

THE LEDGER

CHARLOTTE CELEBRATES HISTORIC BUSINESSES

Charlotte, Michigan has celebrated its city and people with an annual festival in June of each year. As part of "Charlotte Celebrates" Courthouse Square Association would like to celebrate several historic businesses that have been in operation for more than 90 years. These companies have withstood the test of time by surviving two world wars, the Great Depression, various economic downturns and even a flood. Courthouse Square opened an exhibit at the 1885 Courthouse dedicated to these companies on June 8th. The idea of the exhibit is to examine the history of Charlotte, Michigan through its historic businesses.

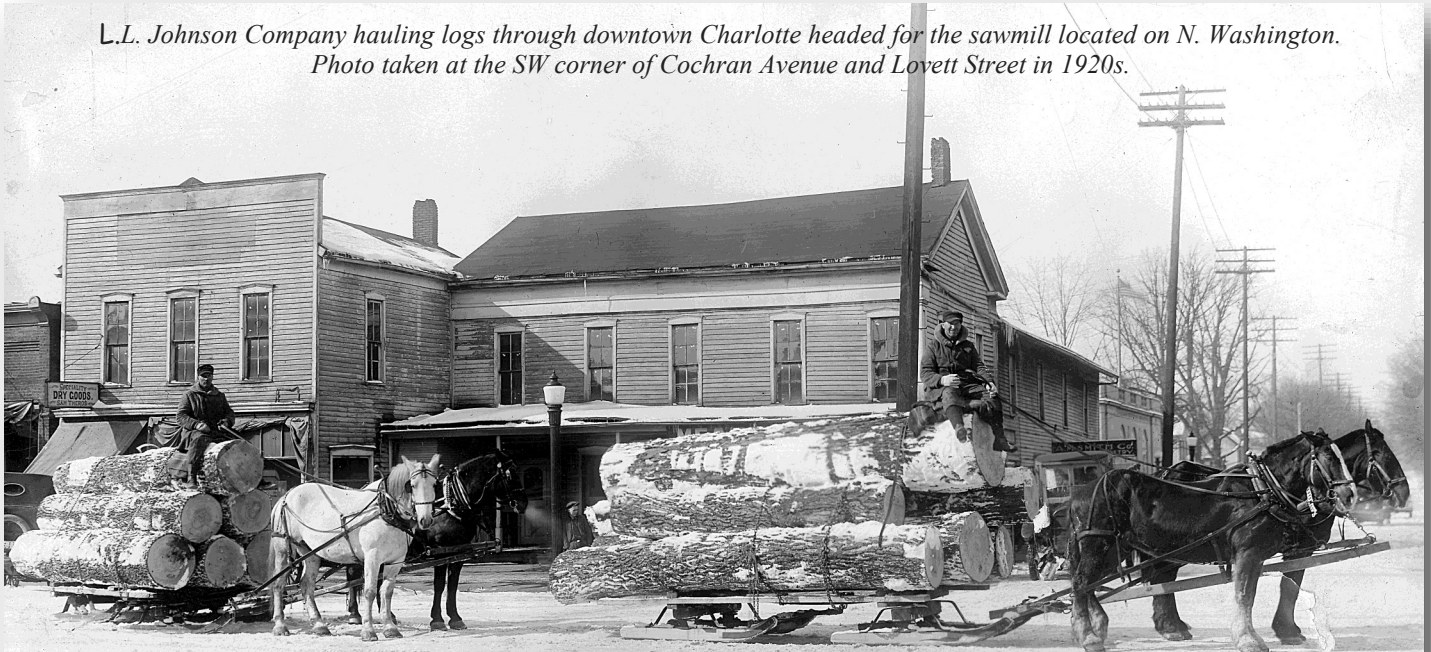
The six companies featured include: Burkhead Green Kilgo Funeral Home, Charlotte Insurance Agency, Fulton Lumber, L. L. Johnson Lumber, Pray Funeral Home and Roseacre Greenhouses. Before these companies rooted themselves in Charlotte, Michigan; they had established themselves in other cities such as Albion, Grand Rapids, Olivet, Owosso and even out of state Indiana. However, they all shared a vision to succeed based on values, valuing their cus-

tomers, valuing ethical business standards and most of all family values.

Burkhead Green Kilgo Funeral Home **Founded in 1909**

The Burkhead Funeral Home was founded by Maurice D. Burkhead as a furniture and undertaking business in Olivet, Michigan in 1909. Later Mr. Burkhead was joined by his son M. Donald. The father and son team worked together until Maurice's death in 1935. According to Charley Green, in the early days of the funeral business most services were held at the church or home of the deceased including preparation of the body for burial. Sensing a change with the public, M. Donald sold the furniture portion of the business and opened a separate funeral home in a residential area in Olivet where services could be held. M. Donald and his wife Irma also decided to expand the business by purchasing the Dr. Green mansion located at 206 West Lawrence Avenue in Charlotte and opened a second funeral home in 1941 which became the main base of operations.

*L.L. Johnson Company hauling logs through downtown Charlotte headed for the sawmill located on N. Washington.
Photo taken at the SW corner of Cochran Avenue and Lovett Street in 1920s.*



This photo is on display at the 1885 Courthouse

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In 1957 Gordon Cheney joined M. Donald to form the Burkhead Cheney Funeral Home. And in 1968 son M. Douglas Burkhead purchased the business from his father and Mr. Cheney. He along with his wife Marguerite operated the funeral home until 1980, when it was sold to Charles (Marguerite's brother) and LeAnn Green. The company operated as Burkhead Green until 2017 when purchased by Scott and Charla Kilgo. It now operates as Burkhead Green Kilgo Funeral Home.

Charlotte Insurance Agency – Founded in 1921

Charlotte Insurance Agency was originally part of the Eaton County Loan and Realty Company which was formed in 1902. The insurance portion of that business was operated by Vaughan G. Griffith. Sometime in 1921 after Mr. Griffith's death, Elva Sylvester purchased the insurance agency and renamed it the Charlotte Insurance Agency using the same space located on the second floor of 128 South Cochran Ave as the loan and realty company. It was unusual for a woman to own a business in the 1920's. According to Robert Collins, a retired druggist, who later wrote, "She created quite a stir in business circles."

Back in its early days, the agency wrote mostly fire insurance policies. However, as the concept of an independent insurance agency took hold, the agency grew by offering multiple lines of insurance. The Charlotte Insurance Agency could write policies from a variety of different companies to fit their customer needs. As a matter of fact, the agency purchased by Ms. Sylvester boasted of the availability of 26 difference insurance companies. The agency continued business on Cochran Avenue for over 60 years until moving to its current location of 313 Lansing Street. Throughout the years, the Agency has had several prominent owners that included Stuart Bearup who joined the business after serving as a US Army Captain in World War II. Mr. Bearup later sold his interest to Daryl Baker, who has served as City Mayor and Councilman for many years. Mr. Baker has since sold his interest to the current owners Charla (Daryl's daughter) Parkinson, Brian Lautzenheiser and Steve Whitingier.

Fulton Lumber – Founded in 1908

Fulton Lumber Company was founded by I. R. (Isaac) Colborn and W. B. (Willis) Fulton in 1908 and operated as the Colburn Fulton Lumber Company at 316 North Washington. Colborn and Fulton came to Charlotte from Grand Rapids and built a new business on the site of Cove & Towe Interior Finish Company which had just burned. The new business supplied wholesale and retail lumber, coal, coke and various building materials for the time such as lime, tile, cement, plaster, and lath. The main lumber shed, which was appropriately named "The Big Red Shed", had a capacity of 1.25 million feet of lumber. The yard also included a modern coal elevator which was operated by electricity.

Over the years the product line changed to meet current customer needs such as dropping coal and coke as electric and natural gas heat became popular. Most of the original buildings are still standing at the property located between North Washington and Oliver Street where they meet the Michigan Central Railroad tracks.

Mr. Fulton brought his son, Clyde, into the business and eventually bought out Colborn's share of the company. Fulton Lumber continued as W. B. retired and Clyde brought his son Robert (Bob) into the business. Later in the 1970s the showroom was expanded to 4,100 sq. ft. As time went on, two more Fultons were added to the company. Christi Fulton Dutcher and Mike Fulton became the fourth generation to join ownership of the company. Fulton Lumber greatly appreciates the generations of family and employees who worked for the business and added to its success. The family is also grateful for the patronage of generations of Eaton County Customers who supported its operation. The company closed to the public in December 2018 and is currently organizing to sell the lumberyard. The company is thankful to all who helped it become a longtime member of the Charlotte business community.

L. L. Johnson Lumber Manufacturing Co. Founded in 1909

Laurin Lewis (L.L.) Johnson founded L.L. Johnson Lumber in 1909 in Albion, Michigan. Mr. Johnson's objective was to harvest Michigan hardwood forests

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using a portable sawmill operation. The company would buy a good stand of hardwoods and bring in equipment to cut and mill the wood right on the property. By 1916, L.L. moved his operation into Eaton County and in 1922 built a stationary sawmill and planing mill on North Washington Street in Charlotte. During this time L. L.'s son Darrel joined the company. As the company grew, it moved to its current location to North Cochran formerly occupied by the Fenn Manufacturing Company in 1930. Sometime in the 1950s, Darrel's three sons, Richard, Robert and Edward were brought into the family business.

During the 1980s, fourth generation brothers, Mark and Tim Johnson joined the company. In June 2004, the two bought the business, becoming the two principal owners. Overall, five generations have worked for the company. In 1966 the company was formally incorporated as the L.L. Johnson Lumber Manufacturing Company. Later in 1975 the company opened a full-blown retail outlet called Johnson's Workbench selling hardwoods and woodworking tools to hobbyist. Over the years, L. L. Johnson Lumber has provided milled hardwoods for the transportation industry, both trains and automobiles, furniture industry and woodworking hobbyist throughout North America. All of this success was brought about by five generations of the Johnson family and continues to this day.

Pray Funeral Home – Founded in 1921

Pray Funeral Home was established in 1921 by Ernest G. and Myron E. Pray. This father and son team purchased the Wisner Furniture & Undertaking Company located at 231-233 S. Cochran Avenue and became known as Pray & Company. The family business operated from this location until 1930 when Myron and his wife, Hazel, purchased a residence at 405 W. Seminary Street. This was used as their personal residence and as Pray Funeral Home until 1949.

In 1949, the present funeral home was constructed next door at 401 W. Seminary, and the former funeral home was converted back into a residence for Joseph Eugene Pray, who was newly licensed as a Funeral Director that year. The furniture store was sold a year later, and the Pray family's full attention

was concentrated on funeral service. Over time, additional generations of the Pray family joined the family business which have included Joseph Eugene's son Joseph Ernest who was followed by Joseph Tyler who may be followed by Joseph Anders. Even though Anders is only 5 years old, he has participated in Pray Funeral Home advertising and may follow in his father and grandfather's footsteps making him the sixth generation in the family business.

Roseacre Greenhouses – Founded in 1911

Roseacre Greenhouses opened for business in 1911 by William Breitmeyer and was described as a successful florist and greenhouse operation. The greenhouse located at 620 West Harris included 10,000 square feet of glass which supported a variety of plants such as roses, carnations, boston ferns, palms, narcissus and hyacinths. Mr. Breitmeyer's ownership of Roseacre lasted until summer of 1914 when the business was sold to Reinhold "Ray" and Beatrice Wietzke which is the same year that Ray and Beatrice were married. Ray and Beatrice operated Roseacre until their retirement in 1949, when the business was sold to Ray's brother Albert H. Wietzke and his wife Marguerite. Albert was Ray's younger brother by 17 years and ran the business with Marguerite until their retirement in 1967.

In 1967 Albert and Marguerite's son James purchased the business. Jim and Diana Wietzke have owned the business since that time. Lately Jim and Diana have brought their son, Richard into the business, followed by Richard's son Jake, thus making him the fourth generation to work at Roseacre. The business continues to this day, mostly supplying flowers and plants to the local community as a self-described "Greenhouse Supermarket" with cash & carry prices. They are also known for the propagation of succulent plants from the original stock developed by Jim Wietzke in the 1970's.

Charlotte Celebrates Historic Businesses exhibit will open Saturday June 8th. The 1885 Courthouse is open Tuesday through Thursday and Saturdays each week 9 AM to 4 PM, other times by appointment.

HISTORIC COURTHOUSE COLLECTIONS

This page will feature some of the historical donations to Courthouse Square Museum

CIVIL WAR STENCIL



These stencils, usually made of brass, were provided to soldiers during the Civil War. This allowed the soldiers to put their name, company and regiment on their belongings for identification purposes. This also was used for identification if they became a casualty.

Wilson J. Parker enlisted at the age of 23 in 1861 in Lowell MI. and mustered out on March 19, 1862 in Detroit. He re entered in 1865 and served in battle for the 1st Regiment, United States Lancers Michigan Cavalry.

Picture and information by Deb Malewski

McCLELLAN SADDLE



This is a McClellan Saddle with a leather and canvas saddle blanket used by the Michigan Artillery in the 1800's. The red leather applique **MICH 119** stands for Michigan Artillery.

The saddles were used at the Charlotte Armory ca, 1800's

Photo's taken by Bob Monschein

*Thank you to our
Sponsors*



241 S. Cochran Suite #1
Charlotte MI 48813
Phone: 517-543-1099
Fax: 517-543-1993

DAILY DELIVERY TO

*Charlotte *Olivet
*Bellevue *Pottersville
*Vermontville *Sunfield
*Mulliken *Eaton Rapids
*

Charles L. Green
Burkhead-Green-Kilgo
Funeral Home

*Your friends
across the Square*

206 W. Lawrence Ave.
Charlotte, MI 48813
Phone (517) 543-3160

**Kiwanis of
Charlotte**



*Proudly Serving our
Community*

430 S. Cochran Ave.
Charlotte, MI 48813
517-543-6794

**Kiwanis is a global organization of
volunteers dedicated to improv-
ing the world One child and
One community at a time.**

**FULTON LUMBER
COMPANY**



316 N. Washington
Charlotte, MI 48813

*"We are pleased and proud
to be members of the Court-
house Square Association"*

**CHARLOTTE
LIONS CLUB**



100 W. Lawrence, Suite B
Charlotte, MI 48813

517-543-4240 or email
Charlottelionsclub@gmail.com

*Lions meet the needs of local
communities and the world every-
day because they share core belief
to serve their community."*

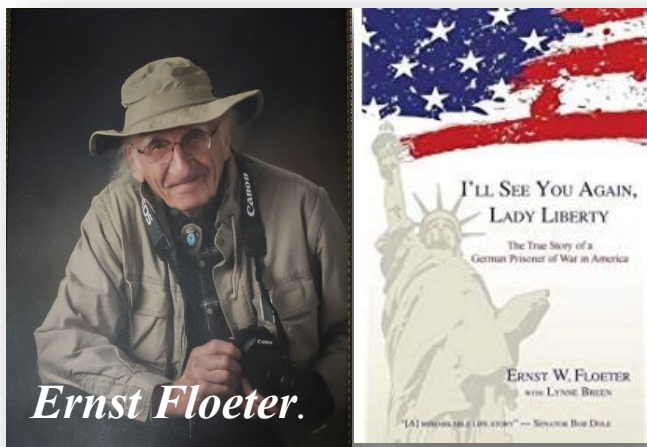
EATON COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

2019 Grant Recipient *Grand Ledge Area District Library*

GRAND LEDGE AREA DISTRICT LIBRARY

In 2015 Grand Ledge lost one of its great historians, **Ernst Floeter**. He was, in his own words, liberated by the American's at Normandy, spending 22 months in the US as a POW- the first step toward his adopted home. He would eventually immigrate to the US with his wife and one small child in 1957.

He served in many leadership roles in Grand Ledge but his largest gift to the community was his photography. At his passing, he gifted the Grand Ledge library a negative collection of over 80,000 images of Eaton County. A member of the Grand Ledge historical Society, Robert Doty selected some 15,000 images to digitize. Grant dollars will be spent to both digitize and promote/share these wonderful images with Eaton County. The collection will be available online via the Grand Ledge library's local history portal for easy searching, viewing and downloading. A dream of Ernst to share his work will be realized!



Do you know a person or organization who deserves this recognition?

Contact :
Julie Kimmer

csamuseum@yahoo.com or 517-543-6999
for an application.

2019 Heritage Awards

Pat Campion - Marcy Cousino & Harold Holcomb



Pat Campion

For her outstanding research into historical homes and buildings in Charlotte. Which has resulted in a three (3) volume book set containing the largest body of research/history and photograph's of the City of Charlotte. Also for her generosity in sharing her work at virtually no cost to the community.



Marcy Cousino

Marcy led the charge in having Eaton County Newspapers digitized in a searchable form. She has driven far and wide hunting down newspapers and microfilm trying to include as many as possible. She has also supported this outstanding project financially along with her countless donated hours. The ability to preserve and research these papers is an amazing gift to all of Eaton County.



Harold Holcomb

Harold has long been a "go to" person for early history in Eaton County. He is quite often the contact for everything from Civil War History to Early Founders of our community. Generous with both his time and research skills, he shares his wealth of personal knowledge with anyone needing help. His support of all things history has been a blessing to us all.



Eaton County
Historical Commission

SUMMER CONCERTS ON THE SQUARE



Plans are once again underway for Charlotte's "Summer Concerts on the Square" and we hope everyone is planning to attend this year. The schedule of concerts will begin Thursday, July 11th at 6:30 and continue on Thursdays through August 15th. Be sure to visit the Charlotte Artisan and Farmer's Market, also operating on the Courthouse Square Thursday afternoons from 3:00 pm until 7:00 pm. Bring your picnic blanket, lawn chairs, family and friends to enjoy a great time on the Square!

2019 SUMMER CONCERT LINE UP

Charlotte's "Summer Concerts" on the Square will begin Thursday July 11th at 6:30 and continue each Thursday through August 15th.

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 7/11/19 | Kathy Ford and the Power 3 |
| 7/18/19 | Capital City Chordsmen |
| 7/25/19 | Brenda Loomis Band (Country Music Night)
<i>*Special Tribute to Gaylord Edgerly *</i> |
| 8/01/19 | Greg Nagy Band |
| 8/08/19 | The Music Doctors |
| 8/15/19 | Ezy Street Band |



Open every Thursday
3:00 pm – 7:00pm
on the Courthouse Lawn.



CHARLOTTE CELEBRATES!



- ♦ **FREE EXOTIC ANIMAL PETTING ZOO**
- ♦ **CHILI COOK-OFF**
Benefiting the Charlotte Fireman's Kiddie Fund!
- ♦ **LIVE MUSIC FROM OUR LOCAL TALENT**
Appearing on our stage!
- ♦ **FREE BOUNCE HOUSE FOR THE YOUNG ONES!**
- ♦ **AN OBSTACLE COURSE FOR THE TEENS!**

A big thank you to Beacon Sales for sponsoring Courthouse Square lawn activities this year!

COURTHOUSE SQUARE CELEBRATES OUR VOLUNTEERS!



Court Square celebrates our volunteers with a lunch on May 30, 2019. Volunteers are very important to the success of Courthouse Square! Thank you!

Pictured front row (L to R) Norma Howser, Julie Kimmer, Caitlyn Tanner, Jan Phillips and Kim Curran Back row (L to R) Rod Weaver, John Hotchiss, Collett Frank, Kay Marsh, Bob Lesser, Sherry Copenhaver, David Talik and Bob Phillips



**Eaton County's Museum at
Courthouse Square**
100 W. Lawrence Avenue
PO Box 411
Charlotte, MI 48813

WWW.CSAMUSEUM.NET



Keeping History Alive on The Square!

Courthouse Square Association is open Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday & Saturday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. Other times can be arranged for special events and by appointment.

Museum Admission

\$1.00 pp

Children 12 and under free

CSA Members Free

Group & Family rates available!

We are happy to make special arrangements with sufficient notice. Please call the museum office at 517-543-6999 for more information. You can always email us at csamuseum@yahoo.com.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

The Eaton County Genealogical Society is also located in the 1885 Courthouse and is open Tuesday thru Thursday from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. Call ECGS at 517-543-8792 for more information.

Other businesses located in the 1885 Courthouse include:

- ♦ ***Johnson's Framing***
- ♦ ***Ann Prater Attorney & Counselor at Law***
- ♦ ***Alpha Video & Computer Services***

Located inside the 1873 Sheriff's Resident adjacent to the Courthouse are:

- ♦ ***PotterVilla Applied Technology***
- ♦ ***Courtney Emerson, LMSW***

Remember to bring your family and friends to your favorite Museum!

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