

Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation

34th Annual

# Historic HOME TOUR



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

Ypsilanti Heritage Festival Event

Photo Lynda Hummel

SUNDAY AUGUST 21, 2011 • NOON-5 P.M.

34th Annual  
Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation

*Historic* HOME TOUR

- 1. 314 Hiawatha Street
- 2. 7 North Normal Street
- 3. 32 South Normal Street
- 4. 35 South Summit Street
- 5. 121 North Huron Street
- 6. 505 North Hamilton Street

# Welcome

Welcome to the 34th Annual Ypsilanti Historic Home Tour. Since 1977, the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation has been pleased and proud to present one of the community's most important resources, its wealth of historic architecture. This year's homeowners have graciously agreed to open their doors so that we all may see and appreciate the results of historic preservation efforts in the Ypsilanti area. We take this opportunity to thank them. 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 nonprofit 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 community 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 Web site is [www.yhf.org](http://www.yhf.org). Since 1977, the Foundation's Historic Structure Marker Awards Program has recognized 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.



Lynda Hummel

314 Hiawatha Street

## *Brent Welsh & Adam Levensgood*

A 1950's split-level ranch house is typically not what one expects to encounter on a historic home tour. But for Brent Welsh and Adam Levensgood it was exactly the type of "historic" rehab project they were looking for. After renovating a vernacular upright and wing house on North Hamilton in Ypsilanti, the two were eager for a change, and they decided to pursue a preservation project on a mid-century house. Their aim in putting their house on today's tour is to spotlight a house from that era.

The 1958 house at 314 Hiawatha was built alongside a near identical house, a common and economical building trend of the post-war era that continues today. Raymond and Mary Whiting spent nearly fifty years in the home, raising their two children, Gerri and Mary Ann there. In 2006 the house was sold by the widowed Mary. It suffered through a string of owners, and when Welsh and Levensgood purchased it in 2009 it was a poster house for neglect and deferred maintenance. They have spent the past two years rehabilitating the house from top to bottom, doing most of the work themselves. They've achieved their goal of preserving as much of the original design as possible.

The entire house is open today, including the open-concept main level, with a modern new kitchen; the extensively renovated lower level, with new bath, guest room, and den; and the upper level, with three restored bedrooms and a bathroom with original tile. The house is decorated with a mix of contemporary, mid-century, and Danish modern furnishings, which complement the simple modern style of the house. The extensive gardens that surround the house were all planted within the past two years. The backyard plantings take their inspiration from the estate gardens at the Casa Loma castle in Toronto.

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Lynda Hummel

7 North Normal Street

## *Roberta & Dan Andrews*

This stately home, built in 1848, has long been a landmark for Ypsilanti residents and may have been designed by the architect who designed the 1840's Greek Revival house at 218 North Washington Street that has been owned by the Ladies' Literary Club since 1913.

The architecture of the Normal Street house, with its double verandas of fretted columns, is reminiscent of the Greek Revival style of the antebellum South. The facade has a beautifully balanced design of French doors above and below; the Italianate details were later additions. The house probably started as a rectangle, but successive alterations have changed the roof line. Tourgoers will notice as they proceed through the house that many additions helped to enlarge the informal living space.

William Cross, a wheat farmer and businessman from Genesee, New York, had the house built. By 1862 it was sold to Frank Smith, and it was his family that sold the residence in 1914 to its most well-known resident, P. Roger Cleary, founder of Cleary College. Mr. Cleary's pride in his penmanship, learned as a child in Ireland, led him to establish the college with a business curriculum.

The Cleary family prospered and was pleased to move in to a home that accommodated their four children so easily. But, as so often happens, the children grew up and left home. The death of Mrs. Cleary in 1939 coincided with the need for housing for the multitudes of new workers at the bomber factory during the war. Mr. Cleary divided his home into four apartments: one for himself, one for his son Owen's family, and the other two for renters. It remained a house of apartments until 1977, when it was bought by Luann and Howard Booth, who began a restoration.

The present owners, Roberta and Ian Andrews, purchased the house in 2001 and have completed its return to a single family home of great charm and freshness. There is plenty of room for two sons and some very large dogs. The entire house will be open for tourgoers to see.



32 South Normal Street

## *Adam Delaney*

People who regularly drive down West Michigan Avenue have enjoyed watching the transformation of this circa 1895 Queen Anne house into a painted lady that sits high above the intersection of South Normal and Ypsilanti's main drag. Adam Delaney, the owner of two concrete construction companies, purchased it in 2004 because "it needed to be fixed up." Slowly but surely he has turned the house into a beautiful showpiece. His mom, Neeta Delaney, has great taste, and the two of them sparred over the exterior colors. The house features three shades of red, and Mom won on one of those. Delaney says he knew he wanted a tan shade and a sunny yellow to complement the reds.

The house's most significant owners were the Plomaritas family. Delaney says that Cleopatra Plomaritas died there in the 1980s. In 2004 the house had two apartments, and Delaney has kept that configuration. He lives on the second floor and his renter, classical violinist Henrik Karapetyan, occupies the first floor. Delaney shares his apartment with his adorable three-year-old daughter, Maya, who is there several days every week. Both apartments will be on today's tour.

Delaney's renovation reflects his excellent carpentry, masonry, landscaping, and artistic skills. The back entrance to the house is all new, and he built it to mimic the front of the house. He also created a loft bedroom that is accessed from his kitchen. He painstakingly built a stone wall up a slope to the right of the house's front entrance and did extensive re-landscaping. Delaney's artistic skills and the taste he probably inherited from his mother are apparent throughout his apartment. For example, he changed a bedroom at the front to a music room, and on one of the walls he painted a mural that was inspired by a drawing of an art deco pendant he saw in a book. Delaney is learning the guitar, and his three guitars are displayed on the wall. Maya has her own rack on the floor for her "guitar."

A fun side note: when Delaney was renovating the house he found six crisp one hundred dollar bills under a vinyl floor in his apartment.



Lynda Hummel

35 South Summit Street

## *Eric & Karen Maurer*

This diva of a house has had a long and eclectic life, beginning as a Gothic Revival sometime in the mid-nineteenth century and ending up as a Queen Anne. "It's a sampler, quite wonderful—an architectural history lesson by itself," said Heritage Foundation board member Jane Schmiedeke in a 1986 *Ann Arbor News* article. From a modest frame structure, built perhaps as early as 1842, the house evolved until the 1890s, when it began to look like it does today.

By 1859 several additions to the house had resulted in steeply pitched gables on all four of its sides. Walter Beach bought the house in 1865 to live in with his wife and their expanding family (they eventually had eight children). Beach soon embellished the house, adding a long veranda with a porte-cochere at the south end, a prominent tower in the north-west corner, and elaborate wooden gingerbread. These alterations represented important nineteenth-century status symbols. The popular Queen Anne Style had peaked and was already in decline by 1893 when Beach sold his highly fashionable house.

The house has had too many owners to list here. A 1936 photo shows a boarded-up house left to rot. It was eventually repaired and lived on as an apartment house and then an EMU fraternity.

Today the house is owned by Eric and Karen Maurer, who live there with their four children. The house was on the tour in 2003, and at the time Eric's father lived with them in a separate apartment. Walter Maurer has since died and the house is once again a single-family home. The Maurers' have an impressive new kitchen, with custom-made cabinets. The former apartment space is now an office for Karen, an art studio for Eric, and part of their much-expanded kitchen.





Lynda Hummel

121 North Huron Street

## *Doug & Mary Kisor*

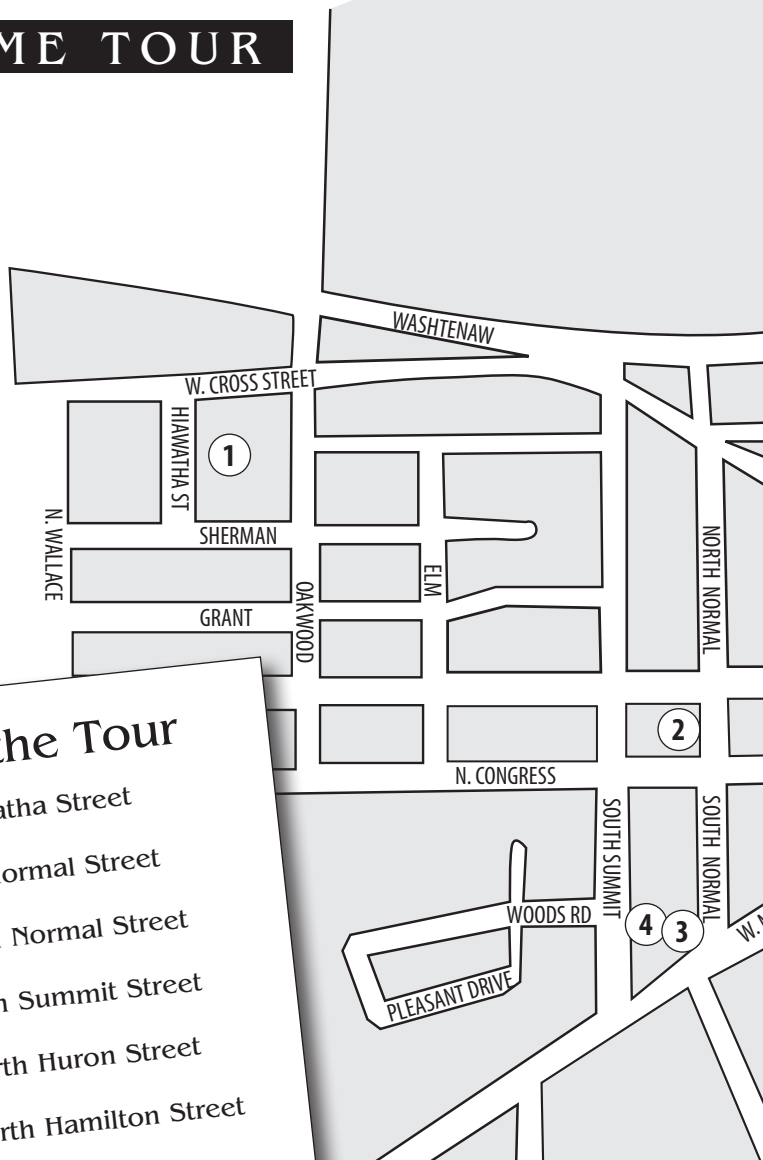
This spectacular example of a house in the Italian Villa style was built in the early 1870s. It became the home of Dr. John Andrus Watling, the first college-educated dentist to practice in Michigan and one of the founders of the University of Michigan School of Dentistry. The house features a tall tower, an ornamental bay window on the side, and a front gable with hipped hoods over the street-side windows on the first floor. (Dr. Watling's dental office was next door at 119 North Huron.)

In the mid-1980s, Oscar Haab rented to Mary and Doug Kisor one of the four apartments then in the house. A memory from that period is of the gravel parking lot that stretched from the back of the house to Pearl Street. It is hard to picture that parking lot today because gardens and trees now fill the space. In the mid-1990s the Kisors purchased the house. Since then, restoration has fluctuated between the inside and the outside, depending on the greatest need and available resources. The interior features wonderful wood floors, including a rich and special parquet floor of walnut, oak, and cherry in the dining room. A circular stair provides access to the second floor (the two levels in the tower can only be reached by ladder). In the early 2000s, the Kisors began to transition the house back to a single-family home. Significant progress has been made, although renovations continue in the formal rooms downstairs and in the tower entry space.

Two side notes, one informative and the other fun. First, the house was previously thought to have been built in 1865. But Doug Kisor has found several bricks with a patent date of December 13, 1870, which indicates that the earliest date for the house would be 1871. Second, Dr. Watling's wife donated an impressive pier mirror from her home to the nearby Ladies' Literary Club, where she was a member. It still graces the club's main meeting room.

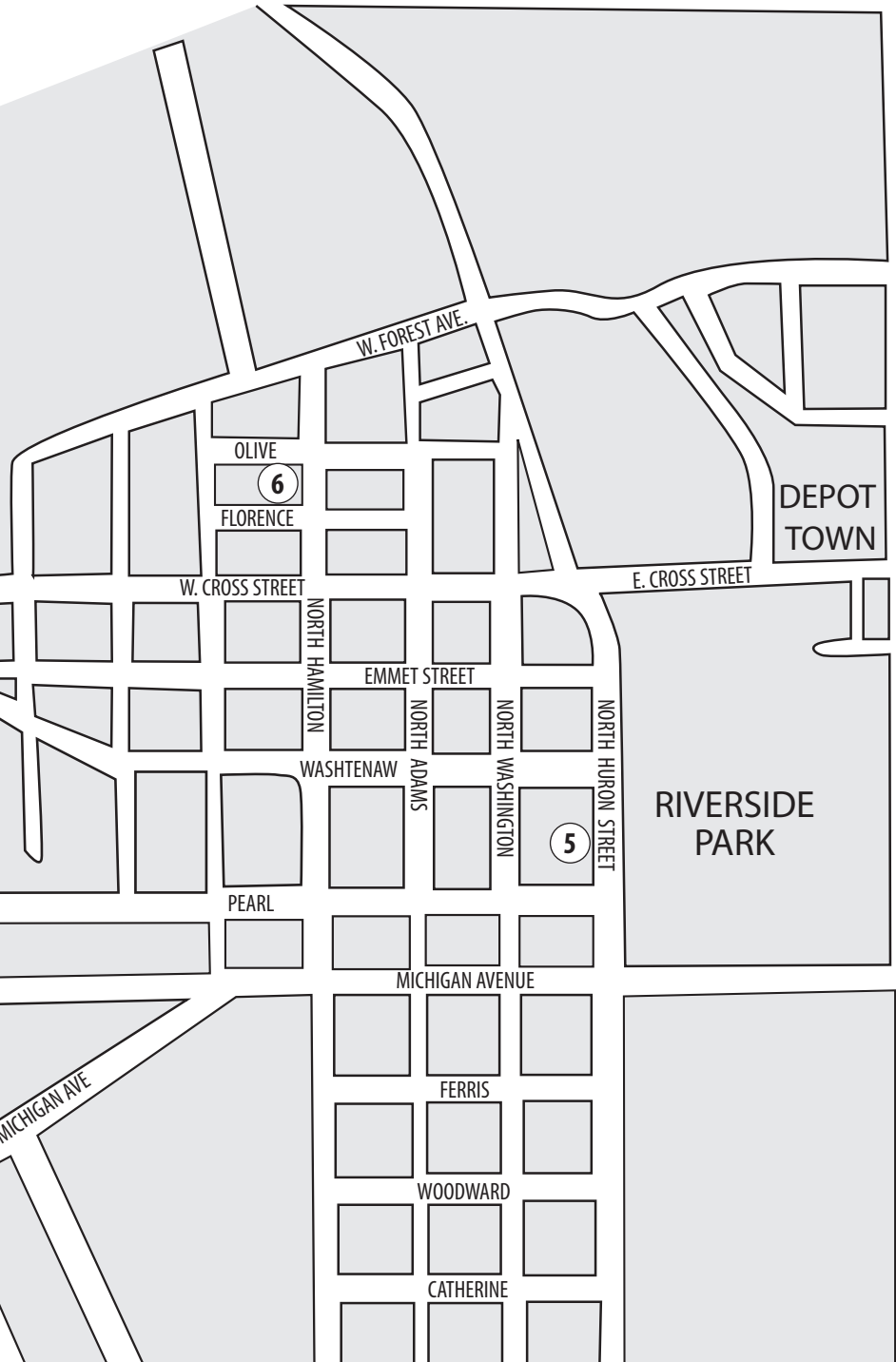
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Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation  
*Historic*

**HOME TOUR**



**Key to the Tour**

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Lynda Hummel

505 North Hamilton Street

## *Barry LaRue & Kim Clarke*

Owner Barry LaRue suspects, based on its exterior design, that this Queen Anne house was built between 1885 and 1889. The Alton E. Lewis family lived in the house for many years. The family probably bought it in 1901, when the Lewis brothers started the Michigan Ladder Company, which is still in business in Ypsilanti today. Alton Lewis put an addition on the front northeast corner of the house to expand the front hallway and add a staircase. The garage to shelter the new-fangled “automobile” was constructed around 1915.

Alton died in 1936. After the death of his widow, two unmarried Lewis sisters, Sara and Caroline (Carrie) lived in the house. Carrie outlived her sister, dying in 1967. The house became a student rental until a Mr. Mulder bought it in 1983. He died broke and, although his house was paid for, he was behind on his taxes. Barry and Kim bought the house from the county in October 2009. Today the house has a new roof and front porch, a rebuilt chimney, and new plumbing, wiring, and attic insulation. A highlight of the renovation was the removal of the ghastly cement tile the Lewis sisters had installed in 1955, obliterating at the time all vestiges of the house’s former charm and style. Much work has been done on the inside, which today consists of two very nice apartments. The one on the ground floor is occupied by Scotty James, who works at Materials Unlimited, and the one on the second floor by Bee Mayhew; her husband, Jim Roll; and her daughter, Samantha. Bee owns the popular Beezy’s restaurant on North Washington Street.

Many current features of the house, including doors, trim, light fixtures, and other details were either salvaged from the home itself or from other homes in Ypsilanti. Barry LaRue is often seen around town on trash day placing an old door or window frame into his truck to be reused at a later time and place.

# *Improving our community . . .*



A portion of the proceeds from today's tour will be earmarked for the restoration of two Michigan Historical Marker signs in Ypsilanti, one in Prospect Park and one on Michigan Avenue. Both are owned by the State Historic Preservation Office. The cost of restoring these signs is approximately \$1,000 per sign. The Ypsilanti Convention and Visitors has committed \$500 to the project.

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Barbara Saxton, Jane Schmiedeke, Penny Schreiber,  
Mary Streeter, Janie Weaver, and Jane Van Bolt



# Thank You

A sincere thanks also to . . .

≈ 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

≈ Lynda Hummel, for her outstanding photography

≈ Octavian Prundeanu, 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

≈ M. J. Dennison and Jan Arps-Prundeanu, for selling the ads for the home tour booklet

≈ Haab's Restaurant, Salt City Antiques, and Materials Unlimited, in downtown Ypsilanti; Nelson Amos Studio, in Depot Town; Norton's Flowers and Gifts, on Washtenaw Avenue; and Downtown Home and Garden, in Ann Arbor, for selling tickets before the day of the tour.

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to support Ypsilanti's heritage of historic architecture.*