

## Birmingham Background

• Local History in Story and Picture •  
As Compiled and Written by RUTH ANNE SILBAR



**BILLY MANSER AT HIS WORKBENCH**  
Handy with boxing gloves, too

## Popular Little Cobbler Led Methodist Choir From Perch on Stool

Billy Manser was Birmingham's popular cobbler in days gone by. There still are folks living today who remember genial Billy, his religion, his whiskers and his short legs.

Billy was exceedingly small of stature, a feature which was somewhat deceiving. He kept some boxing gloves in his shop and one day invited George Mitchell to try them on.

The boys exchanged a few gentle taps when George suddenly found himself awkwardly tangled upon the floor. Billy was an enthusiastic pugilist but was somewhat secretive about his ability, fiscally.

Manser was the Methodist chorleader for many years, a hard worker in the church and was said to be one of the most faithful of the flock.

TO ACCOMMODATE Billy's short stature, a stool was placed in the choir loft on which stood the short but fervent choir singer.

His shop was in an old frame building, located on the site now occupied by LaBelles' Book store on West Maple.

The old building had first housed a fanning mill factory, operated by Alonzo Snow in the 1850's and later became the blacksmith shop of Horace Barnum.

After Billy Manser moved his cobbler's shop to Woodward avenue, the old building was used as a dwelling and then as a laundry.

IN 1906 GEORGE MITCHELL repaired and refurbished the old place and jokingly called the diminutive edifice "The Majestic."

The building sheltered The Eccentric presses (possibly singular) from 1906-1910.

Then a stranger from out of town with the name of Smith bought the old building for \$50 and carted it away.

The building now on the historic site was built in 1916 by H. G. Fields.

Billy lived and worked in Birmingham until his eyesight became so impaired that he had to retire. According to several old-time Birmingham residents, the genial Billy died at the county poorhouse.

*Somehow or other, most people agree, little blades of wood or that one does for another are well appreciated; one does not need to perform something heroic to play the part of the kindly and considerate person.*

## Recreation Budget Request Finalized

A budget request for \$15,110 was approved by the Birmingham recreation board at its meeting last Thursday night.

The request will be presented to the city commission by April 1 for consideration.

With \$2,820 in anticipated revenues from various phases of its program, the board feels actual costs to the city will be \$12,290. The city's cost in last year's recreation program was \$11,000.

In setting up the budget, board members approved a doubling of the summer music program. Other segments of the recreation program showing increases are the playground program and winter swimming.

ADDED TO the summer program will be a day camp at Springdale park. Plans are to operate a school bus to the park and to take children from a different segment of the city each day.

Also new will be a summer program of morning recreation at the high school gymnasium. Frank Whitney, recreation director, said many activities can be carried on at the gym at one and the same time.

Prior to approval of the budget Thursday night, the board discussed the matter of applying fees to some parts of the recreation program.

IT WAS DECIDED fees would be applied in the following manner: summer swimming, 15¢ per period; winter swimming, \$2 per 10-week session, summer dramatics, summer music, \$2 each for the season; and craftwork, fees based on use of materials.

Board members agreed that fees should be applied to help defray expenses of high per capita-cost programs, to give participants a greater sense of the value of the program, and to help reduce waste of materials in craftwork.

## Three Salesmen Cited

Herb Hosner, Geo. McCann and Chuck Wheeler, salesman for The North Chevrolet Co., 1000 So. Woodward, returned to the dealership this week after having been awarded membership in the "1900 Car Club," Chevrolet's national honor organization for retail salesmen. As members of the club, they were guests of honor at a banquet at zone headquarters. Chevrolet zone officials and zone leaders of the National Club of Honor Club officers welcomed them.

## Judge Photo Contest

Two Cranbrook staff members will be judges in the 21st Detroit International Exhibition of Photography which will be held from June 19 to July 4 at the Detroit Institute of Arts. Walter E. Nickle, director of the Academy of Science, and Photography Director Harvey J. Croze will help decide winners in the nature prints and slides and photography entries, respectively.

Use Classified Ads—They Sell!

# The Birmingham Eccentric

SECTION 3  
Thursday, March 25, 1954

## Addresses Meeting Of Transit Assn.

On Tuesday, George B. Finch, 1280 Latham, vice president of Jam Handy Organization, addressed members of the American Transit association at their regional conference held at the Statler Hotel, Detroit.

Keying his presentation to a public relations group, Finch made use of visual aids to demonstrate the importance of high standards of salesmanship and courtesy on the part of transit employees.

**Lawrence E. Smith**  
Landscape Design and Construction  
135 N. WOODWARD  
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IT TOOK THE HELP OF A CHAIR to enable these youngsters to read The Eccentric but our only aim is to have the paper read under all circumstances. Larry Carpenter, left and David Bartleson examined the pages of the paper in a search for publication of their names recently and the chair was commandeered to make the task easier. (Eccentric Photo)

## PLAY IT SAFE!

## Spark Screen In Chimney A Necessity

If roof fires are to be avoided in the City of Birmingham, people who occupy homes that have wood shingle roofs but do not have screens on their chimneys should stop burning papers and other light combustibles in their fireplaces, furnaces and incinerators.

These roof fires are more prevalent during the dry months but the danger exists all year around.

If papers and other light combustibles are to be disposed of by burning, either burn them outside in an approved type incinerator or be sure that your fireplace, furnace or incinerator flue has a screen or spark arrester on it.

prevention is worth a ton of ashes!" Make it a point to check your chimney, today, and save an emergency visit from your fire department that may, or may not, result in a heavy fire loss to your home.

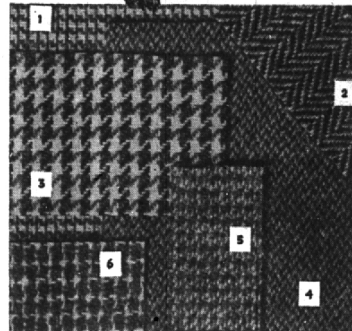
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