

Michigan Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

November 3, 2022

Records Management Services

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

Excused Absence: Joe Calvaruso, Robin Terry and Larry Wagenaar

Staff: Sandra Clark, Michelle Davis and Andrew Oswald.

Public: Diana Paiz, East Lansing, member of the public

The commission met prior to the meeting for a tour of the Michigan History Museum portion of the facility.

At 11:00 a.m. President Egen called the meeting to order.

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

Approval of Meeting Minutes: Chester moved to approve the August 25, 2022, meeting minutes as amended; the motion was seconded by Fernandez and was unanimously adopted.

Continued Strategic Planning for Historical Marker Program

- **Observation on the Ohio Historical Marker Program** – Discussion on Michigan’s marker program and what seems to work well for us and what Ohio offers that may fit into our program. Hemenway stated that Ohio does not have twelve federally recognized tribes like Michigan. Clark stated that Ohio does have private funding available and more staff available than Michigan. Commissioners suggested the possibility of inviting someone from the Ohio and/or Pennsylvania marker program to attend a future commission meeting to allow commissioners time to ask specific questions. Commissioners liked the idea of establishing two deadlines per year to accept applications. The consensus from the commission is that the day-to-day management of the program should be left up to MHC staff. It was suggested to let the content of the marker review project drive the future administrative processes for the program.

- **Update on Detroit Marker Review Project** – Discussion on the draft final report provided by JFM Consulting regarding the Detroit Marker Review Project. The summary information documents the need for the project well. A core group of individuals were identified during the facilitated sessions to work on marker revisions and gaps. The next step is to prioritize the group of markers that were identified as needing text revisions or gaps in the stories that are missing. In terms of revisions, commissioners agreed that it is important to remember that what is acceptable and preferred for marker texts today will likely change in the years to come as language evolves. The commission is committed to be more accurate and inclusive as it moves forward while making decisions on changing past language based on the historic time period.

Local Historic District Committee Report

➤ Vinsetta Bridges Historic District, Royal Oak, Oakland County

Fernandez moved to accept the recommendations provided by Ashlee for the Vinsetta Bridges Historic District; the motion was seconded by Chester and was unanimously accepted.

The commission took a break for lunch at 11:50 p.m. and reconvened at 12:30 p.m.

Marker Program

- **Public Comment on marker topics** – Diana Paiz addressed the commission regarding the marker review project discussion that took place at its June 2022 meeting. The project is working toward capturing stories that have been forgotten or ignored. The commission discussed organizing a core team of historians with knowledge in Latinx, Asian American, Native American, African American, Arab American, LGBTQ, and immigrants in Michigan History, but did not include people with disabilities. She asked that the commission revise the marker review project to include historians with knowledge about people with disabilities and to include their stories that have been forgotten and ignored.

Paiz next addressed terminology used in marker text. There are two markers that have offensive language that references people with disabilities. The Van Buren County Poor House marker text displays the offensive words “mentally retarded.” The Hamtramck Stadium marker discusses “midget car races.” The word “midget” is offensive. Paiz suggest that both markers should be taken down and replaced at the commission’s earliest haste due to the offensive terms.

A third marker noted by Paiz references the portrayal of people with disabilities. The recently approved marker text for the Sanderson House reads, “Mr. Sanderson was left homebound because he was partially paralyzed.” When instead it should be portrayed that he was homebound because of the 1950’s timeframe of not being equipped as a society to assist individuals with disabilities.

The commission thanked Paiz for bringing these matters to its attention.

Clark addressed the concern with the “Midget Car Racing” and shared that it is a specific name used by the racing circuit. She asked Paiz what she might offer as a solution to the text issue. Paiz asked that the commission really examine how important is it to list the specific type of car name, could it simply state “car racing” instead. She stated that the race car organization might not understand the offensive use of the word, however that does not mean others should continue to use it.

Delisting of State Register of Historic Sites (Appendix A)

◆ Erin United Presbyterian Church, Roseville, Macomb County, Site No. L906

Chester moved to approve delisting the Erin United Presbyterian Church; the motion was seconded Truscott and was unanimously approved.

- **Approval of Marker Applications** – Written background information was provided for three new marker applications. (Appendix B)
 - ◆ **New Bethel Baptist Church, Detroit, Wayne County**
 - ◆ **Trombly Elementary School, Grosse Pointe Park, Wayne County**
 - ◆ **Rice Cemetery, Milan, Monroe County**

Ashlee moved to approve the New Bethel Baptist Church application; the motion was seconded by Truscott and was unanimously approved.

Truscott moved to approve the Trombly Elementary School marker application; the motion was seconded by Chester and was unanimously approved.

Ashlee moved to approve the Rice Cemetery marker application for a one-post marker with different text on each side; the motion was seconded by Chester and was unanimously approved.

- **Approval of Marker Text** – Draft Marker texts were provided for:
 - ◆ **Beta Beta Chapter of Alpha Phi, East Lansing, Ingham County**
 - ◆ **The Northernmost Point of Lake Michigan/The North Shore of Lake Michigan (Site No. S258), Naubinway, Mackinac County**
 - ◆ **Mulligan’s Hollow, Grand Haven, Ottawa County**
 - ◆ **Algiers Motel, Detroit, Wayne County**
 - ◆ **Finney Barn/William Dolarson (Site No. S69), Detroit, Wayne County**

Truscott moved to approve the Beta Beta Chapter of Alpha Phi marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Fernandez and was unanimously approved.

Ashlee moved to approve The Northernmost Point of Lake Michigan/The North Shore of Lake Michigan replacement revised marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Truscott and was unanimously approved.

Ashlee moved to approve the Mulligan’s Hollow marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Truscott and was unanimously approved.

Truscott moved to approve the Algiers Motel marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Fernandez and was unanimously approved.

Ashlee moved to approve the Finney Barn/William Dolarson revised replacement marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Truscott and was unanimously approved.

- **Reports**
 - ◆ The Marker Status report was distributed prior to the meeting.
 - ◆ The Marker Fund report was distributed prior to the meeting.
Davis noted that a balance remained from the FY22 Marker Repair/Replacement Fund. Chester moved to approve rolling over the remaining FY2022 balance of

\$4,934.70 and adding it to the FY23 amount. This decision is based on the fact that Sewah Studios stopped accepting refinish orders early in 2022; the motion was seconded by Fernandez and was unanimously approved.

Director's Report

- **Budget FY2023** – Clark noted that the center is in a good place with the current FY23 budget. The department's requests for FY2024 have been submitted, including expansion of the local-government records program. Sandra has a third conversation scheduled with The Mellon Foundation regarding the Heart of the Great Turtle Island project.
- **Mark Hoffman Resolution** – Ashlee moved to adopt the resolution for Mark Hoffman; the motion was seconded by Fernandez and was unanimously approved.

Business Updates

- Commission meeting dates – The commission meeting dates for 2023 were distributed and commissions were reminding of the importance of attending in person if at all possible.
- Egen thanked Wagenaar for preparing and submitting his comments on the agenda during a very stressful time.

Public Comment – No public comments were given.

Commissioner Comments:

- Ashlee thanked Davis for organizing the meeting.
- Egen attended the Birwood Wall historical marker dedication and noted that history seems to have some great representation in Detroit now. Egen thanked Hemenway for his help with a recent film project and Native American actors.
- Truscott noted it is an honor to serve on the commission.

Ashlee moved to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Truscott and the meeting adjourned at 3:32 p.m.



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 be delisted from the State Register of Historic Sites:

Site No.	Date Listed	Name	Location	Reason for Delisting
L906B	3/16/1981	Erin United Presbyterian Church	Roseville, Macomb County	On February 13, 2020, the commission granted artifact status for this marker, noting that the site should be delisted once the structure was demolished. Structure was demolished in December 2020.

Michigan Historical Marker Application Synopses
Michigan Historical Commission
November 3, 2022

New Bethel Church

Applicant: New Bethel Baptist Church

Location Address: 8430 C.L. Franklin Blvd.

Historic Resources: Historic Site & Historic Events

Requested Marker Type: Two Large Wall-Mounted Markers; Side-by-Side

Historical Summary:

The New Bethel Baptist Church was founded on March 6, 1932, with V.L. Bolton serving as the first pastor. The Reverend C.L. Franklin became the church's pastor in May of 1946. The congregation moved into a new church at 4210 Hastings Street in Paradise Valley in 1951. Franklin, a major figure in the Civil Rights Movement and father of Aretha Franklin, moved the congregation to this site in 1963. The congregation was removed from the Hastings Street church in 1961 as part of the Detroit Medical Center urban renewal project that devastated Paradise Valley.

This building was constructed as the Orient Theater in 1927. The theater's name was changed to the Oriole Theater later that year due to a copyright injunction filed by the Oriental Theater. The theater was in operation into the early 1950s. The building was then purchased by Prophet James Jones for use by the Church of the Universal Triumph, Dominion of God in 1952. The Reverend C.L. Franklin purchased the church from Jones in June of 1961. Franklin commissioned African American architect Nathan Johnson to redesign the building. The redesign was considered "the first major all-Negro building project in the city." New Bethel Baptist Church began official operations there on March 10, 1963.

In May 1963 Franklin hosted a meeting at New Bethel Baptist Church that resulted in the formation of the Detroit Council for Human Rights, which elected Franklin as Chairman. The Council played a leading role in planning the Walk to Freedom, one of the largest demonstrations for civil rights ever held in the United States. Martin Luther King Jr. attended the march and gave a precursor to the "I Have a Dream" speech that he would deliver a few weeks later in Washington D.C. at the March on Washington. Many members of New Bethel's congregation were also integral to the success of the march, such as Thomas H. Shelby, Erma Franklin, Grace Cobb, and Benjamin McFall.

On March 30, 1969, what became known as the "New Bethel Incident" occurred at the church. New Bethel was hosting the national convention of the Republic of New Africa (RNA), a Black nationalist group. Several law enforcement agencies were conducting covert surveillance operations of the RNA and the convention.

That evening a confrontation occurred outside the church between two white police officers and an unidentified armed man who may have been with the RNA. One of the officers, Michael Czapski, was shot and killed. The other officer was also shot and suffered further injuries from crashing their patrol car attempting to flee. It is unclear why the conflict occurred or how it unfolded. A dozen or more police officers responded and fired into the church,

wounding several inside. Witness reports disagreed on whether police exchanged fire with RNA bodyguards inside the church. The officers stormed the church and arrested 142 individuals, charging them with conspiracy to commit murder. Witnesses stated that the police brutalized and intimidated them throughout the process.

Those arrested were detained and unlawfully held incommunicado without legal counsel until Recorder Court Judge George Crocket learned of the arrests from the Revered Franklin and established an ad hoc court room at the police station to process the arrestees. Crocket's efforts led to the release of all but three of the detained. The remaining three men were charged with murder, but were acquitted following a jury trial.

Summary of Integrity:

The building has undergone extensive remodeling including the removal of the windows along Linwood Street and a new exterior facade. The overhang above the entrance appears to be original to Nathan Johnson's remodel. However, the building's historic integrity is not as significant as the events that have taken place there. Due to the location, there is no room for a large two-sided marker. The Sponsor has asked that the commission consider the placement of two large wall-mounted markers. Staff notes that there is sufficient information to do this.

Recommendation: Approval

Proposed Marker Location: The front of the church, facing W Philadelphia Street



Trombly Elementary School

Applicant: Renee Jakubowski

Location Address: 820 Beaconsfield, between Essex and Halley Place. Grosse Pointe Park, Wayne Co.

Historic Resource(s): Historic Site

Requested Marker Type: Large marker with the same text on each side.

Historical Summary:

Trombly Elementary School is named for Robert Trombly who held multiple positions around Grosse Pointe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Trombly studied law and became a Grosse Pointe Township Justice of the Peace in 1884. He later served as the president of the Grosse Pointe Park Village from 1910 to 1912 and spent 30 years on the school board.

The original Robert Trombly School was built in 1903 at the corner of Jefferson and Beaconsfield. The school enrolled around 100 students in its four classrooms and employed five teachers and a principal. The current Trombly Elementary School was constructed in 1927 to accommodate an increase in enrollment. The school was constructed in two phases with the second wing being completed in 1930. The school's auditorium showed movies and housed events for Grosse Pointe residents before the construction of the Punch and Judy Theater in 1930. As of 2022 Trombly School is the only elementary school in Grosse Pointe that features an auditorium.

Trombly was designed by the Detroit architectural firm, Smith, Hinchman, and Grylls, whose other work included the Detroit Opera House, the Guardian Building, and the J.L. Hudson Building. Trombly Elementary was designed in a modified tudor-gothic style. It features two Pewabic fireplaces and story book tiles above the drinking fountains. The founder of Pewabic Pottery, Mary Stratton, lived only a few blocks from Trombly at the time of its construction.

Summary of Integrity:

The original greenhouse has been demolished with a new one built in its place in 2016-2017. The building retains much of its original features, including the exterior brickwork and slate roof.

Recommendation: Approval

Proposed Marker Location: Front lawn of the school, by the entrance



Rice Cemetery

Applicant: Barbara J. Collins, Ann Sweet

Location Address: Dennison Rd., between Mead Rd. and Hickory Rd., Milan, Monroe Co.

Historic Resource(s): Historic Site & Burial Site

Requested Marker Type: Large marker with different text on each side.

Historical Summary:

In the Fall of 1833 Caleb Rice traveled from Orleans, New York, to Milan, Michigan, and purchased 240 acres to farm on. The following year Rice and his son, Josephus, started the “Rice’s Corners” farm at the corner of Dennison and Hickory Road.

On October 20, 1888, Josephus conveyed an acre of their land, the Rice Burying Grounds, to the town of Milan for the purposes of operating a cemetery. Four years later Josephus’ daughter, Florence Rice Miller, reached an agreement with Milan to expand the cemetery. As of 2022 descendants of Caleb Rice still live adjacent to the cemetery.

Rice Cemetery serves as the final resting place for four veterans of the War of 1812 and more than thirty veterans of the American Civil War. One of the many veterans buried at Rice Cemetery is Sergeant Daniel Robert McFall. McFall was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in 1896 for his actions during the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House of the American Civil War. On May 12, 1864, McFall, commanding Company E of the 17th Michigan Infantry, spearheaded the capture of Colonel Barker, the commanding officer of the Confederate brigade that charged the Union position. He rescued Lieutenant George W. Harman of his regiment that same day. McFall returned to the Milan area following the war and operated a farm until his death on November 5, 1919.

As of 2022 there are more than 1,100 graves at Rice Cemetery with 280 dating from the 19th century. The cemetery features various ornate grave markers including fraternal symbols, hands pointing upward, a hand coming down from a cloud, obelisks, and weeping willows.

Recommendation: There does not appear to be sufficient information for a large two-sided marker. Staff ask that the commission consider both the size and whether this meets its standards of significance.
Proposed Marker Location: Near Dennison Rd., between the new and old parts of the cemetery



This is the northern end of Rice Cemetery and the proposed location for a marker. The cemetery will be expanding north.