

1996

Preservation Eastern Newsletter, September-October 1996

Preservation Eastern
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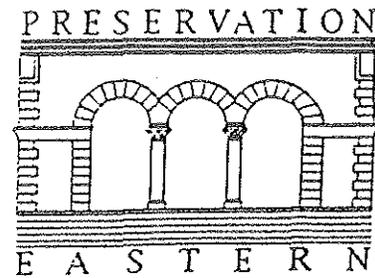
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Preservation Eastern

Newsletter September/October



Volume 4 Number 1 The Newsletter of the Eastern Michigan Historic Preservation Program

Dynamic Maximum Tension

by Susan Rothstein

I accepted the Simmons Internship at Greenfield Village and Henry Ford Museum with two main objectives in mind: to work on a local restoration project and to do something other than wait tables this summer. I had been to the museum only once before and knew nothing about the focus of my internship: Buckminster Fuller and the Dymaxion House.

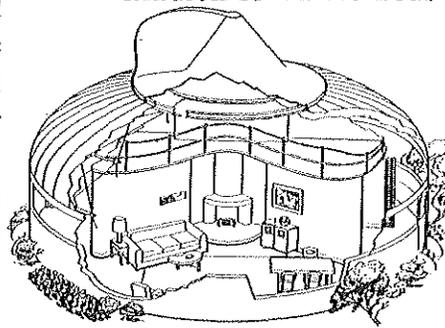
My first day I met the other interns and my boss, all of whom I would get to know very well over the next three months. Four of us were paid interns. A couple others volunteered for various reasons. It was immediately clear that we each had different qualifications. We were all a bit surprised when we started to become familiar with what our internship would involve. The information we had received said that we would catalog, work closely with other staff members to assess the "condition of physical components of the Dymaxion House," and assist in planning the exhibit. In addition, the internship information said "the thrust" of the internship would be for us to "understand, from start to finish, details that make up a large scale restoration." We soon learned we had a great deal of research ahead of us about Buckminster Fuller and the Dymaxion House. We learned quickly that the majority of our summer would be spent in an un-airconditioned section of the museum, away from the public, working with dirty, corroding metal.

Initially, we did a lot of research. I learned Buckminster Fuller developed the Dymaxion House with the intention of providing people with affordable, economically sound housing.

This particular house was built in 1946 in Wichita KS. It was unusual in that it was round and aluminum instead of brick and wood

and was suspended from a central mast like a sailboat. Several were slated for production, but Fuller wanted to make one more prototype before actual production began. For reasons too detailed to explain in a brief article, the deal fell through. Thus, the Dymaxion House was sold to one of the company's investors for one dollar.

Mr. Graham, the new owner, originally bought the house for a "party house." However, his children loved the house so much, the family actually lived in it for several years.



Dymaxion House Model Drawing designed by B. Buckminster Fuller

Delimitation: Jeffrey C. Bourke,
BA for Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village, Dearborn MI.

Throughout this time, the Grahams' altered the house to suit their needs. Mr. Graham tarred many areas of the house to keep it from leaking, painted much of the aluminum, and used

different pieces of the house to make changes in the original structure. Keeping all of this in mind, we knew we were in for an interesting summer. We knew we would among the first people to examine literally all the pieces of the house as it lay in piles in the Henry Ford Museum.

We spent most of our time trying to figure out what certain parts were for, often right down to where certain bolts fit, or how certain systems were designed to work. To further complicate matters, many parts, such as bolts and splice plates were military issue and much of the metal was aircraft aluminum left over from the war effort. In addition to identifying and cataloging the various parts of the house, we became very familiar with the many forms of metal corrosion that occurs when an unusual house sits outside for over 20 years. (Continued on page 3)

Ypsilanti Museum Update

by Kirsten Merriman

Housed in an 1860 Italianate home, the Ypsilanti Historical Museum is at 220 North Huron Street. The museum is home to the city archives and an extensive collection of artifacts, making it a valuable research asset for EMU students.

Preservation Eastern's partnership with the museum began Winter Semester 1995. Kevin Walker, then Ypsilanti Community Development Grants Coordinator, made a presentation to members of Preservation Eastern (PE) regarding the Museum's needs and a possible partnership with the PE.

The partnership began informally with the rehabilitation of the "Tool Room," a small display room on the second floor. This year PE hopes to provide interpretive signage for the room.

In Fall 1995, PE formalized the partnership in a proposal submitted to and accepted by the Ypsilanti Historical Board, the museum's governing body. Since then, PE has worked on many aspects of the proposal including facilitating a feasibility study regarding building maintenance and small hands on projects.

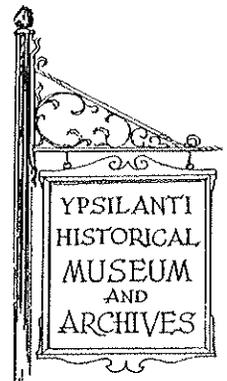
We are currently focusing activities through three committees, the Landscape, Interpretation/Collections, and Planning committees. However, this should not limit any other interested involvement.

Amy Arnold is working with a small group to research, develop, and potentially install a 1860s historic landscape for this Italianate house.

If you are interested in participating in any part of this project, contact Amy at (313) 677-7716.

Tracey Miller is the chairperson of the Interpretation/Collections Committee and currently has several projects going on at the museum. If you are interested in working with collections or educational outreach at the museum, Tracey can be reached at (313) 971-7008.

Preservation Eastern is working in conjunction with the Ypsilanti Historical Society on developing a master plan for the museum that will take it into the 21st century. If you would like to take part in the planning process, call Kirsten Merriman at (313) 484-6884.



Smithsonian Officials to Visit EMU

by Janna Baron

Friday, Nov. 1, 1996, Smithsonian art conservationists Sun Tsang, Mel Wachowiak and Don Williams will lecture on furniture, textile and painting preservation at Sponberg Theater on the campus of EMU. A reception will follow. Students and faculty are welcome to attend.

Preceding the lecture, the officials will make a morning site visit for materials testing to the Ypsilanti Historical Museum with members of the Historic Preservation Program and Preservation Eastern. Contact Prof. Ted Ligibel at (313) 487-1849.

(Continued from page 1)

We didn't get to do much with the house other than that. However, we did get a brief introduction to solvents to see what best removes stuck-on tar from really old aircraft aluminum. Many of us had "Dymaxion nightmares" because the project so took over our lives this summer.

Finally, at the end of the summer, we interns had to give a presentation to the museum staff. We basically had to tell the staff how much we "enjoyed" our summer and how much we learned about the house. My part was particularly interesting because I spoke on why the house should be actively restored, an idea that is accepted by only some of the museum staff. As one person recently told me, "You either love the house passionately or you really hate it and wish it would just go away."

As Dymaxion interns, we also had many unique experiences outside the Dymaxion enclosure. Our boss took us on a behind-the-scenes tour of all the historic buildings at the Village and took us to see parts of various houses that the visitor doesn't normally get to see. He also made sure we each spent time in other departments learning about other things in the museum that interested us and encouraged us to attend staff meetings around the museum. Outside of the Village, he took us to many ethnic restaurants and several group adventures to Target and Duke's Hardware.

Overall, my experience with Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village was of great benefit to my education in historic preservation. I now feel that Buckminster Fuller's ideas about conservation of energy and building materials will inspire me throughout my career.

White Pines Internship in the Adirondacks

by Marla Overhiser

Canoeing, wilderness hikes, mountain-climbing, breathtaking views, lakes without motorized boats, building campfires and touring a unique area of our country... I experienced all of this and much more this summer. Did I mention that I also had a job? I was an intern at White Pine Camp near Saranac Lake, New York in the Adirondacks.

I performed many roles at the camp, a collection of 15 architecturally unique buildings which served as a private summer home for the wealthy elite. The camp began in 1907 and later alterations and building were designed by Addison Mizner in 1911. The camp's most significant resident was President Calvin Coolidge who moved his White House staff to the camp for the summer of 1926.

My duties included acting as the interpreter, orienting visitors to the site at the entrance to the property, and performing hands-on restoration projects. I did a great deal of carpentry, color-matching of stained, dyed and painted finishes, and general care and maintenance of the buildings. The waterfront area featured two boat houses, an indoor bowling alley and a Japanese tea house (designed by Mizner) which was positioned on a small island reachable by a stone, arched bridge.

I welcomed the opportunity to return to the Adirondacks where I went every summer as a child to visit my grandparents. I was pleased to take an active role in the preservation of this incredible 18 acre property and its remaining structures. White Pine Camp opened only last summer for tours and is one of only three such "Adirondack great camps" open to the public.

Director's Column

Greetings! Fall term has gotten off to a great start with a fantastic orientation at historic Pease Auditorium. I'd like to thank students and faculty as well as alumni Dale Tomasi, Beth Stewart and Lisa Lussier for their participation. We have 25 new students this year who bring new energies to Preservation Eastern's (PE) activities. The Detroit Initiative has been revitalized with the appointment of new students, Genell Scheurell and Michele Goldstein as co-chairs. If you are interested in this initiative, please contact Genell at (313) 455-8976 or Michele at (810) 594-9357. The partnership between Preservation Eastern and the Ypsilanti Historical Society continues to strengthen and provide opportunities for students. For more details, see the update on page 2.

With so many students and classes this fall, it's been difficult to select a convenient meeting time. Currently PE meetings are at 5:30 PM on the first and third Mondays of the month in 205 Strong Hall. If you can't make this time and are interested in being involved in activities or are curious as to a meeting's content, I can be contacted at (313) 484-6884. PE is one of many parties contributing to the Reception for EMU's Historic Preservation Program at the 50th National Trust Conference in Chicago. For details, see page 7. I hope to see many of you there!

Yours truly,



Kirsten A. Merriman

INTERNING AT FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT'S "TALIESIN"

By Rhonda L. Deeg

From June to August 1996, I was fortunate to intern with the staff of the Taliesin Preservation Commission in Spring Green WI. Taliesin and the other structures on the property was a bustling community of fellowship members, Hillside instructors, student apprentices, architects, summer tour groups, film producers, educational groups, international visitors to name a few. These day-to-day activities were no hindrance to the ongoing work at the preservation offices.

The office staff spent many hours this summer documenting photographs, taking field measurements, completing room descriptions, conducting room condition assessments and surveying past apprentices who had studied at or visited Taliesin. The preservation building crew spent most of the summer, along with day-to-day regular maintenance projects, completing restoration work on Mrs. Wright's bedroom and remodeling the dorm and bathroom areas of Hillside. The major project that I was helped with was the development and data entry of the Historic Structures Report for Taliesin. Many hours were spent photographing rooms and completing room description forms which were then entered into a main database. Comparable hours were spent in transferring current site measurements taken from field notes and finally to computer aided drawings. Projects such as re-roofing a portion of the Taliesin roof and the underpinning of a concrete wall at Hillside School were experienced on a hands-on level. Workshops conducted by local Fellowship members and staff employees were attended to gain more knowledge of Mr. Wright's building structures and his philosophy behind them.

I thank all the Preservation staff members, and the Fellowship members for giving me this opportunity that will continue to enrich my life and my love for Frank Lloyd Wright and his architecture.

**Second Annual African American
Conference Symposium**
Report from Kristine Kidorf Environmental
Review Coordinator Michigan SHPO

by Wendy Winslow

A wide variety religious leaders, business people, and preservationists took part in the Second Annual African American Preservation Conference in Detroit, held September 26-28, 1996.

Among the topics discussed were the importance of the National Register nominations of significant local neighborhoods. Some of the significant neighborhoods, though originally built by non-African Americans, are considered a source of pride and held to a viable source of Detroit's architectural history.

Another important topic addressed at the conference was faith-based leadership. The Church of the Messiah is working with the community to provide low-cost cooperative housing in Detroit. The church has just built compatible infill architecture for its property on East Grand Boulevard, a potential National Register district. (In fill is when there's a vacant lot and new housing is built.)

The neighborhood of Ravendale has fought back, fortifying their neighborhood against crime, thanks in part to a dynamic individual, Toni McIlwain. Block clubs and individual residents have come together and rented office space in a neighborhood church to help organize to order to fight against crime.

The conference was a success despite low attendance compared to 1995. Several issues regarding neighborhood preservation, community revitalization, and private/public partnerships were discussed.

Editor's Notes

I'd like to take a moment to thank a few people for their help during this period of transition for the newsletter. We have been re-working and re-designing the newsletter, and it could not have been done without them.

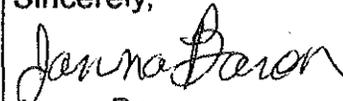
First, I would like to thank Cindy Marshal, manager of the EMU Barnes and Noble Bookstore for donating PageMaker 6.0 to Preservation Eastern.

Greg Revlu was an enormous help guiding me through PageMaker 6.0 and in setting up the newsletter's template. Thank you, Greg!

Thanks are also in order for **EMU Student Government** for covering printing costs this semester.

Finally, I extend thanks to Kirsten Merriman and Neva Baron for all their patience and advice.

Sincerely,



Janna Baron
Editor

Preservation Eastern Officers
Kirsten Merriman, Director
Rob Berg, Activities Director
Tracey Miller, Treasurer
Susan Rothstein, Public
Relations
Janna Baron, Newsletter Editor

**The Irish Hills
Michigan's Own Route 66**

by Rob Burg

Most of us are familiar with Route 66. Many know about the Lincoln Highway. Did you know that in Michigan, the world automobile capital, we have our very own historic highway? This road is U.S. 12 and it passes right through Ypsilanti on Michigan Avenue, but to see the road preserved at its best, you need to travel west about thirty-five miles to the Irish Hills.

The Irish Hills is an area consisting of rolling hills and lakes that have been popular tourist attractions for many years. Native American traveled throughout the area between what became the cities of Detroit and Chicago. The U.S. Army had a military road built along the former Indian trail and this road, known as the Chicago Pike became the favored route of travel from Detroit for the new residents of Michigan.

America saw a tremendous migration of Irish immigrants in the mid 1800s due to the potato blight in Ireland. Many of these immigrants looked toward the rolling hills northwestern Lenawee County as a reminder of their native land. Today, there is still evidence of the Irish settlers in their descendants who still live in the area and in the place names of roads and lakes.

When the automobile became a popular mode of transportation, the Irish Hills breathed new life. Highway U.S. 12 was designed along the Chicago Pike in the 1920s. This brought many travelers through the area. Many tourist cabins and campgrounds were built, roadside restaurants and diners opened, and several tourist attractions were begun, all to meet the demands of these new motorized tourists. Some of these sites, like the Walker Tavern c.1830, were historic sites specifically developed for tourism. Over the years, more sites such as the Irish Hills Tower, Prehistoric

Stagecoach Stop U.S.A. and several miniature golf sites were opened.

This region is an important cultural landscape of the twentieth century that contains many well preserved farm sites from the nineteenth century. The popularity of heritage corridors is on the rise in our country, and Michigan has a perfect model along the old Chicago Road. The region contains several hundred years of history; from the Native American culture to French and English colonizations as well as the settlement of the area and the automobile. Few other roads in the U.S. have as much history as Route 12.

Waterloo Area Farm Museum Internship

by Rick Finch

This spring I interned at the Waterloo Area Farm Museum as Living History Program coordinator and assistant curator.

The Living History Program brings elementary school children to the museum. This spring, 850 children from nine schools experienced the program. As Program coordinator, my responsibilities included making up the guides schedule, collecting fees, running the gift shop, and creating a living history session in which I portrayed a farmer's son from the 1800s.

As assistant curator, I continued an ongoing project of photographing, researching, and documenting artifacts including quilts and period clothing.

In addition, I had the opportunity to research and set up a Victorian Wedding exhibit at the Museum, which ran the month of August. A six page booklet was included in the project. To kick off the exhibit, I coordinated a Civil War wedding re-enactment that drew about 140 visitors.

I would like to thank Agnes Dikeman and the Waterloo Area Historical Society Board of Directors for giving me such a great learning experience. I recommend this (paid) internship to anyone with an interest in living history and working with small museums.

*You Are Invited
to the first
Reunion and Reception
of the
Historic Preservation Program of Eastern Michigan University*

*Wednesday October 16, 1996 from 5 to 6:30 pm
Trader Vic's Luau Room, lower level of the Palmer House
at the 50th Annual National Trust Conference in Chicago.*

UPCOMING EVENTS

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Fall Seminar:
*Preserving More for Less and Skills for Effective Historic
District Commissions Training.* October 25-26 at the Michigan
Historical Center Forum, 717 West Allegan Street, Lansing MI.
For further details, contact the SHPO at (517) 363-1630.

Pioneer America Society: Annual Meeting. November 7-9, 1996
in Austin, TX. Two concurrent sessions and a tour of Austin's
multi-cultural area. For information contact Terry Jordan or
Jennifer Helzer at the Dept. of Geography, University of Texas
at Austin, Austin TX 78712-1098. Phone: (512) 471-0748.
Fax: (512) 471-5049. E-mail: tgjordan@utexas.edu.

Michigan Historic Preservation Network: 17th Annual Conference
The Best of Preservation in Michigan. April 11-12, 1997 in
Bay City, MI. For details, write the Michigan Historic
Preservation Network at PO Box 398, Clarkston MI 48347.

Membership Counts! Join Preservation Eastern.

Why join Preservation Eastern? Well, it's the best way to keep up on historic preservation activities both within the department and throughout the area. Dues are only \$10 annually and your membership and involvement will insure future growth and success in the organization. For more information, contact Kirsten Merriman or any other Preservation Eastern officer.

Name _____ Date _____
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Phone Number _____ E-mail _____
Program of Study _____

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