

& Buying Restoring a Victorian

by Karen Maurer

What is it like to buy and restore a historic Victorian home? It is creative, fun, exciting, uplifting, memorable, depressing, expensive, scary, unrealistic, and time consuming.

My husband, Eric, and I own several historic homes near the EMU campus. The house we own and live in with our five children used to be a duplex. At the time we bought it, we had been planning to move into a four-unit house and turn it into a single-family home.

One day Eric was on the phone with his aunt. At the time, she owned a large Victorian near us. He hung up the phone and told me to get the kids ready to take a walk to see her house; it is one that I had heard many horror stories about. I didn't think I would be interested in living in the house but I knew I had to entertain the idea.

We put the kids in their stroller and set off. When we arrived at the house, my initial reaction was "WOW." I felt an immediate emotional connection to it, and I remember saying "I don't even need to see the inside, let's buy it."

It has been six and a half years since I spoke those words.

Our 1850s Victorian now has a new roof and a new exterior paint job. Many doors have been taken out and others put back in. We had the porch lifted because it had started to sink. All of the walls have been painted, the hardwood floors re-sanded and varnished, ceiling molding added,



Home of Eric and Karen Mauer, located at 35 South Summit. Another spectacular example of Ron Rupert's exterior

two bathrooms redone (with two more to go), new carpet laid in two rooms, and an addition built off of our bedroom. We tore out an extra kitchen and we have a new back porch, a new dormer, and a new three-car garage. And we still have a lot more to do.

In the 1930s a couple with eight children lived in our house. I like to sit in my living room and visualize that family playing hide and seek, building

tree houses in the backyard, eating dinner together, listening to music in the living room, and reading books. I often wonder, "How different can they be from us?" I'm sure our circumstances are similar.

My 16-year-old daughter Charlotte recently invited ten friends over for a birthday party. They said they were scared to be in our house, remarking on all of the ghosts from the past who probably live with us. I

Heritage

NEWS

March 2005

March Meeting

Your Historic Home

by Ron Rupert

Wed. March 23
at 7:30 p.m.

Ladies' Literary Club
218 N. Washington Street

Your Historic Home

On Wednesday evening, March 23, please join us at the Ladies' Literary Club, 218 North Washington Street, 7:30, for Painting Old Victorian Homes, a fascinating talk and slide show by house painter extraordinaire Ron Rupert.

Rupert, whose painting business is called Home Services Ltd., says he will take his talk from "I want to paint my house" through all the problems along the way. He is going to discuss (and bring samples of) different woods, types of paint, and how to repair paint problems. Rupert paints both house interiors and exteriors and will address and take questions on either subject. He uses Sherwin-Williams paint and will bring with him the current color palette for Victorian houses.

A tour of Ypsilanti quickly turns up spectacular examples of Rupert's exterior work: the Queen Anne home of Eric and Karen Maurer, at 35 South Summit; the Glover Mansion, at 118 South Washington, owned and beautifully restored by Steve Pierce and Maggie Brandt; and the vividly painted Victorian, at 114 North Normal, in the process of being transformed into an elegant home by Rachel Cuschieri-Murray and Bryant Murray.

Rupert grew up in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, near Pittsburgh. He started painting houses in college to earn money. In 1967 he came to Michigan to teach in Plymouth. Pretty soon, says Rupert, "I was painting the principal's house." Painting remained

Glover Mansion, located at 118 South Washington Street, owned by Steve Pierce and Maggie Brandt.

his second job until Plymouth teachers went on strike in 1969. After that, he painted full time.

In 1996 Rupert moved to Ypsilanti's historic district to be near the old houses of Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor, which

are the heart of his business. We are fortunate to have this passionate master craftsman in our community. Don't miss this program on March 23. As always, refreshments will be served and the public is welcome.



Photo by Denis Schmiedeke

or work.

have never felt scared here. This house is filled with positive energy and our family feels welcome here.

I am very passionate about Victorian houses, restoration projects, the city of Ypsilanti, and rebuilding old houses instead of putting up new ones in modern subdivisions. I am proud to be a part of the restoration of the historic Ypsilanti community.

If I had known six years ago all the time, effort, and money Eric and I

would be investing in the restoration of 35 South Summit, I still would have done it. Our old Victorian has character and it is steeped in history. I cannot imagine living anywhere else. Restoring this house has brought such joy to our family and to our community.

I believe the Maurer family was meant to occupy this house and I think that we will be living here for a long time.

• PRESERVATION CONFERENCE IN EAST LANSING •

Governor Jennifer Granholm is honorary chair of "THINK BIG: Preservation Creates Cool," the twenty-fifth annual Michigan Historic Preservation Network preservation conference to be held over three days, April 14 to 16, in East Lansing.

The focus of the conference is community revitalization and how historic preservation enhances Granholm's Cool Cities Initiative. Thursday and Friday topics will include tax incentives, the economic benefits of historic preservation, and construction training for homeowners doing hands-on work with historic properties.

Saturday sessions will feature training for historic district commissioners, for historic district study committees, and for property owners facing the challenges of historic windows and painting. Many special activities are also planned, including tours of historic areas in Lansing and East Lansing and on the MSU campus.

Anyone interested in attending this conference can request a brochure from the MHPN at www.mhpn.org; or you can fax or e-mail MHPN (517 371-9090 or info@mhpn.org).

Conference fees range from \$45 to \$265 for members; the cost to join MHPN is \$35.

YHF Donations Benefit Community

Since last September the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation Board has donated a total of \$3,500 to the following area organizations:

Ypsilanti Historical Society: **\$100** in memory of Dr. William Edmunds

Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum: **\$200**

Yankee Air Museum Recovery Fund: **\$500**

U-M Bentley Historical Library: **\$100**

Ypsilanti Freighthouse Restoration: **\$1,000**

Towner House Foundation: **\$1,100**

Riverside Park: **\$500**

2004/2005 SCHEDULE

Meetings are at the Ladies' Literary Club
218 N. Washington Street, Ypsilanti at 7:30 p.m.
The public is welcome.

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MARCH **Painting
Your Historic Home**

25
MAY **Annual Marker
Awards Banquet**

21
AUGUST **Historic
Home Tour**

Interested in Joining the Heritage Foundation?

There are applications available on our website
www.yhf.org

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 and various business locations in the three business districts in the City. Have you visited the YHF website lately? There are new features you may find interesting • www.yhf.org

See you at the General Meeting - Wednesday, March 23, 2005 at 7:30 pm

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