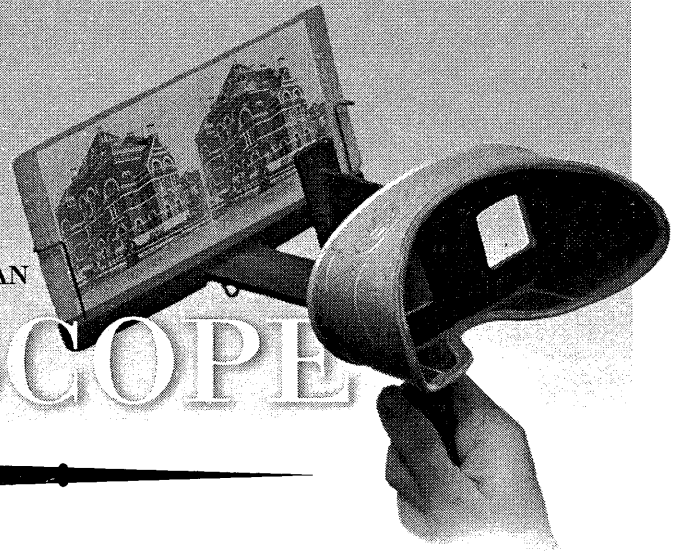


THE JOURNAL OF
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DISTRICT COURT FOR THE
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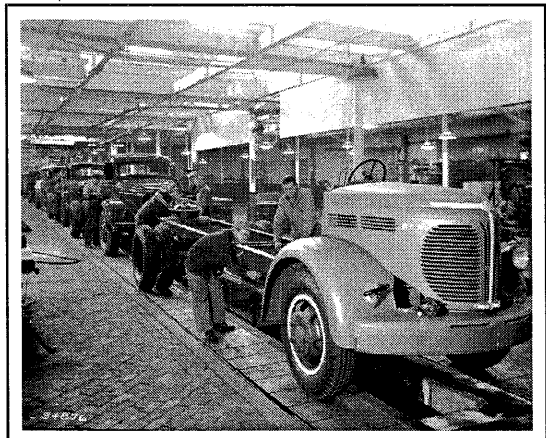
In Memory of Trustee Mark Latterman, 1941-2004

Diamond Reo's Legacy

Mark Alan Latterman

I drive my dark blue Cadillac into a parking space in front of my law office. The address reads 1305 S. Washington in Lansing, Michigan. The building is a new structure, part of a complex of other one-story office buildings, that gives little hint of what existed here one hundred years ago. The ground beneath offers no testimony to the struggle it endured to bear these buildings. Its story began when water was needed to sprinkle on unpaved roads to keep the dust from blowing into the windows of nearby homes and businesses. It began when 26 mail trains passed every day by the East Michigan Avenue depot and when blacksmiths numbered among Lansing's business establishments. It began when that "crazy Olds kid" tried out his horseless carriage at 3:00 a.m. on a late summer morning, its metal parts grinding along for all the neighbors to hear. After traveling only one block, R.E. (Ransom Eli) Olds pushed this contraption back into his garage, his mind racing ahead of ways to perfect it, confident, in spite of doubting neighbors, that one day his "vehicle" would replace the horse.

Within a few years, Olds had ready to go a one-horsepower steam engine vehicle using a gasoline burner to heat the water to create the steam, which turned the fly-wheel, which moved the vehicle. By 1887, P.F. Olds & Son sold over 2000 of these engines, advertised as the "best small power in the world", which were able to travel on "ordinary" roads at fifteen miles per hour.



1947 Olds Truck Line

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P.F. Olds & Son was located on River Street and began as a repair shop with the "Son" initially being P.F.'s older son, Wallace. Later, Wallace sold his share in the business to Ransom who then became the "Son". Because of Ransom's ingenuity and persistence, this business became a household word throughout Michigan.

Ransom's mind not only dwelt on perfecting gasoline engines, but also focused on a Miss Metta Woodward, whom he met while piloting his steam-powered pleasure cruiser up and down the Grand River. Their relationship stretched and strengthened for five years before Ransom was financially stable enough to marry. On June 5, 1889, the day of their wedding, workers placed the last shingles on the roof of their new house.

The couple worked well as a team, Metta taking care of the home and Ransom becoming an influential Lansing businessman. In 1892, they had their first child, Gladys. In the same year, Ransom turned out a second horseless carriage; this one had an added fourth tire, a more powerful steam boiler, and improved gear arrangements. When Ransom sold this vehicle to an English company in Bombay, India, he became the first person in Michigan to sell and export a car. By 1894, a second daughter Bernice was born. During this time, Ransom realized the steam engine's limitations, becoming convinced that a gasoline engine would supply better power to his car. By the summer of 1896, Ransom finished a third horseless carriage, this one incorporating a one-cylinder, five-horsepower, internal combustion gasoline engine able to travel at eighteen miles per

hour. This carriage weighed under 1000 pounds and was considered "noiseless". An article published in the *State Republican* on August 29, 1897 described this vehicle as "so easy to operate it can be managed by a lady, in fact it has been run by Mrs. Olds without trouble."¹

Ease of operation was critical to the success of motor vehicles because many people at the time believed that they were nothing but trouble. In fact, many people were terrorized by their noises, their sputtering, their smoke, and their odor. Ransom Olds had to convince the public that his car posed none of these threats. Perhaps his wife provided the needed thrust for that trust.

Trust also involved finances. Cars could not be built without money and, due to his favorable publicity, Ransom obtained the necessary financial backing for the growth of his business. Ransom raised capital for his new enterprise locally and then, as his fame grew, nationally. Without this solid backing, Ransom Olds would have been just another inventor with a good idea. At first, five reputable Lansing businesses invested money in the fledgling Olds Motor Vehicle Company. This new company continued to share space with Olds Gasoline Engine Works, which was the original company on River Street. This was not the best plan because the engine works already had limited space. Before long, a separate plant was needed, requiring more money and more investors. One of these new investors, Samuel Smith, agreed to finance a new plant if it was located in Detroit and if the Olds Gasoline Engine Works merged with the Olds Motor Vehicle Company. Ransom

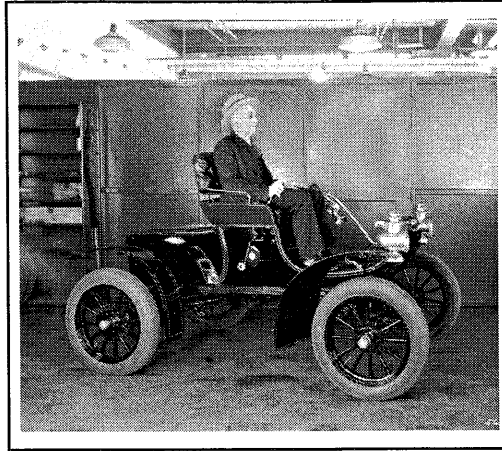
accepted Smith's offer and built his new plant on a five-acre parcel near Belle Isle.

In the 1900s, inventors like Ransom Olds were conducting experiments to determine if motor vehicles could best be powered by electricity, steam, or gasoline. Steam could not be constantly generated and was not convenient for long trips. Electricity was quieter, but batteries required constant recharging. Gasoline provided a faster start, gas was easy to obtain, but a gas engine was complicated to operate. Concerned about company growth and profit, Ransom bet on gasoline, producing a light-weight, inexpensive vehicle similar to his 1896 runabout. At the time, he told his chief engineer that he wanted a car that could be built for \$300 and sold for \$650.

A short time later, Ransom offered to the public his gasoline-powered, curved-dash Oldsmobile runabout, with a vibration-free suspension system and a crank by the driver's seat for delivering power to the gasoline engine. Its popularity was exceeded only by the 1908 Model T Ford. R.E.'s runabout was touted as the car where you have "nothing to watch but the road."²

After a fire in 1901 destroyed the Olds Motor Works near the Detroit River, Ransom relocated his business to a temporary, smaller building in Detroit where a new type of assembly line with slow-rolling platforms moved past the employees supplying parts. By this innovation, Ransom Olds became the first person in history to mass produce motor vehicles. Duane Yarnell, his biographer described how "one interested observer, a tall, thin-faced man in his thirties... stood looking on at the progress which was being made. This young man worked for the Detroit Edison Company at an annual wage of \$1,000.00. His name was Henry Ford. When R.E. saw him watching one of the curved-dash models undergo a road test, he said, 'Henry, this is going to be a great business. Why don't you get into it?'"³

In 1901, Mr. Olds arranged for a twenty-one year-old Lansing native, Roy Chapin, to drive the Olds runabout over 820 miles from Detroit to New York City. Although his



R.E. Olds with Curve-Dash Olds #5650

runabout needed numerous repairs and consumed thirty gallons of gasoline and eighty gallons of water, the trip was deemed a great success, helping to market the runabout as a relatively inexpensive car, easy to service and repair.

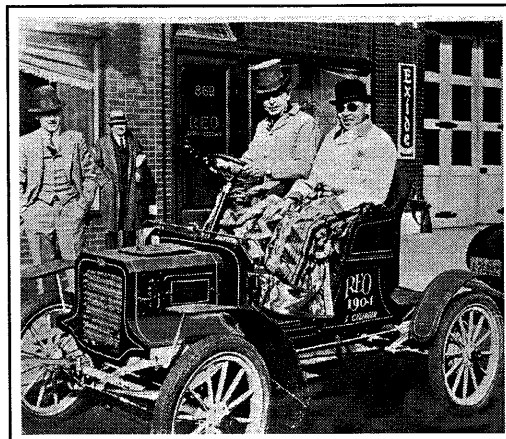
Many people in and outside of Michigan had great faith in Ransom's automobiles, enough to permit Olds to establish a permanent corporate headquarters and plant. Because of the 1901 fire and local labor unrest, Ransom entertained doubts about remaining

in the Detroit area. Fortunately for Michigan, he did not move out of state, but accepted an offer from the Lansing Businessmen's Association to relocate his business on a 52-acre parcel of land in south Lansing. Certainly the area itself had no "come-hither" features, with dense forests and swamps, but the association's belief in R.E.'s capabilities sealed the transaction.

By 1902, the Olds Motor Works opened a plant in Lansing and, that September, Ransom moved with his family back to his hometown. One month before, Metta and Ransom had lost a baby boy, who survived only one day. While not able to erase her grief, Ransom was able to give Metta some comfort with a new home on the northwest corner of South Washington and Main Streets — a beautiful three-story home with a unique 1,000 square foot "automobile room". This room housed a rotating turntable so that a

driver never had to back down the driveway, a fascinating yet typical example of R.E.'s creativity.

All did not go well with the Olds Motor Works plant in Lansing, however. Ransom began having major disagreements with Samuel Smith over plans for future automobiles and plant construction. By spring of 1904, Olds sold all of his stock in the company and resigned from



1904 R.E. Olds with Mr. Chapin

the board, resulting in his separation from the business that his father had founded. By November 1908, Oldsmobile was sold to General Motors Corporation, then under the leadership of William Crapo Durrant.

This action prohibited Ransom from using the name "Olds" on his products, but this did not stop him from producing more vehicles. By August 1904, Lansing businessmen had R.E. up and going again, this time under the name of "The Reo Motor Car Company." The company purchased a ten-block tract on the east side of Washington Avenue south of the Grand Trunk railroad tracks. From the beginning, Reo was well financed and well equipped, with Ransom himself lending the prestige of his name and reputation to this new venture.

Olds' goal was to build practical cars for the common man. Build and popularize cars, he did. His new business attracted other companies to Lansing, including The National Coil Company, the Michigan Screw Company, the Atlas Drop Forge, and the Capital National Bank (not to be confused with the present Capitol National Bank).

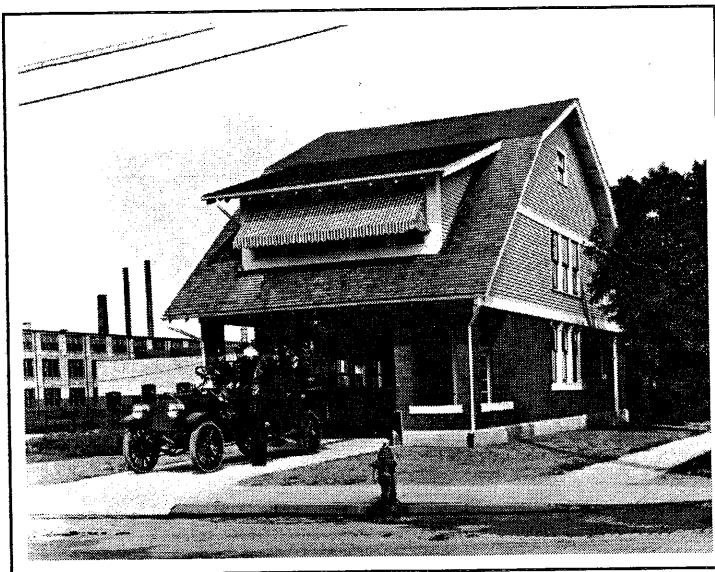
By 1904, new Reos were being produced at the South Lansing plant. One model had detachable side doors that could seat five passengers comfortably and maintain speeds up to 35 miles per hour. The two-passenger version was sold for \$650 — an affordable car that R.E. envisioned years before. By 1905, Lansing's population had grown to 29,000 with many people owning houses and automobiles. Five years later, R.E. purchased the Bement and Sons plant and began manufacturing fire, tow, delivery, and dump trucks, along with busses, hearses, and ambulances. With

their touted Gold Crown engines and the standard-setting Reo Speedwagon, Reo Motor Car Company, was definitely on its way.

Reo's employees abided by strict rules in the plant, which included no smoking, no drinking and no cussing. Those hired were church-going persons. Olds firmly believed that staying clean and sober made for better workers! To help keep his employees on the right path, Reo entered local battles to keep Lansing "dry" in the years before Prohibition. Richard H. Scott, a superintendent at Reo, also served as president of the Anti-Saloon League of Michigan. Horace E. Thomas, Reo's chief engineer, also led this charge because he believed any return of booze "would be the worst thing that could happen to the large industries of Lansing."⁴ Reo's involvement in Lansing reflected its vested community interest.

This investment was added to by the people inside the company. Ransom Olds possessed a fervent desire to deliver a certain lifestyle to his employees and not just money. During the 1910s and 1920s, Reo's management sought white male, Protestant workers, reflecting its belief that this type of person would be self-reliant, moral, and steadfast. Employees were part of a big factory family. They could listen to the Reo band or WREO, the first radio station in Lansing, enjoy many forms of entertainment at the popular Reo clubhouse, play a variety of sports on the Reo field and read the *Reo Spirit*. In return for their loyalty, workers received fair pay and job security. This method of management also encouraged worker stability since promoting the company as a family helped to reinforce stability. After all, even with troubled times, you do not abandon your family. Certainly, on top of the ground, much effort poured forth to keep things in shape. Below ground, however, this attention was sorely lacking.

Even though Ransom had been called a tightwad, he graciously supported public endeavors that increased economic growth. In 1915 Metta and Ransom gave one million dollars to form the Ransom Fidelity Company, a nonprofit charitable and educational foundation. When a fire destroyed the engineering building at the Michigan Agricultural College (now known as Michigan State University), Ransom donated \$100,000 to the college to construct a new building after state legislators refused to fund new construction. Ransom also initiated the construction of the Hotel Olds in Lansing.



#5 Fire Station, Baker & Washington, Lansing

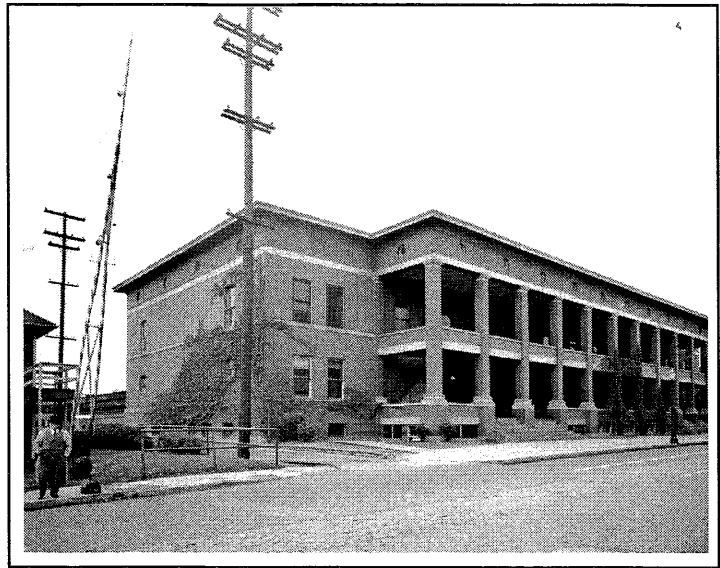
After World War I, Metta and Ransom supported an American relief program helping to stabilize families. In the late 1920s, the Olds family purchased 300 acres on the Grand River near Millett. Its first occupants, Gladys (R.E.'s first daughter) and Bruce Anderson, built a thirty-room English Tudor home on these grounds. They named it "Woldumar", derived from an English translation of the Olds' name. Later, Gladys' sister Bernice lived there. Over the years, different family members moved into the house. Then in 1966, Mrs. Anderson donated 120 acres of this site to promote environmental studies. Woldumar Nature Center continues to thrive, offering to hundreds of youth every year the joy and study of nature.

Twelve years after Woldumar was purchased, the Great Depression hit Lansing. Ransom believed the solution to the economic problems of the nation was a return to the land. He suggested giving every unemployed family ten acres of tax-exempt land for a period of five years along with a ready-made house. Clearly, Ransom wished to see land used to its full potential. During this time, Ransom also stood by "his" bank, the previous Capital National Bank, guaranteeing its depositors their savings.

At its peak in 1927, Reo Motor Car Company employed 6,141 people. The average monthly factory labor force of 5,621 produced 47,009 vehicles and each worker earned average annual wages of \$1,530.53. By 1932, this workforce was pared to 2,556, making 7,030 units and earning an average annual wage of \$714.86. As the Depression worsened, Reo cut its services to its workers. Success of a business is inevitably related to its surroundings, in spite of internal affairs.

By the spring of 1936, Reo decided to produce only trucks, a decision reached because of poor profits, inefficient management, and stockholder disputes. During this time, the workers attempted to affiliate with a union. In December of that year, R.E. retired from the Reo Motor Company at the age of seventy-two. R.E. told his biographer, Yarnell that his "greatest satisfaction has been that my plants have furnished employment to thousands of men who are buying homes, educating their children, and enjoying the ordinary comforts of life."⁵

In 1940, the Reo signed its first union shop contract with the UAW-CIO. The Reo Motor Company continued to manufacture vehicles, but changes were in store for it. One of these changes was to manufacture needed products for World War II. Reo's first defense contract was for large dump trucks. By 1941, Reo was asked to make projectile or bomb fuses. This led to a creation of a



REO Clubhouse 1942

naval division at the company. Orders also were received requiring Reo's engineers to redesign some of its standard trucks to satisfy military needs. By 1942, 50 percent of Reo's production related to defense, this percentage increasing as the war continued. This defense work also created much governmental red tape, which was seen as a necessary inconvenience by management and workers. More changes involved more hiring of women, younger male workers, and veterans. Also, work details kept changing due to fluctuating bureaucratic regulations. During the period of 1943 through 1946, the company experienced work stoppages, slowdowns, sit-ins, and strikes. The prior "factory family" weakened. The focus of the workers changed. The power of war is like a leech that cannot be burned off.

After the war, Reo returned to the competition of the private market, producing products like lawnmowers, school busses, and a variety of civilian trucks. Labor issues of wages and fringe benefits plagued the company. Nevertheless, Reo continued to function, in part due to a strong Lansing economy bolstered by expansion of its automotive industry, state government, Michigan State University, and Lansing Community College. Also during this time, Lansing's first shopping mall, Frandor, opened for business.

In the 1950s, Reo created a new model of a "factory family". Throughout the decade, the company remained committed to its workers. In 1950, while vacationing in July, Ransom complained of feeling ill. He never regained his health and passed away at the age of 86

with his family close by. Notices of his death appeared in newspapers throughout the country detailing his many accomplishments. His wife, Metta, died about a week later. United in marriage for 61 years, they were buried side by side.

By 1953, 70 percent of Reo's production was defense related. After the Korean conflict, Reo could not make a successful transition to civilian production. Reo's over reliance on one product turned out to be a mistake, a common mistake often made by businesses. By 1955, Reo began experiencing wrenching problems. The lawnmower division of the company was sold to Motor Wheel Corporation. The remaining pieces of the company were sold in 1954 to Bohn Aluminum and Brass Company of Detroit, and then to White Motor Company three years later. White Motor Company was a small independent producer of trucks, competing with Mack Truck. However, even after diversification of products and many mergers, White experienced losses with Reo.

In 1967, White merged Reo with Diamond T Trucks, creating Diamond Reo Trucks, Inc. By the end of the 1960s, the plant was in dire need of being refurbished. New equipment was needed for optimum productivity, but this investment was not made because White could not obtain the available urban renewal dollars from HUD. Not being able to relocate effectively sealed Diamond Reo's fate. In 1971, White sold Reo to Francis Cappaert, a native son born and raised in Mount Pleasant, Michigan and a member of the "good ole' boys".

By this time, the Reo plant had earned the label of "urban blight". Employees worked hard to keep the "family" alive, but the struggle was all uphill. Federal programs caused havoc with this goal. The plant became a dangerous one in which to work, with a long list of problems such as the working conditions, rodent droppings in the machines, and noxious diesel exhaust fumes. There was also the sense of corruption most employees felt originated with Cappaert. Many workers believed that he never intended to rehabilitate Reo's declining business and physical plant. The comforts of life Ransom Olds fervently intended for his workers had disappeared. Matters then became much worse. One spring day in 1975, Diamond Reo workers found their plant padlocked. The former Reo Motor Car Company had shut down and filed for bankruptcy.

This closing created a forty-acre eyesore in South Lansing. The City of Lansing decided to redevelop the

site, purchasing it for only \$1. Later, employees discovered the site had been declared a historic monument under the National Register of Historic Places. Lansing's mayor at the time, Gerald Graves, had a different vision for the site's future. "The buildings should be razed and the land developed for a factory or factories... A system of photos and land markings would suffice to preserve the history of the Reo property; a monument of dilapidated buildings won't be necessary."⁶ With input from the Lansing City Council, neighborhood spokespersons, and Mayor Graves, a memorandum of agreement was drafted identifying the Reo plant as a fire hazard. This memorandum allowed the site to be demolished if the city, in good faith, attempted to retain some of the structures for their development. The U.S. Commerce Department contributed \$1 million to create an industrial park on the site.

On July 23, 1979, demolition of the plant began with the mayor operating the machinery. Less than a month later, it was declared that the city had failed to live up to its promise and demolition ceased. In October of that year, the remaining structures burned to the ground by a suspicious fire. Eventually when the site was examined for possible development, it was found to be contaminated with hazardous wastes. Any future development of the site had to be preceded by environmental cleanup actions.

This environmental contamination was a surprise to most people even though there was a general awareness that chemical wastes had been spilled in the plant. In fact, starting only a few years after its construction, the Reo plant had experienced enough fires to warrant the establishment of a fire station there. Every fire was painstakingly recorded in longhand into a red leather covered book maintained by the Lansing Fire Department, detailing the nature of the problem and the response, but contamination of the ground had never been considered to be a serious problem.

Because of the potential benefit resulting from the plant's cleanup, the City of Lansing decided to assume this responsibility even though it was not legally required to act. An environmental consultant hired by the city estimated it would cost up to \$14 million dollars for a proper cleanup. How could Lansing afford such a monumental expenses? Perhaps land used by a "famous automobile pioneer whose ability and foresight made Michigan a great industrial state"⁷ would just have to sit vacant, accumulating weeds and trash. Instead, on August 2, 1988, Lansing voters approved

a proposal authorizing the city to issue unlimited tax general obligation bonds for \$15 million to clean up three areas in Lansing. This action seemed to defuse the issue regarding availability of funds, albeit unsatisfactorily, until the City Council heard from a disgruntled citizen during public comment at one of their meetings. This disgruntled citizen was the former mayor, Gerald Graves, who questioned why the taxpayers of Lansing were paying to correct a problem that they did not cause. Why weren't the people who were responsible for the mess paying for it?

This seemed like a fair question, but because Reo's bankruptcy case had been pending for some time, there was uncertainty about the city being too late to assert a claim for the cleanup costs. The City Attorney, Al Knott, decided to ask a local attorney about the status of this claim. This attorney advised Knott that the bankruptcy case was commenced in the mid-1970s, was complicated, and might still be open. After Knott received this information, he communicated with the trustee in Reo's bankruptcy case. The trustee informed Knott that Reo's bankruptcy case was still open but there were only a few days left in which to file a claim. With this knowledge, Knott retained the law firm of Miller, Canfield, Paddock and Stone, who immediately went to work and, in the time allowed, filed a claim for the City of Lansing, asserting millions of dollars for cleanup expenses relating to the Reo site.

At this time, environmental litigation was in its infancy. People hadn't bothered to look at what was going on underground. This type of litigation was a new genre for law firms and bankruptcy courts. When researching for ascertaining similar cases, a helpful precedent was found offering priority to states in collecting environmental cleanup costs in bankruptcy cases. This finding established a legal basis for the city's claim. It could be argued that Lansing, as a charter city, exists as a creature of the State of Michigan with similar statutory privileges. The credible, accurate records of the Lansing Fire Department established that 80-90% of the fires at Reo's plant reported were caused by chemicals.

Frequent meetings with many lawyers resulted in victory after victory, resulting in the city's claim being

“This settlement was unprecedented.

... Ransom Olds commitment to the business community of Lansing had been finally realized.

His desire for land operating as a vital economic tool would continue.”

allowed in Reo's bankruptcy case. The litigation over the allowance of the city's claim involved Reo's creditors' committee and Reo's bankruptcy trustee, and ultimately was settled. The money for cleanup of the Reo site was made available because it was classified as an administrative expense, taking priority over most other claims filed in the bankruptcy case.

In less than ninety days, the City of Lansing and the bankruptcy trustee reached an agreement requiring the trustee to pay from Reo's bankruptcy estate the sum of \$3.25 million for cleanup of the Reo site. This meant taking funds from Reo's pension fund, because these were the only funds left at

that point. The other responsible parties were also pursued, resulting in an additional recovery of \$500,000. These two amounts totaled \$3.75 million, which combined with the bond monies raised by the city, paid for the cleanup.

This settlement was unprecedented. The victory was the first of its kind by a Michigan city against corporate polluters, according to City Attorney Al Knott. The hope was that this settlement would demonstrate to companies that when you pollute, you cannot hide behind the shield of bankruptcy. Ransom Olds' commitment to the business community of Lansing had been finally realized. His desire for land operating as a vital economic tool would continue.

In 2004, instead of runabouts, the land holds cars like Chevrolets and Mercedes. Instead of assembly lines, people work at desks. Instead of sounds of grinding metal parts, there are sounds of computers, faxes, and telephones.

My office is one of four in a building constructed where the testing track and Reo clubhouse used to be. The former railroad depot across the tracks is abandoned with a “for sale” sign tacked on it. But the railroad tracks still bear more than twenty trains a day. The logistics have changed on how families work to earn money, but the principles that Ransom Olds firmly believed in still endure. The combination of an earnest inquiry and the successful assertion of a claim for environmental cleanup cemented Ransom Olds' commitment to Lansing's business community. The legend continues one hundred years later.

Endnotes

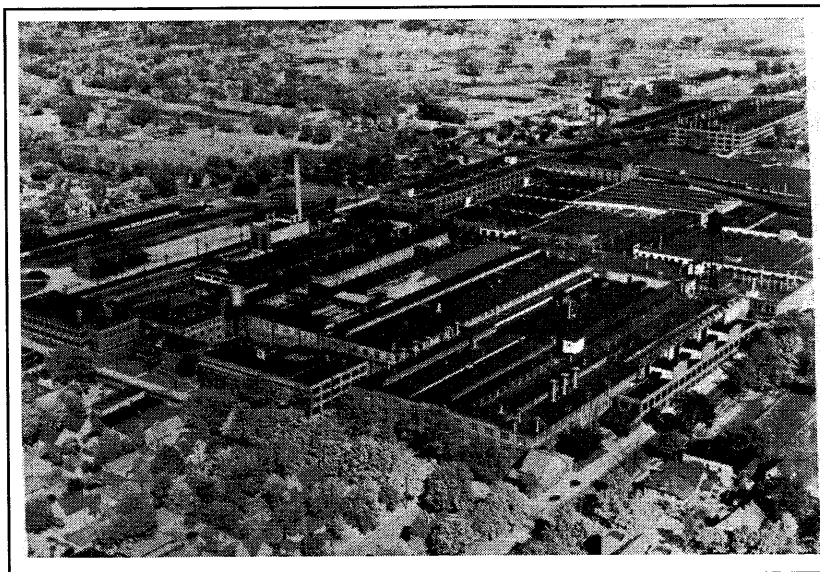
- 1 Patricia E. Heyden, *Metta and R.E. Olds - - Loves, Lives, Labors*, (Lansing: Stuart Publishing, 1997): p. 10.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- 3 Duane Yarnell, *Auto Pioneering: A Remarkable Story of Ransom E. Olds, Father of Oldsmobile and Reo*, (Lansing: Franklin DeKleine, 1949): pp. 84-85.
- 4 Lisa M. Fine, *The Story of Reo Joe*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004): p. 29.
- 5 *Op cit.*, Heyden, p. 63.
- 6 "Graves: Reo Too Run Down to Be National Monument," *Lansing State Journal*, June 23, 1978.
- 7 *Op. cit.*, Heyden, p. 74.

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- 10) Lisa M. Fine, *The Story of Reo Joe*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004).
- 11) Patricia E. Heyden, *Metta and R.E. Olds Loves Lives Labors*, (Lansing: Stuart Publishing, 1997).

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- 2) Alvin P. Knott, Esq., with Alvin P. Knott & Associates
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- 5) James R. Neal, Esq., of Loomis, Ewert, Parsley, Davis and Gotting

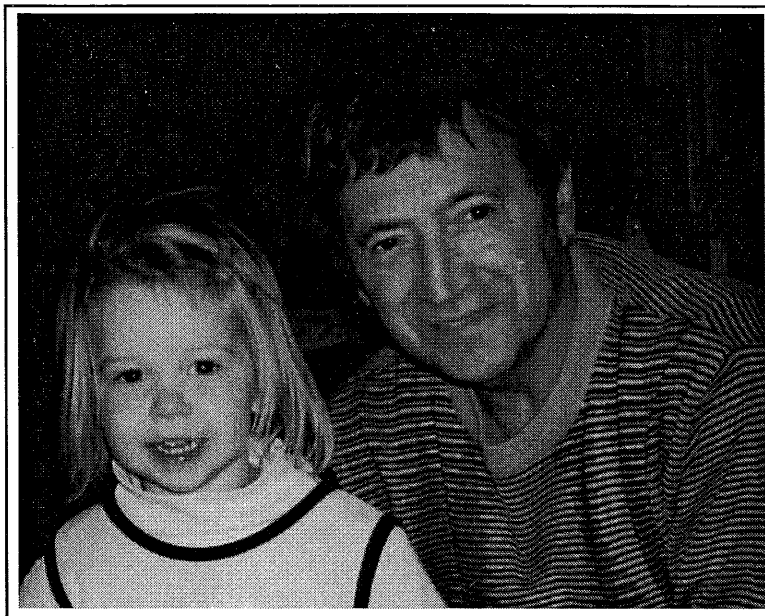


Aerial View of REO Plant

Tribute to Mark Latterman

Chief Judge Robert Holmes Bell

Mark Latterman's rather sudden death on December 24 from ongoing health concerns stunned the Lansing legal community where he had practiced for 36 years. Mark's business law practice centered upon his abilities as a consummate strategist, whether in changing a zoning matter or getting a bill through the legislature. Everyone was his friend — or about to become one. Mark was a thoughtful student of life and culture. He read widely, loved sports trivia, and listened remarkably well, never forgetting anything. As a history buff he was a knowledgeable authority on the Negro League baseball teams. He especially loved legal history. Mark had completed his article on Diamond Reo for the Stereoscope only a short time before his untimely death. His presence will be greatly missed on this Court Historical Society.



Mark and his granddaughter Sammy

In Memory of Mark Latterman

This issue of the Historical Society Journal is dedicated to Mark Alan Latterman, one of our Society Trustees, who passed away at his home on December 24, 2004. Mark had practiced in Lansing for 36 years and was remembered in the Lansing State Journal after his passing as follows:

Age 63, died December 24, 2004. Born April 21, 1941, in Pittsburgh, PA. Mark received his Bachelor's Degree from Michigan State University and his Law Degree from George Washington University in Washington, D.C. He established and operated Latterman & Associates, a private legal practice for the last 36 years. Mark loved working political connections that produced positive results. He was a Negro League baseball expert and sports trivia aficionado. Mark was an avid collector of books, and loved to read and share them with friends. He was a Director on the Lansing and Brighton Capital National Bank Board. Always generous and willing to listen Mark was a proud and committed husband, father and "papa". Surviving are his wife of 40 years, Marilyn "Joey" (Hicks) Latterman; daughters, Patricia J. (Rob) Latterman Love of Farmington Hills, Annette C. Latterman of Yukon Territory, Canada, and Sara J. Latterman of Denver, CO; Sons, Gregg A. (Sue) Latterman of Wilmette, IL, James C. Latterman of Lansing and Steven V. Latterman of Spokane, WA; grandchildren, Robbie, Kyle, Samantha, Conner and Jack; and sister, Gail Weaver of Pittsburgh, PA.

Mark's many talents and warm presence will be sorely missed by all of us.

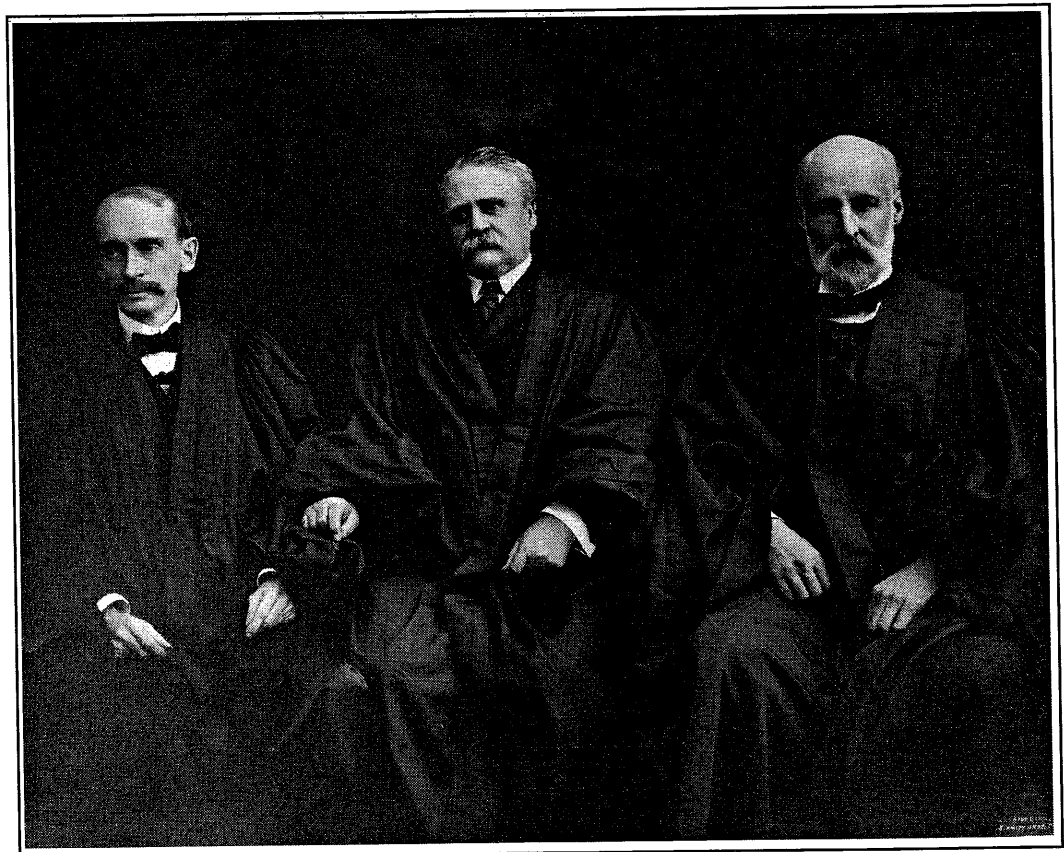
Recent Gifts to the Society

The Historical Society wishes to thank Jamie Geary of Howard & Howard Attorneys, P.C. for his recent donation of a photograph of former United States District Judge Henry F. Severens, a copy of which is reproduced below. This photograph was taken during Judge Severens' tenure on the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals. He is joined in the photo by fellow Judges William R. Day and Horace H. Lurton, both of whom were to be later elevated to the United States Supreme Court. Judge Severens was born on May 11, 1835 in Rockingham, Vermont and received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1857 from Middlebury College. Judge Severens read law in the office of Honorable H.E. Stoughton of Bellows Falls, Vermont, who was then the United States Attorney for Vermont during the administration of James Buchanan. In 1859, Judge Severens was admitted to practice law in Vermont and the next year moved to Michigan, establishing a law practice in Three Rivers. From 1861 to 1864, Severens was the Prosecuting Attorney for St. Joseph County. In 1865, he returned to private practice in Kalamazoo as a partner in the firm of Severens & Burrows. In 1867, he was the unsuccessful Democratic candidate for Congress in Michigan's Second District. President Grover Cleveland appointed Severens as a federal district judge on May 14, 1886, upon the death of Judge Solomon Withey and, on May 25 of that year, the United

States Senate confirmed his appointment to that position. Judge Severens was thereafter appointed to the Sixth Circuit by President McKinley to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of William Howard Taft. Judge Severens served on the Sixth Circuit from February 20, 1900 to October 3, 1911, when he resigned due to ill health. Judge Severens passed away on June 9, 1923 in Kalamazoo.

The Historical Society also extends its warm gratitude to Valerie Martin, the director of the District Court's Probation Office, for her contribution of a metal ledger maintained by that office from 1939 to 1940 containing cards for all probationers living in the Upper Peninsula during that time. These cards contain profiles of these individuals and describe the types of crimes that they committed.

The Society encourages anyone who has similar court memorabilia to preserve these treasures by contributing them to our archives.



(Left to Right) Judges William R. Day, Horace H. Lurton, and Henry F. Severens

Western District Historical Society Membership Application

2005 Annual Membership Dues 2005 Founding Membership Categories

Student	\$15	Pillar	\$300
Individual	\$25	Sustaining	\$500
Contributing	\$100	Patron	\$1000
		Grand Patron	\$2500
		Benefactor	\$5000

Membership Questionnaire

(submit with check and application form)

Dear New Member:

Please let us know of your interests and skills and whether you would be willing to share those with the Historical Society. Help us by completing this short questionnaire.

Name _____

Firm name, Employer name, or Organization represented _____

Special interests or experience in the field of history, local history or legal history: _____

Suggestions for programs, projects, or activities for the Historical Society: _____

Membership contributions are cumulative. *E.g.*, a member who makes contributions eventually totaling \$2,500 becomes a Life Member.

FBA members are entitled to a 15% discount.

The annual membership year runs from November 1 through October 31.

Student Member's Name _____

Individual Member's Name _____

Contributing Member's Name _____

Founding Member's Name _____

Contact person if different from Contributing or Founding Member Name _____

Address _____

Email Address _____

Telephone _____ Fax Number _____

Amount Enclosed _____

Please check all the following that interest you:

- Writing articles for the Historical Society newsletter
- Layout and/or production of a newsletter
- Annual Meeting (planning and production)
- Oral History Project
- Research in specific legal history areas
- Fund development
- Membership Drive
- Archival Collection and Preservation
- Legal Issues relating to archival and oral history collections (copyright, ownership, etc.)
- Exhibit Preparation
- Small Group Presentations to Adults
- Small Group Presentations in Schools
- Other (Please describe) _____


Please make checks payable to:
 "The Historical Society for the USDC, WD of MI"

Mail the application, check and completed questionnaire (at right) to:
 The Historical Society for the USDC, WD of MI
 110 Michigan Street, NW, Room 399
 Grand Rapids, MI 49503-2313

Contributions are tax deductible within the limits of the law.
 Please indicate if this is a gift membership or if it is a special contribution.

_____ Amount _____

(Name of donor, intended honoree, memoriam, etc.)



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