



## **Whitehall Products – 75 Years of Development and Growth**

- 1941 – Whitehall Metal Studios is formed by Chicago entrepreneur and inventor, Thomas M. Pletcher. The Whitehall, MI facility makes and sells cast aluminum ornamental weathervanes
- 1944 – Fire Destroys the Whitehall Foundry
- 1950 – New Foundry and Offices are built in present location in Montague, MI
- 1951 – Cast Address Signs are introduced
- 1956 – Duo-glo do it yourself signs and reflective numbers are launched
- 1962 – Grandson Thomas S. Pletcher takes over management of the company at age 21
- 1965 - Thomas S. Pletcher is promoted to President of Whitehall Metal Studios
- 1967 – The company introduces a new line of framed wall decor
- 1986 – Whitehall builds the World’s Largest Weathervane 48 ft. tall with a 26 ft. arrow. The weathervane is installed at the base of White Lake and topped with a replica of the early 1900’s shipping schooner Ella Ellenwood.
- 1988 – Tomas S. Pletcher sells the company to Barak Ltd., a private holding company. The company is renamed Whitehall Products, Ltd
- 1989 – The company continues expansion into the Mail Order Catalog business launching new products such as Sundials, Birdbaths and upscale home address plaques.
- 1993 – Current President and CEO Brad Bruns is hired to run the business.
- 1993 – New retail packaging is launched with an aggressive strategy to expand into major retail outlets.
- 1994 – The company launches into the gift market with new garden products, retail displays, and nearly doubles the company’s business over the previous 4 years.
- 1996 – DeSign-it do it yourself address signs and numbers are developed and launched marking the first major entry into the Home Center business
- 1996 – The company does a management sponsored buyout and is renamed Whitehall Products, LLC
- 1998 – Whitehall develops and introduces a new line of Bird Feeders and outdoor Clocks and Thermometers
- 2000 – The company develops and launches the Classic Directions line of Copper Weathervanes.
- 2000 – The Commercial Division of the company is launched driving sales into the home builder industry.
- 2001 – Whitehall Products acquires the Flora and Fauna brass garden products company.
- 2002 – Whitehall Products acquires weathervane and address sign company Old Century Forge
- 2003 – The company introduces personalized Mailboxes with custom cast address plaques.
- 2006 – The company expands facilities by constructing a new building in the city of Whitehall that will house painting, packaging, shipping and warehousing along with sales and administration.
- 2010 – The company enters the cemetery and funeral market introducing Whitehall™ Bronze Memorial Markers.
- 2014 - Whitehall introduces Fast & Easy House Number Plaques leading the industry innovation for price and turn around efficiency.
- 2015 - Whitehall develops and introduces Alumi-Shield™ Coatings. The advanced coating protects Whitehall Mailboxes and Address Plaques in the harshest outdoor environments up to 10 times longer than any other mailboxes or address signs in the market.
- 2016 - Whitehall celebrates 75 years in business!

# Detroit Free Press

Section A, Page 3

Thursday, June 28, 1984



**The right direction**

Employees of Whitehall Metal Studios fabricated this 26-foot, 2-inch, directional arrow for the World's Tallest Weather Vane to be erected in Montague this fall. At the feet of the workers are the

direction letters. An aluminum replica of the Ella Ellenwood sailing ship which will sit atop the 48-foot weather vane, has also been completed. The weather vane is being donated by the firm.

## WORLD'S LARGEST

# Montague weather vane coming

By JACK KRESNAK  
Free Press Staff Writer

MONTAGUE — Later this summer, residents in this sleepy little town on Muskegon County's White Lake won't need a weather forecaster to tell them which way the wind blows.

They'll have the world's largest weather vane.

Montague, along with its sister city of Whitehall across the White River, is erecting what is expected to be the world's largest weather vane, a 48-foot tall structure on a small peninsula behind city hall.

"The community has been kind of searching for something to identify it and draw some tourists," said Thomas S. Pletcher, president of Whitehall Metal Studios, which builds 60,000 weather vanes a year and says it is the world's largest manufacturer of weather vanes. "We thought this was perfect."

Pletcher's company, founded in 1938 by his grandfather Thomas M. Pletcher, will make the vane with help from area contractors and companies such as du Pont, which has a plant in Montague.

Most of the centerpieces for Whitehall Metal's weather vanes are either roosters or horses. President Reagan has a horse weather vane and a metal nameplate, made by Whitehall Metal Studios, at his California ranch.

But the world's largest weather vane needed

a centerpiece that could be identified with the history of the area.

"Historically, this area opened up because of water and timber; there were no roads across the state of Michigan," said Robert Wesley, a local artist and marina owner. "We were looking for something that would express the real beginnings of the White Lake area."

Wesley didn't have to look too far.

Among the schooners that carried Michigan lumber through the Great Lakes was the 157-ton Ella Ellenwood, built in East Saginaw in 1869 and bought by Capt. Thomas Flagstad of Montague. The schooner carried millions of board feet of lumber to other Great Lakes ports such as Chicago and Milwaukee.

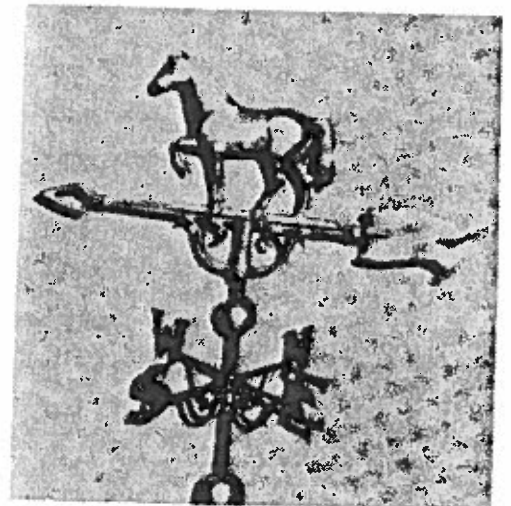
On Oct. 1, 1901, the Ella Ellenwood foundered off Fox Point near Milwaukee. The captain and crew safely abandoned ship, and most of the cargo was salvaged, but the next day, the ship broke up.

The next spring, a portion of the Ella Ellenwood's nameplate — which apparently followed the Lake Michigan current down past Chicago and the Indiana shore and up the west Michigan coast — washed up in the White Lake channel.

Wesley, a retired commercial artist and filmmaker, is building a 14-foot aluminum replica of the Ella Ellenwood's nameplate.

largest weather vane. The legs will be black, while the arrow and ship will be painted "as close to gold leaf as we can get it," Wesley said. "It should be a pretty striking sight."

Pletcher said he had checked with the Guinness



**A weather vane like this one at Whitehall Metal Studios has been installed at President Reagan's California ranch.**

World Records book people and was told there was no category for largest weather vane. But they said Montague's would be included in

**World's largest**

# Weather vane dedicated

WHITE LAKE BEACON

September 18, 1984

The World's Largest Weather Vane was presented to the White Lake community last Saturday in a brief dedication ceremony.

Tom Pletcher, owner of Whitehall Metal Studios and initiator of the project, spoke of the 48-foot high functional

weather vane as White Lake's landmark. He likened the new tourist attraction to special attractions in other cities, like the Eiffel Tower of Paris and St. Louis' arch.

Recalling White Lake's lumbering and shipping history, Pletcher noted the ornament atop the weather vane, a likeness of the schooner Ella Ellenwood, has created

a community theme for Whitehall and Montague.

In thanking over 30 businesses and individuals who contributed labor and materials to the project, and the many people who made monetary donations, Pletcher concluded the opening address by saying, "Let the four winds continue to favor us with friendship, cooperation and prosperity."

White Lake Area Chamber of Commerce President Jack Darrow, serving as emcee, recognized community contributions as he introduced mayors from both Whitehall and Montague, Els Andersen and Bob Todd. Todd echoed Pletcher's remark, asking that "the sail of the Ella Ellenwood feel only the wind of harmony, prosperity and goodwill in the White Lake area."

A large number of spectators lined the newly-laid boardwalk leading to the weather vane behind the Montague City Hall. Included in the crowd were descendants of the Ella Ellenwood's captain; officials from both White Lake communities, Greater Muskegon Chamber of Commerce personnel and New Muskegon representatives.

The design, engineering and construction of the 14-foot Ella Ellenwood schooner model was done by Robert Wesley, artist-sculptor for Whitehall Metal Studios and renowned Great Lake historian.

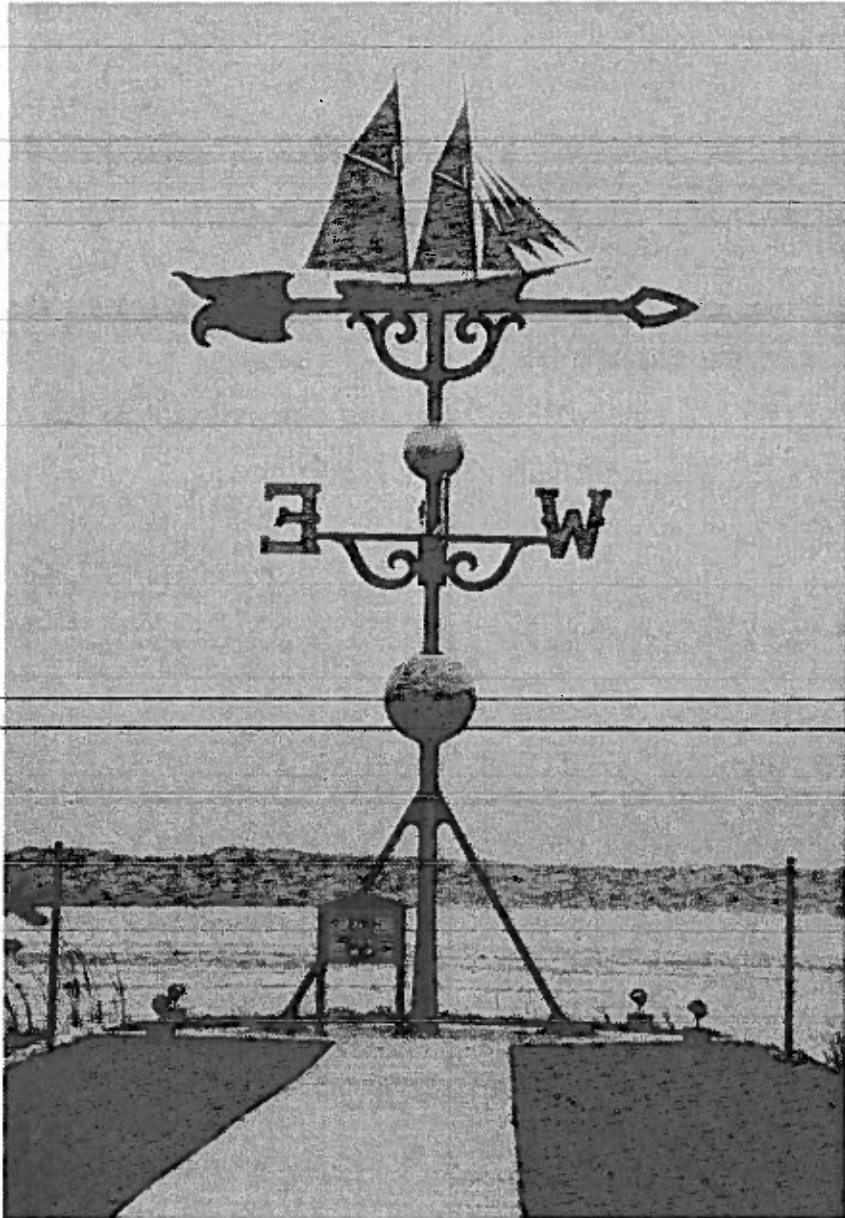
The weather vane was built under the personal direction of Richard Reed, general manager; Tyler Morris, factory manager; and the metal craftspersons at Whitehall Metal Studios, and several area businesses.

The weather vane is incorporated into a plan for a boardwalk and pedestrian-bicycle pathway linking the two cities along the northeastern shoreline of White Lake. A boardwalk already spans the point to the base of the weather vane.

The weather vane is lighted, and the surrounding sod has an underground sprinkling system. A weather station is located at the base of the weather vane.

A wine and cheese reception for those donating to the weather vane was held at the chamber office after the dedication ceremony.

The total value of the weather vane construction and installation is about \$75,000. Whitehall Metal Studios portion



## Completed weather vane

**SPECIFICATIONS:** Overall height, 48'; arrow length, 26'2"; overall length of schooner, 14'3"; height of schooner, 11'7"; height of directional letters 3'6"; diameter of globes: large, 4'6", small, 3'; weight of weather vane, 3,500 lbs.; weight of arrow and schooner, 800 lbs.; and weight of foundation 45,000 lbs.

# MUSKEGON

# THE Chronicle

TUESDAY, SEPT. 14, 1962 • 32 PAGES • 254

## Montague-made weather vane now part of Reagan ranch

By JIM FRISINGER

Chronicle staff writer

It was one of those wonderful surprises that the U.S. Postal Service can deliver.

Last week Thomas Fletcher of Montague was the lucky one.

Fletcher is well known around White Lake for the white ivy and well-planned and splendidly furnished places that are made at Whitehall Metal Studio, a company he founded and operated by his grandfather in 1941. The stylish cast-iron ornaments have given a pretty wide circulation over the years.

BY THE WAY, nevertheless a treat when Fletcher last week received a copy of a West Coast newspaper showing a picture of Ronald Reagan making a radio address from his Santa Barbara ranch. What caught the eye of one of his sales representatives was part of the background. For there were not one, but two different Whitehall Metal ornaments affixed right over Reagan's shoulder.

Fletcher had heard stories about both items before that had linked the firm's products to the president. But never before had he known for sure that they were being used. Both are adorned with a horse.

One, which appeared over Reagan's left shoulder, was a statuette that reads "The Reagans, 1800 Penna. Ave." It was a gift presented to the president the morning after his election by a Washington D.C. Fletcher said the owners had ordered two in stock, planning to keep one on display.

SOURCE: THE election, Fletcher had no idea what had happened to the small ornament that was fabri-

cated at his Montague factory. He presumed it had been given away like the thousands of other gifts that abound to new chief executives.

The history behind the piece, a weather vane, goes back more than a decade. "This is only her way," Fletcher said, "but when he was governor we got word that he had gone into a Santa Barbara hardware store, and said it was one of the best looking horse figures he had ever seen." Whitehall Metal Studio filled the store's order.

"The story of this purchase was relayed to Fletcher through his salesman many years ago, but nothing was known for sure of the weather vane's whereabouts until last week. There it stood, camouflaged by rustic grasshopper sculpture, where the president had decided to speak.

FLETCHER SAID the photo was "fantastic. It looks like a Whitehall

statue." "As long as the president is considered favorably, it's good advertising. When he talks into a microphone," Fletcher joked, "we'll forget about it." The photo, an official White House photo, was distributed as an Associated Press wirephoto Sept. 4.

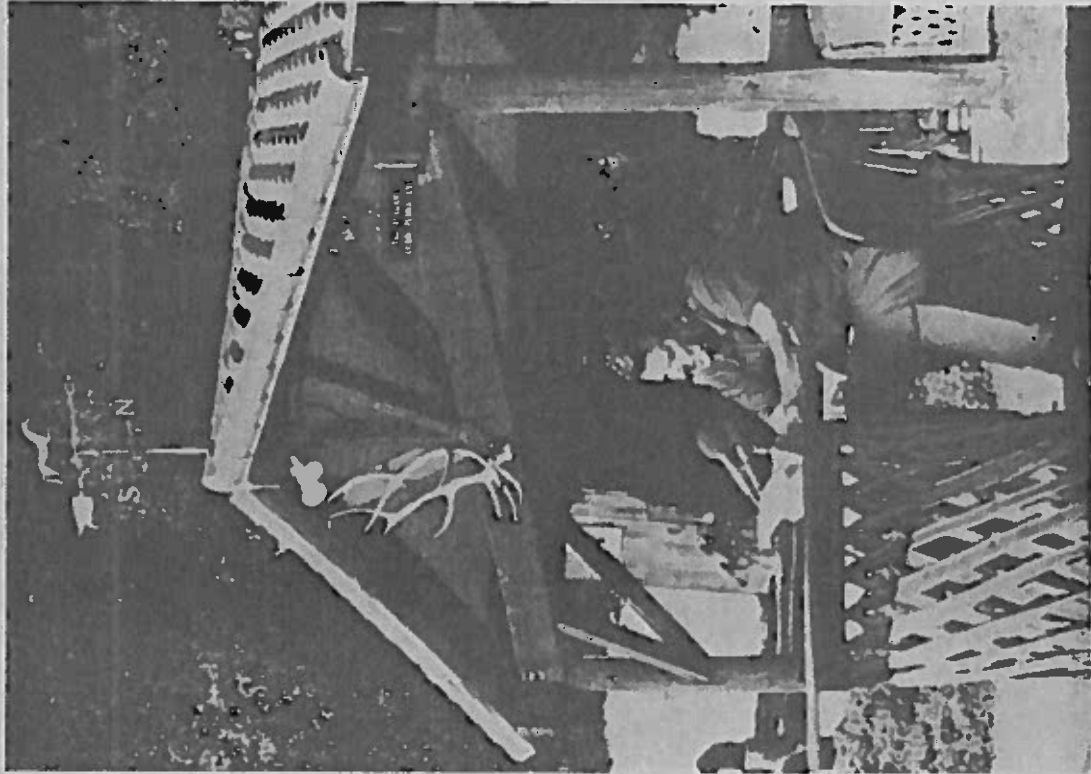
It should be no surprise that, as the world's largest manufacturer of weather vanes, Fletcher has a lot of weather vane orders. In fact, it was in 1964 that he ordered a weather vane for President Dwight Eisenhower's Gettysburg estate.

"So we've had a little fame from presidential orders here or there," Fletcher said modestly.

For those who'd like a bit of presidential luxury, ask for the standard 800 model weather vane, priced at about \$125. It's the one Reagan likes.

President Reagan addresses the nation on radio Sept. 4 from his ranch in the mountains outside Santa Barbara, Calif. In the scenic setting at Rancho del Cielo, where one might tend to forget other pursuits, the president is reminded of his office by the signpost behind him that reads, "The Reagans, 1800 Penna. Ave." The sign was made by Whitehall Metal Studios in Montague. And atop the structure is a weather vane also made in Montague.

Associated Press



# W.S. JENKS & SON



"Purveyors of fine hardware, tools, and machinery since 1866"

1866 –

W.S. JENKS & SON was founded by Winfield S. Jenks at 723 7th St., NW Washington, DC, selling hardware, horseshoes, pot belly, coal and woodburning stoves.

1956 –

W.S. JENKS & SON

Opened its Industrial and Government departments, selling to the young electronics industry and government agencies in the Washington, DC area.



## Purchase order Dept of Interior Sept. 17, 1895

Order No. 723  
G.O.S. 1-647  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
Washington, D. C., Sept. 17, 1895

W.S. Jenks,  
City.

Sir:

Please deliver immediately to this Department the articles specified below, and send therewith a memorandum bill, and reference thereon to the number of this order. The vouchers for payment must be made out in duplicate on the Department blanks and in order to avoid delay in payment, your vouchers should be receipted when sent in.

One or 2 gallon water bucket (for holding water for toilet purposes, with long spout and cover.)

Geological Survey,  
Respectfully,  
Article Secretary

AND THIS CHECK WITH IT.  
CUSTODIAN,  
BUREAU 104.

723 Seventh Street  
Current location - Clydes

910 Bladensburg Rd NE – Washington, DC 20002

Phone 202-529-6020

Shop on line at [www.WSJENKS.com](http://www.WSJENKS.com)