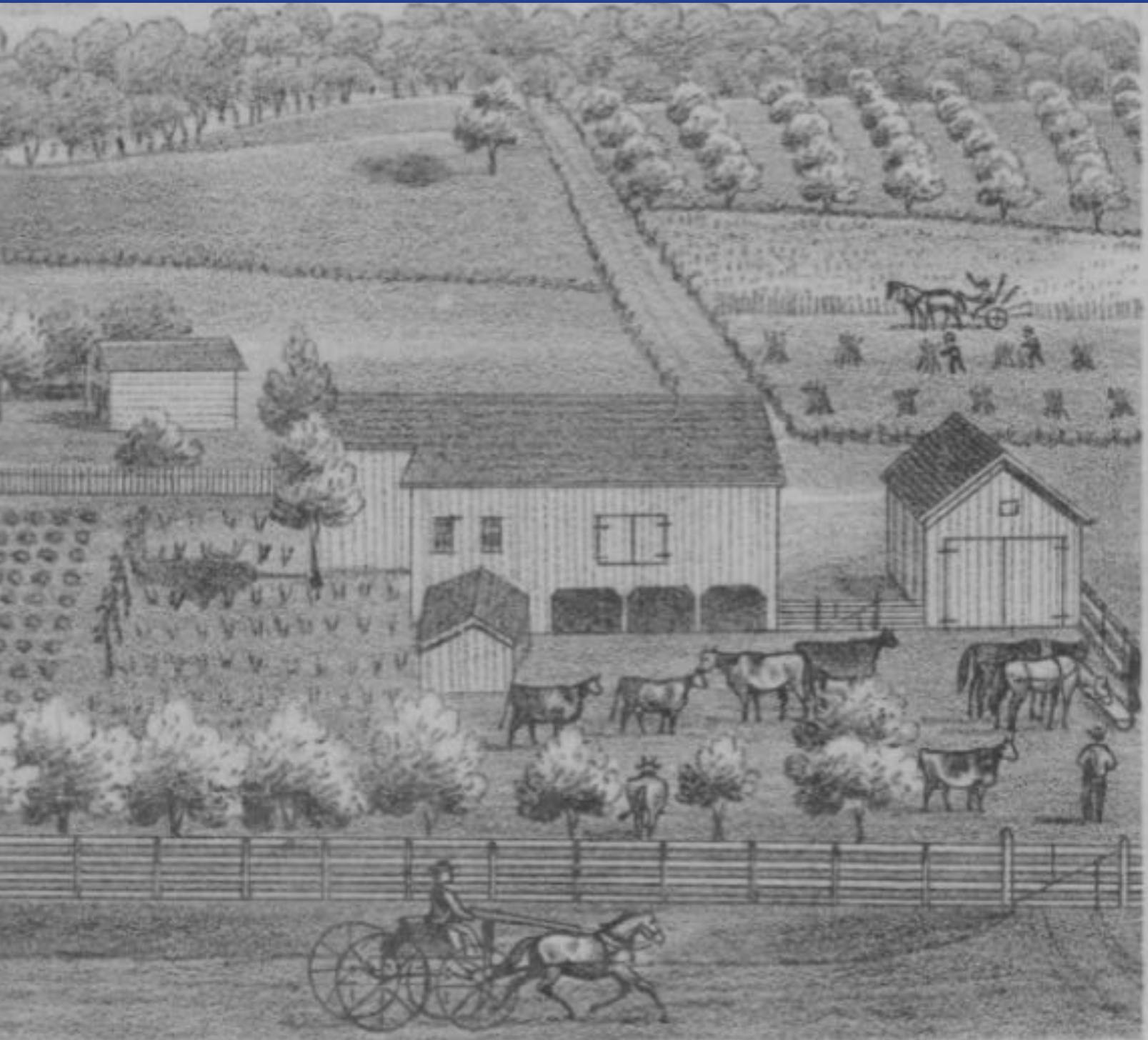


Historic Sites
of Plymouth Township



EN ESQ., PLYMOUTH TP., WAYNE CO., MICH.



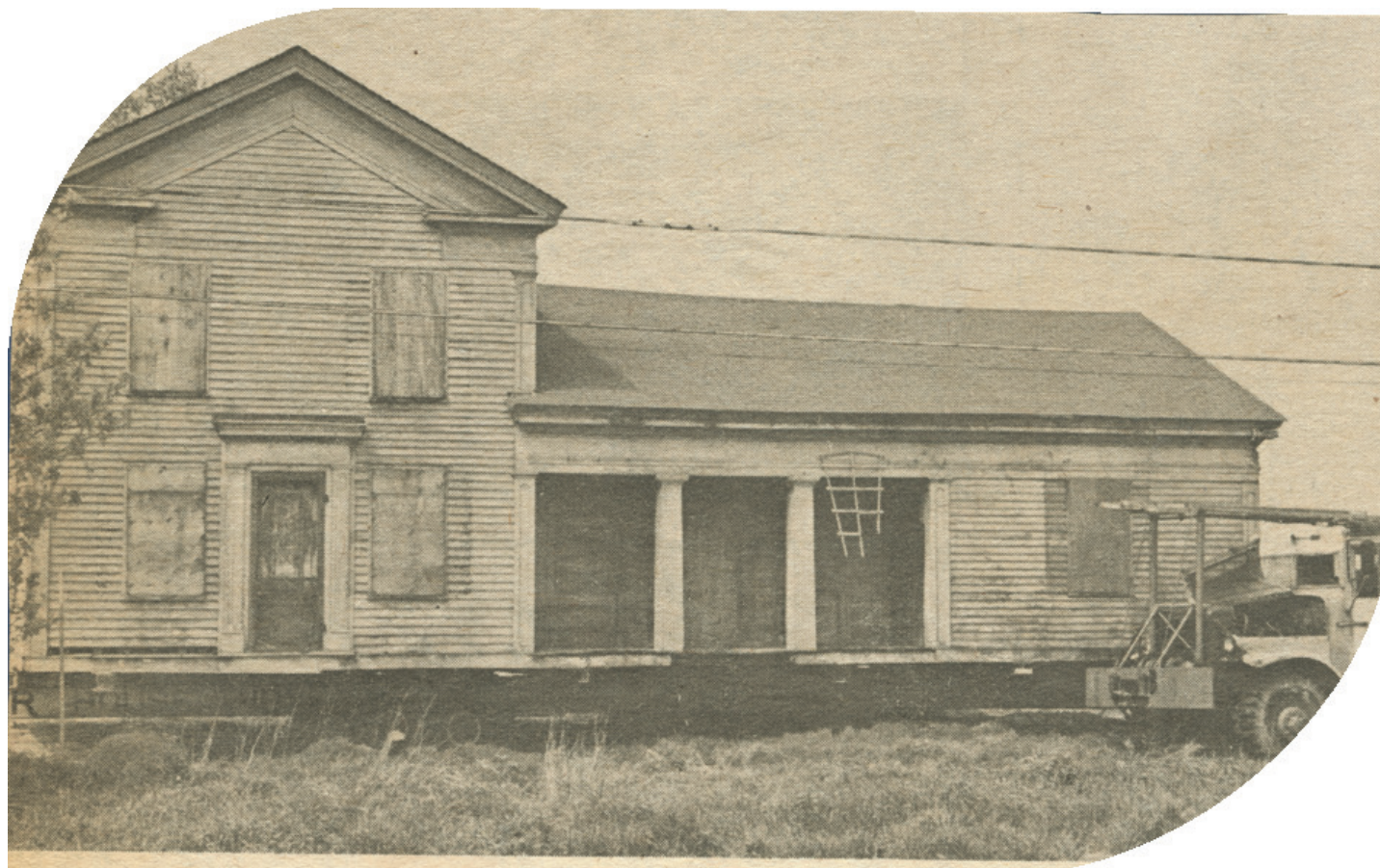
The people of Plymouth Township have the privilege of enjoying a rich heritage with deep roots.

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

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. By 1825, enough people made up a small settlement. Early village meetings were held in Tibbits’s barn, which still exists – a landmark of grassroots democracy (see item K. on page 10).

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



The Moses Allen House (depicted on the back cover of this publication, from the 1876 Atlas of Wayne County Michigan) was saved when Township Park was created from the Allen Farm, and still stands today (see item M., page 11, Township Park for more information).



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.

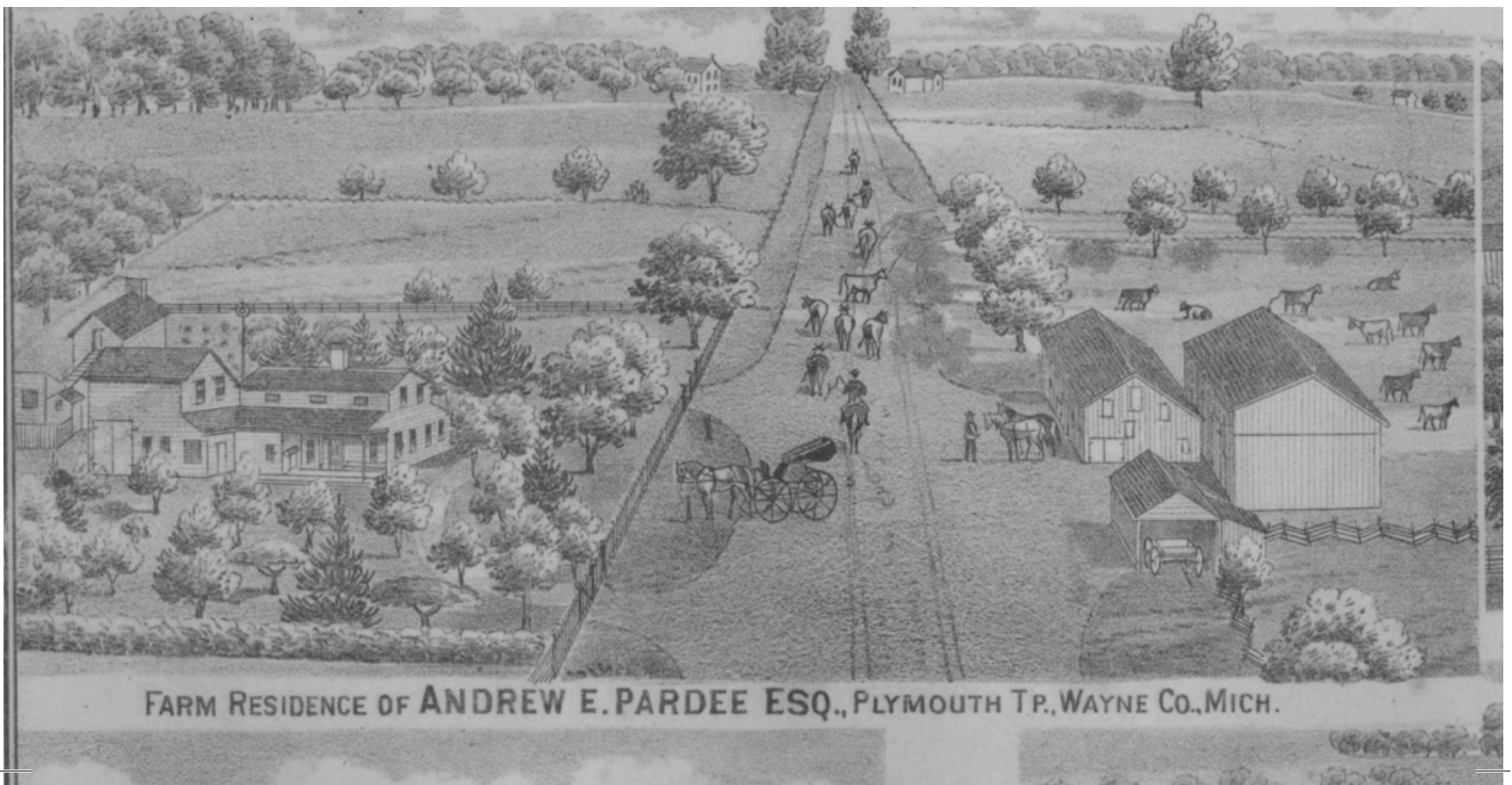
The Plymouth District Library at 223 S. Main in the city is a source for local history, including

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.

From the 1876 Atlas of Wayne County, the farm of Andrew E. Pardee was located in what is today known as the "Lake Pointe" area of Plymouth, just east, across the lake from Phoenix Mill.



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 a Motor Cities National Heritage site.

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

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

For more information, please visit the Township’s website www.plymouthtwp.org

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

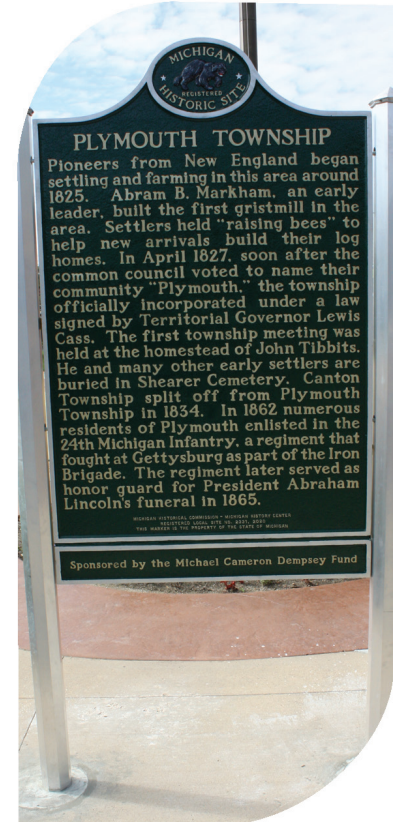
The mission of the Plymouth Township Historic District Commission is:

- 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.

A. Township Hall

9955 N. Haggerty Rd

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.



Above: the Farwell house in 2021.

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.



*Above: the Burroughs building today.
Right: historic photo of the Burroughs building courtesy of the Plymouth Historical Museum.*



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 Drive

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).



*Above:
Gunsolly Mills
in Greenfield
Village today.
Left: Gunsolly
Mills in its*

*original location, courtesy of the
Plymouth Historical Museum.*

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.



Above left: Phoenix Mill 1936. Above right: Phoenix Mill as it stands today, restored, repurposed and thriving. Bottom right: Phoenix Mill's female workforce June of 1923. Both historic photos used with permission from the Collections of the Henry Ford.





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. Mosaic and stained glass works at this historic building were created by artist Andrew Magila. In 2000, the main buildings were repurposed into an inn with culinary, hotel, corporate, special event, and conference uses. A golf course is also part of the facility.



Top: St. John's Inn today. Above: historic photo of St. John's courtesy of the Plymouth Historical Museum.

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 burial ground. In addition to early settlers, the cemetery became the site for interment of 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 westward and began as a Native American foot path.



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."



Photo of the Carl Pursell home courtesy of Bake Realty.

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 (see item I. on the previous page).

Left: the Tibbitts barn in 1983. Photo courtesy of the Plymouth Historical Museum.



L. Peacock House *

47420 W. Ann Arbor Trail

Built in 1928, this Cotswold, or fairytale style home is roofed with cedar shakes and has walls of stone masonry. The informal name of the house was 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 established in 1829 with a house constructed by Moses Allen in 1842 (see a photo of the house on the inside front cover), 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 campus on Sheldon Rd. 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 1941, Dr. Ralph Pino, a retired eye surgeon, acquired the acreage that now forms the subdivision of Colony Farms to establish agricultural pursuits that included weaving, raising live stock and farming.

The colony included a group of communal people who worked the farm. Dr. Pino's aim was to "create a stability, a security and a system whereby one can be useful and beneficially employed no matter what his age might be." according to an article in the Plymouth Mail dated May 26, 1949. One of the original barns – preserved and painted a classic red – can be seen today 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 original milk house is located on the adjacent Bradford Court.



Above top: the barn at Colony Farms today. Black and white photo: historic photo of the Plymouth Symphony Orchestra (now Michigan Philharmonic) playing a concert at Colony Farms, courtesy of the Plymouth Historical Museum.

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.



Above: the Burd house today. Left: historic photo of the Burd House.

Q. McClumpha/Hulce 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 Hulce after being acquired by his parents in 1953. Joanne (Winkleman) Hulce 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.



Above: the McClumpha house today. Left: historic photo courtesy of the Plymouth Historical Museum.



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.

Historic photo of Graye's Greenhouse courtesy of Graye's Greenhouse. Note that Lilley Road is dirt in the lower left hand corner of this photo.

Plymouth Township Historic District Commission

The Plymouth Township Historic District 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.

Structures in Plymouth Township that are at least 50 years old or older and that have architectural or historical significance are eligible to be a historic district. A single building or structure can qualify to become a historic district.

Any property owner in Plymouth Township who wishes to nominate their structure(s) as an historic district should fill out a Historic Designation application and submit it to the Plymouth Township Community Development Department at planning@plymouthtwp.org. There is no fee to apply.

As historic preservation is a public purpose, the Commission is charged with the following:

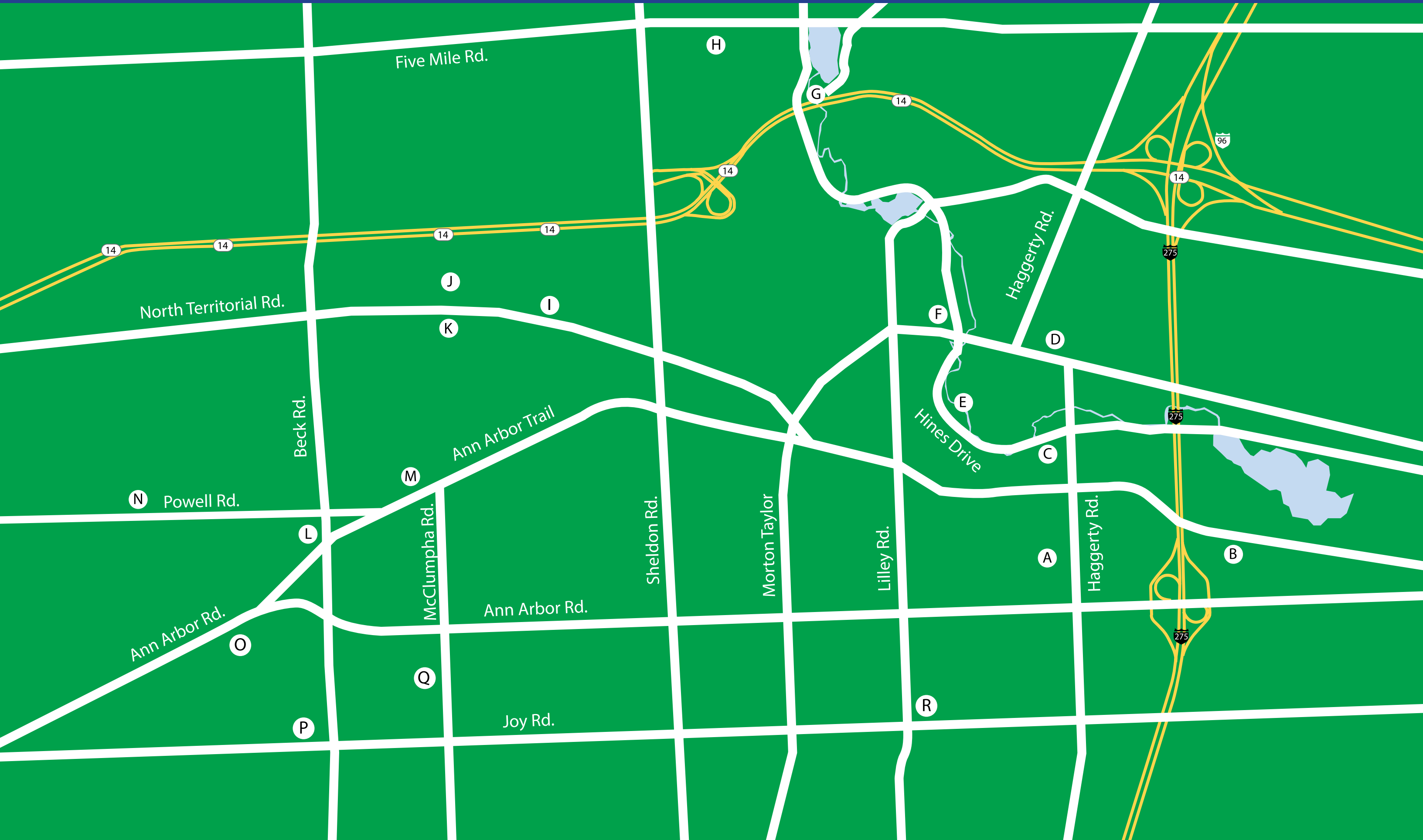
- Safeguard the heritage of Plymouth Township by preserving districts which reflect elements of its history, architecture, archeology, engineering or culture;
- Stabilize and improve property values in each district and the surrounding areas;
- Foster civic beauty;
- Strengthen the local economy; and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

Using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation as a guideline, the Historic District Commissioners are charged with reviewing and approving plans to exterior alterations and additions to resources that have been recognized with historic district status.

It is also the responsibility of the Historic District Commission to educate the community about the historic locations and structure that exist within the Charter Township of Plymouth. The Commissioners will accomplish this task by producing educational literature and recognizing historic locations and structures through the creation of historic markers and signage in the Township.

Plymouth Township
Historic District
Commission

Historic locations around Plymouth Township





presented by  Plymouth Township
Historic District
Commission

Updated 2/2024

FARM RESIDENCE OF D.D. ALLI