

Lansing Capital Area District Library Essay

Newspaper: *Ingham County News* Dates: 1970-1977

Special Features:

There are special features to the *Ingham County News* in the era of 1970-1977. Very often political news is among the major headline trends in historic newspapers, and the *News* is no exception. This paper is the central news outlet of the county seat of Ingham County (Mason), and thus is where press releases, detailed county government news, required notices, and political campaigns and elections were published and covered, more so than any other paper in the region.

In this period, the *News* had region-specific sections including the Mason Edition and Holt-Delhi Edition, among others. These specific sections made for easy to find stories of interest and highlighted the communities of priority for the paper. This is unique because the broad county newspaper served distinct neighboring communities which did not have independent papers and were only traditionally scarcely covered in the nearby larger city papers such as the *Lansing State Journal* or the *Jackson Citizen-Patriot*. It provided a central publication for all Ingham County news in one easily accessible paper for the residents of the county, specializing in countywide stories. The paper documented history in real time.

The *News* of this era also includes advertisements and inserts from prominent local businesses and activities. These are bound with the paper. There are also sections on marriages, obituaries, births, and other personal news items. There are also classified advertisements, and common human and social interest articles about schools, families, businesses, and farms that would otherwise not have been covered in other area news sources.

Reasons Why These Newspapers Should be Digitized:

The *Ingham County News* period of 1970-1977 should be made available online because of its many historical topics covered during these years. For example, in this period, and covered in the pages of the *News*, Ingham County became the first county in the State of Michigan to appoint a Select Committee on History to prepare for the 1976 American Bicentennial. This committee was formed in 1971, made permanent in 1974, and remains today as the oldest county historical commission in Michigan. Reflecting on the Bicentennial commemoration is and will continue to be an important topic for consideration over the next five years while the nation contemplates its 250th birthday in 2026. How did locales commemorate fifty years ago? The *News* covers all that and more in the years proposed here for digitization.

Michigan is the only state in the United States in which the state capitol is not the county seat of the county in which it sits. Mason, the home of the *Ingham County News*, is the county seat of Ingham, while the state capital is elsewhere in the same county, in the city of Lansing. This

paper, over all its years, covered the county government in Mason and state government in Lansing - a fascinating juxtaposition, which has statewide and national relevance. While local, state, and national government are covered thoroughly in the *News*, the government of Ingham County made regular headlines over the decades. In 1974-75, Ingham County saw the rise of young politician Debbie Stabenow, now a United States Senator, who became the first woman to chair the Ingham County Board of Commissioners in 1977. Her first stint in public office will soon reach its fiftieth anniversary in 2024-25 and is sure to catch public attention, especially given that she announced her intention not to run for office again. The papers bearing so much of this rich political history are not yet digitally available but should be.

In the “out county” communities of Ingham, often dwarfed in local news coverage to the state capital of Lansing, the *News* covered the stories that meant something to locals and had larger implications. There were numerous notable events which occurred in this era. The 1970s saw a building and development boom in this region. Covered in the *News* are the people, events, tragedies, obituaries, and headlines of a generation. Presently one of the most intriguing decades in nostalgia, design, and historical research, the 1970s will see endless fiftieth anniversaries over the next decade and a peak in interest in the culture and news of the 1970s. Additionally, this paper is useful and of interest to multiple Michigan communities, and therefore has a wider range of use and impact.