

Howell Area Historical Society

128 Wetmore St. Howell, Michigan



HAHS Caboose & Depot Museum Complex

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President's Message

Hello, Friends of Howell Area Historical Society, and, welcome back for the 2021 season. We will be featuring a U.S. Armed Forces exhibit, this year. We are asking Howell residents, who have served, or are currently serving in the military, to share their service photos for the summer. We would like to honor our hometown heroes by showcasing their photos from their time in the service of our country. Please drop off your photos, and a short bio, please, or call 517-548-6876 if you would like them to be picked up by a member of our board.



Galen Phillips, Howell resident, who served in World War II

Please select HAHS as your designated charity at Kroger rewards, and Amazon Smile. Thank you.

An Early Howell Cabin



As difficult as it is to believe, the above cabin was the accepted home of the first residents of the Howell area. Usually, the man of the family arrived first in order to secure land, and build a rudimentary home. He usually encountered wolves and bears in the wilderness that was Howell.

Moses Thompson built a cabin on the southeast corner of Thompson Lake. He dammed up the three large ponds that were separated by tamarack trees, forming the larger lake named after him. He set to work at the northern edge of the lake building a sawmill in 1836.

Since Moses' home was the only cabin in the area, travelers would enjoy his hospitality until they could clear land for their own cabins. He also provided the logs needed for the construction.

Eventually, the families arrived with all of their worldly belongings. Some of their precious household items ended up in the Depot Museum after many generations of use. The museum has teapots, candlesticks, clothing, dishes, oil lamps, trunks, jewelry, and many more items, once lovingly owned by the first settlers in Howell.

Come visit and see the history of Howell in the everyday items that helped make the lives of the early settlers a bit more comfortable. There is so much of Howell's past see and experience at the museum.

Open Sundays, except for major holidays starting May 16,2021

11:00 a.m. – 3:00 P.M.

The Great Fire of 1892

Were you aware that Howell had a major fire in 1892? It started in Isaac Bush's Grocery on Grand River at 1:00 P.M. on October 2, 1892. The store, located next door to the building where the Dairy Queen is, apparently had a defective flue in the basement chimney. People, in the adjoining store burned some paper in their stove, and, the fire was drawn down through the chimney, resulting in the fire, which broke out in the front and rear of the store. The fire escalated, but was not discovered for some time.

Brigg's Jewelry Store was located in the adjacent eastern building. Johnson's Drug Store, and McDaniel's Saloon were located on the west side of Bush's store. Merchandise from both stores was moved to the courthouse lawn. Hickey and Goodnow's establishment was located to the west of the saloon, and was soon engulfed in flames, also. In fact, the second floor collapsed into the basement, killing Darwin Wines, and Frank Hickey, who was attempting to save his stock. Seven or eight people were trapped, but, were eventually saved. Mrs. Hickey, whose foot had been stuck in some debris, was freed by some bystanders who used crowbars to release her.

By 3:00 P.M., the fire was out of control. Howell only had one piece of fire-fighting equipment at the time, so, hundreds of men carried buckets of water to attempt to put out the fire. Unfortunately, with such an inferno, it was impossible. The Lansing Fire Department was called in to help, but, they did not arrive until 4:30 P.M.

At 4:15 P.M., the Monroe Brothers Building, now known as the Greenaway Building, collapsed into the street.

Buildings along Michigan Avenue were destroyed, also.

The fire was still smoldering at 9:00 a.m. the next day, when men arrived to start cleaning up.

The only building left standing on Grand River, was the building which houses the Dairy Queen today. All of the other storefronts fronting Grand River were lost. The cost was estimated at \$75,000.00.

The lost buildings were rebuilt, as soon as possible. Since this part of Howell had been the center of commerce for the town, the business owners felt that they must rebuild quickly. They did not wish for a repeat of the tragedy, so, they decided to rebuild with brick facades, not wood.

As a testament to the townspeople's will, the buildings stand today, proud and tall.

On the next page are photos of the burning buildings, with present-day Dairy Queen, the building in the photo on the upper left side of the page.



The afternoon of Oct. 2, 1892, changed downtown Howell forever when a fire broke out in the basement of Isaac Bush's Grocery, the store on the far left. Today, Dairy Queen occupies the building on the right.



By 1 p.m., smoke billowed out of the building so thickly that no one could determine exactly where the fire was located.



Howell's only piece of fire equipment, the Champion Fire Extinguisher, and hundreds of men carrying buckets of water went to work attempting to put out the fire. Meanwhile, merchandise from H. C. Brigg's Jewelry Store and F. K. Johnson's Drug Store, the two stores on either side of the grocery, was moved onto the courthouse lawn.



At 2:30 p.m., the fire took over and store owners along the entire block raced to get out as much of their merchandise as possible. By 3 p.m., the fire had spread to the buildings on the west side of the grocery store, including Hickey & Goodnow's. Suddenly, the upper floor of the building gave way, crashing onto the main floor and carrying the contents of both floors, along with 11 people, into the basement. Most were pulled from the burning debris. This photo was taken at 4:15 p.m., just before the walls of the building at the opposite end of the block (where Uptown Coffeehouse is today) collapsed into the street.



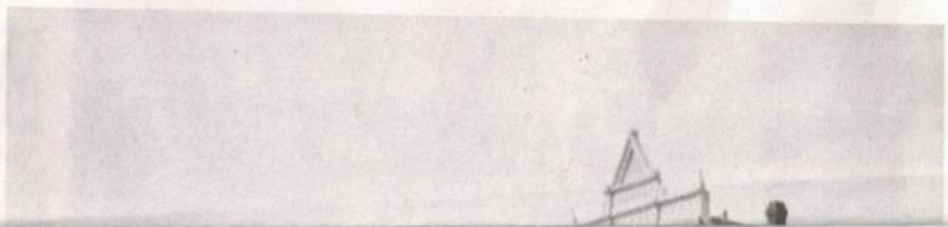
Although assistance from Lansing arrived at 4:30 p.m., it was too late. This was the only building that remained on the north side of Grand River Avenue between Michigan Avenue and State Street - now occupied by Dairy Queen.



The buildings along Michigan Avenue were also destroyed by the flames. Two prominent businessmen, Frank Hickey and E. D. Wines, died while trying to rescue their merchandise from their stores.

FIRE!

A look back at the day Howell burned



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

SPRING CLEANUP

We will be doing our outdoor spring cleanup on Saturday, May 1, 2021 at 10:00 a. m. (Rain date – May 8, 2021.) We have loads to do to get our beloved museum grounds into tip-top shape. If you can lend a hand, we would be most appreciative.

There are weeds to pull, flower gardens to clean, windows to be washed, trash to be picked up, etc. in order for us to be ready to open on May 16. Please call 517-548-6876, if interested.

DOCENTS

We are also looking for Docents for Sunday afternoons from May through October. If you enjoy history, the Museum is the place to be. We will train you. It's an enjoyable way to meet people.

If you can help, please call 517-548-6876, and leave a message. Any help that you can give will be gratefully accepted. Thank you.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

If you have not already done so, please consider renewing your membership for 2021.

Welcome to our new members;

The Hemmeke Family

Dan Williams

Rose O'Neill

Liam O'Neill Peters

Chelsea Dantuma

Grey Miller

HAHS Board

President: Rudy Rudolph

Vice President: Gerri Moen

Secretary: Mary Shaughnessy

Treasurer: Don Maiolatesi

Trustee: Ed Grima

Support HAHS with your membership or donation. Not a member? Join today! Your support is vital to the preservation of local history.

Membership Year – January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021

Name _____ **Phone** _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

Email _____

Memberships: \$15 Single \$25 Family \$500 Lifetime

Donation _____