

THE MALT HOUSE!

By Marcia Phillips



At the beginning of the Twentieth Century, it was the tallest structure on the city's northeast side but a century later it is just a low wall. The Malt House that once stood at 111 East Forest Avenue is gone except for a small block building and partial wall on the northeast corner of Bob and Jan Anschuetz' neighboring property, and parts of the foundation buried under grass. But for over forty years, its brick three stories dwarfed the smaller surrounding houses and empty fields where Dwight, Stanley and Hemphill streets are now.

The Malt House was a tribute to Ypsilanti's booming business culture in the late 1800s- and one-man's ambition in particular. Frederick J. Swaine had come in 1871 to Michigan from Dorset in England where he had been raised in a castle, albeit as an orphan. He left his personal circumstances behind him, shrouded in secrecy, but he was clearly not a penniless orphan as his resources enabled him to visit friends in Ypsilanti, relocate here, marry, build a large home and invest in a small business allowing it to improve significantly, all within a few years. In the land where the self-made man was the measure of success, this young man found success on every side, in business and also his personal life.



The Malt House at 955 Sheridan Street.

Frederick married Eliza George, daughter of George George (yes, that was his real name) who had been deeded the property on the corner of North River Street and East Forest Avenue when the Peck Primary School had relocated from there in 1866. (In fact, the old school building was later incorporated into the Malt House.) He entered into the business of making malt (a necessary ingredient in the production of beer), a business already in operation, with brothers-in-law Worger George and Leonard C. Wallington (married to Eliza's sister Carrie). Swaine quickly became the sole owner. He dreamed big, enlarging the Malt House until it measured 50 x 94 feet in dimension and built a two-story brick Italianate home beside it (still standing at 101 East Forest) practically the same year he got married. Swaine then identified himself on stationery as a "Malster" or Maltster and "Dealer in Barley, Malt and Hops," skills that he must have learned even as he began in the business.



Frederick J. Swaine eventually became the sole owner of the Malt House.

The malt business thrived; output increased from 11,000 bushels in 1874 to 40,000 bushels in 1880. The first sidewalk in the city ran in front of the Swaine home and Malt House (the local cows preferred this sidewalk and had to be constantly chased off it when being herded toward the river bank by local boy Frank Lidke) and the residence was among the first to have electricity in town. Swaine became a local leader in business and politics and enthusiastically participated in theatrical productions. But he died suddenly in April 1897, leaving a widow and two young daughters (two sons had died very young), not as adept as he perhaps was at running the operation. The administrator of his estate, local banker Robert Hemphill, published in the newspaper that he would continue to honor commitments by buying barley and manufacturing malt, but that must have been a temporary solution. Fire insurance maps of 1909 show that a large portion of the Malt House was being used for the storage of ladders, no doubt for the young Michigan Ladder Company down the street. Anyway, Prohibition was a growing movement and it must have been obvious that the malt industry was ultimately doomed.

Within a few years, the property was sold to George Jackson, a local carpenter, who demolished the Malt House, planning initially to build two dwellings on the site with the bricks from it. Ultimately the bricks were

used to build the Wrigley store on Michigan Avenue. Eventually one dwelling, a Sears kit home, was built on the lot in 1927 by newlyweds Frank and Kitty Lidke.

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~
~~XXXXXXXXXX~~, SWAINE ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~
MALTSTERS
DEALER IN BARLEY, MALT AND HOPS
CORNER FOREST AVE. AND RIVER STREET
YPSILANTI MICHIGAN

CASH PAID FOR BARLEY AND HOPS.

A Malt House sign revised to show that Swaine had taken over sole ownership.

The April 13, 1912 Ypsilanti Daily Press described the Malt House as one of the city's oldest landmarks in a story about its upcoming demolition on the front page, right next to coverage of the death of Clara Barton, another icon of the previous century gone. The article suggested that the Malt House be "preserved" . . . in pictures that is, as indeed it was before it was torn down. The story disappeared quickly as well however, as coverage of the sinking of the Titanic eclipsed it on the front pages of successive newspapers. Largeness alone could prevent neither a new ship nor old landmark from disappearing into history.

All information has been gleaned from the resources of the Ypsilanti Historical Society Archives and Bob and Jan Anschuetz.

THE STARKWEATHER FOUNTAIN!

By James Mann



Mary Ann Newberry was born into the prominent Newberry family of Detroit. Her father, Elihu Newberry, was a merchant and farmer. Her brother John was a famous member of Congress, and her uncle Walter L. Newberry was a Chicago merchant, banker and land speculator.



The Starkweather Fountain – a beautiful part of “Lost Ypsilanti.”

She married John Starkweather in 1839, and the couple later moved to a farm near Ypsilanti. John Starkweather did well in the local real estate market, and the two moved into the Italianate house at 303 North Huron in 1875. It was there that John Starkweather died in 1883. The following year, Mrs. Starkweather inherited a small fortune from her uncle. Because she had no children, she used her inheritance to make contributions to local charities and churches. Over the remaining years she gave the Ypsilanti community major gifts including the following: the Hebe fountain on South Huron Street, the Starkweather Memorial Chapel at Highland Cemetery, Starkweather Hall on the campus of Eastern Michigan University, and in 1890 she gave her North Huron Street home to the Ladies Library Association.



The Starkweather fountain in the late 1890s when it stood in front of the Ypsilanti Savings Bank (now City Hall) on South Huron Street.

It was in 1889, when the Ypsilanti water mains were installed, that Mrs. Starkweather gave a very unique fountain to the City of Ypsilanti. It was made of bronze and sat on a granite foundation with a height of 12 ¼ feet above the curb. On the North and South sides of the fountain were drinking bowls for horses, on the East and West faces were bowls for people, and at the bottom on the four corners were bowls for dogs. At the top of the fountain was the figure of Hebe, the Goddess of Youth and Cup Bearer to the Gods. The fountain was the work of the J.L. Mott Iron Works of New York. The original cost of the fountain was \$750.

In April of 1932 the fountain was dismantled because of some problems and by that time there were more modern means available for getting a drink. The City of Ypsilanti had planned to place the statue in the park behind the Ladies Library. However, it was placed in storage for several

years and then in 1935 the top part of the fountain, the figure of Hebe, was moved to Tourist Park, now Water Works Park, on Catherine Street. There she graced the entrance to the park. After that the fountain disappeared completely.

The top part of the Starkweather fountain, the figure of Hebe, in the late 1930s after it had been moved to the entrance to Tourist Park on Catherine Street.



Over the years there has been a great deal of speculation and rumor about what eventually happened to the fountain. At one time suspicion fell on the city park commissioner, who it was rumored had sold the fountain and other City owned items for personal gain. This accusation was never proven. Another rumor that circulated was that City workers dumped the fountain into the Huron River. The most likely scenario is that the fountain was scrapped during World War II as a part of the war effort.

The information in this article is based partly on an article written by James Mann in a series called "Footnotes in History."

Dixboro

Henry Kimmel came from Pennsylvania and was the first settler in what would become Dixboro. Captain Dix was the founder of Dixboro in 1825. A.B. Rowe platted the village in 1826. It was in Wayne County until Washtenaw County was established in 1829.

The first post office was established December 6, 1825 with Mr. Dix as postmaster. It closed September 15, 1850 and was restored with Nelson Townsend as postmaster until July 11, 1861. Again, closed until January 20, 1863, it was restored again May 26, 1890, until it was closed for the last time on June 15, 1905.

Eldridge Gee built the first house in March of 1823. In 1826 he built a saw mill and grist mill.

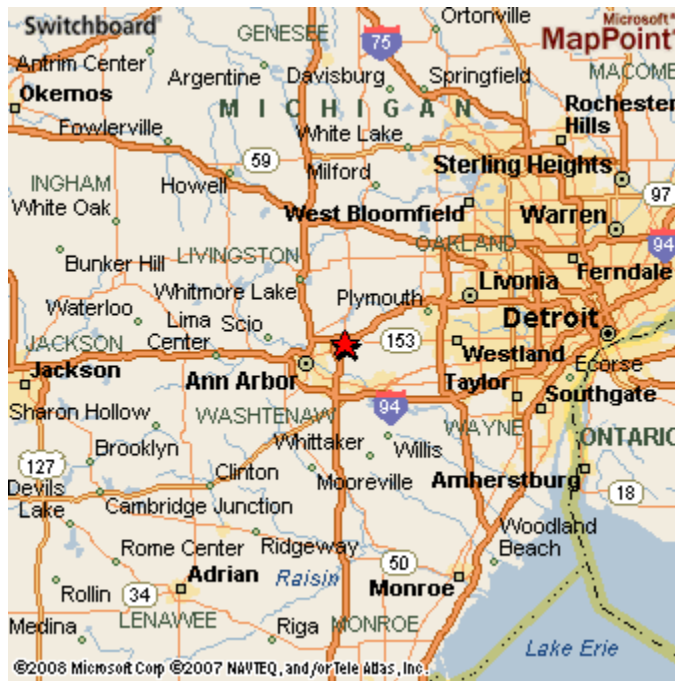
On June 30, 1828, the Legislative Council took part of Ypsilanti Township and made it into Panama Township. In 1831 the people of Southern Panama organized the Township of Superior. The township got its name because Mr. Kimmel thought he had picked an area finer than any other. Mr. Kimmel erected a large ashery and pearl-ash refinery and employed 30 people. Wood was burned to ash, which was then sold to make lye, an ingredient used in making soap. Mrs. Kimmel was a dependable woman. She extracted teeth, bled the sick, fed and ministered to her family and a household of 40 persons for years.

Every settler had a cow, and in the fall 300 hogs were driven in, butchered and sold principally to the settlers. George McKim made barrels to pack the pork in and the barrels were also used in the ashery.

A schoolhouse was erected in 1847. The Justice of the Peace kept a country tavern for many years. Lawsuit trials as well as public meetings were held in his house. In 1880 Dixboro boasted 2 creameries, a washing machine factory, crate factory, saw mill, copper shop, cider mill, chair

factory, store, post office, several blacksmith shops, taverns and 2 churches, the Methodist Episcopal and the Free Church.

Dixboro was also a unique little hamlet that was passed up by the railroad when everyone thought that the railroad would follow the river.



Sources: Michigan Place Names, Walter Romeg, Ypsilanti Press, Oct. 30, 1954
Wendell Hobbs-Post Office Archives