



WASHTENAW COUNTY OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

April 29, 2009

Mr. Thomas E. Pickenpaugh
Department of the Navy
Naval Historical Center
805 Kidder Breese Street, SE
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060

RE: USS Washtenaw County Artifacts

Dear Mr. Pickenpaugh;

I am writing to you on behalf of Washtenaw County Government, with regard to a collection of artifacts from the USS Washtenaw County. The artifacts are presently in the care of Washtenaw County Government, per an indefinite loan agreement with the Department of the Navy dated May 23, 1985.

Your letter of inquiry, dated August 2, 2008, was received by Washtenaw County Facilities Management. This office later contacted my office, which staffs the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission. The Washtenaw County Historic District Commission serves 12 local historic districts in Washtenaw County, including the USS Washtenaw County Artifacts, which were designated as a local historic district in 1981. The matter of your inquiry was transferred over to my office. I apologize for the delay in our response.

Thank you for the inclusion of a copy of our last report, dated August 16, 2002. This report detailed a loan of two artifacts, the ship's bell (Navy #74-156-B) and commissioning plaque (Navy #74-156-C) to Mr. Thomas E. Osmund. This loan was permitted by the Navy, and included a letter of responsibility on the part of Mr. Osmund. The artifacts were returned to public display without incident.

As indicated above, the USS Washtenaw County artifacts were normally on public display at the Washtenaw County Courthouse, 220 N. Main, Ann Arbor, MI. In 2005, the artifacts were removed from public display to accommodate planned remodeling of the public space at 220 N. Main, Ann Arbor, MI. The artifacts were placed into storage at Washtenaw County Facilities Management, 2155 Hogback Road, Ann Arbor, MI. At the time of their removal from public display and placement into storage, the display case was damaged and the ship's wheel helm (Navy #74-156-E) was discovered missing. This missing artifact was believed to be misplaced in the move, and expected to be recovered somewhere in the possession of Washtenaw County Government.

In 2008, a Washtenaw County Facilities Management staff member re-inventoried the artifacts. It was confirmed that the ship's wheel helm (Navy #74-156-D) was missing, and located nowhere in the inventory of Washtenaw County Government. At that time, a police report was filed to document this loss (see attached). Washtenaw County Government deeply regrets this unfortunate situation. We

request that you advise us regarding any additional documentation necessary regarding the loss of this artifact.

The matter of the USS Washtenaw County artifacts has also come to the attention of the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission (WCHDC). As stated above, the artifacts are a designated local historic district overseen by the WCHDC. This honor is normally reserved for only buildings, structures, and landscapes, but is occasionally extended to objects of outstanding historical importance, such as the USS Washtenaw County artifacts.

It is the desire of the WCHDC to return the USS Washtenaw County artifacts to public display. Therefore, the WCHDC has begun plans to design new, secure display cases and interpretive signage. WCHDC has selected Multiform Studios LLC to fabricate the new exhibition (<http://multiformstudios.com>; see attached proposal). Formal design discussions with this nationally-known studio and fund-raising efforts will progress in the coming months. The WCHDC has also made contact with local Navy Veterans of the Vietnam Era, to ascertain their interest in honoring the artifacts and the memory of those who served. The response from veterans has been quite favorable. We expect to see the USS Washtenaw County artifacts back on public display at a Washtenaw County Government location by the end of 2009.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on the status of the USS Washtenaw County artifacts. Henceforth, annual reports on the status of the USS Washtenaw County artifacts will be issued from the Office of Strategic Planning, on behalf of the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission. Please feel free to contact this office with any questions regarding this collection of artifacts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melissa Milton-Pung".

Melissa Milton-Pung
Principal Preservation Planner