



The historic
Earhart Manor
at Concordia University Ann Arbor

A BRIEF HISTORY OF EARHART MANOR

The historic Earhart Manor is unique in architectural design and a marvel of engineering. H. B. Earhart, owner of the White Star Oil Company purchased "The Meadows," a more than 400 acre dairy farm, in 1916.

Construction on this Ann Arbor gem began in 1935 at a cost of \$55,000. The famous Detroit architectural firm of Smith, Hinchman and Grylls (Detroit's Guardian Building) worked in collaboration with the renowned landscape architectural firm, Olmstead of Brookline, MA (Belle Isle, NY Central Park, the Biltmore Estate) to create this 15,220 square foot home reminiscent of a French country chateau. Although no expense was spared in the details and craftsmanship, Mrs. Earhart was adamant that the house be functional and not ostentatious. There are 35 rooms on 4 floors. The structure is steel and concrete, state-of-the-art and very unusual for its time. The exterior limestone was hand tooled to assimilate age. The east side of the Manor includes copper gutters and downspouts, and a beautiful façade.

The Manor is believed to be the first home with air conditioning west of New York City. The structural ventilation system is quite effective in circulating air throughout the home. The phonograph in the west hall was wired to in-wall speakers throughout the house. A security system could be triggered with the flip of a switch from Mrs. Earhart's bedroom. In addition, a communication system with call buttons throughout the Manor allowed the Earharts to reach staff in any room. There was a projector in the ballroom on the third floor to show home movies. Each bedroom included its own bathroom, many having four faucets to provide the options of hot and cold well or rain water.

Mr. Earhart's shower contained 10 shower heads. Mrs. Earhart's bathroom was lined with expensive blue Pewabic tile.

In 1961, the Manor and 234 acres of the Earhart Estate was purchased for a price of approximately \$1 million dollars by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod for the establishment of Concordia College. For many years, the Manor served as a much beloved student center, with a café in the billiards room. The university restored the Manor in 1996-1997. Mr. Fred Schmid donated \$2.8 million for the renovation in honor of his father, Otto G. Schmid. The multi-purpose building is now used for administrative offices, as well as student, alumni, and organizational events.

Concordia University and the Concordia Guild remain committed to respecting the character of the building. Recently an endowment was created for the historical preservation and upkeep of Earhart Manor.

We hope you will join us in supporting Earhart Manor, one of the finest period houses in Southeast Michigan and a jewel on the Concordia campus.

