

THE CITIZEN

Snapshot in Time: A Scene from Saginaw Street, 1920s



Picture from the 1920's. Can you imagine "then" versus "now"? This photo was taken looking north from Kearsley Street and S. Saginaw. The first building on the left is the Genesee County Savings Bank, which is currently being renovated into a Hilton brand hotel. Directly next to it is what is today's Churchill's Food & Spirits. Look right past that to the original Citizen's Bank, as it was before it became the 11-story, Weather Ball high-rise (now Huntington Bank), which was the institution that loaned Billy Durant his starter capital for his Flint Road Cart Company. In the far distance, you can see the Durant Hotel. On the opposite side of S. Saginaw (right) the tallest building, the Sill Building, along with the Bryant Hotel and Hubbard's Hardware, sits on the block that is now the U of M's University Pavilion (formerly Water Street Pavilion). The block closest on the right, where you see the clock, is today's flat lot for parking. The trolley system was known as the "Interurban" and traveled through Flint to Davison.

*Photo
courtesy of
Perry Archives*

Letter from the President



We're off to a new start! Some of you might remember that we just had our elections at the end of May. And, after many years of faithful service to you all, David White handed the baton, and I, very soon, became immensely aware of how much David did for the Society.

The committees have already starting working and have great new things planned for this year. We'll be aiming for programs to engage the variety of interests of the Society members. We're hoping to include something for everyone.

Hopefully, you've already noticed the new and improved website. You can easily make contact with us there for information or to volunteer. You can sign up for memberships and see what events are upcoming. You can still find us on Facebook, and we may just add a little more on the social media platform this year, as well.

If you haven't heard we received a grant from Greater Flint Arts Council as part of the Art Share millage that the county approved. This grant will enable us to have a staff person several days a week, and support our Fall Preservation Workshop that is planned for the first Saturday in October.

We've been hard at work pouring over resumes and interviewing candidates for the new staff position. We have great interest in the position and had an abundance of fine candidates to consider, many with college degrees in history and experience working in museums. After much work in the selection process, our staff person has been chosen. Miss Amber Drury, a graduate from Michigan State University, who has an infectious passion for sharing history!

Jackie Hoist

President

Board Members:

President: Jackie Hoist
Vice President: Gary L. Fisher
Secretary: Mike Thodoroff
Treasurer: Harriet Lay
Historian/Curator:
Colleen Marquis

Directors::
Bill Gainey, Kevin Kirbitz,
Tim Buda, Jeremy Shuck,
David Langdon, Kurt
Neiswender, Todd Slisher,
Bailey (Birnie) Ramirez
Past President: David White

In Memoriam:

Long time Genesee County
Historical Society member
Carol DeKalands passed away
on 7-8-19

Want to connect?

Phone: (810) 410-4605
Email: GCHS1@comcast.net

www.GeneseeHistory.org

316 W. Water St.
Flint, MI 48503



Follow us on Facebook:
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Pictured:
Baseball Team, Kearsley Park,
circa 1915-1920

*Photo courtesy of Perry
Archives*

Listen Up!

Radio Show About 'Telling the Real Story'

While history can be a bore to some people, real history - great stories, well told - can be absolutely thrilling. In fact, that's what a captivating book or movie is all about: a great story that's well told. In Flint and Genesee County, we have some *fantastic* stories to tell, and GCHS Vice President, Gary Fisher, created a radio show to do just that.

The show is called, "Fish and the Flint Chronicles" (Fish being Gary's nickname). The show airs on Wednesdays at 11:00 a.m. Eastern on WFNT 1470, and is streamed live worldwide at WFNT.com or via the Sonoro Music app.

Fans can also listen to the shows any time at FlintChronicles.com where both the most recent show and past shows are archived. Relevant shows are also dual archived on our GCHS website at: GeneseeHistory.org. The spine of the show is focused on not just the events and people that populate the stories, but also in many cases, how they resonate today.

Gary's guests have been a compendium of Flint and Genesee County history across a wide range of topics, and also comprise

people currently visiting Flint and those who have made an impact previously. Some of these names include:

Jimmy Abbott - Former major league baseball player, Sullivan Award Winner, Golden Spikes Award winner

David Blight - Pulitzer Prize Winner, 2019, History

Mark Farner - Leader of Grand Funk Railroad

Paul Krause - Four times NFL Super Bowl Player, NFL Hall of Famer

Phil Hagerman - Founder of Diplomat Pharmacy, the Ferris Wheel, and Philanthropist

Ernie Gilbert - Emmy Award Winner, Annie Award Winner for Animation

Dan Kildee - Majority Whip, US Congressman

Glen Rice - NBA World Champion, U of M National Champion

Anthony Dirrell - World Super Middle Weight Champion

Dr. Robert McMahon - President of Kettering University

Norma Fairhurst - Member of the Flint-based Motown Group, The Velvettes

Phil Shultz - Business CEO, Flint Redevelopment Guru, Movie Producer, Entrepreneur, Philanthropist

Rick Leach - U of M Football Legendary Quarterback, Major League Baseball Player

Howard Bragman - Hollywood PR Guru, and ABC News Consultant

Mark Ingram - Heisman Trophy winner, NFL Player

Mark Wahlberg - Actor, Owner of Wahlburger's Restaurant

Billy Bob Thornton - Academy Award Winning Actor and Musician

Brian Calley - Former Michigan Lieutenant Governor

Rad Jones - Former Secret Service Agent for John F. Kennedy and five other Presidents

Sam Thompson - Chief of Security for Elvis Presley

Yo-Yo Ma - World Renowned Cellist, and Humanitarian



Flint's News Talk
1470WFNT

Don't forget to tune in!
Wednesdays from 11:00 - noon
or listen to the archives at:
FlintChronicles.com

Latest and Greatest

Annual Meeting and Dinner

Radford Jones, Guest Speaker

by Gary L. Fisher

Genesee County Historical Society hosted its Annual Meeting & Dinner at the Durant-Dort Carriage Company Headquarters this year, on Tuesday, May 28th. This year's guest speaker was Radford Jones.

Most people who were alive and older than four or five distinctly recall where they were on November 22, 1963. The day that President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas became ensconced in the collective American conscious for all time. While millions recall their whereabouts with ubiquitous clarity, few recall it in quite the same manner as Rad Jones. You see, Rad Jones was supposed to be there, in Dealey Plaza.

Instead, Rad "Wedge" Jones was in Washington, D.C. shopping for televisions, when the news of JFK's assassination broke. While he was shocked along with the rest of the world, his feelings led to immediate action. That's because Jones wasn't just an ordinary American citizen, he was a member of the elite United States Secret Service, and assigned specifically to protect JFK and his family. Having been with the President on his recent re-election tour, he'd asked for the day off in Dallas because his wife was expecting and they had some preparing to do.

Jones, at 23 years old, was the youngest of the agents. After growing up in Hillsdale, Michigan,

he attended Michigan State University to play baseball and earn his criminal justice degree, after which he applied and was selected to the Secret Service. His very first assignment was protecting the Kennedy clan at "The Little White House", the family compound in Hyannisport, Massachusetts. While there, he and his fellow agents were able to establish an easy bond with JFK, America's youthful president.

Unlike most of the world who remained physically and emotionally frozen after learning of the shooting, Jones went home, threw a suit on and headed to the White House where he would protect the first family, Caroline, John Jr., and Jackie Kennedy, during the following tumultuous days.



Vice President, Gary L. Fisher (left), Rad Jones (center), President, Jackie Hoist (right)

As impossible as it is to fathom in an era of omnipresent cell phone cameras and video, there was only one color, moving film of the assassination. Taken by Abraham Zapruder, it was confiscated, suppressed, and not shown to the American public until 1975, nearly 12 years after the assassination.

A vast amount of the details of the event remained a largely unexplored public

topic, and unbelievably, it was never discussed amongst Kennedy's Secret Service agents for 20 years. But as Jones described it—it was probably denial and trauma that prevented any dialogue—or even a late night bar room conversation.

The agents, there in Dealey Plaza, were seriously psychologically harmed by what they'd witnessed. Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was not an accepted condition yet in 1963—and would not be for decades to come. Given that level of

trauma. It's not that difficult to understand why they might not want to relive it. For Jones there's always an element of "I should have been there". Logically, he doesn't believe he could have saved the President, but emotionally, it's another story.

The aftermath of the Kennedy Assassination did, however, fundamentally alter the way the Secret Service performs their job. Rad was an integral part of that shift. He would go on to protect six Presidents in all: JFK, LBJ, Nixon, Ford, Carter, and Reagan.

Two of those presidents, Ford and Carter, would each visit Flint during their Presidencies. (As an aside, President Ford, would stay in the same hotel and suite The Who had destroyed after their Atwood Stadium appearance in 1967, when drummer, Keith Moon, infamously deposited a large vehicle in the hotel pool.)

His protection included heads of state, first families, Vice Presidents, and Presidential candidates. Rad also was coordinator of security during the 1976 Presidential inauguration.

After 20 years, he moved from the Secret Service, where he was Special Agent for the Michigan Division, on to Ford Motor Company becoming their Manager of Security and Fire Protection, a position with global responsibilities, where he stayed for 21 years. He was listed as one of Security Magazine's top 25 most influential security professionals in 2009. Among his many associations and positions, today, he is a Masters Level instructor in Michigan State University's School of Criminal Justice.

Jones is an eyewitness to Flint history, American history, and indeed, many of the social, economic, and geopolitical movements and people who have largely crafted the world we all live in today. In many ways, large and small, Rad Jones is a national treasure.

Rad was also a guest speaker on Fish and the Flint Chronicles radio show, hosted by the GCHS Vice President, Gary Fisher. You can listen to that interview on the website:

www.flintchronicles.com/radford-jones.html

Flint and Genesee County: Be a Tourist in Your HomeTown Series

Have you lived in Flint all of your life? You could have been a tourist in Flint on July 13th. The Durant Dort Office Building was one of the stops on the Flint & Genesee Chamber of Commerce's 'Be A Tourist in Your Own Town!'. Their concentration was 'Explore Flint and Genesee History'. The program features a different theme each month and provides bus transportation to multiple stops for the day. This month's history concentration included stops at Glenwood Cemetery, St. Paul's Church, Francis Wilson Thompson Library – Genesee Historic Collection Center and Whaley Historic House Museum.

At the Durant Dort, around 60 participants joined us for an engaging look at the history of the mid-century, the time from about 1940 – 1960 and the unique design creativity that came out of that period in history. Elaine Robinson, of Commonwealth Heritage Group, presented the findings of their study about the modern designed architecture in Flint from this time period. She noted the outstanding examples Flint has from the mid-century modern era. She also noted that the State Historic Preservation Office is very interested in supporting the preservation of examples of this style and is encouraging the nomination of the City Hall complex of buildings as a National Register of Historic Places.

Participants also had the opportunity to see some of the exhibits at the Durant Dort Office Building, where Billy Durant started his motorcar company. Tours of the building are available by appointment, and soon the building will be open on a regular scheduled basis.

Even if you've missed this presentation, Elaine will be coming back to present again in more detail and will include a tour of one or more mid-century designs. 'Be A Tourist', occurs each month through October. August features the 'Trails', September the 'Orchards', and October is 'Arts and Culture'.

Blast from the Past

Who Remembers the Soapbox Derby?



GUESS WHAT? It's back!

by Bailey Ramirez

Photo courtesy of MLive

The year was 1933. Newsman, Myron Scott, was on a photographic assignment in Dayton, Ohio, when he came across a group of young boys racing their homemade cars. Scott was so inspired by these boys, that he went in search of a corporate sponsor to establish a national program. It only took one year for Scott to obtain Chevrolet as a corporate sponsor and together, they created the first, official 'All-American Soap Box Derby.'

It did not take long for the Soap Box Derby to catch on. Flint, Michigan held its first ever Soap Box Derby, on Cadillac Street, in 1936. Years later, in 1969, after wonderful success and interest in the event Flint Mayor, Donald R. Cronin, opened the 'Cronin Derby Downs.' This location, near Southwestern High School would be the home of Flint Soap Box Derby racing for years to come!

The Cronin Derby Downs is one of the very few remaining Soap Box Derby tracks in Michigan. It goes down in history as well, producing three Soap Box Derby World Champions: Greg Cardinal, 1978, Russ

Yurk, 1979, and Mark Budgick, 1983. After nearly 25 years without racing, Donald R. Cronin's grandson, Kevin Cronin, has brought the Soap Box Derby back to Flint! June 8th, 2019 marked the first race, in Flint, after a long hiatus and was held at the Chevy Commons. Chase McCallum was the 2019 Soap Box Derby winner.

The revitalization of the Soap Box Derby racing, in Flint, is an exciting initiative to teach local children hands-on skills and creates year-round Soap Box Derby- related educational programs and workshops. The publicity and excitement stemming from the event is also helping to organize the clean-up, restoration, and beautification efforts of the original Cronin Derby Downs.

For more information about Flint's Soap Box Derby racing or how to donate to the cause, you can visit www.flintsoapbox.org.

*Check out our website for more pictures, info, and Factory Two's participation! **Genesee History.org***

Our Stories

Members share their stories, in their own words

A Smile and a Wave: President Kennedy in Flint, October 6, 1962

by **Richard Wicklund**

October 6, 1962 was a pleasant, sunny, early fall day in Flint, and President Kennedy came to Flint to campaign for the reelection of Governor John Swainson.

It was a great opportunity for this 18-year-old to get on my green Schwinn bicycle and head downtown. It was the quickest way, since I didn't have a car, and besides, it allowed me to get in closer than a car could. We lived in the Beecher School District on the north end, and Detroit Street (now M. L. King), was a straight route south.

At Saginaw and 5th Street, the motorcade turned from Saginaw Street, passing Flint's City Hall with rifle armed officers on its roof. I watched from a balcony behind the city hall as the President got out of the new cream colored 1963 Lincoln Continental and go inside for a speech. Then it was around to 5th Street, to join the crowds gathering at the spot where the motorcade would come out between the Fire Department and the Flint Police Department buildings. I had already taken some pictures with my slide camera, so it was to get into position. Shade and the sun made a picture difficult with low speed slide film, the there was no time to relocate with the street lined with crowds of people ready to greet the president.

Then the convertible Lincoln came up the drive and turned, with the President and Governor Swainson riding rather open and casually perched on the back of the car. He looked right at me, smiled, and waved. So what did I do, I waved back! Not good! I said to myself, "Take the picture!"

Of course by then President Kennedy was looking the other way, but at least I got a picture of the only president I have ever photographed! I did get a picture, rather poor, but that smile and wave is just memory, and a good one at that!

(Post script—Governor Swainson lost reelection to George Romney in the November 1962 election a month after President Kennedy's visit to Flint.)



Photos courtesy of Richard Wicklund, personal collection

If you'd like to share stories, pictures or make a donation, please contact us! If you'd like to add comments to what you've read, visit our website! **GeneseeHistory.org**



Genesee County Historical Society
Durant-Dort Carriage Factory Headquarters
316 W. Water Street
Flint, MI 48503

Genesee County Historical Society

Calendar of Events 2019

August	Aug 17:	<i>Boys Under the Hood™</i> Presentation during Back to the Bricks® (Gary Fisher) Public
September	Sept 21:	Who's Who of Glenwood Cemetery Tour (Gary Fisher) RSVP
	Sept 28:	Mid-Century Modern Survey (in coordination with the Flint American Institute of Architects) (Elaine Robinson) For members - RSVP
October	Oct 5:	Preservation Workshop - Public - RSVP
	Oct 18:	Haunted History of Flint Tour (in coordination with the Chamber of Commerce)
	Oct 23:	The Architecture of Death (Ron Campbell); Public - RSVP (Limited seating)
November	Nov 21:	To be announced
December	Dec TBD:	Holiday Program at Crossroads Village; For members - RSVP

***Dates are subject to change due to conflicts, weather, etc. Please make sure to check prior to event!

Check out our new, super cool website for details!
www.GeneseeHistory.org