

# The President's House at the University of Michigan



Anne Duderstadt

## Preface

The President's House of the University of Michigan is the oldest building on the University campus. It is one of the original four houses constructed to house faculty when the University moved from Detroit to Ann Arbor in 1837.

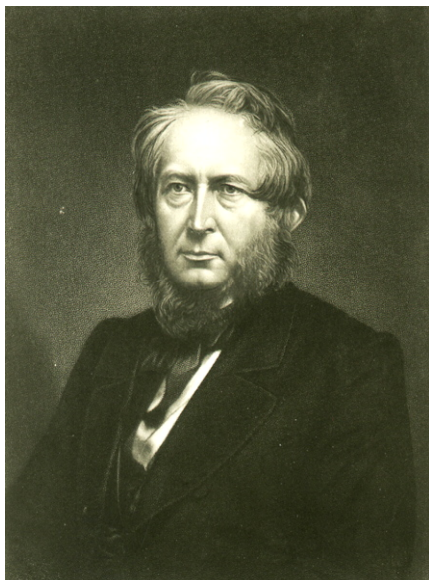


The Crosey painting of the original campus in 1847  
with two of the faculty houses shown on the left

The four houses, built by Harpin Lum for a total cost of \$26,900, all served the University in one capacity or another through the early years of the twentieth century. Completed in the summer of 1840, two of the houses fronted on North University and the other two on South University. The two-story plan included a central hall with two rooms opening off each side. The identical arrangement was repeated on the second floor. Each room had a fireplace. All of the houses had low-pitched, tin roofs. Emil Lorch, professor of architecture at the University felt these structures "had quiet dignity, good proportion, and excellent detail." He was particularly impressed with the entrance porches and the intricacies of their cornices.

### The Early Years

From 1841 to 1852 the University was governed by a faculty committee and the houses were apportioned among the professors. In 1852 Henry Philip Tappan became the first President of the University.



Henry and Julia Tappan

Tappan and his family moved into the vacant southwest dwelling and by his presence made it what it remains today—the President's House. Tappan made no modifications to the house except to see that gas lighting was installed in 1858. However a completely new board of Regents was elected and, unhappy with Tappan's pedagogical philosophy and overbearing manner, they dismissed him in 1863.



The Tappans moved into one of the faculty houses, which became the President's House for future presidents

Tappan's successor was Erastus O. Haven, a Methodist clergyman who had been a member of the faculty for a number of years. Haven's appointment indicated a return to the



Erastus O. and Mary Francis Haven

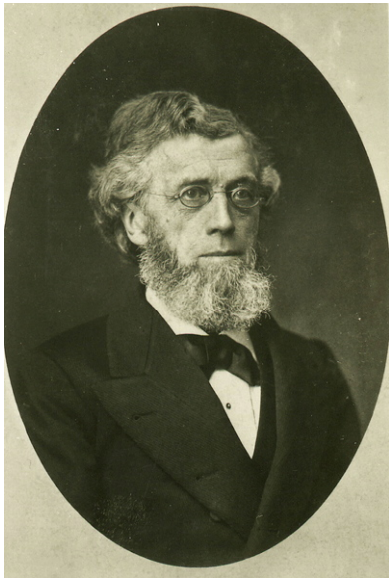
slower pace of life favored in rural mid-western towns of the nineteenth century. The Haven's first addition to the President's House, completed one year after they moved in, was a one-story kitchen. The third floor was also added during Haven's tenure.



The President's House during Haven's tenure,  
with the new kitchen on the left side

A faculty wife, loyal to Tappan, complained that the kitchen spoiled the lines of the house and certainly would allow unseemly odors to permeate the parlors. This woman went on to mock Mrs. Haven for describing Mrs. Tappan as lazy because she employed two servant girls. Mrs. Haven's feelings, however, were probably shared by the "just common folk" in Ann Arbor. Haven left in 1869 to assume the presidency of Northwestern University.

Henry Simmons Frieze, a professor of Latin Language and Literature, served as President *pro tempore* during the next two years while the Regents searched for a new President. However Frieze never lived in the President's House. He preferred to emphasize the temporary nature of his position by remaining in his own home on Washtenaw Avenue.



Henry Frieze and his house on Washtenaw Avenue

In their search for a permanent successor to Haven, the Regents selected James Angell, then president of the University of Vermont. Extensive negotiations with Angell continued over two years. It was only after the third offer that Angell accepted the position, with the renovation of the President's House being a key factor in his decision. The following excerpts from the letters concerning the long negotiations are revealing:

A letter informing Angell of his election as president of the University of Michigan from E.C. Walker, chairman of the Executive Committee of the Regents (September 3, 1869) states:

"Definite action was not taken on the subject of *Salary*. It will be \$3500

per annum and a roomy and comfortable house (with a large garden for fruit and vegetables attached) *–at least.*”

Angell’s reply (October 4, 1869) requested more attention to the President’s House:

“It has occurred to me that I ought to ask you a little more definitely what you think could be done to the house. It seems to me to need absolutely, paper and paint, bath room with hot and cold water, water closet, and some arrangement for a dining room closet, and a furnace. My family has never lived in a house without the above named conveniences, which the house lacks, and composed as it is of persons from very advanced age to infancy, I should not feel willing to ask them to dispense with them, unless there were an absolute necessity. I am well aware that such a change would entail a pretty heavy outlay at first, but once done it would be done for all the future. The attic would hold a tank which could be filled from the roof.”

Walker responded for the Regents (January 4, 1871):

“The Board was an unit, without a shadow of a difference of opinion among us. We determined unanimously to offer you \$4000 per annum and exps of removal and to repaint the house as you suggested, your salary to begin Aug 1, 1871.

Angell asked for still more (February 1, 1871):

“I do most sincerely appreciate this renewed token of the favor of the Regents. And I beg you to extend to them my hearty thanks for their invitation. I have bestowed earnest thought upon their proposition during the last three weeks, and I am reluctantly constrained to say that I really cannot afford to undertake the work at Ann Arbor on the salary named. I am sorry that my circumstances in life compel me to give more consideration to the question of salary than I could wish. But so it is.”

The long negotiations finally came to a favorable conclusion, the Regents yielded, and a wire was sent to Dr. Angell announcing their action and that the salary was fixed at Angell’s figure.

The Western Union Telegraph Company

Ann Arbor M 7<sup>th</sup> 1870 (1871)  
Received at Burl. Feby 8<sup>th</sup>

*To Prest J B Angell*

YOU WERE UNANIMOUSLY ELECTED PRES-  
IDENT SALARY FORTY FIVE HUNDRED AND  
HOUSE EXPENSE OF REMOVEL  
E.C. WALKER

But the negotiations continued as this excerpt from a letter of Walker indicates (April 17, 1871):

“The Ex. Com. reported about the house, and we appropriated \$1,500 to its repair. We are to put in furnace bathroom hot and cold water—and paper and paint throughout etc. etc. Prof. Frieze or Prof. Douglass who is our mechanic will attend to the details and will write you in full. The Regents visited the house when I was not there in March and decided that the addition of the 3<sup>rd</sup> story, on walls only designed for two rendered the

insertion of *new windows* on the sides *unsafe*. I regret the decision and do not share in their fears, tho some are far better judges than myself. The fruit, especially the pears, looks very promising. It was forgotten to trim the grapevines and it is now *too late*."

Acting President Henry Frieze joined in (April 19, 1871):

"We are about to commence repairs on the President's house. We can manage very nicely in respect to everything excepting the alterations you suggest in the windows. It is the opinion of those who have examined the house, that the walls and stucco will not bear any breaking into--particularly as the *addition of the third story* to the house a few years ago caused the walls to settle at the corners, and to show some signs of weakness. Though the movement was but slight, it is thought unsafe to tamper with them. I think we shall succeed in making the house in every other way pleasant and comfortable.

Mrs. F. thinks Mrs. A. had better bring with her any *good domestics* she may already have, or may find.

You will also need a *good horse*."

In a final letter from Frieze (July 15, 1871):

"Things are going on well at the house. The front windows are already cut down. The change will be a great improvement in the looks and comfort of the house."



James and Sarah Angell and their family in front of the President's House

During Angell's thirty-nine-year tenure, the President's House was substantially altered. In 1891 a west wing was added to give Angell a semi-circular library and more bedrooms. Also, two large rooms were made from the original pair of small rooms on either side of the ground-floor hallway. The house was also wired for electricity that same year. The barn, an orchard, and a vegetable garden remained at the rear of the house. The Regents did not accept President Angell's resignation until 1910, four years after he had originally tendered it. He lived in the President's House until his death in 1916.



The President's House during Angell's tenure, with the semi-circular library and bedroom addition.

Angell's successor was Harry Burns Hutchins, dean of the Law School since 1895, and long-time friend of Angell. Hutchins remained in his own home on Monroe Street. He was the only Michigan president not to live in the President's House.



Harry and Mary Hutchins



The house of Harry B. Hutchins on Monroe Street at Packard

The President's House remained vacant after Angell's death, unused except as a Red Cross headquarters during World War I, and as temporary housing for Professor Hugh Cabot of the Medical School from late 1919 through June 1920.



Marion Leroy Burton and Nina Burton

Hutchins retired in 1920 and was succeeded by Marion LeRoy Burton, president of the University of Minnesota. At his request the President's House was thoroughly renovated and a sun parlor with a sleeping porch above added to the east side. The back porch was made into an enclosed dining area, and a garage with bedrooms overhead was added to the west side. Burton's tenure was cut short by his death in 1925 after a year long illness.



The President's House during the Burtons' tenure

Michigan's next president, Clarence Cook Little, came from the University of Maine where he had served as president for three years. He paid little attention to the President's House during his four-year stay in Ann Arbor. Embroiled in almost continual controversy, Little resigned from the presidency of the University in 1929.





President and Mrs. Clarence Cook Little

Alexander G. Ruthven followed Little as president. Ruthven had been at Michigan since 1903, first as a graduate student and then as professor of zoology and museum director. He and Mrs. Ruthven displayed a sense of nostalgia in restoring some of the original furnishings of the President's House. A private study was added in the northeast corner for the president, and Mrs. Ruthven's desire for a glassed-in plant room was accommodated.



The President's House during the Ruthven years

The Ruthven's were well known for their student teas. The house was filled with antiques and tours were given to students during these teas.



Alexander and Frances Ruthven hosting a student tea

### The Modern Era

After a thirty-two year tenure, Ruthven retired in 1951 and was succeeded by Harlan H. Hatcher. Hatcher came from Ohio State University where he was vice president for faculty and curriculum. He was also a former dean and professor of English.



Anne and Harlan Hatcher, and their children, Robert and Anne

Shortly before the Hatchers arrived, the Inglis House estate had been given to the University, and the Hatchers were invited to live there. However, they chose to live in the President's house on campus. The twenty two room house was sufficient for the Hatcher's needs, and they asked only that a glassed-in porch and stone terrace be added at the rear of the house. However, the interior of the house was extensively redecorated during the Hatchers' tenure.



The President's House during the Hatcher years



The living room in the President's House during the Hatcher's era

The Flemings came to Michigan from the University of Wisconsin where Robben Fleming had served as chancellor. Sally Fleming noted in her oral history that after her



Robben and Sally Fleming

husband had been selected as the next president of Michigan, she was visited in Wisconsin by Virginia Denham, the University decorator, to check their furniture and to see what could be used in the President's House and what would be needed. "And when we first came to see the House, it was quite an experience, because the place was much larger than anything either of us had ever lived in and we were wondering how in the world we were ever going to make this huge place into a home."



The President's House during the Fleming years

Virginia worked with Sally to choose furniture, paint, wallpaper, drapery, decorations, china, silverware and all of the things that are needed to run a home and a place for entertaining University guests. Sally Fleming tried to make the President's House more of a home by using conversation areas in each room to make the large house seem more cozy.

The twelve-story Hatcher Graduate Library was constructed right behind the President's House during the Fleming's tenure. About ten feet of the back yard was taken up for about three years while the large structural pieces were erected and the building took shape.



The Hatcher Library looming behind the President's House

Allan Smith served as Interim President during the time between the Flemings and the Shapiros. Smith had been on the Michigan Law faculty for many years, serving as dean of the Law School and Provost. The Smiths initially decided to remain in their own home since the assignment was only for one year. However, they soon found that they were spending so much of their time at the President's House planning and hosting events that they finally had no choice but to move in. Since the Flemings had taken their personal possessions, there was no furniture in many of the rooms, no decorative items, dishes, serving pieces, and other items necessary to run the house. There was one full time staff person who cleaned and answered the phone. When catering for an event was needed, the staff from Inglis House was used.



Allan and Alene Smith

Harold Shapiro was named president in 1980. The Shapiros had lived in Ann Arbor for many years on Hill Street. Harold Shapiro was a professor of Economics, Chair of that department, and Provost. Vivian Shapiro was a professor in the School of Social Work. The Shapiro family moved into the President's House on December 13, 1980. The Shapiros had four daughters, two living at home. Talking about the move, Vivian recalled in her oral history "And the children were not very happy about the move, and they simply did not want to deal with it, so I packed up their stuff and each of their bedrooms got the boxes of their things."



Harold and Vivian Shapiro and family

With the help of Virginia Denham, all of the Shapiro's furniture was moved over to furnish the upstairs of the President's House and to fill in the downstairs. The house was left essentially intact. The carpets and drapes remained. The only changes were to replace the old wallpaper in the dining room which was very old and reupholster the dining room chairs. Some changes were also made in the master bedroom since pictures had been removed from the walls and some painting was necessary.



The President's House during the Shapiro years

Bertha (Bert) Spears was brought over from Inglis House to do both the cooking and part of the housekeeping. D.J. Cole was housekeeper for the second and third floor and handled the laundry. Chuck Jenkins was the gardener and horticulturist. Vivian Shapiro noted that they did most of their entertaining at the President's House because they did not want to go out and leave the children.

During the 1980's the University experienced severe budget difficulties. Departments and units were asked to cut costs and much of the maintenance of University buildings was deferred. The President's House had suffered along with everything else. As the University emerged from its financial difficulties in the late 1980's, the Regents approved a budget to update the heating and air conditioning systems, install a handicapped bathroom, a handicapped access ramp to the house, and a small amount for refurbishing the interior. However before the renovations could commence, the Shapiros accepted the presidency of Princeton, and Robben Fleming came back as interim President while the search for a new President was underway.

### Our Personal Odyssey in the President's House

The election of my husband, James J. Duderstadt, as Michigan's next president was announced in June of 1988. Like the Shapiros, our family had lived in Ann Arbor for many years. Jim and I moved to Ann Arbor with our two daughters from Pasadena, California in December of 1968. Ann Arbor was very, very cold. We knew no one. In January I received a call from the Faculty Women's Club inviting me to a coffee for newcomers. I became very involved with the Club and became chairman of FWC Newcomers the following year. The first time I visited the Michigan President's House was for the FWC Holiday Reception given by Sally Fleming. I thought it was the most beautiful house I had ever seen! And I'm sure I mentioned this to Jim.



My first view of the President's House in 1969,  
glowing in the distance as the University's White House

Ironically, when Jim was named President in June of 1988 it so happened that Robben and Sally Fleming were back once again serving in the interim role during the presidential search. After the Regent's interview and the press conference announcing Jim's appointment, President Fleming asked us both to come over to see the house. Even though Jim had been on the faculty for over twenty years, serving as professor, Dean of Engineering, and most recently as Provost, he had only visited the house on a few occasions, and then only for brief receptions in the public rooms. Our daughters, Susan and Kathy came along, since they also had never seen the house.

The Flemings moved back to their house on Vinewood early in the summer. Since Jim was not scheduled to officially begin his presidency until fall, the University decided to move ahead during the summer with the extensive renovations proposed during the last months of the Shapiro administration, and the work on the President's House began.

We were in limbo during the summer months. We had to plan events for the coming year and yet we were not officially the first family until September 1. Most new presidents wait a term or two into the job before their inauguration. However, since we had been at Michigan for 20 years and had a lot of work to do we did not see any need to wait, and so Jim's inauguration was scheduled for October 6, 1988. This was the weekend of the Michigan State Game, the State of the University Address, a 50<sup>th</sup> year celebration for the Graduate School, and a big gala for the performing arts at Michigan. So there was much planning to be done during the summer.

The President's House was also in a sort of limbo. Renovations of President's Houses usually occur between presidents (at least at Michigan) because of all of the political pressures that come into play with spending money on such projects. During the summer a new heating and cooling system was installed throughout the house. In addition a complex sprinkling system and fire detection system was installed on the second and third floors and in the basement. A handicapped bathroom and handicapped ramp to the house were added. Funds were also available to repair all of the damage done by this work. The understanding was that any funds left over from these projects could be used for interior renovation.

My first visit to the house after the project had begun was a real eye opener. The toilet from the first floor bathroom (to be the handicapped bathroom) was on the dining porch. The front yard was totally dug up, and the side porch was gone. Cigarette butts were scattered all over the floors by the workmen. The University decorators were walking through the house with carpet salesman deciding what THEY were going to do with the house. Suddenly, the house was not as "beautiful" as I had remembered.



My first view of the President's House after Jim was elected President



The front yard was not much better ...



And look what I found on the dining porch!



There were also transition problems with staffing. There was still a housekeeper who had worked for the Shapiros and Flemings, but the cooking was being done by an assortment of chefs from Student Housing. In fact, I walked in several mornings to find the staff catering some other events on campus out of the President's House kitchen.

After the mechanical work and handicap access work was completed and the costs were totaled, we learned that there was roughly \$100,000 remaining that could be used for modest refurbishing of the interior. That probably sounds like quite a bit for a normal home, but for a 150-year-old, 14,000 square foot house, this amount would not go far. In fact, the University's interior decorating staff were already planning to spend \$70,000 of this amount just to replace the turquoise carpet throughout the house. Since Jim had many years of experience in coping with inadequate budgets as dean and provost, we both knew how valuable even this relatively small amount of funds could be. We were determined to do as much as we could within this budget, because we knew that it was unlikely that any more could be allocated to the renovation of the President's House. So, we halted the remainder of project until we had lived in the house for a year to see what really needed to be done. We intended to return to renovate the interior of the house the following summer.

We kept our house on Delaware Drive in Ann Arbor completely furnished, and in May we moved back into it so that we could begin the renovation of the President's House on our limited budget.

We began by removing the carpets from all of the floors on the first and second floors. All of the floors were wood. The library and the dining room were the original quarter-sawed oak and were in beautiful condition. Of course there was some damage done when removing the old radiators along with some water damage, but this could easily be repaired. The living room was not quarter-sawed oak, but was beautiful none the less. The president's study was a wide board pegged wood with a little water damage, but repairable. The second floor wood was not as grand but in satisfactory condition for refinishing. The carpet on the third floor was in good condition, and we decided to leave it in place.



The original floors of quarter-sawed oak were exposed and refinished

The beige silk wallpaper in the dining room was very elegant at one time, but it suffered from water damage along the outer walls. In places it was taped to the wall to keep it in place. There was also water damage to the wallpaper in the library. Hence I made the decision to strip all of the wallpaper in the house, except for the yellow bedroom, which was in reasonable condition. Here I should confess that I was not a fan of wallpaper. I had made some REAL wallpaper mistakes in my own home. Since such mistakes can be expensive, our limited budget dictated that we replace the damaged wallpaper with paint.



We repaired, replastered, and painted the walls.

The drapes had been in place for many years. They were also water and sun damaged and needed to be replaced, again within budget. The renovation was completed during the summer, but it took several months before the drapes, furniture and rugs arrived. Through careful budget control and considerable effort, we were able to refurbish the entire house with the money that was going to be spent to replace the turquoise carpet.



We decorated the house with art on loan from the Museum of Art



Finished at last!

It had always been customary for the President's family to furnish their own private living quarters. This, of course we did as well, although since we intended to keep our original home in Ann Arbor furnished as an occasional retreat, this led to some duplication.



The President's House during the Duderstadt years

It was a unique experience living in a house characterized by such an extraordinary history. It is quite a challenge to make such a landmark a home for your family, especially since you know that you are only visiting for the brief time that you are in the presidency.



Some of the many photographs of earlier Michigan presidents and their families that we framed and displayed throughout the house (shown at Christmas time in the President's House)

As I was doing the renovation, I became very interested in the families that occupied the house before us. With the help of the staff at the Bentley Library we collected photographs of the Presidents and their families as well as the various stages of the evolution of the President's house and had these mounted in prominent places throughout the public spaces of the house. These photographs constantly reminded us of the many contributions that earlier presidents and their families had made both to the house and to the University, and the privilege we enjoyed by living and serving in such a special place.



The Duderstadts: Susan, Jim, Anne, and Kathy  
(with the grandfather clock in the President's House donated  
by the College of Engineering and the Charles Sligh Company)

## The Photographic Essay

This photographic essay is intended as a pictorial history of the President's House, its presidents and their families, for the University archives. We also sought to provide copies of this essay to the many talented and dedicated University staff who worked so hard to maintain such a remarkable and special place. They deserve our sincere appreciation and gratitude.

### *The President's House and Inglis House Staff*

Barbara Johnson, Coordinator of Presidential Facilities and Events  
Inge Roncoli, Housekeeper  
Kurt Szalay, House Assistant  
Joan Kobrinski, Horticultist  
Rose Abercrombie, Gardener  
Judy Dinesen, Events Consultant

### *The Plant Department Team*

Farris Womack, Vice President and Chief Financial Officer  
Jack Weidenbach, Associate Vice President  
Bill Krumm, Associate Vice President  
Paul Spradlin, Director of Plant Extension  
Jack Janveja, Director of Facilities  
Fred Mayer, University Planner  
Tom Schlaff, Facilities Projects  
David Stockson, University Architect  
Brian Harcourt, Architectural Assistant  
Norma Monsma, University Interior Design

Jim Christenson, Director of the Plant Department  
Bob Hall, Painter  
Bill Robinson, Plumber  
Brian Baughn, Carpenter  
Jerry Berry, Electrician  
Mark Ventimiglia, HVAC technician  
Craig Butcher, HVAC technician  
Rosemary Kuderick, Pest Control  
Leo Heatley and the Campus Safety Team

*Computer Support Team*

Steve Beebe  
Dan Fessahazion  
John Chang

*The Duderstadt Family Team*

Susan Duderstadt and John Iskander and Eleanor  
Katharine Duderstadt and Nathan Schwadron and Marina

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Anne Duderstadt

Ann Arbor

May, 2000



The First Family of the University of Michigan  
1988-1996

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