



# The TELEGRAPH

VOLUME XLX Issue 1

APRIL 2024

## FLAT ROCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

25486 GIBRALTAR ROAD,  
P.O. BOX 337  
FLAT ROCK, MICHIGAN 48134

734.782.5220 Museum Office  
www.FlatRockHistory.org  
Archives@FRDigitalHistory.org

### MUSEUM CAMPUS HOURS

Office Hours Tues, Wed, Thurs 9am-noon  
(its always best to call ahead)

Tours by appointment or  
during scheduled Museum Open Houses

Please Note:  
We are closed to the public in January.

### 2023- 2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Bruce Chapin, President  
313.363.6338

Laura Polce, Vice-President

MargaretAnn Warden, Treasurer

Lesley Gilliland Harkai, Recording Secretary  
734.730.3213

Mary Washko, Corresponding Secretary  
313.354.5125

Lila Fedokovitz, Historical Commission Liaison  
989.786.3824

Jeff Groleau, Trustee  
Rose Chambers, Trustee  
Jean Whisler Walker, Trustee  
Dawn Bartok, Trustee

### OUR MISSION

The Flat Rock Historical Society seeks to preserve and communicate to residents and visitors the history and spirit of those who have lived in and near the City of Flat Rock from the beginning of human habitation, or its vision, to bring our community together for the enjoyment, discovery, and learning our past to create our future.

## Grace Wagar Law: 1908 Diary of a Young Girl in Flat Rock

by Mary Washko

Grace Darling Wagar Law was born to Wellington and Minnie (née Scherer) Wagar on July 24, 1891 in Flat Rock. At age sixteen, she was a Sophomore attending Flat Rock High School. Her family donated a notebook that contained her Diary from 1908.

Webster defines a diary as a record of events, transactions, or observations kept daily or at frequent intervals. It contained one's personal activities, reflections, or feelings. Diaries were kept by many different people all through time.



Grace Darling Wagar Law  
July 21, 1891 - May 11, 1980



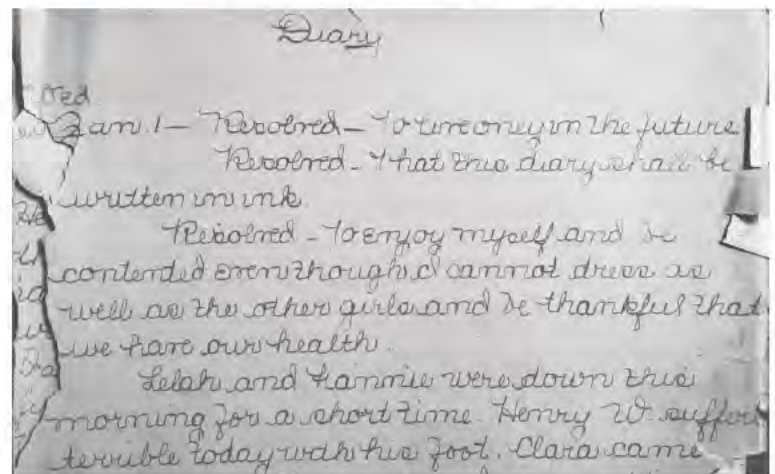
We have transcribed Grace's Diary and have enjoyed learning what life was like for a sixteen year old girl living in Flat Rock in 1908, it has been very enlightening!

What were the feelings and activities of a girl turning 17? This is an account of what she thought and did "back then" in her own words.

Here is Grace's first entry below:

How ironic that her first entry is her resolution to live in the future, write her diary in ink and be content with the things that she has including her health.

How many kids today would wish for these things?





**April 2024**

- 6 – History Speaker 5-8pm
- 18 – Museum Open (Thursday Eve) 5-8pm

**May 2024**

- 1 – Membership Pot Luck/History Speaker 6-8pm
- 5 – Spring Flea Market
- 10 – Prom Photos 3:30pm
- 16 – Museum Open (Thursday Eve) 5-8pm
- 27 – Memorial Day Parade

**June 2024**


- 5 – Membership Picnic/Election 5-8pm
- 20 – Museum Open (Thursday Eve) 5-8pm

**July 2024**

- 18 – Ice Cream Social &  
Museum Open (Thursday Eve) 5-8pm

**August 2024**

- 7 – History Speaker 6-8pm
- 15 – Museum Open (Thurs. Eve) 5-8pm

FLAT ROCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
PRESENT  
INTRODUCTION TO  
**BIRD SONGS**  
  
DOWNRIVER EDITION  
FEATURING  
**BOB PETTIT**  
BIOLOGY PROFESSOR EMERITUS  
Wednesday Evening 7pm  
May 1, 2024

FLAT ROCK HISTORICAL MUSEUM  
25486 GIBALTAR RD. □ FLAT ROCK, MI 48134  
734.782.5220

**September 2024**

- 4 – Membership Potluck/History Speaker 5-8pm
- 6 & 7 – Rummage Sale 9-4pm
- 19 – Museum Open (Thurs. Eve) 5-8pm

**October 2024**

- 2 – History Speaker 6-8pm
- 6 – Fall Flea Market
- 13, 19, 20, 26, 27 – Cemetery Lantern Tour
- 17 – Open House (Thurs. Eve) 5-8pm

**November 2024**

- 6 – History Speaker 6-8pm
- 21 – Museum Open (Thursday Eve) 5-8pm
- 25 – Holiday Decorating 12pm (Indoor)
- 30 – Newsletter Published (before holiday)

**December 2024**

- 2 – Holiday Decorating 12pm (Outdoor)
- 6 – Winterfest Museum Open 6-8pm
- 19 – Membership Holiday Party 5-8pm



The Flat Rock Historical Society  
in Partnership with the  
City of Flat Rock Historic Preservation Commission  
is pleased to present

**Practical Preservation Chat:**  
Wood & Steel Window Restoration  
with  
**Mr. Jim Turner**  
Turner Restoration, LLC  
Member of the  
Michigan Historical Preservation Network

**April 6<sup>th</sup>**  
Saturday Evening  
5-8pm  
Light refreshments will be provided

Flat Rock Historical  
Museum Campus  
25486 Gibraltar Road  
Flat Rock, Michigan 48134  
734.782.5220  
archives@fdigitalhistory.org

# SPRING FLEA MARKET - SUNDAY, MAY 5<sup>TH</sup>

Our Flat Rock Historical Society Spring Flea Market will be held on May 5th at the Speedway. Check our Facebook page for any last minute updates. As always, we need your help. Dawn Bartok and Kathy Fisk, have volunteered to manage the Country Store during this Flea Market.

Members are asked to bring their home baked goods or monetary donations for the Country Store to the Hotel on **Saturday, May 4th between 1 and 4 pm.**

It would be very helpful to have items individually wrapped if possible.

We often run out of baked goods, so we depend on you!

Please let us know if you can help sell baked goods during the flea market.

If you are going to visit the Flea Market on Sunday, please consider supporting the Historical Society's Country Store Booth at the Speedway.

The proceeds from the baked goods go directly to the society supporting artifact conservation and historic programming. Thank you in advance!



## BAKE SALE

**BAKED GOODS DROP-OFF**

**SATURDAY, MAY 4<sup>TH</sup>**

**FLAT ROCK HOTEL 1- 4 PM**

## GRATITUDE

*We would like to thank the following (and hope we didn't miss anyone):*

Thank you to Mary Washko for chairing the March Open House. The St. Patty's Day theme decor was so cute!

Thank you to Bruce Chapin for managing the Firetruck storage and finding a new place making it more accessible.

Tim & Sherry Shurtz for the Victorian Dollhouse and furniture

Jean Walker & Jeff Groleau for re-vamping the Munger Store

Thanks to Jean Walker for working on the new school room exhibit.

Peggy Diekman ...donations of family artifacts.

Thanks to Jeff Groleau for a fantastic Veterans Presentation.

Bruce & Jeff - hanging clock, phone and chalkboard

Thank you to Larry Dishaw for hanging the stained glass above the bar.

### **Certified Local Government (CLG) Status for Flat Rock has been Granted!! Public Workshops on Preservation in the Planning Stage**

*by Lesley Gilliland Harkai*

We obtained our certificate from the Secretary of the Interior of these United States on March 11, 2024, certifying Flat Rock as a Certified Local Government (CLG). This is a program jointly administered by the National Park Service (NPS) and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) that helps promote historic preservation initiatives in local communities, provides resources such as survey assistance, and opportunities for funding.

A Historic District Study Committee has been selected by the chair of the Historical Commission, assembled and are meeting to select local historic properties. An initial list of historic properties in Flat Rock has been identified and preliminary research on these sites has started.

The Flat Rock Historical Commission is planning a series of historic preservation trade workshops later this year. We are in search of tradespeople specializing in restoration arts and preservation to present to our historic preservation commission and local historic property owners in the downriver area.

Our first presentation is scheduled for April 6th (Saturday) about restoring historic windows and the types used in older homes, including maintenance and repair. We are pleased to welcome Jim Turner as the first preservation expert who has agreed to help us on this journey. This presentation is scheduled from 5-8pm and is FREE and open to the public.



*(continued from cover)***Grace Wagar Law: 1908 Diary of a Young Girl in Flat Rock***by Mary Washko*

Each day she has written what she did in the morning which consisted of doing the wash, ironing, and cleaning. They churned their own butter, pick & canned fruit, bought material & made their own clothes and adorning their bonnets to the latest fashion. Her main subjects in school were Geometry, American History, Dutch, German, Chemistry which she excelled in all.

Grace was well liked and had many friends which she corresponded with letters and postcards. How exciting it would be to receive a postcard with your name on it!

Now remember there were no emails or texts back then so going to the post office was vital as to whether you were going to meet a school chum at a social, picnic, dance, go up town shopping or go to a relative's house for a visit.

We have the post cards that match the entries in her diary. With all her school friends who had a crush on whom or if she didn't like something or thought it was dandy.

As I read through the days Grace told of her activities and what a busy young woman she was.

Getting around in bad weather certainly had its disadvantages. Dirt roads were very hard to get around in. If you had plans to go to a function and it looked stormy you may have had to cancel.



If you had wild goose for dinner what would the rest of the meal consist of? Boiled potatoes, pickled beans, freshly baked bread? Even perhaps home-made ice cream with peaches?

We have many postcards on display at the Smith Hotel written to Grace Wagar from her family and friends.

Oh, and by the way reading someone else's Diary is a big No-No but, in this case I don't think Grace would mind, do you?



The story of the founding of the churches in Flat Rock could make an interesting book. Today there is not the time to go into details. The Reverend J.B. Finley on Sunday, December 14, 1823, arrived at the Indian Reservation on the Huron River. Here he gathered the Indians and a few white settlers and a Methodist class was organized. The Methodist Church of Flat Rock is the outgrowth of this pioneers mission.



Methodist Church 1852



THE M. E. CHURCH AT FLAT ROCK

PUBLISHED BY ARNOLD READING

The first building, other than a home in which the congregation first worshipped, from 1824-1834, was a small log building, which was the school house in Flat Rock. It was known as the "Huron Mission School" and the Smooth Rich Wyandot Mission."

Next they built a small white frame building on what is now 26212 E. Huron River Drive and worshipped there from 1834-1852. In 1852, they dedicated a two story white frame church building on the same site. And used it for fifty years. This building was moved



THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, AT FLAT ROCK

PUBLISHED BY ARNOLD READING

to Erie Street near the river and across from the old post office, and became the Maccabees Hall. In 1902, at the same site, they built a concrete block building with stained glass windows. This building was renovated in 1953. On May 12, 1960, ground was broken for the current Methodist Episcopal church on Evergreen. On March 12, 1961, the first regular church services were held here. The new sanctuary was consecrated on May 17, 1970.

In 1855, F.J. Clark, and other like mind plus some Presbyterians held meetings in their homes or in the school house. They finally decided to organize under the Congregational Order. There had been eighteen members in 1857, but when finally organized in 1858, there were 36 charter members. The congregation decided in 1860 to erect a church building at 26250 E. Huron River Drive. This building had been renovated over the years but is basically the same structure [and is known today as the Congregational Church].



Baptist Church 1899

The first Baptist Church was organized in 1872. A building was made on Division Street across from the old high school. The parsonage was next to it. Eventually this building was torn down.

In 1889 some devout and faithful German farmers got together and worshipped at the old Maple Grove School. They formed the Faith Lutheran Church. The first Church was built at 25402 Arsenal Road. In 1947, a new church was built and since has been added to twice.



Faith Lutheran Church 1905



Methodist Episcopal Church 1970



## Early History of the Founding of the Methodist Church in Flat Rock

*By John A. Marcon (1971)*



*Reverend James Bradley Finley  
July 1, 1781 - September 6, 1857*

The early history of Flat Rock is closely associated with the exploits of missionaries who either preceded the settlers or accompanied them. One of the most remarkable among them was a Reverend James B. Finley.

Reverend Finley led the Methodist efforts in Michigan between 1810 and 1840 when he journeyed to the Flat Rock area. In 1823 he organized the first Methodist mission to the Indians in Michigan. This mission was conducted in Huron Township but overlapped into Flat Rock. As such, he can properly be considered the founder of the Methodist church in Flat Rock.

He arrived at the Huron Mission, on December 14, 1823, on the present day site of Michigan Memorial Park. He and his little band of missionaries and travelled on foot and by wagon from Ohio. They forded the icy Huron River and nearly froze to death before reaching their destination, the Wyandot Reservation. Here they met an old friend, "Honnis" who welcomed them with open arms and a warm hearth where they could thaw out their now frozen clothes. Reverend Finley reported, "How good it is, even in a land of savages, to find a friend and a welcome in their hour of need." The zeal with which this little mission group went to work was demonstrated by Reverend Finley when he immediately call a meeting of the Indians on the reservation on the very night of his arrival. Since it

was the Sabbath and the missionaries had not yet held services, he preached to the Indians and apparently was well received. The very next morning he

organized the fist Methodist Indian Mission in Michigan. A class of twelve assembled for instructions.

The settlers in Vreelandville soon heard of Reverend Finleys arrival among the Indians and asked for his services. Within a few years the spiritual needs of both the Indians and the white settlers came under his care. The mission now became known as the "Smooth Rock and Wyandot Indian Mission." During these years the idea of building a Methodist Church in Flat Rock began to take shape in the minds of the white settlers and in the spring of 1834 they began erecting a wooden church building, completing it in the fall of the same year.

The new church building also served as a school for both the Indian and white children. By late 1834 formal classes were being conducted in Flat Rock's first school. This school operated for several years under the auspicious of the Smooth Rock and Wyandot Indian Mission. It was recognized by the federal government and received federal grants to assist in its educational endeavors among the Indian children.

For the next twelve years until 1846 the little congregation had no full time minister, but services were regularly held by either members of the Indian Mission Society by a minister from the surrounding communities. In 1846, a full time minister was engaged, a Reverend William Haze. The building itself apparently stood on this spot for many years, since 1899 a Detroit newspaper described it as the oldest Methodist Church building in Michigan at that time and also noted that two of its founders were still alive. They were John Peters and Mrs. W. B. Littlefield. Whether this building was the original church or just a portion of it is not clear (to the writer) since in 1849, Moses and John Vreeland donated a lot to the Methodist Church in Flat Rock and apparently another building program was launched.

Reverend Finley ended his work among the Indians in Michigan about 1840 and left a legacy to the early settlers. However, one other aspect of his work is of considerable interest. To Reverend Finley we owe a note of gratitude for having documented how Brownstown got its name from an Indian Chief named Adam Brown.

The early History of the Methodist Church in Michigan and in Flat Rock is the story of the hardships and trials of men of the cloth who fought the wilderness and won, bringing to the area, the civilizing effects of religion. The rough tough pioneers who hacked out the village of Flat Rock were grateful to these men who also brought the first vestige of organized society to a place where none existed before.

**2024 SCHEDULE**  
**Bear Clan of Flat Rock**



**MAY 4TH** Home Opener  
 Brownstown & Rochester

Flat Rock Invitational  
 Bay City, Columbus,  
 & Canton

**MAY 18**

Greenfield Village  
 Father's Day  
 Season Opener

**JUNE 16**

Holly Invitational  
 Holly, MI  
 Walker Tavern,  
 Northville, Canton

**JUNE 22**

Gettysburg  
 19th Century  
 Base Ball Festival  
 Gettysburg, PA

**JULY 20-21**

World Tournament  
 Greenfield Village

**AUG 10-11**

**AUG 23-24**

Field of Dreams  
 Dyersville, Iowa

State Cup  
 Championship  
 Bay City, MI

**SEPT 21**

Games subject to change.

Follow us on Facebook

@Fans of the Bear Clan BBC of Flat Rock

**Flat Rock Historical Society**  
 Membership Application

Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

New Member  Renewal Membership No. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Street Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
 City

\_\_\_\_\_  
 State

\_\_\_\_\_  
 ZIP

@ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email 1 Address

@ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email 2 Address

- Landline
- Cell
- Texting

(\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  
 Telephone #

*Please tell us a little about your connection to Flat Rock or interests on the line above.*

CHOOSE ONE:

- \$10 Individual Annual Dues (July-June)
- \$15 Family Annual Dues (July-June)
- \$5 Student Membership
- \$100 Life Membership (per person)

Make checks payable to: "FRHS"  
 Mail application & check/money order to:

**Flat Rock Historical Society**  
 PO Box 337  
 Flat Rock, MI 48134

For Office Use Only:  
 Scan  PastPerfect  MailChimp

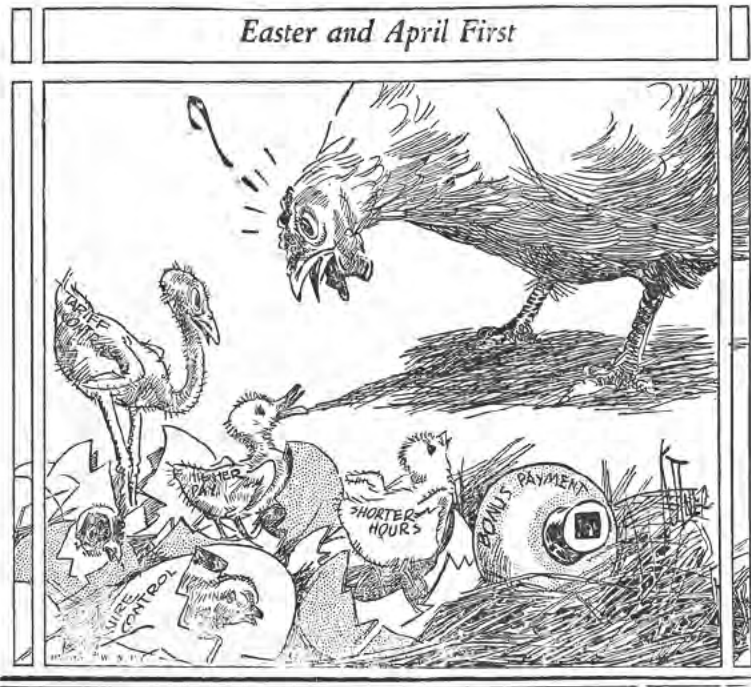
**Home Vintage Baseball Field is located at Huroc Park!**





Postage  
Here

## The Last Laugh: Vintage Cartoons from the Hometown Paper



"Easter and April First" *The Huron Valley Sentinel*  
(Flat Rock), 30 March 1934, p. 1.

### MUSEUM UPDATES

Our Museum Office is located on the lower level of the Munger Store and (at least at this stage) is open by appointment.

Additionally, we are working on cataloguing items into our new web database system. This is potentially something that could be done from home if anyone has a computer and would like to volunteer their time. Please call the museum for a volunteer application and additional details.

### PICTORIAL HISTORY OF FLAT ROCK

The Flat Rock book published by Arcadia Publishing is still available for \$22 from the Museum Gift Shoppe. Books are also available at the Blue Heron Trading Company in downtown Flat Rock or by calling the museum office 734.782.5220.

### ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES

Annual membership dues are due now! If you haven't paid your dues for the 2023-2024 year. Our membership year mirrors our fiscal year July 1st - June 30th. Dues can be mailed, brought to the museum office, given to any board member. We are working to restore the online link for membership as well. Thanks to you all!!!