

# City of Portage, Michigan Historic District Study Committee

## Historic District Modification

The “Van Riper” Property  
3821 West Milham Avenue · Portage, Michigan 49024

## Preliminary Report

December 21, 2011

### Summary

A request from Patrick and Lisa Lynch, owners of the property commonly known as 3821 West Milham Avenue, seeks to remove an approximately 1.51 acre portion from the approximately 22 acres Van Riper property located within the City of Portage Historic District. It is the recommendation of the Historic District Study Committee (“HDSC”) that the City Council **APPROVE** the request as outlined and requested.<sup>1</sup>

### Authority

*The Local History Districts Act*, being Act 169 of 1970 as amended;

The City of Portage City Council resolution designating the Historic District Commission as the standing Historic District Study Committee, pursuant to MCL 399.214, to review and make recommendations as recited in the December 1, 2011 Communication from Erica L. Eklov, Administrative Assistant to the City Manager.

### The Charge of the Committee

The Historic District Study Committee is charged with reviewing the request and acting as set forth in Public Act 169 of 1970. Specifically, the HDSC must:

1. Conduct a photographic inventory of resources within the existing historic district.
2. Conduct basic research of the historic district and the historic resources located within the district.
3. Determine the total number of historic and non-historic resources within the historic district and the percentage of historic resources of that total. In evaluating the significance of historic resources, the committee shall be guided by the selection criteria for evaluation issued by the United States secretary of the interior for inclusion of resources in the national register of historic places.
4. Prepare a preliminary report that addresses at a minimum all of the following:
  - a. The charge of the committee.
  - b. The composition of the committee membership.
  - c. The historic district studied.
  - d. The boundaries for the historic district in writing and on maps.
  - e. The history of the historic district.

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<sup>1</sup> The filing by Patrick and Lisa Lynch was originally styled as an “*Application for Certificate of Appropriateness for Modification to Historic District Structures*.” The HDSC has treated said *Application* as a request for a recommendation from the Historic District Study Committee for removal of property from the historic district pursuant to MCL 399.214 and related authority as granted by the City Council.

- f. The significance of the district as a whole, as well as a sufficient number of its individual resources to fully represent the variety of resources found within the district, relative to the evaluation criteria.
5. Transmit copies of the preliminary report for review and recommendation to the Portage Planning Commission, to the Michigan Historical Commission and to the state Historic Preservation Review Board.
6. Make copies of the preliminary report available to the public.
7. Hold a public hearing within 60 days after the transmittal of the preliminary report.
8. Following the public hearing, prepare and submit a final report with its recommendations and the recommendations, if any, of the Portage Planning Commission to the City Council. If the recommendation is to modify the historic district, the final report must include a draft of a proposed ordinance.

## **The Composition of Committee Membership**

### Voting Members

The HDSC is comprised of members of the Portage Historic District Commission, including: Christine Broberg, Dorie Ehrig, Philip L. Ellison, Deb Srnek, Hamilton Scharff, and Al Van Kampen (2011-12 transitional member – M. Carter replacement).

### Non-Voting Participants

City of Portage Liaison: Erica Eklov

### Abstentions

Mark Reile and Katie VanLonkhuyzen have abstained from participation in this review due to potential conflicts of interest. Michele Carter opted not to participate as her term ends on December 31, 2011.

## **Historic District Studied**

Property Address: 3821 West Milham Avenue  
Portage, Michigan (County of Kalamazoo)

Parcel ID No.: 00007-025-A

This property is commonly referred to as the “Van Riper Property.” The total size of the property is approximately 22.53 acres of which 1.51 acres is sought to be removed from the historic district for residential development.

On December 9, 2011, Christine Broberg and Dorie Ehrig visited the property and photographed the historic resources, which include the house, outbuilding, and the property generally. Photographs were taken of the parcels proposed to be removed from the historic district, in context within existing boundaries and the street, are attached hereto. Additional photos were provided by Mr. Lynch dated 2011 for reference (attached).

The proposed modification of the Van Riper Property would remove the southeastern 1.51 acres to create three (3) residential lots for single-family residences and are referred to as properties A, B, and C. The modification does not affect any existing structure, building, or edifice. Any new construction on the new residential parcels will be subject to the City of Portage construction and development regulations.

## The Boundaries for the Historic District in Writing and on Maps

The legal description for the historic property under the prior Historic District Ordinance (approximately):

SEC 7-3-11 W ½ NE ¼ SEC 7 EXC S 165 FT ALSO EXC US 131 ROW, ALSO EXC MICHIGAN HIGHWAY EASEMENT.

The legal description of the current historic district property under the City Assessor (approximately):

PART OF THE NE 1/4 OF FRACTION SEC 7-T3S-R11W DESCRIBED AS: BEG AT A POINT ON THE N LI OF SAID SEC 7 A DISTANCE OF 868.34 FT S 89DEG42'49"E OF THE N 1/4 POST OF SAID SEC 7; TH CONT S89DEG42'49"E ON SAID N SEC LI 77.75 FT; TH S00DEG02'20"E PARALLEL WITH THE E LI OF THE NW 1/4 OF THE NE 1/4 OF SAID SEC 7 A DISTANCE OF 935 FT; TH S76DEG18'12"W 143.74 FT; TH SOUTHWESTERLY 261.41 FT ON A 230 FT RADIUS CURVE THE LEFT WHOSE CHORD BEARS S43DEG44'34"W 247.57 FT; TH S11DEG10'57"W 10.65 FT TO THE N LI OF THE S 165 FT OF THE NW 1/4 OF THE SE 1/4 OF SAID SEC 7; TH N89DEG46'18"W ON SAID N LI 631.86 FT TO THE N & S 1/4 LI OF SAID SEC 7; TH N00DEG05'48"E ON SAID 1/4 LI 745.80 FT TO THE EASTERLY ROW LI OF HIGHWAY U.S. 131; TH N09DEG52'01"E ON SAID EASTERLY ROW LI 359.76 FT TO THE S ROW LI OF MILHAM AVENUE; TH S89DEG42'49"E ON SAID S ROW LI 806.09 FT; TH N00DEG05'48"W PARALLEL WITH SAID 1/4 LI 60 FT TO THE POB. CONTAINING 22.53 ACRES MORE OR LESS.

The new legal description of the proposed modified district (approximately):

THAT PART OF THE NORTHEAST QUARTER OF FRACTIONAL SECTION 7, TOWNSHIP 3 SOUTH, RANGE 11 WEST, CITY OF PORTAGE, KALAMAZOO COUNTY, MICHIGAN, DESCRIBED AS: BEGINNING AT A POINT ON THE NORTH LINE OF SAID SECTION 7 THAT IS 868.34 FEET SOUTH 89 42' 49" EAST OF THE NORTH QUARTER CORNER OF SAID SECTION 7; THENCE SOUTH 89 42' 49" EAST ON SAID NORTH LINE 77.75 FEET TO THE WEST LINE OF "THE HOMESTEAD OF PORTAGE NORTH", ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF AS RECORDED IN LIBER 42 OF PLATS, PAGE 16, KALAMAZOO COUNTY RECORDS; THENCE SOUTH 00 02' 20" EAST ON SAID WEST LINE 745.00 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 89 57' 40" WEST PERPENDICULAR TO SAID WEST LINE 285.00 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 00 02' 20" EAST PARALLEL WITH SAID WEST LINE 261.87 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 47 07' 46" EAST 42.56 FEET TO THE NORTHERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF MCGILLICUDDY LANE; THENCE SOUTHWESTERLY 127.20 FEET ON SAID NORTHERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE AND ON A 230.00 FOOT RADIUS CURVE TO THE LEFT WHOSE CHORD BEARS SOUTH 27 01' 34" WEST 125.59 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 11 10' 57" WEST ON SAID RIGHT OF WAY LINE 10.65 FEET TO THE NORTH LINE OF THE SOUTH 165.00 FEET OF THE NORTHWEST QUARTER OF THE NORTHEAST QUARTER OF SAID SECTION 7; THENCE NORTH 89 46' 18" WEST ON SAID NORTH LINE 631.86 FEET TO THE NORTH AND SOUTH QUARTER LINE OF SAID SECTION 7; THENCE NORTH 00 05' 48" WEST ON SAID QUARTER LINE 745.80 FEET TO THE EASTERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF HIGHWAY U.S. 131; THENCE NORTH 09 52' 01" EAST ON SAID EASTERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE 359.76 FEET TO THE SOUTH RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF WEST MILHAM AVENUE; THENCE SOUTH 89 42' 49" EAST ON SAID SOUTH RIGHT OF WAY LINE 806.09 FEET; THENCE NORTH 00 05' 48" WEST PARALLEL WITH SAID QUARTER LINE 60.00 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING. CONTAINING 21.02 ACRES MORE OR LESS.

The legal description of the property to be removed from the district (approximately):

PARCEL A:

THAT PART OF THE NORTHEAST QUARTER OF FRACTIONAL SECTION 7, TOWNSHIP 3 SOUTH, RANGE 11 WEST, CITY OF PORTAGE, KALAMAZOO COUNTY, MICHIGAN, DESCRIBED AS: COMMENCING AT THE NORTH QUARTER CORNER OF SAID SECTION 7; THENCE SOUTH 89' 42' 49" EAST ON THE NORTH LINE OF SAID SECTION 7 A DISTANCE OF 946.09 FEET TO THE WEST LINE OF "THE HOMESTEAD OF PORTAGE NORTH", ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF AS RECORDED IN LIBER 42 OF PLATS, PAGE 16, KALAMAZOO COUNTY RECORDS; THENCE SOUTH 00' 02' 20" EAST ON SAID WEST LINE 745.00 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 89' 57' 40" WEST PERPENDICULAR TO SAID WEST LINE 190.00 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING OF THE LAND HEREIN DESCRIBED; THENCE SOUTH 00' 02' 20" EAST PARALLEL WITH SAID WEST LINE 242.61 FEET TO THE NORTHERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF MCGILLICUDDY LANE; THENCE SOUTHWESTERLY 80.41 FEET ON SAID NORTHERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE AND ON A 230.00 FOOT RADIUS CURVE TO THE LEFT WHOSE CHORD BEARS SOUTH 52' 53' 10" WEST 80.00 FEET; THENCE NORTH 47' 07' 46" WEST 42.56 FEET; THENCE NORTH 00' 02' 20" WEST PARALLEL WITH SAID WEST LINE 261.87 FEET; THENCE NORTH 89' 57' 40" EAST PERPENDICULAR TO SAID WEST LINE 95.00 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING. CONTAINING 0.58 OF AN ACRE MORE OR LESS.

PARCEL B:

THAT PART OF THE NORTHEAST QUARTER OF FRACTIONAL SECTION 7, TOWNSHIP 3 SOUTH, RANGE 11 WEST, CITY OF PORTAGE, KALAMAZOO COUNTY, MICHIGAN, DESCRIBED AS: COMMENCING AT THE NORTH QUARTER

CORNER OF SAID SECTION 7; THENCE SOUTH 89' 42' 49" EAST ON THE NORTH LINE OF SAID SECTION 7 A DISTANCE OF 946.09 FEET TO THE WEST LINE OF "THE HOMESTEAD OF PORTAGE NORTH", ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF AS RECORDED IN LIBER 42 OF PLATS, PAGE 16, KALAMAZOO COUNTY RECORDS; THENCE SOUTH 00' 02' 20" EAST ON SAID WEST LINE 745.00 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 89' 57' 40" WEST PERPENDICULAR TO SAID WEST LINE 95.00 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING OF THE LAND HEREIN DESCRIBED; THENCE SOUTH 00' 02' 20" EAST PARALLEL WITH SAID WEST LINE 213.08 FEET TO THE NORTHERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF MCGILLICUDDY LANE; THENCE SOUTH 76' 18' 12" WEST ON SAID NORTHERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE 45.98 FEET; THENCE SOUTHWESTERLY 53.80 FEET ON SAID NORTHERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE AND ON A 230.00 FOOT RADIUS CURVE TO THE LEFT WHOSE CHORD BEARS SOUTH 69' 36' 09" WEST 53.68 FEET; THENCE NORTH 00' 02' 20" WEST PARALLEL WITH SAID WEST LINE 242.61 FEET; THENCE NORTH 89' 57' 40" EAST PERPENDICULAR TO SAID WEST LINE 95.00 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING. CONTAINING 0.49 OF AN ACRE MORE OR LESS.

**PARCEL C:**

THAT PART OF THE NORTHEAST QUARTER OF FRACTIONAL SECTION 7, TOWNSHIP 3 SOUTH, RANGE 11 WEST, CITY OF PORTAGE, KALAMAZOO COUNTY, MICHIGAN, DESCRIBED AS: COMMENCING AT THE NORTH QUARTER CORNER OF SAID SECTION 7; THENCE SOUTH 89' 42' 49" EAST ON THE NORTH LINE OF SAID SECTION 7 A DISTANCE OF 946.09 FEET TO THE WEST LINE OF "THE HOMESTEAD OF PORTAGE NORTH", ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF AS RECORDED IN LIBER 42 OF PLATS, PAGE 16, KALAMAZOO COUNTY RECORDS; THENCE SOUTH 00' 02' 20" EAST ON SAID WEST LINE 745.00 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING OF THE LAND HEREIN DESCRIBED; THENCE CONTINUING SOUTH 00' 02' 20" EAST ON SAID WEST LINE 190.00 FEET TO THE NORTHERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF MCGILLICUDDY LANE; THENCE SOUTH 76' 18' 12" WEST ON SAID NORTHERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE 97.76 FEET; THENCE NORTH 00' 02' 20" WEST PARALLEL WITH SAID WEST LINE 213.08 FEET; THENCE NORTH 89' 57' 40" EAST PERPENDICULAR TO SAID WEST LINE 95.00 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING. CONTAINING 0.44 OF AN ACRE MORE OR LESS.

### **The History of the Historic District**

The property located at 3821 West Milham Avenue was first owned by Allison Kivine (asa Kinne), sold in 1836 to brother-in-law Stephen Howard. It is believed that the first brick home, in the style of Greek Revival, was built on the site which is today within the City of Portage territorial limits. The home-structure currently existing on the property was built in 1859. The barn is considered to have been built at the same time. The house was constructed using hand-hewn oak timbers, cut by Howard himself, for the basement along with handmade bricks. In the 1920s, the house was then utilized by Albert Henwood and his family, who modernized the home with the installation of plumbing and electricity.

The Henwoods also planted the well-known rows of lilac bushes that still exist on the property. The Van Ripers planted approximately 300 oaks and maples, which still exists on the south side of the property.

In 1945, Dr. Charles Gage Van Riper and his wife bought the property. Van Riper was a well-known audiologist and speech therapist, and founder of the Van Riper Speech Clinic at Western Michigan University.

A written history of the home is at the Portage District Library entitled "Our House."

### **The Significance of the District**

The Van Riper Property, with its structures and plants, are historically significant to preserve. However, the proposed removal of 1.51 acre parcel from the historic district will have an insignificant contextual impact on the historic resources.

### **Recommendation**

Following the study of the information contained within, the Historic District Study Committee recommends that the request to modify the Historic District as presented be **APPROVED**. It is recommended that City Council approve amending the City of Portage Historic District Ordinance, specifically Section 38-35 "District Established; Boundaries," to reflect the ensuing legal description for 3821 West Milham (parcel #00007-025-A).

Photos of 3821 West Milham for the HDSC Report



1. South End of Property on edge of First Lot.



2. Approximate Edge of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Lot.



3. Approximate edge of 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Lot.



4. Approximate edge of 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> Lot.



5. Looking North East from bottom of property.



6. Tree line that separates lot from field



7. Looking North from Neighborhood towards out buildings.



8. On property looking SSE at undeveloped residential lots.



9. Tree line that shows where the edge of a back yard would be from home.



10. Standing 65' from building. Picture taken from sidewalk. Approximately where new property line will exist.



11. Looking at existing tree line towards the east from the new proposed property line.

Additional Views of Property of 3821 Milham Road



A. South edge of Property



B. South of Property Looking North



C. View of Out Building from South.



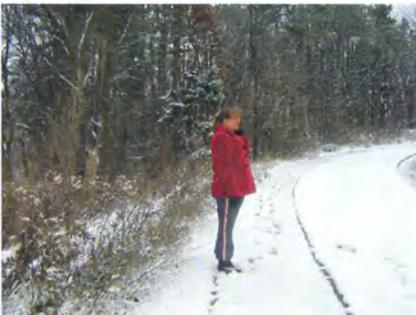
D. Looking North from South Edge of Property



E. View of Back barn from proposed new lot #2.



F. Looking North from proposed New Lot #2.



G. Looking North from South Edge of Property



H. Looking Northwest towards open field area of property.



I. Christine standing on approximate proposed new property line.



J. Looking North from South of Property



K. Trees on the site of Proposed New Lot #1.



L. South side (back) of house.



M. Standing by house looking south. Tall pine trees shows approximate new property line.



N. Similar view closer to house.

**M. LYNCH PHOTOGRAPHS FOR 3821 WEST MILHAM (2011)**



Looking east to west along north property line.



Looking west along north property line.



North front view of 3821 W. Milham – mid yard from Milham Avenue

**M. LYNCH PHOTOGRAPHS FOR 3821 WEST MILHAM (2011)**

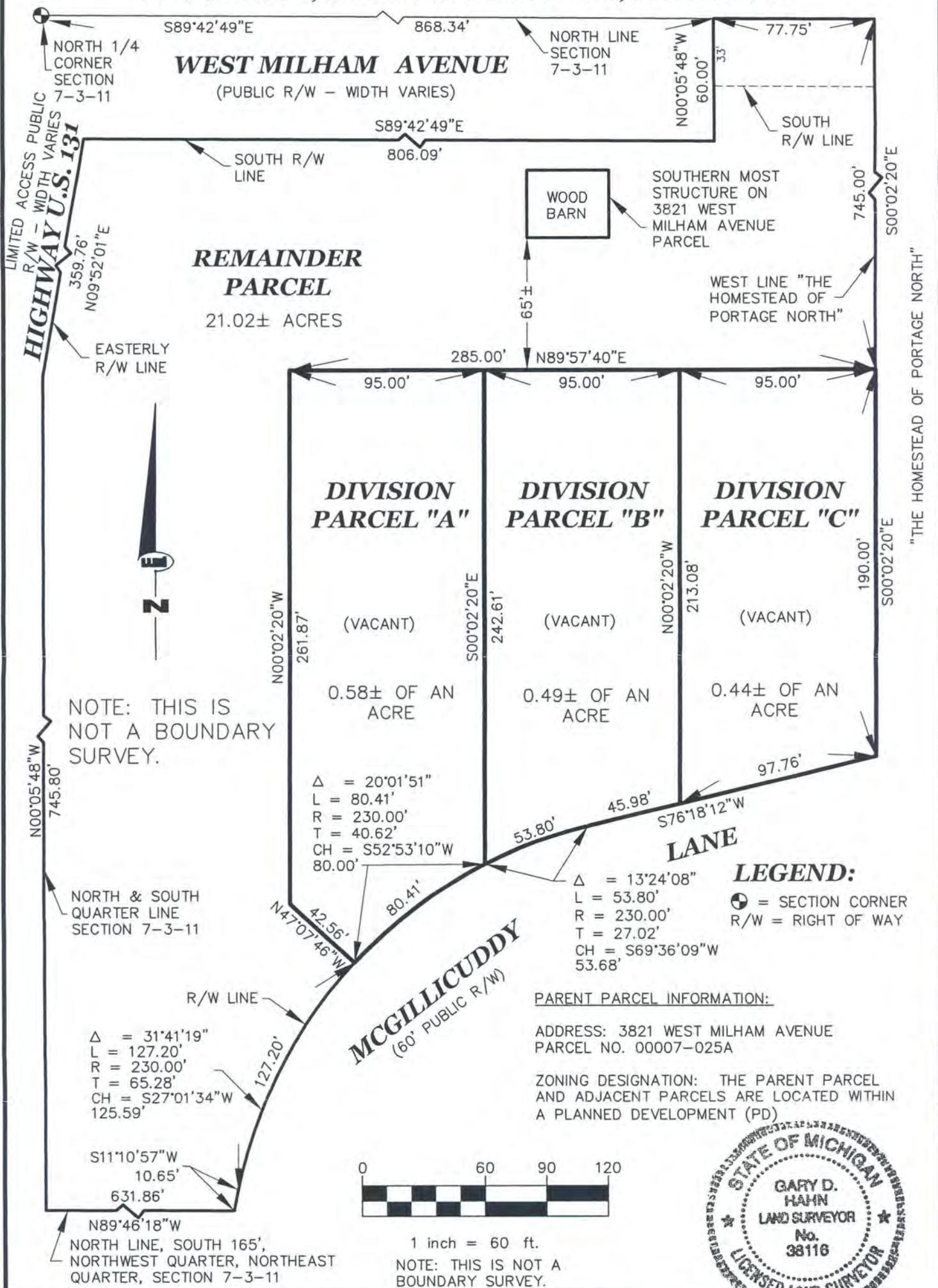


View of house from west yard.



View from east yard facing Milham Avenue

**SKETCH OF DESCRIPTIONS IN THE NORTHEAST QUARTER OF FRACTIONAL SECTION 7, TOWNSHIP 3 SOUTH, RANGE 11 WEST, CITY OF PORTAGE, KALAMAZOO COUNTY, MICHIGAN.**



CITY OF PORTAGE KALAMAZOO COUNTY

SECTION 7, T 3 S, R 11 W

A-110352

LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF DIVISION PARCEL "A":

THAT PART OF THE NORTHEAST QUARTER OF FRACTIONAL SECTION 7, TOWNSHIP 3 SOUTH, RANGE 11 WEST, CITY OF PORTAGE, KALAMAZOO COUNTY, MICHIGAN, DESCRIBED AS: COMMENCING AT THE NORTH QUARTER CORNER OF SAID SECTION 7; THENCE SOUTH 89° 42' 49" EAST ON THE NORTH LINE OF SAID SECTION 7 A DISTANCE OF 946.09 FEET TO THE WEST LINE OF "THE HOMESTEAD OF PORTAGE NORTH", ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF AS RECORDED IN LIBER 42 OF PLATS, PAGE 16, KALAMAZOO COUNTY RECORDS; THENCE SOUTH 00° 02' 20" EAST ON SAID WEST LINE 745.00 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 89° 57' 40" WEST PERPENDICULAR TO SAID WEST LINE 190.00 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING OF THE LAND HEREIN DESCRIBED; THENCE SOUTH 00° 02' 20" EAST PARALLEL WITH SAID WEST LINE 242.61 FEET TO THE NORTHERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF MCGILLICUDDY LANE; THENCE SOUTHWESTERLY 80.41 FEET ON SAID NORTHERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE AND ON A 230.00 FOOT RADIUS CURVE TO THE LEFT WHOSE CHORD BEARS SOUTH 52° 53' 10" WEST 80.00 FEET; THENCE NORTH 47° 07' 46" WEST 42.56 FEET; THENCE NORTH 00° 02' 20" WEST PARALLEL WITH SAID WEST LINE 261.87 FEET; THENCE NORTH 89° 57' 40" EAST PERPENDICULAR TO SAID WEST LINE 95.00 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING. CONTAINING 0.58 OF AN ACRE MORE OR LESS.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF DIVISION PARCEL "B":

THAT PART OF THE NORTHEAST QUARTER OF FRACTIONAL SECTION 7, TOWNSHIP 3 SOUTH, RANGE 11 WEST, CITY OF PORTAGE, KALAMAZOO COUNTY, MICHIGAN, DESCRIBED AS: COMMENCING AT THE NORTH QUARTER CORNER OF SAID SECTION 7; THENCE SOUTH 89° 42' 49" EAST ON THE NORTH LINE OF SAID SECTION 7 A DISTANCE OF 946.09 FEET TO THE WEST LINE OF "THE HOMESTEAD OF PORTAGE NORTH", ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF AS RECORDED IN LIBER 42 OF PLATS, PAGE 16, KALAMAZOO COUNTY RECORDS; THENCE SOUTH 00° 02' 20" EAST ON SAID WEST LINE 745.00 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 89° 57' 40" WEST PERPENDICULAR TO SAID WEST LINE 95.00 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING OF THE LAND HEREIN DESCRIBED; THENCE SOUTH 00° 02' 20" EAST PARALLEL WITH SAID WEST LINE 213.08 FEET TO THE NORTHERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF MCGILLICUDDY LANE; THENCE SOUTH 76° 18' 12" WEST ON SAID NORTHERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE 45.98 FEET; THENCE SOUTHWESTERLY 53.80 FEET ON SAID NORTHERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE AND ON A 230.00 FOOT RADIUS CURVE TO THE LEFT WHOSE CHORD BEARS SOUTH 69° 36' 09" WEST 53.68 FEET; THENCE NORTH 00° 02' 20" WEST PARALLEL WITH SAID WEST LINE 242.61 FEET; THENCE NORTH 89° 57' 40" EAST PERPENDICULAR TO SAID WEST LINE 95.00 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING. CONTAINING 0.49 OF AN ACRE MORE OR LESS.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF DIVISION PARCEL "C":

THAT PART OF THE NORTHEAST QUARTER OF FRACTIONAL SECTION 7, TOWNSHIP 3 SOUTH, RANGE 11 WEST, CITY OF PORTAGE, KALAMAZOO COUNTY, MICHIGAN, DESCRIBED AS: COMMENCING AT THE NORTH QUARTER CORNER OF SAID SECTION 7; THENCE SOUTH 89° 42' 49" EAST ON THE NORTH LINE OF SAID SECTION 7 A DISTANCE OF 946.09 FEET TO THE WEST LINE OF "THE HOMESTEAD OF PORTAGE NORTH", ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF AS RECORDED IN LIBER 42 OF PLATS, PAGE 16, KALAMAZOO COUNTY RECORDS; THENCE SOUTH 00° 02' 20" EAST ON SAID WEST LINE 745.00 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING OF THE LAND HEREIN DESCRIBED; THENCE CONTINUING SOUTH 00° 02' 20" EAST ON SAID WEST LINE 190.00 FEET TO THE NORTHERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF MCGILLICUDDY LANE; THENCE SOUTH 76° 18' 12" WEST ON SAID NORTHERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE 97.76 FEET; THENCE NORTH 00° 02' 20" WEST PARALLEL WITH SAID WEST LINE 213.08 FEET; THENCE NORTH 89° 57' 40" EAST PERPENDICULAR TO SAID WEST LINE 95.00 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING. CONTAINING 0.44 OF AN ACRE MORE OR LESS.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF THE REMAINDER PARCEL - 3821 WEST MILHAM AVENUE:

THAT PART OF THE NORTHEAST QUARTER OF FRACTIONAL SECTION 7, TOWNSHIP 3 SOUTH, RANGE 11 WEST, CITY OF PORTAGE, KALAMAZOO COUNTY, MICHIGAN, DESCRIBED AS: BEGINNING AT A POINT ON THE NORTH LINE OF SAID SECTION 7 THAT IS 868.34 FEET SOUTH 89° 42' 49" EAST OF THE NORTH QUARTER CORNER OF SAID SECTION 7; THENCE SOUTH 89° 42' 49" EAST ON SAID NORTH LINE 77.75 FEET TO THE WEST LINE OF "THE HOMESTEAD OF PORTAGE NORTH", ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF AS RECORDED IN LIBER 42 OF PLATS, PAGE 16, KALAMAZOO COUNTY RECORDS; THENCE SOUTH 00° 02' 20" EAST ON SAID WEST LINE 745.00 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 89° 57' 40" WEST PERPENDICULAR TO SAID WEST LINE 285.00 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 00° 02' 20" EAST PARALLEL WITH SAID WEST LINE 261.87 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 47° 07' 46" EAST 42.56 FEET TO THE NORTHERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF MCGILLICUDDY LANE; THENCE SOUTHWESTERLY 127.20 FEET ON SAID NORTHERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE AND ON A 230.00 FOOT RADIUS CURVE TO THE LEFT WHOSE CHORD BEARS SOUTH 27° 01' 34" WEST 125.59 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 11° 10' 57" WEST ON SAID RIGHT OF WAY LINE 10.65 FEET TO THE NORTH LINE OF THE SOUTH 165.00 FEET OF THE NORTHWEST QUARTER OF THE NORTHEAST QUARTER OF SAID SECTION 7; THENCE NORTH 89° 46' 18" WEST ON SAID NORTH LINE 631.86 FEET TO THE NORTH AND SOUTH QUARTER LINE OF SAID SECTION 7; THENCE NORTH 00° 05' 48" WEST ON SAID QUARTER LINE 745.80 FEET TO THE EASTERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF HIGHWAY U.S. 131; THENCE NORTH 09° 52' 01" EAST ON SAID EASTERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE 359.76 FEET TO THE SOUTH RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF WEST MILHAM AVENUE; THENCE SOUTH 89° 42' 49" EAST ON SAID SOUTH RIGHT OF WAY LINE 806.09 FEET; THENCE NORTH 00° 05' 48" WEST PARALLEL WITH SAID QUARTER LINE 60.00 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING. CONTAINING 21.02 ACRES MORE OR LESS.

SUBJECT TO SURVEY.

SUBJECT TO ANY AND ALL EASEMENTS AND RESTRICTIONS OF RECORD, OR OTHERWISE.

SUBJECT TO THE RIGHTS OF THE PUBLIC AND OF ANY GOVERNMENTAL UNIT IN ANY PART THEREOF TAKEN, USED, OR DEEDED FOR STREET, ROAD, OR HIGHWAY PURPOSES (REMAINDER PARCEL ONLY).

SUBJECT TO ANY FACTS THAT MAY BE DISCLOSED IN A FULL AND ACCURATE TITLE SEARCH.

ASSUMED THE NORTH LINE OF SAID SECTION 7 TO BEAR SOUTH 89° 42' 49" EAST PER NOTICE OF COMMENCEMENT DOCUMENT NO. 2002-001008.

CITY OF PORTAGE KALAMAZOO COUNTY

SECTION 7 T 3 S R 11 W

A-110352

**WAI** WIGHTMAN & ASSOCIATES, INC.  
ENGINEERING ♦ SURVEYING ♦ ARCHITECTURE  
2303 PIPESTONE ROAD BENTON HARBOR, MI 49022  
PHONE: (269) 927-0100 FAX: (269) 927-1300  
www.wightman-assoc.com

9835 PORTAGE ROAD PORTAGE, MI 49002  
PHONE: (269) 327-3532 FAX: (269) 327-7679

CLIENT: AMERICAN VILLAGE BUILDERS, INC.  
JOB NO: (110352)  
DATE: SEPTEMBER 28, 2011  
SCALE:  
DRAWN BY: GDH  
CHECKED BY:

  
GARY D. HANN

# MILHAM ROAD



COTTAGE OFFICE

3821 West Milham Avenue

13

MCGILlicuddy Lane

WESTCOVE DRIVE

A

B

C

MCGILlicuddy Lane

5

4

3

2

1

STORM WATER GREEN SPACE

Proposed boundary alteration

60

61

62

33

BUILDING NAME -- COMMON VanRiper house  
HISTORICAL Howard House  
ADDRESS 3821 Milham Rd. ZIP 49002-

PARCEL 00007-025-D SECTION 7 PLAT NUMBER/NAME 0

PRESENT OWNER Dr. Charles VanRiper ADDRESS 0  
CITY/STATE Portage MI ZIP 49002- OWNERSHIP PRIVATE? Yes

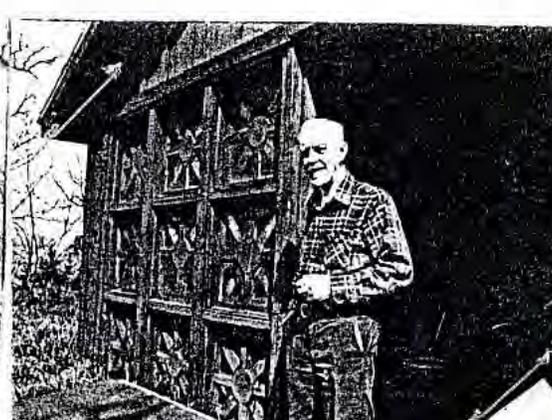
HAS THE OWNER BEEN CONTACTED? Yes DATE 04/27/89, REACTION Positive

PRESENT USE res.  
ORIGINAL USE res.  
PRESENT ZONING

ARCHITECTURAL STYPE Greek Revival

PRESENT EXTERIOR PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE OR STRUCTURE AND ANY KNOWN MAJOR ALTERATIONS FROM ITS ORIGINAL CONDITION:

Property first owned by Allison Kivine, sold in 1836 to brother-in-law, Stephen Howard. First brick house in Portage. Porches have been enclosed. Name and date traced into plaster(1859). All double walls. Interior - all doors and windows in original part are framed with elaborate moldings and windows all have a decorative panel beneath. Original wood floors. Barn-3 parts, milking parlor section for cattle and sheep, forge for horse-shoeing. Back section for riding horses. Amanda, Stephen's daughter, built a small narrow bedroom across east end of the parlor. Dr. Henwood added plumbing, electricity and 3 additional bedrooms and a bathroom and fireplace.



DATE(S) OF ATTACHED PHOTOGRAPH(S)

04/27/89 / /

BUILDING MATERIAL

Brick

CONSTRUCTION DATE: 1859

IS THIS THE ACTUAL DATE? Yes

ARCHITECT:

BUILDER: Stephen Howard

PROPERTY SIZE (FT)

WIDTH:

0

DEPTH:

0

OR APPROX ACREAGE:

73

THE EXTERIOR CONDITION Good

RELATED OUTBUILDINGS AND PROPERTY

Barn

SURROUNDINGS:

Open land

IS THE SITE FOR SALE? No

IS THE STRUCTURE ON ITS ORIGINAL SITE? Yes



ADDRESS 3821 W. Milham YEAR BUILT 1859 ARCH. STYLE GR

WAS STRUCTURE MOVED? (NO) YES FROM SECTION \_\_\_\_\_

OWNER Charles Van Riper SINCE 1945 PHONE # 323-135

PHOTOS IN FILE: 1975b&w \_\_\_\_\_ 1980b&w  1988c \_\_\_\_\_ 1989b&w  1989slide

OTHER: late 1860's, 1861 Wall Map

MAPS

land owner      bldg. on site

1855 wall	<u>A. Howard</u>	<u>no</u>
1861 wall	<u>A. Howard</u>	<u>yes</u>
1873 atlas	<u>A. Howard</u>	<u>yes</u>
1890 atlas	<u>S. Howard</u>	<u>yes</u>
1910 atlas	<u>Amanda Howard</u>	<u>yes</u>
1913 atlas	<u>Amanda Howard</u>	<u>yes</u>
1919 plat	<u>A. Howard</u>	<del>                    </del>
1922 topo	<del>                    </del>	<u>yes</u>
1928 plat	<u>Albert E. Henwood</u>	<del>                    </del>
1953 plat	<u>Chas. &amp; Cath. Van Riper</u>	<del>                    </del>
1964 plat	<u>" " "</u>	<del>                    </del>
1967 topo	<del>                    </del>	<u>yes</u>

PORTAGE & ITS PAST (1976)

Emily Howard  
House # 3

WEBER REPORT (1980)

p. 42-47

KAL. CO. HISTORIES

1880 p. 427-430

1892 p. 1106 - 1109

1906 p. 135 - 136

ADDITIONAL INFO.

"Our House" (1978)

by Charles Van Riper

"Encore" mag. Jan '90  
feature article  
on Van Riper

ADDRESS 3821 Milham YEAR BUILT 1859 FILE # 7-1

CURRENT OWNER Charles Van Riper SINCE 1945 PHONE 323-1311  
"Caddy Gage"

OWNER \_\_\_\_\_  
CONTACTS \_\_\_\_\_

I.D.# \_\_\_\_\_ PHOTO DATES California c/1860-70, 1861 engraving, Potts P. 43 W-1980

MAPS (land owner-acres - house on site)

1855	<u>G. Howard</u>	<u>no</u>
1861	<u>G. Howard</u>	<u>yes</u>
1869	<u>Stephen Howard</u>	<del>yes</del>
1873	<u>S. Howard 100</u>	<u>yes</u>
1890	<u>S. Howard 80</u>	<u>yes</u>
1910	<u>Amanda Howard 80</u>	<u>yes</u>
1913	<u>Amanda Howard 80</u>	<u>yes</u>
1928	<u>Albert E Henwood</u>	<del>yes</del>

PORTAGE & ITS PAST

# 3 see Howard's

WEBER REPORT

p. 42-47

KAL. CO. HISTORIES & BIOS.

- 1880 p. 427-430
- 1892 p. 1106-1109
- 1906 p. 135-136

KAL. CO. LAND & DEED RECORDS

OTHER SOURCES

"Our House" - Van Riper 1978

KAL. 3 w-5

Sec 7-1

3821 W. Milham Avenue - Built by Stephen Howard, very early pioneer settler, in 1859. Constructed using hand-hewn oak timbers, cut by Howard himself, for the basement and barn and handmade bricks, it was probably the first brick house in Portage. When completion was delayed by the Civil War, the family allowed dances to be held there to raise money for the purchase of local soldiers' uniforms. No doubt the people pictured are Stephen and his family who lived in the home until the 1920's. It was then occupied by Dr. Albert Henwood and his family. The present owners are Dr. & Mrs. Charles Van Riper.



ADDRESS: 3821 West Milham

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: West 1/2 Northeast 1/4, Section 7, Town 3 South,  
Range 11 West, Kalamazoo County, Michigan.

YEAR BUILT: 1859

BUILDER: Stephen Howard

ARCHITECTURE:

Greek Revival. A Michigan farmhouse incorporating the Greek Revival style of architecture. This was probably the first brick house in Portage. A name and date traced into the plaster on the wall of the attic stairway dates the house as being built in 1859. Originally the two front porches were both open. The walls of the house are of brick and are double walls with an air space between. Most of the windows still contain the original rather wavy glass. On the interior, all the doors and windows in the original part of the house are framed with elaborate moldings and the windows all have a decorative panel beneath. The original wood floors (tulipwood in the living room) have been maintained throughout the house.

Barn: Built at the same time as the house, the lower part of the barn was divided into three main parts. The left section was the cow barn where the milking was done. The center section probably held cattle and sheep. The right-hand section in front was the forge where the horses were shod -- the old forge pit remains today. The back section was the stable for the riding horses.

HISTORY:

The property on which this house was built was first owned by Allison Kinne. In 1836, he sold a 40 acre parcel (NW 1/4, NE 1/4

Sec. 7) to his brother-in-law, Stephen Howard. Stephen was the elder brother of Rossiter Howard, builder of the two homes at 5719 Angling Road. In the late 1850's, Stephen obtained the 40 acres directly south of his present land and on this 80 acre parcel he began to build his brick home in 1859. The advent of the Civil War slowed the building of the house and Stephen and his wife, Catherine, held dances in the two unfinished parlors to raise money to buy uniforms for Michigan regiments.

Stephen Howard had come to Portage Township with his family in the summer of 1831 from the town of Silver Creek on the banks of Lake Erie in western New York State. He was a young man of 23 at the time. The family settled in Section 6 and to all indications Stephen remained with them until on New Year's Day, 1837, he married Catherine Eliza Payne, daughter of Ephriam Payne, who also owned property in Section 6. Stephen and Catherine had six children in rapid succession. Their firstborn, a son, died in infancy. Then came Harriet Fidelia in 1840; Amanda Melvina, 1842; Cecilia Ellen, 1844; John Jay, 1846 and Geroge Stephen in 1848. John Jay died sometime in the 1850's, so Stephen and Catherine had four teen-aged children when they moved into their new brick home. The Howards were related in some way to most of the families in the area -- the Wattles, the Brookses, the Kinnes, the Gibbs, the Gages of Texas Township, etc. The families visited often and a favorite gathering place was the large front porches of Stephen's home -- where the women all sat in rocking chairs and smoked their pipes. Eventually the children began to leave home. Harriet married Henry Brooks (son of early pioneer, Isaac Brooks), Cecilia married Fred Hyatt Buckhout

and moved to Kalamazoo and George married Pearlie Prouty of Allegan. Amanda did not marry and remained with her parents. Catherine Howard died on Christmas Day, 1890, and Stephen three years later. Amanda remained on the farm and ran it herself with just the help of a hired man. Her aunt, Belva Howard, lived with her from time to time. During the period of 20-some years that she owned the farm herself, Amanda built a small narrow bedroom across the east end of the parlor and probably kept the second floor of the house closed off. Amanda had never been strong, either physically or emotionally, and during her later years spent considerable time in and out of the Kalamazoo State Hospital. Shortly before being committed for the final time in 1926, she sold the farm to a prominent Kalamazoo physician, Dr. Albert Henwood.

Dr. Henwood promptly set out to modernize the house. He brought plumbing and electricity inside and created three additional bedrooms and a bathroom out of the storage area on the second floor. The small pantry and breakfast room were combined into one long, narrow kitchen. The small front parlor was made into Dr. Henwood's office and after removing Amanda's old bedroom from the end of the larger south parlor, it became the living room. The Henwoods replaced the old parlor stove with a large fireplace on the west wall.

Dr. Henwood and his wife, Frances, had four children: Phyllis, James, Mary Jane and John. It was their 16-year-old son, James, who, along with a friend, planted the rows of lilac bushes which now line both sides of the yard. The Henwoods' youngest son, John, was killed during World War II and, wanting a change of scene, they left their home to the care of relatives and moved to Florida, finally deciding to sell in 1945.

The new owners of the property in May of 1945 were Dr. Charles Gage Van Riper and his wife, Catharine. Dr. Van Riper was the founder of the Van Riper Speech Clinic at Western Michigan University. A severe stutterer in his youth, "Dr. Van" has spent his life helping those similiarly afflicted and has become world-famous in the field as a clinician and author. The Van Ripers had three small children, Cathy, Susan and John, when they moved into the house. The home and grounds had been allowed to run down badly since the Henwoods left and the Van Ripers set out to restore the property. More than 35 years later, their home, still standing on its original 80 acres, is one of the loveliest in Portage. Through extensive research into the history of their home and through close friendship with Alice Howard, granddaughter of the builder, Stephen Howard, and with Jim Henwood, Dr. Henwood's son, the Van Ripers have become very knowledgeable of the way things were and, as much as possible, have kept the house and grounds in this way. Dr. Van Riper has written a history of his home entitled Our House which is in the Portage Library collection.

CENSUS REPORTS:

1860

Howard, Stephen	age 52
Eliza (Catherine)	51
Harriet	20
Amanda	18
Celia	16
George	12

1870

Howard, Stephen	age 62
Eliza (Catherine)	60
Amanda	27
Celia	25
George	21

1880

Howard, Stephen	age 72
Catherine	70
Amanda	36

1884

Howard, Stephen	age 76
Catherine	73
Amanda	40

1894

Howard, Amanda	age 52
Barnes, P. A.	72 (female boarder)
Donahue, Frank	63 (hired man)

1900

Howard, Amanda	age 56
Donahue, Frank	68 (hired man)

NOTE:

Genealogical research done on Dr. Van Riper's family has shown that he is a direct descendant (11th generation) of Thomas Gage of Yarmouth, Mass. The same research (from records in the National Archives) has shown that Isaac Gage of Texas Township was a direct descendant (9th generation) of the same Thomas Gage. Isaac Gage was a brother-in-law of Stephen Howard who built this house (the husband of Stephen's eldest sister, Polly). Therefore, Dr. Van Riper can claim a very distant "kinship" with the original builder of his home.

# Charles Van Riper—

## His Curse Became His Acclaim

By Tom Thinnnes

**An often painful and tormented childhood as a severe stutterer energized him into becoming one of the world's most renowned researchers and pioneers in speech pathology.**

In the history of any university is a president, coach, or faculty member who helped put the institution on the map, who gave it an identity, a reputation, a standard of excellence for others to follow.

Such a legendary figure for Western Michigan University is Charles Van Riper, now 84 years old and the teller of Upper Peninsula tales as author Cully Gage. An often painful and tormented childhood as a severe stutterer energized him into becoming one of the world's most renowned researchers and pioneers in speech pathology. A native of Champion in Michigan's upper level, Van Riper came to the Western campus in 1936 and established the first speech clinic in the state.

During his four-decades-plus at Western and even after his 1976 retirement as a Distinguished University Professor, Van Riper spread the word around the globe about the campus's capabilities in speech pathology and audiology. When the WMU Board of Trustees decided to establish a department of speech pathology and audiology in 1965, it was a no-doubter who would head it up. The speech, hearing, and language clinic in that department now bears Van Riper's name, thanks to WMU Board action in May of 1983.

Not too shabby an achievement for a man who was such an embarrassment to his family because of his stuttering that he occasionally was not allowed to eat at the table when guests were invited into the home.

"As a boy, I was a very severe stutterer," says Van Riper, gazing out at a homemade version of the Upper Peninsula on his West Milham Road acreage. "I had awful blockings, struggling so badly that I looked like an epileptic. Trying to get a word out, I'd jerk and twitch and have all kinds of spasms. People would slap me across the face to get me out of it. They had the idea that it was some kind of dirty habit, almost like oral masturbation. The attitudes of



Now retired, Dr. Van Riper has become the spinner of yarns, the teller of tales, as the author Cully Gage.

society toward people with speech defects were crude back then. Their treatment was reprehensible when compared to today's standards.

"You just weren't supposed to stutter," says Van Riper, who has been widowed for about five years. "If you did stutter, you were some kind of freak. You were evil, and thus susceptible to punishments and penalties. That's why I went out to the woods a lot, to be myself and to be by myself. There were fears that I would never be able to speak."

Van Riper says he never really experienced any kind of adolescence because of his speech problems. Talking and expressing opinions as open and free as the Michigan woods that he loves as Cully Gage, Van Riper said it was hard for him as a professional speech pathologist to work with adolescents. "I just couldn't understand them. I had a hard time with my own kids [two daughters and a son], too."

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*Trying to get a word out, I'd  
jerk and twitch and have  
all kinds of spasms.*

## Dr. Charles Van Riper

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But, in retrospect, that nightmare was the best thing that ever happened to Van Riper. The clichés fit nicely in his story—always darkest before the dawn, turning a problem into a challenge and opportunity. “I evolved out of it,” he says. “I learned how to size them up. If I was able to change and become comfortable with my stuttering, then they certainly were, too. If I had faith in them, then they had to have faith in themselves. If I could become successful, so could they. As therapy, it was very, very successful.”

“Of course, all of this had a great impact on me as well,” Van Riper says. “There is great satisfaction in being able to do something good in your life. I think I have impacted on the lives of many for the better. That’s my greatest accomplishment and the most important value in my life.”

The son of an Upper Peninsula physician, Van Riper did not overcome the handicap of being a severe stutterer until he was 26. By that time, he had demonstrated enough innate intelligence to gain entrance into Northern Michigan University, complete two years, and then go on to the University

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### *He wrote the first textbook of its kind in the nation on speech pathology.*

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of Michigan to complete a bachelor’s degree in physics and English.

“When, at the age of 26,” Van Riper wrote in one of his scores of books, articles, and research articles, “I first attained enough fluency to join the human race, I decided to design a life plan so that the rest of my existence would be better than that I had known previously. Those first 26 years had been full of misery and frustration. The rest would be lived as well as I could possibly manage them.”

“Now that I could communicate and no longer had to constantly spend my energies in the anxieties and struggles of severe stuttering,” the passage continued, “all things were possible. I would make that ugly life of mine a



Taken in 1966, Dr. Van Riper with a student in the WMU Speech and Hearing Clinic.

shining thing.”

By 1930, he had a master’s degree from the Ann Arbor campus. Heading west, Van Riper settled at the University of Iowa to earn a doctorate in psychology, to work with his own speech, and to associate with many of the pioneers in the speech-pathology field. In 1936, the same year that Kalamazoo beckoned, he married the former Catharine Jane Hall, the daughter of an Iowa physician and the first speech-pathology major to graduate from the University of Iowa’s undergraduate program.

**H**ow did this son of Champion become a champion in his field in Kalamazoo?

First and foremost, he was spurred by the passion that, as far as he was concerned, nobody should have to go through the hell that he did as a child. Once he had conquered his stuttering, Van Riper cloaked himself in a missionary zeal to help others overcome problems in expressing themselves verbally. The challenge was that speech pathology back in those days was a

nearly uncultivated field and Van Riper had to become one of the pioneers who did the plowing.

“I didn’t have any background in speech pathology because hardly anybody did,” he said in recalling those early days. “So I became a psychologist because I thought that was about as close as I could come in terms of academic discipline. I had to learn about speech pathology as I went along.”

In the process, Van Riper wrote the first textbook of its kind in the nation and established the first clinic in Michigan, which also happened to be only the fourth such institution in the country. The latter required a lot of lobbying with state legislators in Lansing.

“I got the job in Kalamazoo because of Paul Sangren, who had just become president of what was then known as the Normal School at Western,” Van Riper says. “Sangren had a nephew who stuttered badly. His nephew had been put through the same crud that I had been as a youngster. Back then, there was no real help for kids like myself and Paul’s nephew. I was sent to some quack institutions, just as he

had—fraudulent ones.”

In such places, Van Riper says, “the trainers would try to teach you to speak to a rhythm. Wave the arm and say the word with each swing of the arm. There were lots of other tricks like that. As far as speech therapy was concerned, tricks were all they had back then and they were pure garbage. After I had learned the hard way, I decided that I might be able to stutter more easily.”

That became the Van Riper technique—instead of trying to eradicate the habit of stuttering, try to learn techniques in which you stutter more easily and thus hardly noticeably.

“You stutter more easily when you refuse to struggle at the moment,” he explains. “The person who stutters has little lags in his speech. Some of them are so tiny that the average listener can’t distinguish them. As a child, I felt those lags, panicked, lost control, and they became a very long, severe stutter. That’s when I began to jerk my head, jump around, and gasp. So I learned to stutter more easily, almost naturally.”

Whether it was mind over matter or his intense desire to end being the Van Riper family embarrassment, he learned the technique.

“At any rate, Paul Sangren knew about the quack institutions and understood the devastation that stuttering can do to a person,” Van Riper says. “He wanted to establish a reputable, scientifically based speech clinic, which was relatively unheard of in those days. He advertised, I heard about the opportunity, and here I am.

“To be brutally truthful, it was terrible at first because I had little support. In those days, Western was primarily an institution for training teachers. No teachers would admit that their students had speech defects and, of course, many of them did. So I did a survey of school systems and I found hundreds of families that had children who stuttered. I asked them to put the pressure on school superintendents and up the ladder we went to Lansing. It took a long, long time, but the profession of speech pathology was established. It took root and grew.”

Today, it is a profession. There are more than 60,000 members in the American Speech and Hearing Association. “Of course, it wasn’t all Charlie Van Riper, but I had a part in it,” he says. “There aren’t many people who can say that they built a profession, especially a profession that has changed the attitudes of society toward the handicapped, particularly toward the person who stutters. It is now accepted as a problem that can be corrected. To me, that’s a major accomplishment.”

Part of the normal life that he promised himself was an 80-acre retreat which frequently became an outreach of the campus clinic. Over the years, he and his wife brought student-patients, some with social problems that far outstripped their speech difficulties, into their West Milham Road home. The “Earth Mother,” as he called his late wife Catherine, “was able to heal them much better than I did. She loved and babied them. She understood them.” Catherine also practiced her profession outside of the home, serving as a psychologist and therapist at the Child Guidance Clinic for many years.

The stays of these adopted children could last a month, a year, even two years. They stayed as long as it took to heal them. Of these 15 or so cases, one could qualify as a movie-made-for-TV. Let “Cully Gage” write the script:

“His name is Bill Wensley. Combat during World War II greatly affected him, so much so that he was admitted to a psychiatric unit in Battle Creek. Prone to fighting, Bill also had a very severe stuttering problem. Because he frequently escaped and raised hell in Battle Creek, they took away his pants.

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*To be brutally truthful,  
it was terrible at first  
because I had little support.*

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They couldn’t control him. An incorrigible. Catherine said ‘Let’s bring him home.’ They thought we were nuts. Why would we want a berserk guy running around our house?



Catherine Van Riper, his late wife.

“Our children were accustomed to having people who stuttered in our home because they knew these were people I had trouble helping in the clinic setting. At first, it was difficult putting up with Bill’s outbursts, but we persevered.

“After a short time, it became clear. Bill had outbursts because of frustration and those frustrations were based on his inability to speak clearly. Stuttering was the core of his misbehavior, the reason he went mad.”

Van Riper charted a course of treatment that included both physical and mental components. While he taught the technique of stuttering more easily, Van Riper also prescribed some physical labor to relieve Bill’s frustrations. The task was to build an outside fireplace and Bill tackled the chore with great zeal.

“He went out into the back 40 and found the largest rocks he could,” Van Riper says. “He lugged and rolled them in. Some were three feet in diameter. And he began to build something. As his frustrations eased, so did the stuttering. He learned how to

## Dr. Charles Van Riper

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stutter easily. As the fireplace grew, so did his confidence. He was free from the shackles of a speech defect.”

And there is a happy ending to the real-life script. Bill Wensley went on to follow in the footsteps of his mentors and became a speech pathologist. Armed with a master’s degree, Bill established a speech clinic of his own on the west coast and is now retired in Alaska. “He helped a lot of people and did an awful lot of good,” says the proud teacher.

The fireplace fits in nicely with Van Riper’s red-brick farmhouse, which was built in 1859 and was the first of its kind in the area. The builder was a fellow named Steven Howard, who was one of the Kalamazoo area’s first settlers in the early 1830s. A local physician also called it home for a spell. During the Civil War, Union supporters gathered there to raise funds for the cause and buy long underwear for the troops. The Van Ripers assumed ownership about a half-century ago.

In the old basement, Doctor Van, or Cully, as his friends call him, has wine. Digging around in an old chest of drawers down there, he found a skull that had a small hole behind the ear. An anthropologist told Van Riper that the skull was that of an Indian girl,



Found in his basement, this skull of an Indian girl has a small hole behind the ear, suggesting she died from a mastoid infection or a blow from a sharp object.



Located at 3821 W. Milham (next to the 131 overpass), Van Riper’s 130-year-old farmhouse was once used as a gathering place by the Union supporters during the Civil War.

around 18 years old at the time of death.

“She either died from a mastoid infection or was hit by an arrow behind the ear,” Van Riper says. “I think all old houses should have a skeleton in its closet. I at least got a part of one.”

Van Riper bought the property for \$14,000, an investment that he recouped when he granted an easement to Consumer’s Power Company. Even though vehicles by the thousands stream by each day on near-by I-94, there is still enough natural serenity to satisfy Van Riper, at least until he can travel to his real Shangri-La in the Upper Peninsula.

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"I've got two gardens down here," he says, "and a fountain. That stand of trees out there is my link to the Upper Peninsula. I planted most of them, 300 or so. Hardwoods. Oaks and maples. The pines are now nearly 50 feet tall. This is my own cocoon. I can sit out in those woods, light up my pipe, and philosophize. The healing of myself

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*I can become part of it all.  
I'm young again. I'm  
sipping from the  
Fountain of Youth.*

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starts in those woods, or when surrounded by great bouquets of flowers in the garden. Bathed in beauty, it's easy to be happy."

Van Riper can watch cascading water bubble up from a fountain made from an old kettle once used to scald hogs. Maybe he can hear the vegetables grow in his second garden. "I'll sit down there in the early morning or evening and watch the wildlife come in—the deer, raccoons, possum, squirrels. Even with the cars flying by beyond the soybean field, I can become part of it all. I'm young again. I'm sipping from the Fountain of Youth. I take that feeling back to my typewriter."

And out pops Cully Gage! And tales of his real-life Shangri-La, the Upper Peninsula, to which he travels each summer. "I renew my boyhood up there amidst the moose, the deer, the wolves, and the loons on the lake. I can go for 40 miles and never hit a road. That's where I bathe my soul." Cully comes from Kalle, the Finnish word for Charles. Gage is the maiden name of Van Riper's mother.

His first effort was *The Northwoods Reader*, a book of stories about true-life characters he had known as a boy growing up in Champion. The volume was seasoned by a few tales that he "just made up." The intent was to write for his children and grandchildren so that they could know how things truly were in the Upper Peninsula around the turn of the century. He showed the tales to close friends, who recommended that he submit the vol-



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your warm weather needs.

If you're Florida bound,  
remember we'll be right  
next door... Winter Park,

North Palm Beach, Fort  
Myers, Sarasota, Longwood,

Clearwater, Osprey,  
Jacksonville, and Tampa.

**Jacobson's**

## Dr. Charles Van Riper

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ume to a publisher. A publishing firm in the Upper Peninsula went for it.

The name Cully Gage seemed to fit this change-of-pace in writing. After all, Charles Van Riper was the author of scholarly research papers and textbooks. Charles Van Riper had to be careful about what he said. Cully Gage could freewheel. And he sure did!

"The books were easy to write. I'd get a vague idea of a tale, do some mulling over it, try to find in my memories some character who would fit in, and then the stuff just poured out of my index fingers," he says.

His first editor was the "Earth Mother." If Catharine, his wife, didn't chuckle or get teary-eyed, he'd go back to the drawing board and do some revising. "It turned out I didn't have any worries about being sued," he says. "The people up there loved the tales. The feedback was great and that drove me to keep on writing them. I've written seven volumes in the *Northwoods* series now. Some have called me the Garrison Keillor of the Upper Peninsula. Except I have Van Riper Lakes instead of Woebegone."

As Dean Martin used to say, keep those cards and letter coming, folks, because they are therapeutic for Cully

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*I love you, Cully Gage,  
because you have always  
been so in love with life.*

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Gage, who has had more than his share of ambulance runs. There have also been bouts with diabetes.

"I've written about 35 books," he says, "but I enjoy the Cully Gages the most." So do many of his readers, if his mail is any indication:

"Your stories put me in a place I wish I was," wrote one reader. "They soothe the soul."

A younger fan wrote: "I'm not much of a speller, but your stories touch my hart and warm my soal."

"I could not quit reading until I snapped the last page closed," said another. "Aw, Cully, you broke my



Van Riper planted 300 or so oaks and maples behind his home. The pines are nearly 50 feet tall.

poor cracked old heart again and I love you for it. Here's to you, old sir, with all my gratitude, respect, and a dual clink of the glass and my old deutsch head. Good stuff! Goddammit, Cully, I mean it."

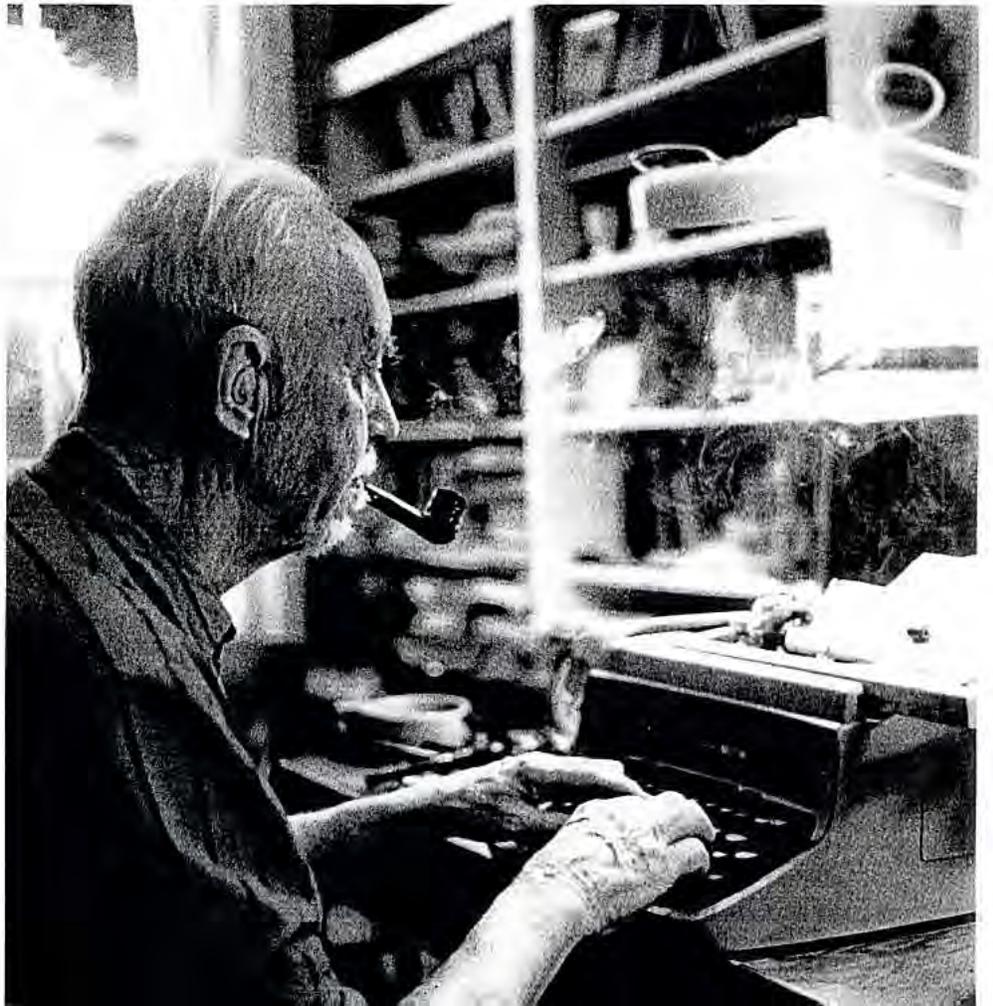
"I laughed and I cried," wrote one emotional reader. "What a great satisfaction it must be to bring joy to so many people. I hope that we will have more stories from you before you join

your beloved Grandpa Gage."

"I love you, Cully Gage, because you have always been so in love with life," wrote an elderly woman. "I treasure your books. Thank you for writing them and sharing your heart's ease with me. What a beautiful, kindred person you are!"

*A Love Affair with the U.P.* was not in the genre of the other *Northwood*

Deep in thought in his study, Van Riper uses the two-finger method to put the finishing touches to his latest book. He has written over thirty-five of them during his lifetime.



*The healing of myself starts  
in those woods.*

*Readers.* For Cully Gage, this book was more of a "gut check," as athletes like to say when times are the most tense in the contest. Instead of telling tales about the fascinating characters he knew as a boy, he talked about the land, the forests, the lakes, and the streams of the Upper Peninsula, and how they shaped one man's life. Chapters were titled "My Boyhood in the Forest," "The Dark Years of My Youth," and "Living Alone in the Forest."

The last chapter on "Growing Old" dealt with the death of his beloved "Earth Mother" after two years of chemotherapy for cancer. Here's the concluding paragraphs:

"This book should probably end right here, but there is just a bit more to say. In September, my son, John, drove me up to the lakes to do some of my grieving. Some of it. My healing rock didn't help much and after I got home, I found our old house very, very empty.

"But life goes on, a life that has a big hole in it which shows no sign of shrinking, but I try to live around it with some grace. Writing more *Northwood Readers* has helped and so have my trips northward. I've managed to get to the cabins every summer and every deer season. Everything up there has changed; yet everything remains the same. Herman sits on his white rock; the old cabin holds me in its arms; the forests and lakes lift my spirit. Children and grandchildren join me there and last summer at the cabin on the second lake, we watched a mother moose feeding on Katy's [his wife] white water lilies, then swim with her calf across to the south shore. The loons give their long wail at eventide and I find some peace. That other love affair, the one I've had with my beloved U.P., still continues. I'll be back again, old cabin."

Van Riper's classic textbooks in speech pathology have been translated into German, French, Finnish, Spanish, Japanese, Korean, and Arabic. There is even a Braille version. Thanks to Van Riper's leadership and the growth of the WMU department to international stature, students from all

**Dr. Charles Van Riper**

over the world come to Kalamazoo to train in the profession of speech pathology.

"But it has been my little books about the people I knew as a boy in the Upper Peninsula that have given me the greatest pleasure," Van Riper says. "They have evidently rung a small gong and I get a lot of fan mail which tells me about other lives and experiences up there. My readers have sent

*"Old men don't usually  
make new friends, but these  
books have brought many  
to me."*

me smoked fish, pasties, saffron bread, maple syrup, and other U.P. specialties. People just drop by the old farm here and visit. Old men don't usually make new friends, but these books have brought many to me."

**P**arents and friends of children, who have seen how his definitive texts—*The Nature of Stuttering* and *The Treatment of Stuttering*—have improved their young lives and freed them from the shackles of a speech defect, probably do not agree with this assessment of the value of his written words. Cully Gage brings happiness and warm memories. Charles Van Riper perhaps brought hope.

In his 627-page volume on *The Nature of Stuttering*, Van Riper surveyed the world literature on the subject, compiling and organizing most of the information concerning the nature and the cause of the disorder. The book contains essentially everything from the first written mention of stuttering to the latest concepts in French, Japanese, Russian, Hungarian, Polish, German, and English. Van Riper examined all written accounts from before the time of Christ to the present, providing a wealth of clinical observations and experiences. It has become a classic.

His books on *Teaching Your Child to Talk* and on *Speech in the Elementary Classroom* were among the accom-

**A**s Cully Gage, Van Riper understands a man's relationship with his environment, with nature's way. From that exudes his sense of serenity, of being part of it all. A sense of humor helps as well.

"I have this huge shredding machine," Van Riper says. "I use it to compost corn stalks, leaves, and other vegetation. One day, it got stuck. Before trying to fix it, you are told to unhook the spark-plug wire to avoid accidents. Then it's safe to remove what is plugging up the shredder. Well, I didn't do that and, all of a sudden, the blades started to revolve.

"I looked down into the bin and saw the scarlet and green colors. The green was from the corn stalks. I didn't know where the red came from. I just said, 'My, isn't that beautiful!' Hell, then I realized those were my fingers. I wrapped my hand in a towel and off I went to the hospital to get sewed up.

"When I got back to the farm," he says, "I continued with the composting, finger stubs and all. I put the results on the roses. I think I'm the only man who ever was reincarnated as

*"I'm not afraid of death.  
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a rose and lived to see it. I recycled myself. The roses that year had the biggest blooms I ever saw." Kind of blood red!

"Because of my health problems and the loss of my wife," Van Riper says, "it's been hard to maintain that sense of serenity, but I've managed. I'm not afraid of death. It will be the end of a useful life. I made a very fine life after a very evil beginning. I became a useful person and had an impact for good. I think I have helped a lot of people. So I have a right to feel some peace. The problems of my childhood are just memories, something to learn from.

Van Riper could have harbored lifetime ill feelings against his father, but if