

Suburban Life

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Fred M. Warner

Book 'sets record straight' on only governor from Farmington

By Amy Rosa
staff writer

MICHIGAN GOV. Fred M. Warner, who Farmingtonians proudly claim as their first and only governor, will finally get the recognition he deserves, thanks to a local historian who knew a good story when she saw it.

No longer will Warner be thought of as just a nice cheese maker from a small town who made it big in politics, and whose house is now the Farmington Historical Museum, the author says.

"It's high time this book got out. It will finally set the record straight," said Farmington Hills resident Jean Fox, 72, who referred to Warner as this state's most important political figure in the first quarter of the century.

Warner, a Republican who first served four years each as a state senator and secretary of state, filled the governor's chair from 1905-11.

At the time, he was the youngest man to hold the offices of state senator and secretary of state, later reaching the governorship at the ripe young age of 40.

For all his accomplishments, however, Fox had no real knowledge of the man before her biographical project. In fact, no one knew him at all, she said. But the Farmington Hills city councilwoman and former newspaper publisher learned — and it was almost by a fluke that she did.

SIX YEARS ago, Fox had no idea that a seemingly simple brochure on the governor would turn into a 520-page biography titled, "Fred M. Warner: Progressive Governor." But it did, all because the Farmington Historical Museum asked her to draft the brochure to hand out to museum-goers.

After asking board members what kind of information they wanted printed, Fox was given only a few pictures and pertinent dates relating to Warner's terms in office.

"They really didn't know much more about him," she said.

So Fox researched. But it wasn't long before she began to think there was more to the governor than met her eye.

"Well, if he was governor three times, there's got to be a story there," she remembered thinking. "Back then, it was two terms and you're out. Three terms was unprecedented."

After all her digging, the result was a "magnificent story," 90 percent of which was unknown until now, she said.

What became Fox's "labor of love" took her through six years of searching archives across the state and country, looking in every corner possible that might contain information on her subject.

But because there were no "Warner Papers" per se, except for personal and family memorabilia, Fox had to rely on newspapers of the day to translate his political years.

SHE SCoured countless pages of Michigan's major dailies and smaller area publications, concentrating on Warner's years in public service, 1895 to 1923. ("Thank goodness for microfilm!" she said.) In the end, the Lansing newspapers proved the most helpful, she said.

"That's when this began to unravel," she said. "I read about political

battle after battle. 'We never knew any of this,' I thought."

Fox read stories about Warner pushing for equal taxation of railroad property, thereby ending their

preferential treatment.

She discovered he also got pure food and drug laws enacted and headed a petition of 100,000 names from the state calling for women's

right to vote.

One of his most controversial reforms, Fox said, was new legislation

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Gov. Fred Warner, in his Lansing office between 1904-11.



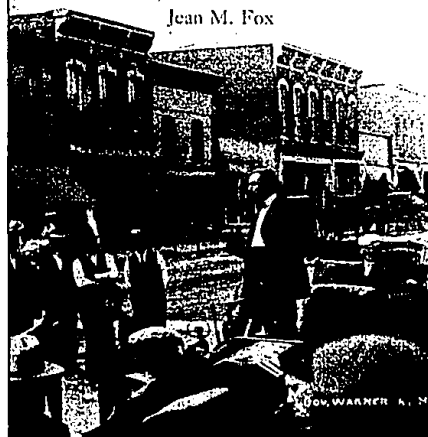
Historian and author Jean M. Fox stands with a portrait of Gov. Fred Warner inside the Farmington Historical Museum, the Gov. Warner Mansion.

"I Went to the People..."

FRED M. WARNER

PROGRESSIVE GOVERNOR

Jean M. Fox



This is the dust cover of the new biography about the only governor from Farmington, Fred M. Warner.

New chief choreographer heads OCC dance troupe

By Amy Rosa
staff writer

The Farmington Hills-based Harbinger Dance Company is beginning its 19th season with a new and long-awaited member — an artistic director who board members searched two years for.

Diann Sichel was just hired last month as the modern dance company's chief choreographer, emerging as the clear choice over half a dozen candidates.

According to board trustee vice president Jessie Stern, Sichel was chosen after a five-week trial period in which she composed an original choreography complete with musical score called "Detroit Personals."

"We saw then that she had the talent we were looking for," Stern said.

ACCLAIMED AS Michigan's premier modern dance company, Harbinger took great pains in finding a replacement for its founding artistic director who left in 1985, Stern said. Until now, dance member Gayle Eubanks had been filling in as interim director.

"Diann's rapport with the dancers is terrific, and she is warm and outgoing," Stern said from the company's studio in the Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College, Farmington Hills.

"Her work is fresh, yet at the same time, she'll be able to resurrect older works for performance."

SIGNING THE eight-month contract with Harbinger has given

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Harbinger Dance Company's Joe Neal (left) and assistant director Gayle Eubanks practice an original choreograph of "Detroit Personals," in which they portray a couple who found each other through the want ads of a newspaper.

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