

Michigan Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

June 15, 2023

Michigan History Center
Morris Learning Center

Commissioners in attendance: Laura Ashlee, Brian James Egen, Delia Fernandez-Jones, Eric Hemenway (via Zoom), Robin Terry (via Zoom), Tom Truscott, and Larry Wagenaar

Excused Absence: Joe Calvaruso and Tim Chester

Staff: Sandra Clark, Michelle Davis and Andrew Oswald

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

At 10:03 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 Truscott and was unanimously approved.

Approval of Meeting Minutes: Ashlee moved to approve the April 13, 2023, meeting minutes; the motion was seconded by Wagenaar and was unanimously adopted.

Michigan History Foundation Follow-up – Commissioners agreed that even though the meeting was not quite as intended with the addition of the book signing event, it was a great first step in bringing the commission and the foundation together. Clark stated she will propose that the two organizations meet again in November and discuss the possibility of having staff provide some presentations.

Update on Detroit Marker Review Project - Clark noted that the grant ends on July 31, 2023. The intent is to have marker applications for each of the 15 proposed new markers completed by that date. Clark asked for feedback from the commission regarding having bilingual text on some markers. Clark noted that using the same text on each side but in two different languages will limit the content of the story that can be shared.

Fernandez-Jones stated that she supports using bilingual text for those concerning Latinx history. She also noted the need to pursue program options that allow the center to continue educating the public after the marker has been erected and building sustainable relationships with communities to encourage the use of the marker to share more of the untold story. The marker should be the beginning of educating the public, not the end.

Wagenaar also supported using bilingual text on markers. However, determining when bilingual text should be used on markers will be important. He asked if it should be done for every community where there is an ethnic language or only where a language is still commonly used. Clark noted the value of keeping an ethnic language alive even if it is not used. It will be important for the community to decide how much of the story they want to share and the preference to use both languages.

Ashlee noted the importance and value of being exposed to what another language looks like.

Wagenaar mentioned the idea of using QR codes on the markers to help share more of the story. He noted that using a link management platform like Bitly might solve some of the landing page concerns that were discussed at a previous meeting.

Clark reported that she submitted a grant application to the William G. Pomeroy Foundation to cover fabricating the 15 newly proposed Detroit markers, two revised markers located on Mackinac Island, the new marker recently approved for Raymond and Annie Mae Smith/99 Pine Street located in Manistee, and three markers located in Detroit that Jamon Jordan noted had text concerns.

Local Historic District Committee Report

- **Mission Historic District, Mackinac Island, Mackinac County**
- **Small Point Cottage, Mackinac Island, Mackinac County**
- **Dr. Lula Belle Steward House Historic District, Detroit, Wayne County**

Wagenaar moved to forward the amended comments provided by Ashlee to the State Historic Preservation Office; the motion was seconded by Fernandez-Jones and was unanimously accepted. The comments will be amended to include information on the Native American cultural contacts for tribal input.

Marker Program

- **Public Comments on Marker Topics** – Diana Paiz addressed her concern with the commission’s use of the term “Latinx” in its meeting minutes. She stated that the term is not widely used or supported within the Latino community.

Fernandez-Jones noted that the term “Latinx” is one appropriate term to describe all people of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Tejano, and Central and South American heritage. She also noted that various other terms and names have been used and contested as well. For example, Latino is a binary term from a colonial language that distinguishes male and female (Latina). She urged the commission to continue using a variety of terms including “Latinx.” It shows a good faith effort to say we understand this is not a perfect term, but we acknowledge that we have been operating under a patriarchal binary that has not allowed room for all individuals to be recognized and accepted.

Paiz next addressed the synopsis of the Jackson Poor Farm Cemetery that appeared in the February 2, 2023, commission meeting minutes. She noted that if the commission is interested in telling stories that have not been told before, this synopsis does not meet that goal. It mentions what happened to the structures, who the caretakers were, and how many people lived there. However, it did not include who these people were and what their lives were like.

Clark noted that a marker application synopsis is used to generate conversation and feedback prior to writing the text and to inform the commission’s decision on the merit of the subject.

- **Sewah Studios Pricing Update** – Clark stated that Sewah Studios contacted the center stating it is unable to produce markers for the current contract price. Clark is currently

renegotiating the contract. Once the increase is determined, the commission may want to discuss its overhead cost for each marker.

- **Approval of Marker Applications** – Written background information was provided for two new marker applications. (Appendix A)
 - ◆ **St. Paul Lutheran Church, Royal Oak, Oakland County**
 - ◆ **Malcolm X House, Inkster, Wayne County**

Ashlee moved to approve the St. Paul Lutheran Church application; the motion was seconded by Truscott and was unanimously approved.

Truscott moved to approve the Malcolm X House marker application; the motion was seconded by Wagenaar and was unanimously approved.

- **Approval of Marker Texts** – Draft Marker texts were provided for:
 - ◆ **Dyer Limestone Kiln, Bellevue, Eaton County**
 - ◆ **Bloomer State Park No. 2, Rochester Hills, Oakland County**
 - ◆ **Cornelius Henderson, Detroit, Wayne County**
 - ◆ **Kappa Alpha Psi/Kappa Kastle, Detroit, Wayne County**

Truscott moved to approve the Dyer Limestone Kiln marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Fernandez-Jones and was unanimously approved.

Wagenaar moved to approve the Bloomer State Park No. 2 marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Truscott and was unanimously approved.

Ashlee moved to approve the Cornelius Henderson marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Wagenaar and was unanimously approved.

Fernandez-Jones moved to approve the Kappa Alpha Psi/Kappa Kastle marker text as amended; the motion was seconded by Ashlee 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 center continues to be asked if an official heritage trail program exists. The commission may wish to create one. She suggested this as a topic for the next meeting. She recommended that prior to that meeting commissioners review the center's heritage trail portion of the website to learn more about it. Clark will ask the trail coordinator to gather information about what other states may be doing for this topic. Most of the Forest Heritage Trail will be completed this summer.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) recently hired Robin Afrik as the Equity & Inclusion Officer. Robin's role is to work with each division/section/unit of the DNR.

Clark noted that Fernandez-Jones is working with the center on the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience grant project. Ashlee asked for a list of awardees for this grant. Clark will send the information to commissioners.

Agenda Items for Mackinac Island Meeting – Egen noted that the heritage trails and Sewah Studios marker pricing have already been mentioned as topics for the August meeting. If you have other ideas or topics to add, please have them to Davis by August 1, 2023. Clark encouraged everyone to attend and bring a guest. It is a nice time for the commission to get to know each other.

Business Updates

- Awards Committee – Egen reported that a June 29, 2023, lunch presentation has been scheduled for the Milliken, Adams, Austin, Kelley Award winner, Matt Switlik. A press release will go out that day. A few revisions have been made for the next year. Egen noted that he will donate the funds this year for the award and shared the final product with commissioners.
- Nominating Committee – The committee recommended renominating Brian Egen as the president. All were in favor of the recommendation. A recommendation was not made at this time for the vice-president, and it was tabled until the next meeting.

Public Comment – Diana Paiz suggested having the Zoom link placed outright on the website for the commission meeting. She said it is an unnecessary barrier for those who may be underrepresented, economically disadvantaged or who may have a disability. She also suggests having links available for the board packet as well, in order to generate more public participation. Paiz noted she would support the commission being involved in starting an official heritage trail recognition program. She also noted that the heritage trails final signage would benefit from having a variety of different community members looking at and reviewing the material.

Commissioners discussed the advantages and disadvantages of having people indicate their intention to attend prior to the meeting. Staff will see what other areas of the DNR are doing.

Commissioner Comments:

- Hemenway stated he was contacted by a local group of historians asking for his advice on applying for a marker for a one-room school building. It was nice to know others feel comfortable enough to reach out to him and it reminded him that part of his role is being available and present for those around you.
- Truscott stated that he attended two marker dedications, one in Jackson and one in Arcadia. He complimented Wagenaar on the appointment of the Historical Society of Michigan's new editor and the wonderful recent magazine.
- Wagenaar reported that 55 Michigan students competing at National History Day are currently at the awards ceremony to learn if they won top places or special awards at the national competition. A press release about Michigan History Day national finalists and their accomplishments will be circulated early next week. Wagenaar also stated that the Upper Peninsula History Conference is scheduled to take place in Iron Mountain on June 23-25, 2023.

- Fernandez-Jones stated that she is excited to work on the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience grant project.

Wagenaar moved to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Ashlee; and the meeting adjourned at 12:16 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

St. Paul Lutheran Church

Applicant: St. Paul Lutheran Church, Steven Carpenter

Location Address: 202 E. Fifth Street. Royal Oak, MI. 48067, Oakland County

Historic Resource(s): Historic Site

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

Historical Summary:

St. Paul Lutheran Church began as a Lutheran orphanage, school, and church on March 31, 1873, on a twenty acre property at University and Main Street in Royal Oak. Reverend George Speckhard was installed as the pastor of the church, superintendent of the orphanage, and an instructor for deaf children in August of 1873. The orphanage and school moved to Detroit in 1875 and was renamed the Lutheran School for the Deaf. The school, now named the Lutheran Special Education Ministries (LSEM), continues to operate out of Ann Arbor, Michigan.

In 1873 St. Paul Lutheran Church began operating out of a Baptist church it had purchased for \$800. The congregation purchased a property at the southwest corner of Fifth and Williams Street in 1886 and erected a wooden chapel. Much of the construction was done by members of the congregation who felled the logs and hauled them to a sawmill in Clawson. All churches used by the congregation since 1886 have stood at this site at the corner of Fifth and Williams.

Reverend Otto Frincke founded a new day school on October 9, 1916. Construction began on a new church building the following year. The new church was designed by Louis W. Klei, a Detroit-based architect. It was built at a cost of \$33,714. When the church was dedicated on January 20, 1918, most of the congregation's services were still held in German. Men and women sat on opposite sides of the church and participated in Holy Communion separately. The church was the tallest building in Royal Oak. The Ambassador Bridge, Belle Isle, and the Seven Sisters smokestacks could all be seen from the belfry. St. Paul Lutheran Church aided in the founding of another congregation, St. John in Rochester, Michigan, in 1920.

The current school building, dedicated on September 9, 1951, was designed by Fredrick Madison, a local architect. Madison's work in Royal Oak includes the 1927 Washington Square Building, and the 1922 Washington Theatre, which is now the Stagecrafters Baldwin Theatre. Construction and furnishing of the new school cost around \$200,000. The school had four classrooms, a library, an office, a gymnasium, and a cafeteria. An additional wing was built in 1959.

St. Paul's congregation had exceeded 1,800 members by 1962. The 1918 church only sat 300, and plans began for a new, larger church to be built on the site. The current church was dedicated on January 22, 1973. Its construction was led by Reverend Ron Guettler who had been installed at the congregation in 1970. The 1918 church was demolished following the completion of the new structure.

Historic Integrity

The 1973 church and 1951 school have not been heavily altered. The bell from the 1918 church remains on the grounds in the adjacent gardens.

Recommendation: Approval

Proposed Marker Location: Williams St. between the church and school buildings.



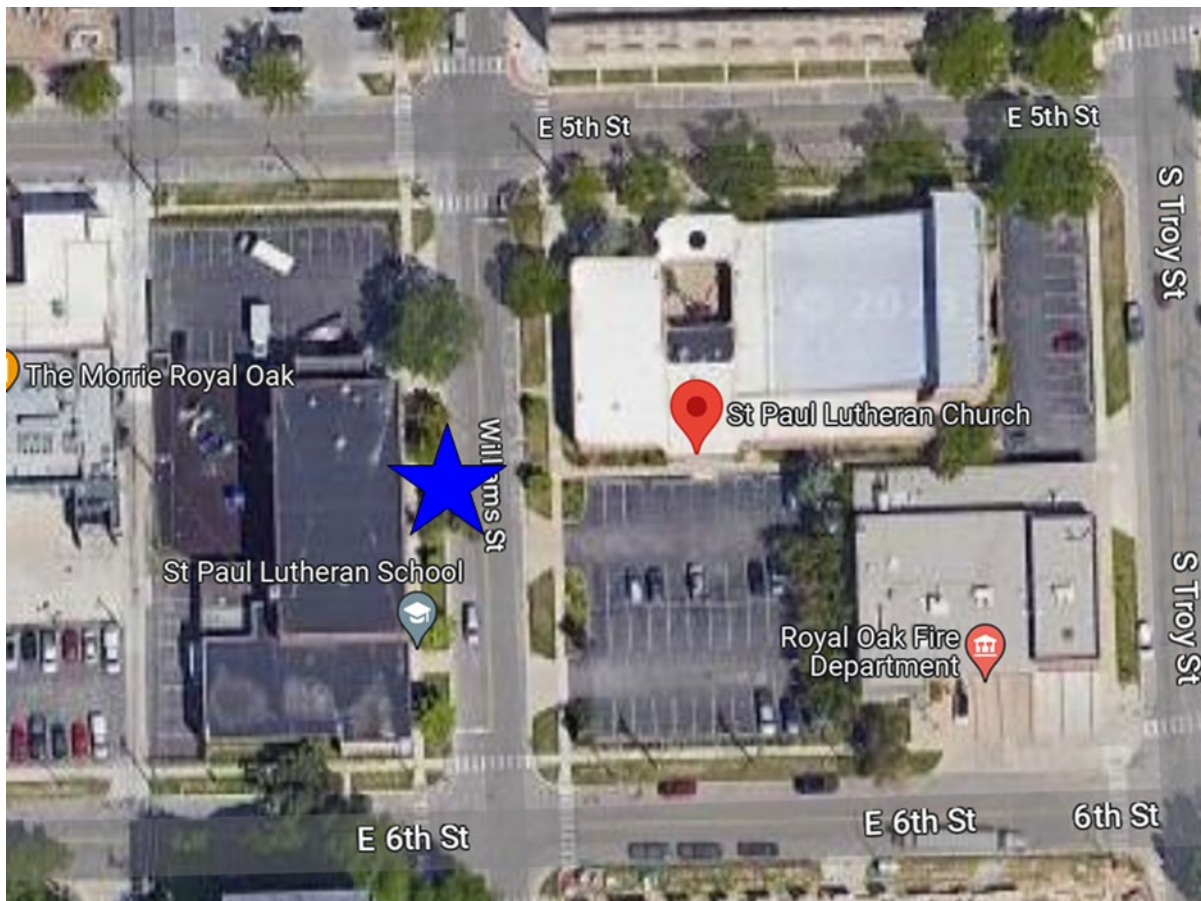
The 1973 Church



The 1951 Church



The 1918 church, demolished after the completion of the 1973 structure.



The proposed marker location, on the lawn of the school building

Malcolm X House

Applicant: Aaron Sims

Location Address: 4336 Williams St. Inkster, MI. 48141.

Historic Resource(s): Historic Person, Historic Site

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

Historical Summary:

This house at 4336 Williams St. in Inkster, Michigan, was owned by Malcolm X's brother Wilfred Little. Little lived here with his wife, Ruth, and their children. Malcolm X resided here with the family between 1952 and 1953. Much of what is known about Malcolm X's stay at this house in Inkster comes from his F.B.I. file. The Federal Bureau of Investigation had been closely surveilling him at this time and stayed in close communication with the Detroit Police Department and the Wayne County Sheriff as to his whereabouts.

Malcolm X was born as Malcolm Little in 1925 in Omaha, Nebraska. His family relocated several times throughout his youth. He spent much of his childhood in Lansing, East Lansing, and Mason, Michigan. He later moved to Boston and New York City in his teens. Malcolm soon ran into trouble with the law and was incarcerated in Massachusetts. While in prison, he eventually focused on his education and debating skills. Still incarcerated, Malcolm joined the Nation of Islam, led by Elijah Muhammed, which was founded in Detroit in 1930.

Malcolm received parole from the Massachusetts State Prison in August 1952, and traveled back to Michigan to live here with his brother. Wilfred arranged a job for Malcolm at a store in Detroit where he worked. Wilfred was heavily involved with the Nation of Islam and founded Nation of Islam Temple No. 1 in Detroit. It was in 1952, during his stay at his brother's home, that Malcolm traveled to Chicago, met Elijah Muhammed, and was officially accepted into the nation, changing his name to Malcolm X. In 1953 Malcolm X was named the assistant minister of Temple No. 1. Later that year he began traveling to temples across the country. Tension between Malcolm and Wilfred's wife, Rose, pushed Malcolm to temporarily relocate to the home of Moustafa (Robert) Hassain on Keystone Street in Detroit.

In 1958 Malcolm X married Sister Betty X, who had grown up in Detroit as Betty Dean Sanders. According to his autobiography, Malcolm called Betty from a gas station in Detroit and asked her to marry him. She immediately flew to Detroit and the couple married in Lansing.

Malcolm X's confidence in the Nation of Islam declined beginning in 1963 with allegations that Elijah Muhammed had sexually assaulted eight young members of the group. The confirmation of these allegations led Malcolm to lay over in Detroit for a few hours while flying home from Chicago so he could discuss the development with Wilfred. Heavily disillusioned with the Nation of Islam, Malcolm officially left the organization on March 8, 1964. His life was threatened numerous times following his departure, but he continued a rigorous schedule of traveling and speaking. On February 14, 1965, only a week before his assassination, Malcolm X returned to Detroit and spoke at Cobo Hall. In his speech, he proudly stated, "I used to live out here in Inkster."

This house is one of the few remaining residences of Malcolm X. The house itself was constructed in 1950 with Wilfred Little as its first owner. It was abandoned sometime later and sat vacant until rehabilitation began in 2021. The house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places that same year.

Historic Integrity

The house, while in disrepair, remains largely original. It is currently being rehabilitated by the nonprofit organization, Project We Hope, Dream, and Believe.

Recommendation: Approval

Proposed Marker Location: The front lawn, to the left of the driveway



The home before rehabilitation began.

