



The TELEGRAPH

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Flat Rock Historical Society

25486 Gibraltar Road
Flat Rock, Michigan 48134

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

MUSEUM CAMPUS

Open by appointment

Please call 734.782.5220

Set open hours will be announced
here and on Facebook

Closed to the public in January & February

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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.

HISTORIC HOUSES OF FLAT ROCK

The Bunte Family

Clay, tile, and a hill nobody wanted

BY LESLEY GILLILAND HARKAI

In 1901 Henry J. Bunte bought a boiler and engine, brick and tile machinery, one old horse, five acres and a firing kiln. Bennie Hall had found clay suitable for brick on that ground eleven years earlier. Henry and his brother George went to work on it.

They added two more kilns and a dryer, then bought twenty more acres of clay. They made brick briefly, then turned to drain tile, which is what farmers in wet Michigan ground needed. Everyone called it the Tile Yard.

By 1912 the local paper called it one of the largest tile manufacturers in Wayne County.



The Huron Valley Cemetery mausoleum, built 1929 of marble and granite quarried at West Rutland, Vermont. Photograph by Lesley Gilliland Harkai, 2026.

He sold the yard to Otto Ruettinger in 1924. By then he had

bought a sand hill on Inkster Road, loose ground grown over in briar and berry that nobody wanted. He began clearing it in 1925, and the first burials came in 1927.

On paper it was the Huron Valley Cemetery. Nobody called it that. It was Bunte Cemetery, and a hundred years later there are still people here who call it nothing else.

The ground had an older history. Long before any surveyor put a line through this township, the banks of the Huron were lined with villages. In 1818 the United States set aside 4,996 acres along the river as a reservation for the Wyandot, to be held so long as they occupied it. They held it twenty-four years. In 1842 the government took the last of it and paid five hundred dollars toward removing them to Upper Sandusky.

People had lived along this river a very long time, and they buried their dead here. Not in one place. Throughout.

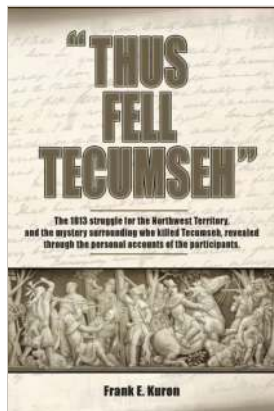
Continued on page 4

Who Killed Tecumseh?

An evening with author Frank E. Kuron

Thursday, September 24 • 7:00 pm • The Flat Rock Hotel

FREE & OPEN TO ALL



Cover courtesy
Kuron Publishing

For more than two hundred years, historians have argued over who fired the shot that killed Tecumseh at the Battle of the Thames in 1813. Credit has usually gone to Col. Richard M. Johnson, who rode the claim to the vice-presidency.

Author Frank E. Kuron went back to the letters and journals of the men who were on that field. A good many told a different story.

He lays out the testimony and lets you weigh it yourself. The question is not as far from home as it sounds: Tecumseh fought within a few miles of this museum — the ambush at Brownstown in 1812, the fighting at Monguagon days afterward.

Kuron wrote a weekly column on the War of 1812 era for the Toledo Free Press. He will have books for sale and will sign them after the talk.

The Society runs the Country Store at the Fall Antique & Flea Market, and everything it takes in goes straight back into artifact conservation and historic programming. It is one of the few fundraisers that genuinely moves the needle — and it runs on what our members bake.

FLAT ROCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY • SEMI-ANNUAL

Antique & Flea Market

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4 • 7 am – 3 pm • FLAT ROCK SPEEDWAY



Calling All Bakers!

Please bring home-baked goods to the Hotel on the Saturday before the market. Wrapping items individually helps enormously — the wrapped goods sell faster and hold up better through the day.

We run out nearly every year; we depend on you for this one. Can you spare a few hours to help sell at the booth on Sunday? Call the office and let us know.

DROP-OFF: SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3 • 12–3 PM AT THE HOTEL

Questions? Call the museum office at 734.782.5220

Honoring the Semiquincentennial

BY HILLARY HANEL ROSE, ASSISTANT CURATOR

As the United States marks its Semiquincentennial — the 250th anniversary of its founding — this year offers a rare occasion for both celebration and reflection.

Our museum has spent the year on lectures, activities and events built around it. You may have noticed our curatorial team in Revolution-era clothing at several of them.

Personally, I have been connecting with the women of the late eighteenth century through an embroidery project: stitching excerpts from the Declaration of Independence onto a set of period pockets.

Pockets were worn inside a woman's skirts, tied at the waist and reached through a slit in the outer skirt, and were sometimes decorated with needlework. A woman might carry a thimble, a few coins, a letter or keys in one. They were among the few genuinely private spaces a woman of the period possessed, which is part of what drew me to them.

I chose the era's foundational document as my guide and worked the text in a fine back-stitch. Stitching the familiar phrases about equality and unalienable rights, I was struck not only by their context in 1776 but by how much weight they still carry.

Our local connection to the Revolution is closer than many realize. The museum's display on Michael Vreeland records a Revolutionary War soldier who settled here in the early 1800s.

The finished pockets will be on display this fall. Please stop me and ask about them.

With Sympathy

The board and members extend our sympathy to our Assistant Curator, **Hillary Hanel Rose**, and her family on the recent death of her father, **Douglas Gray Hanel**.

Post one at work, at church, or in a shop window



Flat Rock Historical Society
Semi-Annual

ANTIQUE and FLEA MARKET

Sunday, OCTOBER 4, 2026

7:00 AM - 3:00 PM

FLAT ROCK SPEEDWAY

14041 Telegraph Rd., Flat Rock, MI

FOR INFORMATION

www.flatrockhistory.org or

(734) 782-5220

**Over 200 Dealers NO pets allowed
Parking & Admission Free**

Gratitude

- To Lee and Maelia Bobcean for their recent donation of furniture to the museum.
- To Bruce and Patty Chapin for moving those pieces to the museum for us.
- To Cindy Fesko, Marti Clay, Patty Chapin, and Jack and Dawn Bartok for their help with the Summer Blast.
- To Marti Clay for putting up the tiles for the new Timeline Exhibit.
- To Chris Harkai for hanging the new bunting on all the buildings before the Summer Blast.
- To Calder's Dairy for donating the ice cream for our Summer Blast sweet treats and ice cream floats.
- To Kylee Murdoch for her help digitizing and entering items into PastPerfect.

The Buntes

continued from the cover



Bunte Bros. General Merchandise, about 1925–1930. Bunte family collection.

Friedrich C. Bunte was born in Germany in 1842 and died here in 1908. His wife, Matilda Auguste Brandes, was also German-born and outlived him by eight years. They are buried at Woodmere Cemetery in Waltz.

Their children were Augusta Sophie, born 1871; August Lewis, 1873; Fred, 1874; Henry Julius, 1876; Anna, 1877; George William, 1879; Lewis Charles, 1881; Herman, 1883; and Emil William, 1885. Herman died at thirty. The rest mostly stayed.

Bunte brick went into buildings too. Henry fired the brick for the Maple Grove schoolhouse at Telegraph and Van Horn, taking the frame building that stood there before in exchange. Eighteen or twenty men worked the Tile Yard and lived beside the kilns; Anna Bunte, whom Henry married in 1904, cooked for them all.

ANNA AND CHARLIE

Anna Bunte married Charles Krutz and moved into the brick bungalow her brother built on the cemetery grounds. Her death certificate names her parents as Frederick Bunte and Matilda Brandes, and her residence as Inkster Road.

She had been ill a long time — diabetes of fourteen years' standing, and an amputation a decade before the end. Through all of it she stayed in the cottage on the grounds, and Charlie kept the graves and kept her, until she died in February 1943, at sixty-five.

Charlie stayed on alone, looking after Huron Valley for another twenty-two years until his own death in October 1965. He is buried at Michigan Memorial.

AUGUST ACROSS TOWN



August & Emogene Bunte, 1899

Henry's older brother August married Emogene Stoflet at Flat Rock in 1899 — a daughter of the family whose name is on our own carriage house. Theirs was a hard beginning: infants buried in 1903, 1904 and 1912. A son, Charlie Stoflet Bunte, born in 1906, lived.

By 1929 they were living at 700 East Huron River Drive, in a house built in 1924. The next year the census taker wrote down August's occupation: Supervisor for the Township.

Emogene died in 1930, and in 1932 August married Cora May Case Langs. They appear at the same address — renumbered 26041 East Huron River Drive — in the 1939 directory and the censuses of 1940 and 1950.

August did not stop at his own front door. The 1942 tax rolls show him holding title to the lot next door at 26049 and the house on it, a 1939 Craftsman cottage with a full-width porch and knee braces in the gable. John and Pearl Littler lived in it.

He died in March 1957 at eighty-four, and was buried at Oakwood in Huron Township — not, it is worth noticing, at his brother's cemetery. Cora outlived him by seventeen years.

THE NEXT GENERATION

Henry had married Anna Caroline Niesen at Brownstown in April 1904. They had three daughters: Margaret, born 1913; Hazel, 1918; and Henrietta, 1921.



Hazel Bunte Cunliffe, 1971

Hazel began keeping her father's books at fourteen. In 1939 she and her husband, Avery Cunliffe, bought the implement shop outright.

Henry died three years later and the cemetery passed to Hazel. She did not simply hold it. She ran it, and became a property owner and developer in her own right at a time when very few women in Michigan did that work under their own names. Her niece Barbara and Thomas Stone later took over for twenty years.

WHERE THEY LIE

The family that built Flat Rock's cemetery is scattered through everyone else's. Friedrich and Matilda at Woodmere in Waltz, Anna Krutz beside them. Charlie Krutz at Michigan Memorial. August at Oakwood.

Anna Caroline Niesen Bunte, Henry's widow, lived to ninety-seven. She died in 1982, forty years after her husband, and is buried at Huron Valley — in the ground he cleared from a sand hill.

AND TODAY

In 2021 Darin McLeskey bought the cemetery and the caretaker's cottage. He is a real estate broker, as Hazel was, has restored a number of historic properties, and has proved a careful steward of the cemetery's records.

A hundred years on, the sand hill on Inkster Road is in good hands.

The Flat Rock Dam

A decision has been made, and a federal review has begun

WHAT MEMBERS SHOULD KNOW

On August 13 the board of the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority voted to proceed with partial removal of the Flat Rock Dam and installation of rock arches, and to enter design and permitting. About \$920,000 of federal money remains for design, through a NOAA Fisheries grant under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Construction is estimated at \$13 million or more.

A week later, on August 20, the City's Historic Preservation Commission met in special session and asked to be recognised as a consulting party under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act — the federal law requiring an agency to weigh a project's effect on historic properties before spending federal money.

WHY THE DAM IS A HISTORIC PROPERTY

Most people think of the dam as river infrastructure near the old Ford plant. The Commission's research shows otherwise.

Henry Ford built the dam, the Ford Motor Company Lamp Factory and a municipal water filtration plant as one programme in 1921 and 1922. Factory and filtration plant were both designed by Albert Kahn. The dam powered the factory, impounded water for the plant, and carried a railroad and a roadway across the Huron.

The Commission has obtained twenty-eight of Kahn's drawings. One sheet, approved 29 June 1923, labels the New Dam, the Railroad & Highway Bridge, the Hydro-Electric Plant and the Lamp Plant as a single project. The filtration plant supplied water to Flat Rock, Rockwood and South Rockwood, and the Lamp Factory became a Michigan State Historic Site in 2008.

FISH PASSAGE IS NOT NEW HERE

Kahn's 1923 site plan shows a fishway and an iceway at the west end of the dam. Fish passage was part of the original design.

A fish ladder was built at the dam between 1990 and 1996 by the Huron River Fishing Association — over twelve thousand donated hours and fifty sponsors, among them the Authority itself, the DNR and the City. It was dedicated in 1997 and repaired by the Flat Rock Sportsmen's Club in 2022.

WHERE MATTERS STAND

The Commission has asked which agency leads the review, whether consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office has begun, and which tribes have been contacted. Copies went to the Wyandotte Nation and the Wyandot of Anderdon.

The Authority had twice offered the dam to the City, latterly with \$4.5 million toward a fish ladder and operations. The City declined on August 3, and ten days later the Authority voted to proceed with removal.

The Commission has stated plainly that it supports fish passage and river restoration. What it asks is that the federal process be followed, and the alternatives on the record given proper consideration.

The Society is not a party to this consultation; the Commission is a body of the City.

THE RECORD SO FAR

11 Sept 2025 — dam offered to the City with \$3m.

13 Nov 2025 — offer revised to \$4.5m.

3 Aug 2026 — the City declines the offer.

13 Aug 2026 — HCMA votes for partial removal.

20 Aug 2026 — Commission asks to be consulted.

In Memoriam

Robert J. Shrader

December 27, 1926 – June 29, 2026



Bob Shrader died on June 29 at American House in Milford, six months short of his hundredth birthday. He was born in Lincoln Park, the son of Charles and Emma Spangler Shrader.

He served in the Second World War, and married Carrie Boik at Taylor Township in February 1950. For forty years he managed the City of Flat Rock's water plant, retiring in 1989 — a job most people never think about and everyone depends on.

He belonged to American Legion Flat Rock Post 337, the Down-river Veterans Honor Guard and the Flat Rock Rotary, and he golfed, bowled, pitched horseshoes and played pool. He was preceded in death by Carrie, and is survived by his son Gary (Bonnie), three grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Mary Dale Lowe Dickerson

March 1944 – August 4, 2026



Mary Dale Dickerson died on August 4 at Wyandotte, looking out over Grassy Island at sunset. She was born in Portsmouth, Virginia, to Ike Lowe and Edith Ramsaur Lowe.

She grew up in Charlotte, North Carolina, and was at Brenau College in Georgia when a chance meeting in Atlanta introduced her to Stuart "Jim" Dickerson. They married in August 1966. His Army service and then a career in steel carried them to Atlanta, El Paso, Seattle, Birmingham, St. Clairsville and at last to New Boston.

She was called a stay-at-home mother, which undersells her: Girl Scout leader, Boy Scout leader, PTA, P.E.O., Soroptimist International, libraries and women's shelters. From 2000 she knitted more than a hundred and fifty baby blankets for the Navy Marine Corps Relief Society, and took pleasure in knowing they went all over the world. She was a charter member of the Dickerson Beach Week, begun in 1974, which now gathers more than sixty people who adored her.

✂ CUT ALONG THE DOTTED LINE

Flat Rock Historical Society Membership Application

Today's date

☐ New member ☐ Renewal

Name

Street address

City / State / ZIP

Email

Telephone

Tell us about your connection to Flat Rock

*Our membership year runs July 1 to June 30,
with our fiscal year.*

CHOOSE ONE

- ☐ \$5 Student
☐ \$10 Senior, 60 and over
☐ \$15 Individual
☐ \$25 Family, same household
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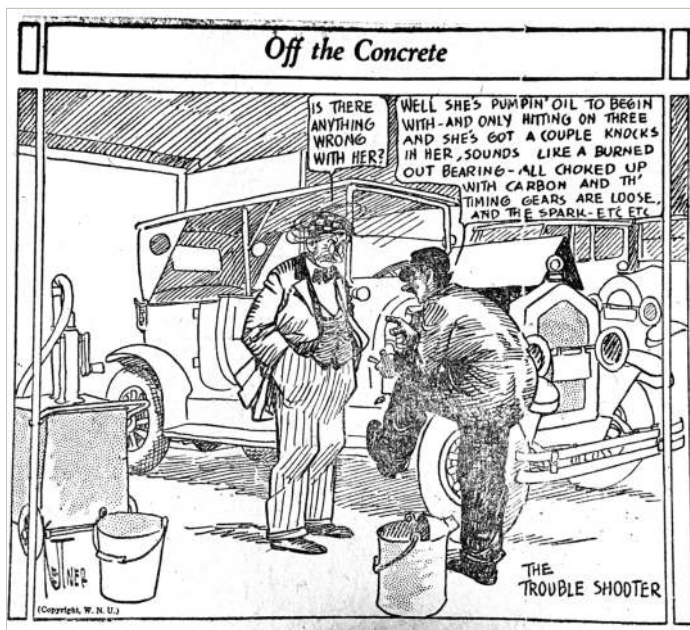
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Postage
Here

The Last Laugh

Vintage cartoons from the hometown paper



"Off the Concrete" — The Huron Valley Sentinel (Flat Rock), 18 April 1924, p. 1. From the newspaper collection now being digitized at the museum.

FIND US

Flat Rock Historical Society

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734.782.5220 · www.FlatRockHistory.org
Archives@FRDigitalHistory.org · Facebook: FRHS

MUSEUM UPDATES

We do not have set open hours at the moment. Our assistant curator teaches full time, and with the school year beginning we cannot yet say what the fall hours will be. We will announce them here and on Facebook. In the meantime, call the office and we will arrange a time.

The new local history timeline is installed in the Munger Store — sixty plexiglass panels above the exhibit case, designed to be changed as we highlight different periods.

HELP WANTED — SERIOUSLY

We need board members. The people serving now have carried this Society for years and are worn out, and no organization can hold buildings, run events and care for a collection without people willing to take responsibility.

Worth knowing: Michigan law lets a non-profit board include directors aged 16 or 17. For a young person that is real responsibility and it looks like it on an application. If you know a student who cares about this town, bring them along.

Volunteers are needed too — cataloguing, the *Sentinel* digitization, historic district photography and the Munger timeline. Call the museum at 734.782.5220.

NEWSLETTER OF THE FLAT ROCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY