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Preservation Eastern Newsletter, August 1997

Preservation Eastern

Eastern Michigan University

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Editorial: Preserving the Hudson's Building for a New Detroit
by Janna Baron (Outgoing Editor)

The Hudson's Building in downtown Detroit is vital to the city's rebirth as a world class city. I make such a statement not only as a preservationist but as an individual who believes that a downtown district, especially one in a city experiencing a new life, needs to be a living, breathing place 24 hours a day. Detroit needs to be a city where people live, work and play not just a place where people come only for some portion of the day to work, attend a show or athletic event or, in the near future, to go to a casino, and then return to suburban homes and hotels.

Tourists can go to the suburbs anytime and anywhere a city is, but they can't experience the unique flavor and texture of Detroit anytime. If the reborn Detroit is all brand-new and service oriented towards visitors who come and go, what sort of flavor and texture will the city have? I fear it would be one of sterile newness without a sense or appreciation of heritage and history.

A key element to renewing the flavor and texture of Detroit is rehabilitating the Hudson's Building. Though the building's former life as a department store is, without a doubt, important to its own heritage and the heritage of the people of Detroit, I am not advocating that it be returned to its original use. Those of us opposed to its demolition acknowledge and accept that it is no longer needed for its original purpose. However, the building could be revitalized, readapted and reused for a variety of purposes in its second life. It has space for retail outlets and loft apartments. There is existing parking, including space for truck traffic and loading docks. Space could even be readapted for a casino. The point is there is a great deal of usable space!

As Shawn Santo (an organizer to retain Hudson's and publisher of the Left Bank magazine) pointed out at a recent town meeting-style hearing sponsored by Detroit City Council President Maryan Mahaffey, the building is very marketable. There is a demand for housing in the city; people want to live in Detroit. In addition, there is a need for a vital urban experience in the immediate area, without traveling to Chicago, Toronto or New York City. The Hudson's Building and downtown have the potential to provide that experience.

As Ms. Santo pointed out, reusing and redeveloping the Hudson's Building can attract both a younger generation and those who remember it as a department store.

For downtown to be successful, it needs density in population. If there is density in population, essential businesses will be attracted to the area, creating a retail environment. Population density and retail outlets in close proximity will create a sense of community shared by residents, business people and customers who care about downtown. In short, population density + retail establishments + community = a VIBRANT, LIVING DETROIT! (Continued page 6.)

The Museum of African-American History
by Mark St. John

During Fall Semester 1996, Nancy Bryk's Museology class visited the site of the Museum of African-American History (MAAH). Though the museum's inception was in 1965, a completely new, state of the art home for the museum was being built. The new museum opened in April 1997 and this author recently had the privilege of visiting it.

The mission of the Museum of African-American History's is to "provide a nurturing environment for the celebration of African-American achievement in arts, sciences, literature, politics, labor and philosophy." The MAAH is in fact more than a museum; it is also a teaching and learning center, with rooms available for education, a library/resource center, and plans for seminars and conferences in the future. There is a very nice theatre there playing films relevant to the topic of the African American experience (the film I saw was the American Experience from PBS, on the topic of the Underground RR). (continued, page 2)
1997 ORIENTATION ANNNOUNCED

by Janna Baron

The 1997 Orientation for EMU's Historic Preservation Program will be held September 3, 1997 on campus at Pease Auditorium from 9 AM to 3:15 PM. The schedule of events is detailed below.

From 9 to 9:30 AM, orientation goers will have the opportunity to meet and mingle. Information packets for new students as well as e-mail and parking registration forms will be available. Refreshments will be served.

Geography and Geology Department Chair Dr. Drew Nazarro will present opening remarks from 9:30 to 10 AM. Following Dr. Nazarro, Preservation Eastern Director Neva Baron will give a run-down of the day's events and introduce keynote speaker Janet L. Kreger.

Kreger, a former instructor at the Historic Preservation Program and architectural historian, will speak to the Orientation from 10:15 to 11 AM.

During the break from 11 to 11:15 AM orders for lunch at Tower Inn will be taken.

From 11:15 AM to 12:15 PM, the three concentrations of the Historic Preservation Program will be outlined by faculty members. Dr. Gabe Cherem will overview the Heritage Interpretation track. Dr. Ted Ligibel will discuss Preservation Planning. Dr. Marshall McLennan, Program Director, will outline the Historic Administration concentration.

Lunch will be from 12:15 to 1:30 PM. You are welcome to dine at the Tower Inn, located right across the street from campus. Fast food outlets are available on campus at McKenny Union.

The orientation group will return to Pease Auditorium after lunch. PE Director Neva Baron will discuss Preservation Eastern activities until 1:45 PM. From 1:45 to 2 PM, a member of PE's Detroit Initiative will discuss internships in the city.

PE Treasurer Phil Smith will lead a walking tour of campus from 2 to 2:30 PM. The location of campus facilities such as the Graduate School and Library will be highlighted.

Dr. McLennan will wrap up the Orientation and discuss the program's "nuts and bolts" from 2:30 to 3:15 PM.

Preservation Eastern, the student arm of EMU's Historic Preservation Program invites all incoming students as well as returning students and faculty to Orientation.

(MAAH from 1)The museum more than fulfills its mission; it gives the African-American community, and for that matter, all American communities, a sense of the great richness and depth of involvement the African-American community has had in shaping the generalized U.S. culture-which heretofore has been suppressed or simply ignored. This perhaps is the greatest gift of the MAAH.

The building is essentially in the shape of a dome, with wings. The dome is said to be representative of the most common African building style, and also a symbol of the "whole"-very important to many African worldviews. The dome itself is glass and reflective metal, giving a very light interior space. It is festooned with African flags, as well as the flags of countries where Africans travelled (very often under force), and now live.

Thematically, the museum really has three components: Of the People-the experience of the African-American in America, including slavery and the rise from enslavement-this was the main or center gallery; One Continent, Many Worlds, about the rich diversity of culture on the African Continent (this had two galleries); and a temporary (I believe) exhibit in the entry area about the ecology of Africa.

Of the People is the centerpiece exhibit gallery. It shows the struggle of spirit in the African American experience since "The Crime"-African enslavement-began five centuries ago. Eight stations tell the stories of the enslavement, the emancipation, and the struggle for equality since freedom. There is in this gallery a piece of particularly moving history-the full-sized hold of a slave ship, carrying its human cargo into bondage (or death.) Local youths were used as casts for the shackled figures to make a link between the past and the present. It also made for a profoundly disturbing picture-I was very moved, and I saw at least one person quietly weeping. No one I saw failed to stop and stare at this miscarriage of human dignity.(see page 3)
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One Continent, Many Worlds, is about the rich cultures of the many peoples of Africa. One of the great, sad legacies of the African-American experience is that of being cut off from their old world cultural antecedents. This exhibit had objects and traditions from the past on display, as well as films and displays about the modern societies of Africa. A portrait of several cities, including Dakar, Senegal, Benin, and Nigeria, gave very in-depth and fascinating views of modern Africa, which still fosters many links to its past.

As of this writing, this author has been experiencing a protracted life on crutches. In a sense it has been an opportunity to learn not to take one’s mobility for granted. With this stressor on me, I decided to take note of how the differently-abled museum guest would get around. This incidentally, is something every person in the historic preservation/museum field should be acutely aware of, as the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act, is a very powerful law affecting public buildings.)

Though the law can grandfather some historic structures into legal non-compliance with the ADA, remember that this community will have no reason whatsoever to support your endeavors if they cannot use them. Modern structures will have no choice, anyway. It is likely in the future that greater compliance will be the norm.

Getting off my soapbox, the MAAH was constructed to be very accessible for the mobility challenged individual. Long accessibility ramps brought one to the front doors, although assistance will be required to open them—they are quite large and heavy. Elevators are conveniently located to take you to the exhibit areas, bathrooms are friendly, and were the museum not so crowded, all of the exhibits easily viewed. The exhibits were placed so one could see them from a wheelchair, and created with enough floor space to move said chair into position to see them. The problem for this Saturday was a very large mass of humanity made mobility space a premium commodity. I strongly suggest the differently-abled person visit on a weekday.

The only real caution I have about the MAAH is the sheer breadth of the emotional and cultural legacy presented. There is a great deal of information here to contemplate and be moved by. By the same measure, I also realize that this cannot be avoided, because of this legacy’s tremendous scope. The best solution is to return to contemplate the exhibits in sections, and then continue to ponder—which, in the author’s estimation, is the purpose of the museum. (continued page 6)

P.E. Art Contest
Winners Announced

by Janna Baron

Winners of the 1997 Preservation Eastern (PE) Art Contest are EMU alumnus J. Ryan of Ann Arbor (Grand Prize); Historic Preservation Graduate student Wendy Winslow (First and Second prizes); and PE member Ron Overhiser (Third Prize).

Grand Prize winner Ryan was awarded $100, a $50 gift certificate from Graphic Art Wholesalers and a PE sweatshirt. Winslow, recipient of First and Second prizes, received gift certificates totaling $75 from the EMU Bookstore and two PE t-shirts. Third Prize winner Overhiser received a $20 gift certificate from Art Attack and a PE t-shirt.

PE sought artistic works that represented, embodied or related the architecture, history, details, essence or spirit of campus buildings.

Submissions were judged on April 8, 1997 in the Regents’ Room at EMU’s historic Welch Hall during the Art Contest Reception. Contest judges were EMU Assistant Vice President Jim Vick, Geography and Geology Department Chair Drew Nazarro, Historic Preservation Program Director Dr. Marshall McLennan, and current Preservation Eastern Director Neva Baron.

Art submitted to the contest is on exhibit in Strong Hall across from the Geography and Geology Department offices until mid-October 1997. The exhibit was currated by alumnus and 1996-97 PE Director Kirsten Merriman and Historic Preservation graduate student and PE member Janna Baron.

Preservation Eastern grateful thanks the following organizations for their support and donations to the Art Contest: EMU Student Government Association, EMU Historic Preservation Program, EMU Bookstore, EMU Office of the Provost, EMU Office of Community Relations, Graphic Art Wholesalers, Art Attack, Great Harvest, Meijer (Carpenter Rd. store) and the members of Preservation Eastern.
**Director's Column**

We have much to be proud of as an organization. Preservation Eastern is the Student Government Association's Student Organization of the Year. During the Winter Semester, PE actively promoted EMU's unique architectural history with our First Annual Art Contest. I want to thank everyone involved in this endeavor. You know who you are! The judging and reception took place in the Regents’ Room in Welch Hall (see page 3).

Our next art contest will take place this November. Susan McBride and I are already mobilizing PE for action. Arts and Sciences Dean Barry Fish and Ypsilanti Mayor Cheryl Farmer will be two of five judges on the panel. For more information contact Susan at (810) 545-0312.

Heather Rinne and Phil Smith are currently working on the Speakers Series for this fall. Speakers will present on the second and/or fourth weeks of any given month.

Heather and I would like to thank all of you that have volunteered to become mentors for new students into our graduate program. Each of you will soon be receiving a name, address and telephone number of your new mentee. Mentoring is a valuable experience for all of us.

In addition, through the Detroit Initiative, PE has been able to place a number of students in internships in the city. Diane Jones (an alumna) at Zachary and Associates has been instrumental in fostering relationships with members of the Detroit-area historic preservation community.

Through much hard work, PE has fostered an on-going, working partnership in the adoption of a five year master plan (1997-2001) with the Ypsilanti Historical Museum (YHM). Our joint PE - YHM committee can be very proud of their efforts.

For the second year in a row, Fall Orientation for new students will take place in Pease Auditorium on Wednesday, September 3, beginning at 9 AM. A committee is currently preparing so that this year's orientation is a success.

Remember, PE meetings for the 1997 Fall Semester are on the first and third Mondays of the month at 5:30 PM in Strong Hall. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend. If you have the desire to be active with PE, but are unable to attend the meetings, please contact me at (313) 480-3688.

By continuing to work together we have much to offer both the University and Southeastern Michigan historic preservation communities.

Yours Truly,

Neva K. Baron

Neva K. Baron (left) and 1996-97 Director Kirsten Merriman (right) at the Spring Semester picnic
The Hudson's Building
What is its Fate?

The Greater Downtown Partnership and the Downtown Development Authority have made a recommendation that the building be scheduled for demolition within the year. After all, it's just another old building that has no value to anyone.

If the Hudson's Building has value to you, let your voice be heard, call the Mayor, the City Council and the Downtown Partnership. Let them know that this building is a valuable Detroit asset and can be incorporated into an integrated development plan that includes retail, residential, downtown parking and entertainment.

- 15-20 million dollars of taxpayers money will be wasted if the building is demolished. All for private development interests.

- If rehabilitation of the building does not occur, the City will lose the opportunity to use the 20% federal historic tax credit that is available for restoration projects.

- As a part of a residential development, the building could qualify for significant low income investor tax credits.

- Under a demolition proposal the City could lose up to $380,000 per year in lost property taxes.

Two credible out-of-state developers have voiced interest in the building and have been turned away by the Partnership. WHY?

If you are interested in helping please call (313) 234-9061 or write to the:

Hudson’s Redevelopment Committee
P.O. Box 43014
Detroit, MI 48243
write & request the mayor to call for a national RFP
request for proposal
for adaptive reuse
of the Hudson’s building
so potential qualified developers
can lay their plans on the table

qualified reputable national developers
(i.e. randy alexander, of madison wi.,
(608.258.5590)
arold schwartzngger’s denver development group
(303.829.9363 ) & others...) are ready and waiting to submit
economically feasible adaptive reuse proposals
if the mayor is willing to be supportive

write city council members

to voice your opinion
the support of only 3 more council members is needed

write a letter to the media-
to help generate more media concern on this issue

Mayor Dennis Archer
1126 CITY-COUNTY BUILDING
DETROIT MI 48226
PHONE:313.224.3400
FAX:313.224.4433

Clyde Cleveland
1340 CITY-COUNCIL BLDG.
DETROIT MI 48226
PHONE:224.4530
FAX:313.224.2011

Sheila Cockriel
1340 CITY-COUNCIL BLDG.
DETROIT MI 48226
PHONE:224.1337
FAX:313.224.0369

Kay Everett
1340 CITY-COUNCIL BLDG.
DETROIT MI 48226
PHONE:224.1337
FAX:313.224.1684

Gill Hill
1340 CITY-COUNCIL BLDG.
DETROIT MI 48226
PHONE:224.1245
FAX:313.224.4095

Nicholas Hood III
1340 CITY-COUNCIL BLDG.
DETROIT MI 48226
PHONE:224.1298
FAX:313.224.0372

Maryann Mahaffey,
President
1340 CITY-COUNCIL BLDG.
DETROIT MI 48226
PHONE:224.4545
FAX:313.963.5741

Mel Ravitz
1340 CITY-COUNCIL BLDG.
DETROIT MI 48226
PHONE:224.4505
FAX:313.224.0367

Brenda Scott
1340 CITY-COUNCIL BLDG.
DETROIT MI 48226
PHONE:313.224.4535
FAX:224.1527

Alberta Tinsley-Williams
1340 CITY-COUNCIL BLDG.
DETROIT MI 48226
PHONE:313.224.1645
FAX:313.224.1787
Dear Mayor Archer:

I would like to commend you on your leadership and commitment to move Detroit into the 21st century. Yet Mr. Mayor, I must let you know that the demolition of the Hudson’s building is not in the best interest of the City of Detroit at this time. This building can be the key to the creation of a significant twenty-four hour residential district, in addition to Capitol Park and Park Avenue.

I understand that there are two very strong proposals that address the adaptive reuse of the building in an integrated development plan that provides residential, retail and downtown parking as components. If the economics work, adaptive reuse seems to be a much better alternative than demolition, wouldn’t you say? It also appears that the demand for downtown loft type residence is at an all time high. At no time since the closing of the building does redevelopment make more economic sense.

Please request of the parties assigned this responsibility that they consider an adaptive reuse proposal and/or they provide an economic development comparisons worksheet that clearly states the difference in cost of demolition vs. redevelopment. Mr. Mayor, the Hudson’s building is but one of the many buildings in the City’s inventory of downtown assets that can be developed to enhance Detroit as a livable city.

Sincerely,
Thank you!

Preservation Eastern acknowledges and thanks the following organizations for supporting the Art Contest:

EMU Student Government Association

EMU Historic Preservation Program

EMU Bookstore

EMU Office of the Provost

EMU Office of Community Relations

Graphic Art Wholesalers

Art Attack

Great Harvest

Meijer

Preservation Eastern Membership

Congratulations
Art Contest Winners!

Grand Prize
J. Ryan

First & Second Prizes
Wendy Winslow

Third Prize
Ron Overhisler

Preservation Eastern Officers 1997-98
Neva K. Baron, Director
Heather Rinne, Assistant Director
Phil Smith, Treasurer
Susan McBride, Public Relations Officer
Janna Baron, Outgoing Newsletter Editor
Jan Bellamy, Incoming Newsletter Editor

Photography Credits
Page 1...Neva K. Baron
Page 4...Janna Baron
A Reminder from the Treasurer: Renew Your PE Membership!
by Phil Smith

The start of the Fall Semester finds us at the beginning of another year of student projects associated with Preservation Eastern. We would like to have membership renewals sent in by Sept. 3 so that we can start planning our budget for the coming year. By noting change of addresses on your membership renewals we can keep track of how to contact you.

Did you realize that your organization, Preservation Eastern, was voted the Number One Student Organization of 1996-97 by student government? Don’t miss out on any of the exciting plans scheduled for 1997-98!

Please take a moment and mail in the membership form found on the back of this and every edition of the Preservation Eastern Newsletter. Your $10 helps with the speaker series, art contest and other programs. Join now, come to the meetings and see for yourself how you can help decide preservation issues.

Homecoming Parade Float?
by Phil Smith

We are interested in learning if there are enough preservation students and PE members who would like to see Preservation Eastern enter a float in the 1997 Homecoming parade on Saturday morning, Oct. 4. Work on the float would need to begin as soon as the semester begins.

Homecoming does coincide with the Pioneer America Society (P.A.S.) conference, which our Historic Preservation Program is hosting in Dearborn. However, work on the float can be completed before that weekend. Those students who do not plan to attend the P.A.S. tour on Saturday would be able to ride in the parade.

If you are interested in working on the float, please contact Phil Smith at (810) 231-1178 so that initial plans can be made and announced at Orientation.

(from page 3) If a guest takes only one thing home from the MAAH, then it would have to be a deeper understanding of the complex and important role the African-American experience has played in overall U.S. society. Though much of this legacy is somber and very sobering, it is at the same time very hopeful and forward looking. It is a very eye-opening museum, with much to teach everyone who visits. One who has the ability to ponder will want to return to do so.

The Museum of African-American History is open Tuesday - Sunday, 9:30 AM to 5 PM. It is located at 315 E. Warren in Detroit’s Cultural Center. (The nearest cross street is John R.) Admission is $3 for adults and $2 for children. Parking is easily accessible, but not free.

(Hudson’s from pg. 1) Retaining the Hudson’s Building is key to the process. Demolishing the building, especially without an established plan for redeveloping the site, accomplishes little. Demolition will cost Detroit at least $15 million. Those dollars could be used for many other purposes that would not rob Detroiters of their heritage.

As a recent Metro Times article illustrated, there are groups with excellent financial backing interested in redeveloping Hudson’s, yet the Greater Downtown Partnership (GDP) will not speak with any group in preserving the structure in any way. The GDP’s plan is demolition, whether or not there is a buyer for the site.

Yes, historic preservation is one of several issues. However, in this instance, preservation of a single building for historical reasons is not the main issue. The main issue is retaining the building for the specific purpose of revitalizing and creating a world class Detroit. I admit this building is not the city’s last or only hope for revitalization (or preservation and adaptive reuse) but giving the Hudson’s Building new life can be one more tool that helps give Detroit new life.

There is talk that Hudson’s may be demolished before Labor Day. I urge you to write to the addresses found on the Newsletter’s insert.
UPCOMING EVENTS


The conference will feature eight presentation sessions about the North America’s cultural landscape and material culture. A day-long field trip featuring the Old Chicago Road and the Irish Hills is planned for Saturday.

For complete conference details, contact Dr. McLennan or Dr. Ligibel by mail at Historic Preservation Program, Dept. of Geography and Geology, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI 48197; by phone at (313)487-0218; and by fax at (313)487-6979.

For Pioneer America Society membership information, contact Glen Harper by mail at Ohio Historic Preservation Office, Dept. of History, 4th Floor, Millet Hall, Wright State University, Dayton, OH 45435; by phone at (937)775-2815; and by e-mail at gharper@corvus.wright.edu.

National Trust for Historic Preservation Conference The 51st National Preservation Conference will be October 14-19 in Santa Fe, NM. This year’s focus is People and Places: Living in Cultural Landscapes. Over 40 educational sessions as well as an increased number of field sessions will be featured. September 30, 1997 is the deadline for hotel conference reservation rates. For more information call (800)944-6847 or e-mail santafe_npc@nthp.org. For a registration form or hotel reservation information by fax, send a fax to (800)755-4023.

Time Traveling in Southern Michigan: The Sauk-U.S. 12 Heritage Route

by Rob Burg ('97 alumnus)

Although the auto culture is very evident along U.S. 12, it is not the only cultural landscape along this historic highway. From Detroit to New Buffalo Township, where it enters Indiana, along Lake Michigan, U.S. 12 winds for 203 miles through rural, suburban and urban landscapes rich in the cultural heritage of Michigan. It is these cultural heritages that will be preserved and interpreted by the Sauk Trail-U.S. 12 Heritage Route.

The heritage route is in the process of being nominated to the Michigan Department of Transportation as an officially designated Michigan Heritage Route. The nomination is spearheaded by two Washtenaw County women: alumna Gladys Saborio of Saline and Joanne Rasmussen of Bridgewater Township. These two women understand the importance of U.S. 12 in the development of Michigan as a state and believe it needs to be preserved.

Not only is the auto culture evident, but the road is traced back to its days as the second federally funded road in the U.S. in 1825 (after the National Road), and to its history as the Sauk Trail - the main Native American trail between what are now Detroit and Chicago. There is even evidence of prehistoric use by mammals, such as the Mastodon trail in Saline Township. Saborio and Rasmussen want to preserve these and other stories along the road.

To assist their efforts, the Winter Semester 97 Historic Preservation and Tourism class undertook a project to develop tourism initiatives for Washtenaw and Lenawee counties’ portion of the road. The class worked in teams to look at various portions of the road including Ypsilanti and Ypsilanti Township; Pittsfield and Saline townships and the city of Saline; Clinton and Clinton Township; and Franklin, Cambridge and Woodstock townships. The teams looked at the potential tourism of the road based on features such as history, architecture, recreation, agriculture, and geology. On April 21, 1997, the class presented its findings to Saborio, Rasmussen and other interested parties.

U.S. 12 is not unique, but it is among several U.S. highways that are preserving the different heritages of the country that have become endangered since the Interstates opened. It is not as famous as Route 66, the Lincoln Highway (U.S. 30), or the National Road (U.S. 40), but it is just as important in tracing the development of the U.S. The entire route of U.S. 12 is Detroit to Aberdeen, Washington, but the oldest stretch of federal road is Detroit to Chicago. This section was surveyed and built from 1825 through the 1830s.

This project is an example of the expanding role of historic preservation. Not long ago, historic preservation was thought of as only preserving historic architecture. It is now much more diverse: the preservation of a cultural heritage, the historic landscape, and more. The Sauk Trail-U.S. 12 Heritage Route, now under development, and others like it, are leading the way in a new era of historic preservation.
Membership Counts! Join Preservation Eastern.

Why join Preservation Eastern? Well, it’s the best way to keep up on historic preservation activities 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 Neva K. Baron or any other Preservation Eastern officer.

Name __________________________ Date __________________________
Address ______________________________________________________
Phone Number ___________ E-mail ________________________________
Program of Study ______________________________________________

Mail this application and your $10 check to Preservation Eastern, EMU Department of Geography and Geology, Historic Preservation Program, Strong Hall, Ypsilanti MI 48197.

Preservation Eastern
EMU Department of Geography and Geology
Historic Preservation Program
Strong Hall
Ypsilanti MI 48197