



# ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ANN ARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION TO THE ANN ARBOR CITY COUNCIL FOR THE YEAR 2008

## Introduction

In accordance with the bylaws of the Ann Arbor Historic District Commission, an annual report is to be prepared by staff, approved by the Commission, and presented to City Council each year outlining the activities of the Historic District Commission for the previous year.

## Statistics

A total of 212 applications were received by the Commission in 2008. The Historic District Commission has delegated a number of minor activities to staff to approve on their behalf, and 140 of those applications received Certificates of Appropriateness from staff. Examples of some of the thirty kinds of work that may be approved by staff, if the work is appropriate, include:

- Replacement of non-original windows or doors
- Replacement of existing awnings and signage in the same size, dimension, and location
- Reconstruction of existing porches
- New or replacement fences
- Replacement of roofs and concrete basement walls

The Commission held hearings on the other 72 applications during their regular monthly meetings. Of those applications, 62 received Certificates of Appropriateness and ten applications were denied. All of the sites were visited prior to their hearing by the HDC Review Committee, which is made up of two Commissioners and staff.

Examples of applications receiving Certificates of Appropriateness included:

- Fifteen new signs, awnings, and canopies
- Nine residential and one non-residential additions
- Four new buildings (three garages and one house)
- Two garage demolitions
- One new storefront

The denied applications included:

- ❑ Two applications to demolish garages and two applications to demolish houses, which were denied because the structures contributed to the historic district
- ❑ Four applications to remove original windows which were determined to be repairable
- ❑ One application to replace stucco with cementitious siding
- ❑ One application for cementitious siding that had already been installed without prior HDC review or building permits

## Awards

Each year during May (National Preservation Month), the Historic District Commission presents Historic Preservation Awards to property owners who have shown dedication to preservation by rehabilitating or maintaining their historic property. The Ann Arbor Historic District Commission's 2008 awards were presented by Mayor John Hieftje during the May 5, 2008 City Council meeting. A reception for award recipients was held at the Michigan Theatre preceding the ceremony at City Council.

### *Rehabilitation Awards*

Rehabilitation Awards recognize substantial work which returns a property to a state of utility through repair or alteration. The work facilitates contemporary needs but respects the features of the property which are significant to its historic and architectural values.

**Award to: Patrick McCauley**  
**For: Sinclair-Richmond-Spathelf House, 1526 Pontiac Trail**



Patrick McCauley has done an exemplary job of restoring and researching this very early Greek Revival home. He believes it dates to as early as the 1830s, with additions in the 1850s and 1860s. It appears to have been built as an outbuilding on what later became the large estate of Jonathan Lund two blocks away at 1324 Pontiac. It was moved to its present location by 1869, when the land was platted as the Partridge Addition and was purchased by the Spathelf family. The property was earlier connected to the Richmond and Sinclair families, early pioneers of the county.

**Award to: Bill Levleit of Westside Builders**  
**For: 513 Fourth Street**



For years this two-story vernacular frame house constructed around 1902 had been left to decay. Parts of the roof had caved in, and floors were rotting to the point where some believed demolition was the only answer. The HDC voted 'no' to one contractor's petition for demolition after hearing from neighbors who wanted it restored. Subsequently, Chris and Bill Levleit, owners of Westside Builders, purchased the property and with the approval of the HDC restored it and constructed an addition in the

back. Special attention was paid to restoring the front porch to its original design and saving the commercial market addition with its unique parapet wall that was added ca. 1925. This building is another example of what can be done with something looks unrestorable. It is a remarkable achievement and we applaud the efforts of Bill and Chris and the crew from Westside Builders. This company is a family-run operation that specializes in additions, renovation and remodeling projects.

**Award to: University of Michigan**  
**For: Observatory Lodge, 1402 Washington Heights.**



This 1930 Tudor-style apartment building has been renovated by the University of Michigan for use by the Division of Kinesiology. The University replaced inappropriate windows (installed in 1982) with new multi-pane casements that match the original steel windows. They repaired the original slate roof, recreated the historic sign, and restored the squirrel weather vane. Inside they restored the lobby with its massive fireplace and Pewabic tiles and repointed the bricks. This sensitive renovation retains the building's historic features while bringing its systems up to date for 21st century use.

**Award to: University of Michigan**  
**For: Stanford Lipsey Student Publications Building, 420 Maynard Street**



This 1932 Collegiate Gothic building was designed by the architectural firm of Pond and Pond, brothers who were Ann Arbor natives and practiced in Chicago and who also designed the League and the Union. The building has now been totally renovated and updated. The slate roof was repaired.

Some of the windows were replaced and some were repaired but the work was so skillfully done that it is hard to tell which are which. Many interior features were kept including the tile and travertine walls, the original stair rails, and light fixtures. Especially interesting are the colorful zenitherm wall treatments (an asbestos product) which were carefully repaired. Wherever possible, original woodwork, tables, benches, cabinets and doors have also been restored and reused.

**Award to: Dr. Timothy Wang**  
**For: J.D. Baldwin House, 1530 Hill Street**



A beloved landmark at the corner of Hill and Washtenaw, this 1840s stucco over brick Greek Revival house is in the Washtenaw-Hill Historic District. Current owner, Dr. Timothy Wang, has restored the stucco [scored to resemble stone (using string!)], as well as several original windows. He has replanted the landscaping, added lights and an iron

fence, and lovingly maintained this very significant historic house.

*Preservation Awards*

Preservation awards are given to owners who have maintained superior maintenance and repair of a significant property to preserve its essential historical, cultural or architectural value for a period of 10 years or more.

**Award to: Jeff Lamb and Ulrike Lau-Lamb**  
**For: Jacob Shiltz House, 809 Miller Avenue**



This tiny Greek Revival has been nicely kept up by the owners. It displays characteristics of the 1840s in its style, size and massing and what appear to be original windows. It was built by a family of coopers and carpenters named Shiltz or variations thereof and it remained in the Shiltz family until 1898. It has been owned since 1990 by the current occupants.

**Award to: James and Susan Kern**  
**For: Francis Hamilton House, 318 South Thayer Street**



This Colonial Revival style home has been owned by Sue and Jim Kern since 1996. Their meticulous preservation of a real "inner-city" property serves as an example to all who believe in sustainability. The house was built in 1906 as a boarding house by Francis M. Hamilton, a Mayor of Ann Arbor and local developer who built other commercial projects along nearby North University, as well as Hamilton Place just off William Street.

**Award to: Robert C. Metcalf**  
**For: Robert Metcalf House, 1052 Arlington Street**



This example of 'modern' architecture was built by architect and U-M Professor Robert C. Metcalf from 1952-1955 as his own home. He still lives there today and maintains it in pristine condition. Metcalf served as Dean of the School of Architecture from 1974-1986. As an early example of Dean Metcalf's work, it is the epitome of modernism in Ann Arbor. The house was 1080 square feet when built and Metcalf and his wife Bettie made additions in 1972 and 1987, doubling its size. Metcalf designed 150 projects (plus more while working for George Brigham), including 80 houses in Ann Arbor.

Metcalf became the first dean of the new College of Architecture and Urban Planning in 1974 when it was split off from the School of Design. He initiated the first doctoral program in architecture, made the school a center for research and doubled its enrollment. He's held offices with the AIA of Michigan, and was given their President's Award for his commitment to training young architects.



**Award to: Gwen and John Nystuen**  
**For: Roy Cowden House, 1016 Olivia Avenue**



This Arts and Crafts house with battered windows and doorway is in immaculate shape. It was built 1913 for Roy W. Cowden, who began as a UM Instructor in Rhetoric and later was Director of the Avery and Julie Hopwood Awards in Creative Writing. Known as "a perceptive and beloved critic of student writing," he was still living here in 1940. John and Gwen Nystuen have lived here since 1963.

**Award to: Laura and Andrew Strowe**  
**For: John Taylor House, 1327 Broadway**



The owners of this ca. 1850 Greek Revival house are artist Laura Strowe and husband who have owned the property since 1979. Erastus and David LeSure sold the property to John Taylor in 1850 and the house was probably built soon afterward. Emil Lorch noticed it in his 1930s studies for the Historic American Buildings Survey and singled it out for its Greek Anthemion grille, doors with two vertical panels, and the flush clapboard siding under the side porch. It is an upright and wing, with its original wooden clapboards and shutters. Laura has glorified her home and neighborhood through numerous art works, many of which have appeared on covers of the Ann Arbor Observer.

#### *Sesquicentennial Awards*

Sesquicentennial Awards are given to businesses and organizations which have been in Ann Arbor for at least 150 years.

**Award To: Hutzel Plumbing**



Hutzel Plumbing is one of the oldest continuously operating businesses in the state of Michigan. It was founded in Ann Arbor in 1857 as a dry goods and paint store and expanded into the plumbing business 20 years later. The company laid the first water lines for the fire department and later aided in delivering water to individual homes and businesses. They became experts in water works and laid the cast iron pipes in Elgin and Streator Illinois. Originally on Main Street and then on East Washington Street, they moved to South Industrial Boulevard around 1958 where they remain today.

**Award to: Washtenaw County Historical Society**



On December 17, 1857, 19 citizens of Ann Arbor, led by the indefatigable John Geddes, met at the county Court House and organized the Washtenaw Pioneer Society. Over the years it has waxed and waned and had a few name changes but artifacts were always collected and often

stored at the Court House as well as various schools and barns around the county. In the 1920s the Society enjoyed a resurgence with many UM faculty members active in the organization, particularly UM President Ruthven. For years they searched for a permanent home for the collections. The Douglas House on E. Huron, Cobblestone Farm, the Kempf House, Barton Dam, the Dean House on Packard and the Tuomy House on Washtenaw were all considered but fell through for lack of funds. In 1990, the now renamed Washtenaw County Historical Society (WCHS) was given a house on Wall Street by the University of Michigan to be moved to Main and Beakes Streets. In 1999, WCHS was finally able to open the Museum on Main Street. On July 29th, the 150th anniversary was marked there with a gala celebration.

*Preservation Project of the Year*

**Award to: Dennis Dahlman**  
**For: The Glazier Building, 100 South Main Street**



This imposing Beaux Arts style building was constructed from 1906-1908 by Frank Glazier of Chelsea. It was renovated with a new cornice, up lighting, and doorways by current owner Dennis Dahlmann, who purchased the historic property in 2000. The architect was Jackson-based Claire Allen, who designed Glazier's other buildings in Chelsea. Glazier had a real 'lust for power' according to one biographer and established the Ann Arbor News to promote his candidacy for State Treasurer. He was convicted of embezzlement in 1910 and sent to Jackson Prison!

The Glazier Building complements Dahlmann's other properties including the Campus Inn, Harris Hall and the Bell Tower Hotel. This project, on Ann Arbor's most prominent and historic corners, involved the reconstruction of the original cornice which had been removed in the 1960s, improvements to the Huron Street lobby, and new signage. Quinn Evans Architects along with Dan Sonntag and Susan Milne of Dahlmann Properties were the project architects. The project is Dahlmann's 100th birthday present to the building... Located at 'ground zero' at the intersection of Main and Huron, where all street numbering begins, this prominent landmark has been returned to its former glory. It is especially enchanting at night when the lights highlight the new cornice.

*Preservationists of the Year*



**Award to: Rita and Peter Heydon**

Mr. and Mrs. Heydon put historic preservation easements on their three properties on East Washington Street, protecting them in perpetuity. The Heydons have owned 322 and 332 E. Washington and Graves Garage for over 25 years (all were purchased in 1980). At that time, Mr. Heydon did a



meticulous restoration of all three for residential and office use and they were listed on the National Register of Historic Places as well as the State Register. They were also locally protected as Individual Historic Properties in 1988 until this ordinance was declared invalid in 2001. When the Heydons learned of plans to build a large development a lot away, they approached the Michigan Historic Preservation Network and enlisted them to receive the easements. The Heydons have shown their concern about the preservation of Ann Arbor's heritage by encumbering themselves with restrictions and putting them on future owners, thus lessening the monetary value of these properties. We applaud their example of preserving for beauty and community enjoyment in perpetuity these lovely 19th century structures in the heart of our downtown.

### **Additional Activities**

A Historic District Commissioner retreat was held on March 8, 2008. The retreat agenda included refresher training on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, guidance on parliamentary procedure from parliamentarian Pat Austin, and a review and slideshow of projects approved and constructed in the last year.

Under the continuing work of Ann Arbor Discovering Downtown (A2D2), a survey of the Old West Side Historic District was begun. The survey will be used to identify historic and non-historic buildings in the district. Comments will be solicited from the Old West Side Association and other interested public. The results will be presented to the Commission and City Council. Staff has photographed every building in the district. In the coming months the historic research will be conducted and the draft report will be prepared.

Staff provided technical assistance to the City Council appointed 415 W. Washington Proposal Review Committee as they reviewed the responses to the city's Request for Proposals.

### **For More Information**

If you would like more information about the Historic District Commission or its activities, please contact Jill Thacher, Historic Preservation Coordinator, at (734) 794-6265 x42608 or email [jthacher@a2gov.org](mailto:jthacher@a2gov.org).