

Michigan Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

August 22, 2024

Mackinac Island State Parks

Post Hospital 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, Steven Hilberg, Shelby Laupp, and Andrew Oswald

Public: Cassandra Erb, PhD candidate in Public History and Social Justice at Antioch University, and former Exhibitions Curator at Louisiana State Museum in New Orleans.

At 9:32 a.m. Egen called the meeting to order.

Steve Brisson welcomed everyone to Mackinac Island and expressed his enthusiasm for the great partnership that has existed between the park and the center for decades. He also shared that the Bonga Tavern historical marker will be going up in the next month or so. He thanked everyone for their commitment to Michigan's history and looked forward to further collaboration.

Chester introduced Cassandra Erb, a PhD candidate in Public History and Social Justice at Antioch University, and former Exhibitions Curator at Louisiana State Museum in New Orleans. Chester met Erb while he worked as the interim director at the New Orleans Museum. Erb is interested in observing how the commission works.

Clark introduced Stephen Hilberg, the new Eastern Michigan University (EMU) marker graduate assistant. She noted that this is Andrew Oswald's last meeting as the EMU marker graduate assistant as he hands off his duties to Hilberg.

Clark introduced Shelby Laupp, the communications coordinator at the center. Her duties include providing website updates and marketing for the commission and the marker program.

Approval of Agenda: Wagenaar moved to approve the agenda with the following amendment: switching Agenda Item VI-B-i – Program Style Guideline with Agenda Item VI-B-ii – Evaluation Criteria and Principles and Standards; the motion was seconded by Chester and was unanimously approved.

Approval of Meeting Minutes: Chester moved to approve the June 13, 2024, meeting minutes as presented; the motion was seconded by Calvaruso and was unanimously adopted.

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

Michigan Historical Marker Program

- **Public Comments on Marker Topics** – no public comments were provided.
- **Marker Updates**
 - ◆ **Evaluation Criteria and Principles and Standards** – The evaluation criteria and the principles and standards documents were distributed prior to the meeting. Ashlee noted the documents were also distributed at the June 13, 2024, meeting.

As a reminder, she noted the intent is to update outdated items and add items reflecting decisions made since the current policies (now principles and standards) were adopted in 1992. She said many applicants have difficulty understanding the evaluation criteria and that changes have occurred since the program began.

In discussing the principles and standards, the commission agreed that there should be an internal document for use by commissioners and staff and certain elements of that document should be placed on the website in a format that is user friendly.

There was particular concern that the standards concerning archaeological sites reflect the concerns of Indigenous people as well as the archaeological research value of the site. Clark will send Ashlee suggested language after consulting with archaeology staff.

The commission also encouraged moving some topics to the website or to the style guide.

After discussing the evaluation criteria, the commission made suggestions in wording changes that will be incorporated into a final document.

- ◆ **Program Style Guideline** – The document was distributed prior to the meeting. The commission reviewed and made a few minor adjustments to the style guide.
- ◆ **Synopsis Guideline** – The document was distributed prior to the meeting. It will be used as an internal document to assist staff in preparing a marker application synopsis. The synopsis should include information the commission needs to accurately evaluate the application and make an informed recommendation on how to proceed. Ashlee said she hopes, with these new guidelines, the commission will spend more time talking about marker content and less time on punctuation and grammar.
- ◆ **Determination of Eligibility** – The document was distributed prior to the meeting. This form is intended for staff use to help determine eligibility when reviewing applications.
- ◆ **Supplemental Form for Cemeteries** – The document was distributed prior to the meeting. This form will replace the current cemetery supplemental form and asks questions to help sponsors think about the context and broader significance of a cemetery.

Recessed for lunch at 11:35 p.m. and the meeting resumed at 1:06 p.m.

- ◆ **Supplemental Form for Religious Organizations and Buildings** – The document was distributed prior to the meeting. This is a new form intended to help sponsors think about context and a broader story to share about the impact of religious organizations and their buildings.

Discussion on all of these documents included numerous comments and suggestions made by the commissioners and staff. Ashlee agreed to update the documents and present them at the November 7, 2024, commission meeting for final review.

Calvaruso thanked Ashlee for the great deal of time and effort she has put into all of these documents, and everyone echoed that appreciation.

- **Sewah Studios Contract – Pricing** – Sewah Studios has revised the contract prices for FY2025. The price increase is only reflected in the cost for a standard size (large) marker. The center recommended updating only the processing amount collected for each standard (large) marker. The recommendation is to collect 10 percent for each standard (large) marker ordered in FY2025. The marker funds collected for a city size (small) marker and miscellaneous items will remain unchanged. Chester moved to approve collecting 10 percent for each standard (large) marker ordered in FY2025 and leave the marker funds collected for a city size (small) marker and miscellaneous items unchanged; the motion was seconded by Ashlee, and it was unanimously approved.
- **Port Austin Air Force Station – Possible Application – Location Question** – An individual interested in applying for a historical marker about the Port Austin Air Force Station located in Port Austin contacted the center. He has identified a location at the U & I Club on M-53 for the proposed marker. Before moving forward with applying for the marker, he asked if the proposed location would be feasible, as it is not on the actual site of the station, which is not accessible. The commission noted the topic has historical significance and the proposed location appears to provide a safe, visible spot that will allow the public to read the marker and see the site in the distance. The commission recommended filling out the marker application and submitting it along with the primary source documentation.
- **Approval of Marker Applications** – Written background information was provided for four new marker applications. (Appendix A)
 - ◆ **Sanford Farness House, East Lansing, Ingham County**
 - ◆ **First Congregational Church of Greenville, Greenville, Montcalm County**
 - ◆ **St. Hedwig Cemetery, Dearborn Heights, Wayne County**
 - ◆ **Franklin Delano Roosevelt Hall, River Rouge, Wayne County**

Wagenaar moved to decline the Sanford Farness House marker application since the house does not meet the criteria of being a significant work of its architect or embody distinctive characteristics of Mid-century Modern architecture; the motion was seconded by Ashlee, and it was approved by a vote of 5-1.

Calvaruso moved to approve the First Congregational Church of Greenville marker application; the motion was seconded by Chester and was unanimously approved.

Ashlee moved to approve the St. Hedwig Cemetery marker application; the motion was seconded by Wagenaar. After discussion, Ashlee withdrew her motion and Wagenaar agreed.

Calvaruso moved to table the St. Hedwig Cemetery marker application pending an updated synopsis that identifies a more robust story of the cemetery's connection to the community, explains why the friars came from Chicago to create the cemetery, and explains the significance of the building. The motion was seconded by Fernandez-Jones and was unanimously approved.

Wagenaar moved to approve the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Hall marker application; the motion was seconded by Fernandez-Jones and was unanimously approved.

➤ **Approval of Marker Texts** – Draft marker texts were provided for the following four markers:

- ◆ **Lincoln at Kalamazoo S44, Kalamazoo County, Kalamazoo**
- ◆ **Dean House, Kent County, Grand Rapids**
- ◆ **Lakeside Cemetery/The Magic Graveyard, St. Joseph County, Colon**
- ◆ **Malcolm X/Wilfred Little, Wayne County, Inkster**

Ashlee moved to table the Lincoln at Kalamazoo revised replacement marker; the motion was seconded by Wagenaar and was unanimously approved. The commission recommends asking the sponsor to consider making this a two-post marker with different text on each side to allow additional space to tell more of the story. Of particular interest was the reason for Lincoln's visit and any connection to the founding of the Republican Party in Jackson, Michigan.

Fernandez-Jones moved to approve the Dean House marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Calvaruso and was unanimously approved.

Wagenaar moved to approve Lakeside Cemetery/The Magic Graveyard marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Fernandez-Jones and was unanimously approved.

Chester moved to approve the Malcolm X/Wilfred Little marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Fernandez-Jones 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.

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

Clark stated that the bids for the Heart of the Great Turtle Island project came in at nearly twice what the architects predicted. She is currently working with DNR and Department of Technology, Management and Budget staff to revise plans to save money and to seek additional funds.

Clark noted that the center continues to work with the State Historic Preservation Office on Archaeology items.

Clark also stated that Tobi Voigt and Marker Harvey are presenting in Fennville to a group with the Latino community about how to preserve their family and community history. The idea is to providing knowledge, assistance and encouragement to save these important historical stories. The center also had two Latino interns this summer who will stay on through the fall to help with various tasks including Latino history in Michigan History.

Clark noted the center is hiring a limited term staff member to help with public history research and writing. The first task will be to work on the Detroit Marker Project, and revisions on older

markers where funds for repair or replacement have been requested. The individual will also help with trail markers, museum labels, State Park histories and other duties.

Ashlee asked what happened to the position at the center that was intended to oversee the trail program and the marker program. Clark stated the candidate declined the position. The center reevaluated that position and decided to use some available FY2025 funds for the one-year limited term position.

Clark also noted that the University of Michigan provided the center with two paid summer undergraduate interns. Each intern wrote a nomination to the Network to Freedom.

Chester congratulated the center on receiving an Institute of Museum and Library Services grant to catalog the Women's Hall of Fame collection.

Business Updates

- Awards Program – Clark stated that no nominations were received in 2023 for the Swainson or Milliken/Adams/Austin/Kelley (MAAK) awards. Clark noted that having a communications coordinator at the center will help with promoting the awards for 2025. Wagenaar stated he would organize an award's committee meeting to find a few individuals to nominate for the MAAK award.

America 250

- DNR Funding – Clark distributed an update about Michigan's Commemoration of the 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence prior to the meeting. (Appendix B) She asked the commission to think about the definition of eligible projects for the \$2 million appropriated for local grants and what might be most important for use of the \$2 million for statewide programs. The appropriations legislation is quite broad on this subject, and Clark asked the commission to consider programming ideas, teaching and/or education ideas, or any other items that will make a difference in Michigan. This will be a topic for the November 2024 commission meeting.

The new one-time appropriation also includes \$500,000 for the Archives of Michigan and \$500,000 for the Michigan History Center. Center funds might be used for updating exhibits or education programming.

Commission/Michigan History Foundation Relationship – The commission agreed that the relationship between the commission and foundation is beneficial to the center and would like to continue meeting on a yearly basis. Commissioners recommended inviting the new foundation development director, William Arnold, to the November 7, 2024, commission meeting. The foundation is moving forward in a positive direction.

The commission thanked Oswald for his time working with the marker program, Clark for lunch, and Davis for all of her work in putting together the time on Mackinac Island.

Ashlee commented that she really appreciated the day's discussion and thanked everyone for taking the time to review and comment on the documents.

Erb thanked everyone for making her feel welcome and for the great conversations.

Chester moved to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Wagenaar; and the meeting adjourned at 2:47 p.m.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandra S. Clark". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Sandra S. Clark, Executive Secretary

Sanford Farness House

Applicant: Michael Zawacki

Contact Info: mtzwck1@gmail.com, 517-719-3129

Location Address: 730 Grove Street, East Lansing, Michigan, 48823; Ingham County

Historic Resource(s): Historic Site

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

Historical Summary:

Sanford S. Farness, a professor of urban and regional planning at Michigan State from 1962-1981, commissioned Robert Pond to design this house in 1964. Pond trained under Frank Lloyd Wright between 1950-1954 at Taliesin. Pond later became Associate University Architect at Indiana University, where he designed many buildings and structures.

The Sanford Farness House reflects some of Wright's principles including the integration of brick, wood, and glass surfaces.

Historic Integrity

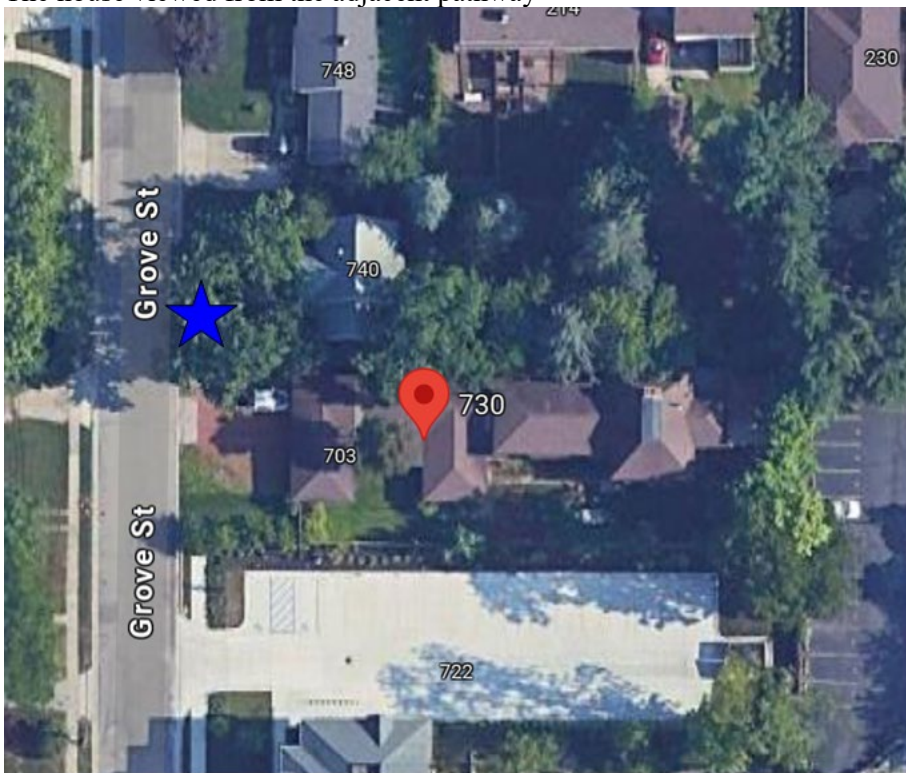
The exterior of the house remains largely unaltered. Minor renovations to the interior include the expansion of the primary bathroom and a wall and countertop added in the basement.

Recommendation: Denial, Pond did not have much of a career in Michigan and this house is not recognized as an outstanding example of his work.

Proposed Marker Location: Front Yard - In the grass by the sidewalk



The house viewed from the adjacent pathway



The proposed marker location

First Congregational Church of Greenville

Applicant: Kirk Faber, Coleen J. Venema

Contact Info: whisperingpf5@gmail.com, 989-328-2835

Location Address: 126 E. Cass Street, Greenville, Michigan, 48838; Montcalm County.

Historic Resources: Historic Building/Site

Requested Marker Type: Large Marker, Different Text on Each Side.

Historical Summary:

On June 5, 1852, a group of eleven settlers gathered in Green's Village's one-room schoolhouse and organized the First Congregational Church of Greenville. Only four of the original members were Congregationalists; the other seven were Presbyterians. The congregation's first church was completed on this site in 1855. Within twenty years, the congregation had outgrown the structure, and it was sold to St. Paul's Episcopal Church. St. Paul's had the building moved across the street, making room for a new, larger church to be built for the Congregationalists.

Elijah E. Meyers designed the current structure in 1879. Meyers designed the capitol buildings for Michigan, Texas, and Colorado. Construction of the new church was completed in 1880. A new bell was placed in the tower, weighing 1,800 pounds and bearing the words "My tongue shall speak thy praise...First Congregational Church of Greenville, Mich. 1880."

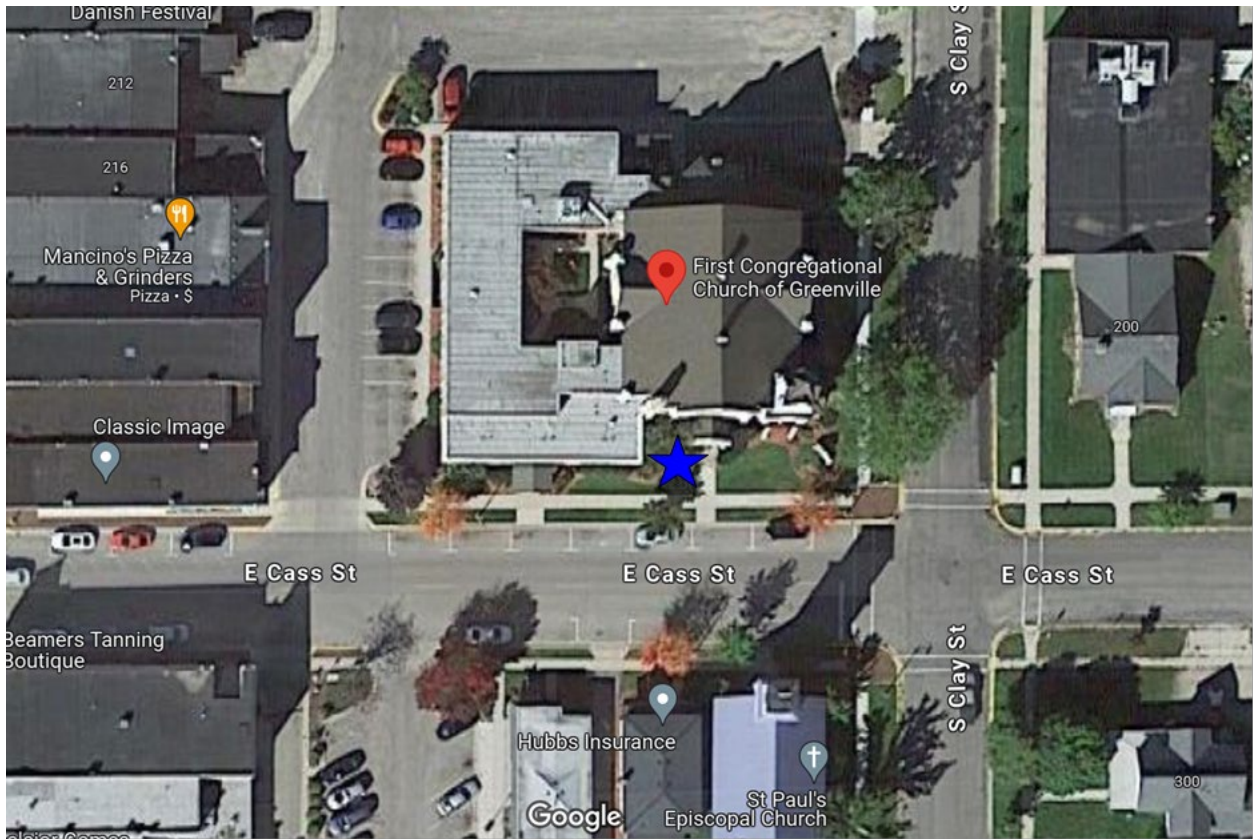
On April 2, 1951, the church fell victim to arson which gutted most of the attached Sunday School rooms and the basement. The arsonist, 21-year-old Vernon Mevis, set fire to another church and two businesses that same night. All five units of Greenville's fire department fought the fires with assistance from units from Ionia, Belding, Stanton, Gratton, Cedar Springs, and Sheridan. The church was repaired and remodeled at a cost of \$25,000. In 1956, the courtyard was dedicated in memory of the Rev. St. Clare Parsons. The 10,000 square foot Christian Education Building that surrounds the west elevation of the church was dedicated on September 13, 1964.

Summary of Integrity:

The church has not been significantly modified since its construction in 1880. However, the setting has changed with the addition of the Christian Education Building in 1964 that wraps around much of the church structure. Original elements of the church include the circular rose window, the 1,800-pound bell in the steeple, and most of the building materials of the chapel. Notably, the 1855 structure still stands across the street from the current building.

Recommendation: Approval

Proposed Marker Location: Front lawn, west of the sidewalk leading to the sanctuary



St. Hedwig Cemetery

Applicant: David Zelinski, Andrew Oswald

Location Address: 23755 Military Road, Dearborn Heights; Wayne County

Historic Resources: Historic Site and Cemetery

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

Historical Summary:

The necessity of cemeteries in the Metro Detroit area coincided with the area's explosion in population at the dawn of the 20th century. Members of the Conventual Franciscans of Saint Bonaventure Province in Chicago recognized this need and purchased property west of Detroit in Dearborn Township around 1922. The friars purchased some 80 acres of land owned by two farmers, W.H. Maxwell and William Morhouse. These two properties spanned from Warren Avenue to Ford Road at what became the northern border of Dearborn in 1925. The northern end of the property at Warren Avenue became the earliest iteration of Saint Hedwig Cemetery being consecrated on Memorial Day— May 30, 1924.

The cemetery is named after Saint Hedwig of Andechs (c.1174-1243) and originally served the area's growing Polish Catholic population. The cemetery expanded into the rest of the previously purchased acreage throughout the 1960s. The cemetery's roads were paved by 1968.

A large mausoleum was constructed in the center of the cemetery over Bills Drain, a tributary of the Rouge River, likely the namesake of William Morhouse. The first portion of the mausoleum, completed in 1968, was constructed using materials shipped from Louisiana by the Acme Marble & Granite Company. Additional wings of the mausoleum were added in 1978.

Military Road, created to connect the Dearborn Arsenal with Ann Arbor Trail and the settlement of Coonville (where Ann Arbor Trail crosses Outer Drive), crossed through the northern end of the cemetery. Increased issues with drag racing and vandalism following the paving of the road in 1970 prompted the cemetery to propose the closure of the road to the city of Dearborn Heights in 1973. Nearby homeowners, concerned that the closure would slow emergency vehicle service to the area, filed suit against the city on August 2, 1974. An out-of-court settlement was reached in 1975 and the cemetery assumed ownership of the section of Military Road that crossed the property.

St. Hedwig Cemetery has held annual Memorial Day Masses since the 1960s, drawing large crowds, local politicians, and religious figures. It holds yearly canned food drives to collect for the homeless and needy. The cemetery has also participated in Wreaths Across America for more than ten years. In 2002, the Shrine of Christianity was added to the Ford Road entrance. It features more than 8,000 above ground niches for cremation interment. The veteran's memorial installed in front of the main office was dedicated in 2004.

Historic Integrity:

The cemetery grounds are well kept by a full-time staff. The entirety of the cemetery, excluding the oldest portion off of Warren, is a memorial park with ground-level grave markers. The "old side" retains many decorative headstones and monuments dating to the cemetery's founding.

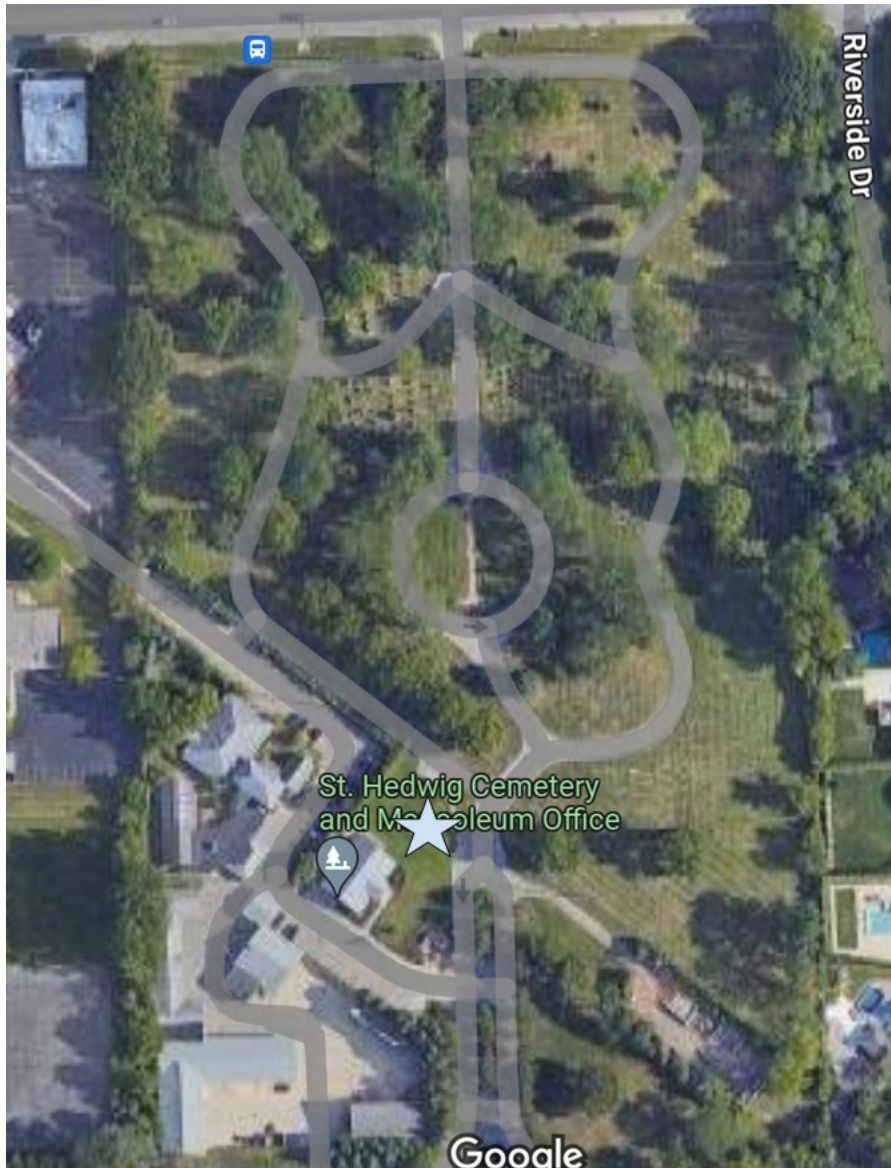
Recommendation: Approval
Proposed Marker Location: In front of the office building



The Ford Road entrance



The central portion of the mausoleum



The proposed marker location in front of the office building

Franklin Delano Roosevelt Hall

Applicant: Bob Kemper, Ron Fancsal

Contact Info: rgfancsal1299@gmail.com.

Location Address: 11424 W. Jefferson, River Rouge, 48218; Wayne County

Historic Resource(s): Historic Building

Requested Marker Type: Unspecified.

Historical Summary:

Franklin Delano Roosevelt Hall opened on April 10, 1946, to serve the United Steelworkers 1299 Union in the Downriver area. The hall, designed as a scaled-down replica of Liberty Hall in Philadelphia, PA, was planned to be dedicated by Eleanor Roosevelt at its opening. Unfortunately, she was unavailable as she was dedicating the opening of FDR's childhood home in Comstock, NY, that same day. Eleanor was able to visit the hall in 1959 and give a re-dedication speech.

Local 1299 was formed in 1937, but had struggled with membership numbers and a lack of recognition from National Steel. Union members, upset with both the company and their union, staged a walkout at the National Steel Great Lakes facility on June 3, 1941. The strikers marched down Jefferson Avenue, demanding that they be fully recognized as a union. They created an effigy of the regional director of the Steelworkers Organizing Committee (SWOC), strung it up on a lamp post, and set it ablaze. This walkout became the catalyst for future "Little Steel" workers to organize walkouts and strikes across the country. This continued unrest led to the dissolution of the SWOC and the formation of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) in 1942.

Summary of Integrity:

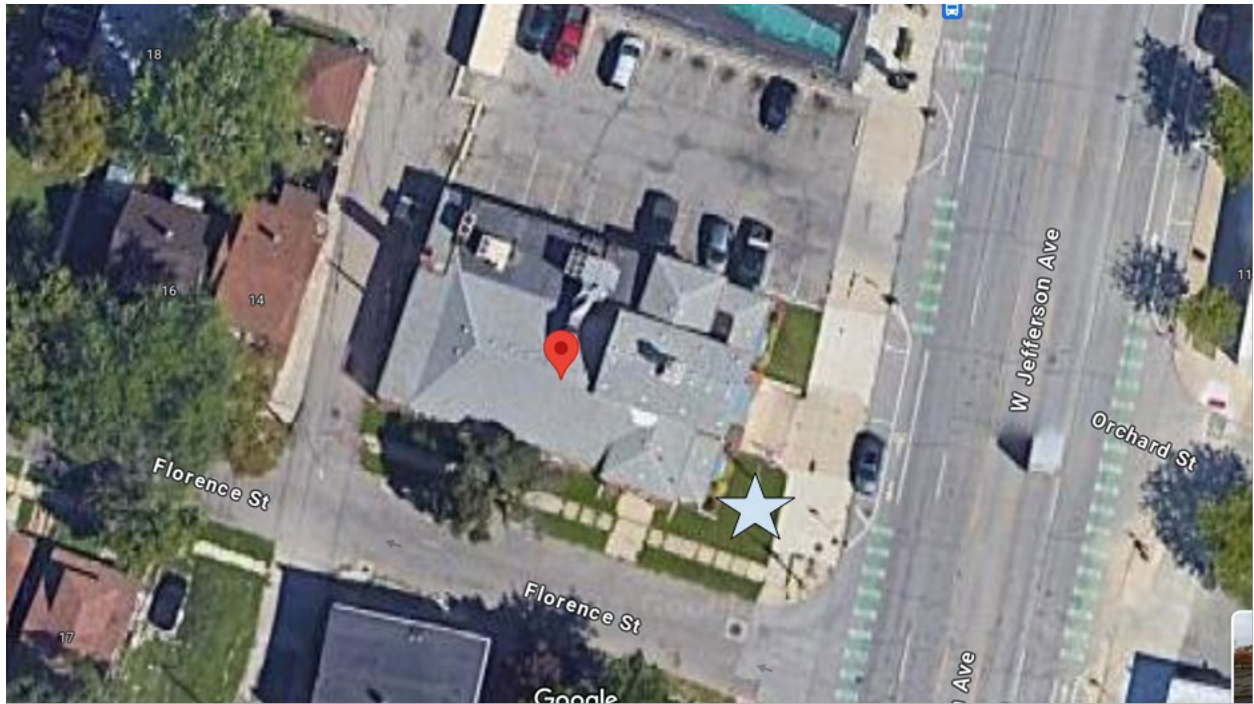
The building retains much of its historic integrity and is still utilized by Local 1299.

Recommendation: Approval

Proposed Marker Location: By the front walkway along Jefferson Ave.



The hall shortly after opening.



The proposed marker location.



Eleanor Roosevelt visiting the hall in 1959.

Michigan's Commemoration of the 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence

The FY26 DNR budget includes \$5 million for the 250th. In December 2020 the Governor made the Michigan History Center (MHC) and the Historical Society of Michigan (HSM) the contacts for Michigan for this commemoration, and together we have formed a committee that has created materials encouraging Michigan commemoration projects that are lasting and inclusive of all of Michigan's past and its peoples. With small contributions from MHC and others, HSM has provided the limited staff to support this committee until now.

The funds are appropriated as follows:

- \$3 million for local grants. Of this \$1 million goes to two legislatively designated organizations.
- \$2 million for state programs. Of this \$500,000 or \$1 million goes to the MHC and the Archives of Michigan. At this point we are seeking clarification of the legislative intent.
- \$150,000 may be used for administrative support.

Our current plan for implementation is for HSM to use the administrative support for full-time work supporting the committee and the information side of the local grant program. MHC will work with DNR finance to administer all the funds. We will build on a model used with recent local park grants that focuses on a simple grant application with good pre-application support and straight-forward reporting.

We are interested in the commission's thoughts on both the definition of eligible projects for the local grants and what might be most important for use of the \$2 million for state programs. The appropriations legislation is quite broad on this subject.

There is also capital outlay funding to replace the parking lots north of the MHC with "Park Michigan" as proposed by the Capitol Commission. Funding for the design phase has been released to the Capital Commission. Much remains to be decided, but it could link the MHC, the Hall of Justice and the Capitol with park space that celebrates every-day people who are part of Michigan's story.



STATE OF MICHIGAN
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

GARLIN GILCHRIST II
LT. GOVERNOR

December 23, 2020

Mr. Daniel M. DiLella, Chairman
U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission
P. O. Box 27840
Washington, DC 20038-7840

Dear Chairman DiLella,

Thank you for your communication and your leadership in planning a commemoration of the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding that will offer an opportunity for education, civic involvement, and examination of the historic themes and values upon which our country is based.

At the time of the American Revolution, the British ruled what became Michigan. In fear that George Rogers Clark might march all of the way to the Straits of Mackinac, in 1780/81 they built the fort on Mackinac Island that was, for a while, our nation's second national park and remains one of the most beautiful places in America. The Treaty of Paris gave our state the shorelines of four of the five Great Lakes, making the American Revolution truly a seminal part of our history.

With that in mind, I am designating the directors of our private and our public statewide history organizations as Michigan's official points of contact for the commemoration of the Michigan USA 250th Committee. Larry Wagenaar is the executive director of the Historical Society of Michigan and Sandra Clark is the director of the Michigan History Center, part of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

They and their boards will collaborate to enlist the involvement of state and local museums, historical societies, archives, historic preservation organizations, educators, Native American tribes and libraries, including representatives of Michigan's diverse cultural groups and the Mackinac Island State Park Commission.

Their contact information is attached.

I look forward to Michigan's participation in this commemoration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gretchen Whitmer".

Gretchen Whitmer
Governor of Michigan
Attachment