



## Historic Marker Banquet Set For May 29

Mark your calendars for the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundations 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 Foundations 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**



The Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation

### Heritage News

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

#### Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation Board Members

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*See you at the April Meeting - Wednesday April 3rd at 7:30*

# Heritage NEWS

MARCH 2002

*April Meeting*

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

Ladies' Literary Club  
218 N. Washington Street  
Ypsilanti

## *T 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



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**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.**

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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

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**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 Labeledzki 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**