

Michigan Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

February 11, 2021

Michigan History Center

Commissioners in attendance (all by Zoom): Laura Ashlee (Okemos, MI), Joe Calvaruso (via phone, Comstock Township, MI), Timothy Chester (Grand Rapids, MI), Brian James Egen (Monroe, MI), Delia Fernandez (Lansing, MI), Eric Hemenway (Harbor Springs, MI), Robin Terry (Detroit, MI), Tom Truscott (via phone, Dewitt, MI) and Larry Wagenaar (Lansing, MI).

Staff (all by Zoom): Sandra Clark (Holt, MI), Michelle Davis (Middleton, MI), and Troy Masserant (Ypsilanti, MI).

Guests (by Zoom): Wendy Jean-Buhrer, Michigan War Memorial

President Egen called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

Each member stated their name and the location from where they were attending remotely.

Approval of Agenda: Wagenaar moved to approve the agenda as presented; the motion was seconded by Calvaruso and was unanimously approved on a roll call vote.

Approval of Meeting Minutes: Wagenaar moved to approve the November 19, 2020, meeting minutes as amended; the motion was seconded by Calvaruso and was unanimously adopted on a roll call vote.

Open Meetings Acts Compliance – Clark stated that the Open Meetings Act has been amended. Currently an extension has been granted that allows boards and committees to continue meeting electronically while in a state of emergency. Once that extension expires, members will be required to attend all meetings in person, at the meeting location, in order to have a quorum. The act also states a member only has voting privileges if attending the meeting in person. When attending the meeting remotely, members must state their name and the physical location from where they are attending remotely.

Public Comment on Items Not related to an Existing Agenda Item:

Wendy Jean-Buhrer presented on behalf of the Michigan War Veterans Memorial Group. The memorial contains more than 300 engraved stones from veterans' posts throughout Michigan. It was built in 1939 at the Michigan State Fair Grounds. When the fairgrounds closed in 2009, the memorial was dismantled and placed in storage. The group has had discussions with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) about placing it at Milliken State Park. The group would like to see this become part of the DNR's master plan in order to proceed with fundraising.

Clark stated that she communicated with DNR staff prior to the meeting and confirmed this is part of the proposed master plan, which should be approved within the next few weeks. She noted that for several years, the Michigan History Foundation held a small fund for this project. In 2020, those funds were released to Dick Chatman.

Wagenaar moved to have Clark prepare a letter of support stating the importance of the reconstruction of this memorial and its unique nature and send to the appropriate authorities; the motion was seconded by Chester and was unanimously approved on a roll call vote.

Wagenaar noted that the Historical Society of Michigan (HSM) would be willing to assist with publicizing fundraising efforts in the future.

Marker Project –

- Pomeroy Foundation – Clark reported the Pomeroy Foundation, a family foundation, has historical markers as one of its two main purposes. She has contacted the foundation and discussed the commission's desire to work with communities to audit Michigan's historical markers for content and gaps. The foundation's interest is in funding marker fabrication, not the needed community and research work. It has a similar project with Ohio and sounded very supportive of the commission's project. One requirement is to recognize the foundation on any marker it funds. This could be accomplished by adding a line to the information at the bottom of each marker, as Ohio does. Clark has received the application to apply for the funds and will follow up.
- Clark also mentioned potential work with Detroit's Black Historic Sites Committee to identify markers needing replacement due to content and potential sites identified as having untold African American stories. Terry noted she would be interested in working on this initiative with Clark. Clark and Terry will meet to discuss further.
- Ashlee asked for an update on the Mackinac Island and the Great Lakes markers. Clark noted funding is needed for the remaining Mackinac Island markers. The Great Lakes markers still need additional work from Clark and Hemenway before they are ready to be finalized.

Calvaruso moved to recognize the Pomeroy Foundation at the bottom of any marker they fund, and to pursue a first-round grant application with partners; the motion was seconded by Ashlee and was unanimously approved on a roll call vote.

Calvaruso noted that this a wonderful opportunity and creates a methodology to get the needed funds. Fernandez added that she is very close to completing her tenure review and will be able to devote more time to developing partnerships in the future.

- Results of Marker Audit – Ashlee reported 63 markers have been evaluated for Crawford County, Delta County, Kent County and the Lansing area. Of those evaluated the following results were reported:
 - Marker Condition:
 - 19 – Fair 36 – Good
 - 8 – Poor 8 – Need new posts
 - Marker Content Concerns:
 - 3 – outdated 1 – more details
 - 3 – considered offensive 1 – fact check needed
 - 1 – story needs expanded

In order to develop grant applications, Clark recommended finalizing the marker condition portion of the audit and allowing additional time for commissioners to review the marker text for content.

That will provide some examples of concerns, percentages of markers likely to need attention and an audit summary. Clark noted that marker condition and marker content may require different sources of support.

Commissioners observed that the audit process made certain patterns in the stories shared on markers evident. Going forward, this may influence commission decisions about stories that may be missing and what applications should be accepted.

Calvaruso and Hemenway left the meeting.

Marker Program

➤ Requests to Revise, Replace, Relocate, Move to Artifact Status

- ◆ **Waukazoo Woods - Ottawa County, Holland, Site No. L1236** – A request was received asking permission to relocate the Waukazoo Woods historical marker from the southwest corner of Post and Waukazoo to the Triangular Park within the Waukazoo Woods area at the intersections of Oakhampton, Oakwood and Waukazoo roads. Ashlee moved to approve relocating the marker as requested; the motion was seconded by Wagenaar and was unanimously approved on a roll call vote of remaining commissioners.
- ◆ **South Olive Christian Reformed Church, Ottawa County, Olive Township, Site No. L1177B** – On November 14, 2019, the commission approved delisting the South Olive Christian Reformed Church site from the State Register of Historical Sites because the original structure was demolished. The sponsor has asked to have the marker moved to artifact status and to purchase a replacement marker with the same text on each side (the side of text that only refers to the congregation and not the demolished structure). Chester moved approval to have the marker moved to artifact status and the purchase of a replacement marker. After discussion, Chester amended his motion to approve artifact status for the marker; the motion was seconded by Wagenaar and passed on a roll call vote of 5-1 with Truscott abstaining.

Ashlee expressed concern with the new artifact status policy. Legislatively the purpose of a marker is to interpret history in an outdoor setting, not to become a museum object. The commission agreed to discuss this further at a future meeting.

The commission then discussed the church's request to purchase a replacement marker that uses "side one" of the original marker text on both sides. It denied this request stating that the original marker was intended for both the architectural structure and the congregation's history. Additional information about the significance of the congregation to the community and a completed, fully

documented new application would be required for a new commemorative marker.

- ◆ **Wawashkamo, Mackinac County, Mackinac Island, Site No. S550A** – Clark presented revised text for a replacement to the original Wawashkamo historical marker. Wagenaar moved to approve the revised text; the motion was seconded by Chester and was unanimously approved on a roll call vote of the remaining members.
- ◆ **Ironwood City Hall, Gogebic County, Ironwood, Site No. L399** – On September 3, 2020, the commission approved delisting the Ironwood City Hall site from the State Register of Historic Sites. Davis discovered the marker was being stored by the Ironwood Area Historical Society, which asked if there was a way to be able to continue displaying the marker. This resulted in an official request to have the marker moved to artifact status. Wagenaar moved to approve artifact status for the Ironwood City Hall marker; the motion was seconded by Chester and was approved on a roll call vote of 6-1.
- **Delisting of State Historic Sites** – Clark presented five sites to be delisted from the State Register of Historic Sites. Chester moved to approve delisting the sites from the State Register of Historic Sites as presented (Appendix A); the motion was seconded by Fernandez and it was adopted unanimously on a roll call vote of remaining members:
 - ◆ **St. James High School, Bay City, Bay County, L264**
 - ◆ **Davidson-Goux House (Huguenot House), Wayne County, L401**
 - ◆ **Cadillac Square Building, Detroit, Wayne County, L418**
 - ◆ **Chicago Hotel, New Buffalo, Berrien County, L733A**
 - ◆ **White Cloud Village Hall, White Cloud, Newaygo County, L1003A**
- **State Register of Historic Sites** – Clark reported on the new state tax credit program for preservation of historic buildings. Being listed in the State Register of Historic Sites is one of the potential qualifications for applying the tax credits. Until the late 1990s, a site or structure could be listed in the State Register of Historic Sites and if listed could apply for a historical marker. After that point, the only way to be listed in the State Register of Historic Sites was to purchase a historical marker. The center has started to receive inquires of how to get a marker in order to be listed on the State Register. Clark is working with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to make sure its messaging is clear that the buildings quality is what makes it eligible to receive the credits, not merely its listing on the State Register.
- Staff discussed the possibility of removing those sites listed on the State Register of Historic Sites that do not currently have a marker. However, with more than 1,000 sites currently unmarked, it would be a very large undertaking and not a priority for the current marker program. Ashlee noted numerous attempts to remove the State Register from the tax credit legislation. It is important to be explicit that having a marker does not make a property eligible to receive a tax credit.

Clark added that the State Register of Historic Sites official document has been kept in a handwritten log form on lined paper. The center is creating an official digital record of the register and will move the paper log to archival status. and

- **Approval of Marker Applications** – Written background information was provided for three new marker applications. (Appendix B)
 - ◆ **Hastings Table Company, Hastings, Barry County**
 - ◆ **Beckwith Memorial Building, Dowagiac, Cass County**
 - ◆ **Amity Lodge #335, Detroit, Wayne County**

Chester moved to approve the Hasting Table Company marker application as presented; the motion was seconded by Fernandez and was unanimously approved on a roll call vote of remaining members.

Truscott left the meeting at this point.

Wagenaar moved to decline the Beckwith Memorial Building marker application as presented and recommend to the applicant that the commission would entertain a revised application that clearly focuses on Mr. Beckwith and not the destroyed structure; the motion was seconded by Terry and was unanimously approved on a roll call vote of remaining members. The commission noted that an appropriate location to memorialize Mr. Beckwith might be on or near an existing Round Oak Stoves building.

Ashlee moved to approve the Amity Lodge #335 marker application as presented; the motion was seconded by Terry and was unanimously approved on a roll call vote of remaining members.

- **Implementation of Marker Repair Program** – Clark reviewed the marker repair and replacement fund policy and asked if any questions remain prior to posting the information to the public. The commissioners agreed that the policy is ready for Egen’s signature and can be posted to the marker website. Davis will share the policy and application with interested sponsors.
- **Reports**
 - ◆ The Marker Status report was distributed prior to the meeting.
 - ◆ The Marker Fund report was distributed prior to the meeting.

Staff Reports

- **Director’s Report** – Clark stated that staff will not return to work in the office prior to May 1, 2021. State Parks and field sites are currently scheduled to open as normal. The center continues to focus on diversity, inclusion, and expanding its digital presence. Both cross-agency work groups are being led by staff members who have taken on facilitation roles and responsibilities. Clark stated the Governor’s budget is being taken up today and she does not expect any real changes to be recommended for the 2022 budget.

Local Historic District Study Committee Reports

The commission was provided information on two reports from Local Historic District Study Committees:

- **Kalamazoo First Baptist Church, Kalamazoo County, Kalamazoo**
- **Saginaw Pere Marquette-Potter Street Station, Saginaw County, Saginaw**

Commissioners expressed concern about grammatical errors in the staff comments provided by the State Historic Preservation Office. The reports were accepted by general consensus.

Business Updates

- Michigan History Foundation – Chester stated that the foundation exists to financially support and encourage the work of history for the state of Michigan, specifically the work of the Department of Natural Resources Michigan History Center and the State Historic Preservation Office. Currently there are sixteen foundation members, four of which are women. It otherwise lacks diversity. Several of the members do not attend regularly, and diversity has not been discussed to the best of Chester’s knowledge. There is still a vacant spot slotted for one more commissioner. There is a required donation to be a member.

The foundation’s executive director, Erin Burns, has secured a capacity building grant from the Capital Region Community Foundation and has hired a consultant to meet with the entire foundation on long-range strategic planning. The foundation realizes it is not doing everything it could be to raise funds to help the center. Burns is ready to move forward with fundraising for special projects. The foundation was founded in 1989 and has a net asset of approximately \$1,091,000. The foundation holds certain special project funds on behalf of the Center. For example, the Yankee Locomotive is one of three surviving Chapin locomotives in the world. In 2019, the center received a grant from the Institution of Museum and Library Services to conserve the locomotive and the match is being facilitated by the foundation. There has not been a discussion about building up an endowment on behalf of the state’s history programs. Looking at other foundations that support state historical agencies, that is one of the key roles that they play. The foundation currently does not have endowment policy. Wagenaar said he would share the HSM’s endowment policy with Clark.

- United Sound Systems Recording Studios – Clark reported that the decision has been made to move forward with building the freeway ramp, and the studio will need to be moved. There is a commitment by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to seek an owner and to properly move the structure. An empty lot next to the current location is a possible new location. The project is not scheduled to begin until 2023, which allows time to pursue options. Clark communicated this information to Carleton Gholz, United Sound Conservancy, and encouraged him to work with MDOT to find an alternative use for the building.
- “America 250” – This is a national effort to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution in 2026. The Governor has designated the HSM and the center as Michigan’s co-leaders for this effort. Clark and Wagenaar agree that a core group from both the commission and the HSM board should form a steering committee to make

decisions and coordinate various local activities. This may also be a good time for a coalition of the Great Lakes States to create a regional project. Some federal funding may become available to the states. The commission offered consensus support.

Commissioner Comments

- Ashlee commented on the importance of keeping relevant primary source documentation used to write Michigan historical marker text. Clark stated the current process is to have staff sort the marker file content immediately after a marker dedication, while the marker text is still fresh in everyone's mind. Many of the older marker files contain very little, if any, documentation at all.
- Wagenaar noted that all of the HSM 2021 conferences will be held virtually.

Ashlee moved to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Wagenaar and the meeting was adjourned at 1:07 p.m.

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

Sandra S. Clark, Executive Secretary

Delisting Items from the State Register of Historic Sites

The Michigan Historical Commission is charged with maintaining the State Register of Historic Sites. When a historic structure 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.

At this time, we propose that the following site(s) be delisted from the State Register of Historic Sites:

Site No.	Date Listed	Name	Location	Reason for Delisting
L264	1973	St. James High School	Bay City, Bay County	Structure demolished 2002; no marker exists; site needs to be delisted
L401	1975	Davidson-Goux House (Huguenot House)	Wayne County	Structure demolished; no marker exists; site needs to be delisted.
L418	1975	Cadillac Square Building	Detroit, Wayne County	Structure demolished 1976-1977; no marker exists; site needs to be delisted
L733A	1979	Chicago Hotel	New Buffalo, Berrien County	Structure demolished 1981; no marker exists; site needs to be delisted
L1003A	1982	White Cloud Village Hall	White Cloud, Newaygo County	Structure demolished; no marker exists; site needs to be delisted

The Hastings Table Co.

Applicant: Sig Strautmanis, General Capital Group.

Location Address: The Corner of East Mill Street and Hanover Street, Hastings, Barry County

Requested Marker Type: Large, different text on either side

This marker is proposed for the site of the main Hastings Table Company factory building, which was destroyed by accidental fire last year. The applicant had plans to adaptively reuse that building for housing and still plans to use the remaining warehouse (built between 1900 and 1909) and the site.

In 1891 the Hastings Chair and Table Company was founded and built its factory on this site. By 1894, the company had changed its name and exclusively sold extending, multi-leaf dining room tables. A manufacturing complex grew around the site. The Hastings Table Company grew rapidly after Emil Tyden, a Swedish immigrant and inventor, joined it in the 1898. Tyden patented eight improvements for the company's tables between 1900 and 1907 and became the factory's manager and vice president of the company. In 1908 the Hastings Table Company was one of the largest manufacturers of dining room tables in the United States. A three-story brick addition to the factory was built that year. When the company closed its doors in 1938, it had tripled its original size and employed approximately one hundred and fifty workers. The site was owned by the Royal Coach Company from 1940-1955. The Hastings Manufacturing Company purchased the original building in 1956.

Emil Tyden (1865-1951) played a major role in the industrial growth of Hastings. He arrived in the United States in 1882 at age 17. In 1898, he patented a seal and lock for freight cars. Richard Messer, a Hastings banker involved in the Hastings Table Company, learned of the invention and invited Tyden to Hastings to produce his product. Tyden accepted and founded the International Seal and Lock Corporation (ISLC) adjacent to the Hastings Table Company. Between 1901-1909, Tyden constructed a new building for the ISLC and moved the company across the street from the Hastings Table Company factory. The building remains there today. At ISLC, Tyden mass produce his product ten years before Ford mass produced cars. By 1932, ISLC provided ninety percent of freight seals and locks in the western hemisphere. Emil Tyden died November 18, 1951. Over the course of his life, he founded or helped direct at least six different companies in Hastings and registered more than two hundred patents. Many of those corporations still maintain a presence in Hastings.

Recommendation: Despite the recent destruction by fire of the historic factory building, we recommend approval due to the importance of Tyden and the company in creating this manufacturing center in Hasting.

Proposed Marker Location:





The Hastings Table Company building adjacent to the original International Seal and Lock Company building, 1901-1907.



The International Seal and Lock Company building at its present location, 1913.

Beckwith Memorial Building

Applicant: Dowagiac Area History Museum

Location Address: 131-135 Front Street, Corner of Beeson and S. Front Streets, Dowagiac, Cass County

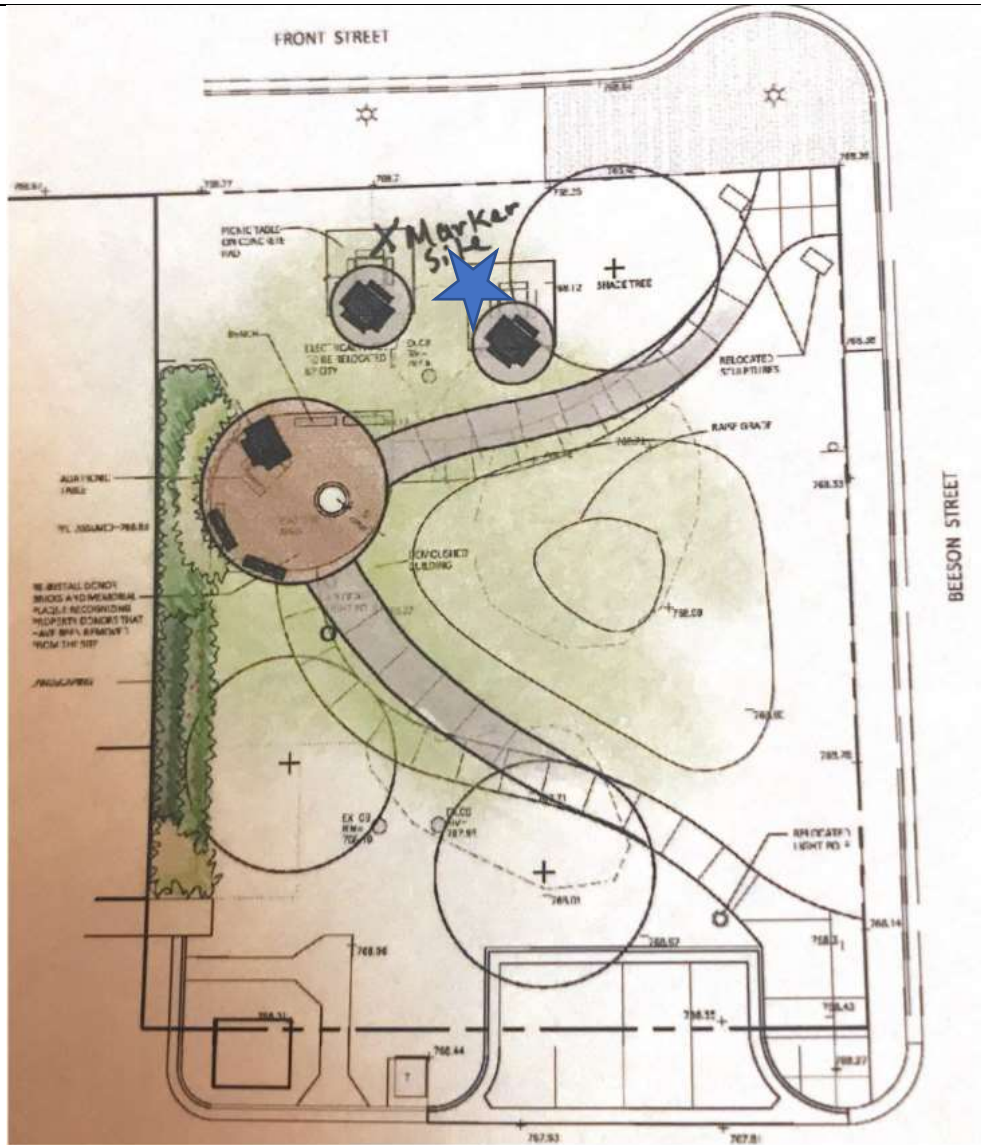
Requested Marker Type: Large, different text on either side

Philo D. Beckwith (1835-1889) came to Dowagiac, Michigan, in 1854 and opened a small foundry with a single employee. In 1861, Beckwith began production of John S. Gage's roller grain drills, a device used for sowing seeds. Beckwith patented improvements for the drills and they became a staple of production for the factory. In 1871, Beckwith began production of the Round Oak heating stove, a product of his own design. These stoves soon became a household name and were shipped to "all the Northwestern states." By 1876, Beckwith had patented 15-20 patents for the roller grain drill and the Round Oak stove. His factory became an important industrial feature of the town. His success brought him a large role in the political life of Dowagiac, where he served as mayor for most of the 1880s and used his wealth to support the city.

After Beckwith's death in 1889, his son-in-law and manager of estate, Fred E. Lee, proposed the construction of the Beckwith Memorial Theatre to the city council in 1892. The council agreed and the theatre was dedicated on this site on January 26, 1893. The theatre was built in the Romanesque style and was one of the first theatres in the United States to use an advanced rigging system developed in Vienna. The Beckwith theatre served an important role in the cultural life of Dowagiac until 1966, when it was razed. The lot sat vacant for some time before it was repurposed into Beckwith Park.

Recommendation: The sponsor wanted the theater to be the main subject of this marker with a detailed description of its architectural appearance. Marker Program staff are uncomfortable with that approach. We could recommend using a picture of the theater with the second side. Beckwith himself may be a better candidate for the focus of the marker.

Proposed Marker Location:





Amity Lodge #335

Applicant: Wanda Latham

Location Address: 9375 Amity St, Detroit, Wayne County

Requested Marker Type: Small, different text on either side.

The Amity and Island View chapters of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F.) built this structure to serve as their meeting hall. The architectural firm B.C. Wetzel & Co. designed the four-story Amity Lodge #335 building in 1910. Construction finished in 1911, and the hall was expanded in 1920. Detroit had many I.O.O.F. lodges, temples, and members through the late nineteenth century and into the middle of the twentieth century, of which little evidence remains. The order originated in England and spread to the United States in 1819. Its mission was “To visit the sick, relieve the distressed, bury the dead, and educate the orphan.” Several other organizations also used the hall as a meeting space. In 1942 the Knights of Columbus Gabriel Richard Council No. 2463 purchased and renamed the structure Gabriel Richard Hall. The Amity Lodge building remained in use by the I.O.O.F, the Knights of Columbus, and other organizations until 1960.

In 1960, the Spiritual Church of Israel and its Army—an African American non-mainstream-denomination of Christianity founded in Alabama in the early twentieth century—purchased the building. Led by Bishop Dr. Derrick Fields and Bishop W. D. Dixon, the congregation moved north as part of the Great Migration and settled in Detroit in the 20s or early 30s. Prior to 1960, the church was headquartered at 5434 Hastings Street in Black Bottom. The construction of I-75 forced the congregation to relocate, and it purchased the Amity Lodge building. The denomination currently has twenty-nine temples across the country, eleven of which are in Southern Michigan. The temple at the former Amity Lodge building is the supreme temple out of which the Church of Israel operates and serves its community.

Recommendation: Approval

Proposed Marker Location:



