Elijah Goodell recalled that everyone joined the dancing, old fashioned square dancing, Virginia reels and country dances, and

the Indians used to come over from Amherstburg and from their camps all up and down the Detroit River. When they had money to help pay the fiddler they joined in the dances and when they did not have money they stood aside and looked on, too proud to take part in the dance if they could not contribute something to the expenses. White men danced with the Indian women the same as with white women and Elijah remembered his mother teasing his father about ‘that tall and handsome squaw’ he danced with at one of the Bowery Dances.

According to Elijah, he saw the belle of the Bowery Dances, Kitty Coque, the daughter of a Native American chief who lived at Amherstburg, ride past his house on horseback. Kitty Coque was the prettiest, wealthiest, and most skillful dancer along the Detroit River. He saw her riding along with her beautifully beaded leggings and blue broadcloth blouse, fringed and beaded. “Yes, indeed, when she rode through Ecorse, every man along the river road would come out and speak with her and she was a bright talker too, and could give them as good banter as they sent,” said Elijah. He said that Kitty married a chief in Amherstburg and sent her daughters to St. Louis to school, afterwards moving to St.

Louis to live with them.

After the pioneer period of clearing land and settling farms, and the village period when Ecorse served as a trading place for farmers, industry moved in along the Detroit River. Villages along the river were rapidly transformed from farm villages to manufacturing suburbs and the street railway was extended to Wyandotte and Trenton. As the villages grew more sophisticated, so did the transportation to the dances. The farmer boys brought in their rosy cheeked country girls from ten miles around in little two wheeled carts or gigs or sulkies to dance all night. After a night of dancing and drinking they rode home in the early morning.

People flocked to Emmon's grove, a beautiful strip of pine woods just outside of Ecorse, in the early days of the Bowery Dance. As the country became more settled people converted groves into picnic grounds. Eventually every road house had its orchard and dancing pavilion connected with the grounds that encouraged the Bowery Dancing and the sale of beer. When sawmills and other manufacturers settled along the river, the farmer boys went to work in factories, laborers came in from the city, and the

population grew. Many people came down from the city to the dances and transformed them from rustic to road houses and dance halls out-of-doors.

Following the old River Road, now Jefferson Avenue, across the River Rouge, the first roadhouse that appeared belonged to John Halfner. A large orchard adjoined a saloon building and in the orchard stood many green latticed arbors and a large dancing pavilion. The entrance was to the left of the building and a flickering torch lit the way across the path in the direction of the pavilion. Sometimes the head of the road house himself gave the balls and other times social organizations or church societies sponsored the balls.

One night in August 1898 the Maccabees gave an open air ball on a ball night for a ball. It had rained heavily that afternoon, and little pools of water covered the ground and the trees dripped rain when breezes shook them. But the dancers came and huddled in a group around the edge of the pavilion, gossiping and chatting. Lines of dancers advanced, curtsied and swung to the music that the village shoemaker and his sons played on a pair of violins, a

flute and a cornet. Under the dripping trees in the flickering shadows, young men and women flushed with dancing wandered arm and arm, while others sat on the benches under arching tree branches.

On the same Saturday night another dance took place at Charles Labadie's at Sand Hill, run by Felix Cicotte, and held for the benefit of the Sand Hill Baseball Club. The ball took place in the little pavilion of Labadie's orchard and the native French of Ecorse village, people from neighboring farms, and factory men and women from Wyandotte came to dance. Occasionally groups of young men ride their bicycles to the dances at Labadies and those at nearby Emmon's Grove. Sometimes the young men on bicycles discover that the night is too dark to ride home along the narrow bicycle paths so they seek shelter in neighboring barns. More than once an early rising farmer has found his backyard filled with an assortment of bicycles. As soon as they are discovered, the bicyclists hastily mounted their vehicles and rode toward the city in the sunrise glow.

The girls at the Sand Hill Base Ball Club benefit wrote white

summer gowns and some of the men wore little tight caps and loose woolen shirts. The musicians wore shirts with rolled up sleeves. Most men wore their hats cocked on the back of their heads, and accented the effect by clamping a cigar stub tightly in the corner of their mouth. Other dancers smoked their pipes as they danced.

The beer stand stood in one corner of the grove and a line of thirsty men usually surrounded it. A shadowed pavilion stood down in the orchard and there young men and women sat in view of the rest of the grounds, hugging each other. A large crowd of children romped on the grounds. One little woman in black with a plain gold band on her hand brought five little children to the ball. The older children took turns rocking the baby in the carriage, and the little widow distributed her smiles and recaptured her youth among the young men standing around the edge of the pavilion.

She is the spirit of the Bowery Dances.

Chapter Four

The Riviere Ecorces (Ecorse Creek) and Its International Connections



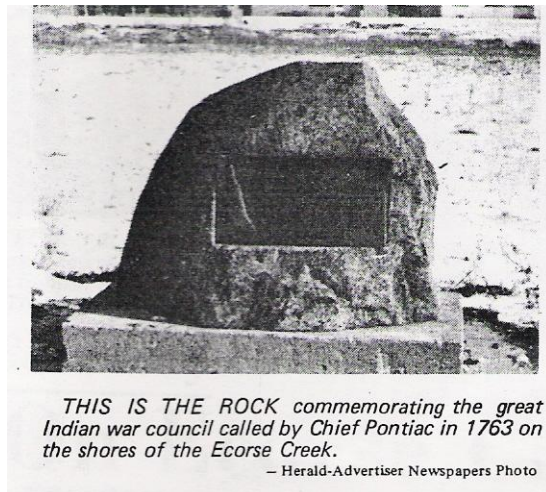
A Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Water Division report of July 7, 2003, scientifically defines the Riviere de Ecorces and its territory. The report describes the Riviere de Ecorces and its watershed this way:

The Ecorse River Watershed flows through both the Southern Michigan-Northern Indiana till Plain and Huron-Erie Lake Plain eco-regions in southeast Michigan. The watershed is approximately 46 square miles in drainage and is heavily developed including the Detroit Metropolitan Airport property (Metro Airport) in the headwater region of the South Branch Ecorse River.

The health, well being and history of the Riviere de Ecorces are important because of environmental reasons, but also for political and social reasons as well. The Ecorse River flows into the Detroit River, which parallels the Canadian shore and connects the Great Lakes to the ocean through the St. Lawrence Sea Way. As the health of the Ecorse River fluctuates, so fluctuates the health and

well being of the Sea Way and the oceans. Wayne County school children that participate yearly in the cleanup of the Ecorse River are acting in the true spirit of internationalism and global ecology and merge their destinies with an ancient waterway and way of life.

Council Fires along the Ecorse River



Before the ancient Egyptians built their pyramids, before the

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ancient Britons built Stonehenge, native American tribes had established villages and towns Downriver from Detroit. Evidence indicates that the Native American people who came to be known as the Wyandot migrated from what is now the southern United States. Language provides one clue. The Wyandot spoke the same language as the Cherokee and anthropologists believe that they were one people. Burial grounds in Gibraltar show that the Wyandot tribe is 1,500 years old and arrowheads and other small artifacts from the Wyandot can be found Downriver.

At one stage of their history, the Wyandot extended south into Ohio, as far west as Wisconsin and north to Hudson Bay. They had settled throughout Ontario at one time, until a war with eastern tribes and a malaria epidemic in the mid 1600s forced them west. The Native American tribes along the Detroit River and its tributaries, including Ecorse Creek, lived in the area 7,000 years compared to the mere 300 of Detroit and the white man. Kay McGowan, chairwoman of Native American studies at Marygrove College in Detroit confirms that artifacts found at sites throughout the Downriver area show signs of habitations going back to over 7,000 years.

These early Native Americans considered Springwells, located near historic Fort Wayne, a sacred place of pilgrimage. Indians from all over the eastern half of the United States came there because of the underground springs. Eventually, they founded a village called Tonguish at the site of present day River Rouge and Ecorse. The modern city of Wyandotte actually was a major Wyandot village called Monguaga which later came to be called Monguagon Village.

For centuries Gibraltar, one of Downriver's smaller communities, was one of the most important and sacred sites to the Wyandot and Native Americans for hundreds of miles. Tribes came from every point of the compass through the Great Lakes to meet at Gibraltar or Tohroontoh, which means "the big rock" in Iroquois. Some of the greatest councils of native peoples in the history of this part of North America occurred in Gibraltar. The Cherokee came, the Cree, the Micmac from Canada, the Montanags, and the Erie. The Susquehanna arrived from the east. The Chickasaws and Choctaws journeyed from way up the Mississippi River. The council was by invitation only and the price of admission was a string of wampum. This wampum wasn't Indian money, but sacred

beads made from seashells from the East Coast.

"What the native people would do is take the shell and soak it in fermented peach juice for two or three weeks until it got real soft," according to Kay McGowan. "They would come up the Mississippi River, carry their canoes across land, put them back in the water whenever they could, and head north. And they knew when they saw that huge boulder in the river that's where they pulled in for council."

There were many other tribes in the area, according to Professor McGowan. She said that there were Sauk and Fox, Miami, Weas, Mascoutens, Erie, Menominee, the Chippewa and the Ottawa along with the Wyandot. The closest neighbors and friends so the Wyandot were the Potawatami who had a village right next to the Monguaga called Robiche. The Wyandots grew corn and the Potawatami built canoes. In Wyandot society only members of the sea snake clan could build canoes and they built the huge ocean going and Great Lakes canoes. When they Wyandot wanted smaller canoes they would trade corn to the Potawatami for them.

According to Professor McGowan, the Wyandot and Potawatami

intermarried frequently. Their villages were very close together along the Detroit and Ecorse Rivers.

The Native Americans loved the Detroit and Ecorse Rivers. They lived on the rivers, fished the rivers and raised their families in villages on the rivers. Fishing was more important to the Wyandot than hunting. Along with the giant sturgeon they fished for lake trout, walleye, and freshwater cod or “burbot” as they called it. The children drank the cod liver oil every day because they knew it made them healthy, Professor McGowan said.

The Rouge River, the Ecorse River, the Huron River and the River Raisin all had villages. Even the smaller creeks were used. The Indians would put fish fences across the creeks to gather fish. Professor McGowan said that there were hunting blinds near the river that have been there for 400-500 years and the same families have used them for generations. She said that when the United States government tried to relocate the Wyandot to Kansas in 1843, some hid out on islands in the Detroit River and in hunting blinds along the river banks. They managed to remain in their ancestral homes while other tribes were moved West.

The French Connection

As the small settlement at Detroit grew, French fur traders and Jesuit priests traversed the area, but the earliest record showing white ownership of property in Ecorse Township dates to 1776, when the Potawatomi Indians deeded a huge tract of land to Pierre St. Cosme. His boundary line was known for years as the St. Cosme Line, later to be known as State Street and still later as Southfield Road. The French Crown awarded numerous land grants in the Detroit area in the late 1700s and it is likely that it granted many claims on the Detroit, Rouge and Ecorse Rivers that were not recorded.

The Wyandot, the Ottawa, Chippewa and the Potawatomi were long in the area when the French came in 1701. The King of France granted Cadillac permission to come to Detroit from Montreal to establish a trading post. Beginning in 1707, Cadillac granted land on both sides of the Detroit River to French settlers who wanted to farm as well as trap and fish. Because transportation was important, every farmer wanted to own land right on the Detroit River and near Fort Ponchartrain. Cadillac

gave each farmer land on the river front which followed the shoreline for two hundred to one thousand feet and extended from the Detroit River back two to three miles. Because the acreages were long and narrow they were called “ribbon farms.”

The ribbon farms lined both sides of the Detroit River from Ecorse to Lake St. Clair. The farmers used their canoes on the Ecorse River, River Rouge, and the Detroit River to visit other farmers and friends in Fort Pontchartrain and to take their farm produce and fur to market. The nearby Fort also provided them with security and safety.

When Cadillac granted land to the farmers they had to agree on certain conditions. The farm could trade, hunt, and fish on his property, but he had to pay rent to use the land and a fee for trading privileges. The ribbon farmer had to pay another fee to Cadillac for the use of his mill for grinding corn and other grain that he grew on his farm. The farmer could fish in the Detroit River and hunt for deer, beaver, wild ducks, and pheasants. The farmers grew corn, wheat and vegetables and also pears, apples and other fruits. They kept cattle, pigs, and a few horses. The

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entire family worked on the farm. The housewives baked bread in outdoor ovens made of clay, made their own cloth and sewed their own clothes. They traded with the Native Americans to get maple sugar.

In 1748, the French offered settlers special bribes to come to Detroit. These bribes included a spade, an axe, a plough, a large wagon, a small wagon and seed and a cow and pig, which had to be returned by the third harvest. By using this system, the French hoped to build up the settlement and strengthen their forces in the new land. By 1760, the population of both sides of the river numbered 2,500 and 600 people lived within the fort.

The British Lion

Britain and France fought for supremacy of the fur trade and for the rich lands and commerce of the Ohio Valley. The French and Indian War ended with a British victory and domination of the Ohio Valley until long after the American Revolution. The Indians had divided loyalties. The Iroquois sided with the English, but the Ottawas, especially Chief Pontiac, whose village was located on

the Ecorse River, had become disillusioned with British designs on Indian land.

Beginning in 1762, Pontiac traveled long distances, visiting Native American villages and urging his allies to attack the British. He decided that he would call a council of Indian Nations to formulate a plan to drive the English intruders off of Indian land. Representatives from the various Native American groups in the area and from the East attended the Council on the Riviere Ecorces in the spring of 1763, including Chippewa, Ottawa, Shawnee, Delaware, Miami, Potawatomi and Huron tribes. There were probably others too. Chief Pontiac addressed the assembled tribes on the bank of the Riviere de Ecorces.

“God said, I am the maker of heaven and Earth, the trees, lakes, rivers, men and all that Thou seest or hast seen on the Earth or in the heavens and because I love you, you must do my will and you must also avoid that which I hate; I hate you to drink as you do until you lose your reason; I implore you not to fight one another; you take two wives or run after other people’s wives; you do know I hate such conduct; you should have but one wife, and keep her

until death. You sing the medicine song, thinking you speak to me; you deceive yourselves; it is to the Manito that you speak; he is a wicked spirit who induces you to evil and for want of knowing Me, you listen to him...”

In the remainder of his speech, Pontiac exhorted the Native tribes to return to the ways of the Great Spirit and advised them that the Great Spirit wanted them to “drive from your lands those dogs in red clothing; they are only an injury to you. When you want anything, apply to me, as your brothers do, and I will do both.”

Inspired by Pontiac’s words spoken against the midnight murmuring of the River Ecorse, the Native Americans devised an ingenious plan. Each group was to concentrate on simultaneously capturing one fort from Detroit to Niagara, making it impossible for the British troops to help each other. Under Pontiac’s leadership, the Ottawa were assigned to capture Detroit. On May 7, 1763, sixty tribal leaders met at the east gate of the Fort (Griswold and Jefferson) with Major Gladwin in the Council House. The signal was a belt of wampum which green side up meant attack and white side up meant don’t attack.

Major Gladwin heard of the attack from an Indian squaw and the British left with the wampum white side up. Two days later, Major Gladwin denied Pontiac admission to the fort and successfully defended Detroit during the long siege. The Native Americans captured every fort west of Niagara one by one except Detroit. On October 13, 1763, the official peace treaty was signed in St. Louis between France and Britain giving all French possessions in North America to the British. Pontiac offered peace and retreated to his ancestral home on the Maumee River. Six years later, he was murdered in East St. Louis and buried under the street.

When Major Thompson Maxwell told the story of the Pontiac War and the attempt to massacre the garrison at Detroit in 1763 to C.c. Trowbridge of Detroit, he elaborated on the story of the Indian squaw who told Major Gladwin of Pontiac's plot for taking the fort. He said that Major Gladwin had noticed this particularly attractive squaw and discovering that she could make moccasins from elk skin. He asked her to make him a pair.

On the day that Pontiac and his men were to capture the Detroit garrison, the squaw lingered at the fort, seemingly reluctant to

leave. When the officer of the day questioned her, she offered him the elk skin. He refused to take it, knowing that it belonged to Major Gladwin. He escorted the squaw to Major Gladwin and after much persuasion and Major Gladwin's promise not to reveal the source of his information, she told him about Pontiac's plot to take the Fort at Detroit.

During the War of 1812, a small force of supply troops under command of American Major Thomas Van Horne started out from outside Detroit, camping for a night on the banks of Riviere de Ecorces. They marched down the River Road to south of Trenton where they were ambushed by British and Indian troops led by Shawnee Indian Chief Tecumseh who had earned the rank of Brigadier General with the British Army. A monument commemorating the battle is located in Gibraltar at the Cleo Parsons Elementary School.

Farming Between the Arrows

The documentary record shows that the earliest settler in the territory that was to become Ecorse Township was Pierre Michael Campau in 1795. The early private records of the Labadie family

show that Labadies settled near the mouth of the Ecorse River in 1764. In the later years of the 18th Century and in the early 1800s, many other French settlers established themselves on or near the Ecorse River, including families like Salliotte, Cicotte, Champaign, LeBlanc, LeDuc, Baby, Bourassa, Riopelle and Rousseau. An 1876 map of Ecorse reveals the names of settlers along the branches of the Ecorse River including Riopelle, Montie, Bondie, Campau, Cicotte, Champaign, LeBlanc, and Labadie.

Joseph Loranger was born on Woodbridge Street between Eighteenth and a half and Nineteenth Streets in Detroit on May 27th, 1811. When he was a year old a renegade Indian kidnapped him from his cradle and carried him off into the wilderness near Ecorse. The Indian appeared in the house while the men folks were absent and though the women heroically resisted his efforts to gain possession of the child, he beat them down and ran off with Joseph. Two days afterward a friendly squaw sent word to his mother that she had recovered her papoose and would restore him for a consideration – a certain amount of whiskey demanded for ransom.

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William Darby was one of the surveyors who ran the boundary line between the United States and Canada after the War of 1812 and one of the leading geographers of his day. He described the Detroit River and its tributaries including Riviere aux Ecorces or Bark River in an 1818 report. He in part that the “settlements on the United States side continue up the rivers Ecorse and Rouge, which together with those along the shore of the strait, present a country in a high state of culture. The Canada shore is not less improved than that of the United States; farm follows farm upon both banks which, with the houses, wind mills and vessels on the strait, afford a fine picture of agricultural and commercial prosperity.”

The French settlers built piroques and bateaux to use on the Detroit River and its tributaries, including the Ecorse River. The piroque was a large wooden canoe made from hollowing a tree and splitting it lengthwise, using the halves for the sides of a boat made from planking in the bottom and ends. These piroques could carry three tons of freight and crews of six who paddled and poled the craft close to shore and beached it easily. A bateaux was a flat bottomed open boat built of cut timber that could be as big as a

barge, at least sixty feet long, carrying 15 tons and a crew of 12. In deep water the crew moved the bateaux with oars. In shallow water they poled it or towed it from the shore. Settlers along the Ecorse River also used birch bark canoes and later in the century, rowboats.

An early Detroit Free Press advertisement attests to the commercial value of both land and bateaux.

Bateaux For Sale

The subscriber offers for sale a new land and well made Bateau. She has a deck in her stern and will carry between sixty and seventy Barrels. She will be sold at a reasonable price for cash down, or, a credit will be given on good security. For further particulars apply to

GEORGE CAMPBELL

River aux Ecorse, June 16, 1820

Alexander Lewis, an ex-mayor of Detroit, who lived in Sandwich, Ontario at the time, recalled the early voyageurs paddling up the Detroit River and its tributary Ecorse River in their birch bark

canoes on their way to Green Bay to buy furs.

He wrote: “Four or five men paddled in one canoe with their captain in the stern to steer. Their parties usually consisted of about forth men and I have seen them come up through the Streets of Sandwich, singing their French boat songs or smoking their pipes...The men wore brown coats and red sashes as part of their apparel and had capes on their coats to pull over their heads when there was a severe storm...”

Alexander Lewis also remembered the Land Panic of 1836. He said that in 1836 there was an event called “the land panic.” Real estate had been on the boom and some people were going almost wild over it. People came from other cities and bought the auction land that they had never seen and could not see, for some of it was swamp in Gibraltar.”

Another early Detroit resident, Dr. George B. Russel, learned about the Ecorse River on horseback. Born in 1815, Dr. George B. Russel was a circuit riding doctor. For 27 years, from about 1842 to 1868, he rode his circuit covering both sides of the Detroit

River from Trenton to the bay fifteen miles above Detroit and on the Canadian side from Malden to Belle River, 18 miles above Windsor. He also covered Gratiot Road to Mt. Clemens and Romeo, Woodward Avenue to Pontiac, Grand River Road to Farmington and Michigan Avenue to Dearborn and Wayne.

Dr. Russel heard that a camp of Indians at Connors Creek had contracted smallpox and after he arrived at the camp and examined the Indians, he discovered the disease in six or eight lodges. Richard Connor and his sister Therese helped Dr. Russel vaccinate 700 Indians in twenty hours. Not one of the exposed Indians died.

Another early settler, William Nowlin, writes about everyday life on the north branch of the River Ecorse in his account of pioneer life in the Michigan wilderness that he called *The Bark Covered House*. The oldest of five Nowlin children, William journeyed to Michigan with his parents John and Melinda Nowlin from what he considered civilized life in New York and left a graphic, detailed account of his life in the Michigan wilderness near present day Taylor.

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William was born in New York state on September 25, 1821, and family talk about migrating to Michigan began around 1832, with the family making the move to Michigan in 1833-1834. They boarded the steamer *Michigan* and arrived in Detroit in the spring of 1834. From Detroit, William and his father John walked with guns on their shoulders to their new farm one mile south of Dearborn. The next his mother Melinda and the rest of the family reached the homestead and in one week, John Nowlin had built a “bark covered house” for his family.

John Nowlin bought an additional eighty acres of land and the north branch of the River Ecorse, flowing east, ran through his land. Beech, hard maple, basswood, oak and hickory trees grew on the land on both sides of the creek and further back from the creek, ash and elm trees flourished. The Nowlin family, especially William, immediately began to make maple sugar. Over the next few years, the Nowlin’s slowly acquired new neighbors up and down the creek.

Joseph Pardee was one of the Nowlin’s neighbors. He came to Michigan in the fall of 1833, claimed his land and built the first

log house on the Ecorse River west of the French settlement at its mouth on the Detroit River. According to William Nowlin, Pardee possessed a strong mind, an iron will, and a determination to leave his mark on the new land. Pardee cleared his land and carved out an extensive farm. When he died in 1859 at the age of 81, he left his family in excellent circumstances.

Other Nowlin neighbors besides Joseph Pardee who came to settle along and near the Ecorse River in the fall of 1833 were Asa Blare who came in the fall of 1834 and Henry Travis who came in the summer of 1835. George Purdy came in the fall of 1835 and Elijah Lord about 1837 or 1838. In 1875, when William Nowlin wrote his book, George Purdy still lived on the Ecorse River and owned a good farm. William marveled at how quickly the land along the river became settled. He could stand by the Nowlin house, look to the west and see Joseph Pardee's house and the smoke from the chimney. He could even see Pardee and his sons when they came out of the house to do their morning chores. He could look to the east and see the house of Asa Blare that adjoined the Nowlin land. As William put it, "The light of civilization was beginning to dawn upon us."

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Squire Goodell was another Nowlin family friend. William wrote about traveling through the woods to Squire Goodell's who lived near the Detroit River. William asked Squire Goodell to fill out papers that would enable him to collect the state bounty on wolves. William received the bounty, but didn't mention catching any wolves. He reported seeing many of them in the woods and hearing them so often nights "that we became familiar with them."

In the spring after the ice broke up on the Ecorse River, pike or pickerel came up from the Detroit River in large numbers and William and his neighbors went fishing. The water ran high in the creek, often overflowing its banks. In William Nowlin's words, "the Ecorse appeared like quite a river."

To navigate the Ecorse and Detroit Rivers, William and his friends made a canoe of a white wood log and launched it on the river. Sometimes they went fishing in the canoe, but when they fished from the canoe, William had to always take a friend along because the pickerel lay in the shallow water where old grass grew. By scrutinizing the surface of the water, William saw the small ripples that the fish made with their fins while they were swimming. The

person in the back end of the canoe poled carefully toward the place where William saw the ripples and when they reached the fish they speared or shot them.

The fish ran up the Ecorse River two or three weeks every spring and the fish that didn't get caught swam back into the Detroit River. William's father John made a pike net with two sections. By the time the fish were running back into the Detroit River, the water had settled into the bed of the creek. John Nowlin set his net in the Ecorse River bed, stretched the sections across the Ecorse River, and staked them snugly. The fish ran up the Ecorse River at night and in the evening John would set his net and the next morning have a splendid catch of fish. William helped his father salt some of the fish they couldn't eat to preserve them for summer meals.

One of William's most interesting Ecorse River experiences happened when he married and established his own claim along the Ecorse River. He hired three or four colored men from Canada to help him through his haying and harvesting and with other odd jobs around the Nowlin homestead. Two of the men kept their

names to themselves and the names of the other two men were Campbell and Obadiah.

According to William Nowlin, Campbell was the older of the two men and trusty and dependable in all respects. Obadiah was a young man whose parents had die when he was a child. He had a younger sister and brother and he wanted to keep them together and provide a home for them. The young woman kept house for Nowlin's three workmen and she frequently came down to his house and helped his wife.

The Fugitive Slave Law required northern men to help hunt down and capture runaway slaves, so William did not inquire too closely into the histories of the men who worked for him. Campbell told William Nowlin the details of his escape from slavery and William realized that the colored men were afraid that they would be arrested and taken back into slavery. They didn't feel safe in working so far from Canada, but Nowlin's attitude should have reassured them. He said, "I am sure if I had heard of his master's approach or his agent's, I should have conducted him or the three, six miles through the woods to the Detroit River, procured a boat

and sent them across to Canada, regretting the existence of the Fugitive Slave Law and obeying a higher law.”

After William Nowlin had finished his haying and harvesting, the colored workers moved back to Canada near Windsor.

Halmor Emmons was another early settler on the Ecorse River. Born at Sandy Hill, a small town in upstate New York in 1814, Halmor dedicated the long hours that other boys his age spent playing sports to books. He completed his law studies in 1836, moved to Detroit, and established himself as a lawyer.

The long hours that Halmor Emmons practiced law impaired his health and at one point it appeared that he would develop tuberculosis. A friend suggested that he move east to what is now Grosse Pointe and another friend advised him to experience the bracing air of the Upper Peninsula.



Camping in Emmons Grove, early 1900s.

Halmor Emmons decided to experiment. He consulted a medicine man of the Wyandotte Indians who directed him to the point of the Ecorse River that lies just over the border in Wyandotte. This area contained mineral deposits and the Indians looked upon it as a healing ground. Emmons invested in an estate of 622 acres. He planted orchards and young pear and apple trees which remain to this day surrounding his home near the river bank. In the summer, always in sight of the river bank, the music of bullfrogs lulled him to sleep.

Trial by Industries and Error

For nearly two centuries, the Riviere de Ecorces, the marsh and farm lands surrounding it and the villages that its water rippled through presented a rural face to the world. Apple, pear and peach trees that the early French settlers had planted showered blossoms on its water. The marshlands that filled its mouth as it flowed into the Detroit River produced aromatic grasses that people used to feed their horses and cattle and as stuffing for their mattresses. Settler along the banks of the Ecorse River fished and caught frogs and gathered wild berries beside it. Several saw and gristmills and coal and brick yards dotted its banks, but then there was not enough industry located along it to affect the flow or purity of its water.

Then in 1901, Great Lakes Engineering works opened the way for the industrialization of the banks of the Ecorse River. Located on the site of the old Hall Brick Yard property, the plant grew to occupy an 85 acre tract with 1,400 feet frontage on the Detroit River, where the east branch of the Ecorse River joined the Detroit River. There were two launching slips, one 800 feet long, 125 feet

wide and 14 feet deep and the other 800 feet long, 150 feet wide and 30 feet deep. A large steel floating dry dock, the only one of its kind on the Great Lakes in 1905, measured 430 feet long and 105 feet wide and could dock the largest boats afloat. The Michigan Central and Detroit southern Railroads both had trackage into the shipyards.

In 1905, the Great Lakes Engineering Works had eight large steel freighters under construction. Over the next six decades, it built many of the tugs, lake freighters and ore carriers responsible for commerce on the Great Lakes, including the Edmund Fitzgerald. Both Ecorse and Wyandotte became important shipbuilding centers and launched their ships of the banks of the Ecorse and Detroit Rivers.

In 1923, the Michigan Steel Works plant was built on Mill Street, just inside the Ecorse Wyandotte city limits off of West Jefferson and in 1930, Great Lakes Steel – now National Steel- established its Ecorse plant near the Great Lakes Engineering Works site. These and other industries including chemical companies from adjacent cities such as Wyandotte and Taylor contributed to

pollution that over eight decades at times turned the Ecorse River into a sluggish, polluted eyesore.

A story in the Ecorse Advertiser in May 1950 summarized the challenge that the Ecorse River faced, even in the 1950s. The story said that the Wayne County drain Commission planned to widen, straighten and beautify the north branch of the Ecorse River. The section of the Ecorse River from Fort Street to the Detroit River was scheduled to be the first to be improved. Plans called for the elimination of the big bends in the creek, widening the creek to a 100 feet width, and deepening it to six to seven feet. Both banks of the river in its new course would be landscaped and beautified.

Renaissance

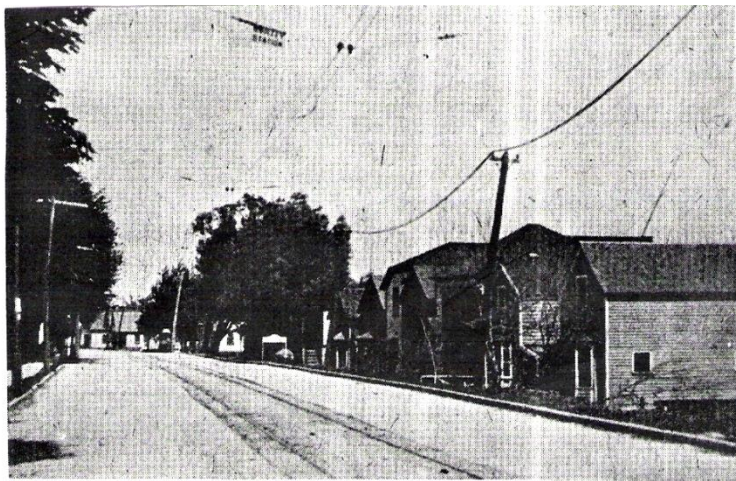
The prognosis for the Ecorse River watershed has ranged from serious to critical condition in the past half century, but there are pockets of hope that gleam like patches of sunlight dancing across the surface of the river. Although a Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Report stated that the Ecorse River is not meeting designated uses for “other indigenous aquatic life and

wildlife,” as required, its 1990, 1996, and 2001 surveys rated the habitat between poor and good, with the majority of sites over the years falling in the fair and poor categories.

Environmental reports, activists, and newspaper stories have kept the plight of the Ecorse River and its tributaries in the public eyes. Moe judicious and scientific uses of pesticides and other agricultural products have helped reduce some of the agricultural pollution to the watershed. Municipalities like Ecorse and Wyandotte and cooperating with each other and their citizens to recycle and renovate land beside the Ecorse River.

Chapter Five

The French-Indian Trail, the Monroe Pike, the River Road and Jefferson Avenue



This is West Jefferson from Southfield looking up the street near Ecorse boat club. Note the streetcar tracks and wires. Nick Pappas, president of the Ecorse School Board in 1967 and owner

of the photograph said that the houses pictured are on the Detroit River side of Jefferson, where the present Riverside Park is located. Nick estimated the picture was taken sometime in the 1920s.

A simple riverside path smoothed and worn by Indian moccasins and furrowed by gentleman's boots in the 1600s today carries cascades of cars between Detroit and Toledo. Jefferson Avenue or the River Road or the French-Indian Trail is the oldest road in Wayne County. When Cadillac first landed in Detroit in 1701 there were no roads. The silver ribbon of the Detroit River provided the connecting ties to Lakes Huron, Michigan and Superior in the northern reaches of Michigan and Wisconsin and it flowed into Lake Erie, providing a link to the eastern ports of Lakes Erie, Ontario and ultimately the Atlantic Ocean.

The Detroit River also provided vital trade and travel routes to the interior of Wayne Country through its tributaries like the Ecorse River and the River Rouge and most early settlers lived along the River. Indian trails provided paths to interior places where the creeks and rivers did not flow.

The route of present day Jefferson Avenue covers the warpath of the Iroquois who traveled frequently to the west. They used two principal trails to go to Malden to receive their annual presents from the British. One travel route, called the St. Joseph Trail lead up the St. Joseph River from Lake Michigan and overland to the Huron River and along the Huron River to Lake Erie. The alternate route, the Saginaw Trail, skirted the southern end of Saginaw Bay and extended to the Rouge River and along the Rouge to the Detroit River.

The first generations of settlers followed the Indians and their trails and forged but a few of their own. In 1799, when John Adams was president of the fledgling United States, Patrick McNeff, a surveyor, wrote to Solomon Sibley about the road situation in Wayne County. He commented that Detroit was the seat of justice in Wayne County and that settlements extended north from Detroit to the upper end of the St. Clair River for nearly sixty miles and from Detroit south to the foot of the rapids of the Miami (Maumee) River, nearly sixty miles.

He said that for the people in these two settlements there were only two periods of the year that they could come to Detroit

without water transportation. These two periods, he said, were in the month of September by land and in the water when “the waters are sufficiently frozen that the ice will bear them.”

One of the roads in Wayne County was a bridle path known as the French-Indian Trail from Detroit running along the west bank of the Detroit River and through the Black Swamp, an area always so wet that travelers had to swim through it to Toledo. If they survived the Black Swamp they could take the trail on to Cleveland. This bridle path became the modern road today called the River Road and Jefferson Avenue.

In 1811, President Madison authorized a party to survey and mark the River Road and set aside six thousand dollars to cover the cost of the road. The War of 1812 prevented the Indian road provision in the Treaty of Brownstown from being implemented.

At the beginning of the War of 1812, General Hull built a military road across the Black Swamp and on to Detroit, but the road was poorly built and could not carry even light traffic.

It cost the United States Government over 20 million dollars to move a few companies of soldiers from Ohio to Detroit during the War. Consequently, four brought fifty dollars a barrel at Detroit. After the army and the War had passed, brush and trees soon reclaimed the military road.

A few years after the War of 1812 ended, the River Road began a second life. In 1817 the approximately 200 troops stationed at Detroit were put to work opening a road from Fort Meigs on the Maumee through Frenchtown (Monroe). President James Madison and Congress established the road as a military road 66 feet wide and set parameters to lay it out. Congress passed a resolution on April 4, 1818 requesting the Secretary of War to communicate programs and prospects for the completion of the military road.

Congress requested Major General Alexander Macomb for a report on the military road. On November 27, 1818, General Macomb wrote to the new president James Monroe, "Completed seven miles, Detroit to the Rapids. The road is a magnificent one, cleared of all logs and underbrush. Bridges were built of strong oak framework. One of the bridges, on which men are working, is

450 feet long. Will complete the bridges first before continuing with the road."

The specifications called for the military road to be 66 feet wide, but the axemen cut an 80 foot wide strip. About thirty miles of this road were completed and General Macomb sketched it, labeling it "The Great Military Highway." He sent his sketch along with his report, but almost before President Monroe and Congress had received and read the report, brush and trees and converted the road back to an Indian trail.

Settlers living in the area and using the road were not content to let it remain an Indian trail and neither were soldier from the War of 1812. They urged Congress to continue to build the road Eastward and appealed to the civil and military officials in the Northwest to continue the road to bring the region into contact with the rest of the United States. They also believed that extensions of the Military Road would open up the Territory to increased land sales and give the farmers and merchants better access to markets for their products. Governor Cass demonstrated that an extension of the Military Road could be made a branch of

the Cumberland National Road and bring Detroit into direct contact with the Capitol at Washington.

Acting on the many appeals for the extension of the Military Road, Congress in 1823 granted land for the construction of a road from the Connecticut Reserve to the Maumee River, finally honoring the agreement with the Indians of fifteen years ago. Congress appropriated \$20,000 to improve the road that the soldiers built from Detroit to Maumee and this appropriation was the first grant that the Federal Government had ever awarded for road building.

The *Niles Register* of October 11, 1823, reported that Father Gabriel Richard, a Roman Catholic Priest, had been elected a delegate from Michigan Territory. Father Richard was well-known around Detroit for his efforts at improving roads. At that time his district extended from Detroit to Mississippi.

The Five Great Military Highways

Around 1825, Governor Lewis Cass planned and directed the

building of five military highways, called the Five Great Military Highways, in Michigan. These roads radiated in all directions. They were the River Road from Detroit to Perrysburg, Ohio. Michigan Avenue from Detroit to Fort Dearborn in Chicago. The Grand River Road from Detroit to the mouth of the Grand River. Woodward Avenue from Detroit to Fort Saginaw, and Gratiot Avenue from Detroit to Fort Gratiot north of Port Huron. A map of the Michigan Territory in 1825 showed these roads and they were marked as United States Roads.

Although they were laid out as military roads at 100 feet widths, they were used primarily for peace and commerce. The River Road was the only one of the five Military Roads that served as a military road and that didn't happen until the United States entered World War I in 1917. Then the River Road was covered with huge motor trucks carrying war materials from Detroit to the sea.

On October 29, 1829, the Legislative Council of the Territory of Michigan authorized a lottery to raise funds to build a road between Detroit and the Maumee in an attempt to help Congress. This was one of the first examples of local officials working with

Congress to bring about improved roads.

In the following decades roads including 122 plank roads in Michigan in 1851 were being built across the United States. Plank or corduroy roads -so called because the adjacent logs were as rough and ridged as a piece of corduroy cloth- were built in Michigan although mud could and did cover plank roads. There are still some traces of corduroy on the River Road buried deep in the ground in the vicinity of Silver Creek. Wagons often had to wallow through the mud to make it to market and stage coaches often got stuck up to their rims on the muddy spring roads. In the days before railroads, stagecoaches were often the only way people could travel from one town to another.

One of the first stagecoach lines to be established was along the River Road to Ohio. Ecorse pioneer Alexander Campau enjoyed the boyhood adventure of riding from Detroit to Monroe and back on the stagecoach which one of his distant cousins drove. He loved the adventure of pulling into Monroe at night, hot, dusty and weary and listening to the traveler's spinning tall tales as he ate supper. The next day arising at dawn to catch the stage home he

Ecorse Echoes

felt a renewed sense of adventure as he headed home to Ecorse along the River Road.

Miserable Macadam and Doubtful Concrete

The late 19th and early 20th centuries were developing years for macadam, concrete and the automobile. People insisted that macadam and asphalt was bad for horses because they kept falling on macadam and asphalt roads or wearing out their shoes on them. The roads, especially in rural parts of Wayne County, were still



Jefferson Avenue Looking Towards Ecorse Business Section.

impassable during the winter and wet seasons of the year.

The Wayne County Road Commissioners submitted their first annual report to the Board of Supervisors in 1907 and requested an appropriation of \$5,000 for the maintenance and repair of the “River Road. This was the first step toward developing the rural sections of the River Road and during the following year the Board directed the improvement of the first mile of road.

The specifications called for a 15 foot wide road made of tar macadam to extend north of the north limits of the Village of Trenton in the vicinity of Monguagon Creek. In 1909 a section of the River Road built of macadam, limestone and crushed cobble was begun at the south limits of the City of Wyandotte and joined to the section built the year before.

As the rural sections of the River Road were being constructed, parallel pavement building was also taking place along its length. Workers constructed a brick pavement at River Rouge to join the section of brick pavement already built in Ecorse. Ford City constructed a brick pavement and when this was completed there was a continuous stretch of about 28 miles that extended from the Wayne-Macomb County line to Sibley. There was just one short

break in the pavement in the southern end of Wyandotte.

Workers built the first section of concrete pavement on the River Road in 1910. In 1911 another three and a half mile section extending south from the south limits of Trenton was built. The city of Wyandotte also built a section of brick pavement one half mile long to close the existing gap. The concrete construction was carried on to the Monroe County line, and by the end of 1912 the total mileage of hard surface road amounted to less than twenty miles. Approximately eleven miles were concrete, two miles were tar macadam and seven miles brick. This provided a continuous stretch of good road from the Macomb County line to the Monroe County line.

The Wayne County Road Commissioners used major intersections to pinpoint traffic conditions. The earlier traffic counts showed a definite trend towards motor vehicles. The first traffic count on the River Road was taken in 1912, just outside the city limits of Detroit. The day long count showed that there were 125 horse drawn vehicles, 370 autos, touring and 13 trucks. A 14 hour count at the same location in 1920 showed 33 horse drawn vehicles,

1,619 autos, touring and 329 trucks. On July 31, 1927, after the River Road had been widened to 72 feet, the count for 14 hours in the Village of Trenton showed 10,450 automobiles, 73 buses and 31 trucks.

When Burton E. Loveland arrived in Ecorse in 1919, he opened the first drugstore in the village on faith. At the time there was only one building on the west side of West Jefferson between Salliotte and Josephine and he occupied one of the three store rooms in that building. The rest of the street was vacant and West Jefferson wasn't even paved. He remembers stones from the horse's hooves and from the few cars passing going through his front window.

Mabel Plourde remembered the River Road when the spring rains had drawn the frost out of the ground. She saw a big load of lumber come up from the Ecorse lumber yard, drawn by four horses on the River Road, with mud up to the hubs of the wheels and the driver standing on top of the load with the reins in one hand and a long whip in the other, lashing the horses that he could reach.

Ecorse Echoes

The Widening of Jefferson Avenue – 1937

“Tippy” Dickey of High Street remembered when Jefferson Avenue was widened in 1937, checking her information with a 1937 story in the *Ecorse Advertiser*. The new River Road or Jefferson Avenue was 90 feet wide with ten inch thick concrete to support the steel laden trucks that rumble over its surface day and night and the whizzing automobiles whose tries will keep the concrete hot.

Some Ecorse citizens thought that opening Jefferson Avenue would push sleepy Ecorse village into an industrial and modern age. The road to the past had been an Indian trail through swamp and swale, a military highway, a typical French village squatting on either side of it. On this highway which was shown on the maps of the Northwest Territory as a military highway from Fort Ponchartrain, Detroit to Fort Miami ,Toledo there traveled Indians on the warpath, settlers coming into Michigan, and soldiers coming to battle the British. On the middle reaches were fought the massacre of Frenchtown (Monroe) and the Battle of Brownstown. It grew into a narrow tortuous pavement and now a

marvelous new highway that cost nearly \$1,500,000.

Several people were responsible for the widening of River Road. The Wider West Jefferson Association organized in 1925 and elected Thomas J. Bresnahan , then mayor of River Rouge as its president. Ecorse Village President Fred C. Bouchard, Hubert S. Amiot of Wyandotte and former president F.C. Affholter of Trenton were on the board of directors and Don Goniea of River Rouge was secretary. Other Ecorse members were F.X. Montie, Earl Montie, I.J. Salliotte, and Christopher A. Raupp. When he became Ecorse supervisor, Frank X. Lafferty worked hard on the project..

The Wider West Jefferson Association backed the plan for a 120 foot highway from West Grand Boulevard to Trenton, cost free to the Downriver communities. After a bitter battle against the North Woodward interests, the Wider West Jefferson Association presented its plan to the Wayne County Board of Supervisors.

The Board of Supervisors directed the Board of Road Commissioners to prepare plans for the widening. They planned a

community party to celebrate the widening of West Jefferson, the River Road. They sponsored a parade, selected a queen and there was dancing in the street. It was called the Greater Ecorse-Wider Jefferson Celebration. Old Glory flew from every light post. The queen was Miss Eileen Raupp, 15-year-old ninth grade student at Ecorse High School, chosen from 13 other school girls to represent the Village of Ecorse. Her parents are Mr. and Mrs. Christopher A. Raupp. Her ladies in waiting were Helen Pudvan, Irene Cochrane, Betty Navarre and Margaret Spaight.

Miss Eileen Raupp, Miss Ecorse, cut the official ribbon opening the River Road, West Jefferson, at the corner of Cherrygrove and West Jefferson.



Photo by John Duguay

Generations of the Ecorse High School Bands marched down Jefferson Avenue as did other bands, community and veteran's organizations and celebrating citizens. The River Road, Jefferson Avenue, rolls on over the horizon and Downriver history marches right beside her.

Ecorse Landmarks Make Way for Wider Jefferson Avenue – 1935

Old Goodell Homestead to be Razed for Development of Through

Ecorse Echoes

Highway

The Ecorse Advertiser of June 19, 1935 reported that among two old Ecorse landmarks that will be demolished under the impending widening of West Jefferson Avenue are two old homes that played no small part in the early history of the village.

Both buildings belonged to the Goodell Estate, and two weeks ago passed to the ownership of Wayne County in the transaction that transferred 17 parcels between Bonzano and the railroad tracks to Wayne County.

One of these old homes, the one at 4333 West Jefferson, is one of the oldest homes in the Downriver district, having been built by the pioneer Jonas Goodell more than 150 years ago. Goodell built the house of logs shortly after buying the land on which the house was constructed from the Indians. (Other stories say that Elijah Goodell is the one who built that house on land that the U.S. government had given him for fighting in the Revolutionary War)

The house had the distinction of being the first place of Catholic

worship in Ecorse. Its first pastor was Father Gabriel Richard, one of Michigan's outstanding pioneers. Father Richard not only was one of the earliest Catholic priests, but also was a learned educator and a statesman of recognized ability.

In addition to being one of the two founders of the University of Michigan, which was first located on Bates Street in Detroit, Father Richard also was for many years a territorial representative in Congress. He established St. Anne's, the first Catholic church in Detroit.

Once a month Father Richard would come out to Ecorse for mass, arriving on horseback. The services were conducted in the kitchen of the old Goodell home. It was in this kitchen that many Ecorse pioneers were baptized.

Many years after it was built other rooms were added to the house until today (1935) it contains five rooms. Long ago the old wooden logs were covered with siding so that none would suspect that beneath the weather boarding are logs that were hewn out of a primeval forest and placed in the walls of the house about the time

the United States won its freedom from England.

When the County engineers examined the old logs prior to taking over the house, they found them well preserved.

The other old house that soon will be torn down is the residence at 441 West Jefferson, opposite Liggett's Drug Store. Alexander and Richard Goodell, brothers, built this building at the close of the Civil War and operated a general store in it. It became the first post office in Ecorse and for many years achieved local fame as the meeting place for Republican causes. Later it became the G.A.R. hall and still later was used as the First Presbyterian Church in the Village of Ecorse. Eventually it was converted back into a home and has been used as a home for many years.

News that the stalwart old pear tree at the William Goodell home, 4265 West Jefferson, will be spared in the forthcoming street widening will be received with satisfaction by many persons in the Village who are familiar with this patriarch of American fruit trees.

At first it was believed that the grand old tree, believed to be well over 200 years old, would have to be cut down when the actual widening gets under way, but now it is said that the tree will come just barely inside the curb line, thus saving the old pear tree from the axman.

Rather than see the old tree lose its struggle for existence the Goodells plan to go to the extra expense of tearing down part of their house and moving it around the tree when they move the house back, if they buy their home back from the County, as expected.

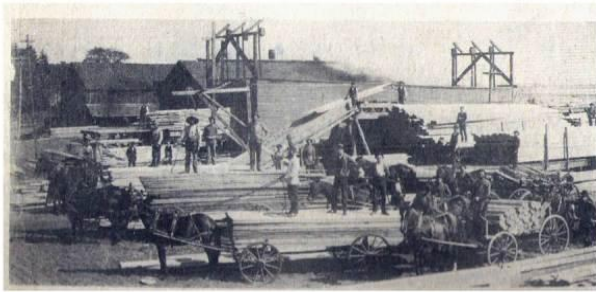
Horticulturists and historians alike are agreed that the tree was growing long before the founding of Detroit. There are only four trees of its species in North America, the others being one in Waterworks Park, Detroit, and two on the Canadian side opposite Ecorse.

Just how the trees came to be planted is in doubt, but it is believed that they brought to America by early French settlers as the species resembles a similar type of pear found only in France.

Ecorse Echoes

The tree at the Goodell home is about 60 feet high, has a trunk about three feet thick and could easily be mistaken for an oak tree, so much does it resemble hardwood. The tree bears exceptionally heavy loads of delicious fruit, the amount reaching fifty to sixty bushels in the best years. The fruit has a tart, but sweet pulp, very pleasing to the taste. A peculiarity of the tree is its bearing habits. In its bearing it rotates in cycles of three years, each year bearing heavier than the preceding year until the third year when the yield decreases for three years and then again starts increasing again. The tree seems to be little affected by frosts.

Ecorse Sawed Its Way Through Michigan's Lumber Boom



Many of the older houses in Ecorse, Wyandotte and the rest of the Downriver area feature huge timbers and intricate wood floors that would cost thousands of modern dollars to duplicate. The wood for these century-plus old houses came from Michigan's north woods where husky lumberjacks felled virgin white pine trees and floated the logs down streams and rivers to the Detroit River and up Ecorse Creek to the Salliotte& Raupp saw mill.

Ecorse historian Al DuHadway wrote a column about the Salliotte&Raupp mill for the Mellus Newspapers in the 1970s. He

said that Oliver Raupp, one of Gustave's sons lived in Wyandotte and showed him four photographs that an obscure, talented photographer who called himself W.J. Watson had taken in the 1880s. Using the cumbersome camera and glass negatives of the time to make pictures of the mill operation, Watson produced clear images of a long forgotten Ecorse industry.

Alexis M. Salliotte and Gustave Raupp joined forces in the 1880s to run the Salliotte& Raupp mill at a profit. The mill was strategically located on the banks of Ecorse Creek. From after the Civil War until about the 1880s, Michigan enjoyed a timber boom, supplying almost all of the lumber used in the United States. After lumberjacks cut down the trees, they were loaded on huge log rafts that were towed down Lake Huron from Alpena and Bay City into the Detroit River and up Ecorse Creek to Salliotte&Raupp's saw mill. Men worked the saws continuously to fashion the pine logs into finished lumber. This gigantic lumber production resulted in equally gigantic piles of sawdust and wood shavings along the banks of Ecorse Creek. DuHadway talked to veteran employees of the Evans Motor Sales Auto Dealership that occupied a sales room on Jefferson. They recalled that the Dealership had been built over

mounds of sawdust from the mill.

After the lumber was sawed and smoothed into logs, it was loaded onto boats and shipped to Detroit. In Detroit the lumber was loaded onto railroad freight cars and sent to communities all across the country. If the timber was consigned to local communities, it was loaded into wagons pulled by teams of horses and oxen and hauled out onto the Mill road into present day Lincoln Park, Southgate, Allen Park and Taylor to be used in constructing homes and businesses.

In his column DuHadway said that the old Mill Road came to be called Mill Street because of these lumber days and not because of the Michigan Steel Corporation which wasn't built on Mill Street until 1924.

Gustave Raupp was not a wealthy man when he emigrated to Ecorse from Germany, but he was far-sighted and ambitious enough to establish a sawmill on the banks of Ecorse Creek during the Michigan timber boom. He was also astute enough to enter a partnership with Alexis M. Salliotte. In today's dollars Alexis

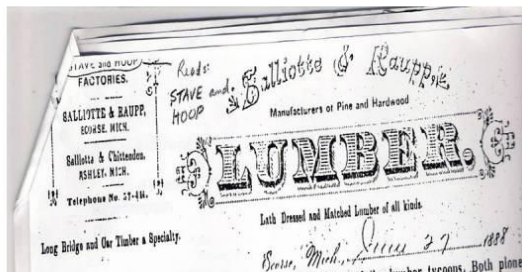
Salliotte would be a millionaire and by 1870's standards he was a wealthy man. He owned extensive timber stands near Ashley, Michigan and took full capitalistic advantage of the lumber boom. When the boom ended in the late 1880s, Salliotte and Raupp dissolved their partnership, but Gustave Raupp continued to operate the mill. After he died in 1923 his sons ran the business for several years. Then in 1929, a spectacular fire that burned out of control for nearly 24 hours destroyed the mill.

Besides the houses that their timber built, street names in Ecorse and Lincoln Park are visible survivors of Salliotte and Raupp's legacy. For many years the home of Alexis Salliotte with its round-towered rooms, cupola, and Victorian gingerbread stood as an Ecorse landmark on the corner of Southfield and High Streets, but it was torn down in the 1970s and replaced with an apartment complex. Two Ecorse streets – Alexis and Salliotte-were named in memory of Alexis Salliotte, who also served as the first village president of Ecorse when it was incorporated in 1902. There is a Raupp Street in Lincoln Park and Gustave Raupp is also remembered as a founding member of the Ecorse Boat Club. Mill Street which runs through Ecorse, crosses River Drive and

continues into Lincoln Park is a reminder of the days when horses pulling heavy wagon loads of wood for houses plodded down its length to new home and business sites.

Chapter Six- Ecorse Businesses

The Raupp sawmill was a popular gathering place for commerce and social events and eventually other businesses sprang up beside the sawmill.



By 1873 the Ecorse business directory listed 15 establishments in Ecorse.

Alexander Bondie. Saloon. Corner State and Jefferson

Campau and Ferguson. Grocers

Ecorse Echoes

Louis Cicotte, Hotel Proprietor. Jefferson

John Copeland, Lumber Manufacturer. Detroit River Lumber

Frederick Ferguson, Brick Layer-Corner of Southfield and Monroe Streets

G.R. Goodell, Grocer

E.J. Goodell-Surveyor & Feed Store. East Side of Jefferson, just north of Southfield

N.L. LeBlanc & Riopelle, grocers

J.B. Montie, blacksmith. South of Detroit, Toledo & Ironton Railroad

Louis Odion, shoemaker. Monroe Street between Southfield & Bourassa

Michael Roulo, Hotel Proprietor

A.M. Salliotte, General Store and Notary Public. Jefferson and State Street

Joseph Salliotte, butcher

George Cicotte, general store. Bourassa & West Jefferson

The 1920s and 1930s were important years for industrial growth in Ecorse. George Fink established the Michigan Steel Corporation on Mill Street and expanded it into Great Lakes Steel Corporation. By the 1950s, Great Lakes Steel would employ thousands of workers in the Downriver area. Great Lakes Engineering and Nicholson Terminal Dock Company expanded an already well established maritime tradition in Ecorse by building and repairing ore carriers and ships for government service in World War I and World War II. Industry gained a strong foothold in Ecorse and caused it to grow enough to become a city in 1941.

Michigan Steel and Great Lakes Steel

Michigan Steel was located on Mill Street between the railroad tracks and Seventh Street. George Fink, a former salesman for the West Penn Street Company in Tarenton, Pa., and several friends formed the Michigan Steel Corporation and it was granted a charter in 1922.

Ecorse Echoes

The original plant consisted of eight single stand mills with six to be supplemented with soft mills. A machine shop, electric shop, carpenter shop, grease house and labor building completed the complex. Production began on July 5, 1923, and the mill showed profit from the beginning because a constant demand for quality steel kept the plant in full operation. Its success led to the idea and implementation of Great Lakes Steel Corporation in 1929 and the 1931 acquisition of Hanna Furnace blast furnace operations at Zug Island.

During World War II, Great Lakes Steel became one of the nation's largest producers of armor plate with the Michigan Steel Plant playing a major role in the final processing of the plates prior to shipment. Michigan Steel also produced other war time materials such as 40 foot Naval Quonset huts, nose hangers, barracks, steel for powder magazines, camouflage frames for gun mounts and arch ribs for Naval warehouse buildings.

By the 1970s, production at Michigan Steel had been limited to heat treatment processing of steel plates, although there were several other vital and ultra modern company departments located

within the plant boundaries. A small staff of security and general labor employees, the hourly and salaries payroll departments, management services and primary accounting and computer operations departments also occupied the buildings.

By the turn of the 21st century, Michigan Steel had ceased its operations and the buildings are being demolished so that a condominium complex can be built where workers once labored to produce steel that helped win World War II.

Great Lakes Steel Corporation

George Fink who founded the Michigan Steel Corporation as well as the Great Lakes Steel Corporation was a true son of the steel industry. As a salesman for the Western Pennsylvania Steel Company, he recognized the tremendous potential of the Ecorse location – raw materials, fuel, accessibility, markets and manpower were all there. He believed that coal could be shipped in by boat from the southeast and iron ore from the north and that the growing automobile industry would provide a ready market. The Depression, since the founding year of Great Lakes Steel, was

1929, would provide the workers from the areas many unemployed.

To finance his Michigan Steel Company and later Great Lakes Steel, George Fink raised one million dollars and began Michigan Steel in 1922. He developed an unusual policy so that he could raise funds without subscription or recourse to municipal bonds. The company paid no percentage, no fees, no stock bonuses, stock was sold at \$50 a share to everyone, and all monies were applied to the business.

Using the same methods, George Fink launched Great Lakes Steel in 1929 with twenty million dollars in funding. By the summer of 1929, the skeletons of three huge steel barns, 1,550 feet long, stood over the swamp that led to the Detroit River. Then something happened to insure the company's future. Ernest T. Weir of West Virginia's Weirton Steel Company, came forward with an idea for a merger. George Fink accepted the idea and the merger of Weirton, a small but very profitable company, with Great Lakes Steel laid the foundation for National Steel.

Then George Humphrey, director of Cleveland's M.A. Hanna Company, owned more than 150 million tons of high grade iron ore reserves in Minnesota's Mesabi Range and he was willing to sell the raw material to independent steel manufacturers. National needed a sure supply of ore, and Humphrey and Hanna, the last major independent supplier, were eager to fill the void. Besides the ore, National Steel acquired the company's blast furnaces on Zug Island and the ownership of some of Hanna's Michigan mines.

The new Great Lakes Steel buildings were constructed on reclaimed swamp land with 3,500,000 cubic feet of sand from Lake St. Clair distributed over the marshlands. A total of 72,000 piles were driven down more than 70 feet to bedrock, and the first mill was built on that foundation. The plants of Great Lakes Steel Corporation began operations in August 1930 and have contributed ever since. National Steel invested another \$16 million in the plant during the first year to make sure that it got off to a good start and during that first year, Great Lakes Steel rolled out 500,000 tons of sheet steel. Eventually, Great Lakes Steel sprawled over one thousand acres in Ecorse and River Rouge.

"A steel plant in Detroit is as logical as a fish pier in Gloucester," Fortune Magazine stated in 1932 in an article discussing the prosperity of National Steel while the other steel manufacturers were suffering from the Depression. For decades "the mill" was the largest single employer of laborers in the Downriver area. During the Depression years, the taxes that the steel industry paid saved five townships and they kept schools open with their percentage of school taxes. Over the decades, Great lakes Steel paid over thirteen million dollars to Ecorse and River Rouge in municipal and school taxes.

In the 1960s, under its parent company, National Steel Company, Great Lakes Steel manufactured 31 percent of the company's total production. The company produced steel for traditional uses and steel remained its focal point, although it expanded into new areas of production as well, including home furnishings, appliances and steel frames for home construction. Great Lakes Steel also produced crushed slag for use in road construction. At its peak the company employed nearly 12,000 men and shipped 4 ½ million tons of steel annually.

Downsizing and reduced production marked the last decades of the Twentieth Century at Great lakes Steel, but in the early Twenty First Century, the Ecorse and River Rouge plants are still productive and vigorous and still a major employer in the Downriver area.

Some of the industries in Ecorse during the 1920s and 1930s included:

Great Lakes Steel Corporation

Nicholson Terminal Dock Company

Great Lakes Engineering

Murray Body Corporation

Grassnell Chemical Company

Detroit, Toledo & Ironwood Roundhouse

National Smelting Company

Schwayder Brothers Mfg. Co.

Wolverine Varnish Company

Michigan Steel Corporation

Ryan Foundry


Modern Collett & Machine Company

15th Annual Ecorse Day

Warren Loveland, President	Cosky Pappa Secretary
Harvey Krommel Vice President	Leo Eisenhauser Treasurer
Richard Guy Jr., 2nd Vice President	

General Chairman Harvey Krommel	Fireworks Ormal Goodell
Power Boat Ormal Goodell	Publicity Hal Root
Carnival Jim Sinko	Entertainment A. Leo Eisenhauser
Public Address Hal Root	Junior Sports Dan Boistrup
Concessions Cosky Pappa	Transportation Ed Krommel
Bowling Regatta Art Sims	Cannery Club Sandy Blakeman
Decorations Louis Parker	Queen Contest Al Boker
Special Police Alvin Royal	Sandy Blakeman

Master of Ceremonies Harvey Krommel
 Carnival Drown River Amusement Co.
 Starts Tuesday, June 28
 Concessions in Park - Am. Legion, Rotary, Kiwanis, VFW



Keep America Free in Education, in Enterprise
and in Recreation

SCHWAYDER BROTHERS

Ecorse, Michigan

Some Ecorse Business Advertisements from the 1950s and 1960s

How many of these businesses do you remember?



Your Health IS OUR BUSINESS!

Every time you hand a prescription across the counter, your health is in our hands. We regard that written order as a sacred trust. Our trained pharmacists use only the highest, most perfect drugs. We mix these ingredients with the utmost skill and these methods reach down so that you will get exactly what your doctor ordered. Bring your next prescription to our store for the kind of unsurpassing your health deserves.

SEAVITTE PHARMACY
THE Retail STORE
 4018 W. JEFFERSON, ECORSE, MICH.
 PHONE DU. 1-0242
 DEPENDABLE PRESCRIPTION SERVICE



CHRIS-CRAFT
 Boat Kits
 Outboard Motors
 Marine & Fishing
 Equipment

CONTENDER BOATS
 (12 and 16 foot - 1950 Model)
BILL BROWN'S Boats & Motors
 3535 W. Jefferson VI. 2-7600 Ecorse

Compliments of
GLENWOOD SUPER SERVICE
 102 W. JEFFERSON ECORSE

Compliments of
ECORSE CLEANERS
 4102 W. JEFFERSON AVENUE

Compliments of
VOLLMERHAUSEN BAKERIES
 8 Biddle, Wyandotte 4003 W. Jefferson, Ecorse

GUY'S SALES & SERVICE
 Your Choice of Best Used Cars in Town
 1 W. Jefferson AT. 6400

Compliments of
SLAVIN DRESS SHOPPE
 1 W. Jefferson Ecorse

ECORSE DEPARTMENT STORE
 4008 West Jefferson Ave.
 DUckin' 1-1444
 ECORSE 29, MICHIGAN



PLAY IT SAFE on the 4
 STAY IN ECORSE
BEAVER LUMBER CO.



Morris “Sandy” Blakeman Writes About Ecorse Businesses

Morris “Sandy” Blakeman of Ecorse wrote a column in the Mellus Newspapers called Sidelites in the 1950s and 1960s. He interviewed many Ecorse civic and business leaders and wrote their stories.

Sidelites

By M. Sandy Blakeman, 1955

A first meeting with Paul Carnahan, president of Great lakes Steel Corporation, leaves one with the impression that here is a man who is entirely capable of directing the operations of the Great Lakes Steel Corporation.

The dynamic personality of Paul Carnahan is expressed, not pretentiously, but in a conservative, soft spoken manner. One immediately senses the strength of purpose of a man who is pleasant yet forthright in expressing his opinion. When asked how

he feels about industry and its position as a leading force in Ecorse, he commented, “industry can be a good citizen, just as you and I.”

His interest in community matters on a smaller scale is shown by the company’s active support in a project for youth junior achievement. With Great lakes as one of the “spark plugs,” several industries and businesses are providing funds and personnel to sponsor a center for Downriver boys and girls where they can operate their own companies and thus gain experience in all phases of business of their own choosing.

Most associates refer to him as a “Downriver minded man.” He first became affiliated with the Great Lakes Steel Corporation in 1934. He began as an hourly wage employee in the blooming mill in the slab transfer operation. He rose through the ranks and was promoted to director in charge of production in 1953. His next promotion was to vice president in charge of sales and in April he was elected senior vice president of the company. When George R. Fink retired from the company’s presidency on May 25, 1954, Carnahan was elected to succeed him.

Few men are more familiar with the problems of Downriver communities than Paul Carnahan and it is plain that he sincerely

believes that industry can and should be a good citizen.

Sidelites. . .

By M. Sandy Blakeman

(This was the twelfth in a series of interviews conducted by M. Sandy Blakeman and printed in the Mellus Newspapers in the 1950s).

Pioneer Ecorse Settlers First Saw Potential of Riverfront Area

After 30 years of selling and appraising real estate in the Downriver area, Don Dodge looks to the future development of the district with the same optimism that influenced his decision to become associated with the Underill Agency in the early twenties.

Dodge came to Detroit in 1916 from Bluffton, Ohio, to work as a machinist and toolmaker in Detroit’s auto industries. He began his real estate career in Detroit and became affiliated with Ellis

(Duke) Underhill in 1925. Dodge is a member of the Downriver Chamber of Commerce and also serves as a member of the board for the Guarantee Savings & Loan Company.

There is still no limit to the future possibilities of Downriver real estate from the standpoint of investment and development, Dodge believes.

“It was no accident that the pioneer Frenchmen selected Ecorse as a site for settlement some 200 years ago,” Dodge mused.

“Geography favored Ecorse. The Detroit River offered the only means of transportation for these early settlers and they were the first to see in the waterway the potential that has since made the Downriver area one of the greatest industrial centers in the world.”

The same potential still exists, Dodge adds, “and the future is even brighter than at any time in the history of the area. Now that the St. Lawrence Seaway is no longer a dream but has been approved by the governments of both the United States and Canada with construction to start within the year, who can predict the tremendous effect this project will have on industrial expansion

and increased real estate values?”

When asked to comment on the effect the St. Lawrence Seaway will have on the home owners, Dodge remarked, “In addition to natural advantages of industry the area also provides sound real estate investment opportunities and home ownership advantages unsurpassed in any other industrial area.”



Ben Franklin

by M. Sandy Blakeman

Nathan Gordon Gervercer came to America from Poland at the age of 12 and settled in Detroit. He began working in the variety stores during his early teens. Gervercer owned the Ben Franklin 5 c to \$1 store located at 4086 West Jefferson Avenue. His six years (in 1955) of doing business with Ecorse people convinced him of the business opportunities in store for those who were willing to

Ecorse Echoes

invest in and work hard at either new or old Ecorse business enterprises. He was a member of a large local buying group that studied the market for good quality merchandise at popular prices.

He commented that " prompt efficient service with a sincere attitude of friendliness is of prime importance to my business."

Gervercer believed that local merchants should work together to make shopping in Ecorse a real pleasure. Joint participation in holiday promotions or monthly sales will attract more interest from Ecorse people and will add new color to business actions.

Ormal Goodell – Goodell Hardware

By **Sandy Blakeman**

Ormal Goodell was born in Ecorse in 1897, the son of Frederick and Sophie Goodell and has lived here since. In 1931, he entered

business as the owner of the Goodell Hardware Company. He has been a civic leader since his young manhood and for 18 years has served Ecorse as a member of its City Council.

Goodell paints a colorful history of growth of Ecorse from a farming community to a major industrial center. He looks to the future as enthusiastically as he views the past. His reasoning is based on facts and his interest in the city is difficult to parallel.

“Ecorse was hard hit by the depression,” Goodell recalls, but not as severely as other communities in this area. The steel mill was under construction during that period and provided employment for many. Most property owners managed to retain their homes.

“Property has always been a good investment here. Today, real estate is bringing higher dollars than ever before. This, in itself, indicates that Ecorse is not doing so badly. Even during business slumps it is hard to find property for sale. Real estate values seem to be increasing all of the time. With the possibility of new developments in Ecorse, there is no telling how much higher property values will climb.

“One of the strange things I’ve noticed through the years,” Goodell commented, “is that much of the property here has been purchased with cash settlements. I can relate many instances where buyers insisted on paying cash. This, to me, is an indication the buyer is financially able and considers Ecorse property a good investment.

“Ecorse is an old community,” Goodell continued, “and this means naturally that the average property owner is not mortgaged over his head. Residents of new communities that have been developed since World War II are usually burdened with heavy mortgages, thus their saving and spending power is limited. It is easy to understand why Ecorse citizens have more spending power and better bank accounts. We have more pay check per capita coming from our industries than most cities this size can boast. When the going gets tough, people want to live near where they are employed. That is another reason why property is a good investment here.”

Asked to comment on Ecorse as a shopping area, Goodell said, “A suburban shopping area serves a definite purpose and Ecorse

residents realize that shopping in their home town is convenient. There is one thing that must be done, however. We must provide better parking facilities. I have always been in favor of off street parking and until more adequate parking spaces are provided, our merchants cannot expect a great increase in their sales volume. There is much to be done along this line before business is improved, and plans should be made at once to start an off street parking program in Ecorse.”

O. Goodell Sporting Goods

Hardware

Phone At. 1632

4039-41 West Jefferson

Slavin's Dress Shop

One of the most pleasant business personalities in Ecorse is Mrs. Sarah Slavin, owner of Slavin's Shoppe located at 4062 West Jefferson.

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Mrs. Slavin has been in the women's apparel business since the age of 15. Her background includes nine and one half years as a buyer at Russels, five years with Himelhoch's and 16 years at her present location.

Always community minded, Mrs. Slavin advocates better shopping facilities in Ecorse. She contributes by keeping up to date on the latest creations during her New York visits, and institutes a "feel at home" policy for her patrons.

Slavin's Dress Shoppe

4062 West Jefferson

Ecorse

Chapter Seven

Ecorse Organizations

Ecorse Kiwanis Club Celebrates Its 50th Anniversary



Burton E. Loveland, charter president of the Ecorse Kiwanis Club, cut the anniversary cake at the club's 25th anniversary in 1952. He was the first president of the Ecorse Kiwanis Club.

Ecorse Echoes

The Ecorse Kiwanis Club observed its 50th Anniversary in March 1977. The Club was organized back in 1927, near the end of the roaring twenties. From that point on, its members committed good deeds in Ecorse.

In the 1920s the United States prospered more than any other nation on earth and changed more than any other time in its history. Ecorse was a little village, its people virile in character, rugged from making steel and automobiles, yet possessing strong individuality and a deep religious faith. Ecorse people matched the personality of their village.

Only eleven years after the national Kiwanis Clubs had been organized, Dr. William Angus, then the minister of the Ecorse Presbyterian Church, first suggested the idea of an Ecorse Kiwanis Club to Burton E. Loveland, Claude J. Miller and Ellis S. Underill. These men-despite the fact that Detroit's number one Kiwanians Joe prance, Harry Young and Donald Johnson did not believe that such a club would last very long in Ecorse - set out with dogged determination to show the world that Ecorse, too, had civic pride. They held many organizational meetings in Jack Riopelle's law

office. Finally, on March 17, 1927, Ecorse Kiwanis Club was chartered as club number 1385, sponsored by Kiwanis Club Number One with Donald Johnson, Joseph Prance and Harry Young officiating.

The Governor of the Michigan District, Lewis C. Reimann, presented the official charter to Burton E. Loveland as the charter president and Clarence R. Mead as club secretary.

The years after the charter were years of struggle. During these formative years, the organizers met wherever possible. They met in their homes, in Standard Restaurant, over Loveland's Pharmacy, in the high school cafeteria, in the Leonard Duckett Center. From the very first meeting at the Standard Restaurant, the Kiwanis proved to be a training ground for leadership. Its beginning projects tended to be highly individual because the economic conditions of many families presented opportunities for helping to pay dental and doctor bills, buy glasses for children, and buy crutches and braces for crippled children.

As the years went on, the Ecorse Kiwanis began to sponsor civic

projects and assist city officials in making them a reality. Some examples of the first 25 years of activity in the Ecorse Club include:

- 1928. Provided Christmas dinner and entertainment for underprivileged children.
- 1935. sponsored a circus and carnival for an entire week during the month of May.
- 1939. Sponsored the Allen Park Club.
- 1944. The Ecorse Kiwanis Club was involved in the war effort, collecting tin cans and scrap iron.
- 1946. Built a wading pool for the city's small children.
- 1947. Provided flowers for Sunday morning church services.
- 1951. Built another wading pool for the city's small children.
- 1952. Chartered buses to take children to the Tiger baseball games.

During these years, two club members served as Lt. Governor in the Michigan District. In 1933, Frank Morris was elected

lieutenant governor of Division Six and in 1943, Donald H. Beckman was elected lieutenant governor in Division Ten.

These were just a few of the Ecorse Kiwanis Club Projects over the next 25 years.

- Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Senior Scouts
- Sending kids to the Shrine Circus
- A long range youth program
- A long range building program
- Ecorse Goodfellows
- Cancer Fund
- Salvation Army
- Downriver Guidance Clinic
- Forney Clement Fund
- Michigan Society for Crippled Children
- Ecorse Boat Club
- Red Cross and Junior Red Cross
- Midget Baseball Teams

- Recreation
- Downriver Community Concert Association
- Wolverine Boys State

Ecorse Kiwanis spent thousands of dollars on community betterment projects during its first 50 years. It sponsored or assisted city officials in working on a Post Office for Ecorse, widening Jefferson Avenue and Southfield, promoting the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Waterway, promoting recreational, promoting Ecorse Park, and promoting clean water and air. Every year Kiwanis sponsored the collection of monies for the March of Dimes and Kiwanis Kids Day.

Over the years that Ecorse Kiwanis Club served the City of Ecorse, 50 men served as the Kiwanis Club's president. They were:

- 1927 Burton E. Loveland
- 1928 Claude J. Miller
- 1929 Dr. R.B. Crill
- 1930 Guy E. Pooley
- 1931 Louis R. Hawkins

- 1932 Clarence Mead
- 1933 James R. Morris
- 1934 Bruce McNeilage
- 1935 Ellis Underill
- 1936 Dr. Lee Hileman
- 1937 Charles Dilfill
- 1938 Don Beckman
- 1939 Glen Hunt
- 1940 John Davis
- 1941 John Bauer
- 1942 Ray Meade
- 1943 Eugene Ochaner
- 1944 Edward Freeman
- 1945 Carl Vollmerhausen
- 1946 Richard Evans
- 1947 Roy Guy
- 1948 Rudy Virta
- 1950 Ray Montie
- 1951 Lambert Pfeiffer
- 1952 Donald Kelly
- 1953 Lawrence Heller
- 1954 Edward Stauder
- 1955 Magnus Meier
- 1956 Nick Stroia
- 1957 Walt Seavitte
- 1958 Harry McMahon
- 1959 William Weeber
- 1960 Robert Sander
- 1961 Melvin Meyers
- 1962 Harvey Kromrei
- 1963 James Simko
- 1964 Sig Nelson
- 1965 Ralph Brant
- 1966 Harold Lang
- 1967 Clifford Ballheim
- 1968 John Ghindia

- 1969 Chester Fleming
- 1970 Robert G. Heller
- 1971 Louis McQuiston
- 1972 Clarence Williams
- 1973 William “Jerry” Bush
- 1974 Norman Fryer
- 1975 Robert Heller
- 1976 Anthony Sanfilippo

In 1977, the Ecorse Kiwanis Club had 26 active and senior members. The club regularly met on Tuesday at 6:15 p.m. at Ciungan’s Shrimp House at 151 Southfield in Ecorse.

Ecorse Police Department

Ecorse Police Chief Al Jaeger Recalls The Day He Fought Both Fires and Law Breakers

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Fire Chief Al Jaeger, age 57, pleasingly plum and bespeckled, stood on the glassed in porch of his neat frame house at 4425 High Street in Ecorse on a December Monday in 1945. He buttoned up his overcoat, getting ready to leave for his office in the new municipal building on High Street. He gazed at the old two-story frame building across the street that had once house the fire and police departments of the Village of Ecorse.

Twenty five years earlier in 1920, Albert M. Jager, had become the first salaried fire chief in Ecorse, the job he still held, and with a force of three men took up office in the wooden city hall across from his house. Now at age 57 in 1945, he went to the fire department in the new municipal building on High and Cicotte Streets to receive the hearty congratulations of the 28 member fire department.

Chief Jaeger remembered Ecorse fires. On a November day in Ecorse in 1918, as a volunteer fireman, he pushed a piano away from the second story window of a burning house to get inside. The piano crashed through the burned out rafters and Jaeger rode it to the first floor. Other firemen carried Jaeger to a doctor's office, overcome with smoke and unconscious from his injuries. When he revived, he immediately returned to the fire and helped his fellow firemen fight it to its end.

About 1922, two years after he was installed as Ecorse's first fire chief, Village President Fred Bouchard made Jaeger acting chief of police. he held the two offices jointly until 1926. His joint chiefship provided material for local jokesters. One story had it

that Jaeger always worked bareheaded in his office until a call came demanding his services as one department head or another. Then he would grab the correct hat, jam it on his head and run out of his office to whatever challenges lay ahead.

Holding the joint office was difficult in the turbulent days of bootlegging and rum running in Ecorse. Several underworld hideouts sprang up along the Detroit riverfront, huddled beside the river below Southfield Road. One of them known as "Robbers Roost," often sheltered notorious lawbreakers. One March day in 1924, Jaeger and one of his men, Benjamin Montie, a fire truck driver and auxiliary policeman, went down to Robbers Roost to investigate a case of petty larceny. Inside Robbers Roost, two bandits who had just raided the Commonwealth Bank in Detroit and escaped with \$17,000 were counting their money. Chief Jaeger and Benjamin Montie took the men to police headquarters for questioning and then Chief Jaeger, Benjamin Montie, and two deputy sheriffs returned to Robbers Roost where they found two more of the bandit ring in hiding.

The two men jumped out of a window into the river. They swam

back to shore and were captured just as two others drove up in a car. The men were Bernard Malley, Leo Corbett, Elza Meade and Tim Murray. Meade and Corbett were in the car and Corbett drew a gun and killed Ecorse patrolman-fireman Benjamin Montie. Chief of Police Jaeger drew his gun and killed Corbett.

During the scuffle, Meade drove away in the car and a statewide hunt failed to find him. Later he was arrested in Arizona and sentenced to 20-40 years in Marquette prison. As the bank robbers attempted to get away, they threw the \$17,000 all over the streets and waterfront. Finders did not return their spoils.

George Moore, Barber, President, Police Chief



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George a. Moore served Ecorse as a public servant, political leader and businessman for 54 years. He was Ecorse police chief for 15 years, a former village president, justice of the peace, and town marshal. When he died on August 25, 1956, at age 72, a detail of Ecorse policemen escorted his funeral procession to Michigan Memorial Park where he was buried. Pallbearers were friends who had served as police officers under him, including Inspector Alvin Gillamn, Lt. John Cicotte, former Police Chief Ray Mell, and Charles V. Watters, Martin Sale and Hubert Guindon who were no longer on the police force.

Born in Carelton, Michigan on July 13, 1884, George came to Wyandotte as a boy and in the early 1900s he moved to Ecorse where he lived for the remainder of his life.

Trained as a barber, George opened his first shop at 4426 West Jefferson. Around this time he also began to be active in public life, combining the positions of town marshal and dog warden with operating his barbershop. As the years passed, he grew more interested in civic affairs and in 1916 and 1917 he and Eli “Peck” LeBlanc who later became the Ecorse dog warden, were the first motorcycle policemen in Ecorse.

In 1916, Moore moved his barbershop to 4410 West Jefferson, using a corner of the shop as a courtroom from 1920 to 1924 when he held the office of justice of the peace.

In 1926 and 1927, he was elected village president and in 1929 he served as truant officer for a year. Following the death of police chief Herbert Ormsby in 1930, George was appointed police chief and filled that office for 15 years. Under his firm guidance, the police force grew into a top rated law enforcement body.

Ecorse Echoes

Never officious, Chief Moore’s officers respected him as a firm but fair chief and a regular fellow. His friend of many years Mayor William W. Voisine said, “He was the greatest chief Ecorse ever had. His death leaves a void which can never be filled. It leaves me with a sense of great personal loss and I know many Ecorse citizens feel as I do. I extend my deepest sympathy to his family.”

After he retired as chief in 1945, George returned to barbering working part time for Roy Livernois until he suffered a heart attack in November 1955.

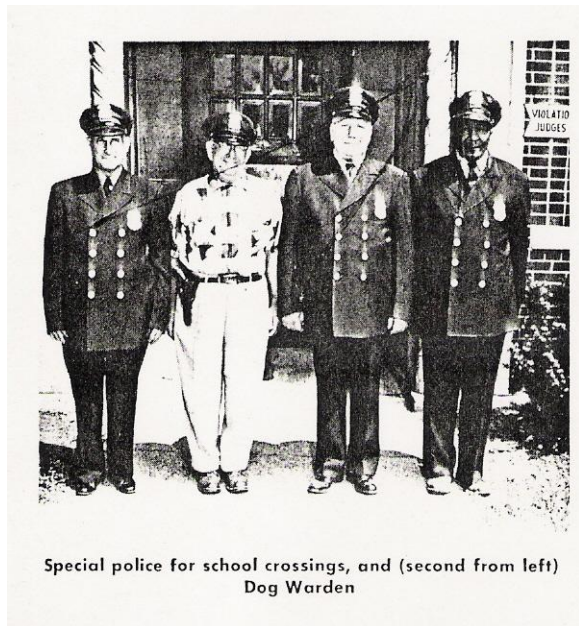
May, his wife, his two sons Melvin and John, five daughters, 22 grandchildren and one great grandchild carried on his proud tradition.

Ecorse Police Department- 1954

In 1954, the Ecorse Police Department received and acted upon almost 6,000 complaints, ranging from stolen autos to vagrancy. A

total of 4,261 traffic tickets were issued and \$72,472.79 worth of stolen property was recovered.

Eleven radio cars were operating on Ecorse streets and approximately 50 cars and 100 policemen from nearby communities were available within minutes to help Ecorse in an emergency. Radio contract was also maintained with fourteen other police departments and the Michigan State Police.



Special police for school crossings, and (second from left)
Dog Warden

Ecorse Fire Department

When Ecorse was incorporated as a village in 1902, the village officials authorized the purchase of a two wheeled hand drawn cart, some fire hose, and coats and hats. This was the beginning of the Ecorse Fire Department.

At the time volunteer firemen manned the Department and it was housed in the Village Hall, located at Labadie and High Streets. According to Fire Department records, a hose house and tower were later built at Joseph and Florence Streets.

The first volunteer firemen were John Goodell, Fred Salliotte, Henry Beaubien, Robert Pope, Frank Lafferty, Stephan Bouchard, John Seavitt, John Sanch, Daniel Lafferty, Albert Bouchard, Elmer Goodell, Edwin Bourassa, Richard Montie, Frank Maurice, John Conrad, Lonair Seavitte, Joseph Labadie, E.J. Montie, Jr., Richard Drouillard, Joseph Beaubien, Chief Gus Gramer and Marshal Elmer Labadie.

The Ecorse Fire Department used the new equipment purchased in 1902 until it decided to buy a 1915 Model T ford truck to convert

into a fire truck. Between 1910 and 1920, Ecorse suffered two severe fire losses which spurred the Village to buy a pumper fire truck and create a full time fire department.

The full time fire department consisted of a captain and three pipemen. The original village fire department personnel to serve on a paid basis were Charles Thibeault, John Needham, Benjamin Montie, driver, and Captain Albert Jaeger who also served in the capacity of town fire marshal.

In 1923, Captain Jaeger was named chief of the combined police and fire departments, a post he held until 1926 when he was named to head the fire department only. As time passed, the fire department personnel increased and in 1942, Ecorse village became a city.

During the years of Ecorse Fire Department history, firemen participated in many charitable endeavors. In the 1930s, men from the Ecorse Fire station tutored fifth graders in spelling at School One. In 1938, fire department personnel built the fish pond that

stood alongside the old fire hall on High Street, and during the Depression, Ecorse police and firemen traveled occasionally to Lapeer where they dug potatoes and then gave them free to needy Ecorse people.

In 1947, Chief Jaeger, the first paid fire chief, retired. Fred Pudvan, a captain in the department was selected to replace the retiring chief. In 1951, Ecorse purchased two resuscitators for rescue work in the Fire Department and in 1953 and 1954, the City of Ecorse bought two 1,000 gallon pumpers manufactured by the American LaFrance Corporation.

Chief Pudvan retired in 1960 and Charles Lafferty took over the Fire Department as Chief on October 3, 1960. Milton Montie became chief after Lafferty retired.

Fire Chief Fred A. Pudvan (1955)

By Sandy Blakeman

The family of Fred A. Pudvan, the fire chief of the City of Ecorse,

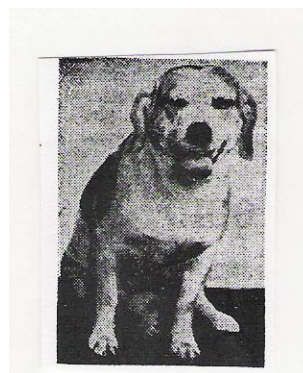
came to Ecorse in 1902 from Bay City, Michigan. Chief Pudvan is accredited with an outstanding record of achievement during his thirty years with the Ecorse Fire Department. He is active in both local and national organizations that constantly study the problems of fire hazards and seek new means of preventing and fighting fires.

Always alert, Chief Pudvan conscientiously promotes the importance of a sound fire prevention program in Ecorse and places special emphasis on the duty of all citizens to guard against carelessness that may lead to fires.

“Ecorse, like many older communities, consists of a large number of older wood frame houses. Through the years the wood and tar materials in these homes have become seasoned and vulnerable to almost instantaneous combustion when coming into contact with sparks or small flame. Fires in such homes are equally serious and difficult to bring under control. The occupants should realize that it will benefit them as well as their neighbors and the fire department if they take every preventive measure possible to

insure against possible fire,” the Chief said.

The Ecorse Fire Department and Smoky The Firehouse Dog



Smoky the Firehouse Dog

[Smoky, the Ecorse Fire Dog](#)

In March 1961, hundreds of Ecorse children and the city's firemen mourned the death of Smoky, the bandy-legged beagle who had

been the Ecorse Fire Department's faithful mascot for eight years.

Smoky was just a cuddly beagle puppy when Stewart Smith, Assistant Fire Chief, brought him to the Number Two Fire Station on Outer Drive. While Smoky was growing big enough to climb on the truck "Big Red," he was learning the difference between the various bells in the station. Soon he learned to ignore the telephone and the interstation system, but he would hop right on the truck when the fire alarm sounded. Then he rode off with his buddies to fight the fire, perched on the hose bed, his big ears flapping in the wind as "Big Red," went whizzing down the street, red blinkers on, siren at full throttle.

A real attention getter, Smoky enjoyed entertaining children at a fire or at a fire prevention lecture. According to Stewart Smith, Smoky had an extraordinary record of long, faithful service since he was on duty 24 hours each day and he had no day off. The only blot on his record was a one day absence that Smoky never explained.

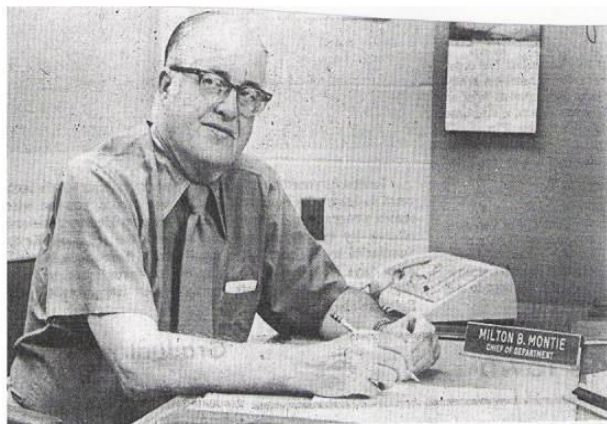
Stewart Smith kept a scrapbook of the highlights of Smoky's life

as a member of the Ecorse Fire Department. Among the pictures of smoky was one with former Detroit Tiger Vic Wertz that was published in a Detroit daily newspaper and in the Cleveland Press. Smoky often visited other fire departments in Detroit, Hamtramck and other Downriver communities.

Finally age slowed Smoky down and in March 1961, he retired permanently.

"Smoky may be gone, but the children of Ecorse will miss his playful antics and his comrades will long remember their favorite firefighter whose loyalty was unswerving," Steward Smith said.

Fire Chief Milton Montie Retires After 35 Years



Milton B. Montie, age 59 turning 60, retired as Ecorse Fire Chief in July 1977, after years of dedicated service to Ecorse and the Ecorse Fire Department. He carried on a tradition of service inherited from his father Benjamin who was killed in a shoot out at Robbers Roost, a 1920s gang hideout on the Detroit River at Southfield Road when Milton was just six years old. At that time in Ecorse history, employees of the Fire Department had the dual

role of fighting fires and criminals and Benjamin Montie and Chief Al Jaeger were capturing the bank robbers when one of them shot Benjamin before Chief Jaeger could shoot him.

Chief Montie had a long history with the Ecorse Fire Department. On January 21, 1942, he was appointed to work as a pipeman. His was the last appointment made by the Village of Ecorse, because at midnight that day, Ecorse became the City of Ecorse. He felt that he was destined to become a firefighter. "This was the only line of work I'd ever considered. I've been around it all my life," he said.

Two Ecorse fires stand out in Chief Montie's mind. "The Linde Air Company fire of 1962 and the Chase Apartments fire of 1972 were probably the worst. We spent five days looking for bodies after the Chase Apartments fire," he said.

Milton Montie was appointed chief in September 1974.

Chapter Eight

Ecorse People

Great Lakes Fur Trader Pierre LeBlanc Lived in Ecorse

Fur traders and Native Americans voyaged up and down Ecorse Creek on their way to the Detroit River and the Great Lakes.

For two centuries, British and French fur traders vied for territory and influence with Native Americans, clashing and combining cultures.

When the first French [fur trading](#) voyageurs exchanged greetings and goods with welcoming Native Americans they changed history, as did the first English trader who stood in the door of his rough, wooden cabin and held out trinkets to the Indians. As

historian Richard White phrased it: “...When they (the

Algonquian Indians) accepted European goods and gave furs in return, a still emerging market system in Europe impinged on their lives...”

British and French Fur Traders Compete for Indian Allies

Richard White argued that the Algonquian Indians in the Detroit and Great Lakes region obtained religious, political, and social benefits from European goods even though they as individuals did not accumulate wealth. He pointed out that the nature of the French fur trade also differed from that of the British. According to White, the French fur trade was a combination of entrepreneurial traders, merchant financiers, licensed monopolists, and government regulators, and the French instituted the custom of relying on the Huron or Wyandot and Ottawa Indians to act as middlemen and expeditors of the trade.

The British, playing a commercial hand, shaped the fur trade as a weapon of war in the fierce struggle for dominance of the North

American Continent. They cleverly played their commercial cards in the Detroit and continental fur trade by portraying themselves not as conquerors but as friends bringing gifts and trade goods. They usually offered better terms than the French and high quality goods at low prices, and basically won the commercial war before the advent of the military war.

In the meantime, the Native Americans were the middlemen and in a good negotiating position with most of their cultures still intact. In 1755, many Frenchmen felt that the fur trade of the Great Lakes did not earn even one percent of the price it had cost the King, and they would have allowed the entire trade to go to the English if the English had agreed to acknowledge French boundaries along the Ohio River. Both sides were courting the Indians with goods and promises and the Algonquians reaped the benefits of both while their preexisting native technologies survived for a long time alongside the new technologies that trade goods introduced.

Pierre LeBlanc, Fur Trader

Ecorse Echoes

Individual fur traders like Pierre LeBlanc were as instrumental as Native Americans in establishing fur trading regions and without premeditation, transforming the cultures of both French and Indian worlds. Leblanc, who would later settle in Ecorse, a small settlement about eight miles from [Detroit](#), was one of the first French men to travel to the area, arriving in 1790 for the Hudson Bay Company.

Fur trading comprised most of the business in this western country at this time and created Native American, French, and British capitalists. Hunting fur bearing animals like beaver and muskrat, preparing their furs for market and transporting them to Montreal provided much of the impetus for exploration and settlement along the Detroit and Ecorse Rivers.

Trade was carried on between Montreal and the upper country by canoes and bateaux. Canoes loaded at Montreal were brought to Detroit either over the Ottawa River coming down through Georgian Bay or through the Niagara route over Lakes Ontario and Erie. The Niagara Route was easier because it had one portage at Niagara Falls while the Ottawa route had at least 30 portages.

Pierre LeBlanc Blends Cultures

Since French and other white women were scarce in this frontier settlement, Pierre married a Fox Indian woman and established a homestead farm on what is now West Jefferson Avenue near the [Detroit River](#). When a French trapper took an Indian wife, his marriage helped him survive Native American attacks or other trouble with the warriors still numerous in the Downriver area. The LeBlancs established themselves as sturdy farmers and trappers, trading with the Indians and maintaining a good relationship with them.

Pierre and his Indian wife had a son whom they named Pierre, who was born in 1820 in a log house on the old family farm. This log house served as a place of worship for the early Catholics and for many years Mass was said within its rustic walls. Early in his life, the second Pierre revealed his sturdy French stock and Indian

blood. He was a constable when he was only twenty years old and for many years he was a highway commissioner, laying out many of the first roads in the southeastern part of Michigan.

Pierre Le Blanc Pays his Taxes

In 1850, the LeBlancs built a new house to replace the old log cabin and Pierre's son, Frank Xavier LeBlanc, was born in that house. Through his years of growing up on the LeBlanc farm near the Detroit River, Frank X. collected many souvenirs of his family's early days in Ecorse and Detroit.

Peter Godfroy, a merchant, survived the Indian massacre at Frenchtown in Monroe in which the entire garrison and all the settlers within the fort except him were tomahawked. He gave Frank X. LeBlanc's grandfather Pierre a receipt for goods that he had purchased and although yellowed and faded it was still legible. Another of his valuable possessions was a tax statement that the sheriff of Wayne County had sent Pierre LeBlanc in July 1824. The statement requested that LeBlanc pay the \$2.03 he owed in taxes! Individual fur traders like Pierre LeBlanc brought

about a blending or exchanging of Native American and white culture and the transformation of both.

Eli “Peck LeBlanc

In July 1958, 70 year old Eli “Peck LeBlanc officially retired from a fifteen year stint as Ecorse Dog Warden. A descendant of one of the Downriver area’s oldest families, he still lived at 4560 West Jefferson Avenue in a home built on the site of the original farm that the Pottawatomie Indians had deeded to his great grandfather Pierre in 1790 when he came to Ecorse from France.

Peck was born August 10, 1888, and by 1904 when he was sixteen, he worked in an ice house on the Detroit River, cutting huge blocks of ice which were stored in sawdust to use during the summer months, At this time he attended the old school which was razed in 1910 to make way for the “new” school which was Ecorse School Two.

When he was a young blade of 17, Peck decided it was time he

had a “regular” suit. He got a job at the Great Lake Engineering Works in Ecorse as a fitter’s helper and worked for five months until he had earned enough money to buy his new suit.

“I remember I paid \$15 for a blue serge suit and then shopped around a bit before buying my first watch. It was a \$25 gem, he recalled.

Trained as a railroad telegraph operator in 1906, Peck spent most of adult life following the trade. Lured by the call of the clicking key, he traveled most of Michigan finding jobs as a telegrapher at stations in Mackinaw, Indian River and many other places before settling down at the Michigan Central’s Wyandotte station.

In 1908, he transferred to the Ecorse station on Southfield and remained there until 1915, shortly before the station was closed to make way for the Southfield viaduct. After a short stay at the Rockwood Station, he changed careers for a time and served as timekeeper in the old Ecorse Foundry and Detroit Brass and malleable in Wyandotte. During World War I he worked as time keeper in the Wyandotte shipyards.

For years Peck spent most of his free time sitting on the front porch of his home on Jefferson Avenue and gazing through his binoculars at the mighty ships that passed back and forth on the Detroit River. All of the freighter captains knew him.

In 1972, the Stewart Cort, at the time the largest ship ever to sail the Great Lakes or on the Detroit River, made a pass up the Detroit River right by Peck's house. She was up bound on the Detroit River on her maiden voyage from Erie, Pa., where she was built to Lake Superior to take on nearly 52,000 tons of iron ore. Her regular route was scheduled to run between Taconite Harbor, Minnesota, north of Duluth and Bethlehem's mill at Burns Harbor, east of Gary, Indiana. It was unlikely that she would ever again pass through the Detroit River.

To make the occasion more special for Peck, the Court blinked a special "Hi, Peck," as the ship passed his house. When the public relations people at Bethlehem Steel had heard that Peck would be watching for the ship, they agreed to a request to blink "Hi, Peck," as they passed his house. With his telegraphy training, Peck had no trouble understanding the greeting.

Ecorse Echoes

Alexander Campau



Alexander Campau was born on September 7, 1843, back in the days when Indians still inhabited Ecorse and its neighboring region and the stagecoach was making its first run between Detroit and Monroe. The second child and oldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Alexis Campau, he came into the world in a small frame house with hand nailed walls located on Jefferson Avenue in Ecorse.

As a child, Alexander attended a little frame schoolhouse on Salliotte Road with a handful of other boys gathered to learn the three "R's" with the guidance of a patient teacher. His father died

when he was just eight years old and Alexander helped his mother in the fields and in the house as well.

To make ends meet, Mrs. Campau rented rooms in her house to men who had come to the area to work on the first railroad in the area, the Lakeshore Railroad. One of her boarders working on the railroad was a stalwart Indian who took an instant liking to Alex. The Indian and Alex shared a bed for most of the time that he boarded at the Campau home and Alex learned firsthand the “true, friendly nature: of the Indians living around Ecorse.

Alex also enjoyed the boyhood adventure of riding from Detroit to Monroe and back on the stagecoach which a distant cousin of his drove. He loved the adventure of pulling into Monroe at night, not, dusty, and wary and listening to the traveler’s spinning tall tales as he ate supper. The next day arising at dawn to catch the stage home, he felt a renewed sense of adventure as he headed home to Ecorse along the River Road.

As he grew older, Alex worked with his brother and too his threshing machine to a neighboring farmer who had none. He

truck farmed for himself and sold his produce to neighbors and to people around the area. When the Tecumseh Salt Works was founded in Ecorse, Alex was one of its first employees, helping to clear away the marshlands.

On July 24, 1866, when he was 23 years old, Alex hitched up his horse and buggy and picked up Adis Salliotte who lived a half mile away from the Campaus. They drove all of the way to Wyandotte and were married. Returning to Ecorse they worked together to build their farm and their lives.

The Campaus had five children and Adis died in 1923. Lillian and Agnes never married and Alex lived with them in his old age. Florence married into the Drouillard family and they lived close to Alex. His son Ernest lived near him.

Alex died on August 24, 1940, and he was buried in Ecorse Cemetery.

Eli Bourassa

The Bourassa family first came to Ecorse in the early 1800s and settled on a farm along Ecorse Creek. Eli was born on August 2, 1883, in the original family home.

As a young man he went to work in the office of the Michigan Steel Corporation and the Great Lakes Engineering Works. Later he worked as a bookkeeper at Kramer-Eberts, Inc. in River Rouge. In 1931-1932, Eli served a term as village clerk in Ecorse and later worked for several years a clerk in the city treasurer's office. He retired from the treasurer's office in 1952.

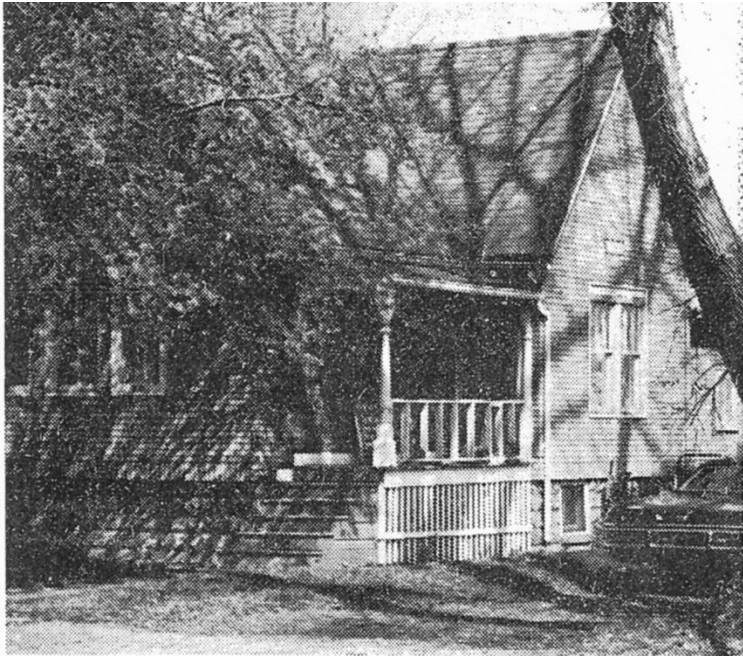
On July 1, 1902, Eli married Augusta Movinski, a member of another old Ecorse family. The couple had no children and Augusta died in 1943.

A leading Catholic layman, Eli was a member of the Holy Name Society of St. Francis Xavier Church, serving the organization as president for several years. He also belonged to the Catholic Order

of Foresters.

Eli suffered a fatal heart attack on April 6, 1957, when he drove from his home on High Street to visit Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Schneider on Cicotte Street in River Rouge.

Elijah Goodell and His Family



The Oldest House in Ecorse?

Elijah Goodell is thought to have built the original log cabin that

Ecorse Echoes

this house on Alexander Court in Ecorse has been built around. Room additions and siding has been added through the years. It is almost hidden behind the Serbian Orthodox Church on Alexander Court.

Elijah Goodell fought in the American Revolutionary War on the side of the Americans. Shortly after the Revolution, he and his wife Achsah (Pickert) and their family migrated from the Mohawk Valley in New York to Canada. Then in the 1790s, the British government passed laws requiring all residents of Canada to swear an oath of allegiance to the Crown. Elijah could not swear allegiance to the country that he had fought, so he gathered his family and they traveled to the United States and settled on Grosse Isle.

The Goodells had twelve children – eight sons and four daughters. All of their children came to Michigan Territory with them except Andrew, the oldest son, who remained in the Mohawk Valley where his descendants still live today.

In the early 1800s, Elijah brought his family to the pioneer

settlement of Ecorse, because the Federal government had awarded him a land grant for his service in the Revolutionary War. His land was situated between the Detroit River and present day Jefferson Avenue between what is now Salliotte and Benson.

The Goodell's log cabin home, one of the largest in Ecorse, served as a social, civic, and religious meeting place. Tradition has it that Reverend Father Gabriel Richard on his monthly visits to the Downriver area, sang mass in the cabin's large kitchen. If this story is true, it is remarkable because the Goodells themselves were descendants of Huguenots, early French Protestants who fled religious persecution in their native France in the mid 1500s.

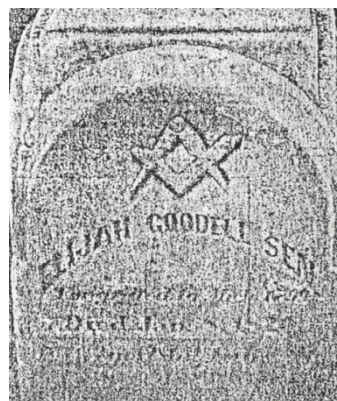
When Elijah died in 1820, he was buried in a small family graveyard on his property by the Detroit River. Eventually his gravestone was moved to Alexander Court between Benson and Goodell, near the spot where he had built his first log cabin home.

Despite his great age, the lettering on Elijah Goodell's gravestone records his death in 1820 and that of his son, Sergeant John Goodell who was killed in Amherstburg, Ontario, during the War

of 1812.

For many years motorists traveling busy Jefferson Avenue passed his gravestone nestled against an ivy covered fence without knowing that it was there. Most Ecorse residents didn't know it was there.

Then in 1973, Elijah's descendant Dr. Blanche E. Goodell, retired Wayne State University professor, died. Members of her family honored her request to have the gravestone moved to Detroit's historical Elmwood Cemetery.



The Salliotte Family Arrived in Ecorse Early



(From left) This 1973 photograph shows Doris Heyart, a teacher at Ecorse School No. One and students Rosemarie Klabon, Michelle Salliotte, Gerald Monks and Robert Salliotte who are all related.

Moses Salliotte's farm was situated on the land now known as Salliotte Road up to Bonzano- now known as Outer Drive. This former farm land is bordered now by the series of railroad tracks directly to the west and by Jefferson Avenue directly to the east. Moses Salliotte built a log cabin with an earthen floor at the site of

present day Loveland's Drugstore. Then he built a log cabin near Ecorse Creek and his son Oliver and grandson Eli were born in the cabin. Moses died in the old homestead when his grandson Eli Moses Salliotte was four or five years old.

Antoine Salliotte bought a 600 acre farm while he was still living in France and located directly to the east of the farm that Moses owned. He built a large enough house to accommodate his growing family and serve as a place for funerals, weddings, and parties. The high school and the school administration building are situated on the former Antoine Salliotte farm.

Several descendants of the Salliotte family attended School No. 1, the oldest school in Ecorse, in December 1973. Doris Heyart, a teacher at School One at the time and three students were descendants of the Salliotte family and related to each other. Student Robert Salliotte and teacher Doris Heyart were first cousins. Robert's father was Roy Aloysius Salliotte and Doris' mother was Regina Salliotte Heyart. Their great grandmother was Nancy Joan Labadie and their

grandmother was Gertrude Salliotte St. Amant.

Nancy Labadie was a first cousin to Antoine Salliotte. His mother was an aunt to Nancy and he was a first cousin to Robert and Doris' great great grandfather Moses Salliotte- Eli Salliotte's father. Eli was Robert and Doris' grandfather.

These relationships made Robert and Doris doubly eight cousins of Michelle Salliotte and Rosemarie Klabon, also students at School One, because Antoine Salliotte was their great, great grandfather and his mother, a Labadie, was their great great grandmother.

Frederic Labadie was the great grandfather of Gerald Monks, a student at School One. Frederic was a first cousin to Antoine Salliotte and Nancy Labadie St. Amant, which made Gerald the seventh cousin to Robert and Doris. Michelle Salliotte and Rosemarie Klabon were Gerald's eighth cousins.

School One was located at 58 Labadie, which was once Frank Labadie's farm. He was a second cousin to Nancy, Antoine and Frederic. Frank was Robert and Doris' fifth cousins and Michelle

and Rosemarie's sixth cousin and Gerald's fifth cousin. Frank Labadie was the father of Earl Labadie who owned Labadie Rexall Drugs in River Rouge.

The Salliotte Family

Salliotte family tradition has it that Alexis Salliotte built the first log cabin on the shore of the Detroit River near the mouth of the Riviere aux Ecorces or Ecorse Creek. Family tradition also says that the earliest members of the family came to North America from the Alsace-Lorraine section of France with the early Jesuits and made their way to Michigan with the pioneer priest explorer Father Pierre Marquette. One of the earliest mentions of the Salliotte name in Michigan occurs in a census of Detroit taken in 1779. Jean Saliot and his wife and two children are listed.

Jean Saliot married Marie Magdalene Jourdian and they had at least two sons, Jean Baptiste and Alexis Moses Salliotte and two daughters. Marie married Joseph Bondy and Therese married Dominique Bondy.

Jean Baptiste Salliotte 9 1776-1824) Marie Jeanne Bondy in Detroit in 1799 and after she died in 1816, he married Catherine Chene who died I 1822. He was the only member of the family listed in the 1820 census of Detroit.

Alexis Moses Salliotte was the first representative of his family in the Downriver area. He and his wife Archange Bourassa had at least two sons, Moses and Hyacinth. Moses Salliotte was born in Ecorse in 1807, and according to his tombstone in the Ecorse Cemetery he married Charlotte Cook, born in Yorkshire, England in 1815. Old time residents of Ecorse talking about Moses Salliotte before in died in 1892 recalled that he spoke little English. His wife Charlotte taught him a few words of English after their marriage, but mostly he spoke French.

After their marriage, Moses and Charlotte had five children, including Alexis M., Joseph, Gilbert, Juliana---, who married Joseph Drouillard, and Anne, (1845-1930) who married her cousin Oliver Salliotte.

Alexis M. Salliotte was born in 1837 and he married Mary Sylvia Rousson. He became an active political figure in the Downriver area and served many years as treasurer and clerk of Ecorse Township. He was postmaster for Ecorse for nearly twenty years and when Ecorse incorporated as a village in 1902, he was elected first village president.

The children of Alexis and Mary included Cora Lefebvre, Frances Monahan, Alma O'Boyle, Etta Nelson, Elizabeth Graffan, Eleanor and Ada Salliotte, and Simon, who married Louise Loeffler, but had no children.

Joseph Salliotte, second son of Moses and Charlotte was Ecorse village assessor from 1903-1906. He married Marie Rouleau and after she died, Mary Moran. His children included Emma Labadie, Charlotte Adan, Gertrude Cummings and the late Ignatius J. Salliotte, prominent Downriver lawyer who served as a member of the state constitution convention in 1907 and was Lincoln Park's first village attorney.

Gilbert Salliotte, third son of Moses, never married. He enlisted the Army during the Civil War and was shot through the cheek and mouth.

Hyacinth Salliotte, brother of Moses and second son of the pioneer Alexis, was born in 1918 and married Adelaide Labadie. Their children included Mary, Samuel, a Civil War veteran; Cleophus, who married Juliette Labadie, Antoine who married Agnes Abbot; Adis who married Alex Campau, Angelique and Peter.

Antoine, born in 1841, was also a Civil War veteran. He marched through Georgia with General William T. Sherman and was twice wounded in action. He is buried in Ecorse Cemetery. Antoine's children include Ecorse Municipal Judge Alger E. Salliotte who held his judicial post from 1934 to the 1950s and Roy B. Salliotte who was killed at the battle of the Meuse-Argonne in France in 1918. The Roy B. Salliotte American Legion Post in Ecorse was named for this World War I hero.

Other children of Antoine and Agnes (Abbott) Salliotte were Stella

Drouillard, Ida Meloche, Inez Salliotte, deceased; Henry, who was a barber in Ecorse; Matilda Bondie; Joseph; Cecelia Hyde; Emma Laginess; Verna Theis; Alvin who was a lieutenant with the Ecorse Fire Department; Eldred; and Sylvia Nelson.

Several Ecorse streets bear the names of many members of the Salliotte family including Alexis, Hyacinth, Charlotte and Agnes. Salliotte Streets runs from Ecorse into Southwest Detroit.

Joseph Montie

The Montie family roots extend far back into Ecorse History. Joseph Montie was born in Ecorse on January 11, 1886, when Ecorse was known as Grandport. He was raised on a farm on Goddard Road in what was then considered Ecorse Township. His parents were Richard C. Montie and Liza Cicotte.

One of five children, Joseph's brothers were Richard and Benjamin Montie and his sisters Mrs. Estelle Labadie and Mrs. Isabelle Durocher.

In 1911, Joseph married Justine Gee and they became the parents of Raymond and Marion, who died in infancy. Joseph served as village clerk in 1919 and Albert his cousin, was a municipal judge in the 1930s.

In 1921, the two cousins, Joseph and Albert Montie, opened what eventually became Montie Fuel and Supply Company of Ecorse. In the pioneer days of Ecorse the Montie cousins sold ice to homes and businesses in the Downriver area from a horse drawn wagon.

They operated out of a farm at the old Beaubien ice House which was located on West Jefferson and named it the Ecorse Ice and Coal Company. They sold just ice until the fall of 1921 when they added a coal yard at White and Webster where their business was still located in 1971.

In 1922, they added building materials and sold most of the sewer supplies for Ecorse sewers. They also supplied most of the cement for the city streets.

His son ray Montie, graduated from Ecorse High School in 1930 and joined the business in 1938 “for two weeks” when General Motors laid him off during a long automobile strike that year. Ray’s two weeks lasted until the 1970s and beyond.

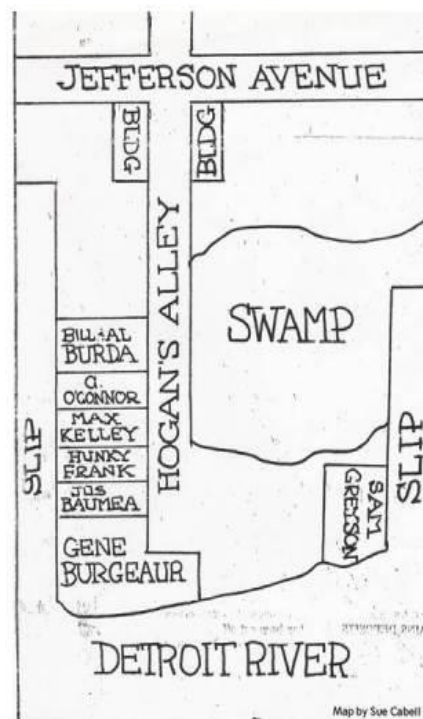
The early 1940s brought a name change to the business which Joseph and Ray now called Montie Fuel and Supply Company. They sold building supplies as well as coal and in 1950 added fuel oil to their stock. In 1964, Howard Warner of Lincoln Park joined the company and it was incorporated as Montie Fuel-Warner Construction Company. After Howard Warner retired, Ray Montie focused on selling lumber and building supplies.

Both Ray and Joseph were involved in business and civic activities in Ecorse for many years. Ray Montie served as an Ecorse Board of Education member from 1945 until 1954. He also served on the city of Ecorse Charter Commission in the 1960s. He was a member of the Ecorse Kiwanis Club for 25 years and served as its president in 1950.

Joseph was a member of St. Francis Xavier Church and when he celebrated his 89th birthday in January 1975, his son Raymond held a birthday party for him at his Ecorse home.

Joseph died on July 25, 1975 at Oakwood Hospital, Dearborn.

Eli “Peck” LeBlanc Witnesses Rum Running in Ecorse



The Detroit Evening News recorded an instance where the Detroit River helped sober someone up, the exact opposite of what

happened on the River in the rum running days of the 1920s and 1930s. *The Evening News* reported that Albert Latour was soused in the River yesterday off Belle Island, and it sobered him right off. When nearby boaters picked him up, he told that he had ‘shadows flitting around him.’ The only shadow his rescuers found was a whiskey bottle nearly emptied. They picked up him and his skiff and took them to Belle Island.

During the 1920s and 1930s the Ecorse waterfront especially near Jefferson and Southfield and a strip of river front called Hogan’s Alley became notorious for its nightclubs. Gambling, bootlegging and other nefarious activities took place on the Ecorse Waterfront and bandits and gamblers from Detroit routinely traveled to Ecorse to ply their trades and hide out from the police.

In 1920, Albert M. Jaeger had become the first salaried fire chief in Ecorse and with a force of three men, took up office in the wooden city hall across from his house. At age 57 in 1945, he went to his office at the fire department in the new municipal building to receive the hearty congratulations of the 28-member fire department.

Ecorse Echoes

About 1922, two years after he was installed as Ecorse’s first fire chief, Village President Fred Bouchard made Jaeger acting chief of police. He held the two offices jointly until 1926 and his joint chiefship provided material for local jokesters. The story had it that Jaeger always worked bareheaded in his office until a call came demanding his services as one department head or another. Then he would grab the correct hat, jam it on his head, and run out of his office to whatever challenge lay ahead.

Holding the joint office was difficult in the turbulent days of bootlegging and rum running in Ecorse. Several underworld hideouts had sprung up along the riverfront, huddled beside the river below Southfield Road. One of them was known as “Robbers Roost”, and often sheltered notorious lawbreakers. One March day in 1924, Jaeger and one of his men, Benjamin Montie, a fire truck driver and auxiliary policemen, went down to Robber’s Roost to investigate a case of petty larceny. Inside the Robber’s Roost, two bandits who had just raided the Commonwealth Bank in Detroit and escaped with \$17,000 were counting their money. Chief Jaeger and Benjamin Montie took the men to police headquarters

for questioning and then Jaeger, Montie and two deputy sheriffs returned to Robber's Roost where they found two more of the bandit ring in hiding.

The two men jumped out of a window into the river. They swam back to shore and were captured just as two others drove up in a car. They were Bernard Malley, Leo Corbett, Eliza Meade and Tim Murray. Meade and Corbett were in the car and Corbett drew a gun and killed Ecorse Patrolman-fireman Benjamin Montie. Then Chief of Police Jaeger drew his gun and killed Corbett.

During the scuffle, Meade drove away in the car and a statewide hunt failed to find him. Later he was arrested in Arizona and sentenced to 20 to 40 years in Marquette Prison. As the bank robbers attempted to get away, they threw the \$17,000 over the streets and waterfront. Spectators did not return their spoils.

Following the family tradition, Eli "Peck" LeBlanc's generation played an important part in Ecorse history. In a 1966 interview with Ecorse native JoAnn Coman he recalled Prohibition days. According to Eli, Mud Island, which was formed by logs from a

nearby sawmill, acted as a screen for an important tunnel constructed by smugglers. This tunnel extended about two blocks inland and was made in such a manner as to allow the boat to travel on the water and still remain below ground. The rum runners then unloaded the liquor in a combination garage-gambling house on Monroe Street.

LeBlanc vividly recalled Hogan's Alley in Ecorse, a small side street comprised of a row of dimly lighted shacks sometimes used as private bars that were called "blind pigs." The majority liquor runs ended at Hogan's Alley, but only smugglers and select guests who knew the pass word were admitted to Hogan's Alley. Once inside Hogan's Alley sights to be enjoyed included young men wearing fancy clothes and diamond rings in imitation of Al Capone, piles of money changing hands and countless cocktails disappearing down thirsty throats. Some people called Hogan's Alley the toughest territory in the country during Prohibition times.

In continuous stories, Detroit newspapers investigated the Prohibition years in Ecorse. Charles Creinn of the *Detroit Times*

said that Ecorse, formerly a small, peaceful resort area, became a notorious “rum row” and the center of a dangerous, risky, but profitable industry after National Prohibition was passed in 1920. According to Creinn, millions of dollars changed hands at one time in Ecorse and the three banks in the village of less than 10,000 inhabitants did a thriving business. People made fortunes overnight and lost them just as quickly.

Orval L. Girard of the *Detroit Times* reminisced with one foot propped on a weather-beaten pier on Southfield Dock. According to Orval, there was nothing but a swamp where the steel works stand. All along the river front customs picket boats cruised day and night in hopes of discovering the rum running operations in Canada.

The *Wyandotte Herald* joined the story parade, but said that bootleggers let Ecorse citizens go in peace unless they interfered with smuggling operations. “For a number of years following the advent of Volsteadism, 90 percent of the beer and strong liquor reaching Michigan from Canada came by way of Ecorse,” said the *Herald*. Before Prohibition, a few boat houses and cottages along

the river front were used for legitimate purposes, it concluded.

Then during 1918, boat houses once sheltering pleasure craft were converted to storage for liquor and luggers, which were high speed boats that transported good across the river. Summer cottages were turned into gambling houses with a variety of entertainment. Most of these changes were made along a one-half mile stretch of land not more than a city block wide.

Another *Detroit News* reporter, Martha Torplitz, wrote that Ecorse changed its personality at night because a Canadian regulation required rum boats to be clear of the piers before nightfall. These boats could travel to Canada at random and load and leave when they pleased as long as they were finished before sundown. The fleet would drop down the foreign side of the Detroit River and wait a chance to escape. Sunset shook the fleet from its daytime drowsiness. Trained eyes watched for signals. A red and green lantern indicated “departure an hour from now” while two red ones meant “start at once.”

Often more than fifty boats, from fifty footers to flat busses,

smaller power boats and row boats and skiffs waited to escape to Ecorse shores. The escape required skillful navigating because the boats did not have lights and the skippers did not always know who was friend or foe. Sometimes prohibition boats disguised themselves as rum runner and rum runners often turned prohibition agents for an evening. A skipper had to have keenly attuned senses to be able to tell friend from foe on the river after dark.

As soon as a boat touched the dock, hired men began loading the liquor into trucks and cars, a job that required timing, organization and craftiness. Some bootleggers tied cases of beer under the floor boards of trucks and cars and installed liquor holding trays under dashboards and hoods. Their padded interior prevented the bottles from breaking even during the roughest chases and during the washboard ride over highways to Detroit, Toledo, and Chicago. Some wrapped bottles in burlap and hung them from the bottoms of boats for the ride to market and a few enterprising others installed trays below box cars on trains, then wired the numbers of their cars to the buyers waiting at the train's destination.

Eli "Peck" LeBlanc picked up the narrative again when he said that cash was the only exchange in this crude bootlegging business with extraordinarily high stakes. As long as the Ecorse rum runners were paid, they did not worry about a load being high jacked or lost or misdirected. But if a customer did not pay cash on delivery the consequences could be cold-blooded murder. Or if someone put false labels on the merchandise to get a higher price for cheap liquor and their customers discovered the trick, the deal could end in a rain of bullets. Police and civilians alike routinely fished bullet-riddled bodies out of the Detroit River.

According to Peck, policemen were not always on the right side of the law. Sometimes official eyes were encouraged not to see the bootlegging activities and sometimes the law ignored the bootleggers out of fear for their lives. "It was common knowledge that police officers were bribed and paid off in other ways to keep quiet."

Ecorse stood wide open for liquor activities besides transferring it. Ecorse was safe for a night on the town. Ladies in evening dresses kicked up their respectable heels on Jefferson Avenue or did the

Varsity Drag in buildings that witnessed more decorous activities during the day. If shots punctuated the hours of an evening out, no one looked up from their drinks for shots were ordinary sounds in Ecorse. Anyone could go down Jefferson Avenue day or night to visit roadhouses like The White Tree, Marty Kennedys, The Riverview and Tom R. ____, run by a former policemen. Many people knew Patsy Lowrey's on Eighth Street with the backroom decorated in western style with sawdust on the floor and a tin-voiced piano echoing through the room. The price across the bar was fifty cents for whiskey and twenty five cents for beer.

Dr. Arthur Payette, another Ecorse pioneer who practiced dentistry in Ecorse for 35 years in his office overlooking Hogan's Alley, pointed out a different side of bootlegging in Ecorse. Some ordinary citizens as well as professional bootleggers wanted to get rich quick and with the right connections, packaged ingredients for making beer could be acquired for nominal fees. Stills and other needed apparatus could be found in basements of houses concentrated on Goodell Street and some "home breweries" specialized in watering liquor by inserting a syringe through the

cork of the bottle, extracting the liquor, and replacing it with water.

Dr. Payette said that for several years the government did not make much of an effort to stop Canadian liquor from coming into the United States and when they did try to enforce the law, the rum runners usually won out. The rum runners would pay any price for a speedboat if it was fast enough to outrun the law. Some of the customers used to complain bitterly about the prices when protection had to be split five ways: local, federal, state, county, and customs.

The doctor vividly recalled a state trooper who came to his office for a teeth cleaning. According to Dr. Payette, state trooper G____ was already out to get Ecorse and during the teeth cleaning he managed to work in some comments about the interesting view of Hogan's Alley and the bootlegging activity in Ecorse. Dr. Payette silently continued cleaning the state trooper's teeth. "Minding one's own business was the best policy," the Doctor said.

The *Detroit News* continued to publish stories detailed

bootlegging operations in “wild west” Ecorse. Journalist F.L. Smith wrote in the *Detroit News* that “to have seen Ecorse in its palmy days is an unforgettable experience, for no gold camp of the old west presented a more glamorous spectacle. It was a perpetual carnival of drinking, gambling, and assorted vices by night and a frenzied business-like community by day. Silk-shirted bootleggers walked its streets and it was the Mecca for the greedy, the unscrupulous, and the criminal of both sexes. When the police desired to lay their hands on a particularly hard customer, they immediately looked in Ecorse and there they generally found him.”

The “perpetual carnival” began on August 11, 1921, when shipments of beer and liquor from Canada to the United States became lawful. This opened up a glittering world of rum running, roustabouts, and riches for the ordinary people of Ecorse. Immediately, three Ecorse workers took their savings and traveled to Montreal where the sale of liquor was legal. They bought 25 cases of whiskey and drove back to Windsor. Over and over they rowed a small boat back and forth across the river until all of their

treasure was ferried to the American side. They posted a lookout for Canadian and American customs officials just in case, but all went well. They sold their liquor in Ecorse and used their profits to finance a second and third trip. Multiply these enterprises by thousands and you have some idea of the volume of rum running across the river. Both Canadians and Americans with their secret caches of beer and liquor waited “like Indians” among the trees and tall grasses on the Canadian side of the river. Boatloads of smugglers would glide across the river, signaling with pocket torches. A blue light flashed once and then twice – “all was clear.” A large sheet hung on a clothesline meant – “turn back immediately, police arrived.”

Rum running boats by the dozen were moored each day at the Ecorse municipal dock at the foot of State Street (now Southfield), which ran through the village’s central business district. Rumrunners transferred their cargoes to waiting cars and trucks, while residents, police and officials watched. Officials erected a board fence to protect the waterfront but rumrunners went around or beneath it. Some Canadian breweries set up export docks on the

shore just outside of LaSalle, Ontario, which is directly across the Detroit River from Ecorse. Fighting Island, situated in the middle of the river between Ecorse and LaSalle conveniently hid rumrunners from police patrols.

Rum running was ageless in Ecorse. Ecorse rumrunners employed as many as 25 schoolboys as spies, lookouts and messengers. In 1922, police arrested a 15-year-old boy delivering a truckload of liquor to a Downriver roadhouse. The boy said that he was only one of several local boys working for the rumrunners. He insisted that he worked only on weekends and nights so he would not miss school. These 13 to 16 year old boys made such good lookouts that the police could not make unannounced raids on blind pigs and boathouse storage centers in Ecorse. The lookout boys usually spotted the police long before they arrived. One state police officer complained that “they spread out along the waterfront and are very awake and diligent.”

Federal and state officials also had a difficult time making rum running arrests stick in Ecorse because the local police were in sympathy if not cahoots with the rum runners. Rumrunners served

on juries and the only cases from Ecorse tried successfully were the ones tried in federal courts.

Another Wild West style battle between law and order and the rumrunners and their defenders took place in 1928 in Hogan’s Alley in Ecorse. Several cars and three boats holding about 30 Customs Border Patrol inspectors gathered at the end of Hogan’s Alley at the foot of State Street (Southfield) to wait in ambush for the rum runners. Rum running boats pulled up to a nearby pier and the agents rushed them and arrested the seven crewmembers.

As soon as they were arrested, the crew of the boat yelled for help. Rescuers rushed from all around. Over 200 people arrived to stop the agents from leaving with the prisoners. The people attacked the customs agents’ cars. They slashed tires and broke windshields. They pushed other cars across the alley entrance and threw rocks and bottles at the agents. Before the situation became too desperate, the agents banded together, rushed the barricade, and escaped.

John Wozniak of Ecorse is remembered as one of the more honest

rumrunners. Wozniak's early twenties coincided with the early rum running years in Ecorse. He was enterprising enough to form his own navy of twenty-five "sailors" to carry Canadian liquor into America across the Detroit River. Wozniak gave his sailors standing orders to avoid violence. Wozniak's men did not carry arms and neither did he. When one of his men got caught, Wozniak backed him and his defense and paid the fine if the rumrunner was convicted.

His love of sports ended John Wozniak's empire. He sponsored a football team and his team became well known in Ecorse, Lincoln Park, Wyandotte and River Rouge. Law enforcement people would come to the games, frequently to identify the rumrunners on Wozniak's team. In 1928, federal law enforcement officials broke up a large bribery ring and with his protection gone, Wozniak was arrested. At his trial, Wozniak told the judge, "When I was indicted I was through for good. The law was getting too strong. I sold my boats and scuttled the others. I went into the automobile business and have done pretty well."

In the early rum running days, the atmosphere on the river

resembled a 24-hour party. Women participated with men in the bootlegging and the person in the next boat could be a local councilman or the school drama teacher. Boat owners could transport as many as 2,500 cases of liquor each month at a net profit of \$25,000 with the owner earning about \$10,000. Some rumrunners made 800 percent profit on a load of liquor. The only real perils of the sea that the rumrunners encountered during those first years were losing directions in the middle of the river at night and collisions with other boats.

In the winter the river often froze solid and the rumrunners took advantage of the ice road. They used iceboats, sleds and cars to transport liquor from the Canadian side to Ecorse. Convoys of cars from Canada crossed the ice daily. Cars on the American shore lined up at night and turned on the headlights to provide an illuminated expressway across the ice. A prolonged cold spell in January and February of 1930 produced thick and inviting ice on Upper Lake Erie and the Detroit River.

Hundreds of tire tracks marked the ice trail from the Canadian docks to the American shore. On a February morning in 1930, a

Detroit News reporter counted 75 cars leaving the Amherstburg beer docks. He wrote that ten carried Ohio license plates and headed down river for south and east points on the Ohio shore. Others drove to the Canadian side of Grosse Ile. When they arrived on Grosse Ile, the liquor was loaded into camouflaged trucks and driven across the toll bridge to the American mainland.

But most of the cars drove from the Amherstburg docks to Bob-lo Park around the north end of Bob-lo Island. From there the trail headed west to the Livingston Channel. When the Channel was safely reached, the cars drove south for a mile where the trail forked. One trail led to a slip on the lower end of Grosse Ile. The other fork led about two miles further north. As the car drove, the road was about two miles from the upper end of Bob-lo Park to the Grosse Ile slip. Translated time wise, it was about a six-minute ride over the ice.

The dangerous part of the ride was along the Bob-lo Park side, where the ice was tricky. The rumrunners drove as far as they could with two wheels on the shore. The road from the upper end of Bob-lo Island to Grosse Ile was safe and the ice solid. The

rumrunners did not try to hide their goods from the law. One of them told the *Detroit News* that “the law isn’t the thing we fear most. What we are really afraid of is the ice. Anytime it may give way beneath and let one of us through.”

The iceboats were the bane of the Coast Guard cutters because they were fast enough to be phantoms for the pursuers. Iceboats had obvious advantages over cars on frozen Lake St. Clair and the Detroit River. Sail equipped iceboats could speed across the river in 12 minutes or less. Law officers did not have much hope of catching them. The *Detroit News* summed up the situation: “A gust of flying snow and perhaps now and then a trace of silver canvas in the wind and the boats were gone.”

Both police and rumrunners used their ice imaginations.

Rumrunners nailed ski runners to boats and pushed them across Lake St. Clair or towed several behind a car. When the police got too close, the rumrunners cut their boats loose. The federal agents fit a spiked attachment called ice creepers over their shoes. But running with creepers was slow. Some rum runners knowing this, wore ice skates and gracefully skated away.

Then in 1921, the pirates, including a famous one called the Gray Ghost, moved in. Go-betweens called pullers would carry cash across the river to the Canadian export docks for large purchases. Many of the pullers were robbed and killed and their bodies tossed into the river. In 1922, it was a nightly occurrence to find bodies floating in the river near Ecorse. The Gray Ghost was responsible for a few of these bodies, but generally he remained a gentleman pirate and let his victims escape with their lives. The Gray Ghost was the most famous pirate on the river. His official titles included pirate, extortionist, counterfeiter, and friend of the Purple Gang from Detroit. People called him the Gray Ghost because he piloted a gray boat and dressed entirely in gray, including a gray hat and a gray mask. He carried two gray pistols and a gray machine gun. One of his favorite tricks was plundering pullers on the way to Canada. He would intercept them in midstream, using his powerful speedboat to relieve them of their cash.

Once the rumrunners got their liquor across the river from Canada, they could dispose of it in several ways. Some syndicates paid farmers \$20,000 or more to store liquor in their barns around

Detroit. Others moved in, uninvited, to the docks and storage areas of the wealthy homeowners across the Detroit River and Lake St. Clair. In 1922 alone, at least \$35,000 worth of liquor came to Detroit through the 70 miles of river and lakefront stretching from Lake St. Clair to South Rockwood. When the Gray Ghost traveled to Canada for his buying trips, he had a large selection of liquor from which to choose. On the Canadian side of the river, the exporters had rows and rows of liquor docks. They could replenish their stock from 83 breweries and 23 distilleries.

The Gray Ghost continued pirating without too much interference and disposed of his booty among the bootlegging syndicates of Detroit. Then one day he made a fatal error. He purchased a large load of liquor in Canada with a bad check and irritated some prosperous wholesalers. Five of the wholesalers kicked in \$1,000 each and hired someone to eliminate the bad check problem. Rumor had it that the gunman worked for the Purple Gang, but the murder of the Gray Ghost was never solved nor was his true identity ever discovered.

Ecorse continued to suffer a bad reputation throughout all of this

rum running activity. Delos G. Smith, U.S. District Attorney, characterized Ecorse as one of two black eyes for Detroit.” To prove his point he warned Mayor Bouchard that if he did not enforce some law and order within thirty days he would send in the State Police. The state police conducted a continuous waterfront vigil, powerful enough to cause most of the smugglers and bootleggers to move their business to Lake St. Clair in the north and Lake Erie in the south. But the liquor smugglers had one power point over the police. They had once used the patrol boat, the *Alladin* as a rum ship without the police ever knowing it.

It took more than four years of hard work and strategy for the police to capture and convict the bootleggers. When Jefferson Avenue was widened in 1929, the shacks along Hogan’s Alley were destroyed and the city bought the thin strip of land by the waterfront for a park.

Then Prohibition was repealed. A stroke of the pen demolished an entire flourishing industry in December 1933. The rumrunners were legalized out of business and Ecorse city officials tore down the fence by the waterfront and created a park.

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In 1936, the *Ecorse Advertiser*, summarized Prohibition and the changing waterfront in Ecorse when it published a lengthy obituary called Requiem for Walter Locke and Rum Row for Walter Locke, a waterfront colleague of Eli “Peck” LeBlanc.

Walter Locke and his partner Ned Magee owned a boathouse restaurant at the State Street (now Southfield) dock and from this vantage point they witnessed the scores of men, boys, women and girls creating the Prohibition drama. Locke saw the scattered boathouses on the banks of the river that had been built at the turn of the century for pleasure boating, but had been taken over by a generation of people who worked at night and got rich quickly. Rents for the waterfront shacks escalated from 10 dollars a month to one hundred. He saw smuggling grow in volume and intensity and a class of men rise who gloried in their own skill, strength, and acumen at outwitting the people who sought to enforce the Prohibition law.

Time passed and Locke heard the voices of thirsty Americans demanding whisky and beer grow louder and he saw the profits for handling them climb higher. The price of cheap whiskey arose

to one hundred dollars a case- whisky which would eventually fall back to its norm of \$24 or \$30 a case.

Bootlegging demographics changed as adventurous youngsters and their outboard motor boats displaced the strong men rowing their sturdy boats across the Detroit River. It took the youngsters and their motorboats ten minutes to cover the distance it took a man an hour and forty minutes to row. Then, as cargoes grew bigger, the luggers, with their huge flat bottomed hulls that could hold hundreds of cases of beer and sleek, swift speedboats with more costly cargoes of whisky displaced the motorboats.

Walter watched rum row blossoming at night into a sea of colored lights and music. He watched the half mile south from State Street – now Southfield – to Ecorse Creek become a glittering cabaret center that became known as the “Half Mile of Hell.” The narrow streets were crowded with automobiles from dusk until dawn and people surged on foot from one spot to another in a frenzied search for entertainment. They paid fifty cents a bottle for beer and fifty or seventy-five cents for a glass of whisky. A meal cost them two dollars and they tipped poor entertainers one dollar and

thought they were getting their money’s worth.

Walter watched the gambling spots open and thrive in the encouraging atmosphere and witnessed fortunes made and lost on the turn of a wheel or the flip of a card. He saw one poor Ecorse man make \$100,000 in a single night and lose \$80,000 of it back again within a few days.

Everyone but “the Law” thrived. The uphill battle of “the law” did not change. Walter Locke saw the “Law”, always in clumsier boats than the bootleggers. The out-numbered “Lawmen hung with the tenacity of bulldogs on their quarry”, but better equipment and the sheer force of numbers thwarted their best efforts.

Then Walter Locke watched the fall of rum row on the Detroit River in Ecorse. It did not fall as gradually as it had risen, instead rum roll shattered like a bottle smashed against a brick wall. He watched the river front shacks where millions and millions of dollars worth of illicit liquor had been stored and passed on become disused and abandoned and then razed to their concrete

foundations. He watched the narrow, dirt, River Road turn into a broad ribbon of concrete called Jefferson Avenue, and widen yet again almost to his doors. He watched a growing stream of traffic whiz by and drivers not even glancing at famous local history spots.

Walter and Ned sat on the little veranda of their house boat restaurant discussing a Requiem for Rum Row. Goodbye to the fortunes lost when “the Law” raided Rum Row and found the “plant” where the liquor was concealed. Goodbye to the whisky cars that whipped into and out of the secret boat well garages. Goodbye to the shots ringing out in the night and the lifeless bodies on the river shores of the boys who had “taken the night boat to Buffalo.”

Goodbye to the fortunes won in overnight operation and to the desperate chances that were taken with life and liberty to make a “stake. Goodbye to the private operations of the “boys” and hello to the gangsters who muscled in to take the wealthier of the boys on a one-way ride. The jolly fellows who freely spent their money disappeared and tight-lipped gangsters took their places. The open

day time bootlegging on the water front turned into a furtive, stealthy fog. Once or twice a “muscler” offered to cut himself into Walter and Ned’s business. Ned would appear the next day with skinned knuckles or maybe his arm in a sling. Nothing else was said or done.

Large scale bribery ruled the day and rum runners and prohibition agents went to jail. Legal exports from Canada stopped and it became more profitable to make beer on the side. Whisky was cut and alky was brewed in alleys by “the Dagoes.” Suddenly Ecorse was “dead” and so was Walter Locke. If he had lived until the next summer, Walter would have watched trees spreading leafy branches over the county park along the former Detroit River rum row where so much whisky had been landed at midnight. Flowers swayed in the breeze where once dancers had swayed to cabaret music and fishermen instead of rumrunners boated on the river. Perhaps, after all, Walter Locke watched and approved.

Serving and Retiring In Ecorse



The Duke Welcomes The Lieutenant Colonel

Ellis “Duke” Underill, the official greeter of Ecorse, welcomed Lt. Colonel James D. Fowler, general staff officer in the Department of Logistics at the Pentagon, to Ecorse.

Lt. Colonel Fowler came to Ecorse in April 1955 to visit his aunt, Mrs. Arthur Williams, who lived on eighth Street. Beulah Hill Williams was a city nurse.

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Buelah Hill Williams Retires



After 22 years of service as a Public Health Department nurse in Ecorse and Ecorse Township, Beulah Hill Williams retired in November 1959. She closed a unique career of public service that included assisting at hundreds of births and acting as a midwife for many Ecorse births when a doctor wasn't available.

Mrs. Hill, as she was usually called, became a Public Health Department nurse for Ecorse Township in 1938, back in the days when Ecorse was a village and part of the Township. After she had worked for Ecorse Township for four years, Ecorse decided to seek city status and Mrs. Hill transferred to Ecorse City Health

Department.

She recalled the early days of her service when most of the west side streets in Ecorse were unpaved and often when she made night trips to homes she had to locate them by the light of a lantern. She assisted Dr. Lawrence Van Becelaire, health officer, in delivering many babies who grew up to take prominent places in Ecorse public life.

“You know my work in connection with the well baby clinic during the last few years. Mothers who have brought children to the clinic have frequently told me that this is the second generation I have served. I have assisted at the births of the mothers and sometimes the fathers,” she said.

Mrs. Hill was born in Atlanta, Georgia, and received her early education there. After going through public schools, she moved to Washington D.C. to take her nurses’ training at Freedman’s Hospital.

About a dozen of Mrs. Hill’s friends and associates gave her a farewell luncheon at the Health Department offices on the second floor of the Ecorse Municipal Garage building.

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After she rested for a few months, Mrs. Hill considered traveling to the Far East to visit her nephew who was an army officer on special duty in Taiwan.

Helen Caffo Named Longevity Champion



Ecorse City officials named Helen Caffo, nurse of the Ecorse Department of health, ‘Longevity Champ’ to recognize her twelve year service record with the city. She started working for the

Ecorse Health Department in 1953.

From left to right are Councilman Alexander Petri, Municipal Judge Carl L. Rhoads, Mayor Richard E. Manning, Helen Caffo, Councilman Giles A. Reeve and Councilman Dennis Smith.

The May 1965 event was staged as a Michigan Week program instead of National Secretary's Day.

Twenty Years With The Sheriff's Department



Robert Fitzpatrick, chairman of the Wayne County Board of Commissioners presented Mrs. Dorothy Wall of Ecorse with

a resolution commending her 25 years of service with the Wayne County Sheriff's Department.

From left, Commissioner Joseph Young, vice-chairman of the Commission; Rosco Bobo of Ecorse; Robert FitzPatrick; Mrs. Dorothy Wall and her husband, J.C. Wall examined the resolution in April 1975.

Brotherhood Week Banquet



—Photo by John Dugan
HIGHLIGHT OF BROTHERHOOD Week in Ecorse was the program held last Thursday night in the Leonard Duckett Center, and highlight of the program was an address by Paul Reid, director of the Detroit regional planning board, who discussed "The Future of Ecorse." Shown above, from left, are members of the committee which planned the third annual affair sponsored by the Ecorse Community

Relations Committee and guests, Benjamin Goodell, acting chairman; the Rev. Henry Parker, of the Church of the Resurrection, master of ceremonies; Dr. Emanuel Carlebach, and Mrs. William C. Hague, committee members; Mrs. Blaine Smith, general chairman; Jessie Wood and Mrs. Richard Dawson, committee members; Mayor Eli Ciungan; Reid; and Mrs. Elwyn DuHadway, a committee member.

Chapter Nine

Maritime Ecorse

Ecorse Rowing Club in the Beginning



For nearly two centuries, the Riviere de Ecorces, or Ecorse Creek, the marsh and farm lands surrounding it and the village of Ecorse presented a rural face to the world. Apple, pear and peach trees that the early French settlers had planted showered blooms into its

water. The marshlands that filled its mouth as it flowed into the Detroit River produced aromatic grasses that people used to feed their horses and cattle and even to stuff their mattresses. Settlers along its banks fished and caught frogs and gathered wild berries beside it. Several saw and grist mills and coal and brickyards dotted the banks of the creek, but there was not enough industry located along it to affect the flow or purity of its water.

In 1901, G.A. Raupp of Ecorse, lumber dealer, guided a raft containing 2,500,000 feet of pine, hemlock, spruce and tamarack logs coming down the St. Clair River for use in his mill. One of G.A. Raupp's other endeavors, the Ecorse Rowing Club, proved to be even more lasting than his mill which went out of business in mid century. He was one of its founding fathers and helped organize its first crew in 1873.

Less than a decade after the close of the Civil War Ecorse became rowing conscious. Shells were unheard of in those early days, but huge crowds lined the river front to watch the competition of the first ten oar barge and later the eight and even six oar barge races that eventually turned the eyes of the world to Ecorse.

Contemporary observers said that the interest in training created in this sport that eventually led to the world championships won by the famous Montie brothers “is what fanned the interest in rowing, not the large crews and cumbersome barges.”



The names of some of the first rowers and generations of championship rowers also appear on the 1876 map as owners of farms and land near Ecorse Creek. They include Beaubien, LeBlanc, Champagne, and Montie. Richard LeBlanc was one of the first to visualize the possibilities of a rowing club in Ecorse. He promoted the idea among his friends and in 1873 they

organized a rowing club of less than twenty members. They called their organization the Wah-Wah-Tah-See Club, an Indian name for Indian names were the general custom in those days.

For a number of years the Wah-Wah-Tah-Sees rowed on the Detroit River in an eight oar barge. The Montie brothers-Will, John, Lige and Frank- practiced with and apart from the rest of the Wah-Wah-Tah Sees. They were sawmill workers at the mill of Salliotte and Raupp and they worked twelve hour shifts rafting logs on Ecorse Creek and the Rouge and Detroit Rivers. When their work day finished, they went out on the Detroit River and rowed until dark in a barge with ordinary oars. For ten years they rowed and saved their money as well and after that decade of training and saving, they purchased a four oar racing shell, the best of its day.

In the 1870s, Southern and Eastern capitalists had introduced the business of rafting lumber and timber through the lakes. This business involved rafting sawmill logs for tugs and steamers to pick up or continue moving to their final destinations. The steam tug *Vulcan*, was a striking symbol of the growth of this business.

During the year 1871, the Vulcan transferred twenty-four rafts of timber from Au Sable East. As a whole, the rafts contained about 20,000 feet of timber and not one of them was lost. Many of these rafts floated down the Detroit River on their way to Lake Erie and Lake Ontario ports.

This maritime tradition in Detroit and the communities up and downriver from Detroit, including Ecorse produced badly needed revenue for business and people, and made the transition from rowing barges for business to rowing for sport and pleasure as smooth as a skilled oar stroke through Detroit River waters. These skillful rowers competed against each other in races and produced rowing clubs that produced community unity, pride, and tradition. The Detroit Boat Club began racing in 1839 and the Ecorse Boat Club in 1873.

The Montie brothers of Ecorse worked as raftsmen, riding the Rouge River outside of Detroit. Every day, dressed in their working clothes – red shirts, blue jean overalls and heavy boots- they wrestled logs into the Rouge River, created timber rafts, and shoved and guided them to their destinations up and downstream.

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The brothers earned an area-wide reputation for their strength, endurance and love of French songs and French partying. They were so widely respected for their skill that the members of the Ecorse Rowing Club implored the Montie brothers to come and row with them permanently.

Such founding members of the Wah-Wah-Ta Sees as Charles Tank, the Beaubien brothers and Frank Salliotte convinced the Montie brothers that their strength and skill would make the club a winner. The Montie brothers didn't know anything about strokes or the science of rowing, but their hands-on rafting experience had helped them develop great stamina. They could row all afternoon without getting out of breath and still sing their French songs, tell stories and celebrate their victories. When General Russel A. Alger presented the Wah-Wah-Ta-Sees with the best shell obtainable, the Montie brothers and other members spent many long afternoons rowing on the river.

The first real race that the Montie Brothers rowed took place at the Aragon Club in New York. They competed in a four oar shell that was extremely popular at the time and they won. Later they

acquired a ten oar barge and this is the barge that the Ecorse men used to enter and win the Northwestern Amateur Rowing Association race at Bay City in 1880. The winning crew consisted of Will Montie, bow; John Montie; G. Beaubien; G. Sanch; Bob Montie; H. Seavitt; W. McLeod; M. Bourassa; H. Labadie. E.J. Montie pulled oars in the race and W.A. Ferguson served as coxswain.

From this crew the Montie brothers organized the legendary four oar crew that went on in later years to defeat all competition. In 1882 the Wah-Wah-Tah-Shee Club entered the six oar barge race held in connection with the Northwestern Regatta and they won this race also. The winning crew included Phillip LeBlanc; G. Reach; Louis Seavitt; M. Bourassa with Ted Ferguson as coxswain. They covered the two mile course in the extraordinary time of 13 minutes, 57 ½ seconds.

Also in 1882, the Montie's Wah-Wah-Tah-Sees teammate Charles Tank, Frank Seavitt, Lou Champaign and Elmer Labadie organized a crew and from 1882 until 1887 they rowed and won several races. Other Ecorse men who rowed during these years

and established records for the Ecorse Club included Theodore Bondie, Alfred Beaubien, Charles Sesyer, Bill McGullen, Bill Clement, George Clark, Alex Beaubien, Henry Lange, Gus Gramer, at times keeper of the Mamajuda and Grassy Island lights and Mark Bourassa. These men rowed in fours barges and entered both junior and senior races.

In 1884 the Montie brothers rowed in the Regatta against such experts as the Excelsiors and the Minnesotas. After being beaten the first day of the Regatta when a broken rudder made their boat unmanageable, they came back on the second day to win the Regatta with a time of six minutes and 57 5/8 seconds for a one and one-half mile straightway course, nearly one minute faster than the record.

The next year on July 29, 1885, the Monies pitted their rowing skills against the Hillsdales in the Belle Isle Regatta. The Hillsdales had just won the Canadian Henley Regatta held at St. Catharines, Ontario, and crowds cheered them all along the Detroit River. The Wah-Wha-Ta-Shees nominated the Montie brothers to row against the retuning champions. The three

contenders lined up at the starting line-the Montie brothers, the Hillsdales and the Centennials. The starting gun retorted and the Monties shot their Alger shell ahead of the Hillsdales, leaving them trailing ten feet.

At the turn in the course, the Montie brothers were two lengths ahead and rowing at the unprecedented stroke of sixty to the minute. The endurance of the Frenchmen enabled them to hold that phenomenal stroke to the end of the race. They finished four lengths ahead of the Hillsdales and nearly a half mile ahead of the Centennials. Lige Montie summarized the race in his own words when he exclaimed that he and his brothers had “beat de Hillsdales dat was just back from Hingland.”

One person on shore was certain as fog on the Ecorse, Rouge and Detroit Rivers about the outcome of the race. Old Alec Cicotte, John’s father-in-law (John married Eliza Cicotte and raised a family of three sons and two daughters) who had almost reared the boys from babyhood knew how strong and skillful they were. The story, probably embellished from telling and retelling but containing a kernel of truth, has it that when the Montie brothers

won, old Alec sang and danced on the shore of the Ecorse River until he dropped from exhaustion.

On the day after the race, the four Monties were back on the Rouge River, wearing their blue-jean overalls and attending to their logging. On Sundays they would sit around old Alec Cicotte’s place near the Rouge River, wearing their Sunday clothes, their coats covered with medals. They won many other races, but they enjoyed talking about the one where they beat the Henley champions who had just returned from “Hingland” the most.



Muskat Love' Those Downriver Muskrat Dinners!



Trapping and eating muskrat or the “marsh hare” has been a Downriver tradition since the French settlers who came with Cadillac trapped them for fur and meat. The muskrat, considered an epicurean delicacy when correctly prepared, is one of the

cleanest of all animals, living on roots, herbs and marsh grasses.

Muskrat dinners were and are popular in the entire Downriver area. The *Cincinnati Times Star* once quoted an invitation that a Frenchman named Pete extended to people to visit his Grosse Pointe home. He told them that his “ole womans” would cook mushrat for them and it would be so good that they would say dat de mushrat is de fines’ fish w’at swim de lac.”

Many a young man growing up in Ecorse and all of the other Downriver communities remembers trapping muskrat and taking them to the restaurant of Sam Pappas to be expertly cooked and served. Gus Pappas, Sam’s son, has a colorful cache of muskrat stories from the days that he trapped them in Ecorse Creek and the Detroit River. Many Downriver French chefs have transformed preparing the plain muskrat roast into a gourmet exercise. In the Downriver tradition, the Ecorse Boat Club sponsored many muskrat dinners as fund raisers.

In February 1957, good news appeared on the gourmet front with the announcement of an Aquaba (muskrat) supper to be held

beginning at 4 p.m. on Friday, March 8 at the St. Francis Xavier school auditorium, Outer Drive at West Jefferson, Ecorse.

Sponsored by the St. Anne Rosary Altar Society, the supper provided an “eat treat” for muskrat supper fans who have little opportunity to enjoy the delicacy as prepared by Gene Maurice. A renowned French style chef, Maurice prepared the muskrat from a jealously guarded French-Indian recipe handed down through his family for several generations. Anyone who preferred fish instead of muskrat could order it when purchasing tickets a few days in advance of the supper.

Mrs. Maria Lambrix, president of the altar society, named Mrs. Russell Goodell and Mrs. Leo McCourt co-chairmen of the supper. Tickets were purchased from members and at the door. Reservations could be made by calling Mrs. Lambrix, DU-1-3118.

Seven years later St. Francis Xavier was still sponsoring muskrat dinners.

Again the St. Anne Rosary Altar Society and the Moms and Dads

Club of St. Francis Xavier parish sponsored an annual Muskrat and Fish Dinner Friday, February 28, 1964 in the school auditorium beginning at 4:30 p.m.

Mrs. Ella LaJoie was in charge of the kitchen and Mrs. Mary Layos of the dining room. They were assisted by men and women of both groups. On hand again this year as in the past in preparing this rare delicacy was Edwin Montry, James Clemens, Edward Lacross and Edward Stewart.

Mr. Stewart, president of the Moms and Dads club and Mrs. John Chrapko, president of the Altar Society, extended an invitation to all to attend the dinner. For those who were a little “leery” of trying the muskrat, there were plenty of fish and side dishes on hand.

Many Downriver residents, especially Catholics, are not aware of the reason they may eat muskrat on Fridays, since it obviously is not fish. In fact, this is the only region where muskrat is permitted to be served on Friday by the Catholic Church. A papal decree made this permissible back in the early 1700s, when during a

famine, the early French settlers were hard pressed to obtain food. They appealed to the Pope, who granted a special dispensation for the people from Port Huron to Toledo along the waterway, and in certain parts of Canada. This right has never been revoked.

A tradition in the Monroe branch of the Reau family has it that the dispensation dates from the winter of 1813, when their family members were fleeing their homes after the battle of the River Raisin. They fled across the ice to Guard Island in Maumee Bay. Father Gabriel Richard of St. Anne's in Detroit found them huddled together in a starving heap in some Native American huts. They begged Father Richard for a dispensation to eat muskrat on Friday. Father Richard granted them their dispensation and since then settlers in the Maumee Bay area have claimed the dispensation to eat muskrat only for themselves and not for the rest of the French of Monroe or Newport.

The Monroe Democrat of January 5, 1906, reported a gala muskrat banquet in Monroe on Thursday December 28th and Friday, December 29th. Over a thousand people attended, including muskrat gourmets from New York, Chicago and Seattle, Bismarck,

North Dakota; Saginaw, Bay City, Detroit, Ypsilanti, Mt. Clemens, Adrian, Blissfield, Monroe County, Toledo, Cleveland, Put-in-Bay and other Ohio points. There were 2,000 muskrats prepared and Commander Charles E. Greening, chairman of the committee reported receipts of \$1,500 and expenses of \$1,200.

Another Monroe version of the Muskrat legend says that Catholics petitioned the Pope in Rome to declare the muskrat to be a fish since it lives in and around water. They argued that eating muskrat on Friday would be an inexpensive way to fulfill the requirement of not eating meat. Local legend has it that several French trappers in Monroe asked their priest whether or not muskrat could be a fish. Puzzled, the priest called a town meeting and the citizens debated the biological classification of the muskrat long and loud. Finally, an old Frenchman stood up and declared, "The rat, he live in water- he no animal. The rat, he walk on land – he no fish. He mus' be vegetable."

Before the Second World War, countless Downriver housewives called on local trappers to provide muskrats throughout the season for regular Friday meals.

Bishop Kenneth Povish in Lansing declared the muskrat question resolved in 1956 when the church ruled that eating muskrat dated so far back that it had become an “immemorial custom,” as dictated by canon law. The bishop added that “anyone who could eat muskrat was doing penance worthy of the greatest saints.”

In 1987, the Archbishop of Detroit declared that muskrat could no longer be eaten as fish, a ruling that dismayed many local Catholics but did not deter them from eating muskrat dinners on Friday. Eating muskrat dinners is no longer tied in with fasting on Fridays, but Downriver Catholic Churches still hold muskrat dinners for parishioners and other muskrat gourmets. Protestant churches and secular enthusiasts also hold muskrat dinners.

The Kola Food Factory in Riverview is one of the Downriver Restaurants that service muskrat. Owner John Kolakowski is an avid hunter. In the mid 1980s after the United States Department of Agriculture closed down all Michigan muskrat farms, John came up with the idea of importing muskrats from Canada. His muskrat dishes are popular during Lent and all year around with many customers.

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St. Francis Muskrat Dinner for Four People

Muskrat can be roasted in tomato sauce, accompanied by cabbage and potatoes or apples and onions.

3-4 muskrats (all fat and glands removed)

1/2 lb bacon

1/2 bunch celery, chopped

4 onions, chopped

1/2 lb oleo

1/2 tsp cayenne pepper

salt

pepper

21 oz canned tomato soup with no water added.

Sauté' bacon, celery, onions, oleo, and cayenne pepper together for 10 minutes.

Put rats in bottom of a roaster.

Pour sautéed mixture over the rats, and then cover

with tomato soup.

Bake, covered, for 2 1/2 hours at 350 deg. F or until done.

Barbeque Muskrat

Yield: 1 batch

1 medium muskrat

Salt and water for soaking

1/4 cup chili powder

1/4 cup paprika

1 cup tomato puree

1/2 cup molasses

1/2 cup onion, grated

Salt and pepper

Cut muskrat into serving pieces and soak overnight in salt water to cover. Drain and dry. Dredge with mixture of paprika and chili powder. Place on grill over coals with a drip pan underneath. Mix remaining ingredients and correct seasoning. Baste meat frequently and turn often until tender.

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Little Ecorse (and River Rouge) Built and Launched Big Ships: The Story of the Great Lakes Engineering Works



The Dream Begins

Anthony Pessano came to Ecorse with a far-sighted dream of building a shipyard on the Detroit River across marshes where muskrat enjoyed full reign. An equally farsighted in the capitalistic sense – old Ecorse Frenchman sold him some of the marsh acres with one condition.

You maike one reservation in de lease, misteer Dee, Mai faithair

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an hees faithair before him shoot de muskrat in dais marsh, an' hiff I sell will you maike de reservation I be allow come on de lan' an shoot de muskrat? I tank you, sair.”

Officially, Anthony Pessano didn't record his answer, but the marshes continued to yield muskrat for the famous muskrat dinners that Downriver restaurants served for so many decades. It is probable that Pessano granted the Frenchman's request and that the Frenchman and his heirs kept part of the family property bordering the Detroit River for them selves and the muskrats.

Anthony Pessano's dream of a shipyard on the marshes also came true. In the 59 years between 1902 and 1961, The Great Lakes Engineering works ship yard built most of the large freighters in the Great Lakes fleet. Altogether it turned 303- some sources estimate 338- vessels, and at times employed as many as two thousand local workers when a multi-million dollar vessel needed to be built.

The Engineering Works constructed ships for the United States Government in World I and World War II and also built the cruise

ships *North American* and *South American*, the state ferry *Vacationland* later called the *Jack Dalton* and eleven sections of the New York Central tunnel under the Detroit River. The *Edmund Fitzgerald* is probably the most famous ore carrier that the Engineering Works built but the names of many of their other vessels such as *Carson J. Calloway*, *Ann Arbor No. 6*, and *Arthur B. Homer* earned niches in Great Lakes maritime history.

In 1961, The Great Lakes Steel Company in a move that some would call irony and others progress, bought the Great Lakes Engineering works for a sale price of \$3,500,000 as part of its expansion program. In an April 30, 1961 article in its pictorial magazine, the *Detroit News* lamented that “It’s the End of an Era”. Detroit had ceased to be a shipbuilding center with the sale of the Great Lakes Engineering Works and there was only one major Michigan shipyard left – the Defoe Shipbuilding Company in Bay City. Ships from other companies now handled most of the ore that Antonio Pessano and the American Shipbuilding Company had founded shipping empires to build vessels to transport up and down the lakes.

American steamship companies now bought parts or whole ships in cheaper yards abroad. The time honored tradition of shipbuilding along the Great Lakes was passing into history on ways figuratively greased by the very men who spent fortunes and careers building them. Part of the reasons for the demise of the shipyards was their very success- they priced themselves out of the market so to speak- and the stifling effects of the iron and steel and shipbuilding monopolies on competition and diversification.

The Iron and Steel Men

George Fink, a steel man from the East who founded Michigan Steel Corporation in Ecorse, Michigan in 1928 and expanded it to Great Lakes Steel in 1929, had a great deal in common with Antonio Pessano who founded Great Lakes Engineering Works, the company that Great Lakes Steel later would buy. For both men, the bottom line was controlling the production of iron and steel.

Like George Fink, Antonio C. Pessano was born in the East. The son of Antonio D. and Elizabeth Pessano, he greeted the world in Philadelphia on July 3, 1857. His parents provided Antonio with a broad education at Philadelphia High School, Franklin Institute of Technology and later with private tutors in mechanical drawing, chemistry, and mathematics. Shortly after his 33rd birthday in 1880, Antonio married Elizabeth A. Walker in Philadelphia on September 22 and was well on the way to establishing his business career.

Pessano first put his education to work. For seven years he worked at the foundry trades and among the machines and carried his tin dinner pail. Eventually he successfully managed the iron and steel shops at Cresson. Pessano's success at Cresson gained him industrial acclaim and he ultimately came to Detroit. He saw the Ecorse-River Rouge District as "a little Pittsburgh growing up." He worked to attract railroads to the area, to buy land cheaply so he could build them, and to develop enough coal storage facilities to tempt freighters to stop.

John Hubert Greusel wrote admiringly of Antonio Pessano in the

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Detroit Free Press of November 1905 that he headed a co-operative movement composed of owners of 500 shops throughout the country called the National Foundry Association. The goal of the National Foundry Association was business protection. The iron and steel trade could oftentimes be tumultuous because its workers were very independent, earned high wages and insisted on collective bargaining. They were devoted to their craft, but quick to protest against poor working conditions. As Greusel put it:

Working in front of roaring furnaces, breathing fumes and handling burdens of iron or steel is a life that kills. It takes a strong man to meet these fellows in a controversy. Pessano is the man.

The owners of the 500 companies of the National Foundry Association depended on Pessano to keep the iron and steelworkers happy and productive. On several occasions Pessano's grasp of the issues, his common sense and firmness helped prevent serious labor troubles.

By 1902, Pessano had learned mechanical drawing, technical

engineering, and mathematics. He had mastered building engines, ships, and took out a score of patents for his improvements in power transmission. In 1901-1902 he moved to Michigan to take over the former Samuel F. Hodge & Company. Samuel F. Hodge, founder of Samuel F. Hodge & Company, marine engine works, immigrated to America in 1849 from Cornwall, England after working as a blacksmith for several years.

After a brief stay in Toledo, he came to Detroit to work on the construction of the fortifications at Fort Wayne. After Fort Wayne was completed he worked in a blacksmith shop at De Graff & Kendrick's Iron Works, at a locomotive works and sold mining machinery for Lake Superior mines. In 1863 with some partners, he organized a firm of his own to manufacture engines and machinery. Hodge served as president of his company until his death in April 1884 when his son Harry S. Hodge assumed the presidency.

The company was located at the corner of Atwater and Rivard Streets in Detroit and boasted several progressive innovations for its time. The main buildings included a foundry and blacksmith

shop, a machine shop and equipment included an electric crane, and a surface railroad. A library containing texts books, statistics and reports, drawings and blueprints pertaining to the marine engineering trade was located in the private office of the president.

In the approximately thirty years the company had been in business it produced over 125 marine engines nearly all of which were in service on the lakes, as well as repair work and stationary engines. The company made the first triple expansion engine on the lakes for the *Roumania* and installed it in October 1886 as well as the engine for the *Colgate Hoyt*, the first of Captain Alexander McDougall's whaleback steamers built at West Superior. The company built other whaleback engines, including the one in the steamer *Wetmore* that crossed the Atlantic to Liverpool and the engine for the excursion steamer *Christopher Columbus* of Chicago World's Fair fame.

The Ships that Great Lakes Engineering Works Built

In 1905, *Beeson's Marine Directory of the Northwestern Lakes* reported that Great Lakes Engineering Works was busy building eight large lake freighters, six of them at Detroit and two at St. Clair, Michigan. They were also building a drill scow equipped with special machinery for the Dunbar & Sullivan Co. of Buffalo, New York.

And for their own use they are building a large steel floating dry dock, 600 feet long by 105 in width and 30 inch depth with a capacity of 4,000 tons, gross weight.

Great Lakes Engineering Works advertised its maritime services in *Beeson's* as well:

GREAT LAKES ENGINEERING WORKS

Designers and BUILDERS of Steel Ships For Passenger and Freight Service

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Marine Boilers a Specialty Semi-Steel Propeller wheels

Made Either Sectional or solid Hydraulic Dredging Machine

Write for Catalogue Detroit, Michigan

The Great Lakes Engineering Works also did custom refitting makeovers on already existing boats. In June 1906, Mont. Tennes and his backers paid the Great Lakes Engineering Works \$20,000 for the steamer *John R. Stirling* that they planned to use as a floating pool room to compete with the *City of Traverse*.

The *Stirling* was formerly the freight steamer *Vanderbilt* that had traded in the package freight business between Chicago and Buffalo. Tennes and his backers estimated that they would have to pay out another ten thousand dollars before the *Stirling* was ready for service. They planned to add a cabin on the upper deck and make other changes so that the ship could accommodate 1,500 people. The owners had secured a landing place for the *Stirling* in the Chicago River east of the Rush Street bridge and Captain George Tebo, lately in the vessel fueling business on the Chicago

River, was to be master of the J.R. *Stirling*.

The 356-foot *R.W. England* was the first ship that Great Lakes Engineering Works launched in 1904. Later the *England* became the *Frank Seither* and still later the *Fontana*. The *Fontana* stayed in service until 1960 when she was sold to Marine Salvage of Port Colborne and scrapped at Hamilton, Ontario.

Great Lakes Engineering Works launched its last ship on November 7, 1959, when the *Arthur B. Homer*, at 730-feet the largest ship on the Great Lakes, rumbled sideways down the ways while an estimated 10,000 spectators cheered. The *Arthur B. Homer* was the heaviest ship side-launched since the ill-fated *Great Eastern*, a 693-foot iron vessel was launched in the Thames River at London, England on January 31, 1858 and was the largest ship permissible under Corps of Engineers regulations for the Soo Locks and St. Lawrence Seaway.

The *Homer* cost more than \$7 million dollars and was the last of a three year-three freighter construction project at Great Lakes Engineering. The *Homer's* sister ships were the 729-foot *Edmund*

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Fitzgerald, launched on July 7, 1958 and the other the 689-foot *Herbert C. Jackson* which was completed on February 19, 1959.

The Great Lakes Engineering works developed the system of prefabrication and final assembly that enabled shipwrights to build the three vessels in three years.

The ships that Great Lakes Engineering Works built and launched in between the *England* and the *Homer* were just as distinctive as the *William G. Mather's* longevity it was delivered in 1906 and scrapped in 1996- and the *Homer's* length.

In November 1904, the Great Lakes Engineering Works yard in Ecorse launched its second vessel, the large car ferry *Detroit*, build for the Michigan Central Railroad to maintain uninterrupted service between Detroit and Windsor. The *Detroit Free Press* account of the launching said that the *Detroit* took to the water in style, "sending a giant wave across the marsh to the accompaniment of two thousand cheers and a shrill salute from every steam whistle within hearing distance."

Vice- President of Great Lakes Engineering Works, George H.

Russel, escorted the car ferry's sponsor, Miss Elizabeth Walker Pessano, the daughter of Antonio C. Pessano, president and general manager of Great Lakes Engineering to the launching stand. Accompanying her were Miss Helen Pessano, Miss Helen Russel, Miss Catherine Russel, Miss Florence Russel, Miss Grace Pessano, Miss Alexandrine Sibley, Miss Dorothea Sibley, Miss Fredericka Sibley, Miss Mildred Plum and Miss Catherine Moore. On the launching stand were A. C. Pessano and George H. Russel, representing the builders; Capt. F.D. Harriman, Joseph Boyer, H.C. Potter, Robert E. Plum, Walter S. Russel, Senator Alger, William Livingston, president of the Lake Carrier's association; J.C. Hutchins; Captain J.R. Innes of the Michigan Central Car Ferry System; Captain Harry Innes and J.A. Westley, chief engineer of the Michigan Central Car Ferry Fleet.

Miss Elizabeth Pessano broke the bottle of sparkling champagne against the bow of the ferry and said, "I christen thee Detroit." The big ship plunged into the water and another Great Lakes Engineering ship joined the Great Lakes fleet.

The *Jacob T. Kopp*, launched on December 7, 1907, was named

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for a prominent banker and businessman of York, Pennsylvania and constructed to the specifications of the Pennsylvania Steamship Company. Its double water bottom foreshadowed the idea of the "unsinkable" Titanic, just five years in the future. The *Kopp* was a bulk freight carrier, 500 feet long over all, 480 feet length of keel, 54 feet beam and 30 feet deep. She was built on the improved arch construction principles, having double water bottom and vertical side tanks that extended upward from the water bottom. This permitted a large amount of ballast water when the steamer ran light and provided a decided advantage in case of storms. One week from her launch, the steamer's engines and boilers and all auxiliary machines had been completely installed and the boilers were under steam. This was a record pace for the time.

During World War I, the United States Shipping Board ordered at least 60 cargo ships from Great Lakes Engineering Works to transport ore from Lake Superior to the voracious Midwestern blast furnaces that produced steel needed for the war effort. The cargo ships also transported grain and other products between the

lakes and some were sold to other countries to become part of their merchant marine fleets. The *Crawl Keys*, built in Ecorse in 29 days in 1918, was a cargo ship that traveled the lakes.

Bert Belky, a shipbuilder for fifty years, lived in River Rouge. He worked as a riveter and when he was 65, he retired and went to work for Fleetwood, a local company. During World War I, Belky was the world champion riveter. In those days welding was used and there was a drive on to see who could rivet the fastest all over the world. Belky won by driving 1,675 rivets a day. From the Rouge-Ecorse Great Lakes Engineering shipyard, he traveled all over the country building ships and he even helped build the Detroit-Windsor tunnel.

Belky kept copies of “The Great Lakes Record”, a small magazine published by and for the employees of the Great Lakes Engineering Works. The February 1920 issue recorded these events as happening at the yard.

A succession of jobs has been keeping the repair department at the Ecorse yard going at top speed. As soon as one ship was repaired

and removed from dry dock another ship took its place...for the opening of navigation is not far off and the work must be finished in quick time.

In World War II, the government commissioned the Great Lakes Engineering Works to build an entire fleet of ore carriers – the largest in the world at the time- to rush ore from the Lake Superior ranges to the lower lakes steel mills to meet wartime steel needs. The shipyard built at least ten ore carriers and three lakers to help in the war effort. Many of the cargo ships that Great Lakes Engineering had built before and after World War I turned up in World War II merchant marine fleets. The *Lake Ellithorpe* was sold to Britain and eventually torpedoed, as was the *Craycroft* under her new name, *Fred W. Green*.

The *Edmund Fitzgerald*-Heading Home



The tragic fate of the *Edmund Fitzgerald* has captured the hearts and imaginations of thousands of people, including the balladeer Gordon Lightfoot, who immortalized her in his 1976 song, “The Wreck of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*.”

When the *Fitzgerald* was launched on June 7, 1958 at the Ecorse Yard of the Great Lakes Engineering works everyone thought that the launching would make a big splash. From its very beginnings, *The Fitzgerald* seemed to generate superlatives.

The construction of the *Fitzgerald* created 1,000 jobs at the Great Lakes Engineering Works. The Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company of Milwaukee, Wisconsin paid eight million dollars to buy the privilege of calling the naming the *Fitzgerald* after its chairman.

At one point, the *Fitzgerald* was called the Queen of the Lakes because of her size. and because of her size- 8,500 tons – the shipbuilders thought that the *Fitzgerald* would throw a wave that would flood part of the Great Lakes Engineering Works and soak many of the thousands of spectators who had come to watch the launching. Instead, the *Fitzgerald* slid naturally into the water with only a nominal displacement of water. Mrs. Edmund Fitzgerald, wife of the chairman of Northwestern Mutual Life, cracked the traditional bottle of champagne over the bow.

A family from River Rouge, Mayor and Mrs. John F. McEwan vividly recalled the launching of the *Fitzgerald* as a very special day for them. Several days before the launching their three-year-old son John had been hit by a speeding truck and had to spend several days in the hospital. He was discharged from the hospital

just as the *Fitzgerald* was due to begin its career. Mayor and Mrs. McEwan wanted to do something for John to celebrate his homecoming so the entire family went down to the foot of Great Lakes Avenue and watched the *Fitzgerald* being launched.

As the *Edmund Fitzgerald* slid into the Detroit River at 12:40 p.m. on June 7, 1958, whistles blew loudly from yachts, sailboats, outboard boats, fishing boats, scows, tugs and freighters lining the waterfront to salute the launching. Airliners, military planes and two helicopters hovered overhead. When the launching was completed, the tug *Maryland* moved full speed ahead to keep the *Fitzgerald* from swinging against the banks of the launching basin. The *Maryland* quickly snubbed the *Fitzgerald* to shore where she remained until August when her cabins would be completed and her smokestack installed.

Her service years proved that the Great Lakes Engineering Company had built the *Fitzgerald* well. The only major work ever done on her was the installation of a bow thruster in 1969 and converting her to oil fuel and fitting automated boiler controls during the winter of 1971-1972. The *Fitzgerald* set a number of

cargo records over the years and was a favorite of ship watches because of her attractive appearance and the antics of her longtime master, Captain Peter Pulcer, who consistently entertained anyone he thought was watching the him and his ship.

On November 6, 1975, the *Fitzgerald* passed the Ecorse and River Rouge shores headed toward Minnesota. She left Silver Bay, Minnesota about 1:30 p.m. Sunday carrying a cargo of 30,000 tons of taconite. She cleared Superior, Wisconsin on November 9, 1975, bound for Great Lakes Steel Corporation in Ecorse, just a few yards away from where she had been launched. On the night of November 10, approximately 17 miles from the entrance to Whitefish Bay, she encountered heavy Lake Superior weather and sank with all 29 of her crew, including Captain Ernest McSorley of Toledo, Ohio, who had commanded her since 1972. Later, the broken hull of the *Fitzgerald* was located in 530 feet of water, the bow and stern sections lying close together.

Back at her birthplace on the Detroit River, Mayor McEwan and his son John stared at the River, and watching the *Fitzgerald* gliding into her home port in wistful imagination's eye. Gordon

Lightfoot etched the *Fitzgerald's* epitaph on the minds and hearts of many when he sang:

In a musty old hall in Detroit they prayed In the Maritime Sailor's Cathedral,

The church bell chimed 'til it rang 29 times For each man on the *Edmund Fitzgerald*.

The literal and figurative bells rang in Ecorse and River Rouge as well.

The Dream Continues

Many of the 303 or 338 vessels, depending on sources and how you tabulate total shipbuilding from the Detroit and Ashtabula works, that the Great Lakes Engineering Works had built did not cease plying the Great Lakes when Great Lakes Steel bought the company in 1961.

The *Detroit News* mourned the end of a shipbuilding era, but the

era continued in a different form. The story of the *Sparkman D. Foster*, formerly known as the *Hoover & Mason*, is illustrative. Two years after Great Lakes Engineering closed its shop doors, the steamer *Sparkman D. Foster* was towed from her winter berth in Detroit at the foot of Mt. Elliot. The Browning Line owned the *Sparkman D. Foster* and sold the steamer to Marine Salvage Ltd. of Port Colborne, Ontario, broker and scrap dealer. The sale of the *Foster* was subject to Maritime Commission approval because the transfer was to a foreign flag. Before she was scrapped the 524 feet long and 9,800 ton capacity *Foster* contributed and received parts of other ships. Her hull and engine were original Ecorse products and her conveyor boom and A-frame were removed and installed in the barge *Marquis Roan* that was seen frequently in Detroit. In 1956 the pilothouse of the scrapped freighter *B.F. Jones* was installed on the *Foster*.

The *Foster* also contributed to Great Lakes history for over fifty years. She came out in the Tomlinson fleet with the unusual double name of *Hoover & Mason*. For 23 years she was a bulk ore and grain carrier, but in 1928 she was sold to Boland & Cornelius,

converted to a self-unloader and renamed *E.M. Young*. The following year she was renamed *Col. E.M. Young*. Browning Lines bought her in 1953, reconverted her to a straight-deck bulk carrier and brought her out again in 1954 as the *Foster*- named for Detroit's best-known admiralty lawyer. The *Foster*'s life history paralleled that of many Great Lakes Engineering vessels and illustrated the longevity and durability of their product.

The saga of the last ship that the Great Lakes Engineering Works built, the *Arthur B. Homer*, also attested to the durability of Great Lakes Engineering construction. The *Homer* slid down the ways of the Great Lakes Engineering Works in Ecorse on November 7, 1959. At the time of its launching the carrier was the biggest ship on the Great Lakes and its launching the largest side launching in maritime history. The *Homer* was the largest ship ever to be launched sideways and out measured the *Edmund Fitzgerald*, then the Queen of the Lakes, by one foot.

An estimated 8,000 people gathered at the Great Lakes Engineering Works to watch the *Homer* kiss the Detroit River and cheered "there she goes" as she rumbled sideways down the ways

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at 12:22 p.m. When the *Homer* splashed into the Detroit River many people who had crowded too close to the launching slip were soaked from the spray which splashed almost as high as the ship. Several workers who had helped construct the ship stood on the afterdeck and waved their metal hats as she smacked into the water, her colorful pennants fluttering madly. Mrs. Arthur B. Homer, wife of the president of Bethlehem Steel, owner of the *Homer*, smashed the traditional bottle of champagne on the prow and said, "I christen thee Arthur B. Homer. Good Sailing."

The ship started to move and whistles blared from long idle ore steamer quartered in the Great Lakes yard and from freighters that had anchored in the Detroit River to watch the launching. Several tugs and smaller boats hovered around the *Arthur B. Homer*.

The *Homer*'s reign as the largest ship on the Great Lakes proved to be brief. In 1960, another 730-footer, the *Edward Ryerson* was launched in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. Paradoxically, more than a decade later, another Wisconsin shipyard, Fraser Shipyards, Inc. of Superior, Wisconsin, lengthened the *Homer*. The *Homer* entered the shipyards in late September 1975 and in October 1975, Fraser

drew up plans to expand her.

First a new midbody was fabricated, and then on October 26, after the *Homer* had been cut in two near midships, the work began.

The stern half of the ore freighter was floated out of the dry dock and the new midbody floated in. The forward half of the ship was firmly ballasted on the keel blocks in the floor of the dry dock. Once the 75-foot wide and 39-footdeep midbody was positioned, the stern was winched back into the dry dock and aligned properly with the new midbody. Then the dock was pumped dry and the stern and midbody sections lowered into a position level with the bow.

In the next few weeks, the workers welded the midbody to the bow, and later the stern to the midbody. Special steel straps were welded the full length of the ship's bottom and to the spar deck outboard of the hatches to provide added longitudinal strength.

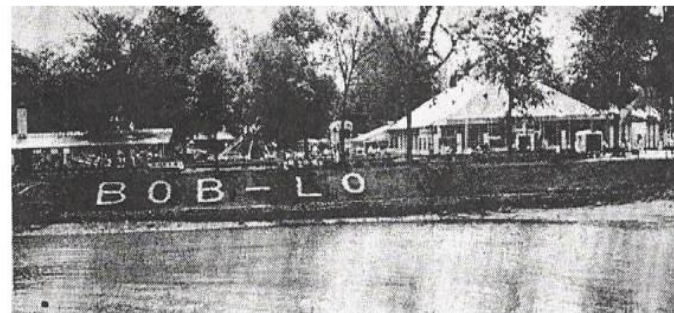
The installation of the 960-foot midbody section in the 730-foot *Homer*, made it the largest American Flag vessel ever to be lengthened and workers finished the job in a little more than two

months. Fraser also increased the *Homer's* cargo capacity from 27,000 gross tons of iron ore to 31,200 and installed a bow thruster to improve her maneuverability.

For three decades, the *Homer* carried iron ore from upper lake ports to Taconite Harbor, Minnesota to Bethlehem's Burns Harbor plant on the southern shore of Lake Michigan and to the company's Lackawanna, New York plant on Lake Erie. She labored until the early 1980s when she laid up in Erie, Pennsylvania. In December 1986 her owner towed her to Port Colborne for dismantling. This last ship that Great Lakes Engineering built symbolized Antonio Pessano's vision of iron and steel and ships transporting the ore to make that iron and steel. Antonio Pessano was a nineteenth century industrial baron building his shipping company on Andrew Carnegie's idea of controlling the sources of supply, thus controlling its manufacture and pricing. Pessano also advocated pride in workmanship and in his workers.

The story of the Great Lakes Engineering vessels can be used as a metaphor for the adaptability and ingenuity of America's maritime

tradition and a practical application of the qualities that Great Lakes founder Antonio Pessano used to establish his business. Hopefully, the 21st Century will produce an Antonio Pessano and a renewal and redirection of the Great Lakes shipbuilding industry.



The Bob-Lo Boats and Bob-Lo Island

The Bob-Lo Boats and Bob-Lo Island

Frank E. Kirby designed the *Columbia*, built in Wyandotte and Detroit in 1902, and the *Ste. Claire*, built in Toledo and launched on May 7, 1910 and entering service later that year. The *Ste. Claire* was named after Lake St. Clair and the St. Clair River,

revealing the influence of explorer Robert de La Salle who paddled through the lake and river during the feast of Ste. Clair. The *Columbia*, named after Christopher Columbus, celebrated her 100th birthday in 2002. She is the oldest steamer in the United States with the exception of ships classed as ferries.

Like all North American steamers, the *Columbia* and *Ste. Claire* are propeller driven. The *Ste. Claire* is 197 feet long, 65 feet wide and 14 feet deep. Her tonnage is 870 gft and 507 nrt, and her engine is triple expansion steam with 1083 horsepower. She can carry 2,500 people and she served 81 years on a single run – a record unequalled in U.S. maritime history. Built in Wyandotte and Detroit in 1902, the *Columbia* is the older of the two Bob-Lo boats. She is 216 feet long overall, and was last licensed to carry 2,500 people. She has been designated a National Historical Landmark, the government's premier designation for historical resources. Both need restoration, and currently efforts are being made to save them and put them back on the Detroit River.

The histories of the *Columbia* and *Ste. Claire* are intertwined with an island in the Detroit River that generations of twentieth century

people know as Bob-Lo Island. In the early 1700s, French priests established a Catholic mission on the island for the Huron Indians and the French christened the island Bois Blanc after the beech tress which covered the island, the “island of the white wood.” English tongues could not pronounce Bois Blanc correctly, so they corrupted the name to Bob-Lo until in 1949, the island became officially known as Bob-Lo Island.

Bois Blanc, three miles long and one-half a mile wide, is located about eighteen miles downriver from downtown Detroit and is a five-minute ferry ride from Amherstburg, Ontario. In 1796, the British established a military post at Fort Malden in Amherstburg, and thousands of Indians from all tribes, journeying to trade furs with the British, camped on the island. For a time, Tecumseh, the Shawnee leader aided the British in the War of 1812, made Bois Blanc his headquarters and used it as a base to attack the American mainland.

In 1839, a lighthouse was built on the southern side of Bois Blanc to guide ships into the narrow straits behind it. Captain James Hackett was hired as lighthouse keeper and owned fourteen acres

of the island on a life-time lease. In the 1850s, Colonel Arthur Rankin, M.P., bought the remaining 225 acres of the island from the Canadian government for \$40.00.

During the Civil War, escaping slaves used Bois Blanc Island as a station stop on the Underground Railroad route to Canada. They landed on the beach and rested for a few hours or a few days before continuing their journey to Amherstburg and a new life of freedom in Canada.

In 1869, Colonel Rankin sold Bois Blanc to his son, Arthur McKee Rankin who starred in the New York theatre and belonged to New York's fashionable set. He built himself an elaborate estate on the island, stocked the grounds with deer, wild turkey, and elk, built extensive stables and treated his New York friends to Bois Blanc hospitality. Eventually his stage career ended and he was forced to sell the island to partners Colonel John Atkinson and James A. Randall. Colonel Atkinson's heirs sold the island to what then was the Detroit, Belle Isle and Windsor Ferry Company. In 1898, the Bob-Lo Excursion Line was created and the island developed as a resort. At the onset, the attraction of Bob-Lo was a

day on the Detroit River and a picnic in the pastoral beauty of the Island. Henry Ford commissioned Albert Kahan to design and a dance hall, which in 1903 was billed as the world's second largest. A carousel provided music and rides.

The boat ride to Bob-Lo contributed greatly to the island's mystique. The boarding dock in Detroit started out at the foot of Woodward, but moved to behind Cobo Hall. The Bob-Lo boat also stopped at Downriver communities like Ecorse, Wyandotte, and Trenton. The boarding dock eventually moved to Gibraltar in 1991.

It took just over an hour to voyage to Bob-Lo Island and Captain Bob-Lo and many bands and other entertainers made the voyage seem as brief as a toot of the Bob-Lo boat whistle. The bands on the second deck dance floor changed with the times – from Mrs. Walpole's turn of the century music to the 1940s big bands to the Latin Counts of the 1980s.

The Brownings hired Captain Bob-Lo, alias Joe Short, from the Ringling Brothers Circus to entertain the children on the Bob-Lo

cruise and he did just that between 1953 and 1973. He always wore an oversized hat, binoculars and handed out coloring books and small toys to the children on the trips. Captain Bob-Lo worked on the Bob-Lo boat until 1974 when he retired at age 90. He died in 1975, still singing the praises of Bob-Lo.

There were also moonlight cruises on the Bob-Lo boats. To teenagers and older romantics, the combination of the soft summer breezes, moonlight on the river, and that special person next to you made an unforgettable experience. Often, the Bob-Lo boat would just travel down the river to Bob-Lo Island, arrive there about 10:00 p.m. and turn around, but that was enough for an unforgettable evening.

The American government made an unprecedented exception for draft-age men during World War I. The law said that draft age men could not leave the country (Bob-Lo is a Canadian island) but officials decided that it would be too much of a hardship for young Michigan men to be forbidden to go to Bob-Lo with their sweethearts during the summer. The Great Depression of the 1930s stopped the national economy in its tracks and the Bob-Lo

excursions as well. Then Franklin Delano Roosevelt's 1933 inauguration brought new hope and returning prosperity to the nation and in 1935, the Bob-Lo boats resumed their river runs.

Financial trouble loomed for The Detroit and Windsor Ferry Company again in 1949. Arthur John Reaume, the mayor of Windsor, suggested that the island be turned into a national park, but the Browning family of Grosse Point, owners of a steamship line, bought the island and the boats.

The Brownings turned Bob-Lo into an amusement park, building rides, roller coasters, and a funhouse. They installed a Ferris wheel, a dance hall, and an antique car exhibit. They brought in 300 exotic animals for a zoo, leading off with Socrates II, a giraffe. They built a mini railroad for rides around the island.

In 1961, the Brownings replaced the island landing dock with the deck of the freighter *Queenston*, sunk in place. In 1973, they built the Thunder Bolt roller coaster of steel and it was one of the largest in the country. Another popular ride was the flue, a log carrying riders down a water slide. In 1975, the Brownings

restored the original 48-horse carousel from 1878, and it delighted children and adults alike until it was sold off piece by piece at auction in 1990.

The Brownings sold Bob-Lo Island in 1979 and it passed through the hands of several owners, including the AAA Michigan. Rowdiness on the boats and on the island in the 1980s caused the crowds to keep diminishing, and when Canadian police and immigration officials spent a day in 1987 rounding up members of the Outlaws motorcycle gang, the end of a 90-year era drew nearer. In January 1996, the steamers *Columbia* and *Ste. Claire*, which had carried as many as 800,000 visitors to Bob-Lo Island every year in the glory years in the 1960s and 1970s, were auctioned off.

Last Trip on the *Columbia*

Jo Santoro Cialkowski, a life-long resident and historian of the downriver area, captures what the Bob-Lo boats have meant to thousands of people. She recalls the days of her youth in the 1920s and 1930s when a day at Bob-Lo was like the Fourth of July and

Christmas together. The *Columbia* docked at the foot of Southfield Road and West Jefferson at that time, and she and her friends and family waited impatiently on the dock straining to hear the *Columbia's* whistle. She tapped her foot to Finzell's live band playing "Up A Lazy River." She remembered the picnics, and games, riding her favorite pony on the merry-go-round and screaming as she rode the cantankerous "Whip". In her teens, she remembered dancing at the Bob-Lo Island dance hall. As the *Columbia* neared the Ecorse Port, she recalled men taking off their straw hats to dance with the ladies as everyone waltzed on the *Columbia's* deck all the way back to the Ecorse port.

Jo concluded her remembrance of the last cruise of the *Columbia* in 1991: "At the dock, my eyes lingered for a long while as the *Columbia* horn blared "good night" and drifted off into the night, not knowing then that it was a lonely goodbye. Waving adieu with both arms, I walked away from the park and headed for home. It is my fondest hope that the *SS Columbia*, queen of the Detroit River, will be off to the seas again."

Fate of Frank Kirby's Last Two Steamers?

Both the *Columbia* and the *Ste. Claire* are National Historical Landmarks, because they are among the last steamers of their type on the Great Lakes. *Columbia's* machinery survives almost intact from 1902 which is quite rare in Great Lakes ship history. The *Columbia* and the *Ste. Clair* also are an important part of the individual historical memory of countless people in the Detroit River region. Both boats made their last trips to and from Bob-Lo on Labor Day 1991. Since then their story includes Michigan weather and rust, crud, holes, wear and tear, and even thieves.

The Friends of the Bob-Lo Boat *Columbia* is a non-profit organization that is attempting to acquire the *Columbia* and restore her for excursions on the river. If the *Columbia* is restored to her former grandeur and returns to service, she will be the last classic excursion steamer in service in America and the last operating ship of her kind in the world. As the Friends of the Bob-Lo Boat *Columbia* say, "Bob-Lo Amusement park may be gone forever, but the fun, excitement, and beauty of a trip on the river aboard a turn of the century steamboat will be available once again."

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A non-profit organization also owned the *Ste. Claire* with the goal of restoring her until a Cleveland businesswoman, Diane Evon, bought her in 2001. Evon too, has the goal of restoring the *Ste. Claire* for some kind of public use. She arranged to have the *Ste. Claire* towed to drydock in Toledo where its hull was repaired. She had other restoration work done and the ship spent September and October of 2002 in Toledo as a Halloween attraction. Eventually, she visualizes the *St. Claire* as a floating restaurant, dinner theater or conference center along the Detroit River or on Lake Erie.

The restoration of the *Ste. Claire* and the *Columbia* will be a race against the ravages of time and the necessity of buying enough time to raise sufficient funds to restore them. By all accounts, Frank E. Kirby was a modest, unassuming man who did not seek public acclaim, although the scores of ships that he designed won him well-deserved acclaim. Passing years fade memories of Frank E. Kirby, but two of his steamers still survive and can still be reclaimed from the ravages of time. Frank E. Kirby would immodestly back the effort to restore the *Ste. Clair* and *Columbia*.

Chapter Ten

Ecorse Schools

School Scenes in Ecorse History



Cornerstone Laid For New Bunche School

A group of eager children look over their new school, the Ralph

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Bunche School, nearly completed in June 1953.

On Tuesday, June 2, 1953, formal cornerstone ceremonies were held and city officials and members of the contracting firms attended.

In the background, left to right, are Councilman John Bauer, Superintendent of Schools Ralph Brant, Mayor Louis Parker and Councilman Albert Buday.

Kindergarten Children Mother Baby Chicks



Mrs. Finn and School One kindergarten pupils (left to right) Terry Stapleton, Gaven McFarlane, Raymond Sablosky, Billy Subotich and Susan Sluka watch the chicks hatch.

In late March 1955, Mrs. Lynne Finn, kindergarten teacher at School One, purchased 60 fertilized eggs with money that her pupils had brought to school. Every day for three weeks the children cared for the eggs, taking them from the incubator to cool, and turning them twice a day to prevent the chicks from becoming deformed. Each egg was printed with a child's name and placed in an incubator to hatch.

On the seventh day the children candled the eggs and saw the chick embryos inside. On the fourteenth day they used the candling method to observe how the embryos had grown.

The children celebrated the "birthdays" of 38 chicks the first three days of school during the week of April 1, 1955, and each "coming out" party was a noisy gathering as the children's happy squeals mingled with the cheeping of the chicks. The excitement in the kindergarten room spread throughout School One and the

children in the other lower classes visited the kindergarten room to watch the baby chicks hatch from their shells.

Mrs. Finn decided to continue the chick hatching as a class project and planned to keep the chicks in the kindergarten room. She hadn't yet decided what to do with them if they grew to full size.

St. Francis High School

St. Francis Students Travel



The senior students from St. Francis Xavier High School in Ecorse prepare to leave for Lansing in May 1953. They planned to visit the state capitol and other interesting places in Lansing.



About forty St. Francis High School students visited the main banking building of the Security Bank in Ecorse in November

1952 to observe its operations. Shown are members of a class in Economics. Left to right Loretta Bella, Roberta Markle, Mary Margaret Ribley, Bank Senior Vice President Clarence Meade, Mrs. Blanche Hunt, Geraldine Wolan, Rena Grevalo, Mary Kay Hollobaugh, Jeanette Pisch, Gloria Gibbons, Rosalie Cosentino, Patricia Labadie. Each fall the Security Bank arranged for students to visit and get a thorough briefing on operating methods.

Old Time Ecorse High School Teachers. Do you recognize any of them?



An Ecorse Bell



In July 1949, Ed McGee who lived at 26 E. Charlotte in Ecorse, harbored an unusual object in his back yard. The unusual object was one of the city's oldest, largest and loudest bells, so loud that some Ecorse old timers said that when the bell rang it could be heard all of the way to Wyandotte.

The bell originally hung in the old Ecorse City Hall at High and Labadie Streets. Ed bought the hall last year for wrecking

purposes and the bell came as part of the package.

After tearing up a section of flooring and hiring a crane, Ed managed to move the bell to his home on Charlotte Street.

Weighing more than half a ton, the bell was cast of nickel and bronze by the Northville Michigan Bell and Foundry Company, which had long since gone out of business. Ed and Ecorse old timers estimated the bell to be about sixty years old. It rang in countless Ecorse Fourth of July holidays, fires, and it called hundreds of city councils to meetings. The only older bell in Ecorse belonged to St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church.

The Downriver Historical Society was interested in purchasing the bell and giving it a suitable inscription. The members wanted to mount the bell in the City Park or on the library lawn.

Ed McGee thought that would be a noble way to treat the old bell. "I sure would hate to see it melted down and sold for scrap," he said.

The school bell stands in front of Ecorse High School at the corner of Outer Drive and Seventh Street and occupies a place of honor and a place of history in the community. The bell weighs more than 1,000 pounds and it hung for 42 years at Ecorse School One, High and Labadie, which was the only school in the village of Ecorse. It called generations of Ecorse young people to school, but in 1952, school officials decided that the bell was too heavy for the aging building and ordered it removed as a safety precaution.

The bell was removed from School One during the summer of 1952 and rather than melt it down, Ecorse school officials at the time decided to preserve it and to mount it on a high concrete base in front of the high school.

Going to School in Ecorse by Glenn Hunt



1971 - SCHOOL ONE - Ecorse, Michigan - 1972

Glenn Hunt, former teacher at Ecorse High School, researched and compiled many of the facts about early education in Ecorse. He said that some of the oldest Ecorse citizens recalled their parents mentioning a log school located near the shore line of the Detroit

River at the foot of what is now Labadie Street, where French instead of English was the language of learning. A few other old citizens recalled a small frame building that stood at the corner of West Jefferson and White Street which served as a school in the 1860s.

In 1871 a small frame building was put up on Labadie near High Street and a few years later it was moved across the street and located on the property where School One stood. The original School One was torn down in 1911 and replaced by an eight room brick structure on which it was possible to read the inscription “Ecorse High School,” over the entrance when it was School One elementary school. The new school building was completed in 1912 and during the months it was being built, school was conducted in the band hall on White Street and in the council chambers of the original city hall that was just across the street on Labadie.

In 1916, ground was broken for a new school on Josephine Street, which was called School Two. Another addition to School Two was completed in 1921. School Three, located on Sixth Street near

Southfield, was completed in the spring of 1923.

In 1927, the new high school building on Seventh and Outer Drive was completed. In the fall of 1927, the 11th grade was added to the system and in 1928, the 12th grade was added. In 1928, work was also started on a new addition to the high school.

The school population in Ecorse was increasing and by 1938 it was necessary to build a new school. Work began on a modern building on 12th Street. Claude J. Miller had died before the school opened and at the dedication, the new school was given the name of the Claude J. Miller School as a fitting tribute to a man who had devoted many years of his life to the development of the Ecorse School system and community.

The Ecorse schools have known many fine principals and superintendents. Fred Cody, brother of Frank Cody, who later taught in Detroit; Edward Fox who left school teaching to enter real estate; and William Harris who played a large part in organizing the first football team in Ecorse were just a few. Newman Smith was principal of the Ecorse Schools in 1912 when

the second School One was being built. Louis Hawkins followed him, but resigned after a few years to practice law. Frank O'Boyle, later a Detroit attorney, was principal of School One in 1914.

In 1915, Claude J. Miller became principal of School One. During his years of service from 1915 to 1939, Mr. Miller saw the Ecorse School system grow from a ten grade to a twelve grade system and from one small building to five. In 1917, Mr. Miller assumed the duties of superintendent of Ecorse Schools and Miss Helen McTaggart, a teacher in the system, was appointed principal of the high school. In 1923, Miss McTaggart resigned and John Davis became principal of the high school, a post that he held for 25 years.

In the fall of 1939, Arthur J. Erickson, formerly principal of the Michigan State Normal High School and superintendent of the Ypsilanti Public Schools, was chosen as the new superintendent of the Ecorse schools. Superintendent Erickson contributed much to the development of the curriculum as well as to the building up of the athletic plants, and under his supervision, plans were made to build another school to meet the needs of the rapidly increasing

population. Much of the success of the Ecorse school system can be attributed to the tireless efforts of a fine staff of principals, many of whom served for over a decade. These include John David whose leadership extended over a quarter of a century and he gave Ecorse one of the finest high schools in the state.

Miss Jessie Munroe served as principal of School One for more than 20 years and Richard Evans, principal at School Three, was a man of outstanding executive ability. Benjamin Goodell, principal of the Claude J. Miller School, capably handled many difficult problems during his year there. Clementine McCauley was appointed to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Anna Murphy who had served as the capable principal of School Two for decades. She also served as principal of John f. Kennedy School.

The Board of Education in the late 1940s was largely responsible for the increased opportunities that the young people of Ecorse enjoyed during the 1950s. members of this board were Fred Vellmure, superintendent of a Detroit chemical plant, who served as president of the board for 33 years; Roy Seavitt, principal of the Morely School in Detroit; Guy Pooley, president of the Ecorse-

Lincoln Park Banks; Charles Dilfill, superintendent of the Detroit, Toledo and Iron-ton Railroad; and Ray Montie, manager of the Ecorse Ice and Coal Company.

By the 1970s, Ecorse school served over 4,800 pupils annually and was staffed by 210 teachers, the majority of whom had master's degrees. By the 1990s, the Ecorse school buildings that had sheltered generations of Ecorse children while they learned – Schools One, Two, and Three and the Miller School and Ecorse High School – were showing their age. The Board of Education and the City of Ecorse implemented a plan to build new schools in Ecorse. Schools One and Two were torn down and School Three was replaced with Grandport Elementary School. The old high school was also torn down and the new Ecorse Community High School was dedicated in 2001. John F. Kennedy School was also built to be used as a middle school.

From the time the early Ecorse schools were conducted in French to the days of Miss Elliott, the terror of room 212 at the old Ecorse High School, Ecorse has provided a good education for its sons and daughters. The new Ecorse schools carry on the tradition.

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Music Was A Family Matter for the Campbells

Two years after he graduated, Alexander Campbell returned to Ecorse High School on Thursday May 7, 1953, when he was the



Photo by John Duguay

guest soloist at the annual spring Ecorse High School Band concert. He was completing his second year as member of the University of Michigan marching band and was also a member of the University's R.O.T.C. Band. He had just returned from a tour with the University of Michigan concert band.

While at Ecorse High School Alexander Campbell studied music under the director of Herbert Saylor and was a member of the Ecorse High School Marching Band for four years. He was also one of the outstanding students in the class of 1951. At the University of Michigan he studied in the Department of Music with the intention of becoming a band director after graduation. His favorite instrument was the tenor saxophone and he played three numbers in the Ecorse High School Band program. They were: "Concerto No. 1," by "Singeless," "Concertina" by Guilhaud and "Tambourin" by Rameau. Mrs. Doris Green accompanied him at the piano.

Both the Ecorse Senior High Band and the sixty piece Junior High Band appeared in the musical program which featured both standard music and popular numbers.

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After playing with his old band, Alexander returned to the University of Michigan and played more solos. In 1954 he and other students competed in the annual Gulantics talent show in Hill Auditorium. His trio, headed by Anceo Franciso on piano with Jimmie Williams on bass took the \$25 third place prize.

"I played in the Michigan Band under William Revelli – who was a great man, he made me sweat blood-but I also led a popular jazz sextet," Alexander later recalled. He graduated from the School of Music with a B.A. in 1955 and a Masters Degree in 1960. He once again returned to Ecorse High School where he directed the band for thirty years until he retired to California with his wife Barbara in 1986.

Alexander Campbell, his wife, and their sons Alexander T. Campbell and Garland and David were also musicians. Alexander T. Campbell played sax in the University of Michigan Band from 1975-1977 and David the youngest played percussion while getting his BA in fine arts in 1980. Garland earned his University of Michigan degree in political science and communications and was an Emmy winning producer of children's TV programs before

becoming a college band director.

Garland said that having a band director for a father meant he and his brothers “always had all sorts of instruments at home – violins, guitars, trombones. We learned something about all of them because they were sitting around the house. My mom was a musician too, but she became an occupational therapist.”

“We didn’t cram anything down their throats, but we exposed them to opportunities I wish I’d had. I used to pack them up, leave home and take them to Ann Arbor to listen to the Michigan Band practice,” Alexander Sr. said.

The Ecorse High School Band marched in the Mardi Gras Parade in New Orleans on February 29, 1976. The appearance of the 79 member band in the 4 ½ hour parade marked the first time that a unit from Michigan or from the North appeared in the parade which is the final celebration before Lent

The band members and their director Alexander Campbell and Assistant Director Jerry Copeland and thirteen chaperones

boarded three buses from Ecorse High School the Friday before the parade. Many Ecorse residents gathered at the School to see them off.

Mrs. Marie Salisbury, an Ecorse resident for 23 years and mother of Larry Salisbury, a school board member at the time, obtained the invitation for the band to participate in the parade. Mrs. Salisbury had attended the Mardi Gras for the past 17 years and had “never seen a Michigan group participate.” A family friend, Arthur Daure, was chairman of the Krewe of Thoth parade and it was from him that she received the invitation to invite any group she wished. “I could have invited any civic group of older people but I thought it would be better to give those youngsters a chance to make good on the invitation.”

The band members and their families and friends raised \$13,000 through various projects, including bake sales, a spaghetti dinner and lunch, a hockey benefit, a card party, paper drive, band concert, student dance, candle sale and medallion sale. Many civic organizations, business leaders and private citizens also assisted. The largest contribution came from the city of Ecorse who gave

\$2,600 for a bus rental.

Co-chairman of the parents' committee were Mrs. Rhoda Daunter and Mrs. Lorraine Lewis. Student leaders were Pete Martinez, chairman; Sheryl Copeland and Andrea Beard.

Alexander Sr. played sax for Motown records during the company's heyday for Martha and the Vandellas, the Temptations, the Four Tops and other groups. In the fall of 1996 the Campbells released their first CD from Square 1 produced by their company, Bunk Bed Music and marketed by another family firm, Marquis Records of Wilmington, California. Alexander Sr. was the session director for the recording and three other musicians completed the Campbell Brothers sextet.



Didn't Everybody Have Spanish Or Latin With Mr. Santoro?

"Isn't that duck soup?" Singing Solamente and other Spanish songs on Fridays. Struggling through Julius Caesar. "Oh fili mi boni belli". These are just a few phrases and memories that generations of students link to George Lawrence Santoro.

George Santoro was born in San Marco, Sicily in September 1902. He and his family arrived at Ellis Island in 1912, when George was ten.

On February 14, 1942, he married Josephine Groasser of Oakland, California at St. Francis Xavier Church. The newlyweds had their reception at the Ecorse High School Gym.

After working at the Whitman and Barnes Tool Company in Detroit, George attended Lawrence Technical School to specialize in Drafting. He attended St. Mary's College of Ohio and graduated from Sacred Heart Seminary, Detroit, earning both B.A. and M.A. degrees. At Ecorse High he taught English, languages, (including Spanish, Latin, French and Italian) and Drafting from 1940-1967. In his early teaching career he taught both day and evening classes, including some for indigent people. He was nominated teacher-of-the-year.

At St. Francis Xavier Church in Ecorse he led the choir, taught catechism, sang tenor in the choir and played the piano and organ at for the church.

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He often toured many countries with his wife, Josephine. He enjoyed bringing back many slides of their trips and inviting students for a day of viewing them at his Stoney Point Beach cabin, "Josephine IV." He was an avid gardener and according to his sister, Jo, his Allen Park home was "a floral show place." During their stays at Ft. Meyers, Florida, George belonged to the Garden Club. He won many blue ribbons for his gigantic satin cream orchids.

George Santoro died in 1995, after suffering a number of heart attacks. But he lives on in his generations of students.

1942 Ecorse Advertiser Newspaper Story

G.L. Santoro Attends MEA Conference

George L. Santoro, represented the City of Ecorse district of the Michigan Education Association on Tuesday and Wednesday at the annual Leaderships Training Conference at the M.E.A. Camp on St. Mary's Lake near Battle Creek.

Michigan Education Association district and regional council presidents meet to attend workshops and discussions with outstanding educators. The group reviews the organization of the M.E.A., oldest and largest professional organization in Michigan, and studies education problems and their solutions.

Programs for the year's meetings are formulated and a library of materials available through the M.E.A. is placed at the disposal of those attending the workshop. These conference members, approximately 150 in number, are leaders in the field of education here.

Chapter Eleven

Remembering Ecorse Soldiers



Elijah Goodell, Revolutionary War Veteran

Elijah Goodell fought in the American Revolutionary War on the

side of the Americans. He and his family came to Michigan and settled on Grosse Isle in 1797.

Daniel and John Goodell, Elijah's sons, fought the British in the War of 1812. Daniel Goodell, one of Elijah Goodell's eight sons, was born in New York in 1794. He served as a private in Major Witherell's Detachment of Michigan Volunteers and Militia in the War of 1812. Daniel was captured when General Hull surrendered Fort Detroit to the British on August 16, 1812.

For military service in the War of 1812, Daniel Goodell received land warrant #2225 for 160 acres of land in Wisconsin, but he didn't move to Wisconsin. On August 10, 1818, Governor Lewis Cass commissioned Daniel Goodell a lieutenant in the Militia of the Territory of Michigan. He married Susanne Baron, daughter of Antoine Baron on July 18, 1820.

Daniel was a farmer and a Democrat in politics. As early as 1829, he became a Wayne County Supervisor and held the office of Justice of the peace and other local offices.

Maria Goodell, Daniel's daughter, married James Perry. Peter Perry, the father of James, had fought under Proctor with the Second Regiment, Essex Militia, Canadian Army, and settled on a farm at present day Goddard and Biddle with his wife Elizabeth. Their son James found it easy to court Maria Goodell because the Goodell's 55 acre farm was north of the Perry farm and about one half mile south of Ecorse Creek.

Daniel Goodell died on April 28, 1882.

Sergeant John Goodell was killed in Amherstburg, Ontario, during the War of 1812.



Spanish American War Veterans

Charles S. Eddy, corporal, 35th Michigan Volunteer Infantry, Co. A

World War I Veterans

World War I Veterans Buried in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery

Joseph Airola, Mich. Pfc, Co. L 33 Inf. WWI

Anim Allen, Mich. Sgt. 5 Trench Mortar Btry, 5th Div.

Samuel Durant, Mich. 2nd Lt., 146th Inf.

Peter Reeves, Corp. U.S. Army

Daniel M. Roberts, Mich. Pfc, Col L. 39th Inf

Peter Joseph Sehoyan, Corp. Hq. Det. 12 Eng.

Ellis S. Underill, Born 1892, Died 1973

Roy B. Salliotte Is Killed in Action in World War I

Civil War veteran Antoine Salliotte, born in 1841, served with General Sherman in his march through Georgia and was twice wounded in action.

Antoine married Agnes Abott and their children included Roy B. Salliotte. Roy was killed at the battle of the Meuse-Argonne in France in 1918. The Roy B. Salliotte American Legion Post in Ecorse was named for this First World War hero.

The Home Front: World War I

Eli “Peck” LeBlanc

In July 1958, 70-year –old Eli “Peck” LeBlanc officially retired from a fifteen year stint as Ecorse dog warden. A descendant of one of the Downriver area’s oldest families, he still lived at 4560 West Jefferson in a home built on the site of the original farm that the Pottawatomie Indians had deeded to his great-grandfather Pierre in 1790 when he came to Ecorse from France.

Peck was born August 10, 1888, and by 1904, when he was sixteen, he worked in an ice house on the Detroit River cutting huge blocks of ice which were stored in sawdust to use during the summer months. At this time he was attending the “old school” which was razed in 1910 to make room for the “new school”, which was Ecorse School Two.

When he was a young blade of seventeen, Peck decided it was time he had a “regular” suit. He got a job at the Great Lakes Engineering works in Ecorse as a fitter’s helper and worked for five months until he had enough money to buy his new suit. “I remember I paid \$15 for a blue serge suit and then shopped around a bit before buying my first watch. It was a \$25 gem,” he recalled.

Trained as a railroad telegraph operator in 1906, Peck spent most of his adult working life following the trade. Lured by the call of the clicking key, he traveled over most of Michigan finding jobs as a telegrapher at stations in Vanderbilt, Mackinaw, Roscommon, Indian River and many other places before settling down at the Michigan Central’s Wyandotte station.

In 1908, he transferred to the Ecorse station on Southfield and remained there until 1915, shortly before the station was closed to make way for the Southfield viaduct. After a short stay at the Rockwood station, he changed careers for a time and served as time keeper in the old Ecorse Foundry and Detroit Brass and Malleable in Wyandotte. During World War I he worked as timekeeper in the Wyandotte shipyards.

For years Peck spent most of his free time sitting on the front porch of his home on Jefferson Avenue and gazing through his binoculars at the mighty ships that passed back and forth on the Detroit River. All of the freighter captains knew him.

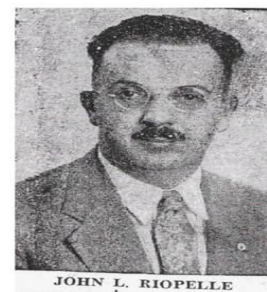
In May 1972, the *Stewart Cort*, at the time the largest ship ever to sail the Great Lakes or on the Detroit River made a pass up the Detroit River right by Peck's house. She was headed up river on her maiden voyage from Erie, Pennsylvania, where she was built to Lake Superior to take on nearly 52,000 tons of iron ore. Her regular route was scheduled to run between Taconite Harbor, Minnesota, north of Duluth and Bethlehem's Mill at Burns Harbor, east of Gary, Indiana. It was unlikely that she would ever again

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pass through the Detroit River.

To make the occasion more special for Peck, the *Court* blinked a special "Hi Peck," as the ship passed his house. When the public relations people at Bethlehem Steel heard that Peck would be watching for the ship, they agreed to a request to blink "Hi Peck," as they passed his house. With his telegraphy training, Peck had no trouble understanding the greeting.

Judge John L. Riopelle



The many friends and relatives of Judge John L. Riopelle of 3928

West Jefferson were shocked to hear early on the Wednesday afternoon of June 22, 1949, that he had died. Judge Riopelle who was 55 years old, had been ill since October of 1948. He was a member of one of the oldest Downriver families. Although he was born in Wyandotte, Judge Riopelle attended Wyandotte, Ecorse, and Central High Schools. He graduated from the Detroit College of Law.

Active in local politics for over twenty years, Judge Riopelle was justice of the peace for many years. He was one of the organizers of the Ecorse Kiwanis Club and the Good Fellows, an active member of the Roy B, Salliotte American Legion Post, Knights of Columbus, Holy Name Society, Optimist club, Rotary and other local organizations.

Judge Riopelle served with distinction during the First World War. At the time of his death, he was secretary of the 32nd Red Arrow, 199th Field Artillery.

Dr. Arthur E. Payette

Dr. Arthur E. Payette had a dental practice in Ecorse for 46 years until he retired in 1968.

He graduated from the University of Detroit and also attended the Indiana College of Dentistry. During World War I he served with the Navy Medical Corps.

He died in November 1969.

Emmett Fuller, World War I Veteran

Emmett Fuller was born on September 16, 1896, in Perry, Georgia to Jordan and Lucy Fuller.

He came to Ecorse in his younger years and when the United States entered World War I, he enlisted. He was a member of American Legion Post No. 352.

In 1920, Emmett married his wife Jeanette. In his later years he became a member of Mt. Zion Baptist Church and was always

willing to do whatever he could for the church.

Emmett died in August 1981 at Veterans Memorial Hospital in Allen Park.



Remembering Two Ecorse World War I Veterans



Dr. S. Lee Hileman Served with the Army in France During World War I

Dr. S. Lee Hileman's friends and family knew that he was an experienced pilot with more than 1,500 hours to his credit in nearly 10 years of flying, so they didn't worry when he and three of his associates from his cattle farm near Alma planned to fly from the cattle farm to an island near the Canadian shore of Lake

Huron to buy horses for their farms in October 1958.

But the weather changed from sunny to wind, rain, and fog, and the plane crashed behind a farmhouse in an open field about a mile north of Otsego County Airport three miles northwest of Gaylord.

Witnesses said the plane, flying low “made a turn and then crashed to the ground.” State troopers reported that the plane buzzed the field once as if trying to make a landing, and then crashed, killing Dr. Hileman. It did not catch fire.

C.A. Koester, 33, manager of the Hileman cattle farm, Ray Montague, 33, a Gratiot County cattle broker, and Rolla Donnan, 57, of Breckenridge, owner of a farm near the Hileman property survived and were taken to Gaylord Hospital.

Officials in Gaylord notified Lincoln Park Police of the crash and they in turn, went to the Hileman home on New York Street and told his daughter Janice, 22, and his son, 28 of the tragedy. When Mrs. Nina Hileman and her other daughter, Mrs. Marilyn Nueder, 28, of Taylor Center, returned from shopping in Detroit, they too

learned about the accident.

An avid hunter, fisherman and outdoorsman, Dr. Hileman flew his plane to hunting and fishing spots in Kansas, Wyoming, Florida, and northern Canada. He also hunted in Alaska. His wife, Nina, accompanied her husband on many of his trips and on the Saturday before his fatal crash, she and two grandsons had flown with him to the farm. “He was considered a wonderful pilot and navigator and kept his plane in excellent condition,” she said. “I always felt safe when he was piloting the plane and I know others did too, because he was always so careful.”

Born July 29, 1899, in Ohio City, Ohio, Dr. Hileman completed his premedical studies at Alma College where he met his wife, Nina. During World War I, he served with the Army in France for 22 months.

After Dr. Hileman graduated from the former Wayne College of medicine (now Wayne State University College of medicine) he began his medical practice in Ecorse in 1928. In 1939, he moved to Lincoln Park but continued to practice from his office at 4045

West Jefferson.

He served as health officer for Ecorse from 1954 to 1957 and was physician for several Downriver businesses. For nearly 30 years he was chief physician for the Great Lakes Steel Corporation. He was physician for the construction firm that built the first steel mill buildings on the site of the former marshland along the Detroit River.

At the time he died, Dr. Hileman was chief of staff at Delray General Hospital, and chairman of the record boards of Outer Drive Hospital and Wyandotte General Hospital.

He was a member of the Great Lakes Steel Post 272 of the American Legion.

First World War Marine Ellis “Duke” Underill



Ellis “Duke” Underill loved life and its many activities, but above all he loved Ecorse. When he died on Sunday, July 15, 1973, at age 81, his family honored his last request and buried him in tiny Ecorse Cemetery, owned by St. Francis Xavier Church.

Duke founded Underill Associates in the early 1920s, was a

former official of the village and township of Ecorse and through the years served as the official Goodwill Ambassador of Ecorse, an honor conferred by the mayor and city council.

Active in many organizations, he was a charter member and past president of the Ecorse Kiwanis Club, member of the Grosse Ile Golf and Country Club, Ecorse Rowing Club, American Legion, Marine Corps League, Zion Lodge One, F. and A.A. Detroit Consistory Mosel Temple, Downriver Shrine Club. As a charter member of the Ecorse Kiwanis Club, Duke was one of its organizers in 1927.

For more than two decades he was known for his hunting and fishing explorations and appeared on the George Perriot and Mort Neff television shows to describe his world travels.

He was often described as the most avid fisherman in Ecorse, who would travel to the ends of the world to fish for fighting trout. He and fifteen fellow fishermen went to the Bear Lakes area of the Arctic Circle in Canada's Northwest Territories in 1963 to hunt and fish and he and Mort Neff went fishing in Chile. Trophies

from his hunting and fishing expeditions decorate the walls of Underill Associates.

In 1939, after four terms as treasurer of the township and two years as treasurer of Ecorse village, Duke retired. He said at the time of his retirement from public office, "I am retiring from public office but not from public life. Ecorse and Ecorse Township will always remain for me a mighty fine place to live and work."

Duke was born in Syracuse, new York on July 10, 1892, and came to Ecorse as a boy. He served with the Marine Corps during World War I. At war's end, he returned to Ecorse and worked in the real estate and insurance fields. Around 1920, he founded Underill Associates and operated it until his retirement in 1968. From that office over the years, Duke and his associates handled the insurance needs of banks, corporations, municipalities, and school districts. When he retired, he sold his business to his brother-in-law and long time associate Frank Butler, but continued to visit the office.

Mayor William W. Voisine first gave Duke the title of Goodwill

Ambassador for the city of Ecorse and he held that title until he died. Many times as he appeared on television to talk about his hunting and fishing experiences, he would also boast about Ecorse, calling it “the greatest little city in the world.”

Before he died Duke requested that he be buried in Ecorse Cemetery. His family granted his request. His tombstone reads: “Gone Fishing.”

Ecorse in the Civil War

Civil War Soldiers that *Michigan Veterans of the Civil War Burial Sites* lists as being buried in St. Francis (Ecorse) Cemetery

Moses Barron. Age 20, Monroe County, 15th Infantry Company G. Buried in St. Francis Xavier, Ecorse.

Louis Beaubien, Age 40. 24th Infantry, Company F. Buried in St. Francis Cemetery. Born April 17, 1822. Died June 3, 1911.

John Brest, 41, Pvt. Enlisted January 27, 1862. Buried in St. Francis Cemetery.

Charles Brock, 28, 5th Michigan Cavalry, Co. C.

Charles Cicotte. 24th Infantry, Company F. Buried in St. Francis. Born December 18, 1832 and died August 15, 1915.

Oliver Delisle, 36, 1st Michigan Cavalry, Company G. Buried in St. Francis.

Gregory Drouillard, 18, Pvt. Enlisted December 12, 1861. Buried in St. Francis.

Solomon Drouillard, 23, Pvt. Enlisted December 12, 1816. Buried in St. Francis

Christian Freese, 44, Pvt. Enlisted January 27, 1862. Buried in St. Francis

Elijah J. Goodell, 5th Cavalry, Co.C. Buried in St. Francis. Born in 1832 and died in 1909.

Martin Goodell, 23, 5th Michigan Cavalry, Co. B

Peter Jager, 1st Cavalry, Company K. Buried in St. Francis. Born March 23, 1827 in France. Died May 19, 1898.

Fred K. LaFleur, Co. C, 5th Michigan Cavalry. Monroe. Age 18. Buried in St. Francis

Francis Metty, Co. D., 11th Michigan Infantry. Buried in St. Francis.

August Misch, 5th Michigan Cavalry, Co. C.

Louis Montry. Co. G, 15th Infantry. Born August 22, 1845. Buried in St. Francis.

James Pendergrass, Co. D 100th New York Infantry. Buried in St. Francis

Francis Ransom, Co. K., 1 Mo. L.A. Buried in St. Francis.

Anthony Reno, co. F. 24th Michigan Infantry. Buried in St. Francis

Antoine Salliotte. Co. H 14th Michigan Infantry. Buried in St. Francis.

Gilbert Salliotte. 182-1922. Buried in St. Francis.

Thomas H. Somers. Capt. 1st Ohio Vol. Inf. Born November 25, 1834. Died September 11, 1913. Buried in St. Francis.

William Young, 32. Private. Enlisted December 31, 1863. Buried in St. Francis.

Civil War Veterans From Ecorse – Burial Site Unknown

1st Michigan Cavalry Co C.

David Cicotte, Jr., Ecorse, 18

Company G.

Augustus c. Bordino, Ecorse, 0

John P. Demay, Ecorse 21.

Richard J. Loranger, Ecorse, 22

Company K

Peter Jacob, Ecorse, 32

Unassigned

Charles Phillips, Ecorse, 18

5th Michigan Cavalary

Co. B

John Harris, Ecorse, 29

Co. C.

Richard N. Collins, Ecorse, 43

William R. Frasier, Ecorse, 20

Elijah J. Goodell, Ecorse, 27

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Remembering Ecorse Civil War Soldiers

Civil War Veterans From Ecorse – Burial Site Unknown

5th Michigan Cavalry

Co. B

John Harris, Ecorse, Age 29

Co. C.

Richard N. Collins, Ecorse, Age 43

William R. Frasier, Ecorse, Age 20

Elijah J. Goodell, Ecorse, Age 27

Buried in Ecorse (St. Francis) Cemetery

August Misch, Ecorse, Age 35

Charles Brock, Ecorse, Age 28

Martin Goodell, Ecorse, Age 23

Co. D.

Joseph D. Kilson, Ecorse, Age 33

Unassigned

Henry Namen, Ecorse, Age 28

7th Michigan Cavalry

Charles Philips, Ecorse, 18

John Wood, Ecorse, 27

9th Michigan Cavalry

James I. David, Colonel, Trenton

Company C

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Charles A. Brown, Ecorse, 30

John Canaday, Ecorse, 21

Moses Cowell, Ecorse, 19

Andrew J. Fox, Ecorse, 20

Jacob Kuntz, Ecorse, 42

Joseph Polts, Ecorse, 18

Charles H. Saunders, Ecorse, 28

Christian Smith, Ecorse 44

Company D

James Ferguson, Ecorse 18

Company K

Hazel Terrell, Ecorse, 18

Unassigned Men

Charles Philips, Ecorse, 18

John Wood, Ecorse, 37

1st Michigan colored Infantry

Company C

Thomas Seymore, Ecorse, 23

Unassigned

Samuel Pearce, Ecorse, 19

2nd Michigan Infantry

Franklin Rhodes, Ecorse, 18

4th Michigan Infantry

Samuel J. Lawrence, Brownstown, 16

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7th Michigan Infantry

Co. E.

Silas Fenton, 36

11th Michigan Infantry

Frank Metty, Co.D. Buried in St. Francis

14th Michigan Infantry

Company C

Joseph Borran, Ecorse, 24

Company H

Henry Beaubien, Ecorse, 23

Richard Barrow, Ecorse, 26

Alexander Bondy, Ecorse, 27

Joseph Bragensen, Ecorse, 31

Emanuel Brest, Ecorse, 34

Joseph Fountain, Ecorse, 18

Gregory Drouillard, Ecorse, 18

Solomon Drouillard, Ecorse, 23

Francis Labor, Ecorse, 43

Joseph La Duke, Ecorse, 20

Pascoh Odette, Ecorse, 24

Peter Rabideau, Ecorse, 35

Antoine Salliotte, Ecorse, 18

Buried in St. Francis Cemetery

John Short, Ecorse, 41

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Samuel Smith, Ecorse, 32

Unassigned

James Streeter, Ecorse, 19

15th Michigan Infantry

John N. Bortau, Ecorse, 24

16th Michigan Infantry

Company C

Oliver Brown, Ecorse, 19

Company K

Frank Valkenstine, Ecorse, 20

17th Michigan Infantry

Company B

Andrew Tabater, Ecorse, 18

Unassigned

Thomas McIntyre, Ecorse, 20

William Wilson, Ecorse, 23

23rd Michigan Infantry

Company I

Henry Myer, Ecorse, 40



Pascal Odette (the soldier on the left) enlisted in Company H, 14th Michigan Infantry on December 30, 1861, at age 18. He re-enlisted as a Veteran Volunteer on January 4, 1864 at Columbia, South Carolina. On August 7, 186, he was killed on the outskirts of Atlanta, Georgia.

The 24th Michigan Infantry

The 24th Michigan Volunteer Infantry was known as the Iron Brigade and it included many volunteers from Wayne County. At least 11 of the company were Ecorse (Township) men whose names and descendents are still well known in the area. In May 1951, the *Ecorse Advertiser* reported that State Representative Earl Hebert had searched the records in Lansing and found a complete history of both Company F and the 24th Michigan Infantry. Frank X. LeBlanc, a member of one of Ecorse's oldest families requested the information because his father Antoine LeBlanc had volunteered and served with the Iron Brigade.

Antoine Leblanc and the rest of the Iron Brigade recruits left Detroit a week after being mustered into the service. The men made many long marches and on December 12, 1862, crossed the Rappahannock at Fredericksburg and during the next three days saw its first action. For three days, Confederate troops constantly fired on the Iron Brigade and suffered heavy casualties.

Its next important engagement was at Port Royal on April 23,

1863, when the regiment made a brilliant attack, capturing a number of prisoners and driving the enemy from their positions.

Shortly after Port Royal, the 24th Infantry entered the Pennsylvania campaign and on July 1, 1863, arrived at Gettysburg, Pa. The regiment immediately went into battle and it was one of the first infantry commands to enter the action in the three day battle. The first order was to charge and the 24th Infantry with the rest of the brigade dashed forward and captured parts of Confederate General Archer's army.

Following this success, the 24th Infantry changed front and formed a line of battle in McPherson's Woods. The Confederates advanced in double lines, their numbers being large enough to overlap and flank the Union forces. They poured a murderous fire into the line of Yankees and forced a retreat to new positions. The ground was covered with dead and wounded. Four color bearers were killed and three wounded in holding the flag aloft.

The 24th Infantry went into this action with 28 officers and 468 men. During the first day of the battle, 22 officers were killed or

wounded, 71 enlisted men were killed, and 223 wounded for a total loss of 316.

In all, the 24th Infantry took part in 21 major engagements, finally returning to Springfield, Illinois. While the 24th was in Springfield, it escorted at the funeral of President Abraham Lincoln. It was mustered out of service in Detroit on June 30, 1865, after nearly three years of brilliant service.

Ecorse Township men serving in Company F included Abram Akey, August Albrecht, Louis L. Beaubien, J.B. Beyette, Anthony Bondy, Daniel Bourassa, Charles Cicotte, John B. Cicotte, Charles Gochy, Antoine LeBlanc, and Anthony Reno.

Company F

Abram Akey

August Albrecht

John B. Beyette

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Anthony Bondy

Daniel Bourassa

Charles Cicotte

John B. Cicotte

Charles Gochy

Antoine LeBlanc- Buried in St. Francis

Louis Beaubien. Buried in St. Francis

Charles Cicotte. 12-18-1832- to 8-15-1915. Buried in St. Francis

Anthony Reno. Buried in St. Francis. Married Mary Salliotte

First Michigan Light Artillery

Battery B

George Theek, Ecorse, 25

Joahim Theek, Ecorse, 20

Battery D

James Miller, Ecorse, 38

2nd Regiment Veteran Reserve Corps

Francis Devan, Ecorse, 34

Joseph Forester, Ecorse, 40

Other Regiments

James Pendergrass, Co.D. 100th N.Y. Infantry. Buried in St. Francis

Francis Ransom, Co. K., 1st Mo., L.A. buried in St. Francis

Thomas Somers, Capt. 41st Ohio Vol. Infantry. Buried in St. Francis.

Elijah J. Goodell

Elijah Goodell is buried in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery and according to his tombstone, he was born in 1832 and died in 1909. The rest of his stone is buried in the ground, but the word “sergeant” is still legible.

Elijah enlisted in Company C of the 5th Michigan Cavalry and enlistment records note that he was 27 years old.

Samuel J. Lawrence

Samuel J. Lawrence was born on the Island of Guernsey, English Channel, on August 15, 1848. In 1852, he came to America with his parents who settled in Wayne County, Michigan. Samuel acquired a common school education and at the age of 16, enlisted in Company D of the 14th Michigan Volunteer Infantry. Samuel spent six of his 22 months of service as a mounted orderly on

General Stanley's staff.

When the war ended, Samuel went West, spending time in nearly every western state and territory. In 1872, he returned to Michigan, settling in the City of Wyandotte and was appointed lighthouse keeper by the Honorable Zachariah Chandler, a position that he held for five years.

From 1897-1898, Samuel was Senator from the Fourth District, that comprised the 12th, 14th, and 16th wards of the city of Detroit, the city of Wyandotte, and Ecorse Township. He also served two terms as a Wyandotte Alderman.

He died in 1919.

James I. David

James I. David was born at Catskill, New York, on August 20, 1811, and came to Michigan in 1842.

He forged an early business career as a contractor in canal and

bridge work. When he settled on Grosse Isle in 1848, he went into the lumbering business. He was the Representative from Wayne County in 1859-1860.

In 1861, James enlisted in Broadhead's Cavalry, designating his hometown as Trenton. By 1862, he had been promoted to Colonel of the 9th Michigan Cavalry and in 1863, he commanded a division of Burnside's Corps, Shackleford's Division. He was mustered out in 1864, after resigning because of disability.

Continuing to be active in politics after the Civil War, James served as Senator for the Third District in 1875 and 1876. In 1886, President Grover Cleveland appointed James Indian Agent for the Osage Agency.

James died at Ecorse on October 13, 1872.

Silas Fenton Enlists in Ecorse at Age 36

Silas Fenton enlisted in Company E of the Seventh Michigan Infantry in May 1864 at Ecorse. Silas enlisted for a period of three

years. He was wounded in action at the Battle of Spottsylvania Courthouse on May 12, 1864, and discharged for disability at Washington D.C., on February 25, 1865.

Salliotte Soldiers Fight in the Civil War

Moses Salliotte was born in Ecorse in 1807 and according to the data on his tombstone in St. Francis Cemetery, married Charlotte Cook, born in Yorkshire, England in 1815. Moses and Charlotte had five children, including Gilbert, the third son. Gilbert never married. He enlisted in the Army during the Civil War and was shot through the cheek and mouth.

Hyacinth Salliotte, brother of Moses, married Adelaide Labadie. Their son, Samuel, was a Civil War veteran and their son Antoine, born in 1841, was also a Civil War veteran. He served with General Sherman in his famous march through Georgia and was twice wounded in action.



DOWNRIVER MEMBERS of the Woman's Relief Corps, auxiliary to the Grand Army of the Republic, were at Greenfield Village recently when a flag was presented to the recently-organized Greenfield Village Militia in Dearborn. Participating in the ceremony were (left to right) Mrs. Florence Miller, Wyandotte; Charles Cliff and Sergeant Major Max DuBois of the Militia, Mrs. Dorothy Ody, Ecorse; Isabel Rieger, Ecorse, Corps secretary; Mrs. Mildred Cliff, Ferndale; Mrs. Gladys Speir, Ecorse; and Mrs. Harriet Koons, Wyandotte.

The GAR – 1879-1948

From about 1879 until 1948, Northern veterans of the Civil War who had returned home and rebuilt their lives organized and joined Grand Army of the Republic Posts. Ecorse veterans formed F. Buhl Post, possible named for Frederick Augustus Buhl, the

oldest son of Frederick Buhl, a prominent Detroit businessman.

For a time, Captain Buhl served on the staff of George Armstrong Custer and he was badly wounded in a fight near Sharpsburg, Maryland. He died of his wounds on September 15, 1864.

Ecorse World War I Veterans

John J. Bauer Serves as Second Gunner in Field Artillery



From 1923 to the 1940s, John Bauer taught higher mathematics, physics and chemistry in Ecorse High School when it was still located on High Street and Labadie and went only to the eighth grade.

Born in Saginaw, Michigan, John spent a large part of his youth in the upper peninsula of Michigan. Then he decided he wanted a career in higher education and lacking the necessary credits, he went to the Ferris Institute in Big Rapids. There he met Woodbridge N. Ferris, who later would become governor of Michigan and a United States senator. John developed much of his teaching philosophy from studying with Mr. Ferris who was recognized as one of the country's greatest educators.

John started as a teacher in the Stephenson township schools in Menominee County and taught there for three years. Then he taught at Nedau, McMillan, and served as school superintendent at Vanderbilt. As he taught, he continuously added to his education, earning a life certificate from Michigan State Normal College and a B.S. in education from Detroit Teacher's College, now a part of Wayne State University.

Being of a technical turn of mind, John also obtained a B.S. and E.M. degree in mining and metallurgy at the Michigan Institute of Technology at Houghton.

When America entered World War I, John joined the 329 Field Artillery early in the war and wore the uniform for 16 months. His outfit was part of the 85th Division and was overseas for nine months, taking part in some of the most desperate fighting of the entire American campaign. John served as second gunner.

In 1937, John continued to add to his education by working toward another degree at Wayne State University. He took special courses on historical collections at Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan.

Don Dodge Fought With Lieutenant Colonel Dwight Eisenhower

December 1969 Don Dodge operated the Don A. Dodge Real Estate Company on West Jefferson and joined the Underill Associates in Ecorse in 1925. He was a member of the Ecorse Kiwanis Club and manager of the Ecorse branch of the Secretary of State's office which he conducted along with the real estate business.

In 1918, he entered the Army in the tank division under Lt.

Colonel Dwight Eisenhower. He died in December 1969.



Remembering Ecorse Veterans – World War II Veterans

Remembering Ecorse Veterans

World War II

World War II Veterans Buried in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery

Walter W. Holzhueter

Mich. S2 U.S.N.R. WWII

Alvin Labadie. Sadler Troop F 16th Cavalry WWII

Kenneth Sisco. Mich. TECs 1623. Service Unit WWII

Matthew John Spillane. Died 2-26-41. Ohio Pvt. 30th Am. Tn. 83rd Div.

William “Fergus” McMurdo



In July 1949, Reverend Leonard Duckett, pastor of the Ecorse Presbyterian Church, officiated at the reburial in Michigan Memorial Cemetery of Pfc. William McMurdo, the son of Mr. and Mrs. George McMurdo of Ecore. “Fergus,” as his friends and family called him, was killed in action on November 15, 1944 at Graylotte, France, after just fourteen months of service.

He was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star. According to the citation issued by the War Department, McMurdo voluntarily made three trips through barbed wire entanglements to get grenades for his comrades who were trapped in advance trenches outside fortifications in the face of enemy fire. Later that day he was killed by enemy fire as he attempted to set up a machine gun.

William Nagy



William N. Nagy, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Nagy of Seventh Street in Ecorse, volunteered to join the Air Corps on December 8, 1941, the day after Pearl Harbor. Just 22 years old when he joined the Air Corps, he served as a flight engineer on one of the battered C-46 transport aircraft that were used to maintain the threadlike supply line from India's Assam Valley to the Allied fighting forces in China.

Nagy, who had earned the rank of technical sergeant, died when his plane crashed into the side of a mountain on April 4, 1944, just three months after he arrived in India. When he was still stateside, he married his wife Alice, and his son

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Michael was 17 months old when he died.

In January 1949, Nagy was reburied at the Michigan memorial Cemetery with full military honors.



Three Pappas Brothers in World War II

Word came from the South Pacific that Corporal George Pappas of Ecorse had been awarded the Silver Star Medal. George was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Sam Pappas of 4678 West Jefferson Avenue. He enlisted in the Marines on January 26, 1942, and after two months training on Paris Island was on his way to the South Pacific where he saw continuous action.

Pappas' captain and another corporal were awarded the medals at the same time. Following a parade, they were escorted before the commanding general who pinned the medals on them and shook their hands.

The Silver Star medal was inscribed with his name and reads "Corporal George Pappas for Gallantry in Action."

George had two brothers also in the service. Nick Pappas was a radio technician in the Marine Air Corps and had been in the South Pacific since February and Gus Pappas was a seaman second class in the Navy.

All three brothers were well known in Ecorse. They attended

school in Ecorse and all were team members of the Ecorse Boat Club where they distinguished themselves with the championship crews.

Charles Sarazin Served in Sicily, Anzio, North Africa, Austria

Charles H. Sarazin, Jr. of Ecorse joined the Navy in 1929 and served for four years as shopkeeper at the Brodhead Armory.

In 1941, he reenlisted in the Army and during World War II was awarded 16 citations for heroism. He served with the third division in French Morocco and Tunisia. He landed in Sicily and saw action in Palermo, Naples, Casino and the Anzio beachhead. He continued with the march through Europe and saw action in Strasbourg and Alsace Lorraine and Frankfort. When the war ended he was in Salzburg, Austria.

He was awarded the Silver Star, the second highest medal which can be awarded; three Bronze Medals, three Purple Hearts, three Oak Leaf Clusters and the Good Conduct Medal. He was also awarded the French Croix de Guerre, a French decoration for the

Army of Occupation. He also won service ribbons for the African and European campaigns.

Charles was a member of the Roy B. Salliotte American Legion Post and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Ecorse.

He died in December 1977 and is buried in Woodmere Cemetery, Detroit.

Albert “Zuke” Zukonik, World War II Marine

Albert Zukonik – “Zuke”

Widely known in the Downriver area as “Zuke,” Albert Zukonik was born in Pennsylvania on May 15, 1919, but came to Ecorse as a teenager in 1933 and spent the rest of his life there. He graduated from Ecorse High School in 1936. At Ecorse High he was a football and baseball star and after high school he played sandlot ball in Ecorse and traveled with a semi-pro baseball team in Washington, D.C.

Before joining the Marine in 1939, Zuke worked at Great Lakes Steel. In the Marines he was a platoon sergeant and a provost marshal’s guard in Quantico, Virginia. He also played baseball on a Marine team.

He served two years and four months in the Pacific as a seagoing marine. During his six years in the Marines, Zukonik became light heavyweight boxing champion of the Canal Zone forces.

While serving aboard the cruiser Erie, he swam two miles through shark-infested waters when it sank in the West Indies in 1942. He later was head drill instructor for Navy aviation cadets at the University of Georgia.

Zuke joined the Ecorse police department in April 1947 and was promoted to sergeant in charge of the traffic department in 1954. A crack pistol shot, his colleagues described him as a “rugged, deep-voiced prototype of a Marine platoon sergeant,” which he was during his more than six years in the Marine Corps.

Advancing to police chief in 1959, Zuke also served as Ecorse

license examiner, weights and measures inspector and vice squad investigator. In 1969 he was elected to the city council and in 1971 he ran for mayor, defeating incumbent mayor Richard Manning.

On September 9, 1973, Zukonik died while resting between bowling frame at Fort Park Recreation in Lincoln Park where he bowled in a morning league. Ecorse City Council approved a resolution of respect for Mayor Zukonik and ordered that all flags on public buildings be flown at half mast for 30 days to express their respect for him.

Miss Garlington Served in World War II

Miss Helen Garlington graduated from the University of Michigan with a Master's Degree in 1948, majoring in dramatics and musical education. During World War II, she spent much time with the armed forces in North Africa arranging and producing plays and skits for the soldiers and sailors.



Attorney William C. Hague and Peter Johnson First Black Veterans Elected to Ecorse City Council

November 1957

Attorney and local businessman William C. Hague, was one of the first black people to be elected to the Ecorse City Council. He was also the first black person to be elected as a school board member. His fellow council members agreed that his exceptional educational background and temperate attitude were favorable attributes.

Educated as an accountant and attorney, William attended Detroit Northwestern High School, Detroit Institute of Technology, and

graduated from the Detroit College of Law. He started his law practice in September 1952.

William Hague's basic thinking and objectives include the rendering of his services as a councilman to all citizens without unwarranted distinction.

One of his major interests while serving on the council will be "the elimination of waste and reckless disregard of the use of the taxpayer's dollars which is absolutely necessary if Ecorse is to look to the future rather than be digging out the past."

During World War II, William Hague served in England, France, Belgium, Holland and Germany.

He has been a resident, property owner and taxpayer in Ecorse for more than 12 years. Married, he lives with his wife and four children on Fifteenth Street in Ecorse.

Peter Johnson- One of Two Black Veterans Elected to Ecorse Council



Peter Johnson, 50 year old retired police lieutenant who also served Ecorse as a constable for two years, was one of two blacks elected to the Ecorse Council in 1957.

A 28 year resident of Ecorse, Peter retired in January 1956 after having served with the Ecorse Police Department for 20 years. He has been a member of the First Baptist Church for 23 years.

He has been a member of the Ecorse Goodfellows for 18 years,

serving on that organization's board of directors for twelve years and he was a member of the Honor Roll Committee of World War II Veteran's organization.

In winning election to the Ecorse Council, Johnson said, "I have reached the finest hour of my life. During my tenure of office as councilman, I promise to work unceasingly for good government and to uphold the dignity of the office to which I have been elected.

Military Governor Carl L. Rhoads, Rebuilding Okinawa

August 1963

Ecorse Councilman Carl L. Rhoads, a Lt. Colonel in the Army Reserve, has received orders to attend a two week course in International law, beginning July 29th at the United States Army Judge Advocate General's School, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia.

Councilman Rhoads is presently assigned as an instructor in the Judge Advocate General's School of the United States Army Reserve, with Headquarters at Fort Wayne, Detroit, and is also

assigned as an instructor in Military Law teaching Reserve Judge Advocates at the University of Detroit Law School.

The Virginia course will govern the application of International Law during both war and peace time, with special emphasis in rules of Land Warfare, the Hague Convention, treatment of prisoners of war, the rights and duties upon occupation of enemy territory, treatment of war criminals and other related matters involving international rights of sovereign states.

Upon completion of the course, Rhoads will revert to inactive duty status and will instruct the other reserve Judge Advocates throughout the forthcoming school year, in the subject matter which he will receive at the Judge Advocate General's School during this period.

Rhoad's Military career began in 1942 when he enlisted as a private in a Rifle company. After graduating from Officer Candidates School in 1943, he was commissioned as second lieutenant and was soon promoted to first lieutenant and then captain and was ordered to Princeton University as a Civil Affairs

office. He went overseas to serve in the far east in 1946.

Politics is nothing new to Rhoads, who became Mayor of Taira, Okinawa, although the manner in which he procured the office is somewhat unconventional as mayoral races go.

According to Rhoads, “I found it much easier to assume the duties of Mayor of Taira than to become elected to the Ecorse Council. I simply marched down the street, well armed with several uniformed soldiers, and proclaimed myself as Mayor of the Town. I took over the police station, announced that I was mayor and nobody questioned my authority.”

Captain Rhoads served as Military Government Officer in the Okinawa campaign and was occupational team leader governing Taira, Okinawa and several surrounding communities. He was among the first troops to fly up to Korea to accept the surrender from the Japanese.

Claude Monroe and the Alexander Dumas American Legion Post



Claude Monroe of Ecorse fought for two years in Germany during World War II. When the war was over and he had returned to Ecorse, he helped found the Dumas Post of the American Legion

which was located on the corner of Tenth Street and Visger Road in Ecorse.

For about three decades the Dumas Post participated in parades and ceremonies in Ecorse and its members – about forth according to Ethel Stevenson-Claude's sister- worked hard to encourage patriotism and the American Way of Life in Ecorse citizens.

A soldier named David Dumas from the 7th U.S. Infantry, Company D., is buried in Ecorse Cemetery. Perhaps he is the soldier who gave his name to the Dumas Post.



PRIME MINISTER WINSTON CHURCHILL is pictured above during a briefing session of the 97th Bomber Group prior to the invasion of North Africa. The photograph, taken by world-famous photographer Margaret Bourke White during May 1943, also includes the late Major Hazen Payette, brother of Dr. A. E. Payette of Ecorse, and other top ranking United States figures. The late Prime Minister is pictured in the rear of the photo wearing a white hat, and Major Payette on the extreme right as he briefed the Bomber Group. Major Payette died July 25, 1962.

Dr. Lawrence S. Lackey, World War II Hero

September 16, 1970-Ecorse Advertiser

Dr. Lawrence S. Lackey of Ecorse, internist and Ecorse School

Board member, was a World War II hero who won his silver and bronze stars for saving wounded men.

Born in Oklahoma, Lawrence began saving for college at age nine when he sold newspapers. By the time he turned thirteen he was saving his wages from a janitor's job and when he was twenty he graduated from Langston College in Oklahoma.

After a teaching stint at a local high school, he joined the Army in 1942 as a "buck private." Soon the Army recognized his potential and sent him to officer Candidate School. He eventually became a captain in the medical administrative corps. He won his decorations during the Italian campaign-the silver star for leading the rescue of seventeen wounded men, carrying them a mile and a half under the German's noses, and the bronze star for leading the rescue of wounded men trapped in a hedge under German fire.

Discharged in 1946, he went to the University of Kansas under the GI Bill and completed graduate work and earned a medical degree. While he went to medical school he married a school teacher.

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In 1952 he came to Detroit General Hospital as an intern and under a Wayne State University Medical School program stayed for internist training. In 1956, he established a Downriver practice.

Dr. Lackey is the vice chairman of the Plymouth Housing Corporation, a Plymouth Congregational Church venture which has built a 230 unit housing project at Canfield and John R. He is a member of the Ecorse School Board and the Board of Directors of the Ecorse Drug Rehabilitation Center.

Ecorse Jaycees Present Distinguished Service Award Key to Lt.



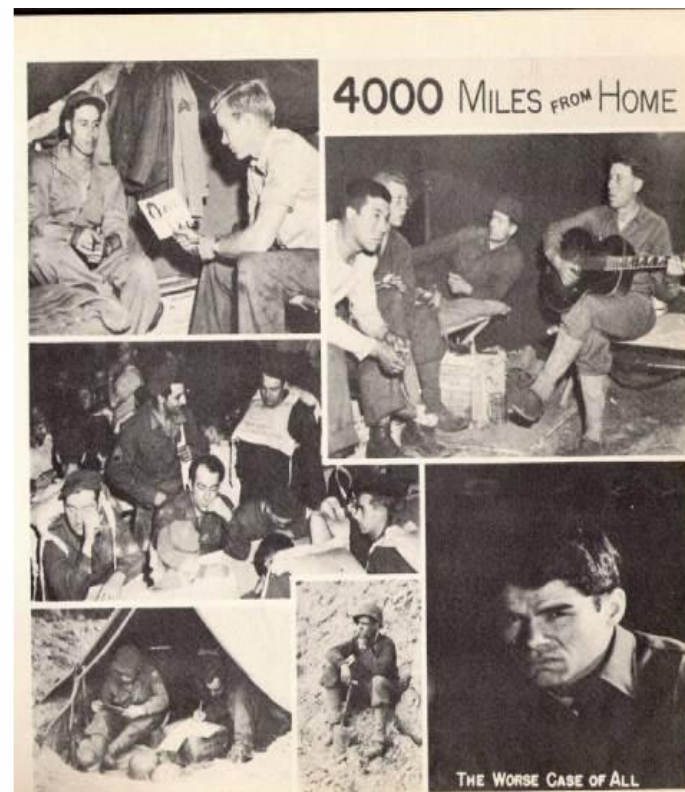
Louis Nagy

In January 1942, the Ecorse Junior Chamber of Commerce (Jaycees) presented a Distinguished Service Award key to Lt. Louis Nagy as the Ecorse outstanding young man for 1942. Lt. Nagy served in the 147th Pursuit Squadron at Wheeler Field, Hawaii.

He was born November 19, 1917 at 42 Broadway, Ecorse, and was the youngest of six children. As a newspaper boy delivering in the area of School Tow, he gave his patrons a ready smile and loyal service. His classmates at St. Francis School remembered him as a good clarinet player and his Ecorse High School classmates knew him as a whiz in baseball and football.

Lt. Nagy entered the Air Corps on October 14, 1940, and received his wings with honors in June 1941. After a visit home, he was stationed in Hawaii. Lt. Nagy said that “after missing Mass on Sunday, December 7, he has a personal score to settle with the Japs.”

Sandy Blakeman in World War II



Morris “Sandy” Blakeman was drafted into the Army in October 1941. He was transferred into the U.S. Army Air Corps which became the 8th Air Force and served in Texas and England.

In June 1944, Sandy found himself in Normandy and served there and near Paris until 1945. He was stationed in Florida and New Jersey from 1945 until 1946, when he received his honorable discharge. While Sandy served in Europe, he took many photos that illustrated the experiences of American soldiers.

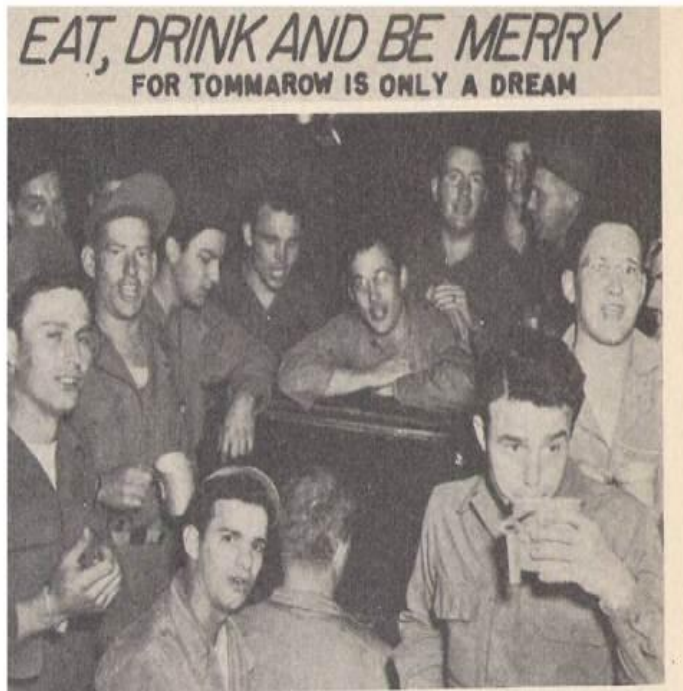
When he came home, Sandy and his wife Mary settled in Ecorse and Sandy worked for a time in the photo department at Loveland's Drugstore and set up his own photography business. He took many photos of Ecorse that make an important contribution to Ecorse



history. He and Mary and eventually his three daughters, Janice, Leta, and Susan lived on Goodell Street in Ecorse.

Sandy collected his GI photographs into a book that his family was gracious enough to share. These are some of the photographs from his book.





Remembering Ecorse Veterans-Japan and Korea

Pvt. Edward R. Crouse of Ecorse Serves with General Douglas Macarthur's Headquarters



August 18, 1949

Private Edward R. Crouse on duty at General Macarthur's Headquarters in Tokyo, Japan. Private Crouse, son of Marion Crouse, of 17 Sunnyside, Ecorse, is a member of the General's handpicked Honor Guard in the Japanese capital.

A 1948 graduate of St. Francis High School, he enlisted in the army the same year and has been in Japan since March 1949.

Pfc. Walter Crouse, a brother of Edward, is also on duty in Japan. He enlisted in August of 1948.

Mayoral and Council Inauguration Resembles 1942

November 10, 1949

Incoming mayor W. Newton Hawkins says farewell to outgoing mayor William Voisine. Scenes reminiscent of January 1942 were revived Tuesday evening in the City Hall Council Chambers as W. Newton Hawkins again took the oath of office as Mayor of

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Ecorse.

Hawkins was elected as the first mayor of Ecorse in 1942. He was reelected in 1943 and after a tour of duty in the Army returned to his law practice. He was again elected mayor last week without opposition.

The council chamber for the inauguration of the newly elected city officials was banked with over thirty huge floral pieces and baskets of cut flowers and with the best wishes of friends and organizations for the success of the new administration.

Clippings From Korea

Thursday, August 24, 1950

Richard Gerstner

Richard Gerstner, 19, of 21 Applegrove, son of Mr. and Mrs. Francis Gerstner, was killed in action in Korea. He had been an infantryman for two years and was stationed with the Army in

Japan for a year before the Korean War broke out.

Richard attended St. Francis High School in Ecorse.

Allen A. Wilson

Private First Class Allen A. Wilson, son of Mr. William C. Wilson, son of Mr. William C. Wilson of Ecorse, graduated this week from the Air Force Communications School at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois base commander Brigadier General John F. McBlain announced.

Pfc. Wilson, 21, graduated from Ecorse High School and has been on active duty with the Air Force since his enlistment on September 15, 1948.

June 26, 1952

Fred H. Schallhorn

Eligible for 2nd Purple Heart

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Pfc. Fred H. Schallhorn, eighteen-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Schallhorn, 72 W. Woodward, Ecorse, has been wounded in the Korean fighting, the Defense Department has announced. Pfc. Schallhorn's parents were notified on June 12 that he had been hit in the arms, legs and head by shrapnel, but the telegram did not state whether or not the wounds were considered serious. He is a member of Company a, 14th Infantry.

This is the second time Schallhorn who attended Ecorse High School, has been wounded. His parents were notified several months ago that he had been awarded the Purple Heart for a slight wound.

Pfc. Schallhorn, who was an employee of Modern Collet in Ecorse before entering the service more than a year ago, arrived in Korea last October.

The Schallhorns have another son in the U.S. military service. He is Pvt. John Schallhorn now stationed in Hawaii.

July 1952

Letters from Home

Ecorse soldiers fighting in Korea will receive letters from the home front soon. Ecorse young people Jennie Ivan, playground leaders, Mary Ann Bewick, Betty Watson, Georgiane Colee, Marilyn Evans, Judy Worley, Paul Palouch, Raymond Kramer and Tini Truitt write the latest local news to soldiers overseas.

December 1952

With the 4th Infantry Division in Korea, James W. Jones, son of Mrs. Odessa Jones, 3791 Eighteenth Street, Ecorse, was recently promoted to corporal while serving in Korea with the 43rd Infantry Division.

Originally an Oklahoma National Guard Unit, the division is now filled with men from all part of the United States. It arrived in Korea last December and captured “T-Bone” hill in June’s see saw hill battles.

Jones, who has been in Korea since last January, is a gunner in the

171st Field Artillery Battalion.

December 18, 1952

Pfc. Chester G. Pendred

Army Pfc. Chester G. Pendred, son of Mr. and Mrs. Chester Droulliard, of Bell Street in Ecorse, recently graduated from the 2nd Infantry Division’s Non-Commissioned Officers Academy in Korea.

A gunner in the 9th Infantry Regiment’s Company F, Pendred entered the Army in October 1951. He wears the Combat Infantryman Badge, Korean Service Ribbon and the UN Service Medal. He is a 1949 graduate of Ecorse High School.

February 26, 1953

Frederick A. Lackey

Frederick A. Lackey, 22, the only son of Mr. and Mrs. Calvin

lackey of Twelfth Street in Ecorse, died in a U.S. hospital in Tokyo on February 3, 1953, of wounds suffered on the Korean battle front.

The information reaching the parents from the Department of Defense indicated that the body would be returned to the United States, but didn't specify a date of return.

Lackey attended Ecorse High School and entered the military service in 1951. He was sent to Korea in May 1952.

Ecorse Veteran's Organizations

Legion Post 272 to Honor Giles Reeve at Testimonial



ECORSE VETERANS remembered Veteran's Day last Thursday by placing wreaths at the monuments in John D. Dingell Park. City officials, some county and state leaders also attended.

April 26, 1958

Giles a. Reeve, state commander of the American Legion, will be honored Saturday night at a testimonial dinner and dance, jointly sponsored by Great Lakes Steel Post 272 and its auxiliary unit. The affair will be held in the post home at 3914 West Jefferson, Ecorse.

Reve, 35, of 18 E. Bonzano, is a member and past commander of the post.

Heading the list of guests who will be in attendance will be Lieutenant Governor and Mrs. Philip Hart; Circuit Judge and Mrs. Horace W. Gilmore of Detroit; Mr. and Mrs. Paul Carnahan of Great Lakes Steel Corporation; National Executive Committeeman of the American Legion, R. Gerald Barr and Mrs. Barr of Port Huron; Alternate National Executive Committeeman of the American Legion, Thomas Roumell and Mrs. Roumell; Mayor Eli Ciungan and Mrs. Ciungan of Ecorse; Mayor John E. McCauley and Mrs. McCauley of Wyandotte; Mayor Jack Johns and Mrs. Johns of Lincoln Park; and Clarence R. Mead, president of Security Bank and Mrs. Mead.

Reservations have been completely sold out to the Legionnaires and their wives who are coming to the affair from all sections of Michigan to pay tribute to Reeve.

An outstanding program which includes a reception at 5 p.m. followed by dinner and dancing has been planned by the committee. Entertainment at the dinner will be furnished by one of Detroit's TV personalities.

Reeve, since his election July 21 to the state's highest legion office is proving to be one of the most progressive and popular state commanders in the history of the department.

Born and raised in Ecorse, Reeve has held every office in Post 272, from commander to sergeant-at-arms, and all elective offices in the Legion's sixteenth district.

A member of the Great Lakes Steel Post since 1946, he was elected post commander in 1950 and again in 1951, after having served as junior vice-commander and adjutant. Reeve also served as treasurer and secretary of the post's memorial home association

for five years and has held the office of president and secretary of the Great Lakes Steel Post Drum and Bugle Corps.

Reeve has been a member of the 10-20-30 Club since 1947, and also has served as district alternate committeeman and district committeeman.

Post Installs Newly Elected Officers

June 1968

Newly elected Post and auxiliary officers will be installed July 6 at 7 p.m. at Great Lakes Steel American Legion Home.

Mrs. Jack Williams of Ecorse was elected auxiliary president when the group met June 6 with Mrs. Jack Charbonneau as hostess. Assisting Mrs. Williams for the coming event are Mrs. Charles McClain, first vice president and Mrs. Robert Charbonneau. Alternates are Mrs. Charles McClain and Mrs. Herman Cather.

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Roy B. Salliotte Post No. 319, American Legion

October 1950

American Legion Honors Trio

Police Chief Charles W. Miller and two others were honored this week with life memberships in the American Legion.

Others so honored were Elmer Korn, Ecorse veteran's counselor and Richard Toutont.

In recognition of their valuable services to the Legion, each of the three received gold-plated membership certificates.

The presentations were made September 23 by officers of the Roy B. Salliotte Post.

March 1953

Post Celebrates 21st Birthday

The Roy B. Salliotte Post No. 319, American Legion, celebrated the 34th birthday of the founding of the American Legion by having a lavish dinner and program in their club rooms on White Street Sunday afternoon March 8.

The 21st birthday of the Post which was chartered in 1933 was also observed.

March 1958

Salliotte Legion Post Plans 25th Birthday Celebration

Civic and fraternal leaders from various sections of Michigan will gather at the Roy B. Salliotte Post 319, American Legion club rooms Saturday night as the Ecorse group celebrates its silver anniversary birthday dinner.

Elmer Korn, a former commander of the Ecorse Post will serve as toastmaster, according to Leo Navarre, another past commander who is general chairman of the birthday dinner.

Leon Miller, commander of the Salliotte Post, has named the following past commanders to assist Navarre with the celebration: Richard Toutant, Oliver Raupp, Bernard Broughton, Joseph Darilek, Charles Nagy and Albert Manderschied.

Nine members of the post will receive certificates in recognition of 25 years of continuous membership in the Legion. They include Marcus Aldrich, Orson Beebe, Robert Bichan, William Drinkwater, Leo Navarre, Leo Renauer, Joseph Sackenheim, George Suciuc and Chris Whitwam.

Twenty year cards will be presented to Peter Betz and Mihajlo Bogdanovich, while Cesare Maddaleng, Stephen Olchair and John Vincinti will be honored for 15 years of active membership.

Those receiving ten year awards include Harold Cyr, William Navarre, Patrick Trondle, Joseph Schrettner, Frank Schrettner, Cloyd Shugers, Edward Washell, George Pappas, Gus Pappas, Nick Pappas, Alfred Schloff and Thomas Stacks.

Roy B. Salliotte Post Honors Leo Navarre, Mrs. Miller

May 1959

A testimonial dinner honoring Leo Navarre and Mrs. Ann Miller, first zone vice-commander and first zone vice president of the Department of Michigan was given Saturday by the Roy B. Salliotte Post 319 and auxiliary, American Legion at the Great Lakes Steel hall.

Mrs. Miller is the first woman from the Roy B. Salliotte Auxiliary to attain the first zone vice presidency. Navarre is the second member of the post to be elected as department vice commander. He was preceded by Charles Miller in 1946.

For the first time in Michigan American Legion annals the combination of the first zone vice commander and vice president come from one post.

Mrs. Miller and Navarre have been active members of the American Legion for 23 years. They both received life

membership cards in 1953. Mrs. Miller was presented with a meritorious certificate in 1955 for her work in the rehabilitation section at Veteran's Hospital.

In behalf of the Roy B. Salliotte Post, Albert Mandersheid, commander, presented Navarre with luggage. Auxiliary president Mrs. Grace Mandersheid gave Mrs. Miller a rhinestone bracelet from the unit.

Navarre is employed by the Marine Corps League as state service officer.

Lawrence C. Knox, past department commander and Wayne Police Chief, was guest speaker. He commended Navarre and Mrs. Miller for their services to the American legion Post and auxiliary. Prominent department, district, post, and unit officials were present at the dinner. Family members of the honored guests also attended the dinner.

Mrs. Marie Broughton and Mandersheid, co-chairmen of the affair, were assisted by Mrs. Mandersheid, Mrs. Dorena Manoylan, Mrs. Constance Duguay, Mrs. Irene Kurel, Bernard

Broughton, John Duguay, George Carr and Albert Brandon.

Ecorse Veterans Were Active in the American Legion Posts

Veteran's Activities

Great Lakes Steel American Legion Post #272



February 1950

The Great Lakes Steel American Legion Auxiliary will hold a business meeting on Thursday, February 2, 1950 in the Memorial Home on Elton and West Jefferson in Ecorse at 8 p.m. Mrs. Blanche Dickey will president at the meeting due to the illness of the president Mrs. Jerry Fredette who is a patient in Wyandotte Hospital.

The unit will entertain at the Veteran's Hospital on Wednesday with a birthday treat and prizes for the veterans.

Members of the Post and Auxiliary are planning to attend the 18th District Americanism Banquet on February 11 in the Lincoln Park Memorial Home.

The Post is planning a Mardi Gras in the Memorial Home at Elton and W. Jefferson from February 24 to 26. The Auxiliary plans to have fancy work and bake sale booths.

Great Lakes Steel Legion Post #272

Thursday, May 14, 1953

Great lakes Steel legion Post Observes 19th Year

Dinner and Dance followed by Dedication of Colors

Great Lakes Steel American Legion Post #272 and Auxiliary on Saturday, May 9, celebrated the 19th anniversary of the founding of the Post with a dinner and dance at the Post home on West jefferson. The well attended affair got underway at 6 p.m. with the serving of a chicken dinner.

Following the dinner an impressive ceremony was held during which the new Post colors and American flag donated by the Auxiliary to the Post were dedicated. The presentation of the flags was made by the Auxiliary president Edith Monroe and the acceptance was given by Past Commander Alex Lovinski. Post Commander Albert Wiegung led the service.

Among the distinguished guests present for the big affair were Department Commander Eugene Houch and wife; District

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Commander Francis Hogan and wife; Field Service Officer Russell Cameron and wife; and District Auxiliary President Mrs. Mildred Wiegung. Each of the past post commanders present were recognized and honored.

The committee in charge of the observance of the birthday saw that the hall was fittingly decorated with beautiful flowers and the Auxiliary also presented two large birthday cakes. Committee members were Junior Vice Commander Everett Johnson, chairman; Harry Kosick, Gerald Busby, John Williams, Cliff Crevier and Stan Kiczenski.

May 23, 1974

Ecorse and River Rouge will pause for a special tribute and memorial to all veterans.

Although traditional Memorial Day is May 30 and the new observation day is May 31, ceremonies will begin at 9 a.m., May

23, in each city.

The Ecorse parade will begin with assembly at 12:30 p.m. and stepping off time 1 p.m. at the intersection of Tecumseh and West Jefferson Roads, Ecorse. All parade units are asked to continue the line of march for one full block past the reviewing stand before breaking out of the line.

Entertainment at the reviewing stand, before the parade begins, will be presented by a troupe from the Richardeau Studio, Wyandotte.

Speaker at the reviewing stand will be Mrs. Albert Wiegling, American Legion Auxiliary president who will give the Memorial Day address.

Parade narrator is Giles Reeve, former Ecorse resident and past commander of Great Lakes American legion Post 272, past American Legion Department commander and presently director of the Legion's Childrens' Billet at Otter Lake.

John Charboneau, Great Lakes Steel Post 272 commander is parade grand marshal and his aide is Gilbert Michel, Post 272.

The program at the Riverside Park reviewing stand following the parade will begin with the playing of the "Star Spangled Banner" by members of the Ecorse High School Band. The Rev. William Rodgers, pastor of the West Side Baptist church, Ecorse, will present the invocation and the address of welcome will be given by Richard E. Manning, Mayor of Ecorse.

Giles Reeve will introduce Grand Marshal Aide, Gilbert Michel and he in turn, will introduce the grand marshal, John Charboneau. Eleanor Chase will present the float award trophy; Ida Ruetz will give the Peter Reeves address and Giles Reeves will make the floral presentations.

Gilbert Michel will give the Sons of the American Legion Award and the American Legion Junior Awards will be presented by Ruth Charboneau, followed by awards to majorettes by Mrs. Eleaor Chase. Harry Prato will give the bicycle awards.

The Reverend Joseph Barlow, Junior, pastor of Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church, will present the day's benediction.

Youth groups taking part in the parade, May 23, will receive by mail a certificate of appreciation with compliments of Ecorse Memorial Day Parade Committee, Mrs. Dorothy Ody stated. Certificates will be sent to the schools or leaders of the groups.

Ecorse Memorial Day Parade Line-Up

1st Division

John Charboneau

Gilbert Michel

Great Lakes Steel Post #272 colors and color guard

Grand Marshal, Mayor Richard E. Manning

Grand Marshal Aide, Ecorse High School Band

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City of Ecorse Officials Motorcade

Women's Relief Corps #270, Grand Army Car

Fifteen Cavalry of Oakland University and the Twenty-first Infantry Volunteers of Greenfield Village, Dearborn

2nd Division

Lyle Campbell

Charles McClain

Great Lakes Steel Post #272 colors and color guard

Royal Lancers Drum & Bugle Corps of Wyandotte

Swinging Sweetheart Majorettes of Dearborn

Great Lakes Steel Post #272 and Motorcade

Unit #272, Miss Poppy...Lori Gimmel

Sons of the American Legion of Great Lakes Steel Post #272

Blue Angels Drill Team of Harper Woods, Michigan

Sarah Pall Dancing School Majorettes of Dearborn

Sarah Paull Dancing School Motorcade

Sarah Paull Dancing School Float

Navy Recruiting Car of Lincoln Park, Michigan

3rd Division

Joe Schiaffo

Bernie Broughton

Roy B. Salliotte Post #319 colors and color guard

Guardsmen Drum & bugle Corps of Flint, Michigan

Martinettes Majorettes of Allen Park, Michigan

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Roy B. Salliotte Post #319 and motorcade

American legion Melvindale aux. #472 Float

Jr. Auxiliary of Roy B. Salliotte Aux. #319

Gold Star Mother Car of Roy B. Salliotte Post #319

Military Order of the Purple Heart National Officers Motorcade

Brownie Troops #1260

Jr. Girl Scout Troops #1634, #1274, #413 and #431

Girl Guards of the Salvation Army of Ecorse

Ecorse Memorial Days and Charles Embry

Charles W. Embry, Black Jesus and Army Veteran

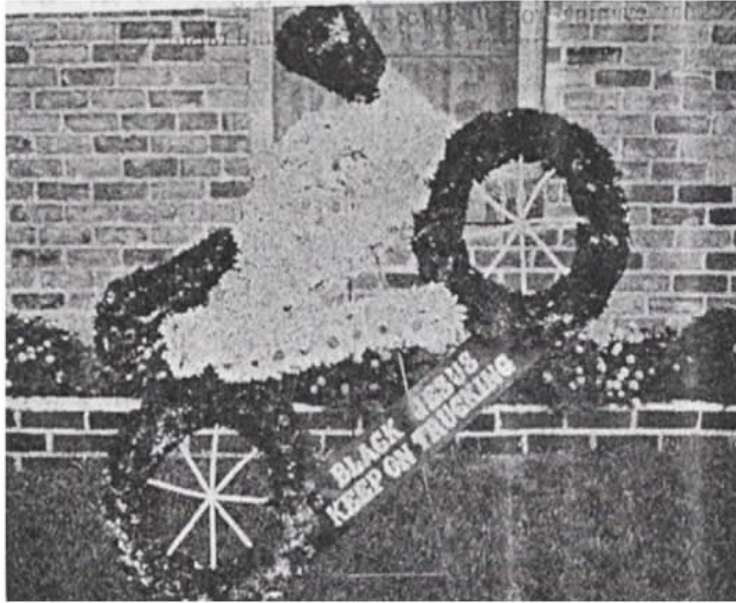
October 3, 1973



Charles W. Embry, a thirty year old Ecorse man, died September 25, 1973 in Oakwood Hospital from injuries suffered when he apparently lost control of his motorcycle.

A witness told police that Embry swerved to avoid hitting the rear of a tanker-trailer truck and skidded off the I 94 freeway near the Rotunda Drive exit in Dearborn.

A witness said that Embry was thrown from his motorcycle but was not struck by another vehicle. The accident happened shortly before midnight. Police said that Embry was rushed to Oakwood Hospital where he died at 1 a.m.



Embry moved to Ecorse when he was two years old. He attended Ecorse High School and graduated with the class of June 1961. He entered the Armed Forces where he served from November 1962 through November 1966. He was then employed by the Ford Motor Company after his honorable discharge.

His funeral took place on September 29, 1973 at Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church, Ecorse, with Reverend Joseph B. Barlow officiating. Funeral arrangements were handled by the Diggs Funeral Home. The funeral was shown on nationwide television, including Channel 7 in Detroit.

There was an overflow crowd of people who attended and it is believed to be one of the largest funerals in the Downriver area. There were more than 200 cards and 300 motorcycles in the procession. There were motorcycle clubs from the Downriver and Detroit areas and they also came from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Better known to his friends as “Black Jesus,” Embry had belonged to the Outcast Motorcycle club of Detroit for more than for years. In the bylaws of the club it is said that the motorcycle of a member killed on his motorcycle must be destroyed. The motorcycle was burned at Westlawn Cemetery.

His mother, Mrs. Bernice Embry, sister, Mrs. Lillie Motley, brother Calvin Embry, stepbrothers Ross and Ray Embry and nephew Kenneth Motley survived Charles Embry.

Memorial Day June 1960 and May 1969



GRAND MARSHALL of the Ecorse Memorial Day Parade Sunday was Harry Prato (left), Secretary Dorothy Ody, and Commentator Giles A. Reeve, past state commander of the American Legion, and a former Ecorse resident.



ALIGNED BEHIND a collection of 24 trophies which later were awarded to the best entries in various categories in the Ecorse Memorial Day parade Sunday were, from left, Lawrence Rehahn, commander of VFW Post 5709 who was grand marshal aide; Councilman Giles Reeve, a former state department American Legion commander; Municipal Judge Alexander Barbour; Councilman Carl L. Rhoads; Councilman Alex Petri, state representative from the Seventeenth District; Gilbert Adams, parade grand marshal and commander of Roy E. Salliotte American Legion Post 319 and Mayor Pro-tem Richard Manning and Louis Parker.

Ecorse Vietnam Veterans

May 20, 1973

Following the traditional Memorial Day waterside services at the foot of Southfield in Ecorse, representatives of veteran's organizations dedicated a memorial to six Ecorse men who were killed in Vietnam.

They are: Sp 4 Lewis Roy Kirby; Sgt. Jamie Villabos; Sp 4 Martee Bradley, Jr; Pfc.. Philip Tank; Pfc. Charles Tank; and Sp 4 Floyd Richardson.

Also honored was Sgt. Gary LaBohn of South Lyons who is Missing in Action. LaBohn was adopted by members of Ecorse VFW Post 5709 who have long been active in the POW-MIA program.

Members of the VFW and American Legion Posts 272, 319 and Dumas and the Peter Reeves Women's Relief Corp attended the dedication that was made by Denise Rebhalm, president of the

VFW Junior Girls Unit. Chaplain Terri Vasquez closed the ceremony with a prayer for the souls of the departed comrades and for the safe return of Sgt. LaBohn.

Ecorse Soldiers Killed in Vietnam

Thomas Bickford

Martee Bradley, Jr. Army/SP4-Panel 37W061 on Vietnam Memorial

Joe. D. Johnson, Jr. Army PFC Panel 13E 14 on Vietnam Memorial

Floyd Richardson, Jr. Army PS4 Panel 05W074 on Vietnam Memorial

Charles Louis Tank, Army CPL 26W012 on Vietnam Memorial

Philip Leonard Tank Army PFC, Panel 44W042 on Vietnam Memorial

Jaime Villabos, Army/SSG Panel 67W 004 on Vietnam Memorial

Lewis Roy Kirby, SPF4/SSG Panel 12E Line 089 on Vietnam Memorial

Lewis Roy Kirby First Ecorse Vietnam Casualty



November 1966

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Ecorse soldier Lewis Roy Kirby of the 14th Infantry, 25 Division was killed in combat with small arms fire on November 19, 1966 in Vietnam. He was Ecorse's first Vietnam casualty.

Lewis, the son of James Kirby of Labadie Court, Ecorse, attended Ecorse High School for one year and Lincoln Park High School for two years. He enlisted in 1964 and received his boot training at Fort Knox and then more training in Georgia and Hawaii before he went to Vietnam.

His father James Kirby was on a hunting trip in northern Michigan when word was received of his son's death. The American Legion Post at Lake City, Michigan, located Mr. Kirby and informed him of the death of his son.

Funeral services and burial were held from the Leonard Funeral Home in Bellaire, Michigan, where his mother Wanda was buried in 1959. Besides his father, a brother Joseph, of northern Michigan survived Lewis.

Pfc Hayward Moon Chosen Soldier of the Quarter

In December 1966, Pfc. Hayward W. Moon, son of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Connor of 19th Street, Ecorse, was selected as “Soldier of the Quarter,” for the 100th Chemical Group, Fort McClellan, Alabama. He was selected for his outstanding knowledge of general military subjects, appearance and soldierly bearing.

Pfc. Moon entered the Army in September 1965 at Fort Knox, Kentucky. After completing basic combat training, he attended the Chemical Entry Course, U.S Army Chemical Center and School, Fort McClellan.

Joe D. Johnson, Jr., is Second Ecorse Soldier Killed in Vietnam

U.S. Army Private First Class Joe D. Johnson, Jr., 20, of Sixteenth Street in Ecorse, was killed in Vietnam on January 2, 1967 by fragments from a Viet Cong mine. He was a member of Company A, 196th Infantry in the Second Battalion. Drafted into the Army in May 1966, he entered Fort Knox, Kentucky for his boot training.

He obtained his advanced training at Camp Polk, Louisiana and came home on furlough during Thanksgiving 1966 to visit family and friends in Ecorse and South Carolina. He left for Vietnam on December 3, 1966.

Joe Johnson Jr. graduated from Ecorse High School with the class of January 1966. He was a member of the baseball and basketball teams, varsity football, and also spent two years as a member of the Ecorse High School Choir. He was employed at the Ford

Motor Company and was a member of the Union Second Baptist Church in River Rouge.

His parents, three brothers, a sister, and a grandmother survive Joe. He was buried with military honors at Union, South Carolina.



Martee Bradley, Jr.

On December 11, 1968, Mr. and Mrs. Martee Bradley of 18th Street in Ecorse received word that their son Martee Bradley, Jr., had been killed in Vietnam. On December 9th, the Army had informed them that he was missing in action.

A 1967 graduate of Ecorse High School, Martee played first trombone in the high school band during his high school years. He was drafted into the Army in March of 1968, took basic and advanced training and was home on leave this summer before going to Vietnam.

His parents and brother and sisters, Mrs. Silas Wilson of Detroit, and Pamela, Roger, Davie, Senn, Starr and Rhonda, survived him.

Sergeant Jaime Villalobos Dies in Vietnam



Ten-year-old Belinda Villalobos accepted the Bronze Star for her father, Army Sergeant Jaime Villalobos of Ecorse, who was killed in May 1968 in the Vietnam fighting.

Belinda, the oldest of five children surviving Sgt. Villalobos, received the medal from Major General Shelton E. Lollis, Commanding General, U.S. Army Tank Automotive Command, (TACOM), Warren

Pfc. Philip L. Tank and Cpl. Charles L. Tank Vietnam Casualties

Pfc. Philip L. Tank, 20, of West Westfield in Ecorse, was killed in Vietnam on September 12, 1968. He had been in Vietnam since July 4 with the First Infantry Division.

Born November 27, 1947, Philip was raised in Ecorse and graduated from St. Francis Xavier High School in June 1965. He attended Northern Michigan University at Marquette before joining the Army in January.

After prayers at Ballheim Funeral Home on September 26, a funeral Mass was sung at St. Francis Xavier Church and he was buried at Michigan Memorial Park, Flat Rock, with full military honors.

Corporal Charles Louis Tank E3A was killed in the Province of Tay Ninh in Vietnam on April 19, 1969. He was born in Ecorse on September 14, 1943.

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A Poem From Vietnam-David Trevino and Mike Pongracz

Wednesday, July 23, 1969

The following poem was written by Marine Lance Corporal David Trevino and Mike Pongracz, both of Ecorse. They were stationed in Vietnam when they wrote the poem, but now are being pulled out along with about 25,000 other servicemen. David was scheduled to be stationed on Okinawa July 15th. Both are graduates of Ecorse High School.

Living and Dying

Take a man then put him alone,

Put him 20,000 miles from home,

Empty his heart of all but blood,

Make him live in sweat and mud,

This is the life I have to live,
And, why my soul to the devil I give.
But you don't know what it's like over here,
You have your parties and drink your beer.
You have a ball without near trying,
While over here your boys are dying,
You burn your draft card and march at dawn,
You plant your signs on the White House lawn,
You all want to ban the bomb,
And protest the war in Vietnam.
You use your drugs and have your fun,
But refuse to come over here and use a gun,

There's nothing else for you to do,
And here I'm supposed to die for you.
There's one thing that you should know,
And that's where I think you can go.
I'm already here and it's too late,
I've traded all my love for hate,
I'll hate you till the day I die,
You make me hear my buddy cry,
I saw his arm a bloody shred,
I heard them say, "This one's dead."
It's a large price to have to pay,
Not to live another day.

He had the guts to fight and die,

By his dying your life he buys,

But who gives a damn if a Marine dies?

His family and friends do and they're the only ones,

But you keep on having your fun,

But your day will surely come.

Floyd Richardson, Jr. Killed in Vietnam

An Ecorse soldier Floyd Richardson, Jr., 22-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Governor Elias, 3820 Seventeenth, died in Vietnam February 2, 1971.

A 1968 Ecorse High School graduate, he had been in Vietnam since December. He had served in the Army for 2 ½ years and was scheduled to be discharged in June.

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According to his other, the Army didn't tell her the circumstances of his death, but he had been in Vietnam since December.

He was buried at Westlawn Cemetery following military funeral services on February 13, 1971, at Mt. Zion Baptist Church.

In addition to his parents, his wife Diane and son, Floyd of Ecorse survive him. His sisters Deborah Wright, Linda and Anita and brothers Myron, Dennis, Andrew and Raymond also survive him.

SP 5 Thomas Wayne Bickford Killed in Vietnam

July 1971

A military funeral service was held July 20, 1971, at Ecorse Baptist Temple for Thomas Wayne Bickford, 20-year-old Ecorse soldiers who was killed in Vietnam on July 11, 1971.

Sp5 Bickford was in a helicopter which blew up in mid-air as the result of enemy gunfire. He began his second tour of duty in Vietnam on June 1. He was a 1969 graduate of Lincoln Park High

School and entered the Army in February of that year. He was sent to Vietnam in January 1970 and was returned to the United States in December 1970.

His wife, Brenda, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Onie Pike of 4645 Ninth Street in Ecorse. Brenda and Thomas were married two months ago, and Brenda was living with her parents while her husband served in Vietnam.

Ecorse Women Serve

Ecorse WAC Reports for Active Duty



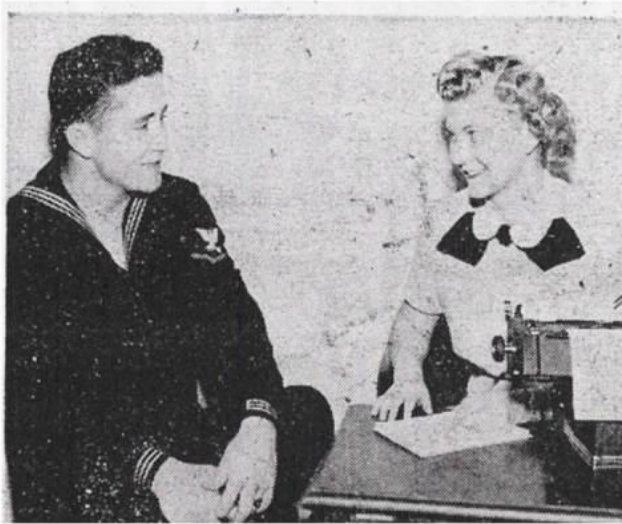
September 1955

Loretta Cameron of Ecorse was one of a group of women reservists from twenty four states to report to the WAC Center, Fort McClellan, Alabama, for two weeks active duty.

A private in the reserve group, Private Cameron is assigned to the 323rd General Hospital Unit, and is employed at the Michigan Bell Telephone Company. As a reserve, she is one of sixty-two enlisted WAC Reservists from all over the United States, who on August 14th converged on the WAC Center for training.

She is the daughter of Mrs. Elizabeth Cameron, 4304 Beech Street, Ecorse.

Irene Mager Reports for the WAVES



January 3, 1952

Irene Jean Mager, SA, WAVE, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Mager of High Street in Ecorse. She is now serving aboard the U.S. Naval Air Station, Alameda, California.

On the staff of the "Carrier," the station's newspaper, Miss Mager is a reporter, covering all and any events that may take place on the station.

Miss Mager enlisted in the WAVES on April 24, 1951, and received her recruit training at the Naval Training Center, Great Lakes, Illinois.

Following her completion of the 12 week course in fundamental naval procedure, she was transferred to NAS Alameda on July 11, 1951. Prior to enlistment in the WAVES, Miss Mager worked for her father at the Mager Roofing Company in Ecorse.

A graduate of the Ecorse High School Class of 1945, Miss Mager was a member of the school band. She also participated in the sports activities at the school.

Miss Mager recently became engaged to Thomas J. Mihm, aviation mechanic third class of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. They will be married in the station chapel in April.

Liz Salas From Ecorse is the First WAVE Aboard the Telfair



April 1956

Liz Salas, Ecorse native and journalist third class USN, a WAVE,

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stepped off the gangway onto the quarterdeck of the USS Telfair and shot a snappy salute at the officer of the Deck. She asked permission to come aboard and submitted her orders to report for duty. With these actions, she was the first WAVE to serve on a U.S. Navy fleet ship.

When Liz reported to the Navy's attack transport ship in April 1956, the Telfair had no precedents to fall back upon. Military Sea Transport Service and hospital ships often carry WAVES, but not ships of the combatant fleet.

The Telfair's crewmen were astonished and fumbled for the right words of greeting for their new shipmate. Captain Charles E. King, commanding officer, declared "The Telfair is honored to have the fleet's first WAVE aboard; it marks another first for the Telfair,"

The daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Dionisio Sales of Sixth Street in Ecorse, Liz enlisted in the Navy in October 1953 and received her recruit training at Bainbridge, Maryland. After 18 months of duty at Great Lakes, Illinois, she was sent to Pearl Harbor duty in July

of 1955.

“Mother was terrified when she heard about me going to sea. She never even let us kids go near water,” Liz said.

Liz discovered that she liked voyaging and schemed for sea duty for some time. After many setbacks she received temporary additional orders from her Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet, to travel with the Telfair during a voyage from Pearl Harbor, Hawaii to San Diego, California. Her job was to write feature stories about a group of Navy dependents who were completing a three month tour of duty in Hawaii on the Telfair.

Liz soon discovered that being aboard the Telfair was an adventure. Her first experience was a touch of seasickness. “They told me it would be calm. It was for awhile. Then my stomach started to go up and down and the first day was pretty horrible. I couldn’t understand it and I began to change my mind about going to sea,”

Next came a chivalrous act. While Liz stood on the bow, an ensign

jumped in front of her to bear the brunt of the salt spray that suddenly splashed over the bow.

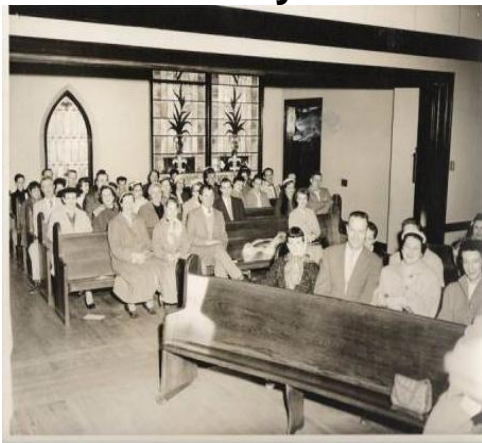
After witnessing fire drills and doing collateral duty as a baby sitter for some of the younger dependents, Liz decided that she liked being at sea. “After I got my sea legs, I enjoyed every minute at sea. I learned something new every day. I’d really like to get permanent duty with the Telfair,” she said.

Liz also wanted to share her pleasant experience with other WAVES. “I think that with a few adjustments, WAVE’s could easily come aboard ships and be just as useful as the men.”

Chapter Twelve

Ecorse Churches

Ecorse Presbyterian Church



Sunday School in Ecorse dates back to 1879 and the official Ecorse United Presbyterian Church grew out of a mission Sunday School that was organized on September 1, 1907, by a group of young people who lived in the small Downriver village of Ecorse, but belonged to the Wyandotte Baptist Church.

On September 12, 1910, the Presbytery of Detroit organized the church, recording 51 charter members and welcoming Reverend Roy G. Hershey as its first pastor on December 15, 1910. A windstorm destroyed the old frame church building in 1912 and members built a brick church building on the corner of Jefferson and Bonanzo which served the church for more than sixty years. The red brick church was demolished and a new church building was raised and dedicated in February 1970.

A manse behind the church was built in 1926 and in 1953, Leonard Duckett Center was built to serve the church and community as an activities building. Many events for the church and community have taken place at the Leonard Duckett Center over the years, including Sunday School, youth fellowship, Kiwanis Club, Rotary, Civil Air Cadets, Boy Scouts, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Ecorse Women's Club, Square Dancers, Women's Fellowship Association, rummage sales, Women's Bible Class, study groups, fish fry suppers, spaghetti dinners, Harvest Home Suppers and bazaars.

Early ministers were Roy G. Hershey, 1910-1913; Isaac J. Van

Hee, 1913-1914; David Gilles, 1914-1915; C.W. Hastings 1917-1921; Walter Nichol, 1921-1926; William T. Angus, 1926-1928; and Ralph A. Armstrong, 1928-1931.

In 1931, Reverend Leonard Duckett and his family came to Ecorse and for 25 years he brought a steady, strong Christian influence into the life of the community. After he retired, three young ministers, all recent graduates of Princeton Theological Seminary, brought a group ministry to the church.

With the support of the Presbyterian Board of Church Extension of Detroit, these ministers extended a two year vocational ministry into the large industrial plants of Ecorse. Reverend George Coleman, one of these three ministers, remained to pastor the church until 1962. During this era, the church reached its peak membership of over 400 members.

Reverend Raymond Scott served as church pastor from 1961 until 1971. During these years the congregation met the challenge of replacing the old church building. Reverend John Bartko became pastor in 1972 and served faithfully until he died suddenly in

1993. During his pastorate, the surrounding community experienced steady unemployment, urban flight, declining property values, and erosion of the public school system and youth recreational opportunities. Ecorse went into receivership from 1986-1990 and the struggle for the renewal of Ecorse still continues.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Ecorse Presbyterian Church focused on being a “family church” with little emphasis on active outreach. As the community changed and as members of the church family moved on or died, the congregation steadily declined around 200 members, hovering there for several years. Sunday School enrollment suffered similar losses. Pledges and contributions also declined, eventually forcing the church to tap into its endowment and investment reserves.

Reverend E. Dickson Forsythe was the last minister to serve the Ecorse Presbyterian Church. The property was sold and the buildings razed in 2009., but the memories remain for the generations of people who were baptized, married, and buried from the Ecorse Presbyterian Church.

The Presbyterians Meet in Raupp Hall



Ecorse Advertiser

March 4, 1937

By John Wall

After a seven months absence from the home fireside while Jefferson Avenue was widened, the congregation of the Ecorse

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Presbyterian Church for the last few Sundays has been attending services in the church itself. The reopening service will be held Sunday. Driven from their worship by the widening of West Jefferson Avenue, a widening which has had a tremendous influence upon the village, the congregation in the interim occupied the only available hall in the village, now known as Raupp Hall. Its use was donated free of charge by the Michigan Steel Social & Relief Association.

If there should be any basis in fact for the theory often expounded by many American writers that the brick or wooden walls of a building should absorb into themselves trails of the characters of their occupants or a brick or wooden walls of a building should absorb some of the characteristics previously interpreted to the encircling walls – what a weird combination there must have been established in that old Raupp Hall – judging from the many occupations that have been pursued within its precincts – and what effect may it not have had on its transient occupants?

Something of that feeling has been imparted to the Reverend Leonard Duckett, pastor of the Presbyterian Church.

“It used to give me quite a start to lead the congregation in prayer, then open my eyes and see the fierce gleaming eyes of a first class Halloween cat blazing down upon me from the wall as they did the morning after the last Halloween dance. And it was disconcerting too, to have the decorations of witches and brooms and other unearthly symbols in the House of the Lord,” he said.

Even more disconcerting, the thought, was the holding of a church service in the aroma of stale beer left over from a party the night before; likewise, the sight of a half dozen empty half barrels, marshaled neatly against the back wall of the hall, smote against his eyes as he raised them from reading the text for the services.

But perhaps the most potent factor of the lot was not made clear to the Reverend Duckett as he was not about when Lefty Clark held sway over the premises which until recently the Presbyterians had used weekly as a church. That was left to a few members of the congregation who in other years might have ascended that narrow flight of stairs to the assembly room through a pseudo cigar store and passed between two rows of hidden eyes closely scrutinizing every person who approached, and perhaps these few members

faintly expected when going to the church services to have to step up on a little platform and be deftly “patted won’ or “finished’ for concealed weapons and have to say the right words in order to get through steel doors swinging outward.

And it is not without the bounds of reason to suppose that the same members might have wondered as church people might often wonder about affairs utterly extraneous to the church, whether there might not be in attendance at these Sunday morning meetings, other ghostly communicants, peering down from balconies which no longer line the walls as they used to, which sharp eyes guardsmen patrolled them or whether ghostly crap tables, half a dozen of them, might not have been pushed back from the center of the floor and the faint clicking of the dice, once so dominant in that place, have been stifled for the services – whether the genteel “congregations” which assembled there long ago.

Yes, the presence of church services in Raupp’s Hall must have imparted some considerable shame to the patrons covering the walls of the old hall and it makes one wonder what an imaginative

person could see if he should scrape from the ceiling some of the discolorations there, infused into the beams by acrid fumes of cigar smoke and stale beer, the reek of whiskey, the heavy odor of massed humans, perhaps deepened by shout of winners, the cries of losers, music of a dance band or the sound of a reverent hymn being raised by devout worshippers-if he should take these scrapings, put them in a bottle and distill them.

Would he see again in the vapor emerging from the retort a long procession of the gamblers, the racketeers, honest steel workers, pleasure bound and the devout worshippers, Bible in hand, in short, all the folks who have frequented the place from its inception?

Probably not.

At any rate, the new church is nearing completion, slowly, and the building fund is rising, also slowly, to complete it. Another thousand dollars in the fund Reverend Duckett says, and there will never again be any need for going into Raupp's or anyone else's hall for church services.

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The rebuilt church will rise upon its new foundations, and the members of the congregation will leave the old Raupp's Hall to its prescribed function, providing a place for recreation and further gathering its misty memories.

St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church

St. Francis Church Is Older Than Ecorse, Even Older Than Michigan

William L. Whitney who lived on Alexis Street in Ecorse, was one of the people working on the St. Francis Festival Committee in 1937. He learned through his research into the church history that St. Francis was almost certainly founded in the late 1820s which made it oldest than the state of Michigan which was created in 1837.

William also discovered that the Downriver district at that time had no churches or schools and the population consisted of only a few French families who made their living hunting, fishing, trapping or farming. Father Gabriel Richard, the priest of early Michigan days, came to Ecorse and set up a little mission where

he preached once a month. He continued to carry on this mission for a number of years in addition to his other duties at St. Anne's Church, part of which were in Congress as the only priest ever to represent the territory of Michigan in Washington.

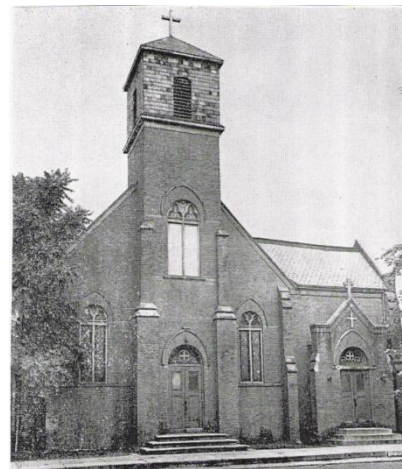
It was through his intervention in Congress that Michigan received the first appropriation to establish the institution that is now known as the University of Michigan. Father Richard also put through the first appropriation for a road from Detroit to Chicago, a federal highway which has borne millions and millions of people across the surface.

"This close link with the past while known to a few scholars is not generally known to a few scholars not generally known to the people who have daily business with St. Francis Xavier Church and I am satisfied that it will be of prime interest to all of them," William Whitney said.

More than a century of service

The St. Francis Church building on High and Bourassa was the second permanent church to be built, with the cornerstone laid in 1882. Father J. Van Gennip, who is buried in St. Francis Cemetery

was pastor.



The Reverend Msgr. Raymond Champion was pastor of the parish for 36 years and he is well remembered by the older people of the community. He was succeeded by Father T.G. Morin. Father Morin's tenure saw many improvements in the parish. The first school was built and additions made to the school grounds until there were approximately three and one half acres in the school grounds fronting on Jefferson and Bonzano Streets.

Ecorse grew rapidly because of new industrial development and by the 1940s, St. Francis Xavier Parish served more than six hundred families and the school had an enrollment of 620

children. By the 1930s the parish saw the need to build a new church on Jefferson and Outer Drive. The “new” church on West Jefferson has stood and served the community for over a century.



The Right Reverend Monsignor Tobias G. Morin cut a cake presented to him by the Ecorse Senior Citizens during his celebration of 60 years as a Catholic priest in December 1964. The Mayor’s Committee on Senior Citizens Activities appointed Father Morin Chaplain of the Ecorse Senior Citizen’s organization.

Chapter Thirteen

Remembering Early Ecorse

By Jean Sexton Wery

Class of 1947

During the 40's World War II as the event that changed the lives of everyone. I grew up in Ecorse when we moved from the south from the time I went to School 2 in the first grade until I graduated and was married. Our town was small. Everyone knew everyone. We had down town Ecorse. There was a dime store, Slavins, a ladie's shop; Roths men's, women's and children's clothing, Sims Men's Wear and Plourdes Hardware. There were doctors and dentists, a pool room, a movie theater, two drug stores, a barber shop, beauty parlor, a bank, Volmerhausens Bakery, a couple of beer stores and a few grocery stores. There was a dry cleaners, library, coffee shop and bars.

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It didn't matter where in Ecorse you lived, you had everything you needed in town. We had playgrounds open all summer. We did crafts, played baseball, tether ball, and checkers by the hour. From Thanksgiving on to February the streets were icy. No salt in those days – if your car got stuck they threw ashes from the furnaces to make traction for the wheels. It was not uncommon to see some boys hanging on the bumpers of cars and sliding all the way from Bell Street to Outer Drive. It was painful if they hit a dry spot, but they still did it. We ice skated right on the street, but there were corner lots that were flooded. You just sat in the snow and put on your skates. At the Municipal Skating Rink we had a shanty with a pot bellied stove to put our skates on that was really neat.

The firemen would open the hydrants for us too cool off in the summer, but then we had an outbreak of polio and that stopped wading pools and hydrant cooling off in the summer.

We had an underground tunnel installed on Josephine that ran under Jefferson so the school kids could safely get to school without crossing Jefferson. We loved to shout when under the street. It had a great echo!

We had grade schools in every neighborhood. Everyone walked to school. By the time I left grade school, we went directly to Ecorse High. In the seventh grade we mixed with the higher grades. We were mostly down stairs at the high school. Every grade school in Ecorse attended meant many new friends from other elementary schools. It was great.

However, we were overshadowed by Pearl Harbor. When Uncle Sam said, "I Want You!", if you had one credit to go you could finish the semester. Then on to war duty. The Annual Year Book for 1944 has a V made up of students that were drafted or signed up before graduation. The high school put out great war efforts. We sold saving stamps to purchase War Bonds. The Girl Reserves made bandages for the Red Cross. We had paper drives, saved twine, saved foil, and stood in lines for nylons. We used food stamps since most everything was rationed.

Everyone pitched in and we had fun. We had our teenage club on Thursday where we played ping pong, danced to the juke box and just hung out with classmates. Once in awhile we had a DJ. I recall a contest as to who could swoon best to Frank Sinatra's

singing. My two girl friends and I got on stage. Two of us chose to do a false faint, but the one who won simply said, "Hubba Hubba." We won a pair of Bobbie sox. She won an 8 x10 autographed picture of Sinatra. I often wonder if she still has it.

We were mixed up with all the classes 7 through 12. We had a class that taught us social skills at dances. We would line up in the gym and pair up with a boy and learn to dance. If you happened to pair up with an upper class man, you really thought you were lucky. This was really one of the reasons why you knew everyone at high school.

Our chorus went to the VA hospital to entertain the men in service who had been injured.

We had a great sports program and in 1944, the Girls Athletic Association came into being. Our band played at every football and basketball home game. Our band marched in every city parade for every holiday. The Ecorse Rowing Club kept summer activities going down at the Detroit River. We had a high school rowing crew along with spring sports, baseball and track.

We never celebrated Armistice day by having school off like St. Francis our Catholic School did. So on our lunch hour we decided that we needed to have the day off also. Miss Jessman told us it wasn't a good idea, but several of my 1946 friends and myself from '47, made signs that said, "No School This Afternoon." We posted them on all doors. Our big mistake was that we stuck them on the doors with gum! Our two janitors, Rose and Herman, had a fit. Needless to say, about 190 kids just read the signs and left. The next morning we were all called down to the office. We pleaded innocent but had to stay after school for three weeks for supervision under the jurisdiction of Miss Von Sprecken. Then the next three weeks we had to deal with angry parents. That was our one time trying to skip school.

We had great skip days which were supervised by Mr. Knox and Iva Studebaker. We went to Walled Lake. We also had Bird and Biology Club where we went to the marsh and looked for birds and then back to Miss Jessman's class where she treated us with Frost Bites which she kept in the freezer in her class. She also had a line of candy. The ones we most enjoyed was Mallo Cups. If you

got an initial that spelled out Mallo, you got a free candy bar. I don't recall anyone ever getting the entire word and getting the prize.

The Class of 1947 was the only class that never had a year book. After the war there were shortages of paper and money, so we had a leaflet printed up with a few facts about 1947. I can assure you if you have one of these, it is tattered and torn by use from reunions. I still have mine.

Even though it was war and post war time everyone in Ecorse put forth much cooperation and worked together hoping for peace.

We are still in touch with my husband's fifth grade teacher, Mrs. Lowney Blair who is in her 90s. She lives in Southgate and spent her summers in Marquette where she grew up. She can be seen walking at the Southland Mall and keeps in touch with us on all holidays. She is amazing and has many memories of her early teaching days at School Two.

The classes of 47, 48 and 49 started having Class Reunions. The

first was in 1952. We had it in the school cafeteria and then to my house after to reminisce. We started having combined reunions in 1972 and every five years and continued on until we had a reunion for all of the 1940s classes in 1992.

A group of Ecorse High Girls(we still think of ourselves as girls when we get together) have a luncheon every April and October. Everyone is invited. Having the luncheons and reunions has kept us in touch and it is always great to remember the good old days in Ecorse. One can click their heels like Dorothy in Oz, close their eyes, and whisper “There was no place like Ecorse.”

Growing Up In Ecorse – 1950s and 1960s

By Jim Pittman

Ecorse 1960s Reunion 2003

Growing up in Ecorse in the 1950s and 1960s was truly an educational experience. I learned a lot about life from the people of this blue-collar community. I learned about hard work from the people who worked at the “mill” or the auto plants and from the

neighbors who worked hard to keep their homes and yards neat and clean. I learned about caring for people, from the teachers in elementary school, all the way through the high school. I learned about religion and moral values from the many youth activities sponsored by the local churches. I learned about sports and sportsmanship from the volunteer coaches that worked with us in Little League and the coaches of our high school sports programs. I learned about living, going to school, playing sports and working with people from many different races and cultures. I also learned about hard times, like when the “mill” went out on strike or the riots in Detroit threatened to spill over into Ecorse. The Ecorse of my memory might not be the same for everyone, but I know I’m a better person for having grown up in Ecorse.

As I sit here thinking about growing up in Ecorse, I have fond memories ranging from the smallest day to day events to some that were life changing. A number of Ecorse grads and former Songsters remember these things about growing up in Ecorse.

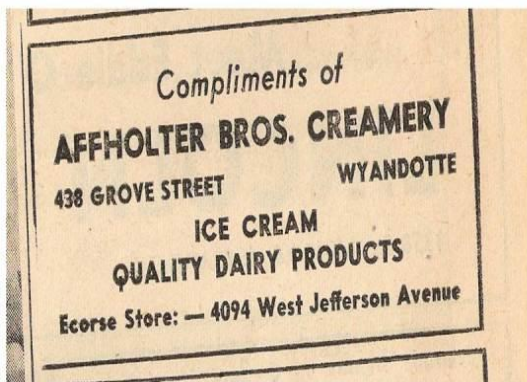
- Cruising the Root Bear Stand

- Getting a burger at Carter's
- Watching the Boat races at the park
- Sitting in the parking lot of Seavitte's drug store on Jefferson
- Playing football games in the afternoon
- Eating a bag of White Castle 'cause they were only 12 cents each
- For a special date we went to the Big Boys on Dix
- Buying French fries by the pound at Golden Point
- Losing to River Rouge in basketball almost every year
- Ice Skating at the Muni
- Sneaking out for donuts from Mr. Buckles drafting class
- Ice cream from Affholders Dairy
- Eating lunch at the counter in Loveland's drug store
- Mr. Buss and his paddle
- Songsters and the powder blue dinner jackets for the boys and the pastel dresses for the girls
- The day in algebra class in 1963 when they announced that JFK had been assassinated
- The first McDonald's hamburger stand on Dix in Lincoln Park
- Swimming nude in PE class
- Going bowling with a gang of ten or twelve on Saturday night at the Thunder Bowl
- Kathryn Adams, high school counselor, knowing when to

pat us on the back or kick us in the butt

- January graduations
- Dragging on Industrial Highway
- Barry Matthew's candy apple tangerine Chevy convertible
- Swimming at the quarry in Gibraltar
- Pizza at Frankies
- Sneaking in the back door of the pool hall on Jefferson and playing at the back tables
- The proms at Lovett Hall in Greenfield Village and dinner at Topinka's or the Top of the Flame
- Taking a date to the Harbor Theater
- Looking for Loony Rooney's on Grosse Ile
- Street Showers
- Hot ham and cheese and fries at Pop's or at King's restaurant
- Hopping the train and riding it to school
- Going for a speedboat ride on the wooden Criss Craft boat at the park
- School Two – Mr. Isopi, Miss Tissen and Mrs. Conley
- Standing in line for our polio shots
- Going to Tiger Stadium, the Zoo, Brenning Pools or the Vernors plant during the summers with the recreation department.
- Watering the plants and everything else in the greenhouse at the High School during Miss Jessman's biology class

Do You Remember Affholters?



I Remember Affholters

by Marvin Graves

On the south end of Biddle Avenue in Wyandotte, Michigan, there was a dairy called Affholters. In my hometown of Ecorse, they

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had a retail outlet. It was on West Jefferson between West Broadway and West Josephine. The dime store was on the corner and Affholters was right next door.

My memories of the Ecorse Affholters store come back to me from the late 1940s and early 1950s. At that time I was in my teens and there was always enough left over in my manila pay envelope from the Ecorse Advertiser delivery route or from my Loveland's Drug Store pay envelope to provide a treat at Affholters.

The front of the store, I think, was modern for the times. Dare I say, almost art deco in Ecorse? It was square across the front and done in a glazed tile a little different than other business on Jefferson. It had a banner across the top that lit up at night in neon, proclaiming the name "Affholters."

There was a large plate glass window and when you looked in, because of the abundant fluorescent lights you could see everything and everyone in the store. There was a large glass door in the front and when you opened it, the fragrance of farm fresh

dairies came to your nose and let you know ahead of time what waited inside.

To the left and running parallel to the window a large case cooled the products it held. It had a slanted glass front to it and sliding doors in the back to give clerk's access to the products inside. Inside this case there was milk in necked glass bottles that had paper caps that you had to lift off by a tab with your thumb. Now we're talking REAL milk here, not this wimpy 1/2 percent, 1 percent, or 2 percent stuff, but REAL milk with CREAM for three or four inches in the neck!

The cream was carefully poured off at home and saved for tea or coffee or as a treat over oatmeal or over Kellogg's Corn Flakes. Skilled milk, buttermilk, chocolate milk and cream in pint and 1/2 pint glass bottles with those same paper caps all stood solemnly in their places in the case. REAL butter lay wrapped in rice or oiled paper. There also was yogurt, sour cream and cottage cheese.

A big brass cash register next to this case had numbered buttons. The total button when pushed opened the cash drawer and the bell

rang. Your money was placed on the marble sill over the cash drawer and your change counted out. The serving counters took up the rest of the store. They were like a series of U's with the tops to the left and facing the left wall of the store. The last U was "reserved" for the girls who worked there. They sat back there when no customers were in the store or when they were finished with the duties that kept the store smelling so fresh.

Summer evenings always attracted a crowd at Affholters. An evening stroll had to include Affholters ice cream. In the early spring and late fall when the demand for ice cream was not so great, people would stop in just for milk or butter. The early spring and late fall were the times for "accepted" guys who sat at the back U under the pretext that it was easier to serve them.

The "customer side" of these U's had stools at regularly spaced intervals. The stools had a single leg going down firmly anchoring it to the tiled floor. The top of the stool was flat and paddle with no back. The stool swung through a full 360 degrees. You could sit on the stool, pull your legs up, grab the counter in front of you, give a mighty tug and spin yourself silly while waiting for your

order to be taken. “Course I never knew anyone who did that!”

High on the wall in back of these counters was a large sign that had the price of everything in the store. When the girls went up the ladder to make a price change, the new prices were always a point of great interest to a boy of my age.

Ahhhh! The girls that worked there. Only girls worked at the store. They were generally girls who were high school seniors from Ecorse and the surrounding communities of River Rouge, Lincoln Park or Wyandotte. They were always in a starched uniform, colors matching the motif of the store itself. A mandatory hair net topped off the uniforms and made them all look like Betty Grable as Rosie the Riveter. The wall behind the counters had shelves that held the various serving dishes for sodas, malteds, sundaes and banana splits and the paper cartons for packing ice cream.

Now here again I talk ice cream with REAL butter fat content. I bet if you had asked any one of those girls for “low fat” they would think you were being a smartie trying to speak Chinese to

them.

Against the back wall there were sinks to wash dishes, those long curved neck dispensers with the handles sticking straight up from the top (they always looked like swan necks to me.) They dispensed soda water, Vernor’s Ginger Ale, Nehi Grape Soda and Coke. Scattered about were coffee makers and clear glass jars with pumps on top that dispensed flavored syrups. There were the stainless steel chest freezers holding the many flavors of ice cream they served. The stainless steel freezers had pockets attached to the side of them that contained water. The ice creams scoops were stored there. From there the scoops made the dive down into the freezer to come up with the good stuff.

Aha! We have finally gotten down to the good stuff! My favorite “good thing” was made with Vernor’s Ginger Ale in a tall glass with a dip of vanilla ice cream placed on top. I can’t remember, was this a float or a “Boston Cooler?” The girls made tin roof and hot Saunders fudge sundaes. They made all kinds of sodas. They made malteds. Did they make malteds!

They would serve the malted with a long spoon and two straws in half wrapped tissue that stuck straight up in the thick malted. The lower half of the straw tissue wrapped removed by the girls and placed in the glass made a very “sanitary” presentation. The malt was so thick that the straws were useless so it was consumed with the spoon until the bottom was reached. Then the wrapper was removed from the straws and they were used to slurp out all of the goodness at the very bottom of the glass. “Course, I always did that!”

The mouth’s saliva being generous from a recently consumed sweet would coat one end of the saved wrapper. Then the wrapper was replaced over the straw, the straw placed in the mouth, and the head tilted back. With a blow gun-like puff of air, the wrapper rocketed up to the high ceiling and with a plop stuck there. There were those who would claim bragging rights as to the number of those wrappers that they had successfully launched and that were up there for all to see. “Course, I never knew anyone who did that!

Then there were the banana splits. The girls made banana splits with pride. They started with a stainless steel oblong vessel that

was on a very short pedestal. They placed a lace paper oily at the bottom, then peeled, split and placed a banana on top of the paper. Next, generous scoops of vanilla, chocolate and strawberry ice cream were placed on the banana. At this point you would have some control over the construction of the split. The next ingredients you would choose from were syrup, fudge, pineapple or one of their berry sauces.

Then came the whipped cream – Affholter’s whipped cream in CO2 charged aluminum containers filled right there in the store. It hissed out and covered all. The next ingredient, crushed nuts, was generously sprinkled on top and a red maraschino cherry topped the whole thing.

The girls would come over to your place at the counter and from in back bring up a place mat. They would put it down in front of you along with a spoon. They would go back to where they had made the banana split and return with it in both hands. They would set it down in front of you and present it as if it were a reward for deeds well done.

I have to stop now as my eyes seem to be getting very blurry and the memories seem to be fading back to wherever they came from.

Am I the only one who does that?

Jo Santoro Cialkowski-Memories of the Bob-Lo Boat Columbia



Photo by John Duguay

The SS Columbia, the regal queen of Downriver ships, retired in 1991 because of mounting service expenses. Her rousing trumpet will be heard no more. Well named for seaman Christopher Columbus, the SS Columbia had cruised the Detroit River trail of Huron tribe canoes and early French explorers. In 1990 alone, the vessel ferried 31,000 passengers to Bob-Lo Island. We, who for decades, regaled in treading her rollicking decks, mourn.

The SS Columbia was built long before Great Lakes Steel squatted on Tecumseh Road and West Jefferson marshland and before Ecorse School was born. The SS Columbia was built with cast iron might and launched May 10, 1902 near the battle site where Chief Pontiac trounced the English.

Captain L. Beattie piloted the Columbia for 42 years. The vessel was later renovated for “Detroit Bob-Lo Island cruising.

In the 1930s, my youth days, the epic summer gala was Ecorse Day at Bob-Lo and picnic excursions to remember. It was time when the SS Columbia docked at the foot of Southfield Road, formerly State Street, and West Jefferson.

Those summer days we stood at the dock, thrilled at her lilting charisma, as we watched the Columbia glide in from Detroit. Oh, to hear her trumpeted arrival and Finzell's live band tunes ring "Up A Lazy River." I recall boarding her for picnics, rides and games, and dancing all noon and evening to live bands at the immense gleaming outdoor Bob-Lo island dance hall. All that is no more.

Last August (August 1991) not knowing the SS Columbia was retiring, my family and I took her final moonlight cruise, rounding Wyandotte, Detroit and Belle Isle. As I stood at her bow, cherished childhood memories returned.

Arriving at Bob-Lo Island we found a shady tree picnic table alongside the water. After lunch we rollicked at picnic games and races. We clapped for horseshoe ringer champs and cheered at baseball homers. Once in my teens I won a high shoe-kicking contest. My prize was a solid carton of green beans, which I picked up at the Ecorse Grocery.

Dancing to scintillating live bands all afternoon in the grandiose ballroom was sheer delight. In between we rode that favorite pony

on that merry-go-round and gleefully screamed, riding the cantankerous "Whip."

Too soon the SS Columbia hailed with her blasts, "Time to leave." Men took off their straw hats to dance with the ladies as we waltzed her deck all the way back to the Ecorse port.

Now a grandmother, it was a thrill that August evening last year to take the SS Columbia moonlight cruise from Bishop Park to Belle Isle and back. With two blocks of passengers my family and I waited at the dock to see the SS Columbia in marquis sunset glitter and like a porcelain dove, drift up to the dock. At her frisky hoot, "glad to see you," we boarded, chatting with old friends from our teens, recalling the excursions. As the ship pointed toward the Ambassador Bridge, I again stood at her rails, glancing at the mewling gulls reeling about her diamond spray.

Cherished memories wafted as we passed her old Ecorse port now obliterated by a tree clustered bird islet where floods of luminous ducks and frolicking geese splashed in the marshes just as the turquoise sunset showed tiny stars. We stared up at the

Ambassador Bridge, elated at her spanned chandelier-glittered loops. The SS Columbia rounded Belle Isle and glided back under the beaded Ambassador Bridge toward the Wyandotte port.

My husband and I left the bow to tour the Columbia decks. We danced to the oldie, “What’ll I do.” Then below we stood awed at the surging piston arms. I regaled in the bow’s brisk breeze as the Columbia followed the channel marked by the red and green buoy lanterns, passing Fighting Island and Ecorse streetlights. Suddenly, the SS Columbia played her powerful beacon on the Wyandotte Bishop Park dock. Her glowing golden boardwalk globes greeted us as the Columbia docked that August night on the money at 11:30 p.m.

I Remember Ecorse When...

In September 1971, Mrs. Evelyn J. Jones of West Wesfield in Ecorse, recalled these Ecorse days when:

- West Jefferson was brick and there were streetcars on it.

- Boat houses stood where Riverside Park is now.
- Outer Drive was one street only and called Bonzano.
- When Ignatius Salliotte, who was an attorney, had a home where the library is now.
- When Wolverine Lumber Company was on the corner of West Alexis.
- When the Bob-Lo Boat picked passengers up at the Ecorse Dock.
- When there was a dry goods store on the corner of West Jefferson and Woodward.
- When our fire station was on the corner of Labadie and High and Mr. Jaeger was our fire chief.

Mrs. Nagy of Second Street who lived in Ecorse for 54 years remembered this Ecorse:

- Southfield Road was State Street.
- We had Bob-Lo Boats dock up on Jefferson river front and a moonlight boat used to go up to Sugar Island.
- We used to have tracks like on Salliotte until they built our viaduct on Southfield.

- We also had horses and wagons to pick up garbage and rubbish.
- Our library was located on the block where the Silver Rail Bar is.
- Our small Ecorse show was on Jefferson, too.
- On Second Street off Southfield, kids used to play ball and have fun.
- Carnivals used to come where there are factories today.
- On Third Street there used to be a cement block shop.
- The houses on the riverfront were like boathouses.

Gary L. Cooper of Tenth Street in Ecorse remembered:

- I can remember very well in June 1959 when Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt spoke at the Ecorse Community Center. I was ten years old at the time. I can remember the greatness and the dignified manner in which she spoke. As she came out of the Center, I got close enough to see this great woman. As she passed by with an armful of red roses she smiled at me and I did likewise.

In October 1971, Mrs. Florine Mitchell submitted these memories of Ecorse days when:

- We built our home in Ecorse in 1924, a small four room house. In October of 1924 we added a small store and business was good. We have no paved streets. No gas. Everyone knew each other. Ecorse was a village then. We had presidents then. We had a small Baptist church. The name was Lily of the Valley. All the children had to go across the tracks to school. We had one small fire department. People had lovely gardens. I have seen Ecorse grow from a village to a city. We have a nice city and a good government.

Early Days in Ecorse

by John Frankhouse

John Frankhouse grew up in Ecorse from 1920-1941, and remembers going to School Two on Josephine Street. He said that there were three other schools at the time-School One and School

Three and the High School. Before the high school on Seventh Street and Outer Drive was built, School One on High Street was the high school which only went to the tenth grade.

The teachers he especially remembered were Miss Conley and Miss Elliott. Women teachers were not allowed to be married. Miss Conley and Miss Elliott were both feared by most students, but they were both good at their jobs. The Depression was on at the time. We had no vacations, but we enjoyed our summers, he said.

The big day in Ecorse was Ecorse Day, a boat ride from Southfield Dock to Bob-Lo Island. Seems like it was a day of rides, games and races. They city used to freeze the field across from the municipal building. That was a rink for ice skating.

The main shopping area was from West Alexis to Josephine. Kroger, C.F. Smith, Loveland Drugs, a small movie house, etc., were there. When I was very young, they only had silent movies there, but they only charged six cents for a double feature. Later on they built the Harbor Theater near Westfield. The streetcars

were running then and for five cents and a penny transfer you could ride to Belle Isle for a picnic and to visit the children's zoo.

The Swampy Little French Fishing Village

by Marvin Graves

The "Little French Fishing Village" on the Detroit River was long the place to eat a muskrat meal. The muskrat or "marsh rabbit" was easy to trap as they made holes in the ice where traps could be set. My grandfather trapped and ate them. They were skinned and then soaked in vinegar and salt water for 24 hours, and then baked or boiled with onions. The meat was dark, and I think a taste for them had to be acquired. Restaurants Downriver served them as late as the 1960s that I know of and may be serving them today. Marsh rabbits were plentiful in the fresh water swamps that covered the Downriver area at the time.

As for the early years that I remember, what is now Quality drive coming off Jefferson Avenue had a swamp on both sides. Jefferson Avenue was "high ground." One of my early Ecorse boyhood

memories was of making a raft and exploring the swamp.

Dorothy Cummings Dunlop Remembers Ecorse

I remember Ecorse as I was growing up in the decades of the twenties and thirties. As a child, I formed many silent opinions and made many quiet observations about this small and rather unglamorous little city. Some of my feelings were ambiguous as I assessed Ecorse. Although I lived in Detroit, my mother made weekly visits to Ecorse to visit her aging father, Joseph Salliotte, and to visit the home of her only brother, Ignatius J. Salliotte.

We would travel in our old Hupmobile past the Rouge Plant on Coolidge. The air was heavily polluted and retained a distressing odor. Turning right on Jefferson we would travel the few blocks to the corner of Jefferson and State Street. State Street is now Southfield Road, but then my Grandfather Salliotte's address was 9 State Street. On the corner were a few stores that backed up to my grandfather's property. I knew that my grandfather owned these stores, but coming as I did from a fairly good residential neighborhood in Detroit. I could not accept the proximity of small stores to one's home.

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The house at 9 State Street, Ecorse, was plain and spare. It was made of wood and was quite commodious. For all of its plainness it retained a certain presence. Perhaps it was the wide wood porch that offered a good view of the Detroit River if you looked to the East. Perhaps it picked up some prestige from the two large and black shiny cars parked out in front. These cars were usually a Packard or a Cadillac. The local funeral director was known to borrow cars for his cortege. There was a bank directly across the street, on the opposite corner of Jefferson and State Street. I understood that the bank was very important to my mother, her father, and her brother, Ignatius Salliotte.

The view of the river from the porch also included a rather ugly commercial looking dock, bordered on each side by two dubious looking structures, one a salon named the Polar Bear Cafe and on the south side of the dock was a fish market with large glass tanks. The existence of these two edifices made me question the acceptability of Ecorse as my ancestral home. I knew that the property on which the saloon and fish market sat, and also the wide dock, were in my mother's name as family property

designated for her by her father.

The greatest stigma of Ecorse for me was the illegal trafficking of liquor from Canada. This process was called “Bootlegging” and the “Bootleggers” were the men that stole across the river in the middle of the night with their illegal product. Although I was young, I could not accept in my rather prejudiced mind that this “under world” flourished so close to my grandfather’s residence.

I remember one Sunday morning during these years that I accompanied my mother and grandfather across Jefferson and viewed the disheveled interior of the Polar Bear Cafe. Tables and chairs were broken and scattered. A walk across the dock to the fish market disclosed smashed tanks and water and fish everywhere. It would seem that the market was a front for the more prosperous business of distributing liquor that went on in the rear of the store. On the Saturday night before, the government agents had arrived. It was some solace to me to learn that the stores were rented out and the family had no real confirmation that anything untoward was going on. Rental income was the only concern.

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Although we were proud we descended from pioneer settlers of Ecorse, my brother and I never stressed to our contemporaries that we were from “downriver.” The pollution, the bootlegging and the tiny homes of the factory workers always presented a not too successful locale to be from.

When I was born in 1917, my grandfather was already old. He was 79. He was the fifth generation of his family to be born to the French families of the Detroit River Region. I remember sitting on the wide front porch as my grandfather rocked in his chair. He would tell us legends about his father and grandfather, how they climbed into the lofts at night while the Indians came in to sleep by the fireside below.

My grandfather would arise early every morning and walk to the “subdivision,” small houses he had built on the land he had inherited. He would collect the rents by a sort of door-to-door canvassing method. The personal appearance assured more prompt payment. After depositing the rent money in the bank on the corner he would return to his post on the porch. He would greet and call out by name the man passers-by. I can hear him yet in his

rather poitoui French accent, “Bon Jour, Monsier LeBlanc, Bon Jour, Monsier Labadie.” Sometimes the strollers would climb the steps to the porch and talk to him in their peculiar French dialect.

My grandfather’s sister Anne Salliotte lived behind his house. Her name was Anne Salliotte and she had married her cousin Oliver Salliotte. Many of the old French families of Ecorse married one another’s families in each following generation.

Down the street from 9 State Street was the Alexis Moses Salliotte house. he was my grandfather’s brother. The house was the only approach to elegance that I remember Ecorse having. It was classic gingerbread Victorian with a cupola and stained glass windows. Uncle Alex had owned a lumber mill that legend has it, formed a slag for what later was called “Zug Island.” Uncle Alex had died in 1905 and during the 1920s the house was occupied by several of his daughters.

They were schoolteachers. One frail grandson lived with his aunts. His mother had died when he was an infant. My brother and I were fascinated with the Victorian house and after tiring of sitting

on the dock we would visit our cousin. He was in poor health most of his short life and he used to lie on a couch in the library and share his many books with us. When he died it was as if the rest of the strength and life of the old house died with him.

(Dorothy cites 1980s articles in the Detroit News and Free Press proposing development plans for Ecorse and the Downriver area, plans that she and her family support.)

Dorothy writes, “I am particularly pleased that the development agency has targeted for development 120 acres at the foot of Southfield road in Ecorse, right on the former site of my grandfather’s old wood house and the bank across the street and the little stores on the corner of Jefferson and State Street (now Southfield), and of course, the site of the Polar Bear Cafe, the Dock and the fish market. Perhaps the second millennium will fulfill the dream that the first settlers of Ecorse and all of those who have lived there since, that living so intimately with such a great river could only bring success and happiness.”

Photo by John Duguay

John Duguay proudly says that he first picked up a camera when he was just seven years old and he has had a camera (perhaps not the same one!) in his hand since then.

The years between John's first camera in the early 1920s and his most recent pictures have been eventful ones. After being educated in Ecorse and Detroit schools, he worked for a time at an Ecorse Company and Ford, then joined the Navy in 1942 and served for three years. John counts a bronze star as one of the decorations that he won for his service as a demolitions expert and a Navy Seal during World War II. The citation for his Bronze Star reads:

"For distinguishing himself by meritorious achievement in February

1945, as a member of an assault unit during the assault and capture

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Of Iwo Jima Island. In the face of enemy rifle, machine gun, and Mortar fire, he bravely prepared the way for the operations of Combat troops and by his courageous devotion to duty Contributed greatly to the success of this hazardous mission. His Courage and conduct throughout were in keeping with the best Traditions of the naval service." R. K. Turner, Admiral, U.S. Navy



After John returned to Ecorse, he went to work for several local

companies as an assembly line designer, and while he was working on one of his projects, a piece of metal flew up and pierced his eye, causing him to lose sight of it. John didn't let his accident slow him down. He continued to design assembly lines and sat up a photography studio in his basement. John is the one on the right in the photo. His photos regularly appeared in local publications, including the *Ecorse Advertiser*. John's pictures are a visual chronicle and an important part of the documentary record of Ecorse history.



The Ecorse High School Band



John Duguay took this picture of the St. Francis High School football team practicing on the Municipal Field with the old Ecorse City Hall in the background.



This picture is from the Ecorse Rowing Club Archives. Magnus Meier is the man in the back row center. He was the principal of School Number One for a time. Does anyone remember him? Does anyone know who the other men are?

This picture is also from the Ecorse Rowing Club Archives and the Ecorse Advertiser. I think this is the same Charles Tank who was killed in Vietnam.



Sandy Blakeman also took this picture.



Sandy Blakeman took this picture sometime in the 1970s.

Old Ecorse Landmarks

Old Village Hall To Be Torn Down



THE ECORSE FIRE HALL was located long ago in a wooden building on High Street. The hall was also used as police department at one time. In this photo (loaned to The Herald-Advertiser Newspapers by Orville Rasbury, of River Rouge) are the driver Benjamin Montie; Fire Chief Albert Jaeger on his left; standing in the middle of the truck is Charles Thibault; and near the front of the truck is John Needham. Jaeger, born in 1888, died in 1958 at the age of 70. He became Ecorse fire chief at the age of 32 in 1920 and was the first paid chief. He lived at 4425 High, Ecorse, across the street from the fire hall. Jaeger was acting police chief in 1922 and held both offices jointly until 1926 then he continued as fire chief.

An article in the Ecorse Advertiser of August 20, 1948, announced that within a few weeks one of the Downriver area's oldest

landmarks, the old Ecorse Village Hall, would remain alive in memory only. At a recent council meeting, Ecorse councilmen asked for bids to tear down the venerable old hall.

Built in 1899 at the corner of High and Labadie Streets almost fifty years before, the hall had been in constant use for nearly 50 years. For more than ten years the building had been recognized as a hazard and a fire trap, but the city of Ecorse was forced to use it for its repair garage. Now, with a new garage completed and nearly ready to be occupied, the old city hall was slated to be torn down.

When the Village Hall was built, Barney Sutliff, veteran Ecorse building contractor, was the foreman on the job and the late L.N. Beaker, constructed the hall. It once housed the police and fire departments as well as the various city offices. It originally had a 60 foot tower, but it was removed several years ago.

Still in the old fire department hose tower was a brass bell, weighing nearly a half ton. Years ago the bell was used to peal out its call for the village's volunteer fire fighters, but it stood mute

for nearly twenty years, with one exception. when the news of Japan's unconditional surrender flashed through Ecorse in August 1945, city employees rigged up a rope to the old bell tower. Once again the brass voice boomed out, but fearful that the entire building would collapse, the workers hurriedly stopped the bell ringing and left the tower.

The Old Ecorse City Hall

The old Ecorse City Hall stood at Cicotte and High Streets from the 1920s until 1973.



It served for years as the city hall until the new Civic Center on West Jefferson Avenue was completed. Just prior to its demolition, a few city departments maintained offices in the building.

The Fish Pond By The Fire Station



In 1938, Ecorse Fire Department personnel built the fish pond that stood alongside the old Ecorse Fire Station on High Street near Cicotte.

Salliotte Family Homestead Torn Down

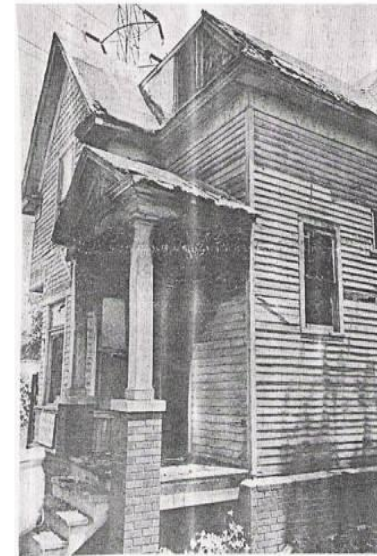
In January 1970, the Salliotte family homestead at High Street and Southfield was demolished.



It was an Ecorse landmark and one of the oldest houses in the city.

Fire Ravages the Weigh Station

Fire partially destroyed a familiar West Jefferson landmark in Ecorse on Monday, July 15, 1974. The landmark, called “the Weigh Station,” was a large Victorian style century old house that sat on property owned by Reuben Grevnin near West Jefferson and Cicotte and the railroad tracks that cross West Jefferson.



Charles Ouelette, a carpenter in Ecorse, built the house around 1874. His grandson, Donald Ouellette who was an assistant engineer in the city of Ecorse engineering department in 1974, said that his grandfather built the house by himself about one hundred years ago. The house was originally built just south of its 1974 location along Jefferson and the Detroit River front, approximately where a boat livery presently stood. The Ouellette family sold the house to Grevnin in the 1930s, and he moved it to its present location.

Assistant Fire Chief Milton Montie said that the fire started in a closet in the building and the cause hadn't yet been determined.

Other Ecorse Buildings Gone, But Not Forgotten!

By Kathy Covert

Miss Goodell's house on the corner of Goodell and Jefferson was another important part of my childhood neighborhood. Bob Zawoysky, one of the boys in our neighborhood Thunderbolt's Gang, used to do yardwork for her and she would allow us to play

hide and seek in her yard in the long summer twilights.

My Grandmother Covert's house is also gone. We used to live right across the street from her, on Pitt Street, and I'm certain that we drove her crazy running in and out of the house all of the time. She was always good for a dime for a popsicle or fudge sickle from Pomograth's Market, a hop across the alley from her backyard.

The old grade schools – one, two, and three- are gone and so is the old Ecorse High School. The new school is much fancier but I miss the old high school. It had personality and there are a lot of memories in that old building.

Ecorse Presbyterian Church is gone, but St. Francis Xavier is still there. I was about ten years old when they build the St. Francis Xavier Church on Jefferson Avenue. I can remember playing with my friends in the piles of dirt and climbing up on the concrete platform to curl up with a book and read in the sunshine.

Ecorse Public Library is still there, too. I spent a lot of happy

hours reading at that library and checking out books. Does anyone remember the pipe fence that used to be in front of it? One of the biggest challenges of my childhood was trying to walk its entire length without falling off. I managed to negotiate it a few times.

Ecorse Slide Shows- History in Pictures

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Many of the early pioneers from Ecorse are buried in Saint Francis Ecorse Cemetery.

Chapter Fourteen

Silent Story Tellers: St. Francis Xavier (Ecorse) Cemetery

In the Beginning Was Father Richard

St. Francis Xavier Cemetery is a prime example of a cemetery that began its life far out in the country, but after years of Ecorse village and city growth, people and houses eventually surrounded it. Today it is a square of grass and grave markers in the middle of rows of houses and between two busy city arteries, Jefferson Avenue and Southfield Road.

Father Gabriel Richard founded St. Francis Xavier parish as a mission of Saint Anne's Church in Detroit for the early Catholics of the Downriver area. The only Catholic priest in Michigan Territory from 1806 to 1821, Father Richard pastored about 500 families spread out along the eastern shores of the Detroit River,

Lake St. Clair and Lake Huron from Ecorse to Port Huron.

When he was not saying Mass and fighting sin, Father Richard explored Wayne County. In fact, he was one of the earliest explorers of Wayne County. On January 15, 1818, Wayne County was platted and by 1826, Governor Louis Cass had divided it into townships. In 1827, Detroit, Springwells, Hamtramck, Monguagon, Brownstown, Plymouth, Huron, Bucklin and Ecorse Townships were created. For generations, the French and Native Americans had called a small river flowing into the Detroit River, Ecorces, after the white bark and other bark of the trees along its banks. Ecorces means river of bark and soon the township and the small village adjoining the creek were called Ecorse. Another part of the Ecorces story says that the Huron Indians wrapped the bodies of their dead in white birch bark and set them adrift toward paradise in their bark canoes.

As one of Detroit's early historians, Clarence Burton noted in his *The City of Detroit, Michigan, 1701-1922*, that the first settlers in Ecorse Township were French. For many years before the first white settlers came to Ecorse and Wyandotte Indian villages

occupied the banks of Ecorse Creek. Important Indian trails intersected where Ecorse Creek meets the Detroit River and they led from the village of Ecorse in various directions. Indian tribes, including Huron and Ojibway, held councils on the banks of Ecorse Creek. Pontiac called several Indian tribes together near Ecorse Creek in the spring of 1763 to plan his war against the white man, and the echoes of war drums from this council reverberated far beyond the small village and township of Ecorse.

Michigan histories state that Ecorse was established on a Wyandot (earlier called Huron by the French) Indian camping site and burl ground at the end of the War of 1812, but Father Richard's records indicated that Ecorse began nearer to Cadillac's founding of Detroit in 1701.

Clarence Burton compiled a list of men who came to Detroit with Cadillac and rented land from him. Cadillac's rental land included tracts extending as far as fifteen miles downriver as well as within the city limits. This range included the present day Downriver communities of Ecorse, Wyandotte, and Trenton. Historian Burton titled his list "Detroit's Original Colonists." Number eighteen on

the list is Michel Campo (Campau) who rented land from Cadillac on March 10, 1707, for five livres (worth about twenty cents) and six sols and paid ten livres for other rights. Number sixty on the list is Jacques Campo, who on March 1, 1709, rented land from Cadillac at four sols and paid ten livres for other rights. The Campau name occurred frequently in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery. Number 22 on the list is Francois Bienvenue, dit De L'isle, who on March 10, 1707, rented land for three livres and paid ten livres for other rights. Burton noted that "many descendents of De L'isle still live in and around Detroit and that they generally go by the name of Delisle."

A walk through St. Francis Xavier cemetery reveals that the Delisle family has a military representative there. Oliver Delisle's stone says that he was a member of Company C, but the rest of the information is buried in the ground. The historical record shows that Oliver Delisle, age 36, was a member of the First Michigan Cavalry from Monguagon - Ecorse-Trenton.

Number 38 on Cadillac's list is Martin Srier, who on March 10, 1797, paid three livres rent and ten livres for other rights. Nicholas

Rivard afterwards bought his parcel of land from Srier. The Rivard family is represented in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery as well.

Angelique Rivard died in 1968 at 81 years of age. Louise Rivard, mother, was born in 1873 and died in 1956 and Paul Rivard, father, was born in 1872 and died in 1935.

The history of St. Anne's Parish in Detroit emphasized the intermingled American-Canadian nature of the settlements along the Detroit River. The settlers arriving after 1749 "were granted strips of land along both sides of the strait. There was no distinction then between the Canadian and American sides of "Le Detroit."

In a 1749 Proclamation, Governor Galissonniers of New France referred to the Canadian side as the south side and the American side as the north and the literature of the period reflects this distinction. Soon, Detroit began to resemble an agricultural community. The land grant terms and settlement prefigured the Homestead Act of the Civil War era in America by a century and was mostly responsible for the rise of Detroit's population to about 500 by 1755.

By the mid 1770s, some 400 mostly French families lived on “French ribbon farms” extending Downriver to Ecorse and beyond. The farms were called ribbon farms because everyone’s land started at the Detroit River and extended back so that each farmer could take advantage of the water frontage. Ribbon farms also provided land owners mutual protection for the Indians and their raiding parties. When Father Richard took his census in 1808 and again in 1832, Ecorse was a thriving farm village. French descendants of Cadillac’s company lost their control of the fur trade, but these families – including the Labadies, Campaus, Rosseaus, Bondies, Goodells and Ripelles- remained the chief landlords and founding families of Ecorse.

The French land claims of Wayne County illustrate that many French and a few other ethnic pioneers were settling in Ecorse several years before the War of 1812. Andre Viger filed Claim 121 of 250.82 acres on June 8, 1808 in Ecorse. Arthur Visger, possibly his grandson, who was born in 1891 and died in 1943, is buried in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery.

Louis Leduc filed Claim 496 for 221.72 acres in Ecorse in 1808.

His descendent Anna, Aurelia and Jacob repose in St. Francis Cemetery.

Charles Labadie filed Claim 25 for 197.80 acres on July 16, 1807 in Ecorse.

On November 26, 1807, Ambrose Riopel filed Claim 61 for 430.26 acres of land in Ecorse.

On December 26, 1807, Marianne Delille filed claim 74 for 106.67 acres of Ecorse land.

Charles Campeau filed claim 84 for 169.44 acres of Ecorse land on December 30, 1807.

The heirs of Joseph Bondi filed Claim 92 for 68.33 acres of Ecorse land on January 29, 1808.

All of these families are represented in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery.

Father Richard's pioneer worshippers at St. Francis Xavier met in the home of the Leblanc family which was located between what is now Leblanc and White Streets on present day Jefferson Avenue in Ecorse. Father Charles DePreitre, the first resident pastor, was a nephew of Bishop Lefevere who had come to Detroit as a seminarian and was ordained there on May 31, 1848. Father DePreitre served as pastor of St. Francis Xavier until 1870, and also acted as a mission priest of parishes in Wyandotte and Trenton in Wayne County and Newport in Monroe County. Father Louis Baroux became St. Francis Xavier pastor in 1871 and remained there until 1882.

Father Richard had the last ecclesiastical laugh on one of the French families represented in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery. On December 8, 1820, during the presidency of James Monroe, Father Richard took his seat as the delegate from Michigan to the Eighteenth Congress. He was the first priest ever elected to Congress, but that distinction did not prevent him from becoming embroiled in a complex court case when he returned to Detroit.

The suit involved one of his parishioners, Francois Labadie, who

had divorced his first wife living in Montreal and remarried.

Father Richard considered this second marriage adulterous. With the blessing of his bishop, Father Richard excommunicated Francois LaBadie. LaBadie sued and the court decided against Father Richard who was fined 1,116. Father Richard refused to pay and a long series of legal entanglements continued for years, ending only when Father Richard died.

Father Richard's Descendants

Although Father Richard is not buried in the churchyard of his mission church, the descendants of Francois Labadie repose there. The Labadie family is one of the founding families of Ecorse and Charles, Henry, John, Alexander, Elizabeth, Florence and Michael are just a few of the Labadies in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery.

Louis Bourassa filed Claim #83 for 68.88 acres of land in Ecorse on December 30, 1807. At least fifteen of his descendants are buried in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery. Baptiste Rousson filed claim #85 for 70.68 acres in Ecorse on December 30, 1807. His

descendents Clarence, Simon, Simon W. and Velera are buried in St. Francis Xavier. Angelique Cicot and children filed claim #114 for 385.82 acres in Ecorse on May 26, 1808. At least thirteen of her family lie in the cemetery.

The first St. Francis Xavier Church, the one originating the pioneer cemetery, was built on High Street in 1882. Father John Van Gennip served as a pioneer pastor and the parish record states that on May 20, 1882, Reverend J.T. Van Gennip blessed a cemetery known as Ecorse Cemetery, with a potter's field in the northeast corner.

Even though the cemetery wasn't blessed until 1882, church records indicated that the first burial in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery took place in 1848, when Charlotte Cook, wife of Moses Salliotte, was laid to rest on September 7, 1848. Only 33 years old when she died, Charlotte was born in Yorkshire, England. Moses Salliotte also rests nearby. His epitaph reveals that he died on March 9, 1892, at age 85 years. He was born in Ecorse, Michigan, and was one of the earliest settlers in the territory.

Father Van Gennip's tombstone can be found in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery. His stone reveals that he was born on July 2, 1818, and he died on September 9, 1889. It is noted on his tombstone that he was pastor of St. Francis Xavier Church. He was born in Heeze, Holland, on July 2, 1818, and he died in Ecorse on September 3, 1889.

The Bondie or Bondy name is also prominent in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery. Antoine Bondie and a host of other Bondy names appear on weathered markers. According to the historical record, Teresa Saliot Bondy should be there, but her marker has not survived. Perhaps weather or vandalism have shattered or buried the traces of her tombstone. Teresa Saliot was the daughter of John Saliot and Mary Magdelene Jourdain. She was born on September 9, 1782, and she married Dennis Bondie who was born on January 26, 1779, in Sandwich, Ontario.

Teresa was buried on February 9, 1858, at St. Francis Xavier Cemetery in Ecorse. Teresa's sons and daughters married into the Navarre and Leblanc families who are also well represented in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery.

The Campau family might have originated in LaRochelle, France, before early Campaus immigrated to Canada and then to Detroit. A June 1750, document describes Jacques Campau Senior as “a habitant living at Detroit.” The History of Wayne County states that Jacques’ children were “respectable citizens, honest and industrious people who left good names behind them when they died.”

Nicholas Campau was born to Jacques and Cecilia at the Niagara portage in July 1710. He became known as Nicholas Campau dit Niagara, because he was born at Niagara. Nicholas Niagara took charge of the Jesuit Mission’s farm on September 1, 1748, agreeing to share all produce with the mission fathers. In exchange, the mission furnished the seed, livestock and 150 livres to build a house and stable.

On July 11, 1751, Father de la Richardie wrote that “Nicholas Campeau, otherwise called Nigara, shall at the end of his lease return the seed which Father de la Richardie and he have agreed upon consisting of 15 minots of wheat, 6 of oats, and 5 of pease, less a quarter of a livre. The whole is to be taken from the share of

the said Niagara.”

In September of 1751, a man by the name of Mr. James took over the mission farm, but the mission farm was not the only land that Niagara owned. On May 28, 1759, his widow, Agathe, as her children’s guardian, sought permission to sell land from Nicholas’ estate. His daughter Angelica Campau married Anthony Louis Decomps dit Labadie. After Angelica died, Anthony took a Chippewa consort, and later married Charlotte Barthe Reaume. From these relationships Anthony fathered 23 children.

The Campau plot in St. Francis Xavier is well populated. Louis Campau, 80 years old, died in July 1850 in Ecorse Township of old age. One of his descendents, another Louis, born in 1867 and died in 1939, rests in St. Francis Xavier. Ades was the wife of Alexander and came to the cemetery in 1923.

Alexander Campau, born on September 7, 1843, lived to a respectable age. He died on August 24, 1940. Archibald Campau died on October 26, 1897, at the age of 89 years. Bettie Campau was only a year old when she died on March 10, 1924, being born

on October 6, 1923. Francis Campau is one of the older generation. Her stone is broken off, but it records her death date as October 8, 1859.

The Reaume branch of the Campau family tree is also represented in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery. Arthur and Sarah Reaume as well as Nellis, Elroy and Adeline Campau repose there.

The date disparity between the first burial in St. Francis Xavier-Charlotte Salliotte in 1848- and Father Van Gennip's blessing of St. Francis in 1882- indicated that Saint Francis Xavier was growing along with Ecorse. Although St. Francis Xavier Cemetery had been established primarily as a church burial ground, if a family owned a plot in St. Francis, the family could permit anyone to be buried there even if they lived out of the parish. This paved the way for as diverse a cemetery population as existed in the living population of the village of Ecorse.

The families of St. Francis Xavier and of Ecorse at large did not escape the reality of the Civil War and these families are also well represented in the cemetery. Louis L. Beaubien does not have a

Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) marker on his grave, but he belonged to the 24th Michigan Infantry, Company F. His wife, Rachel A., 20 years younger, is buried beside him.

Elijah Goodell, son of another of the founding families of Ecorse is also a Civil War veteran. He is buried in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery and so is Frank Metty of Co. D., 11th Michigan Infantry. Pascal Odette was 24 years old when he joined Co. H of the 14th Michigan Infantry and Antoine Salliotte also fought with Company H of the 14th Michigan. Anthony Reno served with Co. F of the 24th Michigan Infantry.

After the Civil War as America bustled toward the Twentieth Century, the population of St. Francis Xavier Cemetery reflected the ethnic diversity of the village. French, English, Polish, Scottish and other immigrants replaced the simple wooden crosses of the church graveyard with more substantial brick and marble markers and family plots as their footholds in America grew firmer.

Father Richard's French Connections

The ethnic mix of Ecorse changed from mostly French families

with a sprinkling of Irish and English to a potpourri of European flavorings with a foundation of French families. This change is evident in the family plots of Saint Francis Xavier Cemetery with late Nineteenth Century dates. A sampling of the names includes George and Elizabeth Babik and family, Albert and Mary Antaya, Mary Bogswacz, John and Catherine Carmody, Fitzpatrick's, Flanagans, Adam and Eva Karmet, Benjamin and Cora Sutherland, Josef Wurmlinger, Catherine Wuk and Joserian Zolynska.

French and other ethnic families still came to decorate graves and to pay yearly pilgrimages to the memories of their ancestors. As they picnicked on benches, lounged on blankets spread of the carpet of green grass and soaked up sunshine, visitors in 1881 may have gossiped about A.E. Riopelle and Mrs. Lambton. Riopell's wife and children and their families rest under cemetery monuments, but A.E. suitably perhaps, does not.

Around November 12, 1880, A.E., who operated a grocery business in Ecorse until a fire burned him out, disappeared into the wilds of Detroit. Local newspapers reported that people from

Wyandotte and Ecorse spotted him, but he did not come back home to his wife and three children. A woman by the name of Lambton also left town and did not return, and rumors circulated around town that the two had run away together.

Mrs. Riopelle and her children moved from Wyandotte to her father's house on a farm about three miles from Ecorse. The newspaper concluded the story by saying: "For the sake of decency and good morals as well as the good name of both parties, we hope there is not truth in the report, but it is a rumor nevertheless which circumstances at present seem to corroborate."

On November 19, 1880, the local newspaper noted that Mr. Richard Montie had taken in a good many borders since keeping the Eight-Mile House – eleven last week. Richard A. Montie was born on February 6, 1855, and was about 25 years old when the newspaper recorded his boarders and the fact that he operated an inn. He had many years of inn keeping ahead of him because he didn't die until July 4, 1946. Richard C. Montie, his son, born in 1881, died in 1927, nineteen years before his father died. Richard's mother, Eliza, was born on Christmas Day 1857, and

died on February 9, 1931, according to their St. Francis Xavier tombstones.

The 1870 Census Index of the Library of Michigan shows that Emanuel or Edmund Visger, a fifty year old farmer, lived in Ecorse Township. Living with him were 24-year-old Philisa, keeping house, Charles 11, and Henry 9, at school. Another Visger, Jame, 44, is listed as a farm laborer. Just to confuse matters, it appears that he has a forty-year-old wife, Philis, keeping house, and several children, including sixteen year old Caroline. The St. Francis Xavier Cemetery records a Phillis Visger, who died on October 25, 1864, at age thirty-three years.

St. Francis Xavier Cemetery is the final resting place of several veterans of World War I and World War II. Joseph P. Airola, who was born in 1895 and died in 1955, served as a private first class in Company L of the 333th Infantry in World War I. Arnim Allen was a sergeant in the Trench Mortar Battery of the 5th Division, and Daniel M. Roberts was a private first class in Co L of the 39th infantry. Peter Joseph Sehoyan was a corporal in Hq Det. 12 Eng. in World War I.

Second World War veterans include George J. Babik who served in the Army, Walter Holzhueter who served in the Navy, and Alvin M. Labadie who was a saddler in Troop F of the 16th Cavalry. Kenneth Sisco was a TECS 1623 Service Unit in World War II and Mathew John Sillane died on February 26, 1941, when he was a private in the 308 Am. Tn. 83rd Div.

Dates on a few other stones indicate that the men buried there could have died in Vietnam and Korea, but there are no flags or markers to affirm this, and there are no records to check for accuracy. In the 1970s, St. Francis Xavier Church decided to turn over the maintenance of the cemetery to the City of Ecorse and also surrendered the cemetery records. In the 1980s, during a time of severe financial problems, the city stored records in the basement of the municipal building and they were destroyed in a flood. The lost records did leave the statistical legacy that there are approximately 2,500 burials in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery, but when Leonard Montie read and transcribed the surviving stones in 1979, only 600 remained.

St. Francis Stories

Jo Santoro Cialkowski grew up in Ecorse and graduated from Ecorse High School in 1936. She also grew up in St. Francis Xavier Church and recalled Memorial Days in Ecorse. “We children were given flags to place on the servicemen’s graves in the ancient St. Francis Xavier Cemetery,” she recalled. She remembered the long walk of twelve blocks from her home to the church and the long walk from the church to the cemetery.

Checking the newspaper file of the Ecorse Advertiser in the Ecorse Public Library is a fascinating, although painstaking way of discovering the dates and stories of some of the people in Saint Francis Xavier Cemetery. The Ecorse Advertiser of Thursday, October 5, 1950, carried the obituary of Eliza J. Riopelle, widow of Charles Riopelle. They both rest in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery. Eliza died at her home on Jefferson Avenue at the age of 88 and funeral services were held at her home. Although she

was born in River Rouge, she had lived in Ecorse for over sixty years.

Eliza had not been well for a number of years and ill-health prevented her from attending the funeral of her son, Frank, in July 1950. She also outlived another son, Joseph, and a daughter May LeBlanc. Frank and May are also buried in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery.

The gravestones of Arthur, Elsie, and Michael Flanagan pose some puzzles. Michael or “Mickey” Flanagan was born in 1920 and died in 1942, when he was twenty-two years old. It is possible that he died in World War II, but since there isn’t a flag on his tombstone, there is no way to tell that for certain without tracing him through military records. Arthur J. Flanagan was born in 1913 and died in 1950. An obituary in the Ecorse Advertiser noted that Arthur Joseph Flanagan (spelled with an i instead of an a) 36, of White Street in Ecorse, died on June 8, 1950, in Spokane, Washington, where he had gone a month before for his health. He was an inspector at the Murray Corporation.

His funeral services were held from the Gallagher Funeral Home and St. Francis Xavier Church and he was buried in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery.

His wife, Elizabeth, survived him as did three sons, Arthur, David, and Michael and two daughters Ceclia Ann and Patricia. Four brothers: Paul, Victor, Cletus and Patrick, and three sisters outlived him as well. Arthur was the son of William Paul Flanigan who is also buried in the family plot.

The same issue of the Ecorse Advertiser sheds some light on the legacy of an Ecorse citizen whose parents Clariss and Nelson Vellmure are buried in St. Francis Xavier. Ecorse became an incorporated village in 1903, and in 1914, Fred Vellmure was elected to the Ecorse School Board. For thirty six consecutive years until he retired in June 1950, he played a central role in the development of the Ecorse school system.

When Fred Vellmure was elected in 1914, Ecorse had a single school building which in 1950 was known as School Humber One. During his long tenure in office, he witnessed the construction of four additional school buildings and an extension of school

facilities which brought the Ecorse school system to a high standard.

The Ecorse Advertiser said of him: "His wife counsel, his keen interest in education and his ambition to provide Ecorse children with the best possible educational opportunities have had a profound effect on the community."

Always keeping the expanding needs of the Ecorse school system in mind, Fred prepared to meet any of these needs. He believed in economy, but not at the expense of education. The Ecorse Advertiser concluded: "His presence and advice on the school board will be greatly missed. Probably never again will a man in Ecorse serve longer than Mr. Vellmure. Few will surpass his love of achievement. No one will ever gain greater respect. His was a job well done."

Father Richard's Legacy

The descendents of Francois Labadie who had won the court case against Father Gabriel Richard, represented the Labadie family in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery throughout the Nineteenth and into the Twentieth Centuries. A Twentieth Century Francis Labadie served on the Ecorse City Council the 1950s. One night in June 1950, he proposed a smoke abatement ordinance to correct a situation in the north end of the city. Labadie as chairman of the Ordinance committee conferred with City Attorney Earl Montie in preparing an ordinance. The Ecorse Advertiser said that a uniform smoke abatement ordinance for the entire metropolitan area had been under advisement for a long time. Labadie felt that the time had come to take some action and true to his family tradition, he acted for the betterment of Ecorse.

Both Harry and Richard Labeau have Woodman of the World Memorials in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery. These monuments alert historians to the fact that these relatives, perhaps brothers, were members of this Fraternal Organization and were buried in the

prescribed Woodman tradition. Harry C. Labeau was born in 1883 and died on October 28, 1916. The Woodman markers are distinctively engraved and set apart from the markers of the rest of the Labeaus in their plot.

The LaClair monument in a nearby square of plots has lambs and hearts carved on the tombstone. These illustrate the point that tombstone art for children is especially poignant. Frank J. LaClair was born in 1879 and died on October 28, 1886 at the age of seven. A cherub points to heaven from the front of his grave stone.

Peter LaClair was born in 1881 and died on May 15, 1896 at age fifteen. Walter LaClair was born in 1893 and died on October 28, 1904, when he was just eleven years old. He died on the same day, seven years later, as his brother Frank. On each of their tombstones is etched the message: "Son of Dennis & Ellen LaClair."

The tombstones of Frank, Peter, and Walter do not tell any more details of their lives, but the lambs and the stark dates illustrate the tragedy of their deaths.

The Bufords also have symbols carved on their tombstones. Isaac who was born in 1863 and died on April 2, 1868, at age five, has a praying angel. Felix Buford who was born in 1850, does not have an angel, but he was only eighteen when he died on October 14, 1868. Joseph Buford who does have an angel was only two days old when he died on October 21, 1868. Taday Buford , born in 1845, was just 26 years old when she died.

The cluster of deaths suggests that perhaps Taday died in childbirth, along with her baby. Or perhaps the Bufords died in one of the periodic epidemics of fever or contagious diseases like typhoid or measles. The Mortality Schedule of 1850 deaths in Wayne County shows that 1850 turned out to be a deadly disease year for Ecorse Township. William Allen, 50 years old, born in England but now living in Ecorse Township died in September 1850 of bilious fever. Daniel and Michael Beclair, both born in Canada but living in Ecorse Township, died within a month of each other in 1850. Twenty five year old Daniel died in September 1850 of bilious fever and twenty year old Michael died in August 1850 of cholera. Angel Bourassa, 22 years old, of Ecorse died in

June 1850 of enteritis. The next generations of her family are buried in the Bourassa family plot in St. Francis.

Helena Clark, 37 years old, died in Ecorse Township in March 1850, in childbirth. Later generations of the Clarks are represented in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery, including a five month old anonymous Clark who was the daughter of Henry and Lucy Clark.

In January 1850, Joseph Goodell died in Ecorse Township of whooping cough when he was just three years old. In February 1850, Felix Leblanc died in Ecorse Township of diarrhea. One month old Julia M. Comfort of Ecorse Township died in September 1850 of diarrhea and Francis Delisle, one year old, also died of diarrhea in September 1850. Joseph Mortulan, three years old, died of brain fever in September 1850 in Ecorse Township.

A video memoir called “A Day in Ecorse 1947,” also highlights the St. Francis Xavier families. The Rotary Club of Ecorse produced the video in 1947 as a business promotion and long time Ecorse residents Andre Mourguet and Morris “Sandy” Blakeman narrated it. Some of the people, places and things captured in the

video are Tommy Salliot's Band, Eberts Bar and Underill Insurance Agency. A glance at the St. Francis Xavier Cemetery Record reveals at least 15 Salliot's and generations of the Eberts family. August and Elizabeth Eberts died in 1938 and 1917, respectively. John Eberts died at age 89 in 1890, and Louise Eberts lived from 1820 to 1901. Mary Eberts lived from 1874 to 1955 and Sarah, the daughter of Joseph and Mary Eberts, died on October 11, 1880.

Ellis "Duke" Underill of Underill Insurance Agency rests in St. Francis Xavier. Duke was born in 1892 and died in 1973. His wife Ferne Underill was born in 1898. For forty years Duke operated an insurance agency in Ecorse. He belonged to the Ecorse Businessman's Association and contributed heavily to the health and wealth of the community.

"A Day in Ecorse, 1947," preserved a picture of Butch Montroy on film. Montroy was a fireman whose family is well represented in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery. Jean Maurice, fire chief, stands in the Ecorse fire station and his parents, Celine and Joseph, rest in St. Francis Xavier. Duke Underill is also pictured in the video in

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one of the natty suits that were his trademark.

Ormel Goodell is also represented in the video. Born in Ecorse in 1897, Ormel was the son of Sophie and Frederick Goodell and a grand grandson of Civil War veteran Eliajh Goodell, who rests in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery. Elijah settled in Ecorse in 1797 when the area was still known as New France. He and his descendants established two sizable farms in Ecorse and several in other Downriver communities.

Saint Francis Xavier Cemetery is part of Father Gabriel Richard and the French, English, and other ethnic families who built Ecorse. It is part of the little girl who used to walk by the cemetery on the way to her grandmother's house in the late 1950s. It is part of her memory of standing at the fence and reading the names and inscriptions on the tombstones and wondering about the people and their stories and the history of Ecorse.

Sandy Blakeman interviewed Ecorse real estate developer and insurance man Don Dodge in the 1950s. Don Dodge traced the history of Ecorse back to the early French settlers. he said that "it

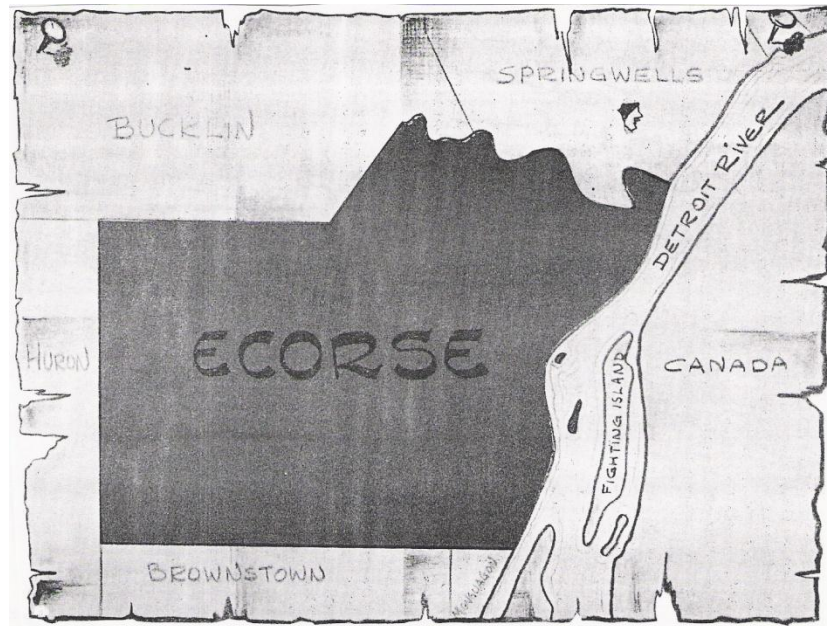
was no accident that the pioneer Frenchmen selected Ecorse as a site for settlement some 250 years ago.”

The Detroit River offered the only means of transportation for these early settlers and they were the first to see the River’s potential that has since made the Downriver area one of the greatest industrial centers in the world. Dodge prophesied for Ecorse, “I can visualize ships from the far corners of the earth loading and unloading at our waterfront. I can see the manufactured products made by our neighbors being shipped from our own port to every country of the world.”

His prophecy has come true and the pioneers resting in St. Francis Xavier Cemetery built the foundation for the growth and endurance of Ecorse.

Chapter Fifteen

Ecorse in the Downriver World



Over two centuries, the original 54 square miles of Ecorse Township have been divided and subdivided into several Downriver cities.

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When Cadillac came to what is now Detroit in 1701, he assigned “ribbon farms” along the Detroit River from Detroit to Wyandotte and assigned them to his men and their families and firmly planted French roots in Ecorse.

In its early days, Ecorse was a French farming and fishing village, populated with Jesuit priests, French fur traders, and Ottawa, Huron, Potawatomie and other Native peoples. The settlement went through French and British occupations and an influx of settlers from eastern states in the early 1800s.

Elijah Goodell was the first English pioneer to settle in Ecorse Township and in 1818, John Rucker purchased a house on Grosse Isle that French settlers had built twelve years before. Major Abram Truax opened a wayside tavern and inn on the main route between Detroit and Ohio in 1816. For a time the village he founded was called Truago, later Truaxton, and in 1875, was finally named Trenton after the deposits of Trenton limestone throughout the area.

In 1827, the Michigan Territorial Legislature reorganized Wayne County which since 1796 had made up the major portion of the

Lower Peninsula of Michigan, forming Ecorse and several other townships. The United States Congressional Ordinance of 1787 had established the Northwest Territory and set forth land policies for the recognition of old French land grants. As a result, Ecorse Township, at its creation, consisted of 54 square miles, comprised several old private claims, more than 40 sections and partial sections of land, and two small islands in the Detroit River.

Activity in the early Ecorse Township area centered around the Campau and Labadie farms where a small village called Grandport grew up. Ecorse people gradually changed the name Grandport to Ecorse and Ecorse was incorporated as a village in 1902 and became a city in 1942, in a final break from the Township. When Ecorse was incorporated as a city, the township seat was moved for the first time to the then village of Allen Park. It remained there until 1956, when Allen Park's imminent incorporation prompted its removal to the unincorporated area of the Township.

In 1957, the 30 year old village of Allen Park was incorporated as the City of Allen Park, including in its new boundary an uninhabited portion of the Township which was situated north of

the village between the cities of Melvindale and Dearborn. The inclusion of the added territory provoked a strong legal battle between officials of the city of Dearborn and the Township of Ecorse in which Dearborn sought to annex the choice industrial property which the Township was striving to retain for Allen Park.

A Michigan Supreme Court decision for the Township permitted Allen Park's subsequent consolidation. The Ford Motor Company, meanwhile, had located a modern manufacturing facility on the property which today houses the general offices of the company's automotive assembly division.

The final township structural change was the incorporation of the City of Southgate in October 1958.

Further Downriver at Gibraltar, near the juncture of the Huron and Detroit Rivers with Lake Erie, a thriving community had sprung up around shipbuilding. About 1835, serious plans to build an overland canal from Gibraltar to Chicago were underway until a severe Depression checked them and Gibraltar became a quiet residential city.

By 1847, the citizens in the western area of Ecorse Township

discovered that traveling all the way to Grandport to conduct their business and cast their ballots posed a hardship. They opted to appropriate a 24 square miles portion of Ecorse Township and formed it into the Township of Taylor, named to honor General Zachary Taylor who later would become the 12th president of the United States. Taylor Township was founded with approximately 160 inhabitants, but it grew rapidly and in the 1960s had a population of more than 60,000 people. Its boundary has not changed since it was incorporated.

Wyandotte is named after the Wyandot Indians who as the Hurons, were among the first Native American peoples to settle the area, some anthropologists estimate as long as 7,000 years ago.

Wyandotte was originally the little Indian river crossing village called Maquaqua. In the 1820s, shortly after the Indian Treaty of St. Mary's and the withdrawal of the Wyandots to the Flat Rock area, dozens of lots were platted and sold for a land boom that failed to materialize. Finally in 1835, Major John Biddle bought up large quantities of the property and began to promote the village.

Early industrial development, a popular inn, and throngs of settlers

led to Wyandotte's incorporation as a village in 1854. In the mid 19th Century, Wyandotte held center stage in steel making and shipbuilding, but by the turn of the 20th Century, the steel industry had moved on and industrialists had begun developing the extensive salt deposits underlying all of this part of Michigan.

In 1923, Wyandotte annexed the village of Ford City. Ford City had been named after J.B. Ford, who was prominent in Michigan affairs and for many years had been president of the Michigan Alkali Company, later Wyandotte Chemicals Corporation and now BASF. Both Ford City and Wyandotte were extremely proud of the Michigan Alkali Company and argued loud and long about rights and claims.

Finally, the Alkali, seeking the tax relief a larger community would provide, offered to build a new public hospital for the people if the communities would merge. The communities merged and true to its word, the Ford family deeded the completed hospital to the people of Wyandotte in 1926 as the Wyandotte General Hospital.

In the early 1920s, annexation activity rose to a fever pitch in the Detroit area. Wyandotte with a competitive eye on the neighboring village of Lincoln Park, looked westward from its boundaries and in 1924, absorbed all the property west to Fort Street and gained several additional subdivision for future expansion. The area grew into some of Wyandotte's finest residential properties.

Henry Ford now entered the picture with a tremendous impact by building an industrial plant in nearby Springwells, once part of Ecorse Township but later called Fordson and now part of the City of Dearborn. Workers poured into the surrounding communities to build their homes. Lincoln Park was one of these communities that grew from a crossroads hamlet on the St. Cosme Line – now Southfield Road – at Fort Street, which incorporated as a village in 1921, expanded in 1922, and became a city in 1925.

Besides the merger of Wyandotte and Ford City in the year 1922 marked other changes in Ecorse Township when the village of

River Rouge was incorporated into the City of River Rouge. River Rouge had been a village since 1899 and the site of a large steel fabrication firm. Part of the Great Lakes Engineering Works shipyard also lay within River Rouge boundaries.

The year 1922 also featured the annexation of the village of Oakwood to the City of Detroit. Oakwood had been a thriving farming later salt mining community since 1910, when it was incorporated in the northeastern portion of Ecorse Township. Oakwood had formerly been called Navarre, named after the descendants of an early French settler of Fort Ponchartrain, Robert Navarre. In the early 1700s, Robert Navarre had been one of the few laymen who could read and write and had gained considerable fame as a scribe and a notary.

Oakwood Heights had been a successful farming and residential area until Ford Motor Company expansion in Dearborn created a large influx of workers looking for home sites. Several developers, including Melvin Wilkinson, platted a village and incorporated it in 1925. Wilkinson died before he could finish his village and his

heir renamed Oakwood Heights in his memory. Melvindale was incorporated as a city in 1932 and grew into a prosperous community.

With the incorporation of the City of Southgate in October 1958, Ecorse Township ceased to exist and all of the records and government functions were transferred to the new City of Southgate. The remaining territory of the Township consisted of two small islands in the Detroit River – Mud Island near the foot of Southfield Road and Grassy Island, opposite the end of Goddard Road. Ecorse was given jurisdiction over Mud Island and Wyandotte jurisdiction over Grassy Island. Mud Island, less than an acre in area, has been completely under water since the early 1950s and is used as a base for recreation land fill in the City of Ecorse waterfront.

Grassy Island, about 15 acres, is used by boaters and swimmers. During the height of commercial fishing in the Detroit River, Grassy Island had been the site for firms dealing in whitefish and sturgeon then abounding in the Detroit River.

For many years Grassy Island also served as the site of a United States government manned lighthouse, but since an automatic navigational beacon was installed on the island in 1927, it has been uninhabited. Long owned by the United States Coast Guard, Grassy Island was deeded in 1962 by a special act of Congress to the City of Wyandotte for ultimate use as a public recreation site.

Its French heritage, its 2.97 square mile geographical boundaries and later the dominance of the steel industry have shaped the City of Ecorse, but its citizens have been the most decisive factor in the destiny of Ecorse. The first French and English families, the first Black American families and later immigrant families from all parts of Europe and the Mediterranean world kept the furnaces at Great Lakes Steel burning, made Samsonite luggage at Schwayder Brothers and kept the other Ecorse businesses and industries growing and prospering.

Ecorse faces many challenges in the 21st Century, but its rich historical heritage and diverse, energetic citizens will keep it striving to grow and survive.

Village Presidents and City Mayors of Ecorse

Alexis M. Salliotte-1902-1903

Elmer R.Labadie-1904-1905

William A. Furgason-1906-1908

John Seavitt-1909-1910

Charles H. Riopelle-1911-1912

Theodore W. Salliotte –1913-1915

Charles L. Heide-1916-1919

Louis A. Seavitt-1920-1921

Alfred C. Bouchard –1922-1928 (except for 1926)

George Moore – 1926-1927

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William J. Goodell –1929-1931

Edward J.Dufour-1932-1933

William W. Voisine – 1933-1937

W. Newton Hawkins –1938-1940 W. Newton Hawkins was the first mayor of the City of Ecorse under its new charter.

Mayors of the City of Ecorse

W. Newton Hawkins – 1941-1950

Theodore Marcott – 1943-1944. Mayor Pro-tem. Mayor Hawkins in Armed Service

William W. Voisine – 1945-1947

Louis S. Parker – 1951-1952

Eli Ciungan-1957-1963

Albert Buday – 1963-1967

Richard E. Manning – 1967-1971

Albert Zukonik – 1971-1973

Lee Sylva – 1973-

Charles G. Coman – 1974-1975

Charles G. Coman – 1975- Died in December 1975.

Dora Gaines – 1975-1977. Mayor Pro-tem. Appointed Mayor.

Richard F. Manning – 1977-1979

Harry White – 1979-1981

Harry White – 1981-1983

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Ken Slifka- 1983-1985

Harry White – 1985-1987

Larry Salisbury – 1987-1989

James Tassis – 1989-2001

James Ditrapini – 2001-2003

Larry Salisbury – 2003-2005

Larry Salisbury – 2005=2007

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