Refinement and Architecture in Early Ypsilanti

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Date Approved
2015

Degree Type
Open Access Thesis

Degree Name
Master of Arts (MA)

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History and Philosophy

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Abstract
The objective of this work is to examine refinement and architecture in nineteenth-century America with a focus on rural areas and Ypsilanti, Michigan in particular. The research utilized consists of an analysis of primary and secondary sources. Included among the primary sources are architectural style books such as those by Andrew Jackson Downing, pioneer writings such as those of Caroline Kirkland and Solon Robinson, historical buildings, and probate record inventories of Washtenaw County. Ypsilantians did not assume the genteel refinement that developed in the nineteenth century. They instead modified gentility to become a form of respectability that suited their needs. By examining one small town in which gentility was unrealistic and undesired, we can conclude that Americans in other periphery locales had differing opinions and feelings toward the movement of gentility which helped shape respectability and comfort in American society.

Recommended Citation
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