

"If Only the Walls could Talk"

'Happy's Tavern' and all it's history, just a memory now

by Denny Esch, Historical Society President

Several months ago I sat at the round table at Main Street Café with some senior citizens and listened to a discussion about "The Old Bar" and "Heckman Barber Shop".

Of course that same discussion probably took place the day before and I would guess it was the main topic every day after hearing that the wrecking ball was coming to town. The days were numbered for "Happy's Tavern" as it was called many years ago.

Everyone in town knows there was a common wall between the old bar and the barbershop. How in the world were they going to save that building?

After weeks of discussion from the seniors morning round table (and no conclusion made) it was learned that after a more complete study by the people in charge, (not the ones at the round table) they felt it would be best to take down both buildings.

Time had taken its toll on the old bar and it was going to take the barber shop with it.

Another part of Pigeon's history was about to be written.

With the start of the demolition of the buildings, you could see there was a plan. The building was taken apart piece by piece. It was as if they were trying not to disturb the history within those walls.

Maybe they were looking for that hidden treasure or was it the past events from within, that made this demolition a little different.

What may be found in that wall or behind this door? In reality, it is just an old building on Main Street. The upper and lower windows were removed and the old wood siding over the original brick was taken off.

All of a sudden a new appearance took place and you could see the early 1900s coming back to life.

There was a doorway upstairs facing Main Street and at the north and south sides of the building, about 10 or 12 feet up there was an old wood

beam, cut into the brick. I would guess it supported the upper porch and cover over the old wood sidewalk.

If you look hard, you can almost see a few people starting to gather outside on the porch all dressed up in their best on a Saturday night.

As the back side of the building was opened up to remove the debris from within, one could see the layout of the rooms up stairs and below.

It was like looking into the back side of a doll house. I parked in the alley one evening trying to get a look inside.

I visualized some local workers, maybe from the mill or the pea plant, and a couple of men from the stables. Several others are there too telling some story of the day's events.

The pool table in the back was being used as well as a couple good games of "gin rummy" were being played.

When I looked deep inside, I could see someone getting a haircut.

Is that Klondike Winters giving a shave and a haircut, or was it the new guy, Arnie Heckman??

It was getting too dark to tell...

Brick by brick the building quickly, but in a reserved way, was being taken down. Each day another piece of history was removed.

When the debris was gone and the dust cleared, another bit of historical research needed to begin.

Not only was there a common wall on the barbershop side but it appears there was a



Happy's Tavern (center building) in the early 1900s. You can see the alleyway where Heckman's Barbershop was built.

common wall to the south.

The roof rafters and the second floor were set into the adjoining brick wall. Bricked up windows and doors were now exposed from the adjoining building - who would have guessed.

I believe there is much more history to learn about "Happy's Tavern" and all the events from it's time, and I can't help but think, "If Only the Walls Could Talk."

PIGEON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 523 • Pigeon, Michigan 48755
989-453-3242

Denny Esch, President

Clayton Esch, Vice President

Jim Leinbach, Secretary

David Eichler, Treasurer

~: Trustees ~:

Chuck Leipprandt • Randy Ovenc

Ardra Schaaf • Clarence Swartzendruber

Meetings are held the second Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. sharp.

Board meeting held the fourth Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m.

All meetings are held at the Arthur J Woelke Historical Research Center.



Pigeon Historical Society (Christmas) Gifts Ideas!

Pigeon 2003 Centennial Book (New)	\$25.00
Pigeon 1978 Diamond Jubilee Book	
Uncirculated	\$50.00
Lightly Used	\$25.00
150 Years of Huron County	\$40.00
Huron County Museum Puzzle	\$15.00
Rails Around the Thumb	\$22.00
Every Photo Has A Story, by Bill Diller	\$27.50

Please contact any Historical Society member or call Clayton Esch at 989-453-2143.

Make your tax deductible check to payable to:
Pigeon Historical Society

Pigeon Dairy & Dairy Bar - "The Place to Be"

From Pigeon Centennial Book

The Pigeon Dairy was founded by William and Luanna Bechler in 1925, while they worked for William N. Turner on his farm, north-east of Pigeon on Gagetown Road.

William Bechler bottled the milk from Turner's dairy herd, delivering it to homes and stores in Pigeon.

In 1930, Bechler purchased the Art Smith creamery bottling milk and making butter. Excess cream was shipped via the 4:00 p.m. train to Saginaw Creamery.

In 1935, Bechlers purchased the A. Hirshberg & Son building at East Michigan and North Main.

With major renovations, the area's first pasteurizer and larger bottling equipment was installed and deliveries to Caseville, the shoreline from Mud Creek to Oak Beach, and later, Owendale began. He purchased milk from dairy herds of

Swiss, Guernsey, and Holsteins, producing a rich-quality milk long before the days of low-fat and 2%.

Later, a cream pasteurizer and a 500-pound butter churn were added, enabling the use of the cream. Butter was sold locally, but much was shipped to Detroit.

In 1938, the Dairy Bar was added.

Manufacturing their own ice cream, the "Dairy Bar was the place to be." Capacity crowds would meet there after ball games and Saturday nights after the 9:00 and 11:00 p.m. movies at the Gem Theatre.

In 1941, the Dairy Bar was enlarged adding meals and sandwiches.

The entire Bechler family worked in the dairy and dairy bar.

Pearl (Bechler) Menzel made many of the ice cream products. Robert and Roland, along with family friends Ronald and Glenn Turner,

delivered milk before going to school. After school they picked up milk from the farmers and then continued with their bottled milk deliveries to Caseville and Owendale.

In 1945, Robert was called to military service. Roland was in high school and Clare was a youngster.

William Bechler sold the Pigeon Dairy to Leo Sturm and Floyd Hamilton, and erected a building at 7608 Pigeon Road.

Here he established a wholesale food business, specializing in restaurants and independent grocery stores throughout the Thumb area.



The Bechler family refurbished a horse-drawn wagon that William Bechler, owner of the Pigeon Dairy, used in the early 1900s. The family entered the wagon in area parades. Circa 1978.



William Bechler delivering milk to the grocery store in Pigeon, 1941.

Petroglyphs in your Backyard

What exactly is a petroglyph?

Well, a petroglyph is a pictogram made on a rock surface by scraping, carving, and abrading the surface. They're like a carving or an engraving on rock and are often associated with prehistoric people. Petroglyphs are not the same as petrographs. Petrographs are drawings on rocks, not carvings.

In our area the petroglyphs were discovered after the great fire of 1871 and 1881. These fires burned away the topsoil and exposed the rocks and the carvings on them.

Most of these carvings are found in Greenleaf Township and labeled the Sanilac Petroglyphs. They are figured to be between 400 and 1000 years old. Sandstone was a favorite choice of the early people because of its ability to be carved on.

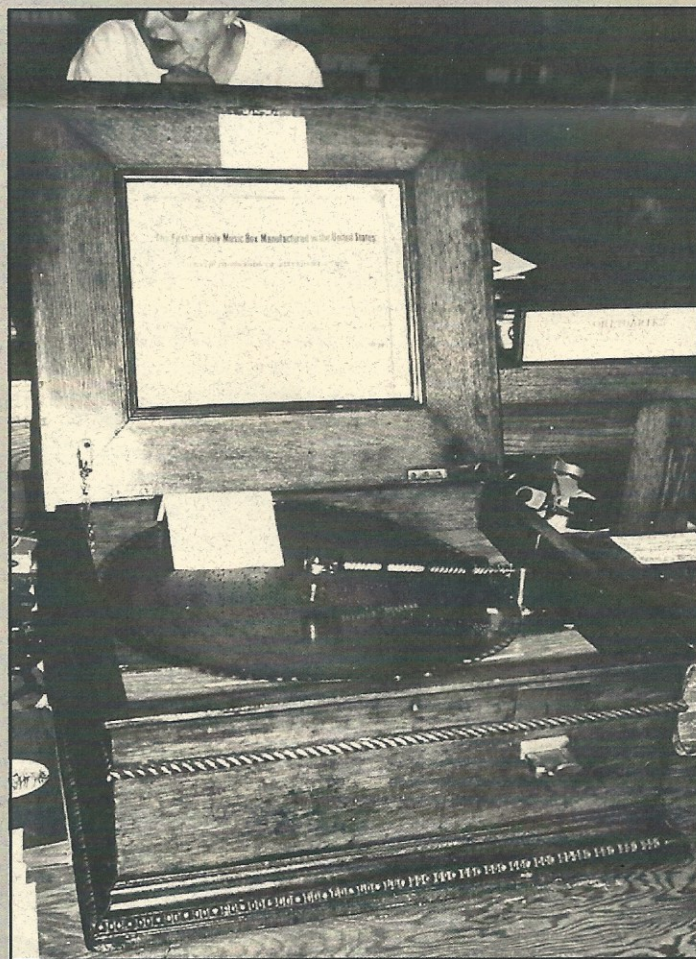
What the petroglyphs actually say is up for debate. Some experts think they have a religious meaning and others believe they might be directions or some sort of lesson.

The current problem facing the petroglyphs is that they're eroding very quickly. Air pollution, wind, and harsh weather are all slowly removing the carvings from the soft sandstone.

The Michigan Historical Museum is working hard on protecting what remains of these ancient messages. It is thought that many more petroglyphs exist in the Thumb than what have been discovered especially around the shore line, but time, topsoil, and erosion have hidden them from us.

So, if you find an exposed piece of large rock, dig around it and clean it off. It might have on it a communication from far back in time.

From the Artifact Collection



This music box is from the early 1900s and is part of the line produced by the Regina Company which was based in New Jersey. It is believed that at the time, The Regina Company was the only music box manufacturer in the United States.

Early 'snowmobile' was a necessity 100 years ago

"Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds."

That's the United States Postal

Service creed. With today's fast as light digital communications, it's something that might not be as important as it was years ago.

Mother Nature has often been in

charge when it comes to life's daily routine.

Today we're lucky to have large trucks, graders and payloaders to quickly move the snow after a wintry blast from the North.

Nearly 100 years ago, on May 20, 1916, Edward J. Anklaam took over the U.S. Postal Route 1 - Pigeon, Michigan.

Using a horse and buddy, the route consisted of about 30 miles. That was too much for one horse, so Eddie (as he was known) changed horses halfway around the route.

The harsh winter months, with feet of snow covering the roads, proved to be quite a problem for a mailman.

There were no school buses that needed to get through and therefore, no plowed roads.

Eddie had a second job working at the Ford Garage pumping gas at night.

He got the idea to rig up a "snowmobile" for mail delivery.

The front tires from his automobile were removed and replaced with runners that glided on the snow. When the snow was gone, the wheels put back on.

So you see, the snowmobiles of today are recreations toys. But 100 years ago, they were a necessity to complete the delivery of mail regardless of the amount of snow on the ground.

WEIRD RECIPES-VENISON HEART JERKY

*For this recipe you can use the oven, dehydrator, or smoker method.

First shoot any size deer, then take home the heart instead of throwing it in the ditch for the raccoons.

Once home, leave the heart on a cold porch overnight with a bowl over it so the cats will not lick or bite on it.

Next day, cut the heart into 3/8" strips removing all sinew and gristle. Now, place the meat into a bowl and cover all of it with whole milk and two ounces of Schnapps. Soak the strips this way for twenty-four hours.

Third day, drain and wash the strips then place them in the marinade bowl with the following: one tablespoon salt, a tablespoon onion powder, a tablespoon garlic powder, a tablespoon ground black pepper, a half-cup soy sauce, a half cup Worcestershire sauce, a teaspoon of liquid smoke, and a cup of rather cheap, bar whiskey.

Cover bowl and place it on a cool/cold porch for twenty-four hours. The next A.M., remove and pat dry all meat and place the strips on the oven racks.

Turn oven on low and leave the oven door cracked open. Dry for six hours then cool the jerky and amaze your friends with this delicious treat. Throw out remaining marinade or drink it later when you come home from a wedding reception.



Eddie Anklaam with this 'modern' snowmobile. The runners on the front were used during the snowy winter months, and the front wheels were placed back on once the snow was gone. You can also see the continuous track drive added to the back wheels to provide traction in the deep snow.

Pigeon Historical Web Site

Trustee Randy Ovcen has taken on the project of creating a new/updated website for the Pigeon Historical Society. It can be found at: pigeonhistoricalsociety.com.

Take a look, but keep in mind that it is "under construction" as Randy is learning how to create it all.

When completed, monthly updates, activities and other information can be kept current.

Thanks Randy for taking on this projects!!

Winter Hours

The Woelke Research Center will be open by appointment for the next couple of months. If anyone is interested in visiting the center, or would like to donate an item to the Depot Museum, please call Vice President Clayton Esch at 989-453-2143.

We'd love to see you on our Team!

An individual or business can become a member by contracting any active member or by sending your tax deductible cash or check to Pigeon Historical Society, 59 S. Main St. / P. O. Box 523, Pigeon, MI 48755. Dues are renewed at the annual meeting each year.

Individual Membership: \$10.00 (active member with voting privileges)
Life Membership: \$120.00 (active voting member with lifetime privileges)
Supporting Membership: \$15.00 (non-active supporting member)
Business Membership: \$20.00 or more (contributing member non-voting)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Everyone is welcome to attend our meetings. Be our guest and become a member!

Trapped in a Leaky Boat with a Storm Brewing

Part 3 in a series,
by Jim Leinbach

In this installment of our tale, we find our young fisherman trapped in a leaky rowboat, far from safety, with a dangerous summer storm bearing down on him. One of the oars on his little boat had broken and was swept away by the building waves, leaving him unable to propel or steer his meager craft.

Like the Horsemen of the Apocalypse, an immense wall of grey-white filled the entire western sky, charging down on the young man with increasing speed. Escape from it was impossible. Thunder roared around him like artillery as the wind increased by the second.

Day had turned to night as the monster enveloped the helpless kid, terror filling his soul. The overwhelming power that nature held over him seemed so surreal that for a second the boy thought he might be dreaming or having a nightmare. But that changed immediately when the wall of wind and rain slammed into him at full force causing his boat to list violently to the port side, instantly filling with water.

Now, our boy was no exception to any living Christian. In his time of terror and panic, hopelessness and powerlessness, he screamed out beseechingly, "God, help me!" as the wind drove the boat sideways into the waves then sent it slashing down to the bottom of Saginaw Bay.

This violent collision of wind and rain literally threw the kid into the air plowing him face-first into a foaming breaker filling his mouth and throat with sandy water. The force tumbled him over and over underwater until his head miraculously broke the surface and he could gulp in a lifesaving breath of air.

Again and again the huge waves crashed into the boy, sometimes rolling him under with the raging currents and sometimes sending him bodysurfing across the top of the water. The boy's mind was blank with horror. No amount of training in lifesaving or swimming lessons by his sisters could be applied in this situation. No amount of strength or reason could save him as the water's power thrashed and spun him over and around, under and out of the horrendous surf.

Time after time water rushed down his throat and the end of his young life seemed very near.

Then, as mercy dictated, the kid suddenly found himself snared in the cattails of the outer Middle Grounds. Finally, for what had seemed an eternity, he succeeded even through his exhaustion to grab ahold of some of these and hold his head upright.

Not by any means was he safe now.

The huge waves crashed into the rushes sweeping through them and bending them to the surf like a hurricane would a grain field. But his feet could

now occasionally touch bottom and a tiny semblance of control came into the kid's consciousness. He still was still pounded by the waves and often lost his footing rolling him and filling his nose, mouth and throat with water. But there was a mite of stability however tenuous and weak, and the boy thought that he might, just might, be saved.

The currents thrust him deeper and deeper into the rushes until he became somewhat buffered from the rollers and was able to gain enough footing to at least keep his head above the water. All strength in his arms and legs was extinguished and our fisherman could only stand weakly on his tiptoes and cling to the weeds that surrounded him.

As panic ebbed and consciousness crept back into his brain he realized how cold he had become even on this hot afternoon. His body shivered in terrific spasms and his teeth chattered violently. Tears of terror and relief poured from his eyes and he sobbed into the wind praying vehemently for his very life.

Being dropped onto an alien planet would have been similar to being stranded in the rushes of the

Middle Grounds.

Hundreds of acres of cattails enveloped the boy and in the darkened sky, rain, and wind any sense of direction was useless. By instinct, perhaps, the boy began moving away from the breaking currents and toward what he hoped would be shallower water.

In shock and shaking like he was the kid could only bounce, float and pull his way through the maze of green stalks that continued to bend and whip down at him in the screaming wind.

At certain points his progress was interrupted by deep holes that again put him in peril. He had to dog paddle or pull himself forward by the rushes in order to again find an area with some footing.

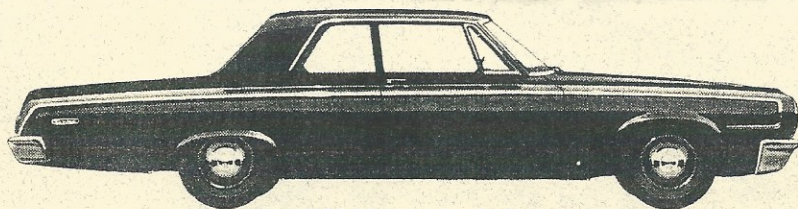
In all the uproar he found that he had lost not only his shoes and socks but his jeans as well having been stripped of clothes by the monster of nature. Slowly the rain slackened but the sky remained black and the wind howled even cooler now as our hero inched his way toward what he hoped and prayed would be salvation.

Next Issue: Rescue

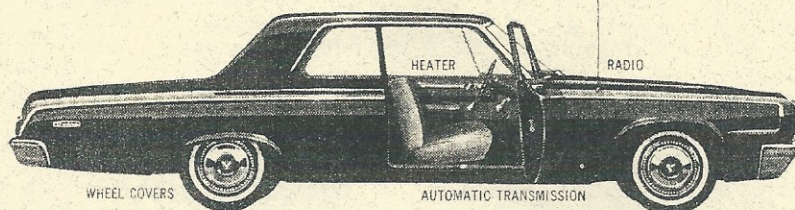
Times Have Changed!

From the pages of the Progress-Advance, January, 1964

THE DEPENDABLES: SUCCESS CARS OF '64



\$2264* not loaded



\$2674.80** loaded

The car on top is a 1964 Dodge 330 two-door sedan. It has a unitized, rust-protected body, front seat belts, an alternator electrical system, self-adjusting brakes and a 225 cubic inch, six-cylinder engine. It will go 32,000 miles between major grease jobs, 4,000 miles between oil changes.

The car on the bottom is the same model,

a 1964 Dodge 330 two-door sedan. And we can say the same good things about it.

There's one difference. It's equipped the way many people buy cars these days.

For a fact, Dodge offers a full line of cars in the low-price field. Sedans, hardtops, convertibles, wagons, the works. They call 'em "The Dependables," because they are.

*Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price for 1964 Dodge 330 two-door sedan, exclusive of state and local taxes, if any, and destination charges.
**Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price for 1964 Dodge 330 two-door sedan including automatic transmission, radio, heater, whitewall tires, and wheel covers. State and local taxes, if any, and destination charges additional.

'64 Dodge

DODGE DIVISION CHRYSLER
MOTORS CORPORATION

Pigeon Motor Sales, Inc.

7392 W. Michigan Ave.

Pigeon — Phone 453-3621

THE PURPOSE OF THIS SOCIETY shall be to discover, collect and preserve any material which may help to establish or illustrate the history of the Pigeon Community and surrounding region, as well as provide accessibility to the collected material for all who wish to examine or study it. The Society will also disseminate historical information to promote interest in the history of the Pigeon Community.