The report should contain a list of contributing and non-contributing resources. Photos of the non-contributing buildings should also be included in the report.

The report should assess the historic landscape and any significant features should be included as a contributing resource (for example, photos show that there may historic trees).

The report needs to include a visual depiction of the boundary on a map. The boundary should be outlined with a heavy, dark line and the nearest cross streets should be included on the map.

Bibliography is misspelled.

All maps should include the name of the study report, the name of the municipality, the of the report year and a north arrow.

A short discussion of the history of the Italianate Style and when it was popular in the United States would be appropriate to place this house in context since its significance is architecture.
Preliminary Report
A. J. Gill House Historic District Study Committee
2015
The Charge of the Committee

By a resolution dated August 20, 2014, the Grand Rapids City Commission named the Gill House Historic District Study Committee in accordance with Chapter 68 of Title V of the City Code and the Michigan Local Historic District Act, PA 169 (1970), as amended.

City Code Chapter 68, Sec. 5.392 provides that the purpose of this Chapter is to:

1) Safeguard the heritage of the City of Grand Rapids by preserving districts which reflect elements of its cultural, social, economic, political or architectural history, and to preserve Historic Landmarks,
2) Stabilize and improve property values in such districts, and
3) Foster civic beauty.

Under Section 5.398 of the Grand Rapids City Ordinance the Study Committee is charged to undertake the following actions:

1) Conduct a photographic inventory of resources within the proposed addition to the Fairmount Square Historic District, specifically Congress School and its grounds, following procedures established by the Michigan Historic Preservation Office;
2) Conduct basic research on the historic resources located within the proposed district;
3) Determine the total number of historic and non-historic resources within the proposed district and the percentage of historic resources of that total. In evaluating the significance of historic resources, the study 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, as set forth in 36 CFR §60;
4) Prepare a preliminary historic district study committee report;
5) Transmit copies of the preliminary report for review and recommendation to the Grand Rapids Planning Commission, the Grand Rapids Historic Preservation Commission, the State Historic Preservation Officer, the Michigan Historical Commission, and to the Michigan Historic Preservation Review Board. Copies of the preliminary report shall be made available to property owners in the proposed historic district and to the general public;
6) Hold a public hearing in compliance with the Open Meetings Act not less than sixty (60) calendar days after the transmittal of the preliminary report;
7) Prepare and submit a final report with recommendations for the designation of the historic district to the Grand Rapids City Commission, which may, at its discretion, act on the recommendations of the Study.

A. J. Gill House Historic District Study Committee
Edgar Kettle Resident
Jon O’Connor Resident
Jerri Schmidt Resident
Rebecca Smith-Hoffman Past Perfect, Inc. (36 CFR 61 certified)

with the assistance of
Study Area Boundary Description
Parcel A: All that part of the Northeast ¼ of Section 28, Town 7 North, Range 12 West, City of Grand Rapids, Kent County, Michigan, described as: Commencing at the Northeast corner of said Section 28; thence South 90°00’00” West 524.00 feet along the Northerly line of said Northeast ¼ to the Westerly line of the East 524 feet of said Northeast ¼ for the Place of beginning of this description; thence South 02°05’07” East 495.51 feet along said Westerly line; thence South 89°25’19” West 173.96 feet to the Westerly line of the East 698 feet of said Northeast ¼; thence North 02°05’03” West 497.26 feet along said Westerly line to the Northerly line of said Northeast ¼; thence North 90°00’00” East 174.00 feet along said Northerly line to the place of beginning.

Parcel B: All that part of the Northeast ¼ of Section 28, Town 7 North, Range 12 west, City of Grand Rapids, Kent County, Michigan, described as: Commencing at the Northeast corner of said Section 28; thence South 90°00’00” West 524.00 feet along the Northerly line of said Northeast ¼ to the Westerly line of the East 524 feet of said Northeast ¼ for the Place of beginning of this description; thence North 90°00’00” East 174.00 feet along the Northerly line of said Northeast ¼, thence South 02°05’11” East 473.75 feet; thence South 89°25’19” West 173.95 feet to the Westerly line of the East 524 feet of said Northeast ¼; thence North 02°05’07” West 475.51 feet along said Westerly line to the place of beginning.

Boundary Justification
The boundaries of the proposed historic district are those of the parcels described above, which encompass the houses, outbuildings, and open space of the proposed historic district.

Historic Resources
The proposed historic district contains six structures: a two-story, Italianate farm house constructed in 1875, a one-and-one-half-story hall-and-parlor house, two garages, and three storage sheds.

Significance
Criteria of significance have been established by the National Park Service under which properties are judged to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. These criteria are also used by the State of Michigan and the City of Grand Rapids in judging the eligibility of properties for historic designation. The National Register Criteria addresses the quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture that is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, as well as:

A. Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
B. Association with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
C. Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
D. Have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.
Properties are often significant for more than one criterion.

The proposed A. J. Gill House Historic District is significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture as a fine example of Italianate residential architecture that has survived the transformation of its surroundings from farm land to city suburb.

Designation Recommendation
The Study Committee recommends the designation of the A. J. Gill House Historic District under the criteria cited above.

Description of Buildings
Constructed in 1875, the Italianate-style, main house sits atop a hill overlooking Lake Michigan Drive near the western boundary of Grand Rapids. It rises two stories from a stone foundation to a low-pitched, hipped roof with widely over-hanging eaves supported by decorative brackets on a deep trim band with dentils between the brackets. The main façade has symmetrically-placed windows and an off-set entry. A small, hipped-roof porch, with decorative columns and railing leads to a pair of wood entry doors. Windows are rectangular-top with simple hood moldings, one-over-one wood sashes, and wood shutters. There is a bay window at the west elevation and a small porch at the east elevation with decorative columns and railing, matching those of the entry porch. A “picture” window has replaced original windows at the first floor of the east elevation.

The one-and-a-half-story wing at the south appears to have been added at a somewhat later date. It has a hipped roof with a central, south-facing gable. The wide, over-hanging eaves have decorative brackets. Small windows near the eave line provide light to the half-story. A second “picture” window is located at the first floor of the east elevation, along with a one-story, shed-roof, enclosed porch. The City Assessor file indicates that the house was remodeled about 1958. It is likely that the picture windows and enclosed porch were added at that time. A hipped-roof garage addition to the south wing was constructed in 1979. Because they are at the rear of the house and not clearly visible from the street, the garage and porch additions do not detract from the historic integrity of the structure, which remains significant.

The interior has six rooms on the first floor and five rooms on the second floor. A 2007 report notes that the interior walls and ceilings are plaster and the floors are hardwood under carpeting. The decorative moldings appear to be original. There is one fireplace on the first floor.

A simple, side-gabled house, referred to as a “Guest House” in the City Assessor file, is located at the southeast portion of the property. A small porch with front-facing gable roof supported by small, round columns protects the centrally-located entrance, which is flanked by one-over-one windows. An enclosed porch was added at the rear at an unknown date; perhaps at the same time the enclosed porch was added to the main house. Siding was installed over the wood clapboard in 1985. The interior has three rooms on the first floor and two rooms on the second floor.

Although the file notes the house as being constructed the same year as the main house, its shape clearly identifies it as a hall-and-parlor house (two rooms wide and one room deep), a vernacular folk style widely built in the pre-railroad era. It is likely that this structure may date to the 1840s or 1850s. Further investigation is required.
The other buildings on the site are frame garages and storage sheds that were constructed at unknown dates. These structures do not contribute to the historic integrity of the site.

**Statement of Significance**

Louis Campau, who is considered to be the first permanent white resident in what was to become Grand Rapids, established a government-licensed Indian trading post on the east side of the Grand River in 1826, near what is now the intersection of Pearl Street and Monroe Avenue. He soon was joined by his brothers, Toussaint, George, and Antoine, along with his Marsac in-laws. The first settlers to follow the Campaus did not come until the spring of 1833, when sixty-three people arrived from New York. According to Albert Baxter's *History of Grand Rapids*, by 1837 the population of the county was about 1,200 people, including nearly 800 Indians.

The land on the east side of the Grand River that comprised the village of Grand Rapids was made available for settlement by the 1821 Treaty of Chicago and had been purchased prior to 1836. The land on the west side of the river was ceded by the 1836 Treaty of Washington. Although not yet surveyed, the area began to be settled by “squatters” soon after the treaty was made in anticipation of sale by the government. The land did not go up for public sale until August 1839.

Samuel White, who came from Canada with a large family in 1836, is said to have been the first settler in the township and eventually owned six hundred acres. White was joined that year by about fifteen other families – arriving from Canada, Ireland, New England, and southeastern Michigan. The following year brought more people to the area. In his *History of Grand Rapids*, Albert Baxter notes that by 1838, the total population of Kent County was about 1,200 people, including nearly 800 Indians.

When Walker Township was created by the Michigan Legislature in 1837, it included all of Kent County north of the Grand River, but was subsequently divided into additional townships as the population grew. The first township meeting was held at the Mission School House in April 1838, on the west bank of the river, just south of what is now Bridge Street. Prior to the organization of the City of Grand Rapids in 1850, six sections of the township on the west side of the Grand River were under the governmental jurisdiction of the township. These sections were annexed in 1850.

The vast amount of land that was made available by the removal of the Native Americans invited speculation and “Michigan acreage was regarded as the hottest item on the market” (Dunbar, p 164). The crash came in 1837, with the collapse of the banking industry in Michigan. West Michigan had no banks and circulating currency became so scarce that the village of Grand Rapids printed its own money – one and two-dollar “shinplasters.” Goods and services were obtained through barter or through *promises to pay* issued by prominent individuals in bank note form. The financial situation slowed immigration to the area considerably for a time.

Like many who came to Kent County from New England, Thales Dean first settled in the southeastern part of the state. Born in Burlington, Vermont, Dean was living in Washtenaw County when he purchased 35.54 acres in Section 31 of Tyrone Township, Livingston County in January 1839.

Dean and his wife, Elizabeth, were part of what might be characterized as the second wave of township settlement. On August 10, 1841, Dean purchased 160 acres in the northeast quarter of Section 28 at the U.S. Land Office in Ionia. A portion of this property is now
known as 2500 Lake Michigan Drive. He constructed a house, which appears on the 1855 and 1863 Walker Township plat maps.

Elizabeth Dean died on August 10, 1846. Thales Dean married Maria (maiden name unknown) two years later. There were no children born to either marriage.

Dean resided on his land until his death in 1865. Dean and both wives are buried in the White Cemetery, now part of Holy Cross Cemetery, in Walker.

The population of Grand Rapids more than doubled between 1860 and 1870. The Civil War brought prosperity to Walker farmers raising crops to feed the Union Army. The labor shortage experienced during the first two years of the war was eased by the influx of immigrants looking for work. The prosperity also brought buyers looking to purchase farms.

Alfred J. Gill was born in Madison County, New York in 1830. Gill and his wife, Harriet, and their nine-year-old son came to Walker in the spring of 1865 from Holland, Erie County, New York. A second son, Mark, was born in Walker in 1866.

After the death of Thales Dean, his property was split, with sixty acres purchased by T. R. Maynard, and the remaining one hundred acres purchased by Gill.

Gill first appears in the city directory in 1868 as co-owner of Gage & Gill, a livery stable at 21 Kent, with a residence at 12 Kent Street. The following two years he is listed individually as owner of a livery stable at 21 Kent Street, with a residence at 55 Ottawa. Between 1875 and 1878, Gill is listed as a butcher at 140 Kent Street, with a residence at 72 Coit Street. Chapman’s History of Kent County notes that Gill owned “considerable valuable property in the city.

In 1875, Gill constructed the Italianate house that still stands at 2500 Lake Michigan Drive. A Gill family history notes that Harriet Gill’s father, Calvin Rogers, was known locally (New York) as an architect and builder. Rogers may have designed this house, but no evidence has been found that he did.

Alfred Gill died in March 1897; Harriet died August 1917. Both Gills are buried in Greenwood Cemetery.

The Grand Rapids, Grand Haven and Muskegon Railway began regular passenger service on February 1, 1902, running from Grand Rapids to Grand Haven and Muskegon with numerous stops along the way. This accelerated the transformation of Walker from farm land and orchards to city suburb. Subdivision began to occur in anticipation of the interurban. By 1919, the route is lined with small lots.

The opening of Lake Michigan Drive (formerly Bridge Street) in 1928 further encouraged residential and commercial development in Walker. Referred to as a “super highway,” the road formed part of a newly-improved route running from Lansing to Lake Michigan that would bring tourists through the city and provide easy access for suburban residents to downtown Grand Rapids. Billed as the “Golden Gateway to the Playgrounds of Michigan,” it was supported by elected officials, businessmen, and developers. Unfortunately, it contributed to the decline of the interurban system.

The 1907 and 1919 plat maps of Walker Township show the Gill property is owned by S[uel] A. Sheldon. By 1939, Reuben C. Dayton is shown as the owner. The property was sold by Dayton in 1954 to the Kowroski family, two generations of which lived in the house until it was acquired by the current owner, Covenant Retirement Community in 2006.
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