Heritage HILL

2016 Weekend Tour of Homes

Saturday, May 21  11 am – 5 pm
Sunday, May 22  12 pm – 6 pm

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Restrooms: (R)
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**closes at 4:00 pm Sunday**

Open Houses:
• 535 Fountain NE
• 19 Lafayette NE
• 29 Gay SE
• 222 Prospect SE
• 444 Union SE
• 532 Prospect SE
• 566 Prospect SE
• 425 Pleasant SE
• State at Jefferson Calkins Law Office
• 450 Madison SE Meyer May House
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The 47th 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. 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 activists. The neighborhood is an inspiring example of a community-in-action as we continue to work to keep the Hill a vital place to live and work.

Tour ...
For 47 years Heritage Hill has invited visitors to explore an array of architecture, decorating styles and urban gardens. Walkability, cultural diversity and adjacent to Grand Rapids’ colleges, universities, and innovative medical facilities, the downtown entertainment and cultural center ... and the hip and energizing Uptown district ... 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 community 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 that 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!

Home Tour Steering Committee:  
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Karen Coy  
Suzanne DeHaan  
Kate Diedrich  
Dennis DeLano  
Jan Earl  
Dave Eppelheimer  
Marie and Kim Koster  
Don Rietema  
Merrit Taylor  
Tom Truesdale  
Maria Zache

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Rebecca Smith-Hoffman

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Craig Nobbelin

Bus Coordinator:  
Tom Postma and Don Rietema

Tour Artist:  
Mei Chow

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Ann and Andy Vidro  
Jane Lovett and Doug Wondergem  
Tom Logan  
Michelle Giordano  
Mary and Fred Host  
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ALL IN THE FAMILY

Every family is a collection of unique individuals, each with their own story to tell. The homes in Heritage Hill are like a family, and whether grand or small, showy or simple, centenarians or new kids on the block, they win the hearts of the people who take the time to appreciate their inner (and outer) beauty. The houses on tour this year are a familial mix of traditionalists and free-thinkers, old-timers and newborns, warm hearts and cool cats, extroverts and humble souls. Eleven of the most interesting characters in the Hill are inviting you over for a visit this May, and they will be dressed in their finest for the occasion. You can expect a warm welcome, enlightening conversation, and of course, a grand tour.

The 2016 Tour went global for the second year in a row as our #1 Staffing organizer returned to Ireland for a 6-month teaching stint 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 spent much more time out and about sightseeing in her free time but instead she worked on Tour! That is the definition of dedication. Thank You Kate!

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Meet the matriarch of the family, dressed in all her finery of spindles and gables and gingerbread, all part of the Queen Anne Style. Her transformation from a humble ten room farmhouse to the grand lady she is today began the day that George and Alice Davis (of Stow and Davis Furniture Company) purchased the home in 1886. At that time, this street was sparsely populated. In 1894, the dirt road was paved with cedar blocks and electricity was brought in. In 1896, telephone wires went up. New homes were built on Fountain by prominent citizens- Charles Berkey, Paul Steketee and William Widdicomb.

The Davises hired the architects, Osgood and Hopkins, to remodel the exterior. The roof line was raised and the porch and the three-dimensional fretwork in the gables was added. All of the turnings used were made at Stow and Davis. A bay window was added to the front and stained glass windows from the Wells Company in Chicago were installed. In 1898, additional changes took place to the exterior and interior, to accommodate the growing family. The porch was enlarged to the right of the front door and the entry hall and the bedroom above it were increased in size. The Davis’ family lived in the house for over 120 years!

After several interim owners, Christian Gaines and Kristen Taylor purchased the house in 2014, and have brought a modern touch to the interior design with their Mid-Century Modern furniture and art collections - a new wardrobe for a fine lady.
19 Lafayette N.E.
Hosts: Ann & Andy Vidro

Built in 1894, this elder statesman of the Heritage Hill family of homes has a grand view of the city below. Constructed of red brick, this Queen Anne Style house is less detailed than earlier examples of the style, but features many of the characteristics. The surfaces of the façade are used as primary decorative elements, both in material and placement. The reconstruction of the outstanding front porch, which had been removed decades ago, has brought character and class back to this gentleman who, for years, had been without his most distinctive feature. The wrought iron gate along the sidewalk began to appear in photographs in the 1930’s.

The early records do not indicate who built the home, but Mrs. Jane Benedict, her daughter and their servant are the first recorded occupants. From 1958 until 2008, the Claus family lived in the home with their three boys; Mrs. Claus remained alone in the home for the last 30 of those years after her husband died and her children had grown. From 2008 until the Vidros moved in in 2011, the house stood vacant.

The Vidro family adopted the home in 2011 with plans to bring a neglected old fellow back to his former glory. They have refinished the oak floors, updated the mechanicals, moved and removed walls, replaced plaster, added woodwork, and decorated beautifully, giving new life to the old, but still sturdy bones of the house. The new layout is open and filled with light from the large windows. Built-in bookcases in the office and trim around the fireplaces provide evidence of Andy’s woodworking talents.

Ann and Andy are the recipients of the 2016 Outstanding Residential Preservation Project Award for their devotion for restoring this lovely home.
Peaches B&B, 29 Gay SE
Host: Jane Lovett & Doug Wondergem

This Georgian Manor Style home is everyone’s favorite aunt, who welcomes family and strangers alike with a warm smile, home-made bread and a cozy fire.

It was built in 1916, by Chester Idema, son of Old Kent Bank founder, Henry Idema. Chester went on to be the vice-president of the bank. The Georgian Style was originally popular in the 18th Century and there was renewed interest in colonial architecture after the Philadelphia Centennial of 1876.

Not tied to convention, Chester planned a side-facing, out of the wind, driveway accessible façade, and as you will see inside, a house with many progressive, energy efficient features and modern conveniences.

This manor house has 14 rooms, seven bedrooms, seven baths and five fireplaces. Though working with architects, Williamson and Crow, Chester was the genius behind this amazing house. He lived in the home for 62 years. There was only one other owner before Jane Lovett and Doug Wondergem bought it in 1993.

So well built and maintained was this house when the current owners purchased it, that it was practically move-in ready. Whatever work was needed was mostly done by Doug and Jane. They have furnished the home with many of their family antique pieces and keep adding to their art collection which is displayed throughout the home.

Much time and effort has gone into the landscaping—planting perennials, building arbors, adding a new patio and, of course, adopting Edgar the Dragon, an Artprize entry, who has taken up residence in the front yard.

For many years, this house has been a busy and popular B&B, called “Peaches”, the name taken from the sign that hangs in the foyer that came from the Jane’s grandfather’s peach orchard in South Haven.
222 Prospect S.E.
Host: Tom Logan

Small but mighty, this “twenty-something” is a hero in the neighborhood. For many decades this block of Prospect Avenue was disturbing. Fires and blight created by absentee-owners that believed that the hospitals would buy their properties at inflated prices, created a street where drugs and violence flourished.

In 1992, neighbors and the Heritage Hill Association put their arms around this street and developed the 200-300 Prospect Street Plan. It envisioned the street you see today: healthy, safe and lovely with some of the prettiest gardens in the Hill.

An important part of this miraculous turnaround was the building of this house in 1995. Tom Logan and his wife Anne, partnered with Craig Nobbelin to complete this case study in infill development. It was the first new house built in Heritage Hill in 50 years!

The objective was not to reproduce an historic home, but to build a modern home that blended in mass and scale with the neighborhood. Architect Jim Winter-Troutwine achieved this design.

It was the start of a miraculous transformation. Since that time, more houses and gardens and families have sprouted up. New life, new opportunities, new neighbors - what a difference this little house made.

The floor plan is very open with lots of light, making the house seem larger than it is. There is plenty of wall space, especially in the living room with its cathedral ceiling, where an extensive art collection from family and around the world is on display. The furnishings range from an antique wooden chest with inlay birds from Germany to a modern table designed by an artist. The Logan Art Museum waits!

The original house on the lot was a duplex built about 1890 for a plumber named John McNaughton.
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A new baby brings renewed life to a family and this home is a welcomed addition. This home was built just two years ago on the site of an 1890’s house that was destroyed by fire. The original home had been built and occupied by the Hooghuis family for over 50 years and then changed hands several times in the successive decades. When the home burned, a gaping hole was left in the streetscape. Michelle Giordano wanted to live near the downtown area, but most homes were much too large for a single person. She also liked the idea of designing a home from the ground up.

Delivering this two-story, 1600 square foot baby took 8 months and was not always easy going. In collaboration with her contractor, Hoffman Homes, and using materials that match the look of the older homes in the neighborhood, Michelle has created a modern, open concept home on the inside with some of the charm and detail of a Heritage Hill home on the exterior. The home was set back to fit with the streetscape and built up higher to afford more privacy. The home’s materials, mass, scale and setback echo the houses around it, maintaining the relationship between building, landscape and open space. It is designed to be compatible with its neighbors without being “historicized.” The front porch helps this home blend in with the surrounding houses, and the old-style fixture and welcoming rocking chairs add to the charm.
532 Prospect S.E.
Hosts: Mary & Fred Host

Someone in every family has to keep order in the clan, and this classic Tudor Revival Style home is just the one to keep up appearances in the neighborhood in a very English way - *The Lady Mary of the Hill*.

Built in 1908-1910, this home, fittingly, was primarily owned by women. Mrs. Cecelia Armstrong was the initial resident and she was followed by a list of mostly female owners. A recent male owner, John Kershek, did a lot of the major renovation needed in a 100 year old home.

This home exhibits the basic elements of the Tudor Revival Style- stucco walls, a steeply pitched roof with a dominant front gable, and the typical faux half-timbering. The windows are grouped in strings of two or three, also characteristic of the style. The exposed rafter ends above you on the front porch are somewhat unusual.

This large, welcoming porch is the perfect perch for sipping tea (or whatever) and for keeping an eye on the neighborhood summer happenings. The front door and screen door were custom made to fit the character of the architecture.

The interior of this home has an air of formality, with a room to either side of the entry and a grand staircase, with a welcoming window seat on the landing, to take you upstairs. The master bedroom has a patterned wood ceiling, a distinctive fireplace with a cherry wood mantle graces the living room and the leaded windows in the dining room flood the room with light on a sunny day. Family heirlooms have found a comfortable place here.

This fine English gentlewoman of a home welcomes you to tour her lovely perennial gardens too.
An American Foursquare - the name says it all; Honest, simple with a strong foundation. This home was just the fellow that Janet and Jeff were looking for – a smaller house in need of renovation that had good “bones” and lots of character. At 110 years old, this house was ready for a complete make-over and the owners spent six months of intensive labor giving new life to the old gentleman. They replaced all the wiring, plumbing and heating systems, added AC, a bath and an upstairs laundry, sanded floors and painted inside and out. They now have all the convenient, energy-efficient and worry-free advantages of a new home along with the charm and grace of this well-appointed supercentenarian.

Although Frank Lloyd Wright is acknowledged as the master of the Prairie Style, many talented Chicago Architects, known collectively as the Prairie School, designed in the style from the turn of the 20th century until WW I. Vernacular variations of the Prairie style, commonly called American Foursquare, can be found throughout the Midwest.

This house has the characteristic square massing of the Foursquare style, having a low-pitched hipped roof with wide, overhanging eaves. The battered side walls at the lower corners and the stringcourse across the façade emphasize the horizontal look of the house. Sadly, the house lost its asymmetrical front porch along the way, making the bay window more noticeable. The Moore’s have emphasized the bay widow with a contrasting paint color.

The home’s first owner was William Corl, owner of Corl, Knott & Co., a wholesale and retail milling business.

You will see what Janet and Jeff saw in this small, charming home and all that they have done to make it their own. New inside and out, the future “Prospects” for this home are bright.
This unfortunate soul was definitely the Heritage Hill family’s “burn-out” case – literally. It was so badly burned that it took a miraculous effort and the Willette’s dogged determination to save it from the wrecking crew that was in-route to demolish it.

Jarve and Marilyn purchased the home in 1980 for $300. Over 26 tons of rubble was removed from the property before the long rehab program could begin. The house is built on a creek bed and the first year was spent putting in steel posts and beams to stabilize the structure. After 36 years of therapy, this jewel of a house is one of the Hill’s most upstanding citizens. Almost every part of this house is new, but Jarv’s carpentry skills and reuse of found materials make it seem like it was all built over 100 years ago.

Originally built for an architect, Thomas Benjamin, somewhere between 1898 and 1902, at a cost of $3,600, the house may have been rented out until it was purchased by James Fox in 1908. The Fox family lived in this house for 60 years.

This house is an example of the late, more restrained, Queen Anne Style. It has a less irregular shape than earlier examples of the style, with Colonial Revival Style decorative elements, including round porch columns, dentil detailing and a truncated, engaged tower. Two smaller porches are located on the east side. With its playful architectural details and bright colors, including a third story sunburst one would never guess at this poor soul’s woeful past.

The neighbors are grateful for Jarve and Marilyn’s successful intervention. The owners like to say that all of the neighborhood children learned the names of the colors of the rainbow from their house.

Jarve is an accomplished woodworker - an artist in his own right; Marilyn is also an artist and their combined creativity is evident throughout this home. Look closely, because the attention to detail, both inside and out, is amazing.
How fortunate the Heritage Hill neighborhood is to have a well-respected lawyer in our family of homes. This gleaming white Greek Revival building, with its noble columns and stately symmetry, was built in 1836 and is the oldest surviving structure in the city. Originally located in the heart of a Grand Rapids when it was still just a frontier town, it stood as a symbol of the bright future that would be this city’s destiny.

Charles Philo Calkins purchased the building in 1837 and set up a law office with his partner, John T. Holmes. The city was growing rapidly, and Calkins’ practice, dealing mostly with real estate law, prospered as well, and soon outgrew this tiny building. When streets needed to be widened downtown, the office was moved to the Belknap Park area, and over time it was forgotten and neglected. Eventually, it came under the care of the Public Museum. It was fully restored, and the dedication ceremony at its current location at the meeting point of State, Washington and Jefferson, was part of the Bicentennial celebration of 1976.

In 2009, a refresh was spearheaded by Boy Scouts Corey Alberda and Travis Lepsch who took on the project for their Eagle Scout community service project. The pair from Faith Reformed Church’s Troop 338 in Wyoming raised $37,000—including $25,000 from Grand Rapids’ Downtown Development Authority. The funds replaced the building’s roof, deck and included the professional restoration of the Lincoln bust and landscaping at the park.

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450 Madison S.E. The Meyer May House
Steelcase Corporation

This neighborhood hipster was *progressive in an unconventional way* when it was built in 1908. Initially designed for a prominent Grand Rapids clothier, Meyer May, this Frank Lloyd Wright designed-and-built home was purchased in the mid-1980s by Steelcase Corporation. Steelcase has turned it into a museum piece of Mr. Wright's architectural prowess and it provides the rare opportunity to experience a Prairie house exactly as Frank Lloyd Wright intended, complete with original furnishings and faithfully-executed reproductions purchased and meticulously restored by Steelcase. It continues to fascinate visitors since it was first on the Weekend Tour of Homes as a “work in progress” in 1986.

The distinctive details found 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 light and the respectful use of natural materials - are evident throughout.

Wright carefully sited the house to allow maximum southern exposure for the living room windows and skylights. 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 Steelcase and Frank Lloyd Wright connection began in 1936 when Steelcase was contracted to manufacture Wright-designed furniture for the Johnson Wax Administration Building in Racine, Wisconsin. The Meyer May House was placed on the Michigan State Register of Historic Sites in 1986.

159 College N.E.
GRPS Montessori (Fountain School)

All families need its teachers. This 1917 symmetrical red brick and white sandstone school was first announced in *The Grand Rapids Herald* as “The finest school house in the country!” Henry Turner, the school architect designed the building and regards it as his masterpiece.

From the outside the building possesses a very impressive appearance. It is built along the lines of the letter “T” with the top of the “T” facing on College Avenue. This arrangement affords excellent lighting in all class rooms that would be impossible in the ordinary square building. The ornate exterior trim includes sculptured children’s faces that grace the north and south entrances.

First Lady Betty Ford was one of the most famous students of this school. *X-Files* fans will remember Gillian Anderson, who also attended Fountain.

This building, along with the adjacent Innovation Central, now house Grand Rapids Public School’s Montessori program. Montessori students attend schools on this campus from pre-school through high school. Grand Rapids offers one of the few programs in the country that includes a Montessori high school.

*For more information on enrollment at these schools see all the details at http://www.grps.org.*

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.

Tour happens every year on the 3rd weekend in May. Join us next spring

May 20 & 21

2017 Heritage Hill Weekend Tour of Homes
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