

**Way Library — Razed 1958**

The roots of Historic Perrysburg go back to 1958. It was then that the original Way Library building was torn down. It had been built in 1892 through a bequest in the will of Willard V. Way, but was totally inadequate for continued use as a library. Local citizens by and large agreed, but there certainly was no agreement that it should be torn down. This was a classic Romanesque-style piece of architecture, one of only two examples in town, the other being the old Louisiana Avenue School (torn down in 2008). Many people were shocked and angered over the destruction of the old library.

And then in 1963 a second shock came. The classic old Italianate-style Township Hall, located where our Municipal Building now stands, began to literally fall apart. The upstairs auditorium was being used as the gathering place for local kids in the Beehive recreational program, and the ceiling collapsed on a day when there was to be one of the regular “sock hops” that evening. This was close to a real community tragedy.

That public building was erected twenty years before the library, in 1872. It was intended as a lure to get the county seat moved back here from Bowling Green and citizens raised private money to build it. Now it was razed.



**Town Hall — Razed 1963**

With these events many here realized that Perrysburg's historic built environment was and could be fragile and endangered.

About this time the United States Congress passed the National Historic Preservation Act that enlarged the National Register to include state and local sites, not just national monuments and famous peoples' homes. Consciousness about preservation was beginning to grow. Also, in 1968 the Maumee Valley Historical Society formed a Landmarks Committee to administer federal money for historic inventories that for the first time officially identified significant architecture in this area.

And finally, a couple of preservation firebrands with great credentials came forward to lead the charge. They were the late Mrs. Anderton L. (Hilda) Bentley, and her daughter-in-law Mrs. Thomas (Gill) Bentley. Hilda was a member of the Ohio

Historical Society board at the time and the only Ohio representative on the board of advisors for the National Trust for Historic Preservation. She persuaded several preservation officials to visit Perrysburg and to give advice.

Gill Bentley had been involved in helping some of the threatened properties on Collingwood Avenue in the Old West End and had organized an exhibit at the Museum of Art that attracted wide attention. She, along with architect Charles Stark, helped identify important period architecture in Toledo that was worthy of general attention and preservation.

Taking advantage of the Preservation Act, by 1970 the Old Wood County Jail on Indiana Avenue and Findlay (built over a century and a half ago) was the first Perrysburg structure to be placed on the National Register. The following year the same Landmarks Committee did a second architectural survey that focused on lesser-known but equally historic buildings on both sides of the river. As a result, in 1973 it was possible to get the former Spafford Exchange Hotel on West Front Street listed on the National Register.

And then there was another happening. In 1977 a project called the Perrysburg Urban Design and Historic District Study was initiated by the Country Garden Club here, and funded by the National Trust, the City, six civic organizations and seven local banks. Its purpose was to define area growth problems and offer guidelines promoting historic zoning and preservation; to provide direction and suggestions for attractive changes that owners might consider for their downtown commercial buildings; and to suggest creation of a Historic District and a Design Review Board (later to be known as the Historic Landmarks

Commission) that would monitor, review and clarify standards of design and permitted changes.

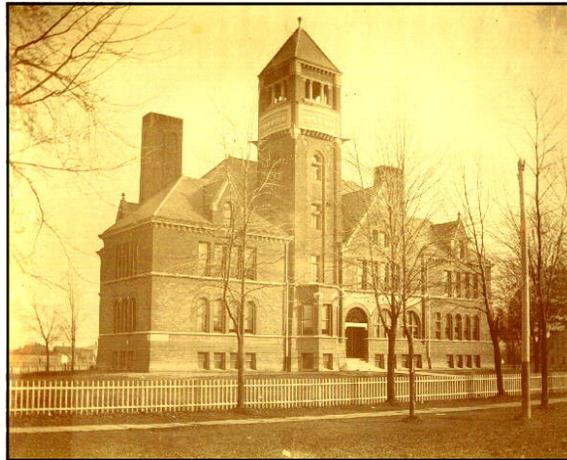
All of this is relevant in that there became a need for an organization such as Historic Perrysburg--the most pressing reason being that listing on the National Register within a Historic District (or anywhere else, for that matter) is an honorary recognition only. A building owner can still do anything he wishes, including tearing it down. So a historic zoning ordinance with teeth enough to enforce limitations on what changes owners can make to the exterior of their properties in the Historic District was needed. And that required organized support because there was some opposition to such a new idea at the time. Today, any revision to the exterior of a historic district home is subject to review and approval of the City of Perrysburg under the appropriate ordinances.

Consequently, Historic Perrysburg was born. On May 3, 1977, the State of Ohio issued a charter to Historic Perrysburg "To cultivate an interest and awareness of the history of the Perrysburg area; to provide assistance in the preservation of old buildings and sites, new construction, and land use planning in the community; to work with organizations, the City and its citizens; and to collect and distribute information to the community by means of publications, tours and special events to promote the historic aspects of the community."

So what exactly is Historic Perrysburg? First of all, it is NOT a historical or genealogy society. It is a group created to encourage and promote the preservation of our built environment and the preservation of our local history, for to this day it has no office or building or permanent address other than a post office box. The Perrysburg Area Historical Museum, an offspring

of Historic Perrysburg in 2001, is the keeper of historical artifacts and documents about our community.

Perhaps the best description of what Historic Perrysburg is, is this: ***Historic Perrysburg is a non-profit organization whose members love this community the way it is and who wish to keep it that way forever. And they work toward this goal without any power or authority to dictate what owners can do with their properties, nor do they in any way function as a part of the City of Perrysburg.***



**Old Schoolhouse — Razed 2008**



## **Things You Should Know About Historic Perrysburg, Inc.**

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## **WHAT it is and WHY**

