

32nd  
Annual

Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation

*Historic*

[www.yhf.org](http://www.yhf.org)

HOME TOUR



Photo Griffin Reames

SUNDAY AUGUST 23, 2009 • NOON-5 P.M.

32nd Annual  
Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation

# *Historic* HOME TOUR

- ❑ 1. 218 North Washington Street
- ❑ 2. 120 North Adams Street
- ❑ 3. 12 West Michigan Avenue
- ❑ 4. 518 Fairview Circle
- ❑ 5. 957 Sherman Street
- ❑ 6. 1104 Pearl Street
- ❑ 7. 210 Wallace Boulevard

# Welcome

Welcome to the 32nd Annual Ypsilanti Historic Home Tour. Since 1977, the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation has been pleased and proud to present one of our community's most important resources, our wealth of historic architecture. Once again, Ypsilanti residents have graciously agreed to open their doors so that we all may see and appreciate the results of this community's historic preservation efforts. We take this opportunity to thank them. This year's tour features seven historic properties located throughout the city. Enjoy the tour!

Although the structures are numbered for your convenience in the brochure, you are free to visit them in any order you wish.

Visitors may be asked to remove shoes. As a courtesy to the homeowners, PLEASE no food or drink, smoking, pets, unsupervised children, strollers, or photography inside the homes.

The ticket holder expressly assumes all responsibility for any personal injury or property damage occurring while on tour.

## ABOUT THE *Foundation*

The Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to the idea that one of Ypsilanti's greatest resources is its wealth of historic architecture. The Foundation seeks to increase public understanding and appreciation of these architectural links with our past and works to promote the conservation, rehabilitation, and utilization of these important commu-



nity assets. The Foundation publishes its newsletter, *Heritage News*, several times a year and distributes it free of charge to its membership by mail and to the general public at various locations throughout the city. The Foundation's website is [www.yhf.org](http://www.yhf.org). Since 1977, the Foundation's Historic Structure Marker Awards Program has recog-

nized more than 150 homes, businesses, churches, and other community buildings in Ypsilanti for significant historic architecture and continuing, sensitive maintenance. The annual Historic Home Tour is sponsored by the Foundation. Proceeds from the tour fund the Marker Awards, community projects, and education programs on preservation-related topics, which are held every year in September, November, January, and March and are open to the public. For more information on the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation or to find out about becoming a member, contact Henry Prebys, president, at 487-0595.





218 North Washington Street

## *The Ladies' Literary Club*

This wonderful 1842 Greek Revival house was thought by Emil Lorch, founder of the architecture program at the University of Michigan, to be one of the finest examples of its style in the country. In 1935, due to the efforts of Lorch, the house was selected by the Advisory Committee of the American Buildings Survey "because of its age and architectural interest as being worthy of most careful preservation for future generations." This document was deposited in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. In 1965 the first marker on a historic house in Ypsilanti, bearing the Michigan State Historical Commission designation No. 47, was presented to the club; and on March 16, 1972, the club was notified that its house was now listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The house was built by Arden Ballard. Several others owned it in quick succession but the Grant family, who purchased it in the 1850s, and the Ladies' Literary Club, which bought it in 1913 from Edward Grant, have been the chief stewards of the house.

The club itself, which was founded in 1878, has a rich history, much of it entwined with the story of the house. Over the years, the preservation of their clubhouse, which is in Ypsilanti's historic district, has been an important goal for club members to coalesce around. The house is used for all club meetings and events but it is also available for rent to the public. In 1970, after careful consultation with preservation architect Richard Frank, a large kitchen, caretaker's apartment, additional restrooms, and a basement for workshop activities and storage were added to the back of the house. To finance the addition, the ladies of the club spent money they had on hand, raised more, and secured a substantial mortgage, which they paid off in short order.

Those who have never been inside this architectural treasure will love touring its gracious rooms, hearing the history of the club and the house, and seeing the antiques donated over the years by club members.

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Photo Denis Schmiedele



120 North Adams Street

*Judith Weinberger*

The only Prairie-style house in Ypsilanti was built by Edward and Lena Mellencamp about 1912. The Mellencamps, who owned a store in the city, lived in the house until 1959, when their son, Robert, inherited it. In 1967 Robert sold the house to Vincent Buck, a former mayor of Ypsilanti. The Michigan Association for Retarded Children purchased the house in 1975 and converted it into a multi-unit dwelling for people with special needs. Judith Weinberger, the fourth and current owner, bought the house in 2001 and has spent several years enthusiastically restoring it.

The house is a wonderful example of Prairie-style residential architecture, which originated in the early 1900s and is largely credited to renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright. The style is defined by strong horizontal lines, rows or pairs of windows, and low-pitched roofs with oversized eaves. Unlike Victorian architecture, Prairie-style lacks overt ornamentation and bright paint colors. The focus, instead, is on an overall sense of symmetry using geometric shapes and forms. Paint colors are muted and mimic those found in nature. Tourgoers will observe all of these elements when they visit the house. Be sure to notice the unique stucco soffits.

The interior of the house has an open, expansive floorplan, which is typical of the Prairie style. Weinberger has lovingly restored the original oak and pine floors, Arts and Crafts windows, and glass pocket doors. The Pewabic-tile fireplace in the front room and quarter-sawn oak paneling in the dining room are not to be missed. Although updated, the kitchen includes the original ice box and butler's pantry. The YHF is very excited to have this wonderful example of an important American architectural style on this year's historic home tour.



12 West Michigan Avenue

## *Eric and Lisa Walters*

This three-story building in downtown Ypsilanti is believed to have been built about 1860. Near the turn of the last century the address changed from 433 Congress to 12 West Congress. This has hampered efforts to research more precisely the date of the building.

In 2007 long-time Ypsilantians Lisa and Eric Walters startled their friends by deciding to buy 12 West Michigan. The couple set about renovating the upper two floors into a new home for themselves, doing almost all of the work themselves. They've been at it now for more than eighteen months.

The main floor was occupied by a slew of businesses and organizations over the years, among them Ypsilanti Plating Works (1912), Robbins Tinsmith (1922–1926), the Salvation Army (1934–1942), and most recently J. K. Shoe Repair (1981–1997). In 1948 the upper floors became the Hillside Hotel. No one can remember when the hotel officially went out of business, but the upstairs apartments continued to be rented until the Walterses bought the building.

Lisa and Eric have gutted all but the second-floor bathroom, which they chose to leave as architectural evidence of the hotel. Fourteen very small rooms have become five large ones. The kitchen was designed with a “diner” ambience, featuring black and white tile, laminate countertops, and stainless steel appliances. The living room doubles as a library housing Lisa’s extensive book collection. The third floor contains the master bedroom and bath, Eric’s den, and Lisa’s office.

Lisa explains that because the building is on Michigan Avenue, or US-12, she refers to it as “Twelve on Twelve.” Eric points out that both the second and third floors have twelve windows, so that’s “twelve on twelve” too.

The future of the retail space remains uncertain. It’s currently rehearsal space for Fourth Wish, Eric’s jazz quartet.



518 Fairview Circle

*Erika Nelson*

The 1925 Period Tudor at 518 Fairview Circle may have been the first house on the street. It is situated sideways on its lot—a very English way of placing a house. The main door doesn't face the street and entering the house feels like coming through a garden. The garage and driveway at the back are accessed off Oakwood Street. This delightful cottage-style house with soft gray decorative half-timbering shows itself off without parked cars cluttering the view.

Erika Nelson bought the house less than nine months ago, in December. Nelson and previous owners Linda Palka, Bruce and Cheryl Campbell, and Patrick Lutali have collectively spent over a decade renovating it. Palka started on the exterior with a new roof and gutters, and she repainted the house herself. Her biggest project took place in summer 2000. With the help of her dad she gutted the kitchen, opening up a wall between it and the dining room. The result is a spacious, light-filled room. Doors were removed from the sunroom off the living room, creating another expansive and airy space.

The Campbells added double-hung windows throughout the house, put in skylights, and enclosed the rear porch to make a sunroom. They also built a two-tiered deck and pergola behind the house. Lutali did a wonderful renovation of the second-story bathroom in tile and marble and he designed the extensive gardens and landscaping.

Nelson has put her own stamp on the house in the short time she has been there. Before moving in she began numerous renovation projects, including restoration of the original wood fireplace mantel and the addition of Motawi tile to the hearth and surround. And she replaced the kitchen backsplash with Motawi. Her art choices and Mission-style furniture create a strong statement in this charming and very personal home.





957 Sherman Street

## *Kathy Scharp and Jake Grimes*

This meticulously decorated Tudor Revival was built in 1926 for Mary and Earl Willoughby, owner of Willoughby Bros. shoe store, well-known to Ypsilanti's long-time residents. It was later the home of a grocer, a salesman, and a brewmaster at Ypsilanti Brewing. In 1948 it was purchased by city manager Naseeb Domoose and in the late 1950s the house belonged to the director of Family Services, Joe Granata, soon followed by an Ypsilanti High School teacher (Mr. Schmidt, to those of you who attended in the 1960s). The present owners, Kathy Scharp and Jake Grimes, were drawn to the Tudor style, with its sharply pitched gables, small paned windows, and the half-timbered effect made by horizontal and vertical boards breaking the shingle siding into rectangles.

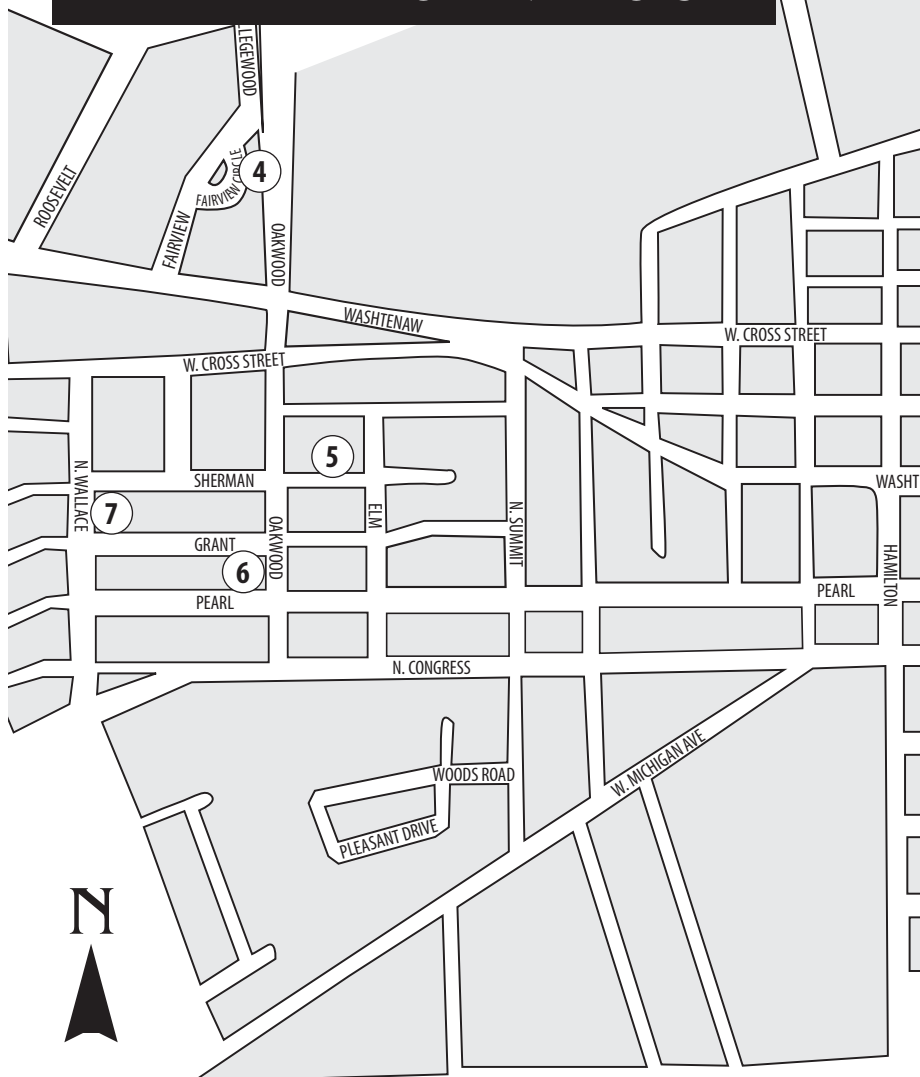
When Kathy and Jake bought the home in 1999, they brought incredible skills to its decorating. Jake is a master carpenter and builder and Kathy an inventive painter, and together they have created an ambiance of drama and comfort. Influenced by the art of John William Waterhouse, Jake built a fireplace that recalls the medieval hearth that might have been found in the wealthiest Tudor houses of the early twentieth century. He has installed elegant moldings throughout the house and Kathy has used paint to make faux finishes that unify the style and add interest to what was a rather modest dwelling. Many Waterhouse prints are on display as well as those of other painters of the period. Venetian masks, Tiffany-style lamps, both period and new, family antiques, and many other details also make this a special home.

Tourgoers will enjoy Kathy's extremely charming hanging pots and window-box plantings in the front, with the flower colors selected to complement the blue color of the house.

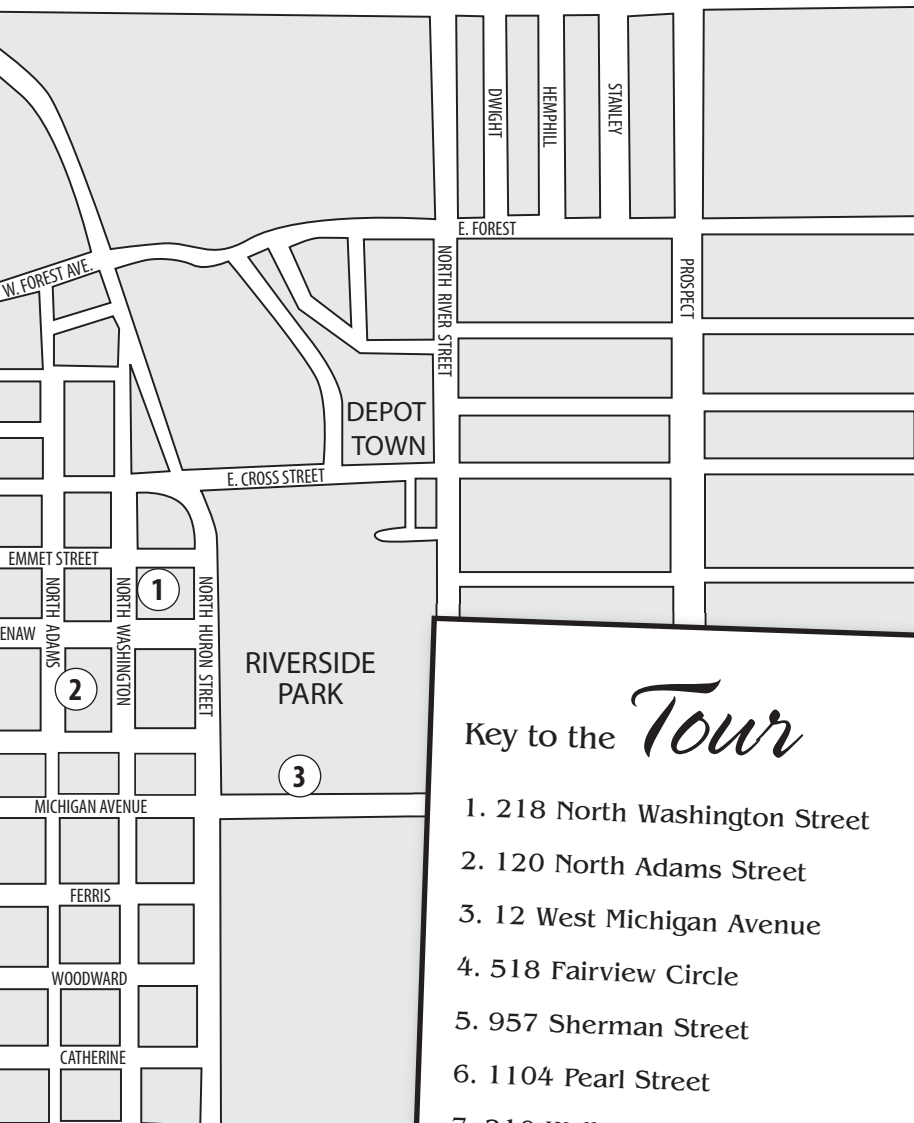


# 32nd Annual Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation

## *Historic* HOME TOUR



# Your *Guide* to the Tour



## Key to the *Tour*

1. 218 North Washington Street
2. 120 North Adams Street
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1104 Pearl Street

## *Lani Chisnell*

Russell and Flora Clyne built this vernacular bungalow in 1924. Russell died in 1929 and Flora, who was a typing teacher at Roosevelt High, lived on in the house until 1960. Current owner Lani Chisnell has assembled a list of former owners. She enjoys pointing out that for most of its eighty-five years the house has been owned by single women.

Chisnell bought the house in late February 2004. When she first saw it, she was not impressed. "It was this strange house with a big long kitchen in it and no living area," she says. "I called it the bowling alley." But over four years she and her very handy dad collaborated on creating a spacious and livable main floor. The house has been transformed with what she calls "a nod toward the Arts and Crafts" style. Among the many highlights of the redo are an attractive new stairway and a stained-glass window on the landing that her dad made and installed. The first floor now has a dining room, a living room, and a wonderful new kitchen with a sitting area. On the second floor, the original small, oddly located bathroom was combined with a third bedroom and turned into a terrific large bathroom. Chisnell has furnished her home with garage sale and Treasure Mart finds, pieces picked up off the curb on garbage day, and antiques from the Saline Antiques Fair.

Over the last year Chisnell has been working on the house's exterior. Siding was removed to reveal cedar-shake shingles and the house has been beautifully repainted. She also added a front porch and an inspired new front door. Her front-yard perennial garden is eye-catching.

Coming up soon will be a decision about her dilapidated detached garage. Where some might see a demolition project, Chisnell envisions a garden shed, a carriage house, and a covered outdoor porch.



210 Wallace Boulevard

## *Larry and Michele Thomas*

This tidy green-sided vernacular colonial revival, built in 1932, is the home of Larry and Michele Thomas, who have lived here for twenty years. The house has a hip roof, which makes it more modern for its time (a "pure" colonial revival would have a gable roof). The house used to be white, with a cupola on top and an odd enclosed porch on the front. In its current incarnation, the house immediately catches the eye of passers-by because of its simple but elegant hip-roofed portico, its cheerful and serene color, its red front door, and its lovingly tended front-yard perennial garden (which is a gem).

When tourgoers finish admiring the flowers in front and go inside, they will be reminded of days gone by when people somehow managed to happily raise kids in comfortable, gracious homes despite a lack of cathedral ceilings, one-acre kitchens, and rambling family rooms. The Thomases have removed carpeting, refinished floors, and painted all the rooms in vivid colors. Family antiques abound. Notice the showy "painted" photos of Michele's great-grandparents at the top of the stair landing. A child's rocking chair in one of the bedrooms belonged to Larry's mom, who would be ninety-three if she were still alive. A handsome white cupboard with glass doors in another bedroom was a wedding gift from Michele's great-grandparents to her grandparents. The kitchen was redone about thirteen years ago and the Thomases recently updated to granite countertops. The spacious upstairs bathroom, which has been remodeled to suit the era of the house, includes two windows, a separate shower, and the original claw-foot bathtub. Tourgoers will exit into the backyard, which doesn't require much mowing because the Thomases have replaced almost all of the grass with a patio and another delightful perennial garden.

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- ♥ Norton's Flowers & Gifts for their stunning and unique floral arrangements for the homes on today's tour
- ♥ All of the homeowners, tenants, volunteer guides, and ticket sellers
- ♥ Penny Schreiber, for editing the home tour booklet
- ♥ Denis Schmiedeke, for his outstanding photography
- ♥ Eric Dotzauer, for heading up day-of-tour ticket sales
- ♥ Pattie Harrington of Standard Printing in Depot Town, for her terrific design of the home tour booklet & poster
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- ♥ Bowerbird Mongo, Salt City Antiques, Norton's Flowers & Gifts, Haab's Restaurant, What Is That? Art Gallery, and Nelson Amos Studios, in Ypsilanti, and Downtown Home & Garden, in Ann Arbor, for selling tickets before the day of the tour

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Jane Schmiedeke, Penny Schreiber,  
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