

# Michigan Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

April 18, 2019

Eaton Rapids Medical Center

1500 S. Main Street

Eaton Rapids, MI 48827

**Commissioners in attendance:** Laura Ashlee, Joe Calvaruso (by phone), Timothy Chester, Brian James Egen, Eric Hemenway (by phone), Susan Safford (by phone), Thomas Truscott, and Larry Wagenaar.

**Excused Absence:** Delia Fernandez

**Staff:** Sandra Clark, Michelle Davis, and Heather Lehman

**Members of the Public:** Paul Arnold and Keith Harrison, Michigan's Grand Army of the Republic Memorial Hall and Museum; Barb Barber and Dave Phillips, Oakland Township.

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

Introductions were made and followed by Keith Harrison extending an invitation for everyone to stop by the Michigan's Grand Army of the Republic Memorial Hall and Museum after the meeting for a tour.

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

**Approval of Meeting Minutes:** Truscott moved to approve the February 7, 2019, meeting minutes as amended; the motion was seconded by Safford and was unanimously adopted.

## Marker Program:

### ➤ **Aretha Franklin inquiry letter**

A request from Amy Arnold, Preservation Planner for the State Historic Preservation Office, asked whether the commission would make an exception for Aretha Franklin to its practice of waiting twenty years after someone's death to apply for a marker. Ms. Franklin's contributions to civil rights, as well as music, would be the focus of the marker. After discussion, Chester moved to waive the requirement of waiting 20 years after the death of an individual in order to create a marker commemorating their contributions to Michigan; the motion was seconded by Truscott and was unanimously adopted. Commissioners agreed that the former Chene Park (recently renamed the Aretha Franklin Park) could be an appropriate location if the City of Detroit approved.

### ➤ **Detroit marker list for Curbed Detroit**

Curbed Detroit reached out to the Center regarding the possibility of writing an article on Detroit's lesser-known Michigan Historical Markers. Clark asked each commissioner to submit a list of their top three or four suggested markers to Michelle by April 25, 2019.

### ➤ **Marker Project** – At the previous commission meeting, Ashlee agreed to chair the marker committee. Along with that new role, Ashlee and the marker committee members were asked to draft a plan that outlines the steps needed to review and update the markers on Mackinac Island and a few about the Great Lakes with an eye toward diversity and

inclusion. Ashlee asked for clarification on what they hoped to see in the draft plan. The commission concluded the plan should include process development and building community involvement. It should result in a model that can be used throughout the state. The marker committee agreed to meet in May. Hemenway noted that the June commission meeting held on the Island presents an opportunity to invite Mackinac Island State Parks, City of Mackinac and other community members to come together to discuss updating the Mackinac Island markers.

➤ **Research on African-American Churches in Detroit**

Clark stated that the center has received two marker applications relating to African-American churches in the Detroit area where non-denominational congregations moved from place to place due to urban renewal and changing populations. Traditional primary sources do not provide needed documentation. Clark asked the commission to consider using marker funds to hire a local Detroit historian to help locate non-traditional sources. This may provide guidance for communities in the future. Chester moved to spend up to \$10,000 on research to locate non-traditional sources for church history with the process to be decided by Clark; the motion was seconded by Wagenaar and was unanimously adopted.

Calvaruso stated he was approached by Martha Reeves, Detroit singer who loves history and Motown history in particular, about doing a Detroit project similar to the Grand Rapids project that placed statues of iconic local people in key spots throughout the city. Calvaruso will share the Grand Rapids process with Ms. Reeves and will mention this might tie in nicely with the marker program.

➤ **Request to relocate the Olivet College marker – Olivet, Eaton County, S186**

The commission reviewed a request to relocate the Olivet College marker. The current location on the northeast corner of Main Street (Old US27) and College Street in Olivet has become a safety issue for the community. Olivet College is proposing a new location at 333 South Main Street, Olivet. Wagenaar moved to approve relocating the Olivet College marker to 333 South Main Street, Olivet; Ashlee seconded the motion and it was adopted unanimously.

➤ **Approval of Marker Applications** – Written background information was provided on five new marker applications. (Appendix A)

- ◆ **Black Bottom, Detroit, Wayne County**
- ◆ **Covington School, Covington, Baraga County**
- ◆ **Dixboro Village Green, Ann Arbor, Washtenaw**
- ◆ **St. Anthony's Catholic Church, Harbor Springs, Emmet County**
- ◆ **Jacksonburg Public Square, Jackson, Jackson County**

Ashlee moved to approve the Black Bottom marker application; Safford seconded the motion and it was adopted unanimously. Truscott moved to approve the Covington School marker application; Chester seconded the motion and it was adopted by a vote of six to one. Wagenaar moved to decline the Dixboro Village Green marker application since the primary focus is on John Dix. Although Dix was important to the founding of Dixboro, much of his life was not spent in Michigan and there is little or no primary source documentation for his early maritime claims or his life in Texas. The commission agreed that it would look favorably on a marker that focuses on the community of

Dixboro, including John Dix's role in its founding and early years. Chester seconded the motion and it was adopted unanimously. Ashlee moved to decline the St. Anthony's Catholic Church marker application because of the lack of diverse primary sources representing multiple perspectives on the subject and the resulting lack of inclusiveness and balance in the proposed marker; Wagenaar seconded the motion and it was adopted unanimously. Wagenaar moved to approve the Jacksonburg Public Square marker application with a recommendation for Lehman and Clark to negotiate with the sponsor on a new title and an alternate location; Chester seconded the motion and it was adopted unanimously.

- **Delisting of State Historic Sites** – Clark reported this list concludes the backlog of sites that need to be delisted from the State Register of Historic Sites. Wagenaar moved to approve delisting the 12 sites from the state and local registers of historic sites as presented (Appendix B); Ashlee seconded the motion and it was adopted unanimously:
  - ◆ **Michigan Female Seminary, Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo County, S47**
  - ◆ **Detroit's First Bank, Detroit, Wayne County, S64**
  - ◆ **Railroad Conspiracy Case of 1851, Jackson, Jackson County, S161**
  - ◆ **Mystery Ship (Alvin Clark), Menominee, Menominee County, S370**
  - ◆ **Norther Michigan University – Kaye Hall Complex, Marquette, Marquette County, S383**
  - ◆ **Prentiss M. Brown, St. Ignace, Mackinac County, S428**
  - ◆ **Governor Chase Salmon Osborn, Sault Ste. Marie, Chippewa County, S577**
  - ◆ **Oxford Methodist Episcopal Church, Oxford, Oakland County, L604**
  - ◆ **Reed City Community Building, Reed City, Osceola County, L1590**
  - ◆ **Emporium (Marlene's Old Fashioned Ice Crème Parlor/The Children's Shoppe, Marshall, Calhoun County, L897**
  - ◆ **Button, Charles B., House, Farmington Hills, Oakland County, L1004B**
  - ◆ **Tyoga Historical Pathway, Deerton, Alger County, L1423C**
- **Approval of Marker Texts** – eight new marker texts were presented to the Commission for review and approval.
  - ◆ **Paint Creek Cider Mill, Oakland Township, Oakland County**
  - ◆ **Patent Medicine Town, Marshall, Calhoun County**
  - ◆ **Two Medical Business Leaders, Marshall, Calhoun County**
  - ◆ **City of Portland/Portland Downtown Historic District, Portland, Ionia County**
  - ◆ **Kindleberger Park, Parchment, Kalamazoo County**
  - ◆ **Fountain Street Baptist Church/Fountain Street Church, Grand Rapids, Kent County**
  - ◆ **Broughton House, Franklin, Oakland County**
  - ◆ **International Institute of Detroit/International Institute of Metropolitan Detroit, Detroit, Wayne County**

Chester moved to approve the Paint Creek Cider Mill marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Truscott and was unanimously approved. Safford moved to approve the Patent Medicine Town marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Hemenway and was unanimously approved. Truscott moved to approve Two Medical Business Leaders marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Chester and was

unanimously approved. Wagenaar moved to approve the City of Portland/Portland Downtown Historic District marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Truscott and was unanimously approved. Ashlee moved to approve Kindleberger Park marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Safford and was unanimously approved. Ashlee moved to approve the Fountain Street Baptist Church/Fountain Street Church marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Safford and was unanimously approved. Ashlee moved to table the Broughton House marker text until further review of additional information that the State Historic Preservation Office may have; the motion was seconded by Safford, and the motion was unanimously supported. Chester moved to approve the International Institute of Detroit/International Institute of Metropolitan Detroit as amended; the motion was seconded by Truscott and was unanimously approved.

➤ **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. Davis provided an update on the conservation marker project. The State Board of Fish Commissioners/State Game and Fish Warden conservation marker will be placed at The Oden State Fish Hatchery in Alanson. The marker will be ordered within the next few days and should be erect by the end of summer. The Edith Munger conservation marker location is likely to be in Whitehall. The Genevieve Gillette conservation marker will be placed at the P.J. Hoffmaster State Park pending the final required signatures. Davis has initiated contact on finding permanent locations for the Edward K Warren/Warren Dunes State Park and the Charles W. Garfield markers.
- ◆ The Marker Fund Report was distributed prior to the meeting.

Clark reminded commissioners to submit three or four photos from the marker dedications they attend for the marker database. If possible, they should include one photo that displays the marker in its location. For example, if the marker refers to a structure, one should show the marker with the structure in the background. Commissioners were also asked to look over the marker database and notify Davis if they noticed any issues or concerns.

Chester reported that the Vandenberg Center/Arthur Hendrick Vandenberg historical marker is no longer at its location. The site appears to be undergoing a major construction project. Clark stated that the architecture firm recently contacted MHC with questions related to storing and requesting a new location for the marker. Chester asked if he should move forward with finding funds to correct the marker, and the response was “yes.”

**State Historic District Reports**

- **Proposed Shalom Fellowship International Ministries/Fourteenth Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church Historic District, Detroit**
- **Detroit Pure Proposed Pure Word Missionary Baptist Church/Eighth Church of Christ Scientist Historic District, Detroit**

Truscott moved to accept the State Historic District reports as presented; the motion was seconded by Wagenaar and was unanimously approved.

### **Staff Reports**

- The Director's report was distributed prior to the meeting.
- **Grant House** – Eastern Market is managing the move of the Grant House.
- **Straits Heritage/Father Marquette** – Clark thanked Chester and Wagenaar for their help with the \$100,000 donation received from the Meijer Foundation.
- **StoryCorps** – MHC is in negotiations with StoryCorps on a project.

### **Business Updates**

- Heritage Michigan – The foundation hired a new employee, Erin Burns, whose primary focus is fundraising. Chester was unable to attend the most recent meeting, but will plan to attend the next one. Chester will approach Ms. Burns about a possible fundraising opportunity for the Straits project.
- Mackinac Island commission meeting – The next commission meeting is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. on June 20, 2019. The marker project will be a topic on the agenda, and Phil Porter will be invited to participate. Clark extended the invitation for overnight accommodations to include spouses, significant others and children. She also invited commissioners to attend either of the public meetings related to the Straits Heritage/Father Marquette project that are being held on June 18 and 19, 2019, at the St. Ignace Library.

**Committee Updates:** None

**Public Comment:** No public comment.

**Commissioner Comments:** Wagenaar distributed a brochure for the Upper Peninsula History Conference being held on June 28-30, 2019, in Escanaba.

Egen thanked Harrison and Davis for their work on the logistics for this meeting.

Truscott moved to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Ashlee, and the meeting adjourned at 1:20 p.m.



Sandra S. Clark, Executive Secretary

## Michigan Historical Marker Application Synopses

Michigan Historical Commission

April 18, 2019

### **Black Bottom**

**Applicant:** Ray Smith

**Marker Location:** On the north side of E. Lafayette St., between 1300 East Lafayette and Du Charme Place, Detroit, Wayne County

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

Black Bottom, named for its rich marsh soils, was a neighborhood on Detroit's East Side. Before WWI, Eastern Europeans occupied much of the area. When African Americans began moving from the South to Detroit during the Great Migration, housing discrimination and economic disparity caused many migrant black families to settle in Black Bottom. By WWII, the neighborhood was a predominantly black community of working class people.

Black Bottom's residents often lived in crowded conditions and paid overpriced rent. Many families boarded with multiple other families to save money. Though poverty, disease, and corrupt law enforcement clouded the neighborhood, Black Bottom was still a vibrant community. The local schools and churches served as social centers, and residents established hundreds of black-owned businesses. Many well-known Detroit personalities were from Black Bottom, including Mayor Coleman A. Young, Nobel Peace Prize recipient Ralph Bunche, and boxer Joe Louis.

In the early 1960s, the City of Detroit razed Black Bottom as part of its Urban Renewal project to replace "slums" with freeways and updated housing. The Chrysler Freeway and Lafayette Park replaced Black Bottom, and families were displaced without proper resources for relocation.

**Recommend Approval**

### **Covington School**

**Applicant:** Joanne Besonen

**Marker Location:** 13299 School Rd., Covington, Baraga County.

**Requested Marker Type:** Small, wall-mounted.

The present Covington School was completed in 1938 after the preceding building burned down in 1934. Classes were first held during the 1938-39 schoolyear. The school originally housed Kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade, and later only K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade. In 1986, shortly after Michigan introduced an act that encouraged school district reorganization, the L'Anse Area Schools Board of Education decided to annex the Covington Township School District.

The schoolhouse was not used again until 1993, when it became "The Learning Center" library. A Head Start preschool occupied the building from 1994 until 2006, and the lower level was briefly used as a town fitness center. In 2007 the Community Women's Club began using the schoolhouse as an art gallery and the UP Made Artist's Market.

**Recommendation:** This is an example of the end of small local schools in rural Michigan (western UP) and of adaptive reuse, but it may not reach the Michigan Historical Marker level of significance. This is something the Commission should discuss.

### **Dixboro Village Green**

**Applicant:** Tom Freeman

**Marker Location:** 5221 Church Rd, Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County. On the southern side of the green near the red brick one-room schoolhouse.

**Requested Marker Type:** Small, one-post, same text on both sides.

John Dix was born in Massachusetts in 1796. In the summer of 1824, Dix purchased land from the federal government in what is now Washtenaw County for \$1.25 an acre and built a house there.

After marrying Mary Eliza Hayes in Massachusetts in 1825, Dix received his land patent and established the village of Dixboro. Surveyor Alva Brown platted the village in 1826. Dix built a gristmill, a sawmill and a general store. He served as Dixboro's first postmaster.

Dix and his family moved to Texas in 1833. He remained a loyal unionist throughout the Civil War and died in 1870.

**Recommend Approval** with the caveat that the marker focus more on the establishment of Dixboro than the story of John Dix.

The sponsor presented a good deal of information on the life of John Dix before and after he came to Michigan. These stories include Dix's involvement in the War of 1812, his life as a ship's captain, a shipwreck on the North Island of New Zealand, and his service in the Texas War of Independence. We do not recommend including this information as it is not pertinent to Michigan history and is largely undocumented with primary sources.

### **St. Anthony's Catholic Church**

**Applicant:** Jane Cardinal

**Marker Location:** Heritage Cross Park, 6541 Lakeshore Dr., Harbor Springs, Emmet County.

**Requested Marker Type:** Large, different text on either side.

The Odawa inhabited the area that is now Cross Village for centuries before the Jesuits established an "Indian Mission" there in the late seventeenth century. In the early 1830s Frederic Baraga founded a church in the village and dedicated it to St. Ignatius of Loyola. The Odawa built its log structure and erected a large wooden cross.

In 1850, Bishop P.P. Lefevre bought two acres of land from Chief Nawmushkote to construct a new church building. The completed church was renamed St. Anthony's by 1853.

Cross Village was nearly entirely destroyed by a fire in 1918. St. Anthony's, then known as Holy Cross Church, burned down along with much of the village. The wooden cross remained standing. Holy Cross Church was never rebuilt.

This is the group that originally applied for a marker for a wooden cross in the park. The commission rejected that application. There is not enough primary source documentation within this application to fill a large marker. Several of the facts listed in the above narrative have not been substantiated with primary sources.

## **Jacksonburg Public Square**

**Applicant:** Linda Hass

**Marker Location:** Bucky Harris Park, northwest corner of West Michigan Avenue and North Jackson Street, Jackson, Jackson County.

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

Many of Jackson's antislavery efforts were tied to its downtown public square. William DeLand and Norman Allen, two men who assisted fugitives along the Underground Railroad, established the *Jacksonburg Sentinel* newspaper at the square in 1837. It was among Jackson's first newspapers, and its early articles called the slave trade "diabolical." The *American Freeman*, an abolitionist paper founded by Underground Railroad agent William Sullivan and his brother Nicholas, was also printed at the public square. Michigan abolitionist Seymour Treadwell took over the paper in 1839 and renamed it the *Michigan Freeman*.

DeLand later became editor of the *American Citizen* Jackson newspaper. The paper criticized the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 that permitted new states to decide whether or not they would allow slavery. The *Citizen* also reported on the Underground Railroad and included the testimony of a mother who stated she would rather see her children buried "than to have them taken from her into slavery."

The Jacksonburg public square also held the town courthouse, which was the location of several antislavery gatherings. Seymour Treadwell, author of *American Liberties and American Slavery*, gave a speech there in 1839. Self-emancipated abolitionist Henry Bibb spoke at the courthouse in 1850 "on the subject of human rights." In 1854, a group of Jackson citizens who opposed the Kansas-Nebraska Act met at the courthouse to discuss the situation and formally declare their opposition.

This application is problematic for two reasons:

1. There is already a marker in what is now Bucky Harris Park with the same title as this proposed marker.

The text reads:

### **Jacksonburg Public Square**

On March 30, 1830, a commission appointed to choose Jackson County's seat of government reported: "A territorial road, called the St. Joseph's road, was last winter laid. . . . Where this road crosses the Grand river . . . a flourishing village is commenced." Named Jacksonburg, the village was surveyed and platted that year.

Residents proclaimed the town the future site of the new state capital. The plat included a public square at the intersection of Jackson Street and the Territorial Road (present-day Michigan Avenue). By the 1880s the square was a bustling business district comprising the county courthouse, the First Congregational Church and three commercial blocks, including the Blackwell Building, now known as the Old Post Office.



2. The proposed location is rather small for two markers.

The image below illustrates the proposed marker location in relation to the existing marker.



## 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 details 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.

Site No.	Date Listed	Name	Location	Reason for Delisting
S47	8/23/1956	Michigan Female Seminary	Kalamazoo Kalamazoo County	No location, boundary, or building
S64	8/23/1956	Detroit's First Bank	134 Jefferson Avenue, Detroit Wayne County	Demolished
S161	9/17/1957	Railroad Conspiracy Case of 1851	Jackson Jackson County	No location, boundary, or building
S370	2/11/1972	Mystery Ship (Alvin Clark)	Foot of 6 <sup>th</sup> Avenue at the Menominee River, Menominee Menominee County	Ship disintegrated and was demolished after being raised
S383	4/14/1972	Northern Michigan University – Kaye Hall Complex	Marquette Marquette County	All structures Demolished
S428	7/26/1974	Prentiss M. Brown	St. Ignace Mackinac County	No location, boundary, or building
S577	4/10/1986	Governor Chase Salmon Osborn	Sault Ste. Marie Chippewa County	No location, boundary, or building
L604	5/17/1978	Oxford Methodist Episcopal Church	Oxford Oakland County	Demolished
L1590	9/21/1988	Reed City Community Building	Reed City Osceola County	Demolished
L897	2/23/1981	Emporium (Marlene's Old Fashioned Ice Crème Parlor/The Children's Shoppe	154-156 West Michigan Avenue, Marshall Calhoun County	Building lost its integrity - third story of the building no longer exists
L1004B	3/18/1982	Button, Charles B., House	Farmington Hills Oakland County	Demolished
L1423C	6/10/1987	Tyoga Historical Pathway	Deerton Alger County	No location, boundary, or building