

MICHIGAN FIREHOUSE MUSEUM

Remembering Norma

IN late December of this past year, Norma Weaver, president and founder of the Michigan Firehouse Museum, passed away peacefully at her home in Ann Arbor. Norma and her husband Howard created the Michigan Firehouse Museum in 1999 with a mission to enhance the appreciation of firefighting history through engaging and informative exhibits, as well as to teach and promote fire safety and prevention. Norma and Howard had a long history in supporting this mission. Norma's father Henry W. Clement had served with the Ann Arbor Fire Department for 27 years before tragically passing from a heart attack while responding on-duty to a local fire in 1961. Coming from humble beginnings, Norma and Howard eventually started a pet supply business. The couple had a great appreciation for antique vehicles and fire history and invested much of their wealth into the preservation and restoration of such. By the end of



Henry Clement at the Ann Arbor Fire Department

her life, Norma had collected and donated nearly 70 antique fire apparatus, which are proudly displayed at the museum today.

Continued on next page.



Norma on the main floor of the museum

IN THIS ISSUE

- Norma & Howard Weaver.....1&2
- Letter From the President.....2&3
- What's New in 2021?.....4
- Featured Fighter Floyd Walls.....5

After collecting several firetrucks throughout the 80s and 90s, the Weavers were looking to create a firehouse museum. They thought themselves fortunate when the old Ypsilanti firehouse, which operated from 1898 to 1974 before falling into private ownership, came available. After three years of negotiations in the late 90s, the Weavers purchased the old firehouse and the house next to it. Norma and Howard scheduled a controlled burn for the house adjacent. It was considered a win-win-win for all parties because the Weavers got to expand their museum, Ypsilanti firefighters got to log practice on the controlled burn, and by now the four apartments they built onto the back of the building are producing more tax revenue for the city than the old home was.

Norma's passion for the preservation and education of fire history is remembered today by museum staff, benefactors, and visitors, who will continue to appreciate the Weaver's collection for generations to come.



Norma and Howard Breaking Ground



Construction begins

A Message from the President

Hello, Friends – it's been awhile since we have communicated. The very fact that this newsletter has arrived in your mail (hopefully) should help to alleviate your concerns regarding the status of the Michigan Firehouse Museum and Education Center. We are alive and well and waiting for the opportunity to be open to the public with some form of normalcy (whatever that is)! I could go into a litany of excuses as to why you haven't heard from us (staff changes, Covid, the dog ate my homework), but in the end all that really matters is that we are excited to be back...

Continued on next page.

Continued from page 2

...This past year has been a firestorm (pun intended). The Covid pandemic shut down our ability to allow the public to visit our museum. And, sadly, we lost our dear friend and museum co-founder, Norma Weaver. Norma's courageous battle with cancer recently came to an end. Our love, thoughts and prayers go out to her family. She will be missed, but we take comfort knowing that she has joined Howard and they certainly are watching over and protecting us from afar. More information about Norma's life and history with the Museum is provided in this newsletter.

With every cloud there is a silver lining. The Covid shutdown created a great opportunity for us to work on various projects during the past year. The most exciting news is that the motorized equipment on display is now fully functional! We are probably the only fire history museum in the country, maybe even internationally, whose trucks actually run. We look forward to warmer weather and open doors to enable you to see the trucks in operation. We are also updating our static displays, and working on making more of them interactive. You will see additional information about these improvements in this newsletter and on our website (which is also being updated):

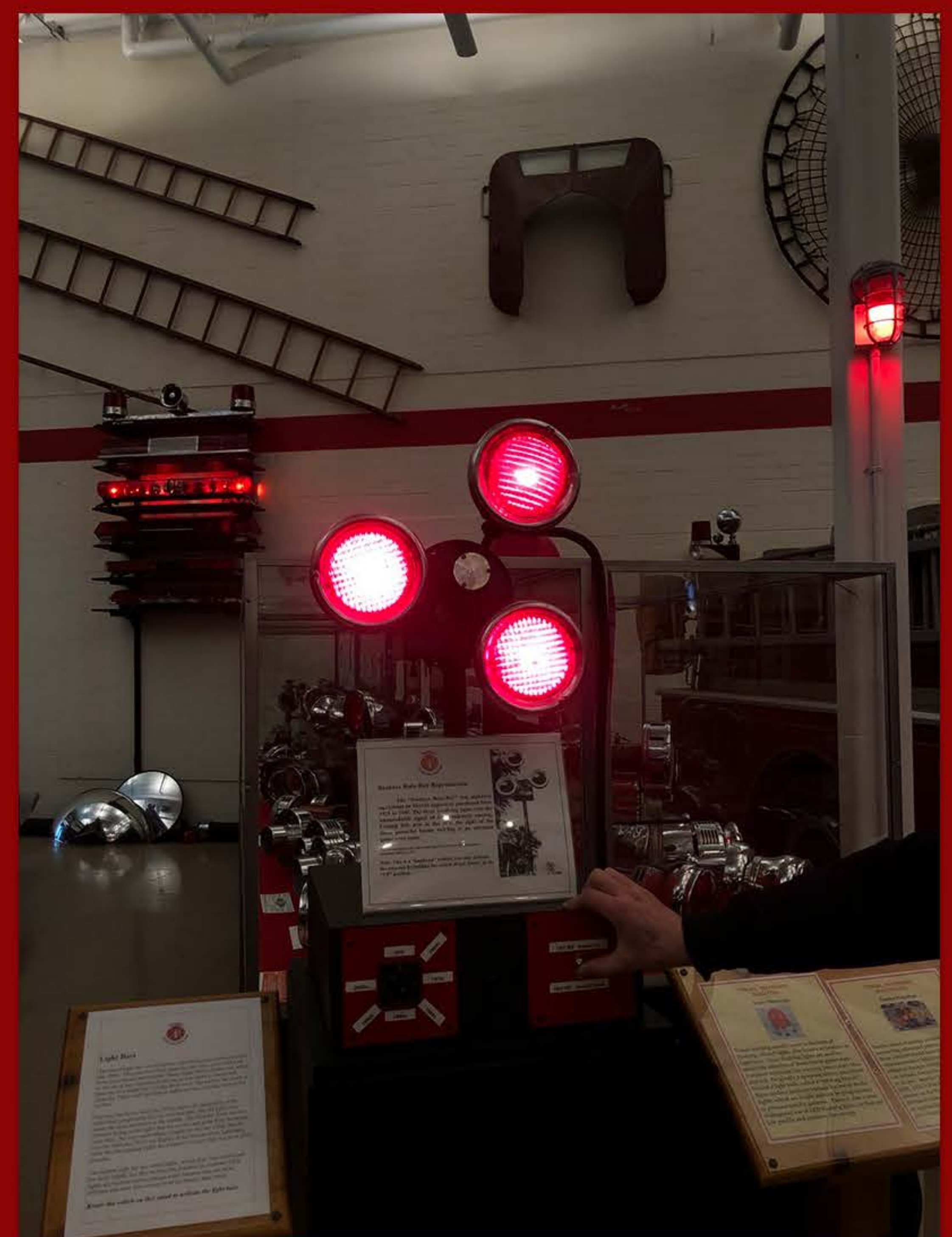
www.michiganfirehousemuseum.org. You should also like us and follow us on FaceBook. We are also actively working on the process to welcome the public back into the museum. Should the Covid positivity rates continue to decline, and the applicable governmental restrictions allow, we hope to be open to the public this summer. However, we have to be able to provide a safe environment so that the entire experience is enjoyable. More information will be made available in future newsletters or on social media.

Thank you for your continued support of the Museum! We look forward to the day we can be together in person! Be safe, and see you real soon!

Dan Egeler, President



New interactive firelight exhibit!



Visitors can cycle through six decades of fire truck lights from the 1960s to the modern cab lights apparatus use today.



Sparky carries a stop sign, a playful reminder that not all of our exhibits are hands-on.

What Else is New in 2021?

At the Michigan Firehouse Museum, the safety of our visitors and staff is a top priority, so it has saddened us to remain closed for the past year. In the meantime, however, we have been working on the full restoration of the fire apparatus on our main floor, and designing new exhibits to further our mission of enhancing the learning and appreciation of Michigan fire history. In the coming months, we hope to continue to add a level of interactivity to our exhibits in order to better keep visitors of all ages engaged while exploring the historic firehouse.



A new exhibit, courtesy of Dave Egeler, displays life-size examples of the fire-safety outfits that first responders have utilized since the early 1800s.



Now on YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok, the Michigan Firehouse Museum is in the process of modernizing our website and social media approach to reach a wider audience.

We're excited to announce our new Adopt a Truck and Adopt an Exhibit programs, which will highlight some of the most historically significant displays in the museum. To further our efforts to expand and adapt, please renew your membership and check our website and FaceBook pages frequently to see how you can volunteer.



The redesigned logo aims to promote our modernization, while maintaining the historical preservation of firehouse history.



Feature Firefighter: Floyd Walls

BELOVED firefighter Floyd Walls was the first minority hire in Washtenaw County and the first professional black fireman in Ypsilanti. Hired in 1966, Walls faced pressure not only as a minority, but also as the replacement for a well-respected firefighter who died in the line of duty. During the hiring process, Walls recalled being asked how he would react to potential racial prejudice against him from the community and other members of the station. Joining the company in such a socially volatile period of American history, Walls faced hostility from some of the older firemen. Soon, however, a new group of more progressive and accepting men came on, and the company became a cornerstone in the Walls' family's life.



Walls served the community as a firefighter for more than 20 years. Upon retiring in 1987, he was asked to be the department's chaplain. In his new position, Walls was instrumental in enacting protected classes and the city's initiative to diversify.

Floyd Walls passed away in March of 2014. He is survived by his wife, Beverly, and their three children. Shortly after his death, Beverly reflected on the department's warmth and the community they created. "No matter what they went through in the course of the day, when they got on the truck to do their job, they looked like a unit. Regardless of what their differences were, they pulled together and did their job," Walls said.



This Black History Month, we remember Floyd for his heroism, tact, and courage, fighting against both fire and racial injustice.