

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD - 2010
LOUISA PIEPER

It's fitting that Louisa Pieper receives the Lifetime Achievement Award because preservation has been a lifetime commitment since growing up in the Allentown Historic District of Buffalo.

Louisa is one of the leaders who founded the Network in 1981, spearheaded incorporation in 1989, and secured its non-profit status in 1990. She guided three generations of amendments to the state enabling legislation to keep local protective ordinances and districts strong. In the six years leading up to success in 1999, she worked tirelessly on state legislation providing a 25% investment tax credit for the rehabilitation of historic properties. Louisa filled leadership roles, planned many annual conferences, was a popular speaker, solicited gifts, and was *the* resource on demolition by neglect, due process, and economic hardship. And, by the way, she was the first to say about 10 years into the life of the Network, "I think we need a budget."

While Louisa's statewide work with the Network could earn her this award, she also has made enormous contributions in the City of Ann Arbor, her home since 1968. Before 1975, Louisa worked for funding that made Ann Arbor's Historic District Commission possible. From 1975 to 1999 she worked tirelessly for the Commission, first as a volunteer and later as full-time secretary and then Historic Preservation Coordinator. Her formal employment as the Historic Preservation Coordinator for the City followed – the first such paid position in Michigan. Working from a basement office in the historic Kempf House, Louisa played a leading role in shaping the study groups and public action that have now produced fourteen Ann Arbor historic districts.

Because Louisa was placing local preservation on a professional footing, it was natural that she enter the national arena during the 1990s as a Board member of the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions. Founded in 1983, the organization was moving toward the same goal. Louisa was involved in the "Preservation Commission Identification Project" that documented the number of commissions in the United States. The fact that their numbers doubled during that decade gave these local bodies a national voice never experienced before. Louisa's cohort also established the "Commission Assistance Program" to increase commissioner effectiveness.

For the last 20 years Louisa has worked tirelessly to create the Downtown Ann Arbor Historical Street Exhibit Program. She plays an indispensable role in site development, research, and writing, as well as in fundraising, promotion, and integration of the program into the high school Social Studies curriculum. Her leadership led to the City, the DDA, and the Program winning three major awards

in 2003--from the International Downtown Association, the Historical Society of Michigan, and the Network.

At every turn, Louisa has made Ann Arbor a better place. She was a founding member of the Kempf House Society, serving many times as President and as an advocate for the Kempf House Museum's restoration. Louisa was involved with establishment of Washtenaw County's Museum on Main Street, served on the board of the historic Michigan Theater, and was instrumental in establishing the Cobblestone Farm Association that manages a local historic farmstead. She helped form the Ann Arbor Historical Foundation, and, just for fun, the "Preservation Ladies & Gents," a group that meets socially to keep spirits nourished with good lunches and conversation.

Most recently, Louisa was a founder and Co-Chair of the Ann Arbor Preservation Alliance, an advocacy and education group that speaks out on the issues. She was the lead invited participant in the 2008 updating of Ann Arbor's Historic District Ordinance. And, as a part of what Louisa refers to as her "self-indulgent volunteer" activities, she has acted as docent for the last 10 years for the UM Detroit Observatory providing tours of the 1854 meridian circle telescope, "the oldest telescope of its kind on its original mount in the world." And quick to pick up on technology, Louisa helped with the "Making of Ann Arbor" project, an innovative Ann Arbor District Library website. It's no wonder that an *Ann Arbor News* headline exclaimed, "Volunteer makes Ann Arbor History Sizzle."

Louisa Pieper does it all with self-effacing modesty, humor, and grace. It is an honor to present her with this Lifetime Achievement Award.