Heritage HILL

2015 Weekend Tour of Homes

Saturday, May 16  11 am – 5 pm
Sunday, May 17   12 pm – 6 pm

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• Women’s City Club
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421 Fountain NE
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Restrooms: (R)
GRCC DeVos Campus
435 E. Fulton
**closes at 4:00 pm Sunday**
• 254 East Fulton
  Women’s City Club
• 450 Madison SE
  Meyer May House

Open Houses:
• 43 Union SE
• 47 Union SE
• 139 Prospect NE
• 159 Lafayette NE
• 230 Fountain NE
• 404 Fountain NE
• 545 Madison SE
• 557 Paris SE
• 421 Fountain NE
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Acknowledgments and Special Thanks
We wish to thank the Heritage Hill Hosts who graciously open their doors and to the 300 volunteer Tour guides who orchestrate our Tour. Home Tour hosts and room guides volunteer their homes and their time. No profit of Tour is distributed to them.

Volunteer Guide Opportunities
Volunteer guide positions are open if you wish to volunteer for the 2016 Tour. Shifts are 4 hours and you receive a FREE Tour ticket.
If interested, please contact the Heritage Hill Association at 459-8950 or e-mail at heritage@heritagehillweb.org. If calling after 5 p.m., please leave a message on voicemail.
The 46th Annual Heritage Hill Weekend Tour of Homes

The annual Heritage Hill Weekend Tour of Homes welcomes you to our historic Heritage Hill neighborhood, one of the country’s largest urban historic districts recognized by the National Register of Historic Places. More than 1,300 homes dating from 1843 stand within the boundaries of Heritage Hill. It is Michigan’s largest and finest concentration of 19th and early 20th century houses. Nearly every style of American architecture, from Greek Revival to Prairie, is represented in the district.

At the turn of the century, this was the city’s most prestigious residential area. Today the neighborhood is an array of lifestyles and passions. Professionals, craftspeople, students, artists … homeowners and renters … share this great place we call home.

Heritage Hill is recognized by the American Association of Planners as one of the Great Places in America and This Old House magazine rates Heritage Hill as one of the best historic neighborhoods in the United States.

The Heritage Hill Association...
The Heritage Hill Association formed in 1968 to stop several urban renewal projects that planned to demolish over 75% of Heritage Hill’s structures. Most of the houses that you will see today on Tour would not be standing if it was not for the tenacity of Heritage Hill neighbors. It was an amazing and diligent organizing effort by residents to have the neighborhood placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Neighbors needed to invoke national preservation legislation to effectively stop the bulldozers. Today, the Heritage Hill Association and residents give testament to those early leaders and continue to work to keep the Hill a vital place to live and work. The neighborhood is an inspiring example of a community-in-action.

Tour …

For 46 years Heritage Hill has invited visitors to explore an array of architecture, decorating styles and urban gardens. Walkability, cultural diversity and close proximity to Grand Rapids’ colleges and medical facilities, as well as the downtown entertainment and cultural center … and the hip, new and energizing Uptown business districts … Heritage Hill has it all!

This year, eight private historic homes are open as well as 3 public buildings. Each has a unique story to share. The house profiles that follow offer insight into the lives of the people who built these great houses … and those who now call them home. During Tour, guides stationed at each house will share information and highlight special features.

Tour is the largest fundraiser of the Heritage Hill Association. Over 300 volunteers contribute to make the weekend a success. All proceeds go right back into programs for the Heritage Hill neighborhood. These include block club organizing, crime prevention, land use planning, engaging community resources, and preservation of the district’s historic character. Enjoy…
The Heritage Hill Association applauds the many dedicated volunteers, committee members, hosts, house captains, and the Heritage Hill Association Staff who collaborate to make Tour Weekend happen. A core Home Tour Steering Committee has spent much of the year planning and orchestrating Tour. We sincerely thank each and all of you for your dedication to Tour! Tour only happens because of the incredible volunteer commitment of our neighborhood!

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Kate Diedrich
Jan Earl
Dave Eppelheimer
Marie and Kim Koster
Don Rietema
Tom Truesdale
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GRPS – Innovation Central
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THERE IS NO PLACE LIKE ....

For Dorothy in the land of Oz, there was “No place like home,” and on the Tour of Homes this year, eleven Heritage Hill families of all kinds are opening their homes to us, from a small Queen Anne gem to a French Chateauesque mansion, from a Prairie Style Foursquare to an ornate Italianate, from several charming Queen Annes to a formidable High Victorian Gothic. Two houses that once belonged to prominent families in the Hill, one a showcase of Frank Lloyd Wright’s genius, the Meyer May House, and the other, the current home of one of the city’s most respected organizations, The Women’s City Club, are included on the tour. You will also be able to stroll through a place that was home for many generations of neighborhood children, the old Central High School, now Innovation Central.

When standing in front of the beautiful, and sometimes overwhelming, architecture on the outside of these houses, it is easy to forget that inside, behind the columns and the cornices, the leded glass and the gables, are warm and welcoming homes and families of all types, from empty-nesters to busy working couples to families with young children. The tour will give everyone a chance to pull back the curtain to reveal the wonders of the original, century-old detailing - rich hardwood floors, decorative moldings and grand staircases, the glowing windows, the many lovely fireplaces, the nooks, arches and alcoves that give grace and character to a room. While respecting this legacy of the past, you will see how this year’s hosts have made creative changes, including the removal of walls for a more open floor plan, the remodeling of kitchens and baths and the innovative use of outdated spaces, that bring their homes into the 21st Century. To this canvas, each family has added their unique brushstrokes with color and fabric, family heirlooms and fine art. Masterpieces all!

Though you may encounter a poppy or two, we guarantee there will be no wicked witches or flying monkeys on the tour route this year. So pluck up your courage, look with your heart and use a bit of brain power to order your tickets to this wonderful event. Put on those ruby slippers and start clicking your heels, for truly, there is no place like (a Heritage Hill) home!

The 2015 Tour went global this year as our #1 Staffing organizer left for a 6-month teaching stint in Ireland this past December. Kate Diedrich spent many, many hours working far from Heritage Hill on this year’s Tour house scripts and write-ups. She could have been out sightseeing in her free time but instead she worked on Tour! That is the definition of dedication. Thank You Kate!
43 Union SE
Hosts: Dave and Andrea Nemes

This 1890 Queen Ann is one of two formerly identical houses being featured on the tour that were constructed by Charles Perkins. Thought to be built for siblings and located next door to each other, the homes started off with matching floor plans, but over the years have evolved into unique personalities.

Charles lived here from 1890 until about 1911 and then moved next door to 47 Union SE. He was Vice-President of Perkins Lumber. The longest-term residents were Morris & Anna W. Cassard, from the early 1930s to 50s. He was an employee of the Waters Building.

From the mid-1960s to about 2005, the home was divided into 4-to-6 apartments at different times, then returned to single-family status by the previous owners, the Wallers in 2010.

With three stories of living space, this home gives a gracious nod to its past but has been updated to accommodate modern family living, including creating an extra first floor bathroom and opening up walls. The beautiful wood moldings and floors in the living room and the parquet floor in the dining room are original to the home.

The contemporary furnishings reflect the tastes and needs of a young family with children and also the interior design profession of one of its owners. It’s hard to imagine this house once housed 6 apartments, but has now been reassembled back to a spacious, single-family home.

While the house next door has a solarium/sunroom off the living room, this home has a walk-out porch on the second floor that was formerly the sleeping porch.
This shingle style house was built circa 1894 on the property of the Waters mansion. The parcel must have been split off in 1911, when it first appears on the tax rolls. It was built by Charles F. Perkins, Vice President of the Perkins Lumber Company. He also built 43 Union SE, the house next door that is also on Tour. Unlike its twin, this house has retained its original floor plan but is uniquely different, and not just because of the addition of a solarium.

In 1915 it was owned by Ebner Irwin, Vice President of the Steel Furniture Company and later President and General Manager of the Grand Rapids Furniture Company. He and his wife Lila lived in this house until at least 1945.

Today, it is owned by Dave Eppelheimer and Brandon Heitzman. Dave sought an antique house to enhance his passion for collecting antiques – especially antique holiday decorations. He is an internationally-known collector of unique and rare vintage Christmas decorations which are displayed year round. He has filled his home with his amazing collection of unique and rare vintage Christmas decorations which are displayed year round. He has filled his home with his amazing collection of unique and rare vintage Christmas decorations which are displayed year round. He has filled his home with his amazing collection most of which date pre-World War II. Dave says that living with his collection is at times like living in a museum. A retired kindergarten teacher, Dave enjoys sharing his home with students, their families and friends. He invites them each December and may have several dozen little children and their families in at one time. He adds, “The only things ever broken in the house were broken by adults.”

With its numerous antiques and lavish holiday displays, stepping into this home feels like entering a magical Christmas museum. Visitors will also notice a nod to other holidays, as well as an extensive vintage glass collection. We welcome you to the “Christmas House.”
Straight out of a Mary Shelley novel, this 1885 High Victorian Gothic Style house is definitely an imposing structure. Larger than earlier Gothic Revival styles, the home has a façade that consists of a series of rectilinear masses with long, narrow windows beneath high, steeply-pitched rooflines and gables that emphasize the height of the building. Craftsman Style designs in the gable vergeboards and ornate hood molds over the windows add to the unique look of this home.

The house was built for Orrin E. Brown in 1885, one of three he had constructed in the neighborhood. Brown came to Grand Rapids as a young man and quickly established himself in the miller’s trade, eventually starting his own firm, the O.E. Brown Milling Company, in 1889. After several more owners, the house was divided into four apartments around 1940. It was an owner-occupied rental for much of the time since then and continues to be so now.

The present owner lives in the large, back part of the first floor, with a charming, small, bay-windowed apartment in front into which you will be able to sneak a peek before entering the main apartment. One of the three upstairs apartments will also be on the tour.

Coming into the house from the large porch, you are struck by a most unusual staircase with one-of-a-kind, cut-out patterns. Upon entering the main apartment, there is a large fireplace and a gracefully arched alcove, illuminated by the light from a series of long windows in the living room. A narrow hallway then opens to the owner’s favorite room - a newly remodeled sunroom that looks out over a delightful garden and that lights up the nearby 1944-era kitchen. A bedroom with a fireplace and a huge closet, two baths and a laundry room complete the layout. A luscious palette of colors, beautiful fabrics and the owner’s art collection brighten every room and bring an unexpected warmth to the home that is in sharp contrast with its rather formidable exterior.
159 Lafayette NE  
Hosts: John and Stacy Figg

The history of this home is a bit of a mystery. Early records show a “building” owned by a school teacher as early as 1885, but later ones indicate that it was built for a prominent local attorney, John B. More, in 1905-06. It is known that the north section of the first floor was used as a dentist’s office for almost 55 years, first by Dr. William Thwaites who lived there with his wife Grace, from 1935 to 1944, and then by Dr. Robert J. Barber and his wife, Elsa, from 1951 until 1990. The brick entry porch, which was added at this time, allowed for the residence to the south and the office area on the north side of the building to be accessed through separate doors. This addition changed the look of the home, which was originally built in the Queen Anne Style. The front-facing gable and steeply pitched roof, typical of the style, are still evident. Craftsman details like the decorative gable trim, patterned shingles and the scrolls beneath the windows add character. The south side of the house has an unusual “stepped” construction which creates an interesting effect inside.

The interior of the home was entirely remodeled in 1997, which will be quite evident when you see the modern, open floor plan. Walls were removed, new wood floors installed, the very beautiful and functional kitchen created and the former dental office and waiting room were incorporated back into the residence. The unusual construction of the south wall results in thirteen corners in the living room! So many features lend charm to this home - a lovely newel post on the stairway, an arched hallway to the kitchen, cove moldings, square-patterned windows and an original slate fireplace in the living room, a window-lined dining room, a fantastic kitchen, a playroom for the children, and upstairs, an adorable nursery, a spacious new bath for the master suite and closet space to spare.

The current owners put their own mark on the exterior of the house by replacing and painting all of the cedar shakes, putting in a new driveway (there used to be a circular driveway for the dentist’s office), and laying the fieldstone patio in the back yard. On the inside and out, they have created the perfect place to raise their two young children, right in the heart of the city.
230 Fountain NE
Hosts: Merritt Taylor and Dennis Delano

This gorgeous three-story brick, 1873 Italianate was built by William Shelby of the Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad. Shortly after building 230 Fountain, Mr. Shelby moved and converted it into a boarding house for socially prominent bachelors, calling it “Saint’s Rest”. Mr. Shelby built a new, larger home directly in back, at 65 Lafayette NE.

The home was later owned by Edmund Booth, the founding manager and editor of the Grand Rapids Press. His additions to the home was the garage, the first in Grand Rapids built specifically for the automobile and topped with a cupola that ventilates the gas fumes. Booth also added the distinctive wrap-around porch. Booth’s descendants owned the home until the mid-1960’s, after which it was converted to apartments.

Noteworthy architectural features included bracketed cornices, curved bay windows and arched windows. The main roof contains numerous dormers and a rounded turret on the West side of the home. Current owners Dennis and Merritt painstakingly restored the Yankee Gutters, an in-roof gutter system that runs the entire outer edge of the roof. This system relies on the careful pitch of copper-lined troughs to drain the water to gutters. Originally, the gutters fed rainwater into a cistern underneath the dining room floor to be used in the home. The cistern is not in active use today. This extensive work has earned them a 2015 Grand Rapids Historic Preservation award.

The home’s opulent roots are obvious and abundant: a floating staircase, 11-foot curved ceilings, mosaic-tiled floors, mixed-wood pocket doors, floor-to-ceiling windows and large mirrors that capture interior and exterior light.

The current owners are respectful of the home’s resplendent past. You will be seeing their main floor unit which retains much of the original floor plan. The upper floors house apartments and a 3rd floor ballroom.
Please remember us when your apartment needs renters. Your dollars not only find you tenants but also support the programs of the Heritage Hill Association! You can list your apartment right at the website or stop by the HHA office. We welcome you!

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**404 Fountain NE**
Hosts: Stephanie and Dashiell Kolbe

Atop this three story 7,600 sq. ft. mansion, on the highest point in Heritage Hill, a courageous couple has devoted the last year-and-a-half to repairing, remodeling and restoring this magnificent home. It was built circa 1891 and is in the French Chateauesque style. This home draws from the 13th to 16th centuries’ French Chateaus but also has Gothic and Italian Renaissance architecture influences. The solid masonry construction, with a conical tower, arches over doors, windows and porches and the heavy limestone detailing emphasize the massiveness of the building. At its time, it was one of the most expensive houses in the city.

For its original owner, Charles H. Berkey, money was not an issue. He was connected to the Berkey & Gay Furniture Company, but founded his own companies, the New England Furniture (later, the Grand Rapids Furniture Company), and the Royal Furniture among others. His companies produced a line of mahogany French and English patterns that became all the rage in the 1890’s. The house passed through many hands and endured several disasters including a 1969 fire, a tornado that took off the chimneys and the truncating of the turret when the roofline was changed. Fortunately, it now is in the caring hands of the current owners who have redesigned this home to suit their modern and busy lifestyle. It is made affordable by the apartment space beneath them and you will tour one of the vacant apartments.

For such an imposing edifice, the owners’ floor of the house is inviting. It spans 2000 square feet and is an eclectic mix of heirlooms, found objects and antiques from local sources. Adding a stylish kitchen and installing new fireplaces was just the start of the effort. Add together all of the exterior repair and modernizing the apartments, it is amazing that this monumental task was accomplished in just over a year! As a quirky touch, but very useful if you are carrying a load of groceries - there is an elevator that was added so that a previous owner’s aging and tad overweight dog could get up and down.

One of the great advantages of living high upon a hill is a bird’s-eye view of the city, visible here from the windows and from the tiled balcony found at the top of the turret. Spectacular, and worth a trip up the fire escape!
In 1913, the Grand Rapids Herald announced the start of a new residence to be built on the fashionable street of Madison near Logan, designed by the well-known firm of Thomas Benjamin and Son for a prominent physician named Dr. George Baert. Planned as a Foursquare, a popular vernacular take on Frank Lloyd Wright’s Prairie Style, the structure has the characteristic square massing, a low-pitched, hipped roof with widely overhanging eaves and prominent dormer windows. The large, asymmetrical front porch and the groupings of multi-pane, casement windows emphasize the horizontal feel of the Prairie Style. The façade on both stories is of an unusual rough red brick. Although it is a sound and sturdy structure, the owner needed to do extensive repair on the exterior, especially the front porch. An expert on wood finishes worked to replicate the original surfaces as closely as possible.

Dr. Baert lived in the home until 1930. Every following decade seemed to bring a new owner and in the 1970’s it appears that the house had several different occupants, though there is no evidence that the house was ever divided into apartments. By 2000, it had returned to a single-family home.

The current owner said that, from the moment she walked through the door two years ago, she knew that this was meant to be her home. With family visiting frequently, she wanted a warm, inviting place for them and herself to enjoy. As you will see, with the beautiful birch mahogany woodwork in the hall and living room and rich oak in the rest of the downstairs, the extensive built-in cupboards and bookcases, the ornately-carved mantle and leaded-glass windows in the dining room and a solarium flooded with light on the first story, the owner has found the perfect place for entertaining family and friends. On the second floor, a spacious sun porch with lovely French doors is surrounded by bedrooms with closet space that Imelda Marcos would envy. The original elements of this house were built with a sense of quality and elegance. It is the personal touches of the new owner that have made this not just a house to live in, but a home to love.
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557 Paris SE
Hosts: Andy Brookhouse and Paul Cook

This small but special late Queen Anne is like a carefully wrapped present. With its diamond-shaped window, this little jewel is delightfully detailed, with a fan design greeting you on the front pediment, a checkerboard pattern on the side gables, a wrap-around porch graced with round columns to welcome guests and all this is capped by a steeply-pitched, cross-gabled roof.

Built around 1890, this home was first lived in by a traveling agent named Frank R. Miles. In 1911 the home was purchased by Edwin J. Chamberlin, a native of Canada who moved to Grand Rapids as a child and after completing his studies at the University of Michigan, set up a dental practice in the city. He was very active in the Masonic fraternity.

After more than 30 years, another long-term resident purchased the home, James E. Kyle with his wife Charlotte. The house remained in her name until the early 2000’s, a tenure that was quite unusual for the neighborhood. Though briefly used as a two-family, it was restored to a single-family in 2007.

Opening this present, you will find a gift worth waiting for. Off of an entryway with a staircase, pocket doors lead to a cozy living room. Another pocket door opens to a room that used to be two. A wall was removed to open up the space and now the soapstone fireplace can be enjoyed from a much larger vantage point. A desk made from telephone poles and an antique baker’s cupboard accent the room. A closet for Hobbits hides in a corner. The kitchen is creatively designed, with quartz counters, a travertine backsplash and bright red school lockers for storage. Four bedrooms and two baths upstairs provide plenty of living space. A diamond is a guy’s best friend with the master bedroom’s unique front window. The owners’ sense of style shines throughout this lovely little home.
Central High School’s heritage began in 1849 making it the oldest school in Grand Rapids and the second oldest school in Michigan. This is Central’s fourth location and was constructed in 1911 by the distinguished local architectural firm of Robinson, Campau and Crowe. The building features decorative elements of Gothic overtones, particularly the use of gargoyles which are said to be directly influenced by the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. The inlaid design in the floor of the main hallway is of Helios, the ancient sun god in Greek mythology who rode daily across the heavens giving light to gods and mortals.

Features of the building were state-of-the-art for the time. Introduction of ample daylight and fresh air was a goal of the designers and made possible through large expanses of glass and ventilated duct work. Corridors are wide and spacious.

The time-worn marble interior staircase is a testament to the thousands and thousands of students and dignitaries who have entered these halls, including Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Taft. Most recognizable Central graduates are Senator Arthur Vandenberg who was largely responsible for the U.S. participation in the United Nations, First Lady Betty Ford, astronaut, Roger B. Chaffee, and Detroit Tiger Dave Rozema. Central has a long list of alumni who have served their community and nation well.

Today, Central houses the four high schools of innovation within Grand Rapids Public Schools: Academy of Business, Leadership and Entrepreneurship; Academy of Design and Construction, Academy for Modern Engineering; Academy of Health Science & Technology. In addition, it is home to the GRPS Montessori High School. For more information on the programs of Innovation Central visit: www.grps.org/innovationcentral.

Enjoy a stroll through the park-like Central campus that will be undergoing a major renovation in the near future to further enhance the landscaping and features of this unique central city campus.
254 East Fulton
Hosts: Women’s City Club

This Italianate Villa was built by Martin Sweet circa 1860. Sweet was a prominent figure in Grand Rapids whose entrepreneurial endeavors included cattle farming, railroads, banking and even one term served as Mayor. He is best remembered for building Sweet’s Hotel, formerly the Pantlind and now the Amway Grand Plaza.

The house was next owned by Frank Davis, a bank cashier (equivalent today to a bank vice president). His wife was active in the music world and organized the Saint Cecilia Music Society, a local music group still in existence.

After becoming a music school, a boarding house and even standing empty for a short time, the Women’s City Club purchased the building in 1924. WCC opened it as their headquarters in 1927 as a historic treasure to be shared with the community and future generations. The house is filled with fine arts: paintings, antiques, china and crystal, chandeliers and imported wallpaper.

Learn more about membership, events, programming and rental at http://wccgr.org.

Desdemona’s Dining Room in the Women’s City Club is open to the public for lunch Monday through Friday, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. It will also be open during the hours of Tour. Soups, sandwiches and more are available.
The distinctive details that you expect to find in a Frank Lloyd Wright Prairie Style home - the emphasis on horizontal lines, the interplay of closed and open spaces, the creative use of windows to control the flow of light and the respectful use of natural materials - are evident throughout the Meyer May House.

Built in 1908, this Frank Lloyd Wright-designed-and-built home was purchased in the mid-1980s by Steelcase Corporation that turned it into a near-museum piece of Mr. Wright’s architectural prowess. Built for clothing store owner Meyer May, this house continues to fascinate visitors since it was first on the Weekend Tour of Homes as a “work in progress” in 1986.

This is a meticulous restoration, complete with original furnishings and faithfully-executed reproductions. The Meyer May house provides the rare opportunity to experience a Prairie house exactly as Frank Lloyd Wright intended.

Wright carefully sited the house to allow maximum southern exposure for the living room windows and skylights and to create a spacious yard for the perennial gardens. Each terrace and each section of art glass was artfully designed and placed to enhance the interior and to draw nature into the house. Doors open out to the terraces and gardens with garden walls and planters all incorporated into the design to intermingle the interior and exterior.

Inside, wood grills hide the radiators, iridescent strips of gold art glass were placed in the horizontal grout lines of both brick fireplaces, and a pastel mural of hollyhocks wraps around a dividing wall between the living room and dining room. The mural, painted over during years of alterations, was rediscovered during the restoration and restored.

The Meyer May House was placed on the Michigan State Register of Historic Sites in 1986 and is a contributing building to the Heritage Hill Historic District.
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