

Michigan Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

February 7, 2019

Michigan History Center

702 W. Kalamazoo Street, Lansing

Commission Room

Commissioners in attendance: Laura Ashlee, Timothy Chester, Brian James Egen, Delia Fernandez, Eric Hemenway, Thomas Truscott, and Larry Wagenaar.

Excused Absence: Joe Calvaruso and Susan Safford

Staff: Sandra Clark, Michelle Davis, Sheri Giffin, Heather Lehman, and Tobi Voigt.

Members of the Public: Amy Arnold, State Historic Preservation Office

President Egen called the meeting to order at 10:09 a.m.

Clark introduced her new executive assistant, Sheri Giffin, who began working at the Center on January 28, 2019.

Ashlee introduced Amy Arnold, Historic Preservation Planner from the State Historic Preservation Office, who is interested in the Black Bottom marker.

Approval of Agenda: Ashlee moved to approve the agenda; the motion was seconded by Truscott and was unanimously adopted.

Approval of Meeting Minutes: Chester moved to approve the November 7, 2018, meeting minutes; the motion was seconded by Wagenaar and was unanimously adopted.

Marker Program:

➤ **Report on Black Bottom Marker**

Clark introduced Tobi Voigt, the Michigan History Center's (center) Director of Community Engagement. Since Voigt is familiar with the Detroit area and had worked with the community in the past, Clark asked for her assistance with the incomplete marker application. Noting that this marker will rely heavily on living memory and that due to the large amount of potential content prioritization will be essential, Voigt decided to host a community input session in partnership with the Black Historic Sites Committee of the Detroit Historical Society and Jamon Jordan, founder and facilitator of Black Scroll Network History and Tours. The session was held on December 10, 2018, at the Detroit Historical Museum. The recommendation of placing the marker on the north side of East Lafayette between 1300 East Lafayette and Du Charme Place was unanimously agreed upon during this session. Since the marker sponsor was unable to attend the input session, Voigt will meet with him to share other community input prior to having any text drafted or location confirmed. Voigt shared a synopsis of the meeting and two news articles about this project with the commission.

Ashlee asked Arnold if the Black Bottom project fits in with the civil rights project that she is currently working on. Arnold stated they are only looking at sites that still exist, and Black Bottom has mostly been destroyed.

Egen suggested this process could be used as a model for future marker projects that are similar. Clark agreed, stating that building trust in communities by developing relationships with key stakeholders is important to the future of the marker program. This may include involving the local community in reviewing current markers for content, damage or destruction, and looking for untold stories. This will help the program touch whole communities and not just individual sponsors.

Voigt reported that the Black Historic Sites Committee has started fundraising efforts to pay for the replacement of Detroit area historical markers that are missing or have been stolen. Ashlee noted there is a special mounting system designed to discourage theft that can be purchased for two post markers. This might be something to consider for replacement markers or new markers in the Detroit area.

Voigt noted that she was contacted by the Wayne State Police regarding The Detroit Medical College Marker that they have in their possession. Voigt will work with them to make sure it is properly stored until construction on the building where it was located is completed.

- **Marker Project** – Ashlee will focus on this during the next few months.
- **Approval of Marker Applications** – Written background information was provided on three new marker applications. (Appendix A)
 - ◆ **International Institute of (Metropolitan) Detroit, Detroit, Wayne County**
 - ◆ **Lima Center Cemetery, Dexter, Washtenaw County**
 - ◆ **City of Portland/Portland Downtown Historic District, Portland, Ionia County**

Wagenaar moved to approve the International Institute of (Metropolitan) Detroit and the City of Portland/Portland Downtown Historic District marker applications; Fernandez seconded the motion and it was adopted unanimously.

Wagenaar moved to decline the Lima Center Cemetery marker application due to the lack of primary source documentation to establish historical significance of this site; Fernandez seconded the motion and it was adopted unanimously.

- **Delisting of State Historic Sites** – Clark reported that a backlog exists of sites that need to be delisted from the State Register of Historic Sites. This has not been a priority for staff in the past. However, moving forward a list will be presented to the commission at future meetings in order to process the backlog. Chester moved to approve delisting the six sites from the state and local registers of historic sites as presented (Appendix B); Ashlee seconded the motion and it was adopted unanimously:
 - ◆ **First Consolidated School, Comstock Park, Kalamazoo County, S154**
 - ◆ **Lumbering Industry, Manton, Wexford County, S39**
 - ◆ **Williams Settlement of the Saginaw Trail, Pontiac, Oakland County, S54**

- ◆ **Wild Cat Banks, Kent Lake, Oakland County, S205**
- ◆ **First Public Fishing Site, Orchard Lake, Oakland County, S192**
- ◆ **Alexander Chene House (Little Harry’s Restaurant), Detroit, Wayne County, L1291**
- **Approval of Marker Texts** – Four new marker texts were presented to the Commission for review and approval.
 - ◆ **The Wolverine Rangers, Marshall, Calhoun County**
 - ◆ **Paint Creek Cider Mill, Oakland Township, Oakland County**
 - ◆ **Centreville Cemetery, Centreville, St. Joseph County**
 - ◆ **Russell Kirk, Mecosta, Mecosta County**

Chester moved to approve The Wolverine Rangers marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Ashlee, and it was unanimously approved. Wagenaar moved to table the Paint Creek Cider Mill marker text and to have it taken up for further review by the marker committee and brought back to the commission at a later date for approval; the motion was seconded by Fernandez, and the motion was unanimously supported. Truscott moved to approve the Centreville Cemetery marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Ashlee, and it was unanimously approved. Truscott moved to approve the Russell Kirk marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Fernandez, and it was unanimously approved.

Ashlee asked for an update on the conservation markers. Clark stated that the location is the final step and she is working on those details. Clark noted the difficulty she and others have faced in trying to obtain approval to place the Genevieve Gillette marker at the Sleeping Bears Dunes. The commission agreed that it is time to seek other location options in order to move this forward.

- **Reports**
 - ◆ The Marker Status report was distributed prior to the meeting. Commissioners need to notify Davis of any marker dedications they would like to attend.
 - ◆ The Marker Fund Report was distributed prior to the meeting.

Truscott moved to approve the marker reports as presented; the motion was seconded by Chester and were unanimously adopted.

Staff Reports

- Grant House – Clark stated that the Center has a signed memorandum of agreement with Eastern Market to move the Grant House. She also noted an amendment to the grant from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority that allows the Center to have Eastern Market manage the move of the Grant House. Some of the next steps will include fundraising to assist with the removal of the exterior lead paint prior to the move, and scheduling meetings with Detroit area stakeholders to find ways to fit into Detroit’s cultural education offerings.
- Clark announced that Dan Eichinger is the new DNR Director. He recognizes the Center’s cultural role and is eager to learn more about it.

- Parks and Recreation Division funding – The Parks and Recreation Division has agreed to give the museum sites \$190,00 for various projects, including interpretative planning for Tawas Point and North Higgins Lake, replacement of the Civilian Conservation Corps Museum exhibits, and new signs and a machine shop exhibit for Fayette State Park.
- The Director’s report was distributed prior to the meeting. Egen congratulated the Center on the Museum’s accreditation noted in the report.

Chester moved to approve the report as submitted; the motion was seconded by Truscott, and was unanimously adopted.

Business Updates

- Designation of *ex officio* member of Heritage Michigan
The commission is permitted two seats on the Heritage Michigan Board. Egen asked Chester if he would be willing to fill one of the vacant seats. Chester is familiar with non-profit boards and graciously accepted. The commission discussed the problem of foundation expectations that members give or successfully solicit a certain amount of money. Chester stated he is familiar with this practice and in this case is willing to meet the expectations of the foundation. Wagenaar moved to recommend Chester as one of the *ex officio* members of the Heritage Michigan Board; the motion was seconded by Fernandez and was unanimously adopted with Chester abstaining.

During the discussion, commissioners also talked about the American Alliance of Museums accreditation letter that expressed concern about the relationship between the foundation and the center. It was noted that the foundation’s articles of incorporation and by-laws indicate that its main purpose is to raise funds for the center. The lack of funds raised for this purpose in recent years was noted. Chester asked for any formal agreements that exist between the center and the foundation.

Committee Updates:

Civil War Sesquicentennial Committee – Egen noted that he recently received the History Partners group list of events.

Awards Committee - Chester stated that the Awards Committee will develop a strategic plan to move forward with the awards for 2019.

Marker Committee - Egen reported that Safford’s schedule does not allow for adequate time to chair the marker committee. Per Safford’s recommendation, Egen and Clark asked Ashlee to chair the committee going forward. Ashlee graciously accepted.

Public Comment: No public comment.

Commissioner Comments:

Ashlee announced she will be retiring from state service at the end of February 2019.

Egen stated that Keith Harrison offered to host the April 18, 2019, commission meeting at the Michigan Grand Army of the Republic Memorial Hall and Museum in Eaton Rapids. Egen will email commissioners for a consensus.

Egen also reported on the amazing experience he had during his recent visit to Sewah Studios, the manufacturer of the Michigan Historical Markers.

Truscott moved to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Ashlee, and the meeting adjourned at 12:35 p.m.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandra S. Clark". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a solid horizontal line.

Sandra S. Clark, Executive Secretary

Michigan Historical Marker Application Synopses

Michigan Historical Commission

February 7, 2019

International Institute of (Metropolitan) Detroit

Applicant: Robert E. Sullivan

Marker Location: 111 East Kirby Street, Detroit. (On the front lawn of the Institute.)

Requested Marker Type: Large, two-post, different text on either side.

Inspired by Jane Addams' Hull House and the settlement house movement in England, the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) opened numerous "International Institutes" during the early twentieth century to help immigrants adjust to their new homes. Elmina Lucke founded the International Institute of Detroit in the summer of 1919. She opened its first office at the Breitmeyer Building on Broadway Avenue in September. The organization quickly outgrew the space and moved to the corner of East Adams and Witherell in May 1920. The new building contained a welcoming living room and fireplace where newly arrived immigrants could feel at home. The Institute helped immigrants learn English, become citizens, find jobs and homes, acquire medical care and assimilate into their communities.

In 1926 the Institute left the East Adams and Witherell building because it was set to be torn down. The organization moved twice before settling in 1930 at the second floor of 2431 East Grand Boulevard. In 1934, the Institute took over the entire building and merged with the YWCA's Woman's Center. It changed its name to the "International Center," but performed the same functions as it had previously. The International Center became independent from the YWCA in 1944. It incorporated as "The International Institute of Metropolitan Detroit" and became a 501(c)(3) organization.

In June 1949, the Institute dedicated land at the corner of East Kirby and John R streets for a new building. The dedication included a multi-cultural celebration named "Parade of the Nations" in which participants dressed in clothing from a variety of cultures and performed traditional song and dance. Building construction began in 1950, and the Institute moved in July 1951. The building includes a large fireplace, paying homage to the Institute's 1920s home. One of the building's greatest benefactors, William S. Knudsen, was a Danish immigrant who was an early client of the International Institute.

In 1958, the International Institute of Metropolitan Detroit was accredited by the United States Department of Justice Board of Immigration Appeals. It remains an advocate for immigrants and refugees, helping them become citizens, holding ESL classes, assisting victims of human trafficking, offering financial literacy programs, supporting career development, and more.

Recommend Approval

Lima Center Cemetery

Applicant: Barbara Ruth

Marker Location: 11068 Jackson Road. Dexter, Washtenaw County.

Requested Marker Type: Small marker, wants to mount to cemetery gate.

This cemetery contains the graves of many early and influential citizens of Lima Township including Asa Williams; Lima's first postmaster; John Harford, who opened the township's first tavern; and Chester C. Palmer, a township treasurer and Justice of the Peace.

There are multiple veterans interred in the cemetery, including those who fought in the War of 1812, the Civil War, WWII and the Korean War.

One notable Lima Township native, General Dwight E. Beach (1908-2000), is buried in the cemetery. Beach graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1932. He served as a Commander and then as an Executive Officer for various artillery units before and during WWII. Beach then served as Commanding General of the 45th Infantry Division in the Korean War. Later, he served as the Director of Special Weapons Development at Fort Bliss, Texas. Beach was honored with the Distinguished Service Medal, Silver Star Medal, Legion of Merit, and Bronze Star Medal.

The application lacks primary sources about the establishment and history of the cemetery itself. The applicant proposes attaching the marker to a gate located at the beginning of the dirt road that leads to the cemetery. The gate is pictured below:



Staff does not recommend approval.

City of Portland/Portland Downtown Historic District**Applicant:** Tina Conner-Wellman, City of Portland**Marker Location:** Scout Park, within the downtown historic district boundaries. Ionia County.**Requested Marker Type:** Large, two-post, different text on either side

In 1833, Elisha Newman obtained a federal grant for extensive land around the Looking Glass and Grand Rivers that would later become the village of Portland. Philo Bogue established a trading post on the Looking Glass River that same year, selling supplies he purchased in New York to local travelers. Pioneers did not settle the area in groups until 1836. In 1837, a post office opened in the new hamlet under the name of Portland. The town grew steadily and was incorporated as a village in 1869 by the legislature. The railroad added a stop at Portland later that year, contributing to a population increase of nearly 80% between 1870 and 1880. The village grew to include cultural institutions, including an opera house in 1880 and a Carnegie Library in 1905. Portland incorporated as a city in 1969.

Portland's Downtown Historic District is located along Kent and Maple streets, between Academy Street and West Grand River Avenue. Early downtown businesses and storefronts were wooden structures, but brick buildings replaced these after several significant fires in the late nineteenth century. The district includes many different building styles, including Late Victorian, Neoclassical, Mid-Century Modern, and Utilitarian. In 1890, the Groton Bridge and Manufacturing Company of New York built what is now known as the Veterans Memorial Bridge. The bridge features pin-connected Pratt truss construction. The Portland Downtown Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2005.

This application is missing some primary sources. If approved, the applicant will be asked to provide sources for the downtown fires, the Carnegie Library's construction, and the Memorial bridge's construction.

Recommend Approval.

Delisting Items from the State Register of Historic Sites

The Michigan Historical Commission is charged with maintaining the State Register of Historic Sites. Originally a site could be listed on the register without having a Michigan Historical Marker. This practice was discontinued in the 1990s.

When a historic building is destroyed or so altered as to remove its historic significance, we require, by law, that the marker be removed. In most cases the State Register listing should also be removed at that time. There are also cases where listed sites that do not have a marker are too vague to qualify for historic recognition. Most of these appear to date to the early days of the program when we presume there was an effort to identify important topics without the specific location detail we require in 2019.

For some time, the practice of delisting has not been followed. Over the next few months, we will try to remedy that with requests for the commission to delist sites. At this time, we propose that the following sites be delisted from the State Register of Historic Sites. None of them had Michigan Historical Markers.

Site No.	Date Listed	Name	Location	Reason for Delisting
S154	1969	First Consolidated School	Comstock Kalamazoo County	No location, boundary or building.
S39	7/18/56	Lumbering Industry	Manton Wexford County	No location, boundary or building.
S54	8/23/56	Williams Settlement of the Saginaw Trail	Pontiac Oakland County	No location, boundary or building.
S205	2/12/59	Wild Cat Banks	Kent Lake Oakland County	No location, boundary or building.
S192	1/16/59	First Public Fishing Site	Orchard Lake Oakland County	No location, boundary or building.
L1291	1/17/86	Alexander Chene House (Little Harry's Restaurant)	Detroit Wayne County	Demolished in 1991