

Heritage NEWS

JANUARY 2003

January

Guest speaker

SCOTT KUNST

Wed. Jan. 22 at 7:30 p.m.

Ladies' Literary Club

218 N. Washington Street



Four Seasons & Forty Centuries of Heirloom Bulbs



Scott Kunst is the owner of Old House Gardens, the country's only mail-order source devoted to heirloom flower bulbs. Since its founding in 1993, Old House Gardens' rare, tough, subtle, fragrant, and distinctive bulbs have been featured in *Fine Gardening*, *Horticulture*, *Country Living*, *Victoria*, and the *New York Times*. Recently, Scott planted some of his favorite antique bulbs with Martha Stewart on ABC's *Martha Stewart Living*.

Kunst will speak to the Heritage Foundation about *Heirloom Bulbs: Four Seasons, Forty Centuries* on Wednesday, January 22, at the Ladies' Literary Club, 218 North Washington Street, 7:30 p.m.

Please join us that evening to learn about unique, endangered, tough, and gorgeous heirloom bulbs that can enrich every garden. This lively slide lecture begins with a whirlwind history of bulbs from prehistory through the 1950s. It then focuses on a season-by-season encyclopedia of antique varieties that are still available to today's gardeners, including wild hyacinths and lilies, Aztec tuberoses, colonial daffodils, Victorian tulips and cannas, Jazz Age dahlias, and more. Old House Gardens is the country's only specialist in these astonishing living relics.

A landscape historian and preservationist, Kunst has been helping owners of historic homes and overseers of historic museums research and restore their grounds for fif-

teen years. He has taught landscape history at EMU, contributed numerous articles to *Old-House Journal*, and helped direct the Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation.

Kunst, formerly a resident of Ypsilanti's historic district, today lives with his wife and sons in an 1889 Queen Anne house on Ann Arbor's Old West Side. An enthusiastic gardener, he grows historic plants in his own yard, including antique iris, peonies, pinks, mums, and—of course—spring and summer bulbs.

January is the perfect month to start thinking about your garden. Bring a friend or neighbor on January 22. As always, coffee and cookies will be served.

The First Baptist Church: A history of its buildings



By James Mann

“At four p.m. Monday afternoon,” reported *The Ypsilanti Commercial* of Saturday, July 29, 1882, “a large gathering convened at the site of the new structure. The corner stone, furnished by Longbridge & Wilcox, was on hand, first quality Berea sand stone, 16x18 inches on the face, 20x28 inches on the south side. The date is cut on a fine specimen of Rogerville, (Tenn.) marble, cemented in permanently, with a partition between that and the box. The exercises, conducted by the pastor, Rev. J. Sunderland, began by singing to the tune of coronation, All Hail the power of Jeers Names. Reading of the scriptures by Rev. I. Gray.”

The new structure was the First Baptist Church, and the occasion was the laying of the cornerstone. From 1884 until 1937, the tall spire of the First Baptist Church at the southeast corner of Cross and Washington streets was a local landmark. Today, there is nothing on the site to remind anyone that it once stood here.

The Baptist Church in Ypsilanti began when Elder J. S. Twiss of Ann Arbor helped to form a society of sixteen members in 1836. The society purchased a building at 110 North River street in 1843 from the Methodists. The Methodists had used the building as a church until the floor gave way during a revival. The Baptists repaired the building and used it as their church until 1847. Lots were purchased in 1846 at Cross and Washington street, where a new church was built. This building was dedicated on June 17, 1847 and was destroyed by fire on December 28, 1849. Work on a new church was started at once, and this building was dedicated on September 4, 1850. This building was 40x80 feet, and had a large basement used for prayer and lecture room. Over time, the needs of the community outgrew

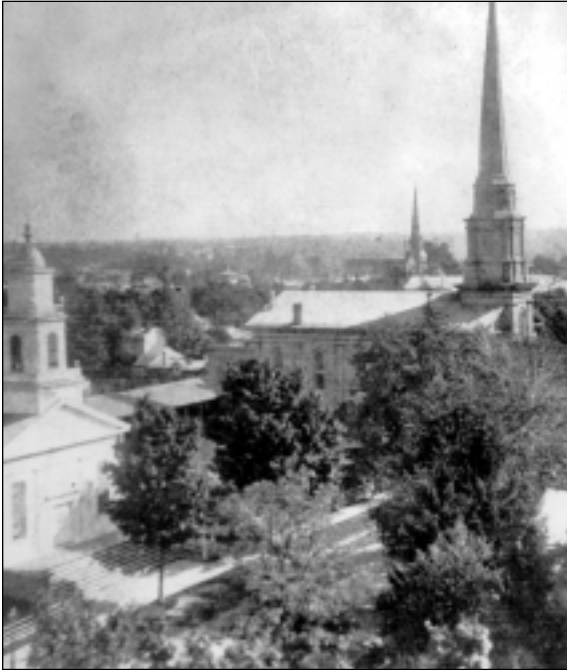
the space of the building. Consideration was given to repairing the building, but this plan was abandoned in favor of building, a new brick structure. The Building Committee entered into a contract with Henry W. Coddington for the erection of a new church on September 15, 1881.

“We made the contract after much hesitation and with feelings of great anxiety,” wrote Daniel Putnam in a report of the Building Committee, published by *The Ypsilanti Commercial* on Saturday, December 16, 1882. “The building of a house of worship seemed to be the special work to which Providence was calling us as a people; but with our limited means, the success of the effort to build appeared doubtful, unless the same Providence should grant us special mercies and blessings in our labors. With such feelings, and with, as we hope, some measure of faith in God, and with some reliance upon our brethren and upon the good will of our fellow citizens outside of our own organization, the committee determined to commence the work.”

The old church was removed, and the walls and roof of the new were put up during the

summer and fall of 1882. Under the terms of the contract, the church could suspend construction, if the necessary funds ran out. "Can we go on immediately and complete our work?" wrote Putnam. "It is exceedingly desirable to do so if possible. The committee are not now prepared to say whether it will be possible or not. The first thing to be done is to collect the subscriptions now incurred. The committee will not advise to move further till that is accomplished. It rests, therefore with the church and congregation to determine whether there shall be some delay, or we shall go on at once."

The question of whether or not to suspend work or continue on came up at a meeting of the Building Committee in October of 1883. "After an ample discussion,"



The First Baptist Church is located on the left, the First Presbyterian Church is on the right, both are located on North Washington Street.

reported *The Ypsilanti Commercial* of Saturday, October 27, 1883, "it was resolved to complete the church immediately, relying upon the generosity of their fellow citizens and the blessing of God upon their labors."

The decision to continue with the work appears to have been the right one, as the contractor, H. W. Coddington of Kalamazoo, proved worthy of his labor. "The plan is a very complete one," noted *The Kalamazoo Telegraph* in a story reprinted by *The Ypsilanti Commercial* on November 17, 1883, "having a large

provision in the way of committee rooms, kitchen, robbing rooms, etc., and the whole house equipped with the Ruttan system of heating and ventilation. The floor of the audience room is arranged and seated in amphitheater form, with five aisles leading down to the front. There will be three large memorial windows in the house. The portions of the plan which enable an advantageous use of attractive wood finishing are the breast work of the orchestra and organ loft behind the pulpit platform, and the spandrels. Of the latter there are three, dividing the ceiling into four panels. They are simple in effect but quite elaborate in the details of the woodwork. For these and the orchestra work the foundation is black ash, with cherry and red cedar. The grain of the pieces selected for this purpose is wonderful, making marked display. Some of the cherry after being oiled bears a close resemblance to mahogany, while the dark red cedar center pieces look like tulip wood. The natural grain of the ash and cherry and the artistic design and finish are worth going a good ways to see."

The church was cruciform in shape being 91 feet long and 61 feet wide. The structure had a 96 foot tall spire. The main audience room was 64x48 feet, and had a seating capacity of 400. The chapel was 30 1/2x25 feet, and could seat 160. The choir was 13 1/2x21, and seated 30. On each side of the chapel were rooms, each 12x12 feet. The galleries were 7 1/2x34 and seated 120. The church had a seating capacity of 710, with room for 100 extra chairs, bringing it to a total of 810.

"The Baptistery," reported *The Ypsilanti Commercial* of Saturday, February 2, 1884, "the only one saved at Ann Arbor, design of Mr. Coddington, an arrangement by which of its own accord the platform slides back, carrying the pulpit with it, uncovering the baptismal fountain."

The dedication of the new church was held on Wednesday, January 30, 1884. As part of the dedication, the contractor, H. W. Coddington, stepped forward and presented the keys to Daniel Putnam, Chairman of the Building Committee. The

Marker Awards

continued from page 4

- The grounds are maintained.
- If it is a rental property, the property has had appropriate maintenance for at least two years.
- The building has been developed sensitively.

The following example gives an idea of what is meant by "appropriate maintenance."

- The siding on the building is what was originally intended or could have been used originally. Vinyl siding on a 19th century building is never appropriate.
- The windows are original or identical to the original in size and configuration.
- Porches, railings and steps are appropriate to the period and style of the building.
- Any additions are compatible.

One-of-a-kind markers are possible in order to recognize the preservation and stabilization of a significant or high-profile building that has had a history of mistreatment. These will be selected after a case-by-case review.

If you would like to nominate a building for a Historic Marker designation send (before March 31, 2003) a very brief description of the building and its address to:

Don Randazzo
Chair, YHF Marker Committee
6101 Hitchingham Road
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
e-mail: drandazzo@provide.net

church had been built at a cost of \$30,000.

The building was destroyed by fire, on the morning of February 19, 1937. The slate roof caved in, and all that was left standing were the walls and the spire. All but two of the stained glass windows were lost. City workers soon after pulled down the walls and spire, as these proved to be a hazard.

Members of the congregation cleaned 83,000 bricks recovered from the ruins of the old church. These were used in the new church, which still stands at 1110 West Cross street. The bricks were not the only item recovered from the old building. The cornerstone is set in the wall of the hallway, leading to the lower level.



Historic House Markers

You can nominate a home or building for this special award

The time is coming again for The Heritage Foundation's *Marker Award Banquet*. At the banquet, owners of houses that meet certain criteria are recognized for their efforts and Historic Building Markers are awarded in order to publicly identify buildings of special merit.

You can nominate a home or building for this special award.

How about bringing places that you think deserve an award to the attention

of the selection committee?

Here are the criteria used by the committee:

- The building is within the boundaries of the City of Ypsilanti.
- The building predates 1950 and has an identifiable architectural style.
- The building is well and **appropriately maintained** (maybe it has just been rehabilitated).

See **Marker Awards** page 3

**2003
HERITAGE FOUNDATION
PROGRAMS**

Location: Ladies' Literary Club
218 N. Washington
Time: 7:30 p.m.



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 2003 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

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For up-to-date information about the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation & our Historic Community visit our website at www.yhf.org