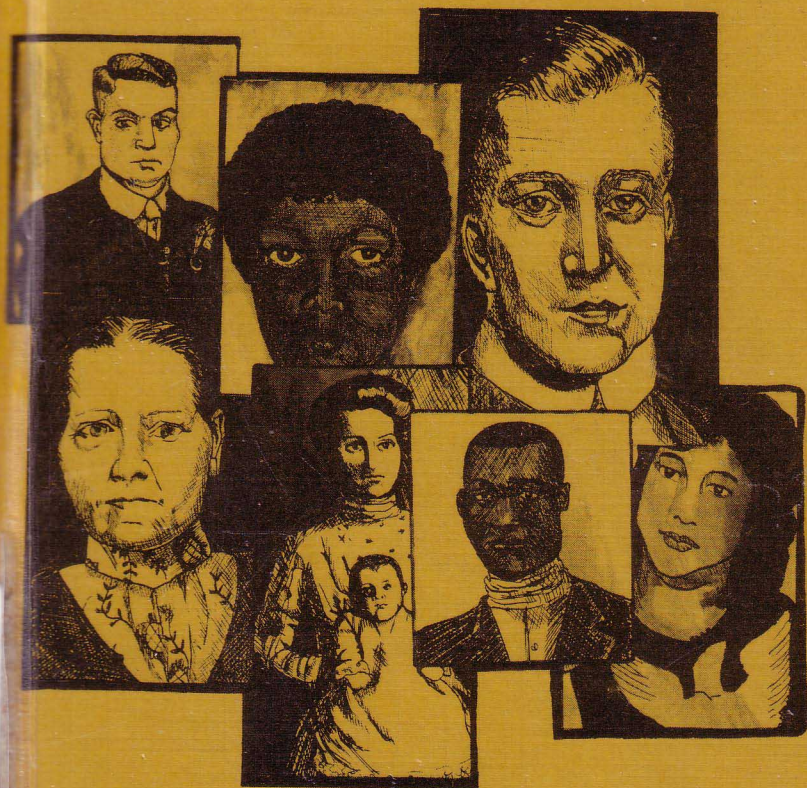


AN
ETHNIC HISTORY
of ALBION



by
Judy Powell

FOREWARD

In 1975 when communities across the nation were making plans for the 1976 Bicentennial celebrations, it occurred to me that after the big parade and the all-inspiring speeches we would return to our daily tasks and forget what we were really celebrating—people. The real strength in this great nation is its uncanny good fortune to extract the best characteristics of many nations and melt them into one.

What could be a more appropriate Bicentennial project than the ethnic history of a truly American city? Albion represents as true a microcosm of the "Melting Pot" as can be found anywhere in the world. The ethnic makeup of our community and the story of how, when and why each group arrived here is interesting. But much more intriguing are the facts that surround the evolution and assimilation of these "minority groups" into the mainstream of life in their new home. For some groups it took longer and they had to work harder; for some the process is not complete today—but we are learning.

The importance of this publication lies in its efforts to make most of us aware of what we are, where we came from, and what contributions our people have made; only with this knowledge can we be sure of who we are and where we are going. Only when we begin to understand these things about ourselves can we hope to understand and appreciate others. It is hoped that a sense of pride will flourish with every page—pride in our city, pride in our ethnic makeup and pride in each other.

If this publication could be utilized in each home as a silent mediator; if each time we criticized another group, we read about them; and if each time we started to hate, we tried to know and understand the hated, the results would be knowledge, understanding and pride in all our fellow citizens and in this truly American city. Read with an open mind and in the following pages you will begin to see America, the best of many nations, only in this instance the place is called Albion.

Charles W. Jones
Mayor of Albion

PREFACE

When I assumed the position as Bicentennial Coordinator for the Albion Bicentennial Commission in May 1976, I hadn't anticipated that this job would be as educational and exciting as it has proved to be. There were several projects that the Bicentennial Commission had selected to implement, but only two actually materialized, the Historic Walkway, which is a tour through the downtown district identifying historic landmarks in the city, and the ethnic history of Albion, a history of Albion's ethnic groups.

Although a native of Albion, I was quite amazed at my ignorance about the history of this city and its people. It was not until my research began that I discovered the wealth stored in the memories of our senior citizens. This wealth that I refer to also has another name—history. History of people, places, and events—history that's unrecorded.

Once I started the research, I realized that any written records would not furnish me with the specific answers that I was looking for and thus most of my information would have to be provided by word of mouth or what is more technically known as oral history. This presented a problem in that people tend to forget or mix up events and two persons may remember a single event differently or may provide different dates. When it was possible, I talked to a third or fourth person to try to substantiate a statement, but it should be remembered that in working with oral history there is always a certain degree of error. Too often, any possible written or published verification was not available, or, if it was, sometimes it was itself faulty. There are, I am sure, unintentional errors which have been made and I apologize for them on behalf of my sources and myself.

Originally a biographical section was to be included in the history, but when the great number of sketches necessary to include all of the ethnic people who have contributed to this community was realized, it was decided to abandon that plan. Therefore I have attempted to choose men and women whose achievements obviously stood out in certain areas like politics, business, education, and the like and to include these persons in their particular ethnic section.

I am sure that there are items omitted which should have been included, but I hope that this booklet can be viewed as just a forerunner, for a more detailed and elaborate history of the ethnic groups in Albion.

The process of collecting information and talking to people was a heavy task and would not have been possible without the assistance of some very special people who really love and care about this city.

The first person that I'm indebted to is Dr. Joseph Irwin, professor of English emeritus of Albion College, who edited the manuscript. Special recognition must also be given to Sarah Birtman-Fox, who designed the cover.

Other acknowledgments must go with much appreciation to the city of Albion, Mayor Charles Jones, City Manager Neil Godby and all of the city hall staff, to the Albion City Council for financing the project, to the Albion Public Library and the Albion Historical Society for the use of their records and facilities, to the Albion Evening Recorder and the editors both past and present, George Mather and Dave Moore, the Albion Bicentennial Commission and to all of the people that furnished me with pictures and/or information: Pat Geyer, Marge Gorman, Marthan Schumacher, Carl Lambrecht, Dr. and Mrs. Lawrence Heidenreich, Mr. and Mrs. Moses Union, Mr. and Mrs. James McIntosh Sr., Mr. and Mrs. Robert Pierson, Edna Holland, Henry Williams, Gertrude Hawkins, Anna Mae Smith, Diane Jones, Georgia Bates, Oscar Smith, Anne Cheek, Willie Davis, Anna Mae Dixon, Al Peters, Tom Lloyd, Tana Reynolds, Victor Calderone, Anne Carrigan, Chester Collier, Mary Felisky, Mary Joe Young, Eusebio Solis, Tomasa Solis, Minnie Cordova, Mr. and Mrs. Joe Benavidez, Joe Gonzalez, Idalie Feliciano, Concepcion Vasquez, David Farley, Dowell Smith, Katie Shelters, Fran Costianes, Marge Burstein, Ruthy Hull, Bobby Wall, Barbara Gladney, Mary Jane Glathart, Lena Maza, Hugh Sebastian, Mr. and Mrs. Juan Lerma.

There surely are others who helped me but whose names are unintentionally omitted.

I am grateful to all of these people and grateful for the opportunity to try to explain the richness of Albion for us all.

Judy Powell

ONE: ALBION'S ETHNIC MIX

The ethnic roots of Albion run long and deep and can be traced back to the 1860's when both Germans and Blacks started coming to the town which had been founded by New Englanders who came as early as 1832. Since that time the city has seen a constant influx of various peoples from abroad and from different sections of the United States.

Following the Germans and Blacks were the Italians, who came about the turn of the century. In 1907 the Russians came to Albion from New York and in 1916 a large group of Blacks came from the south. Prior to 1916, several Black families had lived in Albion at various times. Beginning in the early forties, Albion received yet another group, the Mexican-Americans; many of them came from Texas although a few came directly from Mexico. Others which have come over the years include the Greeks and the Jews and members of other nationalities which came singly rather than in groups.

One reason that Albion has attracted so many diverse people is the number of various industries. Albion has always been a successful industrial town. The Gale company and the Malleable Iron company were two very important companies in the early history of Albion. These companies provided many newcomers with their first jobs.

The history of what was later known as the Gale Manufacturing company goes almost as far back as that of the town. The company was first organized in 1846 by James Monroe but it was not until 1861 that O. C. Gale, Horatio Gale, Augustus Gale, and E. W. Hollingsworth purchased the company and organized the Gale Manufacturing company.

The company made farm implements from 1863 to 1888. The first building was on the corner of W. Cass and Superior streets but the company, because of the rapid expansion of the business, had to relocate in bigger quarters on the corner of W. Cass and S. Albion streets.

The farm implements produced at the Gale were world renowned for their high quality and were sold all over the United States and many were shipped to foreign countries. In 1918 the company discontinued the implement business and entered the foundry business where it specialized in iron

casting until it closed in 1968. The old main office is located on N. Albion street.

The Malleable Iron company, under the leadership of Harry Parker directly recruited both Russians and Blacks to come to Albion to work at the Malleable. The company did not stop there but went on to provide all kinds of services like housing and churches for its employees. Mr. Parker acted like a father toward these people and was loved and highly respected by them. The history of the Malleable began in 1888 when the company was organized by Warren S. Kessler. The vacated building previously occupied by the Gale company was the first factory. The company operated in the old Gale building for ten years before building new quarters on N. Albion street in 1898. The products of the company have been used to manufacture wheels, stoves, agricultural implements, trucks, trailers, and automobiles. In 1977 the factory, now the Hayes-Albion Corporation, is the largest employer in Albion, employing some 1,350 people, who are still actually representative of Albion's various ethnic groups.

Albion's Early Settlers

While the ethnicity of Albion is fascinating, it would not have been possible if it had not been for those early New England pioneers. These pioneers came across swamps and wilderness to settle and found Albion somewhat late, for Marshall, Battle Creek, and Jackson had already been established.

The history of Albion is rich and officially starts when the first permanent white settlers arrived in the area that was referred to as the Forks. Among the first were the Peabodys, a family from New York. Before that time this area was inhabited by the Pottawatomie Indians, who lived along the Kalamazoo river during the summer months. The area got its name "Forks" because of the way the east branch and the south branch of the Kalamazoo river formed a fork as they came together here.

The Peabodys built their first cabin near the location of the present Presbyterian church near the river, and set about developing the land. Although the cabin no longer stands, the site has been designated by the Michigan Historical Society as "The First Home" and a plaque is located in the 300 block of E. Erie street.

Following the Peabody family, other New Englanders came like Jacob DeVoe, the Fitch family, Jesse Crowell, and many more. The most prominent and influential citizen of these early pioneers was Jesse Crowell. Mr. Crowell was a bachelor from New York and was very important in the building and establishment of institutions in Albion. He was the principal founder of the Albion Company, which owned a substantial amount of land. The Albion Company under Jesse Crowell's leadership, in June 1836, laid the plat for a village. Mrs. Tenney Peabody, the first and only white woman in the Forks at that time, was given the honor of naming the village. She chose the name "Albion" after the place where Jesse Crowell came from, Albion, New York.

The Albion Company was responsible for the existence of many things in the newly formed village, the first grist mill erected in 1837, the first cemetery, Riverside, which is still being used, the first U.S. Post Office where Mr. Crowell served as the first postmaster from 1838 to 1849. The Company donated sites for several churches including the Presbyterian, Methodist on E. Erie street, and the Baptist on N. Superior street. Perhaps the most significant act in terms of long range financial and educational benefits for the community was the establishment of a college here.

In 1838, sixty acres of land were offered by the Albion Company to the trustees of the Wesleyan Seminary for the location of a school in the village. Originally the seminary had plans to locate in Spring Arbor, but, because of difficulties, had failed to get started. Three years later in 1841, it was decided to accept the invitation from Albion, and the Wesleyan Seminary, later named Albion College in 1860, was founded here. Again Jesse Crowell was very instrumental in the seminary's locating here and was the school's very first benefactor.

Indian students were a prominent part of the history of Albion College until after the Civil War, for the college's establishment was in part to educate Indian students.

Albion College is now one of the leading private colleges in the state of Michigan, and is recognized all over the country for the high scholastic standards that it maintains.

Albion's Present Ethnic Distribution

According to the 1970 census records of Albion, only two

ethnic groups are recognized, the Blacks and the Mexican-Americans; all other groups are classified as white. The records stated that approximately 25% of the population was Black and 5% was Mexican-American. Albion is becoming the "melting pot" which is essential to the American dream. Over a period of time, groups with white characteristics have been absorbed into Albion's mainstream. Some did it over a period of time, others married into established or non-ethnic families, still others sped up the process by changing their last names or getting rid of their foreign accents, or moving out of what was commonly referred to as the "ethnic community." By whatever process, they succeeded in being assimilated into the community until now many second and third generation descendants of these ethnic groups are unrecognizable.

There has been a tendency among ethnic groups in Albion to have hostile feelings toward each other and in some cases racism exists. At first when the various groups came, most experienced some ill-feelings from members of the established community simply because of fear—fear of the unknown. The newcomers were different in dress, religion, custom, speech, and appearance in most cases. But gradually as other ethnic groups arrived and an earlier group moved up the ladder of success, it developed these same attitudes and began to feel threatened by the arrival of new groups. There have even been specific instances of members of one group owning a business and not wanting to service members of another. This behavior existed for many years, but today this form of discrimination and isolation is almost entirely gone.

The Festival and the All-American City Award

The annual Festival of the Forks celebration came about as a result of concerned citizens' wanting to improve the racial situation and the image of Albion. It was decided a non-commercial yearly festival would be held celebrating Albion's greatest asset: its ethnicity.

The first festival was held in 1967 and activities represented all segments of the community. Certain events are held yearly like the children's parade, the evening parade, and the international food booths. The ethnic food booths are an important part of the festival, for they allow

people to sample foods from various countries. Participants in the booths are encouraged to wear their native costumes and flags are displayed along mainstreet symbolizing the countries represented in Albion.

In 1970 through the efforts of Fran Costianes and her daughter Pauline, an international cookbook was assembled consisting of various ethnic recipes and was called the "Festival of the Forks Cookbook."

In 1973 Albion was the recipient of the National Municipal League's prestigious "All-America City Award." The awards, given yearly since 1949, are presented to several cities which have done outstandingly well in "civic activism despite setbacks to public confidence."

Albion was selected one of 18 finalists among more than 400 U.S. cities and then was chosen one of the nine winners. Albion won the award for three local community improvement programs in the areas of race relations, youth summer activities, and beautification and recycling.

The two programs most closely related to this ethnic history are the Melting Pot Club and the Earn, Learn, and Play. The club was organized in 1968 by two young couples, one white and the other black, who decided some action had to be taken to improve the relationship among whites, blacks, and Mexicans, primarily by means of social events. "Earn, Learn, and Play" was organized so that children of all backgrounds could work together, study together, and play together. Their work projects were primarily devoted to the city's beautification.

The ethnic groups in Albion are varied. Some have been assimilated; other still remain distinct to some extent. All have their own characteristics and their own customs. All have had problems through the more than one hundred years of Albion's existence. All have lived together, sometimes appreciatively and sometimes in conflict, but all — Germans, Blacks, Italians, Russians, Mexican-Americans and others together with the "old American stock" — have over the years come to an understanding of what makes America.

TWO: THE GERMANS

The first Germans started arriving in Albion in the early 1860's, but it is said that there was a large influx in 1868. The reasons that the Germans came to America were several, but freedom and the opportunity to better themselves were given as the most important ones. Others include the Prussian War with Austria in 1867 and Prussian suppression.

In Germany there was a prevalent custom that a man had to do what his father had done. If he was a carpenter by trade, then his son had to follow in his footsteps and his son in his and so on. There was little advancement in occupation regardless of ability. Germany was also a militaristic country and was aggressive and frequently at war. Young men were constantly being taken out of school for military service and many people had become weary of fighting. In consequence they, like many other people, decided to come to America.

Many of the Germans upon arriving in Albion settled in the Hannah street area, south of the east branch of the Kalamazoo river, which came to be called "Dutch Town." The explanation for this is that the word for German is "Deutsch" and the pronunciation became confused and the area was called "Dutch Town." Some German people also settled on Burr Oak street, Hall street, Chestnut street, Irwin avenue, and some on farms in the area surrounding Albion. The Germans have been credited with clearing much of the land near Albion of trees and heavy brush. The German settlers were said to have "eyes for the soil" and were scientific farmers in the old country, so, when they came to the United States, they selected areas with potentially good farm land to settle in.

Some Germans went into the factories to work because iron workers were needed at the Gale Manufacturing and the Malleable Iron company. Some had been iron workers in the old country so that many were qualified to fill positions in the foundries. These men were hard workers and advanced into higher positions as other groups arrived to work at the factories. The German people were also very ambitious people and some started their own businesses. One well-known construction company around town was the one owned and

operated by the most prominent German family in Albion at the time, the Schumacher family.

The Schumacher Family

The Schumacher family, Carl Ludwig Schumacher and Fredericke Raether Schumacher and their three children at the time, arrived in Albion on October 31, 1869. Carl had heard about Albion through an advertisement that sought master craftsmen to come to help build Albion. He had also been wanting to leave Germany because the country seemed to be plagued by many wars and he had already fulfilled his military obligations. The one thing which stopped him was lack of money; Carl and Fredericke needed twenty more dollars to meet the cost of tickets for their family of five. One summer night in 1869 a Prussian army captain whose life Carl had saved knocked on the door in the middle of the night and gave him twenty dollars. Carl was told not to light the light and was urged by the captain to leave the country immediately, for war was about to break out again. Carl thanked the man and the family quickly packed all that they could and left that same night just in time to sail from Hamburg to New York.

When they arrived in Albion on Halloween of 1869, they stayed with Karoline Unkie Behling, Fredericke's sister. That first cold winter was a difficult one for the family and they often wished that they had not left their home in Germany. The next year proved to be better and work began to come to Carl with the springtime. Hardly knowing a word of English, Carl went to work as a mason on the South Ward school job. Mr. Schumacher was a master stone mason and, with time, work was plentiful. From 1869 to 1880 Mr. Schumacher worked most of the time as a plow fitter at the Gale Manufacturing Company and was always there in the winter months. He also helped to make the concern's line of 1876 Centennial Plows. Mr. Schumacher laid the stone foundations for many of the early homes in Albion; he also laid the foundation for the famous Y-bridge at Zanesville, Ohio.

The Schumacher Construction company was formed in 1919 by Carl Schumacher's sons, Frederick and Albert, and his son-in-law, John Geyer, still a resident of Albion. The construction company was significant in the growth and development of Albion and its list of local accomplishments include

building the Washington Gardner Junior High School; the Public Library; Austin and Dalrymple elementary schools; Dean Hall, Wesley Hall, and the Kresge gymnasium on the Albion College campus; the old Malleable Iron Company plant; and many store buildings and homes. The company also had many construction jobs in the surrounding communities of Homer, Springport, Marshall, and Jackson.

Another German owned business significant to Albion was the Wochholtz and Gress Grocery and Coal business which was founded in 1904 by Henry Wochholtz and Fred Gress. Actually the firm was two businesses operated by related families in equal partnership. Many members of the family worked in the business. Mr. Gress had his office at the coal yard on the corners of E. Mulberry and Ionia streets, while Mr. Wochholtz worked primarily in the grocery store at E. Cass and S. Superior.

The grocery store was of the traditional kind. Charge accounts and delivery service, sometimes as often as three times a day, were available. The stock was typical of old line stores: meats, cheeses, canned goods, candy, pickles—even gasoline and kerosene. Clerks wore blue and white stripped aprons and prided themselves on friendly personal service. The business was closed in 1940.

Religion and the Churches

The German people were strongly religious, God-fearing people and it was only natural that they would want to have a church here since this was their new home. The first German church formed was the St. Paul's Lutheran church originally named the German Lutheran church because of the ethnic background and the language which was used for the services. On October 25, 1868, a Frederic Wilhelm came to Albion and conducted the first Lutheran service. Three weeks later he was successful in organizing a congregation of 54 charter members. The congregation worshipped in the rented Presbyterian church for about a year and then decided to buy the edifice which they renovated and moved to the corner of S. Superior and Elm streets. The first building actually built for the congregation in 1888 still stands on that corner as the Come and See Baptist church, one of the historic sites in Albion. The building was built to seat 350 worshippers when the population of the town was only 3,000. Today the descendants

of some of the early German citizens worship at St. Paul's Lutheran church on Luther boulevard.

Another German church, the German Evangelical Lutheran Salem Church, was founded in 1896. The congregation was organized in that year by the Rev. Otto Schettler, a retired minister who had come to Albion from Ohio and was persuaded to resume the active ministry for the benefit of a group of people who wished to form a church of their own. It is said that a controversy had developed in the other Lutheran church and, as a result, a group of its members left and formed the new church. A building was constructed on W. Pine street and the first service was held on October 1, 1898. During the years the name of the church has changed several times. Today the church is the Salem United Church of Christ.

The German people were devoted in their religion and the whole family attended church together every Sunday. Sometimes after church the German people would get together and have a great picnic and afterwards the men would go from house to house repairing each other's homes. There was also a custom among the German people in Albion that, if a family was coming over from Germany, the relatives and friends and the German community in general would prepare a house or place for them to stay. Also things like chickens or a calf or pig would be given to the newly arrived family so that they would have a little something to start off with. When friends or relatives from Germany wanted to come to Albion and did not have adequate funds, someone would send the money so that they could come over. Later the money would be repaid.

Some Difficulties and Some Characteristics

The German people encountered some problems because of their nationality. During World War I some German people, especially children, were ostracized and treated very unfairly. In the schools children were beaten on the playground by other children and were called derogatory names. Since Germany was at war with the United States, people tended to associate the German immigrants with that country, forgetting completely that this was their country, too, and their allegiance was to America. In some cases German children were treated so badly that teachers volunteered to

come to homes to teach.

The German people were, in general, very large; all of the men were tall and usually heavy and the women were strong and usually short. The women were considered good cooks and often spent many hours in the kitchen preparing foods. They also were the handlers of the money, and would pay the bills and save the money. The father was definitely the head of the household and was the disciplinarian.

In the German Community the family was considered sacred and all events were usually family oriented. A babysitter was unheard of and unknown. One German organization regularly held family dinner dances. Each family would bring a dish to pass and a great feast would be held and dancing would follow the dinner. Each family would donate money to pay for the hall and the musicians.

The German people enrolled their children in the Albion public schools upon their arrival here and the children learned the English language very quickly. Playing with the townspeople's children also helped them to acquire the language. Once the children became competent, they taught their parents to read, speak and write English.

Once the Germans became settled, they took the attitude that this was their country and their home so in many instances the parents stopped speaking German in the home. In those homes where the language was retained, it is said that some children had difficulty in school, but in most cases the children adjusted to school and graduated and some went on to college. By the second generation of Germans born in this country, assimilation had almost completely taken place and today descendants of the original German immigrants are involved in all aspects of life in Albion.

THREE: THE BLACKS

Before the turn of the century, Albion and Sheridan townships had a surprising number of Blacks and Mulattoes living here. Most of the older Blacks and Mulattoes were born in the slave states with most of their children being born in Canada, Michigan, or one of the states or territories where slavery did not exist. Some Negroes, obviously former slaves, came to Albion through Canada. Because of Michigan's geographic location Blacks migrated to the state either through Canada prior to the Civil War or directly from the South in the postwar period.

Most of the Negroes were employed. Blacks worked in positions such as laborers, both day and farm laborers, domestic servants, and barbers and hairdressers. The number of Black men who listed their occupation as barber was disproportionately large. The supply was definitely larger than the demand, so that some if, not most, of their patrons were white, or other jobs were also held by these men to make a living. Most of the Blacks living in Albion at this time were Mulattoes. Financially, they were poor, but, in some cases, a few had both personal property and/or real estate.

In the 1870's, a number of Blacks lived with white citizens (some prominent) of Albion. They were either housekeepers or day and farm laborers. What attracted this small number of Blacks to Albion, especially when the Black population was much larger in Marshall and Battle Creek? What made most of them leave before 1916? Only one descendant of these early Black settlers is living in Albion at the present time. It may be possible that some Negroes came through here on the underground railway and decided to stay. Perhaps some went on to Canada and came back after the Civil War.

Albion was a station on the Michigan underground railway that helped countless numbers of slaves escape to freedom. The route came into Michigan to the Quaker settlement near Cassopolis, and then to Schoolcraft, then Climax, Battle Creek, Marshall, and then on to Albion where Edwin M. Johnson was the agent. On to Parma, Jackson, Michigan

Center, Leoni, Grass Lake, Francisco, Dexter, Scio, Ann Arbor, Geddes, Ypsilanti, and Plymouth. Sometimes slaves went to Plymouth from Ann Arbor. From Plymouth they followed the River Rouge to Swartburg, then on to Detroit. From Detroit on to freedom. Pass words such as the following were used on the underground railway: "Can you give shelter and protection to one or more persons?" Most fugitives frequently came through under fictitious names when on the journey to freedom.

The Ku Klux Klan was also active in Albion at one time so this is a possible explanation for the disappearance of some of the earlier Black settlers. Reportedly the organization's headquarters were located on Irwin avenue.

The Coming of Blacks in 1916

In 1916, 64 Black men journeyed to Albion from Pensacola, Florida, to begin working at the Malleable Iron Company. Reportedly at this time only two Black families were living in Albion. They were the Richardson family and the Field family.

The great Black migration of the World War I era stimulated trends already under way. While Negroes were clearly dissatisfied with the whole pattern of race relations in the South, it was an economic crisis arising from several converging factors that precipitated the population movement. The cotton-based agriculture was suffering from the ravages of the boll weevil, which had entered the United States from Mexico. In 1915 disastrous floods in Alabama and Mississippi increased the misery of hundreds of thousands of rural Blacks. At the same time northern industry, fed by demands from the Allies in Europe, felt a great need for unskilled and semi-skilled labor. Since the World War cut off immigration from Europe and countries were calling their men home from America to fight in the war, the northern manufacturers encouraged the poverty-stricken Blacks to leave the South. At first the South felt that there was a blessing in the exodus, that this would create greater inducement for white immigration. But this was not the case. As the dimension of the European war expanded, the South had nothing to offer the potential white migrant comparable to the North's war wages, which were luring Blacks too.

In Albion during this time, the Malleable Iron Company

experienced a labor shortage as a result of World War I government contracts. It was then decided by the company's Board of Directors that Negroes would be recruited from the South to work at the factory. One early director and labor agent of the Albion Malleable Iron Company was M. B. Murray. Mr. Murray was largely responsible for the recruitment of Blacks from the South.

During this period when northern labor agents were going south to recruit Blacks, various problems were encountered by these men. Some agents were exorbitantly taxed, for example, as much as a thousand dollars in Birmingham, Alabama. Some cities like Montgomery, Alabama; Savannah, Georgia, and Jackson, Mississippi, made it a crime for labor agents to "entice" Blacks to go north. In Brookhaven, Mississippi, a labor agent was thrown in jail and the two hundred Blacks that he had recruited were hauled off a northbound train, beaten and dispersed. In places where their activities remained legal, agents were often arrested on trumped up charges.

According to James Hawkins Sr., the first group of recruited men arrived in Albion by special railway coach at about 2 a.m. The group was met by the superintendent of the Malleable at that time, Carl Schumacher and by Ben Brown. They were divided into groups and taken to houses for the night. One old timer reports that he could remember as many as twelve men sleeping in one room that first cold night in November when they arrived. The men stayed in boarding houses until they could earn enough money to buy or rent houses and then they sent for their families, after the long, cold and hard winter. When the Black families arrived most were located on the west side of town in company-built houses. This area was called the Gadsen Court area.

The starting wage for the men was 20 cents an hour which was not as much as the men had anticipated, so some moved to Detroit and New York hoping to find better employment there. When asked what the working hours were, one old timer laughed and said, "There were none." You went early at about 7 a.m. and came out sometimes as late as 8 or 9 p.m.

It has been said by some people that the residential segregation that exists in Albion today is a result of the first Negroes wanting to be segregated. Others said that segregation was present when they arrived here and that they did not want it that way.

The townspeople had a difficult time adjusting to the Black people because prior to this time they had had no experience with a large group of Black people. Some townspeople even moved to the east side of town when Blacks started settling on the west side.

One white senior citizen remembers how the Black men moved off the side-walk when white people were coming toward them. She said that they would take their hats off, tip their heads, and say, "Good morning, sir, or miss." This was done not because they wanted to, but because this was considered normal in the South. This was a custom that they had brought with them.

In general the reaction of the townspeople was negative toward the poor and uneducated Negroes, for some had forgotten that their parents and grandparents, too, had come to Albion to make a better life for themselves and their children.

Educational Problems

By the spring and summer of 1917, after the men had become settled, they sent for their wives and children. The school board was unprepared for the large number of Black children that came here. But the board together with the city council held special meetings to determine what type of education and what special arrangements would be made for the children.

The following three passages are from the school board records of that time. "On July 6, 1917, Mayor Hoaglin addressed the board of education on the question of the colored population." August 15, 1917: "City Council visited the board and had considerable discussion on the colored question." September 5, 1917: "Moved by trustee Dean that we rent the colored church at \$25.00 per/month for four months and heat the same." This motion passed and was later implemented since, in minutes dated October 3, 1917, Lena Cable was hired by the school board to teach at the "Colored Church." So the Community Church was used for a short while as a school for Black children. A 1918 newspaper clipping describing the problems being handled by the school board states: "Another problem that your board is working on is the right way of handling the schooling of the large number of colored pupils that have settled in our city. However, we hope to make some

satisfactory arrangements for the coming school year." What the conclusion of these meetings was no one seems to know since all of the important decisions were made in special session and no records have been found of these meetings.

One Black woman can remember that as a child she went to the East Ward school for one day but the next she went to Austin school with all of the other Black children. At Austin school she remembers that the white children were upstairs and the Black children were in the basement. Each morning when the bell rang, two lines were formed and the white children went upstairs to white teachers and the Black children went downstairs to Black teachers. It is reported that there was a similar classroom for Black children at Dalrymple school. This practice of segregation went on until West Ward school was renovated and turned into an all-Black school.

* West Ward school, located on Cass and Albion streets, was built in 1873. The two-room school was retired until it was again put to use as a Black school in 1918; later two rooms were added to accommodate the large number of pupils. The school reached its peak in 1948 when 135 pupils were enrolled and four teachers taught there. An article in the October 15, 1953, edition of the *Battle Creek Enquirer*, records, "The school was closed but, at the request of Negro parents recently arrived in the city, was opened to be a school exclusively for the colored children taught by colored teachers." This practice was not uncommon at the time. In other cities where Negro children were insulted in the mixed public schools, colored citizens successfully appealed for separate schools. Thus a segregated school system might be inaugurated by the white authorities or might be requested by Black parents because it would be preferable to no schools at all or to a mixed system where their children were mistreated. Another explanation given was that the Rev. James White and other Negro leaders at the time circulated a petition in the Black community asking that the Blacks be given their own school, the reason being that several Black teachers in Albion could be employed in this way. The Black teachers that were here had come with relatives or friends. These teachers had only taught Black children in the South and would only be allowed to teach Black children in Albion if they taught at all. The petition was later presented to the school board and, as a result, West Ward school was designated specifically to be

used as a Black school. No records of any of the above allegations can be found in the school board records of the time. Some persons tend to think that Blacks in Albion at that time wanted to be segregated. This explanation does not seem plausible since segregation was already being practiced in the Albion public school system before the Negroes asked for a separate school, if indeed they did ask at all. If the school board was already practicing segregation by separately educating the Black children at Austin school, then perhaps Black parents felt that asking for their own school would solve the school board's problem of how to handle the colored population newly arrived in the city. Being newly arrived from the South, they did not want any controversies started over the education of their children, especially when, in the South, their children had been separately educated for years.

During the existence of the West Ward school, qualified and certified Black teachers that came to Albion seeking employment were told that Black teachers were placed in only one school, West Ward. They were further told that any vacancies in other schools would be filled by white teachers only.

West Ward school was described as being dark, damp, small and cheerless. In one teacher's opinion the limited supplies and equipment that were available to the school were discarded from the other elementary schools.

The Closing of West Ward School

Several attempts, including boycotts, were made over the years to close down the West Ward school and to integrate the children into the other elementary schools; these attempts failed because of the lack of substantial support from all Black parents.

The events leading up to the 1953 showdown between the N.A.A.C.P. and the school board were several. First, promises had been made for years that the West Ward school would close after the current school year. Second, an unqualified teacher on the staff at the school had not taught her students math for one whole school year, and, third, Black parents had become dissatisfied with a separate and unequal school which was not fulfilling the academic needs of their children. The Black community needed a spokesman and, since Robert

Holland Sr. was one of the first parents trying to have the sub-standard school closed, he assumed the leadership position. In 1953, Mr. Holland, along with the N.A.A.C.P., in an organized effort began to apply pressure to the board of education to close the deteriorating and segregated school. Some parents, in an effort to expedite the closing of the school, kept their children home.

On October 20, 1953, a group of Black parents from the West Ward school district went to the school board meeting. The following was taken from the school board minutes for that day: "Letter dated September 25, 1953 from Mr. Charles Snyder, President of the N.A.A.C.P. in Albion regarding the closing of the West school. This was tabled because the board was still studying the matter. . . . Group of people from the West school district, who had been sitting in on the meeting, again brought up the question of closing the West school. After a discussion of the matter, they were informed that we could not give them our decision until we could further consider the matter. The Board after consideration of several proposals, acted as follows. Moved by Smith, supported by Cartwright, that the Superintendent of schools be authorized to proceed with the transfer to the twenty-six children remaining on the West Ward school rolls, in accordance with the wishes of their parents; said transfers to be made on the basis recommended by a group of parents from the Dalrymple school district; such individual transfers to be made on the basis of the enrollment in the particular grade of the school or schools involved. Five members of the board voted in favor of the motion; one opposed. The motion carried."

It was on October 20, 1953, that the school board made the decision to close the school, and transfer the remaining children but only under certain conditions. One condition was that "said transfers were to be made on the basis recommended by a group of parents from the Dalrymple school district." At the time that the West Ward controversy had been brewing, a white parents' organization was forming at Dalrymple school. The organization, which had quite a few members, felt that, if the regular schools were going to be completely intergrated, they should have something to say about it. The organization decided to send a letter to the school board. The letter dated September 19, 1953, contained the following six points:

" 1. Will accept children [Black] in regular classes. Felt this

best and less liable to cause problems.

2. Will not accept Negro Teachers in any capacity.
3. Will support Board on #1 and help sell it to others.
4. Felt sure they represented over 50% of thinking parents.
5. Cannot speak for Southerners [White].
6. Don't want Negroes to know their names and they want the Board to call a private session."

The letter also had names of some of the organization's members. It would appear that the school board and the organization had made plans of their own, but, since the records of private school board meetings are unavailable, it is not clear what those plans might have been.

During the boycott by Black parents at West Ward school, Black teachers were called into the Superintendent's office and told that they should try to convince Black parents to put their children back in school if they wanted to continue teaching in the Albion Public schools. Some teachers did what he had asked; others did not. One qualified teacher who had supported the N.A.A.C.P. found that she was without a classroom teaching assignment after the school had been closed. She kept her same salary for going into students' homes to tutor students who had fallen behind in their class-work as a result of the boycott. This arrangement was made by the superintendent so that, after the school year, she could be fired, the logic being that she had been paid a teacher's salary for working only two or three hours each day. Several letters were written in support of this teacher and threats were made to the school board of taking the matter to the Michigan Education Association and to the National Education Association. The superintendent, realizing the severity of the situation, offered her a job at Austin school for the next school year.

One story of particular interest during the existence of West Ward school is told by James McIntosh. Mr. McIntosh lived in the house at 218 S. Albion street. Next door lived a white family. Each day the McIntosh children would walk past his neighbor's house to go to West Ward school, the all-Black school, and his neighbor's children would walk past his house to go to Dalrymple school. After a while this situation began to bother Mr. McIntosh and he went to the school board and asked that his children also attend Dalrymple school. The school board ignored his request so Mr. McIntosh took his children out of school while his disagreement went

on with the school board. Mr. McIntosh received pressure to put his children back into school but he felt that he did not have to send his children to an inferior, segregated school but, most important, he felt that he was right. After months of going to school board meetings, and threats of being thrown into jail, Mr. McIntosh was victorious. The school board conceded and the McIntosh children enrolled in Dalrymple school. After the school board granted this request, various efforts were started over the next few years to close down the segregated West Ward school.

Religion, Business and Politics

When the first group of Black men arrived in Albion in 1916, they were invited to worship at the First Baptist Church and the First Methodist Church. The Malleable, sensing that these men were very religious, decided to build a church for the Black people.

The first Black church in Albion stood on the corner of West Cass and Culver streets, and was called the Community Church. The church was a gift from the Malleable Iron Company. The congregation consisted of Baptists and Methodists. At first both denominations worshipped together, but later found it necessary to alternate Sundays. There were several non-ordained ministers attending the church and each felt that he should preach each Sunday, or, in other words each wanted to be pastor of the church. The ministers were the Rev. James White, the Rev. Lewis, the Rev. Leggett, and the Rev. Allen Solomon. Because the congregation could not decide on one pastor, the problem was taken to the Malleable Iron Company officials.

The Malleable suggested that each minister alternate Sundays. This went on until one of the ministers wanted to take the church into a Methodist conference; that is the time when what is now Bethel Baptist Church separated from the Community Church. The Rev. Neverson of the Methodist faith was the pastor of the Community Church for awhile. The First Methodist Church had sent him to be pastor of the church but he left because of the Methodist-Baptist controversy. Mrs. James Hawkins Sr. remembers how curious the townspeople were about the church. Each Sunday afternoon some would come to visit the church to hear gospel singing and others would come in the morning to work in the Sun-

day School.

When the Baptist members separated from the Community Church, they went to the Malleable officials and asked that a church be erected for them which they would pay for. The Malleable agreed and the Bethel Baptist Church was officially organized in 1918. In 1977 in Albion there are ten Black churches of various denominations: Bethel Baptist Church, Church of Christ, Church of God in Christ, Come and See Baptist Church, Grace Temple Church of God in Christ, Leggett Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, Lewis Chapel A.M.E. Church, Macedonia Baptist Church, and Mount Calvary Baptist Church.

The Goodwill Singers are a group of young men and women from several churches who spread interracial goodwill through the ministry of music. The group began in 1957 with ten young Christian men and women, all of one faith. Later the group expanded and included young people of other faiths who sang not to entertain, but to give praise to God by interpreting the gospel in song.

The Singers have distinguished themselves in concerts throughout most of Michigan as well as Ohio and Indiana. They have earned praise singing in churches and concert halls, prisons and hospitals, as well as in the events recognizing Albion's designation as an All-America city.

The Singers have made two long playing records with RCA and Columbia labels. The repertoire includes Negro spirituals, Black folk music, hymns, anthems and gospel songs.

Willa Pierson, organizer and director of the choir, has had training in piano, voice and choral techniques, primarily from private instructors. She is presently minister of music at the Grace Temple Church of God in Christ.

Although there are few Black businesses in Albion in the mid-1970's, there were even fewer in the 1920's and 30's. In the South a town with the same Black population as Albion would have had more Black businesses, because segregation had made better business people out of the Negroes. Segregation made them develop businesses and try to do things for themselves.

Three early Black businesses in Albion included the Bennett Pool Hall and Tavern established in 1917, the Union Barbershop-Cleaning Business in 1920, and the Pierson Grocery Store in 1937. All three businesses were very

successful and received the support of the Black Community. For a time the Bennett Pool Hall was the only Black business in the main business section of Albion. Of the three businesses only one remains — the Union Cleaners. After over 50 years of service to the community, Mr. Union's business is still a successful and thriving business. In 1977 in Albion there are approximately 15 to 20 Black operated businesses in various other categories: barbershop, beautyshop, grocery store, janitorial service, restaurant, shoe repair, sweeper shop, tavern, and wig shop.

Most registered Blacks in Albion have always exercised their right to vote but it was not until 1954 that Blacks actually started to participate in local government. They went to the polls to vote for one of their own — James McIntosh. Mr. McIntosh served on the Albion City Council for three four-year terms and represented the second precinct. After serving on the City Council for twelve years, Mr. McIntosh went on to become a county commissioner.

Since that time Blacks have become increasingly interested in local government. The late Robert Holland Sr. also served on the City Council representing the second precinct from 1966 to 1974 when his death occurred. He had also been active in N.A.A.C.P. and Lewis Chapel A.M.E. Church and had served on the County Board of Health as vice-chairman and on the board of trustees on Albion Community Hospital. Holland Park, named after him, is located where West Ward school once stood.

Serving along with Councilman Holland was Charles Jones, representing the first precinct. Elected in 1966 Mr. Jones served as councilman until deciding to run for mayor in 1974. Mr. Jones defeated his other three opponents and was elected Albion's first Black mayor. Mayor Jones's victory signaled a new day in Albion and was truly indicative of an All-America city. Mayor Jones was re-elected for another term in 1976. In 1974 two other Blacks were elected to serve on the city council: Ronald Gant from the first precinct and the late Richard Tate from the second precinct. Mr. Tate was replaced by Robert Thomas in November 1976.

Richard Weatherford was elected in the 1976 election as county commissioner from the 12th district defeating an incumbent.

In city government Millard Coleman is serving as the first Black city clerk-treasurer, and Max Patterson as the first

Black police chief, and Shirley Jackson as the first Black planning and community development director.

Housing, Employment, Organizations, and Discrimination

When Black families started arriving in Albion in 1917, they were located on the west side of town in the Gadsen Court-Culver street area in Malleable Iron company-built houses. These houses were rented out to families for a monthly fee. The houses were described as small with no running water inside. After the Malleable had recovered the cost of building the little homes, they were sold to families wanting to buy them. These houses remained standing until the urban renewal program caused most of them to be torn down in the late sixties.

From this small section of town Blacks started moving further away but still on the west side of the city. As the Russian and Polish people started moving out of the Austin avenue-Albion street area, Blacks started moving in. At one point in Albion's history Eaton street was considered the "Mason-Dixon line" and Black people never ventured beyond this street when looking for a house to live in. While most Blacks still live on the west side of town, they now have freedom to buy in any section of town. Financially they are more able to do so than they formerly were.

In the first few years the Blacks made Albion their home, most if not all of the Black men were common, unskilled laborers. They were generally poor and uneducated people who had left the South looking for a better way of life for themselves and their children. Since that time their grandsons and grand-daughters have become successful in their chosen occupations. Today in Albion most Blacks are still factory workers, but a number of them are skilled laborers. Some have received training in a particular trade and as a result of specializing are classified as skilled laborers.

A very small number of the Blacks in the community are professional people, the largest group of Black professional people being in education.

Mrs. Ruth (Morris) Ferguson, a long-time resident of Albion, was a teacher in the Albion Public Schools for many years. Mrs. Ferguson came to Albion in 1926 and taught in the

West Ward school until it closed; later she taught at Crowell school until her retirement in 1965. Mrs. Ferguson participated in several educational organizations and was involved in various community activities such as the Negro Business and Professional Women's Club, the Albion Public Library Board, the local chapter of N.A.A.C.P. She also was for 15 years superintendent of the Leggett Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church Sunday School.

Mildred Biggs has been principal of Dalrymple school since 1969. After attending West Ward school herself, she later taught there and then at Crowell school before becoming principal of Dalrymple. She participates in various professional organizations and is a member of the local chapter of N.A.A.C.P.

Willie Boggan, a graduate of Dartmouth College and now a lawyer, is Albion's first Rhodes scholar.

Some of the early Black organizations in Albion were the fraternal organizations like the Woodmen, International Free and Accepted Modern Masons, and the Eastern Star. These organizations were brought here by the men and women that came. These secret organizations were considered prestigious and often gave status to members in the Black community. Today both the Masons and the Eastern Stars are active in Albion.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was first established in Albion in 1933. Moses Union was the organization's first president. Under Mr. Union's leadership the Parker Inn Hotel opened its doors to Blacks. Prior to this time the Inn did not accept Black customers in the hotel or dining room. Another thing that the newly formed organization was instrumental in doing was convincing the white funeral home in Albion at that time to let Blacks have their funeral services at the funeral home's chapel. Today the N.A.A.C.P. is still alive and active with a membership of more than 100. Each year the organization holds its Annual Freedom Fund Banquet which, in the past, has invited influential and prominent speakers such as Julian Bond, Georgia state legislator, and Roy Wilkins, the Association's past national president. The local organization has just recently established the W.E.B. Dubois Award which will be given annually to a deserving senior at the Albion Senior High School.

The local chapter of the National Association of Negro

Business and Professional Women's Clubs was founded in 1964 by 17 Black women. The purpose of the association is to create an atmosphere in which Black women will be able to fully participate in and bring about meaningful changes in their public and private lives, to communicate the present psychological, social, educational, recreational, and economic status of women, to offer positive models to the young women of the community, and to share skills and knowledge with the less informed, to encourage the formation of women's commissions on the local level, and to explore alternative ways for women to meet the multiple challenges of today's changing world.

Each year the organization holds various activities but the most important event is a program which recognizes individuals of the community who have contributed their time, service, and skills to Albion in many ways. The most prestigious award given at this program is the Sojourner Truth Award. It recognizes meritorious community service, deep concern, and participation in all activities advancing the status of women. Other awards presented are the Man of the Year award, the Woman of the Year award, and a community service award. There are also business awards.

Over the years there have been specific incidents in which Black people in Albion have been discriminated against, or where forced segregation existed. At Riverside Cemetery for decades, Blacks were required to bury their dead in a separate section of the cemetery, not because they chose to, but because there was a designated area for deceased Black people. This practice was still common in the sixties. At some of the local theaters over the years forced segregation also existed. After paying the same admission fee as others, Blacks could not choose freely where they might sit, as did whites, but instead were ushered to a "colored section." At hotels in Albion at one time Black visitors could not find lodging because the hotels did not cater to Black people. By 1977 all of these patterns of discrimination and segregation had been eliminated.

The Negroes in Albion, while not the newest of the ethnic groups, had a long way to go, for many of them had been southern rural workers who had to make places for themselves in an industrial community. Particularly in the last twenty-five years, probably beginning with the closing of

the West Ward school, great progress has been made in their achieving a place in Albion's mixed society. There has been improvement in economic and social status, in overcoming discrimination and prejudice, and in gaining voice and influence, particularly in educational and political affairs. The isolation once felt is now disappearing.

FOUR: THE ITALIANS

The first Italian immigrants started arriving in Albion about the turn of the century. Their reasons for coming to America were basically the same as those of other groups: the freedom that America offered and the opportunity for economic advancement. Members of a family, after deciding to make Albion their home, sent back to Italy for relatives and friends to join them. Therefore many of the first Italians were from the same home town or region in Italy. Work being scarce, many Italian men came to Albion specifically to work in the foundries.

The Malleable Iron Company has served as a place of employment for many Italian men over the years while others were self-employed. These men were hired as laborers and unskilled workers to fill the need at the bottom of the employment ladder. But as they learned and other groups arrived, they advanced to semi-skilled and skilled jobs at the Malleable.

The Opening of Italian Businesses

At the same time some Italian men began opening their own businesses. Among them were Anthony Mollica, a tailor, Nicholas Daleo, who operated a fruit store on N. Superior street, and Mr. Imperiali, who owned the Star bakery on Austin avenue. Other businesses included Michael Magnotta's shoe shop where leather shoes were made by hand. In 1914 Mr. Magnotta with his brother-in-law, Rocco Comperchio, operated a poolroom and smoke shop for awhile and later Mr. Magnotta established a pop bottling company. Sam Vitale bought the Magnotta shoe business and was later joined in the business by Victor Calderone. Mr. Calderone, an excellent musician and a great lover of music, played his clarinet in bands around town and also gave private music lessons to many young musicians. In 1932 Mr. Calderone, along with his brother Santo formed the Albion Beverage Company in Albion and Battle Creek as wholesalers of beer and wines; the business continued until 1966. Mr. Calderone, now 86 years old, still plays the clarinet and saxophone.

Many Italian businesses have come and gone but the one

started by Robert (Rosario) Cascarelli around the turn of the century is still in existence although it has changed somewhat from the original. Mr. Cascarelli was first located in business at about 103 N. Superior street where he suffered losses in the flood of 1908. He then moved to a Center street location which became a fruit store and ice cream parlor. Mr. Cascarelli was a good businessman and prospered in that location where his son Louis continued in business for over forty years until his death in 1975 and where Louis' son James is now doing business.

In early Albion it was quite important for a man to live close to his place of employment. Those Italians who owned businesses often lived upstairs over their stores or in the rooms behind them. Many single Italian men were boarders in some houses on W. Mulberry and Clinton streets. There was also an Italian-filled boarding house on E. Erie street by a branch of the Kalamazoo river. It is said that one day some one plugged the chimney of the stove so smoke came pouring out into the house. The newly arrived immigrants, being terrified, dove out of the windows into the river to the amusement of the pranksters. On Austin avenue, west of Albion street, some Italian families lived in the gray company houses which the Malleable had constructed for its employees. The houses on the east side of N. Albion street were also occupied by Italian people. Front yards were often filled with gardens of vegetables like tomatoes and pepper plants and everyone had grapevines. Today descendants of these original Italian immigrants are dispersed all over town.

Education, Language and Politics

Upon arrival here the Italian children were enrolled in the Albion Public schools without any difficulty. Although school was mandatory in Italy, officials did little to keep children in school; as a result many were without a formal education. Here parents soon realized the importance of education and stressed education and saved so that their children could go to college. Language was a small problem to the Italian children entering school. Most made the adjustment and learned English very quickly. It was an unheard of practice among some early Italians to educate girls, especially to give them a college education, but Michael Magnotta managed to change many opinions by sending all five of his

daughters to college. Today many children of Italian descent have, upon graduation from college, gone on to do well in their chosen professions.

In most homes Italian was spoken by the parents and some children. But as time passed many parents, particularly fathers, felt that America was home, and English should be spoken. In these families youngsters grew up understanding one language but speaking another.

Interest in politics always ran high with the Italian people. The original generation of Italian immigrants did not participate at first because they had not obtained U.S. citizenship. James Torre and Michael Magnotta spent many hours helping their people prepare for naturalization and then appearing with them to vouch for their integrity and character. Many Italians considered themselves Republican because Albion was a Republican town at that time. Some voted Democrat for the first time in 1928. Second and third generation Italians have actively participated in politics and have held various political positions.

One such person was the prominent and distinguished circuit court judge, the late Alfonso Antonio Magnotta. Mr. Magnotta was a product of both Albion High School and Albion College where he was outstanding as an MIAA guard in football. Upon graduation from the University of Detroit Law school in 1935, he was admitted to the bar the following year. In 1936 he was elected to the Michigan House of Representatives in the Roosevelt landslide. In 1946 he was elected mayor of Albion. During his term in office parking meters were installed and parking lots prepared. In 1960 Mr. Magnotta was elected Circuit Court Judge for Calhoun County and became well known through his program of solitary confinement. In 1977 Alfonso Magnotta Jr. holds the position that his father previously held as Circuit Court Judge for Calhoun County. In local politics James Cascarelli serves as city councilman for the sixth precinct. He was elected in 1976.

Early Reactions to the Italians

Reaction to the arrival of the Italians was mixed. Many townspeople welcomed them because they realized they were needed for the growth and development of the city, while others felt they were intruders and were somewhat

suspicious of their ways and customs. Older people can still remember stones thrown at them with derogatory words and remarks. In one person's opinion they did not know whether slights and slurs were due to their being Italian, being Catholic, being a member of a large family or simply being poor, but did know that the harassment was due to being different.

During the early twenties the Ku Klux Klan became quite active and there were meetings at which fiery crosses were burned while white hooded figures stood near. One story of particular interest was the encounter of Michael Magnotta with the Ku Klux Klan. One evening Mr. Magnotta and his children were traveling north on Duck Lake road. After telling his children to put their heads down, he stopped the car and got out. Several pairs of curious eyes peered over the top of the door and were horrified to see dozens of hooded, white figures with two flaming crosses glowing in the dark. After a conversation Mr. Magnotta came back to the car and sped away. It was later learned that Mr. Magnotta had been suspected of breaking up a KKK rally by shooting a gun in the air, and scattering the participants.

The Italian people were often difficult for others to understand because of their behavior. These people came from a country and culture where the outward expression of emotions and feelings was normal. They were unafraid of showing their emotions and they had a zest for life. The most important aspect of the Italian community was the "family." All activities revolved around it.

The important events of life like weddings and births were celebrated with much excitement. Family and friends celebrated these occasions with food, wine, music, dancing and laughter.

In those days there was not an Italian home in Albion without a grapevine or grape arbor. Italians were great drinkers of wine because in Italy water was often scarce and unsafe for human consumption, so wine was the solution to thirst. The drinking of wine was a way of life although drunkenness was frowned on. Many Italians often made home-made wine. One person said he can remember as a child going to the Eastern Market in Detroit to get a load of yellow grapes. At home the grapes were crushed in a tub by his dad who had put on his wine boots. The juice was then poured into wine barrels to age.

It is said that during the mid-twenties an organization called the Black Hand or Mafia was active in Albion. The organization tried to extort funds from Italians that seemed to be prospering. Several families were recipients of black bordered letters which were a sign of mourning indicating a death in the family, but, in this case, indicating that the Black Hand wanted money. Threats were made against children or homes if demands were not met. One death is said to be attributed to this group.

Many Italians upon becoming settled in Albion joined the local parish of the Catholic Church. Some of the names taken from the St. John's Church records of that time include Asaro, Torre, Domingo, Calvarusso, Orlando, DeMassio, Biafore, Manino, Marino, Geluso, Gianformaggio, Imperiali, Signorella, Bommarito, Magnotta, Fortunata, Tocca, and Comperchio.

Today descendants of some of these early Italian immigrants are still living in Albion. Many have maintained their identity while others have intermarried with other groups and have become assimilated so that sometimes national identities and customs have been lost. In general, the Italians in Albion are still distinct but are active not only within their own circles but in the community at large.

FIVE: THE RUSSIANS

The first Russian immigrants who came to Albion were brought by Harry Rosenthal, a recruiter for the Albion Malleable Iron Company. Mr. Rosenthal and Carl Schumacher were commissioned by Harry Parker, who was then president of the Malleable, to visit New York to recruit for the company, which was in need of manpower. At that time Ellis Island was the landing place for all immigrants coming into this country from Europe and was teeming with immigrants needing jobs thus making a very viable labor market for the company.

The first group of about forty Russians who came to Albion in 1907 were just a few of the many thousands of Russian immigrants who came to this country that year. These immigrants left Russia for several reasons, among them the Russo-Japanese war and the tyrannies of the Russian Imperial government.

Unable to live satisfactorily in their homeland, they sought refuge in the United States only to learn that America was not a perfect place to start all over again. When they got to New York, they were crowded into the slums of Manhattan and the Bronx, with no employment, and unable to speak the language. This was the time when a group of Russians was approached about coming to Albion to work at the Malleable Iron Company, largely in unskilled jobs. The work was hard physically and called for long hours. So, along with other ethnic groups, they formed a labor force for local industry. Over a period of time some became skilled at their work and today descendants of these early immigrants can be found working in various occupations.

Work at the Malleable was tedious and the wages were low, but, to a people who had grown up on farms and in small villages, and who knew starvation, and deprivation as far as education and medical facilities were concerned, this was something good. The hard work and the low wages could be endured in exchange for religious and political freedom and the other opportunities that this country had to offer.

In the first few years, the Russian population in the city increased considerably as more and more immigrants came from New York. There were White Russians, Ukranians, and

Galicians, and they brought with them many old country suspicions. A White Russian was suspicious of a Ukranian, and a Ukranian was suspicious of a Galician and this resulted in arguments and fights. Constantly being compressed in this small area with very little social contact with the rest of the community caused further difficulty. The town officials and the Malleable officials decided to build a settlement house which would provide recreational activities for the immigrants. At first no one came when the settlement house opened and the officials wondered why. This was the time when Helen Egnatuk, who acted as a liaison person between the Russian community and the company, told the officials that a church and not a settlement house was needed for these people who were highly religious. With the help of Mr. Parker and some other townspeople what is now the Holy Ascension Russian Orthodox church was built, and it did have a quieting effect.

Helen Egnatuk, commonly referred to as Stara-Russka meaning old Russian woman, was very influential in the Russian community and was an active worker in the Orthodox church for many years.

Russian Churches

The Holy Ascension of Christ Russian Orthodox Church was founded in 1916. Prior to that, a priest was sent to Albion once each month from the All Saints Cathedral in Detroit to serve the religious needs of the people. Largely because of the efforts of Mrs. Egnatuk, Mr. Parker convinced other leaders of the city of Albion to put on a fund drive and, in conjunction with the townspeople, raised \$5,000.00 to construct a church. In addition to the building funds, Harry Parker donated the money to build a sidewalk from the church to the street, and also purchased an 800-pound bell for the cupola and sent men and equipment from the Malleable Iron Company to raise and install the bell. There were also numerous donations of building materials given by various townspeople.

The laying of the cornerstone took place on Sunday, April 30, 1916, by Fr. I. Salko, who was assisted by a local choir of 40 voices. The O. J. Teller Construction Company of Albion completed the building during the summer of 1916 and the building was consecrated by Bishop Aresiney of Detroit

on Thanksgiving day 1916 assisted by Father Salko and Fr. Michael Vishgorodzeff. Father Vishgorodzeff then became the first resident priest of the parish.

From that Thanksgiving day in 1916 until 1960, the Holy Ascension Church was the only Russian Orthodox Church in outstate Michigan, the other churches being in the city of Detroit. It was open to the needs of all Orthodox Christians in south-central Michigan.

In the Orthodox Church, Easter is the greatest day of the year. Easter is eagerly prepared for, especially in the Passion Week when the family cooking is being done for the coming holidays. A strict fish and vegetable diet is observed during the Lenten season and most people prefer to go to confession and communion during the Passion Week, when all services are solemn. The typical Russian Easter dinner consists of the following; passha, a sort of sweet cheese, and kollich and baba, varieties of Easter cakes, yeast-raised and richly spiced. These breads are baked in ornamental, tall, round-topped shapes, suggesting church belfries and domes and richly decorated on top with miniature sugar Easter eggs, crosses, and tiny candles.

Colored Easter eggs are quite common and prominent on Russian Easter tables and much time and patience were spent on dying and designing the eggs. The Ukranian art of decorating eggs is known as pysanky. There are many customs connected with pysanky, one being the giving of a pysanka to relatives and friends. Ukranian women collect pysanky as American women collect fine china.

The Russian Baptist Mission, a forerunner of the Eaton Street Baptist Church, was founded in 1916. The congregation was originally a part of the Russian Orthodox Church but separated because of a difference in philosophy. The First Baptist Church assisted in the establishment of the mission and the Rev. Paul Truss from Canada was the first minister, serving from 1921 to 1925. The first building, which was constructed by the members themselves, was located on Austin avenue with the land and some of the funds donated by Mr. Parker. The citizens of the community also contributed funds. After the Rev. Paul Truss left, Ostop Veramy was elected by the congregation to be temporary leader and served in that capacity from 1925 to 1936 when the Rev. Andrew Myczka from Detroit came to be pastor of the mission.

For twenty-five years, the First Baptist Church fostered



Russian Baptist Choir about 1938.

the Russian Baptist Mission until it became an independent institution in 1941, when it changed its name to the First Russian Baptist Church. In 1941 plans were made to erect a new edifice on N. Eaton street; the church was completed in 1951. In 1951 the name was changed to be the Eaton Street Baptist Church. Along with the change of name was a change in the service. Prior to 1951 all services were conducted in Russian, after that time, in English. However one adult Sunday School class continued to be taught in the Russian language.

The Eaton Street Baptist Church along with the First Baptist Church has been host to National and State Russian connected assemblies, which have included the Central States Russian and Ukranian District Association, the Central States Russian Baptist Young People, and the Central States Union of Russian-Ukranian Young People.

A product of this church was the First Russian Gospel Singers which was organized in 1938 under the direction of Mary Felisky. The choir has made recordings for short wave radio stations to transmit behind the Iron Curtain.

One story concerning religious experiences of the early Russian immigrants is told by Chester Collier. Before any Russian church was constructed, some members of a Protestant Church felt that it was their Christian duty to bring the gospel to the Russian immigrants who had no religion or so they thought. One day at the Malleable, while these immigrant men were sitting outside having lunch, a wagon came rolling down the street carrying an organ, a choir, and a minister. The wagon stopped and the choir started singing and the minister preached. The Russians understood nothing of what was being said. They were under the impression that these people had come to entertain them on their lunch hour. When the service was complete, the men stood up and cheered and applauded.

Education and Business

The formal education of the Russian immigrants' children was in the Albion Public Schools. No special arrangements were made for the children because of their language, for most of the children easily adapted to the environment and the school. Since the parents of these children spoke and wrote only Russian, that language was taught in the home and the church. The parents pushed their children

educationally because many of the parents had not had the opportunity to get an adequate education. Most of these people had come from rural areas in Russia where life was hard and the children went to school only during the winter months because the rest of the year they were needed as farm labor. But the parents, recognizing the value of an education, wanted their children to take advantage of a free educational system.

In the 1930's the local school system offered evening classes for the Russian immigrants, the primary purpose being to teach the basic academic skills needed to obtain naturalization papers. Mrs. Felisky, a graduate of Albion College and Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, taught English, civics, and government classes to the immigrants. Mrs. Felisky, a dedicated teacher, helped 48 immigrants to become American citizens. She taught ten years in the Albion school system and two years as a part-time instructor of Russian at Albion College.

By 1920, Russians owned a number of small family businesses. The businesses, which were located in the 500-block of Austin avenue, were designed to administer to the needs of the ethnic community. One Russian businessman, Mike Dubina, came to Albion from New York in 1910 and settled in one of the Malleable Company houses. In a few years, Mr. Dubina purchased lots on Austin avenue and constructed the first Russian grocery store. Later Mr. Dubina sold his store and bought two lots on Austin avenue directly across from the store and constructed a two-story building. A recreation room was on the main floor, on the second floor a dance hall, and in the basement was a bath house with shower stalls, tubs, and a steam bath. The bath house accomodated the men who lived in the company houses where there was no inside plumbing. Most of the men of the ethnic community had to go down town to get baths and haircuts before Mr. Dubina opened up his bath shop. Fire destroyed the store building one winter night, but the Dubinas soon rebuilt the building but closed the bath house in the basement and opened up a restaurant on the main floor. The second floor was turned into furnished rooms and rented out. In the meantime Mr. Dubina purchased the tailor shop on the corner of Austin avenue and Albion street and opened another grocery store. After Mr. Dubina's retirement, the store was operated by his daughter and son in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Leland (Ann)

Carrigan.

Konrad Felisky owned and operated a barbershop in Albion for forty-three years. Mr. Felisky opened his shop in 1918 on Austin avenue. Several other Russian family-owned-operated businesses were established in Albion, all located on Austin avenue. Paul Koroluk's candy store, Tom Branoff's bakery shop and Tom Slavoff's butcher shop. None of these is now extant.

Housing and Organizations

Because of the lack of adequate housing in the community in 1907, the Malleable Iron Company, under the leadership of Mr. Parker, decided to construct a housing unit for the Russian immigrants. The thirty or so wooden frame houses were built in the Albion street-Austin avenue vicinity, where McAuliffe park is now located. The houses usually had two stories and most had two separate units, one upstairs and one down. Heat was furnished by coal and wood burning stoves and there was one water tap in the yard.

It has been said that the community of northern Europeans objected very strongly to the central Europeans living anywhere near them but, as the immigrants became more and more settled, they either bought or built homes in the area near the Malleable. Later, as their earnings and savings increased, they gradually moved further and further away from the original community.

The company houses, which had no inside running water, sometimes housed as many as fifteen persons. Some Russian families took in boarders and charged \$2.50 a week for room and board. Like other women, the Russian women had many duties to perform. They had to keep house, cook and bake, and raise a family. Russian women spent many hours in the kitchen baking because the Russian people ate lots of bread with their meals, especially with soups which were eaten daily. There was a large variety of soups like borscht (beet), tomato, potato, cabbage, chicken, sauerkraut, and many others. Cabbage rolls and cottage cheese dumplings were special treats. A sweet raisin bread which rarely appeared on the table was also considered a treat.

There were a few Russian organizations in Albion, most of which were related to the church and which tended to keep the people isolated within the Russian community. One

such organization was the Russian brotherhood, a social group which offered an inexpensive type of life insurance. A newspaper was also published by the organization on a monthly basis, which kept many Albion people in touch with other units of the Russian people and which provided an opportunity to understand what was happening in the U.S.

The local chapter of the Federated Russian Orthodox Church Club was organized as an auxiliary to the church and a fund-raising social club. It kept the members of the Russian community within the community and offered them literature which was published in larger cities to maintain the traditions of the culture.

There was said to be one organization which was probably illicit but not illegal in the U.S. This organization had as its purpose the transporting of people who wished to leave Europe or Russia, or who were being sought by the new Soviet regime.

When the Russian revolution of 1917 occurred, many Albion Russians cheered because the Czar had been overthrown and were happy that a new government was replacing the old. Actually they were not politically knowledgeable and were quite willing to declare themselves Bolsheviks or members of the Communist party. About twenty-five or thirty of them organized themselves into a group which met regularly in spite of the warnings of the local Orthodox priest. It is said that the group was investigated and that several men were deported.

The Russian people were not politically involved in any way until they became American citizens and could register to vote. Once they had obtained their voting privileges they took full advantage and always voted. They did not actually become involved in city government until George Kracko ran for councilman from the first precinct and won in 1950. Mr. Romanchuk was elected county commissioner in 1970 and served in that capacity until 1976.

As a group, Russians have become an integral part of Albion but have been almost entirely assimilated with the passage of time. The Holy Ascension Church still functions, but in a somewhat limited manner. Russian foods are available during the Festival of the Forks, and there are still many Russian family names in the community, many unaltered but transliterated from the originals.

SIX: MEXICAN-AMERICANS

The Latino community of Albion is composed of people from various Spanish-American cultures. There are Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Argentinians, and other people of Spanish backgrounds, but the major group of Spanish speaking inhabitants is Mexican-Americans.

The Mexican-Americans Arrive in Albion

The first Mexican-Americans arrived in Albion in the early 1940's looking for employment on farms and in northern factories. Some found jobs on area farms and orchards as seasonal agricultural workers, while others secured employment at the Malleable Iron Company. It is said that Felizno Sanchez and Theodoro DeLaRosa recruited men from Texas to work at the Malleable in the late forties. Although not company recruiters, the two men received \$5.00 and expenses for each man they brought here and the recruits received a free one-way ticket to Albion.

Most of the Mexican-American people who came to Albion over the years were from Texas and not Mexico as many people believe. These people were born in Texas as American citizens, but yet were influenced a great deal culturally by the neighboring country, Mexico.

Many of the first men came alone and, after deciding to stay, sent for their families. Many of the Mexican-American people are from the same barrio or town in Texas and are either related or were friends in Texas. Many were from Brownsville.

The moving of large Mexican-American families to Albion, for example four or five brothers and sisters, has resulted in the social circles of the Mexican-American community of Albion being knit together through long friendships and intermarriages between families.

The Mexican-Americans' arrival in Albion was variously received. While some townspeople accepted their arrival as just another group, others viewed it negatively.

The Mexican-American group, like other groups that came before them, also encountered various forms of discrimination and segregation. There have been specific in-

stances of white barbershops and taverns around town refusing to service Mexican-American men and in some restaurants the men were not served if they sat at a table, but yet would be served at the counter. Because of this segregated treatment in those years, the Mexican-Americans patronized the Black businesses.

One Mexican woman who came to Albion in the early years remembers that she felt like an outsider for a long time. She remembers the stares that she received when she went shopping and once, while she was at work, some of her co-workers asked why she did not go back home because she was not wanted here. These actions and remarks were said to be quite frequent for those Mexican-Americans who came first.

The feeling of being an outsider weighed heavily on them because of the small number, but by the 1950's the Mexican-American community began to expand and the isolated feeling began to disappear.

Despite the early discrimination and segregation, segregation in housing was not a major problem. At first the Mexican-Americans lived on the west side of town in the Austin Avenue Trailer park and on Gale and Cass streets, but today the Mexican-Americans are located in various residential areas around the community. No residential pattern has been established.

Today most of the Chicanos are foundry workers. Few are skilled and there are even fewer in professional positions.

Thirty years ago and even ten, there were no Mexican-American businesses in Albion; however, today there are. They include Guzman's Recreation, a pool hall started in 1973, and the Lopez Taco House, a Mexican restaurant that opened in December 1975. Both are located in the downtown district.

Education and the Mexican-Americans

The late appearance of the Mexican-American children in the educational system in Albion enabled them to avoid overt segregation problems. That had already been solved by the Black students, who gave the educational system its first large scale experience with non-white students. The Mexican-American children's entry into the schools did not

cause any disruption or concern and they were placed in schools according to their residential area. As the years passed many Mexican-American children were enrolled in the public school system and when St. John's Catholic school opened a large number were enrolled there.

The language barrier of the Mexican-Americans was one which the school system at first failed to recognize. Like other non-English speaking groups which came here, the children were expected to make the language adjustment in school. Those children who knew no English either made the adjustment and learned very quickly or slipped behind, thus causing some to drop out of school in later years because of academic problems.

A failure of the school system in the past to serve the Mexican-Americans and other ethnic groups properly was its lack of information and awareness of multi-cultural customs and values.

Realizing the needs of the Mexican-American children in the educational system of Albion, many parents and students have stressed the importance of representation and consideration of their needs. Today, as a result, a high school guidance counselor has been employed and a bilingual education program has been implemented. The bilingual education program is one which the Mexican-American community fully supports and believes in. Idalie Feliciano, the program director, is herself of Spanish ancestry and has developed a program that is beneficial to Spanish-speaking students as well as to other students.

Two of the earliest Mexican-American organizations established in Albion are the Latin American Club and the Virgin de Guadalupe group, both of which continue to be active.

The Latin American Club

The Latin American Club, a non-profit organization, was founded in 1961. Organizers of the club include Luis Baiz, Henry Botello, John Campa, Eusebio Solis, Aberlardo Solis, Joe Benavidez, Jesse Badillo, and Umberto Hutavo. The purpose of the organization is to provide dances and cultural events for the Spanish-American community in Albion. Prior to that time the Mexican-Americans had no place to go for entertainment that did not clash with their culture. For years

Mexican Albionites traveled to Lansing to participate in their own kind of dances and activities.

The Latin American Club, originally an Albion club, has expanded to include members from surrounding communities of Marshall, Jackson, Battle Creek, and Charlotte. All members are required to pay monthly dues to maintain membership. In the beginning days of the organization, all events were held at the Albion Armory. Later the old Suburban building near Homer was rented and dances were held on a weekly basis. As the organization grew, a down payment was placed on approximately 22 acres of land on C Drive North where the club is located today. In 1965 a fire at the Suburban club destroyed everything that the organization had. After the fire, a discouraged membership of many dropped to a very few. To avoid losing the land that the Club was purchasing at the time, the remaining members each contributed money for the payments. After reorganizing, the membership decided that the Club would build its own club house. At first requests for loans were turned down by several financial institutions but the money was obtained and the members of the Mexican-American community constructed the club building themselves.

Today the club provides several services to its members. They include the lending of small, interest-free loans and the use of the club house by people within the Mexican-American community to raise money to help their children through college. The Club also serves as a means to help younger Mexican-Americans retain their culture.

Quinceaniera

Cultural events within the Latino community are frequent. The Mexican-Americans have as a group managed to retain many of their cultural traditions. One such tradition is the "Quinceaniera" or the "coming of age," celebrating a tradition which dates back to the time of the Spanish conquest of Mexico and to Spain itself. It takes place when a girl of Spanish ancestry reaches her 15th birthday. Prior to this time the girl is not allowed to wear make-up, date, or wear high heels. Upon reaching the age of 15, the girl takes on added responsibilities which marks her entry into womanhood. Lasting all day, the celebration starts off with mass, where the girl, dressed in a white wedding gown, is escorted to the

altar by her parents and fourteen maids-in-waiting. Each girl represents one year of the honored girl's life. At the altar the girl renews her baptismal vows. The highly important mass is followed by a dinner and then a dance which is held in the evening. At the dance the girl has the first dance with her father.

When a Quinceaniera is held, friends and family members provide services or items for the girl such as the rental of the hall, the cake, the Bible, the Rosary, and the kneeling cushion. These people are referred to as the "Sponsors of the Quinceaniera." The first Quinceaniera held in Albion was in 1966; the honored girl was Lucy Lerma. Since that time Quinceanieras are held yearly.

The Virgin de Guadalupe and the Church

Another traditional celebration of the Mexican-American people in Albion is the day of the Apparition. This day, December 12, honors the patroness saint of Mexico, the Virgin de Guadalupe. The yearly celebration in Albion is sponsored by the Virgin De Guadalupe group, an auxiliary of the St. John's Catholic church. The fiesta begins with a mass at church, followed by a procession honoring the Virgin. Later in the evening a children's dance is held and a Spanish dinner dance takes place over which a queen and four court members preside.

Although the stereotyping of all Mexican people as Catholics would be erroneous, in Albion an overwhelming majority of the Mexican-American community does belong to the Roman Catholic Church; the bond between the Mexican-American people and the Roman Catholic church is the apparition of the Virgin de Guadalupe. Through the years the Mexican people have seen the Virgin de Guadalupe as their patroness and honor her by celebrating December 12 as the day of the Apparition.

St. John's Catholic Church, in the early years of the Mexican-American's arrival in Albion as well as today, has served as a place and means for members of the Latino community to worship. The Virgin de Guadalupe group originated through the church and was organized in 1958 as a branch of the St. John's Church Rosary and Altar Society. The name was chosen because of the significant meaning that it has for Mexican-American people. During the early years of

the group there was a priest named Father Kenneth Faiver, who showed a great interest in the Spanish-American community. He helped many of the newly arrived and also the braceros, migrant workers from Mexico who worked on farms and orchards in the Albion area. He also started a youth group named Higos de Maria for the teenagers; the organization no longer exists. When St. John's school first opened, he assisted some of the children whose parents could not afford the tuition to get enrolled in the school. Inspired by the helpfulness of the priest, the women of the group assisted him in helping families who were in need of immediate aid when other agencies were unaware of their problems.

Services that the Virgin de Guadalupe group offers range from providing dinners for families which have suffered a death, to raising money for educational purposes. In addition to helping the Mexican-American community the group contributes funds to St. John's Church to be used for various things.

Men in the Church and in Politics

Involvement in the church by the Spanish-speaking community is not limited to women only; men actively participate in services and events. Juan Lopez of the St. John's Catholic Church is a candidate for the diaconate program which will prepare him to serve the increasing number of Spanish-speaking people in Albion. Besides participating in that program, Mr. Lopez has been appointed extraordinary minister of the Holy Eucharist in the distribution of Holy Communion. His ministry is primarily to serve the Latino community and particularly the sick and elderly.

Politically few Mexican-Americans have exercised their right to vote over the years. Most are registered now, but prior to the early 1970's a large number were not. In local government, Joe Benavidez served on the city council from the fifth precinct, the first Mexican-American to do so. He was appointed in June 1975 and served through December 1976.

Although the latest arrivals of the ethnic groups in Albion, the Mexican-Americans have added their own dimensions, thus culturally enriching the city even more. Today they actively participate in all facets of the community and have made many advancements.

SEVEN: SOME OTHERS; CONCLUSION

Other peoples came to Albion over the years, most of them singly rather than as groups. Among those who might be considered are Poles, Irish, and Czechs, many of whose descendants are still here. About seventy-five years ago there were even two Chinese laundrymen whose establishment was located where Bournelis Park is now.

Other groups not mentioned in preceding chapters but which are important in the ethnic history of Albion are the Greeks and the Jews.

The Greeks come to Albion

The Greeks came to Albion as early as the late 1800's. They came either to establish their own businesses or to work for someone else. The Greek language was always spoken in the home and the men were able to speak English but most of the wives and children had to learn after being here some time. In fact, some of the children could not speak English when they started school. As there was no Greek Orthodox Church in Albion, the Greeks attended the Russian Ascension Orthodox Church. In the homes, icons and candles were used as home prayer centers; once a year a priest came to each home to bless it.

The Greek people went to Jackson to the "Ahepa" Lodge, an active organization which held dances and special celebrations for holidays and name days. The Greeks' lives were largely centered in their families and their businesses.

George Mitchell is said to be the first Greek to come to Albion. He had come to America about 1892 from Symra, but arrived in Albion in 1897. He opened the first candy store in Albion and one year later a soda fountain on S. Superior street. In 1914 Sam Vafiades came to Albion from Istanbul, Turkey, to begin working for Mr. Mitchell. After Mr. Mitchell's death in 1933, Mr. Vafiades became the owner and continued the business until his retirement in 1955. Like other Greeks, Mr. Vafiades brought relatives to Albion.

Spiro Andrisakis came to Albion from Greece in the early 1900's and opened a candy and soda store known as the Albion Confectionary. In 1909 he brought from Greece his nephew, Nick Kostianes, who later became his partner in the business. Mr. Kostianes returned to Greece in 1928, and married and came back to continue his business here until he

sold it in 1955. Another confectionary, the Sugar Bowl, was owned by George and John Leyos who, about 1937, sold it to Nick Kavalaris. Mr. Kavalaris continued the business until sometime in the late 1940's.

Other Greeks were in the related restaurant business. Nick Pappas was here about 1930 in the Coffee Cup Restaurant on Michigan avenue. He and John Momtsios became partners about 1931. Mr. Momtsios had previously worked at the Albion Grill. The Albion Grill was owned by Pete Papadopoulos and John Yerongtios in the 1920's but in 1938 they sold the business to Nick and Pota Vournakis. Later that year Jim and Pete Poulos joined the business until it was sold in 1945.

Pete Bournelis, known to hundreds of Albion citizens, came to America at the age of 16 from the Island of Samos, Greece. He came to Albion in 1919 after three years in Cleveland. Having learned the shoe making and repair trade in his former country, he purchased his own business here in 1920 to form a shoe repair, shoe shine, and hat cleaning shop at 100 N. Superior street. Mr. Bournelis remained in business at the same location until his retirement in 1965, but later worked part time with Henry Dixon, who had bought the business, and later with Bob Tidwell.

The shop's official name was Up-To-Date-Electric Shoe Repair but the townspeople knew it only as "Pete's Shoe Shop."

In 1973, the city of Albion honored Mr. Bournelis by naming the corner where his business was for more than 50 years, Bournelis Park.

The Small Jewish Community

Although the Jewish community is among the smallest of all the ethnic groups, that group played a very important part in the history of Albion. For many years the Jewish community was comprized of two families: the Blyveises and the Wieners. Although Albion had seen a few Jewish people come and go, these two families were the permanent Jewish residents.

Two very extraordinary men from the Jewish community, Norman Wiener and Peter Blyveis, are remembered for their contributions to this city.

Mayor Norm Wiener, born in Russia in 1891, came to Albion in 1911. Like many others, he had heard of the freedom in America and felt that America offered an opportunity to make a living. Mr. Wiener started off by operating a scrap business. He was always self-employed.

Mr. Wiener's first real political involvement was in 1928 when he was elected councilman. In 1932 Mr. Wiener was elected Mayor of Albion and held that office for 9 terms. During those 18 years, which were not all served consecutively, Mayor Wiener instituted several projects. Numerous streets were paved, the Eaton Street bridge was constructed, Victory Park was developed and the project which most Albionites remember and love him best for, the present city hall was built on W. Cass street. Besides his building programs, Mayor Wiener left the city of Albion in a sound financial condition following the depression.

Also born in Russia, near Kiev or Minsk, Pete Blyveis migrated to this country in 1906 at the age of twenty. He lived in Battle Creek from 1912 until 1933 when he came to Albion with an old truck and fifty dollars in cash. Mr. Blyveis for years was in the scrap-metal business and in 1938 he purchased land on N. Albion street and started his scrap business there. Like others, Mr. Blyveis and his family experienced discrimination against Jews when they wanted to move into a house on Crandall street. Over the years Mr. Blyveis was very active in the community and was a member of several organizations including the Rotary Club, the Albion Conservation Club, the Elks, Moose, and Eagles, and the Masons. He was prominent in scrap salvage campaigns in 1942.

Descendants of the Wiener and Blyveis families are still here but meanwhile, beginning in the mid-fifties, other Jewish families have moved into the community.

Ethnic Groups, a Richness

Although Albion is not a Utopia, it has advanced a long way in its absorption of the various ethnic groups which have come here over the years.

Much is owed to Albion's settlers from the early New Englanders to the later arrivals, no matter the ethnic group to which they belonged. Their activities included partial preservation of their own heritage mingled with the heritages of others. All of the groups made places for themselves in business and industry, in their religious activities, in housing, education and politics.

The richness of Albion today can be attributed in part to its ethnic diversity. But that diversity, while identities are still preserved, has become a unity in the working out of Albion's problems and hopes for now and for the future.