



We welcome Wonder...

# The Muser

September 2011

Volume 11 / Issue 5

[lakeshoremuseum.org](http://lakeshoremuseum.org)

## Memories of Camp Merritt

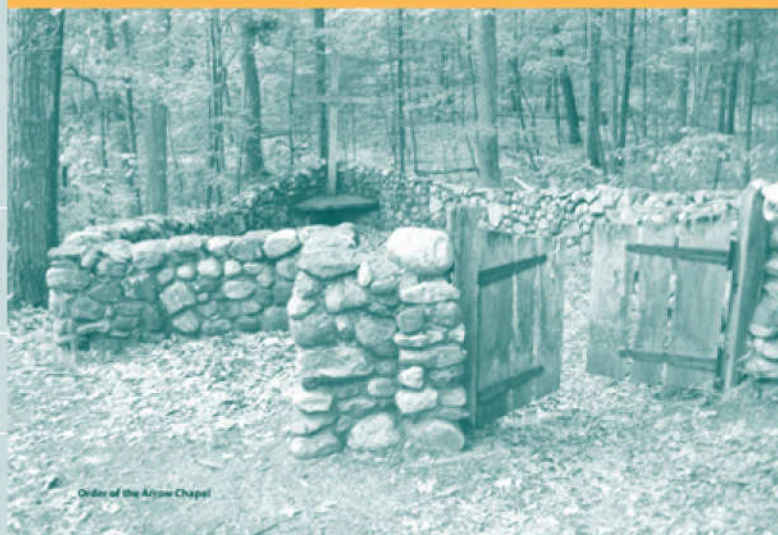
by Sharon McCullar, Registrar

Thanks to several avid newsletter readers, local history buffs and “vintage” Boy Scouts, the mystery of Camp Merritt is solved. Now we know a lot more about the camp, Muskegon Boy Scouts in general and neighboring camps around Big Blue Lake. You may remember from the article in our March newsletter that Camp Merritt was established in memory of Captain Merritt Lamb. Captain Lamb, instrumental in founding and running the Muskegon area Boy Scouts, died in France in 1918. We knew that a Boy Scout camp was established in his honor, but did not have the particulars of where this camp was located.

Although the individuals are too numerous to mention, you have our sincere thanks for your childhood memories, scanned newspaper articles, and terrific map drawing skills. They have all helped to clarify the history and location of Camp Merritt. We even had the pleasure of spending an afternoon with two of those vintage Scouts walking around the old Camp Merritt property on Blue Lake. Our thanks to the Pioneer Trails camp personnel for allowing us access and pointing out Scout structures that still exist on the property.

In June of 1919, Muskegon Boy Scouts eagerly headed for “Bronson’s farm” on Lake Michigan for their three day summer camp. A *Muskegon Chronicle* article noted that it was named “Camp Merritt” in honor

The Order of the Arrow Chapel was built in 1948 by the Scottish Rite Masons.



of the recently fallen Captain Lamb. The article assured readers that the “Scouts will be kept on the jump every minute” and would “put forth their utmost endeavor to make the camp an honor to the name.” The Scouts had to bring their own tents and were responsible for bringing and cooking their own “grub.” No microwave here!

Within the next ten years, the Scouts had leased a 17 acre tract of land on the north shore of Big Blue Lake. The May 19, 1928 *Muskegon Chronicle* contains a biographical sketch of Merritt Lamb and notes that “Camp Merritt on Big Blue Lake” is named for him. Camp Merritt was directly across the lake from the Owassippe camp, established in 1910 by the Chicago Boy Scouts organization.

*continued on page 2*

### Lakeshore Museum Center

430 W. Clay Ave.  
Muskegon, MI 49440  
PH 231.722.0278  
FX 231.728.4119  
[lakeshoremuseum.org](http://lakeshoremuseum.org)

### Hackley & Hume

Historic Site  
484 W. Webster Ave.

### Fire Barn Museum

510 W. Clay Ave.

### Scolnik House

of the Depression Era  
504 W. Clay Ave.

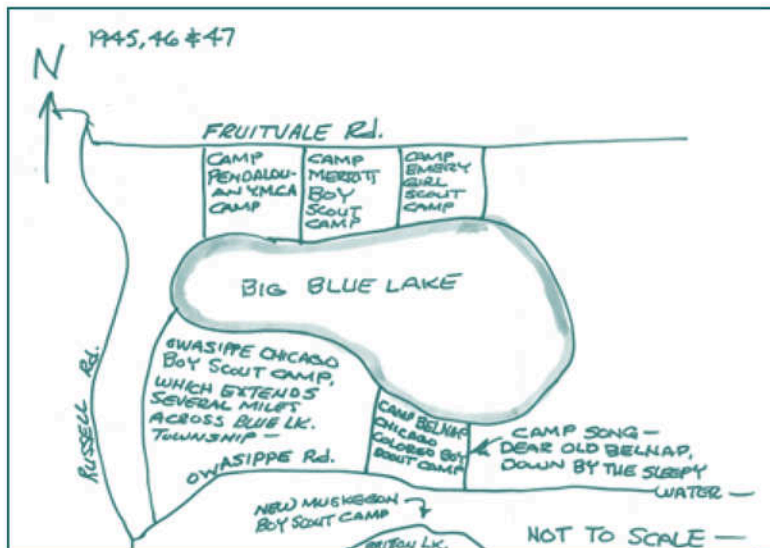
### Mercantile

430 W. Clay Ave.

The Mission of the Lakeshore Museum Center is to preserve and interpret through exhibits, education and programs, the natural and cultural history of Muskegon County.

## Memories of Camp Merritt

continued from page 1



Map drawn by Mr. Balcom, Camp Merritt Boy Scout

In May of 1939 a *Chronicle* article titled “Think Nothing of It” notes that the Muskegon area Kiwanis Club sold popcorn to raise funds for this scout camp. Scouts and their many supporters expanded and improved Camp Merritt while other organizations established camps around them. These included the Muskegon YMCA, YWCA and expansions of the Chicago Scouts’ Owassippe and related camps.

Our walk around the old Camp Merritt site on Blue Lake reveals that several Scout structures still exist. The camp office is now the AmBucs building and the bath house is still in use. The Order of the Arrow Chapel is proudly cared for by the staff of the Pioneer Trails camp. Remnants of dining hall foundations and a small pond constructed by Scouts have also been noted by Pioneer Trails staff.

By 1950, the Timber Trails Council had 3000 members. With a major financial donation from Gerber Foods, the Council purchased 160 acres along Britton Lake, a short distance south of Big Blue Lake. This new camp was named the Gerber Scout Camp in honor of its benefactor. Camp Merritt Scouts cleared brush and constructed tent platforms. The first permanent structure was Evans Dining Hall, which still stands today. The old Camp Merritt site was absorbed into the YMCA Camp Pendalouan and is still in use today as Pioneer Trails camp.

So...now we know!

## A Blast from the Past

by Sharon McCullar, Registrar



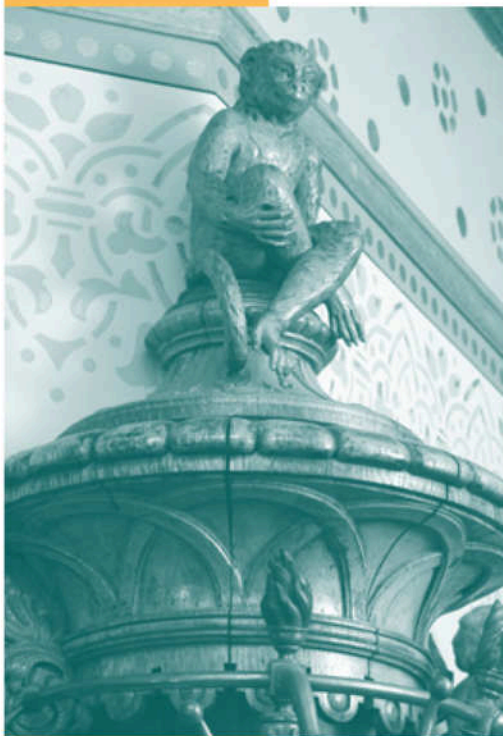
Um...Yikes. While working in the collection recently I discovered some poison darts. They are interesting, and a little scary. Just the right mix in my opinion. But, why does the collection contain poison darts? The answer takes us back to our earliest days as an

institution. The Muskegon County Museum collection grew out of artifacts gathered during the 1937 Centennial Celebration. Most of them were related in some way to the lumbering industry, the fur trade or pioneer families of the area. Many items were collected because of their association with influential community leaders and businesses.

In the 1950s many community museums shifted their focus. Visitors wanted to learn about cultures and areas of the world different from their own. Following this trend, the Muskegon County Museum collected natural and cultural specimens from many different places—while still collecting artifacts important to the story of Muskegon County. The poison darts were donated along with a set of woodworking planes used by a local man. Unfortunately, the 1958 records do not go into detail as to how this man obtained the darts or their special story. They were simply collected as an example of something exotic—from a land far removed from Muskegon County.

Over the next 50 years the focus changed again. Researchers gained greater access to information about other cultures and countries through the internet and networked library collections. This community looks to the Lakeshore Museum Center for information about the history of this area, so now we collect those things that help explain to students and visitors from all over the world the unique story of Muskegon County.

But, we will continue to care for the poison darts. They were given to this institution to hold in trust and we uphold that trust by properly and safely storing these artifacts. Who knows? Perhaps someday soon they will find their way into an education program or exhibit—because they are now part of the unique history of the Lakeshore Museum Center. They found their way into a newsletter article!



The Reception Hall of the Hackley House is full of wonderful wood carvings. Shown is the lavishly carved coat rack.

## Ahead of Myself

Over the years, some of you may have noticed that in August, I turn the air conditioner on high and shut myself away in my office for periods of time to shiver and write. When I emerge, I am not always sure what season we are in. That is because I am already working on fall and winter projects.

First up is the fall Volunteer Bus Trip. We are going to the Felt Mansion, just outside of Saugatuck, way back off the beaten path. Dorr E. Felt, of Chicago, made his fortune as the inventor of the Comptometer, which preceded today's adding machine. This 17,000 square foot, 1925 stone and brick mansion was built on several hundred acres of woods and dunes to be used as the family summer home. The community of Laketown Township is in the process of restoring the house while it's used for both public and private events.

We will then board the Star of Saugatuck to enjoy a box lunch as we cruise the Kalamazoo River and learn about the history of the area, including information on the local ghost town of Singapore.

After we dock, there should be time to roam the shops of Saugatuck. Just remember, anything you buy must be brought home on the bus, so keep size in mind—antique sideboards probably won't fit.

We will once again present "See the Sites in a Different Light" on October 13 and 14 from 4:30 to 6:30 pm. This special event features the wonderful carvings in the Hackley first floor, with information about their significance, and the always popular once-a-year visit to the Hackley basement. Volunteers in the Hume House will discuss common superstitions and how to avoid the bumps in the night. This event is the only one at the Site which requires pre-registration, and due to some of the more risqué stories of the gods and goddesses, we do not recommend the event for anyone under the age of ten. Please remember—this is not a haunted house tour.

I am also gearing up for Holiday Tours 2011. That involves contacting the groups who decorate the houses, finding volunteers to decorate the Depression Era House and the Fire Barn, and doing research in what was and was not done when decorating for the holidays in 1890 and 1920.

So if I come out of my office frostbitten and singing "God Bless Ye Merry Jack O'Lanterns," please forgive me, I'm just a little confused. Just put me outside in the sunlight to thaw out and I'll be fine by the bus trip.



## Test Your Knowledge:

**How many firemen slept at the Charles H. Hackley Hose Company #2?**

## Answer to last Test Your Knowledge: How many teachers lived in the Hume House in 1920?

Two teachers were "boarders" at the Hume House in 1920. Francis Ford, a family friend, often stayed with the Humes during the school year. Esther Kutson also was a teacher staying with the Humes in 1920. Her mother was the family cook, Minnie.



## Guiding Hints:

We all love the Historic Sites. Through years of research, we have an abundance of information about the Hackleys, the Humes, the houses, the architecture and the eras—both Victorian and Depression. Sometimes in our zeal, we forget that some guests may not want or have the time for us to share all of our information with them, so we need to practice reading the visitors. Some quick tricks are to ask guests as they begin their tour where they are from and what brought them to the Site. If they say they love historic houses and tour every one they can find, or they are restoring their own Victorian house, you know they want a lot of information. If they say they were looking for something to do while they are waiting to go to Michigan's Adventure, chances are they are looking for a bit of information and a chance to look at the pretty houses. That's your clue to hit the highlights and let them ask you questions. Who knows, they might decide it is interesting and they will want a little more. If they look at their watches, or they stop interacting with you, you need to get moving because they have lost interest. (I know, that's hard to believe, but it does happen.) Remember to have a conversation with your visitors; don't leave them feeling that you've just given them a lecture.

If there are children in the group, don't leave them out. Ask them if they see something they'd like you to tell them about. Point out the kid friendly carvings in Hackley House, ask them to count fireplaces, or find the kitty in Hume. Most of us have children or have worked with them, so experience tells us that a bored child spoils the experience for everyone.

If you have a mixed group—one wants everything, some have to catch the boat—hit the highlights and then offer those who want to spend more time the chance to go through again to spend more time with you or another guide. A staff member will be more than willing to do that if you need a break.

If you have someone on the tour who is really struggling to keep up, invite them to take a break in the City Barn between houses. Assure them that if they like, someone will take them through the second house once they've had a chance to rest. Have them tell the store associate that they needed a break and to let us know when they are ready to finish their tour.

Practicing these hints will make the tours of the Hackley & Hume houses a more enjoyable experience for everyone—including you.

## New Volunteers/Experienced Volunteers

We have been fortunate to have four new volunteers join us this season. Emily Marra quickly took to the tours and has been doing an excellent job guiding in the Hackley & Hume houses. Nikki Johnson has been shadowing and is real close to guiding on her own.

Kira Sanscraigne took part in our crazy Art in the Park weekend at the Scolnik House of the Depression Era, and Amber George has recently joined us. Both have been a big help at the Scolnik House this season.

Although not a new guide, David Rifenberg has claimed the Fire Barn as his own and has really been a huge help. When I have volunteers in the Fire Barn and the Scolnik House, it frees up staff members who are then available to do other things such as weed the garden, dust, or give volunteers a break from tours at the Hackley & Hume houses.

As you all know Andrea Myers, Barb Brow, Phyllis Spengler, and Leslie Day have cut back on their hours or become volunteers again. We were fortunate to have Amanda Grycki join the staff and Donna Murphy has been a great help too. The more experienced guides have really stepped forward and filled in whenever there was a gap in the calendar. Several have studied the manuals and will work at the Depression Era House or Fire Barn if needed. As a result, we have had at least two guides and often more every day we've been open. We have been steady to really busy all season. Thank you all for coming through when we need it! I knew you would—thanks for proving me right! And please continue to welcome and support our new volunteers.

## Exciting News!

Our own Andrea is expecting her first child! She and her husband Cody expect to welcome their son in December.



## Dark Side of the Museum Halloween Event

By Melissa Horton, Education Curator

Discover creatures of the night and learn how they escape from enemies, find food, and move around in the dark. This program explores galleries, museum specimens and staged animal crime scenes.

The Second Annual Dark Side of the Museum program is on **Friday, October 28 from 4:30 to 6:30 pm**. Tours are on the half hour, registration is required and space is limited. This event is free for children five and older, but children must be accompanied by an adult. Participants will receive a bag of tricks and treats.

To register for the program, call (231) 722-0278.



## Victoriana on Display through October

by Joni Dorsett, Communications Director

The life of Queen Victoria is of special interest to Norma York Bremer, who grew up and was educated in London, England before moving to the United States in 1970. Bremer's collection of Victoriana is now on display in our Collector's Corner.

Victoriana refers to items or material from the Victorian Period (1837–1901), especially those evocative of the design style and outlook of the time or related to the life of Queen Victoria of England (1819–1901). Her collection includes stereoview cards featuring Queen Victoria, scissors with the image of the Queen, Victorian era coins, medals, stamps and brooches that belonged to the collector's maternal great-grandmother. Also on display is a special section from the *Sphere* weekly newspaper, illustrating the Queen's funeral procession past Buckingham Palace, dated February 9, 1901.

## Museum Technology

by Dani LaFleur, Collections/Technology Manager

In today's culture, technology is a necessity that most people cannot live without. Imagine going through one day without your computer or cell phone! Mobile devices are the newest craze in technology and it seems that just about everyone has a smart phone these days. But how can we incorporate these smart phones into the museum experience?

The latest buzz item for mobile devices (yes, a craze within a craze) is QR codes. QR Codes, or Quick Response Codes, are funny-looking, square bar codes that you have probably seen in magazines or store ads. Initially used to track auto parts in warehouses, QR Codes can now be read by anyone with the correct application on their phone. They can transmit text, contact information, or even link you to a website. As their popularity grows, they will be used for many different things. As for the museum, someday you may be reading labels that have a code at the bottom so you can "scan here for more information." Perhaps you will visit one of our historic sites and scan a code on the sign to find out what our hours of operation are. Or maybe you will be walking through Helen Hume's bedroom and you will want to read one of the letters she sent to her mother on her world travels—just scan the code and read!

Technology allows us to reach our visitors in a whole new way and on a whole new level. We can provide more in-depth information for the visitors who want it without scaring away those who don't. What will technology bring us next?



Scan this and see where it takes you.



## The Diamond JUBILEE 2011 Lumber Barons' Ball

Saturday, OCTOBER 1  
6:00pm–10:00pm

### Lumber Barons' Ball 2011

Spend the evening at the Lakeshore Museum Center on **Saturday, October 1** for the 18th Lumber Barons' Ball. Enjoy an opportunity to bid on great items in our live and silent auctions, dance until your feet hurt to the music of the Westside Soul Surfers and enjoy a delicious dinner and dessert catered by the Hearthstone Bistro. Plus, Ladd's Pharmacy will be on hand with a wine and beer tasting station.

**Tickets: \$75 per person**  
Reserve by calling  
**231-722-0278.**

For a sneak peek  
of the auction items,  
visit our website [www.lakeshoremuseum.org](http://www.lakeshoremuseum.org)



# Lakeshore Museum Center

430 W. Clay Ave.  
Muskegon, MI 49440

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## Lakeshore Museum Center and Mercantile Hours

Weekdays 9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
Weekends Noon – 4 p.m.

## Hackley & Hume Historic Site, Fire Barn Museum and Scolnik House

of the Depression Era  
Now open through October 30  
Wednesday—Sunday  
Noon to 4:00 p.m.

The *Muser* is published six times a year by the Lakeshore Museum Center, formerly the Muskegon County Museum. The Museum is located at 430 W. Clay Avenue, Muskegon, MI 49440. Phone 231-722-0278 or email at [info@lakeshoremuseum.org](mailto:info@lakeshoremuseum.org).

## Calendar of Events

**September –**  
Tours are free at the  
Hackley & Hume Historic  
Site all month.

**September 27 –**  
Volunteer Bus Trip to  
the Felt Mansion in  
Saugatuck.

**October 1 –**  
Lumber Barons' Ball from  
**6 to 10 pm.**

**October 13 & 14 –**  
See the Sites in a  
Different Light at the  
Hackley & Hume Historic  
Site from **4:30 to 6:30 pm.**  
Reservations required.

**October 28 –**  
Dark Side of the Museum  
Halloween Event from  
**4:30 to 6:30 pm** for  
ages five and up. Call  
us for reservations.

## Shop Locally at the Mercantile

by Joni Dorsett, Communications Director

The Muskegon Mercantile offers a unique shopping experience and an opportunity to support the Museum at the same time.

Why settle for monopoly or bingo when you can play Butterfly Bingo or Dinopoly? Young shoppers will also find a variety of puzzles, science kits and books to choose from including Michigan-themed reading. Collectors will enjoy filling a bag with marbles, rocks and magnetic sticky stones.

Jewelry lovers will find a great selection of abalone shell bracelets, earrings and necklaces. We have colorful bracelets and jewelry sets. Young shoppers will also find jewelry in their size.

Seven local landmarks are featured in our one-of-a-kind cotton throw. Bowls hand-carved from a variety of Michigan trees are another special treat. The Lakeshore Museum Center logo is featured on a variety of merchandise, including glasses, a travel mug, water bottle and paper cubes.

Next time you get caught in the rain, stay dry with one of our gorgeous folding umbrellas. They are available in a variety of patterns including dragon flies, hummingbirds, peonies and Gerber daisies. Books and videos on local history and Michigan topics line our shelves, along with scarves and gift items.

Our second shop, the Museum Store, is located in the City Barn at the Hackley & Hume Historic Site. All sales at the museum's gift shops support our education programs and exhibits.