



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

Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation Board Members

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

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

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."

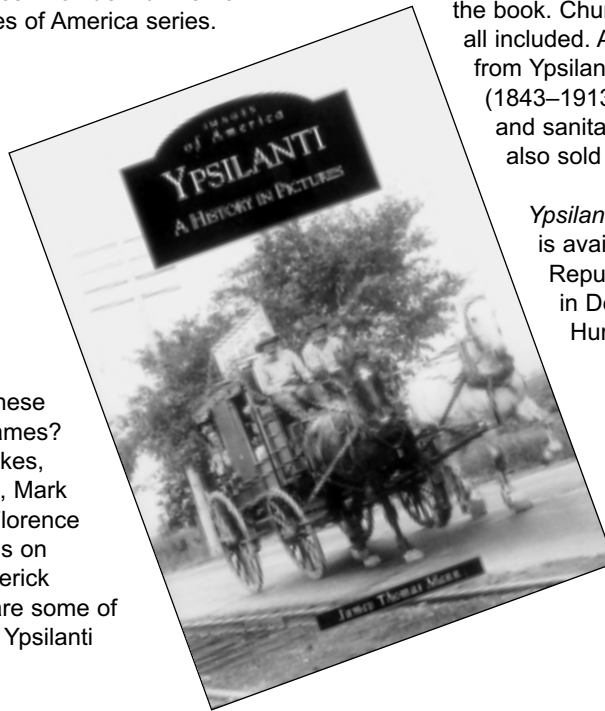
The Ypsilanti Commercial was right, a new and better building was built, but some twenty years after the loss of the first.

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.