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### A Look At Ann Arbor Through S. State & E. Liberty

Ann Arbor is just one of many cities within Michigan, but it has a unique character of its own. Part of this is due to having the University of Michigan harbored within the city, but that is just one reason Ann Arbor stands out. Its character is still wrapped up in the small town feel it maintained even after becoming a city. The many buildings within the city are just one example of what sets Ann Arbor apart from the other city in Michigan. The structures standing within the two city blocks contained by the streets of East Liberty in the north, South State in the east, East Williams to the south, and Thompson street to the north with Maynard running north to south connecting to Williams and Liberty can serve as an example to what makes Ann Arbor what it is today. This area also serves to show how the city has changed. Before we can examine the sample location, a general history of Ann Arbor may serve as a guide to how this city has evolved over time.

The recorded history of Ann Arbor begins in early 1824. (Wiki AA1). The original founders were John Allen from Virginia and Elisha Rumsey from New York. (Wiki AA1). On May 25, 1824, the town plat was registered with Wayne County as “Annabour”. (Wiki AA1). They had purchased 640 acres of land from the federal government for \$800 to begin the settlement. (Wiki AA1). Ann Arbor lost the bid to become the state capitol in 1936, but did succeed to win the bid in 1937 to be the new site for the University of Michigan. (Wiki AA2). This was a major boon for Ann Arbor then, and the university continues to be an important part of the city today. (Wiki AA2). Ann

Arbor became a major regional transportation hub with the arrival of the Michigan Central Railroad in 1839. (Wiki AA2). Ann Arbor was established as the seat of Washtenaw County in 1827, recognized as a village in 1833, and was chartered as a city in 1851. (Wiki AA2). (see figures 1 &2). The first immigrants in large numbers that traveled to Ann Arbor were Germans, and the Irish. The majority of immigrants to Ann Arbor during the 19<sup>th</sup> century were from Canada. (Wiki AA2). The beginnings of Ann Arbor was tied to the immigrants that called it home, and their efforts.

The university continued to set the course of the city since its relocation to Ann Arbor even as other trends set in during the dawn of a new century. The start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the expansion of the University of Michigan. (Marwil, p.79) Two-thirds of the \$600,000 spent on construction in the year 1902 went to this expansion. (Marwil, p.79). This was just part of the expansion of the university as over the years ahead the university would gain hundreds of acres of land in the city. (Marwil, p.79) . The Ann Arbor Civic Association in 1913 adopted a “City of Knowledge and Homes” as the motto for the city. (Marwil, p.85). This was because the value and purposes of home and school were thought to be complimentary at the time. (Marwil, p.85). The car started to become common in 1914 as the horse was clearly being replaced as the standard means of transportation. (Marwil, p.90). The first World War brought provided a catalyst to local industry. (Marwil, p.94). The war also brought animosity towards the German population of the city when the United States stopped being a neutral entity, and joined the Allied Forces against Germany in 1917. (Marwil, p.96). Ann Arbor was insulated

from hard times by the presence of the university was to be evident in the 1930s. The start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century also saw the arrival of Greek immigrants that were beginning to build a life for themselves in Ann Arbor. (Marwil, p.99). By 1930 numerous Greeks had been successful in making this happen which persuaded others to stay. (Marwil, p.100). The university and the city spent the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century valuing the presence of each other.

A shift to research as the aim of the university was followed by a shift in feel of the city. Ann Arbor doubled in area in the fifteen years that followed World War II. (Marwil, p.135). The university continued to increasingly define the city's purpose in 1950 by opening a second campus north of the city limits. (Marwil, p.138). It further brought many in money as federal contracts and grants funded the research seen as the new mission of the university itself at this time. (Marwil, p.139). The city itself helped in the creation of the Greater Ann Arbor Research Park in the southern corridor of the city which showed again that the city was committed to the same aims that the university holds. (Marwil, p.140.) The growth in the 1950s expanded the size of the city, while the growth in the 1960s started to change the face and spirit of the city. (Marwil, p148). Buildings in the center of the city that were constructed at this time rose well above the size of the earlier towers of the city. (Marwil, p.148-149). The shops and restaurants that catered to diverse tastes would appear and disappear as time moved forward. (Marwil, p.149). This shift from a small city with a small town feel to a small city with large-city aspirations was further heralded by the more than doubling of the population between 1950 and 1970. (Marwil, p.148-149). Ann Arbor may have large-city aspirations but in

some aspects it still retains its small city with a small town feel image.

The tour of our city blocks shall start with Nickels Arcade. (See figures 3a & 3b). It is close to the university, Its continued presence really helps in explaining the Ann Arbor character that persists even through changes. “Nickels Arcade is a 261-foot long gallery or arcade which links State Street on the east with Maynard Street on the west in Ann Arbor. The principal facade faces onto State St. and is set into a row of two-story late nineteenth century and early twentieth century commercial buildings.” (MCGI). Nickels Arcade was constructed from 1915 to 1918, and is unique to Ann Arbor as an example of a small commercial gallery or “arcade”. (MCGI). It stands as an important part of the architectural history of the city. (MCGI). It was an important expansion of commercial development when it was first built. (MCGI). It still serves as a gallery of small shops within downtown Ann Arbor.

Next is the St Mary Student Parish that resides on Thompson Street. “From that growing Catholic student community and the worship community of St. Thomas Apostle Church near campus came the initiative to build the Chapel of St. Mary, the Immaculate Conception, whose cornerstone was laid in 1924. At the time of the chapel dedication, an estimated 800 Catholic students attended the University.” (St Mary Parish). “In the early 1970's, in recognition of increasing involvement and support from non-student members of the Ann Arbor and University of Michigan communities, St. Mary Student Chapel changed its name to St. Mary Student Parish. As a parish, we are dedicated to providing opportunities for students, young adults, families, and elders to grow in their Catholic

faith and serve one another as a spiritual community.” (St Mary Parish). The community still supports this Catholic institution among other Christian churches, and so Christianity can still be seen as a part of the city today.

The downtown theaters have a history behind them that goes back nearly one hundred years. The Michigan and State both reside within this area to be examined. (see figures 4a & 4b). The Michigan Theater opened on January 5, 1928. (Shackman, p.178). It resides on Liberty Street. It was built by Angelo Poulas, who was a Greek immigrant.

(Shackman, p.178). The style of the theater is usually referred to as Romanesque Revival.

(Shackman, p.178). The State Theater was opened in March of 1942. (Shackman, p.182).

A total of six buildings were razed along State Street to make room for the new Art Deco

theater. (Shackman, p.182). The State Theater was divided into a quad in 1977 with two

screens downstairs, and two upstairs that was once a balcony. (Shackman, p.183). 1979

saw the end of programming at the Michigan Theater. (Shackman, p.183). The Michigan

Theater was saved by a 1982 millage that led to the restoration and operation to be

handled by the nonprofit Michigan Theater Foundation. (Shackman, p.184). The State

Theater shuffled ownership a few times, and landed in the hands of Hograth

Management, a real estate company owned by bookstore founders Tom and Loius

Borders. (Shackman, p.184). The downstairs has been leased to Urban Outfitters while

the upstairs screens remain. (Shackman, p.184). The Michigan Theater has been handling

the programming and publicity for the State Theater since 1997. (Shackman, p.184).

These movie palaces still stand today even after the age of theater they came from has

become a thing of the past.

One of the many shops to appear and disappear from Ann Arbor includes Borders. This bookstore chain began in Ann Arbor. The Borders Bookstore in downtown Ann Arbor on the streets of Liberty and Maynard was founded in 1971 across the street from its current location, and served as the flagship store for the Borders Group. (WSWS). This store along with many others saw closure in 2011 as Borders Group fell on rough financial times. (WSWS). The absence of such a store will be felt, but something will fill the void as time goes on.

Tower Plaza stands as part of the new wave of towers that highlight the skyline of an emerging large-city aspiration of Ann Arbor. (See figure 5). “Tower Plaza is the tallest building in Ann Arbor, Michigan. It is located at 555 East William Street. The high-rise was constructed in 1969 and stands at 26 stories, and is 267 feet (81 m) tall.” (Wiki Tower). A height limit to buildings within Ann Arbor was set soon after Tower Plaza was constructed. (Wiki Tower). It was originally a residential apartment building, but was converted to individually owned condominiums in 1987. (Wiki Tower). The building is close to the University of Michigan campus. (Wiki Tower). The height limit set after its construction highlights the concern of just how much Ann Arbor is going to lose its previous feel as the city works out its aspirations against maintaining its own character.

Amer’s stands as one of the many new restaurants to grace downtown as the city shifts from being a small city with a small town feel to something different. The idea for Amer’s Mediterranean Deli was created in 1987. (Amer’s). It brought together the coffee house and a quality delicatessen. (Amer’s). It started near the University of Michigan,

Flint campus and then moved to the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor campus in 1989. (Amer's). It is located on State Street just northwest of the University of Michigan campus. It is accompanied by a stretch of restaurants down this corridor of State Street.

The Necto is a nightclub located on Liberty Street in downtown Ann Arbor. "The Necto continues a long legacy of the building as a nightclub and music venue. Originally opened in the mid-1970s as "Chances Are" then as "The Second Chance" the bar was a tour stop for up and coming live music acts in the late 70s and early 80s such as The Police, Cheap Trick, Bob Seger and many more. In the late 1980s "The Nectarine Ballroom" was opened in the space and the building was remodeled around 1991." (Wiki Necto). It came under new ownership in 2001 and reopened as The Necto. (Wiki Necto). "Although the venue may appear small from the outside, it is actually a multilevel establishment. The Necto's main floor has two full service bars, seating and a large dance floor. Located on the lower level is the Red Room, a separate section of the club with an additional dance floor, seating and full service bar. The nightclub also has an outdoor patio seasonally opened with a full bar." (Wiki Necto). It came in as the city was shifting focus but has maintained a lineage as a music venue in downtown Ann Arbor.

Ann Arbor's history has been tied to the University of Michigan since it moved in 1837. The expansion of the city has been accompanied or heralded by the expansion of the university. Even so, there are other structures besides the campus that gives Ann Arbor character and also tells the history of the city. The rise and fall of businesses, the arrival of new restaurants or shops, and the retention of historic sites tells the history of

the city as well. Ann Arbor has grown much since its settlement in 1824, and the build up of downtown to what it is today highlights the differences to what the site looked like when the forests were cleared to make way for the progress of mankind. This serves as a human history of the area, but the city has impacted the environment greatly. The area may now be home to thousands of humans but was once an undisturbed habitat far removed from the urban center it is today. Much of what has been done to the land, water, and wildlife will not be recovered in the region until mankind no longer holds the reins over what happens to the land in which Ann Arbor resides on.

Appendix

Figure 1 – 1873 Washtenaw County

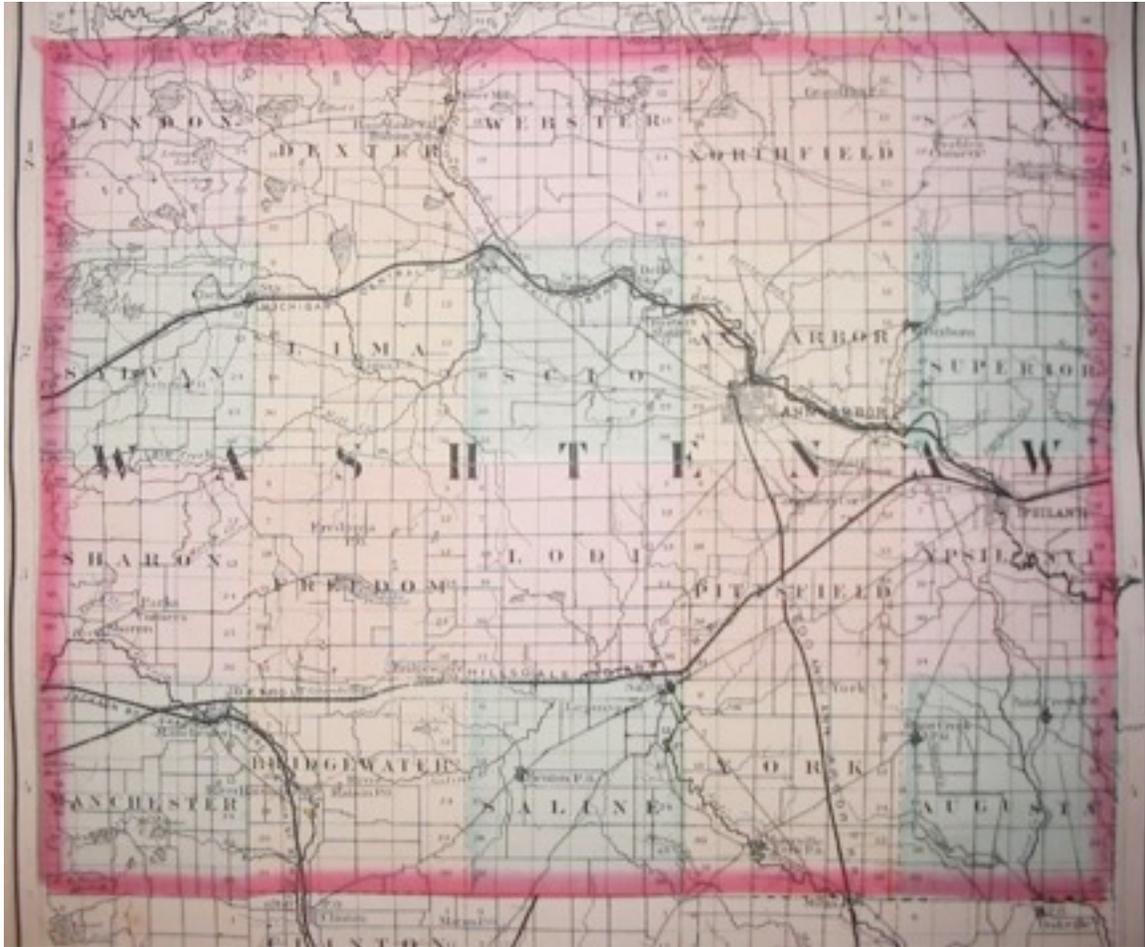


Figure 2 – 1874 Ann Arbor Township



Figure 3a – Nickel's Arcade



Figure 3b – Nickel's Arcade



Figure 4a – Michigan Theater



Figure 4b – State Theater

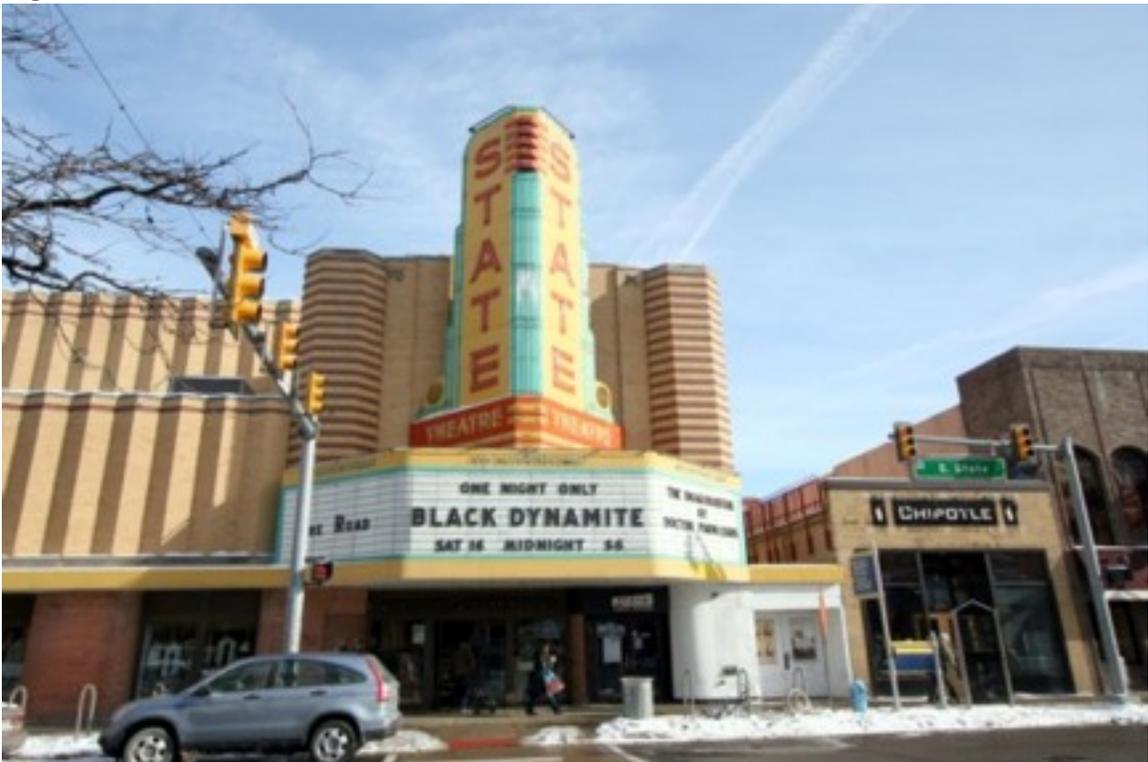


Figure 5 – Tower Plaza



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