



# OLD FOURTH WARD NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION (OFWA) NEWSLETTER

## *Spring 2023*

**SPRING MEETING**, May 2, 2023, 7:00 pm, in the Lounge of St. Andrew's Church, 306 N. Division. Enter through the parking lot. There is an elevator for anyone who avoids stairs. Masks are optional but we are not allowed to provide food or beverages. Our meeting will feature Ryan Pantaleo who will share information about his renovation of 511 E. Ann and his approach to the use of historic properties as income properties, and Doug Selby whose project at 530 N. Division, the Bridge, is designed to meet LEED Platinum certification.

## MINDO CHOCOLATE MAKERS

By Ilene Tyler

Suggesting we feature Mindo Chocolate Makers in our Spring 2023 newsletter led to touring their facility in rural Washtenaw County west of Dexter. Ten of us from the Old Fourth Ward signed up for a 2-hour tour in March. Alicia Meza welcomed us into her main tasting and lecturing room, and briefly introduced her mother and daughter, before jumping into a slide presentation accompanied by many tastes and smells. Much of this information can be found on their web site – <https://mindochocolate.com> – but that does not do justice to the wealth of information gleaned in person.

So, where does Mindo's chocolate come from? It comes from the Mindo Valley in Ecuador, but in truth, their operation is a hybrid of culture, collaboration, innovation, and marketing in both Ecuador and Michigan. The Meza/Wilson family makes their home in both places. Mindo is a small-batch "Bean to Bar" chocolate maker. They are involved in the entire chocolate making process, from hand-picking the cacao pods in Ecuador to hand-wrapping the final product in their retail shop at 204 N. 4th Avenue. In addition, their products are sold online, in dozens of stores around Michigan, and well beyond as news and reviews reach more people.

Mindo contracts with local cacao farmers in Ecuador to harvest the pods and complete the processing up to the point of cacao nibs that are stable for shipping to Michigan. Pods the size of



ALICIA MEZA

## MINDO CHOCOLATE MAKERS Continued



MINDO TOUR GROUP

footballs are gently cut by hand from cacao trees, cut open to reveal the cacao beans covered in an edible sweet pulp. This fruit is open-air fermented in 3 stages for 5 days. The pulp is harvested separately, and the beans are set out to dry for 1-3 weeks, after which they are roasted at 200 degrees F for about 15 minutes. The shells are separated from the beans but saved and ground to make cacao tea, or used as a gardening mulch. The tea, available at Mindo, has the wonderful aroma of chocolate, but with an earthy flavor enriched with potassium, magnesium, and sodium. The fermented, dried, and shelled beans are pounded into nibs that may be further processed in Ecuador but are stable enough to be shipped for finishing in Michigan.



COCOATOWN GRINDER

Cacao butter is processed in Ecuador and shipped with the nibs, or that step is executed in Dexter using stone grinders to conche and grind the nibs for 30-36 hours in a 95°F room. We observed two grinders in operation, the “cocoatown” grinder and a Melanger 20 grinder. These machines aerate the chocolate, developing its smoothness and mellow flavor, to remove the VOC (volatile organic compounds) which are acidic. The conched chocolate is tempered by heating and cooling to create cocoa butter crystals that are separated from the molten, silky chocolate. Cacao butter is remelted at 84°F and combined with chocolate chunks and cane juice organic sugar for various mixes for their bars. The 77% bar is 77% chocolate plus 23% sugar and no added cacao butter, whereas the 67% bar is 67% chocolate plus 33% sugar and cacao butter. The 70% Rustic bar uses crystallized sugar, and the 77% Panela uses coconut sugar. So many variations; so little time!



ITEMS FOR SALE

Mindo also offers classes in chocolate making. As we toured the workspace, we peeked into the grinders and storage rooms, but it was necessary to defer the experience of actual chocolate making until a future visit. For our last stop, we shopped, choosing our favorites from the array offered and departed happy with our chocolate treats.

# CORNWELL MANSION ONCE HOUSED A SYNAGOGUE

By Susan Wineberg



**538 N. DIVISION**

Right next door to Doug Selby's future-forward project at 530 N. Division towers the Henry Cornwell mansion at 538 N. Division. When it was built on a high hill in 1894, it was far removed from Division Street, with over a dozen black walnut trees shielding it from prying eyes.

Henry Cornwell was a wealthy, self-made lumber baron and paper manufacturer who had been in business with his brother Harvey since the 1860s. He wanted to make a statement with this brick Colonial Revival/Queen Anne house, a surprising choice for a lumber baron. Henry's son Frank remained in the house after his father's death and sold it in 1927 to the Beth Israel Congregation who had previously worshipped at a brick house at 420 N. Fourth Ave. which they sold to the Dunbar Center in 1937. [Note: Harvey Cornwell had a house on N. Thayer which was demolished for St. Joe's Hospital; Wirt Cornwell, Harvey's son, lived in a magnificent mansion at 1009 Cornwell Street, which also bears the family name. That home will soon be demolished by the University of Michigan. So, Henry's house will soon be the only physical remnant of this once prominent Ann Arbor family].

The Cornwell house served as the only synagogue in Ann Arbor for almost 20 years. It was not only a place for services but also the residence of its spiritual leaders. The living room became the chapel and a library was used for community meetings. The private residence was upstairs. During this time, the building housed Rabbi Jacob Kamenetzky (1924-1932) and Isaac Goldman (1934-1944). Both were shochets (kosher butchers). Kosher meat was not available in local stores at the time, and parents worried about their children getting proper food. No worries. One student, Molly Ingber, first met with Rabbi Goldman in the backyard where he was slaughtering chickens! Fay Woronoff, another student, recalled in several interviews what Jewish life was like for UM

students in the 1930s and 40s. Card parties were held in the house every Wednesday night in the former library. The women played bridge, gin rummy or mah-jongg, while the men played poker or klüberjasch (a kind of poker). Fay also recalled eating Passover meals there in 1943. The number of people was small, perhaps two dozen, but "what they lacked in number they made up for in noise! My recollection is of lots of commotion and of mothering women good-naturedly heaping plates with generous portions, often eaten hurriedly so one could make the long trek back to campus in time for a 'one o'clock'." The meals were prepared by the Beth Israel Sisterhood. A few articles in the Ann Arbor News have photographs of Beth Israel men and boys worshipping during services held for the High Holidays (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur).



**BETH ISRAEL AT CORNWELL MANSION**

In 1946 the congregation sold the house to a local realtor and moved to another house in Burns Park. They used that house until 1951, when a Hillel building was constructed at 1429 Hill St. It was demolished in 1988 and replaced by the current Hillel building at the same address. In 1978, Beth Israel, a Conservative congregation, finally built a proper synagogue at 2000 Washtenaw Ave. where it remains today and is often in the news because of anti-Israel picketers who have been out on Saturdays for the last twenty years.

After its time as a synagogue, the house served as the Pentecostal Church of God for a few years before being purchased by St. Thomas Church for a youth center. Photographs from church bulletins show the bobby soxers dancing to tunes from a jukebox. In the 1970s Bill DeBrooke, a resident of the OFW, purchased it, restored it, and sold it to Deucalion Resources Group, a computer software company. Ron Suarez owned it in 1994 and sold it to the current owners, the law firm of Ferguson, Widmayer and Clark in 1998.

## BICENTENNIAL PLANNING By Jeff and Christine Crockett



### ANN ARBOR BICENTENNIAL 1824-2024

The year 2024 is Ann Arbor's Bicentennial, and planning has begun. For an overview, see <https://www.a2gov.org/news/pages/article.aspx?i=948>. An Executive Planning Committee has been formed consisting of City Administrator Milton Dohoney, Destination Ann Arbor CEO Sarah Miller, Destination Ann Arbor Director of Community Engagement, Amy Karbo, Creative Washtenaw CEO, Deb Polich, Michigan Theater Executive Director, Russ Collins, and Oxford Companies CEO. Jeff Hauptman.

The Bicentennial organization includes four oversight committees, including Fundraising/Finance, City Planning, IDEA, and Marketing/PR. Working Committees include Natural Resources, Arts/Culture, History/Activism, and Education. The Old Fourth Ward Association is well represented on the History/Activism committee with Susan Wineberg, Christine Crockett, Jeff Crockett, and Norm Tyler. Other members of this committee include Alan Haber, Fran Wright, Patti Smith, Patrick McCauley, Parker Short, Peter Allen, and Michelle McClellan.

The primary task of the History/Activism Committee is to promote the Bicentennial by reaching out to Community groups and asking them to plan 2024 activities with a Bicentennial theme. Mr. Dohoney will be developing a calendar of events and has asked groups to share planned activities with the Executive Planning Committee by November, 2023. So far, our committee has reached out to the Old Fourth Ward Association, Old West Side Association, the Bentley Historical Library, the African American History and Cultural Museum, the A2 Modern Association, the Washtenaw Historical Society, the Broadway Neighborhood Association, and Kempf House.

Several activities that we support include fundraising for an historical marker to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of Jones School, now Community High School. We are also supporting the publication of a book written about life, families, and experiences in the African American neighborhoods of Ann Arbor. We are considering a fundraiser to create a framework comprised of the pioneer planks that have been stored in a barn on city property near the airport. The 46 planks contain the names of Ann Arbor pioneers carved into planks. See <https://www.wemu.org/wemu-news/2018-08-20/hidden-in-plain-sight-an-exciting-piece-of-washtenaw-county-history-recently-discovered>

The History/Activism subcommittee is also working on an Ann Arbor Chronology that identifies important events for each of the 200 years. This chronology will be available on the Bicentennial website at <https://a2bicentennial.org/>. Finally, walking tours of historic neighborhoods has been suggested as an activity.

In the meantime, you don't have to wait to learn about Ann Arbor's rich history. The following resources will provide a wealth of information to get you started:

1. Ann Arbor District Library, Making of Ann Arbor <https://aadl.org/moaa/>
2. Historic Ann Arbor, An Architectural Guide by Susan Wineberg and Patrick McCauley 2014 (available on Amazon)
3. Ann Arbor The First Hundred Years by C.W. Stephenson, 1927
4. Ann Arbor in the 19th Century by Grace Shackman, 2001
5. Lost Ann Arbor by Susan Wineberg, 2004
6. Greek Revival in America by Norman Tyler and Ilene R. Tyler, 2014
7. The Village That Raised Ann Arbor Their Children: The History of Ann Arbor's Black Community by Shirley Beckley, calendar printed in 2017
8. Historic Buildings Ann Arbor Michigan by Marjorie Reade and Susan Wineberg, 1998

# CENTER OF THE CITY UPDATE

By Jeff Crockett

In November 2018, Proposition A passed. It mandated that the city-owned land on the downtown library block was to remain under public ownership in perpetuity and be developed as an urban park and civic center commons known as the “Center of the City.” Since that time, a number of ideas have been considered through the Center of the City Task Force, the Initiating Committee, and the Council of the Commons. Numerous events have been held on this site. In addition, a volunteer group known as the Green Team has activated the site with the creation and management of four community gardens. Progress has been slow due to political resistance and lack of funding, but considerable work by a dedicated group of volunteers has led to a breakthrough. Mlive reporter Ryan Stanton in a March 6, 2023 article indicated that the funding had been secured and that the RFP will move forward. (<https://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/2023/03/a-big-step-forward-designing-downtown-ann-arbor-central-park-could-begin.html>)

Additionally, funding has been secured for two murals to be installed on two vertical walls near the community gardens. The murals are expected to be executed from late May through June by

Mary Thiefels of Tree Town Murals in collaboration with local artist, Lavinia Hanachiuc. These two developments demonstrate important progress toward the activation of the Center of the City. Old Fourth Ward members have contributed to the initiative. Ilene Tyler, Chris and I volunteer on the Green Team that plants and maintains the garden plots. I have participated in the Initiating Committee which has helped to plan a number of events. I have long dreamed that a magnificent fountain will be installed someday at the Center of the City. The first 2023 event will be a celebration of Earth Day on Saturday, April 22 from Noon to 5 pm. Later in the summer, an event will be scheduled to celebrate the completion of the murals.



PLAN FOR THE MURAL

# BUILDING BOOM IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD AND BEYOND

By Julie Ritter



As everyone who lives here knows, Ann Arbor is booming with new buildings all over town. The Old Fourth Ward and the Kerrytown District are no different. Just a list of the most notable projects underway is eye opening:

1. The coming 19 story apartment building on East Washington near South State, just across from the Methodist Church, and abutting the back of the Michigan Theater on Liberty, will make a huge change in the experience of South State Street. This project also has a six-story workforce housing component that will run along the current, existing alley between Washington and

## **BUILDING BOOM IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD AND BEYOND Continued**

- Liberty. When all is done, it will contain 240 full price apartments ranging from studios to five bedrooms, including 19 affordable apartments. The workforce housing building will contain 19 micro apartments.
2. The Margaret Bell Pool and Central Campus Recreation Building, at the corner of Geddes and Washtenaw, have been demolished and will be replaced by state-of-the-art equipment and facilities. We are grateful they have made arrangements to save the stained glass windows from the original building and to protect the two landmark trees on the site. The weeping beech on the corner of Geddes and Washtenaw is a treasure for the entire City.
  3. The new University of Michigan D. Dan and Betty Kahn Health Care Pavilion at the corner of Zina Pitcher and Ann Street. “The 690,000-gross-square-foot CIT project accommodates an inpatient care program with 264 single-occupancy patient rooms and 23 surgical/interventional radiology suites.” This new tower will enhance the existing medical facilities of the medical campus by offering single-occupancy patient rooms.
  4. The new University of Michigan School of Pharmacy is taking the place of three historic homes along Huron, at the corner of Glen, and may overflow into two more historic homes along Glen. As of this writing, the homes along Huron have been demolished and are being removed. The new Pharmacy School building will be a game changer for this College, which is currently in classrooms and research facilities across seven locations on campus. This new school will provide all the needed classrooms, research and support space in one building, plus it will be much more environmentally friendly. “The facility design will emphasize sustainability with the expectation to achieve Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold certification. When completed, the building is expected to exceed current energy efficiency standards by approximately 20 percent as compared to the State of Michigan building code for energy performance.”
  5. A beautiful residential renovation is taking place at the historic Wilcoxson-Easton house at 511 East Ann Street. This project is an act of love by Ryan Pantaleo; he is taking this beloved 1860’s house, previously owned by Widd Schmidt for several decades, and refurbishing and renovating it to showcase the historic aspects of the building. At the same time, plans call for upgrades throughout, and an addition in the back yard. When finished the property will offer two living units, with 10 bedrooms. The OFW Board supports this project.
  6. The Affordable Housing development at the corner of Catherine and Fourth, 121 East Catherine, is a project of the Ann Housing Commission partnering with Avalon Housing. The plan is for a six-story building with 66 residential units, including 9 efficiencies, 55 one-bedroom, and 2 two-bedroom apartments. The current parking lot will disappear, but the new development will provide 18 spaces open to the public including electric charging stations.
  7. Redeemer Church currently resides in the old DKE fraternity building that they purchased and renovated at 611 East William St. The Church has purchased the Treasure Mart building at 529 Detroit Street and is in the process of working through plans and permitting with the City. We welcome them to the neighborhood.
  8. The Garnet luxury condominium development at 325 East Summit and Beakes is almost complete. It will add 10 exclusive, boutique condominium units to the neighborhood. This project is beautifully constructed to fit into the neighborhood as a thoughtfully designed residential project.
  9. 330 Detroit Street is being redeveloped by Maven Developers in partnership with Tom Fitzsimmons as the building contractor. The 33,600 sq. ft. project will put 14 luxury condos above ground floor retail use. It also includes 1000 square feet of open space and underground parking for residents. The entire project will be heated and cooled with a geothermal heat pump installed more than 20 years ago when the White Swan

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## **BUILDING BOOM IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD AND BEYOND Continued**

- project was completed across the street. When finished, this project will be LEED Gold certified.
10. This is a new condominium project going up on the large parcel of currently vacant land on North Main just south of Summit. Previous houses were torn down many years ago. It will provide 22 new townhouse-style, luxury living units. Named “Near North” this development will provide mostly-electric utilities (heat pump for HVAC and electric hot water) and more than one electric car charging station per unit.
  11. A groundbreaking new project by Doug Selby at 530 North Division. When finished, this project will provide four 6-bedroom living units. The Old Fourth Ward Association and neighbors in the community have supported Doug’s project from its inception. It will be a demonstration project for environmental compatibility and will actually feed energy back into the grid.
  12. The University is in the planning stage for a new Children’s Center at the east end of Cornwall Place. This will require the demolition of the two houses at the end of the street. The new facility will serve employees working at the Medical Center.
  13. Construction continues on the Vanguard Hotel on Glen Avenue, between Ann and Catherine Streets. Excavation for four stories of below-grade parking is complete, and the four-story underground parking structure with 241 parking spots will be completed by this summer. Completion for the entire building is slated for 2025. When finished, the Vanguard will offer 164 rooms and suites, and 24 apartment suites for both short term and long-term stays. It will feature both a fine-dining restaurant with a bar, and 12,000 sq. ft. of event, meeting and retail space.
  14. Construction continues on the enormous luxury apartment development, The Beekman, at the intersection of Maiden Lane and Broadway. So far Morningside, the developer, has completed 254 apartment units, is working to finish 286 more units, and is planning an additional 206 units, for a total of 746 units of studio, one bedroom and two-bedroom apartments. Most of the renters are professionals at the hospital complex and graduate students. Only a few residents are undergraduates.
  15. The previous DTE property along the Huron River, just west of the Broadway Bridge, will be completely redeveloped. Called “Broadway Park West”, the Roxbury Group has planned for years to redevelop this previously industrial site with four, six story condominium buildings for a total of 96 condos, and a nine-story hotel with 148 rooms. In addition, there will be a riverfront restaurant, commercial spaces, walking trails that will connect to the Border-to-Border Trail, and an event pavilion that will be open to the public. The local non-profit group, Lower Town Riverfront Conservancy is working with Roxbury to ensure that programming of the public space enhances the riverfront as this huge development takes shape.
  16. Corner of Fifth and Huron Streets: Plans for a new Marriott Hotel on the currently vacant First Martin Property, across from City Hall, have been reported in the news.
- Taken all together, these locations comprise one church, three hotels, four University buildings, five apartment developments with 1077 living units of various sizes and four condominium developments with 142 living units of various sizes. Of these, 85 will be affordable and 19 will be workforce housing.
- In addition to these notable projects, there are certainly other upgrades and changes to other buildings in and around our neighborhood. The Old Fourth Ward is already the most densely populated neighborhood in the City. Once these major changes are in place, it will be even more so. The Old Fourth Ward is by far the leading neighborhood in the City’s stated plan to add density to downtown. We are proud to be able to mix historic properties with cutting edge developments, demonstrating a way forward for other neighborhoods.

## THE O'HARA'S: AN ANN ARBOR PIONEER FAMILY

By Jeff and Christine Crockett and Kristine O'Hara

On May 30, 1902, the Ann Arbor Argus-Democrat reported the death due to heart disease of one John O'Hara, "a prominent citizen and one of the most widely known men of Washtenaw County." He was born in Ann Arbor around 1835. According to the obituary, he had a host of friends and was a popular member of the Elks. At the time, he was living at the home of his son, Phillip O'Hara, 529 Elizabeth St., about half a block away from our house at 506 E. Kingsley. Fast forward 100 years to about 2002. John O'Hara's great-great-granddaughter, Kristine O'Hara appeared at our front door, wanting to see the inside of our house. Kristine had been in our house on a number of occasions visiting her great aunt, Mary O'Hara, who died in 1980. That year, Chris and I purchased our house from Mary O'Hara's estate, but we knew very little about Mary until we met Kristine. In the 20 years since, Kristine has become our very good friend. A California resident, she visits us periodically on trips to Ann Arbor to see her cousin.

As it turns out, the O'Hara's are one of Ann Arbor's earliest pioneer families. According to page 1028 of the History



MARY AND LEO O'HARA

of Washtenaw County, Daniel O'Hara, born in 1802 in County Limerick, Ireland, arrived in Ann Arbor in 1834 and, over the next 20 years, bought hundreds of acres of land which he used to farm. He married Bridget Quinn, and they had two children, John and Joanna. ([https://www.google.com/books/edition/History\\_of\\_Washtenaw\\_County\\_Michigan/2z0XAQAAMAAJ?hl=enDaniel](https://www.google.com/books/edition/History_of_Washtenaw_County_Michigan/2z0XAQAAMAAJ?hl=enDaniel))

Succeeding generations of O'Hara's lived on the family farm north of Ann Arbor in Northfield Township (3601 Pontiac Trail) until in April, 1906, when bad luck struck Daniel O'Hara, grandson of the early pioneer. Lightning



DANIEL & MARY O'HARA

hit the barn and started a fire which resulted in significant damage and a financial setback. A local bank eventually foreclosed on the farm. Compounding this tragedy, Daniel's wife, Mary, died from cancer several months later, resulting in Daniel's relocation to 420 Detroit Street in Ann Arbor. For the next six years, Daniel was a local delivery man until he died of pneumonia in 1912. He left three children, Mary, John, and Leo. All his children settled in Ann Arbor's Old Fourth Ward.



## O'HARA'S: AN ANN ARBOR PIONEER FAMILY Continued

After Daniel's death, Mary, Leo, and John moved in with their Stafford relatives who owned 518 N. Division. After working at Graham's Bookstore, in 1923 Mary started a job as a bookkeeper in the accounting department at the Michigan Union and remained there until she retired in 1963. Although she had been active in St. Thomas Church for many years, toward the end of her life she worked for Old St. Patrick's Church at 5671 Whitmore Lake Rd., and she is buried in the O'Hara family plot at the church cemetery across the street.

There is more to the O'Hara family history. Philip's son, Frank D. O'Hara, was killed in action on November 11, 1918, during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. He died on the afternoon of the day the Armistice took effect. VFW Post 423 in Ann Arbor is named after Ernest Graf and Frank O'Hara, both WW1 casualties. (<https://vfw423.org/di/vfw/v2/default.asp?pid=12256>) Ironically, Frank was stationed at Fort Crockett in Texas before leaving for France. Leo O'Hara eventually lived at 1418 Broadway, which was the



KRISTINE O'HARA

house of former Ward 1 Councilmember Sabra Briere and her husband, David.

We have been able to trace the O'Hara family's Ann Arbor legacy from an Irish immigrant who came to Ann Arbor at its founding and built a farm north of town. Eventually, the O'Hara descendants settled in the Old Fourth Ward, and all attended St. Thomas School and Church. Leo moved his family to California, but Mary remained. In the early 1950s she purchased her first and only house at 506 E. Kingsley where she rented out rooms to international graduate student nuns. She stayed until she died in 1980. Five descendants of the Ann Arbor O'Haras live in Ann Arbor. We are exceedingly grateful to Mary's niece, Kristine O'Hara, for taking the time to stop by our house and share the O'Hara family legacy. As we approach Ann Arbor's Bicentennial, we hope the O'Hara story motivates others to research, document and share their own home histories.

### *Congratulations*

to our friend, **Leza Harary**, who won the grand prize in the Michigan Flyer essay contest. Check out her winning essay here: <http://secure.campaigner.com/csb/Public/show/36js-2mhfb9--128cno-5dhzeuu5?fbclid=IwAR20g10ja0kMJ6UnhEPQ7X387Y1Am0Mi7iYbgvvRCX7zM559kf8vZJkxGqo>

## DOUG SELBY'S PROJECT, "THE BRIDGE," AT 530 N. DIVISION GETS THE GREEN LIGHT

By Susan Wineberg

Doug Selby is an optimist. After numerous setbacks to his proposal to build an eco-friendly, solar-powered quadplex, he is finally planning to break ground in June 2023. This project (called "The Bridge") has received a good deal of media attention from The Ann Arbor News, the Michigan Daily and

Detroit papers. MLive even posted a flyover view of it in a February article. When finished, it will be the most sustainable apartment building ever built in Ann Arbor. Selby, the owner of Meadowlark Design+Build, is clearly working toward a future with the climate crisis in mind. As he put it, "Half of the

## DOUG SELBY'S PROJECT, "THE BRIDGE" GETS THE GREEN LIGHT Continued

excess carbon in our atmosphere now has been put there since the premiere of the show Seinfeld...and that's scary. So we have about 20 years to correct this problem and get to zero emissions or really, it's game over for our grandchildren and millions of other species as the sixth great extinction event starts really kicking in." (MLive, Nov. 29, 2022).

Selby and his wife Jennifer Loops purchased the property at 530 N. Division over 20 years ago when it was badly rundown, with squatters living in the basement. They fixed it up as well as they could and then waited for the right moment. That came in 2017. They began to plan a visionary project, designed to meet the standards of the Living Building Challenge and LEED Platinum certifications.

I've been involved in this project since 2018 when Doug hired me to research the property. It consists of two houses that were put together and used as one. The original house on the site is much older than the second one which was clearly moved there. Doug wanted me to determine the original location of the moved house. I believe it came from across the street at the juncture of Division and Detroit Streets and was moved for the construction of a gas station. A new "filling station" and the duplex structure both appear on the 1931 Sanborn map. Today the gas station site is the triangular building known as the Flatiron Building at 544 Detroit St.

The original house on the 1866 Birdseye Map and the City directory from 1868 lists John Goetz as living at

42 N. Division. Research is always complicated by address changes and this is no exception. Goetz ran a saloon at the MCRR Depot (now the Gandy Dancer). The moved house was built in 1888 by Adam Meuth, a butcher. Sadly, not much architectural interest remains. Vinyl windows were installed at some point and upkeep was spotty by the absentee landlord.

Given these conditions, Selby applied to, and was approved by, the HDC in 2020 to have the building designated as non-contributing to have more leeway in his retrofit. He was endorsed by members of the Old Fourth Ward Association, who spoke at hearings and wrote letters of support. His approved proposal will involve some demolition, some re-use of historic materials, and additions to the rear. His new units will sport solar panels, high-efficiency appliances, and green elements in line with the A2Zero carbon-neutrality goals. The new building will have four apartments with a total of 24 bedrooms. All this was put on hold when COVID shut everything down in 2020. Despite the delays which doubled the cost of the project, he is now set to go. It is estimated to cost \$1.8 million.

The Old Fourth Ward Association welcomes this project as indeed a 'bridge' between the future and the past. We applaud Doug and Jennifer for their persistence despite all the obstacles hurled at them. We look forward to a ribbon cutting and accolades from the sustainability community once it is finished.



WEST AND SOUTH ELEVATIONS



WEST AND NORTH ELEVATIONS



EAST ELEVATION



## A RESCUE MISSION TO RESTORE 511 E. ANN STREET

By Jeff Crockett

According to Susan Wineberg and Patrick McCauley in their book *Historic Ann Arbor*, 511 E. Ann Street, known as the Willicoxson-Easton House, was built around 1827 and has compelling historic significance. The prior owner, the late Widd Schmidt, moved his primary residence to Vermont in the early 1990s. Since that time, the house lacked necessary upkeep and maintenance. It became severely rundown and unsafe, subject to the threat of demolition by neglect.

We were pleased to learn that Ryan Pantaleo, a local developer with a strong belief in historic preservation, had purchased 511 E. Ann and plans to renovate the house and restore it to its former glory, taking inspiration from Kimberly and Steve Hudolin's house at 303 N. Division. Anna Epperson from OX Studio, current chair of the Historic District Commission, is providing design support. After dealing with some structural issues, the plan is for an addition on the rear that will not be visible from the street. If approved, the newly renovated house will have six bedrooms and three baths on the first floor with four bedrooms and two baths on the second.

The OFW Board welcomed Ryan to a recent meeting and support his approach of "restore and not replace." We are impressed with Ryan's values, his

attention to detail, his energy, and his commitment to historic preservation. Ryan will be a featured speaker at our May 2 spring meeting at St. Andrews Church.



**RYAN AND HIS FIANCÉ JESSICA, A NURSE PRACTITIONER, LIVE IN KERRYTOWN, AND PLAN TO REMAIN HERE AFTER THEIR FALL WEDDING.**

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## OLGA 'CAPPY' BILAKOS HAS DIED

By Susan Wineberg

We recently learned that a long-term OFW resident and member of the Old Fourth Ward Association, Olga "Cappy" Bilakos died in September of 2022. She was 93 years old and lived in the Ann Street house where she was born. We are not sure how she got the nickname Cappy, but our resident Greek expert, President Chris Crockett, thinks it could mean anything from 'clever' to 'artful' or 'intelligent.' It could also be derived from 'captain.' My chiropractor was married to Cappy's niece and he remembers it meaning something like 'trouble maker.' Whatever

its origin, Cappy was known by this name to most Ann Arborites.

Cappy's father, Charles Christ Bilakos, who went by Christ, was born in Greece in 1888. When he died in 1970, he'd been an Ann Arbor resident for 50 years. He ran a restaurant in the Ann Arbor Hotel located at 113 E. Ann St. and later was also the owner of the Peters Hotel, built in 1836 as a bank at the NE corner of Ann and Fourth Ave. Eventually, the Bilakos family owned the entire Hoban Block on East Ann (111-123 E. Ann) which they restored in the 1990s. In

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## OLGA 'CAPPY' BILAKOS HAS DIED Continued

addition to Cappy), Christ was survived by his son Peter, another daughter Christina Farmasonis and a brother George Bilakos.

By 1926, Christ had purchased the home at 812 E. Ann, where he lived until he died and where Cappy was born in 1929. Cappy graduated from Ann Arbor High School (now the site of UM's North Quad) in 1945 and received a degree in Home Economics, Clothing and Textiles from MSU in 1951. In the 1960s she began working for the Commission on the Great Lakes Basin Compact. I first met Cappy when the Old Fourth Ward Historic District Study Committee was established in 1977. In the 1980s, the early days of the Old Fourth Ward Association, I interviewed her in her home for a feature we called "Meet Your Neighbor." Somehow it never got published. This

doesn't surprise me because Cappy was a very private person and may have nixed the idea. I do remember sitting in her classic 1950s kitchen talking about her life in Ann Arbor and her family. I also remember she did not hesitate to speak her mind in our meetings regarding the historic district and in her presentations before City Council.

Cappy cared deeply about the history of Ann Arbor and funded one of the Downtown Historical Street Exhibits for the former Peters Hotel. The marker is on an enameled panel on the north side of the Washtenaw County Courthouse. She gave her time and expertise to ensure that historic Ann Arbor buildings remained in use. She will be greatly missed.

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## UPDATE ON HISTORIC TAX CREDITS

By JEFF CROCKETT

The new State Historic Preservation Tax Credit program, Public Act 343 of 2020 was signed into law by Governor Gretchen Whitmer on December 30, 2020. Applications finally opened on June 15, 2022, with a cap of \$5,000,000 per year. A sum of \$4,000,000 was allocated to commercial projects with just \$1,000,000 allocated to owner-occupied residential projects.

There are three parts to the application. Part I involves providing documentation that the resource has historic significance. Part II involves a description of the proposed work with cost estimates. Part III involves documentation of the completed project.

Chris and I applied for proposed work at our house shortly after the application window opened in June 2022. We had previously applied for and were awarded a tax credit in 2002, so we were familiar with the process. That work, the restoration of the exterior of our house, resulted in our receiving the Governor's Award for Historic Preservation in 2003. Unfortunately, last June, within a week after the online application process opened, it suddenly closed in the wake of a flood of applications. Since that time there has been little transparency with regard to the number of applications, the requested amounts, and the breakdown of commercial vs. residential applications.

Periodically I have been in contact with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) trying to learn about the status of our application. I was told that a shortage of SHPO staff to process the applications has been responsible for the delay. Recently, SHPO hired an architect, Mara Lancaster RA, NCARB, to process the applications. On March 20, I received the following message from Mara:

"We received a high volume of applications in 2022 when the online portal first opened, and we are still processing those applications. We are contacting 2022 applicants in the order in which their online applications were received to request supplemental information. We expect that it will take most of the spring to work through the list, so we ask for everyone's continued patience."

"At this time, we are only accepting Part 1 applications for the 2023 Owner-Occupied category. Once we have allocated the 2022 credits, we will begin contacting 2023 applicants to request their Part 2 information. 2023 applications do need to be submitted in both hard copy and digital format on a USB drive. We are not able to accept online applications this year. The Part 1 application is a pdf with fillable fields that the applicant can type directly into, or the blank form can be printed and filled out by hand. We are working to update the Part 2 and 3 application instructions for posting online. Even

## UPDATE ON HISTORIC TAX CREDITS Continued

though we are not accepting those applications right now, I understand that applicants may want to understand the whole process prior to submitting a Part 1. Look for updates soon on the website you referred to in your initial message.”

Successful applicants receive a 25% Michigan tax credit. It should be noted that the applicant must have taxable income against which the tax credit is applied. If you are thinking of

applying, begin by taking plenty of pictures of the present condition of your house. Also, contact Jill Thacher, Ann Arbor’s Historic Preservation Coordinator. She will need to certify your property and is always very helpful. Depending on the scope of your project, the tax credit can be significant. New applicants can apply at: <https://www.miplace.org/historic-preservation/programs-and-services/historic-preservation-tax-credits/state-historic-tax-credit-program/>

## Tree Town Tales

In this issue, we are beginning what we hope will be an ongoing feature of the Old Fourth Ward newsletter. Imitation is indeed the highest form of flattery and we shamelessly pay homage to the “Metropolitan Diary” column of the Sunday New York Times that invites readers to share incidents that illustrate brief slices of life in the city. Send us your stories of chance encounters, coincidences, moments of quiet insight, in prose or verse. Anything, recent or years ago, that happened in Ann Arbor or has a strong Ann Arbor connection is welcome. A few of our board members have made contributions to kick off this effort. We hope you enjoy them. - Eleanor Crown, Editor

## EAGLE ENCOUNTERS

BY JULIE RITTER

In February, I walked out the front door of the house down to the sidewalk and was startled when a huge, teen-aged bald eagle dove down out of the big tree next to the driveway. It swooped low across the street then climbed steeply to disappear around behind the North Ingalls Building, heading for the river just at the bottom of the hill.

In March I was walking with our dog through the Arboretum after a snowstorm. We went down a seldom-trodden path. The snow was halfway up to my knees and up to our dog’s belly. The wind was blowing ice shards. We rounded a corner and suddenly, on that vast expanse of white there was an explosion of black feathers in all directions. One of the crows who often shelter in this secluded area had evidently been taken down by a large bird of prey. I wonder if it was the same eagle.

## TWILIGHT VISITORS

BY ELLEANOR CROWN

A couple of years ago, I went out in the evening to scrape the residential parking permit off the inside of the windshield of my car so I could put on the new one. I was sitting sideways on the driver’s seat with my feet on the ground when I glanced at the rearview mirror and saw

two skunks sauntering down the driveway, one adult and one juvenile. The adult, probably the mother, was very beautiful and quite fluffy with what looked like a giant white feather boa around her neck. She wandered off into the backyard and the little one disappeared. I went back to my task. Then I felt something strange and realized that the young one had gone under the car and was nuzzling back and forth against my ankles like a cat. Eventually, he emerged, joined his mom in the yard, and they wandered off together. It was a magical moment.

## FAMILY SECRETS

BY ELLEANOR CROWN

One afternoon in the mid 1970s, I took my boyfriend Jim’s son Jamie and his friend David to the swimming pool at Veterans Memorial Park. They were probably nine or ten at the time. David was a sweet child who reminded me of a golden retriever who would lean companionably against you if he was standing close by. I swam laps and then stretched out on a towel on the pool deck watching the kids cannonball into the water, scramble back up, and then do it again and again. After a while, David emerged from the pool, trotted over and plunked himself beside me cuddling up against my leg. He thought for a while, then asked, “Why didn’t Jim come?”

“Well,” I said, “he doesn’t like swimming in outdoor pools.”

## TREE TOWN TALES Continued

“That’s weird,” David replied. He pondered that fact for a while, then decided to take me into his confidence. “Want to know something else weird?”

“Sure, David.”

He lowered his voice to a conspiratorial whisper, “My dad doesn’t like McDonald’s.”

## DIAG SENSIBILITIES

BY ILENE TYLER

What should we do on a lovely autumn evening after dinner? This question often leads us to interesting encounters at the Diag. Students are always out recruiting participation in various causes with tables and chalk and amplified speakers. Although we see ourselves as outsiders, we feel welcome. Choosing a seat on an empty stone bench, we watch the stories unfold in front of us like movies on a very wide screen. Two anecdotes from earlier this year are worth sharing.

One evening we encountered a peaceful protest, and we happened to sit between two students who were similarly intrigued. On my right was a young man from China, and on



**THEATER PROMOTION ON THE DIAG**

Norm’s left was a young man from Pakistan. They sought a relaxed conversation, in English, with Americans who were not part of the University. Although we engaged in separate conversations, neither of us talked about politics or academics. We encouraged them to grab every opportunity during their time in Ann Arbor. Eventually, we left the Diag and walked home, feeling good about our casual conversations.

On another evening, we walked over to the Diag to see who and what were on display. We stopped at a table promoting the Michigan and State theaters, curious about why they were there. The volunteers hoped to engage with students and encourage attendance at our beloved historic theaters. They even offered free popcorn. What caught my eye, though, was their t-shirts. I loved the new design with both theaters rendered architecturally and advertising features “coming soon” to both theaters. I took their picture, and asked how I could get one of these t-shirts. It would take a special request, but they said I could pick one up at the member service counter inside the Michigan Theater. Later I posted this photo on Facebook.

The story continues. I posted the Diag photo on Facebook to share the encounter. I am “friends” with Zach Evans, son of David Evans, my former partner and founder of Quinn Evans Architects, who was instrumental in restoring the Michigan Theater almost 40 years ago. Zach had grown up in Ann Arbor and he knew this theater intimately. He graduated from the UM Film Department and has pursued a film career in Los Angeles. Zach never lost contact with the theater, and unbeknownst to me, he had accumulated a vast collection of Michigan Theater memorabilia. My photo on Facebook resulted in an inquiry about this newest item that he coveted for his collection. Tout de suite, the Michigan Theater staff popped one in the mail to Zach. Zach sent me a photo of this newest acquisition displayed proudly in his collection.

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If you have not yet paid your 2023 dues, please do so soon. Your support is important to us and makes possible the activities of the association and the publication of this newsletter

Please make your payment online at:  
<https://old-fourth-ward-association.square.site/>

If that is not possible, contact Jeff Crockett  
([jeffcrockett8@gmail.com](mailto:jeffcrockett8@gmail.com) or 734-657-4326).

Membership Categories:  
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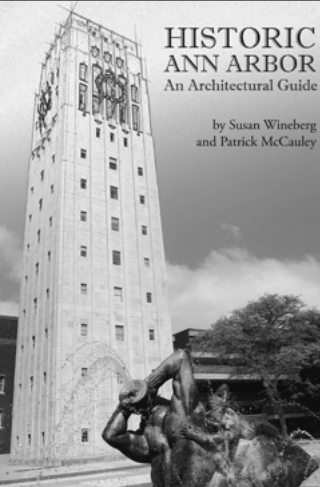


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