

Heritage NEWS



The Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation
2009 GOOD NEWS ISSUE
reporting, for our own delight
and that of our Festival visitors,
on some of the improvements
that have occurred in the
Ypsilanti Historic District over the
past year. It's also our chance to say
thank you to everyone who cares
for and about Ypsilanti!

Good News Edition



Historic *Home Tour*

Sunday, August 23 noon – 5pm

The 32nd Annual Historic Home Tour will take place on Sunday, August 23rd from noon - 5pm. Advance tickets are on sale in Ypsilanti at Haab's Restaurant, Norton-Durant Florists & Gifts, and Salt City Antiques, Nelson Amos Gallery, and Bowerbird Mongo they are also available in Ann Arbor

at Downtown Home & Garden. Tickets are \$10.00 in advance and \$12.00 the day of the tour. On the day of the tour, tickets are available at the Home Tour ticket booth in front of the Historical Museum at 220 North Huron Street from 10 a.m. until 3 pm and Haab's on Michigan Avenue.

Good News in Ypsilanti

In Prospect Park on the East Side, enthusiastic and hardworking volunteers from the nearby neighborhood associations have revitalized historic **LUNA LAKE** and will continue to make improvements this fall and next spring. That lovely feature of the park is once again an asset to the community.



At the **CORNER HEALTH CENTER**, 47 North Huron, a wonderful mural on the south wall, professionally designed and painted by high school students, is highly visible to everyone traveling Huron. The Corner Health Center has acquired the adjacent building at 57 North Huron and is rehabbing that storefront as well.



The Detroit News published a great article on **YPSILANTI ARCHITECTURE**. <http://apps.detnews.com/apps/blogs/architectureblog/index.php?blogid=1228>

We hope it's still accessible when this newsletter comes out.



The historic commercial building at **12 WEST MICHIGAN** has been converted to residential use and is on this year's HOME TOUR! Nothing better for downtown than people living downtown.

The business incubator, **SPARK EAST**, is now located in the rehabbed historic building at 211-215 West Michigan in downtown Ypsilanti.



The newly renovated main floor of the **KRESGE BUILDING** at Washington and Michigan Avenue now features J.Neil's Mongolian Barbeque restaurant and the Keystone Underground Martini Bar.



At the **AUTOMOTIVE HERITAGE COLLECTION** a great new neon sign proclaims 'Auto Museum'.

New **INFORMATIONAL SIGNS** have been installed by Motor Cities and the National Park Service at the Ypsilanti Historical Museum, the Automotive Heritage Collection, the Bomber Restaurant, the Yankee Air Force, the Michigan Firehouse Museum, and Haab's Restaurant with financial assistance from the Heritage Foundation.

A major redevelopment has taken place at the old Central Elementary School (more recently Ave Maria) on West Forest at the corner of North Adams. **SCHOOLPICTURES.COM** is taking over vacant space, putting it back on the tax rolls, and planning green roofs on the two main buildings. The company is also buying the adjacent 1864 Italianate house at 314 West Forest to be used for meetings and to entertain potential clients.

A \$500,000 stimulus grant ensures that restoration of the historic **FREIGHTHOUSE** can be completed and that this wonderful space will once again serve the community. AND, the beginning of a rain garden has been constructed at the Freighthouse to absorb runoff from the roof and the entire site. Appropriate plantings will go in next spring.



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Outbuildings

Recognized for Historical Significance



119 North Adams

In the back yards and lanes of Ypsilanti is still to be found a fascinating collection of village barns and carriage houses. They contribute to our architectural history and to the historic character of Ypsilanti in a way no other buildings can.

In September of 2007, the Heritage Foundation began a new and ongoing program of awarding Historic Structure markers to those significant buildings.

Honored were the village barns and carriage houses at:



112 S. Washington



215 S. Washington



106 S. Washington



213 E. Cross



215 E. Cross



309 W. Cross

2009 Marker Award Winners



204 Elm



518 Fairview



28 S. Prospect



120 N. Adams



305 Oak



313 Maple

The awards were presented at the YHF Annual Marker Banquet, held at the Ladies' Literary Club on May 20, 2009.

2009 Historic Home Tour



218 North Washington Street

The Ladies' Literary Club

This wonderful 1842 Greek Revival house was thought by Emil Lorch, founder of the architecture program at the University of Michigan, to be one of the finest examples of its style in the country. In 1935, due to the efforts of Lorch, the house was selected by the Advisory Committee of the American Buildings Survey "because of its age and architectural interest as being worthy of most careful preservation for future generations." This document was deposited in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. In 1965 the first marker on a historic house in Ypsilanti, bearing the Michigan State Historical Commission designation No. 47, was presented to the club; and on March 16, 1972, the club was notified that its house was now listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The house was built by Arden Ballard. Several others owned it in quick succession but the Grant family, who purchased it in the 1850s, and the Ladies' Literary Club, which bought it in 1913 from Edward Grant, have been the chief stewards of the house.

The club itself, which was founded in 1878, has a rich history, much of it entwined with the story of the house. Over the years, the preservation of their clubhouse, which is in Ypsilanti's historic district, has been an important goal for club members to coalesce around. The house is used for all club meetings and events but it is also available for rent to the public. In 1970, after careful consultation with preservation architect Richard Frank, a large kitchen, caretaker's apartment, additional restrooms, and a basement for workshop activities and storage were added to the back of the house. To finance the addition, the ladies of the club spent money they had on hand, raised more, and secured a substantial mortgage, which they paid off in short order.

Those who have never been inside this architectural treasure will love touring its gracious rooms, hearing the history of the club and the house, and seeing the antiques donated over the years by club members.



120 North Adams Street

Judith Weinberger

The only Prairie-style house in Ypsilanti was built by Edward and Lena Mellencamp about 1912. The Mellencamps, who owned a store in the city, lived in the house until 1959, when their son, Robert, inherited it. In 1967 Robert sold the house to Vincent Buck, a former mayor of Ypsilanti. The Michigan Association for Retarded Children purchased the house in 1975 and converted it into a multi-unit dwelling for people with special needs. Judith Weinberger, the fourth and current owner, bought the house in 2001 and has spent several years enthusiastically restoring it.

The house is a wonderful example of Prairie-style residential architecture, which originated in the early 1900s and is largely credited to renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright. The style is defined by strong horizontal lines, rows or pairs of windows, and low-pitched roofs with oversized eaves. Unlike Victorian architecture, Prairie-style lacks overt ornamentation and bright paint colors. The focus, instead, is on an overall sense of symmetry using geometric shapes and forms. Paint colors are muted and mimic those found in nature. Tourgoers will observe all of these elements when they visit the house. Be sure to notice the unique stucco soffits.

The interior of the house has an open, expansive floorplan, which is typical of the Prairie style. Weinberger has lovingly restored the original oak and pine floors, Arts and Crafts windows, and glass pocket doors. The Pewabic-tile fireplace in the front room and quarter-sawn oak paneling in the dining room are not to be missed. Although updated, the kitchen includes the original ice box and butler's pantry. The YHF is very excited to have this wonderful example of an important American architectural style on this year's historic home tour.

32nd Annual *Historic Home Tour*
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2009 Historic Home Tour



12 West Michigan Avenue

Eric and Lisa Walters

This three-story building in downtown Ypsilanti is believed to have been built about 1860. Near the turn of the last century the address changed from 433 Congress to 12 West Congress. This has hampered efforts to research more precisely the date of the building.

In 2007 long-time Ypsilantians Lisa and Eric Walters startled their friends by deciding to buy 12 West Michigan. The couple set about renovating the upper two floors into a new home for themselves, doing almost all of the work themselves. They've been at it now for more than eighteen months.

The main floor was occupied by a slew of businesses and organizations over the years, among them Ypsilanti Plating Works (1912), Robbins Tinsmith (1922 1926), the Salvation Army (1934 1942), and most recently J. K. Shoe Repair (1981 1997). In 1948 the upper floors became the Hillside Hotel. No one can remember when the hotel officially went out of business, but the upstairs apartments continued to be rented until the Walterses bought the building.

Lisa and Eric have gutted all but the second-floor bathroom, which they chose to leave as architectural evidence of the hotel. Fourteen very small rooms have become five large ones. The kitchen was designed with a "diner" ambiance, featuring black and white tile, laminate countertops, and stainless steel appliances. The living room doubles as a library housing Lisa's extensive book collection. The third floor contains the master bedroom and bath, Eric's den, and Lisa's office.

Lisa explains that because the building is on Michigan Avenue, or US-12, she refers to it as "Twelve on Twelve." Eric points out that both the second and third floors have twelve windows, so that's "twelve on twelve" too.

The future of the retail space remains uncertain. It's currently rehearsal space for Fourth Wish, Eric's jazz quartet.



518 Fairview Circle

Erika Nelson

The 1925 Period Tudor at 518 Fairview Circle may have been the first house on the street. It is situated sideways on its lot—a very English way of placing a house. The main door doesn't face the street and entering the house feels like coming through a garden. The garage and driveway at the back are accessed off Oakwood Street. This delightful cottage-style house with soft gray decorative half-timbering shows itself off without parked cars cluttering the view.

Erika Nelson bought the house less than nine months ago, in December. Nelson and previous owners Linda Palka, Bruce and Cheryl Campbell, and Patrick Lutali have collectively spent over a decade renovating it. Palka started on the exterior with a new roof and gutters, and she repainted the house herself. Her biggest project took place in summer 2000. With the help of her dad she gutted the kitchen, opening up a wall between it and the dining room. The result is a spacious, light-filled room. Doors were removed from the sunroom off the living room, creating another expansive and airy space.

The Campbells added double-hung windows throughout the house, put in skylights, and enclosed the rear porch to make a sunroom. They also built a two-tiered deck and pergola behind the house. Lutali did a wonderful renovation of the second-story bathroom in tile and marble and he designed the extensive gardens and landscaping.

Nelson has put her own stamp on the house in the short time she has been there. Before moving in she began numerous renovation projects, including restoration of the original wood fireplace mantel and the addition of Motawi tile to the hearth and surround. And she replaced the kitchen backsplash with Motawi. Her art choices and Mission-style furniture create a strong statement in this charming and very personal home.

Advance tickets are on sale in Ypsilanti at Haab's Restaurant, Norton-Durant Florists & Gifts, Salt City Antiques, Nelson Amos Gallery and Bowerbird Mongo they are also available in Ann Arbor at Downtown Home & Garden. On the day of the tour, tickets are available at the Home Tour ticket booth in front of the Historical Museum at 220 North Huron Street from 10 a.m. until 3 pm and Haab's on Michigan Ave.

2009 Historic Home Tour



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957 Sherman Street

Kathy Scharp and Jake Grimes

This meticulously decorated Tudor Revival was built in 1926 for Mary and Earl Willoughby, owner of Willoughby Bros. shoe store, well-known to Ypsilanti's long-time residents. It was later the home of a grocer, a salesman, and a brewmaster at Ypsilanti Brewing. In 1948 it was purchased by city manager Naseeb Domoose and in the late 1950s the house belonged to the director of Family Services, Joe Granata, soon followed by an Ypsilanti High School teacher (Mr. Schmidt, to those of you who attended in the 1960s). The present owners, Kathy Scharp and Jake Grimes, were drawn to the Tudor style, with its sharply pitched gables, small paned windows, and the half-timbered effect made by horizontal and vertical boards breaking the shingle siding into rectangles.

When Kathy and Jake bought the home in 1999, they brought incredible skills to its decorating. Jake is a master carpenter and builder and Kathy an inventive painter, and together they have created an ambiance of drama and comfort. Influenced by the art of John William Waterhouse, Jake built a fireplace that recalls the medieval hearth that might have been found in the wealthiest Tudor houses of the early twentieth century. He has installed elegant moldings throughout the house and Kathy has used paint to make faux finishes that unify the style and add interest to what was a rather modest dwelling. Many Waterhouse prints are on display as well as those of other painters of the period. Venetian masks, Tiffany-style lamps, both period and new, family antiques, and many other details also make this a special home.

Tourgoers will enjoy Kathy's extremely charming hanging pots and window-box plantings in the front, with the flower colors selected to complement the blue color of the house.



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1104 Pearl Street

Lani Chisnell

Russell and Flora Clyne built this vernacular bungalow in 1924. Russell died in 1929 and Flora, who was a typing teacher at Roosevelt High, lived on in the house until 1960. Current owner Lani Chisnell has assembled a list of former owners. She enjoys pointing out that for most of its eighty-five years the house has been owned by single women.

Chisnell bought the house in late February 2004. When she first saw it, she was not impressed. "It was this strange house with a big long kitchen in it and no living area," she says. "I called it the bowling alley." But over four years she and her very handy dad collaborated on creating a spacious and livable main floor. The house has been transformed with what she calls "a nod toward the Arts and Crafts" style. Among the many highlights of the redo are an attractive new stairway and a stained-glass window on the landing that her dad made and installed. The first floor now has a dining room, a living room, and a wonderful new kitchen with a sitting area. On the second floor, the original small, oddly located bathroom was combined with a third bedroom and turned into a terrific large bathroom. Chisnell has furnished her home with garage sale and Treasure Mart finds, pieces picked up off the curb on garbage day, and antiques from the Saline Antiques Fair.

Over the last year Chisnell has been working on the house's exterior. Siding was removed to reveal cedar-shake shingles and the house has been beautifully repainted. She also added a front porch and an inspired new front door. Her front-yard perennial garden is eye-catching.

Coming up soon will be a decision about her dilapidated detached garage. Where some might see a demolition project, Chisnell envisions a garden shed, a carriage house, and a covered outdoor porch.

Yes! I would like to support preservation and become a member of the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation.

Please check the appropriate box and return with your check to:

Joe Mattimoe, YHF Treasurer • 301 N. Grove, Ypsilanti, MI 48198

Students & Seniors \$5 Individual \$10 Family \$15

Contributing \$25 Supporting \$50

Sustaining \$100 Lifetime \$1,000

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

e-mail _____

2009 Historic Home Tour



210 Wallace Boulevard

Larry and Michele Thomas

This tidy green-sided vernacular colonial revival, built in 1932, is the home of Larry and Michele Thomas, who have lived here for twenty years. The house has a hip roof, which makes it more modern for its time (a "pure" colonial revival would have a gable roof). The house used to be white, with a cupola on top and an odd enclosed porch on the front. In its current incarnation, the house immediately catches the eye of passers-by because of its simple but elegant hip-roofed portico, its cheerful and serene color, its red front door, and its lovingly tended front-yard perennial garden (which is a gem).

When tourgoers finish admiring the flowers in front and go inside, they will be reminded of days gone by when people somehow managed to happily raise kids in comfortable, gracious homes despite a lack of cathedral ceilings, one-acre kitchens, and rambling family rooms.

The Thomases have removed carpeting, refinished floors, and painted all the rooms in vivid colors. Family antiques abound. Notice the showy "painted" photos of Michele's great-grandparents at the top of the stair landing. A child's rocking chair in one of the bedrooms belonged to Larry's mom, who would be ninety-three if she were still alive. A handsome white cupboard with glass doors in another bedroom was a wedding gift from Michele's great-grandparents to her grandparents.

The kitchen was redone about thirteen years ago and the Thomases recently updated to granite countertops. The spacious upstairs bathroom, which has been remodeled to suit the era of the house, includes two windows, a separate shower, and the original claw-foot bathtub.

Tourgoers will exit into the backyard, which doesn't require much mowing because the Thomases have replaced almost all of the grass with a patio and another delightful perennial garden.

P r e s e r v a t i o n
recycling on a grand scale!

Heritage Foundation Wins 1st Place in 4th of July Parade



Thanks to Barry LaRue, Beth Sandmaier, one of the scenic artists from the Power Center, and YHF Board Members, a new float was erected for the 4th of July parade, depicting the Ypsilanti Underwear factory. With Barry and Beth's artistic talents the post-card images from the factory were brought to life for everyone to enjoy. This float is one for the books!

Heritage Foundation Contributes to Many Historic Community Preservation Projects

The Heritage Foundation is pleased to be able to contribute funds to aid other local organizations in their historic preservation efforts. Here are some of the projects that we have contributed to since 1998.

- Riverside Arts Center for installation of the historic Hill Auditorium box office window,
- Historic District Commission for interns,
- Kempf House,
- Towner House,
- Historic District street signs,
- Clothesline Project,
- John Pierce plaque,
- Washtenaw County Historical Society brochure,
- Ypsilanti Auto Heritage Museum,
- Ypsilanti Auto Heritage Foundation,
- Yankee Air Museum Recovery Fund,
- Bentley Historical Library,
- Ypsilanti Historical Society,
- Highland Cemetery National Register of Historic Places nomination,
- Friends of Ypsilanti Freighthouse,
- City of Ypsilanti for Riverside Park,
- City of Ypsilanti for survey work by EMU historic preservation students,
- Michigan Historic Preservation Network,
- Health Walk publicity,
- Motor Cities/National Park Service for wayside signs.

Good News in Ypsilanti

The **DEPOT TOWN SIGNAL TOWER** has a fresh coat of paint in its original colors, as well as a new roof and refurbished siding.

Improvements just follow one after the other at **RIVERSIDE**

ARTS CENTER! The new stair/elevator tower which links the Riverside and the old Detroit Edison bldg (now known as the Riverside Off Center), is now complete. Also the original Edison garage doors, which were removed sometime in the past, have been replicated by restoration carpenter extraordinaire Don Randazzo.

So, despite the weak economy and drastically reduced City staff, good things have been happening - we are grate-



ful. Thanks to everyone who works to make Ypsilanti a better place to live. Police Fire fighters, City Manager, City Department Heads, City Employees, Mayor and City Council, Boards & Commissions. They're a great bunch doing a great job in hard times. Thanks to everyone who has tucked flowers into window boxes, hanging baskets, and little nooks and crannies all over town - little things make a BIG difference! And, as always, SPECIAL THANKS to all those folks who quietly and faithfully maintain their properties, who sweep and water, pick up and plant, repair and paint. If we missed mentioning you, know that without your effort Ypsilanti wouldn't be the great place it is!

Museums— Don't miss these treasures!

Antique Fire Equipment Museum

W. Cross Street between Huron and Washington

Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum

E. Cross at North River

Historical Museum on N. Huron just south of Cross

Yankee Air Museum Willow Run Airport

Have you visited the YHF website lately? There are new features you may find interesting • 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, Farmers' Market and various business locations in the three business districts in the City.

See you at the General Meeting - Wednesday, September 23, 2009 at 7:30 pm

Annual Marker Awards Banquet	MAY 26
Garden Program	MARCH 24 TBA
Creating Green Architecture	JANUARY 27 Michael Klemm, A.I.A.
Energy Systems & Historic Buildings	NOVEMBER 18 Brenda Rigdon, Historical Architect
Rehab of the Freighthouse & the Kain Garden Concept	SEPTEMBER 23 Bonnie Penel

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

2009/2010 SCHEDULE

Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation Board Members

Hank Prebys, President
 Joe Mattheos, Treasurer
 Jan Arps-Prundeann
 Lani Chisnell
 Pattie Harrington
 Barry Larue
 Bill Nickels
 Bonnie Penel
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