

Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation

# Historic Home Tour



*12-5 p.m.*

SUNDAY  
AUGUST 30, 1981

Ypsilanti Yesteryear Heritage Festival



## 510 Pearl Harris-Larkins Residence

Built in three stages between 1869 and 1874, this frame house, now stuccoed, was purchased in 1974 by Jack Harris, Professor of English at Eastern Michigan University. Since then, he and his friend, Cliff Larkins, have been putting their stamp upon the house, restoring and enhancing its essentially romantic character.

Entering from a typically Victorian porch, the visitor is greeted by a pleasant front hall, unusual for its fireplace with oak mantle. Through this hall one reaches all the other rooms--the front parlor, the study, and the rooms above by way of the charming corner staircase. The ground-floor bath still contains a pedestal tub, a small dining room faces an intimate terrace, and the old-fashioned kitchen has its original maple floor exposed.

From 1885 until 1939, this was the home of Miss Ada Norton, member of the faculty at The Normal College. Returning alumnae never missed a call at Miss Norton's home, 'where ready remembrance and cordial welcome always greeted them.'

From 1939 until 1974, the house belonged to Henry and Ellen Morley. Mr. Morley, who owned the Huron Press, put the stamp of his English heritage on the garden, with spreading yew beside the terrace, old roses, wisteria, scented violets, and yellow primroses--essentially a spring and early summer garden, but always a very private, sheltered place.



## 202 South Huron Fennel Residence

This Greek Revival structure, the first brick house built in Ypsilanti, was constructed for Judge Jacob Larzelere in 1830, and is now owned by Dr. William Fennel.

In 1932, when Miss Doyne Wolfe purchased the house, the kitchen sink still had an old-fashioned pump, there was a woodshed out back, and stove pipes connected to the ample chimney. A beehive oven has been discovered in the back of the fireplace. It has not, however, been uncovered.

There is some question as to whether the structure was originally built as a double house or whether it was built in two stages. In the north apartment, now occupied by Mr. Keith Stanger, there is an unusual winding staircase with black walnut newel post and ballusters. In Dr. Fennel's apartment the staircase is also black walnut but rises in a straight climb to the second floor. The doorway between parlor and dining room has considerable depth and partway through it appears that two walls have been brought together.

Interesting features of the house are the woodwork, original hardware, and 'Christian' doors, so named because of the cross created by the panels. The house rests on a stone foundation and heavy oak beams, and the basement floor is paved with brick. Bricks for the entire structure may have been imported from France, since there were no local brickyards at that time.



## 504 North Hamilton LaRue Residence

504 North Hamilton was built about 1889 in a then-popular functional style which is evidenced by the presence of many similar houses within the 'Norris and Cross Addition.' If one were to identify a specific style for the house, it would be Queen Anne, details of which are seen in the front door and hallway window on the first floor.

The contoured 'bullseye' woodwork is pine, quite likely from the virgin forests of northern Michigan. The floors are all wide-plank pine. Gas pipes, which once led to lighting fixtures, have been discovered in the living and dining room ceilings and the master bedroom wall.

Barry and Diane LaRue purchased the house in 1977, at a time when it had suffered years of neglect and abuse of its historic character. The plumbing and electrical systems had been brought up to code after a fire on the second floor in 1972, so most of the LaRue's work on the house has been decorative in nature—stripping woodwork, sanding floors, locating five-panel doors, wallpapering, and 'scrounging' strange and wonderful things off the curb on trash night!

The LaRue's first look at the backyard gave them a fine view of a gas stove filled with beer cans, a broken swing set, and a five-year-old tree growing through rusting bed springs! All of the shrubs, grass and plants have been added since the LaRue's tenure on Hamilton Street.



## 415 North Huron Lewis House

This elegant house was built in 1856 in the Italianate style. This style, most popular from 1840 to 1880, is characterized by the gently sloping roof, deep, overhanging eaves supported by prominent, ornate brackets, and tall, double-hung windows, each with single panes of glass. The porch features slender columns with beautifully carved capitals. The rope-like detailing around the door and over the windows is an unusual variation from the more usual style of ornamentation, an example of which can be seen on the house next door at 411 North Huron.

The Lewis house was bought by Harriet Adelaide Lewis in July, 1905 and until recently still belonged to her daughter, Evangeline Lewis. The furniture you see is that which the Lewis family brought to the house in 1905. The interior rooms preserve many original features, such as ornate plaster cornice moldings, varnished walnut woodwork, and a carved marble fireplace mantle. In the living room, one of the tall windows has been made into a bookcase.

Outside, be sure to notice the Italianate style tack house of board and batten construction, and the hitching post at the front curb. Landscaping is in the Victorian style which favored curving lines and natural, rather than formal, design.

Both house and grounds are now owned and maintained by the Ypsilanti Historical Society.



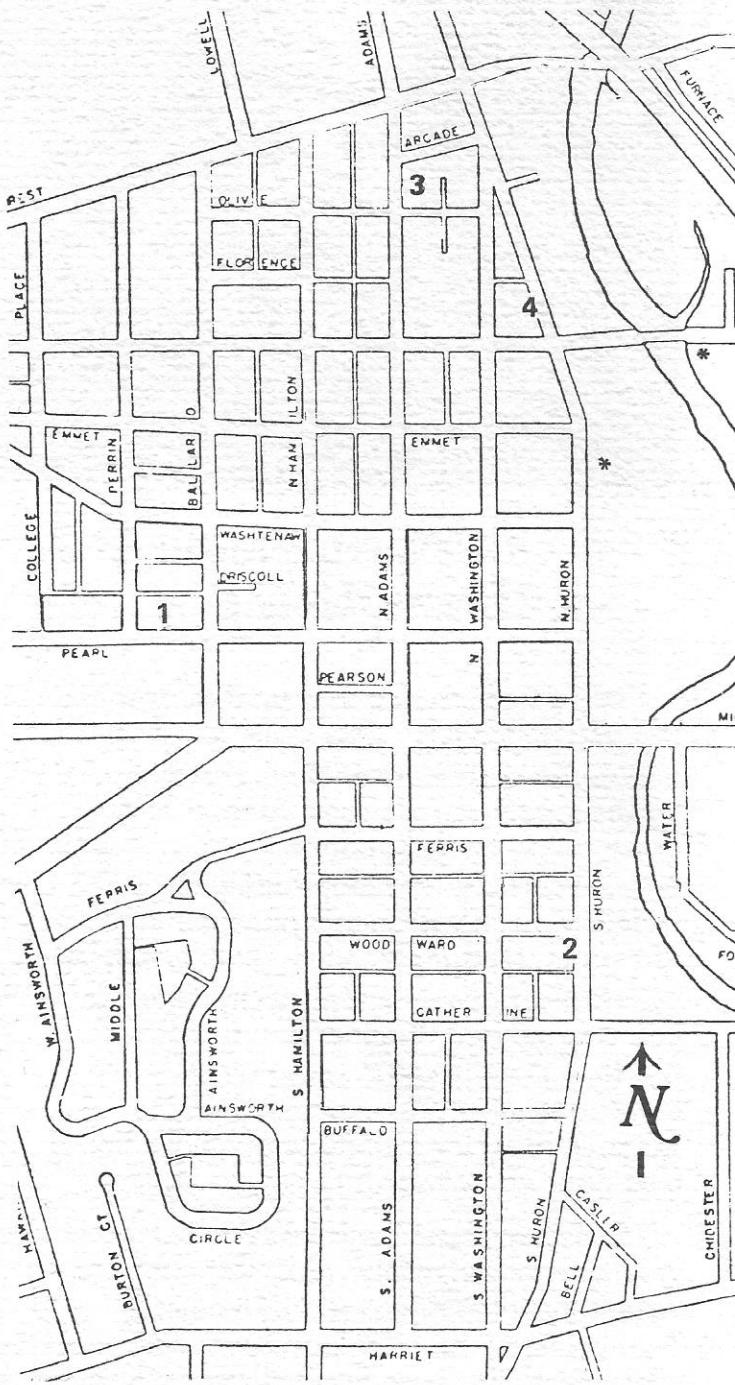
## 23 East Cross McKeever Studio & Residence

Carolyn and Gary McKeever presently live in part of what was once one of the grandest hotels between Detroit and Chicago. The Follett House, built in 1859, opened its doors on the Fourth of July, a marvellously appropriate date for the grand opening of such a gloriously splendid establishment.

The brick Italianate structure reveals a line of light bricks along the roof where a bracketed cornice once adorned the building. A variety of architraves survive and trim the top of the windows on the facade. The tall windows on the western part of the third and fourth floors open into Follett Hall, the hotel ballroom. Many traveling musical and theatrical companies entertained Ypsilantians in those elegant surroundings.

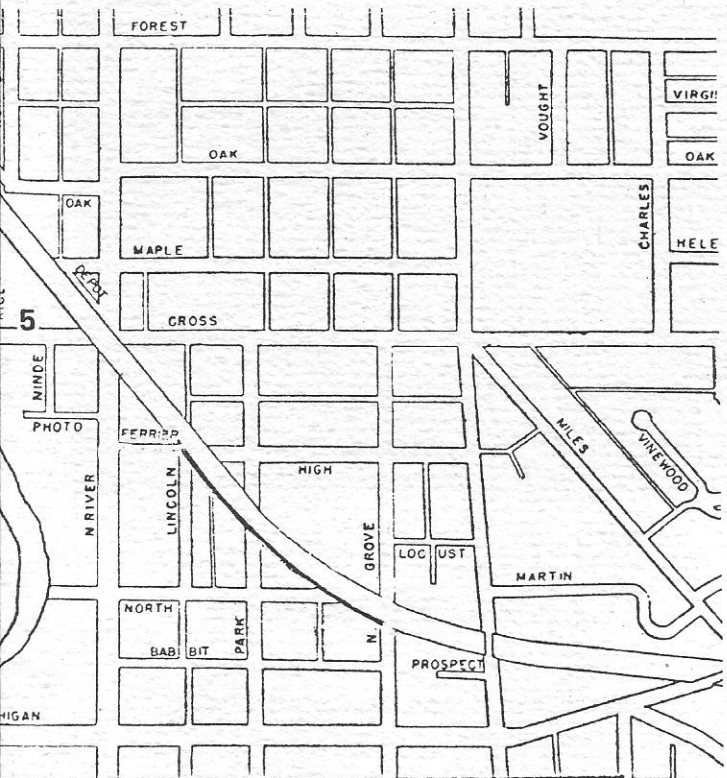
The hotel declined and became five storefronts and many apartments when the commerce of Ypsilanti shifted from Depot Town to Michigan Avenue. Neglect and misuse took their toll.

The McKeevers bought the fourth storefront in 1975. Rehabilitation and redecoration occurred during the spring of 1981. The first floor will be commercially rented, the McKeevers live on the second floor, and the third and fourth floors are studios for Carolyn and other artists. Visitors to the apartment should notice the exposed interior brick wall and original floors.



- 1** 510 Pearl  
Harris-Larkins Residence
- 2** 202 South Huron  
Fennel Residence
- 3** 504 North Hamilton  
LaRue Residence

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The Ypsilanti Historic District consists of all properties within, and on both sides of the boundary streets, with the exception of Forest Ave. between Huron St. and Norris St. which only the south side is included and Prospect St. between Forest Ave. and Cross St. which only the west side is included.

- 4 415 North Huron  
Lewis House
- 5 23 East Cross  
McKeever Residence and Studio.

\*Tickets and Information

Numbers are for identification only.  
Homes may be toured in any order.

Sincere thanks to those whose generosity has

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