

City of Detroit
CITY COUNCIL

HISTORIC DESIGNATION ADVISORY BOARD

218 Coleman A. Young Municipal Center, Detroit, Michigan 48226

Phone: (313) 224-3487 Fax: (313) 224-4336

e-mail: historic@detroitmi.gov



Final Report
Proposed Fort Wayne Historic District
March 10, 2016



Cover photos: Officer's Row in 2012, Michigan State Historic Preservation Office; men in Civil War uniforms raise the flag in 1979, Wayne State University Virtual Motor City.

OVERVIEW

By a resolution dated November 25, 2014, the Detroit City Council charged the Historic Designation Advisory Board, a study committee, with the official study of the proposed Fort Wayne Historic District in accordance with the procedures and evaluation criteria described in Chapter 25 of the 1984 Detroit City Code and the Michigan Local Historic Districts Act.

As the site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971, the historic significance of Fort Wayne is previously documented in an associated National Register nomination form; applicable areas of significance are identified as “Aboriginal (historic)” “Engineering,” and “Military.” More recent conditions are described in detail in the 2003 *Historic Fort Wayne Master Plan*, produced by SmithGroup, and elaborated upon in a 2008 *Program of Preservation and Utilization*, a document prepared by the City of Detroit Recreation Department and based largely on the *Master Plan*.

A synthesis of the information contained in these and other sources, this report finds that Fort Wayne retains “integrity,” as defined by the National Register Bulletin *How To Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, and continues to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A, B, C, and D, as well as the evaluation criteria for local historic districts recognized by the Historic Designation Advisory Board.

This report also identifies additional areas of significance—Architecture, Archaeology¹, Entertainment/Recreation, Ethnic Heritage, and Social History—and applies the evaluation criteria to provide a list of contributing and noncontributing buildings as required by the Michigan Local Historic Districts Act.

BOUNDARIES

The boundaries of the proposed district are as follows:

On the north, the centerline of Jefferson Avenue;
On the south, the Detroit River harbor line;
On the east and west, the boundaries, as extended, of all that part of PCS 32 and 268 lying south of Jefferson Avenue and occupied by Fort Wayne.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries of the proposed Fort Wayne Historic District include the entire historic extent of the facility—bounded by the former Revere Copper and Brass plant on the east and the Detroit Edison property on the west, between Jefferson Avenue and the Detroit River.

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

c. 1100–1971

¹ Including prehistoric, historic-aboriginal, and historic-non-aboriginal sub-areas. “Aboriginal” is no longer used by the National Register as a standalone Area of Significance.

The period of significance begins with the earliest known Native American occupation of the site. It concludes in 1971, when the buildings of Officers Row and NCO Row and transitioned from military control to local ownership under the federal Historic Surplus Property Program, the remaining residents displaced by the city's 1967 civil disturbance moved out of the facility, and the Detroit Historical Museum commenced several demolitions and alterations to the buildings and landscape.

HISTORY

Construction of Fort Wayne began in 1842 under concerns of an invasion from British-controlled Upper Canada. It was named after Brigadier General "Mad" Anthony Wayne, who served in the U.S. Army during the Revolutionary War and the Northwest Indian War, and strategically located on a gentle bluff overlooking the narrowest part of the Detroit River. The significance of the site, however, predates U.S. occupation of the area, and reflects the history and influence of prehistoric, Potawatomi, French, British, and other cultures which settled in the area now known as southwest Detroit.

Prehistory and Euro-American Settlement

Significantly, a single burial mound, still in existence at Fort Wayne today, stands as the only visible remnant of Late Woodland cultures which occupied the region into the fifteenth century. These people constructed numerous mounds and other earthworks throughout the area, including a chain of four mounds—known by archaeologists as the "Springwells Group"—along the Detroit River.² One of the Springwells mounds, depicted in an early topographic survey, sat with the present-day footprint of the star fort and was demolished during the fort's construction; looting, erosion, agriculture, and construction activity also destroyed the other two Springwells mounds—one adjacent to the Rouge River and one east of the Fort Wayne site. Other mounds throughout southeast Michigan have suffered similar fates.³

The mound at Fort Wayne, though significantly disturbed,⁴ remains intact. Study of the mound by archaeologists provided information pertaining to Late Woodland material culture, including the discovery of a type of pottery described as "Wayne Ware,"⁵ and the site retains great cultural significance to several Native American communities, including the All Nations Veterans Council and other organizations from around Michigan. That the mound remains is indeed remarkable, and may reflect a conscious policy on the part of U.S. forces at Fort Wayne.⁶

At the time of Euro-American settlement, Potawatomi and Ojibwe villages were dispersed throughout the area now known as southeast Michigan⁷, and additional villages were soon established along the river, likely to take advantage of opportunities for commerce with French and, later, British traders.⁸ The present-day site of Fort Wayne—known by English-speaking settlers as Springwells (in some accounts, Spring Wells or Spring Well), and by the French as *Belle Fontaine*, due to the elevated, sandy

2 John R. Halsey, *The Springwells Mound Group* (in John R. Fitting et al., *Contributions to Michigan Archaeology*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968), 79.

3 Wilbert B. Hinsdale, *Archaeological Atlas of the State of Michigan* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1931).

4 See "Description" for a summary of the current condition of the mound.

5 Halsey, 124–127.

6 Lieutenant Franklin Lamb, quartermaster Fort Wayne, was censured by the War Department in 1921 for removing several items of pottery from the mound. "Pact Forbids Delving into Indian Mound," *Detroit Free Press*, March 19, 1921, 1.

7 Helen Hornbeck Tanner, et al., *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 102.

8 Brian Leigh Dunnigan, *Frontier Metropolis*, 12.

soil which produced numerous natural springs—would have provided an excellent village site.⁹ Although the precise location of neither the springs, nor the villages, are known, a 1763 map depicts the village as located atop a prominent hill at Springwells, apparently the Fort Wayne site; the likelihood that archaeological resources pertaining to these settlements exists, especially beneath the present-day parade ground and athletic fields, is high.¹⁰

The earliest depiction of the site is shown on a map from 1749, which shows “*Ecores de Sable*”—sandy bluffs—at a point downstream from the town of Detroit.¹¹ Although the bluffs seem to have since been diminished in size by the construction of the fort and surrounding development, they were once a prominent feature: “an immense hill of yellow sand, that always looked, from the city, like a yellow patch on the landscape.”¹²

The site was owned by John Askin, a prominent Irish Canadian fur trader who served as justice of the peace in Detroit, until the city was ceded to the United States¹³ by the 1796 Jay Treaty. Askin operated a windmill and racetrack where the fort is now located. Although the land was not suitable for farming, Askin was a slave owner, raising the possibility that African slave labor may have contributed to the development of the site.¹⁴

In July of 1812 the strategic location played a role in one of the earliest battles of the War of 1812, when Michigan militia used artillery stationed atop the sandy bluffs to bombard the town of Sandwich, located across the river in Canada. Two months later, British and American Indian forces commanded by General Isaac Brock crossed the river, landing at Springwells to begin a 13-month occupation of Detroit. The war would formally conclude with the Treaty of Spring Wells, a peace agreement signed at or near the future Fort Wayne site on September 8, 1815, by William Henry Harrison (representing the United States) and the leaders of eight American Indian bands who had fought against the United States in the war (the United States and Great Britain had previously ended hostilities with the Treaty of Ghent, ratified earlier that year). The surrounding area was incorporated as Springwells Township in 1818. Springwells also saw use as a meeting place for territorial militia during the 1832 Black Hawk War.¹⁵

Establishment of Fort Wayne

Fort Shelby (also known as Fort Detroit, built as British Fort Lernoult) in Detroit had been dismantled in 1827, as it was poorly situated and had fallen into disrepair. Military engineers, beginning with the British lieutenant John Montrossor in 1763, had long recognized the bluffs at Springwells to be a preferred location for a fort. As early as 1815, Brigadier General Duncan MacArthur suggested “at Spring Well, there is a natural position which completely commands the surrounding country and river for several miles.” James Monroe, then Secretary of War, ordered an investigation. In response, Major Charles Gratiot found the site to be ideal, “within shot range of Sandwich.”¹⁶

9 Thomas Killion (archaeologist, Wayne State University Department of Anthropology), in discussion with the author, April 2015.

10 Killion. See “Description” for discussion of archaeological resources.

11 Dunnigan, 43. This map, however, depicts the *Village de Pouteoutamis* as located somewhat further east.

12 Friend Palmer, *Detroit in 1827*, cited in Brian Leigh Dunnigan, *Frontier Metropolis: Picturing Early Detroit, 1701–1838* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001), 146.

13 Detroit was founded by French settlers in 1701, and control was ceded to Great Britain at the conclusion of the Seven Years’ War in 1763.

14 James Conway, in discussion with the author, March 2015.

15 James Conway and David F. Jamroz, *Detroit’s Historic Fort Wayne* (Mount Pleasant: Arcadia Publishing, 2007), 8.

16 *Ibid.*, 146.

Construction of a new fort became warranted as peace between the United States and Great Britain was threatened during the Rebellions of 1837 in Upper Canada. Although the United States attempted to remain neutral in the conflict, many American citizens near the border were assisting the Canadian revolution, prompting fears of a British counterattack. In 1841, Congress authorized the construction of Fort Wayne as part of a series of defenses along the U.S.-Canadian border.¹⁷

Construction of the star fort at Springwells began in September 1843, when a stone-filled wharf was built on the river, and concluded in 1851, supervised by Montgomery C. Meigs, a U.S. Army civil engineer and architect. Meigs was also responsible for Fort Mifflin, Fort Delaware, Fort Montgomery in New York, and the Washington Aqueduct, including the Union Arch Bridge, and was construction manager for part of the United States Capitol. During the Civil War, he served as Quartermaster General for the U.S. Army. Meigs' design was influenced by the doctrines of French engineer Sébastien de Vauban and American military scholar Dennis Hart Mahan. Limestone for the fort and barracks was quarried at Kelley's Island, on the Ohio side of Lake Erie, and the latter structure was finished in 1848.¹⁸ The three-and-a-half story, twenty-bay building remains one of the most outstanding examples of Adam-style architecture outside of the Northeastern United States.¹⁹

Fort Wayne is significant as one of the few remaining examples of a star fort in the United States. Fewer still were built by U.S. forces; these include Fort Mifflin in Pennsylvania, Fort Delaware in Delaware, and Fort Ontario in New York.

The newly constructed Fort Wayne sat unused for some time after it was built. The possibility of Underground Railroad use of the site during this period is a subject that warrants further research. Certainly, the location would have been favorable—completed shortly after the passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, Fort Wayne provided an expanse of vacant land directly across from the town of Sandwich, an Underground Railroad destination and then (as well as today) an African Canadian population and cultural center. The site provided a large dock, and the entire complex was guarded only by a single, civilian watchman.²⁰

Civil War Era

The fort became an active military installation only in 1861, at the dawn of the Civil War. It served primarily as a “camp of instruction” for organizing and training recruits, first the 1st Michigan Infantry Regiment in April of that year, and later the 3rd U.S. Cavalry in December, followed by the 19th U.S. Infantry, who remained through the end of the war. The masonry wall surrounding the star fort was added in 1863²¹, partially due to fears of a Confederate attack through Canada.²² During the war, the fort quickly went from vacant structure to a focus of activity of the city. According to William Phenix, “The arrival of volunteer regiments, musters, martial exercises and picnic excursions from Detroit gave the fort a new prominence in the social affairs of the city.”²³ Exceeding the capacity of the fort, men

17 Fort Shelby (built by British forces in 1778 as Fort Lernoult), which had twice unsuccessfully defended the city during the War of 1812, was commonly understood by both British and American military analysts to be in a poor location. It was allowed to fall into disrepair and finally given to ownership by the city, who demolished the structure in 1827. Brian Leigh Dunnigan, *Frontier Metropolis*, 56, 105, 146.

18 William Phenix, “Never a Shot in Anger,” *Michigan History Magazine*, 20.

19 Conway and Jamroz, 3.

20 James Conway, in discussion with the author, March 2015.

21 City of Detroit Recreation Department, *Historic Fort Wayne Program of Preservation and Utilization*, 4.

22 Conway and Jamroz, 7.

23 William Phenix, “Never a Shot in Anger,” *Michigan History Magazine*, 20.

were housed in temporary shelters and in steamboats on the river.

Though the fort was designed to bear defensive weaponry, this was never installed. After the war, from 1866 through 1868, the fort's demilune was improved, being brought to its present configuration, and officers quarters, which had burned in 1850, were demolished. By this time, the fort had become "one of the finest examples of vertical-walled masonry fortifications in America."²⁴ Not long after, however, the design of the fort was rendered obsolete by advances in military technology, including rifled artillery, and the threat of war in the Great Lakes region rapidly subsided.

Garrison and Logistics Center

Although Fort Wayne would no longer play a defensive role, it would continued to serve as an infantry garrison and, later, a supply and logistics center.

To fulfill these new functions, the fort complex continued to expand, with new buildings constructed to the west of the star fort, including a series of homes for officers that were built in the 1880s. During the 1889 Spanish–American War, troops from the facility were deployed to Cuba and the Philippines. After the war, an increase in American military strength corresponded with the construction of additional residential, administration, and headquarters buildings at the fort in the early 1900s.

In the twentieth century, Fort Wayne provided construction troops during World War I, including 1,300 African American soldiers (the U.S. Army remained segregated until after World War II) of the Signal Corps. Fort Wayne also began its role as a motor vehicle supply center during this time. After the war, the fort briefly served as a detention center during the Red Scare of 1920–1921.²⁵

The Great Depression and the Works Progress Administration

During the Great Depression, the site housed both Civilian Conservation Corps workers as well as people who had become homeless. The fort continued to expand, with a row of duplexes for non-commissioned officers ("NCO Row") constructed in 1938.

The federal Works Progress Administration (WPA) invested significant resources into improvements at Fort Wayne. By 1938, the WPA had already spent over \$800,000 on landscaping projects and on the rehabilitation of many buildings at the site, including the scarp wall of the star fort, and updating of plumbing and electricity.²⁶ An additional million-dollar allocation funded the construction of a new gymnasium, theater, hospital, and barracks. It also provided for extensive tree planting, resurfacing of roads, and additional rehabilitation work of the officers quarters.²⁷ The role of Civilian Conservation Corps workers in landscape improvements warrants further research.

These projects employed a total workforce of 3,000 men. Perhaps the most visible legacy of WPA work at Fort Wayne is the brick cladding of wood Officers Row buildings, including buildings 105–108, 111, and 112, and of the Officer's Club. A 1903 Service Club was extensively remodeled to provide additional recreational facilities for enlisted soldiers, and the theater soon began showing popular movies to entertain soldiers and civilian employees; it also held facilities for stage plays.²⁸

²⁴ Phenix, 21.

²⁵ Phenix, 26.

²⁶ Conway and Jamroz, 110.

²⁷ "Fort Wayne Gets Cool Million," *Detroit News*, August 3, 1938, 1.

²⁸ Conway and Jamroz, 88.

The WPA's Federal Art Project hired muralists including Joe Sparks²⁹ and Frank Cassara.³⁰ The location of these murals is not known, and paint exposures conducted in several buildings by City of Detroit staff suggest that they have likely not survived.³¹ The WPA's Library Project also established a library on subjects pertaining to national defense at Fort Wayne.³²

Arsenal of Democracy

The entry of the United States into World War II was the dawn of what was arguably the fort's most important military period,³³ when it served as a supply center for war materiel, especially vehicles, produced in the Detroit area." The fort officially ceased serving as an infantry garrison in 1940³⁴, and within a year, the number of civilian employees there expanded from one to 850 as the facility transitioned to its new role.³⁵ The Fort Wayne Ordinance Depot prepared vehicles and vehicle parts for shipment from the Port of Detroit, helping the city to earn the nickname "Arsenal of Democracy."

Management of the site was transferred to the Ordinance Department in 1942 and Fort Wayne was designated a "principal motor supply depot."³⁶ During this time, infantry barracks were converted to house about two thousand civilian employees, as vehicles and parts were processed at Fort Wayne before being shipped overseas, in a massive operation headquartered at the fort which also incorporated sites at the State Fairgrounds and the Port of Detroit.³⁷ Many more buildings were constructed to support the needs of this operation (few of which, however, remain).

New buildings included a massive reinforced concrete warehouse on the parade ground, as well as numerous wooden outbuildings, most of which were temporary structures that have since been demolished. Three smaller, single-story concrete warehouse buildings (2A, 2B, and 2C), at the southern corner of the facility along the river, remain. Existing structures were also modified during this time, most notably the entrance to the fort, which was enlarged to accommodate vehicle entry (see description section).

Late in the war, the fort served as a training facility for the Red Ball Express, a predominately African American mobile force that supplied the advancing allied front in Europe in 1944. The fort also housed Italian prisoners of war captured in North Africa, many of whom immigrated directly to the United States after the war and settled in Detroit.³⁸

The Postwar Era

Ownership of a portion of the fort was given to the city of Detroit in 1949, beginning a gradual decommissioning process, with additional property transferred by 1956. Although the Detroit Historical Museum began to operate much of the fort as a museum, and the U.S. Department of Labor established

29 Elizabeth Clemens, *The Works Progress Administration in Detroit* (Charleston: Arcadia Press, 2008), 106.

30 Conway and Jamroz, 111.

31 Conway.

32 Clemens, 122.

33 City of Detroit Recreation Department, *Historic Fort Wayne Program of Preservation and Utilization*, 6.

34 Phenix, 26.

35 Conway and Jamroz, 93.

36 *Ibid.*, 91.

37 *Ibid.*, 8.

38 *Ibid.*, 100.

a Job Corps training center at the site, some of the buildings remained in military use.³⁹ The site served as a military induction center during the Korean and Vietnam wars, and as a military police post.⁴⁰ Cold War-era antiaircraft guns were upgraded in 1957 to Nike-Ajax, and again in 1959 to Nike-Hercules, missiles, provided by the Army Air Defense Command.⁴¹ Additional property was transferred in 1971 in accordance with the federal Historic Surplus Property Program, leaving only buildings 302, 303, 311, 312, 313, 314, and an Army Corps of Engineers boat yard along the river at the eastern end of the site under federal military control.

With most of the historic facility now under city ownership, museum and interpretive functions were expanded, though some of the buildings continued to serve other uses, even providing temporary housing for people displaced by the city's 1967 civil disturbance, some of whom continued to reside there until 1971.⁴² By the early 1970s, the Detroit Historical Museum had intended to demolish most of the twentieth-century buildings surrounding the original star fort, with the intent of "opening [the earthworks] up to view and recreating the landscape as it was when the fort was built."⁴³ This plan was never fully carried out, although some significant changes to the site were made at this time—most notably, the demolition of the largest World War II warehouse buildings and the creation of a large earthen berm separating the three remaining warehouse buildings from the parade ground. Also, barracks from the induction center era were demolished, creating space for the present-day visitors parking lot.

The Detroit Historical Museum operated the facility for some time, and kept a number of buildings open to the public with staffed, interpretive exhibits. The most recent ownership transfers occurred in 1976, when buildings to the north and east of the star fort were given over to local ownership under the federal Lands to Parks program.

The Detroit Historical Museum ceased interpretive activities at Fort Wayne in the early 1990s, closing all buildings except for Warehouse 2C, which continues to be used for collections storage and is not open to the public. After a period of infrequent use, the fort was reopened by the city's Recreation Department in 2001; it now a wide variety of events, including athletic events and historic reenactments. Fort Wayne is also the site of the National Museum of the Tuskegee Airmen, housed in Building 208, and the Woodlands Indian Museum (presently closed) in Building 117. The site is operated and maintained by the Recreation Department, with volunteer support from Friends of Fort Wayne, the Historic Fort Wayne Coalition, and the All Nations Veterans Council.

DESCRIPTION

Fort Wayne is located in southwest Detroit, about three miles downriver from the central business district, on a gentle slope overlooking the Detroit River and just north of the confluence between the Detroit and Rouge rivers. The fort sits just south of Jefferson Avenue, at the foot of Livernois Avenue (formerly Artillery Avenue). Much of the surrounding riverfront area is devoted to industrial uses; to the north lies the neighborhood of Delray. The fort is situated at the narrowest point on the Detroit River, across from the neighborhood of Sandwich, one of the oldest towns in Ontario, now incorporated as part of the city of Windsor. Although development has altered the surrounding topography, the riverbank was formerly defined by a series of bluffs and number of natural springs,

³⁹ City of Detroit Recreation Department, *Historic Fort Wayne Program of Preservation and Utilization*, 6.

⁴⁰ Phenix, 28.

⁴¹ Conway and Jamroz, 103.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 113.

⁴³ National Register of Historic Places, Fort Wayne, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan, National Register #71000425.

giving the area the name of Springwells, incorporated as Springwells Township before the area was annexed by the city of Detroit in 1885 and 1906.

Presently, the site of Fort Wayne occupies 96 acres, 83 of which are managed by the city's Recreation Department; the remainder serve as a boatyard for the Detroit District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The fort is divided roughly in half on a north-south axis by an extension of Livernois Avenue known as Brady Street; to the east sits the original star fort and several large, twentieth-century administrative buildings, as well as the Army Corps of Engineers facilities. The western portion of the site is devoted to detached residential buildings, a large parade ground, several warehouses, and is the location of the burial mound.

Much of the information below is taken from the the 2008 *Program of Preservation and Utilization*, which provides a detailed description of existing conditions and uses.

Burial Mound (c. 1300, excavated and reconstructed around 1944)

Early historic accounts describe a series of four burial mounds along the Detroit River in the vicinity of Springwells. Two of these are depicted on a topographic survey created prior to the construction of Fort Wayne; the locations of the others are unknown. An archaeological excavation conducted in 1944, and subsequent analysis, dated its contents to the Late Woodland period, approximately 1300.

An early description of the mound is provided by Bela Hubbard in 1887, who recalls several decades earlier verify this having observed observing two extant mounds in the vicinity. Referencing the location of a larger mound, likely the one destroyed by the construction of Fort Wayne (described below), Hubbard notes "Several rods below [the larger mound] was a smaller tumulus in a field, then covered with forest. It did not exceed six feet in height, and is still in good preservation."⁴⁴

Excavations of the mound were conducted in 1876 and in 1944; the latter was conducted by the Aboriginal Research Club, an organization of amateur archaeologists, who removed almost all of the human remains and associated artifacts to the University of Michigan.⁴⁵

Although the mound would have been nearly leveled during the excavation, common practice (even for an amateur club)⁴⁶ would have been to replace the original soil, returning the mound to its prior appearance. It is also likely that a few burials and artifacts still remain near the base of the mound.⁴⁷ Thus, although the mound is largely reconstructed, it retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association,⁴⁸ and stands as the only remaining example of the Late Woodlands burial mounds that were once common in the region.⁴⁹

Star Fort, Demilune, and Powder Magazine (1842–1851)

After the burial mound, the oldest structure on the site is the original star fort. Although the fort was completed in 1851, its present configuration is the result of a succession of alterations over the next

44 Halsey, 85.

45 Ibid.

46 Killion.

47 Carl E. Holmquist, *The Fort Wayne Mound*, Detroit: Aboriginal Research Club, 1945.

48 National Register of Historic Places, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, 1997.

49 Halsey, 79.

hundred years, especially during the Civil War and World War II. Although two of the Springwells burial mounds had been situated on the site that would become Fort Wayne, one of them, as shown in early topographic maps of the area, was destroyed when the eastern wall of the fort was constructed.

The square-shaped, four-bastioned star fort was originally constructed with oak revetments and a brick and limestone postern and sally port. A date stone, reading "1845," remains in place beside the sally port. In 1863, during the Civil War, work supervised by Thomas Jefferson Cram reinforced the walls by replacing the oak revetments by a concrete-backed brick scarp that incorporated the original postern and sally port. Army engineer Joseph Totten designed additional elements to be added to the fort, including casemates with rifle galleries and powder magazines for each of the four bastions. Totten also designed gun ports with wrought-iron shutters.

In 1938 access to the star fort was enlarged with an arched entryway to accommodate military vehicles; during World War II the arches were removed to further widen the opening. As the *Program for Preservation and Utilization* provides a detailed description of the evolution of the fort and its current appearance.

The center third of each side wall is set back to form a recess flanked by cannon embrasures. Perimeter walls are topped with cast-in-place concrete caps. At roughly the third points of each side of the fort are casemates, totaling eight for the whole fort. Two of these are accessible by posterns from the inside floor of the fort, and along with the two sally ports, originally provided the only grade-level access to the fort. The other six casemates are accessible via stairways from the tops of the earthen embankments that abut the interior of scarp, and originally had wood and canvas curved roofs.

Cannon emplacements are located at the top of the fort at each star point. Although cannon were never installed, the bases and pivots on which they were to rest still exist. Limestone slabs in iron frames form the breast-height walls over which cannon were to fire. The casemates and access tunnels are clay brick masonry vaulted structures within the embankments and fort walls, and are covered by earth. The embankments are higher than the masonry scarp, and there are trenches in the embankment behind the scarp extending around the perimeter, except where interrupted at eight locations where there is casemate construction below. The two sally ports and posterns are terminated on each end with massive wood doors with hand-wrought iron hardware believed to be original. The current grade-level west entrance to the star fort is not original, having been built by cutting through the wall and interior embankment after the fort ceased to be a defensive installation.

Surrounding the fort is a dry moat formed by the outer masonry scarp and a secondary embankment, the height of which roughly matches the height of the scarp. The embankment was a part of the fort's original passive defenses. The current interruption in the west outer embankment is not original, having been made at the time that the new west entry to the fort was made. The ramped access road on the east of the fort is believed to be original.

The interior spaces of the Star Fort consist of the casemates beneath the inner embankments, two posterns, two sally ports, and the interiors of the two powder magazines. All of these interiors consist of brick masonry walls supporting vaulted brick ceilings. Floors of these spaces are also brick.⁵⁰

On the outer perimeter of the star fort, facing the river, is a V-shaped demilune, designed to house heavy guns that would defend the fort against a naval attack. As described by the *Program for*

Preservation and Utilization:

[The demilune] was designed to be a coastal defensive emplacement with its breast-high limestone walls in iron frames, and cannon pivots and tracks still intact. Within the "V" is another powder magazine intended to serve the demilune. This structure has a brick and stone masonry facade with a wood door facing north. The remainder of the structure extends south and then angles to the southeast into the embankment. The interior ceiling is brick masonry, and the exterior roof consists of rocks set into mortar. It is unclear if this structure ever had a secondary wood framed roof.⁵¹

Another significant structure, set into the walls of the fort, is the powder magazine:

Built with exterior walls constructed of massive limestone blocks, the Powder Magazine is set into the earthen embankment in the southwest corner of the fort. It is surrounded on all sides by a secondary set of massive stone walls extending to the building's eave height, and spaced approximately 4 feet from the building's walls. The secondary wall is interrupted only by an access passage into the magazine. It retains the earthen embankment, and braces the building walls with large limestone blocks located at various points around the perimeter. The structure has a wood entrance door, and a thin brick barrel-vaulted ceiling, with a wood-framed and wood shingled roof.⁵²

The National Register nomination briefly mentions other buildings, formerly located within the walls of the star fort, which no longer exist. They are identified only as "World War II intrusions used today for offices, laboratories, storage, and shops."⁵³

Barracks/"Old Barracks" (Building 507, 1848)

The most prominent structure within the Star Fort, and the largest building at Fort Wayne, is the original Barracks building. Other than the fort itself, it is the oldest and most architecturally significant structure at Fort Wayne.

It is a massive, three-story Adam-style structure, five bays wide with a side gabled roof. Its center bay projects with a front gable. Masonry features brick dentils, cut stone cornices, and originally included built-in gutters. Window sills are limestone; some limestone lintels have been replaced by concrete. Windows are wood double-hung, typically twelve-over twelve. Front entrance doors are nine panel rail and stile doors, with Adam style fan light transom windows, and Roman arches above.

Eight dormers are located on the front roof slope, and ten are located at the rear. Modern aluminum gutters cover masonry cornices.

The building was expanded in 1861, with brick additions built to the rear of the building to house new toilets, and a three-story veranda extending the full length of the building. The veranda is supported by brick vaults and cast iron columns

The *Program for Preservation and Utilization* describes the building's structural features:

The building had a unique structural system with the upper two floors suspended from the roof with metal rods. Cast iron columns supported the lower floors. In 1934 it was reported that the

51 191.

52 192.

53 National Register of Historic Places, Fort Wayne, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan, National Register #71000425.

building was in poor condition due to failure of the roof system. Apparently many of the rods had been cut to provide better access on the upper floors. In 1956 the building was repaired and now appears to be in good structural condition.⁵⁴

A date stone on the exterior of the building reads “1848.”

Officer’s Row (1890–1906)

A line of residential buildings fronting on Gibbs Street, Officer’s Row consists of six duplexes built in 1890 and altered in the 1930s (Buildings 105, 106, 107, 108, 111, and 112), an 1890 Officers’ Club, also modified in the 1930s (building 109), a Commanding Officer’s House (Building 110), which had been altered but has been restored to its 1890 appearance, three duplexes built in 1898 (Buildings 102, 103, and 104), and two larger quarters buildings (114 and the Married Officers’ Quarters, 117) built in 1906.

Buildings 105–108, 111, and 112, two-story wood frame buildings originally clad in wood siding, were covered with brick veneer in the 1930s. The buildings were remodeled to resemble Buildings 216–219 (in NCO Row, described below). They feature prominent mullioned sash windows on the ground floor, and six-over-six windows on the upper story. Both dwelling units share a single hip roof porch with a dividing wall.

The Officers’ Club, originally a two-story residence, was extensively modified in the 1930s, when the building was clad in brick and a two-story rear addition was added.

The Commanding Officer’s House was at one time of similar appearance to the Officers’ Club; however it was subsequently restored to its original appearance, as described by the *Program for Preservation and Utilization*:

The masonry cladding was removed and building was faithfully restored to its original appearance in the 1970s ... it was clad with brick veneer during the 1930s between 1937 and 1939, resulting in a side-gabled Colonial style exterior, with a subordinate off-center perpendicular gable at the east side that formed a side yard ... window openings are rectangular and are supported by steel lintels. The building has five restored brick chimneys. Roof construction is wood framing, and roofing is currently cedar shingles. Eaves feature restored brackets and molding trim. Windows are wood double-hung, typically six-over-six, with some four-over-four. There is a full width front porch on the south elevation and a rear kitchen porch on the north and east elevations.⁵⁵

Buildings 102, 103, and 104 are mostly identical three-story structures that mostly retain their original, simplified Queen Anne appearance. Each features a prominent front center gable, with two wings giving the building a U-shaped plan. Round arched windows on the upper story are set into each gable. Eaves feature crown molding trim, and wood cornices define the lower side of the front and side gables. There are two hip-roofed front porches at the front corners of the building with concrete porches on brick masonry bases.

Building 114 is a two-and-one-half story, side-gabled structure. It is Colonial Revival in style, with a wide cornice and frieze with wood dentils. Its front porch and roof dormers feature classical pediments.

54 187.

55 87.

Building 117 is similar in style to Building 114, however it features a cruciform plan, and non-original entry vestibules at the rear. Hip-roofed porches exist on the south and north. These modifications appear to date from the 1930s WPA era.

NCO Row

The ten duplexes that comprise NCO Row (Buildings 210–219) are somewhat similar in outward appearance, despite having been constructed in three phases beginning in 1897 and concluding in 1939. They are Georgian in style.

Buildings 212, 213, and 214, two-story structures, very similar in appearance. Enclosed entry vestibules, sunrooms, and rear porches are not original. Buildings sit on a base of coursed ashlar limestone. Brick chimneys have corbeled tops. Most windows are wood double-hung, six-over-six. Evidence remains of rear porched that previously existed prior to the present ones.⁵⁶ These three buildings are presently in poor condition, and has been considered for demolition.⁵⁷

Buildings 210, 211, and 215 are each two stories, with identical plans and very similar features. Only Building 210 (now the National Museum of the Tuskegee Airmen) retains its original sun porch. These buildings feature Colonial Revival influences, and are similar to, but somewhat more elaborate in detail than, other NCO Row buildings. Foundations are poured concrete.

Buildings 216–219, each two stories, have a similar plan. However, they vary in that two have hip roofs and a Federal style front porch, while the other two have gabled roofs and a Georgian style front porch. These buildings were built in the 1930s and retain their original appearance. They are duplexes, with centered, paired front entrances. Rear porches are also combined, and one-story sunrooms are situated at each end.⁵⁸

Post Engineer's Storehouse (Building 201, 1897)

This is a simple one-story brick building has a gable roof and segmental arched openings with wood hopper windows (though several steel sash windows have been added). Rail-and-stile doors feature diagonal wide bead board panels At the east end, a brick wall partially painted, suggesting it was formerly an interior wall for a now-demolished addition.⁵⁹

Post Quartermaster (Building 202, 1890)

This is a simple, single story, side-gable brick building with simple Colonial Revival details, including a wood fascia with crown molding. It sits on a coursed ashlar limestone base; located on a slight slope, it also features a basement door. Windows are wood double-hung, six-over-six or four-over-four sashes. Some casement windows also exist. Although most doors are recent hollow metal doors, the basement door is wood. There is a small wood addition on the north side of the building, and a concrete loading dock on the south side appearing to date from the 1930s. A roof dormer appears not to be original.

Guard House/"Old" Guard House (Building 205, 1889)

⁵⁶ 139.

⁵⁷ James Conway, in discussion with the author, January 2015.

⁵⁸ 160.

⁵⁹ 112.

This symmetrical side gabled building features Italianate influences. It is defined by its full length open front porch, front gable, and brackets at its eaves. Prominent brick chimneys have stepped and corbelled tops. Windows feature prominent limestone lintels and sills.

Post Headquarters (Building 207, 1905)

The Post Headquarters building is a large brick building in the Queen Anne or Free Classic style. It is two stories, plus a tall attic story featuring a gable with Palladian window. Segmental window arches are arranged in pairs. The interior was restored to its original layout, with offices for the post commander and others, and a large second floor ballroom, by the Historical Museum in the 1970s. During the 1990s, the building was leased to the Detroit Public Schools for the Medicine Bear Academy and the interior was remodeled to accommodate this use, with fire doors and additional interior partitions.

Stable (Building 222, 1890)

This is a single-story structure with a prominent, full-length monitor roof. It bears a mixture of wood hopper windows and double hung, six-over-six windows, as well as rail-and-stile doors. Eaves feature exposed rafters with curved tails. The exterior appearance of the building appears to be unaltered since its construction.

Warehouses (1942)

At the southern corner of the site, separated from the parade ground by a tall earthen berm, are Warehouses 2A, 2B, and 2C, as well as the concrete slab foundation of a fourth warehouse which has since been demolished.

Dating from the World War II era, the three remaining warehouses are described by the *Historic Fort Wayne Program of Preservation and Utilization 2A* as possessing and “unique character because of its original use” and “associative historical significance/artifact value in that it is one of three surviving structures on the property dating to what may be the most important episode of Fort Wayne’s history—the World War II Arsenal of Democracy era, when Fort Wayne served as a major marshalling and distribution point for the tremendous amount of war materiel manufactured in Detroit.”⁶⁰ Therefore, despite a prior determination to the contrary,⁶¹ this report finds Warehouses 2A, 2B, and 2C to be contributing to the historic character of Fort Wayne.

Each building is constructed of concrete block, painted in some places. Windows are closed with concrete block. Large overhead door openings are supported by steel windows.

Building 2C has been extensively remodeled to provide controlled archives and artifact storage for the Detroit Historical Museum. To accommodate this use, new windows have been added.

Earthen Berm (1970s)

A tall berm near the southern end separates Warehouses 2A, 2B, and 2C from the parade ground. This feature was created as part of a series of improvements that occurred during Detroit Historical Museum

⁶⁰ City of Detroit Recreation Department, *Historic Fort Wayne Program of Preservation and Utilization*, 151.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

management of the facility. The berm shielded the warehouse buildings from view, and was also used as a backstop for target shooting.

Guard House (Building 302, 1942)

This building, which was erected during the Spanish-American War, replaced the original guardhouse. It was the subject of a partial restoration effort in 1984. A wide hip roof and full-length hip roof front porch is are its most prominent characteristics, and its hip-roof front dormer displays a Shingle Style influence. Modifications to the building are described by the *Program of Preservation and Utilization*:

Some windows have been closed in, and some have been replaced ... there is a full nearly width concrete front porch on the south side, with a hipped roof supported on brick masonry columns. The concrete porch does not appear to be original, and the columns are identical to those found on Building 312, built in 1939, suggesting that this porch and columns may have also been built at that time.⁶²

Theater (Building 303, 1939)

This building is a tall single story, with Colonial Revival detailing and prominent Georgian quoins. Its columned front porch and paired, multilight, rail-and-stile entry doors are prominent. Its massing is simple, with a a tall, front-gable roof. Eaves and rakes feature crown molding.⁶³

Barracks (Building 311, 1890)

This large, two and one-half-story brick building in a Colonial Revival style sits on a coursed ashlar limestone base. Its hip roof features dormers with rounded corners, a Shingle Style influence. Mortar joints are red. Windows are wood double-hung, two-over-two, with limestone sills. 1939 Building 312. The roofline is defined by enclosed eaves and several brick chimneys.

Service Club/Recreation Center/Visitors Center (Building 312, 1903–1939)

This 1903 Colonial Revival building was remodeled and significantly expanded in 1939 with a large, two-story, flat roof addition. The original building features a front gable and hip roofs on the wings. The building is brick, with the original section on a coursed ashlar limestone base. Like many buildings at Fort Wayne, mortar joints are red. Wood double hung windows have limestone sills on the original section; windows are steel or aluminum on the 1939 section.

Eaves feature crown moldings, and brickworks has corbelled courses, brick dentils, and Georgian-style quoins. Porches are concrete, with brick columns identical to those at building 302. roof.

Barracks (Building 314, 1906)

Among the largest buildings at Fort Wayne, this structure is two and one-half-story brick building with a U-shaped plan. It is Colonial Revival in style. The masonry building, pointed with red tinted mortar, sits on a high basement with a coursed ashlar limestone base. Windows are mostly double-hung two-over-two wood sash windows; they feature limestone sills and, on the basement, limestone lintels. Concrete porches on the west side do not appear to be original, with hip roofs and brick columns identical to those found on Building 312, built in 1939. The building has a gable roof and several brick

⁶² 161.

⁶³ 164.

masonry chimneys.

Parade Ground

A large open space, the parade ground, extends along the Detroit River between the star fort and the 1942 warehouse buildings, bounded by Gibbs and Bradys streets and a tall earthen berm at its southern end. Around the time of the fort's construction, the shoreline was occupied by shrub-scrub wetlands including willow trees.⁶⁴ This area was expanded, between 1880 and 1896, by grading over swampy land and reclaiming a portion of the riverbank. Reclamation efforts have been ongoing, undertaken by the Works Progress Administration, and later the Detroit Department of Public Works and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Coastal Zone Management Program.⁶⁵

The parade ground was used initially as a drill space. A number of large warehouse buildings were constructed on the site during World War II, although some space remained undeveloped, used for recreational purposes,⁶⁶ as well as for parking and vehicle storage during the war. The World War II buildings were demolished by the 1970s, with the final wooden structures from the wartime era razed in 1976. Today, the parade ground provides a dramatic view of the Detroit River and contributes significantly to the aesthetic value of the site.

Remains of a possible Potawatami village location, as depicted in early historic maps and established as a response to Euro-American settlement, may exist beneath the parade ground. 1944 excavations revealed a concentration of domestic artifacts surrounding the adjacent burial mound, suggesting a village site is likely to exist in close proximity—a possibility which may be explored by non-invasive techniques, including magnetometry and ground-penetrating radar, in the near future. As the northern portion of the parade ground has seen little historic development or other disturbance, such a village would be well-preserved and demonstrate a high degree of information potential.⁶⁷

Landscape Improvements

A campaign of improvements, including landscaping and tree planting, were undertaken by the Works Progress Administration beginning in 1938. Further research may be required to identify the full extent of WPA-related landscape features. A row of mature trees along Gibbs Street, defining the northern boundary of the parade ground, appear in World War II-era photographs as recently planted, and likely dates from this time period.

Gardens

Gardens, formerly located between Meigs Street and Jefferson Avenue, no longer exist; the area is presently occupied by an open lawn. The Fort Wayne *Master Plan* and *Program for Preservation and Utilization* call for further research to determine the historic appearance of these gardens in order to guide potential restoration efforts. Although the gardens have been eliminated, their site is nonetheless listed by this report as a contributing resource due to the vital relationship between open space and adjacent structures that it continues to provide.

64 City of Detroit Recreation Department, *Historic Fort Wayne Program of Preservation and Utilization*, 201.

65 Phenix, 22.

66 Conway and Jamroz, 68.

67 Thomas Killion (archaeologist, Wayne State University Department of Anthropology), in discussion with the author, April 2015.

Shoreline Riprap

The shoreline is stabilized with broken concrete riprap, deposited in the 1970s. Much of the concrete rubble originates from World War II-era buildings which were demolished at that time.

Wayne Street Garage (c. 1980)

A four-car brick garage with a gable roof Wayne Street was built on Wayne Street in the late 1970s or early 1980s. It was used by Detroit Historical Museum employees who resided on site.

Chapel/Workshop

At the eastern end of the site, south of the star fort, stand seven buildings and a boat slip operated as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Detroit District boat yard and presently off-limits to visitors. Of these, two are significant.

The first, a multipurpose, World War II-era building, first housed a chapel, and later provided workshop space in the 1950s. It is presently used as a garage. The single-story brick building features a dome-shaped roof, steel windows, and a stepped parapet facade.

Mule Stables

Formerly a pair of mule stables flanking a central yard, only the western building remains intact, as the second significant building on the Army Corps of Engineers property. This tall, gable-roofed building consists of a single story with a hay loft. It features high, round-arched windows, prominent, hip-roofed ridge vents, and a hay door made of wood. The eastern stable building, however, was greatly altered and incorporated into a 1960s office building.

LIST OF RESOURCES

Contributing Resources

Burial Mound

Gate House

Star Fort, Demilune, and Powder Magazine

Building 507/Barracks

Building 102

Building 103

Building 104

Building 105

Building 106

Building 107

Building 108

Building 109/Officer's Club

Building 110/Commanding Officer's House

Building 111

Building 112

Building 114

Building 117/Married Officer's Quarters (Woodland Indian Museum)

Building 201/Post Engineer's Storehouse
Building 202/Post Quartermaster
Building 205/Guard House ("Old" Guard House)
Building 207/Post Headquarters
Building 210 (National Museum of the Tuskegee Airmen)
Building 211
Building 212
Building 213
Building 214
Building 215
Building 216
Building 217
Building 218
Building 219
Building 222/Stable
Warehouse 2A
Warehouse 2B
Warehouse 2C
Building 302/Guard House
Building 303/Theater
Building 311/Barracks
Building 312/Service Club/Recreation Center (Visitors Center)
Building 314/Barracks
Parade Ground
Landscape Improvements
Gardens
Chapel/Workshop
Mule Stables, western building only

Noncontributing Resources

Wayne Street Garage
Earthen Berm
Shoreline Riprap
Army Corps of Engineers Boat House and Boat Slip
Army Corps of Engineers Detroit District office building
Mule Stables, eastern building
"Fort Wayne" Michigan Historic Site Marker

CRITERIA

The proposed Fort Wayne historic district appears to meet the first and third criteria adopted by the Historic Designation Advisory Board: (1) Sites, buildings, structures, or archaeological sites where cultural, social, spiritual, economic, political or architectural history of the community, city, state or nation is particularly reflected or exemplified; (3) Buildings or structures which embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural specimen, inherently valuable as a representation of a period, style or method of construction.

Fort Wayne appears to meet National Register *Criterion A* due to its direct association with U.S.

military response to the Canadian Rebellions of 1837, Michigan's involvement in the Civil War, and the region's contribution to the World War II "Arsenal of Democracy. The site appears to meet *criterion C* as an outstanding example of an American-built star fort representing the work of Montgomery C. Meigs, Thomas Jefferson Cram, and Joseph Totten. A diverse range of architecturally significant structures include the barracks, an outstanding example of Adam-style architecture in the Midwest, and a "significant and distinguishable" collection of twentieth-century Works Progress Administration and military architecture. Fort Wayne also meets *Criterion C* for the "distinctive characteristics" embodied in the only remaining example of the Late Woodland burial mounds that were once commonplace throughout southeast Michigan. *Criterion D* also appears to be satisfied, as archaeological research at the site has yielded, and is likely to continue to yield, insight into Late Woodlands burial practices and pottery techniques, historic-era Potawatomi village life and its relationship with Euro-American settlement, and 19th century social and military history.

RECOMMENDATION

The recommendation of the Historic Designation Advisory Board is for the designation of the proposed Fort Wayne Historic District.

COMPOSITION OF THE HISTORIC DESIGNATION ADVISORY BOARD

The Historic Designation Advisory Board has nine members, who are residents of Detroit, and three ex-officio members. The appointed members are Kwaku Atara, Melanie A. Bazil, Keith A. Dye, Zené Frances Fogel-Gibson, Edward Francis, Calvin Jackson, Harriet Johnson, Victoria Byrd-Olivier, and Kari Smith. The ex-officio members, who may be represented by members of their staff, are the Director of the Historical Department, the Director of the City Planning Commission, and the Director of the Planning and Development Department. Ad hoc members for this study are Alicia Bradford, Director of the Recreation Department, and Amy Swift of Preservation Detroit.

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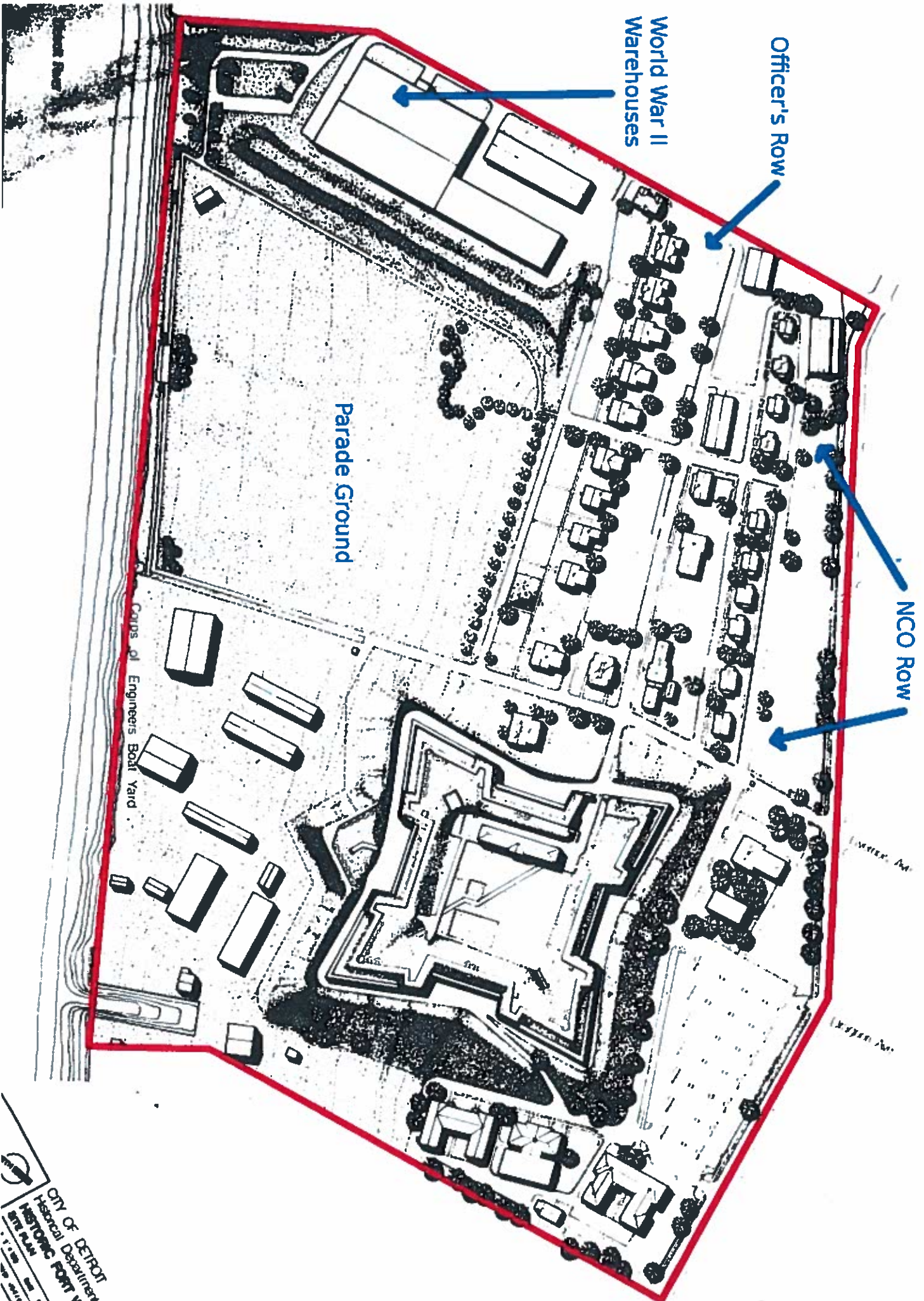
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World War II
Warehouses

Officers Row

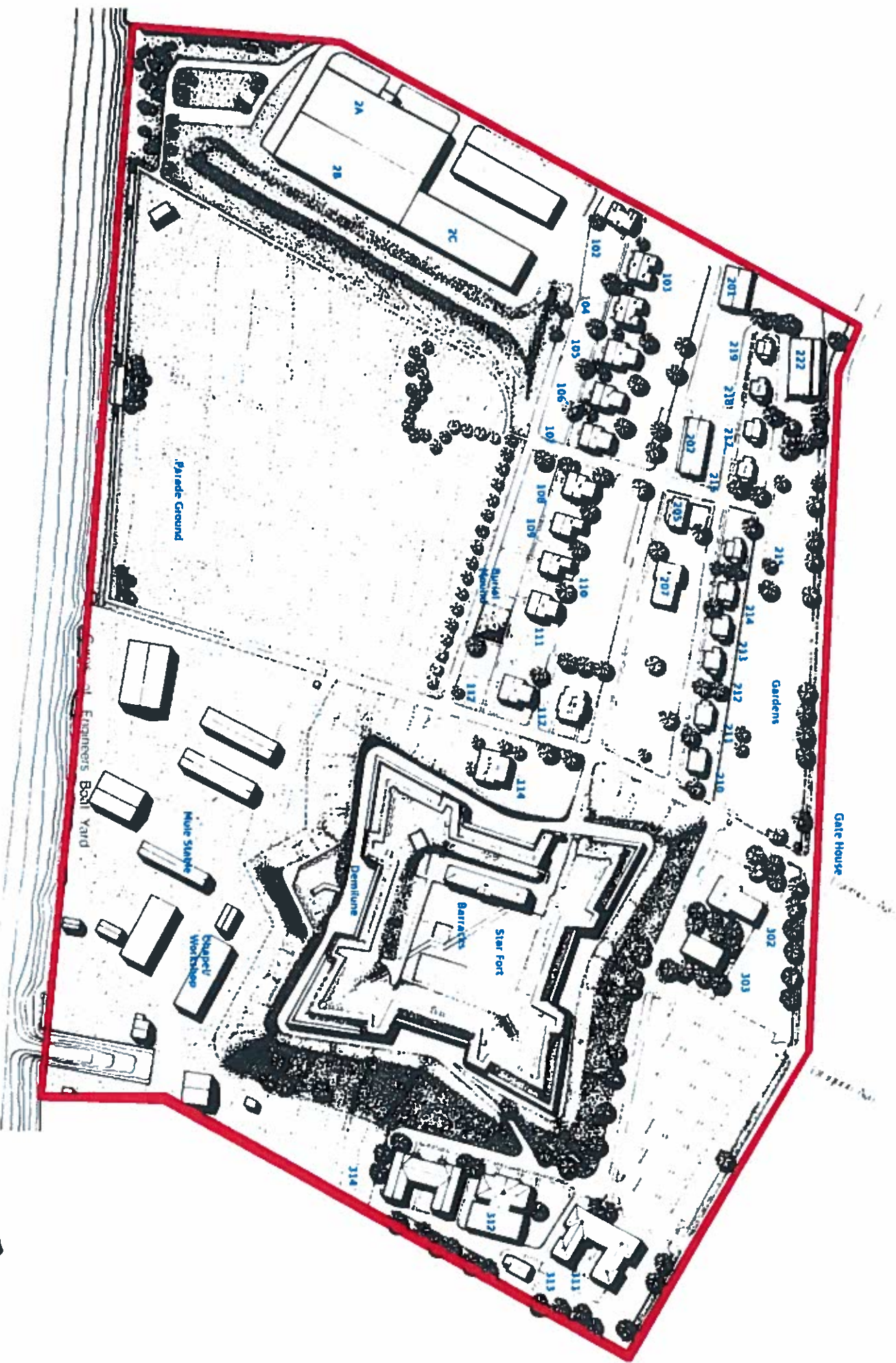
Parade Ground

NCO Row

Cards of Engineers Ball Yard

Lodge Ave

Lodge St



Proposed Fort Wayne Historic District

Historic district boundary

