

Creative Living

CLASSIFIED REAL ESTATE



Bob Sklar editor/591-2300

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Downtown series continues

Bricks and mortar provide a framework for buildings, not downtown. It takes people to parlay potential into productivity.

Take it from Farmington Downtown Development Authority planning consultant Christopher Wascny.

"The image of downtown, in effect, is the image of the city. It's the downtown that makes an impact on us. It's a representative physical element that says something about the people of the city."

In today's second installment of a three-part series examining downtown historic architecture in Overland, the spotlight is on downtown Farmington.

The DDA's \$1.4 million in public streetscape improvements aptly accentuate the private redevelopment that's bringing restoration of many older buildings.

Clearly, rejuvenating a smaller central business district is only as limited as the enterprise of the landlords, shopkeepers and city leaders.

—Bob Sklar

Chaos are, upbeat downtowns in Plymouth, Farmington and Garden City will spread to the neighborhoods beyond, strengthening community vigor and property values along the way.

There's still much to do to revitalize downtown Farmington. Lack of central ownership will always be a problem.

But individual owner efforts to restore century-old buildings, in turn, highlighting the city's heritage, underscore that vitality has replaced despair.

Former Farmington DDA board member Frank Clappison is right:

"The downtown we have today are the only downtowns we will ever have. No one is building downtown anymore and it is up to us to make sure that downtowns like Farmington's will endure."

Historic architecture in downtown Plymouth was profiled Nov. 3. Garden City will command the spotlight in January.



photo courtesy Farmington Historical Commission

Built in 1867, the Governor's Mansion architecture contains "Victorian" influence, and is traditional, colonial-looking, with round columns," said Farmington architect Carl Gaier. There is eyelid brickwork over the windows and a balustrade running

along the first floor's roof line. This view dates back to about 1911, at the end of Farmington resident Fred M. Warner's term as governor.

Site a key element in shaping town's architectural style

Bank history, 2E

By Linda Ann Chomin
special writer

American architect Frank Lloyd Wright said, "In any and every case, the site is the beginning of the building that aspires to architecture."

In February 1824, Arthur Power and sons Jared and John left their home in Farmington, N.Y., to pioneer a settlement in the wilds of Michigan. Traveling by horse-drawn sleigh, they journeyed two long weeks. Finally, they reached their destination.

On March 8, they felled the first tree to build a shelter from the cold, the wolves and the panthers. A log house arose in the midst of the wilderness, created from the only material available: Michigan trees.

Building after building sprang from the barren landscape in what was soon to become the township of Farmington, in the county of Oakland.

Arthur Power was the first builder-architect in the village of Farmington.

He built a shop for shoemaker Ebenezer G. Stevens; a store for Henry Miller; the first sawmill and dam; a grist mill and dam; a potash works for making soft soap; a log house and buildings for his son, Nathan; a large log house on high ground on the northeasterly side of the creek for himself; and two years later, another large, long log house.

Arthur Power was at the forefront in the "encouragement of all enterprises" and promoted growth in the village. He built the first frame mill in 1826.

IN SPRING 1827, the township of Farmington was formed by an act of legislative council. Then came the first frame house built by Timothy Tolman in 1828. Two years later, Arthur Power built a frame dwelling.



Downtown HERITAGE

In summer 1837, Sergius P. Lyon emigrated to Michigan from East Bloomfield, N.Y.

Lyon and his wife, Lucinda, settled

Please turn to Page 2



RANDY BORST/staff photographer



photo courtesy Lee Peol

Left: Ionic columns adorn the facade of the People's State Bank. The Roman influence is evident in the architecture of this cut stone building dating to the early 1920s. "It is very much like the Parthenon with the fluted columns," said Farmington architect Carl Gaier.

Right: Today, the caps are gone from the columns because of crumbling. People's State Bank has been sandblasted off the facade of the limestone building and the Century 21 sign has been added. The balustrade is gone from the roof line. The double-hung windows have been replaced with fixed windows.



SHARON LAMIEUX/staff photographer



From the Observer files

"Primarily a combination of turn-of-the-century architecture," said Farmington architect Carl Gaier about the Warner Block, built in 1873 by P. Dean Warner to replace a building

lost in the fire of 1872. From 1873-76, the second floor of the building served as the Farmington Masonic Temple.



SHARON LAMIEUX/staff photographer

Today, the Warner Block is known as the Cook Building because it housed the dry goods business of Fred L. Cook at the turn of the century. A palladian window was added around 1910,

along with revisions that included the addition of the early art deco look, terra cotta brickwork and a single row of dentils.