Museography

The Official Magazine of the Kalamazoo Valley Museum

Out of This World: Costumes from Film & Television
Kalamazoo’s 49ers
The Mystery of the Missing Diaries

PLUS:
- Out of This World: Costumes from Film & Television
- Kalamazoo’s 49ers
- The Mystery of the Missing Diaries
...and more!

I’m having a nice quiet time here

Greetings from DELTON, Michigan

Tall Tale Postcards
Museography is a publication of the Kalamazoo Valley Museum and Kalamazoo Valley Community College.

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Museography is published three times a year: Fall, Winter, and Spring.

Questions about Kalamazoo Valley Museum programs described in this publication may be directed to the Kalamazoo Valley Museum offices.

Phone: (269) 373-7990 or (800) 772-3370
On the web: www.kalamazoomuseum.org

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History Gallery Update
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Summer Hands-on Happenings

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

FROM CELL PHONES TO MUMMY TWEETS

The Kalamazoo Valley Museum recently acquired an artifact that marked a moment when technological change and local history converged—the very first cell phone on the Kalamazoo Valley Community College campus.

The year was 1988. The phone is a Uniden Cellular One portable telephone weighing in around seven pounds without battery. KVCC was adding on the wing at the flag entrance now housing the bookstore, classrooms, and laboratories. Facilities Manager Bob Lewis was given this heavy portable telephone to carry on the job site to stay in touch with the president’s office.

The phone itself included a wide shoulder strap to ease its weight. The hand set detached to make and receive calls. Scotch taped to the battery case is an index card with typed instructions. The button and code for operator help are also glued to the case in red plastic label-maker lettering.

Twenty-two years later, the addition at the flag entrance still houses the bookstore, the Texas Township Campus is again expanding, and almost everyone carries a cell phone in a pocket or a purse.

What’s more, these hand-held devices can now send written messages, take photographs, cruise on the Internet, and allow conversations anywhere and at anytime in voice or text. Along with the personal computers, cell phones have inspired Internet sites that connect users to each other. Even museums have begun to find new audiences out there in cyberspace.

Thanks to veteran staff member Elizabeth Barker, the Kalamazoo Valley Museum now can be located not only on our website, but on the Internet. Ideally, they will inspire you to visit in person.

Elizabeth has also become our virtual information coordinator. She began experimenting a year ago with a Facebook page for the Museum and college’s web presence in the upcoming year.

Secondly, there are three Twitter sites.

Twitter is a free service that lets users keep in touch with people through the exchange of quick, frequent answers to one simple question: What’s happening?

Elizabeth maintains Twitter sites for the Museum, the planetarium, and the mummy exhibit:

www.twitter.com/KalamazooMuseum

www.twitter.com/KVPMuseum

www.twitter.com/KVMMUNM

Here are some selected Twitter comments, or “tweets,” to and from the mummy on her Twitter site:

Visitors:

“When I was little my fav thing was to see the Mummy. When other kids were scared, I was fascinated” – Nov. 23, 2009.

“My 2½ year old had a blast Saturday in the fretboard festival group. Thanks to veteran staff member Elizabeth Barker, the Kalamazoo Valley Museum recently acquired an artifact that marked a moment when technological change and local history converged—the very first cell phone on the Kalamazoo Valley Community College campus.

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“My 2½ year old had a blast Saturday in the Kalamazoo Valley Museum Fan Page

Kalamazoo Valley Museum Group

Facebook First

Feel free to contact Elizabeth directly at ebarker@kvcc.edu if you need technical assistance.

Thank you, Bob Lewis, for toting around that heavy cell phone in 1988. Thank you, Elizabeth, for helping us surf the next wave of the Internet in 2010. See you in cyberspace.

SMILE! IT’S A KODAK MOMENT

In this era of digital photography, with cameras so small they are part of cell phones, it may be hard to imagine a time when cameras were big and heavy, pictures were developed in dark rooms, and “film” wasn’t thin thermoplastic but glass or metal plates instead.

Even as the science and technology develops, many photographers continue to use “old” methods for artistic reasons and their unique challenges.

Perhaps that’s what motivated Kalamazoo portrait photographer Marion Soldano (1914–2001). He ran Marion Studio and Camera Shop and the Kalamazoo Photo Lab in downtown Kalamazoo from 1933 to 1985.

The Kodak Century Studio Camera, now on permanent display in the Museum’s Time Pieces exhibit, came from his studio. This 5-foot behemoth was manufactured in 1907 and, by the time Soldano was in business, it was already outdated technology.

But Soldano bought the used camera because it took very clear, sharp images. It used 5-by-7-inch dry photographic plates, a technology that was first introduced in the 1860s.

Dry plates revolutionized photography at the time. Before that, photographers used wet plates—glass plates covered with a light-sensitive solution that had to remain wet until they were developed. The photographer hand-coated each plate, placed it in the camera, took the picture, and developed it within 20 minutes.

Imagine doing this outdoors! The photographer had to lug around a large camera and tripod, a portable darkroom, heavy glass plates, and a supply of chemicals to coat the glass plates and develop the images.

Dry plates, on the other hand, could be coated ahead of time and stored for months until the photographer needed them. And they didn’t have to be developed immediately after taking the picture.

The first dry plates were not very light-sensitive and required up to 15 minutes of exposure time for one photo. That was remedied in 1877 with the introduction of gelatin-coated dry plates. These were the type used in Soldano’s camera. The gelatin-coated plate was ultra-sensitive so exposure time was less than one second.

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When Soldano closed his studio in 1985, he offered the camera to the Museum. Today it is one of 160 pieces of photographic equipment in the collection.

The Kodak Century Studio Camera in the Museum’s collection was used by Marion Soldano, shown above left in a photo from around 1980 at the counter of his business, Marion Studio & Camera Shop, which he owned and operated in downtown Kalamazoo from 1933–1985. (Photo courtesy of Robert Catania.) The Museum’s camera is a Model No. 6A. The engraving at left shows similar Kodak models, as well as the dry-plate technology, a revolutionary invention at the time.
KVM’s Latest Special Exhibition is...

**OUT of this WORLD**

**Extraordinary Costumes from Film and Television**

Organized by the Science Fiction Museum and Hall of Fame

_Batman costume worn by George Clooney from the motion picture “Batman and Robin,”_ courtesy of the Paul G. Allen Family Collection.

Stop the presses! Batman and Robin, Captain Kirk, Luke Skywalker, The Terminator, the Wicked Witch of the West, and Indiana Jones are all coming to Kalamazoo.

Well, not really, but the costumes that helped define those characters in major motion pictures and popular TV shows are.

“Our out of this World: Extraordinary Costumes from Film and Television” will showcase these fantasy creatures and more when it officially opens in the Kalamazoo Valley Museum’s third-floor gallery on June 6.

The work of the Science Fiction Museum and Hall of Fame in Seattle, Wash., began its national tour in 2007 and will stay in downtown Kalamazoo until its closing on Sept. 12. More than 40 costumes, artifacts and objects from “Star Wars,” “Blade Runner,” “The Terminator,” “Star Trek,” “The Forbidden Planet” and other popular science fiction-related productions will be encapsulated in glass tubes or globes to reinforce the out-of-this-world theme.

The exhibition allows visitors to examine how costume design incorporates color, style, scale, materials, historical traditions and cultural cues to help performers and audiences engage with the characters being portrayed in the mode of visual storytelling.

Offering visitors new ways of seeing characters as defined by their costumes, “Out of this World: Extraordinary Costumes from Film and Television” is organized into themes, including “Heroes and Villains,” “Creating the Character” and “Caped Crusaders,” as well as specific franchises such as “Star Trek” and “Star Wars.”

On the KVM’s June 4th “Night at the Museum” event, visitors can get a sneak peek at the exhibition and are encouraged to wear their own fantasy, science fiction or comic-book character costumes to celebrate its arrival in Kalamazoo.

Visitors will be able to get close looks at such costume highlights as:

- Hat worn by Margaret Hamilton as the Wicked Witch of the West in “The Wizard of Oz” (1939)
- Robe worn by Sir Alec Guinness as Obi-Wan Kenobi in “Star Wars” (1977)
- Leather jacket worn by Harrison Ford as Indiana Jones in “Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade” (1989) and Indy’s whip from “Raiders of the Lost Ark” (1981)
- Costume worn by Dan Aykroyd as Dr. Raymond Stantz in “Ghostbusters II” (1989)
- Embroidered robe worn by actor Joe Turkel as Eldon Tyrell, creator of the replicants, in “Blade Runner” (1982)
- Costume worn by George Clooney as Batman in “Batman and Robin” (1997)
- Darth Vader cape, helmet, and light saber from “Star Wars” and “The Empire Strikes Back” (1980)

Costumes details, such as color, military styling and cultural associations, work as visual cues, telling the audience that the character is a villain or hero.

Costume designers create looks that send ambiguous messages, indicating that a perceived hero or villain might not be quite what they seem to be—as with the leather jacket worn by the future governor of California in “The Terminator” and the fearsome alien mask worn by Louis Gossett Jr. in “Enemy Mine,” a highly underrated space film that co-starred Dennis Quaid. No exhibition about the power of costumes would be complete without examining the brightly colored tights, masks and capes of comic-book characters. “Caped Crusaders” offers a look at the costumes that have become iconic representations of good, evil and in-between—from the sinister stylings of “The Riddler” to the vigilante bat/demon look of Batman.

“Star Wars” creator George Lucas is a master at creating strong characters—instantly recognizable and distinctively costumed. The exhibition will display amazing costumes and props from the best-known science fiction movies in the world.

Federation starships represent a near-utopian future of equality, opportunity, and adventure, while the pirate-like sash and tunic worn by Captain Kirk in the “Mirror Universe” episode show what might happen if society loses its sense of community and cooperation.

In addition to Roddenberry, other members of the 1996-established Science Fiction Hall of Fame include “Alien” and “Blade Runner” director Ridley Scott, Stephen Spielberg, George Lucas, Mary Shelley and Isaac Asimov.

Out of this World: Extraordinary Costumes from Film and Television. Organized by Science Fiction Museum and Hall of Fame, Seattle, Wash.

Some credentialed actresses—Claire Danes, and Bell’s Eccentric Café among other locations. Some credited actors—Claire Bloom, Renee Taylor and Gitta Röver—had roles as grandmothers. It earned an Oscar nomination as best original song. The community’s name has frequently been used as pieces of throw-away dialogue, according to James Sanford, film reviewer for The Kalamazoo Gazette.

In “North by Northwest,” a loudspeaker in a train station announces it as a destination. In Schrader’s “Light of Day,” Joan Jett and Michael J. Fox’s band is performing in a local dive bar and she blurts out, “How ya doin’, Kalamazoo?” In “RKO 281,” the actor playing Otis Welles threatens to open “Citizen Kane” in “Detroit, Dallas or Kalamazoo, for God’s sake.”

“I also seem to recall a goofy reference in the 1938 Nelson Eddy/Eleanor Powell musical, ‘Rosalie,’” Sanford said. “She plays a princess touring America to escape political strife in her own country. She masquerades as somebody’s cousin from Kalamazoo.”

“Kalamazoo?” was shot here in the summer of 2004 and described the community as “the home of paper, pharmaceuticals and celery.” It remains the only feature movie filmed entirely in Kalamazoo and to stage its premiere here, naturally. Kalamazooan Matt Holter was the director of photography.

The main character is a 1994 Kalamazoo Central High School graduate who leaves town to pursue a dream of becoming a movie star and, a decade later, is an unemployed actress in London facing something of a mid-life crisis. The plot line revolves around a class reunion. Scenes were filmed at a home on Academy Street, at Sweetwater’s Donut Mill, and Bell’s Eccentric Café among other locations. Some credited actors—Claire Bloom, Renee Taylor and Gitta Röver—had roles as grandmothers. It earned an Oscar nomination as best original song.
Sanford recalls that a horror film originally titled “House sitter” was shot at Huntington Castle in the early 1960s. “I know Lyda Stillwell (retired professor of theater) was in it, along with a couple of other WMU professors. It changed titles to avoid confusion with the Steve Martin/Goldie Hawn comedy. “The film was filmed in Kalamazoo at the State Theatre, but I’m not aware of it ever getting a release afterward,” Sanford said. “When I asked Lyda about it a few years ago, she said it was a fun experience, but a terrible movie.”

Also in his recollection is another horror film, this one directed by David Lynn Drzick. “In the Woods” was shot in and around Kalamazoo in 1997 and released on DVD a few years ago. As a performer himself with the improv group Gwalspace Eviction, Sanford said a large portion of its movie “Comedic Evangelists” was filmed in Kalamazoo at the Whole Art Theatre, First Baptist Church, the Epic Center and the Water Street Coffee Joint. And now for the caveat, if we missed any, let us know.

Fresh new look, experiences coming to history gallery

Recent visitors to the Kalamazoo Valley Museum might have been surprised to find the History Gallery closed with “under construction” signs posted at both entrances. The exhibit “On the Trail of History,” which highlighted stories of the region, has been open since February 1996. It needed more than a touch-up and new technology.

For more than a year, several teams of Museum staffers have been working on a revision of the gallery. A research team worked on content, the “stuff” of local history including information, data, and artifacts. Meanwhile, an audience team looked at the learning activities with an eye to the visitors’ experience. With the help of exhibit designers, audio-visual and media specialists, as well as general contractors, the new history gallery will be ready to open later this fall.

To achieve the goal of creating a history gallery that visitors will find entertaining as well as informative—and that will stand the test of time—experienced exhibit designers were used. With their help, new ways of presenting history have been imagined. A multi-media firm offered suggestions on ways to use computer and audio-visual programs in the exhibit.

The audience team used first-hand observations of visitor behavior to propose innovative ways of engaging future patrons. After months of research, meetings, discussions, and revisions, a new exhibit plan was created. In early January, after the busy holiday season, the doors to the old gallery were closed.

All the artifacts in the exhibit were removed, even those that presented challenges, such as 300-pound millstones and 600-pound marble statues.

Furniture, cabinetry, and room settings that could be re-used were put into storage. Now the contractors have taken over, moving and re-arranging walls, modifying electrical and electronic outlets, and creating the physical space that will house the new exhibit.

More months of work lie ahead. With many hours already dedicated to the renovation, the Museum hopes that when it opens, the new gallery will be its holiday gift to the community. —WKM

The case of the mystery diaries

E very day I check eBay for items that might be appropriate for the Museum’s collection.

I find a postcard here, an old Bowers lighter there—most of it fairly ordinary as far as Kalamazoo history goes. About once a year, I find a real treasure. That happened last June when I noticed a 13-year-old girl’s diary from 1907. The seller provided excerpts that offered wonderful descriptions of her daily activities. This was a real find that would be perfect for our collection and offer a window into a teenager’s life from 100 years ago.

I bid several times, increasing my offer, but I didn’t win and thought that was the end of the story. A few weeks later a 1909 diary, written by the same girl, came up for auction. This time I was determined to win. I sat at my computer late one night, nervously watching the seconds wind down until the auction was over. I thought for sure the person who won the last diary would outbid me again. But not this time—I won!

Then I had a brilliant notion. If the seller already sold two diaries, maybe she had more. I couldn’t bear to see them being sold one-by-one on eBay, scattering them across the country. She did have more—11 in total. We negotiated and I bought the rest. The Museum now had them all except the 1907 diary purchased by some other lucky buyer.

The diaries were written by Claire Wight. She was born in 1894 in South Dakota and moved to Kalamazoo with her parents. Her father was a minister at the First Baptist Church and later Bethel Baptist Church. The family lived on Ingleside Terrace, right next to Mountain Home Cemetery.

Claire was a feisty girl—opinionated but also quite a romantic as she writes on Aug. 20, 1911: “It just fills a girl with all kinds of thoughts to read a love story like I have read today!!! What a wonderful mystery love is!”

She was also athletic and became an accomplished tennis player, winning seven singles and doubles trophies between 1914 and 1916 while a student at Kalamazoo College.

But what is exciting about Claire’s diaries is that they provide a rich understanding of the life and thoughts of a middle-class teenage girl in Kalamazoo in the early 20th century. When she wrote on April 23, 1911, “I wonder if my life would sound interesting to anyone if they read this diary,” little did she know that she was chronicling history for future generations to learn from and enjoy.

As I read the diaries, I began to wonder why, and how, they ever found their way to an on-line auction. I contacted the seller and she explained that her brother-in-law buys the contents of self-storage units for which renters don’t pay. But that didn’t end my questions. I began to wonder about Claire’s family. Were they the ones who had left the diaries in the storage unit?

It took most of the summer to track down her family. It was no easy task, but I finally found a niece in Michigan. In November I traveled to her home to meet her and her sons, and talk about Claire and the diaries.

They have many more diaries and it is a mystery to them how 13 found their way into a self-storage unit. They may never know the answer, but what we do know is that Claire’s life now has a spot in Kalamazoo history that will be forever saved.

Clare made quite a fashion statement in her stylish graduation dress. She graduated from Kalamazoo Central High School in 1912. At left are some of the 11 diaries now in the Museum’s collection. The diaries date from 1908 to 1968. Look for more excerpts from Claire’s diaries in future issues of Museography.

—Paula Metzner, Curator of Collections
Postcard collections, as flashbacks to the way we were, traditionally show how a community or some landmark once looked.

Others serve as keepsakes, reminders and souvenirs of a trip to a national park, a famed city or a tourist attraction such as Niagara Falls, the Empire State Building or the Washington Monument.

These collections are not like the one coming to the Kalamazoo Valley Museum on May 14. “Storytelling through the Mail: Tall Tale Postcards” contains vintage examples of an unusual form of visual humor.

Imagine a land where corn grows to the size of tree trunks, where the lakes are so cold that the trout have fur coats, and where deer have become hunters and men are their prey.

These assorted oddities come vividly to life in the traveling exhibition developed by the Michigan State University Museum.

Set to be on display in the downtown-Kalamazoo museum through Sept. 6 will be more than 80 examples of “tall tale” postcards from around the United States. They demonstrate a unique form of popular humor dating back to the early 20th century.

Other items in the exhibit include taxidermy specimens, newspaper cartoons and magazine covers, all of which help to tell the story of the “tall tale” postcard.

“Tall tales” are described as humorous stories of exaggeration, fictional accounts that are presented as the truth. They often involve ludicrous or absurd imagery.

They are passed on in oral, written, and visual forms, including the postcards, cartoons and other artifacts in the MSU exhibit. Artists easily create tall-tale scenes on postcards by piecing together regular-size images with enlargements, or by juxtaposing two images that would not normally go together.

Although illustrated tall-tale postcards were common, it is the trickery of photography that characterizes much of the genre. People sometimes assume that “the camera doesn’t lie,” but tall-tale postcard creators have the last laugh, teasing viewers into believing their lies.

The most common feature of tall-tale postcards is that of exaggeration, the use of gigantic vegetables and fruits, farm animals, or wild game and fish for humorous effect. Exaggerated size is dramatized by a fish catch overflowing its boat or an ear of corn larger than its wagon. Because of the size of the fish, the boat rides low in the water; horses and men strain to move enormous vegetables.

Other popular tall-tale postcards include infamous creatures like the Jackalope and Fur-Bearing Trout, hunting and fishing disasters, or maps that grossly distort the size of a state or region in relation to those around it.

“Storytelling Through the Mail” features masters of the genre, from the “golden age” of American postcard production in the early 20th century to the present.

F.D. Conard of Garden City, Kan., created nightmarish images of giant grasshoppers, inspired by a 1935 Kansas plague. They share the stage with Alfred Stanley Johnson of Wausau, Wis., who is famous for highly realistic, action-packed scenes that mix people and farm products dating from 1909 to 1935.

A more modern approach was taken by Richard Miller of Butler, Pa., with a folksy, staged scene of a hunter tied to the hood of a car with a deer head behind the wheel.

That, however, seems no more out of place than the seamless photographic trickery of William H. Martin of Ottawa, Kan., whose early 1900s images of giant cabbages and freakishly huge rabbits caused a skeptic to look twice.

They were all masters as much for the tall tales they have spun as for their technical prowess.

In addition to works by these “masters” are numerous other cards by lesser known or unknown photographers and illustrators—all silly, nostalgic and evocative of a century of vacations and messages quickly sent long before the advent of e-mail.

Says Beth Donaldson, traveling exhibit service manager for the MSU Museum: “Visitors to ‘Storytelling Through the Mail’ will be treated to a whimsical and occasionally thought-provoking presentation that is smart but accessible, visually appealing and—most importantly—fun.”

A new technology—moving pictures—was first shown in Kalamazoo in 1897, but it wasn’t until 1908 that the Bijou Dream, the city’s first five-cent moving picture house, opened on South Burdick Street.

By 1920, several movie theaters had popped up, often using renovated vaudeville and opera houses.

Visit some of Kalamazoo’s former movie showplaces in this pictorial of buildings no longer with us, repurposed, or still providing entertainment.

For more information on early theaters in Kalamazoo, visit [http://www.kpl.gov/local-history/arts-entertainment/theatres/](http://www.kpl.gov/local-history/arts-entertainment/theatres/) at the Kalamazoo Public Library website.

1. **Academy of Music/Regent Theater**
   Kalamaezoomans got caught in the frenzy of the motion-picture craze in 1897 when an Edison Vitascope was shown at the Academy of Music on South Rose Street. The Kalamazoo Gazette reported that it “caused considerable wonderment and pleasure among its citizenry.” Eventually the Academy of Music was renamed the Regent and became home to both vaudeville shows and motion pictures. The theater section burned in 1930. The building was torn down in 1967.

2. **Majestic/Capitol Theater**
   The Majestic Theater opened in 1907 as a vaudeville house on South Street, just east of Burdick. Renamed the Capitol in 1924, it showed movies exclusively until it closed in 1976. The theater and neighboring Jewish synagogue were demolished for parking space.

3. **Elite Theater**
   The triple arches of the Elite Theater were a distinctive feature of this building when it opened in 1912 as a movie theater on South Burdick Street. The theater went out of business in 1925. Today it has a modern façade with an entry to office spaces.

4. **Orpheum Theater**
   The former Lilienfeld Cigar Factory opened as the Orpheum in 1912. Kalamaezoomans saw their first Charlie Chaplin film here in 1915. The theater, located at 119 E. Michigan Ave., closed in 1949. This 1874 structure is scheduled to be renovated, along with three adjacent buildings, as part of the proposed Metropolitan Center. Photo courtesy of the Kalamazoo Public Library.

5. **State Theater**
   Walter S. Butterfield built the largest theater chain in Michigan, including the State Theater, a vaudeville palace and silent picture house that opened in 1927. It was renovated in 1982 and restored to its original opulence. Today it is a live-performance venue.

6. **Uptown Theater**
   The Museum’s planetarium and Mary Jane Stryker Theater sit on the site of the old Uptown movie theater that was in business from 1938 to 1950. Photo courtesy of Western Michigan University Archives and Regional History Collections.

7. **Wonderland/Fuller Theater**
   The Fuller was an expansion of the smaller Wonderland Theater when it opened in 1928. It closed in 1953 and the theater section was torn down. The front of the building remains as retail space at 225 South Kalamazoo Mall. Photo courtesy of the Portage District Library.
On their honor, they have done their best for 100 years

Even in their wildest visions, Robert Baden-Powell, the George Washington of scouting, and William Boyce, who incorporated the Boy Scouts of America on Feb. 8, 1910, could never have imagined what the movement would become.

It took about six years for the century-old character-building concept to migrate to a place called Kalamazoo, far, far away from its English origins—a genesis that actually took shape amidst the bloodshed of the second Boer War in South Africa.

Once back in England, he was amazed to find British boys playing “the game of scouting.” They were reading the best-seller manual on stalking and surviving in the wilderness that he had written for his soldiering peers.

Baden-Powell gathered about 20 youngsters and staged the first “scouting” campout on an island off the coast of England in 1907, which is regarded as the movement’s milestone. The next year, he rewrote the manual to be a nonmilitary document, “Scouting for Boys,” that focused on nature skills. It became the fourth best-selling book of the 20th century.

While seeds of the movement had made the transatlantic journey and individually sprouted into groups called the Woodcraft Indians and the Sons of Daniel Boone, the organized approach was anecdotal in nature.

Boyce, a Chicago publisher, was exposed to the concept in 1909 when he lost his way in a dense London fog. The boy who came to his aid guided Boyce to his destination, refused a tip and went off into the night satisfied that he had done his “good turn” for the day.

Sound like the scouting oath? That inspired a meeting with Baden-Powell, and scouting as it is known today made the trip across the Atlantic.

As part of the incorporation, Baden-Powell visited the United States. President William Howard Taft was designated the first honorary president and Theodore Roosevelt the vice president. Sons of Daniel Boone organizer Daniel C. Beard was chosen to be the first national scout commissioner.

Similarly to what had been the case nationally, Kalamazoo saw some small scouting-like groups form, but a centralized organization known as the Kalamazoo Boy Scout Council didn’t come into play until 1916. Membership reached about 1,700 by 1937.

One of those original troops survives. Now Troop 205 since the 1970s, but established as Troop 5 at the
The Boy Scout uniform and accessories are recognizable throughout the world. Each group and scout has their own identity that is demonstrated on the uniform with badges, emblems and pins. The Wakazoo emblems, on the green shirt and neckerchief, represent the Wakazoo Lodge of the Fruit Belt Area Council from the 1950s. The 1940s Order of the Arrow sash was worn by Robert McDougal, Troop 13, in recognition of his camping skills.

Camp Rota-Kiwan was established in Texas Township in 1921. The camp map at right dates to the 1940s and the emblems (top of the page) from the 1950s. The brass First Class pin (above left) began production in 1911 and combines the elements of the Tenderfoot and Second Class badges. This design of the Eagle Scout pin shown here (above right) was issued between 1933 and 1954.

Kalamazoo boys followed in the camping footsteps of their English peers almost immediately, going on summer outings at Eagle Lake, Pretty Lake, Wall Lake and Crooked Lake.

But community leaders wanted a permanent summer-camp home. The local Kiwanis and Rotary clubs joined forces to make this happen, even bringing in national leader Beard in 1919 as part of a fund-raising campaign. By 1921, Camp Rota-Kiwan was in business on 10 acres of leased Texas Township land on Bass Lake. The property was eventually purchased and surrounding acreage added over the years.

Even Baden-Powell would have been proud of one incident of realism when a scoutmaster was bitten by a rattlesnake and “provided unscheduled first-aid practice” in 1925.

Kalamazoo's Girl Scout history can be traced to New Year's Eve of 1918 when a charter was issued by the national organization. Baden-Powell had encouraged a friend, Juliette Gordon Low, to bring the movement here and establish the Girl Scouts of America. Credited for the local initiative were Dr. Blanche Epler, Blanche Hull, Mrs. Floyd Olmstead, and the wife of Dwight Waldb, first president of what is now Western Michigan University.

In the early 1920s, Kalamazoo girls could also sample the outdoors, thanks to Mrs. C. G. Kleinstuck, who donated a cabin that was located in the preserve that still carries her name in the heart of Kalamazoo. Dr. W. E. Upjohn opened up his summer quarters at Brook Lodge for Girl Scout leadership training.

Cub scouting began to take hold in the Kalamazoo area in 1932 when a Parchment pack attracted 10 boys.

As for Baden-Powell, he spent his final years in Kenya where he died in 1941. Regarded as one of the greatest Britons of all time, he wrote a final letter to all scouts. “Try and leave this world a little better than you found it.”

First Presbyterian Church of Kalamazoo in 1916, it ranks as one of the senior units of its kind across the country. Its record of producing 329 Eagles—scouting’s highest honor for youth members—is also a standard of national distinction.

In its storied history, one in every 10 members achieved the rank of Eagle. The national average is one in 50.

At one time, all of the churches surrounding Bronson Park sponsored troops, but this is the only one still going. It is one of the oldest troops with the same sponsorship in the nation.
The East Side

The names of neighborhood streets can bring back long-forgotten people who once were prominent businessmen, bankers, or farmers.

A trip to the East Side along Riverview Drive or up the East Main Street hill offers just such an opportunity.

Going north on Riverview, the first street north of East Main Street is Sherwood Avenue. This street name is a bit confusing.

It’s named for Thomas R. Sherwood, a prominent attorney and an associate justice of the Michigan Supreme Court. He owned three acres of land on the west side of East Main a bit north of Michigan Avenue in the Sherwood Addition.

The East Avenue School later was located on this property.

What makes it confusing is that a mile or so east of there, just beyond the city limits, is the Sherwood Park Addition and a small neighborhood playground known as Sherwood Park. This land was once the large farm of another—unrelated—Thomas Sherwood.

The next street north of Sherwood Avenue is Hotop Street in the Hotop Addition. It was named for Frederick Hotop, the owner of the American Hotel that stood on East Michigan. Many residents may remember this as the Park-American Hotel where the current YWCA building stands.

Henry Gilbert, the original owner of the Kalamazoo Gazette, owned 25 acres that surrounded Thomas R. Sherwood’s addition. He developed this land as the Gilbert Addition. Not only does it include Gilbert Avenue but the next street east is Charlotte Avenue, named for his daughter who died as a young child.

The northern border of this addition, now part of Bridge Street, was originally called Myra Street, after Henry’s second wife, Myra Chapman.

Charlotte Avenue ends in a three-way intersection with Gull Road and Humphrey Street.

Elijah O. Humphrey, a farmer and president of the Citizens Mutual Fire Insurance Co., owned an extensive tract of land on both sides of Gull Road, portions of which are now occupied by Borgess Health and Riverside Cemetery.

Across East Main from the Sherwood Addition is the small Bigelow Addition, probably platted by Melville Bigelow. Bigelow and partner Horace Phelps established the firm of Bigelow and Phelps, a manufacturer of windmills. A larger subdivision, the Phelps Addition, surrounds the Bigelow Addition.

Phelps had two sons, Edwin and Charles. Perhaps it’s not surprising that there are streets named Phelps Avenue, Horace Avenue, Edwin Avenue, and Charles Avenue in the addition.

After Horace’s death, Edwin took over the windmill factory and served as president of the Kalamazoo National Bank. Charles was a partner in the Parsons, Woods, and Phelps hardware store but appears to have moved to Massachusetts in the 1880s.

Wallace Street marks the city limits in this neighborhood. Residents on the west side of the street live in the city of Kalamazoo while the homes on the east side are in the Sherwood Park Addition in Kalamazoo Township.

Wallace Street probably takes its name from Annie Wallace, the wife of Thomas Sherwood who owned the farm that became the addition.

The Streets of Kalamazoo — Part 3

Bowers Lighters

A small brick factory on Willard Street in Kalamazoo’s historic Stuart Neighborhood was once the home of the Bowers Manufacturing Co. that made cigarette lighters.

The building had housed the Verdon Cigar Co. in the early 20th century and then the Electric Photographe Co.

Ernest Bowers was a machinist who had moved to Kalamazoo around 1908. For 10 years he was the superintendent of the Cook Standard Tool Co. He then started the Bowers-Dodgeon Tool Co. that later merged with the Kalamazoo Spoke and Nickel Co. where he was the manager.

In 1928, Bowers started the Bowers Tool and Die Co. that set up operations in the Willard Street factory. He patented an improved “slide-sleeve” lighter that looked a bit like a lipstick tube and shielded the flame from the wind.

The Great Depression almost brought the young enterprise down, however. The Bowers factory managed a small profit by making a variety of lighters with daily production reaching 4,000 units in 1938. World War II provided a major opportunity for Bowers. At first, a shortage of brass caused the company to close its doors. Then in 1942, it received a government contract to produce the “Army-Navy Flameless Lighter.” This lighter burned a cord that glowed like a cigarette, but without an open flame. Not only did this make it easier for servicemen on ships or in foxholes to light cigarettes in wind or bad weather, but it was also less visible to enemies.

Bowers had to dramatically increase production. Some 250 employees, mostly women, produced more than 12 million lighters before the war ended. The company was the government’s largest supplier of lighters.

The transition to peacetime production in the years after World War II presented several challenges, including the founder’s retirement. His son, Frederick, took the reins and by 1952 was producing six million lighters annually. One innovation was the “Peli-Can” table lighter made with the cone tops used on beer cans of the day.

The company switched from brass to aluminum after the Korean War in the mid-1950s. However, foreign manufacturers began serious competition selling copies of the Bowers lighters. Frederick Bowers negotiated an agreement with the Japanese manufacturers that ended the import of the copies.

In the 1960s, the company improved the process for finishing the aluminum metal so that high-quality, silk-screened advertising could be painted on the lighters. These colorful lighters would be a primary product until the mid-1970s.

Frederick died in 1966 and his son, Jon, took over the business. The company moved from Willard Street to a modern facility on Sprinkle Road. It no longer produces lighters but is a custom maker of aluminum components for other manufacturers.

The building still stands at 614 W. Willard Street and has recently been refurbished. Neighborhood residents can now occasionally detect the smell of roasting coffee beans in the morning drifting from one of the bright blue building’s new tenants.
Look carefully at these items—their designs hold clues to their functions. Can you guess what they were used for? (Answers below)

#1 A few hot coals in the drawer were all that it required for doing the job.

#2 It’s a chair used on a farm, but not for people.

#3 Hundreds of these mechanisms move along along I-94 and U. S. 131 every day.

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A small bowl would set in the bottom of the chair for the sheep to sit on. The wooden cover was placed over the copper box to hold the hot coals in the bowl. The sheep was strapped in to keep from moving while being sheared. The chair was patented in 1873 and manufactured in Ohio. It was used by Ferdinand Collins and his son William, settlers and farmers in Pavilion Township since the 1850s.

C. Emrick of Kalamazoo in 1938. Emrick’s invention allows the driver of a tractor trailer to maneuver it into tight places by turning at very sharp angles. This five-pound steel pat...
CHildDrEn’s lanDsCaPE

Burton  HE nry uPJoHn

aCCEssiBility sErViCEs
The Museum is barrier-free. Sign language interpreters may be scheduled for programs with a minimum of two weeks notice. Assisted-listening devices are available for use in the planetarium. Our TDD number is (269) 373-7965.

grouP aCtiVitiEs
The Museum is a great destination for parties and group activities. Attend concerts, planetarium shows, Challenger Learning Center missions, movies, special classes or hands-on programs! Call the reservation coordinator at (269) 373-7965 for more information on programs available to groups of all ages.

VoluntEEr alErt!
Call (269) 373-7990 to learn about the benefits of volunteering at the Kalamazoo Valley Museum.

PLANETARIUM

Spectacular sights and sounds guide your imagination through the amazing universe. Come and enjoy the Museum’s brand new, state-of-the-art, full-dome system. $3/person.

FEATURE SHOW—Daily at 3 p.m.
“Secrets of the Sun” (through June 18)
See the life story of our star, the Sun, from its energy source to its surface features and interactions with solar storms and the planets beyond. Grades 5 and up; running time 30 min.

“Ice Worlds” (begins June 19)
Explore comets, the icy moons of the outer solar system, and Earth’s fragile polar regions. Grades 5 and up; running time 35 min.

FAMILY SHOW
Weekdays at 11 a.m., Saturdays at 1 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m.
“Bear Tales” (through June 18)
Constellation stories are told around the campfire as the stars of spring shine overhead. Grades 2–4, running time 40 min.

“Secrets of the Sun” (through June 18)
The story of our star. Grades 5 and up. Running time 30 min.

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Explore comets, the icy moons of the outer solar system, and Earth’s fragile polar regions. Grades 5 and up. Running time 35 min.

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A Kalamazoo-made Jukebox

When the Bowers Manufacturing Co. set up shop in 1928 in a factory on Willard Street, the new owners discovered several jukeboxes. The Electric Phonograph Co., the building’s previous tenant, had manufactured them but abandoned the music-makers when it closed its doors.

These jukeboxes, however, were rather unusual. The company’s devices played cylinder records. While these were still popular, the trend was moving from cylinder to disc records and by 1930, the commercial production of cylinder records had all but ceased.

This might be comparable to a company investing in 8-track tape players just as cassette tapes were becoming popular in the 1970s.

The Electric Phonograph Co. had started business in the late 1910s as a manufacturer of musical devices. It apparently hoped that a coin-operated jukebox would prove popular at dance halls, skating rinks, and bars. The company gambled, however, on a technology that was fading away and the business closed its doors in 1926.

When Bowers moved in, there was no use for the devices and, at some point, a decision was made to simply discard the jukeboxes.

According to family lore, Mildred Bowers, the wife of Robert H. Bowers whose father, Ernest, had founded the firm, insisted that one of the jukeboxes be saved. She kept it in her office at the factory as a curiosity.

When the Bowers factory on Willard Street closed in the 1990s, Mrs. Bowers had the jukebox moved to her home. There she kept it for another decade.

On May 12, 2009, Mildred Bowers died at the age of 92. Her family contacted the Museum and donated the jukebox in memory of Robert H. and Mildred Bowers.

This curious artifact is now a treasured object in the Museum’s collections, awaiting the opportunity to be put on public display.

The jukebox was produced for only two years, from 1916–1918. The ferris wheel mechanism (shown upper left) in the center of the jukebox held 24 four cylinder records, like the one shown lower left. A tune was selected by turning the small crank on the outside of the cabinet to the number of the song on the wheel. The listener placed a nickel in the coin slot to hear one tune.

The KVM collects objects that help tell the stories of people, businesses and events of Southwest Michigan. If you think you have something that belongs in a museum, please contact Tom Dietz at (269)373-7984 or tdietz@kvcc.edu. Our current wish list includes: a 1960s-era G.I. Joe, corsets from the Kalamazoo Corset Company, a cherry pitter from the Dunkley Company.
FREE DOCUMENTARIES

SATURDAYS at 11 a.m.

Between the Lions: Get Wild About Reading!

In “Between the Lions,” the doors swing open to reveal a magical place where characters pop off the pages of books, vowels sing and words take on a life of their own. Each episode is 30 minutes in length.

June 5 The Sad Dad
June 12 Humph! Humph! Humph!
June 19 The Good Seed
June 26 Icarus’s Wings
July 3 Zoop! Zoop!
July 10 Clickety-clack, Clickety-clack!
July 17 Poetry Day
July 24 Trains & Trains & Rainy Plains
July 31 Bobby the Hopping Robot
Aug. 7 Teacher’s Pet
Aug. 21 The Last Cliff Hanger
Aug. 28 Pebble Trouble
Sept. 4 Oh, Yes, It Can!
Sept. 11 Five, Six, and Thistle Sticks
Sept. 18 Bag Beard

Spend the summer watching KEN BURNS’ DOCUMENTARIES
SATURDAYS at 2 p.m. at the KVM

The War—June 5, June 12, June 19, June 26, July 3, and July 10

A series focusing on the many ways World War II impacted the lives of American families. One part of the series will be previewed each week.

July 17—The Shakers: Hands to Works, Hearts to God

Explore 200 years of Shaker life in America guided by the recollections of three surviving members along with archival material. This story of devotion, invention, ingenuity, simple crafts, and dance was filmed at existing Shaker locations, with music re-created from authentic songs.

July 21—Horatio’s Drive: America’s First Road Trip

On a visionary whim and a $50 bet, Dr. Horatio Nelson Jackson became the first person to drive an automobile across the continent. Filmmaker Ken Burns presents the hilarious 1903 saga of the first transcontinental automobile trip that proved that the “horseless carriage” really did have a future.

SUNDAYS at 2 p.m.

June 6—The Brooklyn Bridge

This award-winning film recaptures the drama, struggles, and personal tragedies behind the building of the Brooklyn Bridge. The largest bridge of the era, its construction entailed enormous problems and ingenious solutions. Witness the human heroes behind the bridge that seized America’s imagination in the 1880s, and discover the enduring charm and beauty of this granite-and-steel masterpiece.

June 20—Thomas Hart Benton

Trace the turbulent career of one of America’s best-known, least-understood painters in this bittersweet portrait, highlighting the fierce controversy over Benton’s work. The film combines rare archival material, commentary by those close to the artist, and a survey of Benton’s superb paintings and murals to create a moving profile of the 20th-century genius.

June 27—Huey Long

No one captures the American imagination quite like the Kingfish. This production traces Huey Long’s spectacular career from the 1920s, bursting out of Louisiana under the banner “Every man a king.” Archival footage depicts the charismatic builder of roads, bridges, and schools, whose brutal corruption ended in a hail of bullets.

July 4—The Statue of Liberty

In an Oscar- and Emmy-nominated program on America’s iconic statue, follow its life, from creation by French sculptor Auguste Bartholdi through painstaking construction and accident-prone 1886 dedication, as well as interviews revealing its unique place in our hearts.

July 25—Music Within

When Richard Pimentel tries out for the country’s top debate team and is rejected, he takes his shattered dreams to the Army for a tour of duty in Vietnam. When a bomb blast takes his hearing, he returns home to become a ground-breaking speaker and campaigner on behalf of the rights of everyone with a disability, including his fellow vets. Sponsored by Disability Network Southwest Michigan.

Aug. 1—Kalamazoo Bicycle Film Festival

This is Ken Burns’ perspective on the true history of the American West. One episode will be shown per week.

ADA 20th Anniversary Film

When Richard Pimentel tries out for the country’s top debate team and is rejected, he takes his shattered dreams to the Army for a tour of duty in Vietnam. When a bomb blast takes his hearing, he returns home to become a ground-breaking speaker and campaigner on behalf of the rights of everyone with a disability, including his fellow vets. Sponsored by Disability Network Southwest Michigan.

20th Anniversary Film

When Richard Pimentel tries out for the country’s top debate team and is rejected, he takes his shattered dreams to the Army for a tour of duty in Vietnam. When a bomb blast takes his hearing, he returns home to become a ground-breaking speaker and campaigner on behalf of the rights of everyone with a disability, including his fellow vets. Sponsored by Disability Network Southwest Michigan.

The West—July 11, July 18, Aug. 15, Aug. 22, Aug. 29, Sept. 5, Sept. 12, Sept. 19 and Sept. 26

This is Ken Burns’ perspective on the true history of the American West. One episode will be shown per week.

Sponsored by Disability Network Southwest Michigan.

Aug. 1—Kalamazoo Bicycle Film Festival

The Bicycle Corps: America’s Black Army on Wheels

In the 1890s, the U.S. Army believed it could replace horses with popular new “safety bicycles.” Testing this theory, the army sent 20 African-American soldiers on a 2,000-mile ride from Fort Missoula, Mont., to St. Louis, Mo.
SUMMER HANDS-ON HAPPENINGS

CAPTURING MOMENTS IN TIME

Television shows and movies capture the spirit of culture, politics and society from a particular place and time. Travel back for a look at stories and objects from the entertainment media that can now be found in a museum.

**JUNE 30: HAPPY ENDINGS**
Artifacts from fairy tales and feel-good movies bring back happy memories.

**JULY 7: UP, UP AND AWAY**
Popular science-fiction and space-travel movies generate sought-after collectibles.

**JULY 14: RESCUE ME**
Comic-book superheroes from Batman to Wonder Woman have made it big on the big screen.

**JULY 21: GOOD VERSUS EVIL**
Characters that triumph over evil are heroes to the young and the young at heart.

**JULY 28: PIXEL PERFECT**
Animations and cartoons are a new frontier in computerized entertainment.

**AUG. 4: PUSHING THE LIMIT**
Adventure and the search for mysterious artifacts are themes of movies as well as museum exhibits.

**Plus! Planetarium Show • Wednesday, 1 p.m • $3**
and FREE Reading Rainbow Episode before Hands-On Happenings • each day, 12:15 p.m.