

New museum gazebo a community effort



Farmington High School's wind ensemble was among the dedication ceremony participants.

At right: Margaret Walker (left) and Kay Blackeney, the driving forces behind the Farmington Historical Museum Warner Gardens Gazebo, which was dedicated Sunday afternoon in sun-applauded ceremonies.



By Lisa Blum
staff writer

Farmington Historical Museum's Warner Gardens provided the setting for Sunday afternoon's dedication honoring the near-completion of a Victorian gazebo.

Fashioned after the Victorian Warner mansion, the octagonal wooden gazebo was three years in the making as the pet project of two museum committee members, Margaret Walker and Kay Blackeney.

They thought an aesthetic, functional addition to the Victorian mansion and adjoining gardens was in order.

The gazebo was designed for people to sit in and enjoy as well as for outdoor music and theater productions. A back panel and adjacent wall seat are removable so performers may have an entrance other than the standard front steps.

The white gazebo, with hanging fern planters, has already become a popular spot for wedding and family pictures, Blackeney said.

"This will be a real valentine," Walker added. "The gazebo will be complete when a globe lamp arrives from a California manufacturer and a weather vane is placed atop the gazebo's tall cupola."

THE DEATH of Edessa Warner Slocum in the fall of 1980 marked the end of 115 years of Warner family members in the Grand River residence, according to Walker and Blackeney, both Farmington Historical Commission members. Fred Warner, governor of

Michigan 1905-1910, grew up in the Victorian mansion.

On Dec. 23, 1980, the house and grounds were given to the city of Farmington by Edessa's son, William Slocum of Birmingham. The gift was given in the spirit of the Christmas season, Walker said.

Plans to develop the Warner Gardens concurred with the renovation of the mansion. "The conspicuous missing feature (of the garden plans) was a gazebo," Walker said.

A \$5,000 grant earmarked for the gazebo was one of several grants given by the George and Mabel Slocum Foundation in Birmingham, of which William Slocum is a trustee. About \$10,000 more was raised from area businesses.

"We went anywhere to

'This (gazebo) will be a real valentine.'

— Margaret Walker,
museum booster

talk about it (the gazebo)," Blackeney said.

BOTH WOMEN made calls to prospective donors to save postage. Together they made about 500 calls. Although private donations were anticipated, all dollars were donated by businesses, Walker said.

"We started out cold to raise this money," Blackeney said. "We didn't meet a rejection anywhere along the way."

Gifts ranged from \$25 to \$1,000 from 114 businesses.

Landscape architect John Grisholm of Farmington Hills designed the Warner Gardens, where several area garden clubs have created lavish plantings.

Architect Richard Bos of Royal Oak designed the gazebo under Grisholm's recommendation. Bos' forte is Victorian recreations. He is best known for his reconstructive work on the Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island.

Cedar shingles and two large interior metal rings to stabilize the roof are both part of the gazebo's authentic Victorian design. The cupola's copper roof is a final elegant touch, Walker said.

"Dedicating the gazebo for the enjoyment of generations to come and to show appreciation to contributors" was the reason for Sunday's commemorative ceremony, according to Walker.

PATRIOTIC MUSIC was provided by Farmington High School's wind ensemble. Boy Scout Troop 179's honor guard led the flag-raising. Speakers included Farmington Mayor Pro Tem William Harbeck, Farmington Hills Mayor

Jan Dolan, Farmington Area Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Jo Ann Sorones, Susan Slocum Klingbell, granddaughter of Gov. John Warner, and William Klingbell Jr. and Frederick Klingbell, great-grandsons of Gov. Warner.

Dr. William Ritter, minister at Nardin Park Methodist Church in Farmington Hills, delivered an invocation. The Rev. Lee Tyler of Salem United Church of Christ in Farmington gave the benediction.

Farmington City Manager Robert Deadman and Farmington Historical Commission Chairman Robert Walker also spoke.

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