

# Heritage NEWS

NOVEMBER 2009

General Meeting  
Wednesday,  
November 18, 2009  
at 7:30 p.m.  
Ladies' Literary Club  
218 N. Washington St. • Ypsilanti

## EMU's Historic Preservation Program, a Graduate's Point of View

Veronica Robinson, a student in EMU's nationally renowned historic preservation graduate program, has been an intern at the Ypsilanti Historical Museum since May 2008. On Wednesday, November 18, at 7:30 p.m., Robinson will speak to the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation about her two and a half years studying preservation at EMU and her experiences as an intern at the museum. Her talk will take place at the Ladies' Literary Club, 218 North Washington Street, and it will focus on why she chose the program and the real-world experiences it has offered her.

Robinson grew up in Midland and came to the area to study at the University of Michigan, where she graduated in 2006 with a major in history and a minor in art history. Her plan was "to go into museums," and she applied around the country to museum studies and historic preservation graduate programs. When she discovered the nearby program at EMU, Robinson realized she could attend a top program and save a lot of money by paying in-state tuition.

Robinson is most interested in artifacts and the built world and how they represent tangible history. EMU offers a large selection of courses, many of which are architecturally based. She says that program head Ted Ligibel and his faculty are very well connected and, as a result, EMU preservation students can select from a wide variety of interesting projects. In addition, Robinson has been thrilled to intern at a "really neat small museum where I've gotten a lot of experience doing everything." At the museum she has done a little bit of everything, from creating a digital collections management system to leading tours to digging drainage ditches with Ypsilanti Historical Society president Al Rudisill. Museum volunteers consider Robinson one of the best interns they've ever worked with.



Robinson once had a dream museum job in mind, but after attending graduate school in preservation she's learned that there are "so many interesting jobs I could end up doing." She will graduate in December and is applying for a variety of jobs all over the country.

Please join us on November 18. The public is welcome and, as always, refreshments will be served. For more information, call Penny Schreiber at (734) 483-5688.

### EMU's Historic Preservation Program Largest in the Country

The EMU historic preservation program is housed in the Department of Geography and Geology, but other participating departments include history, art, and construction technology. Founded in 1979, the master's program is now one of the largest and most comprehensive in the country, with concentrations in preservation planning, historic administration, and heritage interpretation and tourism. The program has been recognized with several awards over its thirty-year history, including the American Association of State and Local History's coveted Certificate of Commendation for ten years of nationally recognized performance within the field of historic preservation education. The award program is the nation's most prestigious competition for local history achievement.



# Ypsilanti Freighthouse Rain Garden

- An Interview with Greg Marker  
By Bonnie Penet

**Bonnie:** I seem to remember three questions our Board asked when we presented the idea and the budget for a rain garden. "What's a rain garden?" "Is there some law?" And "Can we re-open the Freighthouse without it?"

**Greg:** Well, a rain garden is more than a pretty name. A rain garden is a carefully designed and constructed drainage system that captures at least the first half to a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch of rain, the so-called first flush that comes off any structures on a particular site. Each garden is constructed in layers of various sand, clay and soil mixes no more than 6" thick to encourage the water to percolate quickly into the soil, rather than stand and create mosquitoes, or flood a street and carry pollutants into the storm drains, streams and river.

**Bonnie:** So, the water stays on the property.

**Greg:** The water and any dust, dirt, debris and pollutants in the area. The water is

filtered naturally over time, say, 24 to 48 hours. Plantings are also carefully chosen and usually include deep-rooted perennials and native species to help filter pollutants. Native succulents are used for variety and color. Not only can these plants survive in standing water for a couple days, but their long roots help make them drought-tolerant.

Keeping the first flush on the property is especially important at the Freighthouse,



(left to right) Denise Slone, Mike Bodary, Brian Robb, Pam Byrnes, Pete Murdock, Nat Edmunds, Bonnie Penet, Ed Penet, Janice Bobrin, Mayor Paul Schreiber, Bob Slone, Greg Marker

since soil testing revealed the presence of heavy metals from the railroad days. Removal of the soil would have been too expensive, so the serpentine berm design was created using existing soils, adding a clay/soil mix, then capping with a top soil and mulch mix.

**Bonnie:** And it's seeded with grass for now.

**Greg:** The tops of the berms were seeded with perennial rye. And the interior was seeded with an annual rye that will be mulched and replanted in the spring of 2010.

**Bonnie:** Back to those earlier questions ... is there really a law that mandates rain gardens?

**Greg:** Simply, environmental quality laws require any new construction to control a 100-year flood event by restricting the release of that water from the property to the same rate as a forest would release that water, about 0.15 cubic feet per second. You can dam it up, dig a deep containment cistern, or build a rain garden and let it naturally percolate.

The FOYF grant from SHPO for storm water management did not technically fall into the new construction category. And the total site is .97 of an acre, just under the one acre threshold. However, both the FOYF and the City wanted the storm water management project to be a model for other renovation in the community. It was the right thing to do.

**Bonnie:** I can answer the third question. The SHPO grant with local matching funds covered re-sloping the east and north decks, and the grade below the decks, plus new fascia, gutters, downspouts and drain piping out to the rain garden, but not the rain garden itself. Once we committed to the project, the SHPO grant required us to complete the rain garden at our expense to get their final sign-off and for the City to be reimbursed.

**Greg:** By doing the design and construction ourselves, the FOYF saved an estimated \$40,000, minus the cost of the concrete removal and about \$2,500 in materials and equipment rental. Berming the sides and not hauling away the polluted soil also saved additional tens of thousands of dollars.

Doing the work ourselves also qualified us for the Washtenaw County Water Resources Commission's Rain Garden program. Any county property owner who does their own work can qualify for the first \$1,000 of professional landscape design, plant selection and planting plan. Further, the FOYF performed its own survey and shape to save design money for the planting plan and the plants. Because of the importance of the site given the future commuter train project, the WCWRC is creating two plans for consideration. We'll turn the soil this winter, and then plant in the spring.

**Bonnie:** Thanks, Greg, for the information. The FOYF is also grateful to the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation, the Ypsilanti DDA, the Ypsilanti Garden Club, the City of Ypsilanti, and other generous donors, plus John Foley, Craig Shankweiler, Greg Marker and other ambitious OHM and FOYF volunteers, who helped make the project happen.

- For more information on rain gardens and how you might build your own storm water management project, go to:  
**[http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/drain\\_commissioner](http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/drain_commissioner)**.

- For more information on the Ypsilanti Freighthouse, including monthly updates, go to: **<http://www.fofy.org>**

## Ypsilanti Ford Plant Houses Historic Buildings



Bottom 2 photos were recently taken by Bill Nickels

The land that included our Ypsilanti Ford plant housed buildings titled "Pumping Station" on the above post card and "Water Works and Electric Light" on an Ypsilanti 1890 birds eye map. As the cornerstone indicates, the building construction dates from 1886. As pictured, the building with the Roman arch survived until this fall as part of the Ford plant power house. As part of a plan to improve the marketability of the complex, Ford will demolish the western half of the plant before January 1, 2010. We are losing some history in exchange for an opportunity for redevelopment of the site.



The Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation

# Heritage News

c/o Don Randazzo  
6101 Hitchingham Road  
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

## Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation Board Members

- Hank Prebys, President
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## 2009/2010 SCHEDULE

Meetings are held at the Ladies' Literary Club, 218 N. Washington Street, Ypsilanti at 7:30p.m. The public is welcome.

**18** **EMU Preservation Program**  
NOVEMBER Veronica Robinson, Preservation student & Ypsilanti Historical Museum Intern

**27** **Creating Green Architecture**  
JANUARY Michael Klement, A.I.A.

**24** **Garden Program**  
MARCH TBA

**26** **Annual Marker Awards Banquet**  
MAY

*See you at the General Meeting - Wednesday, November 18, 7:30 pm*

Heritage News is the newsletter of the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation. It is published five times a year: September, November, January, March and May, and distributed, free of charge, to the membership by mail, and made available to the public at City Hall, Farmers' Market and various business locations in the three business districts in the City.

**Have you visited the YHF website lately? There are new features you may find interesting • [www.yhf.org](http://www.yhf.org)**

## YHF Archives housed in EMU Library

Quantities of archival materials related to 40 years of historic preservation activity in Ypsilanti have found a home. Having long languished in boxes here and there, they are now properly housed at the Eastern Michigan University Library in a newly established Historic Preservation collection. Included are two big boxes containing the entire paper history of the 20-year effort to save the Towner House, several binders of Historic District Commission agendas and minutes, and 40 years of Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation records, including every calendar ever published and all 32 Home Tour brochures. These materials will now be available to all interested persons. EMU was pleased to receive them and YHF was glad to have them safely housed locally - a good arrangement for all concerned.



*Yes! I would like to support preservation and become a member of the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation.*

Please check the appropriate box and return with your check to:

Joe Mattimoe, YHF Treasurer  
301 N. Grove, Ypsilanti, MI 48198

Students & Seniors \$5

Individual \$10

Family \$15

Contributing \$25

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Sustaining \$100

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