

1983

Preservation Eastern, 2/83

Preservation Eastern
Eastern Michigan University

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PRESERVATION EASTERN

no. 2/83

Rural Preservation

Lima Township in western Washtenaw County may become the site of the nation's first rural historic district. This designation would be the culmination of a struggle which has been waging since 1965, when local residents attempted to save their rural community from the effects of two proposals.

The first of these was the Army Corps of Engineers massive flood control plan that required 10 dams on the Mill Creek, creating an 8,000 acre reservoir with total land in excess of 16,000 acres. Next it was the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authorities plan to create a 3,500 acre Metropark centered on a 618 acre impoundment. Both proposals would have required the relocation of many families as well as dramatically changing existing land use patterns.

The chief opposition was supplied by the Mill Creek Research Council formed by local concerned citizens. Not only did they lead the effort to defeat the projects, they were also instru-

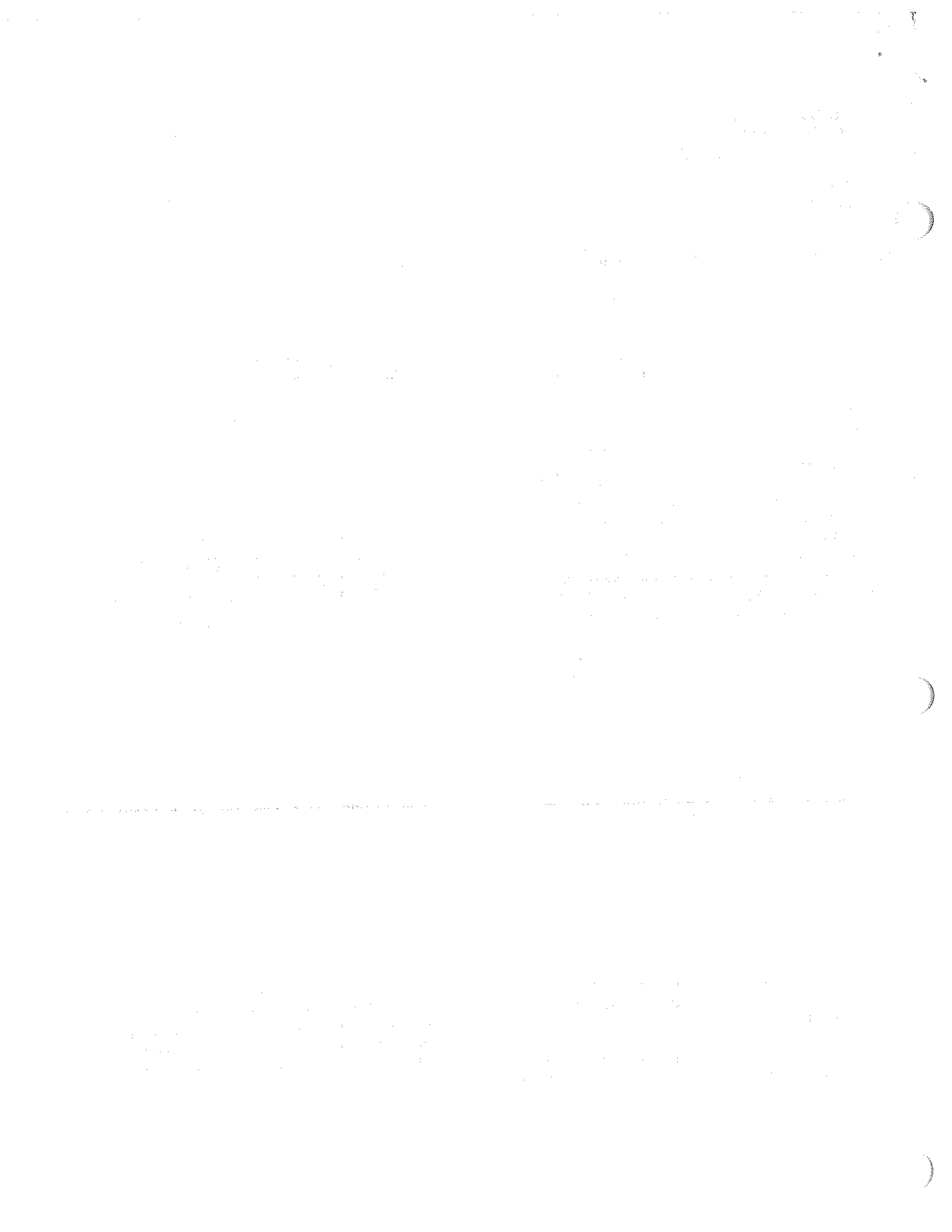
mental in documenting the history of the area and in collecting data and photographs of significant structures. It was from this study that the idea for creating a historic district emerged.

The proposed district encompasses roughly 9,400 acres and includes 76 houses that are described as being significant either architecturally or historically. The architectural importance of the district is collective rather than individual and shows the cultural and economic growth of the area.

Presently, the district is being reviewed by the Michigan History Review Board, who are expected to make a recommendation on the application for placing the district on the National Register of Historic Places. If this area is named to the Register, it would be a major step in recognizing the importance of preserving our rural cultural heritage.



We need your support! Preservation Eastern's Newsletter is growing with each issue, just as awareness and appreciation of our cultural heritage is spreading throughout the nation. If this growth is to continue, community support is needed. (Beginning with our next issue, advertising space will be available to interested merchants and business persons. If you would like us to reserve space for you, please contact Preservation Eastern at 487-0438 or 994-0440.



Profile.....

Jane Bird , Chairman, Ypsilanti
Historic District Commission

Jane Bird has been actively involved in promoting preservation in the Ypsilanti area since 1970. She was a major force in persuading the Ypsilanti City Council to provide funds to form an historic district study committee. Ms. Bird served as chair of that committee, whose report was the basis for the designation of the Ypsilanti Historic District. In 1979, the Historic District Ordinance was passed by Council and the Historic District Commission was created by selecting sympathetic citizens from the community. This commission elected Jane Bird as their Chair, a position which she still fills.

Ms. Bird believes the most significant success of the ordinance has been in creating an atmosphere

in which property owners feel confident in investing in the district.

This confidence has extended to homeowners who were not otherwise aware of the preservation movement. Ms. Bird has worked for the Historic District since its inception and has witnessed the increased stability and physical improvements within District neighborhoods.

There is more work to be done towards improving the level of maintenance in the historic area and throughout the city. However, with the positive effects of the Ordinance and the dedicated efforts of people like Jane Bird, the concept of Historic Preservation has become an outstanding success in the city of Ypsilanti.



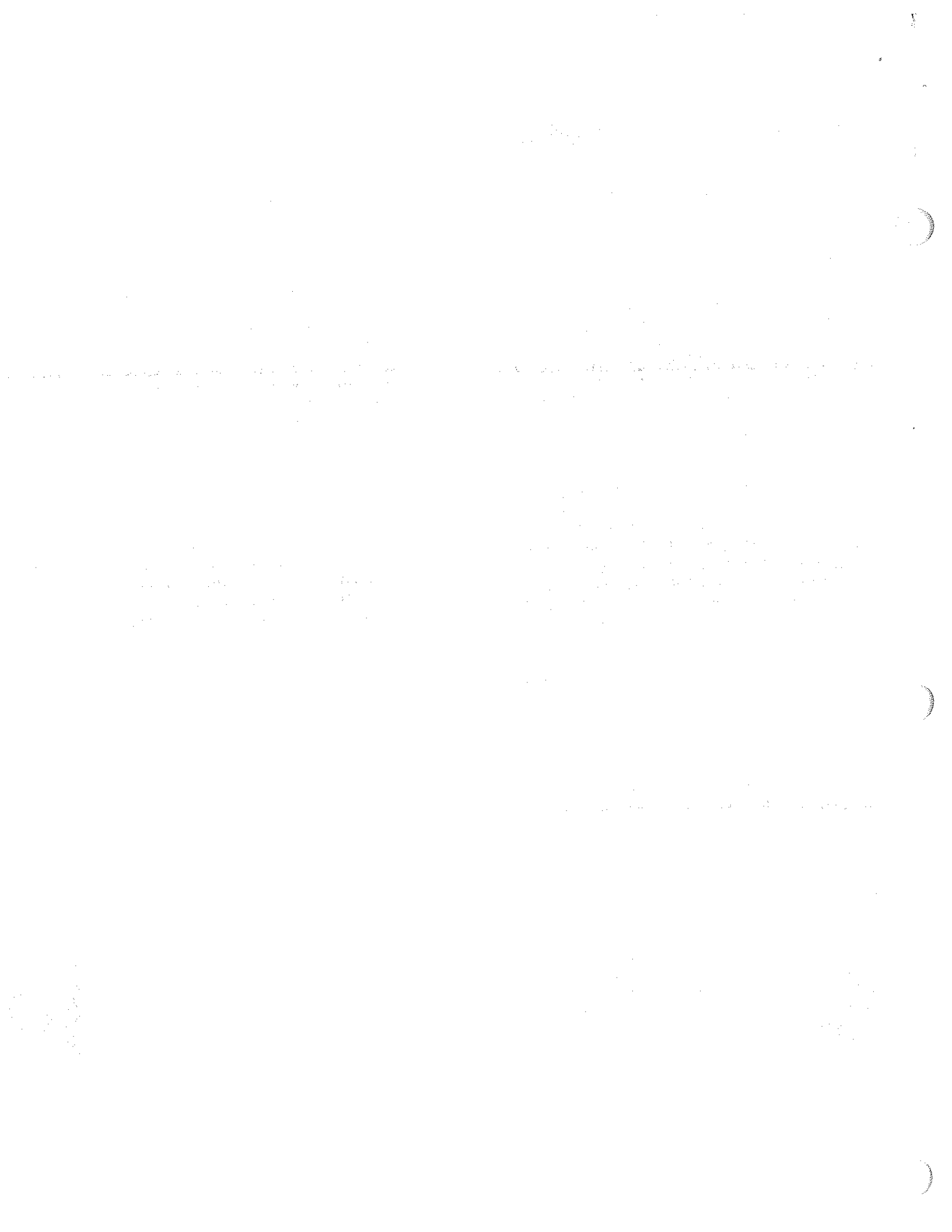
Welch Hall:

The committee established by the EMU Board of Regents to study the potential uses of Welch Hall has now met four times. Although some progress has been made in the evolution of a common understanding of the importance of Welch as a University resource, the committee has a great deal of investigation to complete before making formal recommendations to the Regents. Various committee members have accepted individual assignments which they will report upon in the next meeting, scheduled for April 11th.

There has been a noticeable hardening of positions within the committee. In particular, the view that scarce funds makes Welch an unlikely candidate for renovation has surfaced. This perception

was countered by others on the committee in exhorting the entire group to accept the financial situation as a stimulus to more creativity. There seems to be general agreement that non-university use (of at least part) of the building, offers opportunity for self sustaining financing.

Preservation Eastern will help to give the public voice opportunity to be heard by focusing its energies on Welch Hall during Preservation Week. The Welch Hall committee is currently working on a questionnaire that will sample public opinion on future uses of Welch. If Preservation Week can celebrate the existence, need for, and possible uses of Historic Welch Hall, the public will be more informed when asked to respond to the committee's questionnaire.



Muddling and Remuddling

AN EDITORIAL COMMENT


Several months ago a photo appeared in the "Old House Journal" depicting the National Bank of Ypsilanti, with the caption "remuddling of the Month." The controversy surrounding the renewal of this buildings facade has infected the larger community and has served to unify a small but extremely vocal group of businessmen in the downtown area.

Under pressure from downtown businesses, the Ypsilanti City Council formed a Study Committee to investigate the effectiveness and appropriateness of the Historic District Ordinance. The Majority Report of the Committee came up with some reasonable suggestions for improving the Historic District Commission's procedures. Their advice has been largely ignored. Why has the Council asked for advice, and then refused to act on it? The answer is politics -- as usual.


Several people on the Council were running for Mayor of Ypsilanti and have sought to please too many interest groups at

the same time. The result, predictably, is that they are pleasing no one, and this is reflected in the Council's decisions. For example, one recent action excuses businesses in the Ypsilanti Historic District from complying with the Ordinance; while another releases the Ford Motor Company from an obligation to pay a fee for late tax remittance to the city.

Some good sense must still remain in the Council Chambers, because both of these latest actions have also been reversed; though the Historic District question is only on hold until after the mayoral and city council elections. If the City Council is indeed interested in stimulating an economic revitalization of Ypsilanti (especially the downtown) they must realize that people and businesses require a dependable regularity in the application of ordinances so they may plan their activities with some assurance of the future. It seems to this writer that the caption mentioned above could be applied to the City Council's actions-- muddling and remuddling.



Congratulations, Marshall! Dr. McLennan was recently appointed to the State Historic Preservation Review Board for a term of three years. He is widely recognized as an expert in the field of Cultural Geography and well-versed in all areas of preservation. He will be a tremendous asset to this group.



Our thanks to Wayne State University for hosting Michigan's Local History Conference on April 15 & 16. Much valuable information was exchanged, and Preservation Eastern looks forward to attending again next year!

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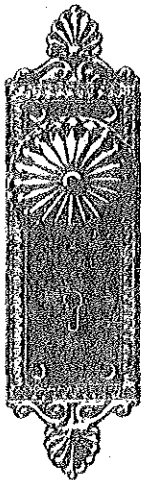
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Announcements

PRESERVATION
IS HOUSING AMERICA



Preservation Week
May 8-14, 1983

National Trust for Historic Preservation

Be sure to check with your local
historical society on their plans
for Preservation Week

Special Events:

- MAY 1 - Walking Tour of Historic Indian Village sponsored by the Detroit Historical Society
- 6 - Bates Lowry, Director of the National Building Museum speaks at Historic Fort Wayne. For information call 833-7934.
- 8, 14 - Historic East Side Walking Tours of Ypsilanti. 2-4 p.m. Free of Charge. Meet at Old Passenger Depot, Depot Town.
- 14 - Preservation Eastern Walking Tour of historic campus buildings, culminating at the water tower. Refreshments will be available afterward in Starkweather Hall.
- 15 - Preservation Wayne Cultural Center Walking Tour of Detroit. For information call 577-3559.

Meetings

Old West Side Association, April 20,
Bach School 7:30pm; Slides and dis-
cussion of kitchen remodeling. Social
hour afterward.

Corrections:

The phone number for the Resource Design Group is 995-9818.

In the Spring Time Schedule, GE0680 should read Architectural Photography.

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P. E. Update...

The latest meeting of Preservation Eastern was held March 22. Updates were presented on the status of the Ypsilanti Historic District Ordinance and the progress of the Welch Hall committee. Possible Preservation Week activities were discussed, with the membership deciding to feature Eastern Michigan University's campus on a walking tour highlighted by Welch Hall. Suggestions were also taken for Ypsilanti Heritage Festival Activities, to take place August 26-28. Concluding the business meeting,

an election was held to fill the vacant post of vice-chairman and Marianne Nichols was elected. Afterward, Michael Aiger of the Ypsilanti Community Development Office addressed the group on the elements of writing grant proposals. This was a most informative and practical topic.

Individuals wanting to help with research, advertising, presentation of the walking tour or any aspect of Preservation Week activities should contact one of the officers.

Preservation Program Co-Directors

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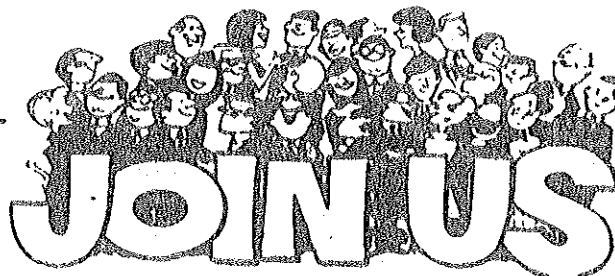
NEWSLETTER:

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Rate: \$4.

Interest:

Welch Hall Committee

Public Relations

Special Events

Newsletter

Send to: Preservation Eastern, Eastern Michigan University
 203 Strong Hall, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197

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PRESERVATION EASTERN

WALKING TOUR of

EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY & Ypsilanti Water Tower

SATURDAY
MAY 14
10 - 12 noon

during
PRESERVATION
WEEK

meet at
STARKWEATHER
HALL

