

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).

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



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

Heritage NEWS

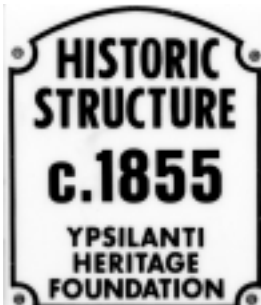
MAY 2002

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



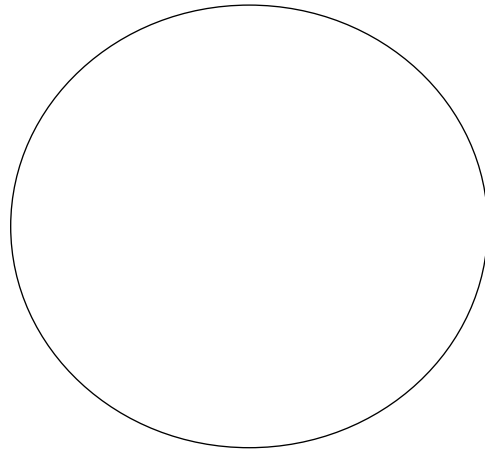
213 Oakwood
Owner: Susan Kelly
c. 1890
Queen Anne

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, &., 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 in 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.