

The Opera House was sold to a Mr. Draper of Buffalo, New York in 1887. Previous to this, Mr. Draper had been proprietor and manager of "Draper's Uncle Toms Cabin Co.", a travelling dramatic company for 25 years. According to the company show bills, their name was "a household word." Mr. Draper did bring with him years of theatrical experience.

A tornado passed through the city of Ypsilanti on April 12, 1883, just after 7:00 p.m. The tornado demolished the Opera House, leaving only the front wall standing. The building was empty at the time, or there could have been great loss of life. Mr. Draper was home ill at the time, and died a few days later.

A new, but smaller and less grand, Opera House opened on December 31, 1896. This became the Wuerth Theater in 1920. The live stage shows were soon replaced by movies. The theater part of the building was demolished in 1959,



Opera House after a tornado passed through the city on April 12, 1883.

Charette planned for end of month

A charette is a series of meetings giving anyone interested a chance to discuss the design of a project. A gathering of this nature has been planned for the end of January regarding the Water Street Redevelopment project.

Megan Gibb, Director of Community and Economic Development for the city said the first meeting is to be held January 26, at Eagle Crest and will continue with several sessions. The consultants, architects and the project developer will be in attendance to discuss the project with the participants.

The planners will then compile the information and put together a plan to present to the city Planning Commission and City Council by late spring.

Questions regarding this project can be directed to Megan Gibb, City of Ypsilanti Director of Community and Economic Development.



The Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation

Heritage News

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

Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation Board Members

Hank Prebys, President
Joe Mattimoe, Treasurer
Jennifer Goulet
Pattie Harrington
James Mann
Megan McCann
Bill Nickels
Don Randazzo
Jane Schmiedeke
Penny Schreiber

See you at the January Meeting - Wednesday January 30 at 7:30

Heritage News is the newsletter of the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation. It is published five times a year: August, 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.

visit our website at www.yhf.org

Heritage NEWS

JANUARY 2002

January Meeting

HISTORY OF DEPOT TOWN

Wednesday, January 30
7:30 p.m.

First Methodist Church
of Ypsilanti
209 Washtenaw Ave.



Depot Town buildings

*have a story
to tell*

*J*ames Mann, Ypsilanti's city historian, will give an informal talk about the history of Depot Town on Wednesday evening, January 30, at 7:30 at the First United Methodist Church, 209 Washtenaw.

According to Mann, buildings are the stages on which people enact the drama and comedy of their daily lives. The buildings of Depot Town, says Mann, have more than a few stories to tell. The Thompson Block, for example, may be the only building used as a barracks during the Civil War still standing in Michigan. The Follett House was considered the



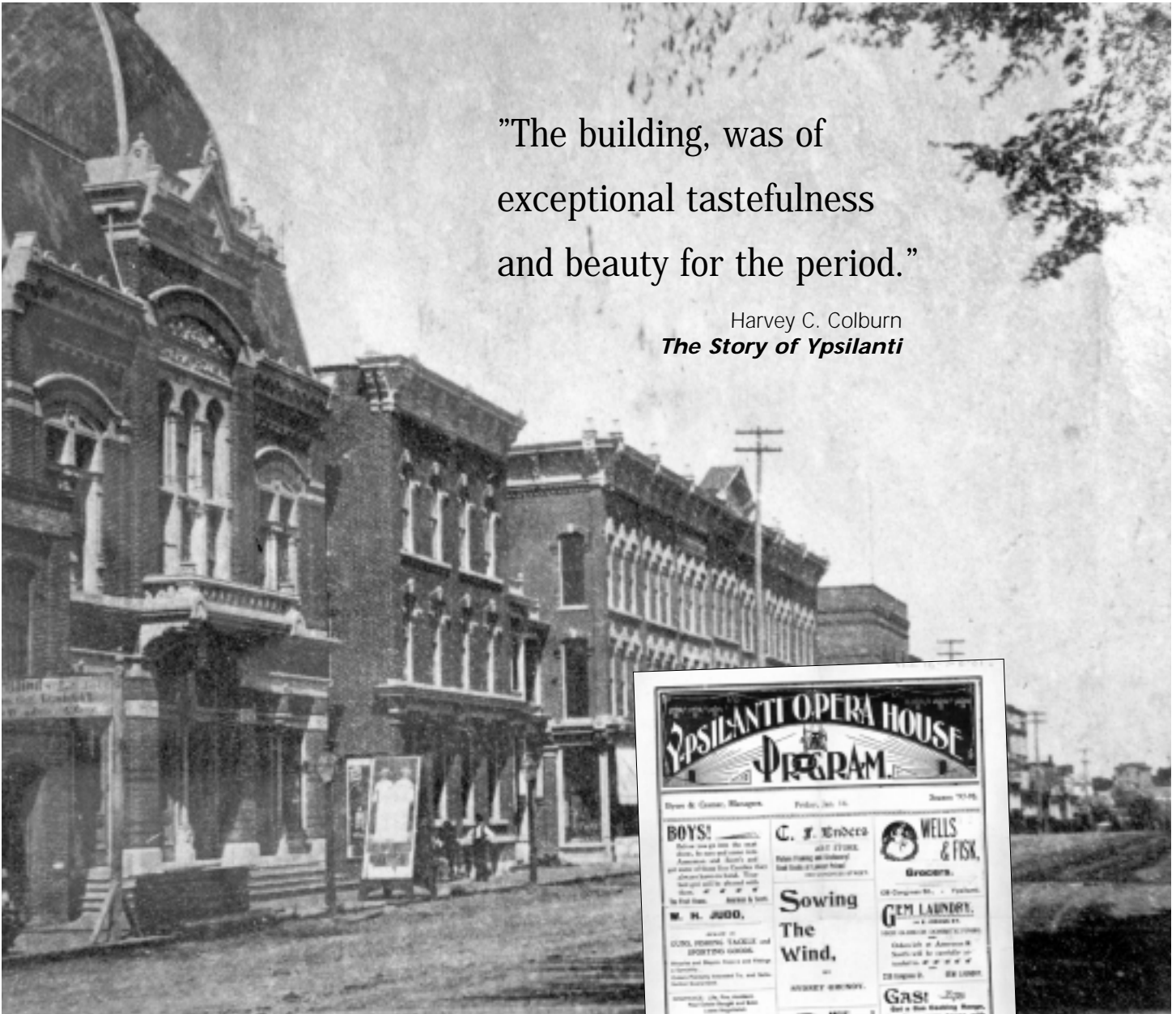
finest hotel between Detroit and Chicago on the Michigan Central line. Today it is hard to imagine that the building that company that made devices for burials. At one time Ypsilanti's Depot was thought to be the finest depot on the line. In contrast, the depots in Detroit and Chicago were considered mere barns. These are just a few tantalizing details from James Mann's treasure trove of information about the Depot Town of yesteryear.

As always, the public is invited and coffee and cookies will be served after the meeting.



Ypsilanti Opera House

a matter of prestige
by James Mann



"The building, was of exceptional tastefulness and beauty for the period."

Harvey C. Colburn
The Story of Ypsilanti

After the American Civil War every community of note had to have an opera house. This was a matter of prestige, as the sight of a opera house noted a city taste and refinement. Ypsilanti was no exception. In 1879 Bogardus, Curtis and Quirk offer to build a \$10,000 opera house, if the citizens of Ypsilanti contributed \$3,000. Enough money was raised to build one costing twice

as much as planned. Ground for the new opera house was broken on July 22, 1879. The architect was Mortimer L. Smith. "The building," wrote Harvey C. Colburn in *The Story of Ypsilanti*, "was of exceptional tastefulness and beauty for the period. The material was red brick with

black facings, the structure being surmounted by a dome, and this by ornamental iron work. The interior was of considerable beauty. The ceiling decorations included the medallion portraits of Longfellow, Shakespeare,

Tennyson, Byron, Scott, and very properly, in the company of these notables, Ypsilanti's own Frederic H. Pease."

The Opera House had a frontage of 50 feet and a depth of 100 feet. The house seated 400 people on the main floor, and 200 in the galleries. The house could seat between 800 and 900 persons comfortably. The stage was 28 feet wide and 33 feet deep. The drop curtain represented a scene from ancient Carthage, Queen Dido and her palace. The drop curtain alone cost \$400.

The new Opera House was formally opened on January 15, 1880. Charles R. Whitman delivered the inaugural address. "This," said Whitman, "is a temple to which the mighty dead shall come as to a home. Shakespeare shall move us to tears of pity and sorrow, shall make us thrill with terror, and quiver with rage, and shall strengthen

our hearts and hands to braver and nobler thinking and doing. The masters of comedy shall make us forget our cares and troubles, while we smile and grow happy in the sunshine of their genial mirth. And here too, perhaps, shall be heard the voices of great composers: Beethoven, grand and sublime, shall speak to us from those heights where dwells repose; Wagner shall bewilder us with the lawless and irregular melodies of his school; the weird and delicate notes of Chopin shall penetrate our innermost being. Here shall sound the majestic strains of Handel's "Messiah," and Mendelssohn's "Elijah"; and Mozart, and Haydn, and Schubert, and Schuman, and Rossini, and Sullivan—the whole company of music makers, shall come and speak to us in tones inspiring holy love."

This was followed by a production of "Our Boarding House" performed by the Leonard Grover's Comedy Troupe,

which had been secured for the occasion.

"Of the Opera House itself," noted The Ann Arbor Register of Wednesday, January 21, 1880, "Ypsilanti may well be proud, and it is our opinion that it is the neatest, and prettiest and most complete little Opera House to be found anywhere."

The Ypsilanti Opera House was soon the scene for theatrical and musical productions, by both amateur and professional companies, as well as lectures, political rallies and conventions and temperance meetings. The Opera House, it seems, was never a paying concern, and there was talk in 1884 of turning the building into either a skating ring or rooms for the Ypsilanti Light Guard. Public support rallied to save the Opera House, and operations continued.

continued on page 4



Cast of Gilbert & Sullivan's "H.M.S. Pinafore" given at the Ypsilanti Opera House August 3 and 4, 1892.
(photos courtesy of Ypsilanti Historical Archives)



Historic Marker Banquet Set For May 29

Mark your calendars for the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation's annual Historic Marker Awards Banquet, to be held this year on Wednesday, May 29, at the Ladies' Literary Club at 6:30 p.m. The Foundation Board will provide both alcoholic and nonalcoholic punch and chicken for the potluck dinner. As this newsletter goes to press the marker committee is still in the process of selecting the houses that will receive historic markers at this year's banquet. A special award will be presented that evening to longtime Heritage Foundation member Jack Harris for his dedication to and accomplishments on behalf of historic preservation in the City of Ypsilanti.

Home Tour Committee Seeks Volunteers

The Heritage Foundation's Home Tour Committee is busy putting together this year's Historic Homes Tour, which takes place on Sunday,

August 18, during the Ypsilanti Heritage Festival. If you would like to volunteer to help with the home tour please call Penny Schreiber (483-5688), Jane Van Bolt (453-6525), or Jane Schmiedeke (483-7622).



Historic Homes Tour Sunday, August 18



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c/o Don Randazzo
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See you at the April Meeting - Wednesday April 3rd at 7:30

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Heritage NEWS

MARCH 2002

April Meeting

**Preservation
Techniques**
Wednesday, April 3rd
7:30 p.m.

Ladies' Literary Club
218 N. Washington Street
Ypsilanti

Preservation Techniques

of Titanic Artifacts Discussed at April 3rd Meeting

Presented by Lauren Sickels-Taves
Assistant Professor, EMU

**What does the Titanic have in common
with an eighteenth-century fort in South Carolina,
the ghost town of Fayette
in the Upper Peninsula, and an 1810 cannon
brought up from the bottom of the Detroit River?**

All are preservation projects under way in the Geography & Geology Departments historic preservation program at Eastern Michigan University.

On Wednesday evening, April 3, EMU assistant professor Lauren Sickels-Taves will speak to the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation about preserving Titanic artifacts. Her talk will take place at the Ladies' Literary Club, 218 North Washington, at 7:30.

In September 2000 Sickels-Taves had a chance encounter at a preservation conference with Ken Vrana, chief archaeologist for the Titanic. Three months later, an EMU team led by Sickels-Taves began work on conserving items from the ocean liner. The team is mainly responsible for architectural items that were part of the famed ocean liners physical construction.

As of May 2002, EMU will have completed conservation of over 800 of the 6000 artifacts recovered from the Titanic. Sickels-Taves will discuss preservation techniques used for a variety of materials. This discussion of the conservation of artifacts from the Titanic and other EMU preservation projects offers home owners and collectors the rare opportunity to glean conservation hints for their own household materials and collections.

To date, the EMU conservation team has assisted in the installation of Titanic exhibits in Baltimore, Kansas City, Nashville, Seattle, and Buenos Aires.

The general public is welcome at the April 3 program; cookies and coffee will be served.

Heritage Foundation Established to Save the 1837 Towner House



Towner House 1999

In the early 1970s Ypsilanti's 1837 Towner House was threatened with demolition. In 1976 the Heritage Foundation was founded to save the Towner House. In 1978 the second largest historic district in Michigan was created in Ypsilanti. In 1979 the EMU Historic Preservation Program accepted its first students. In 2000 artifacts from the Titanic first arrived at EMU for conservation.

Are these events connected?



Towner House 2002

The Normal School President's Residence located on Mill Street (Forest Ave.) in the 1800's

When the Michigan State Legislature approved the founding of a Normal School at Ypsilanti in 1848, appropriation was made for the construction of a school building. Yet nothing was done to provide a residence for the administrator of the school. So when Adonijah S. Welch, the first principal of the school arrived he had to find his own place to stay.

Some time after he arrived at Ypsilanti, Welch seems to have had a house built for himself near the campus. In fact, the house stood right across the street from the campus. A detail map of Ypsilanti dated 1856 shows a structure on the site, with large acreage, opposite the State Normal School, on an unnamed street. The 1859 map of Charles S. Woodard, shows the home of Prof. Welch on the same location. The 1860 City Directory noted, "Welch, Professor A. S. residence Mill opposite Normal School." (Mill St. was later renamed Forest Ave.) Welch sold the house to Samuel Post in August of 1865 for \$9,550.

Sam Post was the local boy who had made good. he had started in the dry goods business, and later ran a general store. By the 1880s he had gone onto the soap business, and worked in Detroit. He continued to live in the house until the 1890s when he rented the property to Richard Boone, the first President of the Michigan State Normal College in 1893. Boone remained in the house until 1899, when the Michigan State Board of Education removed him from office. The house seems to have stood empty for the next two years.

by James Mann



• • •

McKenny retired in 1932, in part because of ill failing health. The new president was John M. Munson, who arranged with the State Board of Education for McKenny and his wife to remain in the house.

• • •

Then in 1902 Lewis Jones became the new president of the Normal College, and moved into the house. Jones purchased the house from Post in 1902. Jones remained in the house until his retirement in 1912. Then Jones rented the house to his successor as president, Charles McKenny. A few years later Jones sold the house and land to the state of Michigan, for the same amount he had paid Post. McKenny continued to pay rent, but now to the state of Michigan. The State Board of Education allowed McKenny to live in the house rent free, beginning in April of 1922.

McKenny was President of the Normal College for twenty years, longer than anyone else. McKenny retired in 1932, in part because of ill failing health. The new president was John M. Munson, who arranged with the State Board of Education for McKenny and his wife to remain in the house. Munson was a bachelor, who preferred to live in a room in the Huron Hotel on Pearl Street. McKenny died in 1933. Munson then arranged with the State Board of Education for Mrs. McKenny to remain in the house. Munson told Mrs. McKenny, she could remain there as long as she pleased.

Although Munson had told Mrs. McKenny she could stay in the house, she was asked to leave in 1938 so the house could be demolished. Munson promised Mrs. McKenny, he would find her a new place to stay. One can only hope the promise was kept. The house was removed, the land cleared and the new King Hall was built on the site.

Historic Ypsilanti Signs Return to the Rail



Thanks to the Depot Town Downtown Development Authority, signs announcing Ypsilanti to passengers riding the rails will once again be in place in historic Depot Town. The DTDDA recently approved funds to construct and install 3 new Ypsilanti signs to assist in promoting our community. The new signs have been designed with sensitivity to the historic design and will be hung from the Freighthouse eaves on the sides of the building adjacent to the rail

●

**Could this
be a sign
of the return of
passenger rail to
Depot Town?**

●

and parking aisle. A third sign will be installed on a post on the east side of the rail line by the Depot Town parking lot. Thanks to Bill Labedzki of Vital Signs for creating and coordinating the sign design with the Historic District Commission and thanks to Dave Wheeler of Utilities Instrumentation for assistance with materials and installation of the post sign. The signs are proposed for installation on Saturday, April 20th as part of the Ypsilanti Civil War Muster.

Ypsilanti Civil War Muster - Saturday, April 20th - Riverside Park

April Meeting a Success

The April general meeting was a great success. Lauren Sickels-Taves presented an overview of the work of her Eastern Michigan team in conserving artifacts brought up from the Titanic, the ocean liner that is sitting at the bottom of the Atlantic. The topic was of great interest to the general public, and the attendance was significantly larger than usual. That, however, created a problem for the folks providing the refreshments. The coffee stuff didn't arrive and the cookies were not going to stretch to feed the crowd. That's when two Foundation members stepped up and saved the day (or evening.) Shirley Durrett volunteered to find some more cookies, and board member, Joe Mattimoe, set off in search of napkins and half and half for the coffee. Both were successful, although Joe had to visit three stores and wade through at least one language barrier to find the napkins.

These two deserve a hearty round of applause for keeping embarrassment from the Heritage Foundation. Thank you both very much for literally going the extra mile(s).



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2002-2003

HERITAGE FOUNDATION PROGRAMS

Location: Ladies' Literary Club • 218 N. Washington

Time: 7:30 p.m.

WED., SEPT. 25: Ypsilanti resident and preservation architect Elisabeth Knibbe on her now completed project restoring a series of old houses near the medical center in downtown Detroit for use as Bed and Breakfasts.

WED., NOV. 20: Henry Ford Museum curator of domestic life Nancy Bryk on the history of wallpaper, what makes a good reproduction, and where you can get good reproductions today.

WED., JAN. 22: Scott Kunst, owner of Old House Gardens Antique Bulbs in Ann Arbor, on "Antique Bulbs: Four Seasons, Forty Centuries."

WED., MARCH 26: Ann Arbor preservation architects Mitchell & Mouat on the restoration of Ypsilanti's historic First Presbyterian Church.

WED., MAY 28: Annual Marker Awards Banquet

See you at the Marker Banquet - Wednesday, May 29th at 6:30 p.m.

Heritage NEWS

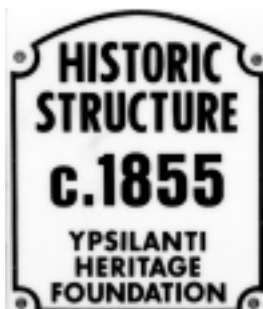
MAY 2002

May
MARKER BANQUET

Wednesday, May 29, 2002
6:30 p.m.

Ladies' Literary Club
218 N. Washington Street

2002 Historic markers presented at May banquet



The Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation would like to congratulate the 2002 Historic Marker recipients. The criteria used for awarding the marker includes the structure's architectural significance and the care and maintenance of the property.

This year the following property owners will be recognized at the Annual May Marker Banquet.



11 W. Michigan Avenue (Flour Mill) c. 1845
Owner: Phoenix 11
121 Pearl Street #607, Ypsilanti



318 West Forest Italianate c.1864
Owner: Ave Maria College
300 West Forest, Ypsilanti 48198



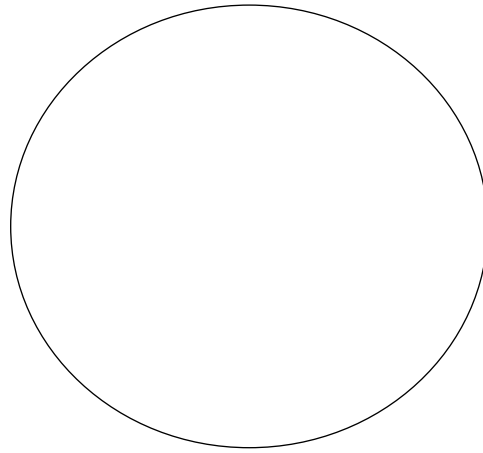
213 Oakwood
Owner: Susan Kelly
c. 1890
Queen Anne

The Ypsilanti
Heritage Foundation
cordially invites you to
The Annual
Marker
Banquet

on Wednesday, May 29, 2002
at 6:30 p.m.

at the
Ladies' Literary Club
218 N. Washington Avenue
Ypsilanti

Please call
Karen Nickels at 483-8896
or Penny Schreiber at 483-5688
if you plan to attend
& let them know
what dish
you will bring to pass



● SPECIAL RECOGNITION
A W A R D ●

The Heritage Foundation is pleased to be honoring Ypsilantian Arthur "Jack" Harris for his life-long commitment to historic preservation in this community. As a young boy growing up in an early-twentieth-century cottage in Lake Ann, Michigan, near Traverse City, Jack learned to appreciate old things.

His first documented act of historic preservation occurred during his first teaching job in Reed City, Michigan, when he was observed dragging an old abandoned sleigh home behind his car. His teaching colleagues immediately dubbed him the "Cutter Kid." Today an old sewing machine recently picked out of his neighbor's trash is on his front porch on Pearl Street, evidence that Jack is still collecting the past to inform the future. Jack refined his interest in historic buildings as a graduate student in England in the 1950s, when he lived in an English thatched cottage near Stratford that predated William Shakespeare. After teaching at CMU and the U-M, Jack found a permanent home at EMU in 1967. He moved to Ypsilanti in 1974, where he immediately wove himself into the fabric of the city by joining the Heritage Foundation. He became a charter member of the Historic District Commission in 1978 and served as Heritage Foundation president from 1982-1990 (only Jane Byrd Schmiedeke has served longer in that office). In 1977 Jack won a grant funded by both the Michigan Council for the Humanities and EMU to support a series of programs promoting the preservation of the Old City Hall, the Stacklewitz house, the Glover house, the Art Train building, and the Towner house, all of which were threatened by neglect. Every one of these buildings is now owned and cared for by a responsible preservation-minded owner. A second grant in 1983 allowed Jack to create a series of events to spark children's interest in history. Called "Windows of the Past," the series included an event where five young people portrayed members of the Tracy Towner family in the Towner House. Both the city and Jack's neighborhood owe him thanks for purchasing and restoring the Gothic Revival cottage at 111 Perin. Jack purchased the neglected architectural gem at a State of Michigan auction by paying back taxes on the property. The house was under restoration for two years before Jack was able to rent it out. Several years later he put the house on the market. Today it is a single-family home. Jack has also had a permanent influence on the look of EMU through his dedicated promotion of preservation on its campus during the 1980s. He served as secretary of the One Room Schoolhouse Committee, which brought the school house to the middle of campus, where it is a powerful reminder that EMU has always specialized in education. Jack wrote letters to influential people and inspired EMU preservation students to act to save Welch Hall, which had been scheduled for demolition. The community of Ypsilanti has benefited immensely from Jack's passionate and energetic support of historic preservation. Jack has changed our world. We remain grateful for his continuing presence in our city.

The Second Union School Building

By James Mann

The north west corner of Cross and Washington has been the site of four buildings, all of which have played a role in the history of education in Ypsilanti. The first was built as a business folly. The Tecumseh Hotel was built in the early 1840s, to house the patrons of a railroad that never came to be. This building became the Ypsilanti Seminary building, perhaps the first graded school in the state.

"The Seminary Building," wrote Harvey Colburn in *The Story of Ypsilanti*, "was a plain three-story brick edifice built close to the side walk and in the form of an L. The longer arm extended westward from the corner and the shorter northward. The roof was surmounted by a cupola with a bell. Attached to the west wing was a two-story frame building originally used as a dwelling."

"Reputation of the school was so well sustained," reported *The Michigan Journal of Education* in October of 1858, "and the number of students so multiplied, that in 1854 it was found necessary to increase the accommodations. Accordingly a large addition was made to the old building and the school continued prosperously until the twenty-eighth of March, 1857, on which day the spring quarter closed. On the morning of the 30th, the building burned."

"As the inhabitants gathered around the ashes," continued *The Michigan Journal of Education*, "some of the children wept, and the purses of the rich shuddered a little, but all consoled themselves with Well, we will have a better school house now."

"A plan for a building was presented," reported *The Michigan journal*

of Education, "by Jordan & Anderson which so well pleased all, that it was adopted by unanimous vote of the District."

The new three story building was built on the site of the old. The architects were Jordan & Anderson of Detroit, and the builders were McDuff & Mitchell, who were also of Detroit. "The entire structure," noted Colburn, "was architecturally satisfying and even beautiful."

"This edifice stands in the center of a beautiful square in the central part of the city of Ypsilanti," reported *The American Journal of Education*, "one of the most attractive healthy and flourishing towns in the State of Michigan. The building has a transept of 120 feet and a depth through the transept of 95 feet, and through the end compartments of 68 feet." The building was in the Italianate style of architecture, and had a height of 95 feet. "The quoins in the corners," noted *The American Journal of Education*, "the windows and door caps and stills, the cornice, the architrave moldings, belt courses, &c., are finished in imitation of brown free stone, the remainder being of hand pressed brick."

The first floor of the building was 6 feet above the lot, "leaving a lofty basement story under which was the heating apparatus, storage and fuel rooms." the first floor was 20 feet high, and, in the center of the building, had a large room or chapel, 90 by 45 feet, used for commencement and other public exercises. It was then the usual practice to place assembly rooms on the highest floor of a building. It was considered an advantage to have the chapel on the first floor. "This is infinitely more convenient and safe, than it is to require an entire congregation at

commencement or other exercises, to climb up to the top of a high building. It is also more desirable, as the infant children can be taken into the room on all occasions, without danger to them, which in ordinary cases, tutors are afraid to do."

There were a total of six entrances to the building allowing the younger children to enter and leave the building separate from the older children. The number of entrances also allowed the separation of the students by gender, as it was then considered best to keep the boys and girls apart as much as possible. The interior arrangement of the rooms allowed the boys and girls to come together when necessary, and to separate again when returning to their classrooms without confusion or inconvenience.

The New England Journal of Education said of the structure, "It is the finest school building of its kind in America." When completed it was the largest, and at \$40,000, the most expensive Union School in the state.

The building was dedicated on August 17, 1858. That evening, about 5,000 people assembled at the school to witness a brilliant display of fire works. "The school building," noted *The Michigan Journal of Education*, "was illuminated with a candle at every glass in the windows."

The building was destroyed by fire on December 9, 1877. The cause of the fire was attributed to a faulty flue in a chimney. A new building with a one hundred foot high tower with clock and bell was then built on the site. This building was demolished in 1929, to make way for the east wing of the High School Building. This building is now Cross Street Village.

Ypsilanti Heritage “tidbits”

National Park in Ypsilanti

The Automobile National Heritage Area has recently become affiliated with the United States National Park system. As a hub of the Automobile National Heritage Area, our auto museum is now part of the National Park System along with the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, and our other national treasures. We can all look with pride at the national park logo now in front of our auto museum!

Heritage Foundation Wins First Place

The Heritage Foundation won overall first place in the 4th of July parade. "Honor Our Own" was the parade theme this year. Following the theme, the float featured the facade of our old fire station surrounded by toy police cars, fire trucks, and emergency vehicles all with City of Ypsilanti identifications. Some of the toy vehicles were purchased while others were provided by members. The purchased toys were repackaged and will be donated to toy collections at Christmas.

Ypsilanti: A History in Pictures Available in Area Bookstores Soon

Ypsilanti: A History in Pictures by James Thomas Mann will soon be available in area stores. The book is 128 pages with about 200 pictures with captions, that tell the story of Ypsilanti from 1823 through 1900. The book is published by Arcadia, publishers of books of regional and local interest. *Ypsilanti: A History in Pictures*, is part of Arcadia's Images of America series.

2002-2003

HERITAGE FOUNDATION PROGRAMS

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Time: 7:30 p.m.

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Heritage NEWS

SEPTEMBER 2002
Good News Edition

September
Bed & Breakfast
Restoration
by Lis Kribbe

Wed. Sept. 25 at 7:30 p.m.
Ladies' Literary Club
218 N. Washington Street

Restoration of the The Inn at Ferry Street

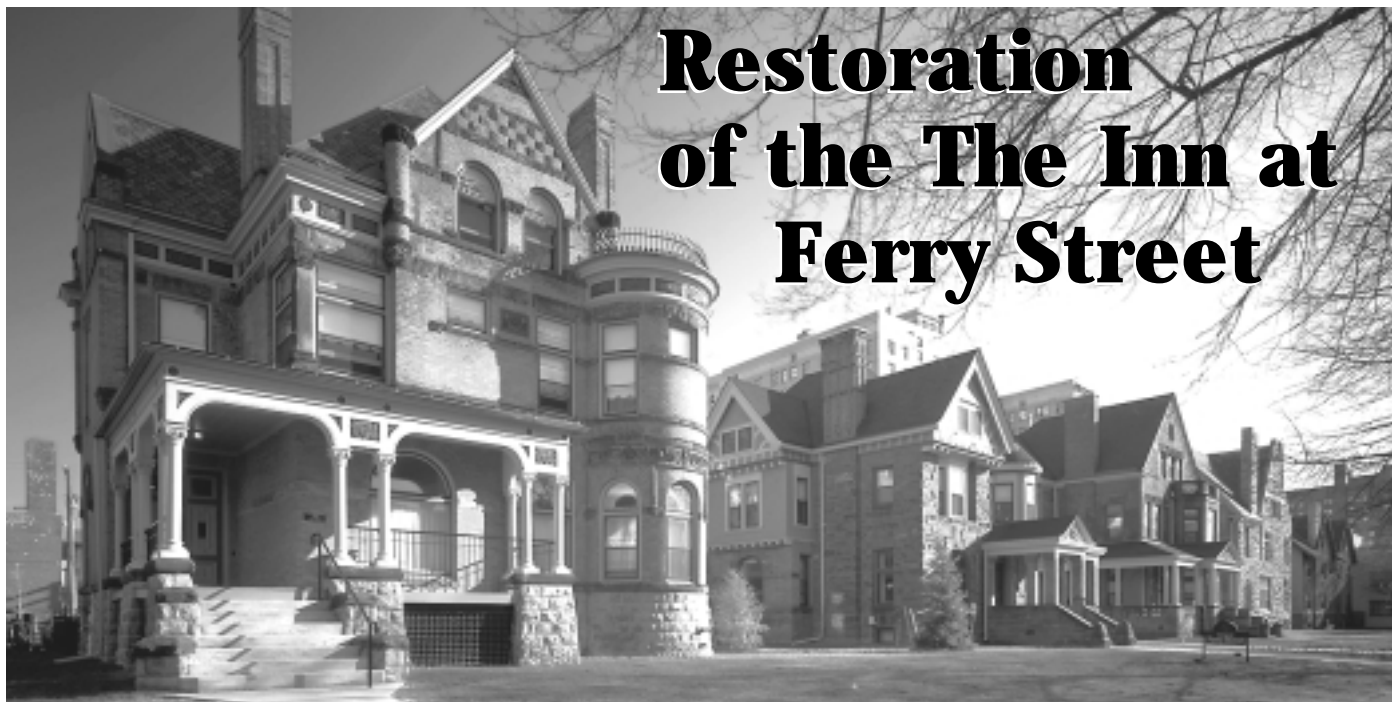


Photo by Glen Calvin Moon

Ypsilanti restoration architect Elisabeth Kribbe specializes in adaptive use of historic and other older buildings. Her firm, Elisabeth Kribbe Architects, employs four architects and is located in the historic nineteenth-century Breakey mansion on North Huron Street. Her two most notable projects in the city of Ypsilanti are both pretty spectacular. In the late 1980s she redesigned the interior of the Gilbert mansion on North Grove Street, transforming it into seven terrific apartments. More recently she was a key architect on the project that changed the forlorn Old Ypsilanti High School on West Cross Street into a charming and successful 104-apartment seniors community called Cross Street Village.

Kribbe will speak to the Heritage Foundation on Wednesday evening, September 25, at 7:30, at the Ladies' Literary Club, 218 West Washington Street. Her topic will be the Inn at Ferry Street, a Detroit project she worked on

for eleven years (she spent seven of those years patiently waiting for the financing to come through). The Inn at Ferry Street is a classic example of what Kribbe does so well. She turned four late-nineteenth-century buildings and two carriage barns in Detroit's Ferry Street Historic District, a National Register district near the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Medical Center, and Wayne State University, into a forty-two-room hotel.

**Kribbe will speak
to the Heritage Foundation
on Wednesday evening,
September 25, at 7:30**

Kribbe will explain and illustrate with slides how she architecturally transformed single-family residences into a modern hotel, while retaining the original character of the original building. Parlors, hallways, and grand

stairways are all intact, blending in well with the forty new bathrooms, fourteen new mechanical systems, and extra stairways that were required for code.

Today the Inn at Ferry Street is thriving. On weekdays it houses visitors to the DIA, Medical Center, and WSU; on weekends it draws people into the city for overnight getaways. Kribbe says that before the project was approved the neighborhood was deteriorating rapidly. Today, taking a cue from the substantial investment of money and taste nearby, people on the blocks surrounding the hotel are in the midst of their own preservation projects.

We hope to see a big crowd on September 25. Bring your friends with you to learn from this outstanding local architect how financial investment in historic preservation can shape an exciting economic and aesthetic future. As always, coffee and cookies will be served.

Good News in Ypsilanti

The Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation presents its

2002 Good News Issue

reporting on some of the improvements that have occurred in Ypsilanti over the past year, for our own delight and that of our Festival visitors. It's also a chance to say Thank You to everyone who cares for and about Ypsilanti!

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False Facades

103 W. Michigan – this commercial building is finally rid of its false front and is sporting a very nice new paint job.

Next door, **105 W. Michigan**, has also shed its false front and will soon undergo repairs to the ground level storefront, to be followed by fresh paint.

The **house at the corner of Hamilton and Washtenaw** is stripped of its synthetic siding, has had its original siding replaced where necessary, and is displaying a handsome new paint scheme.

And the handsome Italianate at **302 Oak** appears once again as it did originally since the asbestos siding has been removed and every decorative detail has been highlighted by beautiful paint colors.



As we go to press, the **RIVERSIDE WEST LINK**, adjacent to the Riverside Arts Center and designed to connect North Huron

Street to Riverside Park, is nearing completion. A handsome addition to our parks system, it consists of a stunning pergola, a brick plaza, landscaping and an impressive flight of stairs leading down into Riverside Park.

The long-abused, pre-Civil War **THOMPSON BUILDING** in Depot Town, has been placed in receivership by the court and is scheduled to be stabilized, repaired and converted to yet-to-be-determined productive uses.

STREETS, beautiful streets! Residents on the east side of town have gladly put up with dirt, dust, closed streets and blocked driveways this summer as the city replaced water mains and sewer pipes and completely rebuilt streets in this year's phase of a 4-year project.

For many years, the Heritage Foundation has given a **\$500 scholarship** to an EMU historic preservation student who would serve as an intern to the Historic District Commission during the summer term. Now, under a new arrangement, the Heritage Foundation, EMU and the City of Ypsilanti each contribute dollars to pay an intern's tuition for the entire year. The Historic District Commission benefits

significantly from the consistency provided by an all-year intern. A great arrangement!

Major work is underway at the downtown **Library**, the **Sidetrack** has a new rear patio and **City Body** shop has great new signs.

Many years ago, the metal plaque which identified the home of the **Reverend John D. Pierce** went missing from the large boulder at the corner of Emmet and Ballard Streets, presumably stolen. Recently, Heritage Foundation Board member Bill Nickels spearheaded an effort to replace the missing plaque. Just days before the new plaque was to be ordered, the original one reappeared at EMU! Who removed it from the boulder, where it was for so many years, and how it turned up where it did all remain a mystery. But now, polished and reinstalled, it again marks the site of John Pierce's home. Eastern Michigan University, the Ypsilanti Rotary Club and the Heritage Foundation all contributed to the success of the project.

John D. Pierce devised the first school system for Michigan in



January 1837 and held the office of Superintendent of Public Instruction for five years. In 1850, he was elected a member of the Michigan Constitutional Convention. In 1852, he delivered the leading address at the opening of the Normal School here in Ypsilanti. A man of many

attainments, he has always been considered the guiding light for Eastern Michigan University. The plaque on the boulder reads:

"This boulder marks the site of the house where

Reverend John D. Pierce, founder of the Public

School system of Michigan lived from 1867 to 1880.

Erected by the Rotary Club of Ypsilanti, 1923."

Rehab Jobs that deserve recognition

Appropriate reconstruction, particularly of the front porch, has brought the beautiful Italianate at **318 W. Forest** back from long, dreary years as multi-apartments and fraternity house. It was awarded a Historic Structure marker in May.

The **Tucker House** (remember Tucker automobiles?) on North Park, purchased by Marsh Plating, looks splendid after careful repairs and an attractive paint job.

At **203 Maple**, the collapsing garage has been repaired, reroofed and painted.



this year's Home Tour.

At **516 N. River**, not only is there a new and appropriate garage designed to complement the house, but the house itself has been stripped of synthetic siding and will soon assume its original appearance.

Major Restoration projects undertaken this year

The **Presbyterian Church** on North Washington at Emmet underwent significant restoration, including the installation of clear glass over the lovely stained glass windows, which can once again be enjoyed.

The lovely Italianate at **108 N. Huron** is now being restored after a damaging fire.

The beautiful Queen Anne at **118 S. Washington** is currently undergoing restoration of its spectacular interior features with plans being drawn for exterior work and paint colors.

New planters and street lights enhance the **Michigan Avenue median**. And, yes, we will solve the parade-viewing problem!



January 2002 saw a seven-day **Water Street design charette** during which architects, developers and any and all interested citizens shared ideas and together developed a design concept for the residential neighborhood planned for the area bounded by Michigan Avenue, Park Street and the Huron River.



at 213 Oakwood.

The Heritage Foundation was surprised and pleased to be awarded a trophy for the best small float in the **4th of July parade**, but more pleased to congratulate and thank the 130 participants who entered floats, bands and decorated bicycles and celebrated in a variety of ways! Special recognition and thanks went to area police, fire fighters and emergency workers.

Downtown Ypsilanti got a wonderful present when the building at **126 W. Michigan** was rehabbed inside and out and given a handsome paint job. **henrietta fahrenheit**, the shop which occupies the building, is on

Notice the beautiful **new paint jobs** at 14 W. Cross, 126 W. Michigan, and 35 S. Summit. Don't miss visiting the **FIRE EQUIPMENT MUSEUM**, on Cross Street between Huron and Washington, with its new addition completed just this summer!



FLOWERS are thriving everywhere in half barrels and window boxes on street corners and curbsides. Thanks to everyone who planted these beauties! Special thanks to all the apartment renters who plant flowers!

St John Catholic Church and **First Baptist Church**, both on Cross Street, have removed the chain link fences from their parking lots!

Repairs to the historic and handsome brick Italianate at **223 N. River**, damaged a year and a half ago by fire, are nearly complete. It will soon be ready for new tenants.

There's been more work done this year to the historic **Millworks Building** on N. River – part of an ongoing rehab program.

The residents of the **600 block of North Adams** deserve applause for ongoing improvements, including new porches, fresh paint and good maintenance.

The long-neglected house at **213-215 W. Forest** has been appropriately repaired and treated to bright, fresh paint.

Many Thanks

AGAIN, to **YCUA** (Ypsilanti Community Utilities Authority) for the wonderful care lavished on the historic stone Water Tower, for the lights which circle the Tower during the winter holidays, for the flower beds and, now, for a top-quality re-roofing job.

AGAIN, to the **SIDETRACK** for the enormous lighted tree in the courtyard at Christmas.

To the **Department of Public Works** for great service year-round, for SUPER snow removal and for never missing their scheduled rounds even during the chaos of street repair.

TO EVERYONE WHO WORKS TO MAKE YPSILANTI A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE: POLICE, FIRE FIGHTERS, CITY MANAGER, CITY DEPARTMENT HEADS, CITY EMPLOYEES, MAYOR & CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS & COMMISSIONS and VOLUNTEERS! What a great bunch! They've never been better!

AND SPECIAL THANKS to all those folks who quietly and faithfully maintain their properties – who sweep and water, pick up and



December Events in Ypsilanti

Sun. Dec. 1 "A Beethoven Birthday Bash," Ypsilanti Symphony Orchestra, 2 p.m., WCC Morris J. Lawrence Bldg. Towsley Auditorium

Sun. Dec. 1 Ypsilanti Fire Station Museum Open House, 2-5 p.m.

Wed. Dec. 4 EMU Women's Chorus Holiday Concert, 8 p.m., Holy Trinity Chapel

Fri. Dec. 6 EMU Children's Concerts: University Concert Winds, Symphony Orchestra, and Dance Program, 10 a.m. & 12:15 p.m., Pease Auditorium

Fri. Dec. 6 Depot Town Moonlight Magic, stores open till midnight

Fri. Dec. 6 EMU Symphony Orchestra and Dance Program's "The Fantastic Toy Shop," 8 p.m., Pease Auditorium

Sun. Dec. 8 Holiday Home Tour sponsored by Visteon and Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels (benefiting Meals on Wheels), 12:30-5:30 p.m.

Sun. Dec. 8 Ypsilanti Fire Station Museum Open House, 2-5 p.m.

Sun. Dec. 8 Holiday Tree Lighting with Santa and local choirs, 6-7 p.m. Riverside Arts Center Plaza, 76 N. Huron St.

Tues. Dec. 31 New Year Jubilee of Southeastern Michigan, 6 p.m.-1 a.m. various venues in and around Depot Town

2002-2003 HERITAGE FOUNDATION PROGRAMS

Location: Ladies' Literary Club
218 N. Washington
Time: 7:30 p.m.

WED., NOV. 20:

Henry Ford Museum curator of domestic life Nancy Bryk on the history of wallpaper, what makes a good reproduction, and where you can get good reproductions today.

WED., JAN. 22:

Scott Kunst, owner of Old House Gardens Antique Bulbs in Ann Arbor, on "Antique Bulbs: Four Seasons, Forty Centuries."

WED., MARCH 26:

Ann Arbor preservation architects Mitchell & Mouat on the restoration of Ypsilanti's historic First Presbyterian Church.

WED., MAY 28:

Annual Marker Awards Banquet

SUN., AUGUST 17, 2003:

Historic Home Tour



The Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation

Heritage News

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

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See you at the November Meeting - Wednesday, November 20 at 7:30 p.m.

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.

visit our website at www.yhf.org

Heritage NEWS

NOVEMBER 2002

November

Guest speaker
Nancy Bryk
curator of domestic life at
Henry Ford Museum
Wed. Nov. 20 at 7:30 p.m.
Ladies' Literary Club
218 N. Washington Street



American Wallpaper and the American Home: 1780-1920

photo from the early 1900's

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Nancy Bryk, curator of domestic life at Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village, is a terrific public speaker—compelling and entertaining. Don't miss Bryk's slide-illustrated talk "American Wallpaper and the American Home: 1780-1920" on Wednesday evening, November 20, 7:30, at the Ladies' Literary Club, 218 North Washington Street.

"The way we use wallpaper today is quite different than it was 100 years ago," says Bryk. Back then, pattern and color were extraordinarily important, and as many working-class as wealthy people decorated with wallpaper. "In 1885 it was cheaper to wallpaper than to paint," according to Bryk. She will be showing us, she says, "a lot of images of ordinary folks and their interiors" from the early, middle, and late nineteenth

century. We will discover that wallpaper was "one of the most important things in the room."

The informal decorating rules of long ago dictated a wide variety of colors and patterns with no continuity from room to room, says Bryk. Today, when Bryk consults with people about how to authentically furnish and decorate their historic homes, they often "roll their eyes," she says, because they are afraid of pattern and color.

Bryk will explain how wallpaper was manufactured and printed in the nineteenth century, and she will briefly discuss twenty-first-century wallpaper manufacturers. She is bringing a handout listing of current wallpaper companies.

"Home is a place you present your-

self to the world," says Bryk. Join us on November 20 to find out what this meant 100 years ago.

Coffee and cookies and informal discussion will follow Bryk's talk.

Nancy Bryk earned her B.A. in history and history of art, her M.A. in American culture, and a graduate certificate in museum practice from the University of Michigan. She has been at Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village since 1981, where she curates the collections of quilts, clothing, textiles, ceramics, glass, silver, and other small decorative arts. Bryk is also an adjunct professor in the graduate historic preservation program at EMU. She has served on numerous program and preservation panels for the National Endowment for the Humanities, and she lectures and consults widely.

The First Normal Gymnasium

By James Mann

"It seems to me," wrote Adonijah S. Welch the first principal of the Michigan State Normal School, now Eastern Michigan University, in his Report to the Superintendent of Public Instruction for 1860, "that the Normal School stands in pressing need of a Gymnasium for the physical training of its pupils."

"No man," wrote Welch, "however finished his scholarship, can be an efficient laborer in any of the professions, if his digestive and nervous system have been ruined by hard study without proper exercise. Yet it is an alarming fact that multitudes of young men, in this country, finish their course of study with a broken constitution."

"Under the pressure of daily recitations," noted Welch, "they are apt to neglect out-of-door exercise altogether, or to take it in a form too mild for the requirements of health. The consequence is that many are compelled on account of illness to leave School before the close of the term, and often to abandon, forever, the idea of preparing to teach. This evil could not find its remedy in ordinary muscular exertion however systematically pursued. By reason of the short time that students remain with us, our Normal course is necessarily so severe that after preparing for recitations, they have not time enough left for exercise if taken in walking or ordinary manual labor."

"The only means," continued Welch, "under the circumstances, by which their physical vigor can be preserved, is by regular muscular drill, under the direction of a competent teacher; for a half hour of gymnastic exercises, properly conducted, is worth three hours of exercise taken in the usual way."

"But we cannot give our pupils such exercises without means," concluded Welch. "We want a plain building, of moderate cost, with the proper apparatus. The estimates show that the whole will not cost over \$1,000, and I am assured that the entire expense shall not exceed the estimates."

Michigan State Board of Education, in

The building was destroyed by fire on August 1, 1873.

The cause of the fire was arson. "Kerosene was probably poured into the inside,"

reported *The Ypsilanti Commercial* of August 9, 1873,

their report for 1860, asked the Legislature for an appropriation of funds for the erection of a building at the Normal, for physical culture. The Legislature failed to make the appropriation that year and the next.

"Under these circumstances," noted Welch in his Report for the year 1863, "it remained to see what could be done without help from the State. Early in the last spring term an appeal was made to the young men of the school for aid in putting up suitable apparatus. In Response, those who were accustomed to the use of carpenters tools came cheerfully forward and we soon had a horizontal bar and ladders erected in the open air."

"The muscular drills thus begun," continued Welch, "were continued steadily throughout the term, and were completed by a public exhibition at its close. The results of the experiment were satisfactory in every respect. The healthful effect of regular gymnastics in the school became daily more and more apparent. Cases of illness were rare, and came from those causes only which were antecedent to the school life of the pupil. A marked improvement in recitations, in order and quiet, as well as in alertness of step and erectness of figure, were among the benefits which the students derived from these simple lessons."

The Board of Education, believing in the need for such a building, managed to save enough money from the appropriation for the school, with the aid of private contributions, to erect a small building at

a cost of twelve hundred dollars in 1862. Before the building was completed, the teacher and students were able to obtain some cheap apparatus for use in the Gymnasium. Once the new building was finished and the apparatus obtained, instruction in physical education became more systematic; but as there was no teacher employed for the instruction in physical education, instruction remained irregular and intermittent.

The building stood behind the Old Main Building, on the site now occupied by the steps of the mall between Boone, Ford and Pierce Hall. It was a two story wood structure with the gymnasium on the second floor, and a woodroom and two sets of privy closets made up the first. The small from the privy closets must have been terrible, especially during the summer.

The building was destroyed by fire on August 1, 1873. The cause of the fire was arson. "Kerosene was probably poured into the inside," reported *The Ypsilanti Commercial* of August 9, 1873, "for when first discovered the whole building was in a sheet of flames. A large crowd soon gathered, but it was burned to the ground. The fence between the gymnasium and the Normal, and several yards of the side walk were burned. The Normal itself was saved from the fire by pouring water from the cupola over the roof. As it was, the cornice and wall were pretty badly burned."

The Ypsilanti Commercial placed the blame for the fire on local liquor dealers, in retaliation for the Normal Principals support for a temperance campaign then underway in the city. "The building," noted *The Ypsilanti Commercial*, "has been a nuisance for years. It was built of wood, and is a good riddance. It will probably in due time be replaced by a more commodious brick building, in a more favorable location. The loss is trifling, and the benefits more than commensurate with the loss."

The Ypsilanti Commercial was right, a new and better building was built, but some twenty years after the loss of the first.

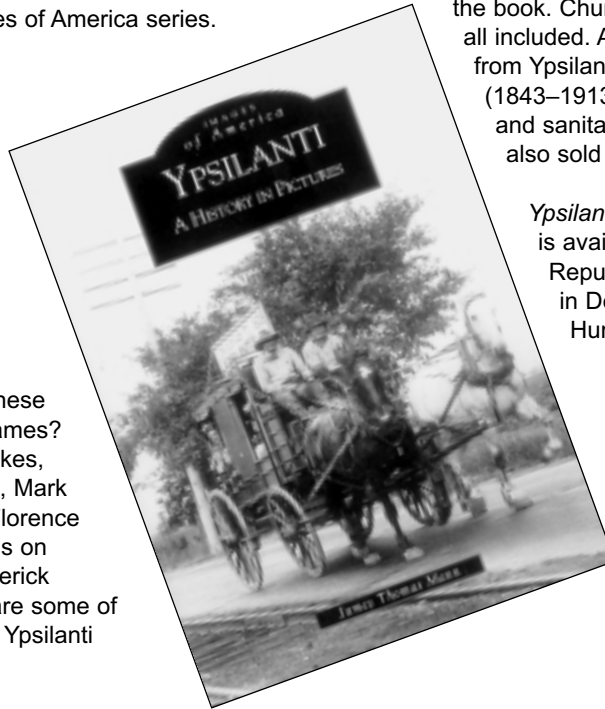
Ypsilanti: A History in Pictures

Now Available in Local Bookstores

Ypsilanti: A History in Pictures is James Thomas Mann's new book from Arcadia Publishing's Images of America series. ISBN 0-7385-1995-2.

This charming book, chock full of enchanting pictures of Ypsilanti from 1823 to the 1890s, is one that needs to stand on your library shelves, or sit enticingly on your coffee table. Here are pictures and descriptions of the people and the buildings that formed our community.

Elijah McCoy, Dr. McAndrew, and the Ypsi-Ann interurban all are found in these pages. Are you interested in street names? This book shows our streets' namesakes, such as Edward Grant, Arden Ballard, Mark Norris, John Sedwick Jenness, and Florence Babbitt. Are you interested in buildings on Eastern's campus? J. M. B. Sill, Frederick Pease, and Mary Ann Starkweather are some of the people highlighted. Or how about Ypsilanti



schools? Joseph Estabrook and Austin George are in the book. Churches, fire stations, and tornadoes are all included. And don't forget my personal favorite from Ypsilanti's past, Tubal Cain Owens (1843–1913), who had a mineral water business and sanitarium on Forest Avenue in the 1880s. He also sold salts, soups, and soap.

Ypsilanti: A History in Pictures is \$19.99, and it is available at Borders; Barnes & Noble; Republic of Letters, the new used bookstore in Depot Town; World of Rocks on North Huron Street; and elsewhere.

Marcia McCrary

French Claim: Property boundaries established using geographical features

By Bill Nickels

Streets not directed north/south
or east/west often have
an interesting history.
Forest Avenue and the west
extensions of streets in Normal
Park are directed from the
northeast to the southwest for
the same historic reason.

In 1809, three Frenchmen by the names of Gabriel Godfroy, Francois Pepin, and Romaine La Chambre built a trading post on a site somewhat north of our present day Riverside Arts Center on the east side of North Huron Street. In 1811, the same three Frenchmen each took up large tracks of land west of the Huron River following a French method of establishing property boundaries using geographical features. The eastern boundary followed the Huron River and the north and south boundaries were drawn perpendicular to the river. The north and south boundaries extended to what is now Hewitt Road. Forest Avenue is perpendicular to the Huron River as it travels through downtown Ypsilanti and was built on the northern boundary of what became known as the French Claim. When Westmoorland Boulevard was constructed prior to World War II, it too was built on the northern boundary of

the French Claim and is in line with Forest Avenue to the east. When Sherman, Grant, and Pearl were extended west of Wallace Boulevard, they were drawn parallel to Westmoorland in the same northeast to southwest direction. The property line that separates 1202 Westmoorland and 325 Wallace also follows the French Claim resulting in two unique trapezoidal lots.

It is interesting that a few years earlier, strip farms with about 1200 feet frontage on the Detroit River and extending three miles perpendicular to the Detroit River were established by Francois Rivard, Jacques St Aubin, and other early French settlers. Just as Detroit has Rivard and St Aubin Streets, Forest Avenue and Westmoorland Boulevard could have been called Godfroy Avenue and La Chambre Boulevard to honor our French history.