

CHAT ROOM



ELLEN HERSCHER

Charming wood bridges endure in Michigan

There is a certain fascination about covered bridges — especially the old ones that are still in existence. Seeing them instantly takes me back in time, imagining the horse-drawn wagons and carriages creating the familiar clippity-clop echo as passage was made through the enclosed bridge on large wooden planks, across a river.

Most covered bridges have not only a roof, but also enclosed sides and some are flanked by pedestrian walkways. The logical explanation for that method of bridge construction was the necessity of protecting the structures against deterioration from the elements of weather. Fires, floods, ice jams, vandals, and porcupines have also played havoc with covered bridges.

Michigan has a number of covered bridges scattered through the state. Enchanting bridges, enduring the test of time, have been awarded historical markers, whereas other bridges have been erected more recently. Sadly, some of the oldest and most majestic of the covered bridges were either destroyed or replaced by modern structures.

The Leonard Street Bridge was one of the *Grand Rapids Giants* — spanning a mammoth length of 832' over the Grand River. It was longer than any other covered bridge built in Michigan, serving the city of Grand Rapids from 1879 until 1913.

If you have been to Henry Ford's Greenfield Village, in Dearborn, you have seen the Ackley Bridge. Joshua Ackley and Daniel Clouse built the 75' bridge in Pennsylvania, in 1832. Henry Ford was on a search to find a perfect covered bridge for the Village and investigated bridges in many states. Ackley's granddaughter donated the Ackley Bridge to Henry Ford in 1937. Having served the southwestern Pennsylvania area for 105 years, it was prudently dismantled, hauled the long distance to Dearborn, and reconstructed where it is still in use today.

Built in 1867, White's Covered Bridge is 120' feet long, spanning Flat River, in Ionia County. The bridge was temporarily closed to automobile traffic in 1955, while undergoing abutment repairs. Distinguished as the state's oldest covered bridge that is still being used, it was awarded a Michigan Historical Marker, in 1965.

Another covered bridge that spans the Flat River is 100' Fallsburg Bridge, which was constructed in 1871. Since that time, the bridge underwent repairs in 1908 and again in 1945. In 1971, the picturesque bridge was presented with a Michigan Historical Marker.

Presently open only as a footbridge, the 125' Ada Covered Bridge proudly spans the Thornapple River. The bridge was originally built in 1867; automobile traffic was prohibited in 1930, and restoration executed in 1941. In 1979, the bridge was repaired after incurring severe damage from snow. A fire totally demolished the bridge, soon after the repairs were completed. With support from townpeople, augmented by assistance from Amway Corporation, the bridge was again restored. In 1974, a Michigan Historical Marker was given to this charming old bridge.

The impressive 282' Langley Bridge is the longest of Michigan's existing covered bridges. It was built across the St. Joseph River, in 1887, close to Centerville and Parkville. In 1910, the Sturgis Dam was built, thereby requiring the Langley Bridge to be elevated eight feet. Substantial reconstruction was rendered, in the early 1950's. A Michigan Historical Marker was bestowed upon the bridge, in 1965.

Among the new covered bridges are Zehnder's Wooden Bridge, Augusta Covered Bridge, Donald F. Nichols Bridge, Pierce Stocking Bridge, Fishers Bridge, Joshua's Crossing, and Reed City Covered Bridge.

Spanning Augusta Creek in Kalamazoo County, the bridge is 100' long.

Please see BRIDGES, C7



June 14 marks the 225th birthday of the U.S. Flag

By PAUL PACE AND RENÉE SKOGLUND
STAFF WRITERS

Ask for directions to the Bob Saks dealership in Farmington Hills and you're likely to get a colorful response: Look for the red, white and blue.

The business on Grand River displays one of the largest flags in the area. According to Marilynn DeMaggio, Bob Saks' assistant, it was the biggest in the country when it was first put up in 1961.

"This is just my observation, but if you're heading east on Grand River and if the wind is just right, it looks like it's flowing all way across the street," she said.

DeMaggio recalled how the flag was taken down to Detroit for President George Bush's visit in 1992 and flew proudly behind him.

The 20-by-30-foot flag costs \$500 and a sparo is always on hand, she said, noting customers always compliment the dealership on its huge tribute to the nation.

"If it gets tattered and can't be repaired we always have a new one available," she said.

Who was Betsy Ross?

We can trace our love for the red, white and blue back to Betsy Ross, the deft seamstress who gave us the first American flag.

When three representatives from the Continental Congress — George Washington, Robert Morris and George Ross — came to call on Betsy in late May of 1776, she had an idea their visit had something to do with her sewing skills. At that time, she was a young widow struggling to make ends meet from her upholstery business.

Besides, she already knew George Ross (she had eloped with his nephew, John), and she was well



Folding the flag: Garden City High School ROTC members Bryan McKinney and Jeremy Fry carefully fold the American flag that flies outside of their school. Chris Kauffman is in the foreground.

acquainted with Washington. She had sewn ruffles on the esteemed general's shirt fronts and cuffs, and on Sundays she sat in the opposite pew from him in Christ Church in Philadelphia.

Although history suggests Washington wanted a six-sided star on the rough design of the first American flag he handed Betsy Ross, she quickly demonstrated how to cut a five-pointed star in a single snip. He was impressed, and Betsy made the flag.

On June 14, 1777, just one year and 10 days after the Declaration of Independence was read aloud in Independence Hall, the Continental Congress adopted the national flag: "Resolved: That the flag of the United States be 13 stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be 13 stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation."

Have flag, will travel

Surely, Betsy Ross would have admired the spunky Carrie Sarb, who careens around the corners of the Plymouth sandwich shop she owns with husband Dan, Harvey's Old Village Deli, in her wheelchair. Marking her whereabouts at all times is the American flag attached to the back of the chair. Sometimes both Carrie and her flag are just a blur of color.

"I'm proud to wear my flag. I'm proud to be an American," she said. "She has that one, and we fly one at home all the time," said Dan. "There's also a flag in each one of the back windows of our van." Dan also displays the flag on the back of his Harley motorcycle.

Carrie's flag came compliments of the deli staff.

"They wanted to give me an orange flag so they would know where I was. I said I wouldn't wear an orange thing on my chair. They brought me an American flag, and I said I would wear that one with pride. I also wear it to church, but I don't wear it into movie theaters or plays. I don't want to block someone's view."

Flags, flags, and more flags

Old Glory Flags in Livonia, which

Flag Talk

"Our flag is red, white and blue, but our nation is a rainbow — red, yellow, brown, black and white — and we're all precious in God's sight." — Jesse Jackson

"Our flag is our national ensign, pure and simple, behold it! Listen to it! Every star has a tongue, every stripe is articulate." — Robert C. Winthrop (1809-1894), Massachusetts senator

We do not consecrate the flag by punishing its desecration, for in doing so we dilute the freedom that this cherished emblem represents. — Supreme Court decision, *Texas v. Johnson*

"You can't appreciate home till you've left it, money till it's spent, your wife until she's joined a women's club, nor Old Glory till you see it hanging on a broomstick on a shanty of a consul in a foreign town." — O. Henry (1862-1919)

"If anyone attempts to haul down the American flag, shoot him on the spot." — John A. Dix in a telegram from Washington, Jan. 29, 1861

sells a variety of flags and flag-related items, was a busy place after Sept. 11.

"It was more than we could actually handle," said employee Elinor Wensley. "We couldn't get supplies in. We're still selling a lot of flags and poles. People who bought flags after Sept. 11 are starting to replace them. The store's most popular flag meas-

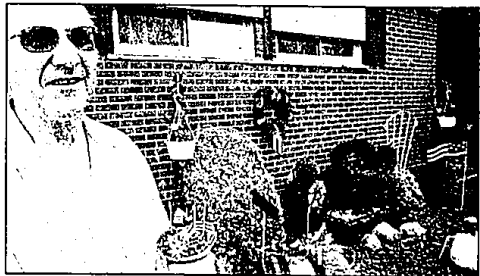
ures 4-by-6 feet and sells for \$44.95. Flag poles can top 60 feet.

"At this time we sell a lot of Betsy Ross flags and the Bennington Flag," said Wensley. (The Bennington Flag, an inverted "U" over the number "76," flew during the Battle of Bennington in Vermont in August 1777.

Please see FLAG DAY, C12



Big, bold and brave: Roy Neal, a former U.S. Army Ranger, flies one of the biggest flags in Redford Township over his business, Insurance House, on the corner of Kintloch and Five Mile Road.



Flags in bloom: Vincent Bala, 71, of Garden City has added flags to his flora for a patriotic front yard.