

Michigan Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

April 13, 2023

Michigan History Center
Morris Learning Center

Commissioners in attendance: Laura Ashlee, Timothy Chester, Brian James Egen, Delia Fernandez, Eric Hemenway, Robin Terry, Tom Truscott, and Larry Wagenaar

Excused Absence: Joe Calvaruso

Staff: Sandra Clark, Michelle Davis and Andrew Oswald

Public: Barbara Bull, Shelby, member of the public (via Zoom)

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

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

Approval of Meeting Minutes: Wagenaar moved to approve the February 2, 2023, meeting minutes as amended; the motion was seconded by Chester and was unanimously adopted.

Egen invited commissioners to join the Michigan History Foundation members, Hank Meijer of the Meijer Foundation, and Richard Norton Smith, author of *An Ordinary Man: The Surprising Life and Historic Presidency of Gerald R. Ford* for a luncheon being held after the meeting and the public program featuring Meijer and Smith at 2:00 p.m. in the Forum. The commission and the foundation will schedule another time for a more substantive joint meeting.

Strategic Planning for Historical Marker Program

➤ Update on Detroit Marker Review Project (Appendix A)

Prior to the meeting, Clark distributed an update on the 15 proposed new markers. The community involvement during the beginning stages of the project prompted many individuals to offer their assistance. The next steps of getting applications submitted, research done, text completed and finding funding will take more time. The grant period ends on July 31, 2023, and Clark plans to have some applications and draft texts completed by that time.

Terry asked about the deliverables for the National Endowment of Humanities (NEH) Grant Marker Review Project. Clark stated the commitment was to work on 15 new markers and get as many applications and texts done as possible.

Ashlee suggested modifying the submitted report by in a more narrative form. Clark will work with Levinson on modifying the report.

Local Historic District Committee Report

➤ Wild-Frey Farm, Scio Township, Washtenaw County

Truscott moved to forward the amended comments provided by Ashlee to the State Historic Preservation Office; the motion was seconded by Fernandez and was unanimously accepted.

Marker Program

- **Public Comments on Marker Topics** – No comments were given.
- **Van Buren County Poorhouse Marker – Local Site No. 430**

- ◆ **Revised Replacement Text – Text Error**

The Van Buren County Poorhouse marker was discussed at two previous commission meetings. The commission agreed that the text should be revised because it refers to people with disabilities as “mentally retarded,” a term that is no longer used. Clark revised the text, and received approval from Sandra Merchant, president of the Van Buren Historical Society.

Terry moved to approve the Van Buren County Poorhouse revised replacement marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Truscott and was unanimously approved.

- ◆ **Artifact Status Request**

The sponsor has requested to have the original Van Buren County Poorhouse marker moved to artifact status. The marker would be placed inside the structure as part of an exhibit explaining how the use of language and practices have changed over time.

Wagenaar moved to approve artifact status for the Van Buren County Poorhouse with the understanding that the final plan must be submitted to the center for approval. The plan should include label verbiage and a sketch of the exhibit. The motion was seconded by Fernandez and was unanimously approved.

- **Text Concern Hamtramck Stadium – State Site No. 731**

At a previous commission meeting, the concern was raised regarding the Hamtramck Stadium marker terminology “midget car races.” The suggestion was made to reach out to the Little People of America (LPA) to ask for its recommendation/stance/opinion on the use of the word “midget” in reference to “car races.”

Davis emailed LPA and received a response from Samantha Rayburn-Trubyk, advocacy director for LPA, recommending that the marker text remain unchanged to reflect the historic record. (Appendix B)

Clark noted she reviewed the criteria that the Monuments Lab used to conduct its National Monument Audit and found that it was not helpful for this particular situation.

Artifact Status Request – Felt Mansion – State Site No. 697

Inaccurate text resulted in a revised replacement marker recently being erected for the Felt Mansion. Patricia Meyer, director of the Felt Estate, requested moving the original marker to artifact status. After discussion, the commission determined that the original marker has inaccurate information and would not add value toward educating the public as an artifact. Chester moved to deny approval of artifact status for the original Felt Mansion marker; the motion was seconded by Ashlee and was unanimously approved.

- **Approval of Marker Applications** – Written background information was provided for five new marker applications. (Appendix C)

- ◆ **Dyer Limestone Kiln, Bellevue, Eaton County**
- ◆ **Bonga Tavern, Mackinac Island, Mackinac County**
- ◆ **Bloomer State Park No. 2, Rochester Hills, Oakland County**
- ◆ **Blackberry Ridge, Shelby, Oceana County**
- ◆ **Cornelius Langston Henderson Sr., Detroit, Wayne County**

Wagenaar moved to approve the Dyer Limestone Kiln application; the motion was seconded by Truscott and was unanimously approved.

Ashlee moved to approve the Bonga Tavern marker application; the motion was seconded by Wagenaar and was unanimously approved.

Wagenaar moved to approve the Bloomer State Park No. 2 application; the motion was seconded by Fernandez and was unanimously approved. Ashlee suggested looking into the Civilian Conservation Corps in lower Michigan to provide additional information to a second side of text and add to the local connection.

Truscott moved to approve the Blackberry Ridge marker application; the motion was seconded by Chester and was unanimously approved.

Truscott moved to approve the Cornelius Langston Henderson Sr. application; the motion was seconded by Terry and was unanimously approved.

➤ **Approval of Marker Texts** – Draft Marker texts were provided for:

- ◆ **Jackson Poor Farm, Jackson, Jackson County**
- ◆ **Rice Cemetery, Milan, Monroe County**
- ◆ **Saginaw News Building, Saginaw, Saginaw County**
- ◆ **Trombly Elementary School, Grosse Pointe, Wayne County**

Wagenaar moved to approve the Jackson Poor Farm marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Ashlee and was unanimously approved.

Truscott moved to approve the Rice Cemetery marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Terry and was unanimously approved.

Truscott moved to approve the Saginaw News Building marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Chester and was unanimously approved.

Chester moved to approve the Trombly Elementary School marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Fernandez 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.

Chester asked for an update on the Sweet House Foundation application that was received in June 2021. Davis stated that additional information was requested and still has not been received. She indicated that she recently reached out to them asking for an update. Chester offered to contact them if additional help is needed. A discussion on what is an acceptable amount of time for a sponsor to respond when additional information is requested followed. The commission supported having staff adopt an administrative procedure that identifies an acceptable amount of time for an application to remain inactive. Once that specified amount of time has passed, the application should be closed. The application fee to cover the cost for administrative processing should not be refunded.

Egen asked for clarification on why the dedication dates are reported by fiscal year. Davis stated that according to the Michigan History Center Act, marker dedications should be reported according to the state's fiscal year (October 1 through September 30).

Director's Report – The report was distributed prior to the meeting. Clark stated the budget is moving forward. The request for hiring three local government records archivists is in the Governor's recommendation.

Clark stated the center is one of ten museums participating in an Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Grant Awarded to the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience. This three-year grant project involves identifying a community partner that the center has not worked with a great deal in the past, developing a relationship with that partner, and identifying and executing a project that involves working together. Clark and Fernandez recently attended a meeting with the Michigan Hispanic/Latino Commission. Clark asked Fernandez about approaching them as a potential partner.

Clark stated that some of the funding for the current year will likely be spent on shelving since it is a one-time need that doesn't involve a long-term money commitment.

Wagenaar stated that Amanda Ward from the Michigan Historical Society is leading the America 250 committee, partnering with the center.

Clark said the Heart of the Great Turtle Island project continues to be the Michigan History Foundation's biggest fundraising challenge. Emily Proctor, Michigan State University Cooperative Extension, led four sessions involving the core project team and several Native American colleagues to begin interpretive planning. Hemenway stated that the sessions looked at the story through multiple tribal views and interpretation, and the project has a lot of potential.

Chester asked for an update on contact with the Mellon Foundation about the project. Clark said that the requested items were submitted in February.

Business Updates

- Awards Committee – Egen reported that a lunch presentation for a June 2023 date is being considered for the Milliken, Adams, Austin, Kelley Award winner, Matt Switlik. Egen is drafting a press release and will have Wagenaar and Clark review before it is released.

- Chester stated the current visitor paid parking system is not a positive first encounter for a visitor. The system is cumbersome and is a poor representation of customer service. Chester moved to send a letter to the Department of Management and Budget regarding the current parking system and how it reflects poorly on the center and the library; the motion was seconded by Wagenaar and was unanimously approved.

Public Comment – No public comments were given.

Commissioner Comments:

- Truscott stated he was disappointed in the lack of local coverage given to John Smoltz and Joe Davis surrounding the nationwide sporting events that they broadcasted. Both individuals grew up in local communities and deserved local recognition.
- Wagenaar stated that the State Finals for Michigan History Day is short on judges if anyone is interested. The event will be held at Central Michigan University on April 22, 2023. The Upper Peninsula Michigan History Conference is in Iron Mountain, June 23–25, 2023.
- Fernandez shared that her book, *Making the MexiRican City: Migration, Placemaking, and Activism in Grand Rapids, Michigan*, has been released by the University of Illinois Press. Chester mentioned Fernandez’s recent talk and book signing at the Kutsche Office for Local History’s 14th Annual Local History Roundtable at Grand Valley State University.
- Ashlee reported on recent work to reconstitute the Office of the State Archaeologist in the Department of Natural Resources and to establish the position and the office in statue. Earlier this week, Ashlee and former State Archaeologist Dean Anderson testified before the House of Representatives appropriations subcommittee asking to have the office reinstated with start-up money and \$1 million annually. Ashlee urged commissioners to reach out to their local legislators stating their support of reconstitute the office. Ashlee agreed to email commissioners with more detailed information.

Wagenaar moved to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Ashlee; and the meeting adjourned at 12:02 p.m.



Sandra S. Clark, Executive Secretary

Detroit Project Update April 13, 2023

Clark Park

Lead Researcher: Noah Levinson

Location Address: W. Vernor Hwy between Scotten and Clark, set back, but still visible from sidewalk

Historic Resources: Park, Landscape

Requested Marker Type: Undecided

Historical Summary: For more than fifty years Clark Park has served as an important physical and spiritual center for the Detroit Latinx community. Holiday celebrations, heritage festivals, concerts, and political rallies held at the park illustrate the vibrant old and new Detroit Mexican Town communities. The thirty acres of land for Clark Park was ceded to the city of Detroit in 1890 for public use. It has remained a public park ever since. Originally the land was part of a ribbon farm stretching a few miles into the current city from the Clark house on the Detroit River. Park design and amenities have changed numerous times in response to community needs. At one point there were auto-polo games (a polo derivative using cars). In 1991 the Clark Park Coalition, a consortium of volunteers and community organizations, took over programming and recreational activities from the City of Detroit. It maintains the last ice rink in Southwest Detroit.

Dr. Lucy Gajec

Lead Researcher: Noah Levinson

Location Address: Vernor and Hubbard, Detroit, Wayne County

Historic Resources: Historic person, community history

Requested Marker Type: Undecided

Historical Summary: Dr. Lucy Gajec Ed.D (1926-2008) worked for more than thirty years at the Michigan Employment Security Commission; however, she is most remembered for her work as an educator and the creator of the Museum of Indigenous Arts. Dr. Gajec created the displays and exhibits and collected the art, costumes and artifacts for the museum on her many trips to Mexico. Her goal was to ensure that Mexican and Latinx children of southwest Detroit had an opportunity to learn their cultural heritage. The museum shared the heritage of modern Mexico, as well as the history and culture of the Maya, Aztec, and other Mexican indigenous peoples. A lifelong learner, Gajec received her master's degree from University of Michigan Flint and was awarded a doctorate from Wayne State University. The museum displays and artifacts were packed and stored by several of Gajec's close friends just before the wooden building was destroyed in a fire.

Chaldean Town

Lead Researcher: Rebecca Binno Savage

Location Address: Undecided, 7 Mile near John R

Historic Resources: Historic neighborhood, immigration

Requested Marker Type: Location dependent

Historical Summary: Chaldean people are Arabs who practice Catholicism. They have been coming to Detroit since the beginning of the 20th century. There was a surge in the 1920s after the Sayfo genocide. The largest wave of immigration came in the late 1960s encouraged by the economic opportunities of the automobile industry. Unusual among Detroit communities, the Chaldeans quickly settled into different parts of the city and other suburbs in Macomb and Oakland counties upon achieving economic success. Chaldean Town's primary role has been to receive new arrivals and connect them with the Chaldean Catholic Church, housing, and employment opportunities.

Blackburn Riot

Lead Researcher: Karolyn Smardz Frost

Location Address: Skillman Library Branch, 121 Gratiot, Detroit, Wayne County

Historic Resources: Historic event, international affair, Underground Railroad, legal history

Requested Marker Type: Large, two-sided marker

Historical Summary: Having self-liberated in Kentucky, Thornton and Lucie Blackburn came to Detroit in 1831. They stayed safely until being recognized and caught by slave catchers in 1833. On June 16, two of Lucie's friends smuggled her out of the city jail in disguise. The following day a large mob gathered at the jailhouse to demand that the sheriff release Thornton. While trying to reason with the crowd, the sheriff brought Thornton outside whereupon he was handed a pistol and in an ensuing fracas was smuggled away from the jail to Canada to join Lucie. Outraged by the escape and perceived skirting of justice, some Detroiters rioted and burned down Black owned property. This was the first race riot in city history. Following these events, Detroit enacted new measures; a curfew for Black citizens as well as a bond payment and proof of freedom, which led many remaining Black residents to leave for a time. The Blackburns were arrested and jailed in Windsor. However, the provincial government refused to extradite them to the United States because their punishment (return to enslavement) would be far worse than any under British law. This decision solidified Canada's standing as a safe terminus of the Underground Railroad. It has continued to serve as a key legal decision in defining immigration, asylum, and extradition laws in Canada. Thornton would later daringly return to Detroit traversing the Underground Railroad in reverse to rescue his mother Sibby and successfully return with her to Toronto.

Rosa Parks in Detroit

Lead Researcher: Noah Levinson

Location Address: 3201 Virginia Park, Detroit, Wayne County

Historic Resources: Historic person, homesite, civil rights icon

Requested Marker Type: Undecided

Historical Summary: Rosa Parks lived more of her life in Detroit than in Alabama. She lived in this home from 1966 to 1988, her longest residence anywhere. After volunteering with his campaign, Mrs. Parks joined the staff of Representative John Conyers. She remained active in civil rights efforts and the Black Power movement. In 1980 Detroit Public Schools and the Detroit News established the Rosa Parks Scholarship. for high school seniors who demonstrate Mrs. Parks' ideals in community service as well as academic merit. With friend Elaine Steele, Parks co-founded the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self Development in her late husband's memory. It aims to help motivate youth to achieve their highest potential.

North End Neighborhood / Bennett Park

Lead Researcher: Noah Levinson

Location Address: Bennett Park, 444 Smith St., Detroit, Wayne County

Historic Resources: Historic neighborhood, Landscape, historic person

Requested Marker Type: Two-sided marker

Historical Summary: The "North End" roughly encompasses the area between Woodward and I-75 and north of E. Grand Boulevard. A booming base of automobile employees in a neighborhood situated near plants in both Hamtramck and Highland Park, the largely Jewish and eastern European community supported a thriving business district along Oakland Avenue. Beginning in the 1940s, more Black residents moved in. This continued a trend of business relationships between Detroit's Black and Jewish communities that extended from Black Bottom to the northwest neighborhoods and the cities of Southfield and Oak Park. Often Jewish neighbors would sell their homes first and then later their businesses. Delores Bennett (1933-2017) was a lifelong advocate for community service and particularly for children. She founded the North End Youth Improvement Council in the late 1970s. The organization offers mentorship, educational assistance, and basic needs assistance year. Bennett Playground and Park was built by the surrounding community in her honor to fulfill a lifelong goal of Ms. Bennett's. She is thought to be the only person in Detroit to have a park named in her honor during her lifetime.

Carlton Hotel

Lead Researcher: Greg Sumner
Location Address: 2915 John R, Detroit, Wayne County
Historic Resources: Historic building, historic site
Requested Marker Type: Wall mounted

Historical Summary: Situated in the Brush Park neighborhood, The Carlton Hotel opened in 1924. It was designed by architect Lewis Kamper, who used many of its features in later Detroit buildings. The hotel was the place to hear the world's top jazz artists in segregated Detroit. The Carlton was featured for decades in the Negro Motorist Green Book, a series of guides created by Victor Green to help Black Americans travel safely and find services catering to a Black clientele. In 1960 *Jet Magazine* declared the Carlton to be the premiere destination for the upper middle class Black American. After changing hands many times, the building was refurbished as the Carlton Plaza Lofts.

Gotham Hotel / Sugarhill District

Lead Researcher: Greg Sumner
Location Address: Building site, open lot northeast of Mack and John R, formerly 111 Orchestra Place, Detroit, Wayne County
Historic Resources: Historic site, historic district
Requested Marker Type: Large, Two-sided marker

Historical Summary: The Gotham Hotel started life as the Hotel Martinique. In 1943 John White and several partners purchased it. Its reputation grew as the finest Black hotel in segregated Detroit and one of the premiere Black owned and operated establishments in the United States. Its Ebony Lounge, named for the magazine, was a destination restaurant. Black Americans who stayed here when visiting Detroit in the mid-20th century included Martin Luther King Jr., Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday (who had a room named for her), Sammy Davis Jr., Joe Louis, and Jackie Robinson. Dr. King wrote a letter to White expressing pleasure with the hotel amenities and upon receipt White stocked King's book in each room. The Gotham was a cornerstone of the Sugarhill Art District, most of which was destroyed for the hospital center expansion. This center of Black cultural life with its thriving jazz and nightlife scene peaked in the 1940s to early 1960s. The Sugarhill District was added to the National Register of Historic Sites in 2003.

North American Indian Association of Detroit

Lead Researcher: David Pintawanakwat

Location Address: *Old YMCA/Comerica Park or 19317 Fenmore, Detroit, Wayne County*

Historic Resources: Historic organization

Requested Marker Type: Undecided

Historical Summary: The North American Indian Association is the oldest indigenous organization in the city. It grew out of meetings of Native communities at the YMCA to discuss and address discrimination in housing and employment. Members had many different tribal affiliations, so the name was chosen to reflect this confluence of peoples of both the United States and Canada. In 1972 the organization incorporated and moved to Fenmore St. on the west side of Detroit. Dean George became the first Executive Director in 1974. NAIA provides resources and support to the Detroit area's indigenous communities and participates in community heritage events, such as Detroit's Thanksgiving Day Parade, the Detroit 300 celebration, and Michigan Indian Day.

Thurman Bluejacket Bear

Lead Researcher: David Pintawanakwat

Location Address:

Historic Resources: Historic person

Requested Marker Type: Undecided

Historical Summary: Thurman Bluejacket Bear (1944-2003) was an indigenous activist, leader, and community advocate. He was known for his warm personality and reverence for indigenous traditions. He worked to give indigenous peoples opportunities to practice and preserve their heritage and traditions for future generations. He hosted "Indian to Indian," a radio show on WDET in the 1970s, that highlighted topics of relevance to the Native community. He was known for his love of dancing and the passion, vibrancy, and artistry of his dances. Bear passed while dancing at a powwow.

Fort Wayne Burial Mound

Lead Researcher: David Pintawanakwat

Location Address: 6325 W Jefferson Ave, Detroit, Wayne County

Historic Resources: Historic Site, Indigenous heritage, Landscape

Requested Marker Type: Small marker

Historical Summary: This Late Woodland Era burial mound is likely the earliest surviving place of human civilization present in what we now call Detroit (1100-1300 CE). It is the only survivor of a series of burial mounds in the region, the largest of them was at the mouth of the Rouge River. Evidence of what archaeologists call the Wayne and Western Woodland traditions is evidence that this land was of prime importance for

many centuries prior to the building of Historic Fort Wayne. In addition to skeletal remains, artifacts found here have included stone tools, pottery, and jewelry. This revered site and its human remains have not always been treated responsibly over the centuries, but it remains a sacred and indispensable part of the land now called Michigan.

Vincent Chin

Lead Researcher: Lily Chen
Location Address: Highland Park
Historic Resources: Historic person, civil rights icon
Requested Marker Type: Large, two-sided marker

Historical Summary: On June 19, 1982, the night of his bachelor party, Vincent Chin (1955-1982) an engineer and waiter, was savagely beaten by two white men in a racially motivated hate crime. Two autoworkers, Ronald Ebens and his recently laid off son-in-law Michael Nitz, followed and assaulted Vincent with a baseball bat after an altercation at a club in Highland Park. Chin arrived at Henry Ford Hospital in a coma and died on June 23. The racial motivations were confirmed by anti-Japanese slurs against the Chinese American Chin. Japanese auto companies' competition with American manufacturers was seen as responsible for layoffs. The defendants accepted a plea bargain for manslaughter charges, and the judge sentence the pair to probation without jail time. The case was taken up as a federal civil rights case, the first anti-Asian civil rights case of its kind. Ebens was found guilty and Nitz was acquitted. The conviction was overturned by a federal appeals court. Further public pressure led to a retrial outside of metro Detroit, where Ebens was again acquitted. The defendants ultimately lost a civil suit and were ordered to pay Vincent's mother, Lily, for his projected loss of income. No one served a day of jail time for this murder. The outcome of this case and the racially motivated violence galvanized Asian community members who formed the modern Asian American movement.

Grace Lee Boggs

Lead Researcher: Lily Chen
Location Address: Undecided between Boggs Center and Boggs Foundation
Historic Resources: Historic person
Requested Marker Type: Large, two-sided marker

Historical Summary: Grace Lee Boggs (1915-2015) was born in Providence, Rhode Island. After studying at Barnard and Bryn Mawr Colleges, Boggs aligned herself with the revolutionary left Workers Party and began writing on philosophy, sociology, and civil rights matters. In 1953 she moved to Detroit, where she met her husband, James Boggs, an activist, writer, and auto worker. Grace established the Detroit Summer project, a multicultural youth program in 1992, and opened the James and Grace Lee Boggs Center to promote and nurture community leadership. She dedicated her life to

fighting for the idea that all people are valid and deserve dignity and basic human rights, particularly championing the causes of labor, feminism, and Asian American activism.

Ruth Ellis

Lead Researcher: Lily Chen

Location Address: Ruth Ellis homesite

Historic Resources: Historic person, homesite, LGBTQ

Requested Marker Type: Undecided

Historical Summary: Ruth Ellis (1899-2000) was born in Springfield Illinois and came out as a teenager. She met her lifelong partner, Babe Franklin, in her twenties, and the couple moved to Detroit in 1937. Together they ran the Ellis & Franklin printing company, the first woman-owned print shop in Michigan. Ruth Ellis's home served as a de facto LGBT hub, community gathering center, and safe space. Upon her 100th birthday, she received honors and commemorations from entities around the nation for her steadfast support of Black, women's, senior, and LGBTQ rights.

Chinatown

Lead Researcher: Lily Chen

Location Address: 2nd and Peterborough, Detroit, Wayne County

Historic Resources: Historic neighborhood

Requested Marker Type: Undecided

Historical Summary: The Cass Corridor is the second Chinatown location in the city of Detroit. The community first began settling in the new immigrant Hastings St. area in Black Bottom.

Davis, Michelle (DNR)

From: Samantha Rayburn-Trubyk <samantha.rayburn-trubyk@lpaonline.org>
Sent: Friday, April 7, 2023 4:46 PM
To: Davis, Michelle (DNR)
Subject: Re: Question - Issue with word usage

CAUTION: This is an External email. Please send suspicious emails to abuse@michigan.gov

Hi Michelle,

Thank you for allowing us to provide a response.

We are in the process of starting our advocacy towards changing and challenging the term midget in the race car world, therefore I do not have an update on where that is going at that time.

However, in terms of the Hamtramck Stadium historical marker, our response is as follows,

The information provided on the Hamtramck Stadium, Michigan historical marker includes a term that is considered offensive to persons of short stature. The language herein is not endorsed or approved by Little People of America, Inc. (LPA) or the Michigan History Center - we never want to insult or be disrespectful of anyone. Regardless, LPA recognizes that by removing all instances of offensive material would be an alteration of history thereby concealing information that was accurate during that time period.

This historical marker could be classified as a historical record. Little People of America, Inc. is committed to transparency, reconciliation, and education.

Please let me know if you have any questions or wish to discuss further next week.

Thanks,

Samantha

--

Samantha Rayburn-Trubyk
Advocacy Director
Little People of America samantha.rayburn-trubyk@lpaonline.org

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Davis, Michelle (DNR)**

<davism1@michigan.gov> Date: Tue, Mar 28, 2023 at

9:43 AM

Subject: Question - Issue with word

usage To: info@lpaonline.org

<info@lpaonline.org>

Good morning...

I am reaching out to your organization about a recent concern that was brought to the Michigan History Center's (MHC) attention. There are approximately 1800 historical markers located throughout the State of Michigan with the purpose of sharing history with the public. The concern involves the text of one of those historical markers. To learn more about the marker program, please visit the website at www.michigan.gov/markers.

The marker in question is the Hamtramck Stadium that is located in Wayne County. The concern related to the use of the term "midget" -- referencing "midget car races." I have included the marker text so that it can be read in its appropriate context:

When the Negro National League was founded in 1920, one of its eight charter teams was the Detroit Stars, who played at Mack Park on Detroit's East Side. A 1929 fire damaged Mack Park, so owner John Roesink built Hamtramck Stadium in 1930 on land leased from the Detroit Lumber Company. The new stadium had a twelve-foot-high metal outfield fence, box seating, and bleachers down the right field line. In May 1930, some 9,000 fans attended the grand opening, where former Detroit Tiger Ty Cobb threw out the first pitch. In June 1930, Michigan's first night baseball game was played here; the Stars played the Kansas City Monarchs under a portable lighting system. In 2012, Hamtramck Stadium was listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

*After the Civil War, black and white baseball players could play on the same teams. But by 1900, black players were excluded from white professional leagues. More than 4,000 African Americans and Latinos played baseball in U.S. professional Negro leagues while baseball was segregated. The Detroit Stars and Detroit Wolves represented the city in four major Negro leagues. National Baseball Hall of Fame members who called Hamtramck Stadium home included Norman "Turkey" Stearnes, "Cool Papa" Bell and "Smokey Joe" Williams. Satchel Paige and Josh Gibson played on visiting teams here. In the 1930s, in addition to Negro league games, the stadium hosted community and scholastic baseball and football, **midget car races** and boxing matches.*

The MHC is asking if your organization has taken a stance on the usage of the term "midget" in the race car circuit world. It is MHC's understanding that the race car circuit involves numerous types/styles of cars. Generalizing the term to "car races" is very broad and would not be specific enough to provide the reader with an accurate description. We are wondering if you have faced this issue and if provide a recommendation when asked.

Thank you for any advice you can offer on this subject.

Kindly, Michelle Davis
Marker Coordinator
Michigan History Center
517-331-7374
Davism1@michigan.gov

Michigan Historical Marker Application Synopses
Michigan Historical Commission
April 13, 2023

Dyer Limestone Kiln

Applicant: Pat Tirrell, Eaton County Historical Commission

Location Address: 8610 Sand Rd. Bellevue, Eaton County.

Historic Resources: Building or Historic Site

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

Historical Summary:

The production of lime for mortar was a lucrative business in Bellevue during the mid to late 19th century. Bellevue and its surrounding areas boast a uniquely pure (96.2%) surface-layer of limestone. Architects of the time valued Bellevue lime for its superior quality. Some 3,500 bushels of Bellevue lime were delivered to Lansing for construction of the state's capitol building in May 1875.

Thomas Roberts and Charles Dyer arrived in Bellevue around 1867 and worked as lime burners. They soon formed a partnership renting and operating limestone kilns in the area. Roberts was a boarder at the home of Philinda Sturdivant, from whom they purchased this plot of land in 1877. The two men constructed the Dyer Limestone Kiln on this site the same year.

They had invested \$4,000 and employed five workers by 1880. The kiln operated full time for eight months out of the year. Thomas Roberts died in 1888, having been crushed by a water tank pulled by a traction engine. Philinda Sturdivant, his wife, stayed by his side for ten weeks following the accident until he succumbed to his injuries. Charles Dyer retained ownership of the kiln and resumed operations in the early-1890s, forming Bellevue Lime Works with John Hall. The Dyer Limestone Kiln was a "perpetual" kiln that kept the fuel and materials burning while the finished lime was drawn out of the bottom. This created a higher quality product with lesser contamination than lime produced by a "mixed feed system" kiln. Today, mixed feed system kilns have largely been phased out in the industry due to their inefficiency and larger environmental impact.

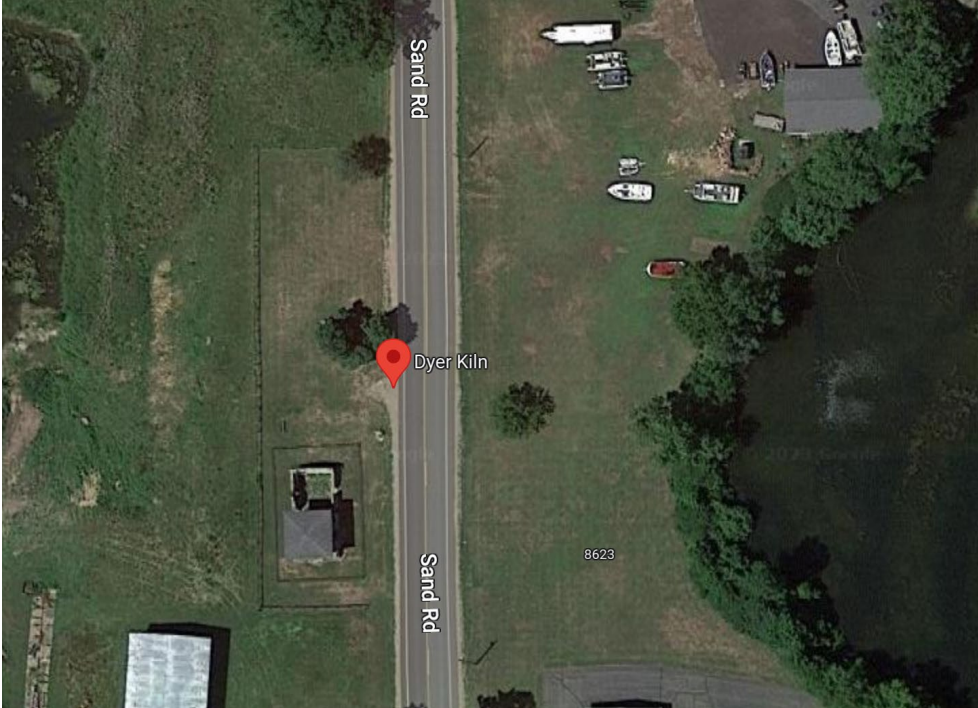
The Dyer Limestone Kiln ceased operations in 1899 when the Michigan Alkali Company bought the area's quarry lands. The company sent crushed limestone via rail to the larger, more efficient kilns in Wyandotte. The site was later owned by the Portland Cement Company and then the Alpha Portland Cement Company. Limestone is still actively quarried in Bellevue by Cheney Limestone for surface and agricultural uses.

This site was listed on the State Register of Historic Places on March 3, 1976, as Site No. L445. No marker was purchased at the time.

Historic Integrity:

The kiln has been subjected to the elements with little intervention since its closure. All wooden portions of the attached storage barn have weathered away. Much of the granite,

limestone, and firebrick components remain in fair condition. A roof was installed on the limestone chimney in 1994 and has helped slow the deterioration.



Recommendation: Approval
Proposed Marker Location: By the Northeast corner of the Kiln

Bonga Tavern

Applicant: Mackinac Island State Park Commission, Steven Brisson

Location Address: 7276 Main Street, Mackinac Island, Mackinac County.

Historic Resource(s): Historic Site

Requested Marker Type: Unspecified

Historical Summary:

Jean and Jeanne Bonga operated a tavern and inn on or near this location beginning sometime in the late 1780s. The Bongas, an African American couple, arrived on Mackinac Island in September 1782 with Captain Daniel Robertson. Robertson came to Mackinac Island to assume command of the British garrison stationed there. It is unknown if the Bongas were enslaved at this time or were employed by Robertson. Robertson was relieved of his duties on June 15, 1787 and left the island. Most modern sources assume that the Bongas were enslaved by Robertson and freed by him upon his departure.

The first daughter of Jean and Jeanne Bonga, Rosalie, was baptized on July 22, 1786. She was believed to be around the age of six at the time. The Bongas were married by Fr. Le Dru in the Catholic church of Ste. Anne de Michilimackinac on June 24, 1794. This is also the first direct reference to the Bongas being free people, not enslaved or “living with” Daniel Robertson. Jean Bonga died on January 20, 1795 and was buried in the Catholic cemetery on the island two days later.

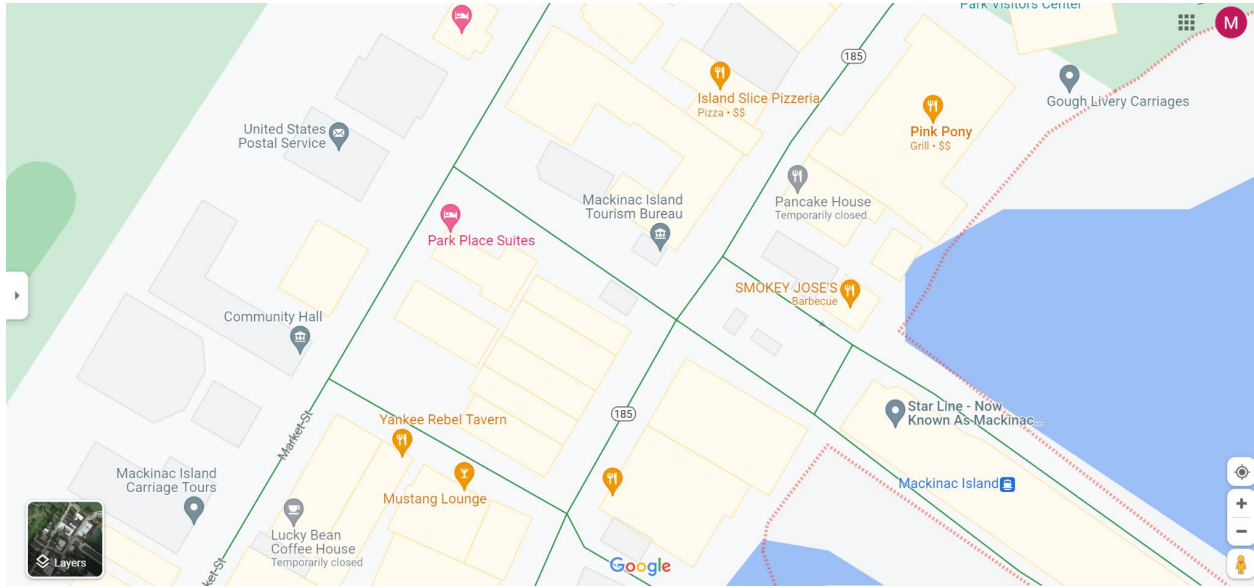
An April 19, 1834, interview of Magdelaine Laframboise by Henry Schoolcraft makes reference to Jean Bonga as a “discharged negro servant” of Captain Robertson who later purchased an old red house where “he kept a tavern, and maintained a respectable character.” Claims from federal land commissioners in the early 1800s seem to place this tavern on lot 109 under the ownership of Nicholas Marchessaux, a French merchant. Marchessaux likely had a personal relationship with the Bongas, as he was present as a witness at their wedding in 1794.

Marchessaux sold lot 109 to Michael Dousman sometime after Jean Bonga’s death. Dousman retained the property until his death in 1854. His son, Talbot Dousman, purchased the lot and several other parcels of land from his estate on December 10, 1855. Henry Overall purchased lot 109 from Dousman on May 2, 1859, for \$1,250. Overall is listed as a “saloon keeper” in the 1860 census. He maintained the saloon until 1898.

Perhaps the strongest piece of evidence that links the Bongas’ tavern and inn to Overall’s saloon comes from the 1882 edition of the *Annals of Fort Mackinac*, which contains Lt. Dwight Kelton’s annotated transcription of the Mackinac Register listing of marriages, baptisms, and interments from the Ste. Anne’s parish records. The entry for the 1794 marriage of Jean and Jeanne Bonga includes the notation that they were “liberated Negro slaves of Captain Daniel Robertson. They kept the *first* hotel on the Island of Mackinac, on Front Street, where Overall’s saloon now stands.”

Historic Integrity

The tavern is no longer standing. The proposed marker would be placed on what was originally lot 109. The property was subdivided in 1935 into lots 119 and 129. Lot 119 fell on the north side of Main Street where the tavern is believed to have been.



Recommendation: Approval

Proposed Marker Location: City Park between Main and Market Streets

Bloomer State Park No. 2

Applicant: City of Rochester Hills, Patrick McKay

Location Address: 345 John R Road, Rochester Hills, Oakland County

Historic Resources: State Park

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

Historical Summary:

On October 13, 1922, Howard Bloomer and his wife, Amy, donated approximately 211 acres of land to the state of Michigan to be used as state parks. Howard Bloomer was chairman of the board for Dodge Brothers, the automotive company, and encouraged the company to purchase and donate an additional ten sites. Bloomer's donated land was divided into four separate state parks. Forty-seven acres became Bloomer State Park No. 2. Over the following years, Bloomer provided funds for the improvement of the site, including the construction of roads and the hiring of maintenance crews.

Howard Bloomer served as a member of the Michigan Conservation Commission from 1923 to 1929. He was also involved with the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority's Board of Commissioners, and the Board of the Directors of the National Conference of State Parks. Bloomer used his own wealth and vast connections to address his concerns over the loss of natural spaces for the public.

The state purchased an adjacent plot, the Sipperley Farm, in 1945 to expand the park. As of 2023, the park spanned over 200 acres of land. The Civilian Conservation Corp conducted projects to improve the park through the 1930s and 1940s. Their work included, planting trees, paving trails, and constructing a fieldstone and timber shelter that is still in use. The construction of the shelter was halted by World War II, but began again following the war and was completed in 1946.

The park is home to one of the most intact portions of the ill-fated Clinton-Kalamazoo Canal project. The state's first governor, Stevens T. Mason, initiated the canal project in 1838 in an attempt to connect the Clinton and Kalamazoo rivers. The proposed canal, which would have spanned the width of the lower peninsula, proved to be incredibly difficult to construct. Issues with varying elevations quickly ate up the project's funding. The canal reached the land that became Bloomer State Park No. 2 before funding for the project ran out and the work was abandoned. The Michigan Central Railroad bed runs along this portion of the Clinton River and serves as the Clinton River Trail used for biking and hiking.

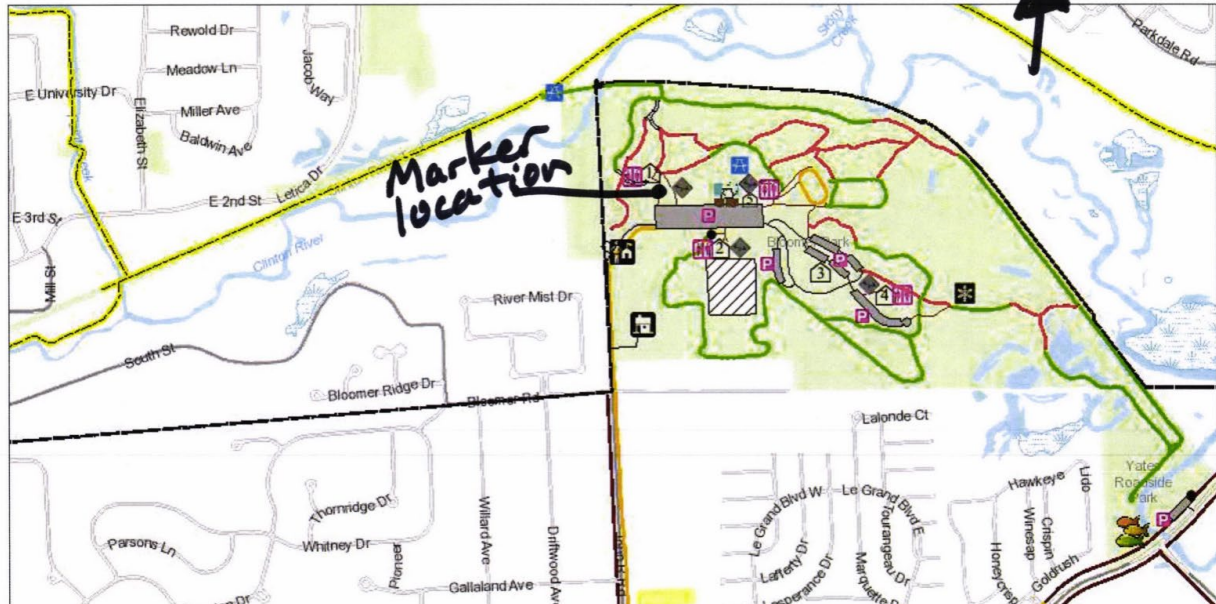


The fieldstone and timber shelter built by the CCC.

1/12/22, 3:22 PM

Parks - Bloomer

Parks - Bloomer



Recommendation: Approval

Proposed Marker Location: Near the parking lot and a paved trail

Blackberry Ridge

Applicant: Barbara E. Bull

Location Address: Corner of 16th Ave. and W. Buchanan Rd. Shelby, Oceana Co.

Historic Resource(s): Historic Site

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

Historical Summary:

Named after the abundance of blackberry bushes that grew underneath the trees that dominated the landscape, Blackberry Ridge became the second Euro-American settlement in Stony Creek (later renamed Benona Township) in 1857. The boundaries of Oceana County had been laid out only two years before. Established as the center of the county's fruit-harvesting industry, Blackberry Ridge provided many of the area's earliest residents with jobs and homes. Many of the area's early residents were former lumbermen that came to establish fruit farms. Their orchards included peach, apple, plum, pear, and cherry trees.

James Gibbs, the first recorded settler of Blackberry Ridge, came to the area in 1857. He purchased 240 acres the following year and built a simple timber structure. Gibbs left in 1862 to serve in the Union Army for three years. He married Cynthia Orena Allen upon his return and constructed a larger house in 1873 for their growing family. Gibbs was the school director for fifteen years and served as the postmaster, justice of the peace, notary public, township treasurer, and a real estate agent for Blackberry Ridge. He planted orchards on the land as early as 1868.

Sammons Landing, a market and pier into Lake Michigan, was established in 1879 and became the point where most of the area's farmed goods were sold and shipped across the midwest. The pier was destroyed by an ice storm in 1909. James Gibbs donated land some time in the late-1860s where Blackberry Ridge's school and church would be built. The proposed historical marker would be placed on this property.

Historic Integrity:

Unfortunately, little is left from Blackberry Ridge's period of significance. The school, church, and Sammons Landing are all gone. The property is now an orchard with a small parking lot and a market on the other side of Buchanan Road.

Recommendation: Approval

Proposed Marker Location: At the corner of 16th Avenue and Buchanan. This is where the church and school were located.



The proposed marker would be placed next to the flagpole.

Cornelius Langston Henderson Sr.

Applicant: David L. Head

Location Address: 3085 W. Jefferson, Detroit, Wayne Co. (Riverside Park)

Historic Resource(s): Historic Person

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

Historical Summary:

Cornelius Langston Henderson was born in Detroit in 1887. His father, Reverend James Monroe Henderson, held multiple degrees, including a doctorate in law from the Detroit College of Law and a doctorate in divinity from Payne University. His mother, Cornelia Lydia Langston, was a school teacher. C.L. Henderson spent many of his formative years on the campuses of Morris Brown College and Payne University. His father served as president of both. Cornelius quickly became interested in both mathematics and music.

Henderson graduated from a pre-college program at Payne University in 1906 and enrolled at the University of Michigan to study civil engineering. Black students were not permitted to stay in the college dorms at the time and often lived with other Black families around Ann Arbor. Additionally, he was not able to benefit from working with other students in study groups. Henderson wrote that a professor stated to the class that his seclusion left him with a much stronger understanding of the material than his classmates. C.L. Henderson and his brother, James, joined the Epsilon Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha, the first Black fraternity chartered at UofM. James Langston Henderson became the first president of Gama Lambda, an alumni chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha, founded in Detroit in 1919.

Cornelius Langston Henderson graduated from the University of Michigan in 1911. He was the second African American to graduate from the university's school of engineering. Despite his qualifications he struggled to find a job in the Detroit area. A former classmate, Kenower Weimer Bash, encouraged him to apply for a position with the Canadian Bridge Company (CBC) based across the Detroit River in Walkersville, Ontario. He was hired as a draftsman for the company in 1911. Henderson worked with the CBC, which later became a Canadian subsidiary of United States Steel, for 47 years, retiring in 1958.

C.L. Henderson was promoted to structural design engineer in 1928 and worked on the Ambassador Bridge and the Detroit Windsor Tunnel in this capacity. He was appointed chief structural steel designer on the Canadian side and oversaw the designing of the Windsor approach to the bridge and much of the installation of the bridge's steel sections. Henderson's contributions to the construction of the bridge have largely gone unnoticed both because of his race and a fire that destroyed much of the CBC's records sometime after 1974.

C.L. Henderson's other projects included designing the Detroit Memorial Park Cemetery, the state's first black owned and operated cemetery. He also worked on projects across the world, including in the Caribbean, Australia, New Zealand, and South America. He passed away on July 23, 1976 and was buried at Detroit Memorial Park Cemetery.

Recommendation: Approval
Proposed Marker Location: Near the Ambassador Bridge in a plaza.



-Riverside Park where the marker will be placed. The park is currently being renovated.



C.L. Henderson's senior portrait, 1911.