

Michigan Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

November 4, 2021

Michigan History Center

Morris Learning Center

Commissioners in attendance: Laura Ashlee, Joseph Calvaruso, Timothy Chester, Brian James Egen, Delia Fernandez, Eric Hemenway (by Zoom), Robin Terry (by Zoom), Tom Truscott and Larry Wagenaar.

Staff: Sandra Clark, Michelle Davis and Troy Masserant.

Public: Madelyn Pugh, Michigan Technology University student (by Zoom)

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

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

Approval of Meeting Minutes: Calvaruso moved to approve the September 9, 2021, meeting minutes as amended; the motion was seconded by Truscott and was unanimously adopted.

Public Comment: There were no public comments.

Marker Project – Prior to the meeting Clark distributed an “organization chart” capturing the process and relationships of implementing the program (Appendix A). Clark asked for the commission’s comments/reactions to the plan. She envisions starting with an academic core history team as an advisory group. This group will advise on major themes in history, specific resources or questions and overall project balance.

- Chester suggested adding a Michigan historian, likely from the college level, to the core team. Wagenaar noted Native American is missing from the core group.
- Clark noted that the Project Manager does not need to be an individual, it could be a group that specializes in this type of work.
- Ashlee asked if the additional marker text writers would be professional historians that are paid. Clark envisions this as a paid position for someone with experience, and it may require different ways of recruitment.
- Calvaruso asked if there are internal obstacles that limit the structure of this type of project. Clark noted the type of funding received may play a role in the involvement of the State or the Michigan History Foundation.
- Ashlee asked who will be responsible for assembling documentation to demonstrate there are errors and completing the application. Clark responded that the local marker team (sponsor) would still be required to do anything they would need to do today to apply for a marker.
- Chester noted that it is important to add the Michigan History Foundation to the organization chart.
- Terry noted that at least two other Detroit groups from the funding side of the audit have already gone into local communities and spent time gathering and analyzing data and

providing feedback for projects. Terry asked if the commission was open to a project management organization that might contribute to this process. Clark noted one thing that is different in this project is the importance of community participation in evaluating where the gaps may lie. Community facilitation is key and having a project management organization will be essential to manage it.

- Commissioners suggested including a preliminary timeline for the project so everyone can understand the time commitment.
- Clark envisions twenty different local regions.
- It was noted that it might be nice to have an acronym for the project. One possibility was MAP (Marker Audit Project).
- Clark reported that with Chester's assistance, a capstone project has been established with the University of Michigan to aide with the audit process. Three or four graduate students will be available to assist with the project from January 2022 through April 2022. They will begin by doing some background research on Detroit. It may be helpful to approach the Black Historic Sites Committee and other local groups to see if they have specific markers they want to see revised so that the students can work on actual markers.
- Clark also reported that the Center has received a National Endowment of Humanities grant to hire a person, for one-year, to work in Detroit on the Grant House and the marker audit project.
- The *Bridge Michigan* marker article sought out the center and created publicity for the marker audit and led to other opportunities, including a WJR radio interview.
- Clark and Hemenway are moving forward with revisions to the Great Lakes markers. Clark noted that two of the Mackinac Island markers have been revised and replaced.
- Clark will apply for funding to the Palmer Foundation to fund marker fabrication.

Marker Program

- **Approval of Marker Applications** – Written background information was provided for five new marker applications. (Appendix B)
 - ◆ **French-Allen House, Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo County**
 - ◆ **Ramona Park, East Grand Rapids, Kent County**
 - ◆ **St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Richmond, Macomb County**
 - ◆ **Camp Arcadia, Arcadia, Manistee County**
 - ◆ **Walk to Freedom, Detroit, Wayne County**

Wagenaar moved to approve the French-Allen House marker application as presented; the motion was seconded by Calvaruso and was unanimously approved.

Wagenaar moved to approve the Ramona Park application as presented; the motion was seconded by Calvaruso and was unanimously approved. Ashlee suggested finding out more information on Helen Hunt Jackson, who was an activist for indigenous Americans. Her novel, *Ramona*, is said to be the source of the park's name.

Calvaruso moved to approve the St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church as presented; the motion was seconded by Chester and was unanimously approved.

Ashlee moved to approve the Camp Arcadia marker application as presented; the motion was seconded by Chester and was unanimously approved.

Chester moved to approve the Walk to Freedom marker application as presented; the motion was seconded by Calvaruso and was unanimously approved.

➤ **Approval of Marker Text** – Marker texts were provided for:

- ◆ **Sanderson House, Battle Creek, Calhoun County**
- ◆ **St. Peter Lutheran Church, Macomb, Macomb County**
- ◆ **Guardian Angels Church, Manistee, Manistee County**
- ◆ **Birwood Wall/Eight Mile-Wyoming Neighborhood, Detroit, Wayne County**
- ◆ **Cathedral Church of St. Paul/Interfaith Emergency Center, Detroit, Wayne County**

Ashlee moved to table the Sanderson House marker text to rework side two and present to the commission at its next meeting; the motion was seconded by Truscott.

Wagenaar moved to approve the St. Peter Lutheran Church marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Calvaruso and was unanimously approved.

Calvaruso moved to approve the Guardian Angels Church marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Chester and was unanimously approved.

Wagenaar moved to approve the Birwood Wall/Eight Mile-Wyoming Neighborhood marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Truscott and was unanimously approved.

Wagenaar moved to approve the Cathedral Church of St. Paul marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Truscott and was unanimously approved.

➤ **Reports**

- ◆ Sewah Price Sheet – effective 2/1/2022
- ◆ The Marker Status report was distributed prior to the meeting.
Clark noted that the Burt Lake Village-Indian Village marker is on indefinite hold.
- ◆ The Marker Fund report was distributed prior to the meeting.

Director's Report

- Director Clark shared that Tobi Voigt accepted the Director of Museums position at the center. Her current position will not be replaced, which will create funding for some mid-management positions filled by existing staff.

Local Historic District Committee Report

➤ Franklin Village, Franklin, Oakland County

Truscott moved to accept the comments provided by Ashlee as written; the motion was seconded by Fernandez and it was unanimously accepted.

Ashlee agreed to review future reports and draft comments for the commission's consideration.

Business Updates

- **Awards Update (Appendix C)** – Egen shared an Award's Update document with the commission prior to the meeting. Egen recommends:
 - Making the Milliken, Adams, Kelley (MAK) Award a joint effort of the commission and the center, simplifying and streamlining the process.
 - Keeping the Swainson Award separate from the MAK award.
 - Making the awards annually and emphasizing diversity. Fernandez supported not having an obligation to issue an award annually if an appropriate recipient is not identified.
 - Regarding eligibility for the MAK Award, Ashlee asked for removal of the "long-term fiscal support" phase.
 - Chester moved to adopt the plan as amended; the motion was seconded by Calvaruso, and it was unanimously accepted.
- **2022 Meeting Dates** – The 2022 dates have been scheduled for the commission meetings. Davis asked commissioners to let her know of any major concerns.
- **Other Items**

Ashlee asked if there is a reason, or instance, when a commissioner should not introduce themselves as a commissioner or act as a representative of the commission. Clark noted there should be distinction between attending a professional or social events and advocacy. It is not appropriate to advocate for something unless one has been asked by the DNR to represent the commission's position.

Commissioner Comments

Ashlee – Ashlee received a letter from Frederic Beeson's son asking for assistance in determining whether or not his father instigated the Historical Marker Program. Mr. Beeson was the secretary to the Historical Commission and the Historical Society of Michigan during the 1940s and on into the 1960s. Ashlee discovered that Mr. Beeson did not initiate the marker program, but as a paid staff member he was assigned the task of implementing the marker program when it was created.

Chester reported that he just got back from a 4,000-mile road trip to Sante Fe, New Mexico. He was able to visit three fairly new museums that included: the New Mexico History Museum in Sante Fe; the First Americans Museum in Oklahoma City that was built by the 39 Indian nations of Oklahoma; and The Greenwood Rising Black History Center in Tulsa.

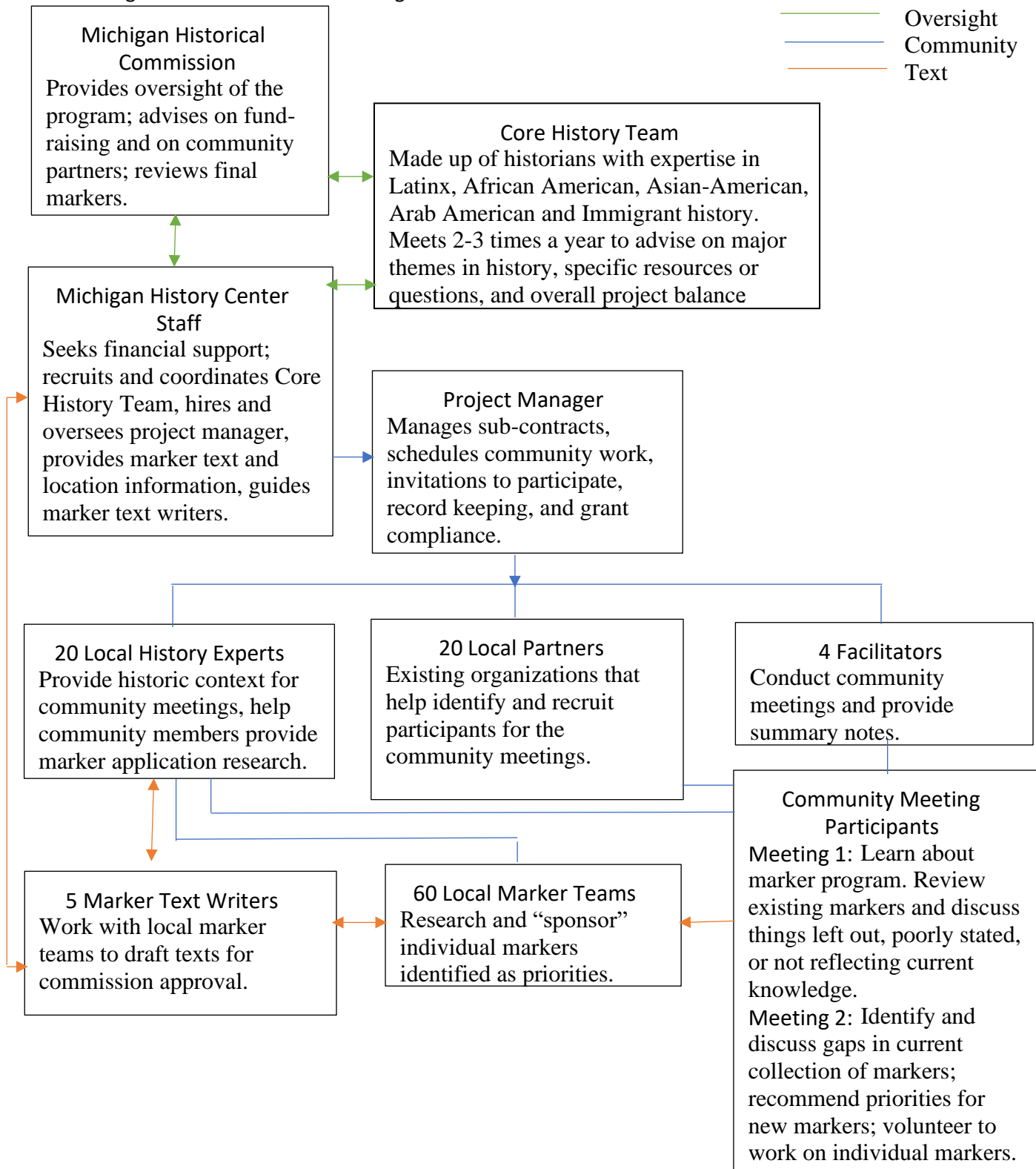
Clark thanked the commissioners for their flexibility and support during the past couple of years and expressed hope that we are on the path to recovery.

Wagenaar moved to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Calvaruso and the meeting adjourned at 12:19 p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sandra S. Clark". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S' and a large 'C'.

Sandra S. Clark, Executive Secretary

Michigan Historical Marker Audit Organization Chart



Michigan Historical Marker Application Synopses
Michigan Historical Commission
November 4, 2021

French-Allen House

Applicant: David Engerer

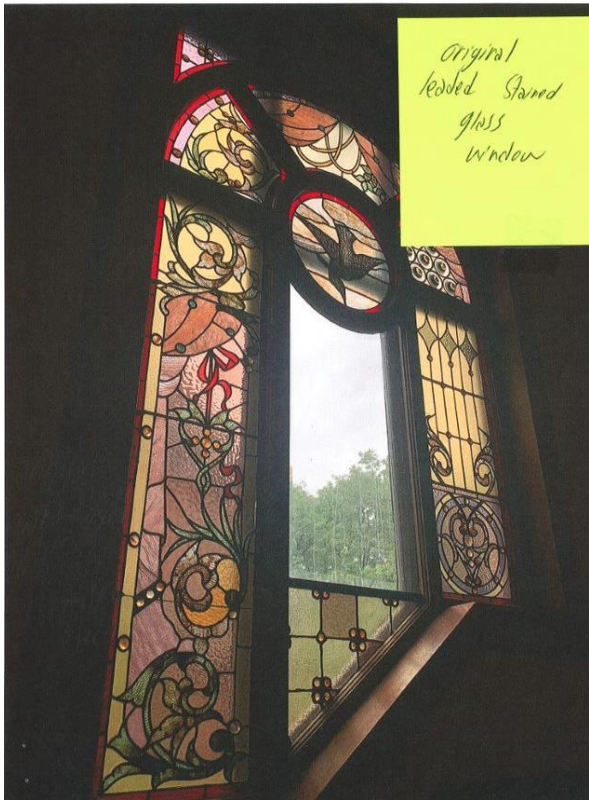
Location Address: 418 Stuart Avenue, Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo Co.

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

Dorr O. French (1861-1919), a prominent lawyer in Kalamazoo, built this house in 1895. H. B. Flagler designed the home in the Queen Anne style. The home retains much of its integrity. French sourced the stained glass and other building materials from Chicago. It is theorized that he used the Marshall Field & Company's wholesale store in Chicago to source these materials, decorate the interior, and commission the hand-painted forest scene in dining room. The stained-glass windows, woodwork, and many other original fixtures remain unaltered. French graduated from the University of Michigan with a law degree. He settled in Kalamazoo in 1884. In 1888 he partnered with James H. Kinnane and formed the practice, Kinnane & French. In 1891 their partnership ended, and French began his solo practice. French also served as justice of the peace and circuit court commissioner in Kalamazoo. He died on November 11, 1919. His wife remained in the home until 1921. Two families owned the home between 1921 and 1928. In 1928 Harold B. Allen, of the Kalamazoo community, moved into the home. Allen joined the Upjohn Company in 1932, eventually becoming finance director and corporate secretary before he retired in 1961. He also worked with the Kalamazoo Community Foundation for forty years, twelve of which as secretary. He was president of the Greater Kalamazoo United Way, a trustee and president of the YMCA of Greater Kalamazoo, established the Senior Citizens Fund in Kalamazoo, and held many other roles in the community. He died on September 26, 1983.

Recommendation: Approval

Proposed Marker Location: The marker will be placed in the Stuart Area Historic District. The "Stuart House" Historical marker is located across the street from the French-Allen House to the North.



Ramona Park

Applicant: East Grand Rapids Community Foundation, Mary T. Dersch.

Location Address: NW Corner of Wealthy Street SE and Lakeside Drive SE, East Grand Rapids, Kent County.

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

By the 1850s, residents of Grand Rapids frequented Reeds Lake as a place for summertime rest and recreation. Sailing and other water activities were especially popular. Its popularity increased in the mid-1870s when a streetcar line from Grand Rapids began to service the location. In 1880 the Grand Rapids Street Railway Company purchased Reed's Lake Road. In 1881, the company purchased property alongside the lake and began developing a resort. The resort would be connected directly to the company's streetcar lines. The Grand Rapids Street Railway formally opened the resort in 1886. After taking suggestions on what to name the park from the women of Grand Rapids, the park was named Ramona, after the protagonist of Helen Hunt Jackson's novel of the same name.

The Grand Rapids Street Railway Company (GRSRC) and the subsequent rail companies that owned the park developed many attractions to market Ramona Park. GRSRC built the Ramona Theater Pavilion in 1897. It accommodated vaudeville performances, dance numbers, music, and specialty acts. In the early 1900s the park constructed its first roller coaster, the figure-eight Aerial Railway, which was replaced by the Jack Rabbit Derby Racer in 1914. Other attractions included steamships like the SS Ramona, which would circle Reeds Lake; the Ramona Gardens Dancing Pavilion and Skating Rink; hot air balloon races; daredevils and more. President Gerald Ford described his most memorable experience at Ramona Park as "seeing Babe Ruth and the New York Yankees play the Grand Rapids minor league baseball team in the Old Ramona ballpark."

Ramona Park remained popular through the 1920s and 1930s but declined after World War II. The rise of personal transportation and competing attractions, such as movies and television, played a role in the park's decline. The development of residential areas around the park also played large role in reducing "the desirability of amusement park use of the area." In 1949, the Capitol Wrecking and Lumber Co. demolished the Ramona Theater Pavilion in what was described as the first step in "the eventual tearing down of the entire park." In 1953, Harold T. Fletcher, a realtor, proposed the construction of a shopping center and apartment complex at Ramona Park. In December 1954 East Grand Rapids voters approved the rezoning of the park by a 2-1 margin for the construction of Fletcher's proposed shopping center and apartment complex. In 1956, the roller-skating rink was the last building to be demolished.

Recommendation: Approval

Proposed Marker Location: The marker will be located on city property on the corner of Wealthy Street and Lakeside Drive SE, next to the remaining fencing that surrounded Ramona Park.



St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church

Applicant: St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Mark Haller

Location Address: 67055 Gratiot Ave., Richmond, Macomb County.

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

During the 1850s several German immigrants from Mecklenburg-Schwerin and Prussia settled in this area. They formed a small congregation but did not have a dedicated sanctuary. Services were held in their homes or at the local schoolhouse. The congregation's initial years were characterized by uncertainty. A series of pastors served the congregation during this time, and the congregation drifted from traditional Lutheran doctrine toward unionism and rationalism. Several members of the congregation left because of this.

In 1863, seventeen members of the congregation built its first wood frame church. Sometime in the 1860s the congregation returned to traditional Lutheran doctrine when it hired Pastor Friedrich Boeling from Immanuel Lutheran Church in Macomb to serve the congregation.

Boeling served the congregation intermittently until 1872.

On January 14, 1872, Boeling drafted the church's first official constitution. This allowed the congregation to call Pastor Friedrich Wilhelm Arendt to serve as its first resident pastor that same year. Arendt served the congregation from late July until September 31, when he announced that he was leaving to serve a congregation in Fraser. The congregation returned to Pastor Boeling for guidance. Boeling arranged for Pastor Carl Lohrmann to serve the congregation. He arrived March 20, 1873. Under Lohrmann's direction, the congregation built their second church in 1875. The 1863 church was converted into a schoolhouse. Pastor Lohrmann recorded the church's early history sometime in the 1870s. In 1925 Pastor Wichman transcribed parts of Lohrmann's *History of St. Peter's Church* in German for church bulletins. The original documents have since been lost.

After the end of World War II, St. Peter Evangelical Lutheran Church organized a community relief effort to aid Europeans, both friend and former foe, suffering from famine and sickness caused by the war. The church called for clothing, shoes, and canned food to be collected and utilized its local Walther League members to canvass the community for anything that could be donated.

The congregation began construction of this church in May 1948. Walter Maul of the Maul and Lentz architectural firm in Detroit designed the church. A two-room school was included into the design of the church. Pastor Knoll, and Pastor Walter Schoedel placed the church's cornerstone on October 24, 1948. Construction finished in 1950. Pastor Knoll dedicated the church on June 11, 1950. Congregation members contributed more than eleven thousand volunteer hours during the church's construction. The large amount of volunteer hours helped to substantially reduce the total cost of the church.

Recommendation: Approval

Proposed Marker Location:



Camp Arcadia

Applicant: Ryan McKenna

Location Address: 3046 Oak Street, Arcadia, Manistee Co.

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

In 1921, after a Walther League rally in Ludington, Michigan, Walter Maier and other Walther League leaders visited Epworth Heights, a Methodist summer camp in Ludington. They were inspired to create a similar Lutheran summer youth camp but believed such a camp could not be created for some time. Charles Starke, a Lutheran and the son of a wealthy lumber Baron from Arcadia, learned of the Walther League's interest and donated thirty acres of land in Arcadia to the Walther League that same year. His mother, Maria Starke, provided \$1,000 to aid the purchase of an adjacent eighty acres of land worth \$4,000. The Walther League accepted the gifts, and planning began in earnest in 1922. The Walther League selected William N. Bowman to design the initial plans for the camp. (The Walther League was the youth education arm of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.)

The Starkes utilized their family businesses, the Arcadia Furniture Company and the Henry Starke Land and Lumber company, to further aid construction of Camp Arcadia. The Arcadia Furniture Company used its mill and warehouses to accumulate, store, and provide lumber for construction at a discount for the Walther League, totaling roughly \$5,000 in reduced lumber prices. While the camp's buildings were being constructed, Starke also offered the use of two hotels to the Walther League so that the camp's first season could begin in July 1923.

The camp's opening in 1923, marked Arcadia's gradual economic shift away from the lumber industry toward seasonal tourism. The Walther League leased lots on camp property for the construction of seasonal cottages dubbed the "cottage colony." By the 1940s, the camp welcomed more than a thousand visitors each season. They came from as far as Texas, California, and Colorado. Twenty-two cottages had been built on the leased property by 1945. The camp had attracted international visitors from Guatemala, Canada, and Japan by 1955. That year more than half of all attendees were repeat visitors.

The opening of Camp Arcadia coincided with a nation-wide "summer camp movement" that began in the 1880s. Stemming from anxieties about the "loss of the wilderness" created by westward expansion, industrialization, and urbanization, summer camps manufactured a safe, healthy "wilderness" experience for urban middle-class children outside of the city and "morally dubious" resort hotels. Camps often created a romanticized view of the wilderness and frequently appropriated Native American motifs to enhance this image. During the 1920s, the number of summer camps based on these principles dramatically increased throughout the United States. During the late 1960s, the continued operation of Camp Arcadia became uncertain. The Walther League doubted its capacity to run the camp for another season. On December 9, 1967, a meeting of concerned Arcadians, many of whom were inhabitants of the cottage colony,

occurred. They decided to lease the camp from the Walther League and operate it for the 1968 season. After the season ended, 275 family members from throughout the Midwest met in Valparaiso, Indiana, on September 28, 1968. Due to the season's success, they incorporated as the Lutheran Camp Association (LCA) and decided to purchase the camp from the Walther League. The LCA launched "Operation Keep Arcadia" to raise the necessary \$241,000 to purchase the camp. Financial support from the cottage colony families and the outright sale of many of the cottages were instrumental in raising the necessary funds. The LCA purchased the camp in 1969.

Recommendation: Approval

Proposed Marker Location:



Walk to Freedom

Applicant: SHPO, Amy Arnold

Location Address: South of 131 Atwater Street, Detroit, Wayne County

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

On June 23, 1963, at 3:00 PM, the “Walk to Freedom” began. Marchers met at the corner of Woodward Avenue and Adelaide Street, and the crowd swelled to monumental proportions. The vast number of marchers forced the march to begin an hour earlier than expected. More than 125,000 people walked in quiet protest down Woodward Avenue toward the Detroit Riverfront and Cobo Hall, at times singing “We Shall Overcome” and the “Battle Hymn of the Republic.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who flew into Detroit to lead the march, arrived after its early start and rushed to join the marchers at Cadillac Square. There King walked with former Governor John Swainson, Mayor Jerome Cavanagh, UAW President Walter Reuther, Minister C.L. Franklin, and other organizers of the walk.

Once the marchers arrived at Cobo Hall, Martin Luther King, Jr. and others spoke to 25,000 of the marchers in Hall A. The rest of the crowd remained outside and listened to the speeches via loudspeakers. King gave the precursor of his “I Have a Dream” speech to the crowds. Two months later, he gave the better-known version of this speech in Washington D.C.

The Detroit Council of Human Rights sponsored the march and scheduled it on the anniversary of the 1943 Race Riot.

The march supported the protests in Birmingham, Alabama, and collected donations for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. When the march occurred, it was considered the largest demonstration in United States history and the first major civil rights march. However, the March on Washington surpassed and overshadowed the Walk to Freedom.

The Walk to Freedom marked a major crossroads for the civil rights movement in Detroit. By November 1963, a schism had emerged in Detroit’s Black community. A new radical arm based in Black Nationalism and led by the Reverend Albert Cleage, Jr stood at odds with the Reverend C.L. Franklin and the traditional non-violent rhetoric of the civil rights movement. When a follow up to the march was scheduled in November 1963, the Reverend C. L. Franklin organized the first meeting of the Northern Negro Leadership Conference, with the goal of combining this organization with King’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference. At the same time, the



Reverend Cleage organized the Grassroots Leadership Conference at King Solomon Baptist Church. Cleage highlighted the ideological differences between the two conferences with statements such as: “Birmingham shows...you just can’t change the white man by letting him beat you over the head every day;” and “I know Jesus Christ believed in turning the other cheek, but even he got mad and chased the money changers out of the temple.” Malcom X, the keynote speaker of the Cleage event, gave the radical “Message to the Grassroots” speech at the conference. The schism in Black leadership, Malcom X said, was caused because “respectable Negroes are afraid to unite with black nationalists while the white man unites to keep them out of everything.” The two events had originally been scheduled as a unified, “nation-wide Negro leadership conference.”

Recommendation: Approval

Proposed Marker Location:





Updated Considerations September 9, 2021

Proposed Update to the MAK Award

- The MAK Award will be a Michigan Historical Center and Michigan Historical Commission sponsored/presented award.
- The Center will issue a press release once a year (date me TBD) to announce that nominations are open and those received by March 1, will be considered by the Michigan Historical Commission at its next regular meeting. *Note: Nominations for the award will be accepted throughout the year.*
- Nominations will be submitted to the Michigan Historical Center for administration and preparation for consideration at the subsequent meeting.
- Nomination forms will be simple and streamlined with a fillable PDF and print version made available through the Center website.
- Award does not need to be annual and can be periodic, but not less than once a year.
- Only one award to be issued per year.
- The award itself should include a certificate (as those printed by the center) and the blue glass vase. The price for the vase has been typically under \$400.
- It is strongly suggested that this award not be granted posthumously.
- It is the intention of this award to recognize the everyday Michigander and not necessarily those with celebrity status.
- Issuance of the award as a ceremony, regular commission meeting, a preexisting event, etc. TBD by Center and Commission.
- The Center will issue a press release regarding the award recipient (s) – if the consideration below is adopted.
- A photo and brief description of the past and future winners will be added to the Center website.

Other Consideration:

- That the Governor John B. Swainson Award be incorporated into the above process and streamlined as part of the nomination process. *Descriptions of awards to follow.*
- Eligibility of the two awards will be clearly laid out on the same application with an indicator as to what award the nomination seeks.
- The Swainson Award "Award" TBD.

PURPOSE OF THE AWARDS

MAK AWARD

The purpose of the William G. Milliken/Elizabeth S. Adams/Frank J. Kelley Award is to recognize significant contributions to the preservation, understanding and/or promotion of Michigan's history by individuals through lengthy and/or visionary service.

Governor John B. Swainson Award

The Michigan Historical Commission established the Governor John B. Swainson Award in 1996 to honor him for his love of history and as one of the few public officials to have served in the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of state government. The commission presents the award to state, county, or municipal employees who have contributed to the preservation of Michigan history even if such activities are not part of their primary job responsibility.

ELIGIBILITY OF THE MAK AWARD

- A. The nominee shall be any individual or agency who has materially contributed to the preservation, understanding and/or promotion of Michigan's history. The award may recognize significant contributions in such areas as legislation, publicity, advocacy, restoration, public history programming, or long-term fiscal support.
- B. The award is for service over the long-term or for a visionary approach to preserving Michigan's history. The nominee needs to demonstrate lengthy and/or visionary public service to the cause of Michigan history.
- C. Nominations must be made by a third party but can be made by Michigan Historical Commissioners.
- D. Current commissioners and staff members of the Michigan Historical Commission are not eligible for nomination.
- E. Nominators may submit no more than 1 nomination per year.

SELECTION PROCESS

- A. A committee of the Commission (that shall include the director of the Center – or designee) will review nominations and select potential award winners based on the nomination application and materials.
- B. Efforts will be made to ensure a diverse pool of nominees and recipients.
- C. The committee will present the potential award winners at a full Commission meeting for final approval.
- D. The Center and/or President of the Commission will manage the notification of the award to the recipient(s) and determine the necessary arrangements. ceremony.
- E. The President of the Michigan Historical Commission will manage the written notification to nominators informing them of Commission determination.

