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# Opera houses

## Cultural cooperation wins our applause

Thankfully, Michigan treasures its cultural base.

Luckily, some small-town arts zealots share the passion.

Together, state/community partnerships stand ready to reopen historic opera houses famous for more than soaring arias. In the old days, the structures doubled as theaters, dance halls, school gyms and meeting places.

In Grand Ledge, Vermontville and other small towns statewide, the doors to the past will swing open again with a push from such activists as Grand Ledge's Ann Ewing and the Opera House Authority, and Vermontville's Hildred Peabody and its restoration committee.

This year, the state Legislature appropriated \$2.1 million in Michigan Equity Program grants to help the opera houses debut as community centers.

But the local enthusiasts added overtures in matching funds and community nostalgia to stage the final acts of restoration.

You need hear only Peabody's recollections to pick up some of the opera house fervor.

Peabody remembers learning to read at the Vermontville Opera house.

"They showed silent movies there when I was a small child," she said. "I loved the silent films so much I had to learn to read the subtitles."

That kind of tribute knows no boundaries of time or place.

In the 1990s, it re-enforces the beauty of learning and the value of retaining for current generations a sampler of lessons of the past.

The Maple Valley News, Nashville, Tuesday, March 20, 1990 —

## *"Friends of the Opera House"*

**ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING**

**March 22 • 7 p.m.**

Vermontville Village Hall  
121 S. Main

*Open to anyone intersted in  
Opera House restoration.*

**Vermontville Township Board  
Vermontville Village Board**