

Washtenaw County Historic District Commission
STAFF REPORT
August 2008

1) Proposed Local Historic Districts

a. Conant Farm Local Historic District Study Committee Report

All research, public comment, and public hearing requirements have been fulfilled for this potential local historic district. The final historic district study committee report was completed by Ina Hanel-Gerdenich, and included only minor changes from the initial draft. Please see the final study committee report included in this board packet. Next steps include an HDC vote to recommend the establishment of a local historic district on the Conant Farm, and formal request for the BOC to adopt an ordinance to create the district. ***Please see the attached Final Study Committee Report.***

b. Othneil Gooding House

With the approval of the HDC Chair, staff has contacted Hugh McCann to ascertain his desire to either reactivate the work of the local historic district study committee for potential designation of the Othneil Gooding House, or possible dissolution of study committee. No resolution has yet been reached.

2) Local Historic Districts

a. Gordon Hall

The Dexter Area Historical Society and Museum has completed work on repair and replacement of materials in kind for the front porch of Gordon Hall. A major roof repair is planned for later in the year, and also expected to fall under routine maintenance. Staff has remained in close contact with Gil Campbell to provide technical assistance. A site visit has been scheduled for next week to update HDC photographic records of the site.

b. Delhi Bridge

Rehabilitation has commenced for the Delhi Bridge. Staff remains informed of the project progress by our friends at the Delhi Conservancy.

c. Staff Visits to Local Historic Districts

Staff will be conducting site visits at most of the Washtenaw County local historic districts over the next several weeks, with the assistance of summer intern Anthony Timek. The purpose of these visits is to update photographic records and refresh or expand staff familiarity with the districts. These friendly, low-key visits cultivate positive relationships with the historic property stewards. They will also fulfill the function of local historic district audits.

3) Historic Sites of Concern

a. Nanry House

Nancy Snyder and Melissa Milton-Pung visited Mrs. Davids, the owner of the Douglass-Nanry House, in her home on August 4. The initial efforts to obtain an appointment were delayed, due to Mrs. Davids' ill health. The house's current state of deterioration and infestation with raccoons was discussed, as well as some possible solutions. Information on potential local historic designation was also received with interest. Milton-Pung also presented Mrs. Davids with a complementary set of the Heritage Tours – and it was noted that the Douglass-Nanry House is honored with mention in both the Esek Pray Trail and Greek Revival Architecture tours. The meeting was overall very positive and respectful. Per a request from Mrs. Davids, staff will follow-up with Superior Township to work toward moth-balling the house. ***Please see the attached materials for further information on the history of the Douglas-Nanry House.***

b. Rawsonville School

Nothing new to report.

c. McCalla Farm

This former dairy farm, located on Michigan Avenue near I-94 in Ypsilanti Township, has been brought to the HDC's attention through previous comments by Commissioner Chuck Gray. Comments from EMU's Dr. Ted Ligibel and members of the general public have also been received more recently by staff. There is no immediate threat known to this site, although it is located in the vicinity of potential development – directly behind Wal-Mart. Staff is presently investigating the site, and will provide information to the HDC as it becomes available.

4) Historic Markers:

Two new requests for historic marker consideration have been received by staff, thanks to Commissioner Peter Kelley. Both properties are located in Northfield Township, and mentioned in the local historic monograph *Northfield Harvest*.

Please see the attached materials for further information on the following sites:

a. *Devereaux Family*

Centennial Farm featuring an Octagon House; already listed on the National Register.

b. *O'Brien Family*

Designated as an Outstanding Centennial Farm; meticulously restored in the 1990s.

5) Native American Trails Project

Commissioners Jasper Pennington and Peter Kelley have been working on a report regarding the Native American Trails project. Staff is still seeking to obtain digital copies of the Hinsdale Map of Michigan Native Americans, but has encountered difficulty in securing the document from the Bentley.

6) Workshop Series

Please join us for the final workshop in the series of Washtenaw County/HDC/Michigan Historic Preservation Network workshops. A generic Historic District Commissioner Training will be lead by Kristine Kidorf of Kidorf Preservation Consulting. This workshop will take place on Saturday, September 6, at 10:00am at the Washtenaw County Library Learning Resource Center (LLRC), located at 4135 Washtenaw Avenue near US-23.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Washtenaw County Department of Planning and Environment