

# Heritage NEWS

March 2003

March

Guest speaker  
JOHN MOUAT

Wed. March 26 • 7:30 p.m.

Ladies' Literary Club  
218 N. Washington Street

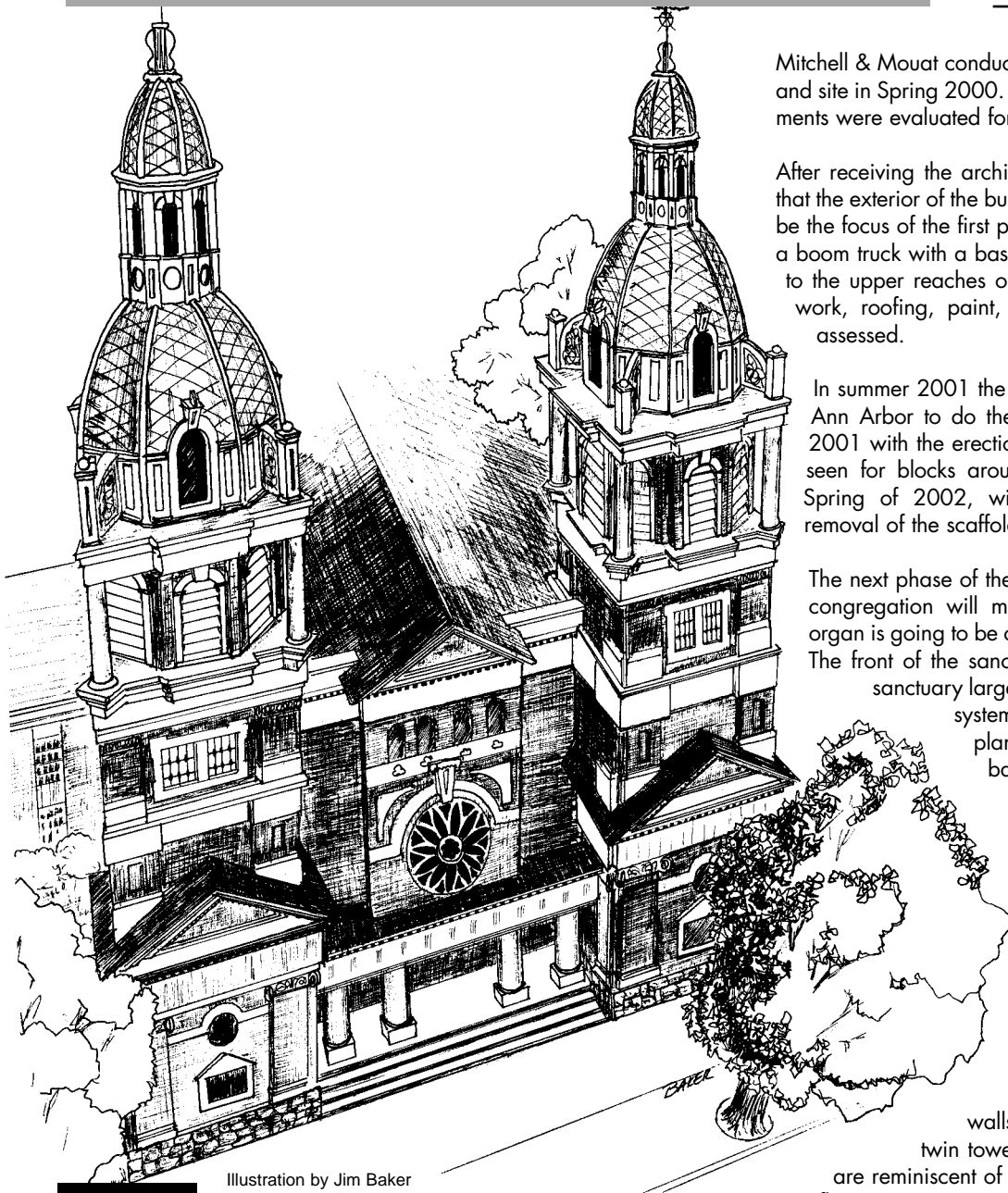


Illustration by Jim Baker

Mitchell & Mouat conducted a Facility Assessment of the building and site in Spring 2000. The building was photographed and elements were evaluated for condition and safety.

After receiving the architects' assessment, the church concluded that the exterior of the building was the highest priority and would be the focus of the first phase of construction. The architects used a boom truck with a basket in winter 2001 to gain direct access to the upper reaches of one face of a tower. Masonry, woodwork, roofing, paint, windows, and stained glass were all assessed.

In summer 2001 the church retained O'Neal Construction of Ann Arbor to do the renovation work, which began in fall 2001 with the erection of extensive scaffolding that could be seen for blocks around. The project was completed in the Spring of 2002, with final painting and the ceremonial removal of the scaffolding.

The next phase of the renovation starts in mid-May, when the congregation will move out of the sanctuary. The historic organ is going to be completely rebuilt at a cost of \$400,000. The front of the sanctuary will be moved back to make the sanctuary larger and more open. Changes in the sound system and the electrical system are also planned. The congregation hopes to move back into the sanctuary in mid-October.

The First Presbyterian Church of Ypsilanti is the oldest church congregation in the city. Founded in 1829, with twelve members and two visiting ministers, the church continues to thrive 184 years later. Its beautiful historic building began to take on its current form in 1898, when work to enlarge the 1857 structure began. Detroit architect Julius Hess redesigned the church using the original sanctuary walls, and adding a double entrance with twin towers. The distinctive cupola-topped towers are reminiscent of English Baroque churches, but the interior reflects Renaissance architecture. The sanctuary is enhanced by the large rose window, made by Tiffany Company of New York. The formal dedication of the reconfigured building was held on Sunday, September 24, 1899.

Please join us on March 26 to learn more about the continuing preservation of one of Ypsilanti's most important historic buildings. As always, coffee and cookies will be served after the meeting. The Ladies' Literary Club, at 218 North Washington Street, is on the other side of Emmet Street across from the Presbyterian Church.

# J

ohn Mouat, principal in the Ann Arbor architecture firm Mitchell & Mouat, will speak to the Heritage Foundation on Wednesday evening, March 26, at 7:30, at the Ladies' Literary Club. Mouat will tell us about the renovations completed last spring to the exterior of the historic twin-towered First Presbyterian Church on the corner of North Washington and Emmet streets. A church representative and someone from Ann Arbor's O'Neal Construction may also join us that evening.



# Preservation

## Happens Outside the Historic District

As their houses age, home owners are often tempted to purchase fake siding to avoid the high cost, time, and effort that come with exterior maintenance. Fake siding salesmen in the days of yore seduced home owners with asbestos shingles, fake brick, and aluminum. Today vinyl siding is all the rage. Unfortunately, fake siding covers up architectural details, creating a new and less interesting appearance for the house. Fake siding also hides problems present at the time of its installation or problems that develop after its installation.

Lots of houses in Ypsilanti's historic district have been restored to their earlier appearance after the removal of fake siding. Original clapboard siding on many of these houses is in excellent shape after years of being hidden away under fake siding. Check out the exciting transformation of the house on the northeast corner of Washtenaw and Hamilton, the most recent site in town where fake siding has been removed. It looks like a brand-new house.

But home owners in historic districts aren't the only ones who dream of ditching their fake siding. In 1993 Jeff and Jennifer Goulet

purchased a 1939 colonial revival house on Roosevelt Boulevard in the city's College Heights neighborhood, which is not in the historic district. In the early 1960s, when the original cedar siding was probably showing wear and tear, the house had been clad in aluminum siding. The Goulets recently hired local painting contractor Ron Rupert to remove the aluminum and paint the original cedar a deep red and evergreen, similar to the house's original colors. "Our little house was eager to be out from under all of that metal, and the original cedar clapboard is in surprisingly good shape," says Jennifer. "You can almost sense how pleased the house is with the work!" Siding removal always reveals hidden details. More than forty years after they disappeared under aluminum siding, louvered roof vents on the Goulets' house are once again visible.

Another good example of the transformative effects of fake-siding removal is the home of Paul and Penny Schreiber at 922 Pleasant Drive. The house is in the city's Woods Road subdivision, which is not in the historic district. The Schreibers are the second owners of their 1938 center-entrance brick colonial revival.

When the Schreibers bought their house in 1985, it was like a great-looking person dressed in cheap polyester. The first owners of the house had succumbed to the lure of aluminum siding in the 1950s. Extensive wood trim under eaves and windows, around the screened porch, and on the garage wing was covered up with bland white aluminum. Worst of all, wide wood shutters had been replaced with narrow white aluminum ones. A few years after the Schreibers bought the house, they pulled off all of the aluminum. The wood trim was restored and painted white, and decorative wood molding was put back and painted a dark green. All of the aluminum shutters were replaced with wider wood shutters, and additional shutters were added to the house. The white aluminum screen door at the front was replaced with a wood screen door; both the shutters and the door were also painted a dark green.

The Schreibers love the way the outside of their house looks today. Although they've already had to repaint their trim and shutters, they wouldn't dream of redressing their handsome house in aluminum.

# Thompson Building Update

Readers may be aware that this long-endangered building in Depot Town, at the corner of N. River and E. Cross, is in receivership.

We have learned from Charles Boulard, City of Ypsilanti Building Official, that for several weeks the receivers have been cleaning out the building.

So far, 38 thirty-yard dumpsters have been removed and they estimate it may take several more weeks to finish the clean out.

The work is complicated by the fact that the elevator has stopped working (it had been "jury-rigged) and the remaining junk is in the basement.

As soon as the building is cleaned out enough to allow evaluation, an engineer will be brought in to identify any immediate areas requiring shoring, stabilization, etc. to keep the building from suffering additional damage during the design process.

Once that is done and the building is empty and safe, the design and planning will begin.



Soldiers and their families pose in front of the Thompson Building during the Civil War Muster that was held in Depot Town and Riverside Park in April of 2002. This year's Muster will take place on April 20.



## Civil War Muster Returns



History buffs and Civil War enthusiasts will revel at the sight of a fully outfitted army marching into Depot Town, ready for battle. Ypsilanti is proud to host the Civil War Muster. Bring your family to this free event that promises to deliver a fun, educational program you won't want to miss.

Muster visitors can observe a typical day in the lives of Civil War soldiers. Visit the military encampment in Riverside Park and chat with the weary Union soldiers. Witness the thrilling spectacle of The Battle of Kolbs Farm, an accurate reenactment of the June 22, 1864 skirmish in Georgia.

For full details and a schedule of events, call the Ypsilanti Area Convention and Visitors Bureau at 734-483-4444.

# 10th Anniversary Celebration of One-Room Schoolhouse



The Michigan One-Room Schoolhouse Association celebrates the tenth anniversary of its founding at Eastern Michigan University on Friday, May 9, and Saturday, May 10. EMU is hosting the conference in John Porter Hall in the College of Education Building.

The Geddes Townhall School on EMU's campus will be the site of Friday evening's opening reception. Guests can see firsthand the completed restoration of a one-room schoolhouse.

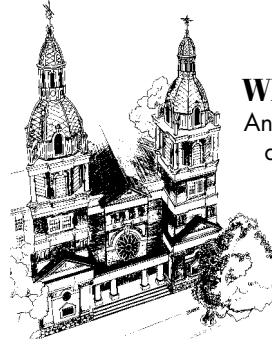
Saturday sessions will be offered on a wide variety of topics, including one-

room school archaeology, preservation and restoration techniques, teaching in a one-room school today, one-room school stories from the UP, and an old-fashioned spelling bee. A slide show that documents the move of the Geddes Townhall School to the EMU campus will also be shown.

Please join us in celebrating our educational heritage. The cost for this event is \$35. For more information contact MORSA, c/o Greenmead, 20501 Newburgh Road, Livonia, MI 48152, Attn: Sue Daniel; or check out our website: [www.one-roomschools.org](http://www.one-roomschools.org).

## 2003 HERITAGE FOUNDATION PROGRAMS

held at  
Ladies' Literary Club • 218 N. Washington, Ypsilanti  
Time: 7:30 p.m.



### WED., MARCH 26

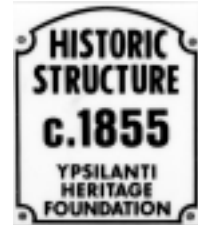
Ann Arbor preservation architects Mitchell & Mouat on the restoration of Ypsilanti's historic First Presbyterian Church.

### WED., MAY 28

Annual 2003  
Marker Awards Banquet

### SUN., AUGUST 17,

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](http://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.