

# *NORTHVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT*



Out of Northville's Past ...  
Part of Northville's Future

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Honorable Mayor and  
Members of Council

Gentlemen:

The Northville Historic District Study Committee takes pleasure in transmitting its report identifying for the citizens of this area, properties worthy of preservation for their historic and architectural value. The properties listed and the historic district outlined herein were entered in the National Register of Historic Places on July 31, 1972. Other than those properties listed, there are many equally worthy. Time did not permit research on each and every building in the district. We hope at a later date to be able to make a complete inventory of all properties within the boundaries of the district.

During the time we were involved in this study, we were impressed with the cooperation of the property owners and their interest in what we were trying to accomplish. This is true in the commercial district as well as in the residential area.

The Committee's deliberations lead them to believe that Northville should make an effort to implement an historic preservation program to encourage property owners to preserve the old and mellow flavor of this city.

The Committee is appreciative of the opportunity given them to serve and in turn, appreciates the assistance of those not on the committee, who aided in the preparation of this report.

Respectfully submitted,

John C. Burkman, Chairman  
Northville Historic District Study Committee

STATE OF MICHIGAN



WILLIAM G. MILLIKEN, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

STEVENS T. MASON BUILDING, LANSING, MICHIGAN 48926

RALPH A. MAC MULLAN, Director

August 23, 1972

Mr. John Burkman, President  
Northville Historical Society  
P. O. Box 128  
Northville, Michigan 48167

Dear Mr. Burkman:

It is a pleasure to join with the Michigan Historic Preservation Advisory Council to inform you that the Northville Historic District was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on July 31, 1972.

The State of Michigan is very proud of the fact that the property is qualified for this designation. The National Register records the story of a Nation, and is a list of distinction identifying those properties by which present and future generations can sense the heartbeat of the United States.

If you have further inquiries about this designation, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Samuel A. Milstein".

Samuel A. Milstein  
Deputy Director - Recreation  
and  
State Liaison Officer for  
Historic Preservation

MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

A. Malcom Allen - Mayor

David M. Biery

Kenneth R. Rathert

Paul F. Folino

Paul R. Vernon

Frank G. Ollendorff - City Manager

Northville Historic District Study Committee

Mrs. Roland Bonamici

Elmer E. Schubert

Mrs. John C. Burkman

Mrs. Elmer E. Schubert

Mrs. William H. Cansfield

Mrs. John H. Teeter

Donald E. Fee

John C. Burkman - Chairman

This committee is grateful to the Northville Historical Society for their support and financial assistance in the preparation of this document.

## OBJECTIVES AND LEGAL BACKGROUND

### THE PROGRAM:

The National Register of Historic Places records the story of a nation. It is a roll call of the tangible reminders of the history of the United States. It is a list of distinction identifying for the people those properties worthy of preservation for their historic value.

Congress called for such a list in the Historic Sites Act of 1935 and the Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The 1966 Act said:

The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to expand and maintain a national register of districts sites, buildings, structures and objects significant in American history, architecture, archeology and culture, hereinafter referred to as the National Register-----

After the 1966 Act became law, the Secretary of the Interior charged the various States with the responsibility of making an inventory of their State.

On August 3, 1970, Michigan's Governor William G. Milliken signed into law Public Acts No. 169, thereby giving our state's municipalities new and needed powers to promote and ensure historical preservation within their boundaries. To accomplish this objective, the statute provides a means for identifying historically significant structures, sites, and landmarks within the municipality, and sets forth the legal mechanism and procedure by which municipality can help preserve them. Implicit through out is a faith in the ability of the local units of government and their citizens to do the job and a belief that the rights and interest of affected property owners should be recognized and protected.

The basic step in the process was taken by the Northville City Council in August of 1972, when, after considering recommendations from the Northville Historical Society, it unanimously created the Northville Historic District Study Committee under Section 3 of Act No. 169.

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A copy of Act No. 169 is attached as Appendix B

## Purpose of Northville's Historic Area

"Never before in our history have the American people been so concerned, articulate, and moved to take action about the plight of our cities. An never before have we been so conscious of the need for discovering and preserving tangible reminders of the past."

Robert C. Weaver, Former  
Secretary, U.S. Department  
of Housing and Urban  
Development (HUD)

As more and more residents of the United States are able to travel in Europe, drawn by the quaintness of the cities there, they have a new viewpoint concerning what has been happening in their native land. Americans have always been in favor of progress - more and more highways and parking areas - no matter what was destroyed to make way for them, with the result that evidences of our historic background are largely disappearing.

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 reflects the federal government's efforts at protecting significant areas, while at state level the Department of Natural Resources has obtained legislation enabling the creation of historic districts by interested municipalities.

Long before this Act of 1966, New Orleans and Charleston, S.C., had realized the importance of guarding the "old towns" that were their greatest asset and would draw tourists. Later the same trend has been observed in Philadelphia, St. Louis, Chicago, and even Detroit, to list a few examples.

The movement is not confined to large cities, Near us Franklin Village, Ann Arbor, Grand Rapids, and Lansing have taken similar action. Here in Michigan we cannot boast of areas like the New Orleans French Quarter, which certainly would have been cleared in our state - streets too narrow for Detroit's main product - but we do have some structures that mark steps in the progress of our history.

- Purpose -

Except for Detroit, a post established almost two hundred years earlier, the settlements in southern Michigan came with the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825. The first to take up land came largely from the lake country of central New York state and used the Canal route.

In Northville the first dwellings of this period are gone. The Dunlap home, much changed, is now the American Legion Hall. The other pioneer farm house, that of Daniel Cady, is the apartment house on the east side of Center Street. The Gregory-Iapham residence, once used as the city hall and certainly the town's most elegant home in its later years, is replaced by our new City Hall. Two other unusual early buildings were the Wilcox home, now the site of the post office, and the Predmore house, built into a hill, now demolished to make way for an extension of the new Presbyterian Church.

The architectural style of the period up to the Civil War was Greek Revival, and the Historical Society is fortunate to have been able to save two examples at the Mill Race Historical Village - the Library and the house that stood where Griswold Road is being extended through Main Street to accommodate race track traffic.

The buildings we are trying to protect in the proposed historic district are largely of the Victorian period, not great architecturally but "carpenter Gothic" typical of that time. Others are much later but represent changes in taste common throughout the United States. However, since they all mark steps in the history of Northville, a typical country town, we hope they can be preserved.