

## Michigan Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

March 12, 2020

Michigan History Center

Bigelow Room, 702 W. Kalamazoo Street, Lansing

**Commissioners in attendance:** Laura Ashlee (by phone), Joe Calvaruso (by phone), Brian James Egen (by phone), Delia Fernandez (by phone), and Susan Safford (by phone).

**Excused:** Timothy Chester, Eric Hemenway, Thomas Truscott, and Larry Wagenaar.

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

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. at the Michigan History Center. No one from the public was in attendance.

**Approval of Marker Applications** - Written background information was provided on two new marker applications. (Appendix B)

- ◆ **Clinton F. Woolsey Memorial Airport, Northport, Leelanau County**
- ◆ **Vasold Family Cemetery, Freeland, Saginaw County**

Safford moved to approve the Clinton F. Woolsey Memorial Airport marker application with the condition of asking for more information on the airport as a whole; Ashlee seconded the motion and it was unanimously adopted. Ashlee moved to decline the Vasold Family Cemetery marker application after concluding that as submitted the application doesn't make the case for the site having enough historical significance; Safford seconded the motion and it was unanimously supported.

Safford moved to adjourn the meeting; Calvaruso seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m.



Sandra S. Clark, Executive Secretary

## Michigan Historical Marker Application Synopses

Michigan Historical Commission

March 12, 2020

### Clinton F. Woolsey/Clinton F. Woolsey Memorial Airport

**Applicant:** Lynn Contos

**Location Address:** 13951 E Woolsey Lake Road. Northport, Leelanau County.

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

Captain Clinton F. Woolsey was born in Northport in 1894. He joined the National Guard while attending Valparaiso University and learned to fly at San Antonio's Kelly Field. Woolsey earned his pilot's license, which was signed by Orville Wright, in 1924. He served as a flight instructor and test pilot in Texas and completed training with the Air Corps Engineering Service in June 1926.

Woolsey was one of ten pilots selected to partake in the Pan American Good Will Flight around Central and South America. The flight was meant to deliver messages of friendship from the United States to Central and South American countries and create navigation routes. The ten pilots left in five Loening planes named after American cities on December 21, 1926. Woolsey served as the flight's maintenance officer and piloted the *Detroit* alongside Lieutenant John Benton.

On February 26, 1927, the *Detroit* was jostled when banking into an air pocket and collided with the *New York*. Both planes crashed just outside of Buenos Aires. The *New York*'s pilots parachuted to safety, but Captain Woolsey and Lieutenant Benton perished. Argentina's president and military officials paid tribute to the lost pilots. The remaining pilots continued as planned and finished the Good Will Flight on May 2. Woolsey's wife, Rosalia, chose a hometown burial instead of one at Arlington National Cemetery. His funeral was held in Northport on March 27, 1927.

Chauncey and Caroline Woolsey arrived in Northport with their children in the early 1860s.

Chauncey's father Adolphus Woolsey, a War of 1812 veteran, arrived with his wife Harriet soon after. Chauncey bought more than 150 acres of land. He fought for the Union during the Civil War and died in battle in 1864. Shortly thereafter, Chauncey's son Byron cleared the family land and became a successful dairy farmer. Byron and his wife Sarah had eight children, the youngest of whom was Clinton F. Woolsey.

After Clinton died in 1927, Byron donated 80 acres of his farm, including a creamery he had built himself around 1890, to serve as a memorial airport. Leelanau Township contributed 120 more acres. The CWA (predecessor to the WPA) assigned workers to the project, which included converting the creamery into the terminal. The Clinton F. Woolsey Memorial Airport dedication took place on July 14, 1935. Private planes occasionally fly in and out of the airport, but the majority of the site's activity takes place during the annual Woolsey Memorial fly-in event, which began in the summer of 1987.

**Recommend Approval**

**Photo is on the next page.**



### **Vasold Family Cemetery**

**Applicant:** Jim Leaman

**Marker Location:** 6450 N River Road. Freeland, Saginaw County.

**Requested Marker Type:** Small, one-post, same text on each side.

Augustus M.C. von Vasold (August Vasold) emigrated from Germany in 1850 with his wife Ernestine and their seven children. They traveled to the United States on the British Queen passenger ship along with many other German immigrants. They arrived in Newfoundland after the ship was disabled in stormy waters and were towed to New York. The Vasolds moved to Tittabawassee Township, Michigan, in June 1850 after August purchased farmland there. The family cleared the land and built their own home. In 1877, after Ernestine died, August established a family cemetery on the homestead. He died in 1887 and was buried at the cemetery. August and Ernestine's children contributed to the township in a variety of ways. August Vasold Jr. served as justice of the peace for sixteen years and was a school officer. Otto Vasold, a successful beekeeper who manufactured his own honey, served as school inspector and a township assessor. Hugo Vasold was road commissioner and a township assessor. The Vasold Cemetery Association, composed of August M.C. Vasold's descendants, owns and operates the site today. The cemetery contains nearly two hundred plots, all reserved for descendants of August M.C. Vasold.

This application was tabled at the February 13, 2020, meeting, to allow time for additional cemetery research to be done. Commissioner Ashlee reported that she "looked at the Vasold

Cemetery file and spoke with former National Register coordinator Bob Christensen regarding how the cemetery might compare to other family cemeteries. We came to the conclusion that as submitted the application doesn't make the case for the site having significance. We discussed the fact that it is large for a family-only cemetery; however, while the cemetery has 200 plots the majority of them are vacant. I looked at the Find A Grave list of burials, and it shows 21 graves from the nineteenth century or first half of the twentieth century, 29 from the second half of the twentieth, and 11 from the twenty-first. This means very few graves are associated with the early history of the township, the story of German immigration, settlement, etc.”

**Staff does not recommend approval.**