

## MEMORANDUM

To: Ann Arbor City Council  
From: Jill Thacher, City Planner/Historic Preservation Coordinator  
Date: April 21, 2017  
Re: Inglis House History and Significance

The 1927 James Inglis House at 2301 Highland Road was documented in 1988 by the City Council-appointed Landmarks Historic District Study Committee. This French Chateau-style residence was found to have historic, architectural, and cultural significance and was recommended for inclusion in a locally designated district. Council included the Inglis House in the Individual Historic Properties Historic District, which existed from 1988 to 2001, when it was declared invalid by the Michigan Court of Appeals.

In 2014, the Inglis House was included in a book called *Historic Ann Arbor: An Architectural Guide* by Susan Wineberg and Patrick McCauley. It describes the unique characteristics of the building and the family that built it, and the property's later life as a University of Michigan guest house for such dignitaries as President Gerald Ford, the king of Thailand, and the Dalai Lama.

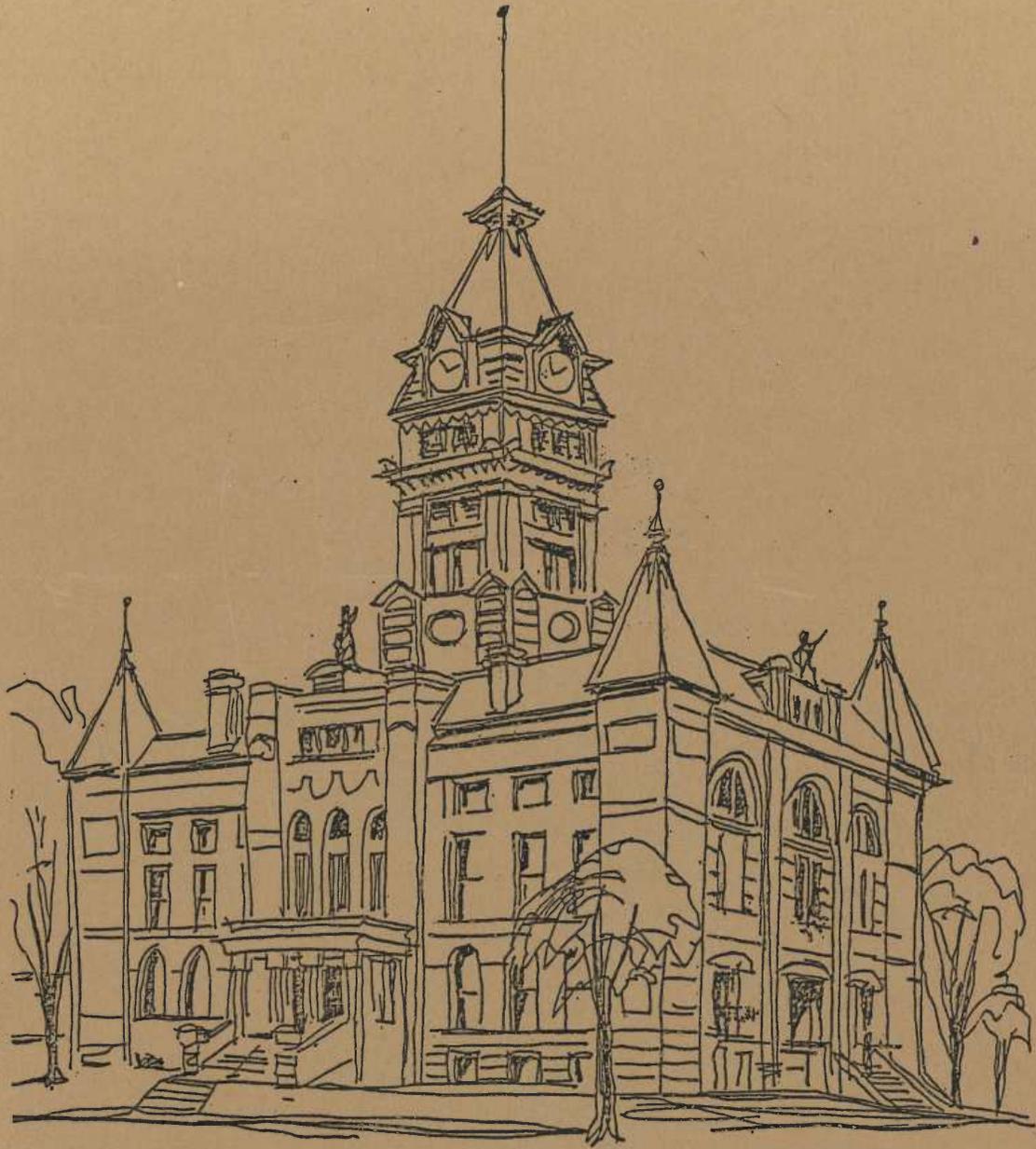
After reviewing the history and significance of the house and grounds, staff concludes that the property maintains the integrity noted in that 1988 study committee report. The historic, architectural and cultural significance have only increased during the subsequent 29 years.

Inglis House, c.1950/60. Image courtesy of Bentley Historical Library.



Inglis House, 1992. Image courtesy *Historic Buildings: Ann Arbor, Michigan*.





KEMNITZ

*Old Court house Square at  
Main + Huron with grass + trees*

LANDMARKS HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE  
FINAL REPORT February 29, 1988

## JAMES INGLIS HOUSE 1927

2301 Highland Road

This beautiful residence was built in 1927 as part of an exclusive subdivision on the eastern edge of the town, located near the University Arboretum. It was situated on the back part of the farmstead owned by the Inglis family since 1901. Nestled away from the bustle of Central Campus, the Inglis House is now owned by the University of Michigan and is used as a guest house and reception center for visiting dignitaries. Used as the University's official guest house, it has hosted world-famous scientists, musicians, government leaders, kings and shahs, all who have been guests of the University and entertained magnificently in these quarters.

Kate Inglis Smith, daughter of Scottish-born Dr. Richard Inglis of Detroit, began the exodus of Inglis family members from Detroit when she and her husband purchased the farmland in order to get out in the good country air. Carol Inglis Spicer, niece of Kate Smith, fondly remembered her aunt's grape vines strung along Geddes Street, between what are now Highland and Concord Streets. Chickens were also raised on the Inglis' farm, as well as apples and pears.

It was natural, says Ms. Spicer, that Kate's younger brother James, a successful Detroit industrialist who owned American Blower Co., should choose the back seven acres for the construction of his new house, for it was the piece with the view. As Ms. Spicer described it, "It was truly a 'creating' - building that house - and most particularly that garden, where there had been before only long grass and wild blackberries and a few pear trees. In my Aunt Elizabeth's later years... in California... it has been the garden... that looms in her memories of those halcyon days." Her gardener Walter Stamphli remained after the University took possession in 1951. In 1974 he still lived in the "Hans Christian Andersen-like cottage" on the grounds.

Ms. Spicer's cousins also have memories of the house: its cost - \$250,000; the asparagus in their mother's garden; the electrically operated garage doors; and the separate wash bowls in the parents' bedroom. The tennis courts, golf course, panelled and book-lined libraries - all stir fond memories among those who grew up there.

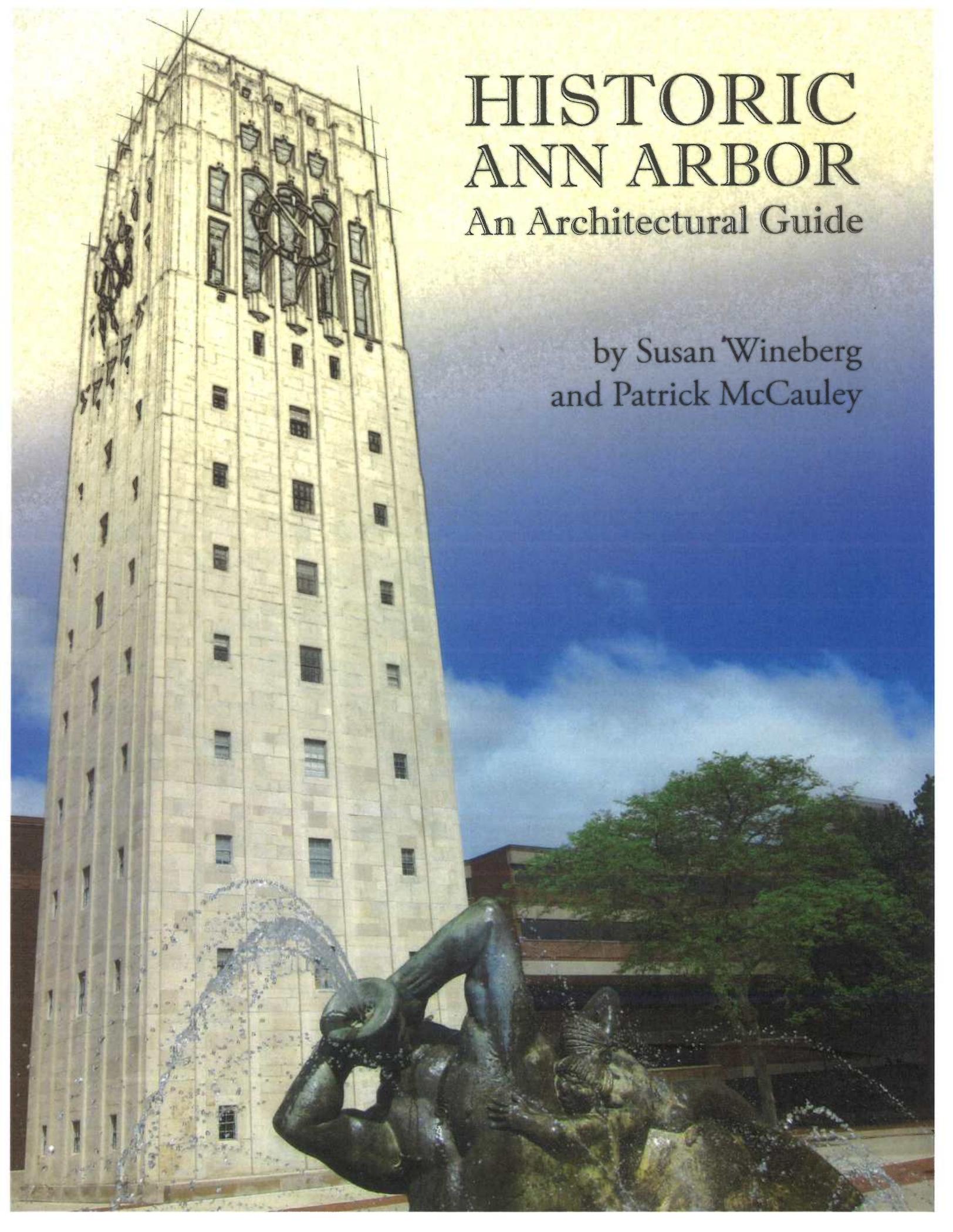
The four-story residence has twelve rooms plus servants' quarters, the caretaker's cottage, three car garage, greenhouse, workshop and pumphouse. The house was designed by Lilburn "Woody" Woodworth, at the time a young and obscure architect/friend of the family whose only other building had been the Arch Diack residence at the bottom of Geddes Heights. Today, the French Chateau style building, with its steeply pitched roof, sits amidst the lush foliage of the original gardens. It elicits praise from many of the notables who have wined, dined and lodged there. In 1986 it was featured on the Ann Arbor's Women's City Club house tour. As the city's only true "country estate" it is an architectural as well as social landmark.

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### References:

*Ann Arbor News*, May 19, 1974.

*Ann Arbor News*, May 11, 1986.

The image is the cover of a book titled "Historic Ann Arbor: An Architectural Guide". The background is a photograph of a tall, light-colored stone tower, the Spurr Tower, with a large, ornate clock face near the top. In the foreground, there is a bronze sculpture of a muscular man, the Spirit of Detroit fountain, with water spraying from its hands. The sky is blue with some clouds. The title and authors' names are printed in a serif font on the right side of the cover.

# HISTORIC ANN ARBOR

An Architectural Guide

by Susan Wineberg  
and Patrick McCauley

## 2301 Highland James Inglis House

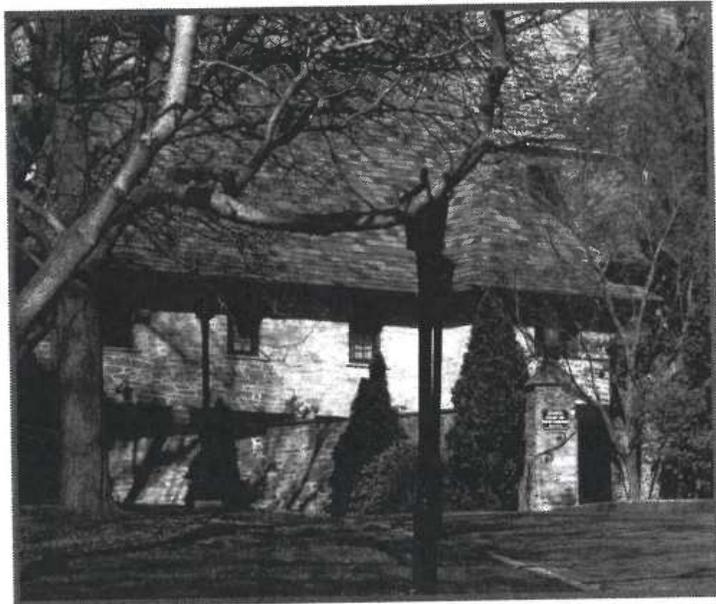
1927

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Near the Nichols Arboretum, this imposing residence once known as “The Highlands” was built for Detroit industrialist James Inglis in 1927 as part of an exclusive subdivision on the eastern edge of town. It was at the rear of farmland his sister Kate Smith and her husband Frank had purchased in 1895 as a retreat from urban life (see #337).

“Inglis House” reportedly cost \$250,000 and is designed to resemble a French château with some English Country elements. Nestled away from the bustle of Ann Arbor since 1950 it has been owned by the University of Michigan, which uses it as a guest house and reception center for visiting dignitaries, including President Gerald Ford, the king of Thailand, and the Dalai Lama.

The residence was designed by Lilburn “Woody” Woodworth, a friend of the family. It has 12 rooms with servants’ quarters, a caretaker’s cottage, a three-car garage, a greenhouse, workshop, and pump house. Unusual features at the time of construction included electrically operated garage doors, separate wash bowls, a golf course, and tennis courts. The lush gardens were often open for public tours when Mrs. Inglis was president of the Ann Arbor Garden Club.



Typical of the French Château style, it has a steeply pitched roof of slate pierced by small dormers, tall chimneys, and an asymmetrical floor plan. The interior has English touches, as in the striking paneled library.

*Former IHP*