

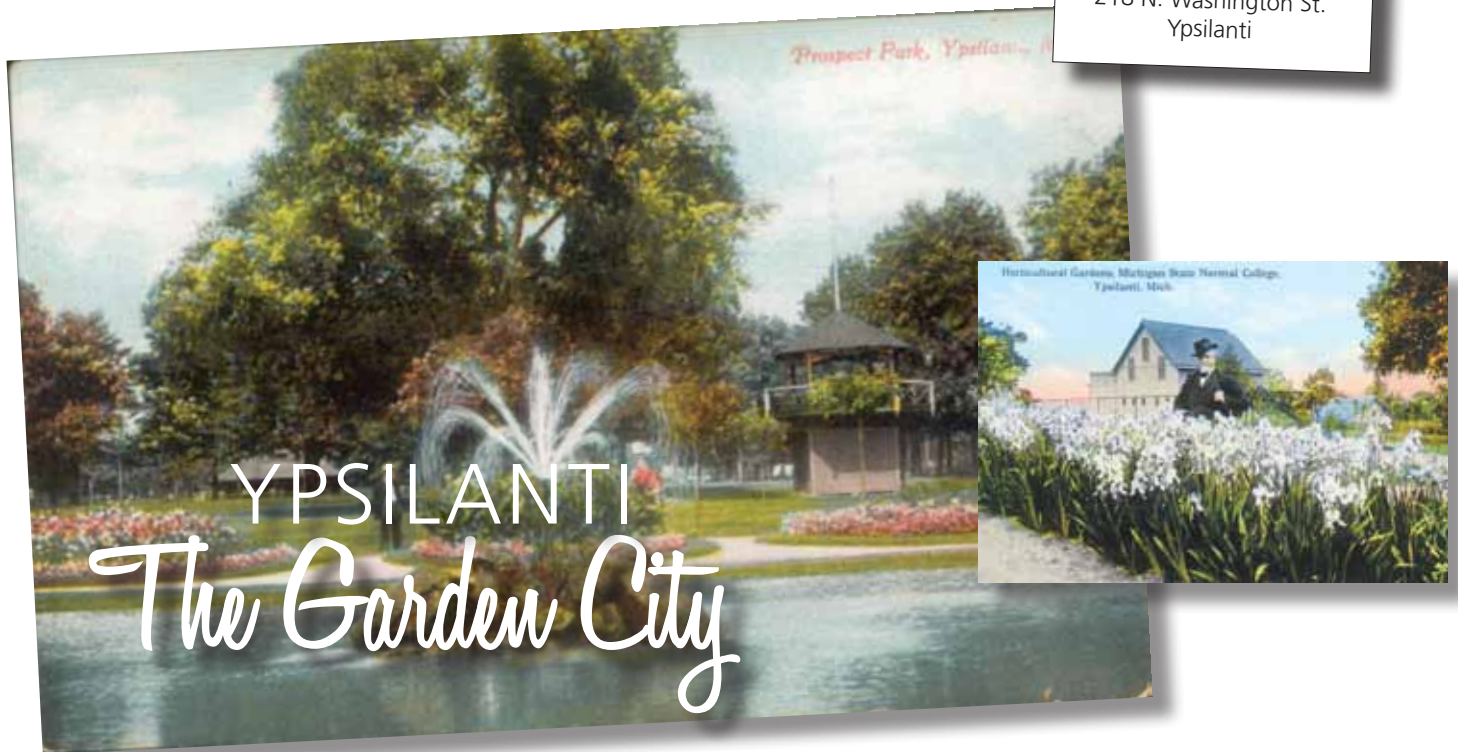
Heritage NEWS

MARCH 2011

Ypsilanti Heritage
Foundation
General Meeting

Wednesday
March 23, 7:30 p.m

Ladies' Literary Club
218 N. Washington St.
Ypsilanti



On Wednesday evening, March 23, please join us at the Ladies' Literary Club, 218 North Washington Street, at 7:30 for a special presentation by local historian James Mann.

For many years Ypsilanti was known as the Garden City. This was because of the many beautiful gardens in the city. From the early 1890's and well into the 20th century the city of Ypsilanti enjoyed a reputation as a city of gardens. People came from miles away to walk the streets of the city to enjoy the profusion of color and display of the gardens.

James Mann will give a talk on a few of the gardens from the past of Ypsilanti. He will tell the story of the Michigan Central Gardens, known for the incredible floral displays made year after year by the gardener John Laidlaw. This was a garden that was nationally known. The garden is still remembered for Laidlaw's rendition in 1898 of the Battleship Maine. This was done with over 100,000 plants.

Then there were the Science Gardens of the Michigan State Normal College, now Eastern Michigan University. The purpose of the garden was to provide students with a laboratory for the study of

botany, horticulture and agriculture. The garden was valued by most as a place of beauty. Sad to say, both the Michigan Central Garden and the Science Gardens are gone. James Mann will bring back at least a hint of what was for one evening.

Don't miss this special event.

Please join us on Wednesday, March 23.

The public is welcome and, as always, refreshments will be served.





Starkweather House Update

Art Campbell owned and rented the Starkweather House for most of the last half of the Twentieth Century. Because of needed extensive repairs, he was unable to sell the house for a profit making price and he was unable to demolish the house because it recently became a historic district. His contractor encouraged him to donate the house to the City of Ypsilanti for an income tax gain which he did in the summer of 2007. The City put the house up for sale at the price of \$1 to a bidder willing to complete the renovations of the house. Ron Rupert was the winning bidder in September of 2007. When Mr. Rupert purchased the house for \$1, he assumed restoration obligations to be completed 18 months after closing with the City. Later, in April of 2009, Mr. Rupert and the City of Ypsilanti entered into a Modification Agreement that extended roof repairs until July 31, 2009; window, doors, and trim repairs until November 1, 2009; siding repairs until September 1, 2009; exterior repairs until October 31, 2009; and a \$50/day default charge if work was not completed on time.

Prior to the Modification Agreement deadlines, Mr. Rupert and the Ypsilanti Historic District Commission concluded it would be best to replace rather than repair the windows in the Starkweather House. While working on another project, Mr. Rupert fell from a ladder and severely damaged his elbow on October 28, of 2009.

In December of 2009, Mr. Rupert wrote Mayor Schreiber and City Council that he had completed the requirements of the Modification Agreement. At about the same time, City staff reported the Modification Agreement was not complete because the windows had yet to be repaired. Uncertain what to do, City Council did not respond to the conflicting claims. In December of 2010, Assistant City Attorney Karl Barr recommended that council revisit the Starkweather Modification Agreement and declare that the \$50 per day default penalty be imposed on Mr. Rupert. By then the default penalty had accumulated to approximately \$25,000 and continued to grow.

After reviewing detailed pictures taken by Mr. Rupert during the project and reviewing council goals with regard to the Starkweather House, city council finally passed a closing resolution on February 15, 2011. The resolution in part said "Council is satisfied that the terms of the agreement have been completed and Council releases Mr. Rupert from any further obligations under the purchase agreement." The resolution continued to say "that said release does not remove any obligations with regards to any City ordinances, nor does it release Mr. Rupert and his successors from deed restrictions which were a part of the original sale."

Art Campbell, Council, and Mr. Rupert can be applauded for saving one of the most historic homes in Ypsilanti. It was on this farm that George and Milly McCoy were Ypsilanti conductors on the Underground Railroad and raised their famous inventor son Elijah McCoy. Ypsilanti is continually thankful for the Mary Ann Starkweather gifts to the City that included our first library, Starkweather Chapel, the Civil War Monument in the cemetery, and Starkweather Hall on the campus of EMU. In addition to saving such an important part of our history, Art Campbell and Council also saved a taxable piece of property that would likely have collapsed without allowing restoration to be cost effective by gifting the house to Mr. Rupert for \$1. Huron Street in 1874. John died there in 1883. According to the 1895 Washtenaw County Atlas, the property was still owned by John Starkweather in 1895.

So what does the trim board that Ron found tell us about the house? The porch on the west side of the house, where the trim board was found, was apparently built sometime after H. R. Scovill started his lumber company after the Civil War. The porch may have been built by John and Mary Ann or by a successive owner. Future discoveries by Ron as his restoration work continues may tell us more.

Marker Houses to be selected for May Presentation

It's that time of year when we search through the city to select homes and businesses that will receive historical markers. We are always open to suggestions from the Heritage Foundation membership. Following is an outline of the criteria used for the selection process.

- The houses or buildings shall be located within the city limits of Ypsilanti.
- It should have a recognizable style of architecture whether it is vernacular or historical to a period and be at least 50 years old.
- Condition and appropriateness of all exterior elements shall be considered.
- The roof condition, (shingles, flashings, cresting)
- Fascia, (bargeboard, dentils, gutters)
- Cornice, (brackets, dentils, modillions)
- Soffit, (the underside of the overhang)
- Chimneys, (does it need repair, tuck pointing, cap repair)
- Dormers or Parapets, (consider whether original or added, is maintenance acceptable)

Is ornamentation appropriate to the style or added for effect only?

Is the cladding, clapboard, brick, stucco, half timber, quoins,

solid boards, in acceptable condition?

Are the windows and window surrounds in acceptable condition?

Is the entrance appropriate and well maintained?

Are porches, balconies, floors, handrails, steps, posts in acceptable condition?

Is the paint well maintained?

Is the foundation in acceptable condition and has it been appropriately maintained,(proper tuck pointing)?

Are basement windows acceptable?

Are the leaders well maintained and water directed appropriately?

Additions or modifications must be appropriate and sensitive to the structure and must be carefully weighed when considering awarding markers.

Appendages shall be considered,(Fire escapes, antennas, ladders, skylights, T V dishes

And finally, is the landscaping well maintained? Are the sidewalks, driveway and gardens appealing?

*Contact Don Randazzo if you have a candidate for a historical marker
don@donrandazzo.com*



Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation Membership to Vote on Amended By-Laws and Articles

The Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation has sought legal counsel to assist in the amending of the By-Laws and Articles of the Foundation. We now have a final document that the membership will vote on in May. You can find the old and new documents on the YHF website www.yhf.org or obtain a printed version of the old and new documents by contacting Pattie Harrington at pklharrington@gmail.com or 734 483-0339.

The vote will take place at the Marker Awards Banquet on May 25th, 2011 at the Ladies' Literary Club, 218 N. Washington Street, Ypsilanti, Michigan.





The Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation

Heritage News

209 N. Huron Street | Ypsilanti, MI 48197

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See you at the Historic Gardens program Wednesday, March 23, 2011

Heritage News is the newsletter of the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation and distributed, free of charge, to the membership by mail.

Have you visited the YHF website lately? There are new features you may find interesting • www.yhf.org

34th Annual Home Tour Plans Underway

The 34th Annual Historic Home Tour will be held Sunday, August 22, 2011, Noon – 5 P.M. This year, we will be highlighting several favorites that have been on tour before and at least three homes that are new to the tour, including 505 N. Hamilton which owners Barry LaRue and Kim Clarke have been restoring and enhancing with great colors. Tour attendees will also get to visit another colorful home, in shades of red at the corner of S. Normal and Michigan Avenue, owned by Adam Delaney.

The Home Tour committee will be finalizing the sites soon and beginning the work of preparing information for the ticket brochure, assigning chief guides and seeking sponsors for the event. For updates regarding the tour, you can visit the web-site: www.yhf.org

A great way for people to get involved in the tour is to volunteer to be a tour guide. You will receive training and learn more about the history and architecture of the home. You will receive a ticket for the tour and invitation to the after tour party that honors the home-owners. If you would like to volunteer for this year's tour, please contact Jan Arps-Prundeanu at janarps60@gmail.com

Home Tour Committee: Lani Chisnell, M.J. Dennison, Jill Dieterle, Sue Hoffman, Tamara Kutter, Nancie Loppnow, Erika Nelson, Alex Petit, Claudia Petit, Barbara Saxton, Jane Schmiedeke, Penny Schreiber, Mary Streeter, Jane Van Bolt and Chair: Jan Arps-Prundeanu

