

The Medina Journal

Spring 2009



In the summer of 2007 the Medina Park Trust granted funds to the CDC to purchase and supervise the installation of 20 new steel benches for the Uptown Park, each with a bronze plaque honoring Letha E. House for her gifts to the community,

The CDC and the Park Trust chose an elegant design, which enhances the beauty of our historic park. As directed in the Medina Park Trust grant, CDC is working on a plan for the permanent installation of the benches this spring.

Cynthia Szunyog

Medina
Community
DESIGN
Committee



141 South Prospect Street
Medina, Ohio 44256



County Court House, Medina, Ohio

The Medina County Courthouse has presided regally over Public Square since 1841, surviving three potential catastrophes: the 1848 and 1870 fires and an effort in the 1960's to tear it down and replace it with something "modern".

Originally a two-story Greek Revival structure with a cupola, it matched the small clapboard and brick structures that filled Public Square during that era, as the rough log cabins of the first settlers gave way to the more civilized architecture

of the next generation.

The 1848 fire did much damage, but the 1870 fire wiped out the entire business district of Medina village. Almost immediately, a massive rebuilding effort began and continued for the rest of the decade. In 1873, the courthouse, which needed more space to accommodate a growing population, was expanded. Two large wings were added to the original building, along with a mansard roof, a bell tower and a two story porch

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with columns, transforming the original Greek Revival style into French Second Empire, to match the new Victorian architecture on the square.

Almost a century later, the once elegant structure had become shabby and rundown, and government officials, inspired by the urban renewal movement sweeping the country in the 1960's, slated it for demolition. A series of passionate and indignant letters to the editor of the Gazette narrowly averted this effort.

The Community Design Committee (CDC) which had been formed in 1967 for the purpose of restoring the Square, added

the preservation of the courthouse to their "to-do" list. In 1973 -- through the efforts of the CDC -- the National Trust for Historic Preservation provided funds, matched by the Medina County Commissioners, for a scholarly restoration of the courthouse.

The original brick was restored by removing a coat of red paint, the capitals on the columns along the front were replaced (the original ones had been removed and taken to a landfill) and the clock tower and mansard roof were repaired. Once the courthouse was restored to historic authenticity, it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Gloria Brown



County seeks to Expand Courthouse

The preliminary design for the expansion of the courthouse on Broadway is shown above. CDC's initial review of the design has been generally favorable. However, the proposed building has no entrance or exit onto Broadway. We believe it is critical

to the health of the Square that there be access directly from Broadway. We have time to work on this concern as the County Commissioners have placed the expansion on hold for this year.

Roger Smalley

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Lest we forget: Elmer Zarney 1922-2007

Elmer Zarney, an artist and graphic designer, was in the audience with his wife Betty that night in February, 1967 at a special Kiwanis meeting when Akron architect, F. Eugene Smith presented a slide show, "Why Uglyness?" When Smith showed pictures of Medina's blemished downtown and pointed out the neon signs, shabby facades and awkward attempts at modernization, Zarney was moved to action. He joined a small group of local citizens (including Charles Griesinger, Elaine Fri Lamb, P.M. and Hannah Jones and Bill and Pat Boyle) in the creation the Community Design Committee (CDC). Within five years, this group fought its way through local opposition and skepticism and worked a miracle of restoration on Public Square.



economic vitality, and that old buildings could be modified to suit the needs of modern business.

And, one by one, the property owners made the restorations. Frequently, the restorations required only a coat of paint and possibly, the removal of gaudy and unattractive signs. However, in the case of the Old Phoenix Bank (now First Merit), and Ziegler's Department Store (now Liberty Commons), the investment in restoration ran into hundreds of thousands of dollars.

By 1975 the restoration was largely completed and Public Square was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Elmer Zarney was born in Cleveland in 1922 and moved to Medina a year later. He graduated from Medina High School in 1940 and, when the U.S. entered WWII in 1941, enlisted in the Army Air Corps and became a tactical reconnaissance pilot. After the war he attended the Cleveland Institute of Art, (where F. Eugene Smith was one of his instructors), then returned to Medina where he began his own business, Zarney Graphic Artists, and raised a family.

Inducted in the Hall of Fame of both Medina High School and the Medina Chamber of Commerce, he was also honored in 2004 with the Lifetime Service to the Arts Award from the Medina County Arts council.

Elmer Zarney passed away on August 18, 2007 after a lingering illness.

Gloria Brown



CDC members, circa 1971. The group spent countless hours planning the restoration.

Frame 1 (left to right) Charles Griesinger, Elmer Zarney, Ken Lipstreu.

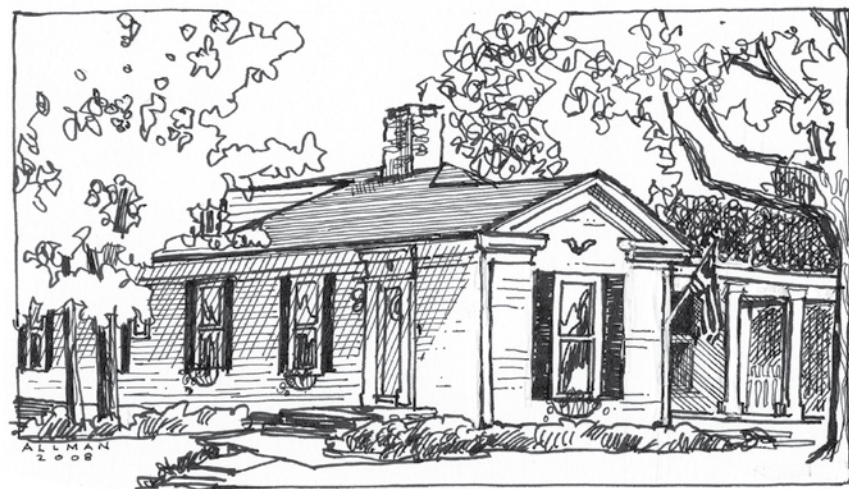
Frame 2 (left to right) Elmer Zarney, Ken Lipstreu, Barbara Aufmuth, Cynthia Wildman Szunyog.

CDC Honors Medina's Historic Neighborhoods

Medina's Public Square was placed on the National Register of Historic Places 34 years ago, after a landmark restoration launched by the CDC breathed life into a unappealing downtown and garnered praise from preservation groups around the country. The CDC, after spearheading this project, remains the watchdog of the Square and continues to safeguard the integrity of the downtown historic district. But a few decades later, it is time for another project, using CDC's commitment to esthetics and historic preservation. We now are in the early stages of such a project.

The Board of Trustees of CDC has decided to extend from the Square into the adjacent neighborhoods which are filled with a richly diverse array of nineteenth and early 20th century architectural styles. We plan to give Beautification Awards to selected homes and businesses, to create a series of Historic Neighborhoods.

The criteria for Beautification Awards include 1.) well-restored historic homes and, 2.) properties featuring a combination of good maintenance, beautiful landscaping and esthetically



This Western Reserve home on 603 East Liberty Street was once a stop on the Underground Railroad.



The 1880 Burnham mansion, now the Corkscrew Saloon, is one of many grand Victorian homes on West Liberty Street.

pleasing colors. The purpose for giving out these awards is to honor the owners of enhanced properties for their efforts, which result in the preservation of Medina's architectural heritage, and to encourage future restoration efforts.

The creation of small historic districts within the old neighborhoods where Beautification Awards are given is designed to foster a sense of pride, and to acquaint the residents, as well as the entire community with the historic personages who lived on those streets -- and with their stories.

CDC is in the process of compiling walking tour brochures for the designated historic neighborhoods, and is planning the placement of historic markers which name and briefly describe the various neighborhoods.

This past July, East Liberty Street was designated an Historic Neighborhood and 12 Beautification Awards were presented. The awardees include an 1841 Western Reserve farm house which had been a stop on the Underground Railroad, an 1837, former one-room school house, and the 1884 Gothic Revival St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

In February we moved onto West Liberty Street and gave 15 Beautification awards. This street, which was once called Rootville, is the location of the A.I. Root Company, Medina's oldest industry. Surrounding the candle-making plant are numerous homes which once belonged to various members of the Root family -- and which were at one time all lit by the dynamo that created electricity for the plant.

The Medina Steakhouse, once a stagecoach stop, the former St. Francis Xavier Church and the old Burnham mansion, now the Corkscrew Saloon, as well as several Victorian homes built by Medina gentry during the Gilded Age were also given awards.

Next on the list for Beautification Awards and future walking tour brochures are East and West Washington Streets and South Court Street.

Gloria Brown

CDC Works to Improve Parking Deck Design



In the past forty years, over forty buildings have been demolished in Medina's Historic District, the eight blocks around the Public Square Park. In most cases, those buildings were replaced with surface level parking. For this reason, the Community Design Committee has been a long time advocate for meeting the uptown area's parking needs with the construction of a parking deck.

Through a partnership among the City, the County and the Library, a parking deck is finally underway in the parking lot behind the county courthouse complex. Designed to hold 360 cars and to potentially be expanded upward another level, it is our hope that we will finally see the end of losing our historic buildings for parking.

While this is good news, CDC has been less than excited about the design of the parking structure. Many communities around the country have constructed urban decks which are actually attractive buildings that do not look like parking structures. The costs of such buildings significantly exceed those of a standard deck but the results are structures that enhance their communities aesthetically while retaining great functionality for many years.

The Medina deck follows the design/build format in which

the partners determined the maximum amount they would spend for the deck and then sought designs which fit within the funding cap. The selected design is a two and a half level deck of poured concrete with open brick facades on all sides. The visual result of the initial design was a long, linear building impacting the primary eastern entrance corridors to our Historic Square that clearly looked like a basic, urban parking deck.

The CDC got its first look at the proposed design in December and within a week we had sent a letter to City Council citing concerns about the deck's visual impact on the neighborhood. We also produced a preliminary redesign of the deck exterior and provided the city with cost estimates to accomplish our suggested changes.

While council has not budged yet on the funding level for the deck, they were receptive to using dollars saved through the elimination of some items in the original design to enhance the look of the building. The net result to date is that over \$100,000 has been made available to improve the look of the parking deck.

Working with the city Planning Director, the chairs of the Historic Preservation Board and the Planning Commission, the

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county administrator, and the deck architect and builder, CDC has been able to effect some significant enhancements. Our goals from the beginning were to break up the linear impact of the structure, to create the appearance of commercial building frontages indicative of the Public Square buildings and to add decorative elements which soften the visual perspective of the deck.

To date we have negotiated the addition of six additional brick columns on both the Washington and Liberty sides of the structure. The southeast corner of the building at Jefferson and Liberty has been bricked in to create a visual barrier to the principle south entrance. In the openings between the columns and the first and second levels, metal arches are included to

add some decorative elements. The two stair towers on the western corners of the deck have been made to appear more like commercial buildings with two over two windows and well-defined doorways. We have also secured interest in creating a more park-like look in the green space between the building and Washington Street.

As this newsletter goes to print, we are hopeful that further improvements will be possible. The final results will not by any means be what we would prefer to see at the eastern entrance to our historic uptown but they will be the best we have been able to make of a less than desirable design. Let us hope the presence of the parking deck at least halts the destruction of our uptown buildings for the purpose of parking lots.

Roger Smalley

What's New

Educational Workshop: "Exterior Painting and Historic Color"

CDC, Main Street and the Historic Preservation Board of the City of Medina will jointly sponsor a workshop, "Exterior Painting and Historic Color," to be presented by the Cleveland Restoration Society on May 5th at the Medina County District Library at 7:00 P.M. in the Community Room.

This workshop reviews historic color schemes and provides tips on how to choose and place appropriate colors for older homes. It also highlights what to look for in hiring a painting contractor.

The workshop is free. Since it is one of the Cleveland Restoration Society's most popular programs, space will fill up fast. Don't delay in making a reservation by calling the CDC office at 330-725-7516. Please give your name and number of people attending.

Web Site:

Miles Reed of Medina Cable Access is currently in the

process of developing a website for CDC. The domain name of the website, which will be up and running by May, is: communitydesigncommittee.org.

Walking Tour Brochures:

As an adjunct to CDC's Historic Neighborhoods program which presents Beautification Awards to attractively restored and maintained homes, a series of brochures entitled "Architectural Walking Tours of Medina's Historic Neighborhoods" is in production. The first two brochures will feature East and West Liberty Streets.

These brochures will be available at the CDC office at 141 S. Prospect St., the Visitors and Convention Bureau on the Square, and at City Hall.

Please note:

In order to save on postage, CDC would be happy to e-mail you all future copies of this newsletter. If you would like to receive the **Journal** electronically, please email us at: medinacdc@zoominternet.net.

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Thank you for your wonderful support!

Donation and membership information is available at communitydesigncommittee.org or call Munson House at **330.725.7516**

Save the Date

Friday evenings in June and July - Community Band Celebrates 150 Years of Concerts in the Park.

Saturday, May 30th - Main Street Medina's Annual Chalk Festival

October 21, 2009 - Annual CDC Preservation Awards Ceremony

