



Meeting of the Plymouth Township Historic District Commission

Thursday, June 17, 2021 - 7 p.m.

Plymouth Township Hall Meeting Room

Next Meeting date August 12, 2021

AGENDA

1) CALL TO ORDER

- a) Roll Call

2) APPROVAL OF THE June 17, 2021 CONSENT AGENDA

3) ENACTMENT OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

- a) Approval of the April 22, 2021 Meeting Minutes

4) BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

5) PUBLIC COMMENTS

6) NEW BUSINESS

- a) On May 25th, The Board of Trustees reappointed Commissioners Azimi and Souchock for three years.
- b) The history of houses on Northville Rd. –*Colleen Azimi*

7) OLD BUSINESS

- a) Shearer Cemetery – *Wendy Harless*
 - 1. Clean Up Continues
 - 2. We identified several rare and endangered native plants in Shearer.
 - 3. Commissioner Harless is creating an up-to-date map.
- b) The Pursell House update-*Jack Dempsey and Dennis Cebulski*
- c) Rockwell Sculptures update – *Wendy*
 - 1. Review of the second draft layout/design of the Township historic marker



2. Updates - Lisa Howard on sculptures to be moved to the Arts Council campus for public display

d) Historic Sites Brochure 2nd Draft – *Jack Dempsey*

1. Review updated text and design

e) Plymouth Township History factoids for the Township Newsletter—*Wendy Harless*

1. We need more factoids

f) Zoom meeting presentation Speakers for 2021 –*Wendy Harless*

1. Greg Donofrio will give a presentation about Phoenix Mill
2. Darrin Silvester will give a presentation about Shearer Cemetery
3. I have put them in touch with Dee Beaver at the library. Waiting hear about dates.

7) ADJOURNMENT

The Public is invited and encouraged to attend all meetings of Historic District Commission of the Charter Township of Plymouth



Meeting of the Plymouth Township Historic District Commission

Thursday, April 22, 2021 - 7 p.m.

Next Meeting date June 17, 2021

MINUTES

Zoom Meeting Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87341823228?pwd=SENPanUvbXBZeGxUIF2RVdXNmQwZz09>

Meeting ID: 873 4182 3228

Passcode: 74666180

Dial-in number: 1-929-205-6099

1) CALL TO ORDER at 7:00 p.m. by W. Harless, Chair.

a) Roll Call

PRESENT:

Colleen Azimi

Dennis Cebulski

Jack Dempsey

Carol Souchock

Wendy Harless

Sybil Hunter (7:11 p.m.)

ALSO PRESENT:

Natalie Bond, Asst. Planner, McKenna

Denisa Terrell, Recording Secretary

2) APPROVAL OF THE April 22, 2021 CONSENT AGENDA

Moved by C. Souchock and supported by C. Azimi to approve the agenda with the correction of changing the year of February 25 minutes to 2021 for the regular meeting of April 22, 2021. Ayes all.

3) ENACTMENT OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

a) Approval of the February 25, 2021, Meeting Minutes

Moved by D. Cebulski and supported by C. Azimi to approve the minutes of the regular meeting Ayes all.

4) BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

C. Souchock: is retiring from the library in June. She will remain in the area and stay on the board. She is also working on the Dunning Foundation grant final approval.

5) NEW BUSINESS

a) Meeting times are all 7 pm. Dates for 2021 are as follows:

February 25

April 22

June 17

August 12

October 28 (Added)

December 16



- b) **The history of the Farwell House – 39505 Ann Arbor Trail –*Jack Dempsey***
The property was missed on the 2020 inventory. Mr. Dempsey presented the history of Farwell House including the family that lived there. He shared details including that there were three sons' service records discovered from census reports that disclosed their service in the civil war. Reuben Farwell became friends with poet Walt Whitman during the Civil War. They corresponded over the years and Whitman included Reuben Farwell in his book "Memoranda During The War".
- c) **The Pursell House update-*Jack Dempsey***- Mr. Cebulski shared that the Planning Commission has reviewed the Cluster Housing Option for the Pursell House with conditions that include amenities such as a historic placement marker in the area of Eaton Estates, the Historic Commission will be involved in the design and text of the marker, and in lieu of a gazebo the developer will give \$20,00 in a separate historic fund. The name of the subdivision will be Pursell House.
- d) There was discussion on the types of historical markers and text to have consistency.

6) OLD BUSINESS

- a) **Shearer Cemetery – *Wendy Harless***
 - 1. Dead tree removal update. The tree was removed. There was no damage to any of the headstones, however, there was some damage to the pathway.
 - 2. Possible Spring clean-up – Commissioners will complete a walk-through on May 2, 2021 just to review work needed. The first clean-up will take place on May 16, 2021. Darrin Silvester says that Sundays are best for turnout. Each family will be assigned a grid to complete and bring their own tools.
- b) **Rockwell Sculptures update – *Wendy***
 - 1. There was a consensus is to collaborate further with Lisa Howard from the Arts Council. The Rockwell Sculptures will be placed on the next meeting agenda.
- c) **Historic Sites Brochure 1st Draft – *Jack Dempsey***
 - 1. There was a detailed discussion concerning the brochure including the text, accuracy, maps, pictures, and obtaining permission from property owners. The map would route through the Township in order of location as a driving tour.
- d) **Plymouth Township History factoids for the Township Newsletter—*Wendy Harless***



1. Factoids will be every other month. There is an approved logo to be used if photos are not available. Future factoids will be Carl Pursell, Seminary, and Farwell House.
- e) The logo was approved by Supervisor Heise—*Wendy Harless*
- f) Zoom meeting presentation Speakers for 2021 –*Wendy Harless*
Reviewed speakers and dates for meeting presentations.
 1. Richard Cox said that they would be willing to give a Zoom presentation about Phoenix Mill.
 2. Wendy needs to confirm dates and coordinate with the library.


Public Comments

Mary Anne gave an invitation to the public from the Environmental Commission to attend an event on Saturday.

7) ADJOURNMENT

Moved by S. Hunter and supported by D. Cebulski to adjourn the meeting at 9:09 p.m.
Ayes all.

Wendy Harless, Chair
Historic District Commission



1/1/2021

Plymouth Township

Historic Sites

Historic District Commission

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The people of Plymouth Township have the privilege of enjoying a rich heritage with deep roots.

A principal tributary of the Rouge River runs through it, named after a Potawatomi chieftain. It is listed as “Tonquish Creek” in an 1849 *Gazetteer*. An 1827 treaty refers to “Tonguish’s village, near the river Rouge.” Indigenous people made their homes in this area years before European-affiliated settlers came.

When settlement began in the 1820s, early inhabitants found a territory full of woods and wildlife. Plymouth is one of Michigan’s oldest townships, established by the Legislative Council of the Territory of Michigan in 1827 – ten years before Michigan became a State.

The first settlers of European origin, Allen and William Tibbits among them, arrived in the area in 1824, and by 1825 enough people made up a small settlement. Early village meetings were held in Tibbits’s barn, which still exists – a landmark of grass roots democracy.

An 1876 *Atlas* illustrates a largely rural township characterized by farms and agricultural pursuits. It remained largely so into the 20th century.

In the post-World War II era, residential growth was concentrated in the area bordering the city of Plymouth. In 1960, the city’s population was slightly greater than the township’s; since then, and the change to a charter township in 1979, Plymouth Township’s growth and larger land size has outstripped the city’s. Private homes across the township date from the various periods of the 20th century, and their styles include farmhouse, arts and crafts, mid-century modern, and by famed architects Frank Lloyd Wright and Tivadar Balogh, whose self-designed home in a wooded area along Joy Road is on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Plymouth District Library at 223 S. Main in the city is a source for local history, including its website featuring a Plymouth Local History page providing online resources.

The Plymouth Historical Museum in the Dunning Memorial Building at 155 S. Main is a principal depository for artifacts and material regarding the Plymouth community’s heritage.

The township is home to sites affiliated with the National Park Service’s Motor Cities National Heritage Area. Several sites are listed in the national and State historic registers. A Michigan Historical Marker dedicated in 2020 at Township Hall, 9955 N. Haggerty Road, succinctly portrays the community’s heritage.

How to use this Guide

This booklet is designed to provide self-guided tours for walking, bicycling, and driving.

It is organized to follow, location by location and page by page, a driving tour. Bicycle and walking routes are subsets of the larger tour route. Please use caution while following this guide.

The I-275 Metro Trail provides a biking route through portions of the township. A portion of the Lakeview Trail on the south side of Newburgh Lake is also within its boundary. Biking is also popular in Hines Park.

You will find recreation facilities and sites in or adjacent to several of the locations.

Please respect the private property nature of several sites listed, especially personal residences which are marked with an *. Observe them from a publicly accessible vantage point.

Letter designations on the Map correspond to the site descriptions that follow. For example, the first – site “A” – is Township Hall. The # designation reflects an MCNH site.

Be sure to explore the many shops, restaurants, and commercial establishments throughout the community.

This self-guided tour guide is published by the Charter Township of Plymouth Historic District Commission.

For more information, < ... >

The Commission was created in 2019 by Ordinance No. 1016, Amendment #23. The purpose of this ordinance is to foster the preservation of historic structures and places within Plymouth Township by enabling owners to voluntarily seek the creation of historic districts for their properties under applicable laws of the State of Michigan.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Plymouth Township Historic District Commission is:

- Safeguard the heritage of Plymouth Township by preserving districts which reflect elements of its history, architecture, archeology, engineering or culture;
- Stabilize and improve property values in each district and the surrounding areas;
- Foster civic beauty;
- Strengthen the local economy; and
- Promote the use of historic districts for the education, pleasure and welfare of the citizens.

<MAP>

A. Township Hall *9955 N. Haggerty Rd*

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Installed at the entrance is one of Michigan's iconic green-and-gold State Historical Markers, telling the story of one of the earliest political subdivisions in either peninsula dating back before statehood. A half-century earlier, the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 declared that Michigan would always be "free" – non-slavery – and the opening of the Erie Canal in 1821 began the flow of settlers. In 1824, the U.S. Government sold off the first piece of property for settlement within the eventual boundaries. The lobby in the building houses a beautiful mosaic noting sites and features of distinction. The Town Hall meeting room is marked by a sign inscribed to the power of local democracy.

B. Farwell House * *39505 E. Ann Arbor Trail*

Once a 150-acre farm, the house dates from the early 1850's. Three sons of farmer Leroy Farwell served during the Civil War in the 2nd Michigan Infantry and 1st and 4th Michigan Cavalry regiments. One of them, wounded in action, became a friend of famed poet Walt Whitman while convalescing in a medical ward where the National Mall is today in Washington, D.C. This property was known later as Hope Farm. The "bones" of the early structure remain within this house of heroes.

C. Hines Park & Drive *between Newburgh and Five Mile Roads*

The Drive is a 17-mile parkway paralleling the middle branch of the Rouge River from Dearborn into the township. The road was built in 1949 in places on land donated by industrialist Henry Ford, and it was named after a head of the Wayne County Road Commission. Along the way are original sites of historic mills, some of which Ford converted into facilities for the manufacture of automobile parts. The Hines Park Greenway connects to the statewide Iron Belle Trail as part of a comprehensive nonmotorized trail network.

D. Burroughs Buildings # *41000 Plymouth Road*

Designed by the internationally famed architectural firm of Albert Kahn & Associates and dedicated in 1938, the main building was the headquarters and manufacturing facility for the Burroughs Adding Machine Company. A coal-burning powerhouse on the east side of the property provided electricity to the complex. During World War II, the famed Norden bombsight was mass produced by Burroughs. The company later became an early maker of computers. The complex has been repurposed as office space and is home to a major developer of electric-based vehicles.

E. Haggerty and Gunsolly Comfort Stations # *41181 Edward N. Hines Drive, and further west*

Built in 1937, the Haggerty Comfort Station was one of the early public motor vehicle comfort rest stops and a prototype for roadside development as part of the "Good Roads Movement." Some twenty rest stops like this were built along the parkway as part of a program of the Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression. Haggerty features a distinctive

architectural style that includes corbeling brick, limestone keystones and quoins, steeply pitched slate roofs, and leaded windows, reminiscent of the Tudor style. When originally constructed, the station had a full-time attendant, an information booth, and a concession stand. The symmetric Gunsolly building features copper gutters, copper roof flashing, and copper snow guards. Plymouth resident Jesse Merle Bennett, Wayne County superintendent of parks and forestry in the 1920s-1930s and author of the landmark 1936 *Roadsides: The Front Yard of the Nation*, was a key advocate of such stations “for the purpose of providing sanitary toilet facilities, safe drinking water, rest rooms and a source of highway information for the traveling public.”

F. Gunsolly Mills # *Gunsolly Drive, in Hines Park*

Located just north of the Plymouth Road overpass is the site of this historic mill. The building is preserved and now located in historic Greenfield Village at The Henry Ford in Dearborn. John Gunsolly operated a water-powered carding mill as well as a saw and cider mill here on the Middle Rouge beginning in the 1850s. Area farmers brought their wool to this mill to have it carded (combed) so it could be spun into thread. The comfort station is historic (see E).

G. Phoenix Mill # *14977 Northville Road*

Just north of the M-14 highway overpass, this historic property was the site for a dam and mill constructed in the 1830s and a gristmill built around 1840. Industrialist Henry Ford acquired the site in 1920 and arranged for design and construction of a new manufacturing building by the Dearborn Realty and Construction Company; its corporate leadership included his wife Clara and son Edsel. The building opened in 1922 as part of Ford’s village industry initiative. The internationally famed architectural firm of Albert Kahn & Associates designed modifications to the original structure. It was repurposed during World War II to provide aircraft parts as a component of the Arsenal of Democracy, and a metallic curtain was added to the building for protection during hostilities – the rail can still be seen from which the curtain was suspended. Saved just before collapse and renovated after years of neglect, it now provides office and banquet space.

H. Inn at St. John’s *44045 Five Mile Road*

This structure is the original 1940’s provincial seminary building that provided a training and education center for clergy and religious purposes. The architecture is Romanesque, and the building features artwork by famed sculptor Corrado Giuseppe Parducci. In 2000, the main buildings were repurposed into an inn with culinary, hotel, corporate, special event, and conference uses. A 27-hole golf course is also part of the facility.

I. Shearer Cemetery *45456 N. Territorial Road*

This oldest community cemetery dates to 1826 when established by pioneer John Tibbits here on a wooded hillside one-half mile west of Sheldon Road. Tibbits, his spouse, and one of their children were buried here. In 2005, a local high-school teacher and his students began to restore the site and undertake an annual practice of caring for this historic burying ground. In addition to early settlers, the cemetery became the site for interment of a Civil War veteran, a member of the

Angell family associated with the University of Michigan, 19th century political figures, and others until the last burial occurred in the early 20th century. Adjacent North Territorial Road is the route of pre-statehood transportation route westward.

J. Carl Duane Pursell Homesite *46200 N. Territorial Road*

This property once was home to long-time resident, graduate of Plymouth High School, and the township's longest serving Member of Congress. Carl D. Pursell (1932-2009), military veteran, teacher, and public official, served as State Senator, Wayne County Commissioner, and Eastern Michigan University Regent. He was elected from Michigan's 2nd congressional district to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1976. He served in the 95th Congress and in the seven succeeding Congresses, from January 3, 1977, until his retirement on January 3, 1993. A legislative tribute hailed him as "a gentleman of strong commitment and service who compiled an exemplary record in public life and strengthened his community, state, and nation. This man of loyalty and unselfishness demonstrated the highest standards of leadership."

K. Tibbitts House and Barn * *46225 N. Territorial Road*

Behind the circa 1826 house is the historic barn also built by the Tibbitts family. In 1827, the people of the area met at this farmstead, gathered together in the barn, and made the first decisions on local governance. After considering various possible names for the community, the meeting settled on "LeRoy," but if that name was already in use then the choice was "Plymouth" after the community in Massachusetts. John Tibbitts was laid to rest in Shearer Cemetery nearby.

L. Peacock House * *47420 W. Ann Arbor Trail*

Built in 1928, this Cotswold-style home is roofed with cedar shakes and has walls of masonry. The informal name of the house derived from the peacocks that roamed the yard and the image of the bird painted on the outside. The uniquely designed house is a landmark in the township at a key intersection near the golf course and central township parks, and it forms a part of the community's heritage. *

M. Township Park *46640 W. Ann Arbor Trail*

Formerly a farm acquired in 1829 with a house constructed by Moses Allen in 1842, crops and produce were once planted, grown, and harvested here. Also known as "McClumpha Park," given its location at the intersection of Ann Arbor Trail and McClumpha Road, the main park is 80 acres of well-maintained walking paths, gathering spaces, and recreational opportunities including a summer sprayscape and fishing pond. In 1986, famed sculptor Peter Rockwell led a community engagement to fashion gargoyle-themed sculptures attractive to children; some remain here, with others at the Plymouth Community Arts Council. Other heritage features are present here and at the greenspace to the west, south of Hilltop Golf Course – another attractive recreation amenity.

N. Miller Woods *Powell Road, west of Beck Road*

Norman and Cornelia Miller purchased over 1,100 acres of this land in 1902; they farmed it until his death in 1958. Remaining family members sold 40 acres to the Plymouth-Canton Community School District in 1968. It was stipulated by the Miller family that this 10-acre plot be preserved, as no harvesting of the trees had ever occurred. Many of the trees now are over 350 years old. It was designated a nature preserve by Plymouth Township in 1991.

O. Colony Farm *Colony Farms Drive*

In the early 1940s, an investor acquired the acreage that now forms the subdivision to establish agricultural pursuits. The original barn – preserved and painted a classic red – can be seen off of Colony Farms Drive. The entryway down a lane featuring willow trees, next to “Walden Pond” through which Willow Creek flows, is viewable off of Thoreau Drive. At least one of the original residential structures remains. The milkhouse is located on the adjacent Bradford Court.

P. Burd House * *47566 Joy Road*

Built circa 1828, this home is one of the earliest in the Plymouth community. The property was originally deeded to James Taft in 1825 and sold to Zenas Burd in 1828. Although the structure has seen modifications through its existence, it retains the original stone foundation and original hand-hewed structural timbers.

Q. McClumpha/Hulse House * *9275 McClumpha Road*

Built circa 1869, this was once the home of Elizabeth McClumpha, the daughter of Thomas McClumpha who owned and farmed much of the land in this area. Elizabeth was the eldest of her siblings, was well-known in the community, and was remembered for her extreme kindness and love of children. More recently, it was the childhood home of actor-director Tom Hulse after being acquired by his parents in 1953. Joanne (Winkleman) Hulse became a leading community arts supporter, after whom the Center for the Arts on Sheldon Road was named. In the nearby New England Corners development, address 9460 McClumpha Road, is the home of Thomas McClumpha built circa 1858.

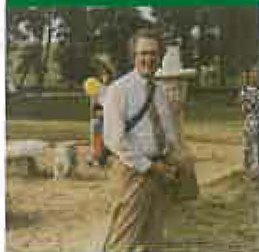
R. Graye's Greenhouse *8820 N. Lilley Road*

Alex Wnuk built the greenhouse in 1928, and his initials still mark the chimney attached on the north side of the glass houses. In 1945, one of his children, Sylvia, acquired the business with her husband, Joseph Graye, establishing Graye's Greenhouse. The family continued to run the operation until 2019, when they sold the business to a young female entrepreneur who is dedicated to ensuring the greenhouse's preservation and growth. Representative of the township's rich heritage in growing things, the house, greenhouse, and barn all evoke the bucolic past in this beautiful community.

< LOGOs >

PETER ROCKWELL SCUPTURES

IN PLYMOUTH TOWNSHIP PARK



Peter Rockwell stands in front of his creations.

In 1986, the Plymouth Community Arts Council raised the funds to bring sculptor Peter Rockwell to our community for three months to create a series of sculptures right here in Plymouth Township Park. Rockwell, the son of famed American illustrator Norman Rockwell, was a world renowned sculptor in his own right, with his work gracing the National

Cathedral in Washington D.C., The National Portrait Gallery, St. Paul's Church in Rome, a convent in Chioggia, Italy and numerous public park installations around the world, just as we see here.

One of the major objectives of this project was for Rockwell to not only demonstrate his sculpting techniques for the public, but to also have members of the public partake in the sculpting work themselves. In a newspaper article from the time, Rockwell revealed that this was a lifelong dream of his, "to create a work of art with his audience." Rockwell went on to say "One of the biggest problems of an artist is a lack of contact with your audience. Here I can explain why I'm doing what I'm doing and even revise if I need to." We know from photos and newspaper articles of the time that the members of the Plymouth-Canton community did actually help out with the sculpting, taking tools in hand and working under the eye of Rockwell himself.

Rockwell developed a reputation for his whimsical "monsters" with elongated features and playful expressions. These features can be clearly seen in the sculptures on display here. In a Detroit Free Press article from the time, Rockwell is quoted as saying "I guess I have always done monsters because they relate to earth and stone. They're a fantasy. And for something like this, they provide a playful element."



Members of the community were invited to help with the work.



DROOLING MONSTER

The sculptures we have on display in Plymouth Township Park are sculpted of Italian limestone. Rockwell intended for this installation to be a place for children to play, and so they did for several years. The smaller pieces were intended to be climbed upon by small park visitors for what Rockwell thought would be thousands of years. "This is the same stone that the Colosseum in Rome is made of, and it has stood for 1,800 years." Rockwell is quoted as saying about his work in Plymouth Township Park. This was not to be, however, as sometime in the 1990s, the tallest of Rockwell's sculptures described as a "tall fountain with water spilling from a 'crying monster'" toppled over, breaking some of the smaller stone parts of the sculpture. Luckily, the Plymouth Township Parks and Recreation Department collected all of the parts of the sculpture and put them in storage for safe keeping.

The largest part of the "drooling monster" sculpture (as Rockwell described it) is now back on display here at Township Park. The other parts of what was once this fountain are on display at the Plymouth Community Arts Council offices on Sheldon Rd.



The Drooling Monster (shown above left) was a fountain that stood for only a few years before it toppled to the ground.

Site of the Rockwell sculptures under construction (black and white photo left).

For more information, visit http://www.plymouthtwp.org/community/historic_district_commission/index.php



Plymouth Township logo

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Historic District
Commission**

Plymouth Community Arts Council logo