

# Michigan Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

June 13, 2024

Michigan History Center  
Board Room

**Commissioners in attendance:** Laura Ashlee, Joe Calvaruso, Tim Chester, Brian Egen, Eric Hemenway (via Zoom – Harbor Springs), Delia Fernandez-Jones, and Larry Wagenaar.

**Staff:** Sandra Clark, Michelle Davis, and Andrew Oswald

At 10:00 a.m. Egen called the meeting to order.

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

**Approval of Meeting Minutes:** Chester moved to approve the April 11, 2024, meeting minutes as presented; the motion was seconded by Wagenaar and was unanimously adopted.

## Michigan Historical Marker Program

- **Public Comments on Marker Topics** – no public comments were provided.
- **Marker Policies and Guidelines Update** – Ashlee distributed the following Michigan historical marker program documents: style guide, evaluation criteria and principles and standards, marker repair and replacement fund policy, moving a historical marker to artifact status policy, synopsis guidelines, and determination of eligibility. Ashlee noted the intent of the documents are to streamline the process in such a way that the commission will be allowed more time to focus on reviewing the application/synopsis and less time on the grammar and style. Davis agreed to share the documents electronically with commissioners. The documents should be reviewed and ready to discuss at the August 22, 2024, commission meeting.
- **Review Marker Repair and Replacement Fund – Sunset Deadline**  
Clark noted that when the commission established the marker repair and replacement fund, a sunset date was set for September 30, 2023. Clark stated that from an administrative standpoint, the program is working well and suggested continuing this going forward. Ashlee moved that the marker repair and replacement fund policy become permanent; the motion was seconded by Fernandez-Jones and was unanimously adopted.
- **Delisting of State Register of Historic Sites: St. Boniface Catholic Church & Rectory L1077A, Detroit, Wayne County (no marker existed)** – Wagenaar moved to approve delisting the site since the structure was demolished in November 1996; the motion was seconded by Ashlee and was unanimously adopted.
- **Holland Harbor/Holland Harbor Lighthouse Marker L394** – Clark noted the marker text is currently being revised due to inaccurate information. Staff recently found that two identical markers exist at two different locations. One marker is in a Department of Natural Resources (DNR) State Park and the other is on private property near the lighthouse. The marker located in the DNR park was approved for the marker repair and replacement fund with 40% of the replacement cost being covered by the park. The

marker on private property is not accessible to the public without scheduling an appointment and those appointment days and times are very limited. Clark recommended removing the marker located on private property and not replacing it because it lacks the public accessibility that is a requirement for state historical markers. Fernandez-Jones moved to remove the marker located on private property and not replace it; the motion was seconded by Chester and was unanimously approved.

- **Port Huron Statement – Marker Funding** – Chester noted that the Port Huron Statement marker text was approved by the commission in 2014. However, due to a lack of funding, the marker has not been purchased. In 2023, Chester agreed to reach out to individuals that were involved with this project to inquire about what funds have been raised so far. After several conversations, he was pleasantly surprised to discover that a total of \$3,740 has been pledged. Chester also researched applying for a small community grant but that did not appear to be a viable opportunity. At this point, Chester recommends using undesignated marker funds to cover the remaining cost of a two-post marker with different text on each side. Wagenaar moved to approve waiving the marker fee normally collected and to use \$430 of undesignated marker funds to cover the remaining balance after the sponsors submit their funds they were able to collect for the marker; the motion was seconded by Calvaruso and was unanimously approved. Chester agreed to contact the individuals to request payment be submitted as soon as possible.
- **Approval of Marker Applications** – Written background information was provided for two new marker applications. (Appendix A)
  - ◆ **Bigler Cemetery, Oakland Township, Oakland County**
  - ◆ **Mayflower Place, Grand Rapids, Kent County**

Wagenaar moved to approve the Bigler Cemetery marker application; the motion was seconded by Calvaruso and was unanimously approved.

Wagenaar moved to approve the Mayflower Place marker application; the motion was seconded by Calvaruso and was unanimously approved. The commission recommended the marker be located outside of the gate on the property .

- **Approval of Marker Texts** – Draft marker texts were provided for the following four markers:
  - ◆ **First Universalist Church, Ingham County, Lansing**
  - ◆ **Mackinac Island S34, Mackinac County, Mackinac Island**
  - ◆ **The Port Huron Statement S732, St. Clair County, Burtchville**
  - ◆ **Blackburn Escape, Detroit, Wayne County**

Wagenaar moved to approve the First Universalist Church marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Calvaruso and was unanimously approved. Clark agreed to revise the text and circulate the final version via email to the commission for its final approval.

Chester moved to approve the Mackinac Island revised replacement marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Ashlee and was unanimously approved.

Clark recommended revising and replacing the Market Street historical marker that is very close in proximity to the Mackinac Island marker and is a slightly different size and in need of updating. She has talked with Hemenway and Steve Brisson from the Mackinac State Historic Parks who have agreed to help with the revisions and review.

Ashlee moved to approve The Port Huron Statement revised replacement marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Chester and was unanimously approved.

Wagenaar moved to approve the Blackburn Escape marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Calvaruso and was unanimously approved. Clark stated that she granted a special exception for this marker file that the author requested to protect her research (marker files are subject to the Freedom of Information Act). The information has been used for authentication but will not be retained for the permanent file.

➤ **Reports**

- ◆ The Marker Status report was distributed prior to the meeting.
- ◆ The Marker Fund report was distributed prior to the meeting.

**Director's Report** – The report was distributed prior to the meeting.

**Business Updates**

- Mackinac Island Commission Meeting – The dates have been confirmed for August 21-24, 2024, with the meeting scheduled for Thursday, August 22, 2024.
- Nomination of Officers for June Meeting – Hemenway recommended nomination of Egen as the president and Chester as the vice-president. Calvaruso made the motion and all were in favor of the recommendation.

**Public Comment** – No public comments were given at this time.

Chester moved to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Wagenaar; and the meeting adjourned at 11:04 a.m.



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Sandra S. Clark, Executive Secretary

Michigan Historical Marker Application Synopses  
Michigan Historical Commission  
June 13, 2024

## Bigler Cemetery

**Applicant:** Barbara Barber

**Contact Info:** 248-608-6807, bbarber@oaklandtownship.org

**Location Address:** Corner of Kern and West Gunn Road, Oakland Township, Oakland Co., 48306.

**Historic Resource(s):** Historic Site/Cemetery

**Requested Marker Type:** Small marker with unspecified text on each side.

### Historical Summary:

Philip Bigler sectioned off a corner of his property as a burial ground in 1825. The first burial conducted was that of his own daughter, Rocksina Bigler, who was born on March 18, 1824 and died on July 29, 1825. Philip Bigler, a War of 1812 veteran, had arrived in Oakland Township in 1825 and purchased five land patents. Bigler served as supervisor, accessor, director of the poor, and director of highways for the county. In 1831 he brought a blooded horse to the township, bringing attention to superior breeding in livestock to the area. Bigler died on May 12, 1839 and is buried in the cemetery with his wife.

The cemetery remained in private hands until 1865 when the Orion and Oakland Burial Society formed and purchased the roughly one-acre lot.

Bigler Cemetery has 209 graves including those of three veterans of the War of 1812 and two veterans of the Civil War. The cemetery is also the final resting place of many of the earliest European settlers of Oakland County including members of Jesse Decker's family. Decker, of the nearby Decker Settlement Historical Marker, was instrumental in establishing the first Euro-American settlement in Orion Township. However, it is not known if Jesse Decker himself is buried in Bigler Cemetery.

### Historic Integrity:

The cemetery is inactive and no longer accepting interments. The grounds are well maintained, and many original headstones and monuments remain.

**Recommendation:** Approval

**Proposed Marker Location:** At the front gate of the cemetery along Gunn Road.



# Mayflower Place

**Applicant:** Frank Patis

**Contact Info:** [melissa.patis@meijer.com](mailto:melissa.patis@meijer.com), 616-724-4871

**Location Address:** 2350 Leonard, Grand Rapids, Kent Co.

**Historic Resource(s):** Historic Building

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

## Historical Summary:

In 1911 Irving Andrew Dean and Olive Crane Kendall Dean hired local architect Frank P. Allen to design this house for them. Allen's work around Grand Rapids includes the City Bakery, the Macey Company furniture plant, and the Johnson Cigar Company.

This house is a two-and-one-half-story dwelling of wood frame and stucco construction. The exterior closely follows the tenets of Classical Revival architecture with features including a centered portico supported by pairs of Corinthian columns, symmetrical fenestration, and a broken pediment front door surround. The interior is done in the Arts and Crafts style with minimally ornamented woodwork and built-in cabinetry. While the Classical Revival exterior reflects the Deans' reverence for their colonial ancestors, the interior reveals their admiration for the Arts and Crafts style that was dominant at the time of the house's construction. The house retains its original specifications book prepared by Frank P. Allen.

Irving Andrew Dean graduated in 1876 from the Grand Rapids Business University, which is now Davenport University. He later joined the accounting department of the Grand Rapids & Indiana Railroad before opening his own accountancy in 1908. Dean married Olive Crane Kendall in Grand Rapids on June 21, 1883. Olive Crane was an exceptionally active member of the Daughters of the American Revolution and particularly the General Descendants of the Mayflower Society. She claimed six or more ancestors among the passengers of the *Mayflower* and donated many family artifacts to the Mayflower Society.

The house is recognized colloquially as "Mayflower Place" for Olive Crane Kendall Dean's association with the General Descendants of the Mayflower Society. It is also recognized as the Dean House or the Irving Andrew and Olive Crane Kendall Dean House. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Place in 2023 as the Irving Andrew and Olive Crane Kendall Dean House.

## Summary of Integrity:

The house retains most of its historic integrity. The limited modifications include updates to the electrical and HVAC systems and a new asphalt shingle roof in 2008. One of the original chimneys was also removed.

**Recommendation:** Discuss, architecturally significant?

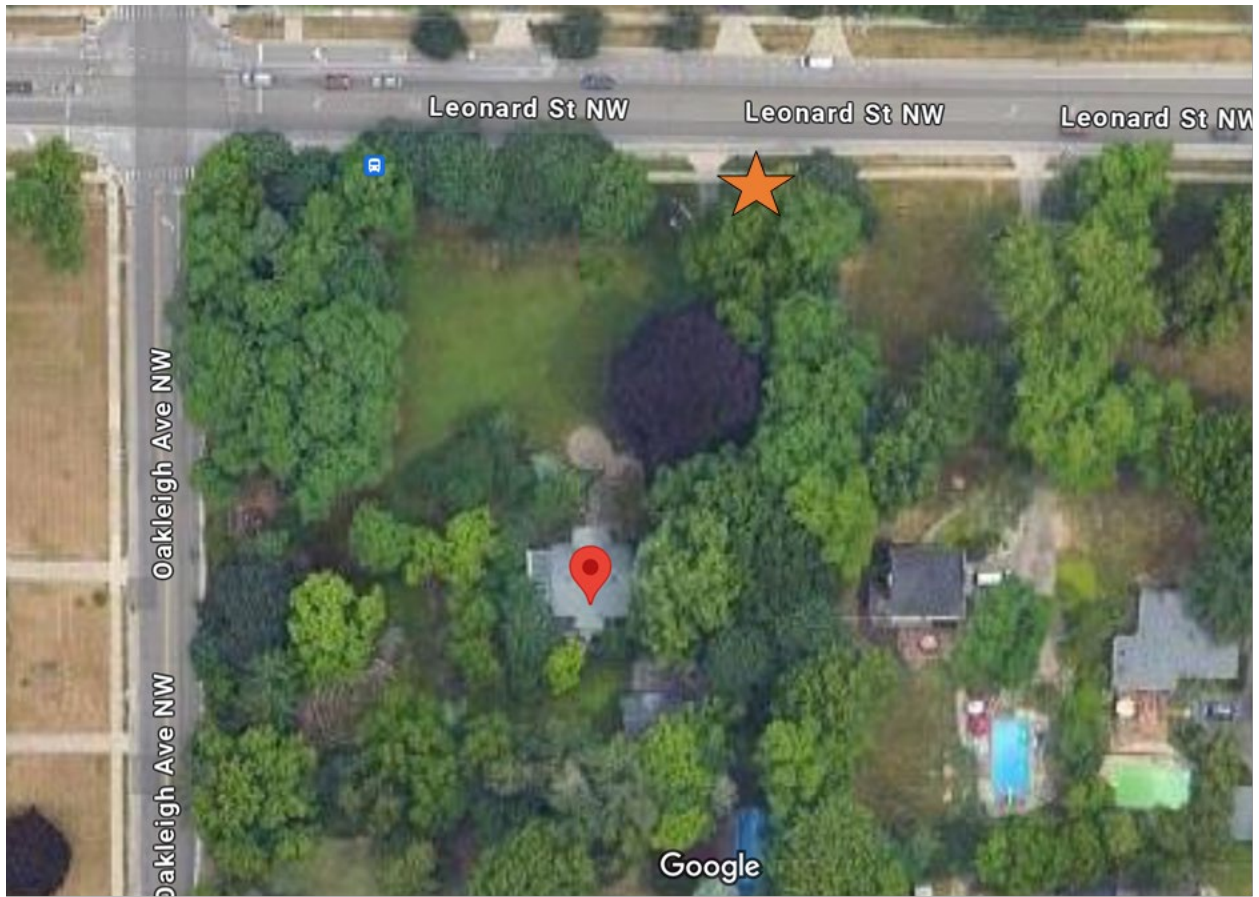
**Proposed Marker Location:** Just inside the front gate, to the left of the driveway in a flowerbed.



The house in 1915.



The house today.



The proposed marker location.

